

Rotation 1, 2007 - 2008
Who is Christ? Jesus' I AM Statements
3 weeks – September 16, 23, 30, 2007

Yearly Theme: Faith in Christ for a New Day

A new day calls for renewed faith in Christ. As St. Andrew's faces the future with anticipation for new vision and growth, we do best to put our hand into the hand of Christ. This is far better than plotting our future alone! Who is this Jesus Christ who leads us forward? Jesus made very clear claims for his identity. He said, "I am the Light of the world", "I am the Bread of Life", "I am the Vine, you are the branches", "I am the Good Shepherd", and "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." We will study Jesus' "I am" statements to learn who he is and how Jesus changes our lives.

Scripture References:

"I am the bread of life"	John 6:1-40
"I am the light of the world"	John 8:12 and 9:5
"I am the good shepherd"	John 10:11-21
"I am the way, the truth, and the life"	John 14:1-14
"I am the vine, you are the branches"	John 15:1-8

Memory Verse:

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." John 8:12 NLT

Learning Goals:

1. The Gospel of John is different from the other (synoptic) Gospels. Only John systematically records the "I AM" statements of Jesus.
2. When Jesus said "I AM", he identified himself as the God who spoke to Moses at the burning bush, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:13-14) and also to Isaiah the prophet (Isaiah 43:10-11).
3. It was very difficult for the people who heard Jesus speak the "I AM" statements to accept that Jesus was God because he did not appear to be the Messiah they expected.
4. When Jesus spoke the "I AM" statements, he clearly said that he is God. Jesus wants everyone to believe that he is the Son of God and receive eternal life.
5. Jesus' "I AM" statements turn our world upside down. Jesus says that we have the physical realities of the sun, bread, vine, and shepherd, but that HE IS the REAL sun, bread, vine, and shepherd. His person is "more real" than the physical things we see around us. Do we believe Jesus? Faith means believing even though we do not see!
6. Each "I AM" statement helps us to understand one way Jesus changes our lives – by feeding us, guiding us, protecting us, nurturing and disciplining us to bear fruit, and opening our eyes to see the lordship of Jesus above all.

Life Application:

1. Jesus is my true light and the true light for the whole cosmos, so no one needs to be afraid or lost or confused. Even though I don't see this now – by faith I believe.
2. Jesus is my true vine, so since Jesus' life is flowing into me I have life and bear good fruit. Even though I don't see it now – by faith I believe.
3. Jesus is my true bread, so I know that he fills my deepest hunger and gives me life that not even death can take away. Even though I don't see it now – by faith I believe.
4. Jesus is my true way, so by following him I am with God. Jesus is my truth, so I am not fooled by lies. Jesus is my life, so I trust only him. Even though I don't see it now – by faith I believe.
5. Jesus is my Good Shepherd, so I trust him to protect me and I know he will never abandon me. Even though I don't see it now – by faith I believe.

Rotation Overview:

Art (Room 7): Vine and Branch Art - "I am the vine, you are the branches"

A gardener talks about stalks, branches, fruit, and pruning. Children stencil vines and branches, paint them, and write the verse on a magnet.

Movie Theater (Youth Room): Video: Bread from Heaven - "I am the bread of life"

Teach about two types of nourishment – physical food and Jesus. Show the animated Bible story video.

Games (Gym): Games - "I am the way, the truth, and the life"

Play a game for each segment and teach Jesus' meaning.

Cooking (Room 4 & Patio Room): Stained glass window cookies - "I am the light of the world"

Begin class by recalling the story of Jesus healing the blind man in the temple. Discuss the sun, the cosmos, our dependency on the sun, and compare Jesus' light to the cosmos. Bake cookies and observe how Jesus' light shines through us to bring color and hope to the world.

Drama (Room 6 & 5): – Watch video clip and dramatize protection - "I am the good shepherd"

Watch short film clip; small groups dramatize how a modern "shepherd" protects others. Compare to Jesus' life-giving shepherding.

Background:

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic (seeing together) Gospels. They are very similar in language and in the material they contain. But John is different. John contains material that is found in no other Gospel, like the story of the woman at the well and the blind man in the temple who was healed by Jesus. John has also included something very special not found in the other Gospels – the "I AM" statements of Jesus. These statements are central to John's book because through them Jesus reveals his identity. John's purpose for writing his book is clearly stated "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Jesus' "I AM" statements tell us from his own lips that he is the Christ, the Son of God, and he calls us to believe in him and have eternal life – John 3:16.

When Jesus' statements are translated, as for example "I AM the Bread of Life," they do not represent the true meaning of the Greek. Jesus' words are translated literally "I, I AM the Bread of Life." All Jesus' I AM statements use the same configuration. Jesus refers to himself, I, and then speaks the name of God which was given to Moses at the burning bush – "I AM."

Exodus 3:13-14 "Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM; I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE.'"

This is also the name by which God identified himself to Isaiah the prophet.

Isaiah 43:10-11 "You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may believe me and understand that I, I AM. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I AM the LORD and besides me there is no savior."

This is the name which the Hebrew people thought too holy to speak, and substituted another name in its place which they could say - Lord. But Jesus spoke the holy name of God as his own name! Jesus claimed through these statements that he was indeed God! It is too radical to be taken lightly, and many people could not believe him – and still cannot today. Jesus certainly did not look like the Messiah they expected – the Davidic figure who would come in glory and might and rescue the Israelite nation from foreign oppressors. But Jesus came with the power to work signs that showed who he is, and he came speaking the powerful word of his Father. He did not want followers who were attracted by miracles. Jesus wanted people to believe in him because of his word.

John records seven "I AM" statements, in addition to other references to himself as the "I AM." In this rotation we will teach five "I AM" statements, but each class will study only three of them since it is a three week rotation. (We will teach a sixth I AM statement in Rotation 5: Jesus Brings a New Day to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.)

“I AM the bread of life.” This statement comes after Jesus has performed the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 from five crumbly barley loaves and 2 small fish. When people are awestruck at the sign and want to make the miracle worker their king, Jesus proclaims that he will give bread that will quench all hunger and thirst. Of course people want this bread. But then Jesus claims to be that bread. Everyone who eats bread becomes hungry again. Physical bread only feeds us for a short time, and the life it gives only lasts a short time. All who eat physical bread die. But Jesus says that all who partake of him will never die. His bread gives eternal life. In this way, Jesus is more real than physical bread, because his nourishment lasts forever! It is radical to think that Jesus’ bread is more real than physical bread. Yet Jesus calls us to believe in him!

“I AM the light of the world.” This statement was made just before the healing of the blind man in the temple, which we studied last year. If you recall, the Pharisees refused to believe that Jesus healed the man and refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. After the blind man was healed, Jesus asked him if he believed in the Son of Man. The healed man responded, “Lord, I believe.” Jesus made it clear that it was the seeing Pharisees who were truly blind and the blind man who could truly see. In this context Jesus claims to be the “light of the world” better translated as “light of the cosmos.” All of God’s creation is under Christ’s lordship. Christ is Lord of all! And the light which Jesus brings is light that allows people to see deeper than physical sight! The light of the sun, moon, or stars only allows for physical sight, but Jesus’ light gives spiritual sight. He is the true light, although the only light we see is the sun. Again, it is radical to think that Jesus’ light is more real than the light of the sun. Yet Jesus calls us to believe in him!

“I AM the good shepherd.” This statement of Jesus was made directly after he healed the blind man. Jesus turned to the Pharisees and spoke about sheep and the shepherd. God often said to the Old Testament Israelites that He was the Shepherd of Israel. Consider David’s 23rd Psalm – “the Lord is my shepherd.” The prophets criticized the religious leaders of old, saying they were false shepherds who did not care for the sheep. God promised to provide a true shepherd, the Messiah (Ezekiel 34:23). Now Jesus says that the sheep know the voice of the true shepherd and follow him, while robbers and thieves do not care for the well-being of the sheep. The true shepherd cares so deeply for his sheep that he gives his life to save the sheep. Jesus claims to be the true shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. Jesus calls us to believe in him!

“I AM the way, the truth, and the life.” Jesus made this statement as he addressed his disciples at the end of his life. Jesus has washed their feet, fed them the Last Supper, and predicted Peter’s denial. Then he spoke a long discourse (only found in the Gospel of John). In this discourse Jesus talked about how he would leave the disciples to prepare a place for them and then come back for them. Jesus says, “You know the way to the place where I am going.” But Thomas answered that they did not know the way. In response, Jesus says, “I AM the way, the truth, and the life.” The answer was not to follow a physical path that might lead them to Jesus, but rather to follow Jesus himself. In fact when Jesus prepares a place, he refers not only to the place in heaven, but also to the hearts of his believers, where he will return to live in the form of the Holy Spirit. Jesus truly is the way to the Father, and by following Jesus (The Truth) we will find the Way. This Way gives eternal life! Jesus calls us to believe in him!

“I AM the vine, you are the branches.” After Jesus said “I AM the way, the truth, and the life” to the disciples, he continued to tell them of his leaving and the coming of the Holy Spirit. He comforted the disciples by saying that he will give them peace. Jesus then spoke a final I AM statement. Jesus said that he is the vine (better translated as stalk) and the disciples are the branches. They are so intimately connected to him that nothing separates them! This must have been difficult to understand when Jesus has just explained that he will leave them. But Jesus is clear – even though he will leave them, he is organically connected as the source of life that flows into them. Jesus’ connection gives them life so they can produce fruit. Jesus explains that God the Father is the gardener who tills the soil to make the vine grow, and that God also prunes the branches that do not produce fruit. We have

life through the life-giving stalk of Jesus, even though we do not see him! A physical vine and branch die, but the true Vine will never die, and he will always give us life – eternal life! What a radical thought that Jesus is more real than a physical vine. Yet Jesus calls us to believe in him!

Belief is the main purpose of John’s Gospel; the word “believe” is found 92 times in the book. Jesus asks us to believe in him so that we may have life. It might have been difficult for the people who lived with Jesus to accept him as the Messiah because he did not look like the Messiah they expected. For us it may be difficult to believe in Jesus who we cannot see at all. But that is why John wrote this Gospel – that we might hear the stories of Jesus’ life and hear his words. When we hear Jesus’ voice, we recognize our Good Shepherd. Then we know that Jesus is our only source of life and love and light, and that by believing in him we have life with him forever. Let us pray that these words will fill our hearts with peace, that the Holy Spirit will give us faith, and that through faith we will have life in his name.

Multiple Intelligence Check List

	Verbal/ Ling	Logic/ Math	Spatial/ Visual	Bodily/kin	Musical	Interpersl	Intrapersl	Natur- alist
Art	x		x	x		x	x	x
Video	x				x		x	x
Game	x	x	x	x		x		
Cooking	x	x	x	x		x		x
Drama	x	x	x	x		x		

Rotation 1, 2007-8: Jesus’ I AM Statements

Workshop	Sept 16	Sept 23	Sept 30
Room 7 – Art	3	4	5
Youth Room - Video	1	2	3
Gym - Games	5	3	2
Room 4 & Patio Room – Food	4	5	1
Room 6 & 5 – Drama	2	1	4