

youth ministry

# accent

the resource for adventist youth leaders  
2011 senior youth week of prayer



**"I AM"**

**THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE**



#### EDITORIAL STAFF

Gilbert Cangy  
DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR  
cangyg@gc.adventist.org

Jonatán Tejel  
EDITOR  
tejelj@gc.adventist.org

Maria A. Dunchie  
LAYOUT & DESIGN, EDITORIAL ASSISTANT  
dunchiem@gc.adventist.org

Erica Richards  
COPY EDITOR  
richardse@gc.adventist.org

DEPARTMENTAL ADVISOR  
Armando Miranda

#### REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Mulumba Tshimanga • East-Central Africa Division  
mulumbaj@ecd.adventist.org

Stephan Sigg • Euro-Africa Division  
stephan.sigg@euroafrica.org

Kasap Gennady • Euro-Asia Division  
gkasap@ead-sda.ru

Benjamin Carballo • Inter-American Division  
carballobe@interamerica.org

Louise Nocandy • Inter-American Division  
nocandyl@interamerica.org

James Black • North American Division  
james.black@nad.adventist.org

Manny Cruz • North American Division  
manny.cruz@nad.adventist.org

Nakk Hyung Kim • Northern Asia-Pacific Division  
youth@nsdadventist.org

Areli Barbosa • South American Division  
areli.barbosa@adventista.org.br

Busi Khumalo • Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division  
sau.youthdir@adventist.org.za

Nickolas Kross • South Pacific Division  
nkross@adventist.org.au

Jobbie Yabut • Southern Asia-Pacific Division  
jyabut@ssd.org

Lionel F. Lyngdoh • Southern Asia Division  
lyngdoh@sud\_adventist.org

Paul Tompkins • Trans-European Division  
ptompkins@ted-adventist.org

John Enang • Western Africa Division  
njenang@wad-adventist.org



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** *Debbonnaire Kovacs* has been writing since she could hold a pencil, and sold her first story to *Junior Guide* when she was eleven years old. By her twenties, she recognized that writing and speaking were not just what she loved to do, but what God wanted her to do. She has written off and on for most of her life, but has been writing full time since 1990, having written twelve books including the first, second, fifth, and sixth grade Bible textbooks used in Adventist schools in North America, and over 150 stories and articles for all ages. She speaks at camp meetings, women's retreats, and other events, and also does copyediting. She urges everyone to take their dreams to God and see whether they are more than just dreams. They may be assignments from the King of Heaven.

You can contact Debbonnaire at:  
[www.debbonnaire.com](http://www.debbonnaire.com) or [debbonnaire@debbonnaire.com](mailto:debbonnaire@debbonnaire.com)

# EDITORIAL : our i.d.

When you travel by air, the first procedure to go through when you arrive at the airport is to go to the check-in service counter to hand over your baggage and to receive a boarding pass. At that time, you will be asked to present your ID, or IDENTIFICATION card, which has your picture, name, date of birth, and address on it. When you proceed to the security checkpoint, again, you have to present your ID and boarding pass. When you arrive to your destination in another country, you have to present your ID card and passport before you can leave the airport.

Does someone really need an IDENTITY? Is it necessary for you to have an IDENTITY? The answer is, it is absolutely necessary. You have to have an IDENTITY. If you don't have your IDENTIFICATION, you would not be allowed to travel by air or by sea. IDENTIFICATION is a requirement for all travelers.

You and I are travelers, and we are on our journey to Heaven. We must have an ID—evidence of WHO WE ARE.

What is your IDENTITY as a Seventh-day Adventist youth? IDENTITY can be defined as distinctiveness, uniqueness, particularity, character, or integrity. Thus by its definition, Seventh-day Adventist youth should be distinctive, unique, have a noble character, and demonstrate integrity.

The year 2011 has been designated as “The Year of Identity” for the Seventh-day Adventist youth around the world. The Encarta Dictionary defines IDENTITY as “the name or essential character that identifies somebody or something.” So in this context, our identity is found in the name of our church, Seventh-day Adventist. You are a Seventh-day keeper, or in other words, you are a Sabbath keeper. An Adventist is someone who believes in and waits for the Second Advent, the coming of Jesus Christ. So our identity as a church is a group of people who places their hope in Jesus, eagerly awaits the Second Coming, and keeps all of His commandments, including the Seventh-day Sabbath.

In Selected Messages, book 2, p. 384, Ellen White wrote, “We are Seventh-day Adventists, and of this name we are never to be ashamed.”



My dear young people, you have your name—Seventh-day Adventist; you have your IDENTITY—a child of God; keep it up, hold it tight, raise it up throughout the year. Be a true and faithful Seventh-day Adventist, not on the seventh-day only, but throughout all seven days.

This year the world church has been challenged to pray 7 days a week, at either 7 in the morning, or 7 in the evening. I invite you to become a 777 youth! My prayer is that we may all board the vehicle bound for Heaven one day soon, and that we will strive to discover our IDENTITY in Christ on this earth and continue to shine for Him. ●

Hiskia Missah  
GC Associate Youth Director

ON THE WEB : GCYOUTHMINISTRIES.COM

WHO WAS JESUS?  
HOW DID HE KNOW WHO HE WAS?



WHO AM I?  
HOW CAN I KNOW WHO I AM?

3	Editorial
6	Read This First
11	Jesus, The Light of the World
19	Jesus, The Door
31	Jesus, The Bread of Life
41	Jesus, The Good Shepherd
51	Jesus, The Way, The Truth, and The Life
63	Jesus, The True Vine
75	Jesus, The Resurrection and The Life
83	Jesus, The Great "I Am"

**SUBSCRIPTION:** To order a subscription of Youth Ministry ACCENT, give a gift membership, or change address or make enquiries, visit our website at [youth.gc.adventist.org](http://youth.gc.adventist.org) or send subscription order and payment to the address below. *youth ministry accent* is a quarterly publication of the Youth Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. All rights reserved. Copyright © 2010, by The General Conference of SDA Youth Ministries Department. A one-year subscription is US\$18.00; Week of Prayer issue US\$5.00. IF YOUR ISSUE IS DAMAGED OR MISSING, call 301-680-6170 or email us at [dunchiem@gc.adventist.org](mailto:dunchiem@gc.adventist.org). We will replace the issue that's missing. FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS: Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, as well as letters to the editor, youth ministry tips, youth volunteer service reports, and programming and story ideas. Send manuscripts to YMA Editor at the address below. CONTACT INFORMATION: Telephone: (301) 680-6170 • Fax: (301) 680-6155 • Email: [accent@gc.adventist.org](mailto:accent@gc.adventist.org) or [dunchiem@gc.adventist.org](mailto:dunchiem@gc.adventist.org) Website: [youth.gc.adventist.org](http://youth.gc.adventist.org). • Mailing Address: GC Youth Ministries Department, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, USA.

# READ THIS FIRST

## identity

---

KNOWING WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST

Who are we? Regardless of our earthly relationships and our national/cultural loyalties, we are “sons and daughters of God.” This fact calls for a kind of loyalty and living that lifts young men and women above the crowd to stand tall for God. But in this hour it means more than just being loyal to God.

The purpose of this special week of prayer and spiritual emphasis is to encourage you to reexamine who you are as a Christian. You must know who you are and what you stand for—what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist youth. The sermons are written as a conversation you would have with a group. You will see instructions, such as when to have scriptures read aloud—these are always in italics and placed in brackets. When there are specific questions to ask they appear under the section, “**Discussion Questions**,” which are open for discussion, so they have no suggested answers.

### BE PREPARED

The most important thing you can do is read over the part you are supposed to do several times in advance, until you become familiar with it. **DON'T READ!!** You can keep your part on a podium in front of you and refer to it when necessary. Make lots of eye contact, move around, speak with expression, and make it yours.

For the anecdotal stories, you may want to invite someone to help you role play these. It will make them more interesting and give other people a part. These will usually require only two people; each person can read his or her part.

### WHAT THE SYMBOLS MEAN

- ✓ Whenever you see this symbol you are at the beginning of the **anecdotal story**—get someone to role play with you.
- † Whenever you see this symbol you are at the start of the lesson, **the life application**—how the Bible text and story can be applied to our daily lives.

## WHAT “I” MEANS

“I”, in these lessons, is you, the speaker. The writer didn’t use “I” much, because she’s not you, and she doesn’t know what you might say. **If there is an “I” statement that doesn’t fit you, change it so it does. If you have a personal experience or insight that works better than one given, use it. You are the speaker.** Be humorous. People remember things they laugh about, and laughing together makes them feel a sense of belonging and family.

## NAMES

This is important. If the names of people in the stories are the same as someone in your audience, it would be a good idea to change them. Remember, these are “composite stories,” and the names can be changed to anything you like. Just keep them diverse and international, or make them appropriate for where you are.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

There are some discussion questions at the end of each section. These are better if used in smaller groups of about 3-8 persons, but if need be can also be used with the entire group, if it isn’t too big. They can also be used as individual thought questions or for journaling.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Within each presentation there are scripture passages. The speaker can read them, especially if you are in a large room, like an assembly hall, but when possible, call on other people to read the texts, or for longer passages take turns reading a verse or two at a time.

Another good idea is to make posters of the eight *Life Identity Principles* and hang the corresponding one each night. If you do that, on the last night you can have all eight of them in front of the group as you review the principles during the presentation. Here are all eight of them:

### **Life Identity Principle #1.**

Because Jesus is the Light of the world, I can be a candle, lighting others’ paths to Him.

### **Life Identity Principle #2.**

Because Jesus is my Door, I can be a doorkeeper, welcoming others into God’s family.

### **Life Identity Principle #3.**

Because Jesus is the Bread of life, I can be a grain of wheat, giving myself to feed others His Word.

### **Life Identity Principle #4.**

Because Jesus is my Shepherd, I can be a lamb that follows faithfully, and also an under-shepherd, helping to care for other lambs.

### **Life Identity Principle #5.**

Because Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, I can walk in His Way, hold up His Truth, and share an abundant, full life with those around me.

### **Life Identity Principle #6.**

Because Jesus is the True Vine, I can be a blessed branch, drawing my nourishment from Him and glorifying God with much fruit.

### **Life Identity Principle #7.**

Because Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, I can rejoice in His newness of life now and trust Him for life eternal.

### **Life Identity Principle #8.**

Because Jesus the Great I AM is, was, and always will be, because He lived out a True and Complete Life here on earth, I can be my true and complete self in Him.

### **SCRIBE**

It is really good to have someone serve as a scribe—maybe a different person each night—and keep notes on a white board at the front. Some of the lessons are better suited to this than others, but whenever you can include short comments or suggestions from the audience, that's always helpful.

### **START YOUR PLANNING IMMEDIATELY**

We know that leadership sometimes changes at the end of the year; but please, if you will no longer be the AY leader next year, do not let that stop you from planning for this special week. Start your planning, develop your target, get your team together, and make sure your pastor is a part of that team.

### **CHOOSE A THEME SONG**

Involve your youth choir; if your church does not have a youth choir, this is the perfect time to get one started. Pick out songs that you all like, and which fit the topic of each evening or choose a song for the entire week.

### **START A PRAYER JOURNAL**

Nothing is greater for your personal spiritual growth than time spent in prayer. Your youth group will grow as you grow. Prayer journaling will help you encounter God in new and exciting ways. You will be able to “track” your walk with God as you go back and review answered prayers, see how He has lead you, step by step, each day. New, fresh, ideas will come to mind as you spend time in His presence journaling your prayers. You can find many ideas online on starting and keeping a prayer journal. Just go to <http://www.google.com> and type in the words “starting a prayer journal.”

### **FORM A WEEK OF PRAYER DEVELOPMENT/REVIEW TEAM**

Depending on the size of your church, this group can be four to eight persons who will go through all eight days' readings with you. Include on your team only interested and committed young adults and youth ministry leaders (Pathfinder, Sabbath School, etc., your pastor/s); this is important because it gives ownership to the entire group, rather than just you and your assistant. Ask the group to commit to meeting for at least five weeks—at least one week for two lessons, and an extra week to wrap things up. Be sure to identify the goal and direction you want to go, preferably at the first meeting, and choose a young person to speak for each day.

### **FIND A MENTOR**

This year we want to encourage you to do something you may not have done before—find a mentor. Find an experienced youth leader,

one you can trust to be honest—someone who will have the guts to tell you what you need to change, what you need to keep doing, or what you need to totally do away with in your ministry. Make sure your mentor is also someone who can help guide you spiritually, someone you can turn to for spiritual guidance, who will ask you the tough questions and will help you work through problems. Also, this mentor should be someone who will help you keep Christ at the center of your plans and hold you accountable.

### **INVOLVE YOUR PARENTS AS VOLUNTEERS**

I served as the AY leader of a church, where one year, the pastor challenged us to do something different for the Youth Week of Prayer. The committee decided to include drama in their Week of Prayer. Every night there was dramatization before the actual sermons. Everyone made sure they came out early; they did not want to miss anything, and neither did their parents, who after taking them to the rehearsals wanted to see what the “big day” would be like. This way, the pastor involved the parents in his planning, and the youth *involved* the parents by having them bring them to the rehearsals. So, parents can become your greatest fans and expand your ability to reach more people.

Many times adult volunteers do not realize how much the youth look up to them, so if you involve more parents, who already know many of the youth, they will be more than willing to serve since they already connect with some of the youth in your group. Try and find at least five adults that most of the youth look up to, then challenge specific youth to ask those adults

to serve as volunteers. Involve some of these volunteers in your development/review team.

### **SCREENING THE VOLUNTEERS**

While we may not like to admit it, the church is not a perfect place, and all volunteers must be screened. Develop your own screening process, ask the tough questions. Please contact your local conference/union/division and get information/guidelines on screening volunteers in your area.

### **TAKE A SURVEY**

Find out who your young people are. Establish a core group among the young people in your church, even if they are not attending the youth meetings. Share your plans and goals for the *Week of Prayer* with them. Start slowly, start small, but begin early.

### **PLAN A Re-ENCOUNTER PROGRAM**

Use the last Sabbath to launch an annual Re-encounter program, spanning three months, culminating in a Homecoming Sabbath celebration. Start a prayer list for all inactive youth.

### **PLAN A COMMUNION SERVICE/ AGAPE FEAST**

A communion service on Friday evening toward the end of the service or on Sabbath morning is a great idea. There are many ways you can do this to make it memorable for your group. For more ideas on the Agape Feast visit: [www.gcyyouthministries.org](http://www.gcyyouthministries.org)

## SOME ACTIVITY IDEAS

Activities to go along with this series will make it even more interesting. We tend to do this sort of thing only for children, but adults are still visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, and we need hearing, seeing, and doing to help us remember things and make them a living part of us. You and your friends will be able to think of others when you read the lessons. Here are some ideas:

**Lesson 1.** Get votive or small candles and paper candle holders. Have a large candle up front that is already lit, which represents Jesus, the Light of the World. Turn off the overhead lights. Choose one person (who is willing to sing alone) to take his or her candle and light it at the big candle, singing "This little light of mine." This person lights two people's candles, and they join in singing. They each light two more and join in singing. Continue this pattern of lighting someone else's candle. Soon everyone will have a light and be singing. The whole room will light up, not only with physical light, but with the light of God, as people sing together to His glory.

**Lesson 2.** Use a real door or an imaginary one to role play some of the ways doors are used, both positively and negatively. For example, one person could be knocking, and another could say, "No! You can't come in here! You aren't \_\_\_\_\_ enough!" Then one person could knock and another could open the door and say, "Welcome! Come in! I'm so glad to see you!" Try to think of and share real ways you've seen these attitudes played out in your lives or in the lives of those you know.

**Lesson 3.** Bring some really good homemade bread to share with everyone. Talk about the process (steps) of baking this bread.

**Lesson 4.** Find a video clip online of a shepherd and sheep to watch and then discuss. (Visit <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/ten-commandments/the-shepard> for usable clips.)

**Lesson 5.** Use a concordance to find all the places in Proverbs that say "in the way." You'll be amazed! You could make posters or lists with what you find, or act them out.

**Lesson 6.** This one is old, but still good. Bring celery or Queen Anne's Lace blossoms and put them in water that has food coloring in it. Talk about which parts of the plant absorb the colored water and how that relates to the lesson.

**Lesson 7.** Write stories or poems or draw pictures of what you think it might be like in the New Earth. (Yes, you can. Pretend you're 10 again if it helps.)

**Lesson 8.** Make a poster of all the ***I Am statements***, like the one the kids in the story make. Or have a discussion in small groups, perhaps longer than usual, on individual answers to "Who are you really?"

**PRAY A LOT! HAVE FUN!**



---

## LIFE IDENTITY

### PRINCIPLE #1

Because Jesus is the  
Light of the world, I can  
be a candle, lighting  
others' paths to Him.

---

# THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

*Jesus said, "I am the Light of the World"*

Wen Chung glowered at the Organic Pineapple Banana Dessert Smoothie sitting on the table in front of him. He barely noticed the waitress stopping by his table.

"Something wrong, Wen? Is your smoothie okay?"

Wen started. "Oh, hi, Andrea. Sorry, I didn't see you." Realizing belatedly what she had said, he looked blankly at the tall, frosted glass, seeing it for the first time. "Oh, yeah, yeah, it's fine. To tell the truth, I haven't even tasted it yet."

Andrea glanced around the small café and then sat down across from him. "It's not busy yet. What's up? Something troubling you?"

Wen met her concerned eyes. This was the sort of thing that made him like Andrea. He smiled for the first time that morning. "You're amazing, you know?"

Andrea looked surprised. "Me? Why?"

"You have so many worries of your own. Three kids, two jobs, an absentee husband . . ."

"Yada yada," said Andrea, flapping a hand. "I asked what was up with *you*!"

"That's my point," said Wen. "You're always the first person to notice someone else in trouble. Don't you have enough troubles of your own?"

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

One of the ways we know

what we are is the stories our

parents and grandparents tell

darkness cannot overcome it, which is equally true. So it's Jesus' life itself that is the light. Just by existing, Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, bring light into the universe. Maybe that's why it's the first thing *They* made at creation.

Then in verse 9, John calls Jesus “the true light,” who gives light to everyone. To everyone! Not that everyone understands or accepts it. But that’s the basic promise. Jesus comes into the world to live as a human being and to bring light to *everyone*. His life is the light, so just by being here, He’s going to bring this light.

Now let's look at where Jesus actually makes the statement claiming to be the Light of the world. Turn with me in your Bibles to John 8:12. *"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"*

This is a very familiar saying, but a lot of people don't realize what was happening when Jesus said it. It's quite surprising. What is the story that precedes these words of

Jesus, and in a way serves as introduction? It's the story of the woman who was caught in adultery. The leaders wanted to stone her, but Jesus forgave her, and told her to "Go and sin no more." We have all been caught in sin, whether it's big or small, a few times in our lives. And I hope that we have all gone to Jesus for forgiveness and cleansing. That's hard enough, yet it's the easy part. What you do next is the hard part. "Go and sin no more." How? Literally "for goodness' sake," *how* on earth can we go and sin no more?

Most of the time, when this story is told, people stop right there. "I forgive you, now go and be good!" And what do we go and do? Sin again!

You'll notice Jesus didn't stop there.

Consider verse 12 again.

Isn't that a strange thing to say right here? It seems like a complete change of subject! "I am the light of the world." What does it have to do with "go and stop sinning"?

Don't you think the very first thing we need, before we do

anything at all, is light to see by? You can hardly even get dressed or eat without at least a little light. So how can we know how to live as children of God if we don't have spiritual light to see by?

That woman who committed adultery probably did not behave that way because she just wanted to be bad. She might not have even done it because she was only interested in her own pleasure and didn't care about what was right or wrong. Most likely, she did it because what she most wanted is the same thing every single human being craves, and that's to feel loved. People try all kinds of things to make themselves feel good, worthwhile and loved, and one really common one is to hang out with somebody who tells you nice things and compliments you, and so you pretend they really love you when in your heart you know they don't care a thing about you. Have you ever done that? It feels good for a little while, but not for long, right?

Jesus was saying to this lonely woman, "Follow Me, and you'll live in the true light of My love. I know who you *really*

*truly* are, deep inside, and I love you! I don't love you for what I can get out of you, or because I want to control you. I love you because you are you and you are Mine. I am the light of this whole world. Come follow Me!"

How did Jesus know this about Himself? As we noted before, He was God in human flesh and knew all kinds of things, but the Bible says He learned, and we know that Mary told Him the stories about His birth and the announcements the angels made. We also know that when He went to the temple when He was 12, He watched the sacrifices and began to understand fully what His mission was in this world. (Can you imagine figuring out a thing like that at 12 years old? When I was 12, I was more interested in what the next cool game was.) We know Jesus spent a lot of time studying the scrolls of the Old Testament and praying all by Himself out in the fields with His heavenly Father. It seems to me that, since He promised the Holy Spirit to us, and since we know the Spirit came on Him in power at His baptism,

we can be sure that the same Spirit was present with Him as a child and as a young man, figuring things out by study and prayer the same way we can. Jesus saw that in the Bible, God was the Light Bringer, and promised even as early as to Adam and Eve that He would send a Redeemer to bring back the light that sin had dimmed. Jesus learned that He was that Redeemer.

Jesus knew that the true light of the world is love. He knew what perfect love was like, in heaven with His Father and the Spirit, and He knew how messed up our ideas of love are. He knew people tend to either go around thinking they're too bad for God to love, or that God *owes* them love, because they're more lovable than everybody else. Jesus came to show us what God's love is like. He demonstrated it every day of His life. He touched people others wouldn't touch, healed the ones nobody thought deserved it, forgave people for all kinds of things, talked with them, laughed with them, went to their weddings and parties. . . He loved them! And they knew it.

Then He said, "Follow Me. Live in the light. God loves you—pass it on!"

So far, there haven't really been any surprises. We all know Jesus is the Light of the world, and we all probably agree that love is another name for that light. But here is where it gets really unexpected.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said an astonishing thing. It's not found in John, but in Matthew. Turn to Matthew 5:14. *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

What? *Who* is the light of the world? Me? You're kidding, right?

Wen Chung would be really surprised if somebody walked up to him while he was sitting there worrying over his major, and this paper his religion professor assigned, and said, "Hey, Wen, you are the light of the world!" Andrea

would probably be even more surprised, even though it's clear to onlookers that she is busy passing on that light of love every day, despite the difficulties in her own life.

But that's what Jesus said. Not only did He say to all the thousands of listeners that were there that day, “*You* are the light of the world,” He went on to say that they shouldn't try to hide their lights under bowls or bushels. They should put them up on lampstands and let their lights shine on everyone around. Doesn't that seem kind of like bragging? “Hey, look at me, I'm the light of the world!”

Do you think that's what Jesus meant? Luckily, we don't have to discuss what we *think* He meant—He tells us right there. He didn't say, “Let people see your good deeds and praise you.” He said, “Let them see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven!”

It's kind of like the sun and the moon. The sun is burning and producing huge amounts of light and heat, all by itself. Nobody keeps fueling it or relighting it. God set it up and started it burning, and there it is, burning ever since. God

is like that light. He produces light and love and goodness just by being there.

But the moon is just a big, round rock. It doesn't have any source of heat or light itself. So it can't shine or warm anybody up, and if you could go up and ask it who it is and what good it is, it might get pretty depressed and say, “I don't know—I'm just a worthless hunk of rock!”

Even if the moon could see and feel and think, it would have no way of knowing that when the sun shines on it, it glows in our sky

like a jewel. On a full moon night, there is enough reflected light to cast shadows on the ground. Back before there was artificial light, people who had to travel long distances would pay attention to the phase of the moon so they would have light to travel by.

And would you believe that in the sunshine, the moon's temperature can get up to 123 degrees Celsius or 253 degrees

Fahrenheit? As soon as it rotates away from the sun, on the dark side, it can drop down to as low as -233 C or -387 F at the poles, where it gets the least solar heating (wiki.answers). That's a big difference!

So once we accept that Jesus is the Light of the world, several things happen. First, we tell Him, yes, please, we do want Him to bring His light and life

*Who am I? It's one of the great questions of life, maybe the greatest question of all.*

and love into our lives. Then we spend time every day basking in His presence through Bible study and prayer and singing. Next we practice reflecting His love and light onto everyone around us.

We look to see what God's light does. It warms people up, it shines, brightens, and cheers all around. So if we want to know if we're acting like the light, we ask, do people feel

brightened and cheered when they're around us? We watch for others that make us feel warmed and loved, too, and spend time in their presence, because one of the ways we learn God's love is from how we relate to each other.

We ask ourselves questions, as Ellen White suggests:

"Do you realize that you are the light of the world? Do you, in your words and deportment at home, leave a bright track heavenward? [*We could add, at work, at school, wherever we are.*] What is it to be the light of the world? —It is to have God for your guide, to have the companionship of holy angels, and to reflect to others the light that shines upon you from above; but if

you fail to exercise Christian courtesy, forbearance, and love in your families, God and holy angels are grieved away, and instead of being the light of the world, you are bodies of darkness" (*Australasian Union Conference Record*; November 1, 1904 par. 8).

Bodies of darkness! Ouch! The problem is, if we read that and take it seriously, we might get into looking at ourselves all the time, worrying about whether we're the light of the world, or bodies of darkness. But it is also possible to look too hard at ourselves. If we spend too much time examining ourselves and our actions, we'll be like the moon rotating away from the sun and looking at ourselves instead of Jesus. That's a quick

way to get really cold and dark! When we keep our eyes on Jesus, walking beside Him, looking up at His face, soaking up His love, then that love will reflect on everybody else. Others will notice that we are bright and cheerful, and they may feel better about themselves. Maybe they'll ask why we're so happy, and we can say, "Because Jesus loves me so much and I just can't help being happy about it! And He loves you, too, you know."

We are not and could never be a source of light to the world, any more than the moon could be a source of light, heat, or power to earth. But if we let Jesus shine His light and love into our lives, we will be lamps to His glory, and when others see us, they will learn to praise God, too. ●

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who are you? No, who are you really?
2. How do you think the woman felt when Jesus forgave her? Why? Have you ever felt that way?
3. Do you agree that love is the light of the world? Why is that so important? Why do we lose track of it so easily?
4. Share some ways God has shone light and love into your life lately.



---

## LIFE IDENTITY

### PRINCIPLE #2

Because Jesus is  
my Door, I can be a  
doorkeeper, welcoming  
others into God's family.

---

# THE DOOR

*Jesus said, "I am the Door"*

Andrea saw the startled look on Wen's face as she walked toward him to take his order. She started talking before she even got to his table. "I know, I know, I look like a domestic abuse case! Everybody's staring. You see that swinging door over there?" She pointed, and Wen's gaze moved to the door to the kitchen area and back to her face. He grimaced with dawning comprehension and sympathy. "Let me give you a little tip. Those doors are made that way so that you can *see* somebody coming toward you. They don't work as well if two people are walking toward them from opposite sides, both with their arms loaded, and both looking back over their shoulders to say something to someone!"

"Ow," said Wen, his round face comically wrinkled.

Andrea tried to grimace back, then winced. "Ow is right." She touched her cheek. "It looks almost as bad as it feels. Doors are my curse this week! Yesterday morning my toddler gate broke, and I found the dog and Minnie, my 3-year-old, in the kitchen feasting on dry cereal together—from the floor!" Wen was laughing, and Andrea rolled her eyes at him. "It's not funny! So, what would you like this morning?"

"Well, you know me and the smoothies," said Wen with a grin. "It's my personal mission to try them all. So today I want that Banana Crunch Breakfast Smoothie. And do yourself a favor, please—go through the door carefully!" "Don't worry!" said Andrea.

When she got back with Wen's smoothie, he had his laptop open and was busily typing away. He looked up and thanked her as she set down the tall glass. "And not for just the smoothie, either," he added. "You just helped me with a paper—again!"

“What, you’re writing about clumsy women?”

“No, but Professor Ellison is all about doors this week. Like what are they for, do they keep things in or out, and what does it mean that Jesus is the Door? He said something I’d never thought about before. In Revelation, where it talks about Jesus knocking at the door, it’s not in the context we always take it for, the door of the individual heart, it’s in the context of the church—specifically, to the church of Laodicea. What do you think that means?”

Andrea thought about it, but only for a second. There was a large group coming into the café. “You mean, He’s knocking at the church door and can’t get in? Wow, that’s something to think about. Got t-o go, sorry!”

† The second “I Am” statement of Jesus that we’ll examine this week is found in John 10:9: *“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.”* Some Bibles say door, and some say gate, but either one is kind of strange. For Jesus to say He is the Light of the

world makes sense. We can see that He brightens and warms people by His presence. But how can a person be a door or a gate?

It's even stranger when you look at the *context*, that is, the stories and sayings that are right around it. The last chapter is a long, detailed story of a man Jesus healed from blindness. Interestingly, He first repeated, "I am the light of the world." Then He healed the man. This man had been blind his whole life, and some of the people thought God made him blind deliberately, because either he or his parents were sinful. Others were all upset because Jesus healed him on the Sabbath. Can you imagine? You're blind your whole life, Jesus miraculously heals you, and instead of joining in your incredulous joy, your pastor and elders are all frowning because it happened on the Sabbath?!

At the end of chapter 9, Jesus tells the Pharisees they have a problem with spiritual blindness. Then His very next words, in John 10:1, are about robbers and thieves climbing into a sheep pen to steal sheep, rather than going through the door. He says that the sheep won't listen to

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

[illegible]

---

---

---

---

---

*scribe write them on a board at the front.*] It opens and shuts. It keeps people and animals out. It keeps people and animals in. It keeps cold or warm air out or in. It can stand open in welcome, or it can be locked tight. It even shows you where to go. If you want to go in a house, you can't just walk through the wall, you can only get there through the door. (You *could* go in through the window, but that usually means something bad.)

Does Jesus do all these things? Let's take a look.

**Open:** What are some things Jesus opens up to? Obviously He opens up to love and light and truth. He always opens up to anyone who wants to talk to Him or to listen to Him. He was welcoming to Nicodemus, who came in private at night, and He was welcoming to the people who ran all the way around the Sea of Galilee to find Him, and He was even welcoming to the woman at the well, who didn't even know what she was looking for. Jesus is open to anything anyone ever wants to tell Him, even if it's a negative or hurtful thing that He's going to ask the person to give up. In the Psalms,

It's worth noting, too, that sometimes Jesus shuts what

**Keeps things in:** Sometimes you want the door shut because it's winter, and you want to keep the warm air in. Sometimes you want it shut because it's summer and you

[illegible]

want to keep the cool air in. Sometimes you shut the sheep gate because you don't want the sheep to wander. Andrea, the waitress, keeps a gate on the kitchen opening, not because she doesn't love her kids and her dog, but because she does. At the nursing home where there is a wing for Alzheimer or other dementia patients, they have to keep the door locked so that people who can't remember where they are won't get out and wander away. They could get lost, or get hit by a car. Sometimes they are angry because they feel locked in, but the people who love them want to keep them safe. Doing this and seeing those you love getting angry when you are trying to protect them can be a heart-wrenching experience.

Does Jesus shut His lambs in sometimes? "Abide with Me," He says. "Stay here with Me, let Me choose the path. Don't run away." Sometimes we may feel locked in to some circumstance or rule, but in fact, if we stick with Jesus, we'll be amazed how far we'll go. We'll have higher adventures and wider experience than we ever would have expected—certainly wider

than the ones who jumped over the wall and got caught in a bramble hedge! But that's okay, because Jesus goes after them, too, rescues them from the thorns, carries them back, and gives them another chance.

**Keeps things out:** When it comes to hot or cold air, you could look at it either way. In the winter months, are you keeping the cold air out or the warm air in? And in summer, are you keeping the cool air in or the hot air out? Yes...gates are like that, too. When the sheep gate is shut and locked, the sheep can't get out, but also, the hyenas and wolves and jackals and mountain lions can't get in to eat them! I don't know about sheep, but I know there are different kinds of people—some who'd rather stay in and safe and never go out at all, and some who feel rebellious and angry and don't want to be shut in ever—where are you on that continuum?

In the Bible, Jesus talks about thieves and robbers who climb over the wall. In this world, let's face it: things are not the way God meant them to be when He created it. There is no perfect

We can trust Him.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? The fact is, Jesus will never betray you, but sometimes it might feel as though He has. Your prayers may be answered in ways you don't even recognize, so you feel unanswered, sometimes for

Everybody in God's kingdom would have gone through that door one way or another, whether they knew it or not. Jesus says those who *knowingly* tried to get in another way,

[illegible]

“climbing over the wall,” He calls it, are thieves and robbers, and unless they change their mind and go around to the door, they will be cast out. The greatest blessing is being able to *see* that Jesus is the Door to life, and enter into Him by choice.

Like the Light of the world, this door imagery also goes both ways. Jesus *is* the Door, the gateway to heaven even for those who don't know Him and maybe never hear of Him until they get there. But not only do we enter into Him, He also enters into us. We have doors, too. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus says, *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”*

I'm sure Wen's professor would agree that the traditional interpretation of this text (Jesus asking to enter individual hearts) is also true. We'll look at it his way shortly.

Despite the language we have used for years, “Jesus wants to live in our hearts,” none of us can really describe and explain what that means or how it works. It's a divine

mystery. Children ask how Jesus can get tiny enough to live inside of them. They reflect the same kind of thinking Nicodemus disclosed when Jesus told him that he had to be born again; he asked whether he had to reenter his mother's womb. Secular people, even when they are honestly seeking, can find those concepts confusing. If we're honest, we will all admit we wonder just how it really works. We say that Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, lives in us, transforms us, equips us for service, guides us, and helps us make choices and do the right things.

Jesus never knocks down doors. He never forces His ways on us. He made our hearts, He has called out to us our entire lives, and He has every right and plenty of power over us! He could make us puppets if He wanted to, but He's spent thousands of years making it clear that He has no interest in coercing us into acceptance and obedience. He never forces His way in. He stands politely at the door and knocks, waiting for us to answer.

What are some of the ways Jesus “knocks on our

News flash—He knows what it's like in there! And He's

*Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." Will we let Him in? He would not have us stand at this time, amid the perils of the last days, in our own finite strength.... It is our privilege to walk in the sunshine of His presence, and to weave into the characters we are forming the golden threads of cheerfulness, gratitude, forbearance, and love. We may thus show the power of divine grace, and reflect light from Heaven amid all the frets and irritations that come to us day by day. . . . Then why do we go stumbling along without light? . . . Our work is to open the door of the heart and let Jesus come in. He is knocking for entrance.... Will you open the door? Jesus is standing at the door of your heart. Let Him in, the heavenly Guest. (Our High Calling, p. 352.2, 6)*

[illegible]

[illegible][illegible]

In this story in John, Jesus had healed the blind man, and then the man had actually been kicked out of the synagogue because he maintained that it was Jesus who had healed him! The Pharisees were saying

It was right after this that  
He told the story of the sheep  
and the gate, and said He was

There is a very interesting story about doors and doorkeepers that you've heard

[illegible]

a million times, but probably never thought of in this context. It's in almost all the gospels. Let's look at the one in Matthew 19:13, 14. [*Read or have someone read.*] What story is this? Right—Jesus blessing the children. What's that got to do with doorkeepers?

Psalms 84 is a really great psalm. You should read the entire thing when you get the chance. But there's one verse in particular that we're going to look at. Keep your finger in Matthew 19 and look at Psalm 84:10. [*Read or have someone read.*] What do you think this means?

A doorkeeper would not be a very high or famous person, would he? He probably was considered a pretty lowly servant. This is just someone who stands there and opens and closes the door all day for those going in and out. The psalmist says he loves being at God's house so much that he'd rather be a lowly doorkeeper than live somewhere fancier or wealthier—maybe—but with wicked people.

I'd like to be a doorkeeper like that.

But there are some people who take it upon themselves not just to open and shut the door of God's house, but to decide who gets to go in and who has to stay out. Lots of people seem to think they have all the answers as to who is good enough to come to church, or who dresses nicely enough, or who behaves well enough for God to love them.

And that brings us back to Professor Ellison's comment about Rev. 3:20 being in the context of the Laodicean church. Have we, do we, ever shut the Lord of Light out of our congregations along with "the least of these"?

The disciples thought they knew who should see Jesus, back in Matthew 19. Jesus was tired and busy, and besides, He was starting to get kind of famous and important. People came from all over to listen to Him. And the more important He got, the more important the disciples got. Or so they thought. When some mothers brought children to be blessed, they tried to run them off. "Get out of here! What makes you think the Master has time for you?"

They were being doorkeepers in a negative sense. They thought they knew who was important enough for Jesus to notice. If a synagogue ruler, or a wealthy person, or even a Roman soldier had come, they wouldn't have sent him away! But little kids and women? That was a different story!

Have you known people like that?

Well, the disciples had a surprise coming their way. They were not the door. Jesus was the door, and He was about to remind them of it. "Don't you stop those children? Let them come!" This was Jesus being the protective door again. The mothers and children had probably started backing sadly away, feeling embarrassed and apologetic for bothering the great Teacher. But not for long. Jesus smiled and held out His arms, and you know those children would have run to Him. The mothers, too, were reassured and comforted.

Jesus had just said, without words, "My door is closed to pride and a judgmental spirit and to people who think they have power and authority. It's

wide open to the ones who are humble and innocent, who don't think they deserve Me, but want to be near Me anyway."

And He didn't even stop there. He went on to say, "The kingdom of heaven is made up of people like these little children!" That was a surprise. So these *were* the VIPs of Jesus' upside-down kingdom! If the disciples (then or now) acted as doorkeepers, they would shut out the right ones and let in the wrong ones. Heaven, then, would have been just like this messed-up earth, and who wants that?!

If Jesus is the Door, how can we be doorkeepers? Do we open wide in welcome to all those who want to come? Do we think we know who God can or cannot love or accept? Do people feel safe and protected and welcome around us?

Here's a basic principle to keep in mind: If Jesus was open enough to include *us*, then who are we to decide somebody else is not acceptable?

Open your heart's door.

Go through Jesus' door.

And then live as an open door to others. ●

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some things Jesus has shut out of your life that made you feel safe?
2. What are some ways Jesus has opened doors in your life and made you feel free?
3. What is one way Jesus has knocked on your heart's door this month?
4. Tell about a time when you didn't feel welcome. What happened? What would you do differently?
5. In what ways are you an open door? In what ways do you keep the door closed? How can you know when to do which?



"Not me," said Adam smugly.

Eventually they put their three smooth, spongy balls of dough and Minnie's small gray lump into separate bowls with names taped to them, covered them, and set them in a warm place to rise. Surreptitiously, Andrea substituted a new lump for Minnie's.

Adam swiped a hand across his forehead. "Whew!" he exclaimed. "I'm sure glad I'm not a grain of wheat!"

Andrea laughed. "You just streaked flour across your face, here." She wiped his face with a towel and they all went to the sink to try to scrub the dough off their hands and out from under their fingernails.

"Why are you glad you aren't a grain of wheat?" asked Jeannie.

"Well, just think! First, you get thrown in the ground and covered up and rained on and all that. Then you get all puffy and split open, which I bet would hurt, if wheat could feel anything. Then little roots and leaves come out and you grow into a nice, big plant. That part's probably pretty nice, swaying in the breeze and sunshine."

"Unless a groundhog comes along," Andrea put in, and Adam made a face while his sisters laughed.

"Then this big machine comes and chops you down!" he continued. "You go through all kinds of machinery to get all the wheat free from all the

leaves and stuff—that's straw, right?"

"Right. People use it for mulch, or animal bedding. Things like that."

"Then you get bagged up and sit on a store shelf, and just about the time you think all the hard part is over, people put you in a mill and grind you up and do all the stuff we did today. Then they bake you in a hot oven!"

"Then," said Jeannie, rubbing her stomach, "they eat you up! Mmmm!!"

"I *really* don't think I'd like being a grain of wheat!" Andrea agreed. "And I'm glad they can't feel anything!"

† So far in our series, we've talked about two "I Am" statements Jesus made. First, He said He was the Light of the world, offered to everyone on earth. Then we learned that Jesus said He was the Door, or the gate, and you couldn't get into the kingdom except through Him. It's almost as if the light is like a street light shining wherever you are and showing the way to the door, and then like a porch light so you can see to get to Jesus.

wherever, without breakfast. Maybe some of us did that today. It doesn't work so well, and it doesn't work in our spiritual lives, either.

*[NOTE TO SPEAKER: Spend a little time with your group on this chapter, going through the following paragraphs, but leaving time for comments and discussion if possible.]*

Today we're going to study a really interesting chapter of the Bible. Turn with me to John 6. The day before this, Jesus fed a multitude that included about 5,000 men. Now crowds of people are following Him everywhere, but not because they recognize that He's the Messiah. The truth is, they're not sure whether to believe in Him or not, as we can see in verses 25 and 26. [*Read or have someone read.*] Jesus isn't letting them get away with anything, is He? Read verse 27. Jesus is trying to change the subject from things of earth to things of heaven. For about a minute, He has at least some of them. They say, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" (Vs. 28). What is Jesus' answer in verse 29? That's just like what we heard yesterday in

[illegible]

our quote from Mrs. White! She said our work was to open the door, and we know sometimes that's easier said than done. Jesus says here that our work is to *believe*, which is another way of saying the same thing, right? Apparently those people thought this was too complicated a subject. They revert right back to their stomachs, which at least they can see and feel.

Then they demand a miraculous sign to prove He is who He says He is. (I don't know how many miracles they think they need!) In verse 31 they hint that manna would be a good option. Just think—no more grinding, no more baking, just easy food to pick up off the ground. “Yeah, Jesus, that would be cool. *Then* we'd believe you for sure!” (Of course, we didn't believe You yesterday. . .)

Again Jesus tries to call them back to the things of God. Let's read through verses 32 to 37. [*Read or have someone read.*] Jesus is being pretty clear here, isn't He? Not that it's an easy subject! Devoted Christians spend their entire lives trying to understand more and more

clearly what it means to “eat Jesus.”

Of course, the people argue. Jesus says He's the judge of people's hearts, and they grumble, “Who does He think He is?” Jesus says to stop grumbling, and in verses 46 through 48 He repeats His claim even more strongly: “I am the bread of life, I'm the *only* bread of life, you don't get to God except through Me, and vice versa.”

More sharply than before, according to verse 52, they argue. “What's He talking about? We can't *eat* Him!”

Jesus gets even more insistent. In the next several verses He says if you don't eat His flesh and drink His blood, you will die eternally, but if you do, you will live forever. And afterwards, in verses 61 to 65, He explains more clearly. Silly as it seems, the people were acting as if they really thought He was talking about eating Him with a knife and fork. In verse 63, Jesus says, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”



the feeding is really feeding the words of Jesus, and not some sugared-up substitute. Not everything that comes in a soft form is good for babies!

But as soon as possible, new Christians need to learn to read for themselves, study the Bible, understand *why* they believe what they believe, and even be able to explain it. So the best thing to do is read the Bible itself. There are still several ways to do it. Here are three:

1. Just start at Genesis and read to the end. You could use a Bible-in-a-year chart, but truthfully, you'll get more out of it (if you're ready for some solid and sometimes difficult-to-digest food) if you do one of the charts that takes three years instead. But it's up to you. There are sometimes advantages to reading it all more quickly and seeing how the parts fit together. In fact, there's a Bible-in-90-days program now that some people love. It makes a good introduction, especially for someone who has never read it through before. Pray first, read with an awareness of Jesus by your side helping you, pray afterwards, and then either

talk or write about what you learned. That's the digesting part.

2. Choose a book of the Bible and study it well and then choose another, or choose a topic you are interested in and use a concordance to find all the passages about that topic and study them all together. This is probably the most "solid-food" method. You have to be ready to track down verses that compare with each other, and pray over some passages that seem to go against each other, and ask God a lot of hard questions. God loves that! This is where you are really beginning to digest God's word and make it a part of your life.

3. When meditating through a particular passage of Scripture, there is a simple four step approach that has been found to be useful and it runs as follows: Choose a quiet place and pray that the Lord will speak to you personally in this time of meditation.

a. Read: You can read the passage several times asking the Spirit to draw your attention to a verse, a thought, or even a word that will be of particular relevance to you.

alone. We eat best in groups. Study with friends or in a small group. Study with your Bible class and your Sabbath School class. Lean on experienced Christians you trust to be godly and helpful without trying to give you all the answers.

The next thing you know, you'll be growing! You won't know how it happened, or feel it happening, any more than you realized it as a kid when you suddenly outgrew your clothes. You'll be an example to others without even meaning to, and they'll be asking what you're doing, and you'll say, "I'm reading Jesus' words, and you wouldn't believe what I learned this week!" . . . and you can go on to share with them, unless they don't want you to. Then be quiet and pray, and just love them every chance you get. There's no force-feeding at God's table.

Before you think you're ready, you'll be the experienced Christian someone else is looking up to and asking questions of. As long as that makes you feel inadequate and makes you realize your need to lean on God, you're all right.

[illegible][illegible]

Here are two quotes from Mrs. White's writings about this subject:

*It is not enough for us to know and respect the words of the Scriptures. We must enter into the understanding of them, studying them earnestly, eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God. Christians will reveal the degree to which they do this by the healthiness of their spiritual character. We must know the practical application of the Word to our own individual character-building. We are to be holy temples, in which God can live and walk and work. Never must we strive to lift ourselves above the servants whom God has chosen to do His work and to honor His holy name. "All ye are brethren." Let us apply this Word to our individual selves, comparing scripture with scripture.*

*In our daily lives, before our brethren and before the world, we are to be living interpreters of the Scriptures, doing honor to Christ by revealing His meekness*

*and His lowliness of heart. As we eat and digest the bread of life, we shall reveal a symmetrical character. By our unity, by esteeming others better than ourselves, we are to bear to the world a living testimony of the power of the truth. . . . (Lift Him Up, p. 105)*

*When [people] submit entirely to God, eating the bread of life and drinking the water of salvation, they will grow up into Christ. Their characters are composed of that which the mind eats and drinks. Through the Word of life, which they receive and obey, they become partakers of the divine nature. Then their entire service is after the divine similitude, and Christ, not man, is exalted. (The SDA Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 5, p. 1135)*

✓ At the supper table, Andrea could see that Adam was thinking hard. She watched him, chewing on bread she had to admit was better than anything she'd ever tried to bake before, his forehead wrinkled. "What's up, Adam?"

His eyes slowly focused as he came back from wherever he'd been. "I was just thinking about what I said earlier about not wanting to be wheat. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad."

This was going to be interesting. "Really? How so?"

"Well, I remember what I read in Bible class not very long ago—that unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it can't bear fruit. I thought that didn't make sense. If it dies, it won't bear fruit either, right? But then today, when I was imagining that a wheat kernel could feel and think, I realized if it could, it would *feel* as if it died, wouldn't it? Being all buried in the dark, and splitting open, and everything."

"I think you're right," said Andrea. "In fact, as a grain of wheat, it does cease to exist." She couldn't wait to share this with Wen. He'd love it. Maybe Adam's deep thoughts would be in one of Wen's college papers. Wouldn't that be nice? She might never make it to college herself, but she was determined her kids would have the chance, especially Adam, the Thinker.

“Right. So then, it goes through all that hard stuff, like I talked about earlier, and it thinks 10 more times that it’s dying for sure this time, and finally, it gets eaten.” Adam put his last bite in his mouth and wiped his fingers on his pants.

Andrea held the automatic frown and waited. Even Jeannie, instead of interrupting or tattling, was listening.

Adam chewed on his bread and his thoughts together, then smiled suddenly. “Then it becomes human!”

“Human?!” yelled Jeannie.

“What?” asked Andrea, startled. Adam could always surprise her.

“Yeah! Don’t you get it? I just ate that slice of bread, and now it’s down there in my stomach getting all mashed up with stomach acid, and it gets broken down and sent through my body, and *poof!* Like magic, it turns into blood and bone and muscle.”

“Magic!” parroted Jeannie.

Andrea grinned. “And brain cells! That’s good thinking, genius!”

Minnie banged her spoon and yelled “Good sinkin, deenus!”

They ended their meal laughing together.

† If Jesus is the Bread of Life, maybe we can be little grains of wheat planted by Him. Maybe we can be taught by Him to give ourselves for others, knowing that we will, by His grace and power, turn into something better than we could have imagined. If bread nourishes and fills, even comforts and makes people feel at home, then we can ask ourselves, “Do we warm and nourish others? Do we try to feed and fill them with the words of Jesus? Do we help to feed them Scriptures that we already know, if they are feeling weak and undernourished, and then let

them eat on their own as they grow stronger?”

Here’s Mrs. White again:

*The life spent on self is like the grain that is eaten. It disappears, but there is no increase. A man may gather all he can for self; he may live and think and plan for self; but his life passes away, and he has nothing. The law of self-serving is the law of self-destruction* (Desire of Ages, p. 624).

Jesus gave all of Himself. He fell and died, but rose again greater. His sacrifice is multiplied every time one of His children gives herself or himself for others, too. So one day, God will have a great harvest and we’ll all eat together at the table of God. ●

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you had any experiences in your life that felt like you were being ground up by painful circumstances? Do you think there might have been any good results?
2. What did you feed your body this morning? What did you feed your spirit this morning?
3. What do you think Jesus meant when He said to eat and drink His flesh and blood? Be specific.
4. In what ways has someone given himself or herself for you lately? How will you thank this person?



---

## LIFE IDENTITY

### PRINCIPLE # 4

Because Jesus is my Shepherd, I can be a lamb that follows faithfully, and also an under-shepherd, helping to care for other lambs.

---

# THE GOOD SHEPHERD

*Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd"*

**I**t was Friday night at the big college church, and a small crowd, both college people and locals, had gathered in the fellowship hall for a short movie and discussion. A student missionary named DeeDee had introduced the video as one she had taken herself in a Middle Eastern country where she and her friend, Ann, had served briefly. The quality wasn't great, but it was still amazing. Wen leaned forward in his seat, munching popcorn without tasting it, watching the screen in fascination.

The scene was just outside a large town with the usual startling juxtaposition of ancient, square white houses and apartment blocks straight out of Jeremiah's time, with window air-conditioners, antennas, cars, and soldiers with machine guns. But the weird thing was what was happening at the edge of the town.

Just as Wen imagined it might have been a thousand years ago, there was a huge flock of milling sheep. There were hundreds of them, like one big, mostly white, woolly pack. The sheep moved and flowed this way and that, and the air was deafening with baa's and maa's and bellows. Around the outside of the flock were several robed Bedouins, dressed about the same way their ancestors had been when Jesus lived in their area.

"Would you look at that? A wooden shepherd's rod!" murmured his friend, Josh.

“I know, cool, huh?”  
whispered Wen.

Then the shepherds began making calls that echoed above the noise of the milling, anxious sheep. They put their hands to their mouths and bellowed out strange-sounding yells. Were they words? Or just calls? Wen had no idea.

An amazing thing happened. The sheep, which had been milling in pretty much the same aimless circle all together, began to move in different directions. Some shoved through each other toward the man nearest the gate. Others pushed past toward the man farthest from the gate. Still others ran in different directions toward a third or a fourth man.

The men kept calling, and the sheep were clearly dividing. There was a high-pitched wail and the camera swung around to catch a baby who had lost track of its mother. There was laughter in the fellowship hall as the baby leapt as if it had springs in its feet, high over the other sheep, this way and that, bouncing in worried circles, yelling wildly.

“Oh, poor thing!” somebody said.

But it only took about 10 seconds before a fat ewe separated from the crowd and mother and baby were happily reunited. Running close by its mother, the lamb raced for the safety of its own flock.

And just like that, there were four separate flocks where there had been one mob of sheep. Each flock now pushed and shoved to be nearest to its own shepherd, and the men began to move off, heading outside of town to find pasture. Not one sheep accidentally followed the wrong man.

The movie ended, and the lights came on. The group was leaning back, exclaiming, “That was awesome! How did they know? The baby was so cute!”

Ann spoke up. "You think it was cool here—you should have been there! This little video really doesn't convey the whole—the whole . . . I don't know what to say."

“Awesomeness!” said DeeDee.  
“It was just amazing! I kept wondering how those sheep knew which voices to follow.”

[illegible]

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

"Then again," said Wen thoughtfully, "Maybe it's about community, too. I mean, all the lambs really have to know is to stay with the crowd. But for us, that can be both good and bad."

“How good a job,” Josh asked, “is our community of faith doing at helping to be sure that the whole flock is following Jesus and no one else?”

After a few minutes of heavy debate on individuality, peer pressure, groupthink, and personal salvation, Andrea said thoughtfully, "There's another whole issue here, too. It's not *just* knowing the Shepherd's voice and being able to go against the current of the crowd and reach His side. I mean, when those sheep got over there to their own shepherd, they hadn't suddenly arrived at the pasture, right? He has to lead them, maybe a long way.



with medicine for their hooves. In fact, it's an interesting side note to think about whether our modern methods of raising flocks and herds is more like the good shepherd in Jesus' stories, or more like the hired man, who runs away and leaves the animals to their own devices!

At any rate, we don't always get all the lessons a passage like this can teach us. Jesus is talking about a Shepherd like the one in the movie—a Shepherd who personally knows each sheep and cares for each one with His own hands. Mrs. White, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, still lived in times when most flocks were small and shepherds did more hands-on care as they had in Jesus' time. She describes the good shepherd this way:

If Jesus is the Shepherd and we are the sheep, can it also be true that we are shepherds ourselves, in some ways?

*The shepherd's life is one full of peril. If he is trustworthy shepherd, he will not be careless and study his own ease, but he will search for the straying sheep amid storm and tempest. Perhaps he will find the lost sheep slipped into some crevice of the rock, where he cannot find his way out. He is beset with fears on every hand. The good shepherd does not come with a harsh voice, scolding the poor frightened sheep, but he speaks in pitiful, soothing, winning tones, so that when the sheep hears his voice, he will follow, unless he is imprisoned in the rocks or tangled in the brambles. Then the only means by which the shepherd can find the sheep is by following up the bleat of distress that the wanderer sends in answer to his call. And when the good shepherd finds the lost one, he puts the weary wanderer upon his shoulder, and*

*brings him back to the fold, rejoicing at every step.*  
(*Youth's Instructor*, April 28, 1886 par. 50)

We could talk all day of ways in which Jesus does these things for us every day of our lives. But of course, the most important way in which He came searching for His lost sheep, the one without which nothing else would matter, is when He came here to earth.

It's as if a shepherd were to change himself into a sheep so that he could talk directly to his flock and they would understand him. We can't imagine what heaven was like any more than sheep could imagine living in houses and eating with silverware and using computers. But Jesus gave it all up, became a human being with a body that got tired and hungry and dirty, put up with people being mean to Him and saying bad things about Him when all He was trying to do was love them, and in the end, He let them torture and kill Him.

You could say that this whole planet was lost and stuck in the prickly bushes of sin. Not only could we not get

ourselves out, we got so used to living in briars and rocks that we thought that was normal life. We argued and fought when Jesus tried to rescue us, like a drowning person so panicked that he almost makes the lifeguard drown, too, by fighting. You know, lifeguards are taught how to knock someone out if they have to, to save them. Maybe we have some lifeguards here today. [You could stop for comments if you wished.] I'll bet sometimes Jesus felt like knocking out some of the Pharisees or some of His disciples when they insisted He was wrong and they were right!

But you can only do that if you know for sure the person really wants to be saved. Jesus won't force the will of anyone who really *insists* that He go away and leave them alone. Just imagine how He feels when He has to turn away and leave someone He loves, down over the cliff, tangled in thorns, about to fall and die, and refusing to come back with Him!

Jesus said something else about being the Good Shepherd. He repeats this statement twice

[illegible]

in John 10, and each time He adds something. This time He added that He lays down His life for the sheep. The second time is in verse 14. What does He add this time? [*Read or have someone read.*]

That's like the movie the group in our story saw. It used to be true, and it is still true in small flocks today. Sheep may be pretty silly, but they do have the ability, if they're given the chance, to learn whom to trust and whom not to. It's like our pets. Do our dogs and cats know our voices? Would they go with anyone who asked, or would they be afraid, or even aggressive? Of course, like people, it can depend on the pet and its personality.

The real question is, *Do* we know Jesus' voice? Do we follow where He leads, or go off on our own? And if Jesus is the Shepherd and we are the sheep, can it also be true that we are shepherds ourselves, in some ways?

Let's look at some different texts in the Bible. Could someone look up Numbers 27:16-21, someone else look up Isaiah 63:11, and someone look up Ezekiel 43:8? [*Have them read*

*their texts.*] What do these texts say about people as shepherds? Is God the only Shepherd, or are human beings sometimes shepherds, too?

In the passage in Numbers, God is instructing Moses about getting Joshua ready to lead the Israelites after Moses dies. It doesn't specifically say so, but Moses was most definitely a shepherd of his people. In fact, God had trained Moses for 40 years as an actual shepherd, to get him ready to lead this unruly crowd. And Moses lay down his life for them, and was reviled and grumbled against in return for his efforts. Now he was nearing the end of his shift as shepherd, and he asked God for a good leader, one who would go in and come out and lead the people like a shepherd. God told Moses that Joshua was His choice. He had a HUGE reward for Moses' years of labor, but Moses didn't know it yet.

So people can be shepherds over God's sheep. And they can be good . . . or not!

The texts in Ezekiel and Isaiah talked about bad shepherds. They are in prophecies which God gave, speaking against the priests

So what about us? If we want to be shepherds for God's sheep, does that mean being a pastor?

3. A good shepherd protects the sheep. Do we refuse to allow someone to be tormented, picked on, or called names in our presence? Did you know that a study done in 2000 and quoted on Loyola University's website, says that 74% of men

[illegible]

would intervene to prevent sexual assault on a woman? \* *Seventy-four percent?! That's horrifying. One hundred percent of people, male and female, should be willing to intervene in such a situation, even if that intervention is just calling the national emergency number! The same study said that only 83% of men even claimed to respect their own spouses' wishes about sexual activity. Christians need to lead the way in this as in all other ways of showing respect and honor and care for each other. And what if we endanger our own lives in the process?*

4. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus lay down His life for us in ways we can't even begin to imagine. Do we follow His lead and give our efforts to loving those around us even when it's hard or dangerous? What if it's just inconvenient? Do we plan to do it "someday"?

Someday never comes.

Let's end with a final quote from Ellen White on the subject of good under-shepherds:

*This is the way the true Shepherd treats the lost*

*sinner. He goes after him; he does not hesitate at peril, self-denial, and self-sacrifice. He is intent upon bringing the sin-burdened soul to repentance, to salvation, to peace, rest, and happiness in his Saviour's love. And it is the privilege of every one who has experienced the love of Jesus in his own heart, to think if there is not someone whom he can by personal effort, by studied tact and kindness, bring to Jesus, who is ready and willing to accept all who will come to him. We can all do much through personal effort. We can be*

*laborers with Jesus Christ. Will the [church] family see what they can do to seek and to save the lost sheep? (Youth's Instructor, April 28, 1886) ●*

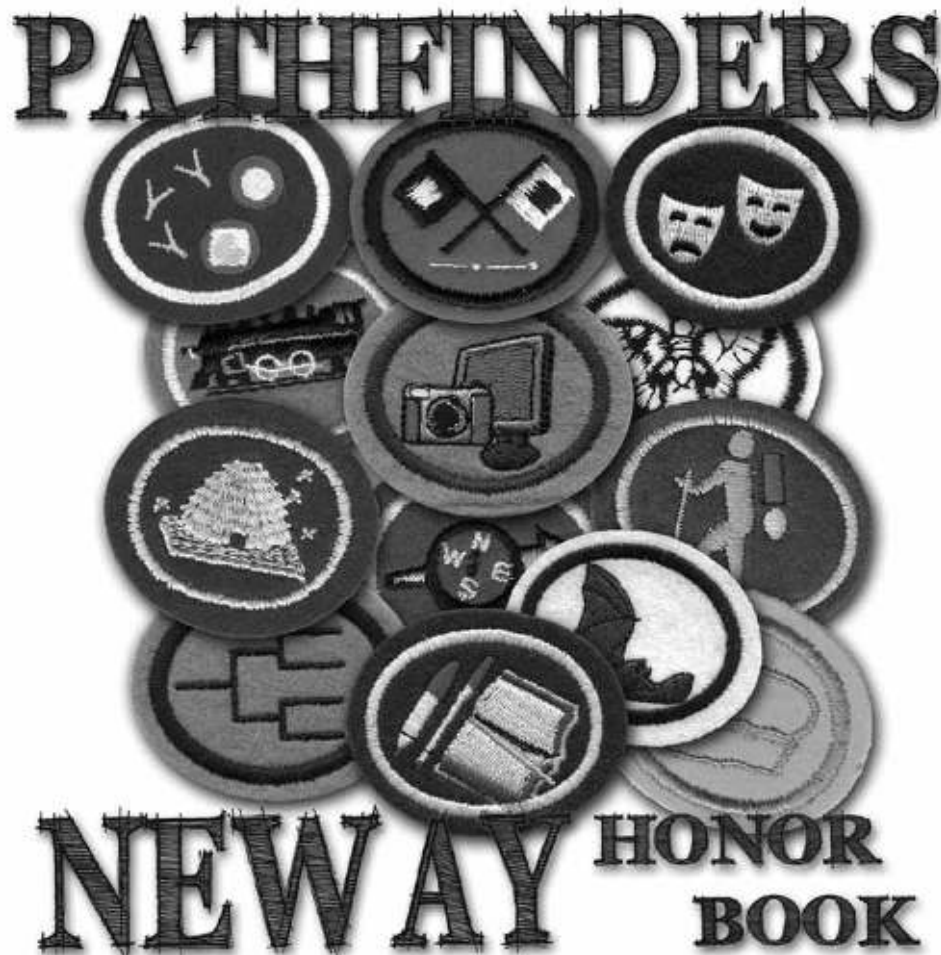
---

*\* Source: Fisher BS, Cullen FT, & Turner, MG. (2000). The sexual victimization of college women. U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Justice Programs: NCJ 182369.*

Quoted on [http://www.luc.edu/wellness/sexassault\\_men.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/wellness/sexassault_men.shtml)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did you learn to recognize and listen to Jesus' voice?
2. Share a time when you thought you were listening to God, but found out it wasn't Him after all. What did you do? What was the result? What did you learn?
3. How can you tell if you are learning to hear Jesus' voice for yourself?
4. Share some ways in which someone has helped to shepherd your soul.
5. What are some ways in which you would like to help shepherd others? Can you create a shepherd's club in your church or group and encourage each other?



**Coming in 2011**

**The Latest Edition of the**

## **Pathfinder Honor Handbook!**

The manual includes all honors currently recognized at the General Conference level of Youth Ministry, and it also includes those specialized honors recognized by various divisions. Each honor is designed to be a course of study that introduces a subject. This subject should have practical value and should enhance the lifestyle of the person pursuing the honor. Honor study should assist the person in his/her development as a well-rounded Christian by directly affecting the social, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of life. The study of an honor should direct the person to a deeper love of the Creator and should increase their interest in committing their life in service to God and to the community. We pray that this handbook will lead you into many new adventures as you discover the world around you, and we hope that these very enjoyable activities will prepare young people for the world to come.

**Available soon at [www.adventsource.org](http://www.adventsource.org)**



## LIFE IDENTITY

### PRINCIPLE # 5

Because Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, I can walk in His Way, hold up His Truth, and share an abundant, full life with those around me.

# THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

*Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"*

Wen was getting frustrated. "I *know* it's right around here somewhere! Try turning left on that next street."

Josh rolled his eyes. "I'm about ready to give up on the whole thing! Are you sure it's in this neighborhood?"

"Positive!" Wen insisted. "And I promised them we'd be there to volunteer today. They expect a large crowd because of the cold snap, and they need help registering people for the shelter."

"Well, why didn't you get directions?"

Wen made a face. "That's just it. I did get directions, but then I forgot to bring them. I realized it right after we left the dorm, but I was *sure* I could remember!"

† Once you've seen the Light of the world, and it's led you to the 'Door' to God's kingdom, and Jesus has begun to feed you the Bread of Life, and to take care of you and protect you as your Good Shepherd, *then* it's time to travel together. Not before!

[illegible]

sure they remembered some essential things they would need, in order to go on with the Holy Spirit instead of Jesus' physical presence with them.

You can probably say the first few verses of this chapter by heart. [*You can stop and try, if you wish. See if the group can say verses 1-3 together, if you get them started with "Let not your heart be troubled."*] The next couple of verses aren't as well-known. Jesus goes on to tell His disciples that they know the way where He's going.

[illegible]

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

His death for my sins and thank Him for giving me the gift of eternal life." But we know there will be lots of people in God's kingdom who never even heard of Jesus (most of the Old Testament people to start with; not to mention that there will be people who *did* say those words, but didn't really get to know or follow Jesus, and are *not* in the kingdom!) So the truth must be deeper and more powerful than that.

What does it mean for a person  
to *be* a Way?

Well, what are some other words for “way”? [*Let people suggest some.*] Path, road, trail, highway. . . Then there are other uses for that word. Like a way of doing something, or a way of being, or a way of living. If someone says, “Walk this way,” he or she might mean, “Go in this direction,” or might mean “Physically imitate this walk.” Which do you think Jesus meant?

Don't you think He must have meant both? He was saying, "Go in the direction I'm going. Let your life point always upward, always toward heaven and love and God. This way of life might get twisty and

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

extra help with his science project. And she really did have a headache and *kind of* a sore throat. She might really be getting sick, and after all, a waitress shouldn't expose people to germs. She would work twice as hard tomorrow to make up for it.

As she turned to gather up the dishes, she saw Adam watching her, and to her increased shame, her guilt made her speak crossly to him. "I thought I asked you to clear this table! I could use a little help here!"

Adam and Jeannie both began to help, neither speaking. Andrea turned away to hide her tears.

Later that evening, she sat down to the table with Adam and his 3-fold poster, markers, and diagrams of electric currents. "Adam, I can't believe you haven't gotten any further than this! You haven't drawn any of the circuits, and have you even begun the working model?"

"It's okay, Mom," Adam said. "I got extra time from Ms. Winston."

"Extra time? Why?"

"I told her you were sick and I didn't feel good, either. She said we could have the weekend, and turn it in next Monday instead of tomorrow." Adam chose a blue marker and leaned over his poster, apparently unconcerned, while a cold stone settled into Andrea's stomach. *Did I just teach my child to lie?* She couldn't think of a single thing to say, so she just got up and went to put Minnie to bed, a helpless prayer floating around in her head.

That evening she sat on the edge of Adam's bed. "We didn't go over your Sabbath School lesson yet, and we don't really have time now, but you know what it's about, right?"

"Yeah, it's when Jesus got baptized, and God said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!'"

Andrea felt tears close to the surface again. Was God pleased with her today?

"Are you getting worse, Mom?"

She took a deep breath. "No, honey, the truth is, I'm not sick. Not physically, I mean. I do feel pretty sick in my heart."

"You do? Why?"

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

us. J. R. R. Tolkien said it was as if the very best possible fantasy or fairytale, too good to be true, turned out to be true after all! Hallelujah! We get to live happily ever after, even though we don't deserve it! All we have to do is say yes and walk through the door, where we will start living a completely new and different kind of adventure. A life of complete truth.

That's hard!

But it's more than that. In fact, if it were only that, it would be impossible. Somehow, we have to live *in* Jesus, who is the truth. We don't really know how it works. God does. He sends us His Holy Spirit, who is in fact the very presence of the Father and the Son with us. God has provided divine assistance to live the life of truth (John 14: 15-18, 23). What we do know is, once we make that choice, Jesus starts opening our eyes to truths we knew, and to truths we didn't know. Often, He uses others to help us learn this. In the case of our story, God is using Andrea and Adam to teach each other. Have you experienced the truth that sometimes children can lead us as well or better than we can lead them?

In this story, Andrea felt the more culpable, and that was true in a sense, because she was the adult, the mom, the under-shepherd with the responsibility to lead her lambs to God. But she was also in danger of going even further off the path of truth than her son. How was that?

*[Allow time for discussion and comment.]*

They both did wrong. They both lied, they both procrastinated, and on top of that, Andrea used her influence as a mother to lead her son astray. Or at least, she didn't pay attention to where her influence was leading Adam. If she'd been thinking, she wouldn't have had this phone call where he could hear, right? Would that have been any better?

What did they do right? They did some of the work they needed to do. Also, Andrea didn't speak hastily when she realized what she had done. She waited, and even though her prayer felt formless and helpless, God heard it. Most importantly, they both recognized their sin and confessed it. And this is where Adam got the chance to help his mother. She was tangled up

---

---

---

---

---

---

[illegible]

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

different!" He stopped and thought again. "Actually, I don't know if I *act* that much different. I know I still lost my temper the other day, and I still procrastinate and make excuses way too much."

Andrea grinned and sat down. “Let me tell you something my 10-year-old taught me!” She told the story and was surprised and a little embarrassed that tears came to her eyes again. “So you see,” she concluded briskly, “according to my Adam, it’s simple! If you do wrong, you ask forgiveness, you see if there’s anything you can do to make restitution, and you move on! No putting yourself down about it! So, what can I get you today?”

She stood again, and Wen grinned up at her. "Surprise me!"

# † THE LIFE

In His discussion with His disciples on the last night of His life on earth, Jesus said three “I AMs” in one: “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Jesus.** An abundant, full life is a life that puts Jesus first. He is the center and the purpose for everything His child does. If we know Jesus is smiling at us, we can take it when others frown. If we know Jesus is showing us what to do next, we don't have to worry about doing the wrong thing. And if we do make a mistake, we can know He'll forgive us and help us, too. If Jesus is the first one we say good morning to and the last one we say goodnight to, if He's the most important person when we're trying to plan our day, we will find a deep source of joy—even in sadness or difficulty. A full life contains all the ingredients of life, and that includes loss and disappointment and struggle. A full life is almost the opposite of an easy life. But it's a life that is worth all the hard work and tears, and it's a life that doesn't get swept away by sorrow, but realizes that God is still there, weeping with us, and will make it all right one day.

**Others.** The second ingredient of joyful, abundant life is love of others. In this same passage, Jesus says that's how people will know if we

love God—by the fact that we love others. John writes a lot about that in his first epistle (1 John). He points out that God is invisible. It's easy to *say* we love Him. If we can't love the people we can see around us, then we aren't really loving God. So what do we do? We go back to number one—put God first. That will grow the love in us wider and deeper, and we'll find we can love even who we consider to be unlovable people. It doesn't necessarily mean we'll be best buddies with them. Some people aren't really safe to spend a lot of time with. Sometimes the loving thing to do is incredibly hard, and includes removing ourselves from close contact with these people. It definitely means not judging others' choices! Loving them anyway means we want the best for them, and we hope they will learn to live in Jesus' love and light, too.

**Yourself.** The third ingredient, and this is really important, is love for ourselves. People have a lot of trouble with this concept. They usually think it means to do anything you want, and live your life by your whims and desires. How is that

love? Would you call it love if you let a child have absolutely anything they wanted? Why would we think that if we give in to ourselves, spoil ourselves, set our desires above everything, that should be called self-love? That's not love.

Parents who love their children set rules for them. They make sure that they eat healthy things and go to bed on time. They pay attention to what they see on TV, and limit the time they can spend online and which sites they can visit. So the third person to show healthy love for, in our JOY acrostic, is yourself. We need to set sensible rules for ourselves, feed ourselves well both physically and spiritually, and treat ourselves as we believe a beloved child of God should be treated. This will not only *not* lead to selfishness, it's the only effective safeguard against it! The person whose deep inner needs are not being met is the one who is always out to

get what he can, and he may not even know how selfish he is or how much he hurts others. Worse, he may not care.

Let's close with an Ellen White quote again:

*Christ's favorite theme was the paternal tenderness and abundant grace of God; He dwelt much upon the holiness of His character and His law; He presented Himself to the people as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Let these be the themes of Christ's ministers. Present the truth as it is in Jesus. Make plain the requirements of the law and the gospel. Tell the people of Christ's life of self-denial and sacrifice; of His humiliation and death; of His resurrection and ascension; of His intercession for them in the courts of God; of His promise, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." John 14:3. (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 40) ●*

## Discussion Questions

1. Some of the things a road does are: show the way, keep people together, and make progress. How can you tell if your life is accomplishing these things?
2. Roads need maintenance sometimes, too, or they will get all broken up and overgrown. What are some ways you can maintain God's Way in your life?
3. What are some things you think and say and do that keep you from seeing that you are the beloved son or daughter of God? What are some things you can do to keep the Truth ever before your eyes, as well as pass on Jesus' love and help others see that Truth about themselves?
4. In maintaining the abundant Life Jesus promised:
  - a. What are some specific ways in which you love Jesus first?
  - b. What are some specific ways in which you love others next?
  - c. What are some specific ways in which you love yourself third?



---

## LIFE IDENTITY

### PRINCIPLE #6

Because Jesus is the True Vine, I can be a blessed branch, drawing my nourishment from Him and glorifying God with much fruit.

---

# THE TRUE VINE

*Jesus said, "I am the True Vine"*

“**W**hen! You’ll never guess what I just did!” Andrea exclaimed as soon as he entered the door of the café.

“What?”

“Got a new job!”

“You did? That’s great! I mean—wait! Does that mean you won’t be bringing me my smoothies and helping on papers anymore? How can I get through college without you?”

Andrea laughed. “I somehow suspect you’ll manage. But no, I’ll still be working here, only in the evenings. I gave up my night job cleaning offices, thank God! I especially wanted to tell you, because in a way, it’s thanks to you. Or maybe to that Professor Ellison of yours.”

“What? How?”

“Well, you know, I got to wondering, who *am* I really? What do *I* want to be when I grow up? I realized I really like all this natural, organic stuff. Did you know I bought a hand-cranked grain mill to make my own bread? So when a job at that tree nursery across town opened up, I tried for it. And I got it! I think I’ll love working outside. The manager said I can even learn grafting!”

the join together. This is more durable, but the cutting can be dangerous, because you're cutting toward your fingers. I'm going to teach you the graft I prefer, which is called a 'saddle graft.'"

Ed showed them a row of what he identified as young apple trees, though they looked like dead sticks to Andrea, a few feet high, with three or four tiny branches at the top. With his knife, and reminding them that their knives must be extremely sharp, he cut off the top of a young tree at a slant, and then cut it again in the opposite direction, so that it pointed upward like a sharp, upside-down V.

Andrea couldn't help wincing for the poor little tree, though she knew it was silly. Even if a tree *could* be said to feel anything, Ed had already explained that grafting was done while the tree was still dormant for winter. "The rootstock is the plant that is strongest. It can take bad weather, or insect damage, things like that. The branch we graft in, the scion, is from a weaker plant, but with the strength of the rootstock it will make beautiful flowers,

[illegible]

Just like the scion taking nourishment from the earth through the rootstock, the Christian who has asked Jesus to live in his or her life through the presence of the Holy Spirit actually takes in the life of Christ...

or fruit, or whatever you want from the particular plant. In this case, we can count on a much better crop of apples!"

Ed had brought a handful of scions, plain branches cut from the variety of tree he wanted to graft onto the tops of the young apples. "The cut on the scion is a little trickier." He showed them how to carefully rock the sharp knife in a cut into the end of a tiny branch, turn it, and cut in from the other direction. "You still have to be careful of your fingers, and have a *sharp* knife." In seconds, he had a v-shaped cut into the end of the scion, which he slid down over the top of the tree. It fit exactly. Or Andrea thought it did. Ed pulled it off again and made a slight amendment. "You have to make sure the join is as perfect as possible, not crooked, or partly together and partly not. Only a perfect union will work." Ed

bound the two stems together with grafting tape. "Each of you can try a couple. The trees in this row are not especially valuable," he added with a grin, "so don't worry about killing them. Also, I have knives for you. At the end of the day, we'll have a sharpening class, which you'll find to be more demanding than the actual grafting process!"

Andrea practiced sharp, even cuts on a spare stick, then carefully made her first graft. She took about 10 times as long as Ed had, but the others were equally as awkward at first, and as she wrapped up her graft, she was pretty sure it would take.

"When will we know for sure?" she asked Ed.

"Within a couple of weeks, as the weather starts to break, the trees will begin to show new growth. If you come over here to this row, I'll show you some

grafts from last year." Ed took them on a short tour of grafts at different stages. But Andrea kept looking over her shoulder. With a laugh, she admitted to the woman next to her, "I'd like to put a ribbon on it, or something, so I'll know my own tree! I hope it grows."

At home that night, describing her day to the kids, Andrea snuggled them with even more affection than usual. More than anything in life, she hoped her attempts to graft them into Jesus would hold!

† So far, we've studied five "I Am" statements. We've seen that Jesus is a Light shining on everyone, leading them to the Door of Himself and urging them to choose to enter. Once a person enters, Jesus feeds them with the Bread of His Word, then is their Shepherd, leading them in His Way, Truth, and Life. This time, we will look at

and eight affairs. These natural abilities were given by God, and were meant to be used with His strength. Just imagine if Hitler or those movie stars we hear about invested their abilities for good and positive causes. How would history be different? When we make a decision to become a follower of Jesus and are baptized as a symbol of embracing that new life, God pours out His Spirit upon us and invests in us new strengths or anoints the natural ones we were born with. These are known as the gifts of the Spirit.

**Jesus has hardness for different conditions.** In the plant world, some plants can stand drought, floods, heat, and cold better than others. Sometimes you can graft a fragile rose, for instance, to a stronger rose rootstock, and the fragile rose will be better able to stand difficult conditions. If our lives are grafted into Jesus, we can handle the stresses of life, from ridicule to loneliness, from difficult home lives to illness. Neither we nor the fragile rose will ever be as strong as our rootstock, but we'll be a lot stronger than we would have been on our own.

[illegible]



HTTP://GCYOUTHMINISTRIES.ORG

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

[illegible]

---

---

---

Then we have to be bound together as if we were one plant. In the later chapters of his book, John describes Jesus praying to His Father in heaven to make all His children “one.” That includes us. We are to be one in Christ and one in each other. That doesn’t mean we’re exactly the same. In fact, if plants were all the same, nobody would ever do any grafting, or any gardening, for that matter. Just think how boring it would be!

How do you get to be “one” with somebody? How do a husband and wife become “one

This won't mean we lose anything of our real selves. In fact, it's the only chance we have of ever *being* our real selves. Only Jesus knows what our true, inner selves were meant to be, and His dreams for us are even bigger than the ones we dream for ourselves. The closer we get to Him, the more we'll learn about our gifts, callings, and uniqueness. The more we'll be able to bloom and bear fruit. And that's when we'll grow into the true beauty God meant us to have. Not one of us will look the same. In case you can't tell, God likes variety! Just look at the different flowers and fruit, not to mention the incredible variety of birds, animals, and fish. John, the one

And remember the last verse of the passage we began with? John 15:8 says that God is glorified when we bear much fruit, because that's how we show we are disciples of Jesus.

Okay, so we know how to be grafted in, and how to be bound up with Jesus. But what does it mean to bear fruit? Jesus says it to His disciples, "I want you to bear lots of fruit," as if He expects them to know what He means, but He really doesn't explain it in this passage. Since they were so confused about the rest of the things He was saying, like where He was going, or how they could know the way, or what He meant when He said He was leaving and going back to God, we can probably assume they didn't understand this right away, either. But they figured it out after Jesus left and the Holy Spirit came to them in power. Paul, who became a disciple at a later stage and who had never

[illegible]

[illegible][illegible]

if you don't love others, it shows you don't love Him either. So if this fruit is missing in your life, there's definitely something wrong with your graft, and you should check it out, and get help from godly people you trust.

**Joy.** You know what it feels like when you are doing something you really love to do and know you are good at? As if you're more *you* somehow? Well, that's what it's like walking with Jesus, only even better. Because you really *are* more your real self! And as you grow and learn and He teaches you more and more, the joy grows deeper into your soul, like roots. But there's one important thing to understand. All of these facets of love are very different than the worldly ideas they sound like. So God's joy, for instance, isn't the same as just being happy and having everything go your way. Things will happen. Annoying things. Frustrating things. Frightening things. Even really awful, sorrowful things. A Christian doesn't always feel happy. Even Jesus was called, in Isaiah 53:3, "a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering." He is more familiar with suffering than we will

**Patience.** Have you ever heard the warning not to pray for patience? The truth is, there's only one way to learn patience, and that's to have lots of things to be impatient about.

**Kindness.** Here is a facet of love that needs no description. Everybody knows what kindness is. Everybody recognizes it when it happens to them. Not everybody turns around and practices it. But since the Bible says *all* good gifts come from God (James

[illegible]

---

---

---

---

---

[illegible]

---

---

---

---

---

us, and our faith grows and grows until it fills us up and overflows on those around us. Second, it means doing things faithfully. Completing work assignments well and on time. Taking care of the people and things you are responsible for. Taking care of yourself, too, which you are more responsible for than anyone else is. Being kind to others. The most important thing to be faithful about, though, and the first thing to check if you find you are being unfaithful in other things, is faithfully spending time praying and reading the Bible, and being sure when we pray to leave time for listening, too. We speak, and know God listens. Then we listen, and know He will speak, sometime in impressions we receive in our hearts, but mostly in either the Bible or the words of others, like sermons, songs, or even something a friend says.

**Gentleness.** This is not always popular today. You hear a lot about being strong, and standing up for yourself, and knowing what you want and going after it. Men, in particular, are often ridiculed for being gentle, because some people

think that means to be wimpy. And women who are gentle may open themselves up to accusations of being doormats or old-fashioned and reactive. But the very fact that it's so misunderstood might make gentleness one of the most necessary virtues in today's fast-paced world. We are all in this together, we all have troubles, and a little gentleness goes a long way in smoothing the path for everyone around us.

**Self-control** Oh, boy, everybody's favorite! We've given this a negative definition, too. Self-control, we think, means living in some kind of box, obeying rules like a robot, never having any fun! Is that what Jesus meant? Surely not! Or we give it a narrow definition. We try to be self-controlled about how much we eat, but not about how well we eat. We are temperate about alcohol, but go all-out on sugar, or fatty foods. Or we are careful about our entire diet, but never exercise, or exercise too much, and make our physical health the be-all and end-all of our existence. The truth is, self-control equals temperance, equals moderation in all things. *All* things!

If we're grafted into the Vine, Jesus, and the Gardener, His Father, is caring for us . . . if we've begun to grow some love and joy and peace and all the rest of the fruit, self-control goes right along with it. It might not mean *never* eating cake, but it certainly will mean not eating three pieces! It might not mean never having to express anger, but it will definitely mean not losing our temper or blaming others for our anger. It will not mean giving up play entirely and spending all your time on work for the almighty paycheck, or vice versa; it will mean doing your best at work *and* play.

And there you have it: a word picture from the Bible of the full and abundant life Jesus promises to those who choose to belong to Him, to grow into Him, to take their nourishment from Him, to grow up into all He wants for them, producing abundant blooms and fruit that are a blessing to all around us. ●

## Discussion Questions

1. What is a sin “disease” or “bug” you would like Jesus to give you His resistance to?
2. What are some things you do to build and maintain a more perfect union with Jesus?
3. How can you tell when your union with Him has some gaps in it? What can you do then?
4. Of all these fruits, which one appeals to you today? Why?
5. Tell of a time when someone else demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit in relationship to you. What happened? How did it feel? Did it make you want to be more like Jesus? How?



---

## LIFE IDENTITY

### PRINCIPLE #7

Because Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, I can rejoice in His newness of life now and trust Him for life eternal.

---

# THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

*Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life"*

**W**en and Josh ran down a hallway with a crowd of other people, hurrying toward the exit and across the green to the administration building. Everyone on campus had been called to assemble in the chapel. The entire college was in chaos.

"What's going on?" Wen asked Josh.

"I don't know, but I guess it's big. I saw Dr. Willa crying."

When they finally reached the college chapel, it was packed and as noisy as a freeway at rush hour. The president stood and raised her hands, and finally the voices quieted. "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm very sorry to have to call you together here. I'm afraid I have bad news. We thought it might be best if you all heard together, in the hopes that not too much distortion and confusion will occur as the story gets told and retold." The president took off her glasses and polished them.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---



---

---

---

---



---

HTTP://GCYOUTHMINISTRIE

only You had been here!" They had seen Jesus heal many people, and they were sure He could have healed Lazarus, too. In other words, why had He let this happen?

Have you been there?

Jesus is speaking to Martha when He makes this "I Am" statement. Before He has done anything at all about the sorrowful situation His friends are in, He says to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

What is Martha's answer?

[*Read or have someone read verse 27.*]

That is what God wanted to hear. In her sorrow, in her disappointment, before she has any idea what miracle Jesus has in mind, even though she may feel angry that God (and Jesus) allowed this to happen, Martha says, "I believe. I still believe you are the Messiah. I am not going to stop believing in you because I am hurt and confused and devastated with sorrow."

She even says she knows her brother will rise again. Martha has the faith that this is not the end. It doesn't stop her grief, but it eases it. Imagine if you really thought everyone who died was dead forever, and you would never see them again!

But no. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. He laid His own life on it.

Great. Makes a good sermon, doesn't it? But you know if you've been there, how hollow that comfort can feel at the time. What *do* you say when a devastated friend asks you *Why*? Or when you yourself sit by a seemingly unjust grave and ask, *Why*? If a person dies "old and full of years," as the Bible puts it, that's one thing. But a young man like Lazarus? Young student missionaries doing God's work? A child, even?

What do you say then?

Of course, we know the end of Lazarus' story. Jesus raised him, he walked in the triumphal procession when Jesus entered Jerusalem before His own death, and then...what then? Is Lazarus still alive? No? So he died again, right?

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

would feel if it were your own child or someone very close to you. Add that all up together, and imagine if you had been a friend of Jesus, and believed with all your heart that He was the Son of God, the Messiah. And now He's dead! He's *dead!!* Can you even imagine the grief and horror and shock?

He's dead.

But He *can't* be dead!

But He is.

Now what do we do?

Mary Magdalene was one of the most grief-stricken of Jesus' followers. He had rescued her from a life of horrors we don't know the half of, and she didn't see how she could go on living without Him. So practically before light on Sunday morning, she went to the tomb.

Let's read what happened.  
[*Taking turns to read, go all the way through John 20:1-18. Take time to stop and discuss what your emotions would have been like if you had been there.*]

"My Father and your Father; My God and your God." Why do you think He said it like that? He wanted to reassure them once and for all that God loved them as much as He did, and

that He loved them a lot! He even stayed in the graveyard before going back up to visit His Father, from whom He had been separated.

But after reassuring Mary and sending this message to the others, Jesus did go right to heaven. Mrs. White says:

*"Jesus refused to receive the homage of His people until He had the assurance that His sacrifice was accepted by the Father. He ascended to the heavenly courts, and from God Himself heard the assurance that His atonement for the sins of [all] had been ample, that through His blood all might gain eternal life. . . The Father. . . would love them even as He loves His Son. . . . All power in heaven and on earth was given to the Prince of life, and He returned to His followers in a world of sin, that He might impart to them of His power and glory." (Desire of Ages, p. 790)*

Now Jesus *was* in truth, once and for all, the Resurrection and the Life. He came to share

that with us. With you and me!  
Amazing!

In all of these “I Am” statements, we’ve first looked at what Jesus said He is, and then at what that means for us. In this case, of course, there is no way that we are either resurrection or life! We just have to decide if we want in on *His* resurrection and life. However, we can also use our influence either to further Jesus’ life and newness, or to spread death and destruction. It’s surprising how often even Christians can do and say deadly things. Unkind words, gossip, stretching the truth (especially to make oneself look good and someone else look bad)—all these things are actions of death, not of life. On the other hand, kind words, loving deeds, standing up for someone who needs it—these things participate in God’s life of love and demonstrate that we “have crossed over from death to life,” as Jesus put it in John 5:24.

But how can this be true right now? We know that we can believe what Jesus says as soon as He says it, as though it had already happened. But there's more to it than that. There is a real, physical way

that we can live out the death  
and resurrection of Jesus now.  
Let's see what Paul says. [*Read  
or have someone read Romans  
6:4, 5.*]

So when we were baptized, that was the outward sign of a whole new life that had already begun on the inside. Here is how Mrs. White explains it:

*"Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Self is by profession dead to a life of sin. The waters cover the candidate, and in the presence of the whole heavenly universe the mutual pledge is made. In the name of the Father, and Son, and the Holy Spirit, man is laid in his watery grave, buried with Christ in baptism and raised from the water to live the new life of loyalty to God. The three great powers in heaven are witnesses; they are invisible but present."(The Faith I Live By, p. 146)*

That was the beginning. The baptized person “professes” to be dead to sin. As life goes on, the question is answered; did he or she really mean it? Anyone can *say* they want to follow Jesus. They might even mean

it, but when it gets hard, or discouraging, do they give up? The water of baptism is only a symbol—it is not what does the washing of sins. Jesus does that, and He is the only one who can. And it isn't done just once—it's done over and over, every day, the rest of your life. No matter how many years it's been since your baptism, that newness of life is still available to you. You can still choose daily to live the resurrected life.

Actually, just before that quote above, Ellen White has this to say:

*“God asks those who take His name, How are you using the powers that have been redeemed by the death of My Son? Are you doing all in your power to rise to a greater height in spiritual understanding? Are you adjusting your interest and actions in harmony with the momentous claims of eternity?” (ibid.)*

So when we want to know if we are living out the resurrected life Jesus has promised us, those are the questions we can ask ourselves. Are we trying to learn something new every day about God and His truth? Are we choosing what to do and say by what effect it has on our

eternal lives, and the lives of others?

Meanwhile, when the horrible, unexplainable things happen and we wonder where God is, and why He didn't stop them, we will just have to put our trust in Him and ask *Him* the questions. It's okay to show our true feelings to God, even when they are negative ones—He understands. Who else can we turn to? He may not, and probably won't answer us now in any way we can understand, but He will be with us now. He will care for us tenderly, cry with us, and finally take us to live forever with Him, where there will be no more tears or death, forever.

✓ Wen had been to some funerals, but this memorial service had to be the worst ever. Each person lost in the tragedy had a funeral in their own home town and church, but the college had a memorial service for all of them. The big college church was packed to the doors. Up front, there were 10 enlarged photographs, some of them senior pictures, on easels, along with a sea of flowers. Wen stayed close to Josh, who could hardly speak.

Both of them seemed to sort of jerk to life when the pastor said, “We may well ask why God would allow such a terrible thing to happen. These young people were at the beginning of their lives. Some of them were about to graduate. Two were engaged to be married. All were working for God!” The pastor paused and shook his head. “Working for God! They were engaged in work that was feeding hundreds of hungry children! Shouldn't God have spared their lives? Didn't He know what great things they might have accomplished for Him? Then there's the bus driver, who has left a grieving family. How could God let this happen?”

The Pastor paused and looked around the room. Wen slid a sideways look at Josh, whose eyes seemed riveted to the pastor's face. He held his breath. Josh had been talking wildly, talking of leaving school, of leaving the church, of giving up faith altogether. Wen found himself praying wordlessly.

“I don't know.”

Wen closed his eyes. *Way to go, pastor! That's helpful!*

"We can't answer questions like this. But I'll tell you what I do know. God hates *all* the bad things that happen in this world. Sin causes death and sorrow. If He's going to stop one thing, why not another?"

Wen opened his eyes and looked up.

"Why not stop *anyone* from dying in accidents? Why not stop any children from dying of starvation?"

Wen forgot, for the moment, about Josh, and noticed the anger he'd felt, himself, churning around just below his consciousness. He hadn't thought of it in that light. He remembered thinking, after 9/11, that some people told the stories of their friends or family members who miraculously *hadn't* died, as if God had somehow loved them more than those who had. Should he be so upset just because these were *his* friends? Weren't there accidents every day? Didn't people die in them? Had he ever demanded of God why He hadn't stopped those accidents? He felt guilty, thinking about it, and then remembered Josh and felt even guiltier. His loss was nothing to his friend's.

"If He's going to stop one, I think He'd rather stop it all." said the pastor. "Don't you think so?"

Wen saw Josh nod slightly, his lips trembling.

Through his tears, Pastor Jake suddenly lit up with a smile. "Friends, listen. He will. He *will!* That's what I'm here to remind us all. That's the thing to hang onto now. We will see our loved ones again, and one day there will be no more death at all."

Wen stopped sliding sideways glances and looked at Josh. A tear was sliding down his cheek. Thank God. Until now, Josh had only been furious. As far as Wen knew Josh hadn't cried at all or slept since hearing about the accident. Wen had a feeling that if Josh could just let go and cry like a baby, it might be a good thing.

Wen's eyes were stinging, too. He saw Josh put his face in his hands and heard him whisper brokenly, *God, I'm so mad at You!*

Wen sighed. It would take a while. But it would be okay, now. ●

## Discussion Questions

1. Have you had someone close to you die? How did you deal with the grief and the questions?
2. What do you think would happen if God stopped letting anything negative or painful happen to those who follow Him?
3. Do you know someone who is grieving? It doesn't have to be a death. It can be the loss of a job, or loss of health, or moving away from friends and feeling lonely. What can you do to share Jesus' comfort with that person?
4. Did the things you have said and done today share God's resurrected life, or did they spread death and destruction? Is there anything you will do to be more aware of sharing life instead of death?



## LIFE IDENTITY

### PRINCIPLE #8

Because Jesus the Great I AM is, was, and always will be, because He lived out a True and Complete life here on earth, I can be my true and complete self in Him.

## THE GREAT “I AM”

*Jesus said, “I Am”*

When was walking down the street, so deep in thought that he almost ran into someone. He jogged to the side automatically, looked up to apologize, then blinked and smiled. “Andrea!” Hi! I haven’t seen you in a while. I don’t get into the café as often in the evening.”

“Yeah, well, it’s a lot busier in the evening, too, so we wouldn’t have much time to talk if you did. How are you doing?”

“I’m great! Would you believe I’ve finally locked into a major? Pre-med, if you can imagine that.”

“Pre-med! Really? You’re in for the long haul, then.”

“Well, remember when you told me that I ought to think about what I’d want to be if I never grew up? You might have just been joking, but the way I took it was to think what I really dreamed of in my heart, what I would do if I didn’t have to worry about cost, and time, and all that. And the truth is, I’ve always wanted to be a doctor, only it seemed so impossible. Even now, just thinking of the years ahead of me scares me. But when I took it to God and really prayed, asking Him to show me, not just what He wants me to do with my life, but who I truly *am* inside, that vision just became so clear that I

Andrea laughed. "That's so great, Wen! But anything you might ever have 'owed' me is more than paid off. I'll have you know that I, too, know what I want to be when I grow up, and it's because of our discussions. See, I've been fixated for so long on a college education. No, that's not even right. I wasn't fixated on *getting* a college education. I was wasting all my energy being fixated on the *impossibility* of getting one. I believed I was a loser from the beginning,

Wen grinned, but said seriously, "It's all because the

[illegible]

great I AM has knocked our heads together a little and got us to realize we too can live significant lives as we remain connected to the Him."

† We have studied all seven "I Am" statements John records Jesus as saying: I am the Light of the world; "I am the Door of the sheepfold"; "I am the Bread of Life"; "I am the Good Shepherd"; "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"; "I am the True Vine"; and "I am the Resurrection and the Life." For our last session together, we're going to look more closely at the "I Am" itself. Where did it come from? What does it mean?

The first time this term was used was in Exodus 3:14, 15. Let's go there together. What story is this? [*People will recognize it as the story of God calling Moses from the burning bush.*] Moses thought the life of leadership he had trained for in Egypt was long over. He had been a shepherd for 40 years and had no idea he would ever be anything else. During that time, he had also been a writer. God had inspired him to write down the story of Creation and the stories of the first godly leaders, like Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob, Leah, and Rachel.

Now, his life takes a sudden, shocking turn. God says, "I want you to go get the Israelites out of Egypt and lead them to the Promised Land.

Imagine if you were Moses. *What??!!*

He argued for a while: "I'm too shy, I can't talk, and they'll never listen." God isn't letting him argue his way out of this assignment. Now, Moses asks, "Well, whom shall I say sent me? They'll want to know who you really are."

Now this is an interesting thing. Moses just meant, "What's your name?" But God knew that the question of Who You Really Are is extremely important, and goes way deeper than your name. His answer is unexpected and a little strange. [*Read or have someone read verses 14, 15.*]

"I Am Who I Am." Strange name, don't you think? But a much deeper and truer answer. We are almost never exactly who we say we are. In fact, we don't even *know* fully who we are at heart. But God, in contrast, is always exactly and truly *who He says He is*. There's an idea of choice implied,

especially in those Bibles that translate this as “I will be who I will be.” God says, “I am who and what I choose to be.”

And there's even more than that in the Hebrew. Mrs. White says, "I AM means an eternal presence; the past, present, and future are alike with God. He sees the most remote events of past history and the far distant future with as clear a vision as we do those things which are transpiring daily" (*That I May Know Him*, p. 12). A Jewish rabbi named Marcia Prager, a Hebrew scholar herself, suggests other ways to translate the Hebrew phrase: "I am the Eternal Am-ness," or "I am the Oneness that lives and points toward life." Or "I am the Eternal Being. I am Being calling Being into Being each moment."\* [*You could have a scribe put these on a board.*]

That's an interesting one. In other words, God is creative not just when He first called the universe, and our world, into existence, but all the time. He is creating right now. He is re-creating us, as much as we will allow, every moment. He gives us a choice, too. In many ways we are who we believe we are,

and who we choose to be. And when we choose to cooperate with Him in that new creation, then in the same way that He is who He truly is, we begin to see and learn and be who we truly are, too.

Besides these seven times in John's gospel that Jesus uses the term "I Am" as an identifying principle, there are four times recorded in the gospels that He uses just the name of God, by itself. We will look at all four of them.

All but one is still in John's gospel. The first two are in one chapter, John 8, so please turn there in your Bibles. If you scan this chapter quickly, you'll see that it looks familiar. The first part of the chapter is the story of the woman caught in adultery, and right after Jesus forgives her, He makes the statement, "I am the Light of the world."

At this point, leaders and Pharisees start arguing with Him. You have to admit, if an ordinary person said that, you'd be tempted to lock him away and keep the key! Who did Jesus think He was? And that is the essential question, right there. *Who did He think He*

[illegible]

\_\_\_\_\_ was? *Who did He say He was?*  
\_\_\_\_\_ And was He telling the truth, or  
\_\_\_\_\_ was He crazy? Because it had  
\_\_\_\_\_ to be one or the other, unless  
\_\_\_\_\_ He was just plain lying, to get  
\_\_\_\_\_ people to follow Him. If it was  
\_\_\_\_\_ that, He'd have given it all up  
\_\_\_\_\_ when it started to threaten His  
\_\_\_\_\_ life, right? And this chapter,  
\_\_\_\_\_ right here, is where it starts  
\_\_\_\_\_ to threaten His life. Instead of  
\_\_\_\_\_ giving up, Jesus gets more and  
\_\_\_\_\_ more direct in His statements.  
\_\_\_\_\_ When they try to say they need  
\_\_\_\_\_ some verification of who He  
\_\_\_\_\_ claims to be other than just  
\_\_\_\_\_ His own words, He actually  
\_\_\_\_\_ claims to be the judge and not  
\_\_\_\_\_ only that, but also the one who  
\_\_\_\_\_ always judges rightly!

\_\_\_\_\_ Then, look at verse 24: "If  
\_\_\_\_\_ you do not believe that I am  
\_\_\_\_\_ the one I claim to be, you will  
\_\_\_\_\_ indeed die in your sins." Wow!  
\_\_\_\_\_ That's just how God referred  
\_\_\_\_\_ to Himself when speaking to  
\_\_\_\_\_ Moses. "I am who I claim to  
\_\_\_\_\_ be." And here is Jesus, not only  
\_\_\_\_\_ claiming that for Himself, but  
\_\_\_\_\_ telling them that if they don't  
\_\_\_\_\_ believe, they'll "die in their  
\_\_\_\_\_ sins," which means, die the  
\_\_\_\_\_ Second Death—die forever! Can  
\_\_\_\_\_ you see that if you don't believe  
\_\_\_\_\_ that He actually is God who  
\_\_\_\_\_ came to earth in human flesh,

you would have to believe that  
He was criminally insane?

But He still doesn't stop,  
even though they keep arguing.  
In verse 28 He tells them  
that when they lift Him up—  
meaning the crucifixion—they  
will know He really is who He  
says He is. (They still did not  
believe Him, or at least they  
did not admit to it, but the  
Roman centurion did. Do you  
remember what He said after  
He oversaw the crucifixion of  
Jesus? "Surely this Man was the  
Son of God!")

But let's go on. In verse 56,  
Jesus says Abraham rejoiced  
at the thought of His day. The  
people who are arguing with  
him scoff, "You're not even 50  
years old! You claim to have  
seen Abraham?!"

And here it comes. Read  
verse 59, and try to imagine  
what it would have felt like to  
hear this, if you were in that  
crowd that day. Remember,  
this is just an ordinary-looking  
man, wearing ordinary clothes.  
He has to eat and sleep, He  
gets sweaty and tired when He  
walks all day, and He looks you  
in the eye and says, "I tell you  
the truth . . . *before Abraham  
was born, I am!*" (Italics added).



the murderous throng could not stand for a moment. They staggered back. Priests, elders, soldiers, and even Judas, fell as dead men to the ground” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 694).

In Luke 22:47-50 we see a crowd led by Judas, who betrayed him with a kiss, approaching. When the disciples saw what was happening, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest. But Jesus touched his ear and healed him. You would think after witnessing such a miracle that the soldiers would be afraid to touch Him, but no, they got back up as if nothing had ever happened, tied His hands again (Jesus had freed himself, without effort, to heal Malchus’ ear), and dragged Him away for beatings and a couple of mock trials.

The fourth place where He is recorded as using God’s name is found in Mark 14:62. Please turn there with me. This is the part of His trial where He is standing before the high priest, Caiaphas. He has stood silently, refusing to answer any of the manufactured charges against Him, until Caiaphas asks point blank (in verse 61), “Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed One?”

“I am,” says Jesus. And even *that’s* not all. He adds a promise for the corrupted high priest who has led His people astray. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Verse 62).

I wonder what Caiaphas and the rest of those who condemned and killed the Son of God will then think. I hope at least some of them came to saving faith and will be thinking, with tears, “He did it for *me!*”

One thing is clear. Throughout His life, Jesus knew very clearly who He was. But He made the deliberate choice to lay aside his divine powers and to live as a man, in complete submission to His Father. In the early stage of His ministry, He refrained to openly proclaim His identity because His “time had not yet come” as He often said. It was indeed the revelation of His identity that led Him to the cross. The one charge against Him at His trial that was actually true was that He made Himself equal with God.

He came for two purposes. He came to clear up people’s misconceptions about who God

was and show them that God is a God of infinite love and compassion, and to make it possible for all who are willing to become children of God to learn to be who they really are.

When we “die daily,” as Paul says, daily making choices to be who God wants us to be, we are dying to old selves, our old ways, and being transformed into new selves and embracing new ways of love and light in the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Every day this week, we've talked about who Jesus said He was, and how He knew and lived by that. Every day we've added ways in which we can reflect that reality in our own identities. Let's look back at all those ways and give them each some more thought.

*[If you have made a poster, or power point slides, of these identity principles, you will have them to refer to, and perhaps read aloud together.]*

**Because Jesus is the Light of the world, I can be a candle, lighting others' paths to Him.** When we choose to dwell in the light of God, all that is not of God in us is revealed; as we confess them,

we receive forgiveness and  
grace and the renewed spiritual  
empowerment to live for Him.  
Our candles are lit so that we  
can share light.

Then, when someone is feeling sad or down and we reach out to listen to them, help them, or cheer them up, we are being a candle. When we see that a close friend is in danger of falling into error or temptation, and we *carefully, lovingly, prayerfully* give them a warning, we are shining light into their dark corners. (You can't do this with anyone who is not already a close friend who trusts you not to be judgmental or critical. And you can't do it unless you are willing to receive this kind of help in return.) When we visit the sick, help the helpless, feed the hungry, and every time we praise God openly, we are shining our candles in the darkness, pointing others to the Door that leads to Life.

**Because Jesus is my Door, I can be a doorkeeper, welcoming others into God's family.** When we choose to walk through the Door that is Jesus, we will find that He is a gateway to new possibilities, taking us places we never

[illegible]

God knew that the question of Who You Really Are is extremely important, and goes way deeper than your name.

thought possible (and maybe didn't think we wanted to go!) And when we open our doors to Jesus and let Him live in us, we are open to new ways of serving Him.

Then, when we are welcoming to "outsiders," showing them around, inviting them to eat with us and sit with us, we are being Jesus' doorkeepers. When we welcome visitors to our churches, no matter how they dress or act, we are being godly doorkeepers. When we act to protect others, especially those younger or weaker than we are, from physical or spiritual danger, or when we act publicly for issues of justice with peace, we are being doorkeepers.

**Because Jesus is the Bread of life, I can be a grain of wheat, giving myself to feed others His Word.** When we

keep ourselves fed on the Word every day, and pray for thorough digestion of the truths in it, we will be able to pass it out to others more effectively. When we recognize His spirit of self-sacrifice, and ask for that spirit to be reproduced in us, we will learn to be willing and joyful to give ourselves up for Him.

Then, when we physically feed the hungry by our own personal initiative or at a soup kitchen or a Community Services Center, we are passing out the Bread of Life. When people ask us why we are happy or how we can behave so lovingly, especially to those who may not seem very lovable, and we explain that we don't have any special ability, but we have Jesus in our life and are trying to imitate Him, we are passing out the Bread of Life. When we give up

something we wanted to do or have, in order to do something loving for someone else, we are giving our lives as the grain of wheat does, so that others may grow. And we will grow, too!

**Because Jesus is my Shepherd, I can be a lamb that follows faithfully, and also an under-shepherd, helping to care for other lambs.** When we follow Jesus faithfully, trying to go only where He would have us go, we will be faithful lambs. When we get stuck or lost, if we immediately call to Jesus for help instead of trying to figure out a way to save ourselves, we are wise sheep.

Then, when we use our influence to turn the flock back toward the shepherd when it gets frightened and wants to stampede, we'll be good and faithful lambs. We may even be called to be under-shepherds—hired help who *don't* run away when the flock is in danger, just to save ourselves. When we gently seek to guide others, especially younger ones, to follow Jesus, not us, for themselves, we are faithful under-shepherds.

**Because Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, I can walk in His Way, hold up His Truth, and share an abundant, full life with those around me.** When we keep our minds trained to recognize God's way, by studying His word more and more deeply as we grow, when we learn God's truth inside and out so that we will recognize falsehood when we see it, our lives will be full and abundant.

Then, when we are followers of the Way, others may do so also. When we hold up the Truth (Jesus) even when it is difficult or dangerous, others may do the same. And our lives will grow ever fuller and more abundant as we gain the strength and ability to share it. The more we give away, the more we will have.

**Because Jesus is the True Vine, I can be a blessed branch, drawing my nourishment from Him and glorifying God with much fruit.** When we cling closer and closer to Jesus, learning to abide in Him *all* the time, when we strive for a union with Him so perfect that our soul's nourishment comes

through Him, we will be fruitful branches.

Then we will spend the rest of our lives learning what our particular, unique gifts and talents are, and will begin to have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control—enough to give away by the basketful!

**Because Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, I can rejoice in His newness of life now and trust Him for life eternal.** When we have chosen Jesus and abide in Him, He promises that we *have* eternal life beginning right now. We will begin to be more fearless when we know there is nothing in this life or in death that can keep us from Jesus.

Then we will long to find new ways to pass that trust and that life on to all we meet. We will be able to trust Him when sorrow and loss come, and to help and grieve with others who suffer or face loss. We will have a trust in God that will neither pretend everything is all right and there is no reason to cry, nor rail against God and blame Him for the losses. And we will

be able to pass on that attitude to others.

**Because Jesus the Great I AM is, was, and always will be, because He lived out a True and Complete life here on earth, I can be my true and complete self in Him.** When we keep our eyes on the one and only True and Complete Life that has ever lived, we will begin to see new things. We will learn when and to whom He told the truth sternly, and when and to whom He told it gently and tenderly. We'll watch how He treated people, and notice which

ones He was most drawn to. We'll see that He didn't allow Himself to be taken before His time, and that when the time came, He was not ashamed to acknowledge His own anguish or to express it to His Father, but He bravely faced up to it anyway. Then, we'll begin to seek and understand our own true and complete selves.

We'll understand that the church is to be united, but not uniform. We are God's child, and we are unique in the universe. We'll spend time asking God what He wants us to do while we are here, and how

to be ready to do that work. While doing the work I am given now, I will be *me*. While doing the work you are given now, you will be *you*.

And we will live in love with God and each other until we live eternally with Him. ●

---

### Reference

\*Prager, Rabbi Marcia, (1998). *The Path of Blessing*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, pp. 81, 82.

## Discussion Questions

1. Which is your favorite of all the "I Am" statements we've studied, and why?
2. Name one way you have chosen to discover who you are this week.
3. What are some ways you can help clear up misconceptions about God and show your friends that He is a God of love and compassion?

But the question that matters most is, *Who are you? No, who are you really?*

## **WORLD YOUTH DIVISIONS CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **ECD–East Central Africa**

#### ***Magulilo Mwakalonge***

P O Private Bag  
00503 Mbagathi, Nairobi  
KENYA  
Tel: 254 20 660-3000  
E-Mail: mwakalongem@ecd.adventist.org  
**Adm. Asst. Anne-Marie**  
**Ngendabanyikwa**  
ngendabanyikwa@ecd.adventist.org

### **EUD–Euro Africa**

#### ***Stephan Sigg***

Schosshaldenstrasse 17  
3006 Berne  
SWITZERLAND  
Tel: 41 31 359-1530  
E-Mail: stephan.sigg@euroafrica.org  
**Adm. Asst: Esther Hanselmann**  
Esther.Hanselmann@euroafrica.org

### **EES–Euro Asia**

#### ***Kasap Gennady***

Krasnoyarskaya Street #3  
107589 Moscow  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
Tel: 7 495 786-8150  
Email: gkasap@ead-sda.ru  
**Adm. Asst: Yulia Lisovaya**  
jlisovaya@ead-dsa.ru

### **IAD–Inter America**

#### ***Benjamin Carballo***

#### ***Louise Nocandy (associate)***

PO Box 830518  
Miami, FL 33183-0518  
Tel: (305) 403-4700  
E-Mail: carballobe@interamerica.org  
E-Mail: nocandylo@interamerica.org  
**Adm. Asst: Jainie Baltodano**  
baltodanoja@interamerica.org  
**Adm. Asst: Oliva Florez**  
florezol@interamerica.org

### **NAD–North America**

#### ***James L. Black***

#### ***Manny Cruz (associate)***

12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring MD 20904  
Tel: (301) 680-6421/(301) 680-6472  
E-Mail: james.black@nad.adventist.org  
E-Mail: manny.cruz@nad.adventist.org  
**Adm. Asst: Gael Murray**  
gael.murray@nad.adventist.org

### **NSD–Northern Asia Pacific**

#### ***Nak Hyung Kim***

#### ***Bevan Mark Jenneke (associate)***

PO Box 431  
Koyang Ilsan 411-600  
REPUBLIC OF KOREA  
Tel: 82 31 910-1528  
E-Mail: youth@nsdadventist.org  
E-Mail: bmjenneke@nsd.adventist.org  
**Adm. Asst: Angela Han**  
chunek@nsdadventist.org

### **SAD–South America**

#### ***Areli Barbosa***

Caixa Postal 02600  
70279-970 Brasilia, DF  
BRAZIL  
Tel: 55 61 3345-1818  
E-Mail: areli.barbosa@adventistas.org.br  
**Adm. Asst: Tania Fanti**  
tania.fanti@adventistas.org.br

### **SID–Southern Africa Indian Ocean**

#### ***Busi Khumalo***

PO Box 4583  
Rietvalleirand 0174  
SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 12 345-5929  
E-Mail: khumalob@sid.adventist.org  
**Adm. Asst: Arlete Paulo**  
pauloa@sid.adventist.org

### **SPD–South Pacific**

#### ***Nick Kross***

#### ***Litiana Turner (associate)***

Locked Bag 2014  
Wahroonga NSW 2076  
AUSTRALIA  
Tel: 61 2 9847-3221  
E-Mail: nkross@adventist.org.au  
litanaturner@adventist.org.au  
**Adm. Asst: Nicole Brzezniak**  
nbrzezniak@adventist.org.au

### **SSD–Southern Asia Pacific**

#### ***Jobbie Yabut***

Box 040  
4118 Silang, Cavite  
PHILIPPINES  
Tel: 63 46 414-4068  
E-mail: jyabut@ssd.org  
**Adm. Asst: Carmen Sarmiento**  
csarmiento@ssd.org

### **SUD–Southern Asia**

#### ***Ravindra Shankar***

Post Box 2 HCF  
Hosur 635 110  
Tamil Nadu  
INDIA  
Tel: 91 4344 26-2170  
E-Mail: mravis70@hotmail.com

### **TED–Trans European**

#### ***Paul Tompkins***

119 St. Peter's Street  
St. Albans, Herts AL1 3EY  
ENGLAND  
Tel: 44 1727 860-331  
E-Mail: ptompkins@ted-adventist.org  
**Adm. Asst: Judy McKie**  
jmckie@ted-adventist.org

### **WAD–West Central Africa**

#### ***N. John Enang***

22 Boite Postale 1764  
Abidjan 22  
COTE D'IVOIRE  
Tel: 225-22-44-00-97  
E-mail: njenang2000@yahoo.co.uk

introducing:

# identity

2012 devotional for youth and youth leaders

available Summer 2011



check out other youth resources • spread the word

online at: [www.gcyyouthministries.org](http://www.gcyyouthministries.org)

facebook: GC Youth Ministries

impact

SOUTH  
AFRICA

2013

SERVICE  
PROJECTS

JULY 1 - 6, 2013

[www.gcyyouthministries.org](http://www.gcyyouthministries.org)

CONFERENCES

JULY 8 - 13, 2013