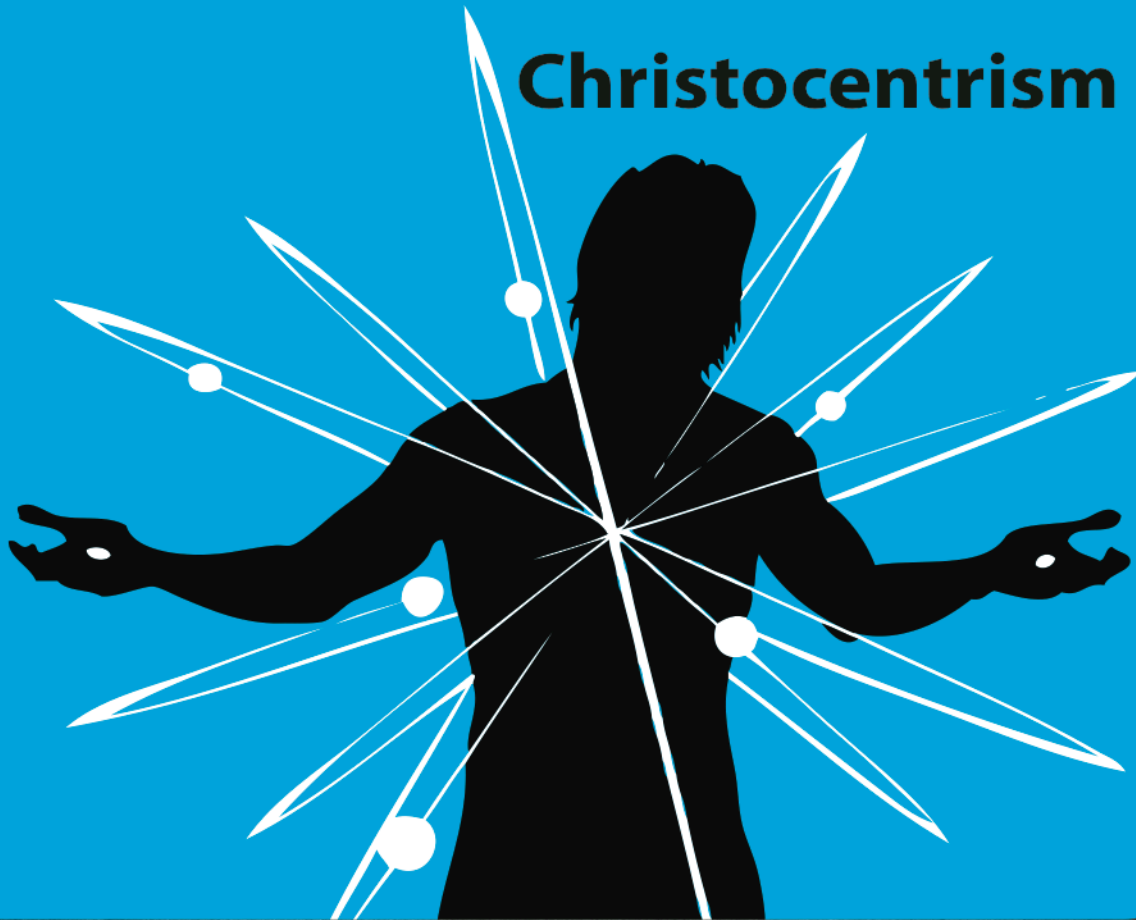


Storyline



Christocentrism



PREFACE

CHRISTOCENTRISM literally means to see Christ as the center of everything. And wouldn't you know it...that's exactly how God wants it. We aren't supposed to make Jesus a part of our lives, instead He is supposed to be our very lives! If you want to get really nerd-like technical, then you should know that we are supposed to have a Christocentric view of all Scripture. That simply means that we're supposed to see Jesus as the meaning and goal of all the Bible – in every story, theme, passage, poem, proverb, and text. Enjoy this eBook that is designed to and grow students in Jesus as the center of their lives.

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CHRIST IS THE FIRST THOUGHT OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

Two words can put a smile on a youth pastor's face while sending a chill down his spine. It can simultaneously be his biggest event, his greatest anticipation, and his worst nightmare. It is so epic, that it can and should only be done once a year. You guessed it...the student ministry "ALL-NIGHTER" is the best and most-hated event ever.

Lock-ins are ridiculously lame. A lock-in is when a youth pastor brings in a ton of teenagers, juiced-up on mountain dew, buzzing with sugary snacks, but with absolutely nothing to do but shoot basketball, play cards, and possibly burn the entire church complex down.

All-nighters are way different. Our all-nighters crank up with a crazy worship concert. Then we roll around town in charter buses.

Our first stop is 3 hours of neon-roller skating with laser tag and all you can eat pizza. Our second stop is black-light bowling for a couple of hours. Our third stop is mini-golfing for about an hour. Then we had back to the church to pump the teen's stomachs with an all you can eat pancake breakfast to send them home fat, happy, and exhausted...with a potential of diabetes.

The secret to a successful all-nighter is a lot of prayer, a focused plan, and a ton of preparation. All-nighters don't just happen by a random chance of worship bands, roller skating rinks, laser tag arenas, bowling alleys, and mini-golf courses coming together to sacrifice their employees to the wee hours of the night for energy-drinking teenagers. Rather, a youth pastor has a "first thought" of wanting an epic event to offer his student ministry so that they can reach their lost friends for Jesus.

In a very similar way, God did not create the whole cosmos without a specific plan to where Satan could move in to diabolically hi-jack it. Also, God did not send Jesus as plan B to put His plan A back into process. Rather, Jesus is God's plan A, and always has been from the start. The reason God created the whole cosmos, made all humanity in His image, recorded history in His Scriptures, allowed Satan to start an evil conspiracy, designed the gospel, and instituted the church...is all because God has had one very specific, personal plan for all of eternity. That plan is not a thing or a what. That plan is a

Who. God's first thought is His primary goal and aim. God's plan, purpose, and primary goal are none other than...His Son Jesus Christ.

I pray that this short booklet will encourage you to see Jesus as God's central theme in all the Scriptures, our motivation, the gospel, our sanctification, the church, the Pentateuch, and even Christmas! Christocentrism simply means "Christ-centered."

CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF THE SCRIPTURES

CHAPTER ONE

It raised the phrase “a walk to remember” to a new level. When I was a youth leader in Tuscaloosa, the youth pastor and I took a group of graduated senior guys to the beach. The youth pastor warned them of my love to walk the beach for miles and hours, but they still joined me. We began our journey at 10am with the sun to our backs, and at high noon we headed back as the sun had crossed over the sky and was at our backs again. One not-so-lucky walker started feeling really hot later that night and found that he was severely sunburned. After being confined to a couch with a near-by fan, food, and a videogame controller for the rest of the week at the beach house, one of the guys found a strong pain reliever in his bag on the last night of the trip. It sure made my friend feel better, but he was ticked it wasn't found until the last day!

I'm sure it's hard to believe, but there is an even greater walk to

remember in history. Three days after His death (ring a bell?), Jesus' disciples were on a seven-mile walk of their own from Jerusalem to Emmaus when a stranger appears out of nowhere and joins them on their journey. Shhhh! It was Jesus in stealth-mode. Jesus asks the disciples what the topic of conversation for the day is. They thought surely he was some ignorant tourist with a camera around his neck since he hadn't heard of the recent crucifixion and robbery of Jesus of Nazareth's body. Jesus scolds them a bit by calling them foolish for their unbelief in the resurrection as He personally takes them through the OT to show them how Genesis through Malachi foretold the glorious resurrection He entered through His suffering of the cross. As night fell, they asked the strange traveler if he would stay with them. He did. He even broke bread with them and blessed it (ringing another bell?). At that very moment, they recognized who it was all this time! But then Jesus vanished. They both agreed that their hearts burned within them as He walked them through all the OT and interpreted it to be about Himself.

These disciples went running to the others to tell them that Jesus' body wasn't stolen, but He truly had been raised from the dead. Again, He appears in their midst. Jesus has got some great timing! He wanted to show them that He's not a ghost, but He's a real, risen human being with flesh, bones, blood, hair, and ear wax. And then to really show he's a real human being, Jesus sits down and eats with them. I can only imagine how hungry He was after being dead 3 days.

For a second time (but this time over dinner), Jesus takes them all back through the whole OT. He shows them how He fulfilled all of the prophecies, curses, and promises. He teaches them that His death provides forgiveness of sins through personal repentance, and that this great news (Gospel) must be told to all the nations through His witnesses...His disciples.

Side note - I walked into my bank one day. One of their cheesy drink coasters jumped off the counter at me (not quite literally). The bank was doing a promotion where every transaction would give the customer a point, and points could buy certain things. The coaster read: "Finally, it all has a point." "Wow!" (That was me thinking loudly to myself) The world is sending a message that they all really are looking for the point of all life. What brings all of life together? What is the one point that makes sense of everything? It is Jesus Christ!

I think how teenagers are learning so many different subjects, sports, social skills, etc. They are begging with the question, "Yeah, but what's the point?" Churched teens are learning so many different verses, doctrines, truths, stories, spiritual disciplines, etc. If they don't get the point to it all, everything will just be a big disconnected jumbled mess in their lives. Jesus tells us how to interpret all of life, all of Scripture, and all of all things. The answer is Himself – Jesus Christ! God has created and designed all things to find their goal in Jesus (Eph 1:10-11), He finds His glory in Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:10-11), His will for our lives is that we are transformed into Christ's image

(Rom 8:29), and He wants us to experience our joy in Jesus. As you walk with Jesus through His Word, remember, He is the point to everything written there!

CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF OUR MOTIVATION

CHAPTER TWO

When I went to Africa on a mission trip, it wasn't the differences of Africans from Americans that shocked me. It was their similarities. Just like American teenagers, the Ugandan senior high boys seemed "too cool" to get involved, the senior high girls sat around giggling about the guys, and all the junior highers were enjoying the games shamelessly. I had to keep reminding myself, "Chip, you're not in Kansas (USA) anymore!" Watching how teenage guys are prone to video games, wrestling, and grunting while teenage girls naturally love giggling, discussions, and frequent bathroom trips together...I'm convinced that both genders operate off different motivations. Teenage guys are motivated by action while teenage girls are motivated by affection.

Since we're on the subject of motivation, it's important to crack

our chests open, and examine our hearts... spiritually! What is the central motivation of our lives? Why do we do what we do? I believe if we're honest, we'll all admit that sometimes we just get tired of doing the "Christian thing" whether it be church, singing, witnessing, studying, etc. Paul is addressing a church in the same condition that we often find ourselves. He points them back to the right motivation for life in 1 Corinthians 3:10 – 15.

Paul is writing his little heart out to the church in the city of Corinth saying that life isn't about him or anyone else in ministry, but it's about the foundation that every ministry should be built on. That foundation is Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is the motivation for our salvation (vs. 10-11). The foundational motivation that God uses to bring everyone to faith in Christ is the desire to know and follow Christ. When I played high school basketball, the number one reason I played was for glory – the glory of the team and the glory of me. Glory is the reason I ran sprints, practiced until near exhaustion, shot more than a hundred times a day, and wore the embarrassingly tight hand-me-down uniform. God's goal for salvation is that Jesus Christ would get the glory from our lives. God works in the heart of a sinner in a way that they see their sin, they see their need for Christ, and they want to be united to Him.

Not only salvation, but Paul also says that Jesus Christ is the motivation of our sanctification (vs. 12-15). Sanctification is a word

talkin' bout our spiritual growth. Paul rushes his readers way ahead to the Day of Judgment as he tells them that all of their works will be tested with fire. In the next chapter, Paul tells them that their works are being tested for the motivation - why they are done (1 Cor 4:5). So the motivation is crucial! All of this is a picture of our good works being put on a conveyor belt and passing through a fire. If they were done for the glory of Christ, they will come out the other side proven as valuable as gold, silver, and jewels. If even the best of someone's good works weren't done with the motivation of glorifying Christ (if done for self or someone else), then the worth will be proven by ashes of incinerated wood, hay, and straw. God's desire is that we do everything for the glory of His Son, Jesus Christ. Change your mind to make Jesus' glory the reason for everything you do. Decide to grow spiritually as a Christian because you want to glorify Christ with your life!

As I'm writing this right now, you may be just as bothered as I am about the past. "What about all of those Christian, religious, great things I've done in my life? Are you saying they don't count to God unless Jesus is first in my mind?" That's not what I'm saying at all. I would never come up with anyone like that because I'm a sinner. But that is what God is saying through the Apostle Paul. If we find ourselves doing things not for Christ's glory, we must stop, pray, and set our hearts on Him. Just like guys and girls, the motivation of Christians must be different from the world – Jesus Christ!

CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF THE GOSPEL

CHAPTER THREE

It was one of the most embarrassing moments of my life! After putting the gas nozzle into my tank, I stepped inside the gas station to use their always-lustrous bathroom and then to buy a drink. I came back out to my car, got in, started it up, and drove away. I heard a loud “POP” and realized something had just hit my car. I looked back and saw that I had driven off with the nozzle still in my tank. The nozzle had been ripped from the gas pump. When I went back into the store to confess my stupidity, all the attendant could muster from her mouth was, “Whaaaat were you thinking?” The problem was that I wasn’t thinking at all. I was performing the same fill-up routine I had done for the last 12 years of my driving life.

I’m afraid that we as Christians often fall into a routine when it comes to the gospel. We thoughtlessly live our Christian lives without

much thought of what the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ is accomplishing through us. We don't really think much about the importance of continuing to repent of our sin. Paul wrote to a church about this same problem.

Paul writes to remind this church of the gospel that he preached to them while he was in their city, and that they had received it (1 Cor 15:1a). Before they clearly received the Gospel, Paul had previously preached in the city-synagogue, but was rejected there (Acts 18). He then went to the house next door to the synagogue; and many people got saved including the ruler of the synagogue. Paul knew that the ruler truly received Christ because his life had completely changed. True salvation is a real reception of the gospel (1 Cor 15:3-4), a bona fide belief, a lifestyle of following Jesus Christ as one's Lord (Acts 16:31). We must RECEIVE the Gospel. The Gospel of the life, death, and resurrected LORDSHIP of Jesus Christ isn't just something to merely know or grasp. It must be received. Receive Christ as your Lord and Savior by turning from your sinful lifestyle and toward following Him personally.

Paul also wrote the church to encourage them to stand in the gospel (1 Cor 15:1b). Back in those days, to "stand" in something meant to remain in a condition or state of life. The Gospel is often spoken of as something we believe at salvation and then leave behind in order to grow, as if it is merely a hoop to jump through or a ticket

for a ride. Here Paul says that the Gospel is something that we remain in to grow from for the rest of our lives. If we learn something spiritually new with depth, it is connected to and grounded in the Gospel. There was a time this Alabama boy (me) lived in Michigan and was taken on a sled ride which was pulled by a snow mobile. Since my so-called friend was driving me through the woods as fast as 50mph, I was afraid to fall off for the sake of my limbs and my life. To his shock and frustration, I didn't fall off for the two entire runs he took me around his property. I remained on the toboggan for my life! Likewise, we must REMAIN in the Gospel. Remain in the Gospel by living a LIFE that flows out of the Gospel: continuously repenting of sin and following after Jesus Christ.

Lastly, Paul wrote to the church to challenge them to hold fast to the Gospel (1 Cor 15:2). Biblically, to "hold fast" means to keep your mind in that way of thinking. Notice Paul says that we are being saved IF we hold fast. Honestly, I don't much care for the phrase "once saved, always saved" anymore. I think it gives too many lost sinners a false assurance of salvation just because they said a "salvation prayer" in the past, and their pastor told them to not doubt it. Paul is saying that we know we truly have been saved if we currently are being saved, and we know that we currently are being saved if we are holding fast to the Gospel through repentance of sin and faithfully following Jesus Christ. I prefer the phrase: IF saved, ALWAYS saved. We must REMEMBER the Gospel. Endeavor to remember the Gospel

of Jesus Christ daily by reading the Scriptures filled with the Gospel,
PRAYING the Gospel from your salvation, and faithfully gathering with
the church to worship Christ with the hope of the Gospel.

CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF OUR SANCTIFICATION

CHAPTER FOUR

He was one of the coolest guys I ever knew. This dude totally had it all together. He was a great athlete, all of the girls swarmed him, his intelligence was stellar, and he just had that laid back attitude that everyone enjoyed. During the prime of his life, this close friend of mine was in a tragic car accident. From the accident, he no longer had the physical agility to play sports, he no longer had the attractive look, his intelligence was severely altered, and his personality had changed drastically. He was still the same person God had created him to be but very distorted.

This story is also true about every one of us - every human being. It all started at the beginning of time when God created humanity in His own image to reflect Him (Genesis 1:26-28). What does it mean for Adam and Eve to be created in the image of God? It means that God

has shared everything about Himself with us. God is righteous, so humanity could choose right over wrong. God is rational, so humanity could make decisions and solve problems. God's role was to rule over the cosmos, so He set up man to have dominion over all the earth (Gen 1:28). God can see, hear, etc. all things, so He created man with a body to reflect His attributes. You may be reading this and despising the way you were born, but you must remember that you are made in God's image. Others may be reading this with great pride in the way that they were made. We must be reminded that God didn't create you for our image...but for His. God created humanity in His own image by sharing with us everything that He is. God commands us to reflect Him.

So are we still perfectly imaging God as He originally created us? Unfortunately, that is not the case. God's image in humanity has been distorted by sin (Genesis 3:6). In the Garden of Eden, Satan the serpent slithered up to Eve the woman to deceive her into eating the forbidden fruit. That cataclysmic event infected all humanity with the curse of sin. Before the curse, all humanity imaged God faultlessly. After the curse, humanity continues to exist in the image of God, but His image is distorted in us because of sin. It is as if looking into a clear mirror in the morning. The mirror reflects the exact image that stands before it. If that mirror is struck in the middle and cracks spread in every direction, the reflection is still there but greatly distorted. When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit and rebelled against

God, His image in them was distorted. Many people feel so broken because of this. Praise God there is a remedy, a fix!

How does God put us back on the road of growing in His image again? God renews His image within believers by their becoming like Christ (Rom 8:29). We must understand that Jesus is the exact image of God (Colossians 1:15-18). He is not the next best thing to God or God junior. Jesus is fully God, exactly God, perfectly God. He is also what it means to be fully human. We often think that Jesus wasn't fully human because He didn't sin. Aren't we fully human because to be human means to be sinful? Actually, it's the other way around. To be human means to be fully in God's image as He originally created us. Therefore, Jesus is more human than we are because He is exactly imaging God. He resisted temptation after temptation when we usually give in after the first few tugs of our sin. Jesus Christ is the perfect image of God. Jesus is what it means to be human. God restores us into His image as we are growing and becoming like Christ (Col 3:10). Jesus is God's goal for our salvation, for our spiritual growth, and for all of our lives.

When it comes to understanding our sanctification (spiritual growth into Christ-likeness), we have to know that God didn't intend for us to see a "quiet time" as the primary means. Instead, the number one way we become like Christ the most is through the church. Through preaching, teaching, fellowship, praying, ministering,

discipling, worshipping, and evangelizing with other believers as a local church we become most like Christ (Eph 1:23). Is your life goal to become like Christ? If so, does your participation in your church reflect that?

CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF THE CHURCH

CHAPTER FIVE

I wasn't able to sleep. I couldn't get the images out of my head, and the anticipation was building daily. That's what happened the time I watched the show "LOST" on NBC. I only watched it once. Because the suspense of waiting for the next's week episode was killing me, I never watched it again. Shows like this are a huge hit because everyone connects with a conspiracy. Conspiracy theories are even filling our country about the AIDS virus, the 1969 moon landing, and many more. Everyone connects with an idea of conspiracy because deep down they know conspiracies are true. The reason why movies like *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Golden Compass* attract so much attention is because of their plots of conspiracy.

In Ephesians 1:15-23, Paul is walking the local church of Ephesus through the climaxing chapter of the true-cosmic conspiracy. This

conspiracy started with Adam as God created him, placed all things under his feet, and charged him to rule the cosmos. Adam failed by rebelling against God, and Satan became the ruler of the world (2 Cor 4:4) much like Jacob stole Esau's birthright. Paul says that the conspiracy of Satan ruling over God's creation is being overturned by the death and resurrection of Christ through which God placed all the cosmos under Christ's feet. We understand this language as we have watched boys play King of the Hill, pushing and shoving their enemies beneath them so that they have the top position of triumph. We understand this language of God giving Christ as the head over all things in nearly every area of life. Teams have their captains, militaries have their generals, and corporations have their CEO's. The world may be rebelling against God, but it is also reflecting His kingdom design. God has given Christ as King over the cosmos! This means we ought not to think of Jesus as a hippie who is just apathetic to sin. Jesus is a loving-victorious King which means we have power over sin, we have boldness to preach Him, and we have nothing to fear...not death or anyone. Yet I must say, *the reason we don't follow Christ, is because we love our sin more than Him.*

If it's amazing to think that God has placed all of the cosmos under Christ's feet and He has given Christ as the head over everything, it's ever more amazing to realize to whom God has given Christ. Not to the "world" and not even to "Christians," but God has given Christ to the CHURCH! What is the church? Later, Paul speaks of

the church as being gifted by God with pastors, teachers, etc. Paul is talking about the local church (Eph. 4): the committed group of believers who have pastors, deacons, and people serving each other daily as the body of Christ. Each local church is to fully represent God's kingdom. Paul says that the church is the body of Christ (Eph 1:23). Is that an important image? Head-body imagery is very common to us. If I showed you a picture of three famous men dressed up in a suit but with their heads blanked out, you couldn't tell me who they were. But if I showed you a picture with the faces of three men, you could tell they were Lebron James, Tim McGraw, or Will Smith. Have you ever heard someone say that they love Jesus but they hate the church? That would be like a man whispering to you how much he loves his wife but he's just disgusted with her body. You would gasp at such an offense and suggest counseling...or a beat down. Love the church as Christ's body!

Paul lastly says that God has made the church the fullness of Christ (Eph 1:23). Christ filling the church is very important to understand. Just as God filled the OT temple with His Spirit, so is Christ filling the church with His Spirit (Acts 2:33). We shouldn't think of ourselves as individuals who are filled, but the church filled as the temple. This has great significance when thinking about how involved we should be with our local church. We should join our local church. We should heavily participate in our local church. We should find a place of service in our local church. If the church is the fullness of

Christ, then it only makes sense that we experience Christ most fully in the church. *We only love Christ as much as we love our church.* Jesus, be the center of our lives as we worship You with Your body, Your bride, Your fullness.

CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF THE PENTATEUCH

CHAPTER SIX

“Do you ever want to be a real pastor?” Nothing frustrates me more than that statement! First, a youth pastor is a real pastor of the church whose emphasis is the student ministry. Second, the teenage years are so critical that they need a pastor of their own. I love being a youth pastor because I get to prevent more problems than just fixing them. I must be honest and say I’m disappointed in many youth pastors today. They make worship more about the music, the concert, and the band rather than about Christ. Also, they make sermons and lessons more about topics and “how to’s” rather than about Christ, too. God is very clear in His Word: everything revolves around Jesus Christ!

We recently finished studying the Pentateuch in our student ministry. Those first five books of the Bible were written by one

author, Moses, who covered over 2,500 years of Biblical history. In John 5, Jesus told a group of Jews that it was obvious that they didn't believe in God the Father or the Scriptures because they didn't believe in Him (5:37-44). But then Jesus seemed to take it a step deeper by telling them that they don't even believe in Moses whom their hope is set on because they don't believe that Moses wrote about Him (5:45-47). Hold the phone. Moses never mentioned the name of Jesus in his writings. Where and how can we find Jesus Christ in the Pentateuch?

The Bible teaches what is called a "Christocentric Hermeneutic." Christocentric means centered around Christ. Hermeneutic means "a view of Scripture." So the Christocentric Hermeneutic is a view of the Bible that is always centered around Jesus Christ. God is constantly teaching and telling us to do this in and with His Word. The Bible isn't about a bunch of topics to help you have a better life now. The Bible is all about Jesus and how to live our lives totally for Him. Jesus first, us last.

This is what we do every single Wednesday night. We start out with an introduction story that is more about life, but it creatively connects us into the passage we're looking at. From there, we move on to the story of the passage. Telling the story of the passage is crucial because it helps you experience the Word, see how it connects to the overarching story of Christ, and carve it in your own life story. We then boil it all down to a truth of the story so that we're

connecting to God's timeless truths that are just as true now as they were then. After understanding the story and the truth of the passage, we point it to Christ – His person and work. We must know who He is and understand what He has done and is doing in order to experience a real relationship with Him. Again, all of the Scriptures find their cohesion and their focus in Jesus. Then I usually tell an illustration-story that connects the passage, story, truth, and Christ with the personal life application. I want the personal application to be an opportunity for our students to peer deeply into their lives, retrace their steps, rehash their conversations, and rethink all their motives. I want them to leave every Wednesday night with a new challenge to live for Christ in ways they've never thought before, in ways they've never thought they needed to before, or in ways they've never dared! We then move to a time to immediately apply the word by praying in confession of sin and asking for strength. Then the last thing we do is close with worship songs as a way to respond to God in praise, worship, and honor because of what we have heard about His Word and His Son.

Keep Jesus at the center of your church, worship, spiritual growth, devotions, prayer, advice, counseling, relationships, and all else! Understanding the Christocentric Hermeneutic will help you to keep Jesus Christ as the center of the Scriptures and then the center of your life. It has to be Jesus first...and us last! Now you know why and how we prepare and organize every lesson on Wednesdays.

CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF CHRISTMAS

CHAPTER SEVEN

“The best way to spread Christmas cheer is to sing loud that all may hear.” Elf, Fred Claus, and even Talladega Nights are all movies that reveal how our culture and society views Christmas. Everywhere the world turns, they see a nativity scene with baby Jesus lying there. I often wonder if they think we believe in baby worship. What do they think when we lead our children to sing Happy Birthday to baby Jesus? What about you? How do you picture Jesus over Christmas? Is He just a cute, cuddly, fat, and pudgy baby? Or, is He the King of Kings and Lord of Lords of your life and this world?

Read Isaiah 9:6-7. Isaiah here is speaking to God’s people, the nation of Israel, and telling them that they will have a child, a son born and given to them (Isa 9:6). This is so important to them because their lives, family, and heritage are being threatened with death. Should we

think about Jesus as a baby? Yes! We must celebrate the first coming of Christ as a human born into this world. Jesus couldn't come as a spirit, an angel, or a Lion (like Narnia), but He, being fully God the Son, had to come as fully human to conquer the reign of sin and death started by Satan. He had to be born of a virgin because if Joseph were His biological father, then God would not be His Father. If God the Father was not His Father, then Jesus would be born a sinner like us, and not live a perfect life, not die as an atoning sacrifice, not resurrect, and He would go to hell like us. But Jesus is fully God and fully man. He's from God (deity) and Mary (humanity).

Also notice that Isaiah here is saying that Jesus is coming to overtake the government of the world. Israel need not fear the world's government because ultimately Jesus will take it over and rule. We also shouldn't fear ours. This is why Jesus is called the Wonderful Counselor: He is and gives true wisdom for how we ought to live for God. Mighty God: He is not only fully man but He is also the Mighty God of the Bible. Everlasting Father: His rule over His righteous servants will be eternal and loving. Prince of Peace: The goal of Jesus' rule is peace over all the earth like never before. Yes, we should celebrate Jesus' birth for what He came to accomplish: a new-world rule.

Read Revelation 19:11-16. As we celebrate the first coming of Christ, we must concentrate on the second coming of Christ. Jesus is

no longer a baby. Rather, He is a fearsome warrior-king returning to destroy the wicked and rescue the righteous. It says that Jesus is returning on a white horse like the good guy in the old westerns who always wins. He is called faithful and true because He never stops, and He embodies truth. He doesn't come back for noogies or tickle fights, but rather He returns to judge and make war. Is this your Jesus? His eyes blaze with a passionate wrath against His enemies and a burning love for His followers. He comes back wearing crowns (diadems) with some serious bling that makes even Beyonce look poor. The robe He wears is dipped in blood. If someone wants to fight you and they're wearing a robe dipped in blood, then run for your life! He has already poured out His blood once, so it won't happen again. He will win! His followers are dressed up in clean, white, ironed linen. He doesn't need us to fight. He fights for us! He's coming back all tatted up with "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" on both His robe and thigh. This is like "Thug Jesus" taking over! Is this your Jesus? This is the biblical Jesus. This is the Father's Jesus. Do you follow this Jesus?

How do we celebrate Christmas as we concentrate on His return? We give! Just like a proud father gives out cigars (gum of course) to his friends at the birth of his new baby boy, we are to be givers at Christmas. We celebrate Jesus' birth by giving to everyone. Getting is only a result of everyone else giving. When Jesus was born, He was the gift of the Father to us (Rom 8:32). Truly celebrate Christ by giving to others.

CHRIST IS FINAL THOUGHT OF GOD

CONCLUSION

The sign of a successful All-Nighter (as mentioned in the Intro) is not merely safety, attendance, or even just salvations. While all of those are huge, the real sign of a successful event is continual gospel-growth in the student's lives and student ministry as a whole. So, the youth pastor doesn't just need a "first thought" to plan the event, but he also needs a "final thought" to make sure the event fulfills its intended purpose.

Likewise, Jesus is not merely the first thought of God. God did not only start the creation for the glory of Jesus, but God also created everything so that it would all be brought back together and redeemed for the kingdom of Christ for all of eternity. God's goal and aim in creating all things was so that Jesus would be its ruling-King worship-focus on a new earth and in a new heaven forever and ever.