



I AM

**THE SEVEN I AM
STATEMENTS OF JESUS**

Introduction

As we go through the process of developing a new Parish Vision in 2017, we think that it is important to return to the central questions of Christianity - to reflect again on what we believe about God, about his plans for the world, and about ourselves.

This term we are doing a series called 'I Am...'. This picks up the series of seven statements that Jesus makes in the Gospel of John about his identity. In these passages, Jesus said 'I am...':

- The bread of life
- The light of the world
- The gate
- The good shepherd
- The resurrection and the life
- The way, the truth and the life
- The vine

We will be learning more about what each of these statements mean, and what they mean for us.

In our Life Groups, during this series we will be encouraging the groups to study these passages using a different method to that which we often use. Instead of providing a series of questions for each week, we encourage you to learn and practice a particular way of studying the Bible called the 'Discovery Bible Study Method'. This process has been developed to help Christians (especially newer

believers) learn what it means to approach the Bible expecting to hear from God, to find what he is saying to them, and to put it into practice. If our group members are equipped to do this, then our groups will become more confident in studying the Bible together. We will also be more attentive to the voice of God and what he is saying to us as a church.

The Discovery Bible Study Method (DBS)

This method follows the example of Jesus in the way he mentored a group of people together. It has the power of accountability and multiplication.

Three letters A-B-C define the structure for your conversation.

A. Ask

Ask what has been good this week. It's important to be specific. Not "how are you?". "What has been good for you?" forces people to say the good things that have happened. This then is the basis of thanking God and teaches people to praise and thank him.

Then ask what has been difficult, bad or challenging this week. This forms the basis of prayer for needs. As you pray for needs, whatever they are, this allows the space for God to break through and do a something special.

Then pray; thanking God for what is good, and praying for the needs. Keep the prayers simple, easy and to the point.

B. Bible

The aim is to teach self-discovery. To not rely on a teacher, but to understand that the Bible, with the Holy Spirit as revealer, is

sufficient. Self-discovered truth that is applied by the person stays with the person. It sticks. It is their truth. It is personal and owned. Jesus did this a lot in his discipleship. He asked the disciples '*Who do men say that I am?*' ... and '*Who do you say that I am?*' and '*Well done, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father in heaven*'. Why didn't Jesus just tell them? Why didn't he just say from the beginning 'Hey guys, I am the Messiah, the Son of the living God!' Instead, he let the process of discovery happen over time, he let it come by revelation from his Father as he allowed people to go through a process of discovering who he was.

The process:

- Open to the Bible passage for the study.
- Invite someone to read the verses.
- Get someone else to reread it, especially if there is another translation available.
- Retell the story. This is important as it cements the story in our minds. Re-tell the story as you would tell it to a friend. The retelling of the story should be a group affair. One person can attempt to re-tell and others can chip in and add to the picture. In this way the story is painted by the group.
- Then ask 'so what?' The key is for the leader not to jump in too quickly and teach! Let them think, and talk. What do they see in these verses? Don't be afraid of awkward silences. If they ask you to explain, turn it around by asking them what do they

think? Sometimes it is good to simply be quiet, and let them come up with the answers. This is very hard to do, as we are so used to providing all the answers, but it's a key discipline for this process. Remember the key in this process is self-discovery. The teacher's job is to give space for the person to learn. To put in their own words what they see. You have to trust the Holy Spirit!

- Two highly recommended questions are: 'What does this say about God?' & 'What does this say about us?'
- Some other questions: 'Are there areas you are bothered by?' 'What do you like?' 'What do other people think?' 'How do these verses make you feel?'
- If you are talking more than the group members, then you are talking too much. You know if you are being successful if the group is talking a lot more than you.
- Keep the discussion centered on scripture. If the person is veering off course, bring it back by saying 'Where do you see that in these verses?'

C. Commit to obey

The third part of this process is to ground the talk into clear obedience steps. Jesus described making disciples as 'teaching people to obey everything I have commanded you.' We often miss the words 'to obey'. Our discipleship processes are often knowledge based and not obedience/action based. There is a key difference.

The question is 'So what will you do about this?' This becomes the obedience step. Let the person come up with their own commitment. It might be something like 'I need to respect people' or 'I need to be more thankful'. Or it may be something very specific, like 'I need to stop shouting at my family!' Whatever it is, it needs to be listened to and respected. It is OK if it is a simple application. When someone commits to obey, truth that has come via scripture and revelation becomes lived, personal and owned.

Finally the last key is to 'tell someone this week what you are learning'. Encourage the group members to identify someone that they can share with the things that they have learned, between now and the next group.

Summary

So it's as simple as ABC. It begins with worship and thanksgiving. Then Scripture is the centre, the teacher empowers the person, and doesn't have all the answers. The disciples discover the truth in God's word and learn to obey and share with others.

Video outlining the method:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPCL9w6LIjE>

Passages in the 'I Am...' Series

1	The Bread of Life	John 6:35-59
2	The Light of the World	John 8:12-20
3	The Gate	John 10:1-10
4	The Good Shepherd	John 10:11-18
5	The Resurrection and the Life	John 11:1-44
6	The Way, the Truth and the Life	John 14:1-10
7	The Vine	John 15:1-8