

The AUDACITY of JESUS:

Embracing His Offensive Identity

Almost everyone has an opinion on who Jesus is. Some say he was a brilliant teacher, a great prophet, or an ethical role model. The only problem with these ideas is that Jesus never claimed to be any of those things; instead, he insisted - repeatedly - that he is God. Few people accepted his bold claim - that he was the one true God in flesh - was offensive, and some accepted it, while others turned back and no longer followed him. (John 6:66) All month long in February, The Story Church will explore the audacious claims that Jesus made about himself in His own words. These controversial statements will leave us with two choices: to take him at his word and accept he is God, or to reject his divine identity and dismiss him as a fraud.

February 15, 2026 - I Am the Light of the World

With this message series, we're focusing on the audacious claims of Jesus. Let's begin with a definition:

AUDACITY (noun) - courage or confidence of a kind that other people find shocking or rude

Has anything that Jesus said or did ever offended or shocked you? If so, what was it? Why did it offend you?

In a recent survey released by *The Spectator*, teenagers read the words and deeds of Jesus. Their takeaway:



Why do you suppose these teens got the impression that Jesus has a “God complex”?

What was the significance of Jesus’ “I AM” statements in the Gospel of John?

John 8:12 - When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

What event was happening in Jerusalem at this time (see John 7:2)? Why would Jesus’ reference to “light” have been significant in that context?

When Jesus said this, the temperature in the room went way up. **Why? Why were Jesus’ critics so offended when he claimed to be “the light of the world”?** (See Psalm 27:1, Isaiah 9:2, 42:6, and 60:19-20)

John 8:31-38 - To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus 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.” They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?” Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.”

How did Jesus offend his audience in this passage?

What does it mean to be a “slave to sin”, and how can we be set free? (See Romans 6:5-14 and Galatians 5:1)

Some in Jesus’ audience claimed that Abraham was their father. **What did Jesus imply in v.38 about their real father?**

John 8:39-47 - “Abraham is our father,” they answered. “If you were Abraham’s children,” said Jesus, “then you would do what Abraham did. As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the works of your own father.” “We are not

illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.” Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”

With his first “I AM” statement (“I am the bread of life”) Jesus called out people’s APPETITES. **What was Jesus calling out with his second “I AM” statement, and why was it even more offensive to many in his audience?**

The Jewish leaders IDENTIFIED themselves with Abraham, and they took pride in their IDENTITY. **How would you describe your IDENTITY? When you introduce yourself to strangers, what do you lead with?**

- **John 8:53-59** - Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?” Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!” “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

In v.58, Jesus slipped in another, lesser-known “I AM” statement. **What was it? What was Jesus saying about himself?**

What habits, attitudes, and assumptions would change about your life if you truly believed in and accepted Jesus for who he is? What, if anything, is holding you back?



Ash Wednesday Worship

Join us THIS Wednesday, February 18 at 7pm for a special time of teaching and worship to mark the start of the season of Lent. Nursery care available for ages 4 and under. Learn more: thestory.church/events



Women's Retreat with Wendy Speake

Save the date to join us for a spring women's retreat on Saturday, March 21 from 10am to 2:30pm! This retreat is open to women of all ages and life stages. Learn more and register: thestory.church/events



Merge Premarital Class

Our next 6-week Merge class begins on Tuesday, February 24 at 6:30pm, and is open to couples who are engaged or seriously dating. Merge is also required for any couples seeking to be married at The Story in the next year. Register: thestory.church/groups