

The Way: Not a Map but a Man

JOHN 14:1-14 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

Jesus doesn't hand us a map home; he is the way.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 20): John 13:36-38, Before the Rooster. Its big idea: Jesus knows you better than your promises do.
- After this passage (day 22): John 15:1-17, Abide in Me. Its big idea: Remain in Jesus' love; lasting fruit grows from him, not from us.

Open

Recall last time: Jesus told Peter he would deny him three times before the rooster crowed. The very next words Jesus speaks are these. Ask: "Have you ever been lost, asked for directions, and had someone say, 'Just follow me'? How did that feel?" Take two or three answers. Read John 14:1: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe in Me as well." Then say the big idea: Jesus doesn't hand us a map home; he is the way. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. A Room Being Made Ready (John 14:1-4, about 10 min)

The one thing: Jesus meets troubled hearts with a promise that rests on his own word.

Ask: When has someone's word been enough to calm you, even before anything changed?

2. Not a Map but a Man (John 14:5-7, about 12 min)

The one thing: The road to the Father is not a route to follow but a Person to trust.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus answered Thomas with "I am" instead of giving him directions?

3. Seen Me, Seen the Father (John 14:8-14, about 14 min)

The one thing: In Jesus, the unseen God has a face, and the way home has a face too.

Ask: Jesus asks, "still you do not know Me?" What do people often miss about Jesus, even after years around him?

Close (never cut it)

This passage comforts, and it shows who Jesus is, so land on rest, not a task. Say it plainly: troubled people are not told to find the way; Jesus is the way, and he comes back for his own. Read v6 again, allow a short silence, and then leave Jesus' own question in the room: "still you do not know Me?"

PROTECT THE ENDING

If section 3 starts late, drop vv12-14 and the optional points, keep the Philip exchange, and protect the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 1, 3, 2, 5, 4 (top to bottom) · Feelings: The disciples worried, Thomas worried, Philip worried, People welcomed to be where Jesus is happy · Code: I AM THE WAY

Act it out: One child plays Thomas and asks, "How can we know the way?" The teacher, as Jesus, says, "I am the way," and the class follows the teacher around the room to a "house" corner.

1. A Room Being Made Ready

JOHN 14:1-4 · ABOUT 10 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus speaks comfort hours before his arrest.
- The Father's house has room, and Jesus is making it ready.
- The goal is not just a place. It is being with Jesus.

"Do not let your hearts be TROUBLED."

"...so that you also may be WHERE I AM."

Discuss: When has someone's word been enough to calm you, even before anything changed?

Jesus meets troubled hearts with a promise that rests on his own word.

MUST COVER

- v1: Comfort comes as trust, "believe in Me as well." It follows right after Peter's failure is predicted.
- vv2-3: The point of the room is presence: "where I am."

IF THERE'S TIME

- Background: a betrothed groom built a room onto his father's house, then came back for his bride.
- v2: "If it were not so, would I have told you": Jesus stakes his own honesty.

Illustration idea: A guest room made up before you arrive, with fresh towels and the porch light on. Someone expected you.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: A parent or friend who promised and then followed through.
- Listen for: A doctor or nurse whose words calmed them before the results came.

If it drifts: If it turns into guessing about heaven's size or layout, point to v3. Jesus cares about "where I am," not floor plans.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Even before Thomas asks, Jesus points to himself. Home is wherever he is.

Short on time? Drop the betrothal background.

Bridge → Jesus says, "You know the way," and Thomas says what everyone is thinking.

2. Not a Map but a Man

JOHN 14:5-7 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Thomas admits he is lost, and Jesus does not scold him.
- Jesus answers with a person, not directions.
- Knowing Jesus is knowing the Father.

"I am the WAY and the truth and the life."

"If you had known Me, you would know My FATHER as well."

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus answered Thomas with "I am" instead of giving him directions?

The road to the Father is not a route to follow but a Person to trust.

MUST COVER

- v5: Honest confusion is welcome. The great claim is spoken to a man who says he is lost.
- v6: There is one way to the Father, and the way is Jesus himself.

IF THERE'S TIME

• "I am" echoes the name God gave Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). Jesus uses it often in John.

• 1 Timothy 2:5: Paul, writing to his young helper Timothy, says there is one go-between for God and people.

Illustration idea: You ask a local for directions, and they grab their keys and say, "I'll take you." You don't need the map anymore.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: You can follow directions without the person, but you have to trust a guide.
- Listen for: Because the destination is being with him.

If it drifts: If it becomes a debate about world religions, admit it's a real question and set it aside. Then ask: what did Jesus actually claim in v6, and to whom?

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Thomas asked for a route. Jesus said, "The route is me."

Short on time? Skip the burning bush point.

Bridge → Jesus says, "From now on you do know Him and have seen Him," and Philip wants to see.

3. Seen Me, Seen the Father

JOHN 14:8-14 · ABOUT 14 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Philip wants to see God. Jesus says, look at me.
- Jesus' words and works come from the Father living in him.
- Those who trust him share his work and pray in his name.

"Anyone who has seen Me has seen the FATHER."

"If you ask Me for anything in My NAME, I will do it."

Discuss: Jesus asks, "still you do not know Me?" What do people often miss about Jesus, even after years around him?

In Jesus, the unseen God has a face, and the way home has a face too.

MUST COVER

- vv9-11: Seeing Jesus is seeing the Father. His words and works show it.
- vv12-14: Because he goes to the Father, his people will do his works and ask in his name, and the Father is glorified.

IF THERE'S TIME

- Colossians 1:15: Paul, writing to an early church, calls Jesus the image of the invisible God.
- "Greater things" (v12) likely means a wider reach after Jesus goes to the Father, not flashier miracles.

Illustration idea: You meet a friend's mother and hear your friend's laugh. You feel like you already knew her.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: That he is gentle and patient, not harsh.
- Listen for: That he really claims to be God, not just a good teacher.

If it drifts: If "whatever you ask" becomes a debate about prayer, point to "in My name" and "so that the Father may be glorified" (v13).

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Philip wanted one glimpse of God, and he had been looking at him for three years. The way home has a face.

Short on time? Cover vv12-14 in one sentence and skip that discussion.

Bridge → Let's end where Jesus left Philip: with Jesus himself.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Set the scene. It is Jesus' last supper. His arrest is hours away, and he has just told Peter he will deny him. Then he says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled."
2. Read it together. Read John 14:1-11 aloud, slowly. Ask what stands out or bothers them.
3. Name the objection. Say it honestly: "No one comes to the Father except through Me" can sound like one man making himself God's gatekeeper. Don't rush past it.
4. Look at what he actually claims. Jesus doesn't claim to guard a door to someone else. He says, "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father." He points to his words and his works as evidence. The question becomes who he is.
5. Leave his question. Close with Jesus' words to Philip: "Philip, I have been with you all this time, and still you do not know Me?" Let it sit. Leave it with them.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

"Isn't claiming to be the only way arrogant?"

It would be, if he were only a teacher. He claims more than that: that God is seen in him. That claim is either true or it isn't, but it isn't a small claim.

"What about people who never heard of Jesus?"

This passage doesn't answer that directly. It tells us who the way is, not how every case works out. It's fair to hold that question honestly.

"Is this just about heaven after we die?"

Partly. But the center is "where I am." The hope is being with Jesus, not a building.

"Does 'whatever you ask' mean I get what I want?"

Jesus ties it to asking "in My name" and to the Father being glorified. It is a promise to people who share his purposes, not a blank check.

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).

If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.

If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.

If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.

If you've taught for years: Don't lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.

If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.

If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn't serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).

If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?

If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Plan for the skeptic and the grieving

This text is read at funerals and debated by skeptics.

If you're new: Expect one grieving person and one objection to v6, and decide ahead of time how you'll respond gently.

If you've taught for years: Invite someone who has grieved, or who once doubted, to share briefly how vv1-3 or v6 met them.

2. Admit what is hard

"Greater things" and "whatever you ask" raise honest questions.

If you're new: Say, "This is hard to understand," then point to what the verse itself says.

If you've taught for years: Show how "in My name" and "so that the Father may be glorified" shape the promise without explaining it away.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

The passage comforts and reveals Jesus. It doesn't hand out homework.

If you're new: End on rest and Jesus' question. Resist adding an action step.

If you've taught for years: Hold the silence after v6 longer than feels comfortable.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you'll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: Have you ever been lost and someone said, "Just follow me"?
- start in the text: Recall Peter's rooster warning, then read 14:1 right after it.
- use an object: Hold up a folded paper map, then set it down and say, "Jesus didn't give Thomas one of these."

CLOSINGS

- restate the big idea: Jesus doesn't hand us a map home; he is the way.
- allow quiet reflection: Read v6, then sit in one minute of silence.
- call back to the opening: "Remember the person who said 'follow me'? Jesus said, 'I am the way.'"

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone asks about a loved one who didn't believe in Jesus.: Don't pronounce on anyone. Acknowledge the pain, say the passage tells us who the way is, and offer to talk after class.
- Someone says, "I asked in his name and nothing happened.": Don't defend or fix it. Admit it's hard, note that v13 ties asking to the Father's glory, and let v1 speak to their troubled heart.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: "Thanks. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can't answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: "Great question. Let's catch it after class so we can finish the passage."

READ THIS WEEK

- Colossians 1:15-20
- Hebrews 10:19-23
- 1 Timothy 2:5-6

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/14-1-14/lesson

The Way: Not a Map but a Man

JOHN 14:1-14 (BSB) · WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."
John 14:6

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus doesn't hand us a map home; he is the way.

1. A ROOM BEING MADE READY · JOHN 14:1-4

- Jesus speaks comfort hours before his arrest.
- The Father's house has room, and Jesus is making it ready.
- The goal is not just a place. It is being with Jesus.

"Do not let your hearts be _____."

"...so that you also may be _____."

Discuss: When has someone's word been enough to calm you, even before anything changed?

2. NOT A MAP BUT A MAN · JOHN 14:5-7

- Thomas admits he is lost, and Jesus does not scold him.
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"I am the _____ and the truth and the life."

"If you had known Me, you would know My _____ as well."

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus answered Thomas with "I am" instead of giving him directions?

3. SEEN ME, SEEN THE FATHER · JOHN 14:8-14

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"Anyone who has seen Me has seen the _____."

"If you ask Me for anything in My _____, I will do it."

Discuss: Jesus asks, "still you do not know Me?" What do people often miss about Jesus, even after years around him?

Read this week: Colossians 1:15-20 · Hebrews 10:19-23 · 1 Timothy 2:5-6

For Kids: The Way: Not a Map but a Man

JOHN 14:1-14 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Jesus is the way to God.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

- ☐ Jesus tells his friends not to worry.
- ☐ Thomas asks how to know the way.
- ☐ Jesus promises rooms in Father's house.
- ☐ Philip asks to see the Father.
- ☐ Jesus says, I am the way.

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

The disciples: happy · sad · worried

Thomas: happy · sad · worried

Philip: happy · sad · worried

People welcomed to be where Jesus is: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

T R U T H C P B Y
U C R O O M S S F
N F U V B H V F N
S A T S P O C P U
D T H F H U R L L
N H O R I S H A I
H E M R L E U C F
K R A K I F D E E
H V S U P V U D Y

ROOMS · HOUSE · FATHER · THOMAS · PHILIP · TRUTH · LIFE · PLACE

4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=E 3=H 4=I 5=M 6=T 7=W 8=Y

4 1 5 6 3 2 7 1 8

5. DRAW IT!

Draw a house with many rooms and Jesus standing at the door to welcome you.

6. MEMORY VERSE

"I am the way and the truth and the life." John 14:6 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

When I feel worried, I can remember Jesus is _____. _____