

# The Way, Truth, and Life

*March 27, 2022*



## PURSUE

BUILDING FOR PEOPLE. BELIEVING FOR MORE.

### Lesson Summary

#### ***Main Passages***

John 14:1-6

#### ***Session Outline***

1. Believe Also in Me (John 14:1-2)
2. You Know the Way (John 14:3-5)
3. I Am the Way (John 14:6)

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#### ***Theological Theme***

Mankind is separated from God because of the corruption of sin. Yet, God in His mercy and kindness has provided a way for sinners to be saved through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.



## Leader Guide

# The Way, Truth, and Life

### Introduction

- ? Have you ever been to escape room? How did it go?
- ? What is the draw of escape rooms? What makes them tricky?

Escape rooms are popular, in part, because of the challenge. It isn't easy to piece the clues together and escape within the set time limit. It takes a team that will work together and think critically and creatively. Escape rooms can be loads of fun and sometimes loads of frustration.

All people find themselves in a metaphorical and more sinister sort of escape room. This escape room is of our own making and impossible to get free from unless someone intervenes to help. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). All are slaves to sin and imprisoned in death's dungeon.

Thankfully, God has provided a way to escape the curse of our sin and shame. The door to freedom from the problem of sin is clear, simple, and direct. Jesus told the disciples how to go to heaven in straightforward language. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). All who look to Him with faith and repentance will never perish but will be given eternal life. Charles Wesley exulted in this truth when he wrote his famous hymn, "And Can It Be, That I Should Gain":

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free;  
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.*

Let's look closely at Jesus's statement in John 14:6. We will think carefully about Jesus's identity, the problem of sin, and God's plan for the salvation of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

## Session Summary

John 14:1-6 is a passage of comfort. Jesus words were offered in a time of heaviness and darkness. Not only was Jesus anticipating His death on a Roman cross, but His words fell in the shadow of Judas's treachery and Peter's denial. It's hard to imagine that Jesus could be at rest during this time, but He was. Not only did His words convey a personal peacefulness, but He also worked to imbue His disciples with an assurance rooted in the truth of who He was and what was to come. Jesus was comforting the anxiety and fears of His disciples in what must have been a time of personal anguish.

As we study this passage, it is helpful to understand these words were precipitated by Jesus's compassion and concern. He spoke to the disciples about their troubled hearts because He was aware of their fears. Perhaps their anxiety was written across their faces. Jesus knew what worried them and how those worries affected and afflicted them. This is also true for Christians today. Jesus knows what anxiety does to our hearts. We may recall Paul's command to be anxious for nothing (Philippians 4:6). What joy it is to have the imperative command from Paul and the comforting truth from Christ in the battle against anxiety.

### 1. Believe Also in Me (John 14:1-2)

There is no doubt that Jesus claimed to be God. No one who reads the gospels can reasonably object to this, no matter how hard certain groups (i.e. Jehovah's Witnesses) have tried to erase Christ's claims. Jesus claimed to be God. The Pharisees hated Him and had Him crucified for it. The disciples found solace and joy in it. Here, Jesus made this claim clear to them again. He said, "Believe in God; believe also in me" (v. 2). He revealed His identity to His disciples to comfort and encourage them. Their hearts were troubled, and Jesus sought to bring peace to their hearts by helping them to understand exactly who it was they were dealing with.

Then, Jesus explained what He would do for them. He said He would go and prepare a place for them and come back for them.




Do you think Jesus's identity (being God) or His promises were more comforting to His disciples? Which is more comforting to you? Why?

The source of peace, hope, and joy for all of humankind is found in the Triune God and not primarily in any other gift or blessing. Jesus wanted His disciples to first love, depend on, and find comfort in His person. The work He would accomplish would certainly benefit them, but the work was a means to an end and that end was communion with the one true and living God.


### The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Jesus alone is able to provide access to God because he alone paid the penalty for our sins (Is 53:5; Heb 1:3). He is the truth (Jn 1:14, 17; 5:33; 18:37; cp. 8:40, 45-46) and all contrary claims are false. He alone is the life (1:4), having life in himself (5:26). He is thus able to confer eternal life on all those who believe in him (3:16). Jesus is truth and life, and he is the one and only way of salvation.

 What did Jesus's identity have to do with the work that He would accomplish for His disciples?


Jesus was uniquely adequate to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Jesus is fully God and fully man. Because Jesus, the Savior, came in the likeness of human flesh and died a sinner's death, God remains just while extending grace. God condemned sin by placing it on Christ and removing from believers the wrath that they were due. To be the true mediator between God and man, Jesus had to truly take on flesh and live as a human being. He shared human nature with us except for one thing: His flesh was not tainted by inherited sin. He was completely sinless until the Father placed the sins of the world upon Him. Because Jesus was truly God and truly man who lived a life of perfect righteousness in human flesh, He is the only One qualified to satisfy the demands of God the Father.

Jesus remained fully divine even in His incarnate state. To deny Jesus's divinity is to deny 2000 years of orthodox Christian teaching and, more importantly, fundamentally change the gospel to a message that is powerless to save. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ in flesh is God. Evidence for the full deity of Jesus Christ is at every turn in the New Testament (see Titus 2:13; Colossians 1:19; 2:9; Hebrews 1:6; Acts 7:59-60; John 1:3; Mark 2:5; and Acts 10:42).

 Application: Where do you normally seek comfort when your heart is troubled? Are you more likely to seek comfort in who God is or what He can give you?

## 2. You Know the Way (John 14:3-5)

Although Christ's words were a comfort to the disciples, they are a warning to the world today. While it is a great comfort for those who love Christ to know that He has gone to prepare a place for them and will come back for them, it is to the dismay of those who reject Christ to know anyone who seeks to approach God by any other means will fail. Jesus told His disciples that they knew the way. The reason He could say that is because they knew Him. Jesus never told His followers to believe in themselves, make their own way, or reach their full potential. He told them to forsake sin and trust fully in Him for salvation.

 Why is it that people need a way to get to God in the first place?

The Bible says that every human being on the face of the earth is either a child of God or a child of the devil (John 8:44; 1 John 3:10). Those who are "in Christ" are children of God. Everyone else is a child of the devil. The problem is that all people are born in sin (their very nature


is corrupted by sin) and practice sin. There is no one who is righteous and holy before God (Romans 3). A good definition of sin is “rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, not being or doing what he requires in his law.”<sup>1</sup> No one can rightly say they haven’t done this.

This sin separates every person from God. Isaiah 59:2 gives a vivid, succinct description of the effect of sin: “But your iniquities are separating you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen.”

 Why does a person’s sinfulness prevent access to the Father? Does this negate God’s kindness and mercy?

God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (Exodus 34:6). However, His mercy and grace must be held alongside His justice and holiness. God will not tolerate sin and He will not allow sin to go unpunished. A sacrifice of blood is required for the forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 9:22). R.C. Sproul wrote, “All things being equal, God does desire that no one should perish. But all things are not equal. Sin is real. Sin violates God’s holiness and righteousness. God also is not willing that sin should go unpunished. He desires as well that His holiness should be vindicated.”<sup>2</sup>

Further, we must be sure to go the whole way in our understanding of the spiritual state of humanity. The Bible doesn’t say that we are merely disadvantaged or crippled in our spiritual ability. Rather, the New Testament makes it clear that we are completely dead in our sins and trespasses (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13). Not only are we separated from God, but we are also unable to get ourselves in a position to approach him.

 Application: What do you base your view of and confidence for eternity on? How does this compare to the teaching of this passage?

### 3. I Am the Way (John 14:6)

The culmination of this passage is Jesus’s monumental statement in verse 6. Jesus claimed that He is the way, the truth, and the life. This statement is an all-encompassing summary of who He was to His disciples and what He is to those who come to Him today. He is the way that leads to eternal life. His Word is the truth that reveals the will of God. And in Him only can a dead sinner find life.

The truth of Jesus’s identity and mankind’s sinfulness brings us to our final point. First, we recognized that Jesus is fully God and fully man. He lived a perfectly holy and righteous life and offered Himself as an

acceptable and effective sacrifice for the sins of the world. Second, people are separated from a holy God because of their unholy nature and living; and they are dead in their sins and trespasses. If these two things are true, then we must submit to the biblical teaching of the New Testament and this very verse that the only way to be made right with God and become one of His children is through faith in the gospel of Jesus and repentance of sin (Mark 1:15).

- ❓ What has Jesus done that we could not do?
- ❓ How do His holiness and righteousness help sinners?

Jesus pleased God the Father in all His words, actions, and thoughts (Matthew 3:17). He lived a holy and righteous life at every point.

This is the heart of the gospel. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, “He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Paul stated that Jesus took on our sin (made Him to be sin who knew no sin). This is often where we stop in considering the sacrifice of Jesus. We believe Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross and took away the punishment that is due us. The death of Christ is certainly no less than this, but there is more. Look at the last clause of this verse: “so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The taking away of sin was to make way for righteousness, and not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of God. What does this mean? Think of it this way. You are trapped in a prison and the only way to get out is to pay one billion dollars. You check your bank account, and you are actually in debt one billion dollars. You have the very opposite of what you need to escape your misery. Is it possible to work hard, pay off your debt, and then save up to get of prison? Hardly. Not in a thousand lifetimes. Your situation is completely hopeless. You’re a dead person walking.

Then, something astounding happens. Someone not only pays off your debt, but they also deposit into your account the one billion dollars you need to be free. This is what Jesus did. Not only did He pay your sin debt, but He deposited into your account His righteousness. Now, when God the Father, who is perfectly just and holy, looks at your account, He sees the perfect righteousness of Christ. This doctrine is known as double imputation.

Jesus is the only way to the Father. He is the only One who has paid your sin debt. He is the only One who can deposit righteousness into your account. Without both of those things, we are lost. He is the way, the truth, and the life.

- Application: Have you trusted Jesus to pay your sin debt before God? How is God speaking to you about that today?

## Conclusion

For centuries, the North Star provided a sure guide for travelers, especially those on the open sea. They knew if they could locate that star, then they could determine their own position and make their way to safety.

Christ is our North Star. He shows us the way to the Father. He tells us the truth about our need and God's provision for the need. He gives dead sinners life through His death on the cross. When a person comes to Christ, He will never cast them away (John 6:37).

- Where do you need comfort in your life right now? How do Jesus's identity and promises provide comfort for you?
- How should Jesus's provision for your sin change the way you see the world and others around you?
- Why should the truth of John 14:6 compel us toward gospel conversations with others? How do you need to respond today?

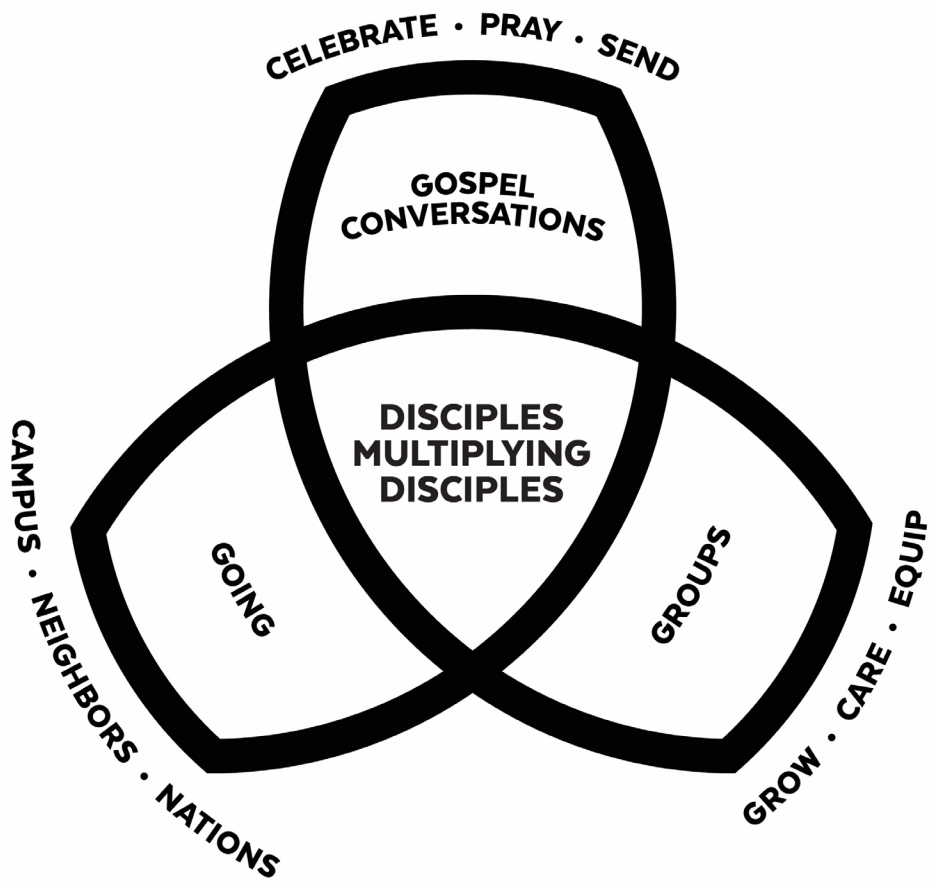
## Prayer of Response

*Spend time praying through the basic truths of the gospel. Confess your sinfulness, spiritual inability, and profound need for a rescuer. Praise God for the sacrifice of Christ that both takes away your sin and credits your account with Christ's righteousness.*

## Additional Resources

- *John 12-21* by John MacArthur
- *Be Transformed* by Warren Wiersbe
- *John 13-21 for You* by Josh Moody

# Disciples Multiplying Disciples





## For Next Week

### Session Title

- The Way

### Main Passages

- John 15:1-8

### Session Outline

1. Our Deepest Need (John 15:1-4)
2. Fruit Producers (John 15:5-7)
3. Glory to the Father (John 15:8)

### Memorize

*<sup>6</sup> Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

- John 14:6

# Historical Context of John

## Purpose

The purpose statement in 20:30–31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God’s people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

## Author

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24–25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple Jesus loved” with Peter in 13:23–24; 18:15–16; 20:2–9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3–4; 8:14–25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1–4).

## Setting

The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter’s martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1, 14, 18; 10:30; 20:28).

## Special Features

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John’s Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.

## Extended Commentary

### John 14:1-6

14:1. Troubled people need peace and affirmation. The problems of the disciples were as real as our problems. In fact, it is probably fair to say that most Christians are realists. From Scripture they recognize the reality of sin, the reality of evil in the world, the reality of deliverance from sin, and the reality of ultimate eternal life.

These disciples, good Jews, had already trusted in God and now Jesus asked them to trust in him. They had watched him feed five thousand people and bring Lazarus back from the dead, but now they must trust him not just for food or miracles, but with their lives.

Some question exists about the grammatical nature of the verbs rendered trust in this verse. The NIV offers the preferred translation with the verbs appearing in what Greek scholars would call an imperative/imperative pattern. Rather than saying, “You have trusted in God so now trust in me,” or some similar phrase, both sections of the sentence offer a command.

14:2. Let us acknowledge at the beginning of this chapter that this portion of Scripture is not about huge buildings in heaven but about space. Lots of songs have been written to proclaim “mansions over the hilltop,” but Jesus simply told his disciples, “There’s room in heaven for you.” But he also wanted to indicate that he would go ahead of them to do specific work—the preparation of heaven (14:2b). The New Testament teaches us we are pilgrims and wanderers in this world. We may own homes, and some of them may be huge and beautiful. But we do not belong here because we are not primarily citizens of this world. In heaven we will be where we really belong because Jesus has gone ahead to prepare a place for us.

Paul Tournier once suggested that a place of one’s own has been the basic desire of every heart since Eden. Let us not think of this preparation as the Lord’s return to his carpentry skills, pounding two-by-fours in a housing project for believers. It surely describes his death, resurrection, ascension, and princely role at the Father’s right hand.

The promise “I will come back” (v. 3) has been variously understood by interpreters. But in the context of death, ascension, and heaven, it seems difficult to arrive at any conclusion other than the second coming of Jesus. As to the Father’s house, I agree with Carson: “The simplest explanation is best: my Father’s house refers to heaven, and in heaven are many rooms, many dwelling-places. The point is not the lavishness of each apartment, but the fact that such ample provision has been made, that there is more than enough space for every one of Jesus’ disciples to join him in his Father’s home. Besides, have they not just been encouraged to trust him (v. 1), and always found strong reason to do so? Can they not therefore be assured that if heaven were other than what he has described, he would have told them?” (Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991.).

14:3–4. Forget the mansions; what this passage talks about is the personal touch of the Savior. Count the times he says I or me in these two short verses, and you will come up with five. He wanted the disciples to trust him personally. It was not just preparation of a place in focus here, but the personal return of Jesus to take his own to heaven. This passage does not speak about levels of reward or big buildings in heaven. It promises the second coming of Jesus Christ. Did they really know the way? They should have known; it has been obvious in this book since chapter 3.

The setting of these verses centers on promise and peace. Jesus would take care of his disciples by making sure they could be with him in the Father's presence. By this point in his ministry, they were expected to know the way to the place where I am going. Of the coming and going in this passage Westcott writes, "This departure is itself the condition of the return: separation, the cessation of the present circumstances of fellowship, was the first step toward complete union" (Westcott, p. 201).

14:5–7. Thomas was an honest follower though always the skeptic, so he was the first to ask, Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way? Jesus' response is the key verse of the passage, memorized by Christians all around the globe. Jesus is the way—reconciliation; Jesus is the truth—illumination; Jesus is the life—regeneration. This is the exclusive gospel. The New Testament knows nothing of universalism—the idea that God will find some way to save everybody. What could be clearer than Jesus' words in verse 6, No one comes to the Father except through me.

Why did the disciples need all this talk about trusting Jesus? Why do we need it? Because like them, we do not know Jesus well enough; so we struggle to understand the Father. Repeatedly Jesus emphasized the link between the heavenly Father and the Son, but right up to the end the disciples did not get it—and we struggle with the concept as well.

This is one of those places at which we would like to have audio aids for the Bible. What was Thomas's tone of voice when he said this? Is he still the skeptic? The pessimist? The negative thinker? It would appear so, but we admire his openness and vulnerability. The impact of Jesus' answer echoes through the centuries to the present hour. He embodies the way to God, the truth about God, and the life in God. And if the disciples really knew him as they should, they would understand the inseparability between the Father and the Son.

This announcement in John 14:6 prepares the way for the author of Hebrews to write, "We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body" (Heb. 10:19–20).<sup>3</sup>

## References

1. Colin Hansen, ed., *New City Catechism Devotional: God's Truth for Our Hearts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 77.
2. R.C. Sproul, *Can I Know God's Will?* (Sanford, FL: Ligonier Ministries), 22-23
3. Kenneth O. Gangel, *John*, ed. Max E. Anders (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2000).

## Author Bio

### **Kenneth Gangel (John)**

Dr. Kenneth O. Gangel (1935-2009): A prolific author and an experienced leader has been influential in the field of Christian education for over forty years. He's written numerous articles and over 50 books, while pastoring, teaching, raising a family and leading schools. His impact reaches around the world through students, co-authored books, and working with leaders of churches and schools.

### **Colin Hansen (New City Catechism Devotional)**

Collin Hansen (M.Div., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) serves as the editorial director for the Gospel Coalition. He previously worked as an associate editor for Christianity Today magazine and co-edits the Cultural Renewal series with Tim Keller. He and his wife belong to Redeemer Community Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and he serves on the advisory board of Beeson Divinity School. You can follow him on Twitter at @collinhansen.

### **R.C. Sproul (Can I Know God's Will?)**

R.C. Sproul (1939–2017) was founder of Ligonier Ministries in Orlando, Fla. He was also copastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel, first president of Reformation Bible College, and executive editor of Tabletalk magazine. His radio program, *Renewing Your Mind*, is still broadcast daily on hundreds of radio stations around the world and can also be heard online.

### **John MacArthur (John 12-21)**

John MacArthur has served as pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, since 1969. His ministry of expository preaching is unparalleled in its breadth and influence. In more than five decades of ministry from the same pulpit, he has preached verse by verse through the entire New Testament and several key sections of the Old Testament. He is Chancellor of the Master's University and Seminary, and can be heard daily on the Grace to You radio broadcast (carried on hundreds of radio stations worldwide). He has authored numerous bestselling books, including *Twelve Ordinary Men* and *One Perfect Life*.

### **Warren Wiersbe (Be Transformed)**

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of Back to the Bible, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as "the pastor's pastor." He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.

### **Josh Moody (John 13-21 for You)**

Josh Moody (Ph.D., University of Cambridge) is the senior pastor of College Church in Wheaton. He is a pastor, author, conference speaker, and college campus speaker. He is the president and founder of God Centered Life Ministries. His books include *7 Days to Change Your Life* (Abingdon Press 2017), *How Church Can Change Your Life* (Christian Focus 2015), *Preaching to the Affections* (Christian Focus 2014), *Journey to Joy* (Crossway 2013), *Jonathan Edwards and Justification* (Crossway 2012), *No Other Gospel* (Crossway 2011), and *The God-Centered Life* (Regent 2007; IVP UK 2006).