

What would Jesus say to...

SERMON SERIES



Will.i.am

What would Jesus say to... Reminders

Each of these messages can be tailored towards a Gospel presentation and our hope is that they will be used to engage with those on the fringe of the Church.

Each 'character' we are exploring is a real person. Let's remember that as we speak. It's important that these sermons are not used to slam people but to affirm God given attributes and speak into their lives. Think about three positive things we can say for every one thing we might like to see change.

This sermon series should also help equip Christians in two distinct ways. Firstly, they should help us think about how we engage in faith conversation with friends. Secondly, they help us see that our faith is not only about a Sunday morning meeting but about how we engage with all of life.

Background Information

(from the following websites: will.i.am/, <http://www.biography.com/people/will-i-am-21317151> and http://www.popsugar.com.au/celebrity/Facts-About-iam-Songs-iam-Has-Written-Produced-34876588?utm_campaign=social_share_button_d#photo-10)

"I'm just a guy who is passionate about music, and people have gravitated to what I put out there." – *will.i.am*

Synopsis

Born on March 15, 1975, in Los Angeles, California, will.i.am is a hit-making solo artist and founding member of the Grammy Award-winning group the Black Eyed Peas. The multitalented singer has also excelled as a songwriter and producer. Outside of the music biz, will.i.am dabbles in fashion, acting, technology, business and social activism.

Early Life

Will.i.am was born William J. Adams on March 15, 1975, in Los Angeles, California. His mother, Debra, raised him alone after his father abandoned the family. Will.i.am grew up in a housing project, which he described to the Daily Beast as being "raised in the ghetto, on welfare, two minutes from homeless." Having music as an outlet helped him look beyond his bleak surroundings. While in high school, will.i.am met Allen Pineda (stage name: apl.de.ap). The two combined their hip-hop and break-dancing styles to form the rap group Atban Klann with several others. They were signed in 1992 to Eazy-E's Ruthless Records label.

The Black Eyed Peas

In 1995, will.i.am renamed the group the Black Eyed Peas. Two years later, they made it to the radio with "Request Line," a collaboration with Macy Gray. After working with Gray, the band realized a feminine touch was missing, and singer Kim Hill temporarily joined the lineup before Stacy "Fergie" Ferguson became a permanent fixture. Her mighty vocals paved the way to stardom. Their 2003 album, *Elephunk*, soared thanks to the track "Where Is the Love," featuring Justin Timberlake. With will.i.am leading the charge as front man, producer and songwriter, more hits followed, including "I Gotta Feeling," "Boom Boom Pow" and "Let's Get It Started." By 2013, the foursome had earned three

Grammy Awards and sold 31 million albums worldwide – making them one of the best-selling artists/groups of all time.

Solo Artist and Producer

When not focused on the Black Eyed Peas, will.i.am has produced music for some of the biggest stars in the world like Rihanna, Michael Jackson, Justin Timberlake, Ricky Martin, Mariah Carey, Usher, Nicki Minaj, Cheryl Cole, Diddy, Ciara, Chris Brown, Britney Spears, Shaggy, Flo Rida, Estelle and U2 to name just a few. He even produced for his bandmate Fergie, when she struck out on her own. Fergie's success prompted the producer to follow suit in 2007 with his own album, *Songs About Girls*. Three other individual albums followed, including the super popular *#willpower* in April 2013, which included the duets "ThatPOWER" with Justin Bieber, "Fall Down" with Miley Cyrus and "Scream & Shout" with Britney Spears.

In total will.i.am has won 7 Grammy Awards, and is the first recording artist to send a song to Mars in conjunction with NASA's Curiosity Mars Space Lab. Space and music industry firsts were achieved on August 28, 2012 when "Reach For The Stars (Mars Edition)" was played back from Mars during a youth education event hosted by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Acting, Fashion, TV and Business

Musician is not the only professional hat that will.i.am wears. There's acting as well, including a co-starring role with Hugh Jackman in the 2009 blockbuster *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*. He's also appeared in educational TV specials, *American Idol*, *The X Factor* and served as a coach on the reality competition shows *The Voice UK* (2012, 2013, 2014) and *The Voice Australia* (2014).

Will.i.am has also played in the fashion space, even taking classes at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising. He's released several lines like *EKOCYCLE*, which incorporates recycled plastic bottles. Technology is yet another of his fortes: Will.i.am serves as a shareholder in Beats Electronics and as a director of creative innovation at Intel, and has put out his own line of camera accessories.

Technology

Technology is infused into the world of will.i.am as an essential element. It powers everything that he does. As the Director of Creative Innovation for Intel, will.i.am conceptualizes the next frontier of interactive technology by acting as an idea generator. Earlier this year, will.i.am debuted the first song on another planet, premiering his song, "Reach for the Stars" from Mars to mark the successful landing of NASA's Curiosity rover. His interest in the interplay between digital photography and augmented technology, will.i.am also created the i.am+ *foto.soho*, an iPhone case that dramatically improves the quality and social aspects of the built-in camera.

Activism and the Future

This renaissance celebrity isn't about just profit but also politics, change and social activism. He created songs and a website to support Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. His innovative music video for the song "Yes We Can," featuring snippets from Obama's speeches, won an Emmy and a Clio award. In addition, will.i.am runs his *i.m.angel* foundation to support education. Its *i.am.steam* initiative to expose underserved students to learning opportunities outside the classroom earned him recognition as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2013.

Philanthropy

For will.i.am, philanthropy is a top priority in everything that he does. With a commitment to inspire kids to stay in school and go to college to become the leaders of tomorrow, will.i.am advocates regarding the importance and power of a good education through his i.am angel foundation. The i.am scholarship provides future leaders and innovators with comprehensive financial assistance to complete post-secondary education. The i.am.angel Foundation has also created i.am.STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math), an elementary and middle school initiative to provide underserved students with learning and interaction opportunities beyond the classroom in collaboration with Discovery Education. In addition, the i.am angel foundation is also active in the U.K. through a STEM education and computer skills joint initiative with The Prince's Trust.

Entrepreneurship

will.i.am is a founding shareholder in Beats Electronics, the creators of Beats by Dre™ headphones. Leveraging his experience in the consumer electronics industry, will.i.am hosted the world premiere introduction of his i.am+ foto.sosho camera accessory for iPhone4/4s and iPhone 5 in London in November, 2012. Fusing the worlds of fashion, photography and mobile lifestyle, the i.am+ foto.sosho camera accessory line debuted in December, 2012 at retail, available exclusively at Selfridges & Co. department store in the UK.

As a musician, producer, director and advocate for education, he is an enthusiastic user of technologies in both his professional and personal lives. In recognition of his ability to harness technology to enhance entertainment, creativity and communication, Intel Corporation appointed will as Director of Creative Innovation in 2011.

In collaboration with The Coca-Cola Company, will.i.am is on a mission to elevate the importance of recycling and to turn waste into a valued commodity through his EKOCYCLE brand. Launched in July, 2012, EKOCYCLE gives consumers an array of stylish options when shopping for co-branded fashion apparel, accessories and sporting goods that incorporate recycled plastic bottles.

What's coming up for the ridiculously busy will.i.am? If the rumors are true, the next accomplishment to check off his list will be American Idol judge.

10 things about will.i.am

1. He was born in Los Angeles, California in 1975
2. His mother, Debra, raised him alone in a ghetto after his father abandoned the family
3. His full name is William James Adam, Junior
4. He started the band Black-Eyed Peas with a friend he made in high school named Allen Pineda (stage name: apl.de.ap)
5. He's won 7 Grammy awards, and has produced music for Justin Timberlake, Usher, U2, Rihanna and Michael Jackson.
6. He is the first recording artist to send a song to Mars in conjunction with NASA's Curiosity Mars Space Lab.
7. He has tinnitus from being exposed to loud music over long periods of time. He also has ADHD.

8. Aside from music, he has ventured into fashion, acting, technology, business and social activism
9. He loves England! Loves the cold weather so he can wear more clothes :)
10. Philanthropy is a top priority in everything he does: his i.am.angel foundation seeks to transform lives through education, inspiration and opportunity

What would Jesus say to will.i.am?

1. "I care about the poor and disadvantaged too"

- will.i.am grew up in a ghetto among the poor and disadvantaged. Now that he is famous and wealthy, philanthropy is a top priority in all he does:
 - He set up the i.am.angel foundation to help transform the youth community in the neighbourhood he grew up in
 - in response to the foreclosure crisis, the foundation has launched the i.am home program which works to improve financial literacy and provides grants to help qualifying struggling families
 - will.i.am has been quoted as saying:
 - I rescue families who are losing their homes because they have no jobs and they can't pay the mortgage and the banks are foreclosing on their homes.
 - Philanthropy is part of my DNA.
 - Philanthropy is something I am obligated to do.
 - Philanthropy is the thing that I am really excited about, and having success means I can do more.
- Philanthropy (from Greek φιλανθρωπία) etymologically means "love of humanity" in the sense of caring, nourishing, developing and enhancing "what it is to be human" on both the benefactors' (by identifying and exercising their values in giving and volunteering) and beneficiaries' (by benefiting) parts.
- Jesus too was friends with the poor and afflicted, much like those will.i.am must have grown up with. Jesus cares about the ghettos...about the lack of education and the violence and the social injustices seen in these parts of the world.
- Jesus personified the Father's "love for humanity", embodied "what it is to be human" and gave His life for the care, nourishment and development of our humanity. Hebrew understanding of salvation is "a restoration to everything it means to be fully human".
- Jesus would affirm will.i.am's commitment to helping the poor and disadvantaged, even pointing out that whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)
- It was Jesus' legacy and the practice of early Christians that transformed the view of charity in the Roman world. Emperor Julian, observing how Christians cared for Roman citizens (including adopting Roman babies abandoned outside city walls to die) said: For it is disgraceful when no Jew is a beggar and the impious Galileans [the name given by Julian to Christians] support our poor in

addition to their own.

- Jesus would also affirm will.i.am's view that "having more success means I can do more". This echoes a Biblical vision of stewardship: everything we have comes from God, and what we have enables us to bring the Kingdom into areas and lives where it is needed.
- Jesus said:
 - "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 28:20)
 - "The greatest among you will be your servant". (Matthew 23:11)
 - "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

2. "Keep walking the talk"

- will.i.am is a wordsmith, renowned for his creative and quirky use of words. He talks a good game. But he also walks a good game. He is big on action. In his own words:
 - I will not start an initiative until I've spent my own money. Because if I spend my own money, people who want to get on board afterwards know that I am serious about it. (In 2012 he donated the £500,000 appearance fee the BBC paid him to be a judge on The Voice to the Prince's Trust to help develop young people's skills in Brixton and east London, with the focus on technology).
 - I don't want to hope anymore. I don't think we should hope anymore. We hoped enough. Now we have to do. We all have to do now.
- Just like will.i.am, Jesus was very clear and specific about putting action to our faith – walking the talk:
 - As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. (Luke 6:47,48)
 - Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. (John 13:17)
- James 2:17 adds In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.
- Jesus saved His harshest words for the hypocrites – those who talked the talk, but didn't walk the walk. He'd say to will.i.am: "Keep walking the talk".

3. "Let's reach for the stars"

- will.i.am is extremely futuristic. He has some wild and creative ideas.
- As part of his joint passion for music and technology, will.i.am became the first recording artist to send a song to Mars in conjunction with NASA's Curiosity Mars Space Lab. Space and music industry firsts were achieved on August 28, 2012 when "Reach For The Stars (Mars Edition)" was played back from Mars during a youth education event hosted by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. A section of the song's lyrics go:

Why they say the sky is the limit
When I've seen the footprints on the moon
Why they say the sky is the limit
When I've seen the footprints on the moon
And I know the sky might be high
But baby it ain't really that high
And I know that mars might be far
But baby it ain't really that far
Let's reach for the stars
Reach for the stars

- These lyrics capture a fundamental tenet of will.i.am's philosophy in life. He has not allowed his disadvantaged background (including the lack of a father) to define him. He has looked forward, dreamed big and achieved a lot. He has used his God-given gifts to accomplish much. He consistently encourages others to dream big too.
- God the Father wants to break us free from things in our past that hold us back and to encourage us, like Abraham, to look up to the stars and get a big dream from Him.
- He has created every one of us for greatness. But not as the world, and perhaps even will.i.am, measures greatness. And He has shaped us for significance, placing unique gifts in each one of us to be used for His glory.
- So Jesus would commend will.i.am for reaching for the stars – not being defined by the past, but dreaming big and aspiring to make the most of his life.
- But he would also point out that worldly success doesn't equate to success in the Father's eyes:
- Mark 8:36 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?
- Jesus would invite will.i.am to use his gifts for the furtherance of the Kingdom, and to store up for yourself treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20). He would remind him that If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)
- Jesus would say "I love your creativity and I value your efforts to affect change in society, but I want you to know that it is I who have given you a bright future. Your hope should be in me."
- Mark 9:23 "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."
- It's great that your song was the first to be played on Mars, but remember that I created Mars – and every other planet, star and comet in the universe! Your dreams should come from Me and centre on Me and My plans for the world.
- Jesus would remind will.i.am that the way up is the way down – just as Jesus laid His own life down for others. Jesus would say "Let's reach for the stars... together!" – My dreams for you, My path for you, My presence with you.

4. "I love your evangelistic zeal, just focus it on Me"

- will.i.am's life story is a reflection of redemption. His father abandoned the family when he was a baby. His mother raised him in a housing project full of gangs, drugs and drive-by shootings, and encouraged him to be unique and to avoid conforming to the tendencies of the other youth

in his neighbourhood on the east side of Los Angeles. She encouraged him to begin working on his musical career by sending him to public schools in affluent West Los Angeles. His mother's actions set up the opportunity for his musical career, which was the launch pad for his ventures into the world of technology. He sees technology as a means to "salvation", and has gone back to the troubled neighbourhood he grew up in to seek to educate and equip young people in their technological expertise.

- His website says:
 - Technology is infused into the world of will.i.am as an essential element. It powers everything that he does. As the Director of Creative Innovation for Intel, will.i.am conceptualizes the next frontier of interactive technology by acting as an idea generator. His interest in the interplay between digital photography and augmented technology, will.i.am also created the i.am+ foto.soho, an iPhone case that dramatically improves the quality and social aspects of the built-in camera.
- Technology has had a big impact on will.i.am's life, and he believes technology can change people's lives. In fact, will.i.am is an evangelist...
 - An article in the Guardian, December 2012 carried the following:
Music has been the launch pad for will.i.am's success, but it's now just one strand of his burgeoning empire. He's become a technology evangelist, a speaker at the most prestigious gatherings of the world's elite – the Clinton Global Initiative, Google events – he's developed and launched his own range of iPhone accessories, he has his own charitable foundations paying for kids to go through college and bailing out people's mortgages.
- He was quoted at the World Economic Forum in Davos as saying:

"Get kids equipped and skilled in the biggest thing in the world right now, and that's technology. It encourages people to put their mind in things that allow people to connect and live fruitful, full lives via the technology that they bring to market".
- Jesus might point out to will.i.am that technology is great, and can help connect people and spread messages, including the Good News, but ultimately there is something greater than technology. That ultimately it's not technology that brings fullness of life, but rather "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full". (John 10:10)
- Jesus would encourage will.i.am to hold on to his evangelistic zeal, and vision to change the world, but to steer it towards the Gospel – the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).
- 1 Peter 3:14,15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.
- We are called as disciples to submit our lives to the Lordship of Jesus. This produces transformed lives that are evident to others, so that the world will take notice and ask us for the reason for the hope we have.

5. "Let me introduce you to our Father"

- will.i.am never knew his father, who abandoned the family. He says he was very well loved and has been extremely blessed with people who love him, but he has no idea what it would be like to have a father.
- Jesus would tell will.i.am that he knows the sting of being abandoned by those closest to Him – his closest friends – and even being misunderstood by his own family
- Even though will.i.am has expressed no desire to know his earthly father, Jesus would point him to a perfect Father who "loved the world so much that he gave his only Son..." (John 3:16), one who is "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling (Psalm 68).
- Reference the father's lavish love and grace in parable of the prodigal son?
- Jesus would say: Right now you're will.i.am – let me introduce you to "the Great I am" – "I am that I am"... you can get to know Him personally through Me. And when you know whose you are, you find out who you are
- Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1:13)
- Use this as a platform to share the Gospel, and invite people into a living relationship with a perfect, loving Father

Creative Input

- Segments from interview with will.i.am at World Economic Forum 2015 in Davos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teCYYd0rjQI&feature=youtu.be>
- Pictures of the various gadgets will.i.am has developed, or various outrageous outfits he has worn

Interesting articles/sources

1. www.theguardian.com/music/2012/dec/15/will-i-am-want-to-write-code
2. www.theguardian.com/lifestyle/2013/apr/27/will-i-am-interview
3. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/9694250/Will.i.am-the-evangelist-for-technology-is-dreaming-what-the-future-will-be.html>
4. <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1443238/bio>
5. www.cnn.com/id/101021730 (video interview)
6. <http://youtu.be/F1iMHRK6EdU> (video from 2013)
7. <https://youtu.be/teCYYd0rjQI> (35 minute video from 2015. THIS IS AWESOME!) <http://youtu.be/F1iMHRK6EdU>

Quotes

(found on IMDB and other interviews)

- I was born and raised in the ghetto, on welfare, two minutes from homeless.
- We're from the projects - East L.A. On welfare the majority of our lives. A lot of my friends are dead and in prison, just like any urban person that comes from areas like I'm from. But my grandma was super-grandma. Ain't nobody mess with our family in my neighbourhood because everybody loved my grandma. She was the one that prayed for everybody. We were one of the first families in the projects. And I moved them out. Music allowed me.
- I was born and raised in East Los Angeles by a single mom who had three biological kids and adopted four more. I never met my dad.
- Philanthropy is the thing that I am really excited about, and having success means I can do more.
- I don't want to hope anymore. I don't think we should hope anymore. We hoped enough. Now we have to do. We all have to do now.
- It should be mandatory that you understand computer science.
- I don't follow waves or trends or emotions.
- Music is my therapy and my straitjacket. Music keeps me sane and keeps my mind on something. It's fragile up there.
- If you live in a ghetto and really want not to just change your life and your family's life but change your ghetto's life, make your ghetto a good neighbourhood, learn science; try to be like Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates and Steve Jobs.
- If you know how to freestyle, you will never have writer's block.
- I will not start an initiative until I've spent my own money. Because if I spend my own money, people who want to get on board afterwards know that I am serious about it.
- I don't want to be on stage when I'm 57, talking about... 'Let's Get It Started.'

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