

# JESUS-CENTERED LIFE

## Week 4: Jesus and His True Mission

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

### 1. LEADER PREPARATION

#### LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson you'll help your students explore more than the “what” behind Jesus’ mission on Earth and get to the more foundational and transforming “why” behind his clandestine rescue operation—our salvation. Your students will explore the “why” by learning how stories can tell us more about Jesus than principles can. They’ll experiment with this truth by studying a scene from a film that reveals the heart and mission of Jesus.

#### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT: Students will discover the heart behind Jesus’ mission of salvation.
2. WHY: It’s not enough to understand principles that are true—we’re invited to understand Jesus’ heart of truth.
3. HOW: Your students will explore, in depth, a scene from a film that “unlocks” Jesus’ heart and mission.

#### PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

John 7:1-6

#### SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

John 6:53; 17:1-12, 20-26; Romans 3:23; 7:4

#### TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you’ll definitely want to refer to it as you lead.

Read John 7:1-6.

“Propositional truths” are statements that affirm or deny something—they’re simply factual statements about truth. Here’s a biblical example: *For all have sinned and fall*



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TIP



*short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).* One common way to pursue “the deeper truths of life” is to break God’s story into lists of principles and short statements of truth. This helps us understand *some* aspects of what’s true, but not the deeper foundations of truth. The Bible is largely a collection of “stories of truth” that reveal to us the heart and character and motivation of God. It’s the stories of truth that show us Jesus’ true intentions toward us.

Jesus said, “You are my bride (*my beloved*), and I am the bridegroom.” In fact, he repeatedly refers to himself as the Bridegroom and describes us repeatedly as the Bride. The Bride (*who is us*) is the gatekeeper for intimacy. She must choose to receive and yield herself to the Bridegroom. Ultimately she *allows* the Bridegroom a deeper level of relationship and intimacy. Without her permission and yielding, it is rape. The true mission of Jesus Christ is to reunite the Bride with the Bridegroom—to draw us to him and show us his true nature, so that we can overcome our distrust of him and our own shame, and give ourselves to him freely.

## **THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]**

### **Text Message Questions**

**We’ve provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.**

- Here comes the Bride! Ever wondered why Jesus called you and me “the Bride”? Join us at small group to discover!
- Why was Jesus motivated to sacrifice everything for you? It’s not the reason you think. Come to small group for the surprising answer.

### **Parent Email**

**We’ve provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.**

Dear parents,

We’ve completed the fourth week of our six-week study that’s focused on answering the question Jesus asked his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” In this lesson,





we explored a scene from the film *Les Miserables* to discover the heart behind Jesus' mission on earth, not just the facts behind it. Students examined why Jesus called himself the Bridegroom and us his "Bride"—we are all invited into a "marriage" relationship with him.

As you go throughout the week, help reinforce this lesson in your child's life by asking the following questions as you have the opportunity.

- Why do stories often have more power to reveal God's heart than "propositional truths"?
- Why do people often prefer to follow principles and propositional truths than to follow the person of Jesus?
- What's a story you've read in a book or seen in a film that has revealed or taught you something about who God is or what God is like?

Thanks for all your prayers for our small group ministry. Have a blessed week!



# JESUS-CENTERED LIFE

Week 4:  
Jesus and His True Mission

## 2. LESSON GUIDE

### GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then jump into today's lesson.



If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you'd like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at [ideas@simplyyouthministry.com](mailto:ideas@simplyyouthministry.com).

### TEACHING GUIDE



The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen are (1) Getting to know Jesus through the lens of story, (2) At the heart of Jesus' mission, and (3) Reuniting the Bride and the Bridegroom.



Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read John 7:1-6 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so everyone has a chance to read.

On a large sheet or pad of paper on the wall—or even a legal pad if your group is small—be ready to write kids' answers to the following question on the bottom half of the sheet or pad. Leave the top half empty.

#### ASK:

- *What do we really know about Jesus' true mission on earth?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *These answers are all true and scriptural. Yet we're after something even bigger. Let's collect these answers under a small umbrella. [Draw a curved line over the answers you've written, so it looks like an umbrella.] The big question that remains for us to explore is not "What?" but "Why?" Let's explore the*





*"Why?" behind Jesus' mission, and we'll leave space above our initial answers to write what we learn. [Draw another curved line at the top of your pad.] However, I don't think we'll find what we're looking for simply by pursuing an answer in the usual way.*

## 1. Getting to know Jesus through the lens of story

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Dr. Francis S. Collins, the much-respected director of the Human Genome Project, says: "I had to admit that the science I loved so much was powerless to answer questions such as 'What is the meaning of life?' 'Why am I here?' 'Why does mathematics work, anyway?' 'If the universe had a beginning, who created it?' 'Why are the physical constants in the universe so finely tuned to allow the possibility of complex life forms?' 'Why do humans have a moral sense?' 'What happens after we die?' "*

*Collins, a world-class scientist, is saying that science has its limits when it comes to explaining the deeper truths of life. "Propositional truths"—in other words, statements that affirm or deny something—are simply factual statements about truth. Here's a biblical example: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). One common way to pursue "the deeper truths of life" is to break God's story into lists of principles and short statements of truth. This helps us understand some aspects of what's true, but not the deeper foundations of truth.*

*Donald Miller, popular Christian author of the bestseller Blue Like Jazz, tried to address the tension between propositional truth and "story truth" when he explained on his website why he wrote the book Searching for God Knows What:*

*"I wrapped this book up [on a] night I felt like I was losing it a bit. Essentially, I had begun to wonder if I had misunderstood the gospel of Jesus, thinking of it in propositional terms rather than relational dynamics. The latter seemed too poetic to be true, but the former had been killing my soul for years and was simply illogical. If we hold that Jesus wanted us to 'believe' certain ideas or 'do' certain things in order to be a Christian, we are holding to heresy...I finished the last paragraph and felt a kind of sickness at the thought of whether or not I was telling the truth. But after further consideration, and after rewriting the book, I realized the formulaic version of Christianity was irrational, and for that matter, unbiblical. True Christian spirituality mirrors relational dynamics more than the workings of a free-market economy."*





**ASK:**

- Why do stories often have more power to reveal God's heart than "propositional truths"?
- Why do people often prefer to follow principles and propositional truths than to follow the person of Jesus?
- What's a story you've read in a book or seen in a film that has revealed or taught you something about who God is or what God is like?

## 2. At the heart of Jesus' mission

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Let's explore the answer to our question—What is Jesus' true mission?—by diving into a story. Remember that God reveals himself to us through the collections of stories that make up the Bible. We'll look at part of a story written by Victor Hugo in 1862—it's called Les Misérables. His story was made into a successful Broadway musical and, later, a successful film. We'll watch a much longer film clip than we normally do in small group—about 14 minutes. While this story is raw, you'll also sense a real beauty in it. As we watch, our mission is to pick out clues to Jesus' true mission that are embedded in this story. We'll stop the story briefly to skip over a hard scene.*

*Les Misérables follows the story of ex-convict Jean Valjean, a man imprisoned in France to 19 years of hard labor for stealing a loaf of bread for his hungry family. Valjean gains his release from prison, but he can't get a job because he's an ex-convict. He resorts to stealing from a kind bishop who invites him into his home. Valjean injures the bishop when he's caught stealing. In a powerful scene, the bishop keeps Valjean from going to jail—literally, the bishop redeems Valjean and challenges him to live his life for God.*

*From that point on, Valjean lives passionately for God and for the poor and oppressed. He becomes a successful businessman and political leader. When, without Valjean's knowledge, a worker is wrongfully fired from her job at his factory, she descends into poverty and prostitution and bitterness toward Valjean, because she believes he ordered her firing. In this long scene, you'll see Fantine, the young woman, struggle to stay alive on the street just before she meets Valjean again. Just a warning that this scene contains some rough language near the beginning.*

**EXPLORATION:** Play two back-to-back clips from the 1998 version (Liam Neeson, Uma Thurman, Geoffrey Rush) of *Les Misérables* (29:20–41:00, then 45:48–47:05).





Make sure to stop the DVD after the first segment and fast-forward to the second segment—the gap between the segments has some scenes that are hard to watch and aren't crucial for this discussion. Also, early on in the scene, some rough and drunken men interact with Fantine and use coarse language. You can lower the volume on this portion to avoid exposing your kids to this language.

**ASK:**

- *What makes it difficult for Fantine to trust that Valjean wants to offer her a pure love?*
- *What must happen in Fantine, the prostitute, to allow Valjean to love her?*
- *What obstacles must Valjean overcome to convince Fantine to receive real love from him?*
- *What does Valjean do to convince Fantine to be loved by him? How does he woo her?*
- *If we treat Valjean as a symbol for Christ and Fantine as a symbol for us, what can we learn about Jesus' true mission on earth from this story?*

### 3. Reuniting the Bride and the Bridegroom

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Jean Valjean shows Fantine his true heart, over and over. He never pushes himself on her, and never expects or requires love back. But slowly, over time, love wins Fantine's trust. Valjean's last kiss on her forehead, which passes over her lips, is a beautiful act of love that's pure. He isn't intent on using her. Jesus said, "You are my bride (my beloved), and I am the bridegroom." In fact, he repeatedly refers to himself as the Bridegroom and describes us repeatedly as the Bride. The Bride (who is us) is the gatekeeper for intimacy. She must choose to receive and yield herself to the Bridegroom. Ultimately she allows the Bridegroom a deeper level of relationship and intimacy. Without her permission and yielding, it is rape. The true mission of Jesus Christ is to reunite the Bride with the Bridegroom—to draw us to him and show us his true nature, so that (like Fantine) we can overcome our distrust of him and our own shame, and give ourselves to him freely.*

Go back to the pad you used to write down students' responses to Jesus' mission on earth at the beginning of the lesson—the "umbrella" you drew. You should have the top half of the pad blank. For the following questions, write kids' answers in the top half of the pad, under that "big umbrella" you drew earlier.





**ASK:**

- *Think about the story of the rich young ruler—the young man who asks how he can find eternal life, and Jesus tells him to sell everything he owns and follow him. Why does Jesus require everything of him?*
- *Think about Jesus telling us that we must “eat his flesh and drink his blood” if we want to “have any part of him” (John 6:53). That’s kind of a scary statement—what does it mean?*
- *Think about Jesus telling us we must “hate” our father and mother or we’re not worthy of him. That sounds so harsh. What does Jesus mean?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *These answers get at the “why” behind Jesus’ heart toward us. When we understand why he has sacrificed everything to win us back, it changes everything about our Christian life.*

**ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]**

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Have you ever considered why God didn’t just kill Satan and his angels? Instead, God threw Satan to earth. A dictator would just kill his defeated enemies. God is so much better than a dictator. It comes down to this: God wants us to have the freedom to choose him, so he sent his Son to draw us to him, to show us himself, to “kiss us on our foreheads,” to invite us into close relationship with him. He passionately hopes that we will love him back.*

**ASK:**

- *What risks is God taking by going to such great lengths to make sure we are free to choose him?*
- *What are some ways you have “loved God back”?*

**SUMMARY**

End your lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.



LEADER  
TIP







## FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

*Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another (Romans 7:4a NASB).*

