

Lesson Overview

1 Life Need:

Discuss the importance of knowing what you believe.

2 Bible Learning:

Read what Jesus said about believing in Him.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:*
Poster and reproducible sheet—
Words to the Wise

3 Bible Application:

See that the wise person believes in Jesus.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:*
Poster—This Is the Faith

4 Life Response:

Receive abundant and eternal life by believing in Jesus.



Wisdom to Follow

Trusting in Jesus—At His last supper with His disciples, Jesus announced His departure and plan to return to His Father in heaven. This caused great anxiety for the disciples and troubled hearts. Therefore, Jesus offered encouraging words and promised to calm their fears. He talked about firmly placing trust in Him. He spoke about God's plans for their future once He departed. He assured them they would one day be in the Father's house with Him. He promised plenty of rooms for everyone who believes in Him. With great love, Jesus is even now preparing a home for God's children. These verses are also teaching about an anticipated time when Jesus ultimately returns at the end of the age when all believers will gather together in heaven, united with Christ.

Asking Questions—All the disciples were probably perplexed by this information. Thomas bravely asked Jesus a question: Where exactly are you going, and how do we get there? Jesus emphatically stated, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6, KJV). He is not a map or a signpost pointing in the direction of heaven, but the true causeway that leads to heaven and eternal life.

Then Phillip asked Jesus to show the disciples the Father. Jesus, once again, attempted to explain the connection between God the Father and God the Son: they are the same in essence. Jesus came to earth to display the Father's love, mercy, and goodness, His very nature. Jesus entirely depended on God for each step of His ministry and existence on the earth. The power displayed through Jesus came only under God's authority and His ability.

Living for Jesus—Jesus offered the disciples more information. First, He said, God's work will continue. Amazing things will be done through Jesus' followers. Second, His followers can ask anything in His name. Tacking on "in Jesus' name" to the end of a prayer is not a magic formula, guaranteeing God's answers. What we ask in His name must be in His will and glorify the Father. A wise person searches out these statements and claims of Jesus and sees the truth in them. The fool dismisses Him and ignores the truth.

AS YOUR STUDENTS ARRIVE

Ask your students to think about at least three things they believe in besides Jesus, God, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit. For example, they might say they believe in the basic goodness of people, in an afterlife in

heaven, even in themselves. We may believe in some things without even thinking about them such as believing in second chances or in the ability of everyone to succeed in life in some way.

Link to Last Week: Let several students describe how they “tuned in” to God’s voice this past week and “tuned out” other voices with their false wisdom.

Wisdom to Follow

A Present-Day Illustration

Akira hurried with the final additions of her makeup. Cassandra would be at her apartment soon to pick her up for church. Akira liked and looked up to the 40-year-old Cassandra. She seemed to have it all together. The two had met at a Blacks in Engineering networking event. Akira, only one year out of college, was looking for a mentor. Cassandra and Akira took to one another easily.

While Akira had gleaned a lot from Cassandra over the last year, what seemed to stand out most was her personal life and character. Akira was a wreck. She had been desperate to find a boyfriend, love, and acceptance. She had also been desperate to make a name for herself professionally. She wanted it all!

Cassandra had listened, encouraged, and shared Christ with Akira. It was not that Akira had not heard about Jesus before, but Cassandra’s life and love were so inviting. Yes, Akira had a good job, but so many things were missing.

“It’s not things,” said Cassandra. “It’s Christ.”

“Does anyone want to accept Christ?” the pastor asked. “Please make your way down to the altar, and we will pray with you.”

Akira stood to her feet and made her way to the aisle, as Cassandra also rose.

“I want the Lord. I want a new life,” Akira told the altar worker.

1. What things do people believe would give them a better, more fulfilling life if they had them?

2. Have you believed in and gone after things that did not make your life better? Explain your answer.

3. In what ways do our beliefs affect our lives?

LESSON FOCUS: The wise person believes in Jesus and receives life.

1 Life Need

Discuss the importance of knowing what you believe
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Read together the opening story in the student book, then ask the class to form small groups to discuss what they believe as they answer **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

The Question 1 answers might include more money, a bigger and better house, a higher-paying job, being married or having a different spouse, or living in a new or more exciting place. If enough people tell us that these things will make our lives better, or we see people who have these things living a “better” life, we can begin to believe that these things will make our lives better and more fulfilling as well.

Question 2 reminds us that getting the things described in Question 1 usually does not give us what we expected. More money may lead to bigger problems; a different job may be worse than the one we had; we carry our problems from one marriage to the next. Also, we are constantly looking for that feeling of “fulfillment” or ultimate “happiness” that we will not ultimately find in this life—or if we find it, that feeling can disappear as our circumstances change.

For Question 3, students have been reminded that what we believe in sets the course for our lives—our actions inevitably follow our beliefs.

Bible Learning 2

Read what Jesus said about believing in Him

On the poster sheet, read the last paragraph. Point out the photo of a first-century house with “many rooms” (John 14:2).

MY FATHER’S HOUSE

Read John 14:1-4 and discuss these important points:

- Jesus knew that the disciples would be troubled by His crucifixion but He told them to believe in Him the way they believed in God the Father, since they are the same.
- Jesus redirected the disciples’ focus from the temporal world, which is fading, back toward the eternal kingdom of God, where the true reward is being with the Father.
- Jesus declared that He was going to the Father’s house—a house with many rooms—to prepare an eternal place for them.
- Though the Lord would no longer be physically present with the disciples, He reassured them that He was preparing a place for them with His Father, and He would take them there.

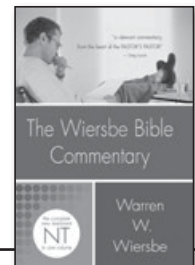
BIBLE EXTRA

Preparing a Place

Jesus told His disciples that He was going on ahead of them to prepare a place for them. So what is He doing in His current state? From Jesus’ encounter with Saul on the way to Damascus, we see that He knows the intimate details of every human life, even those who are hostile to the Gospel. From the seven letters to the churches in the Book of Revelation, we know that He understands the strengths and weaknesses of every congregation, commending faithfulness while confronting spiritual apathy. As He prepares for His return, His undivided attention is given to the Church that He is building.



You can find more commentary on the Scripture passage on pp. 279-281 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.



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My Father’s House

John 14:1-4, KJV

- 1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
2 In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.
4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

John 14:1-4, NIV

¹“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ²My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Just before Jesus ate the Last Supper with His disciples, He washed the feet of His disciples, predicted His betrayal by Judas, and told Peter that he would deny knowing Jesus in His hour of greatest need. It was in the context of this emotionally chaotic time that Jesus told His temperamental-but-loyal disciples to not allow their hearts to be troubled.

Jesus encouraged His followers not to allow their hearts to be anxious. So, to address their fears, Jesus gave them hope of one day being reunited with Him.

Because Jesus is truly God, and one in essence with the Father, He told His followers that to believe in God is also to believe in Him. The disciples’ eternal destination was an actual place (not simply some ethereal place), and Jesus was going there to get the place ready for those who love Him. Jesus describes heaven as a large house with many rooms in which His followers will dwell. And if Jesus was going to go to all that trouble to get the place ready, then surely He was going to return to bring them back to be with Him. He also reminded them that they knew the way to where He is going.

4. How did Jesus address the fears of the disciples?

5. What promise did Jesus make to His followers?

• Jesus also said that the disciples would know where He was going (to be with the Father) and the way to get there (through Him).

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

He said there was no reason to be

afraid and that He would eventually be reunited with them.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

He promised to prepare a place for them in the eternal kingdom, and then to come back for them.

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

Read John 14:5-7 and discuss these key ideas in the text:

• Though the Lord had prophesied of His death and resurrection, and the disciples had witnessed all of the miracles, Thomas and the others struggled to comprehend and accept who Jesus was and where He was going.

• Jesus told them that three things everyone wants are found in and through Him: eternal life starting right now; the truth about all things; and the way to the Father in heaven. The way to have eternal life is by receiving Christ as Lord. When you receive the Son, you have the Father also.

• Jesus said if the disciples had truly known Him (not after the flesh but by the Spirit), then they would have known that He was the Word made flesh, so they had seen the Father because He was in the Father.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

Thomas didn't understand

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The Way, the Truth, and the Life

John 14:5-7, KJV

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

John 14:5-7, NIV

⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Christians are often criticized for being too exclusive because they teach that salvation can be found in no one else but Jesus Christ. Surely, people say, with so many religions and proposed paths to God throughout human history, claiming an elite path to salvation is arrogant, biased, and narrow-minded. Some falsely believe that the exclusive salvation claim of Christians about Jesus was a later invention of the Church.

However, in regard to the claims of Jesus being the only way to heaven and the Father, He couldn't have been any clearer.

Thomas challenged Jesus' assertion that the disciples understood the way to which Jesus was referring when He was talking about preparing a place for them in the eternal kingdom. Thomas likely thought that Jesus was going to establish an earthly kingdom in Israel. Instead, He was telling them that He was about to leave.

Jesus answered Thomas's heartfelt question by clarifying that "the way" was not a political plan, or a military advance, or even a step-by-step guide to following Christ. Jesus Himself is the way. He embodies the path to God, and so anyone who would be reconciled with God must go through Him. In addition to being the way, Jesus embodies the truth. He not only taught what was true, but He is the very incarnation of truth.

BIBLE EXTRA

First-Century Houses

Most houses in first-century Israel only had one room. All of life happened in this room, including food preparation, eating, sleeping, and talking about what happened that day. The "house of many rooms" (vs. 2) to which Jesus refers would have been more like a rich person's house, with many rooms for multiple functions.

A. M. Hunter, in his commentary *The Gospel According to John* (Cambridge U. Press, 1965), notes that "The day before, Jesus had sent two of his disciples to secure a 'large room upstairs' for the Last Supper (Mark 14:12). They did not know the way but had to follow the owner. Arriving, they found everything 'prepared.' It looks as if Jesus here made the disciples' journey of the day before a parable of eternity, in which the upper room foreshadows the home of God with its many habitations."

where Jesus was going, so he had no idea how they were going to follow Him there.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

Jesus made it clear that no one can be reconciled with God except through Him.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS

Finally, read John 14:8-14 and think about these summary statements:

BIBLE EXTRA

The Deity & Humanity of Christ

During the early centuries of the Church's existence, there were many challenges to the idea of Jesus' divinity and humanity. Many of these theological positions came out of Gnostic thinking, which believed that since anything material was evil, Jesus could have never been fully human (or He was only human). Consequently, either the deity or humanity of Christ was diminished in some way by these heresies. The Creed of Chalcedon, agreed on by the Church in A.D. 451, decisively posited that Jesus was truly God and truly man, having two natures (divine and human), while being a distinct individual—whose personality and will were completely separate from the Father and the Spirit.

BIBLE EXTRA

Philip

Nothing is said about Philip in the first three Gospels. He's only mentioned in the Gospel of John. He seems to have been handpicked by Jesus. From Philip's question about where to buy bread at the feeding of the five thousand, Philip may have been in charge of getting food for the disciples, which would have made him very practical and likely detail oriented. From this temperament, we can better understand Philip's clarifying question about seeing God the Father through Jesus.

- After Thomas said the disciples did not know where Jesus was going, Philip asked the Lord to see the Father and then he would be satisfied. They had seen proof of Jesus' identity for three years, but Philip wanted more proof.

- Jesus said everything He had said

and done declared the glory of God and revealed that God was among them. What further proof should they have needed? They had seen Him, so they had seen the Father.

- The Father, Jesus said, was in Him and doing His work through His Son.

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There is nothing false about Him, so He cannot, and will not, leave the means of salvation up to debate. In addition to being the way and the truth, Jesus is the embodiment of life. Only in Him can we find the "full" life we all want (John 10:10). Once again, Jesus affirmed His essential unity with the Father. To know Jesus is to know God.

6. *What was confusing to Thomas about what Jesus was saying?*

7. *What did Jesus teach about the only way to be saved?*

In the Name of Jesus

John 14:8-14, KJV

8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my

John 14:8-14, NIV

⁸Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

⁹Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

¹⁰Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

¹¹Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.

¹²Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the

• If they did not believe what Jesus said, they had the empowering evidence of the Father in Him shown to them through the signs and wonders they had seen.

• After Jesus' death and resurrection, though He would leave them, signs and wonders they would do

would confirm they were from the Father.

• Yet another promise from Jesus is that He will hear and honor the prayers of the righteous. Whatever request they would ask of Him in His name and to glorify the Father, Jesus would grant them because it

would be in His will.

• Jesus reassured the disciples of the immutable promises of God, that the "effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous avails much" (Jas. 5:16, KJV). If we seek God with our whole hearts, we will find Him and He will hear us.

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KJV

Father.

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

NIV

Father. ¹³And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

When Jesus talked about knowing the way, Thomas asked for clarification. The Lord did something similar with Phillip in response to Jesus' statement that to know Him is to see the Father. Jesus seemed a bit incredulous that after all this time, Phillip still didn't get it. To see Jesus is to see the Father. They are one in divine essence, while remaining separate Persons.

Therefore, Jesus made it clear to Phillip that no further clarification, or teaching, or vision was necessary. To see and interact with Jesus was to see and interact with God the Father.

Jesus understood that the disciples were not getting what He was saying to them, so He appealed to the miraculous works He had performed by the power of God (as evidence of His unity with the Father). In His ministry, and in the early church through the apostles, God performed many miraculous signs in order to bring credibility to the Lord's message of redemption.

In addition, Jesus reminded His followers that they would perform many of the same miracles through the power of God—and perhaps even greater signs and wonders as their influence and presence expanded into the known world. Whenever they did these things, they were to remember that it was God alone who empowered them to perform such signs—and to humbly draw people's attention back to God and not them.

Jesus concluded His teaching by saying that if they were to ask anything in His name, He would do it, because God would be glorified by it. The "anything" Jesus refers to here is anything that is in alignment with the will of God. If it is, it will be given to us. Jesus' name should never be used for anything else.

8. Why did Jesus seem frustrated with Phillip?

9. What can we learn about God the Father by looking to Jesus?

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

Phillip had been with Jesus long enough to know that to see Him was to see the Father; and yet, Phillip and the other disciples still seemed to not be getting the concept.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

Jesus is a perfect reflection of the Father, so by looking to Jesus we can understand what our heavenly Father is like.

BIBLE EXTRA

A Heretical Teaching

Later in the third century, there was a teaching called modalism that misrepresented what Jesus was teaching to the disciples. Modalism taught that God appeared in three different modes: prior to the incarnation, He was God the Father; during the earthly ministry of Jesus, He appeared as God the Son; after the Ascension, He became God the Holy Spirit. We know this teaching is not true because of what happened during Jesus' baptism: God the Father spoke from heaven; God the Holy Spirit landed upon Jesus in the form of a dove; and God the Son was the one being baptized (Matt. 3:16-17). All three were made manifest at the same time, so there is no way that they could have appeared in "stages" as modalism taught. Once this teaching started gaining momentum, the Church effectively made it clear that the teaching was not consistent with Scripture.

Bible Application **3**

See that the wise person believes in Jesus

You may want to photocopy this page and cut out the boxes so that each group has its own set of instructions. Put up the poster from the Resource Kit for the group discussing it.

• Poster: 'This Is the Faith'
Read the quote on the poster and respond to Spurgeon's comment: what does it mean to fall into the arms of Jesus? Is that a good way of describing what it means to put your faith in Him?



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GROUP ACTIVITIES

• Discussion Group

Read "The Wisest Choice" in the student book and discuss your answers to **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. The decision to follow Christ is not an easy one to make. Many voices give "counsel" on what to do with your life. The "all roads lead to God" philosophy sounds non-offensive, but the exclusive claims of the Gospel are what give life. Though God can use us or others to give good guidance to people, whatever anyone says should ultimately be based on God's good counsel. We can only advise out of the partial knowledge that we possess. Everyone's purpose is found in the person of Christ.

• Replying to the 'Wise Men'

Discuss how you would respond to each of these "wise" people who laugh at your belief in Jesus: "Believing in Jesus is just a crutch you're using to get through life and avoid reality"; "No one can seriously believe that somebody rose from the dead and is God"; "Believing in what Jesus said is no different than believing in some other great person—they all have a part of the truth of life"; "As long as I believe in God, that's all that matters."

The Wisest Choice

It's astounding the number of "armchair experts" there are—you know, the people who sit on the sidelines and advise others on matters in which they have neither experience nor revelation. It usually starts with, "If I were you, I would. . ." which is a dangerous preference for whatever is to follow. Wouldn't it be wiser to start with the One who created us for His purpose? The answer to the age-old question "Why am I here?" is found in the One who placed you here!

Our identity is in Christ, and it was given to us by God. Our personality, our likes and dislikes, our DNA and our unique fingerprint were all created by God. No one knows us as He does because all those unique components are what makes us, us. Only God knows how each element of our character is used in the development of our faith and fulfillment of the purpose He wants us to fulfill. How many people spend their entire lives looking for the way to heaven, the truth of everything in the universe, and the most abundant life now and forever? The search for all those things should lead to the One who can answer all our questions and provide all things for us—Jesus.

If we truly want the best this life has to offer, as well as the promise of an incredible life lasting into eternity, we have only to listen to the words of Jesus in John 14. These words need to be heard by anyone who does not know Christ and any Christian who is feeling weary, depressed, and uncertain about life. When we feel as if believing in and following Jesus was not a wise choice, we must remember that no other way, no other person, no other truth explains everything we want to know.

- 10.** *How and when did you realize you made the wisest choice in life by following Jesus?*
- 11.** *Is it wrong to listen to the advice of other people about life? Explain your answer.*
- 12.** *Why would people who are struggling to choose which way to go with their life not listen to the words of Jesus?*

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4 Life Response

Receive abundant and eternal life by believing in Jesus
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There is no true satisfaction without understanding that true wisdom begins with God and believing that Jesus is who He said He is. There are no substitutes, no “other paths” to follow besides His.

Have your students read “I Got This” and think about the question

there. They may want to discuss the question in the groups they had in Step 1. Some things they could write include “Reading His Word before I read text messages, social media, or watch TV”; “Making sure my decisions, work, finances, and relationships glorify Him”; “Telling others that the only way to have abundant life is in Christ.” If you have unbelievers who have never asked Christ to be Lord and Savior of their lives, invite them to discover more about Jesus and His claims and be ready to help them do so. On page 114 of this teacher’s guide are some helps to lead people to life in Christ.

Close this time in prayer, saying something like this: “Heavenly Father, we need You! As we see the signs of Your coming, we ask You to steady our hearts, strengthen our faith, and keep us on the narrow path that leads to life. Forgive us, sanctify us, and have preeminence in our lives. We surrender ourselves to You, Lord—spirit, soul, and body. We present ourselves a holy sacrifice. We profess You are Lord and live our lives to show that! In Jesus’ name, amen!”

When the students are dismissed, distribute copies of this week’s *Power for Living*. Send *Lesson Leaflet* to people who could not be with you today.

Before next week, read James 1:1-11. Ask your students to think about how they feel when they hear the words, “There will be a test next week.”

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‘I Got This’

This generation has a catch phrase: “I got this.” Well, the truth is, we “got” a lot less than we think we “got.” We think we are wise when we are not. We don’t know what each day will bring, or the number of days we have remaining. We must surrender our lives to Christ because we believe He is who He said He is, and He waits for everyone on the other side of this life. When we “got” Him, we “got” everything. If we don’t, we have nothing.

► *If you believe in Jesus now, thank Him for the abundant life He gives today and the eternal life with Him that is coming and ask yourself, “What am I doing right now in my life to show that I truly believe He is who He said He is?” Write some of those things below. If you have not accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, your teacher can help you with that decision and answer questions you may have about who Jesus is.*

KEY VERSE

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. —John 14:6, KJV

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” —John 14:6, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of July 27 through August 2

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Colossians 1:24-29—Suffering on Behalf of the Church.
- Tues.** Titus 3:3-7—Saved by God’s Mercy.
- Wed.** Luke 11:9-13—Ask: God Will Supply Your Needs.
- Thurs.** Romans 5:1-5—Rejoice in Your Sufferings.
- Fri.** Romans 5:6-11—God’s Loving Actions toward Sinners.
- Sat.** Isaiah 40:1-8—Grass Withers but God’s Word Stands.
- Sun.** James 1:1-11—Wisdom Overcomes Trials and Temptations.