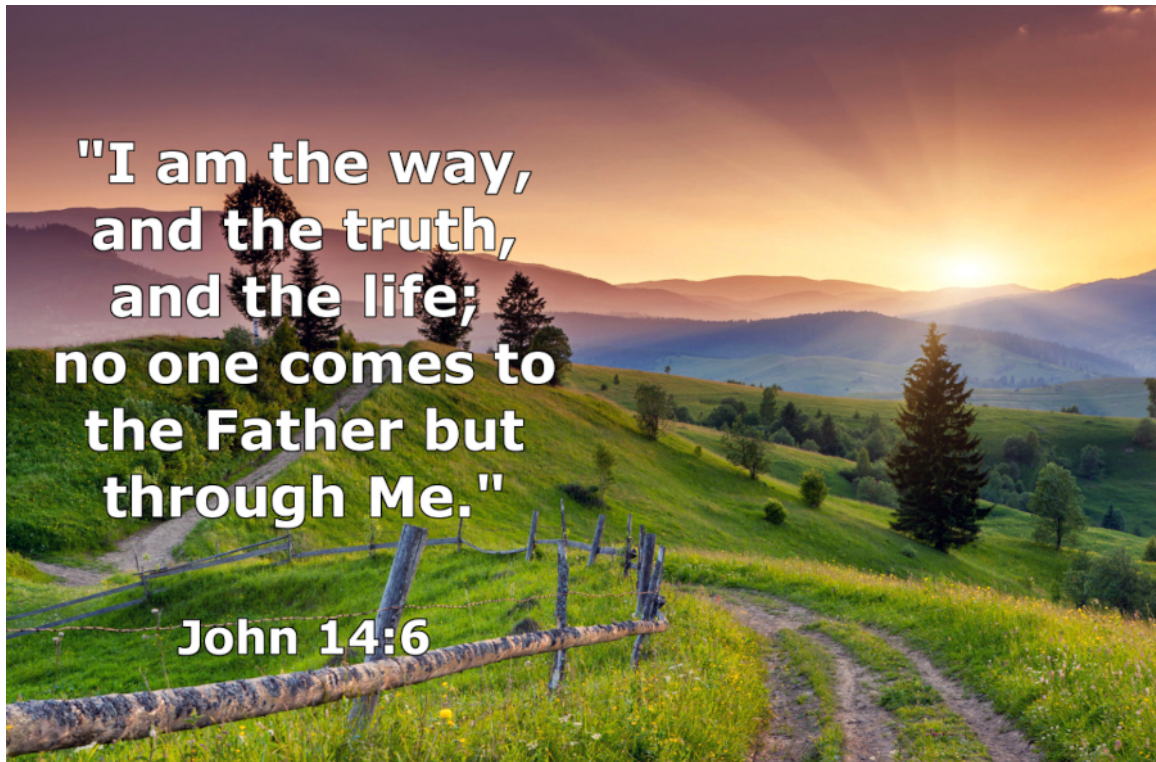


“The Way to Heaven”

2 November 2024

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Majestic Sunset - Carpathian Mountains (Ukraine) - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" - John 14:6 - 123RF Photo - Used under license

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' " ([John 14:6](#)).

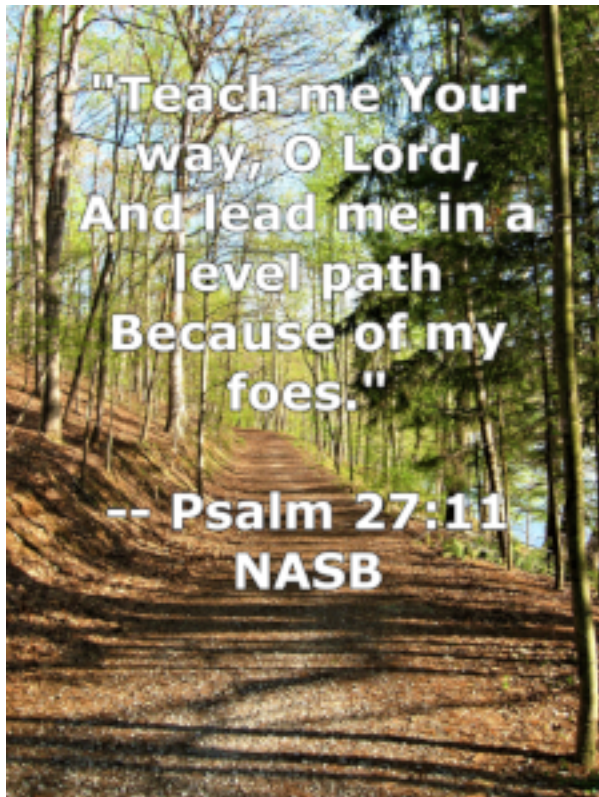
This lesson describes the way of God as taught in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father and to the Father's heavenly dwelling place. Jesus asks us to believe (trust) in him. Jesus invites us to follow him on the way.

Come explore with me what the Bible says about the "the way."

Consider. Do you believe that Jesus is the only way to the Father and to heaven? Why or why not?

1. What does "the way" mean in the Old Testament of the Bible?

The main Hebrew word for "way" in the Old Testament is *derek*. *Derek* means "way, road, distance, journey, manner" (Ref. 1). The "way of the Lord" was a concept familiar to Jesus' Jewish listeners and included keeping God's commandments. Let's look at example verses in the Old Testament



Lake Needwood Trail, Derwood, Maryland, USA – Psalm 27:11 - Photo by Whitney V. Myers

God instructed the Israelites to keep God's commandments by walking in his way. Deuteronomy 5:33, Deuteronomy 8:6, Deuteronomy 10:12, Isaiah 30:19-21, Jeremiah 6:16, Hosea 14:9

God instructed parents to teach their children the way of the Lord. Genesis 18:17-19, Proverbs 22:6

God instructed the Israelites to make God's way known among all nations. Psalm 67:1-2

Knowing God and God's ways are key to finding God's favor. Exodus 33:12-13

God goes before his followers to show them the way. Exodus 13:21

David asked God to "Teach me Thy way, O Lord." That is an excellent example for us to follow. Psalm 27:11, Psalm 25:4-5

2. What does "the Way" mean in the New Testament of the Bible?

The main Greek word for "way" in the New Testament is *hodos* (Ref. 2). Thayer's Greek Lexicon describes the principal definitions of *hodos* as follows (Ref. 2):



"Begin One Way" Sign - Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, USA - Photo by Whitney V. Myers

A traveled way, road. Matthew 2:12, Matthew 7:13-14, Acts 8:26, Acts 26:13

A traveler's way, journey. Mark 8:27, Acts 8:39

A way (manner) of thinking, feeling, deciding. Acts 2:28, 1 Corinthians 12:31, Acts 16:16-17, Acts 18:24-26, James 5:20, 2 Peter 2:2. In Acts 16:17, a demon-possessed slave-girl accurately identifies the "way of salvation." In Acts 18:26, Priscilla and Aquila explain the "way of God" more accurately to Apollos.

The name for Christianity in the early church. Acts 9:1-2, Acts 19:9, Acts 19:23, Acts 22:4, Acts 24:14, Acts 24:22. When Paul spoke before the Felix the Governor, Paul stated that he was a part of "the Way which they call a sect" (Acts 24:14). Felix had "accurate knowledge of the Way" (Acts 24:22).

Many believers today may not know that in the Book of Acts "the Way" was more widely known than the term, "Christian." In the early church, believers in Christ were first called "Christians" in Antioch (Acts 11:26).

The Greek word for "Christian" is *Christianos*, which means "a follower of Christ" (Ref. 3).

In comparison to "the Way," which is mentioned several times in Acts (refer to the above references), "Christian" (Christianos) is mentioned only three times in the entire New Testament (Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, 1 Peter 4:16) (Ref. 3).

3. Who is Jesus that speaks to his disciples (and to us today) about "the way"?

First, let's consider the occasion. In John 14:1-6, Jesus was speaking to his beloved disciples the night he was betrayed, the evening before his death. Jesus had just told the disciples that he is about to leave them (John 13:3-4, John 13:33). *"Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus answered him, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.'"* (John 13:36).

Let's also consider who Jesus is. The one speaking to his disciples is:

- The begotten and only Son of God (Luke 1:30-35, John 3:16)
- The visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3)
- Fully God and fully human (John 1:14; Colossians 2:8-9)
- One with the Father (John 10:24, 30)
- The same God who appeared to Moses and said, "I AM" (John 8:58, Exodus 3:1-6, Exodus 3:13-14)

4. What does Jesus teach us about "the way to heaven" in John 14:1-6?

Let's read together each verse in John 14:1-6 and consider the key word definitions. This approach will give us context for Jesus' statement in John 14:6 that he is "the way."

a. In John 14:1, Jesus said, *"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me."* Jesus is teaching us that the remedy for our troubled hearts is to believe in him. The Greek word for "troubled" is *tarasso*, which means to be "disturbed, agitated, stirred up" (Ref. 4). The Greek word for "believe" is *pisteuó* (pronounced *pist-yoo'-o*), which means *to trust in, have faith in, and have confidence in* (Ref. 5).

The remedy for our troubled hearts is to entrust ourselves completely (including our spiritual well-being) to Jesus.

b. In John 14:2, Jesus said, *"In My Father's house are many rooms; if that were not so, I would have told you, because I am going there to prepare a place for you."* Jesus was telling his disciples (and all the people who would believe in him) that he was going to heaven to prepare a place for us. The biblical reference to his "Father's house" refers to heaven (Deuteronomy 26:15, 1 Kings 8:30). There are plenty of rooms (dwelling places) in heaven for believers (Ref. 6).

c. In John 14:3, Jesus said, *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you also will be."* Jesus provides the way to heaven at Jesus' initiative, not ours. The "you" which Jesus speaks twice in this verse is second person plural (Ref. 7), so Jesus is speaking to all who believe in him.

John uses the Greek word *paralambano* for "take" (in *"I am coming again and will take you to myself"* - John 14:3) (Ref. 8). *Paralambano* means "to take (receive) by showing strong personal initiative" (Ref. 8). That is why we don't get to heaven by the works we do ourselves, such as "trying to live a good life" without Christ. We get to heaven by believing in Jesus because Jesus, at his initiative, has made the way for us (Hebrews 10:19-20).

d. d. In John 14:4, Jesus said, *"You know the way to the place where I am going."* Jesus had just described to his disciples the place where he was going -- his Father's house (heaven) (John 14:2). In John 14:4, Jesus says to his disciples they already should know [*mentally and spiritually comprehend*, Ref. 9] the "way." For example, see what Jesus taught and said in Matthew 16:21, John 10:9, John 11:25.

However, it is clear that Jesus' disciples did not yet understand what Jesus meant by the "way" (John 14:5).

e. *"Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?'"* (John 14:5). Thomas boldly asked Jesus a question. At that time, Thomas did not fully see, perceive, or understand what Jesus was saying about the "way." Thomas did understand later when

he put his hand into Jesus' side after Jesus' resurrection. Then Thomas believed in Jesus (John 20:26-28). Note that Jesus' did not scold Thomas nor does he scold us when we ask him questions (James 1:5).

f. In John 14:6, Jesus said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me."*

(1). Jesus himself is the way

In John 14:6 Jesus declares that the way to the Father (and to heaven) is himself. Jesus himself is the *hodos* -- the road and the journey -- to the Father and to heaven (Ref. 2). Our acceptance to God no longer depends on our imperfect obedience to the Mosaic law but on faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:23-26).

(2). Jesus invites us both to believe in him and to follow him on the way

In John 14:1 Jesus instructs his disciples (and us) to believe in him -- that is, to trust him completely and to have confidence in him (Ref. 5). Jesus also called his disciples to follow him (Matthew 4:19) and he calls us to follow him as well (Mark 10:21, Matthew 16:24). Following Jesus is more than a "click" on social media. Responding to Jesus' invitation to follow him means a lifetime joining him as his disciple -- clinging steadfastly to Jesus, conforming wholly to Jesus' example, "in living and if need be in dying also" (Thayer's Greek Lexicon - Ref. 10).

(3). Access to the Father is exclusively through Jesus

Jesus himself is the only way to the Father and to heaven because Jesus is the one who has paid the penalty for our sins. The Apostle Paul wrote, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Jesus, and only Jesus, has made the way for us to heaven by shedding his own blood to redeem us (Hebrews 10:19-20, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Ephesians 1:7).

5. Our response to Jesus

Are you ready to believe in Jesus, to trust him completely? Are you willing to follow him as his disciple? If "yes," then I encourage you to pray through these steps in your own words.



Asian Man Praying at the Cross in a Christian Church - 123RF Photo - Used under license

Believe in Jesus

- Confess your sins to Jesus (1 John 1:9). Tell him that you are sorry for your sins. Thank Jesus for forgiving your sins.
- Tell Jesus that you believe in him. Tell him that you believe God raised him from the dead. (Romans 10:9). Thank Jesus for saving you.

Follow Jesus

- Learn from Jesus. Learn the holy scriptures of the Bible. The Holy Spirit will teach you and guide you (Psalm 25:4-5, John 14:26, John 16:13).
- As Jesus' disciple, serve other people using the spiritual gift or gifts that God will give you (Matthew 10:42, Matthew 25:37-40, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Ephesians 4:11-12).
- Seek out and find a local body of believers (church) where you can worship God, find fellowship and encouragement with other believers, and learn by receiving good teaching from God's inspired word, the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 10:23-25).

Give your life to Jesus, and you will never regret it.

Related Lessons

"The Way of the Lord (Old Testament)" - Deuteronomy 5:33

"What Does 'The Way' Mean in the New Testament?" - Matthew 7:13-14

"The Remedy for a Troubled Heart (John 14:1)"

"Jesus is the Truth" - John 14:6

"Jesus Christ is the Life (John 14:6)"

"Jesus is the Way to the Father" - John 14:6

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