



SEVEN

REFLECTIONS ON JESUS,
IN THE GOSPEL
OF JOHN.



DR. DAVE PAFFORD



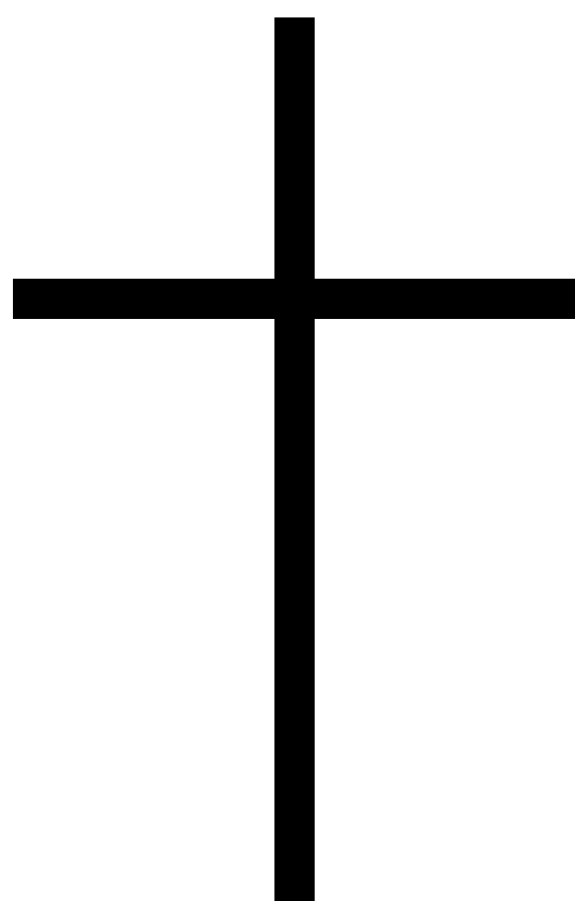
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Reflections on Jesus in the Gospel of John
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I AM BREAD.

Yeast. A living, single celled organism. About 160 species, they float through space and time. They are in the air we breathe. We find yeast on every continent. And yeast is generally a required ingredient for bread. Some bakeries have been using the same mother dough with the living organism for hundreds of years even today.

Yeast lies dormant until it comes into contact with warm water. Once reactivated, the yeast feeds off of sugar and creates conditions for distinctive flavors and aromas for the bread. Yeast is literally a fungus. The tiniest amount expands and permeates and ferments other ingredients.

There are hundreds of types of bread. The ancient Greeks produced 80 different types. Bread has been used as a currency by various cultures including the Egyptians. Bread is so powerful a food that a family of four can live off the bread produced by one acre of wheat.

One important bread is called matzoh.

Why did God command his people to not eat bread with yeast for eight days? He commands it as a practice to remember the Passover and the Exodus from Egypt. Yeast is not to be eaten but also to be totally expelled from one's life.

God says seven days you shall eat bread without yeast. Unleavened bread. Seven days of it. Sweep your house. Expel people who don't follow through. It's so serious observant followers will sell their baked goods. They are to eat it with a Passover lamb. Why?

Because yeast represents the sin of hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy is the state of pretending. It's everywhere. Everyone is polishing their brass. The only cure for a brass halo is to break it. Smash it. And when you sweep the yeast of it out of the corners with a good confession, the cleaning kills on contact.

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Dear friend,

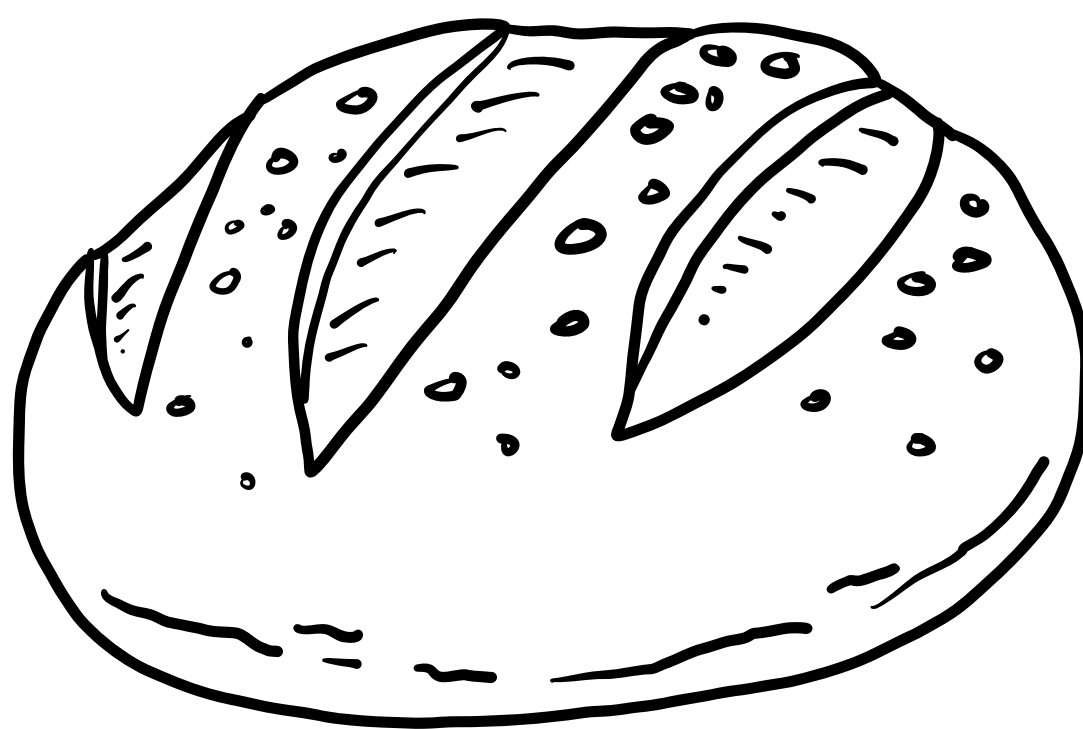
They asked me, "when did you come here to our city?" I said to them, You came here looking for me because you ate bread. Don't work for bread that spoils but food that is infinite.

Rarely do I warn you, dear friend about people. But I caution you to beware of the yeast of the religious elite, the Pharisees. Hypocrisy starts small but expands and it gets into surprising places of your life until the whole is just a fungus.

They said, “our ancients ate the bread from heaven in the desert of wandering.” So, I reminded them it wasn’t a religious leader that gave you manna but my Father. For the bread of God comes down from heaven.

They said, “Give us this bread, daily.” So, I told them, I am not some bread king. I am the Bread itself. My bread is unleavened. It does not require yeast. It does not spoil. For I am the true bread of life. Fresh bread is fresh life. It only comes when you eat and consume me, my thoughts, my life, my essence. So, mix my matter into every corner of your life because I’m showbread of the Sabbath.

I am bread. -Jesus (John 6)



I AM LIGHT.

A flash. It was there at the beginning. The sky splitting. Light shining in the darkness. Crack.

Light cannot be stored. It's always fresh. A form matter, light is massless but can be absorbed. One place we see faith tangibly. Energy flowing but for a moment. Waves rising. The invisible, for a moment visible.

Vitality of life on display. Science can't seem to reduce it. But to see it for real is a revelation. Opening one's eyes to it is disorienting because light is sight. Light illuminates. It makes color. It uncovers. Without the right light, discerning direction, having wisdom, that's just impossible.

In him was life and that life was the light... The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The human mind produces about 20 watts of power through a biochemical and electrical process, enough to power a light bulb. Even when closed, our eyes absorb and convert natural light waves into an electrical current. Cells with melanopsin wake up the brain and begin cognition. Wake up, O sleeper, rise up.

How do you interpret what you are seeing? We see because of the light. Turn off the light and they disappear. Yet a polished subject can be blinding. That's because we aren't really able to see light, we only see with it. Light always reflects back at the same angle it hits an object. And your interpretation of that object may be because that light is reflected, diffused, scattered or even polarized by the objects shape, roughness, or contour. Light itself is too powerful to truly be seen.

The evidence of things not seen...

Light makes us see but not all light is visible. Actually, light is mostly invisible.

We have only viewed about 5% percent of the visible universe. And less than ten percent of all light is visible. The last visible spectrum is actually infrared light requiring more gear to be seen itself.

Light is electric and also magnetic. Is it a particle or a wave? Both.

Light allows us to hear. Tune in, turn it up when you feel low, because the light spectrum also created the radio. Streaming sound, cell phones, wi-fi, microwaves our bodies; yep, all light.

All those ones and zeros flying on the optics.

Data, bots, and A.I. all come to life.

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All this and a cat video brought you by light.

And light makes things move.

The moon reflects the sun and moves the water,
wave after wave.

The closer you get to the source the more those
waves hit you too.

Ultraviolet, X-rays, and gamma waves radioactive to
your tissue.

Not only can you see light.

Feel light.

You hear it.

Smell and taste it.

Moses once got close enough that he asked the
question. Show me your Light.

And God, the Eternal Light said, I'll let you catch my
glory as I fade.

God said first get inside of this rock, and I'll cover
you with my hand. So, when you can get a flash of
me, you'll live to tell the tale. You'll still be able to
stand. Then God said that his goodness, mercy, and
compassion would pass by.

So Moses, the writer of the Law would only get a
glimpse but only after God removed his hand. God is
so other and so transfixing. To view His glory and
goodness, we need to hide ourselves under His rock
and get under the covering of His hand, because
God cooks and he's glowing.

Light warms but it also burns. How do you absorb light? It makes all the difference. The light is real. Care for it. Be careful with its potential because abuse burns. Wild flames, the ashes of the past, burnout, sunburn, and smoke screen, this is not the way of the light. The light of life is never power without the warmth of love, and never warmth without with self-containment of oneself. The light itself practiced self-limitation and humility with his life.

The psalmist once described God being wrapped in light, clothed with light. The light requires a lens to focus and hide us behind in order for us to experience glory. Without that the radioactive fallout of glory disintegrates us. People tend to flame out. Their character dissolves. Their talent fads. But not Him.

The man born blind. Healed by Jesus. The woman caught in adultery. The plot to kill Lazarus after Jesus brought him back to life. Every one of these healing stories is followed by someone asking for the interpretation. Because they don't believe their eyes. Whether, it's physical blindness, spiritual blindness, or eternal blindness, Jesus hands gently guides our experience from darkness into light.

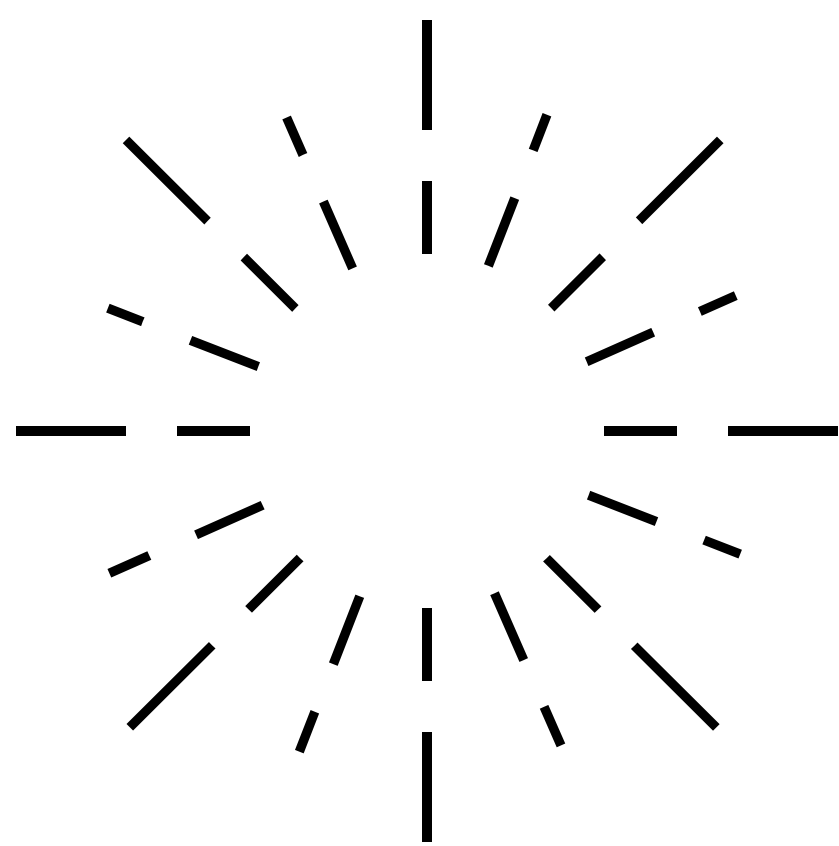
Viewing life through all of its twists and turns, Jesus says after each of these three stories, I am light.

He says, you can trust me. I'm the truth beyond truth. I am the phos of the cosmos. My phos drives out phobos. My light burns down the fog of fear. I am the most humane human. I'll illuminate the danger. I'm right here. I'm no stranger. I'll reveal the monsters who slide, snake, and break justice. Because I live no lie, I'll bring it all into my solstice.

I have no dark side. No shoes to drop. I am light. If you walk in darkness, stop. You don't know where you are going. But I do. And where am I? I'm rising, it's dawn.

Walk in the light and see. Live as children of light because you are living in the shadow of eternity.

Of the seven I am statements of Jesus, only light is mentioned thrice.



.....

Dear friend,

If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Because no one can see God and live. At the very end of His Unveiling, my beloved, John notes that there will no longer be night. And there will be no need for a lamp or a sun because God, the Eternal light will illuminate them. Light always takes the shortest path.

That light is me.

That's what the Apocalypse, the Revelation means. It means me, the Light. It means to see, be seen, and to really understand.

To see, I am saying, is to see through me, and truly know. To know yourself, to interpret and discern light and darkness. What you are seeing is to interpret light, goodness, and mercy through me. Moses went into the cleft of the rock. But I, the rock of ages walked out of the cleft after three days full of light and full of light.

I am light. - Jesus (John 8, 9, & 12)

I AM THE DOOR.

The door.

It represents an entry to a future. Some doors are made with wood and others made with fear. The future beyond. That is a door that is full of hope and marks a new frontier.

Some doors are easy to open but difficult to close. While others no so much.

It's often the last key on the king ring that unlocks the potential which behind it is dormant.

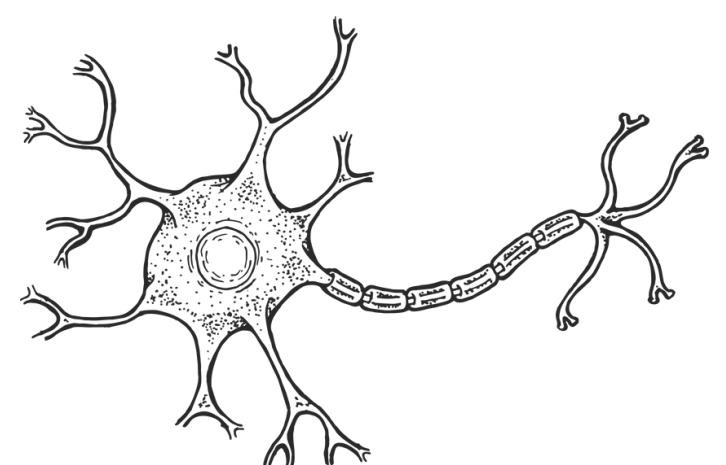
Placing your hand on the handle you twist until the tumblers fall. The knob clicks, as the turn of the key snaps the ending, one place for the beginning of another. The door cracks.

The way widens.

The invitation to a new relationship. A portal to a new day. Access to rest. Closure.

Doors are at once a beginning, transition, and ending.

If you were to look into our biological world, you would see channels within our cells. Travelers move molecules and important chemical between cells. Cells open doors to release and receive everything from electricity to protein through neurotransmission.



Each year we revisit January named after the ancient Roman god of doors, Janus. Janus is depicted as having two faces one that looks forward and the other that looks back. At the start of the new year, we review the past and look toward the future with hope. This practice dates back before Jesus. If one was to travel to Rome, they would see many jani which are attributed to Janus. Janis was considered the god's god because Janus was the doorkeeper to the heavens.

Jesus is implying that He, and He alone is the means of access to God and the way in which people are to come to God. He is the doorkeeper to the heavens. The Pharisees were law keepers. They are serious about entrance to heaven. And Jesus is saying to them that the law without friendship with God creates loss and theft, and that sheep are being led astray.

4000 years ago, the Egyptians began to carve reliefs in their tombs that appeared to be doorways to allow the dead to pass through. This way the souls of the dead could go between worlds. They reasoned that the living could not pass through a false door if one was alive. Jesus offers an alternative, the living should not be deceived. It is relationship with the shepherd and hearing his voice that leads to the right doorway.

Entering through Him one can go in and also out and find a new and better life. Both in this moment and in the world to come.

Jesus is not a hollow door left unsecured but rather a gate with a guard, the gatekeeper.

Jesus as a door represents the safety and security of belonging but he is not a closed door but one that is opened and closed regularly.

The immanent and transcendent mission of God is neighbors and nations. Movement and change are linked. Jesus as the door is demonstrating that flowing in and out are critically important. The immanent door is literally next door at our neighbors home. The transcendent door is the portal of prayer.

All doors hang over a threshold on a hinge. Jesus is the door to sacred space hinged on faith. To know him and who he is, is to step into the threshold of belief in the in-between. The sacred exchange means that we go in and out regularly in relationship. The door is never slammed, often open, but protected.

Today those who follow the law place a small written manuscript of the Law on their door post called a mezuzah.

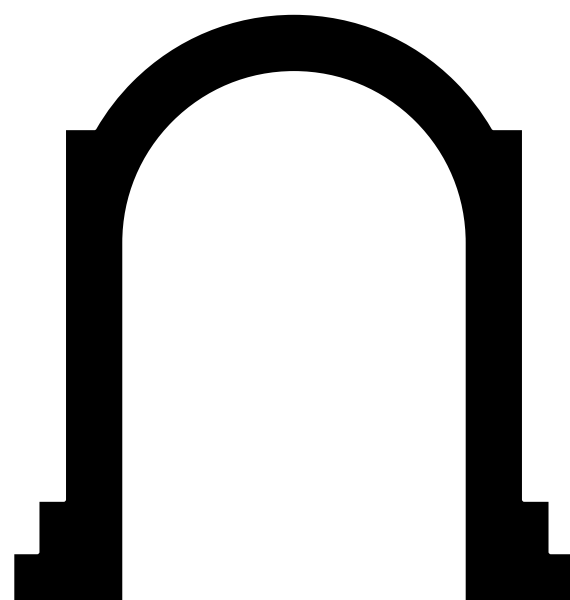
A mezuzah represents the five books written by Moses and is a reminder of the Passover. A mezuzah may be written by a scribe. If even one letter is missing it cannot be used. Shaddai one of the seven names of God should be visible. As traditional law followers leave they are to say, "May God keep my going out and my coming in..."

.....

Dear friend,

The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the door for him and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought them out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. I am that door for the sheep. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.

I am the door. -Jesus (John 10)



I AM THE GOOD.

I am the good.

Yes, I am the good but not just the good of the moment and not just the good of the past.

I am the good of the forever. I am the compassionate. And my good lasts.

I watch over centuries and have seen my people harassed.

Like a shepherd, I am the good beyond the moral, the coerced, and the courts.

I speak through wind and fire to those who were enslaved by force.

I offer my guidance in freedom to shepherds, kings, and scribes.

I bring hope to those trapped. Everyone. Everywhere. All tribes.

I am the good.

I see the oppression of my people and their cries are in my ears.

I wanted to be their shepherd so I moved heaven and earth to be near.

I am their protector. I am with them and I'm the keeper of the Name.

I am the good.

I guard them so they do not perish. Lions nor bears, nor the profane.

I love my sheep. I do not use my power for myself or for fame.

I am kind to them. I do not dominate, envy, or dishonor them. My guidance is a rod.

Peace, protection, and caring, not doing anything that damages the sheep.

I watch their needs with attention. I see them when they sleep.

I lead them to safe water and take them to green pastures and look for the lost sheep.

I am the good. I rise early to heal. I am the unseen worker delivering tirelessly.

I get down in the dirt, in the pain, and in the dark place.

The ancients asked the question, what is good? And some said to have the virtues of wisdom, justice, courage, moderation, suffering well, and an appreciation of the transcendent. And yet this falls so short of the good.

The good is not detached and virtuous.

The good is attached.

The good cares, provides, and guides.

I am the good shepherd.

I lay my life down and die.

Jesus began his ministry to the lost sheep of Israel but he made clear that the Gentiles would be included in his church. There's one flock. And one shepherd. The rest are hired hands. We are the sheep of his pasture. We are pets to God. Isaiah spells it out. He says, we all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us to our own way. Because God loves us, the Lord laid the cost, the suffering, and the pain on Jesus. And because he's the good, we lack nothing.

We lack nothing.

We lack nothing, when we are defenseless to suffering and pain.

We cannot stop it any suffer or pain any more than we can stop the galaxy from its spin.

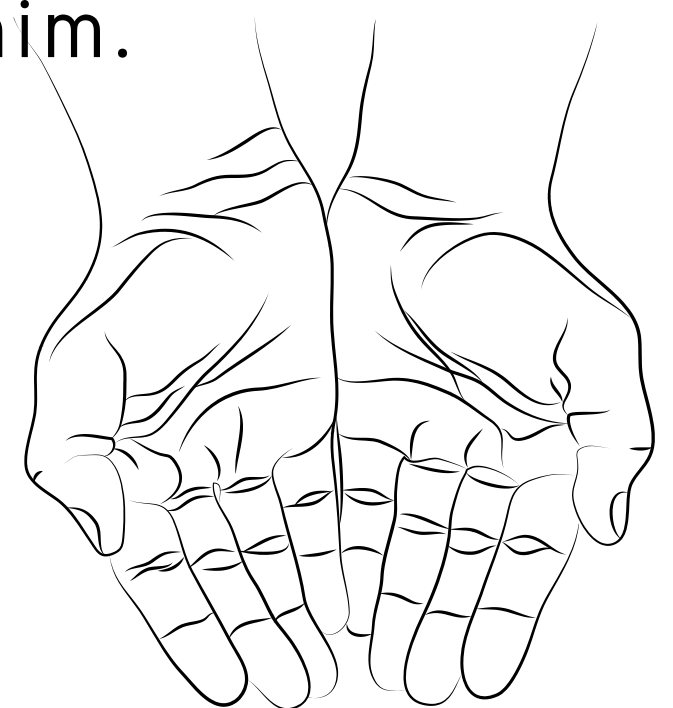
Sheep are mentioned three hundred times in the Bible. And we like sheep are defenseless.

Yet we lack nothing. I am the good shepherd means that He owns us.

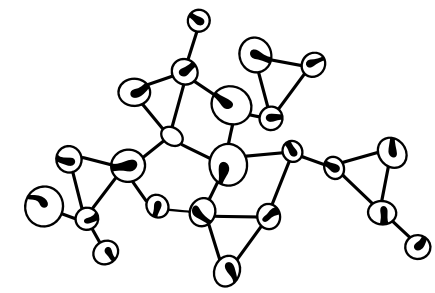
I am the good shepherd Jesus knows us. Jewish shepherds knew each name of their sheep.

Shepherds, pastors, leaders, and overseers. These were some of the first to see him.

I am the good. Jesus - (John 10)



I AM THE LIFE.



Friendship forms.

In the midst of expectations, performance, and fear. Friendship forms the basis for all life.

When all attempts of self-improvement lead to self-loathing and anxiety. The alternative is simply friendship.

It was friendship that formed in the beginning. God desires love and creates us for this one purpose. Culture clacking keyboards, clinking forks, knives out, and hammers down. Ours is a desire to serve, produce, and do. In that space called more, Jesus says to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”“

Friendship forms all life and life after life through Jesus. He is the resurrection and life. He is the anastasis and zoe. Jesus is thawing out that which you thought was life. But was really a lie. He is reanimating you from a life that is really death. Friendship forms the reborn. And He is bringing new life out of the bones. The Martha-Lazarus metaphor is this: so quickly we reframe life back into the old ways of death and the life emanating force that’s reconstituting cells, neurons, and biology is a breath away.

Christ, our brother, God of the Universe, is the life after life has gone out of the bones. He says I am the resurrection, the life given after the lights have gone out.

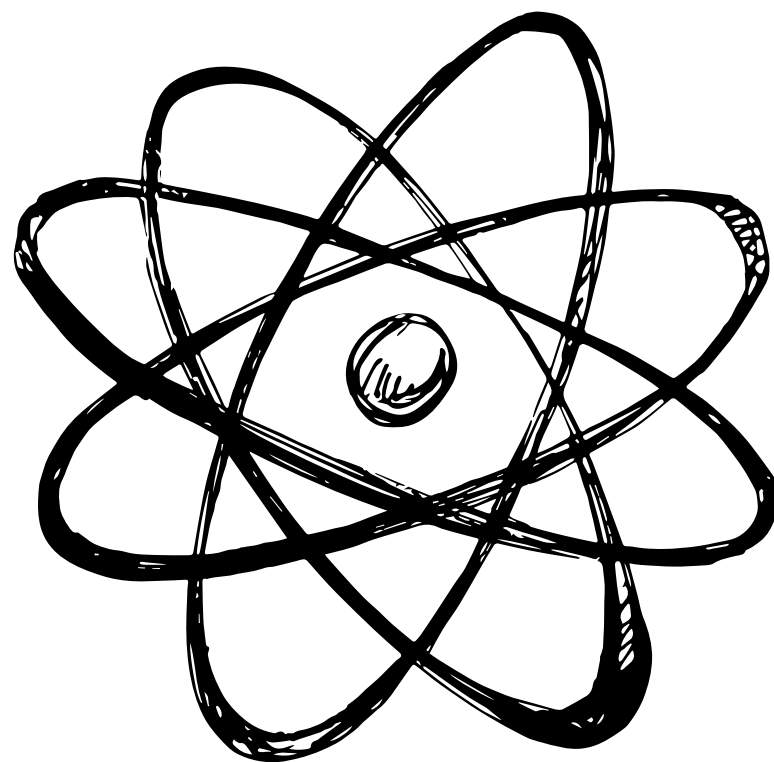
But he also says to Martha, I am the Zoe-life. Zoe is a more spiritual word for life.

This is word for the spirit of life. God's spirit is a power that flows from God's conscientiousness. It's a universal, emanating, flowing spiritual power coming from God himself. It sustains all plant life, animal connection and holds the atoms together. All positive thoughts, energy that leads to life, love, and peace; all of that is zoe in action. It's zoe flowing through grace, mercy, order, justice that creates and makes life possible.

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I am the Life before, during, and after Life. The Anastasis and the Zoe.

I, Jesus, am the resurrection and the power of life itself. - Jesus (John 11:25)



I AM THE WAY.

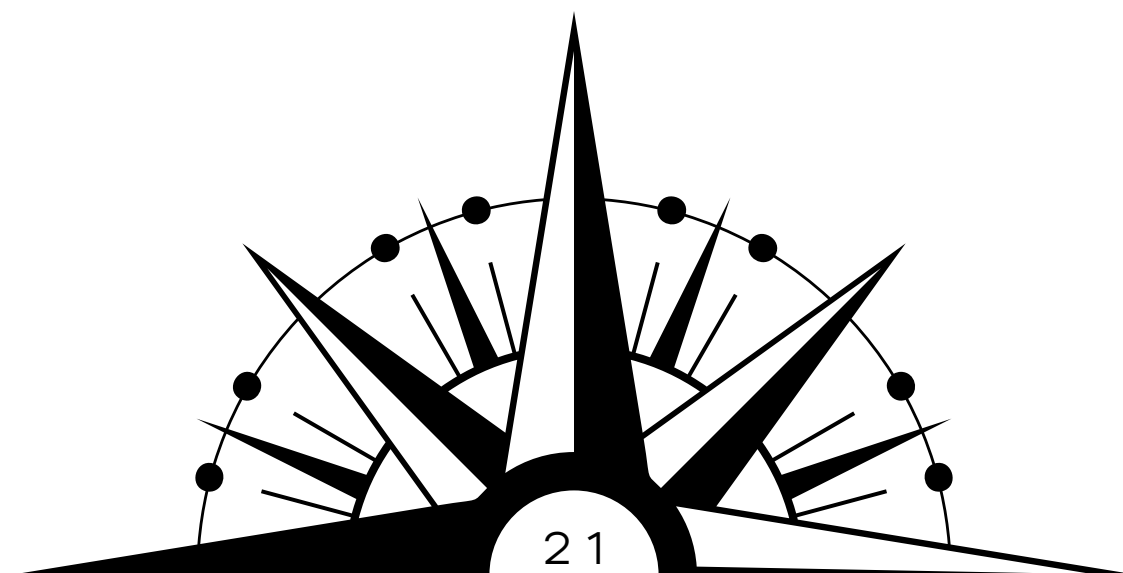
Way preparers often go forward first. They pioneer. They take the heat. They cut a path through something that once seemed impossible and create a breakthrough for all who come after, seven ways to Sunday.

Moses heard God say 37 times, “I will be.” God was telling Moses that he was present not only in the moment but also in the future. Later, the New Testament writers noted that Jesus in speaking said ego eimi, or “I am” 37 times.

Perhaps none is more significant than his statement in John 14....

Let not your hearts not be troubled, believe in God and also in me. There are many rooms in my Father’s house. I have come to tell you that there is a place of safety and security in my Father’s house. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

Jesus provides us with an example of being a way preparer. John the Baptist was also a forerunner. He was sent by God to prepare the way of the Lord.



In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight paths for him."

We are friends of the bridegroom but it's his wedding. When we prepare the way, we are sent ahead to prepare for his great day.

.....

Dear friend,

The way is the belief that my Father, God provides a sacred space and that you follow me into. It is a belief that we can create belonging, a rich deep community here on earth as it is in heaven. And it is the recognition that where I am going is an augurated, thin space of destiny that awaits us called heaven.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.

This is not a one-way trip for me. I'm saying, "You're not alone."

I'm not going to leave you half-way through the trip at the rest stop. I'm with you all the way." No cap.

This isn't a rescue mission for me. I'm not just pulling you out of bad circumstances. I'm wanting a permanent, infinite relationship with you. I will work through all your insecurity to affirm, yes, there's nothing you could do to get me from loving you."

Thomas says to me, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

So, I turned to Thomas and say, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

See Thomas, you're a skeptic. And that's ok. You've been burned before. There is a little doubt in all of us. We want to know how. I am the Passover threshold. I am a door which is a personal path marked with my blood by my own hands and feet. There's love flowing and marking your personal path. There's a path from the place of death into the place of life.

If you look closely you get to step into my footprints. Grab the handle of the door, still red from when I touched it. And see the my dna spread on the doorposts of once lonely people now marking the way.

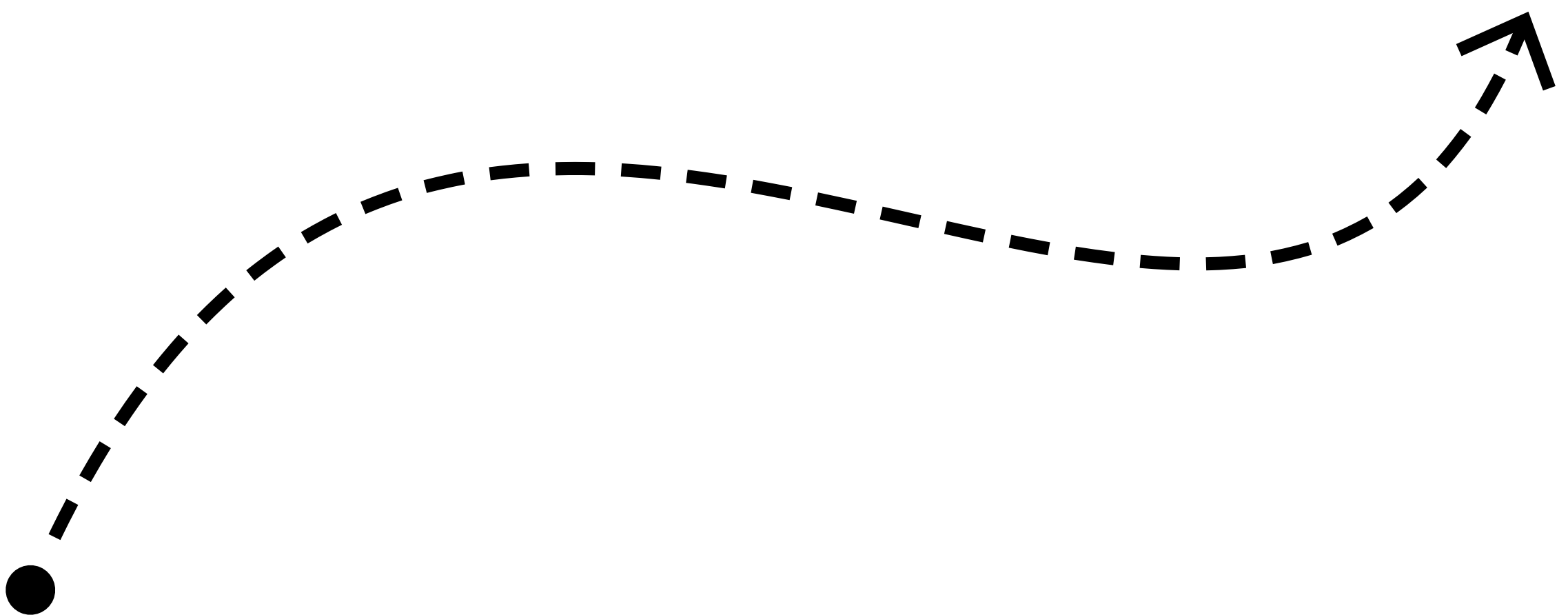
There are many ways and many doors to God but they all flow through me.

I'm inviting you on that path and asking you to prepare a path, a way of belonging for those that follow.

Then Philip says to me, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough." I said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Remember I said 37 times, "I am?" That's the present tense for what my Father said in the future tense 37 times. "I am" is saying I am that I am, and I will be what I will be. I'm expressing my infinity.

I am the way, Jesus (John 14)



I AM THE VINE.

The vine. It grows where it finds root. The vine without the branches looks like dead wood. There's not much to look at but almost out of nowhere buds begin to form. The bud becomes a branch. The branch flowers. The flowers suddenly become fruit. The process from vine to grape is at least three seasons long.

There's a lot of waiting.

Water and nutrients in the soil flow from the roots, up the vine, and outward into the buds, branches, and into the flowers. Once they arrive into the leaves, light from the sun causes the synthesis of sugar to flow as energy into the plant sustaining it. Nourishment comes as the result of those two things happening providing life and fruit.

The vinedresser, sometimes called the husbandmen prunes. To the untrained, it looks like the vine is totally stripped bare. But unpruned vines don't produce much other than a mess. It's those small little branches that are the producers. The less sap needs to travel from the vine to the branch, the more likely fruit will reach its maturity.

If there's too much spread, the vine seeks to survive rather than produce. These vines are full of leaves and flowers but not fruit. The vine's fruit, the grape is most often harvested at night.

A time of crushing is when the harvested grapes are broken so yeast can get in and ferment their juice.

For centuries the prophets foretold of a vineyard. Isaiah sang about it. Jeremiah cried about it. A beloved vineyard created by a husbandman is named in the book of James. God waiting for the precious fruits of the earth to be revealed. The prophets were perplexed because this farmer (Godself) looked for a good crop only to find wild grapes. He opens his vineyard, breaking down its walls because of the corruption of what was planted. Jeremiah experiences God's lament as he watches from his tower as his vineyard is destroyed by other nations.

So, when Jesus comes on the scene, he reintroduces vineyard, as God's kingdom with workers that come and go. The vineyard represents provision that God gives and it represents fruit that we bear. Leviticus reminds us not to plunder the kingdom of the vine but to leave grapes for the poor and the stranger.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. He's coming around to this row. It will be a brutal cut. Remain in me, dear branch. Branches that bear no fruit are pruned, so that they will bear it. Stick with me and I'll stick with you. Blossoming requires bravery.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will breakthrough to new levels of fruitfulness. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that has a lot of flowers and fluff but is ultimately burned up.

I'm not looking for followers or acquaintances, I'm looking for real friends that love me. Let's stay connected with one another through the grace of prayer. I'm with you until the end, keep close to me. I'm always a prayer away.

If you remain in me, listen, and follow my words, there's very little we cannot do together. Think of it, this entire Universe was for the purpose of us connecting like this. This is my Father's glory, that we belong and are together, forever.

I am the true vine. - Jesus (John 15)



SEVEN.

BREAD. LIGHT. DOOR. GOOD.
RESURRECTION. WAY. VINE.

SEVEN I AM STATEMENTS OF JESUS.

Go with me on a short adventure. Let's explore what Jesus has to say to us in his own words about himself. In this short but deep study, we take a deeper look at some of the most significant illustrations Jesus used to describe himself in the book of John.

I'm inviting you to know Jesus more deeply. We explore ways we can see Him for who he is. We are made to marvel, to wonder and to see how significant knowing Jesus makes us more lovely and loving people.

At His core, Jesus invites us to behold, belong, and become truly human by connecting with aspects of who He is.



Dr. Dave Pafford, is a Columbus-based pastor and writer. He is passionate about developing leaders and structures including churches, centers, and schools. He has worked with thousands of pastors, started education centers, businesses, and churches. Today, Dave integrates development, business, anthropology and Christian theology in building new teams. He is regularly consulted by educators, counselors, ministers, and leaders on everything from education, business, counseling, coaching, and ministry.