

# Jesus is the Only Way

John 14:5-7

18 April 2021 | Grace Bible Church Corinda | Ben Shannon

**Big Question:** How can we get to God?

**Big Idea:** Jesus is the only way to God.

## Introduction

Have you ever been lost?

I mean, really lost?

Not just “I not exactly sure where I am,” but starting-to-panic lost.

The first time I flew through LAX (remember those days!) I had a significant layover.

I decided to fill in the hours by hiring a car and seeing a few sights before catching a red-eye across the country.

It was a great afternoon, that is until it was time to take the hire car back.

This was in the fairly early days of smart phones.

Sure, I was in a city I didn't know, but I had my recently-acquired three-year-old hand-me-down smart phone.

What could possibly go wrong?

Although I didn't have any data on my phone, I thought I was okay because I'd thought ahead and downloaded a GPS app.

The mapping app was pretty basic, but it seemed to work okay for getting me to major locations.

But when I was taking the car back, it took me down a whole heap of minor back streets.

That's when I found out that although it could find roads and locations, it didn't handle street numbers properly.

The hire car place was somewhere on a very long road and the GPS took me to a residential neighbourhood miles from where I was meant to be.

I was in an unfamiliar city, driving on the wrong side of the road for the first time, it was dark and I had a flight to catch.

First I went in one direction without any luck, so I turned around and went a long way in the opposite direction.

It was getting later and later into the night and the extra time I allowed so I wouldn't miss my flight started to disappear.

As the minutes raced by I started to wonder if I'd make my flight.

Panic started to set in.

I knew where I was meant to be going, but I had no idea how I was meant to get there.

That's kind of how the disciples were feeling in chapter fourteen of John's gospel.

After spending the best part of three years learning from Jesus, he sits eleven of his disciples down for a farewell pep talk.

This comes right after Jesus saying that one of them would betray him.

Right after, Judas clears out in verse 30 of chapter thirteen.

Then Jesus drops the real clanger in verse 33 when he tells them that he's not going to be with them for very much longer.

**John 13:33** NIV11 <sup>33</sup> "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

Peter, being Peter, wants to know where he's going and Jesus avoids giving him an answer.

He just says that they shouldn't worry, verse one, and that he's going to his father's house to prepare a place for them.

Jesus says that the disciples can't go where he's going.

At least, not yet, though they'll go there in the future.

Peter isn't having a bar of it and he wants to know why he can't come now.

To which Jesus replies that he's not really ready to give his life for Jesus, in fact, he'll deny him.

Well, that really is too much for Thomas because it's not at all clear to him exactly where Jesus's going.

It's pretty hard to get somewhere if you don't even know where it is that you're going.

You need directions.

Thomas pipes up with his own question in verse five:

**John 14:5** NIV11 <sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Thomas often gets a bad rap for being doubtful, but I think that's misunderstanding Thomas.

I heard someone call him 'Honest Thomas' which seems like a much better name.

He's not the kind of guy who asks questions to be a pain in the neck, but he doesn't want to settle for half-baked answers either.

He doesn't just want a vague answer, he wants an address that he can put into Google maps so that he can see on a map exactly where he's going and has clear directions on how to get there.

Thomas doesn't know where or the way, although the two things are related to each other.

But Jesus says that he already knows, verse four:

**John 14:4** NIV11 <sup>4</sup> You know the way to the place where I am going."

And that, my friends, sets the stage for the astonishing, mind-blowing answer that Jesus gives in verse six.

This's the sixth "I am" statement in John's gospel.

Each of these I am statements describes a bit about who Jesus is.

They're also a clever play on words because Jesus is revealing that he's God by describing himself as "I am", just like Yahweh did when he revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 3.

Jesus is describing what it means to be God's Messiah.

We're going to look at what it means for Jesus to be the way, the truth and the life.

It means that **Jesus is the only way to God.**

## The Way

The disciples can't imagine going on without their teacher, so it's no wonder that they're troubled – 14:1.

What they don't understand is that they can't go on unless Jesus goes first.

Thomas wants to know how to get there, but Jesus is the there.

Jesus is the way.

Many people are impressed by Jesus because he had some sane things to say to a messed up world.

Most people wouldn't disagree with what he says about living ethically in the world.

Jesus is an example for us, showing us how live the good life.

He said things like Matthew 7:12:

**Matthew 7:12** NIV11 <sup>12</sup> So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

But Jesus goes further than that because he was also on about showing us the way to God.

He was interested in more than just ethical living, he was concerned about living the righteous life that God requires of his people.

The most extreme example of living for the benefit of others is laying down your life for them.

Which is exactly what Jesus did when he went to the cross.

Many people see Jesus as the one who leads the way by bush bashing a new path for us to follow.

All of that is true of Jesus, but it falls short of what he means when he says that he's 'The Way.'

As he's talking to his disciples, Jesus is making clear that he's about to do something that Peter or anyone else can't.

Jesus' death is more than just an example to be followed.

He does more than just opening the way to God.

He IS the way to God.

The reason that Thommo was so confused is that the way isn't a place or direction.

The way is a person: Jesus himself.

On one level, the disciples already know Jesus, but on another level they still don't fully appreciate who he is and what he's got to do.

When Jesus says that he's going to prepare a place for them in verse three, he's not saying that he's going to turn down the bed and put in a hot water bottle ready for them to arrive.

He means that he's going to die, rise and ascend into heaven.

Jesus is going to the cross to make it possible for others to come home to God.

Going to the cross involved Jesus suffering more than we could ever imagine.

He didn't suffer just to be an example to us.

He suffered FOR us.

He died on the cross to pay the penalty for other people's sin.

When Jesus went to the cross, he walked a path that we couldn't.

Sure, any one of us can die for our sins.

Peter said that he was willing to do exactly that in 13:37, although when push came to shove, he denied Jesus instead.

But if we did that – if we died for our sins – we wouldn't be able to save ourselves.

All we would do would be receiving the penalty that our sins deserve and that would be the end of our story.

What Jesus endured was the fair penalty for sin, but it WASN'T the fair penalty for HIS sin because Jesus never even once sinned in his life.

Not even a single uncaring word, an unfaithful glance or a little fib.

He lived in perfect obedience to God at all times.

Which's why God can accept Jesus' life as the payment for our sins.

As Jesus hung on the cross, there were two criminals hanging on crosses on either side of him.

Luke's account of Jesus' life tells us that one of them mocked Jesus and told him to save himself.

What that criminal didn't understand is that Jesus could've saved himself, but he was on the cross to save others, not himself.

The other criminal realised that his own punishment was just, but that Jesus was dying for people exactly like him.

**Luke 23:41** NIV11 <sup>41</sup> We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

For the penalty of our sin to be paid, either we need to die or Jesus does.

His death is the way that our sins can be forgiven so that we can have a fate other than death.

Jesus' death is the only way sinners can live.

Jesus is the only way to God.

What do we typically call followers of Jesus, people who live with Jesus as their lord and saviour?

We usually call people like that Christians, don't we?

The Bible tells us that "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch," Acts 11:26.

There are a host of other names used for Christians in the Bible: disciples of Jesus, saints, those who call on the name of the Lord, brothers and sisters, believers and followers of Jesus.

But the earliest name given to Jesus' disciples was "those of the Way".

It sounds really awkward and maybe a bit creepy?

I don't think I've EVER heard someone called that.

It's interesting that's how Christians are described in Acts 9, 19 and 24.

People who follow the Way seems like a really good description though.

It captures that following Jesus isn't just a set of beliefs.

It's a way of life and that it's the way to life, as we'll see shortly.

And it affirms that JESUS is the way and not something that we can ever do for ourselves.

Jesus is the Way.

## The Truth

Secondly, Jesus is the truth.

When I think of "truth", I often think about a set of facts like:

- Although it seems ironic, the Nobel Peace Prize is named after Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite.
- More than 20% of the world's calories come from rice.
- Erno Rubik took a month to solve the cube he created.
- Kangaroos can't walk backwards.
- The angles of a triangle add up to 180 degrees.

These aren't opinions.

Facts don't change depending your particular perspective.

Yes, I know that there are some really sincere drongos trying to even challenge the facts maths on the basis of critical theory.

Even though I can't believe that it really does need to be defended in some places, it doesn't actually change the reality that facts are facts.

Facts aren't the kind of truth that Jesus's talking about here.

Like the way, the truth is a person. "I am the truth."

Truth isn't just facts to be known, but a person to have a relationship with.

Jesus is the truth who can be known and set people free:

**John 8:32** NIV11 <sup>32</sup> Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

New parents can't wait to share their bundle of joy with the world.

We put up pic of the little tacker on Facebook as soon as possible.

If you meet a new parent, they can't wait to whip out their phone and show you a picture of the new offspring.

Actually, the only thing worse than new parents is new grandparents!

You "oh" and "ah" politely, looking at the photos to try and work out who the baby takes after.

Yes! I can see now that he's got his mother's eyes and that's definitely his dad's hook nose.

Jesus is the truth because he basically does the same thing in reverse.

Instead of the parent introducing the child, seeing the child introduces the parent.

Jesus shows us – truly shows us – what his father's like because he does everything that his father tells him to.

Something that can't be said for the rest of us.

How would you draw God?

You can't because he can't be captured on a page.

God banned his people from even trying because they'd end up worshipping the incomplete and inadequate copy rather than God himself.

Which's exactly what they did.

While Moses was up the mountain, Aaron gathered gold, threw it into the fire and a calf idol popped out.

We can use words to describe God, but they fall short too.

Even using lots of words doesn't manage to capture exactly what God's like.

Before Jesus, people got glimpses of God.

No one's seen God, but lots of people saw Jesus.

And because he came from God, he's the only one who can explain exactly what God's like.

Jesus explains what God is TRULY like.

That's actually the point John makes in the first chapter of his gospel.

**John 1:18** NIV11 <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

You can make up whatever concept of God you like.

We'd like to think that we're more enlightened than God and so we try to come up with a better ourselves.

People have been making up gods for thousands of years to explain what couldn't be explained.

People still like to have a crack at it today, but that doesn't mean that those gods are real and true.

Really, they reflect what we're like as human beings rather than what the one true and living God's like.

People often tell us that God is a fairy tale, when the very things they believe are the real fairy tale.

Just because you make up a god, doesn't mean that it's true.

Jesus is the standard for what God's like and how the world should be interpreted.

It's true that we could be misunderstanding or misapplying what God's said.

That's why we need to keep going back to what he's revealed about himself in the Bible.

We should be asking, "Did God really say?" not to reject what God said like Adam and Eve did, but to make sure that we've heard him correctly.

Jesus shows us the truth of who God is.

## The Life

Jesus is the life.

At first, it might seem strange that Jesus would describe himself as the life.

I'm breathing in and out, my heart's still pumping and on rare occasions you get intelligent conversation as a sign of life.

Many of us feel like we're living life just fine, having a grand old time.

We don't need Jesus to live.

It's so easy to think that we're self-sufficient and life's not too bad when we can say, "I've got a good job, there's food on the table and the kids are doing well at school."

We forget, actually we struggle to face the reality that we all owe our very lives to God.

He's the one who's given us this life.

There's not a single thing that was made without him.



**John 1:3–4** NIV11 <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

Jesus is also the one who gives eternal life to everyone who trusts in him, John 3:15.

Doctors can do a marvellous job of helping people, but they can't claim to bring people back to life.

Certainly not bodies that have been dead for days, weeks, month, years, decades and centuries.

Jesus can.

He does this by putting an end to death.

He proved that he could do this by rising back to life after he died.

Can you conquer death?

Jesus has. And he promises that you can too, if you put your trust in him.

Jesus was once talking to two sisters who were grieving because their brother had died.

He knew these sisters well and so when they heard that Jesus was coming, one of them went out to meet him.

Martha wishes that Jesus had been there because then her brother wouldn't have died.

Jesus tells her that her brother will rise again.

Think about that for a second.

That's an incredibly cruel thing to say to someone who's grieving... IF IT ISN'T TRUE.

Offering false hope to people is despicable, but that's not what Jesus does because he really can offer life after death.

**John 11:25–27** NIV11 <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup> "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

Martha believed. Do you?

Jesus is the life.

## The ONLY Way, Truth and Life

Jesus is the ONLY way, truth and life.

You might believe in karma as a philosophy to live by.

*I believe in Karma what you give is what you get returned*

That's not an altogether bad way to live.

Doing good to others and treating them as you'd like to be treated is pretty much what Jesus says.

But it doesn't offer any hope to people who've done stuff that really is bad and they know it.

Jesus offers life to everyone, regardless of how they might've messed up in the past.

Other people think that the answer's to have a whole heap of gods.

There's safety in numbers so if you have lots of gods, then you'll cover all the bases.

So just add Jesus in with all of the others.

Except that Jesus demands EXCLUSIVE allegiance.

You must follow him and him alone.

He must be your backup plan, but not your ONLY plan.

Jesus certainly isn't the only ethic you can have or philosophy that you can follow.

He isn't the only one that people can worship.

But he is the only one who can take you to God.

The second half of verse six is really important.

There's no other way to the Father, except through Jesus.

**John 14:6b** NIV11 No one comes to the Father except through me.

This message didn't go down all that well in the ancient world because it's so exclusive.

Believing in one God meant that followers of the Way weren't putting their faith in other gods.

People around them were concerned that their gods might be offended.

Christians were seen as a threat to good and decent people because they would only worship Jesus alone.

This message that Jesus is the only way to God isn't any better received today.

Following Jesus cramps our style because it means living with him as Lord, living his way and not ours.

Many people don't really care at all whether what Jesus says is true or not, but they care a heap about him getting in their way.

Followers of the Way are seen as a threat to good and decent people who want to live according to whatever identity they choose.

The ultimate destination is the Father.

It's having our relationship with God the Father fixed and restored.

We can know the God who created us if we have our sins forgiven.

And knowing him is the greatest thing in all the world.

Verse seven tells us that you can know him now.

But you can't have the future blessing without knowing him now.

If you know Jesus, then you can know the God the father.

**John 14:7** NIV11 <sup>7</sup> If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Jesus doesn't restrict access to God, he opens it up.

You don't have to believe it, but there is no question what Jesus was claiming – that He is the exclusive path to God

You should place your trust in him because only he can save.

**Acts 4:12** NIV11 <sup>12</sup> Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

Is it any wonder that so many people are lost and confused?

People don't really know where they're going.

If you dig down beyond the surface, there's an awful lot of insecurity.

Jesus answers the question of where we can go – it's to be with God.

That's why Jesus tells us that he's the only way to get to God.

## Conclusion

Do you know where you're going?

People have all different kinds of ideas about what happens after we die.

There are people who think that we become worm food and just dissolve back into the universe and that's it.

They find something satisfying about the fact that they're just going to disappear into the universe.

That's not what Jesus says about what happens though.

Death isn't the end of our story.

We're headed for an eternity with God or completely separated from him.

Jesus says:

**John 5:28–29** NIV11 <sup>28</sup> “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.

Perhaps you're feeling lost and confused this morning.

It could well be that you hadn't even noticed before you came here, but you've quietly sat and listened, life feels out of control.

You don't really know where you're going and it might be that panic is setting in.

Friend, if that's you then don't leave here this morning burdened, weighed down and alone.

This verse is a word for you; a precious truth to grab hold of.

Jesus is the way and he's the truth and he's the life.

No one comes to the Father except through him.

Turn from your sin and your false gods.

Repent and put your trust in the risen and reigning Lord Jesus today.

I'm going to finish with the words of Thomas à Kempis:

*Follow me. I am the way and the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which you must follow; the truth which you must believe; the life for which you must hope.<sup>1</sup>*

Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *Counsels on the Spiritual Life*, 1.93.

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**Big Question:** How can we get to God?

**Big Idea:** Jesus is the only way to God.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why did Jesus make this “I am...” statement?
2. Did Jesus live and die just to be an example for us?
3. Why didn't Jesus come down from the cross?
4. What do we lose by not calling followers of Jesus “followers of the Way”?
5. What does it mean for the truth to be a person?
6. How do we know that our understanding of God is right and someone else's is wrong?  
Does it matter?
7. How can Jesus claim to be “life” when we're already alive?
8. What points of tension do the exclusive claims of Jesus make for people today?