

*John: The Gospel of Light and Life*  
Adam Hamilton  
Chapter 3 Discussion  
The “I AM” Sayings of Jesus (pgs. 57-71)

**Opening Prayer**

Holy God of light and life, thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ. Bless our time together as we study this Gospel. Open our hearts so that we may be receptive to your word and grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Bible and Book Study and Discussion**  
“I AM”

**Read John 20:31 (pg. 163) (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible pg. 1856)**

- Here John states his reason for writing this Gospel.
- These seven “I AM” sayings about are contained in this Gospel and point to the divinity of Jesus and affirm that Jesus gives life to all who believe in him.
- The great language the words for “I AM” are *ego eimi*.
  - How do we translate the Greek word *ego*?
  - **The Self, I**
  
  - How do we translate *eimi*?
  - **“to be”**
- **Read Exodus 3:13-15 (Cultural Background Study Bible pg. 110-111)**
  - What was the significance of the name “I Am Who I Am” in the polytheistic culture where Moses lived?
  - **I AM is the true name of God, the one that is most revered.**
  
  - What do you think is the significance of this name in our culture today?
  - **The name I AM, or LORD, or GOD is seeming to be less important in our current culture because there are any who question the significance, presence, and reality of God/Jesus/Christ.**
  - **Many find that it is something that is too surreal and that maybe it was written and is fake.**
  - **But why? (Keep in mind that these are all examples of things I heard at one point or another.**

- It is possible that there are many possible reasons:
  - They haven't taken the time to truly get to know God/Jesus/Holy Spirit
  - They are unsure of how things could change for the better or even for the worse
  - It scares people, and they do not understand how a God or even a being from long ago can do such wonderful and marvelous things.
  - Does prayer even work? I have been praying and nothing has even happened, I haven't even seen a sign, or a glimpse of a possibility that something has happened.
  - A POSSIBLE MAIN REASON:
    - People do not believe in things that they cannot see or touch. Which would make them real.
    - Or what is the scientific proof that this book, The Bible is real, how do we know that a drunk man didn't just sit down and write it one day?
    - We truly do not know the reason, these are some true reasons that I have heard.
- Do you have any other observations or things that you may have heard or experienced or felt?

### **Biblical Research**

- **On pg. 64**, Read the seven **"I AM"** sayings.
  - *I am the bread of life.*
  - *I am the light of the world.*
  - *I am the gate of the sheep.*
  - *I am the good shepherd.*
  - *I am the resurrection and the life.*
  - *I am the way, the truth, and the life.*
  - *I am the true vine.*

- *Note: That the sayings about gate and the good shepherd are grouped together.*
- What does this “I AM” saying tell us about Jesus?
  - This statement demonstrates a connection between Jesus the Lamb of God, and the Eucharist.
  - John knows about the Eucharist and uses its symbolism in the story of the transformation of water into wine, and here in Jesus’ words about being the bread of life.
  - Just as bread is a sustainable food for all living creatures, Jesus is a sustainable food for all living creatures, a form of life that is delivered to us just by sharing the Eucharist with other individuals or believers. Through transubstantiation we get Holy Communion, our representation and partaking of the last supper.
  - “I am the BREAD of life.” Jesus draws from the Passover Seder and the manna by which God sustained the Israelites in the wilderness.
  - Pointing to the deliverance demonstrates that he will deliver us from all sin and evil through his death and resurrection.
  - This belief sustains and brings hope to his disciples.
- How does this saying proclaim that Jesus gives life to everyone who believe in him?
- It proclaims that the Bread of life sustains us but also binds us as people and believers together.
- How did Jesus build on or reinterpret Old Testament understandings of these words and phrases?
- Jesus’ actions and events made important connections to the Old Testament.
  - Such events are:
    - Bringing the Israelites out of slavery.
    - Giving his disciples and followers bread or manna.
    - Using this sustainable food substance to bring people together through the breaking of the bread.
    - Also using the father’s words and teachings to demonstrate that the presence of Christ has been with them always from the times of the Old Testament up to the present (their present day) and even now.
    - Pg. 66 John does not recount Jesus’ words at the Last supper, reinterpreting the Bread and Wine in this way. But John knows about the Eucharist and uses its symbolism in the story

for the transformation of water into wine, and here in Jesus' words about being the bread of life.

- This draw allows John to draw on the deeper meaning of Holy Communion.

- How does this "I AM" saying speak to us/you today?
- *All time for the participants to speak and answer with their observations and experiences.*

### **Group Work/Readings (Old Testament Connections)**

#### **Group 1**

"I am the gate of the sheep." (John 10:7)

"I am the good shepherd." (John 10:11)

Larger context: John 10:1-16

Related Old Testament references: Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11, 56:7-8; Ezekiel 34:23.

#### **Group 2**

"I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25)

Larger Context: John 11:17-27

Related Old Testament references: 1 Kings 17:17-24; Isaiah 25:8, 26:19a; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Daniel 12:1-4; Hosea 6:1-3, 13:14.

#### **Group 3**

"I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)

Larger Context: John 14:1-6.

Related Old Testament references: Exodus 13:21-22; Psalm 25:4-5, 8-10; Psalm 31:5-6; Psalm 139:7-10, 24; Deuteronomy 32:4.

#### **Group 4**

"I am the true vine." (John 15:1)

Larger Context: John 15:1-8

Related Old Testament references: Psalm 80:8-19; Isaiah 5:1-7.

### *I AM the bread of life.*

- Hamilton points out that John relates this “I AM” saying to two significant events: Jesus feeding the multitudes and Passover. The story of Jesus feeding the multitudes is the only miracle story that is record in all four Gospels.

*Read John 6:26-59 (pg. 75-76) (Cultural Background Study Bible pg. 1821-1822)*

- *Read Exodus 16:4, 15 (Cultural Background Study Bible pg. 138)*
- *Read Nehemiah 9:15 (Cultural Background Study Bible pg. 791)*
- *Read Psalm 78:23-24 (Cultural Background Study Bible pg. 958)*
- What does the saying “I am the bread of life” tell us about Jesus when considered in the context of Passover?
  - *Saving his people by breaking bread together, or by providing bread for their survival.*
  - *Answers may vary depending on the individual interpretation.*
- What does the saying tell us about Jesus when considered in the context of manna in the wilderness or desert?
- *When we are lost, he will provide food for our hunger, and water for our thirst.*

*Note that in addition to the Old Testament contexts of Passover and manna, we also understand this “I AM” saying in the context of Holy Communion.*

- When you partake in the sacrament of Holy Communion, how are you participating in Christ’s story of salvation?
  - *Let the participants share their thoughts, and experiences.*
    - *Some possibilities:*
      - *Sharing a meal as the family of God*
      - *Coming together as one in Christ at the same table as the disciples did.*
      - *Partaking in the body and blood allowing us to receive the gifts that were sacrificed for us on the cross.*

- How does the sacrament of Holy Communion bind people together?
- Let the participants share their thoughts, and experiences.
  
- What is the significance of the phrase “Breaking bread”?
  - Partaking in the bread, which is the body through transubstantiation, to receive Christ into our lives.
  
- What does “bread” symbolize or signify in our culture?
  - Let the participants share their thoughts, and experiences.
  - Possibilities may include:
    - Food for us to survive
    - Sustenance for a healthy life
    - Bringing Christians/believers together
    - etc.
  
- In our community of faith? In your family?
  - Let the participants share their thoughts, and experiences.
  
- How does the bread of Holy Communion bring you spiritual sustenance?
  - Let the participants share their thoughts, and experiences.

**“I AM the light of the World.”**

- Old Testament references
  - Genesis 1:3, 5, 16 (*Cultural Background Study Bible* pg. 4-5)
  - Exodus 13:21 (*Cultural Background Study Bible* pg. 134)
  - Psalm 27:1, 56:12-13, 119:105 (*Cultural Background Study Bible* pg. 903, 935, 1000)
  - Isaiah 2:5, 49:6, 60:1, 19 (*Cultural Background Study Bible* pg. 1112, 1196, 1211-1212)
- What does the “light” represent in these Old Testament texts?
  - In the Bible light has always been a symbol of holiness, goodness, knowledge, wisdom, grace, hope, and God’s revelation.
  - In contrast, darkness has been associated with evil, sin, and despair.

- When God called Israel and Judah to be the light for the nations, what did God intend for them to do?
- God chose the ancient Israelites because He had promised Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation and occupy the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:3, 7; 17:4, 7-8; 22:17). God blessed Abraham and his descendants because of Abraham's faith, a living faith that resulted in diligent obedience to God's instructions and law (Genesis 26:3-5).
- This promise was repeated to Abraham's son, Isaac, and to Abraham's grandson, Jacob (Genesis 17:21; 26:24; 28:1-4, 13).
- It is possible that he intended for them to go out and share the good news of Jesus and help them to see themselves and our world in his light.
  
- What is the significance of light in the Jewish Festival of Booths?
- The Feast of Booths vividly reinforced God's provision and guidance for Israel During some their darkest days. The extended backward look was designed to generate joyful gratitude for Yahweh's grace and faithfulness to the nation.
- We read in John 7 that Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Festival of Sukkot. Sukkot is a Hebrew word meaning huts or booths: hence, the celebration is often called the Festival of Booths.
- This was to remember Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness, a time in which the people lived in tents or "booths."
  
- What does light symbolize in the Christian faith?
- "The people walking in the darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned." Isaiah 60:19.
  - Possible answers
    - God's promise
    - Jesus' actions of kindness and redemption.
    - symbols of holiness, goodness, knowledge, wisdom, grace, hope, and God's revelation.
  
- How have you experienced spiritual darkness?
- Answers to this question may be personal to the participants.
  
- How have you experienced the light of Christ?
- Answers to this question may be personal to the participants.

- How is your faith community a light that shows nonbelievers the way to Christ?
- Answers to this question may be personal to the participants.

### **Reflect**

- Read John 8:12 (pg. 79) (*Cultural Background Study Bible pg. 1826*)
- How did you feel during the reading?
  - Answers to this question may be personal to the participants.
- How do you feel in light?
  - Answers to this question may be personal to the participants.
- How do you feel when it is dark?
  - Answers to this question may be personal to the participants.

### **Hymn Study and Discussion**

**“Christ Be our Light”**  
**Bernadette Farrell**

*Verse 1*

**Isaiah 9:2**(*Cultural Background Study Bible pg. 1129*)

*Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.*

**Refrain**

*Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ, be our light!  
Shine in your church gathered today.*

**Verse 2**

*Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has pow’r to save us.  
Make us your living voice.*



**Refrain**

**Verse 3**

**Isaiah 55:1-2(Cultural Background Study Bible pg. 1205)**

*Longing for food, many are hungry.  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.*

**Refrain**

**Verse 4**

*Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us your building, sheltering others,  
walls made of living stone.*

**Refrain**

**Verse 5**

**1 Corinthians 12(Cultural Background Study Bible pg. 2006-2007)**

*Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong.  
Let us be servants to one another,  
making your kingdom come.*

**Refrain**

- The first verse of the song talks about how we long for light in the darkness.... How would you interpret this phrase?
- How could the Refrain be used as a prayer for light or guidance as we wait for the light of Christ to come into our lives, and illuminate our path?

## **Wrapping Up**

### **Reflect (Personal/Optional)**

- Re-read the “I AM” statements (pg. 64)
- How has your understanding of the person, purpose, and ministry of Jesus Christ grown through this study of the “I AM” sayings?
- Do any of these “I AM” sayings speak to you in a special way?
- Which of the sayings can you be for someone else?
- What are the new insights do you have regarding your relationship with Jesus Christ?

### **Closing Prayer**

*Lord Jesus, when we look at you, we believe we are seeing the Father. We know that we need more than bread to live. We need you and the love, mercy, and life that you give. Be the bread of life for us. Sustain us and feed our souls. Be our light and dispel the darkness in our lives. May your light so shine in us that other might see you through us. Amen.*