

THE **crossing** **small groups**

The Infinite Abundance of the I AM | Revelation 1:17-18 Sermon Discussion Leader Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To help us realize that our lives will be happier and more fulfilled if we trust and follow Jesus, the I AM who is the source of infinite, abundant life.

Sermon Reminder: Dave continued the sermon series looking at the “I am” statements from Jesus. This week’s statement is found in a vision given to the apostle John in Revelation 1. We learned that the way for us to escape being miserable and instead experience real joy as Christians is to remember that Jesus offers not a life of scarcity, but rather one of great abundance.

Icebreaker: Can you think of someone you know that turned out to be quite a bit different—in a positive way—from the person you initially thought he/she was (think of a friend, co-worker, neighbor, or even a spouse)? How did your perception change by interacting with the person more?

Transition: Getting to know these people we’ve talked about better has led us to change our opinion of them and probably appreciate and enjoy our relationships with them more. But the same thing happens when we better understand and remember who Jesus really is and what he really offers us.

Discussion:

1. Dave began his sermon with a question: “Is it possible to be a Christian and not be miserable?” Do you identify with that question? I.e., if you’re being honest, do you sometimes feel like following Jesus often makes you more unhappy than you would otherwise be? How so?
2. Dave also mentioned a quote from Ray Ortlund Sr.: “Half-hearted Christians are the most miserable people of all. They know enough about God to feel guilty, but they haven’t gotten far enough with Christ to be happy.” How do you think going farther with Jesus, i.e., knowing him better and remembering who he really is, might help us want to follow and trust him more?

3. Now let's read a few of the related statements that Jesus makes in the book of Revelation:

Revelation 1:17–18

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

Revelation 21:6

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

Revelation 22:13-14

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life...

What do we learn about Jesus in these statements? What do they tell us about who he really is?

4. In the statements that we just read, Jesus is using images that appear at the very beginning of the biblical story. They allude to the incredible abundance that God provides our first parents in the paradise of the Garden of Eden. Read:

Genesis 2:9-10: The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the *tree of life* and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. *A river watering the garden* flowed from Eden.
(emphasis added)

Despite this great abundance, Satan tempts Adam and Eve into doubting God's love and provision for them. As Dave put it, he did so by causing them to "invert the abundance-scarcity equation." He characterized the abundance that God offered (all the trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food) as a *scarcity*—as unsatisfying. And he painted the one prohibition God gave (not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil)—which was put in place to build trust and commitment and so deepen their relationship with him—as standing in the way of the *abundance* they really needed to

make them happy. But giving in to Satan's temptation brought about the exact opposite effect.

Where are you tempted to seek abundance outside of trusting Jesus and following his commands for your life? How has this generally worked out? Over time, has it made you more or less happy and satisfied?

5. Let's look again at Jesus's statement in Revelation 1. Read:

Revelation 1:17–18

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

As Dave mentioned, believing that Jesus really died and rose again to new life was the fuel that gave his earliest followers great confidence to follow him in the face of great hardship and even death.

How do you think the reality of Jesus's death and resurrection helps us to trust him?

6. What is it about Jesus that you most need to remember right now to help you trust that listening to and following him is the path to abundance rather than scarcity in your life? What might help you keep this truth in front of you on a regular basis?

Sharing and Prayer:

This passage from Psalm 34 will help guide our prayers in light of everything we've talked about today:

Psalm 34:4-9

⁴ I sought the Lord, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.

⁵ Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.

⁶ This poor man called, and the Lord heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him,
and he delivers them.

⁸ Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

⁹ Fear the Lord, you his holy people,
for those who fear him lack nothing.

Let's pray for ourselves and each other using the promises of this passage.