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Jesus Is: A 31-Day Devotional on the "I Am" Statements of Jesus

Knowing Jesus is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian. And there is no better way to get to know Jesus than by learning about Jesus in His own words.

In the Book of John, Jesus makes seven statements about Himself. These are known as the "I Am" statements. In doing so, Jesus communicates a profound truth about His identity. He is telling His audience, and us, that He is one with the unchanging, eternal Father. The statements have resonated with Believers for centuries, and they will resonate with you. In this 31-day devotional, you'll be challenged, encouraged, and brought near to Jesus in a profound way.

"Jesus Is" is written by bestselling author Dr. Bryan Gill.

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JESUS IS

A 31-DAY DEVOTIONAL ON THE "I AM" STATEMENTS OF JESUS

DR. BRYAN GILL

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**MY FAITH RESTS NOT UPON WHAT I AM,
OR SHALL BE,
OR FEEL,
OR KNOW,
BUT IN WHAT CHRIST IS,
IN WHAT HE HAS DONE,
AND IN WHAT HE IS NOW DOING FOR ME.**

CHARLES SPURGEON



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INTRODUCTION

I am thrilled that you are beginning this 31-day journey through the seven “I am” statements of Jesus found in the Book of John. When I started brainstorming about writing a new devotional book, I had you in mind. I wanted to create a meaningful devotional experience rich with Scripture and careful exegesis while at the same time providing practical application. The world doesn’t need more fluff—the world needs more of Jesus. And what better way to help you understand Jesus more fully than to study Him using the words He used to describe Himself.

If you are unfamiliar with the significance of Jesus’ “I am” statements, you probably have a few questions. Like, why are these statements important? What do they mean for believers? Why write a book about them? It’s difficult to overstate the importance of what Jesus was doing when He made these declarations. When Jesus said, “I am,” He was making a bold statement about His identity: “In using the expression, Jesus seems to be explicitly identifying Himself with Yahweh, asserting His eternality, self-existence, and changelessness, and claiming to bear Yahweh’s presence on Earth.”¹ Studying these “I am” statements is extremely beneficial to Christ-followers as it unlocks a deeper understanding of Jesus’ identity.

In the book of John, Jesus says the statement, “I am the...” seven different times. Below are the statements and where they appear in John’s Gospel.

1. I am the bread of life. (John 6:35)
2. I am the light of the world. (John 8:12)
3. I am the door. (John 10:7)
4. I am the good shepherd. (John 10:11)
5. I am the resurrection and the life. (John 11:25)
6. I am the way, and the truth, and the life. (John 14:6)
7. I am the true vine. (John 15:1)

Each of these statements tells us something about the character and purpose of Jesus. Over the next 31 days, we will dive deeper into these seven statements from a historical and personal perspective. In a sense, these are seven divine metaphors that Jesus used to help illustrate points He was trying to make. Jesus, being a masterful teacher, communicated difficult concepts through imagery. However, some imagery is lost on us since we live in a Westernized culture in the twenty-first century. My hope for us over the next 31 days is that we can reclaim some of the intent behind what Jesus wanted the original hearers to understand when He made these statements.

Just as a fair warning, this devotional isn't full of stories and illustrations. While some are sprinkled throughout, I wanted to focus more on the theology and message of what Scripture is saying. I hope you will find this a rich and robust approach to your daily devotional time as we look at the Old and New Testaments to better grasp what Jesus meant with these seven statements.

Now, you may ask yourself, if there are only seven statements, what will fill up the rest of the days? I'm glad you asked. Each of the seven statements gets a day dedicated to introducing the statement and its context. The days following will help us look at Bible passages related to each "I am" statement. Looking at other verses and passages of Scripture will help us unlock some of the mystery behind what Jesus wanted His original audience to hear and help us apply these truths to our lives.

I am thankful for you and encouraged that you are intentionally growing closer to Jesus. I am honored that this book can be a small part of what God is doing in your life. I pray that, once you complete this book, you will better understand Jesus as our Savior and why He is the only one who could be worthy of forgiving us of our sins and drawing us into the full life He promises in His Word.



DAY 1

THE BREAD OF LIFE

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” - John 6:35

For thousands of years, having bread has meant security, stability, nourishment, and provision. The year 2020 was a big year for bread-making. The world was in turmoil, and many people decided to make bread. Traffic to bread-making websites skyrocketed above their normal engagement levels, social media channels were filled with bread-making tutorials, and yeast products flew off the shelves. For most, baking bread not only provided a great distraction but meant that their nutritional needs would be met even if they couldn't reach the grocery store. In the south, when the weatherman says it's going to snow, people rush to the store to stock up on bread and milk and hunker down. Historically, bread was one of the first foods that didn't involve hunting or gathering. It meant that a wheat crop was plentiful, and provisions and time were adequate to make bread.

When I think about the miracles of Jesus, two come to mind: Jesus feeding the five thousand with fish and bread and Jesus walking on water. These two have been my favorites since my early days of Sunday school and vacation Bible school. According to the Gospel of John, they happened on the same day—one right after the other. Jesus fed the crowd with a little boy's sack lunch and then went off by Himself to pray. Later that night, as the disciples had traveled several miles out onto the sea, Jesus caught up with them by walking on the water. What a wild night!

The next day, some of the same people from the crowd He'd fed the day before were hanging around to try to catch Jesus again. They found Him on the other side of the sea and demanded to see more signs. They started asking questions and equating Jesus' bread and fish miracle to the Israelites being given manna in the desert. Jesus quickly told them that all those Israelites died, but He was the bread of life and offered eternal life to those who believed in Him. As you can imagine, that completely confused them (we will dive into this more in this week's devotions).

When I think about the statement, “I am the bread of life,” I can't help but think about all the things that bread represented for Jesus' original audience. For many, this image of security came to mind because they had just been fed in their time of need the day before. For others, the thought of bread baking in their home as that sweet aroma wafted through the air evoked a feeling of nostalgia and stability. Still others thought about God's provision to their ancestors in the desert through manna from heaven. As we will see in this chapter, Jesus, being the bread of life, meant that He was all of these: security, stability, nourishment, and provision.

This prayer is from the Book of Common Prayer and is typically used on the fourth Sunday of Lent. Pray it now as we begin this chapter into Jesus' statement, "I am the bread of life."

**GRACIOUS FATHER,
WHOSE BLESSED SON JESUS CHRIST
CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN
TO BE THE TRUE BREAD
WHICH GIVES LIFE TO THE WORLD:**

**EVERMORE GIVE US THIS BREAD,
THAT HE MAY LIVE IN US, AND WE IN HIM;
WHO LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT,
ONE GOD, NOW AND FOREVER.**

AMEN.



DAY 2

THE BREAD OF LIFE

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.” - Exodus 16:4

The Israelites were notorious for complaining, especially after God had just done something amazing to deliver them from some type of danger. In this instance, God delivered them out of Egypt, where they had been enslaved for hundreds of years. However, that wasn’t good enough. They didn’t see the opportunity of becoming a nation of their own out from under the rule of the Pharaoh. Only a month into their journey, they were focused on their problems and their hunger rather than their deliverance from bondage. They would’ve rather died in Egypt with full bellies than live free and hungry. Completely ungrateful, they complained about their food situation to Moses and Aaron.

But what did God do? He provided for His people despite their ungratefulness. God gave Moses and Aaron specific instructions for the Israelites, and each morning, as the dew dried on the ground around their tents, a strange flat bread-like substance had formed on the ground that they called manna. And each day, everyone gathered as much as they needed, some more than others, and it never ran out. The next day, God did it all over again. And each day after that as well. As long as they were in the wilderness until they reached the Promised Land, God provided bread from heaven to meet their needs.

This bread from heaven was symbolic of God’s sustaining grace for His people. This story beautifully illustrates God’s goodness and graciousness despite our actions. His grace never runs out. Some of us need more than others, but God never tires of giving good gifts to His children. Like Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations 3:22–24, “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’”

God’s provision for His people was not proportionate to their obedience, and God’s grace to us is not determined by our performance. We need Jesus, and no amount of work can earn the grace He freely gives.

When Jesus said, “I am the bread of life,” He was saying that His love never runs out, His grace never runs out, and every day, like bread from heaven, your soul will no longer be hungry because it will be satisfied in Him.

QUESTIONS

- 1. In what areas of your life can you show more gratitude toward God today?**
- 2. What can you start doing each day that would acknowledge the goodness of God and that will remind you that His love never fails?**
- 3. Take a moment to pray and thank God for His provision and new mercies each day.**

DAY 3

THE BREAD OF LIFE

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. - Micah 5:2

Words are important in the Bible. People's names have meaning, and we often see that names of places also have meaning. As you may know, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament was written in Greek. To the original hearers and readers of Scripture, the words used for names and places were easily recognized, and they understood the meaning behind these nouns. However, for us in the twenty-first century who do not speak the biblical languages, we must do a little more digging.

It has been said that people have an “aha” moment when learning a foreign language. They're studying along, and suddenly, the words and sentence structures begin to make sense, and they begin to comprehend the foreign language just as well as their native tongue. Full transparency: When I was in Hebrew class in seminary, that “aha” moment never came. But, one class stood out to me—the one where we learned what the name “Bethlehem” meant.

Bethlehem was a small and unimportant city compared to the other places in Judah. But, long before Jesus, several recognizable characters were associated with this little town in one way or another: Ruth, Boaz, Samuel, and David, to name a few. The word Bethlehem is made up of two words: beth and lehem. Beth means “house,” and lehem means “bread.” Therefore, Bethlehem literally means “house of bread.” To the Israelites that came before Jesus, Bethlehem's name wasn't very significant. But Jesus changes everything.

God historically uses the unassuming, weak, and undersized to accomplish His purposes. Think about an old man named Abraham with a barren wife being the parents to a nation. Or about David defeating Goliath or Gideon and the 300 soldiers. Or about the mighty walls of Jericho falling after the Israelites walked around the city and blew horns. Paul said it best in 1 Corinthians 1:27: “But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.”

It was no coincidence that God chose Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus; He was making a statement that He could do great things with the unlikeliest places and people. So, when Jesus, born in the “house of bread,” claimed He was “the bread of life,” it all started to make sense. This claim was prophetic and pointed to God's greater purpose for all people. Because of Jesus, we know about a little town called Bethlehem. If you think your life doesn't have meaning, think about what Jesus can do with you. Jesus changes everything.

