



Finding I AM

HOW JESUS FULLY SATISFIES
THE CRY OF YOUR HEART

Lysa TerKeurst

The cover features several olive branches with green leaves and olives in various stages of ripeness (green, yellow, and dark brown) scattered around the text. The background is plain white.

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THE CRY OF YOUR HEART

Lysa TerKeurst

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MEET THE AUTHOR

Lysa TerKeurst is passionate about God's Word. She has studied extensively in the Holy Land and loves to make connections between the Old and New Testaments. Her deepest desire is to help others experience Jesus by unpacking Scripture in new and fresh ways everyone can understand!

Lysa is the president of Proverbs 31 Ministries and the #1 New York Times best-selling author of *Uninvited*, *The Best Yes*, and 20 other books. But to those who know her best she's just a simple girl who speaks about hope in the midst of her own struggles. Lysa lives with her family in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Connect with her at www.LysaTerKeurst.com or on social media @LysaTerKeurst.



INTRODUCTION

What is that relationship, that insecurity, that hurt, that desire, that prayer you've brought to God countless times? It's what makes you trust God the most, and in the not-so-spiritually-certain moments, it's what makes you most suspicious of Him. If God is good, why isn't He being good to you in answering this cry of your heart?

I've been there.

There is a desperate cry within my heart that I've longed with every fiber of my being to see come to pass. Minutes have turned into days and weeks and years of learning to make some sort of spiritual peace. On my good days I stand assured, "It's just not God's timing yet."

But on my less stellar days I crumble, afraid and hurt, "God, why? You know how much this ache in my heart steals a piece of too many of my smiles. Quite honestly, I'm tired of wondering if you're withholding because I'm not good enough, capable enough, spiritual enough, trusting enough, or mature enough. I guess I'm really tired of hoping."

This study is deeply personal to me. It's not a kumbaya, let's get together and just talk about the Bible enough to feel good about ourselves. This study is a lifeline, a way to get oxygen into the places of our hearts that have been starving to breathe and fully live.

And I'm so glad you are here to study with me. To search God's Word and seek Him as the source of our satisfaction.

In this study we are going to dive into the seven I AM statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John. We are going to go to places in the Holy Land where Jesus may have been when He uttered the words. I want the Word of God to come alive to you in this study—to reach the recesses of your heart because I truly believe that God's Word to us is life.

So, lean in with me, and let's see what Jesus wants to say to us and how He wants to satisfy our hearts.





ABOUT THIS STUDY

I fell in love with the Holy Land on my first trip to Israel a few years ago. In just two years, I've been there seven times studying and preparing to bring what I've learned to you. The Bible has come alive to me in a new way and one of my hopes in this study is that this will happen for you as well. This study was actually birthed out of one of my trips to Israel when the small group I was with specifically studied the Gospel of John. We heard our guide teach some of these I AM statements, and I left that trip knowing that I had to dive into this topic more fully.

In the study we will spend time on each of the I AM statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John. A few things you will want to know:

- The first video session is an introduction to the series.
- Then each week in your personal study time you will study one, or sometimes two, I AM statement.
- And then in the video following your week of study, I'll unpack the I AM statement(s) you just studied that week.




This was an intentional format because I want you to study the I AM statement for yourself, dig into Scripture on your own about each one, before I give you my thoughts on the subject.


You will have four days of personal study each week with an optional fifth day. That optional fifth day is just that, optional—don't feel like you have to do it. It's only if you want to take the study to the next level.

During the study we will be looking at many passages in the Gospel of John, but we won't be studying the whole book. What the optional fifth day of personal study will do is walk you through the entire Gospel of John a few chapters at a time. You may have already read some of the passages in that week of study, but in doing it this way you will read every word in the Gospel and be able to see the I AM statements in a fresh way because of it.

My prayer for you in this study is that you will discover that Jesus is the key to any kind of satisfaction you are looking for. He alone will fill the empty places in your heart, and I hope you find Him anew in this study. I'm so grateful to be taking this journey with you.



*Jesus is
the key to
any kind of
satisfaction
you are
looking for.*



I AM THE *Bread* OF LIFE.

I AM THE *Light* OF THE WORLD.

I AM THE *Sheep Gate*.

I AM THE *good Shepherd*.

I AM THE *Resurrection* AND THE *Life*.

I AM THE *Way* AND
THE *Truth* AND THE *Life*.

I AM THE *True Vine*.

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group guide

VIDEO GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

After watching the video, discuss the following questions in your group.

1. God desires to be all you *need* and all you *want*. Describe the difference between the two from your own perspective.
2. Can you relate to the "sweet sorrow" I discussed in the video?
Share any part of your story that you feel comfortable sharing that may be helpful to others.
3. How does the statement that life isn't meant to fully satisfy us, only Jesus can, speak to you today?
4. What are a few things you are hoping and praying for God to show you as you start this study?

Bread



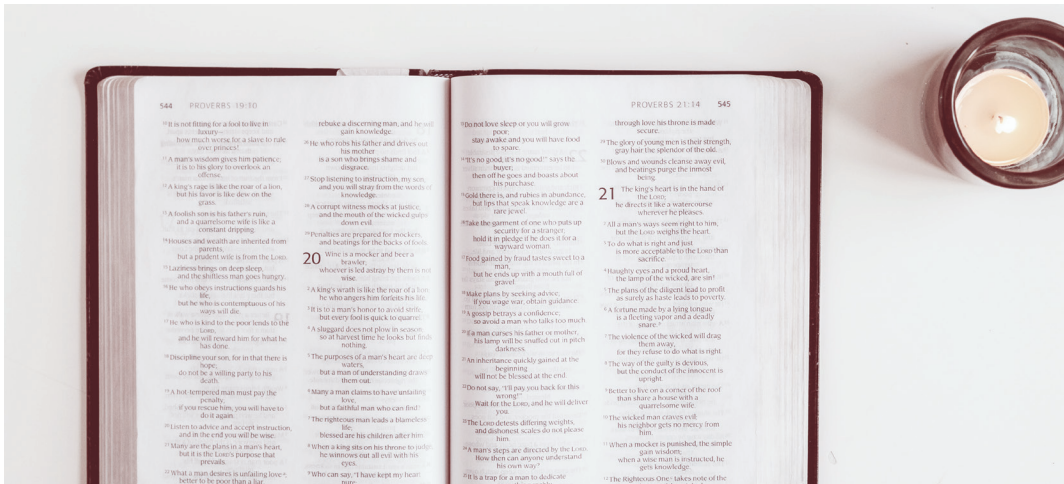
WEEK 1

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

JOHN 6:35

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DAY 1

BIOS & ZOE LIFE

For years I've wanted to be like the spiritual giants who approach prayer and fasting with glee in their voices and a glide in their steps. They smile through the passing up of food with an apparent ease that's always eluded me. Yes, I wanted to be like them, but I was apparently too weak.

So, each time I heard about an invitation to fast from food I sidestepped the opportunity with my list of excuses:

I struggle with low blood sugar.

I get real grumpy when I get real hungry.

If I have an emotional breakdown while pursuing a spiritual breakthrough, it sort of defeats the purpose, you know?

I think fasting works for some people but not for me.

All I could think about was the struggle of my stomach. But then this past January something changed. I was feeling spiritually starved. Suddenly, all I could think about was the struggle of my heart.

There was a desperation like I'd never known as I confronted the source of my ache. I reached a place where I could not hear from God. I felt disconnected from believing God's promises were true for me personally. I was desperate to have relief from this unbelief.

I could sense His presence. I could connect with His truth. What I longed for the most, His voice of assurance and instruction, was stunningly silent.

That thing I mentioned in the introduction—the source of my holy wrestling, my silent suffering, the reason my pillow was sometimes wet with tears, the pain—was at an all time high. And then suddenly and almost cruelly, God seemed eerily silent.

I lay in bed one night racked with an imploding feeling.

One sleepless night turned into 2, 3, 7, 10. Starvation of the soul doesn't give permission slips for sleep to help you escape its grip.

I cried at unusual times. I withdrew from depth in my conversations with others. I lied about having a sore throat, a sour stomach, a bug of some sort—anything to excuse me from having to be present.

When you are absent in heart but present in reality, you know the slightest bump or jostle by anyone would shatter your ability to hold it together. You'd be nothing but dust that even a wisp of wind could and would blow away without any sympathy at all. As everything about you goes flying, you'd suddenly and horrifically realize you're helpless to gather the particles that were once "you" back into something of any sort of substance.

And then on night 11, finally, I slept. Physically, I felt better the next day. But spiritually I was so utterly exhausted and spent that I knew something had to break through. That's when another fasting invitation came.

Out of nothing but sheer desperation I said yes: "Yes, God, I will fast from food that gives me physical comfort so I can find something new with You. I don't want comfort. I want connection. I must hear from You. It's not even an option to go one more day without feeding my soul with Your whisper."

I didn't do a complete fast. But it was more than I'd ever been willing to try before. I was desperate. It's amazing the powerful influence desperation can have on a person for good or bad. Desperation can lead to degradation.

Desperate people can find themselves doing desperately degrading things to ease their source of pain. But desperation for God is different. True desperation for God will lead to revelation.

And after only a few days the revelation I got stunned me.

Apart from Him
there is no true
satisfaction.

God was *allowing* this source of pain in my life.

He wasn't causing it. He didn't take pleasure in it. He didn't like the hurt it was causing me. But He absolutely was allowing it. And the only whisper from God that kept rushing through my heart was that I had to learn to fully trust Him and Him alone.

Without full trust in Him, it is impossible to be fully satisfied by Him. And apart from Him, there is no fullness. Apart from Him there is no true satisfaction.

The instant fix I had been begging Him to give me would only benefit me in physical and emotional realms. It would have given me a temporary fix and a brief stint of relief, but it would never develop in me a permanent source of life from which to draw upon time and again.

God was after so much more for me. He was after my soul. That deeper place where God wants to ease the hunger of our souls can only be accessed when we are stripped of the cheaper, temporary sources of nourishment.

In John 6:35, we find God personalizing His original "I AM" statement from Exodus 3 through His Son's declaration.

TAKE A MOMENT AND READ JOHN 6:35.

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

JOHN 6:35

Remember, God's "I AM" statement from Exodus was so completely full that it needed no qualifier. It was the promise that His presence was everything we ever needed. It was all peace, all provision, all perfection, and all protection. That was His promise given. But our human hearts were designed by God not just for His completion but also for His companionship. We needed His promise and His presence to be personalized.

Jesus and His seven I AM statements from John personalize God's promises.

Make no mistake, God is I AM. He is absolutely all we need, but He delights in us not only needing Him but also wanting Him.

So, He gives us something we've craved physically on a daily basis since the beginning of time—bread. But He isn't just any bread. He's the Bread of life.

There are two words for *life* in the Bible. One is *bios*, used 10 times in the Bible, which means "breath in your lungs or physical life." The other is *zoe*, which means "possessed with vitality looking to the fullness of life." It's used 135 times in the Bible.¹

Let's look up one verse for each of these words to get an idea of how they are used. Look up the following verses and write some ways the word is used according to the passage.

Bios: Luke 21:4

Zoe: 1 John 5:12

Why do you think *zoe* is used 125 times more than *bios*?

Jesus doesn't want us to just live with breath in our lungs walking around as a shell of existence. He wants us to have a rare vitality, experiencing the fullness of soul someone should experience when Jesus Himself does everyday life with us.

Do you believe this? Do you believe Jesus wants this for you? Why or why not?

I believe it for me. I believe it for you. Because before the beginning of time, God has waited for you to read these words and come to this realization. That thing you've been so desperate to see come to pass? That unanswered prayer? That unrelenting ache? The cries you're so afraid are unheard? The unyielding addiction? That unsung recognition? Your unraveling hope?

Those answers and the easing of that ache aren't the source of finally becoming fully satisfied. They aren't. And you believing this lie is a scheme of Satan to keep you in an unsatisfied place.

Trust me, even if that problem was solved, the enemy has another waiting in the wings that will be just as distracting and devastating to you as this one. We live in a broken world where escaping brokenness isn't possible. Our souls were made for the perfection of the garden; therefore, they can't ever be satisfied by the imperfect grit and grind of this sin-soaked world.

I have a theory about why I've anguished and suffered so desperately through this message. Because Satan wants to steal these words, kill my desire to deliver them, and destroy the miracles this teaching will produce in my life and in yours. The enemy of our soul strategizes day and night to get us to settle for bios life so we will never taste the hell-shattering fullness of zoe.

It's been his plan since the beginning.

We see it when the Bread of life was tempted by the enemy in the desert.

TAKE A MOMENT AND READ MATTHEW 4:1-4.

Jesus had been fasting for forty days and the Scriptures make sure to note that "he was hungry" (v. 2). So, the enemy tempts Jesus to satisfy His bios need—eat

some physical bread—so that He would starve His zoe need—the deep satisfaction of fasting for deeper connection with God.

In what way has the enemy been tempting you to satisfy physical and emotional needs and kept you from pursuing that zoe life we've been reading about?

We need both *bios* life and *zoe* life. It's not one or the other—it's a "both and" deal. But we must remember it can't just be *bios* life. We were also made for *zoe*. As a matter of fact, I think God uses our hunger for *bios* bread to give us a picture of *zoe* bread. Think about the way physical hunger works. Hunger isn't a bad thing. Hunger produces a need for provision.

Physical hunger produces a need for what kind of provision?

Doesn't it make sense that God would also allow us to experience spiritual hunger as well? What does the term *spiritual hunger* mean to you?

Just like we read in Matthew 4 where the tempter came to twist the truth with Jesus, he will want to twist the truth of God's provision for us. God is the source of life through His provision. The enemy is the source of lies through his perversion.

What we consume will consume us. It's our choice whether we are consuming God's life or the enemy's lies.

—
God is the source
of life through His
provision.
—

Write out Matthew 6:33 here:

The word seek in the original Greek is the word *zeteo* which means "to crave."²

What are you truly craving today?

A declaration is "a positive, explicit, or formal statement."³ Write out your personal declaration of what you need to shift or give up in order to crave the Bread of life like never before.



DAY 2

FEEDING THE 5,000

Before Jesus utters His first official I AM statement, He performs a miracle—the feeding of the 5,000. This is the fourth miracle of Jesus in the Book of John, but the first I AM statement. Before we can truly understand the I AM statement, we need to look at the miracle.

John 6 is where we will camp out this week. Even if you are unfamiliar with Jesus and the Gospels, you have probably heard of the feeding of the 5,000. After all, it is the only miracle that we read about in all four Gospels. For that reason alone we should sit up and take note.

PLEASE READ JOHN 6:1-9.

Why were the crowds following Jesus? (v. 2)

Imagine hearing about a man like that in your life today. What would be the request you would make of Him?

Look specifically at verse 4. In what time of year did this occur?

Passover was a springtime festival that celebrated the deliverance of the Hebrew people (Israelites) from Egypt where they were held in bondage as slaves. Take a moment and consider the feeding of the 5,000 within the context of this festival. Passover celebrates God as a deliverer. During the Israelites' wandering in the desert God provided manna from heaven. Don't miss this important point. This was one of the biggest times of celebration on the Jewish calendar. In fact, it was the highlight of their spiritual history. And not only did they celebrate and look back to thank God for what He had done, they also, perhaps just as importantly, looked forward to when God would send another prophet like Moses to bring deliverance to them.

Little did they know that the very Prophet they were waiting for was in their midst. Do you think they wondered if it was Him? Do you think they had hope stirring within them that maybe this would be the One who would rescue them and deliver them once and for all? Or do you think the many years of waiting with no result had hardened their hearts so much that they didn't really believe anymore? Were they just celebrating to celebrate or did it have purpose?

What promise from God are you waiting to be fulfilled? Or what have you asked God for time after time with no tangible results?

Maybe you'd like to start this study with a simple prayer for God to open your heart and soften it. I'd like to challenge you with something I challenged myself with as I worked through this material. Pray every day of this study for God to open and soften your heart to hear from Him. Ask Him to help you to trust Him. Keep hoping, keep praying, and keep watching for His hand. Just because you don't clearly see God's work at this moment does not mean He is not working.

WITH THAT IN MIND, LET'S LOOK BACK AT JOHN 6:5-9.

Poor Philip. He is trying so hard. And then Andrew gave his own shot at a plan. Neither were even close to a good solution. They were hopeless. Feeding these people was, to them, an impossible situation.

Why do you think Jesus asked Philip where they should buy the bread for the people if He already knew the answer?

How have you seen God show up in a seemingly impossible situation in your life or in the life of someone you know?

READ THE REST OF THE STORY IN JOHN 6:10-15.

Look closely at verse 11. All Jesus does here is give thanks. He simply says the blessing. The blessing that He might have said, according to Jewish tradition could have been:

“Blessed be thou, Yahweh our God, king of the world who causes bread to come forth from earth.”⁴

Maybe this doesn't speak to you like it does to me, but I love how a blessing opens up this miracle. Thanking God for what He has done. For who He is. Thankfulness opened the door to what God had in store for this group of 5,000.

Maybe you feel too heartbroken to be thankful.
Maybe you feel too hurt to be thankful.
Maybe you feel too fearful to be thankful.
Maybe you feel too disappointed to be thankful.
Maybe you feel too mad to be thankful.
Maybe you feel too depressed to be thankful.
Maybe you feel too hopeless to be thankful.

Fill in the blank for yourself:

I feel too _____ to be thankful.



Hillside near Capernaum

The solution to your problem or issue may be thankfulness. It's at least worth a try, don't you think?

Jesus provided food to the people on this hillside after He thanked God. They ate and enjoyed what was likely much-needed nourishment. They had full stomachs and now their ears were open and ready to hear from Jesus. And I'm certainly glad they were ready to listen because Jesus was going to challenge their thinking with what He was about to say.

Before we close out this day of study, though, I want us to look at a few things about the feeding of the 5,000 from the perspective of Mark's Gospel. Let me start by telling you a story.

I'm not sure when it happened. I can't pinpoint a moment or a skewed thought or a wrong perspective that started it. But I'm now well aware that somewhere along the journey of my long wrestling through my unanswered prayer, my heart started to harden.

*The hushing of
humility will
be the rushing
in of pride.*

Like I said, I can't tell you when it happened, but I can tell you the first clue to realizing it's happening to you: It's when you hush humility.

The hushing of humility will be the rushing in of pride. There's nothing that crystallizes and encrusts the soft places of a heart more than the subtle first notions that you disagree with truth.

You start to think you deserve a little more than truth will allow.

You begin to believe you know a little better than the truth that bumps up against your desire.

You excuse away the promptings that your justifications to skew truth aren't so justified.

From that platform an elevated sense of self grows.

The disciples found themselves in just this predicament.

They'd been out doing public ministry with great success. And then they stumble upon the feeding of the 5,000. They had served Jesus in the big ways of preaching,