

GIMME GOD!

Church Service Packet

Way

John 14:1-7
Matthew 11:28-30

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Welcome to the Gimme God! Worship Service. We have tried to make these resources as easy to use as possible. The sermons and prayers have been formatted with plenty of space to write in between the lines. Please feel free to make changes that will be most appropriate for your church.

To print the children's bulletin for ages 3 to 6, copy pages 18 and 19 onto sheets of 8.5 x 11 paper (double-sided) and fold. To print the children's bulletin for ages 7 to 12, copy pages 20 and 21 onto sheets of 8.5 x 11 paper (double-sided) and fold. **[Important Note: When printing children's bulletins, in the "Print" dialog box, please make sure you have the "Page Scaling" option set to NONE. Do not "fit" or "shrink" to fit the printable area. Feel free to contact us if you have problems printing.]**

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Sermon

In his book, *Mere Christianity*, author C.S. Lewis wrote about his disdain for the dentist:

When I was a child I often had toothaches, and I knew that if I went to my mother, she would give me something which would deaden the pain for that night and let me get to sleep. But I did not go to my mother—at least, not till the pain became very bad. And the reason I did not go was this. I did not doubt she would give me the aspirin; but I knew she would also do something else. I knew she would take me to the dentist next morning. I could not get what I wanted out of her without getting something more, which I did NOT want. I wanted immediate relief from pain: but I could not get it without having my teeth set permanently right. And I knew those dentists; I knew they started fiddling about with all sorts of other teeth which had not yet begun to ache. They would not let sleeping dogs lie; if you gave them an inch they took a mile.¹

Lewis then went on to say that the Lord is like those dentists who, when given an inch, want the mile as well. It's as if starting in a relationship with Christ is like knocking over the first in a long string of dominos, and as long as we don't cut off the relationship, it will continue to blossom

and flourish into higher and deeper places in our lives than we could have imagined at the beginning.

We find a perfect example of this in the I AM statement of Jesus this morning. “I AM the way, the truth, and the life.” This is a statement we’re very familiar with, but have you ever stopped to wonder why Jesus puts these three things together—way, truth, and life. Did Jesus throw these things out at random, or are they connected in some way?

The Way

I want to suggest to you this morning that Jesus was being very deliberate in His choice of words. And I think He was trying to communicate something unique about the path to eternal life. So, let’s examine these one at a time. What does it mean to say that Jesus is The Way?

It means just what John wrote in the first chapter of his Gospel. He said, “No one has ever seen God, but the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known.”²² This is really a beautiful thing when you think about the culture of the world in Bible times. Nearly every society on earth was obsessed with gods. They all prayed to or tried to manipulate gods in some way or another. The “pagan” cultures even fashioned little idols, images of their gods, in order to have something tangible to focus on while they prayed.

And into this menagerie of false gods comes the One True God, and He says to His people, the Israelites, “There is no other God but me.” The Israelites weren’t allowed to have idols to pray

to, but everything in their culture and in the Old Testament sanctuary system was a symbol that was designed to point them to the time when God would appear on this planet in the flesh.

That was an incredible idea! Nobody ever actually *saw* their gods in the flesh. The Egyptian gods didn't appear to the Egyptian people. The Greek gods didn't appear to the Greek people. The Roman gods didn't appear to the Roman people. They were always considered to be aloof, far off, and distant. But the God of Heaven, the One True God, is different. He makes a promise to His people that He is going to come and visit them, live with them, and even be one of them.

So, when John says that “nobody has seen God, but the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known,” it was a radical idea. Regardless of the kind of character Jesus manifested, the fact that any god had shown up on the earth was a big deal.

But we see that Christ didn't just come for a visit. He came for a specific purpose. In his opening to the book of Hebrews, Paul writes, “In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.”³ Unlike pagan gods, who never had personal interaction with their subjects (because they didn't exist!), God has been speaking to us throughout history. And here, Paul says that Christ's coming was a continuation of the communication. In Christ, The Word, God was speaking His message to us loudly and more clearly than ever before.

This is part of what it means to say that Jesus is the way. He is the vehicle through which we learn most intimately about God. In many places, the Bible refers to Jesus as our mediator, and it's

interesting to note that the root of the word *mediator* is “media.” The media is where we go for information, to find out what’s going on. God has always been interested in communicating about Himself to His creatures, and Jesus takes on that role of the “divine media.” If we want to know about God, we see the clearest and best revelation of His character in Jesus.

The Truth

And this leads us to the second part of Jesus’ statement: the truth. Jesus is the way to learning the truth about God. In other words, accepting that Christ is the way and taking the journey with Him helps us understand what is true about God.

Do we need help with understanding the truth about God? Do we have some misconceptions about Him? Yes, I’d like to suggest that, when they ate the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve caused the human race to be afraid of God and to have certain misunderstandings about His character. It’s interesting, isn’t it, that running and hiding was the first thing Adam and Eve did after they disobeyed God? Why would they do that? Had God ever given them a reason to be afraid? Why were they suddenly fearful?

You see, this is one of the problems with sin—it impairs our ability to have a relationship with God. It causes us to believe that God is unforgiving, that He is out to get us, that He is angry with us, and even that He is a liar. And these were misgivings about God that swirled around in the human subconscious until Jesus came.

Because in Jesus, we see that God forgives, even when we abuse Him. We see that God is not out to get us, but that He is out to heal and save us. We see that He is not angry or demanding, but He says, “I don’t condemn you.” And especially, we see that God is not a liar, but He gives us evidence of the truth.

One of the wonderful things about this part of Jesus’ statement is that we see, then, that truth is a Person, not a thing. Truth isn’t some external object, something out there to be manipulated and spun. No, Truth is a Person, a person to have a relationship with. God is Truth, and the more time we spend in relationship with Him, the more we will understand what is True about Him and about ourselves.

The Life

And, finally, this truth leads us to . . . life. In John 17, Jesus said, “This is life eternal, that they might *know* You, the one true God.”⁴ Jesus said this during His final prayer for the disciples, right before He went to the cross. Obviously, He was equating the message of the cross with the truth about God—that self-sacrificing love is at the very heart of God’s character.

In the Upper Room, He had just said, “This is my body. This is my blood. I’m giving it to you.” Can there be anything more sacrificial than breaking down your own body for the benefit of others? To say, “Here I am, all of me . . . take me and use me. I give myself to you.” That was the

message of Jesus to His disciples in the Upper Room. It was the message of the cross. In fact, it was the message of Jesus' entire life.

It is the truth about God, that He will stop at nothing in His pursuit of us—even if it means enduring torture and death. This is total love, and it is the foundation of life. So, taking the *way* leads to the *truth*, which leads to *life*. That's why Jesus said,

Take my yoke upon you — (I am the way)
and learn from me — (I am the truth)
and you will find rest for your souls — (I am the life)

The Narrow Road

Sometimes, taking His yoke upon us doesn't seem so easy. There's something in us that wants to resist it. It seems hard and restrictive. In fact, elsewhere Jesus said that the way to eternal life was a narrow road with a narrow gate. That is such a misunderstood Scripture! We have interpreted it to mean that the journey with Christ will be one of difficulty and pain, while the other road, the wide road that leads to destruction is the way of freedom and fun.

But the reason the gate that leads to eternal life is narrow is not because it's a difficult road to follow, but it's because there is *only one option*. Narrow describes the number of choices, not the quality of the journey! God is the only one who can lead us to life. And as He does, He is like that dentist who always has the best interests of the patient at heart. Sure, the dentist could fix the one toothache and ignore everything else, but he wants his patient to enter into the freedom that comes

with good dental hygiene. Those of you who have had cavities know that the end results of poor dental hygiene aren't pleasant.

And it's the same way with God. Jesus is the way, the *only* way to truth and life. Trying to do it on our own will get us nowhere. God loves you—every single part of you! That's why He doesn't want just one little part of you. He wants all of you! Just as He gave Himself fully for us, just as He said, "Here I am, all of me . . . I give myself to you," He longs for *us* to say the same thing to *Him*. And when we do, we will find that the life He promises is better than anything we could have ever imagined.

C.S. Lewis finished his commentary on going to the dentist this way:

Our Lord is like the dentists. If you give Him an inch, He will take a mile. Dozens of people go to Him to be cured of some one particular sin which they are ashamed of or which is obviously spoiling daily life. Well, He will cure it all right: but He will not stop there. That may be all you asked for; but if once you call Him in, He will give you the full treatment.⁵

Today, let's rejoice that we serve a God who wants to give us the *full* treatment. And let's determine that we will come to *Him only* to find the Way that leads to the Truth that leads to Life.

1. *Mere Christianity*, p157
2. John 1:18, NIV
3. Hebrews 1:1-2, NIV
4. John 17:3, NIV
5. *Mere Christianity*, p157

Prayers, Etc.

INVOCATION

Jesus, the Way; Father, the Truth; and Spirit, the Life; You are glorious and magnificent. In Your great love, You have shown us the way to eternal life. Be with us now as we seek out Your presence. And fill us completely with new life. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He has called us today to come to Him, to learn from Him, and to live in Him. We will find true life in no other, so come, let us worship the Lord.

PARTICIPATORY PRAYER *(may be spoken together with the congregation)*

Gracious God, You are the Way. When we walk with You, we will lack nothing. Awesome God, You are the Truth. Your light shines brightly in the darkness of our hearts. Powerful God, You are the Life. You alone can teach us what it means to truly live. Help us learn from You today. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE *(may be spoken by pastor after the Participatory Prayer)*

The Lord is our life. When we are mired in sin, He forgives us. When we are wandering away from Him, He finds us. When we are stubborn, He is patient with us. His mercy is everlasting. Amen.

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

When we couldn't find the way, the Father sent Jesus. And when we didn't know the truth, Jesus gave the Spirit. And when we didn't have the life, the Spirit reminds us of the Father. God's nature is wrapped up in giving. As He is a great giver, let us also open our hands and hearts in giving to others. Today's offering is for . . . *(omit if your offering is not specially designated)*

OFFERTORY PRAYER

God, thank You for being the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Bless these gifts and the way they are used so others may find the Way to know the Truth that leads to Life. Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

God of the Way, You illuminate our darkness. Your light shines in the gloominess of our lives, and once again, we behold You. You are beautiful. You are holy. You are marvelous. You are beyond compare, without equal.

God of the Truth, You do not leave us to the insanity of our delusions. You have chosen the method of self-revelation to demonstrate truth and reality to us, so we can make informed decisions about our future with You. In Jesus, we see the truth about You. You are compassionate. You are caring. You are humble. You are beyond compare, without equal.

God of the Life, You alone create and sustain Your creation. In Your vast power, You hold planets and stars and galaxies together. You are all-knowing, all-powerful, and ever-present. You are able to heal and mighty to save. You are beyond compare, without equal. **[insert the specific needs of your congregation here]**

Thank You for finding us after we wandered into a far country. Thank You for Your mercy and acceptance. Thank You for welcoming us home with open arms, into the joy and celebration of heaven. We love, admire, and adore You now and forever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

And now, may the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit open your eyes to see the Way, set the Truth ablaze in your hearts, and lead you on to the life everlasting. Amen.

Children's Story

Method: Story

Purpose: To help children understand what Jesus meant when He said that He was "the way, the truth, and the life."

Suggested Props: a homemade treasure map with foreign-looking writing

Good morning, boys and girls. Today I'm going to tell you a story about two young men named Kevin and Rick who found a treasure map one day. They were digging around in a big field, and they uncovered a map *[if you brought a prop, hold it up here]* but they couldn't read it. They could see that it was a map and it looked like it led to a huge fortune at the end of it. But they were very frustrated, because they didn't know how to read what the map said. It looked like it was written in a very strange, foreign language.

But the idea of finding a hidden treasure was too much to ignore. So Kevin and Rick started showing their map to everyone they knew, and they asked everyone if they knew anything about the language on the map. None of their friends knew what language it was, so they started asking other people. They called a whole bunch of different universities and asked their language professors to look at their map. And they talked to archaeology experts and historical experts, but nobody seemed to know what was written on the map.

Finally, they found someone who barely recognized the language and told them that there was only one person in the whole world who knew how to read it. Eagerly, Kevin and Rick found out where that person was, and they got on a plane to fly far away to the other side of the world, where they found this kind, old man.

They took their map to the old man and showed it to him. Right away, he smiled. He recognized the writing, and he said he would be happy to teach the language to the young men so they could read the map and follow it to the treasure.

Kevin and Rick were so excited. They spent a lot of time with the old man, and eventually they learned the language. And once they learned the language, they were able to read the map! They were so excited because, all of a sudden, this piece of paper that had looked so confusing to them for so long was crystal clear. They could read and understand everything on it!

And so the two young men set out with their map to find the treasure. And they *did* find the treasure, and it was more wonderful than anything they ever could have imagined!

Boys and girls, this story is like a statement Jesus made to His disciples. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Those three things are connected. By finding the way, we discover the truth, which leads us to life.

The treasure Kevin and Rick found was like “the life” that God wants to give us. The true life that He has is like finding a treasure, because it’s better than *anything* else we can ever find. It would be pretty sad if we used up all our days on this earth without finding the treasure of God’s true life.

And Kevin and Rick’s treasure map was like “the truth.” It showed them exactly what they needed to do and where they needed to go to find the treasure. The map showed them how to get to the treasure, just like the Truth shows us how to find the Life.

And the kind, old man in the story was like “the way.” Before Kevin and Rick found the old man, their treasure map was useless to them because they couldn’t read it or understand it. And before Jesus came, we didn’t understand the Truth about God either. We needed Him to help us see God clearly, just like Kevin and Rick needed the old man to help them read the map clearly.

So, just as the old man led to understanding the treasure map, which led to the treasure, Jesus is the Way for us to understand the Truth, which leads us to Life. And whenever you are confused about anything in life, I hope you will remember that in Jesus, we find all the answers we need.

Responsive Reading

God of gods, You are the way.

Your yoke is easy and Your burden is light.

King of kings, You are the truth.

Your light banishes the darkness, blazing strong in the night.

Lord of lords, You are the life.

Death has no sway over You. Nothing can hold You down!

Great I Am, be our everything.

Because of who You are, we offer everything we have to You!

Hymn

God, On the Cross

sung to the tune of *Lift High the Cross* (Crucifer)

Refrain

*God, on the cross, You proved Your word is true,
So we would know that we can trust in You.*

Falsely arrested in the garden grove,
You chose to open heaven's treasure trove.

Refrain

Tortured and beaten, shedding precious blood,
Your love unfettered, flowed, a holy flood.

Refrain

"Father, forgive them," was Your heartfelt cry,
And proved Your grace is not in short supply.

Refrain

Calvary revealed that death is caused by sin,
Not by our God, who died, our hearts to win.

Refrain

Nothing we do could make You love us less;
Your mercy thrives in comfort or distress.

Refrain

Words by Kelley Lorencin

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Song Suggestions

Hymns

Come, my way (Come, My Way)

Words and music by George Herbert and Alexander Brent Smith

Lord of our life (Cloisters)

Words and music by M.A. Von Lowenstern, Philip Pusey, and Joseph Barnby

Loving Shepherd of Thy sheep (Orientis Partibus)

Words and music by Jane E. Leeson and French Melody

Praise Songs

Here I am to worship

Words and music by Tim Hughes

© 2001 Thankyou Music

Hope set high

Words and music by Amy Grant

© 1992 Age To Age Music, Inc.

Jesus, what a beautiful name

Words and music by Tanya Riches

© 1995 Hillsong Publishing

Let the peace of God reign

Words and music by Darlene Zschech

© 1995 Hillsong Publishing

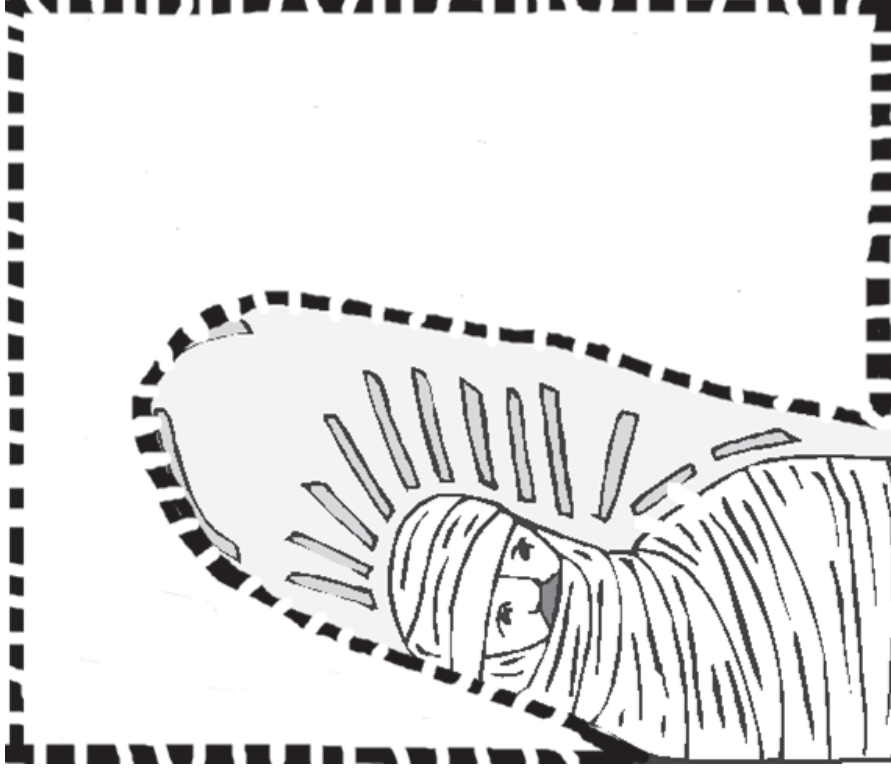
The eyes of my heart

Words and music by Matt Redman

© 1998 Thankyou Music

Jesus gives us life.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.
Trace and color Lazarus' tomb.



Wee Worship

ages 3 to 6

John 14:1-7



The Way, the Truth, and the Life

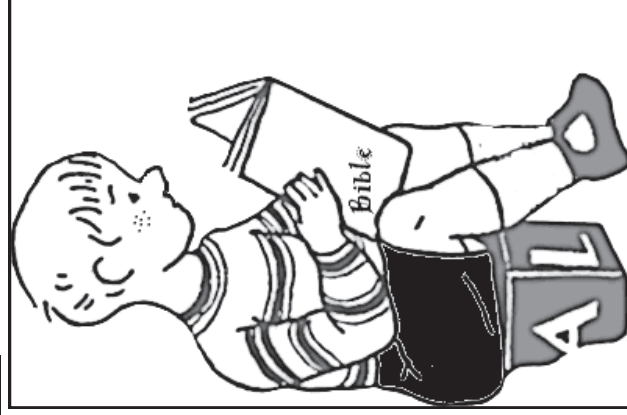
Jesus is the way we learn about God.

Trace the letters below.

J E S U S
T H E
W A Y

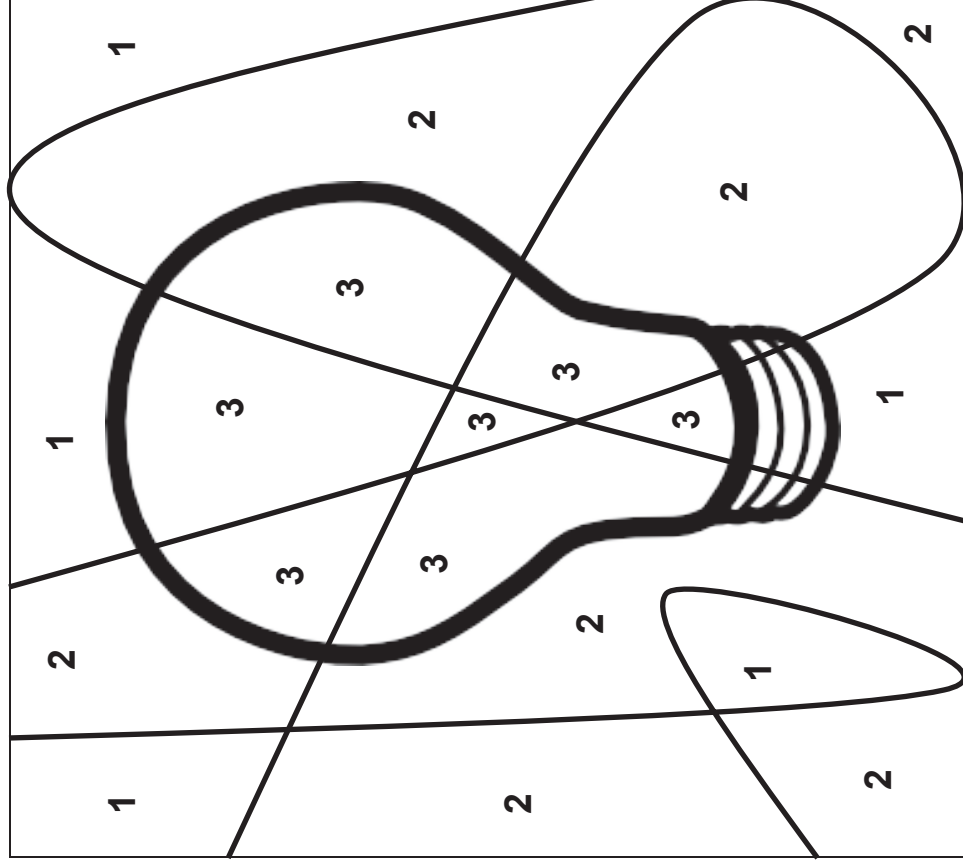
We also learn about God in the Bible.

Find and circle the five changes in the second picture.



Jesus shines the truth into our lives.

Shade in the 3's.



Only Jesus can show us the Father.

Use the code to complete a famous statement of Jesus.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ♥ | A | B | C | ♥ | D | E | F | ♥ | H | K | M | ♥ | N | O | P |
| ♥ | | | | ♥ | R | S | T | ♥ | U | X | Y | ♥ | | | |
| ♥ | | | | ♥ | | | | ♥ | | | | ♥ | | | |

”



Worship

ages 7 to 12

John 14:1-7

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Jesus came to give us life.

Find the letters in the circles to fill in the blanks.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | | | | | | | | |
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | L | M | N | O | R | T | U | V | Y | Z |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 4.5 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 7 |
|---|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----|---|----|---|---|-----|---|
| 4 | 5 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 7 | 89 | 6 | 7 | 7.8 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|----|---|----|---|---|-----|---|

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|-----|---|
| 1 | 1.2 | 8.9 | 6.7 | 2.3 | 1 | 6.7 | 8 |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|-----|---|

$$\begin{array}{r} 5.6 \quad 5 \quad 34.3 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

