

“In 40 brief but rich devotionals, trusted pastor Adam Ramsey helps us draw strength from the life-giving words of Jesus. Although structured for the season of Lent, these soul-enriching meditations, prayers, and quotes can be savored throughout the year. Take a walk down the fresh pathways Adam opens for us—straight to the heart of our Savior. You’ll be glad you did.”

JANI ORTLUND, Executive Vice President,
Renewal Ministries, Tennessee, USA

“Jesus alone has the words of eternal life, and Adam’s latest book will take you on a profound journey to discover their contemporary relevance. Drawing from deep wells of devotional insight, Adam weaves his soulful reflections with piercing imagery from Charles Spurgeon. A truly enriching read!”

DAN PATERSON, Apologist; Speaker;
Author, *Questioning Christianity*

“‘Is Jesus real to me?’ That is one of the most pressing questions of a Christian’s spirituality. And in this stellar book, Adam Ramsey, with his pastor’s heart and theologian’s skill, takes us through the Gospel of John, where we encounter the real Jesus—the one who really is Lord and Savior, our gracious Friend, our living Redeemer. *Truly, Truly, I Say to You* will help you enjoy the real Jesus.”

J. A. MEDDERS, Director of Assessment,
Acts 29; Author, *Humble Calvinism*

“This book is a delight! Adam Ramsey draws us into the heart of Christ as he reflects on the words Jesus spoke during his earthly life. Each devotion is beautifully written and leads us into greater wonder and adoration of our glorious Saviour. Read it slowly and savour the goodness of Jesus.”

CAROLYN LACEY, Women’s Worker, Woodgreen Church,
Worcester, UK; Author, *Extraordinary Hospitality*
(for Ordinary People)

“Since the first day I met Adam, he has consistently helped me in two ways: in digging deeper into God’s word, and in discovering the riches of Christ on every page. This book is an overflow of that core part of his heart, which will call you to grow in Christ as you take your time reflecting on each word that he said. *Truly, Truly, I Say to You* is simple enough for any person to approach just as they are, yet profound enough that they will be unable to stay the same.”

DAN GORRY, Lead Pastor,
C3 Currumbin, Gold Coast, Australia

“By the time I had finished this book, I felt that I had been on a journey with Adam, Charles Spurgeon and the apostle John, with all of them saying to me each day, *Look at what Jesus said here— isn’t he amazing?!* Adam has written a beautiful daily devotional that wonderfully causes you to stop and mull over the words and heart of our Saviour. This book has truly stirred my affections for Jesus, and I’m excited to encourage others to get hold of a copy and go on the journey too. Thank you for this gift, Adam.”

STEVE ROBINSON, Senior Pastor, Cornerstone Church
Liverpool; Director, Cornerstone Collective;
Director, Acts 29 Great Britain

*Truly,
Truly,
I SAY TO YOU*

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*Truly,
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Meditations on the Words of
Jesus from the Gospel of John

Adam Ramsey

with insights from

Charles Spurgeon

Truly, Truly, I Say to You
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*To Kristina,
Our Saviour smiles over you more than you know,
and he smiles through you more than you could imagine.
To me most of all.*

Contents

INTRODUCTION	13
THE BEGINNING OF LENT	
1. "What are you seeking?"	17
2. "Follow me"	21
3. "My hour has not yet come"	25
4. "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up"	29
THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT	
5. "You must be born again"	33
6. "So must the Son of Man be lifted up"	37
7. "The fields are white for harvest"	41
8. "The Scriptures bear witness about me"	45
9. "It is I; do not be afraid"	49
10. "Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out"	53
THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT	
11. "I am the living bread that came down from heaven"	57

12. "Do you want to go away as well?"	61
13. "If anyone thirsts, come to me and drink"	65
14. "Neither do I condemn you"	69
15. "I am the light of the world"	73
16. "Before Abraham was, I am"	77

THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

17. "I am the good shepherd"	81
18. "My sheep will never perish"	85
19. "I am the resurrection and the life"	89
20. "Now is my soul troubled ... Father, glorify your name"	93
21. "If I do not wash you..."	97
22. "By this all will know you are my disciples"	101

THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

23. "I go to prepare a place for you"	105
24. "You still do not know me?"	109
25. "The ruler of this world has no claim on me"	113
26. "Abide in me"	117
27. "I have called you friends"	121
28. "I chose you"	125

THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 29. "It is to your advantage
that I go away" | 129 |
| 30. "Your sorrow will turn into joy" | 133 |
| 31. "Take heart; I have overcome
the world" | 137 |
| 32. "Father, the hour has come;
glorify your Son" | 141 |
| 33. "Sanctify them in the truth" | 145 |
| 34. "That they may be one" | 149 |

HOLY WEEK

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 35. "Shall I not drink the cup?" | 153 |
| 36. "My kingdom is not of this world" | 157 |
| 37. "Behold your son!
Behold your mother!" | 161 |
| 38. "I thirst" | 165 |
| 39. "It is finished" | 169 |
| 40. (Silence) | 173 |

EASTER

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| 41. "Peace be with you" | 175 |
| 42. "Do you love me?" | 179 |

A Delightfully Brief Introduction

Iam convinced that one of the primary reasons why many of us possess a middle name is so that our mother can get our attention. It is a near-universal fact of life that when the woman who brought you *into* this world throws your middle name into a sentence, you are in grave danger of her taking you *out* of this world if you don't immediately pay attention. Your middle name serves as a signal. It grabs your attention. It compels you to lean in.

Similarly, Jesus had a phrase that he used for that purpose.

“Truly, truly, I say to you...”

It's a phrase that John, the writer of John's Gospel, records Jesus using frequently throughout his teaching. Twenty-four times, to be exact. These words are a way of catching our attention, as if to say, *Hey! Listen closely here. Pay attention. Underline this.*

And yet, all of Jesus' words demand such attention. Through these pages, I want to draw your eyes and your heart to various sayings of Jesus from every chapter in John's Gospel—to zero in on a phrase and turn it around a few times in your mind. I have one goal in this book: to help you pause for a few moments

each day and savour the life-renewing words of Jesus, so that they linger with you throughout the day.

Though it can be used at any time, this book is structured as a Lent devotional, for reading during the six and a half weeks leading up to Easter (beginning on Ash Wednesday, and not including Sundays). Each chapter is short: no more than five to ten minutes of reading. Each begins with a passage from John to read, which I then explore, and closes with a short prayer or reflective exercise. And then, to drive the truth of Christ's words home into your heart, I've enlisted the help of someone who has been a very precious friend to me over many years now: Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Known as the "Prince of Preachers", Spurgeon served as pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London (the largest church in the world at the time) from 1854 to 1892, where he preached anywhere from four to ten times per week. In his spare time, he also established and led a theological college and an orphanage, provided oversight for dozens of charities, and penned somewhere in the vicinity of 150 books. His collected sermons span 63 volumes, and make up the largest set of books by a Christian author in the history of the world.

Yet it was not only the quantity of words he generated—both spoken and written—that set Spurgeon apart. He preached Christ powerfully, eloquently, vividly and repeatedly. To Spurgeon, no matter how much practical help or wisdom the sermon contained, it was not a Christian sermon until it lifted up the person and atoning work of Jesus from the Scriptures. His voice in the 19th century was gospel-preaching at its finest: illuminating the mind and lighting a fire in the heart for literally millions of people in his own day.

And it continues to be so in our day.

One of the great joys I experienced while writing this book was reading hundreds of sermons by this Prince of Preachers, and hunting there for the right words to help you feel the

weight of Jesus' words. I pray that you will be encouraged through Spurgeon's Christ-exalting insight and power of speech as much as I have been.

So as you lean in to listen to Jesus each day, my prayer is that you will feel the weightiness of each word our Saviour said. He who is this very moment holding the universe together by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3)—whose word healed the sick, raised the dead, renewed the downcast, instructed storms, commanded water, multiplied lunches, silenced demons, confounded scholars, enraged hypocrites and called the spiritually dead into the joy of fullness of life—still speaks through his word, the Bible.

And John, wanting to ensure that we understand exactly who it is that is speaking to us, begins his account of Jesus' life with an earthquake of theological eloquence:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

(John 1:1-5)

May God give us ears to hear him who speaks to us—to really hear him. As my co-author encourages us, "He bids you come to Him. His loving voice invites you to draw near. At His word press forward once again, let down the net once more, and joys unspeakable await you, surpassing all you have up to now experienced."¹ May the words of the Saviour that we explore in these pages arrest your attention and captivate your thoughts. May they refresh you even as they provoke you. May they give you life in his name.

¹ Charles Spurgeon, "At Your Word", Sermon #1654.

CHAPTER 1

“What are you seeking?”

READ JOHN 1:35-41

*H*ave you ever considered the significance of the fact that the first words of Jesus recorded in John’s account of his life are a question?

Two disciples decide to trail Jesus as he leaves the Jordan River: the first is Andrew (the brother of Peter), while the second is generally speculated to be John (the author of this narrative). On the surface, it seems relatively straightforward. Andrew and John hear John the Baptist proclaim, “*Behold the Lamb of God!*” and begin following Jesus as he makes his way back into town. Jesus, likely hearing footsteps trailing him, turns and asks what they want.

Pause for a moment and think about that. Before we hear Jesus giving a single directive or instruction, he asks a question that gets right to the heart. Their hearts. *What are you seeking?* For when God asks a question, he is not seeking information unknown to *himself*. He is helping us to see *ourselves*, in light of who he is.

When Adam and Eve were hiding from God in the shame of their first sin, and God asked, “*Where are you?*” (Genesis 3:9), it wasn’t because he was unaware of their geographic location. It was because they were unaware of the full impact

of the new spiritual location that their rebellion had put them in.

When God asked Job, “*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?*” (Job 38:4), it wasn’t because he was unsure whether or not Job had existed eternally as a witness to the events of Genesis 1. The question wasn’t for God’s sake but for Job’s.

“*What are you seeking?*” (John 1:38)

Jesus did not ask for his own sake but for Andrew and John’s. And for ours. Jesus desires our *desires*. He wants the meaning-seeking, beauty-desiring, satisfaction-questing centre of who we are: our hearts. And so he asks, “*What are you seeking?*” We humans are seeking-creatures, hunting for fulfilment. We can’t help it. For our desires, our identity, and our direction are all woven together. Or, as author James K.A. Smith puts it, *we are what we want*. Smith writes, “Our wants and longings and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow”.² As it turns out, Jesus’ question penetrates to the core of who we are. And it changes John’s life.

First words and last words have a way of staying with us. Years later, as John wrote this account near the end of his life, he could still remember the first words Jesus ever spoke to him. It was only four words, spoken on a dusty wilderness road somewhere near the Jordan River. But the soul-piercing simplicity of those words stayed with John through the decades of his long life, because they redirected the trajectory of that life.

The scene closes with Andrew going to tell his brother Peter, “We have found the Messiah”. For these first disciples, the question that probed at a *what* was answered with a *who*.

2 James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Brazos Press, 2016), p 2.

Because that's what real Christianity is: a constant reorienting of everything in our lives around the person and work of Jesus.

What do your present habits reveal about your desires?

What do your present worries and your prayers reveal about your longings?

What does your present way of speaking, to others and to yourself, reveal about your heart?

As you make your way through these short devotionals on the words of Jesus, return to his question, which turns out to be an invitation: "*What are you seeking?*" Alexander Maclaren, a Scottish Baptist minister writing a little over a century ago, helps us see the answer:

*"Let me tell you what you are seeking, whether you know it or not. You are seeking for rest for your heart, a home for your spirits; you are seeking for perfect truth for your understandings, perfect beauty for your affections, perfect goodness for your conscience. You are seeking for all these three, gathered into one white beam of light, and you are seeking for it all in a Person. Many of you do not know this, and so you go hunting in all manner of impossible places for that which you can only find in one. To the question, 'What seek ye?' the deepest of all answers, the only real answer, is, 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.' If you know that, you know where to look for what you need!"*³

You know where to look for what you need! It is to the promised one, whom the Old Testament anticipates and the New Testament reveals. It is to the Son of God, of whom John the Baptist preached and Andrew the disciple gave witness: "*Behold the Lamb of God! ... We have found the Messiah.*"

3 Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture: St John Chapters I-XIV* (Eerdmans, 1938), p 54.

PRAY

Lord, there are a thousand things competing for my attention today. Some are important; many are not. But I don't want a single one of them to obstruct my view of you. Help me not lose sight of you today. I want to follow you more faithfully. I want to know you more deeply. I want to want you more. Amen.



“‘What is it that you seek?’ ... He puts the same question to you this morning—‘What seek you?’ Are you seeking pardon? You shall find it in Me. Are you seeking peace? I will give you rest. Are you seeking purity? I will take away your sin, a new heart will I give you and a right spirit will I put within you. What are you seeking? Some solid resting place for your soul upon earth, and a glorious hope for yourself in heaven? Whatever you seek, it is here ... O my dear friend, if you would but come and see Christ, if by humble earnest prayer you would give your heart up to Him, and then trust in Him implicitly to be your guide, you would never lament the decision.”

Charles Spurgeon, “The First Five Disciples”, Sermon #570

CHAPTER 2

“Follow me”

READ JOHN 1:43-45

There are a lot of reasons why I love the movie *Braveheart*. But one in particular is the contrast of leadership styles between the Scottish freedom fighter William Wallace and the English king and generals. Both call armies to follow them into battle. Both give orders. Both demand sacrifice and self-denial. The difference between them, however, is one of location. The English king gives orders from the safety of the back. Wallace leads from the front. The former leads with instructions, but the latter leads by example. And at the risk of stating the obvious, to properly *follow* another requires being able to see their back, not merely hear their voice.

Jesus is the most trustworthy leader in the history of the world. Life under the rule of Jesus is not merely instructed; it is modelled. He is both our goal and our guide: a glorious King as well as our perfect example. John wants us to see that when Jesus calls us to follow him, he is calling for an all-of-life exchange: all that we are for all that he is. *Follow me*.

Follow me. Interestingly, no reason is given to Philip for *why* he ought to follow. No enticement or reward is offered. The sermon is short—only two words in total—but the message pierces Philip’s heart and gets to the core of what real

Christianity is: drawing near to Jesus, over and over and over again. The sum of which is a life that follows him, walks with him and gradually yet increasingly reflects him.

Philip sees in Jesus a leader who is both trustworthy and worthy of his immediate devotion and allegiance. No one can place conditions or limits on the leadership of Jesus and with integrity claim to be one of his followers; for the moment we say, “Ok Jesus, I’ll follow you *if* you bless me, *if* you make my career successful, *if* you make me healthy, *if* you don’t mess with this part of my life, *if* I can retain some sovereignty over my life”, we are actually confessing that there are created realities more worthy, more satisfying and more important to us than Jesus.

Which is idolatry.

Which is, you know, really bad.

As Timothy Keller points out, whatever is “on the other side of that *if* is your real master, your real goal. But Jesus will not be a means to an end; he will not be used. If he calls you to follow him, *he* must be the goal.”⁴

Christianity is not “Jesus, I’ll follow you if you improve my life” but “Jesus, I’ll follow you because you are better than life”. He is our goal.

Jesus later said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:23-24).

In other words, the only thing in all the world more costly than following Jesus... is not. Hold on to your life and you’ll choke that life away. Release your life into the hands of Jesus by dying to your need to call the shots and you’ll find more than everything you were ever looking for. It is

4 Timothy Keller, *King’s Cross: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2011), p 19.

counterintuitive, but God has ordained freedom to come through surrender and life to come through dying.

In this way, following Jesus may be hard, but it's not complicated. In fact, all that is required by the two-word sermon of Jesus is a two-word response:

Yes, Lord.

Each day. Every day.

Yes, Lord.

Come to me. *Yes, Lord.*

Learn from me. *Yes, Lord.*

Trust me. *Yes, Lord.*

Do not be anxious. *Yes, Lord.*

Love one another as I have loved you. *Yes, Lord.*

Love your enemies. *Yes, Lord.*

Go make disciples. *Yes, Lord.*

Follow me. *Yes, Lord.*

Make no mistake: the loving leadership of Jesus in this life will include both green pastures that restore us and dark valleys that trouble us (Psalm 23:2-4). But neither the absence of the former nor the presence of the latter means that he has abandoned us (v 5). And that is enough. For the command of Jesus to follow him is infused with his promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Is there any part of your life where you've been keeping Jesus at arm's length? Turn to him again, go to him again and say, "Yes, Lord. You're leading. I'm following. Let's go."

After all, who in all the world is more worthy of your devotion, your obedience, your trust, your life and even your death than Jesus?

PRAY

Jesus, whatever you call me to, wherever you lead me, whenever you desire me to, teach my heart to respond, “Yes, Lord”.



“Christ has marked His sheep on their feet as well as their ears. They follow Him; they are gently led, not harshly driven. They follow Him as the Captain of their Salvation; they trust in the power of His arm to clear the way for them. All their trust on Him is abiding; they lean all their hope on Him; they follow Him as their teacher ... Has Christ said it? It is enough! ... Happiest of all the happy are they who see the footprint—the print of that foot that once was pierced with the nail—and put their foot down where He placed it, and then again, in the same mark, follow where He trod, till they climb at last to the throne!”

Charles Spurgeon, “The Sheep and Their Shepherd”, Sermon #995