

THE WAY

Note from Pastor Mike

Dear Pilgrim,

There's a LOT to reflect on and discuss from our first message of our original series, so don't be overwhelmed. This study guide is intended to provide you with questions to meditate on every day over the course of the whole week--until we hit you with more truth next weekend! So don't try to eat the whole elephant in one sitting. If you are an Ohana Group Leader facilitating a discussion, a little advanced prayer and planning will be necessary so you can select the questions best suited for your group.

Pastor Mike

Introduction

We are so glad you chose to join us to celebrate the greatest day in human history! Today, about 3 billion people around the world join our hearts as one to worship our Risen Lord. And in the next few moments we're going to find out what all the excitement is about. Here at New Hope Central Oahu, Easter is especially significant because our church was born on Easter Sunday 22 years ago. In fact, it was on April the 4th 1999, the exact date as Easter this year! And get this, ALL of our campuses were born on an Easter Sunday--Wahiawa in 2009, Haleiwa in 2011, Transformation Academy in 2015, and New Hope Spark in 2016. So turn to the person next to you and say, "HAPPY ANNIVERSARY to us!"

In addition to it being the greatest holiday on the calendar, you made a great decision coming to Church today because today is the first message of a brand new series. So we are all starting off together today and nobody is behind. It's that feeling you get with a full tank of gas or like a canary with fresh newspapers--a brand new start! So here... we... go!

In one of His last conversations with His followers, Jesus said that His time with them was drawing to an end, (John 13:33). He also told them, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later," (John 13:36). Doubtful, Thomas replied, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" (John 14:5) Thomas' concern is all of our concern. We want to know how to get to God--the way to Heaven. But what is the truth? Which way is

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the right way? Jesus reveals that the path forward lies not in a religion, a political party, or a 12-step program, but in a Person. In a world of "My truth", "Your truth", and "Half-truths", Jesus said, "I am The Truth". There's the "Fast life", the "Good life", "The Hard-knock life"; Jesus said, "I am The Life". There's the "Easy way" or the "Hard way", "My way" or the "Highway", but when it comes to finding God, Jesus said, "I am The Way".

1. In your own words, what is our new series, *The Way*, going to address?

Jesus has blazed a trail for each of us and has left us everything we need to follow Him. Do you know your destination? Do you have everything you need for the journey? But most importantly, do you know The Way? Our new original series is called "The Way." Next week, week 2, we're going to help you figure out exactly where you are in your own personal journey and help you set a course for The Way. Then in week 3, we will help you get fully equipped and geared up for your Spiritual journey on The Way. Then in week 4, we will prepare you to face the most dangerous traps and pitfalls we will encounter along The Way. Then in week 5, commencement! We will give you a powerful and compelling, final charge as you embark on The Way, the most important journey you'll ever take in life. So don't let this weekend be a one-off. Join us for the next month! And if your life doesn't change in the next few weeks, Pastah Earl goin treat you fo go grindz! Das right! Free plate lunch anywhere you like! Guaranz ball bearanz!

2. Can you describe the "transformation arc" this series intends to take us on? That is, how does it begin? And where is it trying to take you? (If you get this question, it will save Pastor Earl a lot of money.) Therefore, do you think it would be important to view each message?

So today is week 1 of our series. Let's find out why we call Jesus THE WAY. On Easter, Jesus rose from the dead and conquered the power of sin. Easter was the birth of a new life – a new way. All of history is broken into the time before Christ and life after. The earliest followers of Jesus were called followers of The Way. Jesus Himself said, "I am the Way". But "The Way" to what? Where are we following Jesus and how do we get there? Today, people believe there are many ways to believe, many ways to live, and ways to go. But when it comes to following Him, Jesus said, He is "The Way, The Truth, and The Life". So how do

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we reconcile everything we've been told with what Jesus said? We'll explore the answer to that question right now.

Let's read the exact words of Jesus together in the Bible. Ready go:

Key Scripture:

"² There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going." ⁵ "No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!" ⁸ Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹ Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!" (John 14:2-9 NLT).

3. What is the origin of our phrase "The Way?" The Way to what? Or to Whom?

Everybody say "relativism." Ok, so what does that mean?

Relativism means there is no absolute truth.

Whatever I think is just as valid, just as true, as whatever you think. Everything is a matter of opinion, a matter of preference. In some instances this is actually true. For example, some might say the Kansas City Chiefs are a better football team than Tampa Bay. The Chiefs beat the Bucs in week 12 of the regular season. Mahomes wasn't 100% when he played the Super Bowl. So you could argue that if they played a third time and the Chiefs win, then maybe KC is the better team. Maybe. But the FACT REMAINS, that in the Super Bowl, Tom Brady and the Bucs beat the Chiefs in convincing fashion. No ifs, ands or buts, the Bucs are Super Bowl Champs and Tom Brady is the Greatest of all time with 7 rings. Is KC the better team? Maybe. That's a matter of opinion. But the TRUTH is the Bucs are the champs. And the TRUTH is the TRUTH no matter what your opinion is. You can argue that the Chiefs are better. You may have a feeling that the

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Chiefs are better, but the fact is they lost to the Bucs in Super Bowl 55. And as Ben Shapiro says, "Facts don't care about your feelings."
Today we are living in a very relativistic time. Facts don't matter to a lot of people in this world.

4. What is relativism? What is the difference between the "opinion" that the Chiefs are the best team versus the "fact" that the Bucs beat the Chiefs in Super Bowl 55?

You might say, "Mike, why does that matter? Who cares if there are some die-hard Chiefs fans out there?" We're not talking about football. We're talking about the Truth. People today want to believe whatever they want. They say not being anchored sets them free to say and do whatever they want on the ocean of life. But are they really free? Or are they adrift? Actually, without the truth, people are not happy. They are lost. And they are angry. The truth is there IS such a thing as absolute truth. In fact, what was the definition of relativism again? There is no absolute truth. You do realize that when you say "there is no absolute truth" you're making an absolute statement! So the very definition of relativism is a self-contradiction. That's why relativism leads to a life full of contradictions.

5. Is there such a thing as absolute truth? Or is everything a matter of opinion and preference?

What we believe to be true is critical. The truth matters. Why? Because what we believe on the inside will manifest on the outside. In fact, EVERYTHING you do in life--every action you take, every word you speak--comes from something you think and feel. Your beliefs don't just "influence" your life, they "determine" your destiny! Let me say that again: Your beliefs don't just "influence" your life, they "determine" your destiny! Tell the person next to you, "Your beliefs determine your destiny."

6. Why does knowing the truth matter? How do our beliefs influence our lives? Our final destiny?

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Remember the Hawaii Missile Crisis back in January of 2018? Somebody pushed the wrong button and the State sent out an EMERGENCY ALERT that NORTH KOREA had launched a ballistic missile at Hawaii. People were thrown into a panic because the alert said "this is not a drill." Every mobile phone in the State of Hawaii told us we were going to die in less than 30 minutes. People were crying. One guy crawled into the sewer system with his kids. People were leaving final messages for their loved ones. A friend of mine was so distraught. He 100% believed these were his last moments alive on this Earth. He was by the beach, so he walked out to the shoreline, gazed at the horizon, and full-on broke down crying before God and begged God to forgive him and he dedicated his life to Christ that day. Well, of course, now we know none of it was true. There was no ballistic missile headed for Hawaii. We were not under attack from North Korea. The whole time we were all panicking, fearing for our lives...we were actually completely safe. We only believed it was real. So my friend said, "Oh! Nevah mind, God, wuz one false alarm!" Nah, nah. That moment changed his life forever, cuz now he realize, one day not goin be one false alarm. One day he really goin ma-ke, and his eggs headed fo dat big omelette in da sky. So he still one strong Christian to dis day. Do you see why the Truth matters?

Your beliefs will not just influence your life, they will determine your destiny.

7. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being you absolutely believed), how did you react to the Hawaii Missile Crisis? How did this affect your behavior?

I'm tempted right now to point out a massive list of examples of relativism in the world for you right now, but the problem is, I know there are some of you here who really believe that stuff, and my pointing them out will only distract you from what we're really trying to say. Let's stay focused on that.

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8. Pastor Mike avoided talking about examples of “preferences over truth” in society these days. But can you think of any? For example, can a man become a woman just because he identifies as one? Or does God determine a person’s gender? Consequently, should this person be allowed in the girl’s restroom? Girl’s locker room? Be allowed to compete in girl’s wrestling, track, etc.? Second example, can we define marriage any way we want? Or does God determine the definition of marriage? Third example, should we be “hooking up” with as many people as we can, or did God reserve sex for marriage? Fourth, are there many ways to God? Or is there only one way?

And that brings us back to Easter. So if I were to go around saying, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” it would take you less than a second to figure out that I’m either lying or I’ve lost my mind. And the same is true for any of you. Even if we didn’t know you very well, all we need to do is ask your wife, “Is your husband the Messiah?” And she goin say, “Oh no, he wen escape da loony bin again? Con-funnit!” It’s completely different with Jesus. Jesus never wrote anything about Himself. Everything we have on Him comes from people who knew Him for years, followed Him 24/7, including His family. And these people who KNEW Him, the closest people in His inner circle, eyewitnesses who spoke with Him, ate with Him, ministered by His side, all came to the same astounding conclusion, a truth that eventually led to their imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom, a truth they took with them to their graves. So they had 3 choices: Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. What was their amazing conclusion? Upon close inspection from multiple eyewitnesses, what Jesus claimed about Himself was perfectly consistent with everything about His life. Not just that He was a great spiritual leader, philosopher, or teacher. Jesus claimed to be God. Jesus... is... God.

9. Who did Jesus say He was? Why can’t we say He was just a great teacher or master philosopher? Who do YOU say Jesus is?

This is absolutely critical in our discussion about truth. Because who gets to decide absolute truth? The truth is determined by the authority of the person speaking. Many people believed the missile alert because it came from the Emergency Alert System of the State of Hawaii! If you’re listening to a flawed human being, then you take everything you hear with a grain of salt. In fact, maybe I don’t believe that person at all! But if GOD is speaking, then I really

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really need to listen. When deciding on the truth, authority is decisive. Let me say that again:

“When deciding on the truth, AUTHORITY is decisive.”

10. When deciding on the truth, what is the most important issue? Why?

And the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is our most convincing, historical evidence that Jesus is God. It's the cherry on the top, the icing on the cake, the final word to a lifetime of the most profound revelation and miracles the world had ever heard or seen. So Praise God that doubting Thomas asks the question to which we are ALL dying to know the answer. Thomas asked Jesus, “What is the way to the Father? We don't know the way. What is the way to Heaven? Please show us the way to God!” Jesus said, “I am the Way.” But it gets even better. Next Philip asks--thank you SO MUCH, Philip, for asking this!!! If we don't remember another thing about Philip, he will go down in history as the guy who asked the most important follow-up question of all time--Philip asks Jesus to SHOW us the Father! This is awesome. It's exactly where we need this conversation to go next. “Jesus, since you are the way to the Father,” Philip says, “please reveal the Father to us RIGHT NOW.” What Jesus says next is so mind-blowing, so profound, it is the answer to not just Philip's question, but to all of reality. Jesus says, “Philip, I've been here the whole time and you still haven't figured it out. By seeing Me, you see the Father, because I and the Father are one and the same.” Did you catch that? Remember, when we're deciding on TRUTH, the authority of the person speaking is the decisive issue. Jesus says He is THE way to the Father. He's not “a” way. He's not one of many ways. He is the one and only way to the Father.

11. We already know that it was “Doubting Thomas” who asked Jesus to show us the way to the Father, prompting Jesus to answer, “I AM the Way.” But what was Philip's follow-up question? And how did Jesus answer? Why is this so important to our discussion on truth?

Again, in our relativistic world, there are a lot of people out there who say their way is the way. But Mohammed never claimed to be God. Buddha never claimed to be God. And certainly none of us have ever made that claim. So none of us have the--here it is--AUTHORITY to make that claim. None of us have the

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authority to say, "It's my way or the highway." Only Jesus can say that because He is God. Only Jesus can say, "It's My way because I'm Yahweh!" And if you think these conversations are powerful, wait till you find out what Jesus said AFTER He comes back from the dead. If you ever wanted to read the most authoritative word ever on the afterlife, look no further than the words of the resurrected Messiah. Here's the thing: Jesus is not just saying He is "The Way." By revealing to Philip that He and the Father are one, Jesus is saying that He's not just THE WAY, He is also OUR DESTINATION. Because, where do we all want to go? What's our final destination? The Father. Well, if Jesus and the Father are one, then once you know Jesus, you've reached your final destination!

12. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the ultimate evidence that Jesus is God. How does this impact His claim to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life?"

I realize this is a lot to take in, so that's why we're going to take an entire series to explore this more fully. Because the truth that Jesus is THE WAY, means that He is the key to our whole life. We no longer see our life as a bunch of separate compartments: here's my family life over here, my work life over here, my church life over here--separate, unrelated compartments. Now our whole life needs to come under THE WAY. But more on that next week.

*"I believe in the sun not just because I see it, but because by it I see everything."
(CS Lewis)*

So in the same way we believe not just because Jesus is the Son of God, but because through Him, now all of reality makes sense. Once your life comes into alignment with Jesus, then He helps you to navigate EVERY area of your life. Now do you see why the Resurrection of Jesus is the greatest day in human history? Relativism is a lie. It's fake news. There is absolute truth. And that is the good news.

13. This series could very well be the most important series of your life up to this moment. Today, we discovered why Jesus establishes absolute Truth. Therefore, He will reveal to us the best Way to Life. Go back and re-read our quote from CS Lewis. What did CS Lewis mean by his profound statement?

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14. How will you align your life with the Truth that has been revealed to you in this week's message?