

VIDEO INTRODUCTION: Is there More to Life than This?

Some questions:

- Who would like to see numerical growth in Gillespie?
- Who would like to have church community growing deeper in faith?
- Who has a family member they would love to come to faith in Jesus?
- Who has a friend / colleague / neighbour they would like to see come to faith in Jesus?
- Who in the last two years has made an invitation to anyone to come to church / a church course?
- Who will take one of these Alpha invites and pray about who they can invite over the next few months – AND THEN DO IT??

The reason for taking a look at Alpha over the next wee while is to give a taste of what the course offers, but more than that to bring understanding to you about some of the most important questions of life, starting with the introduction week on the Alpha course – IS THERE MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS?

John 6:35 New International Version (NIV)

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, “**I am the bread of life.** Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

John 14:6 New International Version (NIV)

⁶ Jesus answered, “**I am the way and the truth and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 10:10 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.**

SERMON: Is there More to Life than This?

A place Christians go, or I hope you go, to find answers to such questions is the word of God – the Holy Scriptures, and also to God also in prayer. But many in our world do not seek wisdom or answers from God.

For a short time I want to consider the two I Am saying of Jesus mentioned in the video and which you have just heard read. But these are just two of a number of I AM sayings... A

WEE REMINDER:

- Before Abraham was even Born, I AM (John 8.58)
- I AM the light of the world (John 8.12; 9.5)
- I AM the good shepherd (John 10.11)
- I AM the gate for the sheep (John 10.7, 9)
- I AM the resurrection and the life (John 11.25)
- I AM the grapevine (John 15.1, 5)

This phrase I AM is remarkable –

- it underscores the authority of Jesus. When Moses met the LORD on Mount Sinai he was eager to discover God’s name (Exodus 3). He is told by God the name is YHWH – the four letters that express existence – that when translated into Greek is *ego - eimi* – I AM.

Any Jewish reader who knew the Hebrew Scriptures would understand what Jesus meant when he said I Am.

- That Jesus not only represents God, he ‘presents’ God to the world.

I AM confirms Jesus’ divine status – that he can work, speak and act in the Father’s place.

He is not a mere man – but the word of God dwelling in human flesh.

John 6.35

Jesus, along with the disciples, had just fed the 5000 and the next day the crowd were following him – Jesus accuses them of seeking him for food and sustenance, rather than what he really truly offers.

NT Wright gives this analogy –

- a PhD art student enters a gallery going round with a note pad, looking at the notes alongside the paintings

with author and dates and such – faithfully taking details down before moving onto the next. Then after this leaves the gallery to use these notes in for his thesis. But at no point does the student step back and take in the painting – to just stand back and see.

NT Wright's point is the crowd are doing likewise – just seeing Jesus as a solution to a small issue – food. They are not standing back, taking in the whole picture and seeing who Jesus is. They are seeing the provision of food as being the point – not that it was there to lead the eye, the mind and the heart to the true gift of God to his people.

They miss that Jesus is literally the bread that sustains life as it should be. It is He that satisfies the spiritual hunger that is at the heart of us all.

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The I AM saying illuminate not what Jesus can do for you, but illuminate who he is.

Only if we are prepared to step back, pause and metaphorically lift our eyes can we enter and see who He is...

He is not a provider of bread – i.e. physical sustenance on demand – but is one who demands a new way, a new standard to which followers sign up.

Until we recognise who Jesus is and what he demands – the deep hunger will remain... which brings me onto

John 14.6 – I AM the way, the truth and life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

This is THE statement in the Bible that causes division BETWEEN Christians and wider society, and also division between Christians – and is used against Christians who believe these words of Christ.

We who believe He is THE WAY, THE TRUTH and gives LIFE in the truest sense of the word – we can be cast as somehow divisive, exclusive – calling out others for they are wrong.

Here we are dealing with universalism – and folks have asked....

- How dare he?
- How dare John in his writing,
- How dare the church or anyone else put these words out there...
- Words that ask others to give up their way of life and follow Jesus' way – surely that is wrong.

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There are Christians who give up this central tenet of our faith, and I say in so doing reject the uniqueness of Jesus.

Because it just doesn't work.

If we accept there are many ways to God – then we unseat Jesus from the throne and therefore the way to a personal relationship with God.

- No other religion is personal IN THE WAY THAT Christ offers.
- No other religion expresses God as incarnate in a human being.
- No other religion offers the good news of atonement, complete and utter atonement for sin by death upon a cross.

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This is what the Alpha course offers... in an honest and open way – a **CHANCE** to hear this news

A chance to consider the big spiritual questions of life – no pressure.

And the message on offer is not given in arrogance.

It is a message that says –

- ❖ Come to Jesus
- ❖ He **IS** the way, the truth and life and
- ❖ there is no other way to God.
- ❖ Go another way and you're stuffed...
- ❖ but how this message is carried matters!!

Jesus didn't dodge the issue of judgement – think of His words at John 9.39

For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

But also, He delivered the message with a servant heart and spirit...

- ❖ Jesus washed his disciples feet.
- ❖ He spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well – which he shouldn't have done.
- ❖ He also broke convention and ate with sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes.
- ❖ He wept at the tomb of Lazarus, his friend.

It is this Jesus we follow and want others to know... the servant Jesus who calls us to serve in the same way...

With Grace, love, mercy, peace, gentleness, kindness...

Yes, some will find the message distasteful, even maybe arrogant, but that is not reason to dilute the person Jesus – I AM, and nor is it reason to diminish the words

I am the way, the truth and the life.

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In John 10.10 we heard Jesus talk about thieves stealing, killing, destroying –

- that is what those who proclaim the Christian faith is not unique also seek to do...
- to kill and destroy life.

Jesus' answer is this...

He comes to bring life, and bring it to the full.

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That is the message which I wish to convey, that Alpha will bring.

I asked at the beginning who wanted to see growth...

This is one way in which the world is being affected FOR Christ and the Kingdom.

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Will you engage in the coming series, and in the Alpha course we will start in January?

I pray the answer to that is yes.