

The background of the entire image is a photograph of a cave's interior. The cave walls are made of dark, jagged, and textured rock. A large, irregular opening in the cave wall is the source of a bright, warm light, likely from the sun. Through this opening, a view of the ocean is visible, with waves breaking on a rocky shore. The light from the opening creates a strong lens flare effect on the left side of the image.

# I AM

## THE SEVEN “I AM” STATEMENTS OF JESUS

*Passion Week Devotional 2024*

# PASSION WEEK

Join us this Passion Week for Good Friday services and Easter services. Find more details about these services below.

## GOOD FRIDAY SERVICES

Friday, March 29th — Worship Center  
3:00pm, 5:00pm, 7:00pm

## EASTER SERVICES

Sunday, March 31st — Worship Center, The Ridge & SouthPoint  
7:00am, 8:30am, 10:00am, 11:30am



Learn more  
about Easter



Learn more about  
Good Friday

# WELCOME TO PASSION WEEK

In the Gospel of John, Jesus makes seven *I AM* statements about Himself, revealing His deity and oneness with the Father.

In Exodus 3:14, God revealed Himself to Moses as *I AM WHO I AM*. Jesus clearly makes a correlation between Himself and the revealed name of God in the Old Testament. Removing all doubt as to His true identity. The question is, do we see and accept Him as He has revealed Himself to us?

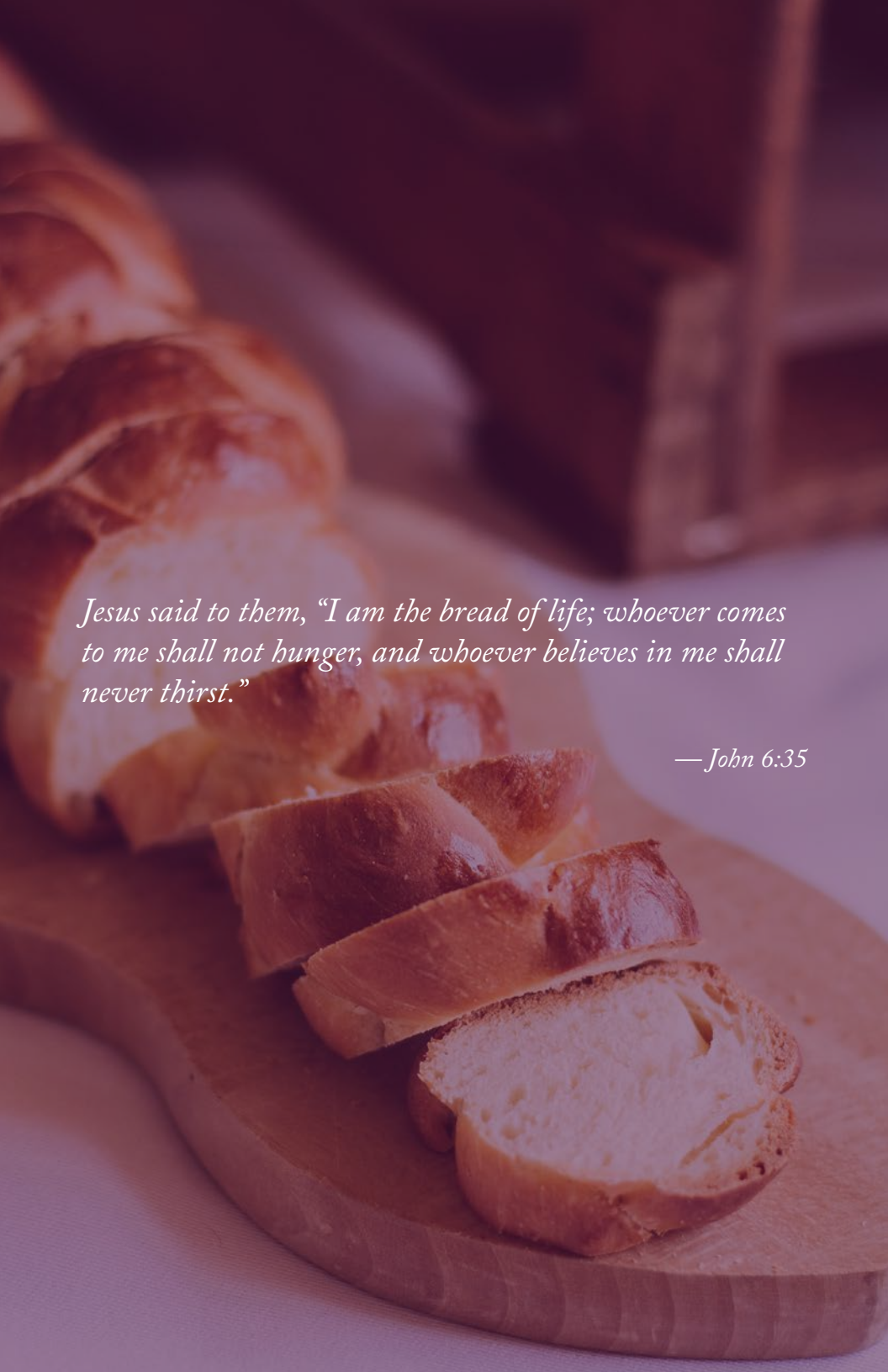
Throughout Passion Week, you are invited to review and rehearse the seven *I AM* statements of Jesus. Each devotional has been penned by one of our pastors, expounding upon these profound statements:

I AM the Bread of Life  
I AM the Door of the Sheep  
I AM the Good Shepherd  
I AM the Resurrection and the Life  
I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life  
I AM the True Vine

It is my hope that you will see and understand Jesus better, resulting in treasuring Him more as we celebrate the resurrection together. He is the Great I AM!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dan Francis, Senior Pastor



*Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."*

*—John 6:35*

# MONDAY

## I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

PASTOR ALLEN WILLIAMS

*Read John 6:1-40*

In Exodus 3, Moses is tending his father-in-law's sheep when he is given the task by God to lead His people out of Egypt. Picture this: Moses encounters a burning bush and has a direct conversation with God. During this interaction, God appoints him as the one to lead the Israelites out of captivity; to be their leader. Moses, not exactly brimming with confidence, asks how he'll convince the Israelites that God sent him. God responds with a profound statement:

*"I AM who I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you." (Exodus 3:14)*

In his gospel, John reflects on this reality as he structures a part of it around these seven statements of Jesus. The first of these statements comes from John 6:1-40.

In this passage, Jesus gathers a substantial following and people are drawn to Him as He teaches with authority. Some disciples, however, are concerned about practical needs for the crowd, wondering how to feed them. Jesus, undeterred, does a few things: organizes the people, uses limited resources, prays, gives thanks, and turns it into a feast. Clearly, Jesus cares about meeting the *practical* needs of His followers.

As Jesus leaves, He recognizes that the crowd is motivated by the fulfillment of those practical needs. The disciples go ahead of Jesus in a boat where they face a storm and are terrified. In the midst of the storm, they spot Jesus walking on water. Terrified, they cry out, and Jesus commands the water to be still. It's evident that Jesus

cares about meeting the *physical* and *emotional* needs of danger and fear for His followers.

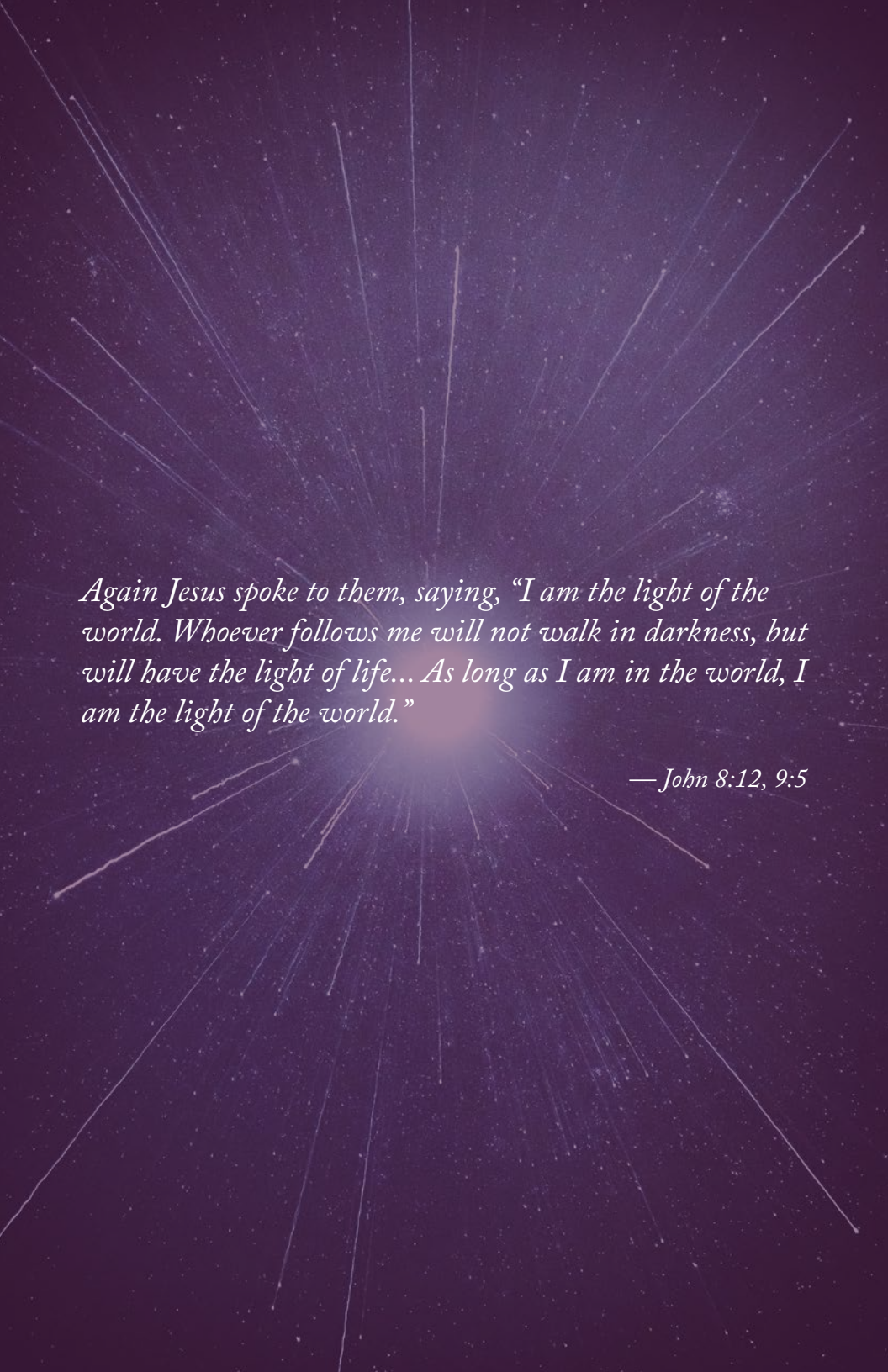
Then, beginning in verse 25, Jesus and His disciples are safely on the shore, and Jesus is being questioned. He makes clear the intentions of the crowd, and the crowd is confused and continues to question what Jesus means. They were still focused on how Jesus had met their practical needs, and the disciples were still reflecting on how Jesus had just fulfilled their physical and emotional needs as well.

That's when Jesus says,

*"Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world...I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:32-35)*

Jesus makes it clear that while He can meet our practical, physical, and emotional needs, He also aims to fulfill our *deepest* need—eternal life and forgiveness of sins. This week, as we approach Good Friday and Easter, thank God for providing food, shelter, health, and peace. But remember, these aren't guarantees in this life. I urge you to thank God for His Presence and the sacrifice of Christ, ensuring us that He is the Bread of Life, offering eternal satisfaction.





*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life... As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."*

*— John 8:12, 9:5*

# TUESDAY

## I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

PASTOR JOSH CASSELLIUS

*Read John 8:12-20*

When I was a kid, I went on a tour of a cave. It had been set up with lights throughout which allowed you to easily and safely navigate through the caverns and see the many formations and aspects of the cave. As we neared the end of the tour, our guide warned us that he was going to turn off the lights so that we could experience the darkness that exists underground. As he turned off the lights, an extreme darkness immediately filled the cave. It was so dark that you could not see anything, not even your hand right in front of your face. It was unlike anything that I had ever experienced. After the initial shock, thoughts of panic began to enter my mind. The realization that it would be impossible to find my way out in the darkness was calmed only by the knowledge that we had a guide that would soon turn on the lights and guide us safely out of the cave.

Our lives can often be like this cave. It can be dark and filled with many dangers and uncertainties; situations that seem impossible. Yet, we are not called to live in the darkness. We have a guide, a Savior, one who shines His light into our lives, so that we may live in the light. Jesus says in John 8:12:

*“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

As believers, we are called to walk in darkness but have the promise that when we follow Jesus, we will have His light that brings us life.

In the same way that as I stood in that dark cave and was able to have hope because of the guide that would turn the lights back on

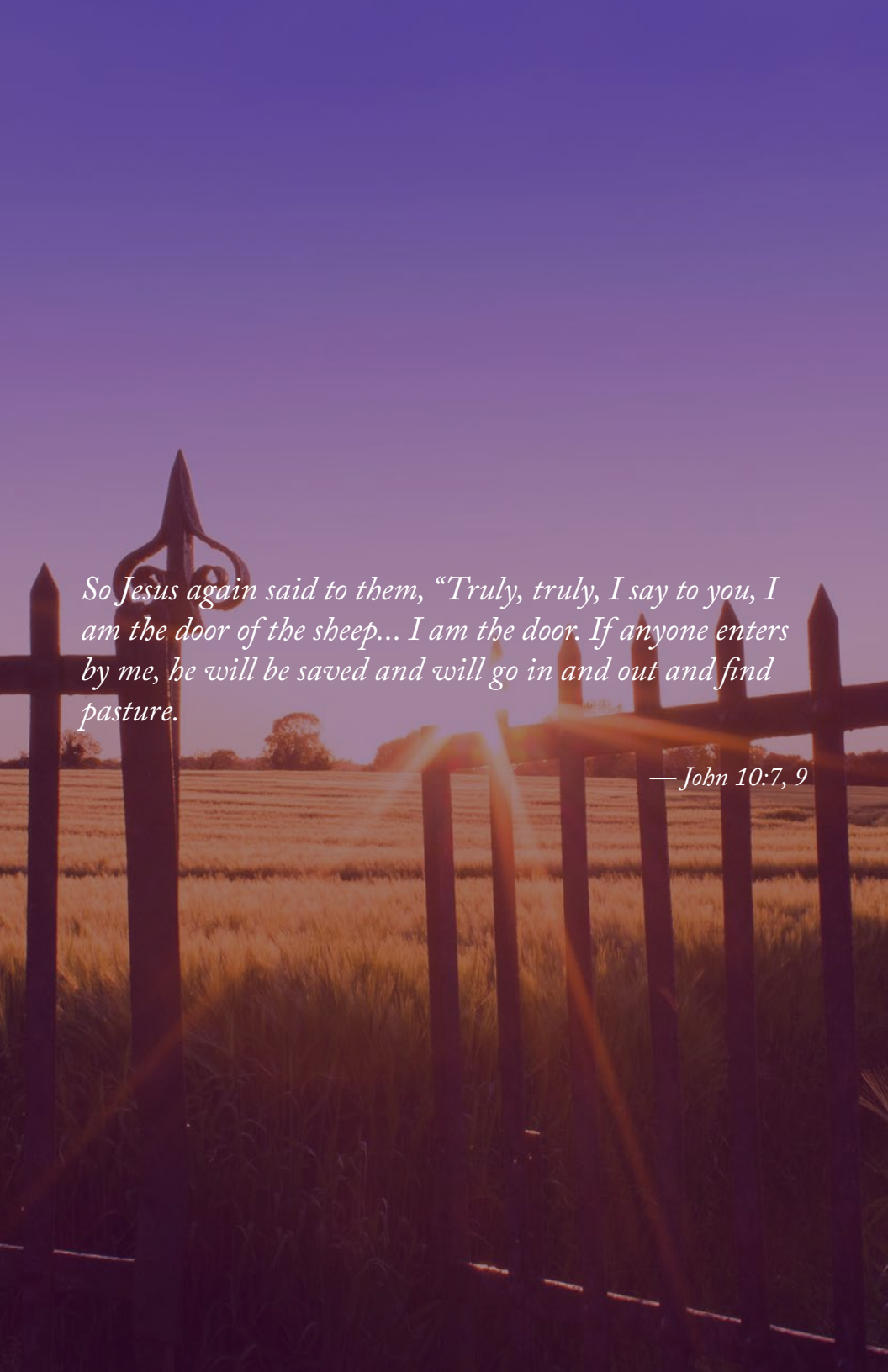


and safely guide us out, we can also turn to Jesus, our hope when the darkness of this world starts to close in on us. Psalm 119:105 says,

*“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*

So, no matter what the darkness is in your life, whether it be physical, mental, financial, relational, or some other area, I encourage you to turn to Jesus and His Word to find your light and freedom from the darkness.

Then, as the light of Jesus begins to shine in our lives, we are then called to reflect that light to those around us who are living in darkness. Matthew 5:15-16 says that we are to be like a city on a hill whose light can be seen from a great distance. It is in this way that we can live out our mission of helping all people find freedom in following Jesus!

A wooden picket fence with a decorative finial on the left post runs across the foreground. The fence is set in a field of tall, golden grass. In the background, there are trees and a bright sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and lens flare effects across the scene. The sky is a clear, deep blue.

*So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep... I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.*

*— John 10:7, 9*

# WEDNESDAY

## I AM THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP

PASTOR JONATHAN LEWIS

*Read John 10:1-10*

The *I Am* statements of Jesus are truly a profound study for our world today. Rarely do we hear people make such declarative statements that draw a line of distinction so clearly. Jesus is setting Himself aside in this statement as *the doorway*, through which those who enter through Him will find peace, protection and salvation. The image of this kind of door would have been easily understood among those who were accustomed to watching faithful shepherds lead their flocks through the sheep gates. Outside of their pens, the flocks were subject to all kinds of threats, however, leading them through this door would allow them to experience safety and security. While this was a familiar image to the hearers in Jesus' day, people today have a hard time wrapping their minds around someone declaring that there is one door—one passage—and to say that He is the single doorway to find spiritual peace and salvation.

He is *the* door, not just one door among many. Our culture has come to embrace as many different pathways to peace as people can imagine. As a result, those who refuse to accept all of the various pathways are dismissed as narrow-minded and judgmental. However, it is actually a statement of clarity and grace for all who spend their lives seeking one path after another. Many people will spend much of their lives seeking significance, love and acceptance while Jesus has provided a continual invitation to find what their hearts desire in Him. He is not just *a* door. He is *the* door.

He is the door that is open to all who seek Him. Over the years there has been a tendency to proclaim that even though Jesus is

the door and entry into the experience of God's grace, many have sought to control who gets in and who doesn't. Many seek to determine who is worthy of entering and who is not. The beautiful truth is that Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the One who is the door and that He is open to all those who would believe in Him—all those who trust in Him as the One who forgives and leads to newness of life. The Good News is that if your heart is longing for forgiveness and a relationship with Jesus Christ, you are able to pass through and find everything that you so desperately seek.

He is the door. He is the gate that leads to eternal life. Enter through Jesus Christ and find rest in knowing your sins are forgiven and His love leads you to live a new life.



*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."*

*—John 10:11, 14*





# THURSDAY

## I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

PASTOR GARY STEFFANIAK

*Read John 10:11-21*

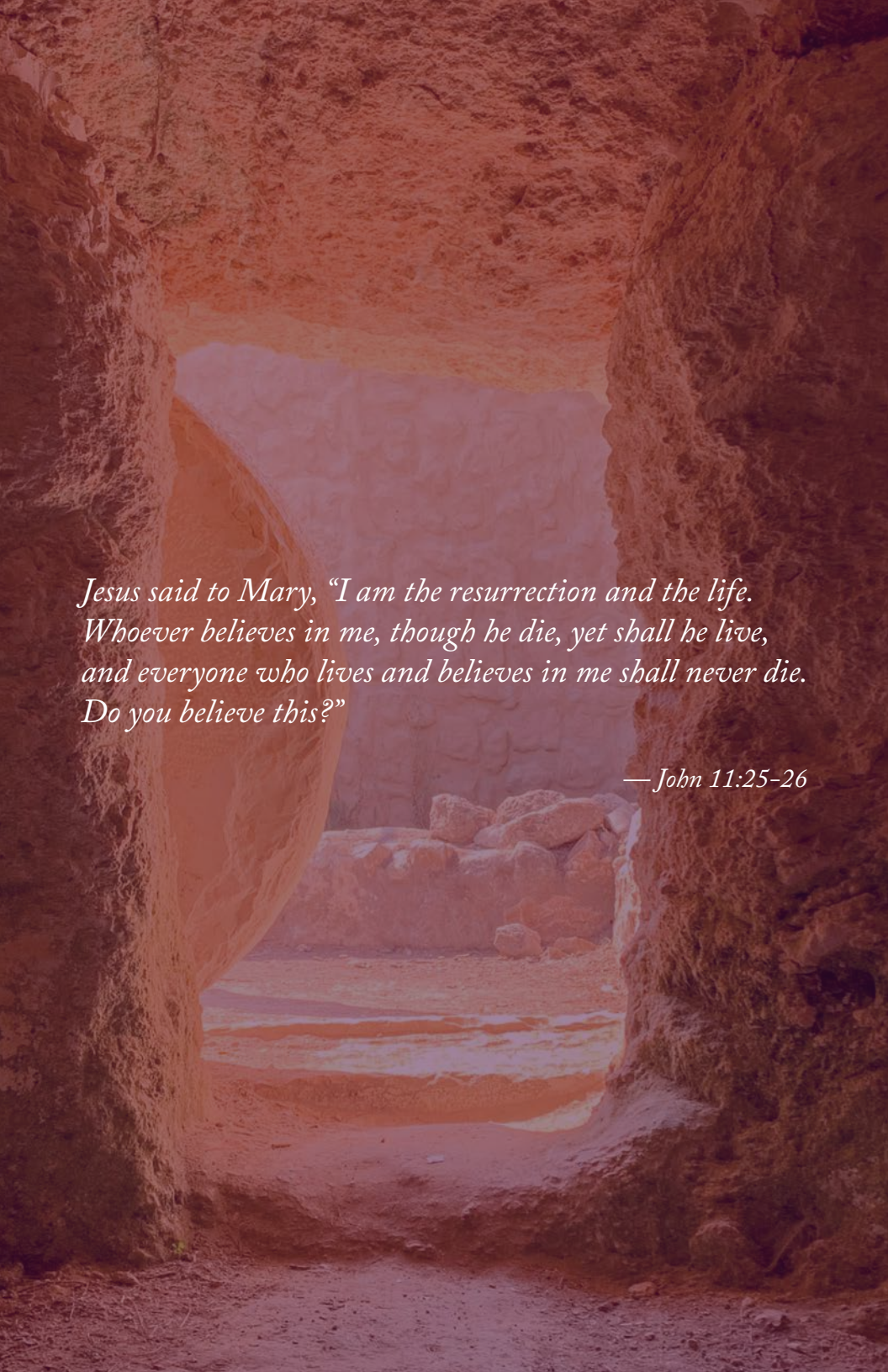
In John 10, Jesus identifies Himself as *the good shepherd* (verses 11 and 14). To many of us who have been believers for some time and are familiar with this title, it's easy to accept it as true. But it's also easy to just skim over it and miss the depth of its value and personal impact on our lives. Sometimes we fail to appreciate just how good the *good* is until we lay it alongside its opposite and make a comparison. That's exactly what Jesus does here in John 10. He compares His style of shepherding against that of a hired hand. Here's how He lays out the contrast:

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 10:11-14)*

Notice that the hired hand runs in the face of danger and abandons the sheep, exposing them to the threat and danger of the wolf. The reason he runs is because he doesn't really care about the sheep. In contrast, Jesus, *the good shepherd*, cares so much that He's willing to sacrifice His very life to save His sheep. Even though we are smelly, sin-infested, and prone-to-wander sheep, we are safe, secure and accepted by the good shepherd!

Because He will never abandon us, we are never forced to face our

fears in our own strength. Because He is our protector, we can live with confidence, knowing that He will lead us through any difficulty we will face in this life; making us resilient, even when the evil one is relentless in his effort to steal, kill and destroy. Because He is not a distant and disengaged deity, He knows us intimately and invites us to know Him intimately in return. Because He enables us to hear His voice, we can be led (if we listen attentively and respond obediently) and formed more and more into His beautiful image. For all this and more, thank You, Jesus, for being *our good shepherd*.



*Jesus said to Mary, "I am the resurrection and the life.  
Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,  
and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.  
Do you believe this?"*

*— John 11:25-26*

# FRIDAY

## I AM THE RESURRECTION & THE LIFE

PASTOR DAN FRANCIS

*Read John 11:1-44*

As a pastor, I officiate a lot of funerals. By their nature, funerals are somber affairs where death is fully felt and deeply grieved. The loss of a loved-one is traumatic and leaves an emptiness in the lives of those left behind. In John 11, Jesus is comforting Martha and Mary upon the death of their brother, Lazarus. Martha demonstrates incredible faith when she says to Jesus, *“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”* She clearly believes Jesus to be the Messiah and capable of raising people from the dead. Jesus answers her by saying, *“Your brother will rise again.”* To which Martha acknowledges the hope of the resurrection on the last day. It is into this context that Jesus makes one of His greatest declarations:

*“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*

Notice that Jesus doesn't say that He will *give* resurrection and life (although He certainly can), but that He *is* the resurrection and the life. He is the means by which we receive eternal life—if we believe. Jesus doesn't just offer something, He *is* something.

Furthermore, He indicates that physical death is not the end, rather it is the doorway to eternal life: *“Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live...”* Death ushers the believer into a fuller life of fellowship with God: *“Everyone who loves and believes in Me shall never die.”*

Not only does Jesus claim to be the resurrection and the life, but He proves it by His own death and resurrection. He really died,


was really buried, and really rose from the dead. Jesus proves His statement.

This is the great hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—that though we die, yet shall we live. For the unbeliever, death is thought to be the end. However, for the one who puts their faith in Jesus Christ, death is just the beginning of life everlasting.

Funerals are a time to remember the reality of death—death is real. However, they are also great moments to rehearse the remedy for death: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The great punishment for sin (death) is remedied by the great sacrifice for sin (Jesus).

So, as believers in Jesus Christ, we must not fear death. Death is not the end, rather it is the doorway to eternal life. In a very real sense, it is not death to die—it is life, life everlasting. Jesus *is* the resurrection and the life.



A stone path leads up a grassy hill under a purple sky. The path is made of large, flat stones and is flanked by dry grass. In the background, there are rolling hills and a wooden fence. The sky is a deep purple with some clouds.

*"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

*— John 14:6*

# SATURDAY

## I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH & THE LIFE

PASTOR MAT ENCINOSA

*Read John 14*

Have you ever been in a group setting where you were clueless about the conversation topic? But instead of admitting you didn't know what they were talking about, you participated with inert comments and fake laughs so as not to let everyone else know that you were completely out of the loop? No? Yeah... ok. Well, I think we should appreciate Thomas' willingness to throw his hand up and ask Jesus what in the world he's talking about. Jesus' statement that He is the way, truth, and life is an answer to Thomas' question, "*Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?*" Do you feel the pressure to know everything, or always have an answer? Or maybe you feel like you have to always look confident and competent in front of others? If that's you, let me encourage you to be a little more like Thomas. He just had no idea what Jesus was talking about. And instead of sitting there feigning a thoughtful look as if he were basking in the profound wisdom of his teacher, Thomas acted a bit more like my kids after I try explaining to them why I can't play a specific song on-demand on the car radio, and they respond "huh?"

Contrasted against bold and brash Peter who often would speak with great misunderstanding, Thomas (in this instance) brings an inquisitive posture that seeks understanding. Perhaps Thomas' question in the passage was the inspiration for Saint Francis' prayer,

*"O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek... to be understood as to understand."*

Jesus' words in verse 6 were so profound, that before Christians

were known as Christians, they were collectively referred to as being part of “the way.” As in, “I’ve found the way and I’m walking it.” But the way to what? In our modern familiarity with “church-ey” and spiritualized thinking, we quickly answer: Heaven, or eternal life, or being present with God. But Jesus’ disciples were probably assuming things like identity and stature as the ruling nation, or a kingdom rightfully restored, or the fulfillment of ancient promises for Hebrew prosperity. So when Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for them, they thought He was speaking of a temporal kingdom in a glorious city, perhaps even some illustrious and luxurious city that they knew of (hence Thomas’ question about where it is and how to get there). As you see in John 14, Jesus redirects their focus away from a temporal kingdom to the eternal one. Do you ever find yourself getting overly attached to material goals and outcomes? There’s often nothing inherently wrong with the goals we set in this life, and we find it helpful to set goals. But when those goals define us, we’re heading for a kind of trouble called idolatry. Jesus’ disciples had tunnel vision from their cultural conditioning, so much so that they were about to miss Jesus’ meaning entirely. Thankfully, Jesus didn’t let them stay in their tunnels!

So the question comes to us—do we miss seeing spiritual blessings and futures because we’re so focused on material or cultural pursuits? If you’re like me, then the answer is a sheepish “yes.” When Jesus told His disciples that He was the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to His Father except through Him, He was giving an incredibly merciful call to His followers: if you’re so focused on your own way that you try to, or end up, meeting my Father on your own, you’ll meet Him only as a judge who will judge your life based on His own holiness. But if you meet Him through Me, you’ll find Him as the Father He is: gracious and merciful, welcoming you, through Me, into His family forever. May we have the self-awareness to know that we don’t always understand. And may we be willing to change directions from the cultural flow of traffic, to the way that Jesus walks.



*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser."*

*—John 15:1*



# SUNDAY

## I AM THE TRUE VINE

PASTOR CLAY THOMAS

*Read John 15:1-17*

In this passage, Jesus is preparing His disciples for life without Him physically present. He is facing the cross and the new life that is beyond the cross. This passage uses a very familiar metaphor for His disciples, the relationship of a branch to a vine. Verses 1-8 describe the metaphor and verse 9-17 comment on its application.

The branch must abide, live, or remain in the vine. Its only source of nourishment, growth, and fruit is found in its connection to the true vine. The branch has work to do but it cannot really accomplish any of its tasks apart from the vine. Specifically, it cannot bear fruit—this is elementary—a branch apart from the vine is dead already. The disconnection will cause it to wither and die. The life Jesus gives: new life, new birth, is the only true source of flourishing for us. It is Jesus' word living in us that direct us to ask and receive what we need from the Father to fulfill our purpose. Apart from Him we can do nothing life-giving or redemptive in this world. And what is this fruit that we are to bear?

Jesus explains to us the fruit of which we are to bear. This remaining in Him is to abide in His love and to love as He loved, expressly that we are to love one another. All other life for a disciple of Jesus must flow from this fountain. He is calling them, and us, to a greater love that is self-sacrificing and brings joy. This is genuinely loving each other the way He loves us. We remain in His love by accepting that love which is granted *to* us on the condition of His death *for* us. How does He love us?

*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his*



*life for his friends (John 15:13).*

So our very lives are forfeit in the kind of love He is asking for. The fruit He expects is this kind of love from us. We cannot do it alone. It requires remaining in Jesus' words. It requires remaining in prayer. It requires remaining in genuine relationship with other believers, "one another," and results in love for one another that will attract others to Jesus.

As we prepare to celebrate the Cross and the empty tomb, let's reflect on our lives and how we mirror this kind of love. Let us also reflect on how we might remain in, or abide in, Jesus more each day. What are the circumstances or things in our lives that distract us from being connected to Jesus and others in the deeply loving way He desires us to be?

This remaining in Jesus and this new life is a minute by minute choice about what we bring into our life. We can enjoy the amazing world God has given us freely but we cannot feed on harmful things and expect to remain in Jesus. That is why He adds that we remain in His love when we keep His commandments and also that we bear fruit. Abiding or remaining in Jesus is an indispensable part of what it means to be His disciples. Let us seek this minute by minute, day by day.

