

*This midweek study will examine why it's important for students to recognize that all humanity has inherited a sin nature that can only be overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

#### Essential Doctrine: Enslaved to Sin

Because of the fall of Adam and Even in the garden of Eden, all of humanity has inherited a sin nature that inclines them toward sin and rebellion. Human beings are enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:17), continually living with the propensity to transgress God's commandments whenever possible. It isn't until one experiences salvation through the work of Christ that he or she is able to overcome sin's enslavement through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:2).

**Scripture:** *Romans 6:12-18; 8:1-11*

#### 1 Sin leads to slavery. (Rom. 6:12-18)

With the fall of humanity in the garden came a propensity or bent for humanity to sin. Adam and Eve, before being tempted, had a disposition and inclination toward good. After the fall, however, their natural inclination turned toward sin. This is partly due to the fact that sin leads to human enslavement from which we are incapable of delivering ourselves. Not only that, but this enslavement is a universal condition, meaning all of humanity has suffered as a result. This doesn't mean that humans don't make a willful choice when it comes to committing sin, of course, only that their unregenerate will is now inclined or bent to choose sin over God and the things of God.

#### 2 The Holy Spirit frees us from the slavery of sin. (Rom. 8:1-11)

When someone repents and places their faith and trust in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and is now adopted into the family of God and filled with God's Spirit, that person is no longer enslaved to sin as they were before. Instead, a Christian is now capable of overcoming the temptation toward sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is because of the Holy Spirit's continual work of sanctification within a believer's life that he or she can now delight in God and in the things of God more than in the fleeting pleasures of sin.

#### Opening Activity

On the board or a large sheet of paper, write the word LIVE in large letters. Share that God created us to live in relationship with Him. The problem is that God's original design—the ideal of a perfect, personal relationship with Him—was completely reversed when Adam and Eve chose to sin. Write the word EVIL and point out the reversal of the letters. We don't like to think of ourselves as doing things that are evil, but we do. We do evil because we are born with a sin nature and we choose to sin. Our sin enslaves us and separates us from God.

Provide paper and instruct students to write GOD on one half and ME on the other half. Next, guide them to tear the paper in half. Explain that this is what our sin does to our relationship with God. God is holy, righteous, and without sin. He can't allow sin/evil into His presence. That is why our sin separates us from Him.

Does this mean we have no hope of ever being freed from sin? If we are all inclined to sin, is it even possible for us to have a right relationship with God? Why or why not?

#### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "This Is Amazing Grace" by Phil Wickham  
(*The Ascension*, Fair Trade Services, 2013)
- ▶ "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" by Hillsong UNITED  
(*Zion*, Hillsong Music, 2013)
- ▶ "Greater" by MercyMe  
(*Welcome to the New*, MercyMe, 2014)

#### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Freedom" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "Experience Life" *BluefishTV.com*

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### 1 Sin leads to slavery. (Rom. 6:12-18)

Illustration: Share the following information about Morgan Spurlock, star of the documentary *Supersize Me* (Sony, 2004). To test the dangers of eating too much fast food, Spurlock ate nothing but McDonald's for 30 days straight. A healthy eater prior to this experiment, Spurlock's body originally rejected the fast food. As time went on, however, Spurlock's body became so used to the burgers, fries, and soft drinks that he even began craving it.

- ▶ *How is this similar to our tendency to become used to sin?*

#### Read Romans 6:12-18.

Paul warned believers not to let sin rule over them.

- ▶ *What is life like when you "let sin reign in your mortal body"?*

Invite students to add to the following list of areas where we sometimes feel enslaved to sin: unhealthy relationship with boyfriend/girlfriend, attitude toward parent(s), private life, social life, etc.

- ▶ *If believers are freed from sin, why would they still choose to live in sin?*

The lure of sin doesn't go away even though we are dead to sin when we receive Christ; we still battle temptation and the desire to do wrong while at the same time having the desire to do right.

- ▶ *What are some sins you struggle with? What prevents you from breaking free of these sins?*

### 2 The Holy Spirit frees us from the slavery of sin. (Rom. 8:1-11)

Option: Invite students to share some stories of how people have been rescued from fires, floods, tornadoes, captivity, etc. You might even consider researching some inspiring rescue stories and sharing these with the group.

#### Read Romans 8:1-4.

Discuss the following definition of *condemn*: to express an unfavorable or adverse judgment on; indicate strong

disapproval of; censure; to pronounce to be guilty; sentenced to punishment.

- ▶ *Why are those who know Christ no longer condemned?*  
Jesus rescued you from sin and death.
- ▶ *What have we been set free from? What are we set free to do?*

#### Read Romans 8:5-11.

- ▶ *What does it mean for the Holy Spirit to live in you?*

The Spirit changes the way you think.

- ▶ *What is the difference between living according to the flesh and according to the Spirit?*

Sin has been defeated by Christ, but sin and death still claim their hold on our mortal bodies. Yet in these bodies we are alive spiritually and can live by the Spirit's guidance. (*Life Application New Testament Commentary*)

- ▶ *How should the truth that the Spirit lives in you change the way you live? Can people see a difference?*

#### WRAP IT UP

Illustration: Share the following quote from Corrie ten Boom: "I have a glove here in my hand. The glove cannot do anything by itself, but when my hand is in it, it can do many things. True, it is not the glove, but my hand in the glove that acts. We are gloves. It is the Holy Spirit in us who is the hand, who does the job. We have to make room for the hand so that every finger is filled."

- ▶ *What changes do you need to make this week so that you are living in the power of the Holy Spirit?*

*This midweek study will explore the nature and purpose of miracles and whether or not miracles still occur today. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

#### Essential Doctrine: Miracles

A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes the natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

**Scripture:** Mark 2:6-12; John 5:16-23; James 5:14-15; 1 John 5:14-15

#### 1 What are miracles?

(Mark 2:6-12; John 5:16-23)

Many people are fascinated when it comes to miracles. But what exactly is a miracle? Beyond that, what's the purpose of miracles? A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes the natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Thus, common occurrences such as the birth of the child should not be credited as a miracle since gestation and birth is not going "above and beyond" the laws of nature.

#### 2 Do miracles still occur today?

(James 5:14-15; 1 John 5:14-15)

One of the most pressing question regarding miracles (signs and wonders) today is whether or not they still occur. The answer is yes, though still for the same reasons as stated above—for the glory of God and to validate the truth of the gospel (as in the case of a missionary preaching for the first time to an unknown people group). Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does continue to perform miracles.

#### Opening Activity

How loosely do we use the term "miracle" today? Invite students to call out some things some people might consider to be miracles as you list them on the board or on a large sheet of paper. (For example: a sick person is healed; someone survives a terrible accident; the birth of a child; an athlete makes an unbelievable play; etc.)

Are these things really miracles? Why or why not?

What is necessary for you to consider something a miracle?

Share the following definition of "miracle" from the *Holman Student Bible Dictionary*: God's intervention in humanity, nature, and history (Num. 14:22; John 2:11). Sometimes translated as signs, wonders, or mighty acts. Miracles carry out God's purpose or reveal God.

Do you believe miracles still happen today? Explain.

#### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Impossible" by Building 429  
(*Album*, Label)
- ▶ "Oh How I Need You" by All Sons & Daughters  
(*The Longing*, Integrity, 2012)
- ▶ "Countless Wonders" by Chris Tomlin  
(*Burning Lights*, sixstepsrecords, 2013)
- ▶ "Give Me Faith" by Elevation Worship  
(*Kingdom Come*, Elevation, 2010)

#### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Mission Trip Miracle" *BluefishTV*

*This midweek study will explore the nature and purpose of miracles and whether or not miracles still occur today. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

### Essential Doctrine: Miracles

A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes the natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

### 1 What are miracles?

(Mark 2:6-12; John 5:16-23)

Option: Show a brief clip of a famous magician performing a magic trick, or search the Internet for a simple magic trick you can perform for students yourself. Next, list on the board or on a large sheet of paper some miracles that can be found in the Bible. (For example: the 10 plagues of Egypt; Balaam's talking donkey; surviving the fiery furnace; parting of the Red Sea; Joshua stops the sun; etc.)

- ▶ *What makes these biblical miracles different from magic tricks or illusions?*
- ▶ *What is the purpose of miracles?*

#### Read John 5:16-23.

Briefly provide background on the miracle Jesus performed leading up to His words in this passage.

- ▶ *Who did Jesus' miracles point to?*

Unlike a magician or illusionist who performs to draw attention to himself, Jesus' miracles pointed to His Father.

- ▶ *What "greater works" was Jesus referring to in verse 20?*

The greatest miracle would be the greater work of salvation God would bring about through Jesus' sacrifice.

#### Read Mark 2:6-12.

The sick man was healed and walked in front of everybody.

- ▶ *How would you have responded to seeing this miracle? How did the people respond?*

The people were amazed and gave glory to God.

- ▶ *Do you respond with amazement when you see God's power at work? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *Do you need to witness a miracle to believe Jesus is the Son of God? Explain.*

### 2 Do miracles still occur today?

(James 5:14-15; 1 John 5:14-15)

- ▶ *Have you ever prayed for physical healing for yourself or someone else? How did God answer your prayer?*

#### Read James 5:14-15.

- ▶ *What did James mean by the term "prayer of faith"? How is this different from any other prayer?*

Believers should pray with confidence that God can heal.

- ▶ *Does this mean God will miraculously heal every illness as long as we pray in faith?*

God acts according to His will and purposes and for our good and joy in Him. Prayer can bring healing, but lack of healing does not show that the one praying lacks faith. (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

#### Read 1 John 5:14-15.

- ▶ *Based on this passage, what can a Christian know when it comes to making requests of God?*

God answers prayer according to His will.

- ▶ *How can we know we are praying "according to His will"?*

Through Bible study and prayer, the Holy Spirit will teach us to understand God's will.

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *When you don't get the miracle you ask for, does that mean God is ignoring you or that you lack faith?*

Remind students that there will be times you don't get the miracle you want, but following Jesus starts with learning to trust God's purpose in your life.

*This midweek study will examine why it's important for students to recognize that the ultimate consequence for sin is death. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

## Essential Doctrine: Sin and Death

The ultimate consequence for sin is death—physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death (Rom. 6:23). God was clear to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden that if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die (Gen. 2:17). The type of death that would result from the fall in the garden wasn't only physical death, but spiritual death—separation from God. Spiritual death continues in a permanent state when someone dies apart from the reconciling work of Christ, who defeated death through His own sacrifice on the cross and subsequent resurrection.

**Scripture:** *Genesis 2:15-17; 3:2-5; Romans 3:23-26; 5:12-17; 8:6-13,35-39*

### 1 Sin results in physical death.

(Rom. 5:12-17)

The Bible states that the wages of sin is death, physical death being one aspect of it. We see this in Romans 5 where Paul connects the fall of humanity in the garden to man's death, making it clear that the consequences for sin is death. God specifically warned that this would result if Adam and Eve disobeyed in the garden (see Gen. 3)—consequences that would spread to the entire human race.

### 2 Sin results in spiritual death.

(Gen. 3:2-5; Rom. 8:6-13)

Not only did sin result in physical death, it also resulted in spiritual death. Once again, we see this initially with Adam and Eve after their sin against God in the garden. Upon their disobedience, their relationship with God was broken and they experienced the shame and guilt of their sin—trying to hide from God's presence. The consequences of their decision would be passed down from generation to generation as was soon evidenced when Cain murdered Abel. Thus, sin results in spiritual death, making one hostile toward God.

### 3 Sin results in eternal death.

(Rom. 3:23-26; 8:35-39)

Sin is an offense against a holy God, and our sin must be dealt with if God is to stay true to His character. While God must punish sin, He also has a desire to rescue and redeem. Paul tells us that God has taken it upon Himself to be both "righteous and declare righteous" those who trust in Christ—meaning, He will still be just by punishing sins, but instead of people bearing that punishment, He allowed His Son to bear it in their place. For those who trust in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, punishment no longer awaits, only adoption as sons and daughters of God. However, all others will experience eternal death and separation from God, which is all the more reason we should share the good news of Christ.

## Opening Activity

Call for a show of hands from everyone who sinned this week. Who sins? What about our pastor, deacons, or teachers—do they sin? Where did sin come from?

*The Holman Bible Dictionary* defines sin as: actions by which humans rebel against God, miss His purpose for their life, and surrender to the power of evil rather than to God. ... Sin is universal—we all sin. ... Satan introduced sin when he beguiled Eve. ... Since Adam and Eve rebelled, sin has invaded humanity like a dread malignancy.

Why do you think we find it so difficult not to sin?

All people have inherited a sinful nature; however, every person is also responsible for his or her choice to sin.

When we sin, who are we always sinning against? (Though sinful acts may be directed against another person, ultimately every sin is against God.)

What are the consequences of sinning against God? (Sin creates a barrier between us and God.)

## Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" by Hillsong UNITED (*Zion*, Hillsong Music, 2013)
- ▶ "This Is Amazing Grace" by Phil Wickham (*The Ascension*, Fair Trade Services, 2013)
- ▶ "Broken Together" by Casting Crowns (*Thrive*, Provident, 2014)

## Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Club Paradise" *BluefishTV*

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The ultimate consequence for sin is death—physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death (Rom. 6:23). God was clear to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden that if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die (Gen. 2:17). The type of death that would result from the fall in the garden wasn't only physical death, but spiritual death—separation from God. Spiritual death continues in a permanent state when someone dies apart from the reconciling work of Christ, who defeated death through His own sacrifice on the cross and subsequent resurrection.

### 1 Sin results in physical death. (Gen. 2:15-17; Rom. 5:12-17)

Option: Assign partners and challenge students to see how many things they have in common with their partner. Offer a small prize to the pair who comes up with the most things in common.

- ▶ *What two characteristics do all humans have in common?*  
All of us are sinners, and we will all die.

#### Read Genesis 2:15-17.

- ▶ *What was the only thing Adam and Eve could do that would destroy the perfect world God created for them?*  
If Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge, they would “certainly die.”

#### Read Romans 5:12-17.

- ▶ *What were the consequences of Adam's sin? What are the consequences of our sin?*  
The Bible states that the wages of sin is death, physical death being one aspect of it. We see this in Romans 5 where Paul connects the fall of humanity in the garden to man's death. God specifically warned that this would result if Adam and Eve disobeyed in the garden (see Gen. 2)—consequences that would spread to the entire human race.

### 2 Sin results in spiritual death. (Gen. 3:2-5; Rom. 8:6-13)

#### Read Genesis 3:2-5.

- ▶ *How did Satan downplay the consequences of eating the fruit? How does Satan cause you to dismiss the consequences of falling into temptation today?*
- ▶ *What were the true consequences of Adam and Eve's actions?*  
Not only did sin result in physical death, it also resulted in spiritual death. Upon Adam and Eve's disobedience, their relationship with God was broken and they experienced the shame and guilt of their sin.

#### Read Romans 8:6-13.

The consequences of Adam and Eve's decision would be passed

down from generation to generation as was soon evidenced when Cain murdered Abel. Thus, sin results in spiritual death, making one hostile toward God.

- ▶ *What evidence do we see of humanity's broken relationship with God today?*

### 3 Sin results in eternal death. (Rom. 3:23-26; 8:35-39)

- ▶ *What is the worst punishment you've ever received? What would it have meant to you if someone had taken your punishment for you?*

#### Read Romans 3:23-26; 8:35-39.

When we place our faith in Christ, God no longer focuses on the sin in our lives. Instead, He sees us through the blood of Christ. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we are righteous in God's sight. Nothing, not even death, can separate us from Him.

- ▶ *Does that mean we can sin all we want as long as we ask forgiveness?*  
Sin is an offense against a holy God, and our sin must be dealt with if God is to stay true to His character. While God must punish sin, He also has a desire to rescue and redeem.

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What would your life be like if you were not born with a sinful nature?*  
Born with a sin nature, we are bent toward rebellion and disobedience against God. However, we are not forced to sin; we choose to sin.
- ▶ *What hope do we have of overcoming our sin nature? Is this something we can do on our own? Why or why not?*  
Remind students that sin entered the world through one man, but salvation also entered through one man—Jesus Christ. Jesus overcame sin, which leads to eternal death, and offers us eternal life instead.
- ▶ *Do you believe the work of Christ can overcome the sin in your life? Why or why not?*

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize the church as "the people of God."  
Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: People of God

Scripture describes the church as "the people of God." (See 2 Cor. 6:16.) Comprised of both Jew and Gentile, the church is created by God through the atoning death of Christ. The term "church" is used in two senses—individual local churches that have covenanted together under the Lordship of Christ, and the universal church that comprises all believers in Christ in all times. As the people of God, the church seeks to live under Christ's authority while we are protected and cared for by Him.

**Scripture:** *Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; Philippians 2:1-11; 2 Timothy 2:1-2*

### 1 The people of God are called to unity. (Acts 2:41-47; Phil. 2:1-11)

From the earliest days of the church, we notice some interesting practices that demonstrate how individual believers were unified under Jesus' lordship. The Scriptures specify that early believers devoted themselves to fellowship, prayer, sharing in the Lord's Supper, and learning from the apostles (Acts 2:42). While most of our churches have a hard time getting people to come to a weekly event, the early church assembled "every day" (Acts 2:46). Of course, these outward acts weren't superficial or for show; rather, they were an outward demonstration of an internal transformation that had taken place within each believer. The gospel changed the hearts and minds of these men and women that they focused on the same goal. Work, family, leisure, and everything else became secondary to serving the body of Christ and bringing others into His kingdom.

### 2 The people of God are called to gospel faithfulness. (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:1-2)

God has one church, one people who are called to be holy and to carry on the good news of Christ by contending for the faith and delivering the gospel to the next generation. It is by this faithfulness that we, ourselves, have come to hear the gospel—because of the faithfulness of Peter, Paul, Stephen, Barnabas, and others who have planted churches and trained pastors over the centuries, who in turn planted churches and trained pastors, and so on. This is part of what it means to be the people of God. Not only do we have the opportunity and responsibility to contend for the gospel, but also the call to deliver it to others.

### Opening Activity

**Game Stations:** Set up one or more game stations (Wii, Xbox 360 Kinect, PlayStation, etc.) and allow students to play team cooperative games—games where students have to work together to play the game or accomplish a goal rather than playing against one another. While students are playing, invite them to describe/explain their favorite game.

After about ten minutes, invite students to describe what they like about playing team video games, sharing how unlike many other video games, these require a team to work together. Explain that this is how the Christian life works, especially in church life. Point out that if we don't get along together, it will be difficult to accomplish the mission Christ has given His church.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Do Something" by Matthew West  
(*Into the Light*, Sparrow Records, 2012)
- ▶ "Give Me Your Eyes" by Brandon Heath  
(*What If We*, Provident, 2008)
- ▶ "Build Your Kingdom Here" by Rend Collective  
(*Campfire*, Rend Collective Experiment, 2013)
- ▶ "Until the Whole World Hears" by Casting Crowns  
(*Until the Whole World Hears*, Provident, 2009)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "In Here Out There" *BluefishTV*

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### 1 The people of God are called to unity. (Acts 2:41-47; Phil. 2:1-11)

*Illustration.* Share the following: In the first book of J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy, *The Fellowship of The Ring*, a group of characters are brought together for the purpose of destroying a powerful ring in the fires of Mount Doom. This team is made up of two men, an elf, a dwarf, a wizard, and four Hobbits. Though the characters are different in many ways—and there is much hostility and distrust among them—they work together against a common enemy for a common purpose.

- ▶ *How did focusing on the same goal bind this group together?*

#### Read Philippians 2:1-11.

- ▶ *What four things did Paul urge the church to do to be unified? (see v. 2)*
- ▶ *What does it mean to have the same love and share the same feelings?*

We are to express the same love for one another as Christ has expressed to us and be in one accord.

- ▶ *What is the goal we are to focus on? Why is focusing on the same goal important as a church?*
- ▶ *Is it really necessary to be part of a church? Can't I serve Christ on my own?*

#### Read Acts 2:41-47.

You can be a Christian and sit alone in your home all day. However, you won't grow to the potential that God has planned for you if you don't get plugged into a local church.

- ▶ *How did the early church serve other believers? In what ways did this help them grow in their relationship with Christ?*

The early believers devoted themselves to fellowship, prayer, sharing in the Lord's Supper, and learning from the apostles. Of course, these outward acts weren't superficial or for show; rather, they were an outward demonstration of an internal transformation that had taken place within each believer. The gospel changed the hearts and minds of these men and women so that they focused on the same goal.

### 2 The people of God are called to gospel faithfulness. (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:1-2)

- ▶ *How do you know that what you are learning from your teachers at school is true? What might the consequences be if what they started teaching wasn't true?*

#### Read 2 Timothy 2:1-2.

- ▶ *Why was it important for Timothy to make sure the gospel was taught to trustworthy people who were able to pass it on to others?*

God calls His people to be holy and to carry on the good news of Christ by contending for the faith and delivering the gospel to the next generation. It is by this faithfulness that we, ourselves, have come to hear the gospel—because of the faithfulness of Peter, Paul, Stephen, Barnabas, and others who have planted churches and trained pastors over the centuries, who in turn planted churches and trained pastors, and so on.

#### Read Matthew 28:18-20.

- ▶ *What commission did Jesus give His followers? Was this just for church leaders or does it include everyone?*

God calls all of us to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them. This is part of what it means to be the people of God. Not only do we have the opportunity and responsibility to contend for the gospel, but also the call to deliver it to others.

- ▶ *Who do you need to thank today for sharing the gospel with you? What are some specific ways we can make sure we are also following through on this commission?*

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How would you describe your commitment to our church?*
- ▶ *How has being a part of our group helped you grow in your faith?*

*Option:* Provide maps of your city or county and allow time for students to look over the map. After a couple of minutes, discuss which part of the city or county is in the most need. After students have responded, ask: How can we share the gospel by providing a service or ministry to the people in this area?



*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that one aspect of sin is missing the mark of God's standards set for humanity. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### **Essential Doctrine: Sin as Missing the Mark**

One aspect of sin is missing the mark of God's standards set for humanity. Missing the mark isn't simply making a mistake, but consciously choosing to sin and falling short of God's glory as a result. We may refer to sin as a failure on the part of humans to live according to God's standards, but we must recognize this failure is intentional. We miss the mark when we deliberately choose to cast aside God's purpose for us.

**Scripture:** *Genesis 1:31; Isaiah 45:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:5-6*

### **1 God's design is good.** (Gen. 1:31; Isa. 45:9-12)

When we talk about God's intention or God's mark, in essence we are talking about God's good design in the world that He has created. It is important to recognize God's design all throughout creation—from the physical world of laws and regularities to the social world of morals and ethics—noting how each sphere wasn't created haphazardly, but instead with great design and order. Not only that, but it is important to recognize that God's design is a good thing, which not only brings God glory, but contributes to our good and joy in the end. We see what happens when we go against God's good design and intention, as with the case with Adam and Eve in the garden—by going against God's standard for right and wrong, their relationships with God, each other, and the world around them became distorted.

### **2 God's design is restored through Christ.** (2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:5-6)

Even though sin has corrupted God's good design all throughout creation, the Bible tells us that creation is continually being restored through Christ who will one day make all things new. This means that even now things like relationships, authority, working, resting—things that were originally created and designed by God as good—are being redeemed and restored through the work of Christ to reflect their original purpose. This means, among other things, that Christians can demonstrate to the world the good intention behind God's original design, showing how His purpose and plan in these areas not only make much of Him, but work for our good and joy as well.

### **Opening Activity**

Many people do not believe there are absolutes in life. They believe that what's wrong for one person may not be wrong for another. If that is true, then a person or whole society can decide that the murder of certain people (genocide, for example) is not wrong.

Would you want to live in a world where there are no rules or standards? Why or why not?

Invite students to share examples of Marvel or DC Comics characters who try to live by their own standard of right and wrong. How does living by our own standards usually turn out?

Who gets to set the standard for how humanity should live? Do you agree that God should set the standard? Why or why not?

### **Worship/Playlist Ideas**

- ▶ "Flawless" by MercyMe  
(*Welcome to the New*, MercyMe, 2014)
- ▶ "Fix My Eyes" by for KING & COUNTRY  
(*RUN WILD. LIVE FREE. LOVE STRONG*, Word Entertainment, 2014)
- ▶ "Live Like That" by Sidewalk Prophets  
(*Live Like that*, Word Entertainment, 2012)
- ▶ "Beyond Me" by tobyMac  
(*Forefront*, 2015)

### **Video Idea(s)**

- ▶ "Don't Be a Statistic" *BluefishTV*

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that one aspect of sin is missing the mark of God's standards set for humanity. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

### Essential Doctrine: Sin as Missing the Mark

One aspect of sin is missing the mark of God's standards set for humanity. Missing the mark isn't simply making a mistake, but consciously choosing to sin and falling short of God's glory as a result. We may refer to sin as a failure on the part of humans to live according to God's standards, but we must recognize this failure is intentional. We miss the mark when we deliberately choose to cast aside God's purpose for us.

### 1 God's design is good. (Gen. 1:31; Isa. 45:9-12)

*Option:* Display an iPhone, then ask students to tell you who invented it. Invite students to call out some other famous inventors and inventions. Then hold up an image of a copyright symbol.

- ▶ **Why would someone want or need to protect their invention or design with a copyright?**

With a copyright, the author, designer, or creator has control over how his or her composition, work, or invention is used.

#### Read Genesis 1:31.

- ▶ **Do we, as God's creation, have the right to question the goodness of God's design? Why or why not?**

#### Read Isaiah 45:9-12.

- ▶ **What examples do we see in this passage of the absurdity of a creation questioning its creator?**
- ▶ **How does this illustrate the absurdity of our temptation to question or disobey God?**

God is not a distant or uninvolved Creator. He is a loving Creator who created all things, including us, for a purpose.

- ▶ **What happens when we choose to sin and consequently fall short of God's good standard? How did we see this in the case of Adam and Eve?**

By going against God's standard for right and wrong, Adam and Eve's relationship with God, each other, and the world around them was broken.

### 2 God's design is restored through Christ. (2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:5-6)

#### Read Revelation 21:5-6.

- ▶ **What is God doing in these verses? What is your response to the thought of God taking everything that is broken in this world and making it new?**

The Bible begins with the majestic story of God creating the universe, and it concludes with his creating a new heaven and

a new earth. This is a tremendous hope and encouragement for believers. (*Life Application New Testament Commentary*)

- ▶ **What is the end result of the metamorphosis of a caterpillar? What makes this so amazing?**

#### Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

- ▶ **How is it possible for someone to become a "new creation"?**

Briefly provide background on Paul's transformation. Share how his life changed after his encounter with Christ.

- ▶ **How does Christ transform our lives when we become new creations?**

Like Paul, believers are changed when they meet Christ. Christians are new people. The Holy Spirit gives them new life, and they are not the same anymore. (*Life Application New Testament Commentary*)

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ **If you've accepted Christ, how is this transformation evident in your life?**

Even though sin has corrupted God's good design all throughout creation, the Bible tells us that creation is continually being restored through Christ who will one day make all things new. This means that even now things like relationships, authority, working, resting—things that were originally created and designed by God as good—are being redeemed and restored through the work of Christ to reflect their original purpose. This means, among other things, that Christians can demonstrate to the world the good intention behind God's original design, showing how His purpose and plan in these areas not only make much of Him, but work for our good and joy as well.

*Option:* Distribute note cards with the following guidelines to help students in their transformation of becoming more like Christ: 1. Study the Bible daily (1 Pet. 2:2); 2. Pray to God constantly (Phil. 4:6-7); 3. Meet with other Christians regularly (Heb. 10:25); 4. Tell others about Jesus (Mark 16:15; 1 Pet. 3:15).

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize sin as idolatry. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### **Essential Doctrine: Sin as Idolatry**

Sin is not only a physical act of rebellion against God, such as lying or stealing, but it is also a matter of the heart. The physical displays of sin are the fruit of what has been birthed in the heart of a person (Matt. 15:10-20). In Scripture, idolatry usually refers to bowing down to a statue made of wood or gold, worshipping created things instead of the Creator. But idolatry can take on more subtle forms: a seeking of approval, security, power, pleasure, etc. We can diagnose the idolatry of our heart by examining the areas where the desires of our hearts have turned into idolatrous demands (Jas. 4:1-3).

**Scripture:** *1 Kings 11:1-13; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 3:1-9*

### **1 Heart idols are real and can destroy us.**

(1 Kings 11:1-13; Col. 3:5-9)

When most people think about idols, they imagine wooden or golden statues that primitive cultures bow down to in their worship of a deity. In the Western world, you don't see too many instances of physical idols being bowed down to; however, you do see a good amount of what we call heart idols. Heart idols are more subtle in nature, and involve the treasuring of things in this world more than the treasuring of Christ, things like sports, relationships, the praise of man, reputation, personal talents, and so forth.

### **2 Jesus alone is worthy of worship.**

(Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 3:1-4)

The Bible has a good deal to say against heart idols. For starters, it teaches us that all forms of sin (lying, stealing, copying someone's homework, etc.) spring from the condition of one's heart and what a person is idolizing at the time. This is why the Bible affirms the importance of having a new heart with the coming of the new covenant that Jesus ushered in with His blood. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, Christians can experience, through the power of the Holy Spirit, victory over sin and idols of the heart. While our hearts haven't been made completely new and sinless at this time, Christians can look forward to the future when heart idols will no longer be an issue since the hearts of Christians will cherish Jesus as they should.

### **Opening Activity**

Show a clip from one of the *Superman* (Warner Home Video) movies, then discuss several superheroes and their alter egos. Point out that most superheroes actually exist as the regular guy, but they cover up their true identity when they disguise themselves as the superhero. However, unlike the rest, Superman's true identity is actually Superman. His disguise is Clark Kent.

What is your true identity? Are you an amazing new creation of Christ, still living here on earth? If so, are you living as that new creation or are you disguising yourself in order to fit in with the world? Perhaps your true identity is worldly, but you disguise yourself as spiritual in order to fit in at church. Today, will you allow Christ to change your mindset, stop your sinful habits and practices, and live as a new person?

Discuss how we can allow others to see either a disguised version of who we really are or the real person God intended us to be. Which person would you say you most often portray to others? Which person would your friends say you most often portray?

### **Worship/Playlist Ideas**

- ▶ "Awakening" by Chris Tomlin  
(*And If Our God Is For Us*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow, 2010)
- ▶ "Drops in the Ocean" by Hawk Nelson  
(*Diamonds*, Hawk Nelson, 2015)
- ▶ "Through All of It" by Colton Dixon  
(*Anchor*, 19 Recordings, Inc., 2014)
- ▶ "From the Inside Out" by Hillsong  
(*Mighty to Save*, Hillsong Music Australia, 2010)

### **Video Idea(s)**

- ▶ "Worshipping the Wrong God" *BluefishTV*

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize sin as idolatry. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

### Essential Doctrine: Sin as Idolatry

Sin is not only a physical act of rebellion against God, such as lying or stealing, but it is also a matter of the heart. The physical displays of sin are the fruit of what has been birthed in the heart of a person (Matt. 15:10-20). In Scripture, idolatry usually refers to bowing down to a statue made of wood or gold, worshipping created things instead of the Creator. But idolatry can take on more subtle forms: a seeking of approval, security, power, pleasure, etc. We can diagnose the idolatry of our heart by examining the areas where the desires of our hearts have turned into idolatrous demands (Jas. 4:1-3).

### 1 Heart idols are real and can destroy us. (1 Kings 11:1-13; Col. 3:5-9)

- ▶ *Can you be completely devoted to God and, at the same time, have an unhealthy attachment to other things? Why or why not?*

#### Read 1 Kings 11:1-13.

Solomon had taken for himself 1,000 women who didn't know or love God. In fact, they worshiped idols. Probably in an attempt to keep them happy, and as a political move for good foreign relations, Solomon allowed and even promoted and participated in the worship of these idols.

- ▶ *What are some things that at one time seemed good to you that ended up leading to sin?*

When most people think about idols, they imagine wooden or golden statues that primitive cultures bow down to in their worship of a deity. In the Western world, you don't see too many instances of physical idols being bowed down to; however, you do see a good amount of what we call heart idols. Heart idols are more subtle in nature, and involve the treasuring of things in this world more than the treasuring of Christ, things like sports, relationships, the praise of man, reputation, personal talents, and so forth.

#### Read Colossians 3:5-9

- ▶ *What does this passage tell us we need to get rid of? Why?*  
We need to get rid of sinful actions and attitudes, including greed, because they are a form of idolatry. All of these things take our focus off of God.
- ▶ *What is the result when God is not our focus?*  
A divided heart leads to compromise, disobedience, and ultimately, defeat.

### 2 Jesus alone is worthy of worship. (Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 3:1-4)

- ▶ *What do you think about the most? Why?*

#### Read Colossians 3:1-4

For Christ to be Lord of your life, your mind must be set on Him.

- ▶ *In what ways does your mindset need to change?*

The Bible teaches us that all forms of sin (lying, stealing, copying someone's homework, etc.) spring from the condition of one's heart and what a person is idolizing at the time.

- ▶ *How do you set your mind on things above? Why is that important?*

Our thoughts influence our actions. If we place our thoughts on "what is above," our actions will please God.

- ▶ *Why is Christ, alone, worthy of our full attention and worship?*

#### Read Philippians 2:9-11.

- ▶ *How do these verses recognize Jesus as Lord? Why will every knee bow?*

(Note that "every" does not mean that everyone will be saved, but that everyone will acknowledge that He is Lord.)

- ▶ *Many call Jesus Savior, but does that make Him Lord of their lives? Explain.*

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Does Jesus have first place in your life? Why or why not?*

Remind students that because of Jesus' sacrifice, Christians can experience, through the power of the Holy Spirit, victory over sin and idols of the heart. While our hearts haven't been made completely new and sinless at this time, Christians can look forward to the future when heart idols will no longer be an issue since the hearts of Christians will cherish Jesus as they should.

- ▶ *If Jesus is your Lord, what difference should that make in your life?*

*Option:* On index cards, direct students to list sins, attitudes, unhealthy desires, etc., that they need to put away. Provide time for students to commit to the Lord their desire to get rid of the things in their life that take their focus off of Him, then shred the lists as a symbol of their commitment.

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that there is only one true God. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: God Is One

The Bible affirms that God is one, as seen in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, otherwise known as the Shema. In both Old and New Testament times, the advocacy of monotheism (belief in one God) was contrary to the surrounding culture. Where most cultures practiced polytheism (belief in multiple gods) or henotheism (the worship of one god with the belief in multiple gods), the people of God knew, based upon God's self-revelation, that Yahweh, the Lord, was the only one, true God.

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 19:1-6; 93:1-5; Mark 12:29; John 1:1-3,14-18; 14:6-7; 16:13-15; 1 Corinthians 8:5-6

### 1 There is no authority greater than God's.

(Deut. 6:4-9; Psalm 19:1-6; 93:1-5)

By definition, in order for God to be God, He must have no one equal to Himself. (Otherwise, if there was someone equal to God, then by definition he couldn't be God). Consider the Star Wars (20th Century Fox) movies, for example. There you have this impersonal force of good and evil, a force that is, overall, completely equal though opposite in sides. One side never truly conquers the other, nor can it. This is what we call dualism, which is logically incompatible for thinking about the most powerful being in the universe. Either God is God or he isn't, and there can only be one all-powerful being with the title of God.

### 2 The Bible affirms the existence of one God.

(John 1:1-3; 16:13-15; 1 Cor. 8:5-6)

While there are several religions and worldviews that claim the existence of multiple gods, the Bible affirms the existence of only one, true God. Simultaneously, the Bible also affirms that God exists in three distinct yet equal persons known as the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not three gods, but one, given the fact that the Trinity is both unified and diverse. Thus, while there is one God over all of creation, that God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### 3 Jesus affirms the existence of one God.

(Mark 12:29; John 1:14-18; 14:6-7)

Jesus, being fully human and fully divine, affirmed the existence of one God, and by doing so highlighted His oneness with the Father and Spirit.

### Opening Activity

Tell students you are going to begin today with a quiz. Offer small prizes, such as snack size candy bars, to the first student to answer each question correctly. Quiz questions:

Who was the 16th president of the United States?

Who is the current vice president?

What is our state capital?

What kind of car does our pastor (or student minister) drive?

As students attempt to answer, either fail to acknowledge correct answers, or simply tell the student offering the correct answer that he or she is wrong. Instead, award prizes to students who give incorrect answers.

When the game is over, or when students continue to protest (whichever comes first), thank them for defending the truth and for not letting incorrect answers slide. Point out that there was only one correct answer to each of these questions. Unless we defend our faith by sharing that there is only one true God, those who want to distort or change the truth will influence and deceive many people.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Who Is Like the Lord" by Israel & New Breed  
(*New Season*, Integrity, 2001)
- ▶ "Our God" by Chris Tomlin  
(*And If Our God Is for Us*, sixstepsrecords, 2010)
- ▶ "Mighty to Save" by Newsboys  
(*God's Not Dead*, InPop, 2011)
- ▶ "We Believe" by Newsboys  
(*Restart*, Sparrow, 2013)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "A Man Feel in a Hole" *BluefishTV*

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that there is only one true God. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

#### Essential Doctrine: God Is One

The Bible affirms that God is one, as seen in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, otherwise known as the Shema. In both Old and New Testament times, the advocacy of monotheism (belief in one God) was contrary to the surrounding culture. Where most cultures practiced polytheism (belief in multiple gods) or henotheism (the worship of one god with the belief in multiple gods), the people of God knew, based upon God's self-revelation, that Yahweh, the Lord, was the only one, true God.

#### 1 There is no authority greater than God's. (Deut. 6:4-9; Psalm 19:1-6; 93:1-5)

Option: On the board, invite students to list as many gods as they can. These can be ancient pagan gods, Greek gods, and gods of other cultures and people in our world today. You might even include "the force" from the *Star Wars* movies. Be sure to include the one, true God on the list.

- ▶ *Can there be more than one, true God? If not, how can we know which of these gods is the one, true God?*

#### Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

The nations around Israel worshiped many gods and goddesses, but Israel affirmed to all that there is but one true and living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*)

#### Read Psalm 19:1-6.

- ▶ *According to these verses, how can we be sure that God exists?* God's works declare and proclaim His praise.
- ▶ *What in nature fills you with an awe of God and His glory? Why?*

#### Read Psalm 93:1-5.

- ▶ *How long has God been in power?* God has always been Supreme Ruler.
- ▶ *What are some powerful forces in nature? How do these displays of force demonstrate God's power and authority?* \*The roaring waters can also represent the nations and people who rise up to oppose God. (*Holman OT Commentary*) No human power, no natural power is greater than God's authority. By definition, in order for God to be God, He must have no one equal to Himself.

#### 2 The Bible affirms the existence of one God. (John 1:1-3; 16:13-15; 1 Cor. 8:5-6)

- ▶ *How would you explain the Trinity to a non-Christian friend?* While many religions and worldviews claim the existence of multiple gods, the Bible affirms the existence of only one, true God. The Bible also affirms that God exists in three distinct

yet equal persons known as the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not three gods, but one,

#### Read 1 Corinthians 8:5-6.

- ▶ *How is God identified in these verses?*

The Bible teaches that God is one God in three distinct persons. The first Person is Father.

- ▶ *How does God relate to us as Father in these verses?*

We exist both because of God and for God.

#### Read John 1:1-3.

- ▶ *What/Who is "the Word" in this passage? (Jesus)*

The God of creation, the ultimate mind of the universe, had taken on human form. (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

- ▶ *What are some roles of the Son found in Scripture?*

Save the world (John 3:16-17); do the Father's will (John 6:38); be a light to the world (John 12:46); seek/save the lost (Luke 19:10); be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10)

#### Read John 16:13-15.

- ▶ *What is the role of the Holy Spirit?*

Convict (John 16:7-11); reveal truth (John 16:13); comfort (John 14:16); intercede (Romans 8:26); give gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-10); transform (2 Cor. 3:17-18)

- ▶ *How does the work of the Spirit testify to the one, true God?*

#### 3 Jesus affirms the existence of one God. (John 1:14-18; 14:6-7)

#### Read Mark 12:29; John 1:14-18; 14:6-7.

- ▶ *How do we see characteristics of parents in their children? What does Jesus reveal to us about His Father?*

Jesus, being fully human and fully divine, affirmed the existence of one God, and by doing so highlighted His oneness with the Father and Spirit.

#### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How does your life affirm the existence of the one, true God?*

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize the authority of Scripture. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

### Essential Doctrine: Authority of Scripture

Since the Bible is the inspired Word of God, containing God's special revelation to humanity, it is the ultimate standard of authority for those who follow Christ. Because it is truthful in everything it teaches, Scripture is humanity's source for wisdom, instructing us on how to live life well to the glory of God. Submitting to the authority of Scripture means that we are to believe and obey God by believing and obeying His Word.

**Scripture:** *Psalm 119:89; Matthew 5:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12*

### 1 God is the author.

(Ps. 119:89; Matt. 5:17-18; 2 Tim. 3:16)

Written by dozens of authors over the course of hundreds of years, the Bible is unique among any other book. Because God is the primary author of Scripture, the message of the Bible is imperishable, as Jesus reminds us in Matthew 5:17-18. Unlike other books, the Bible stands the test of time due to God's providential care in preserving it for future generations so that others may come to discover the good news of salvation found within its pages.

### 2 The Bible is the authority for your life.

(Heb. 4:12)

Scripture gets its authority from its author—God. And because God is eternal and unchanging, we can trust the truth of His Word to be unchanging too. Scripture will never fail in its purpose or be broken (John 10:35). In addition, Scripture has transformative power (Heb. 4:12; John 20:31), as seen in the case with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. Through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, the Bible is capable of speaking to the deepest parts of our lives, transforming hearts of stone into hearts that love God and others as originally intended.

### 3 God's Word equips you to live for Him.

(2 Tim. 3:16-17)

Knowing that Scripture has God for its author and is authoritative because of that fact, we should be motivated to submit to the authority of the Bible in every area of our lives. This submitting shouldn't be a begrudging type of submitting, but a joyful one, understanding that obeying God's Word is for our good and equips us to live for Him. The truth of the matter is that everyone submits to something, whether it be the authority of oneself (personal reason), the authority of others, the authority of tradition, etc. However, these were never meant to serve as ultimate authorities in our lives. God has given us His Word as the final authority for how we are to think and live, which is exactly why we should seek to internalize the truth of Scripture into our lives daily.

### Opening Activity

Play a brief game of "Spread the Word." (This works best in groups of 10-20. If you have more students, divide them into teams.) Organize groups in a circle or straight line and choose a starting player. Whisper the words to 2 Timothy 3:16 in that student's ear, then direct them to share the verse with the next person in the line. Continue until it gets to the last person in line. This person restates the words they heard, which may be very different than the original. Use this game to illustrate how important it is to know what the Bible says. Emphasize that when it comes to knowing the truth, God's Word is the authority.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Words" by Hawk Nelson  
(*Made*, Hawk Nelson/Nashburnham Inc, 2013)
- ▶ "One Thing Remains" [feat. Kristian Stanfill]  
(*Passion*, sixstepsrecords, 2012)
- ▶ "Fix My Eyes" by for KING & COUNTRY  
(*RUN WILD. LIVE FREE. LOVE STRONG*, Word, 2014)
- ▶ "Word of God Speak" by MercyMe  
(*Spoken For*, INO Records, 2002)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Practice What You Read" *BluefishTV*
- ▶ "The Bible Influences Everything" *BluefishTV*
- ▶ "The Skinny on the Bible" *SkitGuys.com*

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### Essential Doctrine: Authority of Scripture

Since the Bible is the inspired Word of God, containing God's special revelation to humanity, it is the ultimate standard of authority for those who follow Christ. Because it is truthful in everything it teaches, Scripture is humanity's source for wisdom, instructing us on how to live life well to the glory of God. Submitting to the authority of Scripture means that we are to believe and obey God by believing and obeying His Word.

#### 1 God is the author.

(Ps. 119:89; Matt. 5:17-18; 2 Tim. 3:16)

- ▶ *How do you decide whether to believe something you heard? Does it make a difference if you know the person you heard it from? Why or why not?*

#### Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

All Scripture comes from God Himself. "Men wrote the Bible, but the words and substance of what they wrote came from God." (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

- ▶ *How does knowing that God's Word comes directly from Him impact your desire to learn from it? Explain.*

#### Read Matthew 5:17-18; Psalm 119:89.

Because God is the author of Scripture, the message of the Bible is imperishable. God has existed eternally in the past, exists in the present, and will exist into the future. We can trust that His Word is also eternal.

- ▶ *How does knowing that God doesn't change help you to trust His Word?*

#### 2 The Bible is the authority for your life.

(Heb. 4:12-13)

**Illustration:** Imagine you are driving from New York to Los Angeles. How many states would you go through? Which highways would you drive on? How many time zones would you cross? Where can you go to find the answers to these questions? Point out that we couldn't make plans to travel this distance without the help of a map. Maps are essential to travel.

**Point:** How do we know how to live for Christ? How do we know which direction to take when life gets tough? We can't live for Christ without studying the Bible. It is essential to following Him.

- ▶ *What does it mean to be "relevant"?*  
Our society thrives on the concept of being relevant—fashion, politics, and entertainment must be deemed significant to the current times and concerns of the people.
- ▶ *Do you believe Scripture is relevant to the things our world faces? Why or why not?*

#### Read Hebrews 4:12-13.

- ▶ *What does verse 12 say about the power of God's Word?*

This is a strong statement about the authenticity, relevance, persistence, and power of Scripture to change lives.

- ▶ *Based on verse 13, how much of our lives does God know about?*

Our days are full of poor judgments and failures. Scripture is the standard that points out our sin. It is also the wisdom that points to our freedom.

- ▶ *If God's Word is like a sword, what thoughts and attitudes need to be cut away in your life?*

#### 3 God's Word equips you to live for Him.

(2 Tim. 3:16-17)

- ▶ *What is the purpose for completing your education? Could you be an engineer if you never learned math? Why not?*

By applying ourselves in school, we become equipped with specific skills and knowledge that will help us in our jobs/careers.

#### Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

God didn't leave anything out when it comes to Scripture. The Bible contains everything you need to live for Christ.

- ▶ *What does it mean to be "complete, equipped for every good work"?*

Paul encouraged Timothy that devotion to the Word brings a readiness to accomplish anything God asks. Meditating and focusing on God's Word will lead us to fulfill His plan.

- ▶ *How does this passage relate to your life? Do you feel equipped to fulfill God's plan of sharing the gospel? Why or why not?*

#### WRAP IT UP

Everyone submits to something, whether it be the authority of oneself, the authority of others, the authority of tradition, etc. However, these were never meant to serve as ultimate authorities in our lives. God has given us His Word as the final authority for how we are to think and live

- ▶ *Is the Bible just a book you pick up now and then, if at all? How can you make sure it is truly a guide for your life?*



*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize Christ as our High Priest. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

#### Essential Doctrine: Christ as Priest

As our Great High Priest, Jesus accomplishes the work of reconciling us to God. He is the One whose perfect righteousness is presented to the Father for our justification. He is the One who intercedes for us before the Father (Heb. 7:25; 9:24) and prays for us to remain faithful (Luke 22:31; John 17).

**Scripture:** Luke 22:31-32; John 17:11-19; Colossians 1:11-12; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24

#### 1 Jesus intercedes for us. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25; 9:24)

One of the main functions of the high priest in the Old Testament was to serve as a mediator between God and the people, or to intercede before God on the people's behalf. This type of intercessory pointed forward to the day Christ would intercede on behalf of the entire human race. As Paul says to Timothy, there is only one Mediator between God and man, and that is the God-man, Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

#### 2 Jesus can identify with our weaknesses. (Luke 22:31-32; John 17:11-19; Col. 1:11-12)

As our High Priest, the Bible affirms that Jesus can identify with us in our weaknesses. He knows what it is like to be human, to be tempted—yet He lived without sin. Because of the incarnation, we have a High Priest who has drawn near to us and can sympathize with humanity's weaknesses, not some distant deity on cosmic bleachers looking down into our struggles. He knows what it is like to feel lonely, abandoned, treated unjustly, mocked, and ridiculed. Because of that, we can be certain that He loves us and is interceding on our behalf for our good and joy.

#### Opening Activity

**I'm With Him:** Prior to this session, make a list of a few of the students in your group. Set up the entrance of your room to feel like an exclusive venue entrance (ideas: red carpet, rope, bouncer, guest list, and so on). As students arrive, allow those who are "on the list" to enter, but require the others to wait in a line outside the main meeting room. Before the session, prepare a few students who will be in the line to claim "I'm with him (or her)" as a specific adult leader walks by. These students are allowed to enter the room solely because they claim to know this leader. After a few minutes of waiting, allow everyone to come inside the room.

In Hollywood, it can sometimes be all about who you know. When it comes to having access to God, it is *always* about who you know. Explain that in this session, you will be looking at where Jesus is now and how it truly is about who you know.

#### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "10,000 Reasons" by Matt Redman  
(*10,000 Reasons (Live)*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow, 2011)
- ▶ "He Knows My Name" by Francesca Battistelli  
(*If We're Honest*, Word Entertainment, 2014)
- ▶ "How Can It Be" by Lauren Daigle  
(*How Can It Be*, Centricity, 2015)
- ▶ "Shoulders" by for KING & COUNTRY  
(*RUN WILD. LIVE FREE. LOVE STRONG.*, Word, 2014)

#### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "The Files" *BluefishTV*
- ▶ "He Came to Get Messy" *SkitGuys.com*

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize Christ as our High Priest. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

### Essential Doctrine: Christ as Priest

As our Great High Priest, Jesus accomplishes the work of reconciling us to God. He is the One whose perfect righteousness is presented to the Father for our justification. He is the One who intercedes for us before the Father (Heb. 7:25; 9:24) and prays for us to remain faithful (Luke 22:31; John 17).

### 1 Jesus intercedes for us. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25; 9:24)

- ▶ *What does "intercede" mean?*

#### Read Hebrews 7:25 and 9:24.

- ▶ *What does it mean that Jesus intercedes for you?*

Share the following definition of "intercede": to intervene between parties with a view to reconciling differences. Jesus is speaking on our behalf to God.

- ▶ *Why would Jesus be involved in trying to reconcile our differences with God? What are they? What is the result of our differences?*

Illustration: When someone is charged with a crime, both the prosecution and defense bring witnesses. The job of the defense witnesses is to show that the person charged did not do what they are being accused of. Jesus stands before the Father and defends His followers against the accusations of sin. His defense is always that He took the place of His followers so that they do not have to pay for their crime.

- ▶ *What gives Jesus the right to speak to God for us?*
- ▶ *Which would you rather have—you speaking to God in your defense or Jesus speaking to God in your defense? Why?*

There is no one better qualified to stand up for you than Jesus. The best lawyer in the world can't defend your sinfulness to a holy God; but God's perfect Son who took your place is more than able to speak to the Father on your behalf. He defends us as innocent, not because we are sinless, but because He has declared us innocent through the cross.

#### Read 1 Timothy 2:5.

Jesus bridges the gap between sinful humanity and the righteous God. He settles the legal demand for justice. *(Holman New Testament Commentary)*

### 2 Jesus can identify with our weaknesses. (Luke 22:31-32; John 17:11-19; Col. 1:11-12)

- ▶ *Who is the strongest person you know?*

Illustration: Created in 1977, The World's Strongest Man

competition has become the premier event in strength athletics. For over 30 years, the strongest men from all over the world have come together to compete in a series of unique and amazing tests of strength to determine the World's Strongest Man.

#### Read Colossians 1:11-12.

Jesus strengthens you according to His power.

- ▶ *What kind of power was Paul talking about? Where does it come from? How is it measured? What will we need it for?*

#### Read Luke 22:31-32.

- ▶ *For what reason would Simon (Peter) need Jesus to pray that his strength would not fail?*

Satan wanted to crush Simon Peter and the other disciples like grains of wheat. He hoped to find only chaff and blow it away. But Jesus assured Peter that although his faith would falter, it would not be destroyed, "But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen and build up your brothers." Jesus prayed for faith, not the removal of the test. *(Life Application New Testament Commentary)*

#### Read John 17:11-19.

- ▶ *For whom was Jesus praying in these verses? What did He pray?*

Jesus prayed for our protection so that we could continue to carry His message into the world, serving and glorifying God.

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What trials are you facing right now? How can we pray that Jesus will strengthen you?*
- ▶ *How does it give you hope to know that Jesus is interceding for you?*

As our High Priest, the Bible affirms that Jesus can identify with us in our weaknesses. He knows what it is like to be human, to be tempted—yet He lived without sin. He knows what it is like to feel lonely, abandoned, treated unjustly, mocked, and ridiculed. Because of that, we can be certain that He loves us and is interceding on our behalf for our good and joy.

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that Christ's sacrifice paid for our sins once and for all. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### **Essential Doctrine: Christ as Sacrifice**

There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ as being the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. However, unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were unable to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), Christ's sacrifice on the cross was able to remove our sin "once and for all."

**Scripture:** *Genesis 3:21; Leviticus 4:35; 5:10; Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:1-4, 11-18*

#### **1 The need for a sacrifice.**

(Gen. 3:21; Lev. 4:35; 5:10; Heb 10:1-4)

Ever since humanity sinned against God in the garden, a sacrifice for sins has been necessary. When Adam and Even failed in their fashion attempt to stitch leaves together, God made for them clothing from the skin of an animal, sacrificed to cover the shame brought to mankind (Gen. 3:21). Many Christians have seen in this story a glimpse into the foreshadowing of the death of another—the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

#### **2 Christ as our sacrifice.**

(Heb. 9:11-14; 10:11-18)

The need for a sacrifice only highlights the severity and ugliness of sin. Given that sin is first and foremost an issue of our hearts, it is important to recognize that our hearts are what need covering by the grace of God. Passed down from generation to generation, sin affects all of humanity (1 Cor. 15:22). But here's the good news: Jesus Christ offers Himself as a sacrifice in our place (1 Peter. 1:18-19). He is the Lamb who died to clothe us, the One who offers up His spotless blood to save us from our sins.

#### **Opening Activity**

Download pictures of a prescription antibiotic and an over-the-counter painkiller such as ibuprofen (or provide some actual empty bottles). Post one picture on either side of the room. Lead students to stand beside the picture that represents which medicine they would take in each of the following situations: 1) You've just gotten stitches after cutting your foot on a piece of glass. 2) The doctor confirms that you have strep. 3) You've come down with a terrible headache. 4) You have the flu. 5) You sprained your ankle in P.E. class.

Discuss why students would choose either a painkiller or an antibiotic. Point out that in the Old Testament, sin, which was much like a bacterial infection, was treated with a temporary painkiller (animal sacrifice). However, because the sacrifice never treated the underlying infection, the sin kept coming back. The animal sacrifices had to be repeated regularly and could never actually cure the problem.

However, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross removed the power of sin similar to how a prescription antibiotic heals a bacterial infection, permanently getting rid of the infection. Once the antibiotic starts working, no more painkillers are needed to mask the pain of the infection. Once Christ died for the sins of humanity, no additional animal sacrifices were ever needed.

#### **Worship/Playlist Ideas**

- ▶ "Because He Lives (Amen)" by Matt Maher  
(*Saints and Sinners*, Provident, 2015)
- ▶ "Flawless" by MercyMe  
(*Welcome to the New*, MercyMe, 2014)
- ▶ "This Is Amazing Grace" by Phil Wickham  
(*The Ascension*, Phil Wickham, 2013)

#### **Video Idea(s)**

- ▶ "Blood Sacrifice" *BluefishTV*

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### Essential Doctrine: Christ as Sacrifice

There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ as being the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. However, unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were unable to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), Christ's sacrifice on the cross was able to remove our sin "once and for all."

#### 1 The need for a sacrifice.

(Gen. 3:21; Lev. 4:35; 5:10; Heb 10:1-4)

▶ **When do you think the first animal sacrifice took place? Why?**

Challenge students to search their Bibles or the Internet to find information about the first animal sacrifice.

#### Read Genesis 3:21.

The first animal sacrifice happened right after the first sin. Because of Adam and Eve's sin, an animal was killed so that God could give them clothing to wear.

#### Read Leviticus 4:35; 5:10.

▶ **Why did animal sacrifices continue to be necessary?**

Animal sacrifices were required to show the cost of sin and forgiveness.

#### Read Hebrews 10:1-4.

▶ **Why did animal sacrifices have to be repeated year after year?**

Animal sacrifices were never intended to completely remove sin. If animal sacrifice had repaired the damage caused by sin, then they could have ceased to be offered. Instead, they brought the consciousness of personal sins in the hearts and minds of God's people. And even when all of the specifications for making the sacrifice were carried out precisely as instructed, the sacrifices still fell short. God's wrath could never be satisfied by any animal sacrifice people offered up to Him.

▶ **What "sacrifices" do we make to try to earn God's forgiveness? (good works, church attendance, mission trips, volunteering, etc.)**

▶ **Why aren't these things enough to cleanse us from sin?**

Our personal sacrifices, while good, cannot remove our sin.

Illustration: Show students a Tide to Go Pen® or other device used to blot out small stains, as well as a heavily stained sock or T-shirt. (Consider staining the sock or T-shirt during the session using ketchup, mustard, grass, dirt, etc.) Share how the Tide pen is used and why it was created. Invite a volunteer to come to the front of the room and try to remove the stains in the piece of clothing with the pen. Discuss the impossibility of using one

little stain removing pen to clean an entire load of dirty laundry. Point out how that concept is similar to the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. They could do a little bit of damage control, but animal sacrifices would never be enough to be able to clean sin completely.

#### 2 Christ as our sacrifice.

(Heb. 9:11-14; 10:11-18)

#### Read Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:11-18.

▶ **How did Jesus' sacrifice make others unnecessary?**

The only way sin could be atoned for was through sacrifice. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for all time.

▶ **Why was Jesus' blood sufficient to forgive us of our sins?**

Christ's sacrifice did more than purify ceremonially, which is what all the ashes [burnt offerings] could do, it cleansed hearts. (*Life Application New Testament Commentary*)

▶ **What did our need for forgiveness cost Jesus?**

Our sin cost Jesus everything: His life.

Illustration: Pull out a giant container of laundry detergent. Set this container out on the table, pointing out that when a family has really dirty laundry, like grass stains from sports, stinky socks, etc., they pull out the powerful stuff. Jesus' blood is much more like powerful detergent. His blood gets rid of the toughest sin stains for good!

#### WRAP IT UP

▶ **On a scale of 1 to 10, how thankful are you that your forgiveness is not dependent on sacrificing an animal? Explain.**

▶ **Do you tend to ask forgiveness for the same sin over and over?**

Remind students that we don't have to ask forgiveness for past sins over and over. The blood of Jesus was far more precious than the blood of animals. His was a once-for-all offering that never needed repeating. (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to understand that they have been reconciled to God through the work of Christ. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### **Essential Doctrine: Atonement**

The word atonement literally refers to a “blanket” or “covering,” and carries with it the idea that because of our sins and transgressions, we will never be in right standing before God if we don’t have atonement for our sins. This is exactly what Christ has done for us on the cross—shedding His blood and clothing us in His righteousness so that when God looks at us, He sees the covering of His Son instead of our sin.

**Scripture:** *Exodus 12:3-5,12-13,29-32; Ephesians 1:6-10*

### **1 God’s judgment over sin is coming to all.** (Ex. 12:12-13)

The early chapters of Exodus tell of the story of God raising up Moses to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt. Blood becomes the bookends in the story of the plagues: With the first plague the Nile River is turned into blood, and with the tenth plague God warned that He would strike every firstborn male dead. In essence, death was coming to all in Egypt—Hebrew and Egyptian alike. The judgment was the same for both. But God provided one way of escape. If blood, from a spotless lamb, was found sprinkled on the doorframes of the houses, the angel of death would spare the life of its inhabitants.

### **2 God’s judgment is why we need atonement.** (Ex. 12:3-5,29-32)

God’s kindness was clearly demonstrated in the Passover through His provision of protection. God made a way for people to be protected from His righteous wrath, which is exactly what atonement illustrates. Instead of sweeping their sin under the rug and pretending it didn’t exist, God made the blood of the lamb sufficient enough to spare them from the judgment they deserved.

### **3 God’s judgment is satisfied at the cross.** (Eph. 1:6-10)

The redemption story of the Passover points forward to the redemption story of salvation in Christ. That’s the story Paul was writing about in Ephesians. We have “redemption”—not in the blood of a spotless animal on Passover night, but in the blood of Jesus Christ, who has been slain for us so that our sins might be covered (atoned for). That is the essence behind the word “atonement,” the covering of our sins with the shed blood of Christ on our behalf. It is because of His shed blood that we are now clothed in His righteousness and are no longer under condemnation from God’s judgment.

### **Opening Activity**

Why do some people like to restore furniture, houses, or cars?

Invite students to tell about some items they’ve either restored or seen restored, then share the following: Auto restoration is the process of cleaning, replacing, or restoring the worn out parts of an older model car so that it shines like new again. This involves not only the parts that people can see, such as the exterior and the interior seating, but also the mechanical components such as the engine and braking system.

Point out that one of the things we all should be interested in restoring is broken relationships.

Share about a time when you’ve had a broken relationship restored. Allow students time to share, as well.

Remind students that if they are Christians, they have had the ultimate relationship restoration—their relationship with God. God takes the initiative to restore our relationship with Him.

### **Worship/Playlist Ideas**

- ▶ “We Believe” by Newsboys  
(*Restart*, Sparrow, 2013)
- ▶ “Redeemed” by Big Daddy Weave  
(*Love Come to Life*, Word, 2012)
- ▶ “This I Believe” by Hillsong Worship  
(*No Other Name*, Hillsong, 2014)
- ▶ “This Is Amazing Grace” by Phil Wickham  
(*The Ascension*, Phil Wickham, 2013)

### **Video Idea(s)**

- ▶ “Experience Life” *BluefishTV*

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to understand that they have been reconciled to God through the work of Christ. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

### Essential Doctrine: Atonement

The word atonement literally refers to a “blanket” or “covering,” and carries with it the idea that because of our sins and transgressions, we will never be in right standing before God if we don’t have atonement for our sins. This is exactly what Christ has done for us on the cross—shedding His blood and clothing us in His righteousness so that when God looks at us, He sees the covering of His Son instead of our sin.

## 1 God's judgment over sin is coming to all. (Ex. 12:12-13)

The early chapters of Exodus tell of the story of God raising up Moses to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt. When Moses went to Pharaoh to seek the release of the Israelites, he was denied. Pharaoh didn't want to free over a million people. They were Egypt's field slaves and laborers. Who would do all the work? Because of Pharaoh's hardened heart, God made things so difficult in Egypt that Pharaoh would have to give up and let them go. The first nine plagues hit the country. They were bad, but not enough to make Pharaoh change his mind. The tenth plague changed everything.

### Read Exodus 12:12-13.

#### ▶ *What was the tenth plague God would bring on Egypt?*

The tenth plague involved the death of every firstborn—both Hebrew and Egyptian, human and animal. The Lord planned to send the death angel across the land, and everything that had been born first in each household would die.

#### ▶ *Why didn't Pharaoh listen to God after the first nine plagues?*

Pharaoh's heart was hardened. (See Ex. 10.)

#### ▶ *How did God provide a way of escape for His people?*

God instructed the Israelites to take the blood of a lamb and smear it on the doorposts of their houses so that the angel would know to “pass over” that place. The blood on the doorways of the Israelite homes was a symbol of their faith in God.

## 2 God's judgment is why we need atonement. (Ex. 12:3-5,29-32)

#### ▶ *What does it mean to get what we deserve? Have you ever said about another person: “He had it coming”? What did you mean by that?*

#### ▶ *Do you think the Egyptians deserved what happened to them?*

Point out that all of us are sinners and deserve to die, but God loves us so much that He gave us another chance. (See Rom. 3:23-24.)

### Read Exodus 12:3-5,29-32.

Share the following definition of *atonement* from *The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*: “Biblical doctrine that God has reconciled sinners to Himself through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ.” God made a way for people to be protected from His righteous wrath, which is exactly what atonement illustrates. God made the blood of the lamb sufficient enough to spare them from the judgment they deserved.

#### ▶ *What emotions do you think the Israelites might have felt after that first Passover when they were spared from the death angel?*

## 3 God's judgment is satisfied at the cross. (Eph. 1:6-10)

### Read Ephesians 1:6-10.

#### ▶ *What promise are we given in verse 7? What did we do to deserve this?*

By God's “glorious grace” in Christ, He redeems us. We are guaranteed freedom from sin and eternity with Him.

#### ▶ *Where would we be without God's grace?*

Just as God passed over His people when He saw the blood on their houses, He protects us from judgment when we by faith receive His Son, who gave His own blood on the cross. The first Passover marked the beginning of the exodus of God's people out of slavery. In an eternally more significant way, our faith in Jesus marks our own exodus from sin's bondage. These events foreshadowed the greater work of redemption God would bring about through His Son's bloodshed on the cross. We are freed from sin's bondage when we receive Jesus (Rom. 6:23).

### WRAP IT UP

#### ▶ *Does the thought of God as “judge” scare you or comfort you? Explain.*

Because of Jesus, our Passover Lamb, and the blood He shed on the cross, followers of Jesus have nothing to fear. Just as the death angel passed over the houses that demonstrated their faith by the blood, God sees His children through the blood of Jesus.

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize God's holiness. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### **Essential Doctrine: God Is Holy**

God's holiness refers to His uniqueness in being separate from all He has created. The Hebrew word for *holy* means "separate" or "set apart." God's holiness also refers to His absolute purity. God is unstained by the evil of the world. His goodness is perfect, and the moral code we find in Scripture is a reflection of His holy nature. As people made in God's image, we are called to holiness.

**Scripture:** *1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 6:1-8; James 1:13*

### **1 God's holiness sets Him apart from creation.** (1 Sam. 2:2; Jas. 1:13)

When people think of holiness, they immediately rush to moral perfection. While that is part of what it means to be holy, being holy also refers to being distinct and different from everything else. When it comes to God's holiness, it is easy to recognize that He is different from all parts of creation, just as a painter is different from his painting. The Bible affirms that God is "Holy, Holy, Holy," meaning there is none more morally perfect than He is. Because He is perfect in both His character and attributes, God is completely without sin, and even incapable of sinning.

### **2 God calls His people to be holy.** (Isa. 6:1-8)

God calls His people to share in His holiness, to live lives that are holy. We are to be distinct and separate from the rest of the world. While Christians should engage culture with the love and message of Christ, we should be different and stand out from the crowd by glorifying God in all we do. Even though we are incapable of being morally perfect here on earth, we can strive toward greater degrees of holiness within our lives as we are being transformed daily into the image of Christ (Rom. 12:1-3).

### **Opening Activity**

Group students into four teams by eye color (blue, brown, green, or hazel) Form four straight lines. Give the first person in line a transformer toy. On your cue, tell students to work to transform their toy. Award a team point to the first to complete the following task: Each person in line will work the toy to its transformation (from car to robot; next person would go from robot back to car; and so on). The first student in line will pass the toy to the next person in line for the second round. Continue this until you get through the last person in line. Award the winning team a prize.

Point: When converting a transformer toy, you change what it looks like but not what it is made of—it is not changed at its core. You are holy because the Holy Spirit lives in you. How you feel, how you see yourself, and how other people see you may change, but what does not change is the fact that the Holy Spirit is living inside you making you holy. God's Holy Spirit is in you, as a believer, constantly transforming you into the likeness of Christ.

### **Worship/Playlist Ideas**

- ▶ "Live Like You're Loved" by Hawk Nelson  
(*Diamonds*, Hawk Nelson, 2015)
- ▶ "Day One" by Matthew West  
(*Live Forever*, Sparrow Records, 2015)
- ▶ "Lord I'm Ready Now" by Plumb  
(*Need You Now*, Curb, 2014)

### **Video Idea(s)**

- ▶ "Bubble Creek Canyon" *BluefishTV*

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### Essential Doctrine: God Is Holy

God's holiness refers to His uniqueness in being separate from all He has created. The Hebrew word for *holy* means "separate" or "set apart." God's holiness also refers to His absolute purity. God is unstained by the evil of the world. His goodness is perfect, and the moral code we find in the Scriptures is a reflection of His holy nature. As people made in God's image, we are called to holiness.

### 1 God's holiness sets Him apart from creation.

(1 Sam. 2:2; Jas. 1:13)

- ▶ *How would you define holiness? (Record responses on the board. Don't respond or correct at this time; just allow students to share.)*

#### Read 1 Samuel 2:2.

The literal meaning of the word *holy* is to be separated or set apart.

- ▶ *Who is speaking in this verse? Why did Hannah proclaim that there is no one holy like the Lord?*

Hannah praised God for His blessings and great works.

- ▶ *Review students' definitions of holiness and invite them to choose which definition they think is best.*

When people think of holiness, they immediately rush to moral perfection. While that is part of what it means to be holy, it also refers to being distinct and different from everything else.

- ▶ *How is God set apart from us? Why is that necessary?*

#### Read James 1:13.

- ▶ *What does this verse tell us that God will never do? Why?*

God is completely separate from sin; He cannot sin, is not tempted to sin, nor does He tempt anyone to sin. He is not capable of evil. Nothing evil or sinful can come from Him. His holy nature will not allow sin into His presence.

- ▶ *How would you explain the holiness of God to someone who doesn't know Him?*

When it comes to God's holiness, it is easy to recognize that He is different from all parts of creation, just as a painter is different from his painting. The Bible affirms that God is "Holy, Holy, Holy," (Rev. 4:8-11) meaning there is none more morally perfect than He is. Because He is perfect in both His character and attributes, God is completely without sin, and even incapable of sinning.

### 2 God calls His people to be holy.

(Isa. 6:1-8)

- ▶ *How do you know when you've sinned? Is sin always easy to recognize? Why or why not?*

#### Read Isaiah 6:1-5.

Standing in the presence and holiness of God helped Isaiah recognize his sinfulness.

- ▶ *What does it take for us to recognize our sin? Why is this important?*

When we truly encounter the holiness of God, we can't help but see ourselves for who we really are—sinners in need of a Savior.

- ▶ *Why is it important to confess sin? How do you confess your sin? Do you hate your sin as much as God does? Explain.*

#### Read Isaiah 6:5-7.

The sight of a holy God and the sound of the holy hymn of worship brought great conviction to Isaiah's heart, and he confessed that he was a sinner. Unclean lips are caused by an unclean heart. (*The Bible Exposition Commentary*)

- ▶ *What was God's response to Isaiah's confession.*

It is not enough just to recognize your sinfulness. Confronted by a holy God, you must be cleansed by Him through confession of your sin.

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What difference does it make in your life that God is holy?*

#### Read Isaiah 6:8.

- ▶ *What is God's call to you? What keeps you from responding?*

God calls His people to share in His holiness, to live lives that are holy. We are to be distinct and separate from the rest of the world. While Christians should engage culture with the love and message of Christ, we should be different and stand out from the crowd by glorifying God in all we do. Even though we are incapable of being morally perfect here on earth, we can strive toward greater degrees of holiness within our lives as we are being transformed daily into the image of Christ (Rom. 12:1-3).



*This midweek study will examine why it's important for students to understand the nature of Jesus' deity. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: Jesus' Deity

Within the person of Jesus Christ, there are two natures—the divine nature and the human nature. Scripture teaches that Jesus is fully divine and fully human. His divinity is on display in passages that describe Him as being equal with God (see John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:1-3). The New Testament also points to the deity of Christ by showing how He possesses attributes that God alone possesses (see Mic. 5:2; John 1:4), how He performs works that only God performs (see Mark 2:5-12; John 10:28; 17:2), and how He Himself claims to be the Son of God (see John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5; Matt. 26:63-64).

**Scripture:** *John 1:6-18; 8:56-59; 10:30; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 10:11-14*

### 1 Jesus' deity is affirmed by Scripture.

(John 8:56-59; 10:30; Col. 1:15-20)

The testimony of Christ's divinity in Scripture is overwhelming. The disciples of Jesus affirm and testify to His deity, as well as do God the Father and the Holy Spirit at the time of Jesus' baptism (among other places). In addition, Jesus Himself testifies to this reality in several places, including the famous seven "I Am" statements in John's Gospel. By using the language of "I Am," Christ was doing more than simply describing Himself as preexistent. He was claiming to be Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, the one true God.

### 2 Jesus' deity is necessary for salvation.

(John 1:6-18; Heb. 10:11-14)

If Christ is not divine, then His sacrifice was not sufficient to save us from our sin. The truth of Christ's deity is absolutely essential to maintain the integrity of the gospel by which we are saved. If Christ was and is not the true God, then we are hopeless and helpless in our sins, still under condemnation for our sins. Only an infinite being can fully and truly bear the infinite punishment which our sin deserves.

It is also important to note that if Christ is not divine, then He could not serve as mediator between God and man. Scripture tells us that there is one mediator between God and man, and He is the God-man, Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5). As man He is able to sympathize with us in our weakness and serve as our great high priest, and as the eternal God, He is able to intercede for us, offering a final sacrifice on behalf of sinful people.

### Opening Activity

**One-Hundred Percent Pure?** Distribute a snack-size chocolate candy bar to each student as they enter the room. Encourage them to eat the candy before beginning the Bible study. Hold up a candy bar and ask them if they enjoyed the free candy. Present them with the following facts from the Food & Drug Administration: Chocolate that contains 59 or less insect fragments per 100 grams is OK, 60 or more fragments gets thrown out. Chocolate is also OK as long as it does not have more than 1.0 rodent hairs per 100 grams. ([www.fda.gov/oral/compliance\\_ref/cpg/cpgfod/cpg515-700.html](http://www.fda.gov/oral/compliance_ref/cpg/cpgfod/cpg515-700.html))

Ask students how they feel about their candy now that they know it may not be 100 percent pure chocolate.

**Point:** It's difficult to find something today that's 100 percent pure, but Jesus was both 100 percent God and 100 percent man.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "How Can It Be" by Lauren Daigle  
(*How Can It Be*, Centricity, 2015)
- ▶ "Fearless" by Phillips, Craig & Dean  
(*Fearless*, Phillips, Craig & Dean, 2009)
- ▶ "Because He Lives (Amen)" by Matt Maher  
(*Saints and Sinners*, Provident, 2015)
- ▶ "How Great Is Our God" by Chris Tomlin  
(*How Great Is Our God*, sixstepsrecords, 2011)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Who Was Jesus?" *BluefishTV*
- ▶ "The Files" *BluefishTV*

*This midweek study will examine why it's important for students to understand the nature of Jesus' deity. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

### Essential Doctrine: Jesus' Deity

Within the person of Jesus Christ, there are two natures—the divine nature and the human nature. Scripture teaches that He is fully divine and fully human. His divinity is on display in passages that describe Him as being equal with God (see John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:1-3). The New Testament also points to the deity of Christ by showing how He possesses attributes that God alone possesses (see Mic. 5:2; John 1:4), how He performs works that only God performs (see Mark 2:5-12; John 10:28; 17:2), and how He Himself claims to be the Son of God (see John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5; Matt. 26:63-64).

### 1 Jesus' deity is affirmed by Scripture. (John 8:56-59; 10:30; Col. 1:15-20)

Option: Discuss how the following views of Jesus miss the mark of what the Bible says about Him:

*Jehovah's Witness:* Jesus is not God incarnate. He is a created being.

*Mormonism:* Speak of Jesus as Savior, but believe He was the physical offspring of God.

*Buddhism:* Believe Jesus was a wise and enlightened man, but not the Son of God.

*Islam:* Jesus was not God, but was a prophet of God.

*Scientology:* Deny the deity of Christ and see Him as one of many good teachers.

#### Read Colossians 1:15-20.

- ▶ *How did Paul identify Jesus in this passage? (image of God, firstborn (preeminent), creator, Lord, Savior)*
- ▶ *Why is it important to understand that Jesus is fully God?*  
Jesus provides us with the opportunity to see the invisible God. Jesus is the exact representation of God.

#### Read John 8:56-59; 10:30.

- ▶ *What was Jesus claiming in these verses?*  
By using the language of "I Am," Christ was doing more than simply describing Himself as preexistent. He was claiming to be Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, the one true God.
- ▶ *What difference does it make that Jesus existed before creation?*
- ▶ *How does Jesus being 100% God affect your trust in Him? What if He were only 75% God?*

### 2 Jesus' deity is necessary for salvation. (John 1:6-18; Heb. 10:11-14)

- ▶ *Why was it necessary for Jesus to become human?*

#### Read John 1:6-18.

Jesus came to earth as "God in the flesh" not just because He could, but to provide the way for people to have a right

relationship with God. There is no other way to be reconciled to (made right with) God than through Jesus. (See Col. 1:19-20.)

- ▶ *Could Jesus still be Savior if He was not both 100 percent God and 100 percent man? Why or why not?*

If Christ is not divine, then His sacrifice was not sufficient to save us from our sin. It is also important to note that if Christ is not divine, then He could not serve as mediator between God and man. As man He is able to sympathize with us in our weakness and serve as our great high priest; and as the eternal God, He is able to intercede for us, offering a final sacrifice on behalf of sinful people.

#### Read Hebrews 10:11-14.

- ▶ *How often did the priests have to offer sacrifices? Why?*  
Even offered daily, the priests' offerings would never be enough to take away the sins of people.
- ▶ *What was unique about Christ's sacrifice?*  
Because of the deity of Christ, Jesus' once-and-for-all sacrifice was enough.

#### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What does Jesus' sacrifice mean to you personally?*  
When you stand before God, you can be assured that Christ's sacrifice was enough for your salvation.
- ▶ *How does your life reflect your thankfulness for Christ's willingness to take on human form and sacrifice His life for your salvation?*  
Remembering that Jesus is our Savior should lead us to respond with both gratitude and concern for others.  
Provide index cards. Direct students to write the names of three non-Christian friends. Explain that it's not enough for us to recognize and be thankful that Jesus is our Savior. Our response is to spread that love to others. Next to each name direct students to write one tangible way they will begin to share Christ with that friend this week.