

LESSON FOUR

JOHN: 7 “I AM” STATEMENTS

“The Resurrection and the Life: A disciple believes Jesus gives life”

SCRIPTURE | John 11:17-27

MEMORY VERSE

“God said to Moses, ‘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).

MAIN IDEA OF THE TEXT

Because Jesus is the resurrection and the life, death is not the final word for those who are in Christ.

GROUP TIME

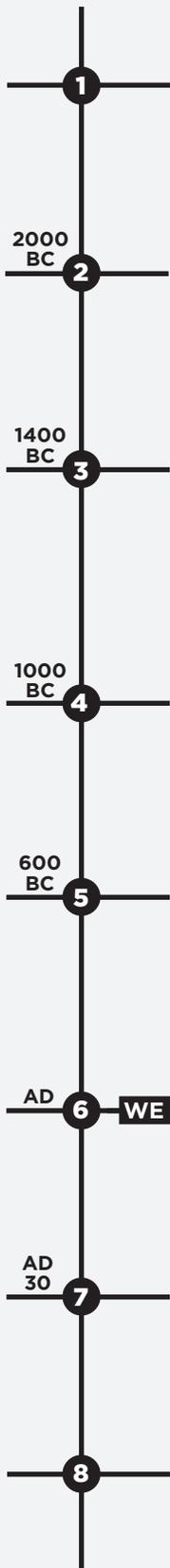
5 minutes	Welcome
5-10 minutes	Attention Grabber
10 minutes	Story / Context
25 minutes	Discussion
5-10 minutes	Closing & Prayer

PRAYER FOCUS

- **Next Steps Class (Mar. 21/22)** – Pray for people to take their next step at Lakepointe: baptism, membership, serving, Rooted.
- **Easter (Apr. 4/5)** – Begin praying for Easter services and the opportunity to declare that Jesus is alive! He is resurrected and gives life to all who believe.

BEGIN this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of his Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study.

GOD'S STORY TIMELINE



1. God Creates the World and Promises a Rescuer (*Genesis 1-11*)

God created everything good and placed humans in a garden to live in close relationship with Him. But Adam and Eve chose to trust themselves instead of God, and sin entered the world. Relationships, creation, even our connection to God was broken. Yet even in judgment, God promised that one day, a descendant of Eve would crush the serpent and bring healing.

+This points to Jesus as the promised Rescuer who defeats sin, Satan, and death.

2. God Calls a Family and Makes a Promise (*Genesis 12-50*)

God chose a man named Abram (later Abraham) and gave a covenant to him: that he would have a large family, receive a land, and be a blessing to all nations. Though Abraham and his descendants were deeply flawed, God continued His promise through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

+This points to Jesus as the true offspring of Abraham, through whom all nations are fully blessed.

3. God Rescues His People and Forms a Redeemed Nation (*Exodus-Deuteronomy*)

Generations later, Abraham's descendants were enslaved in Egypt. God raised up Moses to rescue them from oppression and slavery. God called His people into a relationship with Himself. He made a covenant with them, gave them the law, and instructed them in worship. He was forming a people who would live differently and show the world what it looked like to belong to Him.

+This points to Jesus as the greater Moses, who rescues us from slavery to sin and writes God's law on our hearts.

4. God Gives a Home and Promises a King (*Joshua-2 Chronicles*)

God brought His people into the promised land under Joshua's leadership. Over time, they asked for a king like the other nations. It was a disaster. But God graciously gave them David, with whom he made another covenant: one of David's descendants would rule forever. Solomon built the temple, but after his death, the kingdom split into two and began spiraling into idolatry and injustice again.

+This points to Jesus as the forever King from David's line, who reigns with justice and peace.

5. God Removes His People and Reminds Them of His Promise (*Ezra-Nehemiah*)

Because of their rebellion, God allowed His people to be conquered and taken into exile. First, it was the Northern Kingdom, Israel (to Assyria), then the Southern Kingdom, Judah (to Babylon). The temple was destroyed, and the glory of the kingdom faded. Yet God continued to speak through the prophets, reminding the people of His promise to restore them, give them new hearts, and send a Rescuer.

+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the new covenant, restores hearts, and fulfills every prophecy.

6. God Sends His Son and Fulfills His Promise (*Matthew-John*)

At just the right time, God sent Jesus into the world—born of a virgin, fully God and fully man. He perfectly obeyed the law, pointed us to the Father, and laid down His life as a sacrifice for our sins. On the third day, He rose again, proving that He is the Savior, the King, and the fulfillment of every covenant promise God has ever made.

+Jesus is the center of the story—all of Scripture leads to Him.

7. God Sends His Spirit and Builds His Church (*Acts-Jude*)

After rising from the dead, Jesus ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to empower His followers. The early Church spread the good news of Jesus across the Roman world—planting churches, welcoming both Jews and Gentiles, and learning to live as God's new covenant people. Though imperfect, the Church carries Jesus' mission forward today.

+This points to Jesus as the risen King who gives the Spirit to dwell in us and send us on mission.

8. God Restores All Things and Dwells with His People (*Revelation*)

The story isn't over. One day Jesus will return to judge evil and make all things new. There will be a new heaven and new earth, where God's people from every tribe and nation will live with Him forever. There will be no more pain, no more death, and no more sin—just joy, justice, and unbroken peace.

+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the story to its perfect and eternal culmination.

1 GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

LEADER TIP

To grab your participants' attention, start your lesson by telling a story related to the lesson's main idea. We have provided you with three options in this section, but feel free to develop your own.

OPTION 1: THE BLACK DEATH

In the late 1340s, Europe was struck by the Black Death. Over the course of several years, the plague moved along trade routes and through cities, killing millions. In many regions, roughly a third of the population died. Families vanished. Clergy and physicians died alongside the poor. No group proved immune. What made the plague especially destabilizing was its unpredictability. People could be healthy one day and dead the next. Long-held assumptions that moral living or social standing offered protection collapsed.

Some turned toward intense devotion. Others abandoned restraint altogether, concluding that if death was unavoidable and arbitrary, the future no longer deserved careful investment. When tomorrow felt uncertain, many began to live only for the present. When death feels final and uncontrollable, it reshapes how people understand meaning itself.

It was to that human instinct, still with us, that Jesus spoke in John 11, not with a theory about death but with a claim that challenged its authority altogether.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *In moments like the Black Death, when death felt sudden and uncontrollable, people's sense of meaning began to collapse. Why do you think the certainty of death shapes how we live more than almost anything else?*
- *When the future feels fragile or out of our control, what kinds of meaning or priorities tend to rise to the surface, and which ones tend to fade?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:

Death always raises questions. That is the kind of moment we find in John 11, where grief was real, hope felt fragile, and the future was uncertain.

OPTION 2 : ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW'S SON

During a famine, the prophet Elijah was living in the home of a widow in Zarephath. She had already buried her husband, and her future rested entirely on her only son. While Elijah stayed with her, the boy became sick. The illness worsened until there was no breath left in him, and the child died.

The widow's response reveals what she assumed was happening. She turned on Elijah and asked why he had come to her at all, why her sin had been remembered, and why God would draw near only to take what little she had left. In her mind, the presence of God had brought loss, not life. Elijah did not argue with her or offer an explanation. He took the boy from her arms, carried him upstairs, and cried out to the Lord, refusing to treat death as an outcome that must simply be accepted.

Life returned to the boy. This shows that even in the OT, though death is devastating and real, it doesn't always get the final word. And when God acts, life happens. What Jesus did for Lazarus is similar to what happened with this widow's son—He restored Lazarus's physical life. But it points to a much greater resurrection.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *In the widow's response, she assumed that God's nearness had led to loss rather than life. Why do you think suffering so often reshapes how people interpret God's presence?*
- *When people stop expecting things to change, what kinds of decisions or habits tend to follow?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:

The story of Elijah and the widow gave Israel an early way of thinking about death and God's nearness in the face of it. That way of thinking was greatly expanded when life Himself stepped into the presence of the grave in John 11.

OPTION 3 : A DEAD BATTERY

You just enjoyed a great meal at your favorite restaurant. It's cold outside, so you do that little half-run to get into your car. You turn the key and ... nothing. Just that clicking noise that tells you the battery is dead. Thankfully, a friend who is also at the restaurant has a set of jumper cables. He gives you a jump start and you're back on the road.

But this keeps happening. Your battery can no longer hold its charge. Eventually it's going to be totally dead—unable to be brought back to life by jumper cables. You'll need a new battery.

In John 11 we'll read of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. What kind of resurrection is this, though? In one sense it's like the jump start. Because Lazarus isn't still walking around today. He eventually died physically again. But in another sense, Lazarus was so dead he was starting to stink. This points to something greater than a jumpstart.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *When you think about life returning, what do you imagine that life looks like? Simply breathing again or something fuller than what was there before?*
- *When you hope for God to bring life into a situation that feels dead, what are you usually asking for? Relief, restoration, or something that actually changes what life is like going forward?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:

Those questions matter because in John 11, Jesus did not just speak about bringing someone back from the dead. He spoke about life itself. As we read, we need to listen carefully to what Jesus meant when He used that word and whether the life He offers is the same kind we are hoping for or something deeper altogether.

2 SET THE STAGE

LEADER TIP

This section provides the historical, cultural, and literary context needed to properly interpret and apply the text.

OUTLINE

- I. Prologue: Christ as the Eternal Word (1:1-18)
 - A. The Word (1:1)
 - B. The Word and creation (1:2-5)
 - C. The Word and the world (1:6-18)
- II. Presentation of Christ as the Son of God (1:19-12:50)
 - A. By John the Baptist (1:19-34)
 - B. To His disciples (1:35-51)
 - C. Through miraculous signs (2:1-12:50)**
- III. Instruction of the Twelve by the Son of God (13:1-17:26)
 - A. The Last Supper (13:1-38)
 - B. The way to the Father (14:1-31)
 - C. The true vine (15:1-27)
 - D. The gift of the Spirit (16:1-33)
 - E. Jesus's high-priestly prayer (17:1-26)
- IV. Suffering of Christ as the Son of God (18:1-20:31)
 - A. His arrest, trial, and death (18:1-19:42)
 - B. His triumph over death (20:1-31)
- V. Epilogue: The Continuing Work of the Son of God (21:1-25)
 - A. Appearances to His disciples (21:1-14)
 - B. Assignment to His disciples (21:15-25)¹

CONTEXT

In the Old Testament, death is treated as a serious and largely unquestioned reality. People grieved, buried their dead, and spoke of the grave as a place of silence and loss. The Old Testament spends far more time teaching God's people how to live faithfully before death than explaining what comes after it.

By the time of Jesus, Jewish views about resurrection were varied and often disputed. Some groups believed God would one day raise the dead as part of His final act of justice. Others rejected the idea altogether. Even where resurrection was affirmed, it belonged to the end of history, not the middle of ordinary life. It was something God might do someday, not something people expected to encounter in the present.

John placed the death of Lazarus inside that world. Death was assumed to be real, irreversible, and settled. When Lazarus died, everyone in the story knew what it meant. Death had done what death always does. Whatever hope remained was distant, abstract, and postponed. Hope, if it existed at all, was oriented toward a distant future rather than immediate restoration. That's why Martha's answer makes sense. "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

¹Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1663.

CONNECTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

When Jesus spoke of resurrection and life in John 11, He was not activating a single, well-defined Old Testament image as He did with manna or shepherding. Instead, He was gathering several strands of Scripture that all speak consistently about one thing: life belongs to God, and death is not something human beings know how to reverse.

In Genesis 1, life was not discovered or earned. It was spoken into existence. God created by His word, and when human life appeared, it did so because God breathed life where there was none. From the start, Scripture trained Israel to assume that life originates outside of us and remains under God's authority.

As Israel's story unfolded, that assumption deepened rather than softened. Death was treated as real loss. Grief was not minimized. When Scripture speaks of hope beyond death, it does so cautiously. Isaiah 53 hints at life emerging after suffering, speaking of one who passes through death and yet sees life again. Ezekiel 37 imagines a valley of dry bones brought back to life, but even there the vision points beyond itself, to God's future act of restoration rather than an expectation people could claim in the present.

Israel knew God gives life, sustains life, and could restore life. But they did not expect resurrection and life to be spoken of as present realities bound to a single person standing at a tomb. Jesus was placing Himself as the source of life.

FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS

We die. Every life moves in that direction, and nothing we do stops it in the end. We can delay it, distract ourselves from it, or refuse to think about it, but death remains unavoidable. We cannot generate life ourselves. Our eternity depends on a Life Giver.

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Because Jesus is life and resurrection, death no longer gets the last word. This isn't an escape from death but a defeat of it. By His own death and resurrection, Jesus made death a passage rather than an ending. For those who belong to Him, death may still come, but it no longer has finality.

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find exercises you can use to lead your group through Observation, Interpretation, and Application. As the leader, work through all the exercises below to ensure you understand the text well.

John 11 records Jesus stepping into a moment where death was not hypothetical or distant. Lazarus had been buried, mourned, and accepted as gone. What Jesus said here was spoken in the presence of grief, certainty, and resignation. The exchange with Martha forced a question that goes beyond what will happen someday and pressed into what is true right now about life, death, and who Jesus is.

Verse 17 tells us Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. John included this detail to remove any uncertainty about what kind of death this was. This was not a delayed response or a close call. Death was complete and assumed to be irreversible. Whatever Jesus was about to say or do could not be explained as timing or recovery. The situation had already passed the point where hope normally survives.

Verses 18–19 widen the lens. Bethany was close to Jerusalem, and many people had come to mourn with Martha and Mary. This grief was public. The family appears to have been well known, and the presence of so many visitors means what happened next would have witnesses. John also reminded the reader how close Jesus now was to Jerusalem. He had come back into danger, and that risk sits quietly in the background of the scene.

Verse 20 shows Martha going out to meet Jesus while Mary remained behind. John did not explain the difference or turn it into a lesson. He simply shows two responses to loss. Martha's movement toward Jesus led to conversation, not resolution. Grief was still very much present.

Verses 21–22 reveal both Martha's faith and its limits. She believed Jesus could have healed Lazarus if He had arrived sooner. That confidence was genuine. At the same time, she spoke as though the moment for that kind of intervention had passed. Her statement about God granting whatever Jesus asked was not a request for resurrection. It reflected her continued trust in Jesus's relationship with God, even though she did not imagine that death itself might be reversed.

Verses 23–24 expose how hope can be sincerely held and functionally postponed at the same time. When Jesus said, "Your brother will rise again," Martha interpreted His words through a category she already had. She affirmed the resurrection at the last day, a belief rooted in Scripture and shared by many in her tradition. That hope was real, but it was also safely distant. It allowed death to remain fully in charge of the present while promising that God would act later. Martha's response shows how resurrection can be believed without being expected.

Verses 25–26 are the center of the passage because Jesus did not shift Martha's timeline. He shifted her focus. He did not say resurrection would happen. He said where it comes from. Resurrection and life were no longer things God does at the end. They were bound to the person standing in front of her. To know Him is to be connected to both.

Jesus then refused to flatten the reality of death. He said plainly that those who believe in Him would still die. Lazarus had already made that

clear. Faith did not prevent burial. But death was no longer allowed to decide what that burial meant. Those who die believing in Him will live, because the life He gives is not created by the body and is not sustained by it.

When Jesus said those who live and believe in Him will never die, He was not redefining biology. He was redefining loss. Death still takes the body, but it does not take the life that comes from Him. That is the claim Jesus placed in front of Martha before anything happened at the tomb.

Verse 26 ends with a question. “Do you believe this?” Jesus was not asking whether Martha believed He could raise Lazarus. He was asking whether her faith could move beyond belief in a distant resurrection to trust in Jesus as the source of life itself. The question pressed belief into relationship.

Verse 27 records Martha’s response as a confession. She named Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, the one sent into the world. Her answer did not yet resolve her grief or explain what would happen next, but it shows that the conversation had shifted. Resurrection was no longer merely a doctrine she held. It was now bound to the identity of the person standing in front of her.

JOHN 11:17-27

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21 “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

24 Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

27 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”²

²*The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Jn 11:17-27.

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people to discuss the Observation and Interpretation questions.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: THE DEATH OF LAZARUS

Read John 11:17-19. What details did John give about Lazarus's death and the setting surrounding it?

Suggested Response: John said Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, and many people had come to comfort Martha and Mary. The scene is one of settled mourning with many witnesses present.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: MARTHA'S WORDS

Read John 11:20-22 and 27. What did Martha say to Jesus, and how did she describe her belief about Him?

Suggested Response: Martha told Jesus that if He had been there, her brother would not have died, and she said she knew God would give Jesus whatever He asked. She also said she believed Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: JESUS IS THE RESURRECTION AND LIFE

Read John 11:23-26. What did Jesus say about resurrection, life, belief, and death?

Suggested Response: Jesus said Lazarus would rise again and identified Himself as the resurrection and the life. He said those who believe in Him will live even though they die, and those who live and believe in Him will never die. He then asked if Martha believed this.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: THE FINALITY OF DEATH

Based on John 11:17–19, why did John emphasize how long Lazarus has been dead and how many people were present?

Suggested Response: John emphasized the length of time and the presence of mourners to make clear that Lazarus's death was settled and publicly accepted. There was no confusion about whether he were truly dead and no private space for reinterpretation. Whatever Jesus said or did must be understood in light of death's apparent finality.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: MARTHA'S BELIEFS AND ITS LIMITS

Considering John 11:20–22 and 27 together, what did Martha clearly believe about Jesus, and what did she not yet seem to expect?

Suggested Response: Martha believed Jesus had a unique relationship with God and confessed Him as the Messiah and Son of God. At the same time, she did not appear to expect the immediate reversal of Lazarus's death. Her faith affirmed who Jesus was without yet imagining what that might mean for her present situation.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: WHAT JESUS WAS CLAIMING

In John 11:23–26, why did Jesus move from speaking about Lazarus rising to speaking about Himself? What claim was He making by doing so?

Suggested Response: Jesus moved from a statement about Lazarus to a statement about Himself to redirect Martha's understanding of resurrection. Rather than allowing resurrection to remain an abstract future event, He claimed that resurrection and life are found in Him personally. By speaking this way, Jesus presented Himself as the source and authority behind both present life and future resurrection, not merely a participant in God's plans but the one through whom they occur.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

QUESTION 1: As you read John 11:17–27, what part of the conversation between Jesus and Martha did you find yourself lingering over? Was there a statement or exchange that felt especially significant or unexpected?

Suggested Response: Responses will vary. Encourage participants to name specific words, phrases, or moments in the conversation that caught their attention. Use follow-up questions to invite deeper reflection rather than quick answers.

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find questions to choose from that will help your group consider how God calls them to respond to the text. Help your group set measurable action steps.

QUESTION 2: Martha believed in resurrection, but she placed it at the end, not in the present. Where in your life are you most tempted to believe God can act someday without expecting Him to meet you now?

Suggested Response: Some may name areas of grief, disappointment, or long-standing situations that feel settled. Others may recognize a pattern of lowering expectations as a way of avoiding further hurt. This question helps expose where hope has been delayed rather than denied.

QUESTION 3: Jesus did not deny that death happens, but He challenged what death is allowed to decide. Where have you accepted an ending as final and stopped expecting anything more?

Suggested Response: This question helps us notice where death and loss have been allowed to close doors God has not said are closed and whether we are willing to trust Him with more than we can see or explain. We should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, but that isn't an invitation to cynical inaction.

QUESTION 4: Jesus asked Martha, "Do you believe this?" not as a test of knowledge but as a personal question. Where does your faith tend to stay true but abstract, affirmed without shaping how you face loss or uncertainty?

Suggested Response: Some may recognize a gap between what they confess and what they expect. Others may see how faith can remain sincere while still keeping grief, fear, or disappointment insulated from it.

QUESTION 5: This passage does not rush resolution. How can our group help one another acknowledge grief and loss while still holding onto Jesus's claim about life experienced in the present? How do we grieve as those who have hope?

Suggested Response: Group support may include listening without fixing, praying without pressure, and staying present over time. The focus is shared faithfulness rather than quick answers.

4

CHALLENGE

LEADER TIP

End your study time with one final challenge and prayer. Your final challenge should pull together everything you covered in this lesson and call your participants to action.

By experience we learn where to place our expectations. We figure out what to hope for, what to brace ourselves against, and what feels no longer worth considering. Over time, those adjustments can settle into quiet conclusions about what is finished and what cannot change. Jesus spoke into that posture by locating resurrection and life in Himself, not as distant ideas but as realities that are not governed by what death appears to have decided.

Trusting Jesus as the resurrection and the life does not mean refusing grief or denying finality. It means refusing to let loss dictate the full scope of what God can still bring about. It invites us to remain open to life that is not limited by our ability to predict outcomes or protect ourselves from disappointment.

- Where in my week am I most likely to live as though an ending has already been written and nothing more should be expected?
- What situation right now feels settled or closed? What would it look like to entrust that place to Jesus without demanding a specific outcome?
- How can our group help one another name loss honestly while still leaving room for God to define what comes next?

The way of Jesus does not promise that death will not come. It promises that death does not get to decide everything that follows.

Let's pray.