GodQuest

SERMON 1: THE QUEST

Text: John 14:1–6

[Before the service, tape or somehow affix one-, five-, and ten-dollar bills under several of the chairs/pews in your auditorium. You might also open the sermon with the Signpost 1 video sermon introduction on your Church Leader Resource DVD.]

Every day is a special day here at _____ Church, and today is no different. Some of us entered this building, this room, with many things on our minds:

- Work
- Family
- Finances
- All kinds of things

Others entered expectantly, actively looking for an encounter with God, planning to seek Him and find Him in worship. Others among us may not really be sure why we're here. Maybe someone invited you, maybe you just showed up on a whim, or maybe you came out of curiosity.

Whatever is the case with you, I have great hopes that in a few moments, we will all be going the same direction, pursuing a single goal, engaged in a common quest. Because, before anyone entered this place, I went through this auditorium and placed under certain seats a one-dollar bill … and under other seats a five-dollar bill … and under some a ten-dollar bill.

Some of you are already reaching under your seats. Some are wondering if I'm joking … I'm not. So go ahead, check it out … see if there's some money under where you're sitting!

[Pause, let folks look, wait until everyone has had a chance to search.]

Now, please, no fistfights—don't anybody try to claim money that wasn't under your seat! OK, settle down, everyone, and let's see if I can get back some semblance of control here.

If you DID find something, just lift it and wave it in the air so those around you will know I was telling the truth! All right, thank you. Put your hands down.

That money is yours to keep. Consider it my gift to you. You can thank me later.

Now, is there anyone here who DIDN'T EVEN CHECK under your seat?

[Wait for response.]

As you might guess, I did that for a reason. Jesus once compared the kingdom of God to a merchant searching for fine pearls and to a man who discovered treasure buried in a field. He

portrayed it as something worth seeking, as something that could be found, as something that was worth any price on earth to obtain.

That is the idea behind the series of studies from God's Word, the Bible, that we are launching today. It's called *GodQuest*, and it's a multifaceted journey of discovery that we'll be taking the next six weeks in our worship, in small groups, in the youth and children's programs, and in our individual lives as well.

You can participate in this journey in numerous ways. You can obtain **helpful aids, including**

- **A nonfiction book, *GodQuest***
- **An exciting novel**
- **Helpful journals for adults and teens**
- **And more …**

Just stop by the information table after this service and find out more.

Through it all, we are going to explore some of the most important, most difficult, and most pressing life questions:

- **Can truth be known?**
- **Does God exist?**
- **Can we trust the Bible?**
- **Why is there evil and suffering?**
- **And more …**

And when it's all over six weeks from now, I believe we'll all be at a place we never knew we could get, REGARDLESS of where we may be starting from.

One of the characters in the novel *The Quest* says, **"Everyone is searching; not everyone knows it." I think that's true.** Just as a few minutes ago, everyone here was looking for something, so it is in life. Everyone is searching, but not everyone knows it. Everyone is on a quest; not everyone realizes it. Every soul is seeking the same thing, longing for the same thing, but some aren't even aware of it. And I think our common quest involves those pressing life questions I mentioned a minute ago, and our common destination can be found on the other side of those questions.

So let's get started. I'd like to ask you to turn in your Bibles to the **Gospel of John, chapter 14**.

The first verses of this chapter kind of set the stage for our quest, as they depict the disciples of Jesus—His closest friends and followers—being told by Jesus that He was scouting out the path for them, that He would be their bellwether, their pathfinder, in the quest we'll be studying these next six weeks. Turn there with me and follow along.

> *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to*

> *prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."*
>
> *Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"*
>
> *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* —John 14:1–6 NIV

Now, let me explain: In the flow of the Gospel of John, Jesus is speaking these words in the days prior to His crucifixion. He's preparing his disciples for His death, resurrection, and ascension. And you can see from Thomas's reaction that he—and probably the rest of the disciples—were bothered when Jesus said He would be leaving them.

But Jesus said, in effect, "Don't worry; you know the way." Thomas answered, in effect, "How can you say that? We *don't* know the way." And Jesus answered—don't miss this—*"I am the way …"*

In other words, **Jesus doesn't just KNOW the way; He IS the way. Jesus doesn't just GO the way; He IS the way. Jesus doesn't just SHOW the way; He IS the way.**

And not only that, He said:

> *"I am the way and the truth and the life."* —John 14:6 (NIV)

We're going to spend some time on that second statement, "I am the … truth," because that's a key starting point on this *GodQuest*.

As He so often did, Jesus made a simple, straightforward statement that day that spoke VOLUMES to the people of His day and likewise speaks volumes to us in our day. In fact, **Jesus said three things that are as relevant and applicable to us as they were to Thomas and the other disciples those many years ago.**

1. **I can know that truth exists.**

When Jesus told Thomas, "I am the way and the truth and the life," He was not only making a true statement; He was making a true statement about truth!

Here is where the easy believism or benign "whatever-ism" of many of our friends and neighbors breaks down. A lot of folks will say that "Jesus is just all right with me," you know, that **Jesus was a great man and an inspirational philosopher whose teachings ought to be followed … but they will also tend to say that there is no right and wrong**, there is no true or false, and truth is just "whatever," you know? Truth is whatever I say it is, and YOUR truth is whatever YOU say it is.

But there is an obvious problem with that: **Jesus taught that truth exists!** Jesus did not treat truth as a personal preference; He spoke of it as an objective reality. He could have said, "I am the truth … for me." He could have said, "I am the truth … for you." He could have said, "I am the truth … if you want me to be." But He didn't say any of those things. He said, "I am the … truth."

Listen, if I say to you, “I am a mammal,” would you not assume that I’m saying that mammals exist? If I were to tell you, “I am a pastor,” would you not suppose that I’m saying that there IS such a thing as a pastor? So of course when Jesus says, “I am the truth,” we can understand His clear intention is to say that truth exists.

But that is not all His statement tells us.

2. **I can know the truth.**

When Jesus told Thomas, “I am the … truth,” remember that He had begun the conversation by referring to a place of knowing and being that would be accessible to His followers because He was going on ahead of them. And He would have us understand the same thing about truth.

You see, there are many people in our families, neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools who do not think truth can be truly known. As *GodQuest* author Sean McDowell says on the *GodQuest* DVD:

> *A skeptic said to me one time, “You can’t know truth.” Ironically, to claim that you can’t know truth is to claim to know something about the world, namely, that truth can’t be known. But this is hopelessly contradictory. How could someone know that they can’t know truth? To those who claim truth can’t be known, I like to ask them if they have really gone on a deliberate quest for truth? Have they considered the scientific, philosophical, historical, and experiential evidence for Jesus—who claimed to be the truth? Jesus said*, *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”* —Matthew 7:7–8 (NIV)

[You may choose to instead play this portion of the *GodQuest* Resource DVD from Signpost 1, packaged inside the *GodQuest* DVD-based Study in your Church Kit.]

According to Jesus, truth can be known. He said:

> *“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* —John 8:31–32

Did you catch that? “You will **KNOW** the truth.” According to Jesus, **you and I not only CAN know the truth; we WILL know the truth if we are really His disciples.** And that leads us to one final thing Jesus’ answer to Thomas says:

3. I can live in relationship with the truth.

When Jesus told Thomas, “I am the … truth,” He wasn’t primarily making a philosophical statement. He was making a personal statement. It started with the word *I*.

Some in this room are old enough to remember the science fiction television series *The X-Files.* The show spawned a catchphrase that became famous: “The truth is out there.”

But according to Jesus, that’s not quite accurate. **According to Jesus, the truth is NOT “out there”…it’s “in *here*,” that is, in *HIM*.** Jesus’ answer to Thomas’ confusion was to define truth not as a concept, not as an idea, not even as a principle, but as a PERSON … the person of Jesus Himself. The truth is found in Him.

He did not say, “I believe in the truth.” He did not say, “I know the truth.” He did not say, “I can show you the truth.” He said, “I am the … truth.” He said, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” He said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

If you are here this morning as a sincere seeker after God, I invite you to reach out, to take Jesus at His word and find the object of your heart’s quest in Him. You can do that by **praying a simple prayer,** silently, along with me right now.

Say, “Jesus, You say to ask and I will receive. You say to seek and I will find, to knock and the door will be opened. So I ask. I seek. I knock. Please meet me here. I confess that I am a sinner, like everyone else here. I am ready to turn away from my sin and to receive You into my heart and life. I accept your sacrifice on the cross as payment for all the wrong things I’ve done. I turn my life over to your control and ask You to come into my heart and take charge from now on. Amen.”

Now, **if you’ve prayed that prayer, the Bible says you’re a totally new creation** and a brand-new follower of Jesus Christ. I would welcome the opportunity to meet you and pray with you after this service. And for all of us, let’s pray together:

“Lord Jesus, thank You for your words reminding us today that You are indeed the way, the truth, and the life. Help us—each one—to apply those words by following You the Way, believing You the Truth, and living through You the Life. Amen.”