



## Centering Jesus: Seeing Jesus at the Heart of Scripture

### A Four-Part Bible Study

#### Session One

#### Abraham: Sojourn and Sacrifice

The Bible is not just a series of isolated stories. It is one book that describes the love of God and His plan of redemption, centered on Jesus Christ. He is the focus of all Scripture, and every part of God's Word points to Him. Figures in the Old and New Testaments connect to Christ in the same way that every aspect of our lives should. This Bible study series guides youth to understand how Jesus truly is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2). Through Scripture exploration and group discussion, your youth will consider how Jesus does not just appear in the Gospels, but can be found throughout the Bible, demonstrating God's plan and presence throughout history.

**Note for Leaders:** As we examine these Old Testament figures, it's important to look at the stories through a "Jesus-colored lens." We want to guide teens to truly understand God's faithfulness through His broad plan for salvation. This happens when we dig into what Scripture says, rather than trying to impose our own agenda on the Bible or merely "squeeze Jesus in" according to our purposes. Be aware of this as you lead discussion.

**Lesson Focus:** In this lesson, teens will examine how the life of Abraham connects to Jesus. Abraham lived in tents and temporary homes, just as Jesus lived temporarily on Earth during the Incarnation. Abraham trusted God's promises, even to the point of sacrificing his son. Jesus obeyed God to the point of death and sacrificed Himself for us. God established a covenant with Abraham and promised that his descendants would be a chosen race. In Jesus, we see the New Covenant established, offering all people the opportunity to be children of God.

#### Opening Activity:

Depending on the size and make-up of your group, select one of the following opening activities to spark conversation and prepare for topic discussion.

- **Tent-pitching race:** have teens work together to put up a small tent in the center of the room. This can be done as a group effort or in competitive fashion with pairs or groups racing to see who sets up the tent the fastest. For added challenge, have teens carry the tents to different parts of the church building to set them up. Discuss the call of Abraham and how God instructed him to move to an unknown land and set up camp.



- Guess how many? Recall the promise God gave Abraham that his descendants would be an unimaginable number. Look at a collection of something extremely small, such as sand grains or glitter specks. If you'd rather turn it into an estimation game, fill a jar with something you can count (M&M's or marbles, for instance), and have teens take guesses at how many items are within. Talk about the covenant between the Lord and his servant.
- "Father Abraham": Revive an old classic (loved by all ages!) with some rousing rounds of the song "Father Abraham."

### Scripture Exploration:

Examine Bible passages to consider how Abraham connects to Christ. If you have a large group, it might be helpful to divide teens into pairs or groups of 3-4, and have each smaller group take a passage or two to discuss in depth and describe for others. Smaller youth groups might benefit from reading all of the passages together and discussing as a group.

Designate a scribe for small groups or the whole group and create a simple chart to consider how the events in Abraham's life are an echoed of what we see in Jesus. Separate a piece of paper into two sides. On one side, summarize what is happening to Abraham in the verses. On the other side of the paper, write down how Jesus is reflected in the verses. How was His experience similar or different? How can we see the promises of God to Abraham fulfilled in Jesus?

Choose a few passages, depending on timing and the size of your group. Notes for leaders to consider are included with each passage. Some potential verses to contemplate include:

- Genesis 12:1-9  
*This passage describes the call of Abram and how he trusted God. God made a covenant with him and promised to bless him. Nations were to be blessed by Abram, just as all nations are blessed in Christ. Abram followed God's instruction without knowing final outcomes. Jesus knew the outcome, but did follow His Father's will, including death on the cross for us.*
- Genesis 15:1-6  
*God promised to bless Abram and give him countless descendants, and Abram believed. Jesus comes from this line and is the ultimate heir of the inheritance promised to Abram. Through Jesus's perfect life, death, and resurrection Abram and all those who believe are saved.*
- Genesis 15:13-16  
*God told Abram that the people would be sojourners in a foreign land. Christ was in a sense journeying through Earth with "nowhere to lay his head" – Matthew 8:20. We are journeying through Earth as a temporary home before Heaven.*
- Genesis 22:1-14  
*Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son, Isaac; Jesus gave His life and made the ultimate sacrifice for us.*
- Romans 4:16-25  
*Abraham believed, hoped, and had faith in God's promises, which were fulfilled. It wasn't good works that made Abraham "the father of many nations", but it was God's good gift to him. Jesus was doubted and questioned by others, including those who should have seen him as the Messiah. Jesus was tempted, but unlike Abraham or us, Jesus was perfect. Abraham was also willing to trust in God no matter what,*



*just as Christ obeyed and honored His Heavenly Father. We can endure knowing that God is faithful and will keep whatever promises He makes to us, as He kept the ultimate promise of sending Jesus.*

- Hebrews 12:1-2

*Connect back to Jesus as the founder and perfecter of our faith. He endured the cross so that we might have life and salvation.*

### **Discussion and Application:**

After teens have the chance to consider the various passages of Scripture, take some time to discuss themes further with guided questions. Here are some suggested questions.

1. Abraham was something of an exile or wanderer. How do our lives relate to this concept? How are we not fully at home in this life?

*Answers may vary. Guide teens to consider that while we can work for God and serve Him with our lives, ultimately we are created for Heaven and await the Resurrection and our new bodies. The encouraging thought here is that when life is difficult or we don't feel like we fit in, we can know that we are made for more than just this life.*

2. Abraham trusted in God's promises and believed he would have numerous descendants. How do we know that we can trust God's promises?

*We see His faithfulness throughout Scripture, and most notably see His promises fulfilled in the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. We know that, even when others in life let us down, God never will.*

3. Consider the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22. How does this relate to the sacrifice of Jesus? Why is it important for our faith?

*There are many details that could be covered here. Teens might need help finding relevant details with this event. Some elements to point out include:*

- The wood carried by Isaac, similar to cross carried by Christ.
- The ram provided by God to take Isaac's place, just as Jesus was provided to take our place.
- The giving of a son as God gave His Son. This is important because Jesus did sacrifice Himself for us, and because of that we have forgiveness of sins.

### **Additional Resources:**

*Christ in the Old Testament.* Published by Rose Publishing, 2007. (I can list full bibliographic information if needed.)



## Session Two

### Joseph: Rejection and Redemption

The Bible is not just a series of isolated stories. It is one book that describes the love of God and His plan of redemption, centered on Jesus Christ. He is the focus of all Scripture, and every part of God's Word points to Him. Figures in the Old and New Testaments connect to Christ in the same way that every aspect of our lives should. This Bible study series guides youth to understand how Jesus truly is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2). Through Scripture exploration and group discussion, your youth will consider how Jesus does not just appear in the Gospels, but can be found throughout the Bible, demonstrating God's plan and presence throughout history.

**Note for Leaders:** As we examine these Old Testament figures, it's important to look at the stories through a "Jesus-colored lens." We want to guide teens to truly understand God's faithfulness through His broad plan for salvation. This happens when we dig into what Scripture says, rather than trying to impose our own agenda on the Bible or merely "squeeze Jesus in" according to our purposes. Be aware of this as you lead discussion.

**Lesson Focus:** This study hones in on the life of Joseph. The story of his betrayal, trials, success and willingness to forgive his brothers is a remarkable one with excellent lessons for all of us. Joseph's account is a wonderful example of endurance through incredible hardship. It is also important to notice how many similarities we see when comparing Joseph to Jesus. Both were brought low, raised up, forgave those who wronged them, and ultimately served as the means of salvation. Joseph's life shows a partial fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, as he saved the nations from famine. The completion of this fulfilled promise is evident through Jesus, who saved all nations from sin. Take a look at some highlights from the Joseph account to point out the many Christ connections that can be found.

#### Opening Activity:

Depending on the size and make-up of your group, select one of the following opening activities to spark conversation and prepare for topic discussion.

- "Verbal ping-pong": have youth pair up for a verbal volley. One pair at a time will face off while others watch and judge. Provide a category, and have teens take turns naming things within that category. Teens cannot repeat what the opponent has said or take longer than 5 seconds to respond (or 3 seconds, to make things more interesting). The first youth to falter is "out." Match category themes with the story of Joseph: colors, things you'd find in Egypt, strange dreams, etc.
- Dream on...have teens take guesses at a fun "quiz." Provide a list of common dreams, and have teens match them with their supposed meaning. Explain that our dreams now don't



necessarily always tell us things. Dreaming about ice cream doesn't mean God commands you to eat it (much as we'd want Him to). But dreams did often have important meaning in the Bible and played a critical role in the life of Joseph.

### Scripture Exploration:

Examine Bible passages to consider how Joseph connects to Christ. If you have a large group, it might be helpful to divide teens into pairs or groups of 3-4, and have each smaller group take a passage or two to discuss in depth and describe for others. Smaller youth groups might benefit from reading all of the passages together and discussing as a group.

Designate a scribe for small groups or the whole group and create a simple chart to consider how the events in Abraham's life are an echoed of what we see in Jesus. Separate a piece of paper into two sides. On one side, summarize what is happening to Joseph in the verses. On the other side of the paper, write down how Jesus is reflected in the verses. How was His experience similar or different? How can we see the promises of God to Joseph fulfilled in Jesus?

Choose a few passages, depending on timing and the size of your group. Notes for leaders to consider are included with each passage. Some potential verses to contemplate include:

- Genesis 37, Matthew 26:15 and John 1:11  
*Joseph was rejected by his brothers and sold as a slave; Christ was rejected by those who should know Him as God's Son and was sold for the price of a slave.*
- Genesis 39:1-12 and Hebrews 4:15  
*Though far from perfect, Joseph was an exemplary servant and did not give into temptation from Potiphar's wife; Jesus was tempted and did not sin.*
- Genesis 39:13-20 and Matthew 26:57-68  
*Joseph was unjustly accused and imprisoned; Jesus was wrongfully accused and ultimately executed.*
- Genesis 41:14-45 and Acts 2:33  
*Joseph was raised to Pharaoh's right hand and helped save many; Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father and saves all.*
- Genesis 50:15-24 and Romans 8:28-35  
*Through Joseph's rejection, false imprisonment and "death" (for all intents and purposes), God worked to save his brothers and father from starvation. His brothers meant evil, but God worked good through their evil, just as God did with the Cross of Jesus. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, nothing can separate us from God's love.*

### Discussion and Application:

After participants have the chance to consider the various passages of Scripture, take some time to discuss themes further with guided questions. Here are some suggested question topics.



- How was Joseph able to forgive and serve those who had hurt him so much?  
*Remind teens that he recognized that God's hand was in all circumstances and that He was working through even evil intentions. The Holy Spirit gives us the words and the ability to live out our faith in forgiving others. It was the Lord who helped Joseph forgive.*
- Have you ever forgiven someone who hurt you? How did God help you do that?  
*Teens can share personal stories as they feel comfortable, but hopefully recognize that, as we petition in the Lord's prayer, God helps us to forgive as He forgives us. It is not our own nature to forgive others, but the Holy Spirit works in us to reflect the love and forgiveness we have been given in Christ. Because we've been shown mercy for our great sins, we should pass that along to others.*
- Joseph continued to honor God and serve Him, no matter what situation he was in. Can you think of a time when you, or someone you know or know of, were able to work through a tough circumstance and follow God despite challenges?  
*If teens don't have a lot to share, be prepared with personal anecdotes or historical figures that exemplify this principle. Remind youth that connection to God's Word, Worship, and Sacraments can all help in difficult times.*
- What comforting truths can reassure us when we are facing a difficult situation and don't understand what is happening?  
*We know that God is in control, no matter what the circumstances are. We can trust that He will be faithful and care for us.*



## Session Three

### Moses: Called Out of Egypt

The Bible is not just a series of isolated stories. It is one book that describes the love of God and His plan of redemption, centered on Jesus Christ. He is the focus of all Scripture, and every part of God's Word points to Him. Figures in the Old and New Testaments connect to Christ in the same way that every aspect of our lives should. This Bible study series guides youth to understand how Jesus truly is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2). Through Scripture exploration and group discussion, students will consider how Jesus does not just appear in the Gospels, but can be found throughout the Bible, demonstrating God's plan and presence throughout history.

**Note for Leaders:** As we examine these Old Testament figures, it's important to look at the stories through a "Jesus-colored lens." We want to guide teens to truly understand God's faithfulness through His broad plan for salvation. This happens when we dig into what Scripture says, rather than trying to impose our own agenda on the Bible or merely "squeeze Jesus in" according to our purposes. Be aware of this as you lead discussion.

**Lesson Focus:** This study examines the life of Moses, and similarities we find between Moses and Christ. Both were endangered soon after birth, with Moses born under Pharaoh's death order for Hebrew baby boys and Jesus fleeing the murder orders of Herod. Moses and Jesus both spent time in Egypt as foreigners. They both chose 12 associates to assist in their work. Moses and Jesus were part of incredible miracles from God, including healing, food provision, and water events. And both had marvelous mountain experiences. The Jewish leaders in the Old Testament looked to Moses as an important figure and leader, particularly as he received the Law from God, which was sacred and governed their lives. Jesus came to fulfill that law and to offer new life through His forgiveness.

#### Opening Activity:

Depending on the size and make-up of your group, select one of the following opening activities to spark conversation and prepare for topic discussion.

- **Movie night:** if you have extra time during the Bible study weeks, host a movie night and watch a Moses film like *Prince of Egypt*, or for a real classic, *The Ten Commandments*. Enjoy themed games and food, and discuss how the movie takes extra liberties that might deviate from Biblical accuracy. You could also opt to watch a clip from one of the movies, if time is short.
- **Ten Commandments Test:** Consider the Law given to Moses with a Ten Commandments game. Play Pictionary or charades, or a combination of the two (toss a coin to decide which to do on each turn). Have one student at a time pull a number or choose which Commandment to illustrate, and then draw or act out what it is for other students to guess. This is a fun way to review the Commandments for a Confirmation class, as well.
- **Build a pyramid:** this is less thought-provoking and simpler fun, but open the study with a reminder of the slavery in Egypt. Have students pair up to build a "pyramid" using toothpicks and marshmallows or gummy candy.





### Scripture Exploration:

Examine Bible passages to consider how Moses connects to Christ. If you have a large group, it might be helpful to divide students into pairs or groups of 3-4, and have each smaller group take a passage or two to discuss in depth and describe for others. Smaller youth groups might benefit from reading all of the passages together and discussing as a group.

Designate a scribe for small groups or the whole group and create a simple chart to consider how the events in Moses's life are an echoed of what we see in Jesus. Separate a piece of paper into two sides. On one side, summarize what is happening to Moses in the verses. On the other side of the paper, write down how Jesus is reflected in the verses. How was His experience similar or different? How can we see how Moses' life mirrors Jesus? How does Jesus perfectly fulfill God's promises seen in Moses' story?

Choose a few passages, depending on timing and the size of your group. Notes for leaders to consider are included with each passage. Some potential verses to contemplate include:

- Exodus 1:22 and Matthew 2:16  
*Moses was born in a time when Pharaoh wanted to slaughter innocent infants; Jesus had to flee from Herod's order to kill infants (and went to Egypt to escape, similar to the Egyptian birth and upbringing of Moses). Both were threatened by those in power, but ultimately God protected them.*
- Exodus 2:15 and Matthew 2:14  
*Moses had to flee the land for his safety; Jesus had to flee from Herod's kill order.*
- Exodus 14:15-22 and Matthew 14:22-36  
*God used Moses to part the waters of the Red Sea and defy the laws of natural order; Jesus walked on water.*
- Exodus 19:24 – 20:21 and Hebrews 12:18-24  
*Moses was the covenant mediator who stood between God and His people in the same way that Jesus, as God-Man, stands as the sole Mediator between God and Man under the new and greater covenant.*
- Exodus 16:1 and Matthew 14:13-21  
*The Israelites received manna and quail in the wilderness; Jesus miraculously fed 5,000 with just a small amount of food.*
- Exodus 12:5-8 and 1 Corinthians 5:7  
*The Passover required the slaughter of an unblemished lamb; Jesus sacrificed Himself as the great and final Passover lamb.*
- Numbers 12:10-13 and Matthew 8:1-3  
*God used Moses to heal Miriam of leprosy; Jesus healed people of leprosy.*
- Numbers 12:5-8 and Matthew 17:1-5  
*Moses was overshadowed by a cloud on the mountain; Jesus was covered with a cloud on the mount of transfiguration (where Moses appeared, as well).*
- Numbers 13:2-16 and Matthew 4:18-22  
*Moses chose associates to help him; Jesus chose twelve disciples.*





### Discussion and Application:

After students have the chance to consider the various passages of Scripture, take some time to discuss themes further with guided questions. Some suggestions include:

1. Moses received the Ten Commandments from God. How do we as Lutherans view the Law? Can we obey it perfectly?

*Remind students of the Law as a curb, mirror, and guide. The Law is important, and Jesus did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. We cannot keep the Law perfectly, but Jesus lived without sin and died in our place to sanctify us.*

2. Moses was given faith to trust God and reject the life of ease in Egypt. Instead, God used him to deliver the Israelites from the hands of the Egyptians (Hebrews 11:23-28). Have you ever had to give up something because of your faith? What did Jesus give up to deliver us from our sin?

*Personal stories might vary, and some students might not have had much experience with sacrifices. Some might have to skip sports practice in order to attend church or choose between youth group and other activities. We know that Jesus did not cling to Heaven but came to Earth and gave His life to save us (Philippians 2:5-11).*

3. God provided for His people, leading them out of Egypt and taking care of their needs while in the wilderness. How does He continue to provide for us and lead us today?

*God gives us our “daily bread” and provides what we need for this body and life. We do not always have what we want, but we have what we need. God provides us with the greatest need we have, salvation. He promises us the Promised Land of Heaven and we can be assured He provides that through His Son.*

**Note for Leaders:** If you go into the story enough to cover the plagues against the Egyptians, you might encounter questions about how a loving and merciful God could destroy people with death. Be prepared to discuss God’s justice and omniscience. Emphasize that God’s love is stronger than His wrath, and that He delivered the Israelites and saves all those with His free gift of redemptive faith.



## Session Four

### David: The Shepherd King

The Bible is not just a series of isolated stories. It is one book that describes the love of God and His plan of redemption, centered on Jesus Christ. He is the focus of all Scripture, and every part of God's Word points to Him. Figures in the Old and New Testaments connect to Christ in the same way that every aspect of our lives should. This Bible study series guides youth to understand how Jesus truly is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2). Through Scripture exploration and group discussion, students will consider how Jesus does not just appear in the Gospels, but can be found throughout the Bible, demonstrating God's plan and presence throughout history.

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**Lesson Focus:** This study examines the similarities between David, a king of Israel after God's own heart, and the Son of David, Jesus. God promised David a throne forever, and Christ is the fulfillment of that covenant. There are many other shared traits between the two. David started out as a shepherd intent on caring for his flock, and Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for us. David defeated Goliath and delivered the people, just as Jesus defeated Satan and delivers us. David had a strong friendship with Jonathan, who was happy to sacrifice his inherited throne for his friend and risked his life for him. Jesus shared a friendship with John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Christ to take over, and sacrificed his life. David was also tempted to sin, and although he fell, Jesus overcame the temptation he faced and helps us in times of trouble. David's son (Solomon) inherited his throne as king, and Jesus (a son later in the lineage) holds the throne forever. David also wrote many of the psalms, which Jesus fulfilled during his life.

#### Opening Activity:

Depending on the size and make-up of your group, select one of the following opening activities to spark conversation and prepare for topic discussion.

- Psalm exploration: The Psalms are a wonderful tool to use for prayer focus and examination of how we can bring all emotions before the Lord. As time allows, discuss favorite types of music or worship songs with students. Follow this up with studies of various types and examples of Psalms that David wrote and consider especially how some of the words of Psalms were fulfilled in the life of Jesus (consider in particular Psalm 22, 69, and 110).
- Slingshot battle: This is a simple (and potentially messy) opening that appeals to a wide crowd. Consider David's defeat of Goliath with only a simple slingshot. Divide students into groups and



provide tools for them to create a slingshot or catapult that they can use to launch items across a room.

- Talk about the practice of anointing and how it relates to Samuel's anointing of David as king. Consider bringing in special oil to make the discussion more tangible. Point out that the word "Messiah" means anointed. God chose David not for outward impressiveness, but for his heart.

### Scripture Exploration:

Examine Bible passages to consider how David connects to Christ. If you have a large group, it might be helpful to divide students into pairs or groups of 3-4, and have each smaller group take a passage or two to discuss in depth and describe for others. Smaller youth groups might benefit from reading all (or some) of the passages together and discussing as a group.

Designate a scribe for small groups or the whole group and create a simple chart to consider how the events in the life of David are echoed in Jesus. Separate a piece of paper into two sides. On one side, summarize what is happening to Moses in the verses. On the other side of the paper, write down how Jesus is reflected in the verses. How was His experience similar or different? How can we see how David's life mirrors Jesus? How does Jesus perfectly do what David could not?

Choose a few passages, depending on timing and the size of your group. There are several examples that demonstrate how both David and the Son of David endured and fulfilled God's plans. Notes for leaders to consider are included with each passage. Some potential verses to contemplate include:

- 1 Samuel 17:34-35 and John 10:11-18  
*David served as a shepherd who was willing to risk his life for the sheep. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep.*
- 1 Samuel 17:45-47 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-28  
*David defeated the champion Goliath; Jesus destroys the last enemy, death, and reigns over all things.*
- 1 Samuel 20:35-42 and John 3:22-30  
*David's friendship with Jonathan and Jesus's friendship with John the Baptist.*
- 2 Samuel 11 and Hebrews 4:15  
*David was tempted and gave in, sinning with Bathsheba; Jesus was tempted and did not sin.*
- 2 Samuel 7:11-16 and Hebrews 12:24  
*God made a covenant to establish His throne through David; Jesus is the New Covenant with a throne that lasts forever.*
- 1 Kings 1:29-30 and Luke 1:31-33  
*The son of King David inherited his kingdom; the great Son of David has a kingdom that will never end.*



## Discussion and Application:

After students have the chance to consider the various passages of Scripture, take some time to discuss themes further with guided questions. Some suggestions include:

1. God chose to anoint David as king, although he might not have looked the part (1 Samuel 16:1-13). How does God choose us for unique purpose?

*We are created to glorify God. We can do that in a variety of ways but have the joy of knowing that God loves us and chooses all of us to be part of His kingdom work. Our size, strength, and look don't matter in God's eyes, because He sees the heart.*

2. Shepherds, like David, had a role that people in the Old and New Testament understood. Jesus uses this metaphor in his teaching. What does it mean that Jesus is our Good Shepherd?

*The shepherd leads the sheep and takes care of their needs. He is willing to put his life on the line in order to protect them from enemies. We need a shepherd because we tend to wander (like sheep) or make mistakes. Jesus guides and cares for us, providing for our needs. He gave His life to protect us from sin and death.*

3. How does God help us to defeat the “giants” in our lives? What might those be?

*The main “giants” Christ defeats are sin, death, and the devil. We have the assurance of knowing He has conquered our great enemies. We can also take comfort in knowing that daily troubles are met by the power of God. Perhaps students wrestle with anxiety, bullies, or other challenges. We face those knowing that God has called us His own and uses us even in challenging times.*

4. Even though David was a great king, he fell into temptation and sinned. How can we resist falling to temptation?

*We are all going to sin. But we can always repent and ask God for forgiveness. We can hope in the knowledge that Jesus did not sin and died to forgive our sin. There might be things in our lives that are challenging, or temptations we don't anticipate and then come up. Through all, we can endure in the knowledge and hope that we can call on God in times of trial. The Holy Spirit provides help through faithful Christians, His Word, prayer and worship.*

