

ADULT GROUP GUIDE

The

GOD



We Can Know

Exploring the “I Am” Sayings of Jesus

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A D U L T G R O U P G U I D E

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MARY LOU REDDING



WEEK 7

**“I Am the
Resurrection and the
Life”:**

Knowing God’s

Possibilities

The objective of this session is to live into the celebration of God’s gift of life that we receive in every new day. As we explore

God's gifts to us, we are called to respond to that grace by living with gratitude and praise for God's undying love and care for us that is demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

GATHERING / CHECK -IN

Using the pattern of the past weeks, invite the group members to say how they are feeling physically, spiritually,
and emotionally by completing a sentence that begins
with - "I am....."

Pray this opening prayer!

God of life and renewed life, you know that at times we feel used up by our daily struggles. We ask you to lift from us the burdens that keep us from loving you and others as fully as you call us to. We pray for your life to flow into all the situations and people we are concerned about, knowing that this is your will for us, this day and every day. In the name of Jesus, who is our resurrection and our life, today and eternally. Amen.

We will read the scripture today as part of the Practice portion of our time together.

Video (10 MINUTES)

Introducing the video: This video segment is filmed near the traditional sites of Lazarus’s tomb and the garden tomb where Jesus was buried. Listen for how God offers us daily opportunities for new life and fresh possibilities. (*Play the track for Week 7.*)

Video/Book Discussion (10 MINUTES)

1. Have you ever said to God something like Martha’s words to Jesus, “If only you had been here, this would not have happened”? What was the situation? How did that event affect your faith?
2. What would you say to someone who believes that faith in God should guarantee that God will keep bad circumstances from happening to us, such as seeing those we love die prematurely?
3. Rob says that faith sometimes asks us to do things that don’t make sense. When has your faith caused you to do or say something that a nonbeliever might find hard to understand?
4. Are you a person who struggles with what does not make rational sense—such as resurrection—or one who is able to accept by faith without question? Why are you as you are? Were you always like you are now? If not, what changed you?
5. Rob says that hope is the essence of Christian faith. Do you agree? Why or why not? If not, what one word expresses the essence of faith for you?

Practice: *Lectio Divina* (15 MINUTES)

The passage of scripture for today is John 11:17-26.

Possible script to introduce this practice:

Lectio divina is a Latin phrase that means simply “**holy reading**.” Since early times, before printed Bibles were widely available, believers have listened for guidance from God as they heard scripture and Christian writings being read aloud. The practice has four steps: listening for a word or phrase that “stands out” for you or gets your attention in some way, reflecting on how the word or phrase connects to your life right, receiving a personal invitation from God as you consider that connection, and praying about what you heard.

We are going to experience a small taste of this practice in the next few minutes. We will hear today’s passage of scripture from John 11:17-26 being read aloud twice the first time. Then I will give you a question to consider during a time of silence.

John 11:17-26 (NLT) Please Read:

VS17 When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days.

VS18 Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem,

VS19 and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss.

VS20 When Martha got the word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house.

VS21 Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.

VS22 But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.”

VS23 Jesus told her,” Your brother will rise again.”

VS24 “Yes,” Martha said,” he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day.”

VS25 Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live even after dying.

VS26 Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this Martha?”

B. Jesus meets with Martha and Mary.

1.(17-22) Martha greets Jesus as he comes to Bethany.

So, when Jesus came, he found that he had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him, but Mary was sitting in the house then Martha said to Jesus” Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.”

QUESTIONS:

Why did Jesus wait four days to get to the tomb?

He had already been in the tomb for four days:

Jesus waited four days because he knew the Jewish superstition of that day that said a soul stayed near the grave for three days, hoping to return to the body. Therefore, it was accepted that after four days there was absolutely no hope for resurrection.

Why did the Jews join the large crowd After Lazarus is death?

Many of the Jews had joined the women around Mary and Martha:

This was a large crowd, still present four days after Lazarus was buried. It was considered an important obligation to join with those who mourn the death of near relatives.

“A procession composed of relatives, friends, and sometimes hired mourners accompanied a body to the grave; And morning usually lasted several days afterwards.

Why do you think Mary was sitting in the house?

Mary was sitting in the house:

It is likely that by this circumstance the evangelists intended to convey the idea of her sorrow and distress; because ancient, afflicted persons were accustomed to putting themselves in a posture, as expressive as their distress; the grief having rendered them as it were immovable.

Why do you think Martha said to Jesus Lord if you had been there my brother would not have died?

Martha honestly stated her disappointment in Jesus' late arrival. She believed that Jesus was able to heal her brother while he was sick yet still alive. It's possible that she didn't even consider that Jesus was able to raise Lazarus from the dead now.

Death was no stranger in His presence no more than disease, but people did not realize this. They would think of death as incurable.

In verse 22 Martha states even now, I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.

Martha was not confident that Jesus would raise her brother. Instead, she said that she would still trust Jesus despite this disappointment. This was a remarkable demonstration of faith, one that should be taken as an example.

Queens Chapel, this leads me to believe that there can be great power and even now prayers.

23-26

Jesus told her your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Him,” I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him” Yes, Lord I believe that you are the Christ, the son of God who is to come into the world.”

Your brother will rise again: Martha understood that her brother Lazarus will rise again with all righteousness on the last day. She didn't even consider that Jesus might immediately bring Lazarus back from the dead.

We may comfort a grieving person by saying” you will see him/her again.” We sincerely mean it and sincerely mean the comfort, but we don't mean you will see him again right now.” Jesus meant that Lazarus would rise again right

now.

I am the resurrection and life: Jesus did not claim to have resurrection and life, or understand secrets about resurrection and life. Instead, Jesus dramatically said that **He is the resurrection and the life.** To know Jesus is to know resurrection and life; to have Jesus is to have resurrection and life. Apart from him there was neither resurrection nor life.

He who believes in me though he may die he shall live: Jesus boldly challenged Martha to trust that he was the source of eternal life. Jesus presented himself as the champion over death. While humanity in general fears death, the Christian can't fear dying. The believer will never die but simply make an instant transition from the old life to a new life.

“Those that believe in Jesus Christ appear to die, but yet they live. They are not in the grave; they are forever with the Lord. They are not unconscious they are with the Lord in paradise. Death cannot kill a believer, it can only usher him into a freer form of life.

In closing:

Jesus made an enormous claim: I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die he shall live.

Only God could say such things in truth. Queens Chapel do you believe this? Jesus challenged Martha not to debate or intellectualize this but to believe. She must believe Jesus was who he said he was and that he could do what he said he could do.

Now the question is do you believe that He is who he says He is the resurrection and the life.

Amen.

Closing Litany and Prayer (5 MINUTES)

Invite the members into silence, asking them to think about these questions: How has your understanding of Jesus changed over the last weeks because of this study? How have you changed or how do you want to change because of it? Invite group members to say a sentence about their reflection.

OR: Invite group members to speak a sentence about what the statement “I am the Resurrection and the Life” means to them in their life right now.

Remind the group that “I am the Resurrection and the Life” will be their response each time the leader pauses in the litany. Or provide copies of the litany and have group members read the “One” statements in turn, with the full group responding each time.

One: When we find ourselves wondering why loss has come, we can remember Jesus' words as he faced death:

All: “I am the Resurrection and the Life. Live in me.”

One: When we are tempted to give in to the lie that life will never change for us, Jesus says,

All: “I am the Resurrection and the Life. Live in me.”

One: When life's disappointments cause us to stumble, Jesus reminds us,

OR

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All: “I am the Resurrection and the Life. Live in me.”

One: When we ask God to give us back something we’ve lost, Jesus reminds us to look forward, saying,

All: “I am the Resurrection and the Life. Live in me.”

One: God works on both sides of the grave, giving us life now and life yet to come, through Jesus who said,

All: “I am the Resurrection and the Life. Live in me.”

OR: Reuse the litany from the first session:

One: Just as God spoke to Moses, God wants to speak to us. Let us open our hearts to God who wants to be known and who says,

All: “I am who I am.”

One: When life pressures us to care more for things than for God, remember that Jesus said,

All: “I am the Bread of Life. Come to me and never be hungry.”

One: When we feel puzzled about which choices are right, we can ask for guidance from the one who said,

All: “I am the Light of the World.”

One: When we feel vulnerable and lost, remember that we are continually being sought by the one who said,

All: “I am the Good Shepherd. Come to me.”

One: When we feel powerless and weary, we can find power offered to us by the one who said,

All: “I am the True Vine. Abide in me.”

One: When we wonder who’s in and who’s out with God, we can find reassurance in the grace embodied in Jesus who welcomed all, saying,

All: “I am the Way. Follow me.”

One: When we face loss and pain, we can find hope in the one who promised us renewed and abundant life, saying,

All: “I am the Resurrection and the Life. Live in me.”

Closing Prayer

Close by praying this prayer or your own:

Living Christ, thank you for your life that gives us life, now and eternally. Teach us how to leave the past behind and live in the power of your resurrection every day, as a witness to the new life we celebrate at Easter. Amen.