



# FIRST LIGHT CHURCH

# SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Date: 11/20/22

Series: I Am

Text: John 14:1-7

**BIG IDEA: Jesus is the only way.**

**ICEBREAKER:** Share about a time when you got lost. Did you ask for directions? Did you use a GPS, but it was wrong? How did you find your way back?

**CONTEXT:** The disciples had been given some unsettling news from Jesus. The news that Jesus was going away, Jesus would die, one of them was a traitor, Peter would disown Him three times, Satan was working against them, and that they would all fall away. This news created a sense of impending loss and the fear of loneliness.

**PASSAGE:** Have a volunteer read John 14:1-7.

## DISCUSSION:

1. 14:1 The disciples were troubled because they were afraid of all they were about to lose. How did Jesus address their fears? What was comforting about it?
2. How does trusting Jesus help calm our hearts?
3. 14:2-3 How does the home metaphor that Jesus used help us better understand what He was saying?
4. For Jesus to 'come again' can refer to more than one coming: His resurrection, to come by the Spirit, or to come at the end of the age. He also tells us why He is coming, to take you to Himself. How does this understanding of 'coming' help you in your faith? If not, why not?
5. 14:4-5 How do the disciples know the **way** Jesus is going? Is He the only way? Acts 4:12
6. Thomas focused on the destination and not the way. What was Thomas missing?
7. 14:6-7 "I am the way, the truth and the life" are all equal realities. But to answer Thomas' question, because Jesus is the truth and life, therefore He is the way. How would this help Thomas and the other disciples?
8. To know Jesus is to know God. How is this true? (John 10:30)

## APPLICATION:

9. What causes your heart to be troubled? How do you deal with it?
10. How can focusing only on the destination of heaven without living like we know the way to get there be problematic? How can you live in such a way so that others believe in Jesus?

## K4 CONNECTION:

People will know us by our fruits. As we strive to reach our communities for Christ, it starts with how we live our lives. We are not perfect people, but if we live in such a way as to show Christ in us as much as we can, people will be drawn to the way, the truth and the life of that which we proclaim.

## CARE AND PRAY:

- Thank God that He is the way, the truth, and the life. We don't have to wonder which way is
- Share any prayer requests with one another.

## COMMENTARY

**14:1.** It is Jesus who is heading for the agony of the cross; it is Jesus who is deeply 'troubled' in heart (12:27) and spirit (13:21). Yet on this night of nights, when of all times it would have been appropriate for Jesus' followers to lend Him emotional and spiritual support, He is still the one who gives, comforts, instructs. For they, too, are *troubled* not because they are rushing toward pain, ignominy, shame, crucifixion, but because they are confused, uncertain of what Jesus means, and threatened by references to His imminent departure.

The links with the previous chapter, then, are two. First, there is an implicit tie to Peter: if *his* faith is about to shatter, will the other disciples prove more stable in their trust? Small wonder the Eleven are profoundly upset. Second, and more broadly, because of the disciples' turmoil, Jesus unpacks at some length the implications of His impending departure (13:33, 36).

The way the disciples are to calm their hearts is spelled out in the second part of the verse: ***Trust in God; trust also in me.***

**14:2-3.** The reason is now spelled out: Jesus' departure is for the disciples' advantage. True, He is going away, but He is going away to prepare a place for them, and He will come and get them so that they may be where He is. What more could they ask for?

Thus far all the commentators agree. But the language used of Jesus' 'coming back' and 'being with' His disciples refers at various places in these chapters to different things: sometimes to Jesus' return to His disciples after His resurrection, sometimes to Jesus' 'coming' to them by the Spirit after He has been exalted to the glory of the Father, and sometimes to His 'coming' at the end of the age (in this chapter, *cf.* notes on vv. 18-20 and 22-23). Indeed, in the view of some commentators, the language in vv. 2-3 is purposely ambiguous in order simultaneously to refer to more than one coming. The details of the text could argue that these two verses refer to the second advent of Jesus, when He comes to take His followers to be with Him forever.

The simplest explanation is best: *my Father's house* refers to heaven, and in heaven are many *rooms*, many dwelling-places. The point is not the lavishness of each apartment, but the fact that such ample provision has been made that there is more than enough space for every one of Jesus' disciples to join Him in his Father's home.

*I am going there to prepare a place for you:* the words presuppose that the 'place' exists before Jesus gets there. It is not that He arrives on the scene and then begins to prepare the place; rather, in the context of Johannine theology, it is the going itself, via the cross and resurrection, that prepares the place for Jesus' disciples. And if He takes such trouble, all to prepare a place for His own, it is inconceivable that the rest should not follow: *I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.* Unlike some other passages that look to the parousia, this one focuses less on apocalyptic elements and the winding-up of the cosmos (*cf.* Mk. 13:24-27; 2 Thes. 2) than on the comfort to be enjoyed by believers in the presence of God (*cf.* 1 Thes. 4:15-18)—which is different again from those passages that offer solace to the believers on *their* death (e.g. 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23).

**14:4.** Although Jesus tells His disciples, *You know the way to the place where I am going* (*cf.* Additional Note), the next verse demonstrates that, at some level, they know nothing of the sort. John's point is

not that Jesus has made some terrible error in assessing His disciples, but that precisely because they know Him they *do* know the way to the place He has just prescribed. Once again it is by reading on and then coming back and re-reading the text that we find Jesus' anticipation of His clear, impending statement that He Himself is the way (v. 6).

**14:5.** Thomas appears in the Fourth Gospel as a loyal, even a courageous, disciple, but one who is liberally endowed with misapprehensions and doubts. His question sounds as if he interpreted Jesus' words in the most crassly natural way: he wants an unambiguous destination, for without such a destination how can one meaningfully speak of the route there? Dodd (*IFG*, p. 412, n. 1) goes beyond the evidence when he argues that the sequence runs like this: Jesus: 'You know the way; you do not need to know where it leads.' Thomas: 'If we do not know the destination, how can we know the way?' In fact, Jesus has just spelled out the destination (vv. 2-3) and advised them that they *also* know the way (v. 4). Thomas replies, in effect, that he (and the other disciples) have not really come to grips with what He has said about the destination, so how could Jesus' further insistence that they know the way bear coherent meaning?

**14:6.** The second half of this verse shows that the entire verse must be taken as the answer to Thomas' question. This means that *way* gains a little emphasis over *truth* and *life*. Still, if Thomas' question and v. 6a demonstrate that *way* is the principal theme, it follows that *truth* and *life* enjoy a supporting role: Jesus is the way to God, precisely because He is the truth of God (*cf.* notes on 1:14) and the life of God. Jesus is the truth, because He embodies the supreme revelation of God—He Himself 'narrates' God (1:18), says and does exclusively what the Father gives Him to say and do (5:19ff; 8:29), indeed He is properly called 'God' (1:1, 18; 20:28). He is God's gracious self-disclosure, His 'Word', made flesh (1:14). Jesus is the life (1:4), the one who has 'life in himself' (5:26), 'the resurrection and the life' (11:25), 'the true God and eternal life' (1 Jn. 5:20). Only because He is the truth and the life can Jesus be the way for others to come to God, the way for His disciples to attain the many dwelling-places in the Father's house (vv. 2-3), and therefore the answer to Thomas' question (v. 5). In this context Jesus does not simply blaze a trail, commanding others to take the way that He Himself takes; rather, He *is* the way.

**14:7.** The meaning of the first part of v. 7 turns on a textual variant. The variant behind the niv text is basically negative: If you really knew me [and you don't], you would know my Father as well. Although this reading is strongly attested, it appears to have been influenced by v. 8, where Philip reveals the depth of his ignorance, and by 8:19. The reading of the second-century papyrus P<sup>66</sup>, the uncial Sinaiticus (N), the first hand of Codex Bezae (D) and some other witnesses is more or less preserved in the niv fn., and has good claims to authenticity: If you have come to know me, you will know my Father also. The assumption, in other words, is that at least the disciples have come to know Jesus. What they must understand is that this knowledge of Jesus is the entree to true knowledge of the Father. From now on, Jesus insists, you do know Him and have seen Him. The contracted pair of words rendered From now on (ap'arti), could be read as one word (there were usually no spaces between words in the early uncial manuscripts) with the meaning 'assuredly'. It is tempting to think that is what Jesus means here: 'and assuredly you do know him and have seen him.' If we retain From now on, the reference is to the time the disciples have come to know Jesus during His ministry, and especially through the hour of His death and resurrection, now immediately upon them.

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D. A. Carson, [\*The Gospel according to John\*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 487–493.

## WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Having withdrawn from the crowds of Jerusalem, Jesus pours His time and efforts into His disciples, Jesus gives us an extraordinary summary of who He is and what He came from heaven to do on our behalf. Though most often read at funerals, these familiar words prepare us for life long before we face death. Present relationship, comfort, and security with Jesus is being stressed more so than our future place of residence.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. By boldly affirming these three categories, we can see how Jesus fulfills the three main offices God provided for His covenant people: prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, Jesus is the truth of the Father—He is the Word made flesh, the final word God has spoken to His people (Heb. 1:2). As priest, Jesus is the way to the Father—He is both the sacrifice for our sins and the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 12:24). As king, Jesus is the life from the sovereign giver of life, the eternal Father—who gives life now and in the coming age for eternity (Heb. 6:5). He is the King whom the Father has already installed in Zion (Ps. 2:6) and the ruler over the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5).