

PAINTING A PORTRAIT OF JESUS



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Have you ever worked on a paint-by-number or colour-by-number picture? How easy is it to tell what the picture is before you paint or colour it? For some, you can look at it and guess what the picture might be. For others, you can't really tell what it is. So, what do you need to do to start finding out what the picture will really look like? If you are like most people, you usually start with one number that represents one colour and fill in all the spaces having that number with the appropriate colour. After you've coloured in that number, the picture begins to be revealed. Then, you do the same with the other colours. After adding each colour to the picture, you can finally recognize what the picture represents. You get the complete picture. You can also paint a picture with words.

Think about 3 words true about you that you could use to describe yourself.

Now say, "I am..." followed by those three words.

You just painted a picture of yourself with those words. That's similar to what Jesus did with His "I Am" statements. Just like adding each colour to a paint-by-number picture enables you to recognize the picture, Jesus used the "I Am" descriptions to paint His own portrait. A portrait is a painting, drawing, or photograph of a person. Usually, a portrait reveals someone's physical appearance. It is a true likeness of that person. When you look in a mirror, you see a likeness of yourself. In a sense that's a portrait. Jesus' portrait does not reveal His physical appearance. Instead, Jesus did what I asked you to do above—describe yourself with a few words to "paint" a portrait of yourself. Jesus painted Himself with words that reveal a "picture" of who He is, how He

meets our needs, and why we can trust Him enough to follow Him. The Painting the Portrait of Jesus lessons focus on what are commonly called the “I Am’s.” The “I Am’s” are statements that Jesus made in the gospel of John. They are called the “I Am’s” because each one of them starts with the same 2 words, “I am.” Then, Jesus follows the words “I am” with a phrase to describe Himself to those who are listening. As one who lived as a man among us, He understands the spiritual needs of men, women, boys, and girls. These “I am” declarations are like colours Jesus used for the canvas of His own self-portrait so His followers could know Him better and understand His significance in their lives. These “colours” reveal the Jesus that we follow. And, studying them is in a sense “Painting the Portrait of Jesus.” Like Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the gospel of John contains the good news about Jesus—who He is, why He came, and what He offers to those who trust in Him. Jesus used specific phrases as word pictures to describe Himself to those who were listening and to describe the difference He could make in their lives when they trusted in Him. Discovering these truths will make a difference in your life as well.

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Jesus Is the “I Am”

Jesus answered, “Before Abraham was born, I AM.” (John 8:58)

The *Painting the Portrait of Jesus* lessons focus on the “I am” statements Jesus made in the gospel of John.

Jesus follows the words “I am” with a word picture to describe Himself to those who are listening. Jesus’ word pictures were like paint colours in a portrait.

A portrait is a painting, drawing, or photograph that is a true representation of that person. Each one of those “I am” statements is like another paint colour being added to Jesus’ portrait.

Jesus painted Himself with words that reveal not His physical appearance but a “picture” of who He is, how He is the answer to our spiritual needs, and why we can trust Him enough to follow Him.

THE FIRST COLOUR IS WHITE

White is really a mixture of all colours. Have you ever seen white light shining through a prism?

All those colours miraculously mix together to form white light. So, white represents all the colours Jesus used to paint His portrait.

In the Bible, the colour white often represents **the presence of God**. We find the “I am” statements in the book of John. The Gospel about who Jesus is, why He came and what He offers to those who trust in Him.

John emphasizes repeatedly that Jesus is God in human flesh.

Read John 20:31.

What did John say was his purpose in writing his gospel?

And, once you know and believe this, what will happen?

Belonging to Him means you will have a relationship with Him. And, once you belong to Him, you also get life from Him, eternal life.

The two words “I am.” To the Jewish people were part of God’s name. Years and years before Jesus was born, God spoke to Moses and told him to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. Moses said to God, “What if I go to them, and they want to know your name, what shall I tell them?”

Read Exodus 3:13-14.

What name did God give Himself?

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the Hebrew name for God is spelled YHWH. We think the name was pronounced Yahweh. This was God’s personal name. Jesus knew this name for God. And, He frequently claimed that name for Himself.

One time Jesus was talking to a woman at a well. She said that one future day the promised leader known as the Messiah would come.

Read John 4:19-26.

What would the Messiah do?

How did Jesus respond to her ?

What was Jesus communicating to the woman about Himself?

Another time, Jesus was talking to some Jewish leaders and told them He knew Abraham. They said, “You are not even 50 years old. How could you have seen Abraham?”

Read John 8:56-59.

What was Jesus' answer?

Why do you think the Jewish leaders became so angry with Jesus?

When Jesus said, "I am," He is revealing something about Himself. He is God. He did the things that God does. He healed people and forgave them of their sins. He told people that He was God.

Jesus is the "I am." He is God. We don't think of God's name as Yahweh anymore. We often think of God's name as Jesus.

As mentioned, the colour white represents the presence of God. One day, when Jesus was on a mountain with His disciples, His clothes became dazzlingly white, whiter than any bleach could ever make them. His disciples saw that and knew it meant they were in God's presence.

Read Mark 9:2-8.

What did the disciples hear the voice from heaven say?

So, not only is Jesus God, He is more specifically the Son of God. He knows God as His very own Father. Jesus obeyed His Father and lived His life as a God-man among people. That way, He knows every need that we have - both physical and spiritual. He knows what it is like to be hungry and thirsty, to know fear, to be alone, and to long to know God.

Jesus knows that He is the answer to every need, especially the need to know God.

Read Hebrews 4:15.

How confident are you that Jesus understands how you feel but is also powerful enough (as God) to take care of your every need?

Jesus is the “I AM.” He said to His disciples, “If you know me, you will know God.”

Jesus is the answer to the spiritual needs of every person, especially the need to have a relationship with Him, to belong to Someone who loves us dearly.

Read Matthew 11:28-29.

What is the invitation and the promise?

What inner needs do you have that Jesus’ promise could satisfy?

Christianity is Christ so spend a few minutes each day reading the verses and reflecting on Jesus—His life, His relationships, and His teaching. Get to know Him well—this One who loves you dearly.

Here are some Scripture readings to do at home and to reflect on, to help you learn more about Jesus – the “I AM”.

Read John 1:1-28.

Read John 1:29-51.

Read John 2:1-11.

Read John 2:12-25.