

Small Group Guide: The Prophecy of the coming Christ - Phil Snider

Series: The Christmas Story - Week 1 of 3

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: What's your earliest or most meaningful Christmas memory? What made it special?

Sermon Summary (5 minutes)

This week we began our journey through the Christmas story by looking at the Old Testament predictions and promises of Jesus' coming. We saw how God had a plan from the very beginning—from Genesis through the prophets—to send a perfect lamb as the ultimate sacrifice for sin. Abraham's faith in offering Isaac foreshadowed God's willingness to send His own Son, and the prophecies in Isaiah and Micah pointed to specific details about Jesus' birth, nature, and purpose.

Key Scripture: Genesis 22:8 - "And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering.'"

Discussion Questions

Section 1: God's Eternal Plan (15-20 minutes)

1. **The Test of Abraham:** How does the story of Abraham being asked to sacrifice Isaac help us understand God's plan for salvation? What does this reveal about Abraham's faith?
2. **From the Beginning:** Pastor mentioned that Genesis 3:15 is called "proto-evangelism" (the first gospel). How does knowing God planned Jesus' coming from the very beginning impact your faith?

3. **Personal Reflection:** Can you think of a time when God asked you to step out in faith before you could see the outcome? What happened?

Section 2: The Perfect Lamb (15-20 minutes)

4. **Without Blemish:** Why was it essential that Jesus be born of a virgin and live without sin? What would have happened if He had sinned even once?
5. **Fulfilling the Law:** Discuss how Jesus had to be fully human to fulfill the law and fully God to be the perfect sacrifice. Why couldn't He be one without the other?
6. **Old vs. New Covenant:** How does the permanent sacrifice of Jesus differ from the temporary animal sacrifices under the Old Testament law? What does this mean for us today?

Section 3: The Prophecies Fulfilled (15-20 minutes)

7. **Isaiah's Prophecies:** Look at the names given in Isaiah 9:6 (Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace). Which of these characteristics of Jesus means the most to you right now, and why?
8. **Emmanuel - God With Us:** What does it mean practically that Jesus is "God with us"? How should this truth change how we approach our daily challenges?
9. **Bethlehem:** Why do you think God chose the small, insignificant town of Bethlehem for Jesus' birth rather than Jerusalem, the religious and political center?

Section 4: Faith and Evidence (10-15 minutes)

10. **Heroes of Faith:** Hebrews 11:39-40 tells us the Old Testament heroes of faith died without seeing the promise fulfilled, yet they believed. How does having the completed story strengthen our faith compared to theirs?
11. **Evidence for Faith:** Pastor said the Old Testament provides "evidence to bolster our own faith." How does understanding the prophecies and their fulfillment strengthen your confidence in God's promises?

Key Takeaways

✓ **God had a plan from the beginning** - Jesus wasn't "Plan B"; He was always the plan for our redemption.

✓ **The perfect sacrifice required perfection** - Jesus had to be fully God and fully man, without sin, to be our permanent sacrifice.

✓ **Prophecy fulfilled builds faith** - The hundreds of fulfilled prophecies about Jesus give us confidence that God keeps His promises.

✓ **God provides** - Just as God provided the ram for Abraham, He provided Jesus as the Lamb for us.

✓ **Faith precedes sight** - Like Abraham, we're called to trust God's promises even before we see them fulfilled.

Practical Application

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

1. **Study the Prophecies:** Pick 2-3 Old Testament prophecies about Jesus (use a study Bible or online resource) and read how they were fulfilled in the New Testament. Journal about how this strengthens your faith.
2. **Seek His Counsel:** This week, before making any decision (big or small), pause and ask Jesus as your Counselor for wisdom. Keep track of how this changes your perspective.
3. **Share the Evidence:** Have a conversation with someone (believer or non-believer) about one fulfilled prophecy that strengthens your faith in Jesus. Share why it matters to you.
4. **Reflect on "God With Us":** Each day this week, identify one situation where you need to remember that Jesus is Emmanuel—God with us. Write down how His presence changes that situation.

Family Application:

- Read the Christmas story from Luke 2 with your family, but first read one of the Old Testament prophecies (like Isaiah 9:6 or Micah 5:2) to show how God promised Jesus long before He came.
- Create an Advent activity where each day you read a different prophecy and its fulfillment.

Memory Verse

Genesis 22:8 - "And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering.'"

Closing Prayer Focus (10 minutes)

Prayer Requests: Share and pray for one another.

Closing Prayer Themes:

- Thank God for His eternal plan and perfect provision
- Praise Jesus for being our perfect Lamb
- Ask for faith to trust God's promises even when we can't see the outcome
- Pray for those who don't yet know Jesus as their Savior this Christmas season

Looking Ahead

Next Week: Preparing the Parents - How God prepared Mary and Joseph for the coming of Jesus.

Reminder: Don't miss the Christmas Soup & Chili Fellowship tonight at 6 PM!

"God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering." He promised it, He fulfilled it, and we can trust every promise He has yet to fulfill.