

DAY 6

“I am the true vine.” (John 15:1, 5) By staying connected to Christ, we stay connected to our one and only life source. If we don't stay connected to Christ, we cut ourselves off from our life source. The greatest challenge we face in life is self-reliance. We're constantly told to pull our own weight and not rely on others. While that may be sage advice for humanity, it's terrible counsel for how to put your trust completely in Christ. While I might have incredible strength and capacity, I don't have ALL strength to sustain my life. If I rely on myself alone and my strength alone, what do I do when that's gone? That's exactly when Jesus invites us to find that HE is the Vine. All life comes from our connection to Him!

HOW CAN I PUT THIS TO WORK?

When you get up, take time to ask the Lord to keep you connected with Him. When faced with a decision during the day, take a brief moment to pray for Jesus' life to lead you. When struggling with something heavy, ask Jesus to meet your need with His life.

DAY 7

“I am the Alpha and the Omega” (Revelation 1:8; 21:26; 22:13). When Jesus identifies himself as the Alpha, he is proclaiming his primacy before all things. Everything in Heaven and on earth comes after him! When he proclaims himself the Omega, Jesus is proclaiming his right to have the final word on all matters. No matter where we fall in between those, Jesus' authority is intact and will be. I can rest confidently that I'm in His care. I don't have to figure it out. I only need to rest that Jesus can and indeed will be in charge. That's not an excuse to be lax or lazy in our approach to life, but it is a reminder of where I work falls in the scheme of eternity. It's after Jesus and before his final word.

HOW CAN I PUT THIS TO WORK?

When you're faced with a difficult circumstance or choice, before you begin to press toward a decision, take a moment to remind yourself that Jesus is before all things and after all things. Humble yourself enough to ask for the Alpha and the Omega to speak into your circumstances.

Don't Forget

The yearly reading plan is available in both Welcome Centers as well as online at our website. Visit www.fbc-midland.org or scan the QR Code below to the reading plan web page. Here you can download this plan and the 365 day plan in pdf format.

In addition to the downloadable plans, you will find links to other online reading resources and devotions for the entire family.



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2024

7 DAY READING PLAN

In the Gospel of John, Jesus offers seven statements of identifying himself. Jesus' desire in introducing himself this way was to give us a more robust picture of who He is and what He intends to do in our lives. For far too long, we have settled for a weak and ineffectual picture of Jesus. This 7-day devotional is intended to strengthen your faith in Christ, enlighten your heart and mind to who He is and what that means for you. Connecting your heart and mind daily with God's word will bring your spiritual life to a stronger place.

Let's start here:

In the writings of the Apostle John, Jesus offers 7 "I AM" statements about who He is, each making a definitive theological declaration. By using the statement "I AM," Jesus is equating himself with the God who met with Moses on Mt Sinai. In Exodus 3-4, God declared himself to be "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex 3:14). The depth of this identification is difficult for our minds to comprehend but to understand what Jesus meant in John's writings, we must understand what God meant when speaking to Moses. God's meaning was eternally profound and in essentially three ways – From eternity past, I always have been. There never has been a time when I was not. In the present, I exist because it's who I am. I'm in the same place and substance as I always have been because I don't change. Into the future, I always will be as I always have been. When we take time to look at these statements, it can reshape who we understand Jesus to be and allow us to find ourselves in the process. My prayer is that these readings will guide your heart and mind to who Jesus REALLY is and not merely settle for a shadow version.

DAY 1

"I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6). This is the preeminent declaration of Jesus' identity. This existential declaration is a line in the sand about who we should understand Him to be and how to understand why He came to earth at all. By declaring His unique identity as the way, truth and life, he is declaring his absolute uniqueness in each of those as if He is the ONLY way, the ONLY truth and the ONLY life. There is none other than Him nor is there a rival for his place nor can there be. When we recognize this ONE fact, everything else comes into focus. The problem we've seen around us is the redefining of truth to a highly subjective "my truth" that's unimpeachable by someone else. When it's my truth, no one else can deny it! But what happens when MY truth comes into conflict with YOUR truth? What do we do then? There must be an objective truth, one that stands above all others. There is indeed – His name is Jesus.

HOW CAN I PUT THIS TO WORK?

Letting God's Word speak into your life daily gives you clarity for the other things that will come against you. Doing it first thing in the morning allows me to filter everything that comes after it through the lens of God's Word. His eternal, unchanging Word is an anchor for my ever-changing turbulent world.

DAY 2

"I am the light of the world." (John 8:12) To a world lost in darkness, Christ offers Himself as our light. We live in a dark place and in a dark time – Jesus warned us of this and told us not to be surprised when darkness seems overwhelming. But Jesus' arrival came to bring light into our darkness. When Jesus proclaimed "I am the light of the world" he was revealing himself to be the source of illumination.

Even the smallest light drives back the darkness. Consider this: a nightlight left on gets overwhelmed by the brightness of the sun. But when the sun goes down, the strength of even a small light pushes back the darkness. It's enough to provide clarity for walking or comfort for a child worried about the dark. In our current darkness, Jesus is more than enough to push back on the darkness trying to overwhelm us.

HOW CAN I PUT THIS TO WORK?

Talking to Jesus in prayer invites His light into our darkness. When I'm uncertain, I ask for his light. When I'm confused, I ask for his light. When I'm worried, I ask for his light. Let today be the day you begin to live in the light Jesus meant for you to have.

DAY 3

"I am the Good Shepherd." (John 10:11) One of the most familiar images of the Old Testament is "The Lord is my Shepherd" from Psalm 23. Jesus connects the image of a shepherd to himself and it's not hard to see why. People understand the role of a shepherd. Shepherds guard their flock. They protect them from predators. They provide for their needs. They shelter them from storms, and they care for them when they are sick. We recognize a shepherd's work.

It's even easier to recognize when a sheep doesn't have a shepherd. A sheep without a shepherd will invariably put himself in harm's way. They'll wander off a cliff. Or fall into a hole. Or eat something bad for them. Who will care for them without a shepherd?

The truth is we need a shepherd. All of us do. Someone to guard over us when we are weak, broken and beaten. Who will you trust to shepherd you?

HOW CAN I PUT THIS TO WORK?

One of the most foundational portions of spiritual growth is also the most overlooked. Keeping a journal of how the Good Shepherd is meeting your needs can be a real asset to growth. Begin today by writing a letter to God about your thoughts, feelings, dreams and aspirations.

DAY 4

"I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25) Death is that hard stop at the end. 100% of people in history have died. All those who have claimed some sort of special revelation like Buddha, the Mahatma, and Confucius are all dead. But for those in Christ, death does not have the final word. His declaration of primacy over life and death reveals the full width and depth of his divinity. Christ – AND ONLY CHRIST – has died and returned from there. When we see him die in Luke 23, it's easy to believe that's the end because experience has taught us as much. But when we read Luke 24 and see him alive again, his declaration in John 11 makes sense! Both life and death are under His authority and thus He fears neither! For those who trust Him as their Savior, they don't need to fear them either.

HOW CAN I PUT THIS TO WORK?

Death is a part of life. Most of us try to hide from death by skipping funerals. But death still comes. We must, therefore, plan for what we'll do when it comes for us. Most usually, death comes unbidden and unwanted. If we knew it was coming, we would prepare well. We DO know it's coming so it's time to prepare well for that moment whenever it comes by trusting in the only one who has authority over it: Jesus Christ.

DAY 5

"I am the bread of life." (John 6:35, 21, 48, 51) As bread sustains physical life, so Christ offers and sustains spiritual life. As Jesus feeds the 5,000, he offers them something they understand – bread. They know their need for bread and the sustenance and nourishment it provides. If they don't get it, they will die. Their need for bread is a regularly felt need that compels them to meet the need.

Likewise, the only way we can remain healthy is to continue to feed ourselves from God's Word. If we don't, we can't be surprised when we're emaciated and gaunt. Starving yourself will do that. But, when we feed ourselves regularly from God's Word we'll be strengthened, encouraged and empowered to live in the fullness God meant to give us. The question isn't where we can find bread. The question is am I willing to receive it? Let today be the day you commit to living with the "bread of life" as your best meal of the day.

HOW CAN I PUT THIS TO WORK?

Letting God's Word speak into your life daily gives you clarity for the other things that will come against you. Doing it first thing in the morning allows me to filter everything that comes after it through the lens of God's Word. His eternal, unchanging Word is an anchor for my ever-changing turbulent world.