

I AM

Lenten Study Guide Answer Key

Lesson 1

Q1. Some answers include: Jesus is the same God who was faithful to the Israelites in the wilderness; Jesus' provision for us is physical, emotional, relational, spiritual; Jesus provides for us daily; Jesus gives us what we need (not always what we want!); sometimes the way God provides is mysterious: the word *manna* literally means "what is it?"

Q2. Answers will vary. Because our culture is individualistic, self-reliant, and convenience-oriented, being in need can create a panic in us that other cultures who are more interdependent may not experience. For many of us, we don't turn to God until we are desperate, so being needy or desperate is the key ingredient to spiritual growth . . . which may explain why many of us get stuck in our spiritual growth.

Q3. They expected a list of things to do and laws to keep.

Q4. Believing in Jesus is very active; it is more than head knowledge. It is physically trusting and relying on Jesus to guide us, fill us, and make us enough.

Q5. John 6 is a metaphor for the communion table in many ways. Jesus is saying that what is really true about us, that the thing that we truly need, is for Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Isaiah 53:4-6 portrays Jesus as the suffering servant whose body was broken for us, whose blood was poured out for our sin. The abundant life is found in relationship with God, and it is Christ's death that reconciles our relationship with God, that we may experience the fullness of life in Christ (Colossians 1:20-22).

Q6. We often turn good things from God into ultimate things in our life. We turn things like career, family, hobbies, and money into things (idols!) that we think can make us happy. The more we rely on them for happiness, the more enslaved we become to them and the more they let us down.

Every false idol offers a path and a promise. It says, "If you do this then you will be happy." But Jesus is the path and the promise. He walked the path that we are unable to walk in order to give Himself to us as the promise. We see then that faith is more about *receiving* than doing.

Q7. My hope is not that some day I will get my act together. My hope is not that some day all my circumstances will become what I want them to be. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. That is the solid rock we can stand on—all other ground is sinking sand! Jesus not only dies for our sins but gives to us His righteousness as our own so that we can stand before the Father as holy and blameless. Our judgement day was on the cross. Jesus stood in our place. That is a hope that is secure, because it is not based on my performance but on His!

This grace is so amazing that it begins to change our heart and desires. I no longer need to be consumed by building my identity and security, but I can live to love others freely. Receiving the good news of the gospel should always propel us out to love others (2 Corinthians 5). The orientation of our hearts should turn outward to love others as Christ has loved us.

Q8. Your answers will vary. In general, the more we see our need for a Savior, the more precious His grace is to us. John Bunyan once said that the greatest gift God gave him was giving him a glimpse of the darkness of his heart. All that is required to receive grace is to know our need for a Savior. When we see that Jesus is truly the “bread” that we need, we will pursue Him with our whole heart.

LESSON 2

Q1. Answers will vary and there are a lot of possible answers including: Light/Dark; Life-giving/Death; Hope/Despair; Illuminating/Lost; Good/Evil; Righteousness/Lawlessness.

Q2. Answers will vary based on personal experience. I remember as a child being afraid of the dark. The unknown was scary. The noises and the shadows seemed to turn into monsters. While I am no longer afraid of the dark, the unknown can feel like a scary place to be.

Q3. There is so much we can say here! When John is talking about the Word (in Greek this is *logos*), he is talking about the source of life and light. In Greek mythology, Zeus was called the *logos*. But here is God who becomes human to come and rescue us. He comes to bring light to the darkness and truth and grace for those who believe in Him. Jesus is the creator of the universe. John paints this picture of a personal, loving God who comes down to rescue us and adopt us as His children if we believe in Him.

In Colossians, the Apostle Paul paints a similar picture: Jesus as God who not only created the universe but also reigns over everything. He holds the molecules together! Jesus is God in the flesh who reconciled us to Himself through His blood shed on the cross for our sins.

Q4. John is trying to show us that Jesus is the same God that walked with the Israelites for 40 years. He is also trying to show the reader that it is better to follow Jesus than Moses, who the religious Jews sought to emulate.

Q5. Answers will vary based on personal experiences and personal preferences in how one connects with Jesus. But answers will include: The Bible is the primary way Jesus speaks to us today. The Holy Spirit leads us and guides us. Sometimes Jesus uses other believers to encourage and guide us. In the quiet of nature, we can experience the presence of Jesus.

Q6. Many people are blind to their lostness. And for many others, they are well aware they are lost and looking for answers. There are many examples of each.

Q7. When I am in a dark place, I can spiral into despair. I think that no one can help me. But in my dark place is where Jesus already is, waiting for me. He is there to speak to me in that place, to light me out of the miry pit, and set my feet on solid ground. When I am at the end of myself, that is where Jesus is always for me.

Q8. This question is to do on your own, not for group discussion.

LESSON 3

Q1. The religious gatekeepers said that rightness with God was found through the rules you keep. You need to be self-righteous. But Jesus continually points out in the gospels that there is only one who is righteous, Jesus himself. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, humankind has wanted to pursue rightness apart from God, whether through rule keeping, accumulating wealth or power, or garnering likes on social media. Jesus says that the only way to rightness with yourself and with God is through Him.

Q2. Boundaries can serve as guard rails in our life to help keep us out of trouble. We all are naturally prone to wander. Boundaries can serve as a fence to keep us from drifting into trouble. Boundaries can be helpful to maintain order.

Boundaries become challenging when we start to think that the boundaries are the thing that makes us (or others in our life) righteous.

Q3. The Ten Commandments, for example, should be seen as a gift to us. First of all, they show us a need for a Savior because no one keeps them. Every day we break them! For example, the first commandment is to have no other gods, yet we all worship things we love more than God. Second, the commandments give us a picture of how to have loving relationships with God and others. The more we live them out of a heart of love, the more life-giving those relationships are. The Ten Commandments become more problematic when people use them as the gate for who is in or out. No one ever keeps them, but we are apt to not see the log in our own eye and judge others who are not keeping the commandments.

Q4. We tend to think that the broad road is for those who do obviously evil things, but clearly the context of the Sermon on the Mount is that the broad road is full of those who think they are righteous apart from the grace of God. The natural way of humankind is to think that we can earn our righteousness. Jesus warns us continually about such false teachers. Broad is the road to destruction of those who think rightness is found within themselves. The narrow gate is Jesus. Only those who humble themselves to receive grace through Jesus will find it. Several places in Scripture clearly state that God opposes the proud (the self-righteous!) but gives grace to the humble.

Q5. So many answers to this question! Some may include: your inner critic, negative things you heard as a child that just keep playing in your head, expectations from family, work, and the world. Anxiety and depression often try to speak lies into our life. Every sin flows out of some lie that we are believing.

Q6. Certainly reading the Bible is an important part of learning to recognize His voice. Jesus is always consistent with the Bible. Jesus is always with us, for us, and loves us better than we can love ourselves. It can be challenging to hear His voice amid the many voices in our world. We need to learn to cultivate silence into our day. His voice always speaks with truth and grace.

Q7. The abundant life in Christ always calls us to die to selfishness in order to find life through obedience to Jesus. Jesus calls us to move out of those places where we are stuck and take risks with Him. These paths to God's yes are rarely as clear as we want them to be, for sometimes we have to say no to something good to follow God's better for us. God often calls us out of comfort and control to move into greater dependence on Him. Saying "yes" to these things feels painful because our selfish self doesn't want to lose control and comfort.

Q8. This is such a beautiful passage. I found it helpful to read verse 5, as well. “Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure.” In the Lord Jesus alone do we find the abundant life. He is our daily bread! He is my security. When I fix my eyes on Jesus, I find contentment even when my circumstances seem grim. The joy of the Lord is my strength. The path of life, the narrow path, is found in Christ. In Christ, we experience all the spiritual blessings found in Ephesians 1:1-10.

Lesson 4

Q1. Like sheep, we are prone to wander. Sheep are notorious for making poor choices, following the crowd, and getting stuck. They do not do well on their own; they need a good shepherd.

Q2. He goes out ahead of them and leads them to good pasture. He knows the sheep and the sheep know the Shepherd. Jesus lays down His life for the sheep.

Q3. They listen to the Shepherd’s voice. They know the Father. They are secure in the Shepherd.

Q4. You can view this as two questions asking the same thing or as two different questions. Answers will vary. We believe the lie of Satan that the Shepherd is not looking out for us. We cling to our false idols of comfort, control, power, and approval. Or we run away, afraid.

Q5. Answers will vary by personal experience.

Q6. Answers will vary. The Luke passage reminds us that Jesus is the one who pursues us. Only those who are lost get carried home by the Shepherd. In Ezekiel, we see Jesus as the Lord God who rescues His people. We see how personal the Shepherd is in pursuing the lost, tending for the hurt and the weak.

Q7. It is upside-down from the way the world operates. We follow the path of Jesus, who humbled Himself and was obedient to the Father to the point of death. He rose again and was exalted. We, too, are called to lay down our life in love so that others may experience Jesus. The path of obedience and trust in Jesus leads us to exhibiting the fruit of Spirit.

Q8. Your answers will vary.

LESSON 5

Q1. First of all, it was a plant that was common in that day that they could relate to. But more to the point, we all tend to grow closer to Jesus through adversity. When things are going well, we tend toward self-reliance. But hard times show us our true need for Jesus.

Q2. Answers will vary. They may include: doing stuff to earn His approval, pretending we are better than we are, giving Him an hour on Sunday but not dwelling with Him the rest of the week.

Q3. Sometimes my life can look pretty good on the outside. I can be productive and garner people’s approval. But on the inside, I can be anxious, self-focused, trying to gain the attention of others. Usually I become aware that I am trying to bear fruit on my own when I sense that I am losing control, or

when I experience anxiety or anger in my life. When I abide in Jesus, my self-worth is built on what Jesus has done for me and who He says I am. I am not obsessed with what others think of me or what I think of myself.

Q4. Answers will vary. Reading the Bible, praying, being quiet before Jesus, worship music, books and podcasts that point me to Jesus. Resting in the promises of Jesus. Reminding myself of the gospel throughout the day.

Q5. In America, we see our walk with Jesus as a very individualistic endeavor. But if I go in my backyard and see a plant with just one branch, I usually pull that plant up and throw it away because I know it will not survive. The healthiest plants have many branches and roots that grow together. So it is with our walk with Jesus. We grow healthiest together. Colossians 2:6-7 calls us (y'all again!) to live our lives in Christ, rooted and built up in Him TOGETHER!

Q6. The fruit of the Spirit describe who Jesus is. When we abide in Christ, the person of Jesus in us is exhibited to others. A branch does not grow its own fruit. The fruit comes from the vine. The branch only holds the fruit. We do not grow more patience by trying harder to be patient. We grow more patient by dwelling with Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit is never for the person bearing it, it is always produced for the benefit of another.

Q7. We tend to see productivity as activity. We look to things we can measure like bank accounts or goals achieved. Abiding is much more about being than doing. It is about relationship. God wants our heart. When we dwell with Jesus on a heart level, it changes everything. It changes how we view ourselves and others. It changes our definition of success and productivity. Success is resting in Jesus. The by-product of resting in Jesus is seen in how we love others: the fruit of the Spirit.

Q8. This question is for personal reflection.

LESSON 6

Q1. Your answers will vary by personal experience.

Q2. Answers will vary based on personal experience. Sometimes we medicate the discomfort with things like binge-watching Netflix, non-stop scrolling on our smartphone, or too many adult beverages. We may also dive deeper into idols of comfort, control, approval, or power.

Q3. Disorientating. Scary. Self-pity. For those of us who are overly self-reliant, we may refuse to ask for directions, so we just get more and more lost!

Definition of "way": method or manner of doing something, path for traveling along.

The article THE before way tells us that Jesus is the only way to find the right path for our journey.

Q4. True holiness is love. The Ten Commandments is a picture of what holy, loving relationships look like. Truly, Jesus is the only one who lived like this. But His Spirit dwells within us and we can move toward more loving and holy relationships by dying to self and abiding in Him.

Q5. Jesus as our:

Priest (Way): In the Old Testament, the priest would provide the sacrificial animal to atone for your sins. In Hebrews, we are told that Jesus is our High Priest and the perfect lamb who takes away our sins once and for all.

Prophet (Truth): We think of prophets as truth tellers, and certainly Jesus is the ultimate source of all truth. The Gospel of John equates Jesus with all wisdom. Jesus tells us that if we follow Him, then we will know the truth and the truth shall set us free. (John 8:31-38)

King (Life): The angel Gabriel told Mary that Jesus “will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:32-33). Jesus has “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). He has “the name that is above every name” (Philippians 2:9-11). Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16), and one day He will be king in the earthly, political sense of the word, as the weight of governance is borne on His shoulders, He reigns on Mt. Zion, and the nations bring Him homage (Psalm 2:6, 48:1-2; Isaiah 9:6; 11:10). Even before then, He truly is the ultimate authority.

Q6. Answers will vary. The abundant life is found by letting go of control and following Jesus.

Q7. Your answers will vary. We can fix our eyes on Jesus through spiritual disciplines, connecting our heart to Christ’s heart for us. I highly recommend Dane Ortlund’s book, *Gentle and Lowly* about Christ’s heart for you.