

BE BRAVE

Bible Briefs

Three Timely Bible Lessons for the Busy and the Brave

Who Do You Say I Am?

In the times of troubles ... He is

Bible Briefs by L.G. Westlake, Author, Blogger, Adventurer, Word Advocate



He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

LESSON 1

Three of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) record Jesus asking His disciples an interesting question. "Who do the people say I am?" When the disciples answer that the people believe He is either a new prophet or a prophet returned from the dead, Jesus asked this question: "Who do you say I am?" In the book of John, the last of the four Gospels, Jesus uncovers revelation after revelation about himself, claiming seven different titles.

These metaphorical names explain His purposes in walking earth as both a man and God. If you're anything like me, reviewing the *I ams* will bring you back to the grace-filled, shock and awe moment of when you first believed. After years of life as a believer, we can all take the unveiled mysteries of Christ for granted. I want to change that today. You?

WHY IT MATTERS WHO CHRIST CLAIMS TO BE

Before diving into the mystic descriptions of Christ, let's chat about current global climates and why pressing into these metaphorical titles is important for our spiritual growth.

Christ truly can be trusted with all that's seemingly wrong in life. Including our current trials and tribulations. His self-proclaimed titles prove this.

Trials infiltrate every life. Tribulations eb and flow through the progressions of nations. And hardships can and have reverberated across the entire world affecting almost every single person of our near eight billion global population. It is during these troubled and burdensome times that we often discover the full substance of our faith ... or lack of.

In the last couple of pandemic-laden years, I've discovered that my own faith is not nearly as robust as I'd hoped. As Covid affected loved ones, knocked me down for several weeks, and fear-inducing rhetoric blasted from every electronic device I owned, I found myself asking the typical whys and praying for things to get back to normal ASAP.

But we've never been promised a normal. In fact, as children of God walking closely with our Savior, we're told the path will be narrow and that the Jesus trail leads to the death of our flesh.

Death of any kind is not pleasant. But for you and me, necessary. And to kill the flesh, we must be willing to be stretched in our thinking, give up our comfort zones, and endure some pain.

There's nothing like a debilitating trial to expose our weaknesses.

TAKE ACTION

During the upheavals of 2020 and 2022 (pandemics, riots, protests, government overreaches, and economic hardships), what weaknesses did you discover in your faith?

Pray about your answer then list your responses to the uncertainties or circumstances that caught you off guard and found you not trusting in God's sovereign plans.

*** Write in your journal or electronic notes*

LESSON 2 Who Do You Say ... *He is from the book of John*



DIVING IN

In Lesson One, we took an inventory of the faith flaws trials can expose. In Lesson Two, we'll discover why identifying weaknesses are important.

In the Word of God, where all truth exists, we find character-exposing trials have purpose.

Look at James 1: 2-4

Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (NASB)

DEEPER WATERS

According to God's eternal and perfect wisdom, what are trials meant to do in your life?

***Write your answers in your journal or electronic notebook*

PROACTIVE NOT REACTIVE

If distresses and difficulties are a purposeful part of every person's faith walk, then we shouldn't be caught off guard when troubles come. It is through the dark-valley journeys

that we ultimately reach the clear skies of the beautiful mountain-top experiences. Knowing that in our current state on planet earth, trials are by holy design, we can and should be prepared to face personal and worldly upheavals with grace and sold-out trust in God's eternal plans.

Being prepared for trials means trusting Christ with every aspect of your life.

TAKE ACTION

To build upon your foundational faith, read the book of John and identify and record the seven *I Am* statements made by Christ.

*** Record these titles in your journal or electronic notebook*

Had you forgotten one or more of these seven revealing titles of Christ? Did something in the verses surprise you?

INTERNALIZE THE WORD

Spend the rest of your contemplation time mentally reviewing each of Christ's seven metaphorical titles. Using your own Scripture memorization methods, commit these important trust-building truths to memory.

Lesson 2 wrap up: When trials come our way, we can trust that the Lord has identified a weakness He wishes to strengthen. When we can identify that weakness, we work beside him, in trust, to become more Christlike. Christlikeness leads to a calm, peaceful approach to enduring the refinement process.

LESSON 3 – Who Do You Say *in the book of John*



MORE REVELATION

In Lesson Two of this **Bible Brief** edition, we reviewed the seven *I am* statements of Christ found in the book of John. Throughout the Word, there are more than fifty names attributed to our Savior. Each of these names gives us insight into the love, sacrifice, but also purposes of Christ.

In Corinthians 15:45, Christ's death is paralleled with the beginning of mankind's life. *"The first man, Adam, became a living person. So also it is written: The last Adam was a life-giving spirit. (NASB)*

In this verse, we're told, the purpose of Christ is to be a life-giving spirit. The Adam of Eden was a living creature made from the dust of the ground. Christ, in comparison, was indeed a man born of a woman, but also wholly God, able to impart a new and eternal life through His spirit. His purpose? To offer a new and eternal spirit life to all that belong to Him.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Christ is not only our Savior, but also the One who initiates and grows our faith. *"... looking only at Jesus, the originator and perfecter of the faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."* As the Perfecter of our faith, another of Christ's purposes is to grow your faith—trust in Him. He often uses trials to accomplish this.

Through Christ's grace, we are granted His God-given trust. It is in our personal relationship with Him that we develop the faith to move mountains as promised in John 14:12: *"Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I am going to the Father."*

Through discovering the depths of Christ's many names and metaphoric titles, our faith grows; spiritual wisdom matures; and we develop a new strength, realizing that our Jesus not only gave us eternal life (John 3:16), but He imparts faith (Hebrews 12:2), perfects that faith through trials (James 1:2), and prepares us for even the unthinkable.

It is through Him that you and I stand.

It is through Him that you and I fight.

It is through Him that you and I have victory.

TAKE ACTION

Looking back to the book of John, we also discover that Christ solidified His *I am* statements, using miracles and situational context proving that who He claimed to be is supported by the Father. Conduct your own Bible study and identify as many correlating real-life circumstances and/or miracles that underscore Christ's metaphorical claims. Use both Old Testament and New Testament books in your search. I've used the first *I am* statement as an example below. Can you find more examples?

*** record your findings in your journal or electronic notebook*

<u>The "I am" statement in John</u>	<u>Correlating Miracle or Circumstance</u>
I am the bread of life	Manna from heaven (Exodus 16); Feeding the 5K (John 6)

I am the Light	
The Door	
The Shepherd	
I am the Resurrection and the Life	
I am the Way, Truth, and Life	
I am the Vine	

INTERNALIZE THE WORD

In your current life circumstance, which of Christ's metaphorical titles brings you the most comfort?

*** Record your answer in your journal or electronic notebook*

Spend the rest of your contemplation time calling on this title of Christ through prayer. Literally speak His description.

My prayer example:

My Bread of Life, you sustain me. I know, no matter the circumstance, you will provide for my needs and feed me spiritually, making me an example of your trusting love and goodness.

.....

Last thought for your pondering: Because of His great love for us, our Father is building experiences into our lives that will expose our flesh (sin). This is for circumcision—the removal of flesh—so the Spirit of Christ in us may reign. We must surrender to the trials that expose the flesh, cutting away our nature and letting Christ’s power flow.

That’s all for this edition. I pray and am full of hope that you have unearthed fresh, new revelation about your Savior. He truly is our all in all.

Be sure and check out my [biblical blogs](#) and my latest [brave-inducing Christian fiction](#) at www.lauriegreenwestlake.com

Thanks for including me in your Jesus journey!

Be Brave,

L.G. Westlake (Laurie)

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR COFFEE SHOP AND ZOOM GROUPS

From the *Who Do You Say I am* Bible Brief

1. What have you/we learned about trials?
2. Could you identify a faith/trust weakness in lesson one? Share one weakness.
3. Which of the metaphorical titles of Christ helps build trust in a current, personal trial?
4. After identifying and studying the seven *I am* statements of Christ, do you feel more prepared to trust Him during unexpected troubles? Explain.
5. **Keeping it current** – If you could design a business card for Christ to share with the world, but could only choose three of His metaphorical titles, which three would it be? What would else would your business card say?
6. Email each member of the group a graphic and/or worship song that will, moving forward, inspire you to remember one or more of the seven *I am* truths.