

I AM

MISSION ADVENTURES

2019 North American Theme Speaker Notes

Session 1: Introduction to the Theme

When we hear, 'I AM', automatically we go to fill in the blank. What comes next? What is the 'label' we choose for ourselves? How do we answer the question of 'I AM'?

Students coming into this week are living in a world of identity confusion. The social constructs that once were a staple, are being changed; boundaries are being questioned, pushed, protested; communities and individuals are living in times of uncertainty, economically and socially. So, what do we do with that?

As we prayed for what God wanted to speak to this year's Mission Adventures participants, we felt that three words summed up the world that they are growing up in: Hopeless, Hidden and Shaken. We prayed into the seven spheres of society (family, government, religion, business, celebration/arts, education and media), and words that came from that included dissatisfied, dissolved, tainted and shady, but also included untapped and creative solutions. This generation is a generation of game changers, of activists, of people born in

a world that is constantly questioning. They are growing up in uncertain times; the traditional family unit is being pulled apart; the government isn't to be trusted; we are flooded with information as news is painted through a skewed lense. But teenagers are searching. They want to know the truth. They are hungry for meaning and searching for something that is bigger than themselves.

In this world that is full of chaos, what does it look like to focus on who the father, son and Holy Spirit is? What does it look like to abandon the world's view of who we are and look at it first through who God is? Who is the I AM? Who are we through the I AM? And how do I relate to the world around me through the knowledge of both of these things?

The passage that we have chosen for this theme is Isaiah 43, in its entirety, with a particular focus on verse 10. We would love for you to unpack this chapter more as we explore together this incredible message on identity.

Isaiah 43:10 "You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may

know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.

Session 2: I AM ... He

Before we can begin to address our identity, we need to look at the identity of our creator. In Genesis, we hear that man was made in the image of God: in the same likeness as He. How can we begin to understand our own identity, if we don't understand God, if we don't understand 'He'?

Isaiah 43 is titled 'Israel's only Saviour', and in it God pours truth about himself out to his people. He calls himself Creator (v.1,15), Redeemer (v.1), Saviour (v.3,11,12), Before and after everything (v.10), God (v.12), All powerful (v.13), King (v.15), Provider (v.20), Forgiver (v.25). Throughout the Bible, God gives Himself many names, including the I AM. What does that mean? How do we convey the importance of the names that God gives himself?

We hear many truths about God in the Old Testament and countless time he also points towards Jesus. Later in Isaiah, it talks about a suffering servant that will come and will be marred beyond human likeness, despised and rejected,

pierced for our transgressions and all our punishment put on him. Isaiah talks about this servant's wounds healing us and receiving a blessing for giving His life (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). In verse 25 of chapter 43, it says 'I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.' These show us that the fact or being of who God is cannot be contained in just one word. He has to explain Himself in many different ways because we are limited in our comprehension. The trinity is a full picture of who God is: father, son and holy spirit. But how do we begin to understand what it means to be all sufficient, all powerful, all knowing?

How awesome is it that God, as big and uncontainable as He is, wants to be in relationship with us, because being made in the image of Him, this is where we are designed to be. When we are able to step back from our small life and get to know the all encompassing persons of who God is, we can fully begin to step into our own identity.

Other Scriptures for Reference

Exodus 3
John 8:58

Session 3: I AM ... His

In today's society, youth are fed information about their identity from so many different platforms, that the truth becomes hard to see. The voices around them are loud. Students learn that love is conditional; that their identity sits in how many likes a picture on social media gets; that in order to be seen or heard, they have to act or look a certain way, they have to be an extreme version of themselves. They are being told that they are only worthy if they are getting enough attention from other people, that their value comes from people around them or the things that they achieve.

They are looking for purpose in a world that's ideas around purpose are changing. They are searching. And finding answers in places other than the Bible.

They find it hard to believe that their purpose comes from their creator. They don't know that they were thought out, planned, prepared for. They don't know that God knew them and loved before they were even born.

You are mine - In verse 1 of our theme passage it says "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." We want to see youth set free in the knowledge that their identity comes from being His, from being in the father. God loves unconditionally, He chooses and adopts into His family (Ephesians 1:4-6). In a time where it feels like family isn't steady or safe, God chooses to adopt us into His family. He doesn't mind that we don't have it all together. He chooses us, as we are, to be welcomed and loved as His own. We have identity in belonging. God doesn't say you have to be perfect to fit into His family, He isn't asking us to have it all together, but He welcomes us as we are. Just like Israel, God, through Jesus, has redeemed us, though we have stumbled or fallen, God is there, saying that he has a seat at his table for us.

You are loved - Through Jesus, we are called worthy to be loved. "Because you are precious in my eyes, and honoured, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life." - Isaiah 43:4. In a society that tells you that you have to work for love, that you have

to act a certain way you won't be loved, this passage is radical. The people of Israel had rebelled against the covenant they had with God and He still redeemed them. Yes, there was a price to pay in their exile. Yet God didn't leave them in judgement but delivers them from exile, and He calls them loved.

You are not alone - In a world where community is dissolving at the same time as it grows, loneliness is an epidemic. It is proven that there is direct correlation between social media use and loneliness, because meaningful social interaction is hard to come by. We are becoming increasingly isolated, and it can be hard to see that we are not alone. In verse 5, God says "Fear not, for I am with you". What would it look like to embrace the company and presence of God in our everyday lives and walk in step with him, even when the world is a lonely place?

Throughout the Bible, God speaks of how he has created us; redeems us; makes us worthy; calls us children in the Kingdom of God; and so on. God speaks so many truths that are opposite to the world

around us. He is the one who created you, knows you, loves you, walks with you and we can have confidence that our identity comes through Him who is the I AM. In today's world it is easy to believe that your identity is dependent on your success, your looks, your friends. It is easy to feel unworthy of love because you aren't "doing" enough, or because you look "different", but God says the opposite of what the world says: That in Him, through the Son, we are redeemed, we are chosen, we are known and we are loved.

How amazing that the creator of the universe has hand designed each one of the Mission Adventures participants? That He has made them in the image of Himself, that He would know and love them as His own!

Other Scriptures for Reference

Ephesians 1:4-6

Jeremiah 1:5-8

Session 4: I AM ... Holy

In Isaiah 43, the Lord reminds his people that he is the one who brought them out of Egypt and he is the one true God. There is none like him. He is the Holy One, their creator, saviour and redeemer.

Throughout the Bible we read about the Holiness of God. His holiness is dangerous, even fatal at times. His holiness is a consuming fire. His holiness is distinctive. In the Old Testament, when God revealed himself to his people, he did so in a way that distinguished himself from all other gods.

In Exodus 33:18-23, Moses asks to see the glory of the Lord, and in His reply the reality of the holiness of our God is told. He is set apart. He is unapproachable, untouchable. Nevertheless, he makes himself not just accessible, but known to us. He is I AM, and I AM is holy.

His holiness has a way of exposing our sin and emphasising the separation between us and God. It makes us aware of our sinfulness and shortcomings, as it should

Yet, do not despair! There is hope! For he delights in showing mercy, and his mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13). He delights in bringing people into relationship with him. Thus, he is the Lord who sanctifies us and makes us holy. In the Old Testament, this atonement required sacrifices and burnt offerings. Only the priests could enter in to the holy of holies. But when the spotless lamb came and laid upon the altar, he paid the ultimate price for our holiness. He suffered and died so that the unholy would be made holy. He died that we might enter in to the holy of holies and experience the fullness of the glory of God and not be consumed.

Thus, if he has made us holy, what does he require of us now? (Matt 9:13, Acts 3:19, Micah 6:6-8, Lev 11:45)

Our God is holy, and we are made holy in him. However, we are participants in this process of sanctification. We rely on the blood of Christ and the power of the spirit, but we must also renew our mind each day. When we are taken in to the holy of holies by the blood of the lamb and when we see the curtain torn,

repentance and restoration should be our heart's cry. To choose life and holiness set before us and to restore others to relationship with the Holy One.

"To be holy as God is holy is not simply to be pure and righteous, but to act toward others with purity and goodness, with truthfulness and honesty, with generosity, justice and love, particularly toward the poor and those who are in no position to help themselves" (Hawthorne, 1998).

In scripture, we can encounter the holiness of God and learn about what it means to be holy as God is holy. Reference passages like Romans 12 and Colossians 3:1-17 to read more about some specific examples of holy living.

Lastly, remember that Jesus is with us in the process. In John 17, Jesus prays to the Father for us that we would be sanctified in the truth of his word and live in him as he lives in us. Now we no longer hide in the cleft of the rock. We boldly approach the throne, and we are called to bring the world with us.

Hawthorne, G. F. (1998). Holy, holiness. In R. P. Martin, & P. H. Davids (Eds.), Dictionary of the later New Testament & its developments . Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press. Retrieved from http://elibrary.johnsonu.edu:2048/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/ivplater/holy_holiness/0?institutionId=7676

Holiness. (2002). In M. J. Selman, M. H. Manser, & S. Travis, Macmillan Dictionary of the Bible . London, UK: Collins. Retrieved from <http://elibrary.johnsonu.edu:2048/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/macdbib/holiness/0?institutionId=7676>

Other Scriptures for Reference

Exodus 33:18-23

2 Samuel 6:7

Romans 12

Genesis 2:3 Leviticus 20:26 Col 3:12-17

James 5

Acts 3:19 1 John 1:9

Session 5: I AM ... With

God is trinity. God is Father; God is Son; and God is Holy Spirit. God is in relationship. Trinity are continuously *with* one another. Their nature is *with*. Their ways are *with*. It was from their “*with-ness*” that they made humans... so that we could join them in their *with*. It seems that from that perfect circle of harmony, belonging, and intimacy Trinity, in loving generosity, has an infinite desire to expand the circle.

We, each of us, are invited into this *with*, we are designed for it, with a built in weakness towards it. We are made to be *with* God, and nothing else can come close. Not that we are God or gods, but that we are God’s. We are magnetically drawn to create family *withs* that reflect the nature of the big capital “W” *With*. Our loves and our lives are meant to demonstrate that *With* and invite others into that *With*.

Yet, living on this side of eternity, we find *with* to be scarce. Intimacy, belonging, acceptance, companionship, and love are in short supply. The vulnerability

required often seems to high a price. We must unlearn the patterns of self-protection and practice the presence of God. We can tune into Trinity and begin with now.

We can practice *with-ness* in the difficulties of every day life, and even in places of darkness and need. We can practice *with-ness* by remembering what the Lord has done in history, and in our own story. In this we reshape and discipline our minds; an act of spiritual worship. We can practice *with-ness* as we walk mindfully of his righteousness on us, and his presence in us.

With Him in What He Does - “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” - Isaiah 43:2

Also Philippians 4:7-9

It’s not that He keeps us from trials or that we are even immune to attacks from the enemy, but instead, the idea is that

the things we face in life do not have to overwhelm us or consume us. Metal and glass have to go through intense fire to be refined before they can be used to their full potential. So this idea of us walking through the fire but not being burned or consumed can also speak that we do not just survive trials, but through them, we become more like Jesus. We are being refined and purified.

With Him in What He Has Done - “This is what the Lord says— he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick” - Isaiah 43:16-17

These verses refer to the exodus from Egypt. God miraculously saved His people. We can have a tendency to forget what God has already done, to be eager to move on to what next and to convince ourselves that He is not moving in our present. In verse 18, we are reminded not to live in this past. We should remember but not rest on what God has already done, we should be

expecting and allowing God to work in new ways. It is important to remember what God has done in order that we can be fully available to what he is doing and will do. The memories serve as an encouragement for what is to come.

With Him in What He Is Doing - “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.” - Isaiah 43:19-21

God is declaring new beginnings. He is referencing the promises given to the Egyptians that he would bring them out of the desert. God doesn't want us to sit stagnant, to be in the wasteland of our lives. He is bringing us new life, he is inviting us to drink of the water that he gives, because that is our purpose, we were formed for Him, that ultimately He would get the glory. He is making new from old.

Another awesome example of these three things comes from 2 Kings 6:15-17. In this story we see an awesome example of how our perception of reality is not the full picture. The physical trials, the times that we feel stuck, the times when we don't see or feel that God is moving are us viewing through our own lense. This week we have talked about how to understand our own identity, we first have to look at who God is. We have a limited view. We can get stuck in tunnel vision. But this passage is calling us to open our eyes to spiritual vision. God is always working throughout the world, and in our lives. The spiritual world is alive and active. We may not always understand our circumstances, but God does not forsake His people. He has proven this time and time again throughout history and He will continue to work this way. We have to choose to be with God in mind and spirit. We are called to closer intimacy, if only we would open our eyes.

Other Scriptures for Reference
Philippians 4:7-9

Session 6: I AM ... Sent

“You are my witnesses, my servant whom I have chosen” - God is calling us represent him; to be his witnesses. We are to stand with Him. We are called to know, to believe, to understand and to speak that He is God and there are no others. We are being called into an epic rap battle, and He is putting us into the ring. So, what do you need before you enter the arena? What do you need to be able to testify and witness to who God is and what He has done in your life?

To Know - Every student knew something about God when they arrived. Everyone had their ideas about who He is, and what relevance He has to their lives. But, through their Mission Adventures experience, they should find that they actually know Him better; not just know about Him.

Witnesses tell the truth as they know it. In court, we swear an oath that we are not giving false testimony. If we are to swear this oath, we first have to know the truth and to gain wisdom. God doesn't want us to fall at the first hurdle,

He wants to equip us to testify to the truth.

A definition of the word ‘know’ is to “have developed a relationship through meeting and spending time with someone; be familiar or friendly with; be aware of through observation, inquiry or information; be absolutely certain or sure about something; recognise something or someone; be able to distinguish one person or thing from another.” Do we know we are known by God? Do we know Him like this? Can we share this knowledge with others?

In Jesus, we see the example of intimacy in the most incredible way. We see a relationship where all parties are fully known, and God invites us to be a part of that intimate relationship (John 10:1-18)

To Believe - We come to believe things based on things that we know. Isaac Newton knew that apples fell from trees, so from that he deduced and came to believe that there are gravitational forces on earth that control the motion of objects both inside and outside of that pull.

There is purpose in believing coming after knowing. God knows that in order to truly believe something, you must know it well, you must feel sure of the truth.

Believing is a product of knowing. It isn't something that we can make ourselves do. Believing in and having faith in come from hearing and knowing (Romans 10:8-17)

To Understand - The definition of ‘understand’, states that it means ‘to perceive the intended meaning, the significance, the explanation or the cause of something; to interpret or view something in a particular way; to be sympathetically aware of the character or nature of.’ We often use ‘understand’ to request certainty. “I want to understand why there is suffering in the world?”. “I want to understand how a loving God could let children die from AIDS”. “I want to understand what job I am specifically called to do”. We want to understand through our earthly lense, through the small box that is our comprehension.

But it isn't about that. God is calling us to understand through the lens that He is the I AM. He goes on to say 'Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the Lord and besides me there is no saviour.

We are called to view life through the understanding that there are no other gods before or after God, and that He is the all encompassing I AM. What does it look like to look at every part of life through that lense? What would it look like to make decisions based on the understanding that God is the I AM? What would it look like to view relationships based on our understanding of who God is?

This is a call beyond our human understanding. Hebrew 11:1-13 and Proverbs 3:5-6 tell of what faith is. These three steps: to know, to believe and to understand, are the calling that God has placed on our lives, this is the purpose that He has given you.

Our students may never actually find themselves in a physical battle beyond this week, a rap battle seems unlikely.

But, they are being called to be God's witnessing to the world, the nations are waiting for their testimony of who God is. Many will have opportunities to travel to different countries, many will stay in the same place, but each will have opportunities to tell of what they know, believe and understand of the I AM. Will they be ready when people ask about the God that they follow?

God has chosen each one to KNOW Him intimately - do they know Him?

God has chosen each one to BELIEVE Him fully - do they believe Him?

God has chosen each one to UNDERSTAND Him and who He is - do they understand?

They have been chosen as witnesses, so how will they represent Him when they are called to the floor?

Through knowing, believing and understanding that God is the I AM, we are able to step into that battle in a way that sets us apart from the world. 2 Corinthians 10:3 "For though we live in

the world, we do not wage war as the world does."