

# I AM

## Life Group Leaders Guide

### Objective

This guide contains the information and questions you will need to lead a life group study during our current sermon series. Our aim is to spark Spirit-led, Bible-centered conversations that anyone can participate in regardless of how biblically literate they may or may not be. **The win** that we want you to experience is when your group members **connect** more closely with each other and with God so that they are encouraged to move forward in living out their faith.

### Directions

The *Purpose* and *Move* sections are for the leader to read to the group to provide clarity. **Do not feel pressured to cover all the questions.** Decide which ones may work best for your group. You will see brief notes interspersed between groups of questions to help give the group context for their answers. The *Notes and Commentary* section (when included) is optional reading for the leader to get background information and better understanding of the passages before leading the discussion.

### Series Overview

Jesus made seven famous “I AM” statements, as recorded by John, declaring that he is God. Though there are a lot of benefits and blessings that come from a relationship with God, by far the greatest thing that Jesus offers humanity is Himself! He alone can meet our deepest needs and longings. Whatever it is you need right now at a core level, Jesus IS the answer.

### I AM Series Schedule

Week	Sermon Date	Topic of Sermon	Topic of Life Group
1	1/5	The Bread of Life	<a href="#">Life Group Socials</a>
2	1/12	The Good Shepherd	The Gate
3	1/19	The Resurrection and the Life	The Light Of The World
4	1/26	The Way, the Truth and the Life	The Vine

## The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

# *I AM The Gate*

### The Big Idea

*Jesus is the gate through which we must pass to find provision and protection.*

### Flow of Study

**Icebreaker:** Describe a time when something you cared about was lost or stolen. Did you make any changes to prevent that from happening again?

**Move #1:** In John 10, Jesus uses a rich analogy from the sheep industry to describe who he is. In the sermon this past weekend, we dug into the concept of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. But in this same text, he mixes his metaphors and also describes himself as the Gate.

#### Read John 10:7-10 (NIV)

7 Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 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.

1. In this metaphor, how does a gate protect the sheep when they “come in” to the pen (verse 9)? In what actual ways does Jesus offer us protection?
2. In what sense are the religious leaders “thieves,” taking what did not belong to them (verse 8, 10)? In what sense were they “strangers” (verse 5)?, “hired hands” (verse 12 & 13)?
3. How is Jesus different from these religious leaders?
4. How does the gate provide freedom for the sheep to “go out, and find pasture” (verse 9)? How does Jesus provide access to everything we need for mind, body, and soul?

**Move #2:** Now let's read another verse in John where Jesus reaffirms that he is the way to salvation.

#### Read John 14:6 (NIV)

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

5. How does this I AM statement relate to Jesus previously describing himself as “the gate”?
6. How does Jesus’s claim imply a sense of urgency when considering those who do not know Jesus?
7. In both of these passages from John, Jesus mentions life. How does Jesus give life in the present and for eternity?

**Move #3:** Let's turn to another place in scripture where Jesus describes the narrow way to salvation and warns of the failure to enter through *his* door.

**Read Luke 13:22-27 (NIV)**

22 Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

He said to them, 24 "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. 25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'

"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

26 "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

27 "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'

8. How would you respond to a person who asks you how to be saved?
9. What are some ways that people try to enter the door of salvation, and how is that different from the narrow way?
10. When does the door close to the opportunity of salvation (verse 25)? How does this reinforce the urgency of our decision?
11. Have you ever felt convicted by this passage, like you were just going through the motions of your faith and not fully surrendering your life to Christ? What practical ways can we overcome this?

**Next Steps:** The following are things you could challenge your members to do in order to take what you studied in this curriculum farther.

- If you have not yet entered through the narrow door, now is a great time to make that choice. Your life group leader can help!
- Look for ways this week to bless your "one" and help them to find Jesus. If you don't yet have someone in mind, think of someone in your life that doesn't know Jesus and commit to blessing them.

**Prayer:** End your study with a time of praying with and for each other. Take requests, but be sure to pray also about what you've discussed today.

## Notes and Commentary

*The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.*

### On John 10

Jesus' explanation (10:7–18) turns the story creatively. The setting of the sheep pen in the parable invites reflection particularly at three points: the gate, the shepherd, and the sheep. (1) The first image of the parable that Jesus does not interpret concerns his entry into the sheepfold. The watchman permits him entry, making

him God's shepherd. He is the rightful leader who goes through the gate. He has authority to lead the sheep (while others do not).

(2) In his interpretation Jesus shifts some of the images. He now is *the gate*. He alone is the sentry, the one through whom access to the sheep can be found (10:7–8). He stands in the gate, and any who enter without his permission (who sneak into the flock) are not to be trusted. This implies some endorsement of those who enter into leadership in Christ's name, leaders who come after him whom he knows. But it also implies a warning, for there are illegitimate shepherds whose entry he prohibits. Who are these "thieves and robbers" who have come before Jesus (10:8)? Some have argued that they are false messiahs in the first century, and we know that there were many. But the most likely target of Jesus' criticism is the Pharisees, who have been the subject of Jesus' teaching since chapter 9. Since the Maccabean era Jerusalem had witnessed many leaders who qualified as "false shepherds."

But there is another nuance. Since Jesus is the gate for the sheep too (10:9a), only those sheep who find him will enter the sheepfold and find safety. They alone will know his leadership and exit to find safe, lush pasture (10:9b). This thought parallels 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." The image here is a flock of sheep in a threatening desert. Food and water are scarce. Predators are everywhere, and they know the sheep are vulnerable. Jesus' image is that of well-fed sheep whose shepherd knows how to lead them to pasture and water daily, and who at night gives them safe rest in the sturdy walls of the sheepfold. These are sheep that flourish and are content, thanks to the skill of the shepherd. Psalm 23 describes this sheep's life in full ("The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want" 23:1). Similarly Psalm 118:20 describes this gate and our entry: "This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter." ...

The failure of these spiritual leaders to acknowledge the work of God in Christ puts in question the legitimacy of their leadership. As an interpreter I must probe who such people might be in my own generation. It may well be church leaders, but the subject is wider than this. It is any voice that draws people away from God, any voice that inflicts harm particularly on God's people. Jesus is remarkably bold with these people. They are "robbers" and "thieves" about whom we must be warned. And the litmus test for us is whether what they say and do coheres with the work and witness of Jesus Christ. Using Jesus' sheepfold image, he alone is the gate that gives access to the sheep. Those who enter "over the wall," whose voice is foreign to the voice of Jesus, who bring no safety and protection, are to be rejected. (Gary M. Burge. *NIV Application Commentary: John*)