

JESUS REVEALED

Encountering Christ in His Biblical Names

STUDY GUIDE

Fr. Jeffrey Kirby, STD

Paul Thigpen, PhD

In loving memory of

Jeff Spillane

whose life revealed Jesus to all who knew him

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WELCOME TO JESUS REVEALED

Of the seventy-three books in the Bible, only four of them, the Gospels, provide a life of Our Lord, a record of his words and deeds when he walked among us.

Yet the other books of the Bible speak of him, too. They announce—some of them, hundreds of years in advance—his public ministry, his healings and miracles, his passion and resurrection; they disclose his eternal existence as the Son of the Father; they show how he is the very life and foundation of the people of God.

And for each one of us, they reveal that Jesus is our divine brother and friend and Lord who guides us, enlightens us, and leads us, if we're willing, to heaven.

When, after the Passion, the disciples encountered the Lord on the road to Emmaus, “he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Lk 24:27). This was perhaps the very first Catholic Bible study. And what a powerful experience it was. “Did not our hearts burn within us,” the disciples exclaimed after the encounter, “while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Lk 24:32)

In *Jesus Revealed*, Dr. Paul Thigpen and Fr. Jeffrey Kirby lead you on the same journey the disciples undertook with the Lord on the road to Emmaus. They open the Scriptures for you, looking at many books in both the Old and New Testaments to reveal different facets of the Person of Christ.

In coming weeks, you'll look first at scriptural passages focused on the earthly life of Our Lord and his fulfillment of the messianic prophecies. Next you'll look at the heavenly life of Our Lord, exploring his divine nature.

In the third part of your journey, you'll focus on Jesus in relation to the Church. Finally you'll explore Jesus' personal relationship with you.

As you embark upon this journey, pray that it is an occasion for Our Lord to reveal himself to you in new and exciting ways. And seize the opportunity to reveal yourself to him as well. Allow your heart to burn within you as you encounter Christ in *Jesus Revealed*.

Conor Gallagher, Publisher



AUTHOR'S NOTE

Jesus Revealed is an eighteen session study on names and titles for Jesus appearing in Scripture. Sessions focus on a different sphere or area where we can discern the presence of the Lord.

Session 1 introduces Jesus. “Who do you say that I am?” Jesus posed this question to his disciples, and he poses it to each one of us as well. In this session we explore this most crucial of questions and the absolutely unique status Jesus claimed for himself.

Sessions 2–5 reveal Jesus through his life on earth. How was Jesus’ identity revealed by God to his people? How did they learn about his mission? Long before Jesus was born, God gave them glimpses through prophecies and foreshadowings received across many generations. But even after Jesus arrived, his contemporaries discovered who he truly was only gradually. In these sessions, we follow their path to discovery. We begin with his names and titles that are revealed through the events and circumstances of his earthly life: his conception, birth, and public ministry; his passion and death; his resurrection; and his ascension into heaven.

Sessions 6–9 reveal Jesus through his life in heaven. After Jesus returned to heaven, a more complete picture of his identity and mission was gradually revealed by God. Through the words of Our Lord, the preaching of the apostles, and the teaching of their successors, the Church broadened and deepened her understanding of Christ. Here, we examine how Scripture lays a foundation for this richer acquaintance with Jesus. It offers names for him that point to an identity and activity far beyond the few years of his earthly life. Reflecting on these names, the early generations of Christians delved into Christ’s life in heaven with the Father before all ages, his heavenly reign now, and his return to earth in glory.

Sessions 10–13 reveal Jesus through his life in the Church. Jesus’ mission did not end with his ascension into heaven. Through the Church, his mission continues on earth, and his identity is more fully revealed. In these sessions, we consider names and titles of Jesus that point to his saving mission through the Church, his foundational place in the Church, his essential union with the Church, and the Eucharistic gift of himself to the Church.

Sessions 14–17 reveal Jesus through his life in me. Jesus came to call each soul into an intimate, personal relationship with himself. Such a relationship requires a commitment from each of his followers, but its eternal rewards more than compensate for the cost. In these sessions, we reflect on names and titles of Jesus that reveal aspects of his relationship with each one who answers his call. He shows himself to be our faithful guardian, our source of divine grace, our healing and guiding light, and our model and strength.

Jesus Revealed concludes with session 18. Here we explore a title that points to Jesus’ role in history, as both Source and Destiny.



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UNDERSTANDING YOUR GUIDE

What's inside your Study Guide for Jesus Revealed: Encountering Christ in His Biblical Names? Here's an overview.

Study Sessions

The *Study Guide* is divided into eighteen study sessions. Each session is further divided into a “Self Study” section and a “Group Study” section. These sections are designated (along with the session number) by the caption in the colored bar along the outside edge of each page.

The following elements appear in each of the eighteen sessions of the Study Guide:

SELF STUDY

The first section of each session, designated as “Self Study,” helps you prepare individually for the group study. Before coming together with the other participants, you can spend some time on your own reading the scriptural text, reflecting on the study notes in this section, and looking ahead to the questions for group discussion. Your group may have you write the responses to the questions you can answer before the session in order to prepare for a more rewarding group discussion.

Optional use of the self study section: We highly recommend that you prepare for the group experience by using the “Self Study” section. But we recognize that busy schedules don't always allow for that possibility. So even if you're sometimes unable to prepare ahead of time, the group session recaps, videos, and discussions will still offer you valuable insights into the scriptural text. As you view and listen, you can still take part in the conversation and take notes on the videos and discussions. In addition, as time allows, you can always go back to review the material in the book.

Session Readings

The scriptural citations at the bottom of the opening page of each session identifies the specific readings to be studied in that particular session. The scriptural texts quoted in the Study Guide and Leader Guide come from the Revised Standard Version-Second Catholic Edition (RSV-2CE) translation of the Bible. Other Catholic versions are available, but you should be aware that the wording of the biblical text will vary in other translations.

Non-Catholic Bibles typically lack seven books that are found in the Catholic Bible. So make sure the version you choose is an approved Catholic Bible such as the RSV-2CE or one of the editions of the *New American Bible* (NAB). The Douay-Rheims (DR) version is also an approved translation and an old favorite of many Catholics, but keep in mind that some of its older

language may seem unfamiliar, and many of its books have names that differ from more contemporary translations.

Introduction

A short description of the scriptural passages being studied introduces the session.

Prayer to Prepare for Study

Prayer should be an integral part of every aspect of our lives, especially when we embark on a study of Scripture. We must ask God for the knowledge, wisdom, diligence, and humility necessary to understand his Word, and for the grace to change our lives by responding in faith and obedience to what he says.

This prayer, included at the beginning of every “Self Study” section, is attributed to St. Richard, bishop of Chichester (c. 1197–1253), a medieval English Church reformer and champion of the poor. The words of the prayer reflect in a beautiful and concise way the goals of this study.

Study Notes

These extensive notes are in many ways the “meat” of this Bible study. They provide insights into the historical, cultural, moral, and wider biblical context of the entire passage under study. They will help you understand and reflect upon what you read in the Gospel, offer occasional comments on the text by the Church Fathers and other saints, and provide answers to common questions about difficult or puzzling passages.

GROUP STUDY

The second section of each session, designated as “Group Study,” takes you and the other participants in your group through your study together. It includes prayers, videos, questions for reflection or discussion, and other aids to study: definitions of key words that may be unfamiliar, quotes from the saints and Church documents, and relevant citations from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC).

Opening Prayer

The opening prayer is for the group to pray together. It’s adapted from Scripture—Psalm 25:4–5—and is prayed at the beginning of each session.

Teaching Video

The Teaching Video, the first of two videos for each session, is hosted by Dr. Paul Thigpen. The Teaching Video for the first session offers an introduction to the course, highlighting the many names Jesus has throughout Scripture (over one hundred!) and revealing one of the most important: the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The following sessions chronicle seventeen other names for Jesus, examining the deeper meaning and context of each one and their connections to other parts of Sacred Scripture. While the study notes cover the entire text designated for each session, this video offers a more focused approach.

We encourage you to take notes on the lines provided under various topical headings drawn from the video presentation. We recommend this activity to help you remember what you have heard.



Small Group Discussion

If your study has ten or more participants, you may hold discussions in small groups of five to seven. Each small group will have its own discussion leader prepared to guide the group. The small group discussion for each session will respond to two sets of questions, “Digging Deeper” and “Life Application.”

Digging Deeper

The “Digging Deeper” questions prompt you in two ways: First, the questions help you recall some of the insights you have learned in reading the scriptural passage and the study notes. Second, the questions help you reflect more deeply by considering some wider issues raised by what you have learned.

Life Application

The “Life Application” questions are posed to help you consider how you might apply to your own life the key points from each session. After this discussion, you will be able to consider your answers in light of the insights provided by the “Life Application Video.” Answers to these questions will vary according to the life circumstances of each participant.

Before turning to the second video, the group will take a five-minute break to socialize, stretch your legs, use the restroom, and enjoy refreshments.

Life Application Video

After returning from your break, you’ll gather to watch the second video, a pastoral reflection from Fr. Jeffrey Kirby, STD. His insights focus on how to apply to your everyday life the scriptural passage being studied. We recommend that you simply listen instead of taking notes on this video.

How Then Shall We Live?

This section serves as a summary of the insights in the “Life Application Video.” Since you haven’t taken notes on the video, we recommend that you silently review this section to prepare for responding to the challenges in “Living It Out.”

Living It Out

This section prompts you to pray, then discern and write down the changes that God is asking you to make in your life, especially over the course of the next week, based on what you have learned. You’ll be given three to five minutes to sit quietly and reflect on the challenges you face in this regard. Then you’ll have an opportunity to share what you’re thinking and feeling if you’re comfortable doing so.

Closing Prayer

Each session will close with the group praying aloud together the prayer provided. Each prayer has been chosen for its relevance to some aspect of that particular session. The closing prayers are drawn from Scripture and other traditional sources.

ADDITIONAL STUDY AIDS

Arranged throughout both the “Self Study” and the “Group Study” portions of the guides are special sections with additional relevant information and insights. These are intended to supplement your knowledge and enhance your understanding of the scriptural passages being studied:

Words to Know

A list of key words or phrases that defines terms that might be unfamiliar or expounds upon their basic meaning.

Catechism Connections

Citations for relevant passages from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Rome to Home

Relevant excerpts from Church documents such as papal pronouncements and statements of ecumenical councils.

Voices of the Saints

Relevant quotes from saints throughout history.

My Personal Checklist

At the beginning of the first group session of *Jesus Revealed: Encountering Christ in His Biblical Names*, you’ll have the opportunity to review “My Personal Checklist: Before the Study” (p. xi), which is a list of some personal benefits that we hope you will receive through this experience. You’ll have a minute or two to follow the instructions on the page.

At the end of the last session of the study, you’ll have the opportunity to review “My Personal Checklist: After the Study” (p. 260) so you can reflect on the areas in which you have grown personally through the study. You’ll have a minute or two to follow the instructions on the page. *Both of these checklists are for your use only; they should not be shared with anyone else unless you choose to do so.*



MY PERSONAL CHECKLIST

Before the Study

Your word is a lamp for my feet, / a light for my path (Ps 119:105 NAB).

You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free (Jn 8:32).

Here are some personal benefits you can receive through this study of *Jesus Revealed: Encountering Christ in His Biblical Names*. Check all those you hope to receive. At the end of the study, you'll have a chance to review the list again to reflect on the areas in which you've grown. *This checklist is for you only; it will not be shared with anyone else unless you choose to do so.*

- I want to know God more personally and intimately through studying his Word.
- I want to become more familiar with the Bible and learn how to study it.
- I want to find in the Bible the truth about God, myself, and others.
- I want to learn more about the uniqueness of Jesus.
- I want to understand how Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.
- I want to appreciate better what Jesus accomplished for me through his passion.
- I want to understand better Church teaching on the Second Coming
- I want to learn more about Jesus' divine nature.
- I want to experience more fully Jesus' humanity.
- I want to come to a deeper personal knowledge of the Person of Christ.
- I want to receive more hope and healing for the personal wounds I carry.
- I want to forgive myself for something in my past, even though it's difficult.
- I want to forgive someone else for something in my past, even though it's difficult.
- I want to experience more fully the presence of Jesus in the Church and sacraments.
- I want to reflect God's loving kindness to those around me.
- I want to become less attached to material things.
- I want to accept more faithfully and joyfully the "crosses" I must bear in my life.
- I want to increase my desire for holiness.
- I want to increase my desire for heaven.
- I want to become a more active member of my parish to help build the kingdom of God.



| *Christ Consolator, Carl Bloch, Restored Traditions*



SESSION 1

THE WAY,
THE TRUTH,
AND THE LIFE

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."

JOHN 14:6

SESSION READINGS

LUKE 9:18–20; JOHN 14:1–11; PHILIPPIANS 3:7–11;
EXODUS 20:1–3; DEUTERONOMY 6:4–5; MATTHEW 22:34–40;
PSALM 25:4–14; 42:1–2, 8; 73:23–25, 28

Introduction

“Who do you say that I am?” (Lk 9:20). Jesus once asked his disciples this question, and his words ring down the centuries to our day, challenging us as well. He raises the most crucial issue we could ever ponder, for our eternal destiny hangs upon our reply.

Was Jesus just a good man, a wise teacher, and nothing more? Many today see him that way. But such a view fails to consider what Scripture says about him, and most importantly, what he says about himself.

In the Bible we can find more than a hundred names and titles for Jesus. Each of the eighteen sessions of this study will focus on one of them, along with others that are closely related. Through these names and titles—if we are willing to reflect deeply upon them—Our Lord reveals himself in myriad ways, beckoning us to know him and love him more deeply.

This first session considers the meaning and the implications of a startling claim that Jesus made: “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me” (Jn 14:6).

Prayer to Prepare for Study

Most merciful Redeemer, friend and brother, let me know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly. Amen.

—Adapted from a prayer ascribed to St. Richard of Chichester (1197–1253)

Study Notes

These notes provide insights to help you understand and reflect upon the biblical text.

- ✦ Luke’s Gospel (9:18–20) reports that one day, Jesus is praying alone, and his disciples are with him. Though we are not told the subject of Jesus’ prayer, Luke’s mention of this detail suggests that what follows has special significance—his action has perhaps been prompted by a directive from his heavenly Father. Jesus turns to the disciples and challenges them with two questions that will press them to understand more clearly who he is and why he has come.
- ✦ Jesus’ first question—“Who do the people say that I am?” (Lk 9:18)—is not the anxious query of someone who worries about what other people think of him. Rather, it reflects the strategy of a wise teacher: He allows the disciples to consider the issue of his identity without yet having to answer the question themselves.
- ✦ The speculations of the people indicate that they recognize Our Lord’s prophetic authority and activity in his teaching and miracles. But they have failed to grasp who he truly is. Surely, they think, he must be the fiery prophet John the Baptist, resurrected from the dead after King Herod had him executed (see Lk 9:7–9), or perhaps one of the Old Testament prophets



raised from the dead. Some think he is even the greatest of the ancient prophets, Elijah, returned to earth after his mysterious departure centuries before on horses and chariots of fire (see 2 Kgs 2:11–12). Herod has heard the same speculations (see Lk 9:7–9). But Jesus is actually none of these.

- ✦ Now Our Lord asks the all-important question, addressed directly to the disciples: “But who do *you* say that I am?” (Lk 9:20, emphasis added). They must answer this question for themselves; they cannot avoid the issue if they are to be his disciples.
- ✦ As usual, Peter speaks first and on behalf of the others. He replies, “The Christ of God” (Lk 9:20). We will consider the profound meaning of Peter’s response in our next session. But for now, we can conclude that even though Jesus speaks with God’s authority and performs miraculous signs as the great prophets of Israel have done, he is much more than just another teacher or prophet.
- ✦ John chapters 14 through 17 record a later conversation between Jesus and his Apostles, on the night he is betrayed. He knows his death is at hand, and his last words resemble in form and content the kind of farewell address that we find in several other biblical passages (Jacob to his sons, Gn 49; Moses to Israel, Dt 33; Joshua to Israel, Jo 23–24; and King David to the people of Israel, 1 Chr 28–29). Like a “last will and testament,” the farewell address allows Our Lord to make important declarations that must be recorded and remembered. He is summing up those things that he wants to impress deeply on those he loves.
- ✦ Among the customary elements of the farewell address found in John 14:1–11 are an acknowledgment of an impending departure and words of comfort to those left behind. Jesus reassures his friends that he will “go to prepare a place” for them in the house of his heavenly Father. In time, he will return to take them to himself so that where he is, they also will be (v. 3).
- ✦ Our Lord is not just promising his followers guidance as a teacher. He is promising them the supreme gift of himself. The ultimate goal of his relationship with them is to have them live at “home” in fellowship with him and his heavenly Father for all eternity.
- ✦ Some biblical scholars have noted that Our Lord’s words seem to suggest the imagery of wedding customs of the day. In that culture, the groom would leave his betrothed wife at her home with her parents to go prepare a home for her in his native town. Once the home and the wedding feast were prepared, he would return to escort the bride back there for the feast.
- ✦ If nuptial imagery is indeed intended here, it is in keeping with Jesus’ reference to himself as “the bridegroom” (Mt 9:15; Mk 2:19–20; Lk 5:34–35); his parable of the wise and foolish virgins who await the coming of the bridegroom (who represents Jesus at his second coming, see Mt 25:1–13); and John the Baptist’s reference to Jesus as the bridegroom (see Jn 3:28–29). Similar imagery appears in the description of “the marriage supper of the Lamb” in the Book of Revelation, and a reference to the Church as the “bride adorned for her husband” (Rv 19:9; 21:2). The Lamb and the husband are Christ.

- ✦ We will say more about this imagery in session 12. For now, we should note that all these nuptial references are striking in their portrayal of Jesus' followers, not simply as disciples or even friends, but as those who know him intimately and await a spiritual consummation of their love for him. He is so much more than just a teacher or prophet!
- ✦ When the Apostle Thomas seeks clarity about the way Jesus' followers must take to arrive at such a destiny, Jesus replies, "*I am* the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6, emphasis added). This is a startling claim; no prophet or teacher sent by God has ever spoken this way.
- ✦ Our Lord is not offering a road map to heaven; he himself *is* the path to that final destination. He has not come simply to speak the truth about God and about humanity. He himself *is* the truth about God and about humanity. He is not simply explaining the meaning of life in its fullness and abundance; he himself *is* that full and abundant life (see Jn 10:10).
- ✦ St. Hilary (c. 310–c. 367), bishop of Poitiers and a Father and Doctor of the Church, puts it this way: "[Jesus] himself has chosen these winning names to indicate the methods that he has appointed for our salvation. As the way, he will guide us to the truth. As the truth, he will establish us in the life" (*On the Trinity*, 7.33).
- ✦ This kind of claim is different from the claims typically made by the founders of religions. While they see themselves as teachers of wisdom about life, or revealers of God's will, Jesus is calling his followers to encounter *himself* and embrace *himself* as the way, the truth, and the life. His very person is at the center of his message and his mission—the very essence of his message and his mission. And his words imply that those who reject him or ignore him will fail to live abundantly and, in the end, will be lost on the way to the Father's house.



| *Christ Sending Out the Seventy Disciples, Two by Two*, illustration for 'The Life of Christ', c.1884-96, James Tissot (1836-1902) / Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, USA / Purchased by Public Subscription / Bridgeman Images



- ✦ For this reason, Jesus' followers are called above all into a relationship with him: to know him, to place their faith in him, to love him, to serve him. Only such a communion makes possible a true journey to God and a life in and with God.
- ✦ In fact, Jesus asks of his followers not just their love but a love that exceeds all others—even their love for their parents and children. “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Mt 10:37). He goes so far as to call his disciples to lose their lives for his sake (see Mt 16:25).
- ✦ What might such a relationship with Jesus look like? What kind of commitment would it require? Some years later, the Apostle Paul describes his own relationship with Christ when writing his letter to the Philippians (see 3:7–11).
- ✦ There, he surveys his soon-to-be-completed life and concludes that compared to knowing Jesus, nothing else matters; all else is meaningless without him: “Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ” (Phil 3:8).
- ✦ Two Greek words here convey the intensity of Paul's conviction. The one translated as “surpassing worth” (*hyperechon*) asserts that knowing Jesus far excels in value all other things; it is the supreme, the ultimate good. The word rendered here as “refuse” (*skubalon*) means, not simply trash, but the spoiled food thrown out to the dogs, or even dung in the latrine. The Apostle is stretching the limits of language to convey the infinite worthiness of Christ to be the center and purpose of our lives.
- ✦ Note as well that this is the only time in Scripture when Paul refers to Jesus as “my Lord” (Phil 3:8, emphasis added). He makes sure we realize that he is not simply talking about an intellectual awareness of certain facts about Jesus. He is expressing a *personal* knowledge, an *intimate* acquaintance, with Jesus—even though Paul never walked with Our Lord during his earthly ministry as the twelve Apostles did.
- ✦ To “gain Christ,” Paul tells us, is a goal that must overshadow all others. It demands our total commitment; no sacrifice is too great to attain that destiny. The Apostle is in fact already demonstrating the sincerity and firmness of his commitment by his willingness to endure prison for preaching about Jesus Christ; he writes to the Philippians from a jail cell (see Phil 1:12–14). In the end, he will gladly die for the sake of his Lord. Other Apostles will do the same when confronted with the choice of either rejecting Christ or giving up their lives.
- ✦ Paul and the other Apostles are Jews. Imagine for a moment how they and their fellow Jews might first respond to Our Lord's declarations. They have been taught that such a total commitment, a personal adherence of love, trust, and obedience that supersedes all others, belongs to God alone. “I am the LORD your God,” their Creator has said to them when giving them his Law to live by. “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex 20:2–3). Only the Creator of the universe has the right to make such a demand.
- ✦ Moses once commanded the ancient Israelites (the ancestors of the Jews): “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD. And you shall love the LORD your God with *all* your heart,



and with *all* your soul, and with *all* your might” (Dt 6:4–5, emphasis added). By the time of Jesus, these words are familiar to every devout Jew, who recites them as part of a prayer every morning and evening. It is called the *Shema Yisrael* (Hear, O Israel) from the opening words of the prayer in Hebrew.

- ✦ We should not be surprised, then, to find that these words from Deuteronomy are the basis of Jesus’ reply to a scribe’s question, on another occasion, about which is the greatest commandment of God’s law (see Mt 22:34–40). At the heart of the Jewish faith is the conviction that the Lord wants *all* of each person’s heart, soul, and might (strength) for himself—a total devotion of love.
- ✦ As evidenced in the Psalms, the Jewish people have long prayed fervently that God would enable them to cultivate such a relationship. To do so, he would have to reveal to them the truth about himself, the path that leads to him, and the kind of life that would draw them close to him in friendship.
- ✦ Psalm 25, attributed to King David (or perhaps written in his honor), expresses such yearning eloquently: “To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. . . . Make me to know your ways, O LORD; / teach me your paths. / Lead me in your truth, and teach me, / for you are the God of my salvation; / for you I wait all the day long. . . . Good and upright is the LORD. . . . He leads the humble in what is right, / and teaches the humble his way” (vv. 1, 4–5, 8, 9).
- ✦ The final destination of these paths, along which the psalmist is led by truth, is “the friendship of the LORD” (Ps 25:14). The Hebrew word translated here as “friendship” is in some versions of the text translated as “secret” or “secret counsel” or even “intimacy.” It comes from a root term that refers to those who come together for confidential conversation. The God who calls his people to himself is not a distant dictator of the universe seeking slaves to do his bidding. He is a God of “compassion” and “merciful love” (v. 6). In our obedience to his gracious will, we find our healing, our freedom, and our salvation from sin.
- ✦ Psalm 42 provides another example of such holy yearning for God. “As a deer longs / for flowing streams, / so longs my soul / for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, / for the living God” (vv. 1–2).
- ✦ The psalmist’s desire is not just for God’s gifts or blessings but for God himself. His longing is so passionate, so fundamental to his being, that it seems instinctive, visceral, physical, a desperate thirst that must be quenched if he is to go on living. His prayer is echoed in the words of King David: “My soul thirsts for you, / my flesh faints for you, / as in a dry and weary land where no water is” (Ps 63:1). At the time his prayer is spoken, the king is in the wilderness of Judah, perhaps fleeing from his rebel son, Absalom (see 2 Sm 15). His physical surroundings are the stark exterior image of an interior reality.
- ✦ The psalmist wants God to be near, intimate, familiar: “When shall I come and behold / the face of God?” (Ps 42:2). A distant God, a hidden God, will not suffice, will not satisfy. “By day the LORD commands his steadfast love; / and at night his song is with me, / a prayer to the God of my life” (v. 8).



- ✦ Still other psalmists speak in prayer of their intimacy with God: “I am continually with you; / you hold my right hand. / You guide me with your counsel, / and afterward you will receive me to glory. / Whom have I in heaven but you? / And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides you. . . . For me it is good to be near God” (Ps 73:23–25, 28).
- ✦ Jesus’ devout Jewish contemporaries are well aware, then, that God has called them to himself. The truth about him, the way that leads to him, leads to abundant life in his presence. But God requires that they be fully his if they are to be intimately near him and see his face.
- ✦ It is in this very context that Jesus tells his followers—whom he will now declare to be no longer his servants, but his friends (see Jn 15:15)—“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me”; and in the same conversation, “he who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:6, 9). How can Jesus legitimately make such claims? And how can Jesus ask his followers to love him in the way they should love God alone: more than all others, more than life itself?
- ✦ Clearly, Jesus comes to them as much more than just a good teacher or a prophet sent from God. So to obtain a more complete picture of his identity and mission, we must search the Scriptures to discover the names and titles he claims for himself, and those that others ascribe to him. Viewing them together, we can begin to grow in our knowledge of him, faith in him, and love for him, just as his disciples grew in their understanding of the living Mystery who walked among them.

To prepare for small group discussion, turn ahead now to this session’s “Digging Deeper” and “Life Application” sections.



Rome to Home

“Christ is the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). Consequently, the decisive answer to every one of man’s questions, his religious and moral questions in particular, is given by Jesus Christ, or rather is Jesus Christ himself, as the Second Vatican Council recalls: “In fact, *it is only in the mystery of the Word incarnate that light is shed on the mystery of man.*”

—Pope St. John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 2



Opening Prayer

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; / teach me your paths. / Lead me in your truth, and teach me, / for you are the God of my salvation; / for you I wait all the day long.

—Psalm 25:4–5

Teaching Video

This first video, hosted by Dr. Paul Thigpen, focuses on an aspect of Jesus' life, identity, or mission revealed through a particular title. Here are some highlights of Dr. Thigpen's presentation, with room to take notes as you view the video to assist you in the group discussion.

Names as a reflection of a person's identity

Studying his titles increases our love for Jesus

The uniqueness of Jesus' self-revelation



The gradualness of Jesus' self-revelation



Catechism Connections

These readings from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) will deepen your understanding of this session's presentations and discussions. The numbers identify the relevant paragraphs in the Catechism.

- ✦ Jesus is the way as our model for holiness: CCC 459
- ✦ The way of Jesus leads to life: CCC 1696
- ✦ The way of Jesus is the beatitudes: CCC 1697

Small Group Discussion

DIGGING DEEPER

1. How is Jesus' claim to be "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6) different from the claims made by the founders of other religions? How do his claims about his identity and mission go far beyond those of a mere teacher or prophet?



2. Why would Jesus ask his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” (Lk 9:20)? Why must they understand and embrace Jesus’ true identity and mission if they are to be his true followers?

3. What kind of relationship does Jesus expect—even demand—of his followers (Jn 14:1–11; Mt 10:37–38; Mt 16:25)?

4. How does St. Paul’s life illustrate this kind of relationship with Jesus (Phil 3:7–11)?

5. In the Old Testament, God calls each of his people to the kind of relationship that requires placing him first in their lives, loving him with all their heart, soul, and strength (Dt 6:4–5). How can Jesus legitimately call for a similar kind of commitment to himself? What would be implied by such a commitment?



LIFE APPLICATION

1. Do your daily thoughts, words, and deeds show that you walk in the “way of Jesus”? Are there any habits you have that are keeping you from fully walking in the way of Jesus?

2. In acknowledging Jesus as the truth, what Church teachings do you need to reflect on that may give you difficulty in fully embracing Christ as truth? If you accept these teachings as truth, how will that help you live the Christian way of life more deeply?

3. How do you manifest that Jesus Christ is the lord of your life in the vocation God has given you (consecrated service, holy matrimony, single life for the Lord)?



Voices of the Saints

Therefore, hold fast to Christ if you wish to be safe. You will not be able to go astray, because He is the way. He who remains with Him does not wander in trackless places; he is on the right way. Moreover, he cannot be deceived, because He is the truth. Nor can he be disturbed because He is both life and the giver of life.

—St. Thomas Aquinas, *Exposition of John's Gospel*

Life Application Video

After breaking from your small group discussion, gather to watch the second video, a pastoral reflection from Fr. Jeffrey Kirby, STD.

How Then Shall We Live?

Silently review the following summary of Fr. Kirby's reflection to prepare for the "Living It Out" meditation and discussion.

How do we seek to live with Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life? Are we recognizing all the little opportunities we are given in our daily lives and vocations to serve Christ?

It can be easy to think that serving God will come in some extraordinary way, but so many times when we look for extraordinary ways to serve the Lord, we miss out on the powerful opportunities to serve him in ordinary ways.

So what is a concrete, ordinary way to follow Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life?

One of the primary ways is to love. Love is seen as an emotion in today's world, but in a theological sense, it is a virtue and an act of the will. St. Paul tells us, "Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away" (1 Cor 13:8). Everything else will pass away, even faith and hope. But not love.

Loving others as Christ asked us to is following him as the way because he instructed, "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44). It is following him in the truth because sometimes real love demands we correct someone in love. It is following him as the life because we are told in Scripture, "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 Jn 4:7).

There is a famous saying often attributed to St. Teresa of Calcutta, and that certainly reflects her life, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." How can we love more greatly in the name of Jesus? This is the question we must all ask ourselves.



Living It Out

On your own, spend three to five minutes praying, discerning, and writing down the specific ways that God might be calling you to make changes in your life. Share and discuss afterwards only if you feel comfortable doing so.

Consider this week how God is calling you to . . .

- ♣ Love those who seem unlovable.
- ♣ Serve him in ordinary ways.
- ♣ Submit with humility to a certain truth that has confounded you in the past.

Words to Know

Nuptial: Having to do with marriage or weddings.

Shema Yisrael: Literally, “Hear, O Israel” (Dt 6:4); the opening words of a Hebrew prayer recited twice daily in Jewish tradition.

Closing Prayer

Lord, my God, bestow upon me an understanding that knows you, diligence in seeking you, wisdom in finding you, a way of life that is pleasing to you, perseverance that waits trustfully for you, and confidence that I shall embrace you at the last. Amen.



The Entry into Jerusalem, 15th century, Master of the Thuizon Altarpiece / State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia / Photo © Tarker / Bridgeman Images