

STUDY GUIDE

CHURCH NAME

WHY I AM NOT
A CHRISTIAN

JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY

JOHN 3:16-18, JOHN 14:4-7

07/16/2017



NEW VISION

MAIN POINT

Jesus is the only way to God, but His is the way of grace.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

If you only had a few minutes to tell someone about yourself what details would you include?

Why did you include these particular details? What is significant about them?

Many claim that the exclusivity of Jesus is the antiquated message of religious fundamentalists. Or they may nicely say: "That may work for you, but not for me. That may be your truth, but all views are equally valid." However, a closer examination of the pluralistic view that all religions coexist, simply contradicts itself. Skeptics might object: "There are no absolutes." To which a Christian could respond: "Is that an absolute statement?" The question, "What is truth?" is not a new one. Claiming biblical truth in a culture that wrestles with objective truth is difficult. Jesus Himself understood this when he provocatively proclaimed, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6 ESV). Jesus was not saying that He was one way to God among many. He was not saying that He pointed the way to God, either. He said that "no one comes to" God "the Father but through" faith in Himself. This means that religions that assign Jesus a role that is different from the one that the Bible gives Him do not bring people to God or eternal life. What sets Christianity apart from every other religion is grace! Jesus is the way!

READ AND REFLECT

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 14:4-7.

What question did Thomas ask that led to this response from Jesus? Do you think this is the response Thomas expected?

How would you state verse 6 in your own words?

Thomas asked Jesus to show him the way to the Father. “I am the way” is the central claim of this verse. Under the Old Covenant a priest was allowed to enter the presence of God once a year. Jesus fulfilled the Levitical Law and sacrificial system in His person. In Him alone, the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Col. 2:9). Anyone seeking the way to God has no need to look any further than Jesus. Follow Him, and He will show you the way.

Read John 1:14. What does it mean to say Jesus is the truth? How is this different than the world's definition of truth?

Read John 11:25. What was Jesus claiming when He said He was the life?

Many people conceive of truth as a set of ideas that are to be known and interpreted intellectually, but the Bible sees truth as something more. Jesus Christ is truth itself. Truth is not a series of facts or ideas discovered by our intellect, but rather truth is found by entering into a personal relationship with the source of all truth. Additionally, Jesus is life, because He gives eternal life to His followers. Because He is truth and life, He is able to say that He is the only path to God the Father.

How would you respond to someone who believes there are multiple ways to God or that truth is relative?

John 14:6 makes an exclusive claim to truth. All of Jesus' claims in this verse are preceded by the definite article. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus' answer did not leave any room for questions about His identity. The last part of this verse makes that abundantly clear. “No one comes to the Father except through me.” Though we live in a pluralistic society that teaches there are multiple ways and paths to truth, the Bible speaks against this. It is the testimony of Scripture that Jesus is both the Son of God, and the only way to God. In Christ alone are truth and life found.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 3:16-18.

What does it mean to “believe” in Jesus? Why is this so important?

What words from this passage help us understand the manner of God's love for us?

Out of love for us, God sent Jesus to accomplish our salvation on the cross. When we believe in Jesus we believe in both His identity and His work. These verses are at the heart of the gospel message. The Greek word for “gospel” means “good message.” It's a declaration of God's activity to permanently change and restore our lives. God's love provided salvation for the world through the gift and sacrifice of His Son, but salvation comes only to those who believe in Christ. This is what Jesus accomplished at the cross.

Read Romans 5:6-11 and Ephesians 2:4-10. What attributes of God do you see in these passages? Which attribute do you think is most significant? Why?

How does Paul, the writer of Romans and Ephesians, describe the state of humanity and our need for Jesus?

God's mercy, love, and grace bring about change. Mercy is the disposition to act compassionately in response to the plight of someone in need. God's love is the John 3:16 kind of love in which God sacrificed His Son for sinners to have life. Grace describes God's showing undeserved favor toward all who have sinned against Him. Paul described the timing of Christ's death as “while we were still helpless” and “at the right time.” Christ did not die for us when we were worthy of being saved; He died when we were at our absolute worst—a broken and hopeless creation.

What are the two possibilities (concerning eternity) Jesus pointed out in these verses?

Read Acts 4:12. Why does the truth about Jesus matter? Why is our response to Jesus so important?

Everyone responds to Jesus in some way, either with belief or denial. There is no middle ground. If Jesus is who the Bible claims that He is and did what the Bible says He did, our response to Him is the most important thing we can ever do. If the words of Scripture are to be trusted, and salvation is found in no one else, all who have not trusted in Jesus alone for their salvation are condemned to spend eternity apart from Him. Out of love for the world, Jesus commissioned His church to proclaim the gospel to all nations. The gospel is the most important message anyone can ever hear or believe.

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How often do you share the gospel with others? Is this a regular practice in your life? If not, what steps can you take to begin to share the gospel with others more regularly?

What Scripture could you use to share the gospel with others? How could you use the Scripture from this lesson to walk through the gospel with a non-believer?

Who do you know that is in need of the gospel? How can you share the good news of Jesus Christ with them this week?

Do you know anyone who is particularly gifted in evangelism? Consider asking this person how they share with others to see if there is any wisdom you could gain from their example?

PRAY

Thank God for the simple truths of His gospel message and the confidence we can have in our salvation. Pray that you will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to spread the good news of the gospel to others.

COMMENTARY

JOHN 14:6

14:6. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (see note at 6:35,48), and no one comes to the Father except through Him. Jesus alone is able to provide access to God because He alone paid the penalty for our sins (Isa 53:5; Heb 1:3). He is the truth (Jn 1:14,17; 5:33; 18:37; cp. 8:40,45-46), and all contrary claims are false. He alone is the life (1:4), having life in Himself (5:26). He is thus able to confer eternal life on all those who believe in Him (3:16). Jesus is truth and life, and He is the one and only way of salvation.

JOHN 3:16-18

3:16. Is there a verse anywhere in the Bible more well-known and loved than this one? How poignantly it states that eternal life comes not because of anything we do. Salvation comes as a free gift when we believe what God has said. For almost two thousand years people have been adding to the gospel, but the truth still rings clear today—whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Nicodemus had superb religious training but very little spiritual insight. He could not grasp Jesus' statement that a person must be born from above to experience eternal life.

Four times in three verses (vv. 16–18) Jesus uses variations of the word believe, perhaps the most important key word in John's Gospel. The Son of God classified the entire human race into two groups—those who believe and are not condemned, and those who do not believe and are condemned already.

The gospel begins with God's love, penetrates through the cross and the empty tomb, and results in eternal life for those who believe. Morris declared, "In typical Johannine fashion, 'gave' is used in two sentences. God gave the Son by sending Him into the world, but God also gave the Son on the cross. Notice that the cross is not said to show us the love of the Son (as in Gal. 2:20), but that of the Father. The atonement proceeds from the loving heart of God. It is not something wrung from Him.

Nicodemus would have believed firmly that God loved Israel, but not much in Jewish theology allowed for God to love the world. This is new revelation, the new covenant breadth of the gospel. Jesus had just evoked one Old Testament image in the Pharisee's mind (the snake in the desert), and now He touched on another—the aged Abraham sacrificing his only son on the altar (Gen. 22:2).

To describe God's love for the world John chose the verb *agapao* for the first time in his writings. He used it thirty-six times, more than twice as many as any other book of the New Testament except his first epistle in which he used it thirty-one times. But the gospel does not center in God's love, but rather what he gave on the cross—the death of his Son. The Bible does not allow us to merely acknowledge that Christ died for the world; saving faith requires a recognition that he died for each of us individually.

The words one and only translate *monogenes*, which appears again in verse 18. John had already used it in 1:14, 18 and used it again in 1 John 4:9.

The verb *perish* speaks of eternal death in contrast to eternal life. It represents the opposite of preservation, since death is the opposite of life. Those who refuse God's gift are alienated from Him without hope for both the present and the future. A person need not sin blatantly to perish. One may simply fail to act positively in receiving God's gift. When applied to Judas in John 17:12, we learn that the one who perished was the son of perdition, or in the NIV, the one "doomed to destruction," a play on the word *apoleo*.

A word needs to be said here about the section that includes verses 16–18. If we take these verses separately in our study, they form a single unit of thought in the text and each verse depends upon the others (though many who could quote verse 16 would not be able to recite verses 17–18 with equal accuracy). Verse 16 tells us that God gave His Son, verse 17 explains why, and verse 18 emphasizes the result.

3:17–18. Did all this happen for judgment and condemnation? No. That was never God's purpose. Notice how central Jesus is to the passage. Verse 15 emphasizes the words "in him" and they appear again in verses 16–18, while verse 17 talks about God's saving the world through Him. Every human being has a choice—eternal life or eternal death. And as the Bible describes it, to perish is not to cease existence, but to experience utter failure, futility, and loss—an eternity without God.

Somebody once said that the world could be divided into two groups—those who divide the world into two groups and those who do not. If that is the case, God is definitely in the former category for He divides the saved and the unsaved clearly in these verses. The saved believe and are not condemned; the unsaved do not believe and are condemned. And let us not miss the word already. We exist in a state of condemnation by birth—our sin natures inherited from Adam.

We enter physical life in a state of spiritual death and then our sin natures compound the problem with sinful behavior.