

SESSION 3: JESUS THE WAY

3.0 OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this course called *Walking the Good Path*.

In this program, we are looking at Jesus, not in a religious or “churchy” way, but as a real person who walked the good path of God the Creator whom He called Father.

From early times, the people who followed Jesus became known as ***people of the way***. They lived and acted in ways that Jesus lived and acted in relation to God and to others. What Jesus taught and how He lived was all about helping people and showing people how to walk the good path of life with God their Creator and Father.

He said, ***“I am the Great Spirit’s pathway, the truth about who He really is, and the life of beauty and harmony He offers to all. There is no other guide who can take you to the Father. To know Me is to know My Father”*** (John 14:6 FNV).

We can read about this in the Gospel of John which is in the Bible and contains stories about the life and teachings of Jesus. It is called the Gospel of John because it was written by John, one of the earliest followers of Jesus. The word gospel means good news. For John, the life of Jesus was good news because Jesus showed him how to walk the good path of life. In this course, we will be looking at what John discovered about Jesus.

In our first session we discussed John’s description of Jesus as the Word sent from God the Creator, and in the second session we discussed Jesus as the Truth.

3.1 REVIEW SESSION 2

In our last session we talked about Jesus the Truth. Jesus is trustworthy. His words and actions/behaviour are consistent. Jesus is a credible messenger whose message is true — One who was totally consistent in what He said, what He did, and how He acted. Jesus was completely trustworthy and treated all people with the same love and respect regardless of who they were. He delivered God’s message, that God’s love is for all people. More importantly, His actions proved the truth of that message, as His behaviour demonstrated that love to people regardless of their race, status, or behaviour. It is in His relationship with people that His message rings true.

Would anyone like to share their responses to the assignment? You were asked to read the stories about Jesus in John chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 and to make a list of what you think Jesus is saying and showing people about God the Creator's path.

3.2 WHAT IS MEANT BY WAY?

Those who listened to Jesus' message and followed Him, became known as people of "the way." The word, "way" has different shades of meaning. Let's think about five different uses of "way." There are probably more than just five, so if you can think of any other uses of "way," we can add those to the list as well.

1. There is a **way** of doing something as in the *procedure of it*. For example, putting together a piece of furniture or equipment requires assembly. Instructions usually explain the way to put things together, step-by-step.
2. There is a **way** of acting as in *prescribed actions and behaviours*. These actions are expected of people working in different contexts. Professions including engineers, doctors, teachers, lawyers, counselors, dentists, truck drivers, etc. must act according to certain protocols.
3. There is a **way** for getting from one place to another and *directions to follow*. For example, a road map or GPS gives specific highways, roads, and streets to get from one place to another. A trail map guides hikers along a pathway to a particular destination or place of interest.
4. The **way** can describe *the means* of getting from one place to another. For example, you can go by train, boat, plane, or bus.
5. Some people have a certain **way** about them, as in *a manner or style* that makes them more or less attractive to others. Some have a way that is kind and considerate; others have a way that can be irritating and off-putting.

Can you think of any other uses of "way"?

3.3 A WAY OF LIFE

We also describe people or individuals as having a certain *way of life*, as in the lifestyles of the rich and famous, or the lifestyle of a celebrity, or the lifestyle of a busker or street performer.

A person's way of life includes various things like their lifestyle, traditions, customs, habits, values, behaviour, as well as their ambitions or goal in life. Generally, we also think of a person's way of life in terms of their relationships with other people.

Let's think about some of the various kinds of lifestyles and some of the things that stand out or define that lifestyle particularly regarding relationships with other people – people like themselves as well as people who are different from them.

Do the “Way of Life” Lifestyle Group Exercise and discussion. Then discuss the following questions:

- Everyone has a way of life. How would you describe your way of life?
- What is the one thing about your way of life you would not want to change?
- What is the one thing about your way of life you would want to change? How could you do this?
- Where do you think your way of life might take you?

3.4 A WAY TO SOMEWHERE

A person's way of life reflects the things that are important or meaningful to them. Every person is on a journey through life. For some people, that journey is focused on their goal in life, like getting rich, becoming a mechanic, a pro basketball player, a teacher, a chef, or a musician. For others, the goal in life might be to have fun, own their own home, have a family, etc.

A person's way of life includes what they do, how they live, and the choices they make in order to achieve the things that are most important to them, to reach their goal.

There is an old poem that describes it this way:

*To everyone there opens
A way, and ways, and a way.*

*And the high soul climbs the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to everyone there opens
A high way, and a low.
And everyone decides
The way their soul shall go*

(adapted from poem by John Oxenham)

Discussion:

Consider this poem by discussing these questions:

- What do you think the difference is between the high way and the low way?
- Why do some people “drift to and fro on the misty flats”? Or what causes them not to pursue the high way (or the low for that matter)?
- Do you agree with what this poem is saying?

3.5 WAYWARD

Think about the description of people either taking the low way or drifting back and forth by not choosing one way or another. They can be described as people who don't know the right or good way to go or who are wayward because they go their own way.

Wayward people can be people who know the way to go but choose to go a different way. They can also be people who drift along aimlessly. A wayward child is a child who is unmanageable, disobedient, and wilful. The wayward child wants to have their own way regardless of what their parent may want and resists the parent's guidance and discipline.

Jesus describes a wayward person as being like a lost sheep – a sheep that has wandered away from the path. Jesus tells a story about a good shepherd who cares for the sheep, protects them, and guides them on a good path. When a sheep wanders off, he does not abandon it but goes looking for it to rescue it and bring it back to safety. We will discuss this more in another session.

Right now (just for fun) we want to think about why a sheep (or a dog or cat) might get lost. Do you have a story about a pet you have lost and what you did in response?

3.6 JESUS AS “THE WAY”

When Jesus says, “I am the Way,” He is saying something particularly important. He is not simply saying, “I know the way and can give you the directions or show you the path.” Jesus says “I am the path” to the destination of life, which is the good life with God the Creator. and there is no other way to get there.

Jesus says something further about this destination. He says that the destination of life is to be in harmony with the Creator. Life comes from the Creator, God the Father, and the good way of life is to be in relationship with the Creator who is like a good father to us. The problem is that human beings are like wayward children or straying sheep, going their own way, and doing their own thing. But the Bible explains that the Creator loves the people He created and wants them to live in relationship with Him - to love Him as He loves them. That is why He came to earth in the person of Jesus.

One translation of the Good News from John says it like this:

The Great Spirit loves this world of human beings so deeply He gave us His only Son—the one who receives everything from His Father. All who trust in Him, and His way will not come to a bad end but will have the life of the world to come that never fades—full of beauty and harmony. Creator did not send His Son to decide against the people of this world, but to set them free from the worthless ways of the world.
(John 3:16-17 FNV)

The Bible explains that Jesus is the Way to a relationship with the Creator because He knows the Creator personally and is united with the Creator. The way of living in love and harmony with the Creator is by knowing Jesus and living in relationship with Him (having faith - believing - trusting Him). It is the way of love - loving Jesus as the Creator/Father loves us. Love is at the heart of Jesus’ good news and the heart of Jesus’ way.

In the same way the Father loves Me, I have loved you. Never stop walking this road of love. By doing what the Father has told Me, I have remained in His love. As you walk in My ways, My love will remain in you. I am saying this so your hearts will be

filled with the same joy I have. To walk the road with Me, you must love each other in the same way I have loved you.

(John 15:9-12 FNV).

Jesus doesn't just talk about the way or give directions on how to find the way. Instead, He does two things:

First, Jesus offers people something they cannot find for themselves: a way back to God. People have turned their backs on the Creator, insulting Him by thinking and acting like their own way is good, better than God's way. In the process, they do all sorts of things that are contrary to the Creator's way of love. They hurt others and themselves in many ways that cannot be undone or made right.

Jesus offers to forgive people for the wrong they have done (see the story of Jesus and the immoral woman in John 8:1-11). Everyone will judge, but Jesus did not come to condemn. He came to rescue and to save people from condemnation by forgiving their sins and wrongdoing. Jesus offers people a clean slate, a new start on God's way of love. This fresh start is like being "born again." (See Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3).

Second, Jesus offers to lead and guide people on the way to the Father. He says, "follow Me." To follow Him is to take Him at His word and to trust Him. It is a relationship that leads to living in harmony with the Creator. Nobody can walk God's way of love alone; Jesus is the Way and leads people on the way.

3.7 HELP IN FINDING THE WAY

For important information, written or verbal instructions are simply not enough. We need someone to actually show us and guide us instead of just telling us. That person should be able to see and understand what we are doing in order to help us do the thing correctly.

Do Exercise "Help in Finding the Way".

Would this exercise have been easier if the person with the drawing had been able to guide their partner more directly instead of just dictating instructions? (Discuss).

The Gospel of John explains that the Creator did not just give humans instructions about walking in His good path. The Creator sent Jesus to show the way – to guide people onto the good path. Jesus is the Way.

3.8 CONCLUSION AND ASSIGNMENT

Jesus is the Way to walking the good path of life – to living life to the full. We will discuss what this means in the next session, “Jesus the Life.” To prepare, select one of the following stories from John’s Gospel and answer the questions written below:

1. Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4)
2. Jesus and the royal official (John 4)
3. Jesus and the disabled man by the pool (John 5)
4. Jesus and the disciples in a boat in the storm (John 6)
5. Jesus and the immoral woman (John 8)
6. Jesus and the blind man (John 9)
7. Jesus and Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11)
8. Jesus and the disciples who were fishing (John 21)

In the story you selected, how was the person (or people) changed when they met Jesus?

Imagine what it might be like if you were the person meeting Jesus in the story. How would you react? What would your life be like?