

SESSION 3

A Life of Trust

THE POINT

We can trust Jesus because He is the way, the truth, and the life.

LIFE CONNECTION

Life doesn't always move in the direction we hoped, and often our own plans to steer it in another direction fail. We are to live lives of constant trust in God, and that is no more evident than in those moments when life takes an unexpected turn. We can be sure of this: Jesus is for us, He is with us, and no matter what we face, He brings us to the Father.

THE PASSAGE

John 13:36–14:6

THE SETTING

The meal was over and the dining room was quiet. Judas had gone on his mysterious errand. Now Jesus instructed His disciples more fully. The disciples listened, but remained confused and too disturbed to understand. They could not shake the sense of future uncertainty that dampened the spirit of the room. A few of the disciples had enough sense to fall back on their old question-and-answer learning style.

JOHN 13:36–14:1

13:36 “Lord,” Simon Peter said to him, “where are you going?”

Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later.”

37 “Lord,” Peter asked, “why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”

38 Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.

14:1 “Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

Verse 36. When Simon Peter responded to Jesus' earlier comment, “Where I am going, you cannot come” (John 13:33), he might not have heard or grasped Jesus' command (v. 34) that they were to love each other. “**Lord,**” **Simon Peter said to him, “where are you going?”** We do not know if Peter was exasperated, confused, or just curious. Jesus had dismissed Judas, so Peter might have thought He was going to leave soon, too. Peter did not want to be left out.

Jesus' response put it in perspective: “**Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later.**” Jesus was not speaking about taking a walk. He was speaking about a journey with deeper meaning and a greater destination. Yes, they would take a walk. Soon they all would adjourn to a nearby olive orchard as Jesus taught them one final time. In that garden, He would pray and be betrayed. His enemies would haul Him off to the temple precincts where He would endure the kangaroo-court trials of the desperate Jewish

establishment. He would suffer the Roman scourging. He would die a humiliating death on a Roman cross they would force Him to carry up the hill. He would be buried in a rich man's grave. Then after three days, He would be raised from the dead. His journey would continue as He appeared to His disciples. His disciples would witness His ascent to heaven, where He would be seated at the right hand of God in heaven. Though neither Peter, nor any other of the disciples, could follow Him to death and beyond now, they would all be there soon enough.

Verse 37. Peter caught the sense of impending danger. He wanted to rise to the occasion and responded with his own agenda. He asked, **“Why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”** Three years earlier, Simon, nicknamed *Cephas* or *Peter* by Jesus, was one of Jesus' earliest disciples. He developed into a leader of the group and a member of Jesus' inner circle. We know he was a married man, because when he was hosting Jesus and the others in his home, Jesus healed his mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39). Perhaps an up-and-coming businessman in Capernaum, Peter was a homeowner (Matt. 8:14) and paid taxes (17:24-27). He owned two fishing boats in partnership with his brother Andrew and friends James and John (Luke 5:1-11). We can imagine his neighbors might have considered him an upstanding pillar of the community. Life changed for him when he followed Jesus. This young, unknown rabbi with only a growing reputation called him and Andrew, James, and John to join Him in catching men rather than fish (Mark 1:17-20).

There was no doubt Peter was loyal to Jesus. He professed his allegiance in the greatest way possible. He would consecrate his life, just like a sacrifice on the altar, to protect Jesus. He would be the Lord's bodyguard. Peter was willing, we might say, to “take a bullet for Him.” Peter had every intention of following through on his promise if the need arose. We do not know whether or not Peter was boasting about his professed loyalty. That loyalty soon would be tested, however, and he would fail. Peter's weakness was evident. He spoke with bravado, without clear forethought. He “jumped the gun” in professing his loyalty with such vehemence.

Verse 38. Jesus, as He does with us all, knew Peter better than Peter knew Peter. Jesus replied, **“Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.”** Jesus told Peter that before the earliest crack of dawn the next day, Peter would deny knowing or associating with Jesus. One great sorrow of this denial would be that Peter would do it three times. In Jewish thought, to do anything three times was absolute. Denial repeated three times was total and complete. We need to remember that Peter blundered into these denials. He did not deny with a Judas-like calculation. Then he genuinely repented with deep sorrow (Luke 22:55-62, esp. v. 62).

Peter's denial and Judas's betrayal were two different things. Judas willfully and intentionally sold Jesus out. He planned it. It was done with “malice aforethought.” It was crass and selfish. John did not identify the reason Judas sought the money. Perhaps he was so disillusioned with Jesus he was willing to settle for the price of a poor slave. (If an ox gored a slave to death, the ox's owner was to pay the slave's master thirty silver shekels, Ex. 21:32.) Judas regretted what he had done, but he never truly repented. Peter, on the other hand, denied Jesus, almost by accident, caving under the pressure of the moment. He did not intend to. He just slipped into it. It was typical that he did not do things simply nor go only part of the way. His reaction, however, was deep, personal, and powerful. When he heard that rooster crow, what he had done hit him hard. He had denied his best Friend in the world. He misplaced Jesus' trust. He wept bitterly and returned to the other disciples a broken man.

Jesus' mention of the crowing of the rooster gave His followers a time frame for coming events. The Romans relied heavily on the crowing of roosters to mark the beginning of a new day and the changing of the guard. Those sounds signaled the time to begin normal daily military activities. Daily life of the temple also began after the cockcrow. Temple officials would loudly announce the beginning of the temple activities, often followed by a blast of the trumpet. This signal could not be missed. Peter would deny Jesus three times before the dawn of a new day. Now, no one would sleep well, if at all. Everyone's loyalty would be tested.

Verse 14:1. The disciples needed to be reassured after Jesus' announcement of Peter's denial. Jesus sought to calm their fears: **“Don't let your heart be troubled.”** They worried about immediate danger. He told them not

to worry, God had greater things in store. Jesus pointed to a greater, eternal security. He reminded them of the ultimate source of their security and gave them a command to be obeyed: **“Believe in God; believe also in me.”** They did believe in God; in the same way, they needed to believe in Jesus. In the same way they trusted the Father, they needed to trust Jesus. The only way they would survive the coming horrors would be for them to rely in faith on God and the One whom they understood God had sent.

Jesus knew admonitions were not enough in that disturbed time. He gave them a foundation for their faith. Salvation was more than what the Jews hoped for. It was not merely physical redemption. Most certainly it was not a violent revenge against their enemies. Jesus taught that salvation was both temporal and eternal. It is temporal in that it begins in the present life and brings an enrichment and abundance that transcends wealth or health. It is eternal in that what was begun in this life by faith continues for eternity. It remains in the presence of God. The apostles’ faith would help them endure to the end.

JOHN 14:2-3

2 In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?

3 If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also.

KEY WORD: Rooms (14:2)—God’s house (heaven) has plenty of accommodations. There is a place and space for everyone who believes. Jesus is preparing this space for all who believe.

Verse 2. Jesus assured the disciples that death is not the end. He taught them there is an eternal reward for those who believed. The coming events would only facilitate His promise when He said, **“if it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?”** In this time of growing uncertainty, Jesus appealed to their faith and trust in Him. He was going away. They had to be prepared for that. His truthfulness was unquestioned. He would do as He promised! This was what Jesus taught, but they did not completely understand.

Jesus reassured them of heaven’s vast capacity. He said, **“In my Father’s house are many rooms.”** You might be familiar with the King James Version’s phrasing, “in my Father’s house are many mansions.” We hear the word “mansions” and think of large, opulent palaces with all amenities included. The Greek term meant *rooms* or *space*. Jesus promised that in God’s dwelling place (heaven) there is room enough for any and all who believe.

In Jewish culture, a large extended family might live together in an enlarged house or nearby. Married sons would bring their wives into the paternal home. The father would, if necessary, build a new room to accommodate the new couple. Similarly, God gathers His family in His house with places for everyone. His people are His family.

Jesus not only confirmed an eternal, heavenly family, He also established an earthly family, the church. It is a group of people who loves each other so much that love is its identifying quality. It has capacity for all who come to Christ. Belief in Jesus brings a double benefit—an entirely new family of brothers and sisters with God as the Father, and an eternity in heaven.

Verse 3. Perhaps the disciples were still disturbed, for Jesus continued to assure them. He said, **“If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also.”** This is a great promise. By now the disciples knew He was going away and not going to be with them much longer. Still not understanding, they accepted this truth. The promise was encouraging. Jesus would come

back. He would take them with Him. He would gather them like a bridegroom greets and gathers his bride in a close embrace. Earlier Jesus had surveyed the city of Jerusalem and cried. “How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Luke 13:34). The mother hen collects her brood, pulls them tightly to her body, and covers them with her outstretched wings. They are safe and protected. Jesus would take His followers to Himself just that protectively and securely!

Jesus has prepared a place, a spot, a room for each of His disciples, then and now. When He returns, He will escort each to His place to be in His presence forever. Heaven is where Jesus was, is, and shall be.

JOHN 14:4-6

4 You know the way to where I am going.”

5 “Lord,” Thomas said, “we don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the way?”

6 Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Verse 4. We can imagine Jesus reacting to quizzical looks on the disciples’ faces. It was almost an accusation. **“You know the way to where I am going.”** The disciples thought they knew. He was going to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. They were not on the same wavelength as Jesus that time. They should have known that basic truth. They had admitted He was Messiah, but they thought in the old kingdom paradigm of physical power and retribution. They never got past their old ideas. Jesus spoke clearly. He had already told them where He was going, that He would suffer and die and rise again. (See Matt. 16:21 and Mark 8:27–9:32.) They just did not get it.

Verse 5. Sensing that Jesus was speaking about something more than a nighttime stroll in a garden, a third disciple, Thomas called *Didymus* or *Twin* (John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2), spoke up. **“Lord,” Thomas said, “we don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the way?”** Thomas had been Jesus’ disciple from the beginning (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). His two names both identified him as a twin. “Thomas” comes from the Hebrew for *twin*, and “Didymus” is Greek for *twin*. Scripture does not identify his twin sibling. Thomas was not afraid to ask pointed questions. He wanted objective verification of spiritual claims. He believed Jesus had been raised from the dead only when he finally saw the Lord’s wounds (John 20:24-29). Thomas wanted firsthand knowledge!

In this instance Thomas wanted to know where Jesus was going and how they all would get there. This was an honest question. Thomas admitted his confusion and ignorance. This was a good kind of question and doubt. It led to real knowledge. It led to a response that reached beyond the present to eternity.

Verse 6. Jesus’ response was forthright and concise. He used only nineteen Greek words to set eternal parameters. **Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** This is one of the most important and divisive statements Jesus ever made. It is emphatic and bold. It demands exclusive allegiance: **“I am *the* way, *the* truth, and *the* life. *No one* comes to the Father *except through me.*”**

Jesus said, “I am the way.” Other groups might offer an “Eightfold Path” to follow, “Five Pillars” to observe, “Seven Sacraments” to receive, or a life of merit or good works to offer, but Jesus said there was only ONE way to the Father. HE is that only way.

A *way* is a means to an end. It could be a six-lane freeway or a worn, narrow path through the woods. One takes this way to get somewhere. In John 14:6, it is the way home, to the Father’s house, to the Source of life. Earlier, Jesus described this “way” that leads to life as having a narrow gate and a difficult road that few would find (Matt. 7:14).

A *way* is also a lifestyle or mode of acting or behaving. It was and is a set of objective instructions on how to live according to and in the Way. Followers of “the Way” (Acts 9:2) lived peaceably with their neighbors and followed Jesus’ teachings. They exhibited genuine love for each other and their unbelieving neighbors. They desired to bring others to faith in Jesus.

Jesus said, “I am the truth.” He is not *a* truth, or one of many truths. He is the only and final truth. He is the litmus test for all truth and reality. What He said and did was totally valid. Everything else must be compared to Him.

Jesus said, “I am the life.” This is the destination of the way and the essence of the truth. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all life, of everything animal, vegetable, and mineral, as well as all that is cosmic and spiritual life. He holds the universe together by His powerful and sustaining word (Heb. 1:3). It is only in and through Him that we believers have full and complete lives in this life. He gives His children purpose, direction, and fulfillment. Life is more than breathing, eating, and sleeping. It must be full and joyous, or it is only a dreary existence. Jesus is life abundant. As the life, He is *essential*. No one comes to God for eternal life without faith in Christ. It is a package deal. “The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12).

This is the sixth of seven “I am” statements recorded in the Gospel of John. Jesus spoke these to establish His claim of Messiahship. The Gospel writer presented these sayings in such a way that each of Jesus’ claims was emphasized. It was a subtle claim, yet completely understood by the Jewish religious establishment. The words “I am” are more than descriptive. For the Jews these words, even in their seemingly innocent contexts, were a blatant and not-so-subtle claim by Jesus to be God. Speaking to Moses at the burning bush, the Lord revealed His name as “I AM” (Ex. 3:14). These bold claims incited the Jewish leaders against Jesus. This “I am” statement sums up all the others. It was and is the foundation of our faith. It is the reason we can totally trust Jesus for our salvation!

LIVE IT OUT

We live in a time when trust is hard to gain and hard to keep, but Jesus is trustworthy in every way. Spend some time focusing on God’s character and how trustworthy He is.

Trust. Think of an area of your life in which you tend to trust your own abilities. How can you rely more on Jesus and less on yourself?

List. Make a list of times or events when you experienced the trustworthiness of Jesus. Place the list where you can find it when your heart is troubled.

Share. Meet a friend or family member who does not share your spiritual beliefs about Jesus. Pray for the opportunity to begin a conversation about Jesus as the only way to God.

Get into the Study

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture on PSG page 38 and ask **Question 1: When has your life taken an unexpected turn**

GUIDE: Refer group members to “**The Bible Meets Life**” (PSG, p. 39) to Brandon’s story of his wife’s near death experience.

SAY: We can trust that God is with us, no matter what we face.

GUIDE: Introduce **The Point** on PSG page 39: **We can trust Jesus because He is the way, the truth, and the life.**

OPTIONAL INTRODUCTION: Refer to “**Life Connection**” for an alternate introduction to the session.

PRAY: Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask God to help us trust Him in all areas of life.

Study the Bible

John 13:36–14:1

SUMMARIZE: Before reading the verses, refer to “**The Setting**” on page 36 to establish the context of the biblical passages.

READ: Ask a group member to read John 13:36–14:1.

SAY: When Jesus said, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now,” He was speaking about a journey with deeper meaning and a greater destination. This journey included his death, burial, and ascension to heaven.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Invite group members to share about experiences when they were in a new or different place and were following someone in a car and became separated from them. Share the feelings you had and how the situation was resolved.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bible Commentary** to provide explanation about Peter’s loyalty to Jesus:

Peter professed his allegiance in the greatest way possible.

He would consecrate his life, just like a sacrifice on the altar, to protect Jesus.

He would be the Lord’s bodyguard.

Peter was willing, we might say, to “take a bullet for Him.”

Peter had every intention of following through on his promise if the need arose.

RECAP: Refer group members to **PSG page 41** to *Brandon’s story of when he was in college. He had lifted weights for many years, but one day he made a rookie mistake. He decided he would “max out” on the bench press without anyone around to help him as a “spotter.” He was certain of how much he could lift, so he loaded up the plates, lifted the bar, and lowered it to his chest. And that’s right where the weight stayed. Thankfully, someone in a nearby dorm room heard his cries for help and rescued him. He had been 100 percent certain he was strong enough to bench press that much weight—and he was 100 percent wrong.*

SAY: Peter honestly believed he would fight to the death for Jesus, but Jesus knew that when the pressure came, Peter would deny even knowing him.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bible Commentary** to explain the differences between Peter’s denial and Judas’s betrayal:

Jesus told Peter that before dawn the next day he would deny knowing or associating with Jesus.

In Jewish thought, to do anything three times was absolute. Denial repeated three times was total and complete.

Peter blundered into these denials. He did not deny with a Judas-like calculation. He genuinely repented with deep sorrow (Luke 22:55-62, esp. v. 62).

Judas intentionally and willfully sold Jesus out. He planned it. It was done with “malice aforethought.” It was crass and selfish.

Judas’s reaction—He regretted what he had done, but he never truly repented.

Peter’s reaction—When Peter realized what he had done, he wept bitterly and returned to the other disciples a broken man.

DISCUSS: Question 2 (PSG, p. 42): When are you tempted to trust your own abilities over placing your trust in God?

Alternate: Why might we sometimes depend on ourselves instead of trusting God?

ENGAGE: Invite group members to complete the activity (PSG, p. 42). Encourage volunteers to share responses.

TRANSITION: Next we will discover the hope that Jesus gave to His disciples to reassure them.

Study the Bible

John 14:2-3

READ: Invite a group member to read John 14:2-3.

SAY: Jesus assured the disciples that death is not the end. He taught them there is an eternal reward for those who believe in Him.

GUIDE: Refer group members to **Key Word** on page 40 (PSG, p. 43) to explain the word *rooms*.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bible Commentary** to provide explanation regarding *rooms*:

The King James Version says, “in my Father’s house are many mansions.”

We hear the word “mansions” and think of large, opulent palaces with all amenities included.

The Greek term meant rooms or space. Jesus promised that in God’s dwelling place (heaven) there is room enough for any and all who believe.

In Jewish culture, a large extended family might live together in an enlarged house or nearby. Married sons would bring their wives into the paternal home. The father would, if necessary, build a new room to accommodate the new couple.

In the same way, God gathers His family in His house with places for everyone. His people are His family.

DISCUSS: Question 3 (PSG, p. 44): What do you find comforting about these verses?

Alternate: What are you looking forward to because of your trust in Christ?

TRANSITION: In the next passage we will discover the only way to God is through Jesus.

Study the Bible

John 14:4-6

READ: Invite a group member to read John 14:4-6.

SAY: The disciples were confused when Jesus told them, “You know the way to where I am going.”

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bible Commentary** to information about Thomas and his question:

Thomas was called Didymus or Twin (John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2).

His two names both identified him as a twin. “Thomas” comes from the Hebrew for twin, and “Didymus” is Greek for twin.

Thomas was not afraid to ask pointed questions. He wanted objective verification of spiritual claims.

Thomas wanted firsthand knowledge!

Thomas believed Jesus had been raised from the dead only when he saw Him (John 20:24-29).

SAY: Jesus’ response was forthright and concise.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bible Commentary** to provide explanation about John 14:6:

This is one of the most important and divisive statements Jesus ever made. It is emphatic and bold. It demands exclusive allegiance.

Jesus said there is only ONE way to the Father. HE is that only way.

A way is a means to an end. One takes this way to get somewhere. In John 14:6, it is the way home, to the Father’s house, to the Source of life.

A way is also a lifestyle— a mode of acting or behaving. It is a set of objective instructions on how to live.

“I am the truth.” Jesus is the only and final truth. He is the litmus test for all truth and reality.

“I am the life.” Jesus is the Creator and Sustainer of all life.

DISCUSS: Question 4 (PSG, p. 45): **What are some ways people seek to be right with God, other than through trusting Jesus?**

SAY: You may have friends or family members who believe there are many ways to God (see **PSG page 45**).

GUIDE: Refer group members to **Digging Deeper** on **PSG page 46** to the explanation of the phrase *Jesus: the only way to God*.

LEADER PACK: Display **Item 4: The Gospel** poster. Walk the group through the plan of salvation, encouraging group members to share the gospel message with others.

DISCUSS: Question 5 (PSG, p. 46): **How would you explain that Jesus is the only way to God to someone who doesn’t know Him?**

Alternate: Why do some people react negatively to the truth that Jesus is the only way to God?

Live It Out

GUIDE: Emphasize **The Point: We can trust Jesus because He is the way, the truth, and the life.**

REVIEW: Live it Out (PSG, p. 47). (See text to the left.) Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

Wrap It Up

GUIDE: Encourage group members to remain true to the Lord in every area of life. Remind group members that Jesus is the only way to God, so it is vital to share this truth with those who do not know the one and only way to God.

PRAY: “Father, thank You for making it possible to be in a relationship with You and to have the promise of eternal life through Jesus.”