

7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)

## I Am Statement Project

Due: \_\_\_\_\_

Each student should pick one (only one) of Jesus' "I Am" statements listed below. Then, follow the steps below:

1. Read the scripture passage connected to your saying.
2. Read the background information provided for your statement.
3. Go back and read the passage again in the Bible.
4. Answer the questions that follow for your passage.
5. Write a paragraph summary of your "I Am" statement using the answers to the corresponding questions and the background information provided.
6. Create a visual representation of your statement (drawing, painting, photograph, collage, etc.).
7. Attach your written description to your visual illustration and turn it in.

### Jesus' "I Am Statements"

I Am the Bread of Life  
 I Am the Light of the World  
 I Am the Gate  
 I Am the Good Shepherd  
 I Am the Resurrection and the Life  
 I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life  
 I Am the True Vine

## "I Am the Bread of Life"

*John 6:22-59 (6:1-15 for background)*

**Background:** Throughout the whole Bible, there are multiple signs that point to the importance of Jesus' statement. Following the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. In that wilderness, God provided for the Israelites by sending manna every single morning. Years later, in the temple, there were 12 loaves called "Showbread" (Bread of the Presence) that represented the covenant between God and Israel. As the "Bread of Life" Jesus is the fulfillment of that covenant. In the sacrificial system, pure, unleavened bread was used in giving "thank offerings" to God and sealing a personal vow to God. It is a sign pointing to Jesus as the pure offering. Immediately preceding this text in the gospel, Jesus feeds the 5,000, performing one of the seven signs in John's Gospel.

1. What is the context for this discourse? What happens before this event? (*see John 6:1-14*) Why are the crowds following Jesus? How do we sometimes act like the crowd?
2. What does Jesus say about the manna eaten by the Israelites in the wilderness? (*see Exodus 16:15-21*) How are we like the Israelites who tried to store up more?
3. How does Jesus answer the crowd? (*vs. 35-40*)
5. What does it mean that Jesus is the bread of life? What is he revealing about himself in his answers?
6. How does Jesus tell us to respond in verses 51-57 to the fact his identity as the Bread of Life? What do you think this passage has to do with Communion?
7. How do the Israelites respond to Jesus' statement? (*see John 6:60-71*) How should we respond in faith to Jesus as the bread of life?

## “I Am the Light of the World”

*John 8:12-30*

**Background:** Jesus makes this statement against the backdrop of the feast of *Sukkos* (the Feast of Tabernacles). During the festival, the Israelites remembered God’s provision for them as they camped in tents in the desert. While in the desert, the people were led by a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night. During the festival, “in the center of the court burn great golden lamps, set on bases that are 150 feet high. Each lamp has four branches, which terminate in huge bowls into which oil is poured. . . . Floating in the oil in these bowls are wicks made from the worn out garments of the priests. When the wicks are lit, the light reflected by the burnished bowls . . . illuminate the entire city of Jerusalem” (Schauss). In this saying, Jesus is claiming to be the true “burning bush,” the true glory of God, the true light of the world.

1. What is the history of this light to which Jesus refers? How does this idea of Jesus as the Light relate to them? (*Read Exodus 13:21-22, 14:29-25.*)
2. Why did Jesus pick this time and location to say, “I am the light of the world”?
3. What do you think it means that Jesus is the light of the world?
4. What are the benefits does Jesus give to those who follow him? What does Christ say to those who reject his claims (vs. 13-19)?
5. In what ways do we live in darkness today? In what ways do we (or should we) live by the light?
6. How are we like the Pharisees? How are they avoiding a decision about who Jesus is?

## “I Am the Gate”

*John 10:1-10*

**Background:** In the summer in ancient Israel, sheep are sometimes kept out in the pasture overnight. The pen used is simply an enclosure made of piled rocks. There is no roof nor door, but thorns along the top of the rock walls protect the sheep from wild animals, and the shepherd himself sleeps in the entrance, providing a door. When Jesus says he is the gate for the sheep (v. 7) it is a picture of a shepherd sleeping in the entrance. Jesus is the protector of the sheep. Additionally, the sheep enter and exit through Jesus (v. 9) as a passageway.

1. Who is Jesus talking to in this passage? What is the context?
2. How does Jesus contrast his coming to Israel (the sheepfold) with the thief and robber?
3. What other Bible stories can you think of involving shepherds or sheep?
4. What are the characteristics of the genuine shepherd (not the thief or robber)?
5. Jesus says he is the door or gate. What is the door to and who is it for? What is needed to go through the door? What do you think the door symbolizes (apart from where it leads)?
6. How does the idea that there are many paths up the same mountain contrast with what Jesus says when he says “I am the gate” or “I am the door?” How is Jesus’ statement both inclusive and exclusive? What is difficult about this?

## “I Am the Good Shepherd”

*John 10:1-18*

**Background:** “Despite the importance of shepherds in biblical times, by this period they represented a despised profession . . . often portray[ed]...as rogues...Throughout the empire, peasants were impoverished, and among the peasants there was but one class distinction: ‘Only the goatherds and shepherds constitute a separate and lower class.’” (Keener, 799-800) By claiming to be the “Good Shepherd,” essentially exalting this lowly profession, Jesus becomes an affront to the religious elite and the educated. There is great intimacy between the shepherd and the sheep - he knows them by name and they know his voice. “Sheep are utterly dependent on the shepherd. A shepherd will make a unique sound, call, or song with his voice. The sheep quickly become accustomed to their shepherd’s particular tone inflections and distinguish it from any other shepherd’s voice. The shepherds’ sheep might be intermingled; but when one shepherd makes his particular sound, his sheep will respond to his voice and follow only him. If a stranger should come among them and use the same words and phrases, the sheep wouldn’t react in the same way. Sheep won’t follow a stranger’s voice.” (Christie and Nystrom, 42-43)

1. What comes to mind when you think of a shepherd?
2. What is the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep?
3. Who are the “thieves and robbers” in Jesus’ description? How is Jesus different from them?
4. Who do you think the “other sheep” are in this passage? Who do we see as other sheep?
5. How do you discern the voice of the shepherd from all the other voices out there trying to get your attention?

## “I Am the Resurrection and the Life”

*John 11:1-44*

**Background:** This takes in the village of Bethany. Lazarus’ sisters are Mary and Martha. They send to Jesus when Lazarus is sick because they know Jesus can heal him. Instead, Jesus waits two days before going (seems strange since it was someone Jesus loved). Martha articulated a belief that Lazarus would rise in the final resurrection on the last day. Jesus meant something different. Jesus’ reaction (weeping) is a demonstration of his humanity and compassion (*splanchnizomai*). Jesus’ statement (I Am the Resurrection) corresponds with his action (sign) of raising Lazarus.

1. What do most people think of death in our society? Why do you think many people fear death?
2. Who are the major characters in this story and what do we already know about them?
3. What does Jesus tell his disciples is the reason for not going to Lazarus? What does that mean? How do we see this work itself out in the story?
4. What do you think about Thomas’ comment in v. 16? Does you think he understands what Jesus is doing?
5. Why is Jesus in anguish? What is the significance that Jesus weeps? Why is he deeply moved?
6. What does Jesus mean when he says “I Am the Resurrection and the life...” ? How is this story a larger metaphor for the work of Christ and the benefits of salvation?

## “I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”

*John 14:1-11*

**Background:** Immediately prior to this proclamation, Jesus and the disciples have been celebrating Passover together. Jesus has washed their feet as a sign/example of the way we should serve one another. Jesus presents the disciples with two promises here: (1) I’m going to prepare a place for you. (2) I’m coming back to take you to myself. Notice what Thomas is not asking. He is not asking, “how do I get to heaven?” He is not asking, “Will people of other faiths get to heaven?” Instead, Thomas is concerned that as to how believers will be with Jesus. “Jesus, how are we going to follow? We’re not sure where you’re going.” Jesus responds by repeating the same thing he said in vs. 1 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.” It’s not an abstract doctrine of salvation, it’s an invitation to relationship. We don’t need more information about Jesus. We need more Jesus.

1. Why do you think the disciples’ hearts be troubled?
2. What do you think it means to “trust in Jesus”?
3. To what does “my Father’s house” refer?
4. How has Jesus replaced the temple (the place where Heaven and Earth meet)?
5. What do you think Thomas is asking and thinking in verse 5? Why did Thomas ask this question? How did Jesus respond?
6. What does it mean to believe that Jesus is “the Way and the Truth and the Life”? The way to where? The truth about what? What kind of life?

## “I Am the Way, the True Vine”

*John 15:1-17*

**Background:** Growing grapes is not like growing a garden. You don’t plant in the spring and harvest the same fall. Growing grapes is a long-term investment. Young plants cannot handle the weight of the fruit, so you have to cut off (or prune) the fruit and any buds for the first three years of a plant’s life. Throughout the Hebrew Bible (OT), Israel is referred to as the vine and God the vinedresser. Often, Israel is referred to as a vineyard that does not produce good fruit. At times, God removes the protection as a sign of judgement against Israel. In many ways, Israel has failed as the vine of God. Jesus, however is the “true vine.” Eugene Peterson translates the phrase “abide in me” this way: “Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you.” Our fruitfulness come from the extent to which we “make our home in Jesus.” Our strength comes from the extent to which we “make our home in him.” Our very identity comes from the fact that we are part of the household of Christ, a part of the vine, a disciple of Christ.

1. Review the context. What has happened? To whom is Jesus talking?
2. What is the metaphor of the vine, vinedresser, and branches? To whom do each of these refer? What does this say about how we, Jesus, and God relate?
3. What is the fruit Jesus is talking about? What would it look like for us to bear fruit in our context?
4. What does “pruning” mean? What is it for and why is it necessary? What does it look like practically? Who is pruned and who is not?
5. “Abide” is used 15 times in this passage. What does abiding mean here? How do we abide in Christ? What is the result?