The ‘I am’ sayings of Christ

Jesus made some sweeping claims for himself – outrageous but true! This study guide examines the ‘I am’ statements, mainly from the Gospel of John. But the sessions go far beyond a study of ancient words to a consideration of how these claims can transform our lives today. What does it mean for Jesus to say he is the Bread of Life? That he is the Light? What do his dramatic claims tell us about his power and character? And how might that impact us each day?
Scripture Union is an international Christian charity working with churches in more than 130 countries providing resources to bring the good news about Jesus Christ to children, young people and families and to encourage them to develop spiritually through the Bible and prayer. As well as coordinating a network of volunteers, staff and associates who run holidays, church-based events and school Christian groups, Scripture Union produces a wide range of publications and supports those who use their resources through training programmes.

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Getting the Most Out of 

*I AM*

No one could say the things Jesus said and be taken seriously. Imagine standing up in an office meeting or even at a small group Bible study and saying: “I am the way; no one has access to God except through me.” Or think about how you would react if someone took the microphone at a funeral and announced: “I am the resurrection and the life; if you believe in me, you will never die.” That person would be asked to sit down—or ushered out the door! No one would take such claims seriously.

But those are the very words we hear from Jesus in the Bible—and from Jesus the words ring true. Who is this man who makes such sweeping claims? And how can such a man bring rest to my restless spirit?

The claims Jesus made sounded even more startling to the people who first heard them. The words “I am” drew Jesus’ first-century Jewish audience back to a pivotal point in biblical history. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush and sent him to Egypt to lead the people of Israel to freedom. Moses worried that the people would want to know who had sent him and so he asked God what his name was. God answered, “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14). God’s covenant name with Israel was “I AM.” Now, hundreds of years later, the same words come from the lips of Jesus. He is claiming to be no one less than the Lord God. The same God who spoke to Moses now speaks again.

This study guide examines the “I AM” declarations of Jesus
in the New Testament. We will look at the context of each statement, and we will listen to Jesus’ powerful words—but we want to go beyond simply a study of ancient words. We will also discover how Jesus’ words can transform our lives today. Be prepared to wrestle with some amazing claims. Then be prepared to have your life changed as Jesus’ claims ring true in your experience.

**Suggestions for Individual Study**

1. As you begin each study, pray that God will speak to you through his Word.
2. Read the introduction to the study and respond to the personal reflection question or exercise. This is designed to help you focus on God and on the theme of the study.
3. Each study deals with a particular passage—so that you can delve into the author’s meaning in that context. Read and reread the passage to be studied. The questions are written using the language of the New International Version, so you may wish to use that version of the Bible. The New Revised Standard Version is also recommended.
4. This is an inductive Bible study, designed to help you discover for yourself what Scripture is saying. The study includes three types of questions. **Observation** questions ask about the basic facts: who, what, when, where and how. **Interpretation** questions delve into the meaning of the passage. **Application** questions help you discover the implications of the text for growing in Christ. These three keys unlock the treasures of Scripture.

Write your answers to the questions in the spaces provided or in a personal journal. Writing can bring clarity and deeper understanding of yourself and of God’s Word.

5. It might be good to have a Bible dictionary handy. Use it to look up any unfamiliar words, names or places.
6. Use the prayer suggestion to guide you in thanking God for what you have learned and to pray about the applications that have come to mind.

7. You may want to go on to the suggestion under “Now or Later,” or you may want to use that idea for your next study.

Suggestions for Members of a Group Study

1. Come to the study prepared. Follow the suggestions for individual study mentioned above. You will find that careful preparation will greatly enrich your time spent in group discussion.

2. Be willing to participate in the discussion. The leader of your group will not be lecturing. Instead, he or she will be encouraging the members of the group to discuss what they have learned. The leader will be asking the questions that are found in this guide.

3. Stick to the topic being discussed. Your answers should be based on the verses which are the focus of the discussion and not on outside authorities such as commentaries or speakers. These studies focus on a particular passage of Scripture. Only rarely should you refer to other portions of the Bible. This allows for everyone to participate in in-depth study on equal ground.

4. Be sensitive to the other members of the group. Listen attentively when they describe what they have learned. You may be surprised by their insights! Each question assumes a variety of answers. Many questions do not have “right” answers, particularly questions that aim at meaning or application. Instead the questions push us to explore the passage more thoroughly.

When possible, link what you say to the comments of others. Also, be affirming whenever you can. This will encourage some of the more hesitant members of the group to participate.
5. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. We are sometimes so eager to express our thoughts that we leave too little opportunity for others to respond. By all means participate! But allow others to also.

6. Expect God to teach you through the passage being discussed and through the other members of the group. Pray that you will have an enjoyable and profitable time together, but also that as a result of the study you will find ways that you can take action individually and/or as a group.

7. Remember that anything said in the group is considered confidential and should not be discussed outside the group unless specific permission is given to do so.

8. If you are the group leader, you will find additional suggestions at the back of the guide.
"Do you know anything about the Bible?" I was browsing the religion section of the local bookstore, and a woman of Middle Eastern descent startled me with her question. “There are so many Bibles here,” she said, “and I don’t know which one to choose.”

I asked a few questions and made a couple recommendations. When she walked away with her new Bible, she smiled and thanked me for helping her. “American men,” she whispered, “are not usually so polite.”

Her words still ring in my mind. I wonder how often she has been scorned or ignored. I wonder if any Christians have crossed the path of her life and how they have treated her.

**GROUP DISCUSSION.** How do you respond when someone speaks to you unexpectedly? Share a story if you have one.

**PERSONAL REFLECTION.** What kind of person are you reluctant or afraid to speak to? What factors make you hesitant?
Jesus made some amazing claims about himself—and often to the most unexpected people! In John 4 Jesus reveals himself as the source of eternal life to a woman no one else would talk to. Read John 4:1-26.

1. The Jewish people of Jesus' day despised the Samaritans (and the Samaritans returned the favor). Trying to think from that cultural background, how would you feel upon hearing that Jesus had decided to go through Samaria rather than taking the longer, but more acceptable, way around the territory?

2. What barriers is Jesus willing to overcome in order to have a conversation with the Samaritan woman?

3. What barriers hinder Christians today from engaging others in conversation about Jesus?

4. What does Jesus mean when he offers her “living water” (vv. 10, 13-14)?

What does the woman think Jesus means (vv. 11-12, 15)?
5. Why does Jesus bring up the woman’s past marriages and present adulterous relationship (vv. 16-18)?

6. Why do you think the woman makes the comments in verses 19-20?

How does Jesus respond (vv. 21-24)?

7. What does it mean to worship God “in spirit and in truth” (vv. 23-24)?

8. In verses 25 and 26 Jesus clearly claims to be the Messiah, the deliverer God had promised to send. Imagine the look on the woman’s face when she hears his words. Do you think she is surprised or skeptical, and why?

9. What does Jesus’ offer of living water mean in your life and spiritual experience?
Identify any fears or prejudices that may keep you from talking to other people about Jesus. Ask God to give you the courage to overcome those barriers.

**Now or Later**

What would Jesus talk with you about if you had a quiet lunch together? In a journal or the space here, formulate two or three issues that you think Jesus might want to address.

How would you respond—by changing the subject or by receiving his grace? Prayerfully talk over those issues with Jesus. Listen for his response.
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