

HIS STORY

God hears the prayers of the oppressed

In chapter 2, we read about Moses’ birth (vv. 1-10), his growth (vv. 11-15), and his flight from Egypt (vv. 15-22). The story continues in verse 23 with a new king ruling Egypt. Despite this change in government, slavery remained intense. As a result, Israel groaned and cried out for help.

When the people cried out, God heard them. God also saw their oppression, and the writer says that God took notice of the situation (2:24-25). God heard. God saw. God knew. God’s attentive nature is revealed throughout Scripture. God’s people can cry out to their God and trust that He hears them and cares about their situation.

► **Who are some famous or semi-famous people you’ve met? Does knowing about someone or meeting that person once mean that you know him or her? Why or why not?**

God Responds to those in need

Moses wasn’t eager to go on this mission. In their dialogue, Moses made several excuses for not obeying God’s call. But God responded to each of Moses’ excuses and questions with statements about His own sovereignty and power.

Moses’ first argument was about himself. “Who am I?” (3:11), he asked. He felt insufficient. He essentially asked, “Have you considered my resume? For the last 40 years, I’ve been in a wilderness.” Stop and think about it. Even though he was once a prince, Moses is now a humble shepherd. God asks this shepherd to confront the most powerful person in the world and tell him to let his slaves go free. This would be sort of like an average blue-collar worker declaring war on a president of a major country. Can you imagine your plumber declaring war on Russia?

Moses was an average guy, and alone he didn’t have great influence. Yet God responded to Moses by revealing what was most important: Himself. God said, “” (3:12a). Throughout the Bible this is what God’s leaders need in order to lead: God’s presence. It’s the non-negotiable for serving God. Think about Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Jehoshaphat, and the disciples. (See Matt. 28:18-20.) God was with them all.

Essential Doctrines

Enslaved to Sin: *Because of the fall of Adam and Eve 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).*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ **How does it comfort you to know that God sees every sinful deed done against you? How does it challenge you to know that God sees every sinful deed you have done against someone else?**
- ▶ **How does it encourage you to know that God hears the cries of the oppressed? How can we make sure we pay attention to injustice and oppression in our world so that God can work through us?**
- ▶ **What are some areas where you feel unqualified or unable to do what God has called you to do? How does God's presence and His promise enable you to keep trying?**
- ▶ **What fears prevent you from speaking on God's behalf? How can faith in God's promised redemption help you overcome these excuses?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

When Moses encountered God, the Scripture says Moses "hid his face." Why? It's because Moses was in the presence of the Holy One. We should understand Moses' fear. We should also maintain a sense of reverence before God. However, as believers we don't have to hide from God in fear because of the work of Christ. We are hidden in Him! We can seek God with confidence because of Christ.

- ▶ **What are some ways we can increase our sense of reverence for God?**
- ▶ **What is the difference between being "terrified" by God and being "awed" by God?**

Heart

It's important for believers to see our potential through God's eyes. In God's response to Moses (Ex. 4:11-12), He told Moses to rely upon His power. If God gives us the ability to see and speak, why could He not give Moses the power to speak before Pharaoh?

- ▶ **Question What are some other excuses Moses could have offered for not following God's plan? What excuses have you used for not following God's plan?**
- ▶ **What is one way you sense God calling you to serve Him? Are you willing to depend on God and not on your own abilities to see it through? Explain.**

Hands

When talking to Moses (Ex. 3:1-10), God explains that He is going to save His people from something (slavery), for something (worship and witness). In the same way, Paul tells the Ephesians that's exactly what has happened to those who trust in Jesus (Eph. 2:1-10). According to Paul, Christians have been saved from wrath, and for good works.

- ▶ **Question Why should the grace of God motivate us toward good works?**
- ▶ **How can you demonstrate this week the truth that God has saved you from slavery to sin and to be a witness of His great grace and mercy?**

**THE SENDING OF THE
PLAGUES**

EXODUS 6:2-9; 7:14-18

The Point: God demonstrates His glory by comforting His people and confronting those who oppose Him.

HIS STORY

God Comforts His People

In the previous session, we saw how God commissioned Moses and his brother, Aaron, to deliver a message to Pharaoh on behalf of the Israelites. As Moses and Aaron encounter Pharaoh, we see God reassuring Moses that He is in control (Ex. 6:1). Then God comforts Moses by giving several promises.

► **Make a list of the promises of God in this passage. What promises do you think would have been most meaningful to the Israelites?**

Promises provide us with hope of what is to come. In the midst of darkness, promises remind us of the glory of God. Here, we find that God gave Moses several awesome reminders.

Consider these four “I will” statements: God says: (1) “I will deliver you” (Ex. 6:6a); (2) “I will redeem you” (6:6b); (3) “” (6:7); and (4) “” (6:8). These four statements highlight God’s work of salvation.

God Confronts Those Who Oppose Him

Despite these amazing promises in chapter 6, Moses and the people still struggle to believe God’s plan. (See 6:9-13,26-30.) In 6:10-13, God told Moses to go back to Pharaoh, yet Moses’ response was one of unbelief and despair. Moses responded to God with confusion. He couldn’t understand how Pharaoh would listen if the Israelites wouldn’t even listen. But once again, God charged Moses and Aaron to go confront Pharaoh and finish the mission.

In addition to comforting His people, we now get to see another way that God revealed His glory: by confronting false gods. The following chapters reveal God’s judgment on the Egyptians through a series of severe plagues. Today someone may look at these plagues and say, “Are you kidding me? This scene is bizarre! Is God a cosmic jerk? Is he trying to annoy the Egyptians?” Or they might be tempted to say, “This is silly and hard to believe.”

It’s certainly strange and severe. But we must understand that there’s something bigger going on than what we see at first glance. God is judging not only the Egyptians, but also the gods of Egypt. In Exodus 12:12, God says that he is going to perform the last sign, the death of the firstborn, and in so doing he is executing judgment .” This is also repeated in Numbers: “” (33:4b)

Essential Doctrines

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.*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ **Question Why is it easy to put our trust in things we can see (money, homes, people, etc.)? Why is it more difficult to rely on the One who is invisible?**
- ▶ **When was the last time you were discouraged by God's timing or lack of intervention in a difficult situation? What truths about God helped you through this time?**
- ▶ **Why should God's deliverance in our lives lead us to genuine worship?**
- ▶ **What are the false gods our society turns to for security?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

When you think about it, God could have obliterated Pharaoh at a moment's notice, but He didn't. God's ways aren't our ways. There are things that happen and timing of events that may not make sense to us, but in the end put God's glory on full display. This means that even in our confusion and sometimes disappointment, God's ways are just and good, and they inevitably benefit us in the end.

- ▶ **Share of a time when you felt disappointed and questioned God's ways and goodness.**
- ▶ **How can this session help alter the way you view those disappointing times?**

Heart

In Exodus 7, the text says on a few occasions that Pharaoh's heart was hardened (vv. 14,22), which consequently prevented him from listening to the word of the Lord. Instead of allowing the series of plagues to convince him to release the Israelites, Pharaoh continued to resist the word of the Lord, and therefore became more hardened as a result. Eventually, God gave him over to the hardening of his own heart, which eventually resulted in his own death.

- ▶ **How is it that sin causes us to turn our hearts from God and His Word?**
- ▶ **What are some ways we can guard our hearts from being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin?**

Hands

Like Moses and Aaron, God calls us to war against the powers of this world that keep people in bondage to sin and suffering. These powers might be things from our own fear of rejection or failure in our abilities to putting our trust in cultural messages that promise happiness in sinful pleasures that ultimately can't deliver.

- ▶ **Question When have you, like Moses, felt that God was asking you to do something you couldn't do?**
- ▶ **How can resting in God's promises and trusting His sovereignty help you be obedient to Him?**

The Point: Even in His righteous judgment, God offers salvation through the sacrifice of a substitute.

HIS STORY

God Warns of Judgment

The first nine plagues had wreaked havoc on the Egyptians, and God had manifested His glory in unleashing judgment upon the empire that stood against Him and His people. One final plague remained—one that would be worse than all the others. And through Moses, God chose to warn Pharaoh of the judgment to come.

- ▶ **List some techniques your parents used when you were younger (or still use) to warn you that you were about to get into trouble? (for example: count to three; call you by your middle name; etc.) What did it take for your parents to get your attention?**

- ▶ **What warnings might we receive from God today when we refuse to listen to His instruction? What does it take for God to get your attention?**

God offers protection through a sacrifice

In Exodus 12:6-7 we see what was to happen to this unblemished lamb. It was to be killed at twilight. The slain lamb would be a vivid reminder to everyone that all deserve judgment. (See Rom. 3:23.) Consequently, a blameless life had to be sacrificed in the place of the guilty people who needed salvation. The blood of the lamb was to be applied to their doorposts (v. 7). The obedience of placing the blood on their doorposts showed that they believed God would keep His word and pass over, sparing that house from judgment. So, Israel escaped judgment through this sacrifice, and salvation was accomplished by faith in the work of the substitute. The blood on their doors served as a sign that judgment had already fallen at that house. Just as the plagues were a sign to Egypt of God's justice and judgment, now the Passover was a sign of God's mercy to Israel.

Thus, we see God continue to keep the promise of Genesis 3:15 and the Abrahamic covenant. In the midst of looming judgment, God provided. He protected Israel from slavery and death for future salvation. In accomplishing this, He said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (v. 13). God accepted the blood of the sacrifice and passed over their sin.

Essential Doctrines

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 of Eden wasn't only physical death, but spiritual death—separation from God.*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ **Question** Why was it important for the sacrificial lamb to be spotless? What did being spotless signify?
- ▶ **The blood on the door was a public statement for all to see. How does this influence the way we think of our Christian faith? What characteristics should distinguish your life from the lives of others?**
- ▶ **What does the Passover event communicate about our sin?**
- ▶ **How has this session challenged you when thinking about God's judgment and grace?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

This story causes us to remember the severity and mercy of God. When we think about it, we all will have to admit that we deserve this kind of judgment. We are all like Pharaoh. Some think they will never be judged. They think that they can spend their life piling up pyramids full of stuff, chasing fame, and refusing to bow down to the true God. Sadly, they will end up much like Pharaoh unless they look to God alone for mercy.

- ▶ **Why do you think God gave Pharaoh advance notice of the coming plague instead of simply unleashing His wrath? What "advance notice" has God given humanity regarding His judgment?**
- ▶ **How should the severity of God's judgment and the magnitude of His mercy affect the way we live?**

Heart

In Exodus 12:27b-28, notice the people's reaction to the Passover instructions: worship and obedience. They "bowed down and worshiped. Then the Israelites went and did this; they did just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron." This theme of worship and obedience runs right through Exodus. By remembering who God is and what He has done, they give God praise and obedience.

- ▶ **What is the connection between our worship of the Lamb and our witness to the gospel?**
- ▶ **Share of a time when you responded in obedience as a result of God's goodness in your life.**

Hands

God calls us to warn others of His coming judgment and to offer the good news of salvation through Jesus, the substitute Lamb.

- ▶ **Do you find it difficult to talk about coming judgment? If so, why?**
- ▶ **What difference does it make in talking about judgment knowing that Jesus bears the wrath of judgment in our place through faith in Him?**

The Point: God protects His people and brings judgment upon those who oppose Him.

HIS STORY

God Guides His People

Notice Israel didn't exit by the way of the sea, though it was the quickest route. They would have arrived in less than two weeks instead of forty years! That was the shortest way, but not the best way. There were enemies in that direction, and Israel was not ready for battle.

The text says, "The people will change their minds and return to Egypt if they face war" (Ex. 13:17). They would have turned back to Pharaoh at the first sign of trouble. Even though they left "in battle formation" (v. 18), this doesn't mean they were ready to fight. Later in their journey, once they reached Canaan and saw how big their enemies were, they said, "Let's appoint a leader and go back to Egypt" (Num. 14:4).

God's route wasn't an easy route. They would spend 40 years in the wilderness, and soon they would be hemmed in between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army. God planned to teach them many things on this journey; He had other purposes in mind, involving much more than moving them from point A to point B.

God Protects His People

As the story continues, we see how Pharaoh pursued God's people just as God said he would (vv. 5-9). Even though Pharaoh thought he had a good military strategy, he was actually fulfilling the purposes of God. As Pharaoh pursued Israel, he would have used the best of chariots. Egypt had all the modern military advantages. Surely they thought the Israelites would be defeated. Pharaoh was probably singing victory songs before the battle began. But he was wrong.

According to verse 10, when Israel saw the Egyptians, they were afraid. No surprise here! The Egyptians were superior soldiers. They had "weapons of mass destruction" so to speak. But what was the real problem? Israel had forgotten that it was God who brought them to this place. They needed only to fear God and trust in His love.

► **Do you usually react like the Israelites when your circumstances become difficult?**

► **Question Why do you think we are so quick to stress out and whine when life gets tough?**

God Judges Those Who Oppose Him

Through the end of chapter 14, we find one of the most important stories in the Bible: the crossing of the Red Sea. God will get His people out of Egypt through the miracle of parting the sea, and He's going to judge the Egyptians by swallowing them up in the sea.

Moses obeyed the instruction God gave him (v. 21). But think about these instructions: Pharaoh was coming, the people were complaining, and God essentially said, "Hold out your stick, and I will part the waters!" Why? Once again the theme of God's glory is repeated: "I will get glory over Pharaoh" (see 14:17-18). It may have sounded foolish, but Moses obeyed.

Essential Doctrines

People of God: *Scripture describes the church as the people of God (2 Cor. 6:16). Comprised of both Jew and Gentile, the church is created by God through the atoning death of Christ.*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ **Question** Why is it sometimes difficult to trust God's guidance? What are some things we learn as we walk by faith in God's guidance?

- ▶ **When** have you been able to look back on your life and see how God has guided you? How does looking at God's guidance in the past increase your confidence in His future guidance?

- ▶ **How** do we give glory to God by obeying His instructions even when we don't understand His purpose?

- ▶ **In what ways** is the complaining of the Israelites like holding a mirror up to our own hearts?

YOUR MISSION

Head

The reality of judgment and salvation are clear in Exodus 14:30-31. Imagine the scene—bodies washed on the shore, giving a dreadful picture of unrepentant people. The waters of judgment had come down on those who refused to believe. In contrast, on the other side we see the happy picture of believers who have been saved from the waters of judgment. They were delivered by grace through faith.

- ▶ **In what ways** have you seen the power of God after waiting a long time for Him to act?

- ▶ **Why** do you think it is important that God's saving actions on our behalf demonstrate our weakness and His strength?

Heart

In Exodus 15, God's people sing, which is how a saved people should respond. If Israel sang with all their hearts over this salvation, how much more should we who have received a greater deliverance through Jesus? We praise what we prize. Do you prize your Savior?

- ▶ **How** has God's work of grace and mercy in your life led you to praise Him?

- ▶ **How** does the temptation to sin still affect our hearts even after we are redeemed?

Hands

Treasuring Jesus for His work of salvation will inevitably lead to a love for others and a desire to see them come to know Jesus in a saving way. It is what fuels obedience to Jesus' command to share with others the good news of what He has done, so that they, too, may come to praise Him and bring Him glory.

- ▶ **Why** do you think a love for God naturally leads to a desire to make Him known to others?

- ▶ **How** has this session challenged you to live differently?

HIS STORY

God's People Complain

As the Israelites move on, this time at "Rephidim," they have no water. But instead of trusting and seeking God, they "" and "grumble" against Moses (Ex. 17:2-3). Because of this, Moses named the place "Massah and Meribah," which means testing and quarreling. (See also Ps. 95.) Instead of trusting God, they were testing God.

This sinful entitlement attitude was expressed in two ways. First, they demanded water. "Give us water to drink," Israel said (v. 2a). The text highlights their attitude. They weren't coming in humility asking for water, but were acting like spoiled kids.

This was a sad pattern for Israel. They grumbled under Pharaoh (Ex. 2:23). They grumbled at the Red Sea (14:11-12). They grumbled at Marah (15:23-24). They grumbled about their leaders (16:2-3; 17:3-4; also Num. 11). God had just turned bitter water into sweet water and had sent bread from heaven, yet they still complain here at Rephidim.

God's People Question His Goodness

Next, we see Israel questioning God's goodness (Ex. 17:3). "" they asked. They were beginning to question their entire deliverance from Egypt. Was the purpose of their liberation for death in a wilderness? Of course not! There was no need to question God's provision.

God didn't redeem Israel to then forsake them. God redeems, and God provides. As believers, we should remember that God has brought us through a greater exodus. And if God would provide the solution for our greatest problem (through Christ's death and resurrection), then we have no reason to question His goodness or doubt His faithfulness when facing our day-to-day problems. God is good. Believe it.

- ▶ **Have you ever questioned God's goodness? Explain.**

- ▶ **We all grumble and complain. How does adding the words "against the Lord" after "grumble" or "complain" change our view of this attitude?**

- ▶ **What does grumbling about our circumstances say about our heart's posture toward God?**

God Has Mercy and Provides for His People

Moses knew that what made Israel distinct was God's presence among them. Moses proclaimed that they could not move one step without God. What distinguished Israel wasn't their land (they didn't have it yet). It wasn't their wealth (they had been slaves). It wasn't their culture (it wasn't fully developed yet). What distinguished them? It was that God was with them.

Once again, God's presence was manifested to the people in a remarkable way. Look at Exodus 17:5-7 to see how God solved this particular water problem.

Essential Doctrines

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.*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ **Question** When was the last time you grumbled about a situation you were in? How is grumbling related to a sense of entitlement?
- ▶ **Do difficult circumstances cause us to have wrong attitudes and actions, or do they merely reveal wrong attitudes of the heart? Explain.**
- ▶ **God intended to train and form His people during their years in the wilderness. In what ways might God be training you as you walk through difficult times?**
- ▶ **Can you think of a parallel between God's provision of water for complaining Israel and a specific provision He has made for you when you were grumbling? How did God's provision affect your attitude?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

When most people question God's goodness, it is oftentimes the result of a difficult time in their life. However, Christians, knowing that God is good and is working for our ultimate joy in Him, rest in the fact that God is shaping us into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:28-29), and this process often involves trying times (Jas. 1:3; Rom. 5:3-4). God knows exactly what it will take for us to become more like Jesus in the way we live.

- ▶ **How can Jesus' suffering and death on the cross encourage you during difficult times?**
- ▶ **What is the greatest thing God could ever do for us?**

Heart

Grumbling and complaining are symptoms of a deeper problem taking place within the heart. When desires run rampant and turn into demands within our hearts, sin takes root and begins to produce grumbling behavior within our lives (Jas. 4:1).

- ▶ **Think about the last time you grumbled and complained. What demands have you created in your heart to cause you to respond that way?**
- ▶ **How has this session challenged you to address the grumbling in your own life**

Hands

The Rock, Jesus, was stricken for our salvation, but we can't keep this good news to ourselves. We must tell everyone about the Living Water. We can offer a lot of good things to the world, and so we should. The world needs clean water, food, and clothing. And while we offer these things, let's also make sure we are offering the gospel, the good news of the Savior who was crushed so that those who place their faith and trust in Him may live forever.

- ▶ **In what ways can Christians be a stream of living water to the lost around us?**
- ▶ **How does being the recipient of God's mercy impact the way you show mercy to others?**

HIS STORY

The People Fall Into Idol Worship

Why did Israel fall into idolatry? Why did they distort true worship? For the same reasons we, too, fall into idolatry.

1. We fall when we disobey the word of God. (Ex. 32:1a)
2. Like Israel, we will also fall if we distrust the purposes of God. (v. 1b)
3. Like Israel, we fall when we forget the grace of God. (vv. 2-4)
4. Like Israel, we fall when we fail to use our gifts to the glory of God.

► **How are you using your gifts of time, talent, and treasure for God's glory? Explain.**

The People Need a Mediator Because of Their Idolatry

The people chose to worship a created thing instead of worshipping the Creator God. The psalmist writes in Psalm 106, "So He said He would have destroyed them—if Moses His chosen one had not stood before Him in the breach to turn His wrath away from destroying them" (v. 23). What a remarkable statement about the work of Moses on behalf of the Israelites. In verses 11-14, we learn about intercession, particularly about Moses' important role of intercession.

► **What does it mean to intercede from someone?**

► **How can we intercede for others in prayer? Why is this important?**

This story teaches us a lot about pleading to God for others. For starters, we should appeal to God's character and faithfulness in prayer. Notice how Moses appeals to God's compassion, God's past investment and reputation, and God's covenant faithfulness.

Second, we must seek the will of God, not our own selfish desires, in prayer. Moses didn't ask for personal glory here. God said that He would start all over with Moses, "I will make you into a great nation" (v. 10). This could have been flattering, but Moses cared more about the people fulfilling God's purposes of making them into a great nation. We too should pray in line with God's will; that is, making disciples of all nations, not desiring our own fame.

Third, we must believe that God answers prayer! This account in Exodus 32 is one of the best examples of how God responds to prayer. Because God is personal, He responds to prayer.

Essential Doctrines

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. (See 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.*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ **Why is it important that what we believe about God match up with what He has revealed about Himself in Scripture? What are the dangers if our opinions don't line up?**
- ▶ **What is the relationship between our view of God and our behavior? What are some choices we make that come from a wrong view of God?**
- ▶ **Make a list of common idols that you struggle with today and how they fail to deliver on what they promise.**
- ▶ **Like the Israelites, what happens when we forget the past work of God's grace in our own lives?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

Anything can be an object of idolatry. Usually, the better something is, the more likely people will idolize it. People live in bondage to sexual sin, in part, because the human body is an amazing creation. The same goes for food and relationships. But we must not take "good things" and turn them into "god things." If we do, we will end up in a life of total bondage and corruption.

- ▶ **What are some good things God created that are often turned into "god things" by ourselves and others?**
- ▶ **What are some ways we can avoid falling into this type of idolatry?**

Heart

Because of Israel's rejection of God's Word, their lack of trust in God, their lack of gratitude for the grace of God, and their lack of desire for the glory of God, they fell into idolatry. This whole scene is a picture of distorted worship. They were doing everything their way instead of God's way. We must remember that worship is about glorifying God, not gratifying self. It's possible to do things in the name of the Lord but still not worship the Lord.

- ▶ **What are the signs that our worship has become "distorted" or focused on ourselves and our preferences rather than on God and what He has said?**
- ▶ **What are some ways we can prepare our hearts for genuine worship during our time with others at church?**

Hands

As we see with Moses, God calls us to intercede for people who need Him, appealing to His character and His will as we pray for their salvation. Part of that interceding takes place by speaking truth in love to others, as well as pleading that God's grace would intervene in their life.

- ▶ **How can we help one another turn to God instead of idols during difficult times?**
- ▶ **How would you describe the way you divide your time in prayer? How much time do you spend praying for yourself? How much time do you devote to praying for other people? What are those prayers like?**

The Point: The first four commandments reflect God's desire to be first in the hearts of His people.

HIS STORY

God Reminds His People of His Great Love for Them

When we think of Moses on Mount Sinai, we usually think of the Ten Commandments. But it's important to put those commandments in context. God reassured the people of His love and protection when He spoke of delivering the Hebrews by carrying them on eagles' wings. God told Moses to remind Israel that He was the One who delivered them from their bondage to the Egyptians and brought them to Himself. In delivering Israel, God was putting His character as Redeemer on display.

► **Why is it important for all believers to recognize that the God who spoke these words is the same God who delivers us today?**

God Shows His People What a Heart that Loves Him Looks Like

As we've seen, God reminded Israel again that He was their God and that He alone had delivered them out of Egypt. The lesson is simple: God deserves our full devotion simply because of who He is. Notice how the first two commandments reinforce this important truth in Exodus 20:3-6.

The desire to deify anything but God comes from a heart that is always striving to compete with God for first place. Left to our own devices, we will always choose to exalt ourselves and wrap our lives around things we believe will fulfill us. Our hearts have to be remade and empowered by something outside of ourselves—something that can break our sinful tendency to worship things that are inferior to God.

In the next two commandments, God gives a picture of what will flow out of a life fully devoted to Him.

To revere God's name means we will not use His name recklessly. When we use God's name to speak about Him or for Him, it is serious business.

As Christians, we believe Jesus Christ has freed us from the technicalities of Sabbath law, since He is the rest for our souls (Col. 2:16). Still, there are principles in this commandment we would do well to remember:

- **It acknowledges that we are not God.**
- **It acknowledges that we trust God.**
- **It acknowledges that we need God.**

Essential Doctrines

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.*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ **Question Like Israel, how has God given you evidence of His love and rescue of you? How is your life a testimony to the character of God as a deliverer?**
- ▶ **What are some of the good things in your life that you struggle against making an idol?**
- ▶ **What are some ways God's name is misused today? Why does God take this so seriously?**
- ▶ **How has this session challenged you in thinking about the command to keep the Sabbath? What are the benefits of being reminded of the three principles that were discussed?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God, and the remaining six commandments deal with our relationship with other people. This ordering of God first and then others is important. When you think about it, our relationship with God will determine the quality and extent of our relationships with other people. If that first relationship is healthy and centered on Jesus, then the grace, mercy, and love received in that relationship will carry over into relationships with other people.

- ▶ **How might your own relationship with God influence your relationships with other people?**
- ▶ **What might this look like in your own life moving forward?**

Heart

You and I may not struggle with making statues or images of gods to give our attention and devotion, but we should be on guard for idolatry in its more subtle forms. An idol can be anything or anyone that we give first place in our lives. In fact, the most common idols are good things that we make ultimate things. The first two commandments remind us that God is a loving and jealous God who will tolerate no rivals to His throne. He must be first in our lives.

- ▶ **Why is it right for God to demand first place in our hearts?**
- ▶ **What are some ways you might identify personal idols in your own life?**

Hands

God calls us to live in such a way that demonstrates to others that He is in first place in our lives. Part of doing that will involve wanting others to know and experience the joy that comes from having God as first place in their lives as well.

- ▶ **Why is personal idolatry a hindrance to our mission and message as Christians?**
- ▶ **What are some ways you have been challenged to live differently because of this session?**

The Point: The remaining six commandments reflect God's desire for how people should relate to one another.

HIS STORY

We Honor God by Honoring Our Parents

God calls us to honor our parents in response to His redeeming love for us. The Hebrew word translated honor means to make weighty and carries a positive sense of giving respect in abundance. Because all human parents are sinful, they may be “worthy” of honor in varying degrees. But God does not call us to weigh our parents’ worthiness and then decide whether or not to honor them. He calls us to honor them as a way of honoring Him, of recognizing His authority in our lives.

- ▶ **Do you struggle to honor your parents? In what ways?**
- ▶ **How would your family life be different if you made the Fifth Commandment more of a priority?**

We Honor God by Honoring Our Neighbors

Do Not Murder

This commandment is clear and concise. Murder is condemned as a sin because of the motive behind it and the way it disregards the inherent value of human life.

Do Not Commit Adultery

This is rooted in God’s original design for marriage. From the beginning, God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, and He created woman. Adam and Eve together reflected the image of God in their relationship of trust and love.

Do Not Steal

The Eighth Commandment forbids stealing—taking something that does not belong to us. This command covers a wide range of dishonest practices birthed in a heart gripped by possessions instead of a heart that trusts in the One from whom all good things come.

Do Not Lie

The Ninth Commandment forbids us to bear false witness against our neighbors. Throughout the Old Testament, God expressed His hatred for lying and declared truthfulness to be a requirement for His people. Because He is a God who tells the truth, His people must also tell the truth—always.

Do Not Covet

The Tenth Commandment gets right to the heart of our chase for satisfaction. From the garden of Eden, we’ve seen the human trait of wanting what we cannot have and placing hope for ultimate satisfaction in people and things. If we are honest, we see it in our own lives too.

Essential Doctrines

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.*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ **How is honoring your parents' authority more than merely obeying them?**
- ▶ **Why does Jesus connect murder to a hateful heart? What are some ways we express hatefulness with our words?**
- ▶ **What are some examples of stealing non-monetary items that seem commonplace today? How should a Christian respond to these things?**
- ▶ **What types of lies are seen as being acceptable today? How should Christians think about lying?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

Stealing is not just robbing a bank or shoplifting in a store. There are many forms of theft, and all of them are a sin before God. All of them, of course, come from a covetous heart. What begins as a simple desire within our hearts and minds turns into something we demand and can't live without. James 4:1-3 shows us the process of temptation and sin, telling us that each man is drawn by his own renegade desires.

- ▶ **What is the connection between stealing and coveting? How is idolatry at work in the heart of the person who steals?**
- ▶ **Do you agree that it is more blessed to give than to receive? Why or why not?**

Heart

Unlike many of the other commandments, the nature of coveting is one that cannot be seen on the outside. Much like the First Commandment, which commands us to worship God, coveting is something primarily in the heart. However, you can see the fruits of this sin within people's lives, often being the source that leads to other sins.

- ▶ **How does a coveting heart reveal discontentment with God?**
- ▶ **What are some comparable modern day objects from the ones mentioned in Exodus 20:17 that tempt us to covet today?**

Hands

How we relate to others impacts our witness to those around us. If we treat others poorly and with disrespect while claiming to be Christians, our witness to them will likely be a negative one. If our relationships, instead, are characterized by love and respect, then our witness will likely be better received. Our Christian beliefs ought to positively impact our relationships, and our relationships should positively contribute to our witness to those around us.

- ▶ **How might our mission as Christ's ambassadors be hindered by dishonoring our parents, stealing, coveting, and so forth?**
- ▶ **What might your friends conclude about your walk with Christ if they observe a heart that is content within you?**

HIS STORY

God Plans the Tabernacle

While Moses was alone with God, God showed him what was next on the divine agenda. God asked for a tabernacle—a sacred tent—to be constructed as the place where His presence would be manifested. This would make it possible for a holy God to dwell among His people.

Note the phrase, “so that I may dwell among them.” The Israelites understood—as we do—that God’s presence is everywhere (that He is omnipresent). Yet God chooses to manifest His presence, open to the senses, among human beings in specific times and places. The tabernacle in the wilderness would become just such a place.

- ▶ **Why do you think God was so specific about everything associated with the tabernacle?**

- ▶ **Do you think having really specific instructions makes it easier or more difficult to obey God? Why?**

God Builds the Tabernacle

For the tabernacle, everything worked out perfectly. After the raw materials were gathered, two master craftsmen—Bezalel and Oholiab, as well as those working under them—set about constructing the tent and all the furnishings. The inspired biblical writer noted that their skills were God-given (Ex. 36:1). The Scriptures also provide exact details about each aspect of the construction.

God Dwells Within the Tabernacle

God had manifested His presence earlier (and temporarily) to the Israelites through a “pillar of cloud.” A cloud was visible over the tent outside the Israelite camp where Moses and the Lord talked (Ex. 13:21; 33:7-11). But now something new and fantastic happened. God visibly showed up in the heart of the camp, above the tabernacle, as Exodus 40 indicates.

Twice in these verses “the glory of the Lord” is emphasized. The term translated “glory” carries ideas both of “weightiness” and “brightness.” With reference to the God of Israel, glory refers to the overwhelming manifestation of His presence.

Essential Doctrines

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).*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ **Why do you think God wanted the offerings to be voluntary? What should this say about our own offerings?**
- ▶ **Just as God used some human leaders to accomplish His will in constructing the tabernacle, what might be some tasks we are called to fulfill as “divine instruments” of God’s will?**
- ▶ **When Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple that protected people from being in direct contact with God was torn in two from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). What did that symbolize?**
- ▶ **If God is always with us and we have access to Him, then why don’t we continually “experience” Him?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

It is a remarkable thing to consider that the God of this universe, the Creator of heaven and earth, desires to dwell among us. This is true not only before the fall occurred in Genesis 3, but even now in the midst of human sin and rebellion. God graciously accommodates us, redeemed sinners, making it possible for us to enter into His presence with full confidence.

- ▶ **Imagine you were an Israelite who saw God’s presence displayed in the brilliance that filled the tabernacle and the cloud above it. How would this have affected your understanding of God’s character? Of His greatness?**
- ▶ **How might the thought of God’s desire to dwell among His people impact the way you battle sin in your life?**

Heart

The apostle Paul took up the language associated with a temple to remind early Christians that they were indwelt by God’s Spirit; therefore, they were God’s temple and manifested His presence to others in the world. (See 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:21-22.)

- ▶ **In what ways do you see God’s glory in your life?**
- ▶ **How can you demonstrate the presence of God to those around you as a living tabernacle?**

Hands

This story of the tabernacle’s construction is a great reminder that God creates people with various gifts to be used for His kingdom and for the good and joy of others. One doesn’t necessarily need to go into full-time vocational ministry in order to make much of Christ with his or her life—both Bezalel and Oholiab were able to glorify God by being the artists and craftsmen God created them to be. This should be encouraging as you think about your own giftedness and what you will do one day as a profession.

- ▶ **Why is it wrong to think that some gifts/professions are sacred and some are secular?**
- ▶ **If you are interested in the arts in some way (graphic design, acting, etc.), how does this encourage you to pursue that craft for the glory of God?**

HIS STORY

The Burnt Offering

The first kind of animal sacrifice that God specified to be presented to Him was called the burnt offering. Perhaps its name was derived from the fact that it was the only offering that was completely burned up, leaving nothing.

Based on Leviticus 1:3-9, answer the following questions:

- ▶ **Where was the animal to come from?**
- ▶ **What kind of animal was it to be?**
- ▶ **Where was the animal to be offered?**
- ▶ **How was the offerer to identify with the animal?**
- ▶ **How would the Lord respond to the offering?**

The Grain Offering

The second offering God specified to Moses in Leviticus involved grain (or bread or flour). Its name was derived from the fact that it was the only offering that did not involve the death of an animal but rather grain from the earth, which was hand ground into “meal” or flour.

Because people ate grain daily (in the form of flour baked into bread), the grain offering reminded the worshiper that their everyday life depended on God’s provision. Their ability to serve God—or even restoration to service after sin or sickness had disrupted service to Him—was demonstrated in this offering.

The Fellowship Offering

Of all the sacrifices God specified in Leviticus, only the fellowship offering could be eaten by the offerer. This provides an important insight into what the sacrifice symbolized: reconciliation to God so that a person may enjoy fellowship with Him.

This offering has also been called the peace offering in English, because the Hebrew term for the offering is closely related to the Hebrew term for peace or wholeness. The offerer was to present before the priest a spotless cow, sheep, or goat.

Unlike the burnt offering, only the fat and certain internal organs were burned. The offerer could eat the (cooked) meat of this sacrifice, but only on the day of the sacrifice or the next day (7:16-18). In other words, it was a kind of fellowship meal between God, the priests, and the offerer. The animal offered in sacrifice and then eaten symbolized that there was now a right relationship with God. (In most cultures, those who share a meal together do so only if a certain level of friendship is present; in this instance God was, as it were, inviting the worshiper to enjoy a friendship meal with Him.)

Essential Doctrines

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.”*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ **Why is guilt a universal emotion? How can the feeling of guilt help us look outward to Christ instead of inward to ourselves?**
- ▶ **As with the grain offering, what are some ways we can express our gratitude to God today?**
- ▶ **What are ways we express a restored relationship with others today?**
- ▶ **Why do you think it was important for these offerings to be “costly?” What did the cost of the offering communicate about the seriousness of sin?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

Because of the once and for all sacrifice of Christ, we don't have to offer sacrifices to atone for ourselves. The offerings we make today aren't to appease our conscience or gain favor with God; instead, they're offerings made from gratitude and faith in response to His salvation.

- ▶ **What are some poor offerings that we often offer up to God in response to His great gift of salvation?**
- ▶ **How can a proper understanding of Jesus' sacrifice help motivate us to giving God our best in these areas?**

Heart

The story that Leviticus tells of the different sacrifices can easily make today's reader squeamish. We are not accustomed to talking about killing animals, having them skinned, dismembered, and burned on altars. It is a sobering picture, one that sheds light on two essential things: the severity of our sin and our need for a Savior.

- ▶ **How do you think these sacrifices would have made the person offering them feel in regard to his or her sin?**
- ▶ **What would it say about our sin if no sacrifice or Savior was needed?**

Hands

In Romans 12:1-2, the apostle Paul advised believers to “present your bodies as a living sacrifice.” All the animal sacrifices of the Israelites involved killing the animal—only for the grain offering was there no death. Thus, just as the grain offering was presented to God and then benefited others, so it is with believers. Jesus' followers are alive, presented to God, and then are able to serve others through the use of their unique spiritual gifts (12:3-8).

- ▶ **Why should Christ's sacrifice for us drive our desire to live for Him?**
- ▶ **What are some spiritual gifts God has given you, and how can you use them to serve others?**

HIS STORY

The Sin Offering

For Israelites, the sin offering became the way for certain unintentional sins to be remedied. It was God's solution for providing purification for those who were unclean. When talking about the sin offering, our story in Leviticus shows us how guilt was symbolically transferred from the unclean person to the clean sacrifice through the act of touching the animal being offered. It was only through this physical contact that atonement and restoration would take place.

► **What do you do when you realize you've sinned? Do you try to hide your sin from God or do you admit you've made a mistake and repent? If you deny it, does that make you any less guilty? Explain.**

The Restitution Offering

Our consciences hurt when we've hurt another. It's human nature to try to set things straight when we know we've messed up. The Israelite people felt the same way. God's answer to this need was the restitution offering. In some English Bibles, this sacrifice has been variously translated the guilt offering, the trespass offering, or the reparation offering.

The restitution offering was the fifth (and final) offering that Yahweh specified. It shared some features with the sin offering. Like the sin offering, it was concerned with the remedy for unintentional sins, but it focused on repairing the damage done to others because they had been deprived of what was rightfully theirs. Look at how Leviticus 5 describes the restitution offering.

► **Do you seek to make things right when you realize you've hurt someone? Why is this important?**

► **How do we get right with God when we sin today?**

Essential Doctrines

Satisfaction Theory of Atonement: *According to this theory, the atonement of Christ satisfies every requirement for God to be able to forgive the failures of humanity. God has not been given the proper honor He is due; in His death, Jesus compensated for the failure to give honor by willingly going to the cross as the God-man to pay the price for humanity's sins.*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ **When it came to the sin offering, Leviticus tells us the role of confession on the part of the offerer. Why do you think a heart-felt confession is important?**
- ▶ **How does the sin offering challenge the way we think about our own purity?**
- ▶ **Apart from Jesus, what are some ways people try to alleviate a guilty conscience?**
- ▶ **How does a cleansed conscience empower us to serve God? How does an unclean conscience hinder our mission?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

Everyone is aware of their inner conscience—that inner impression that certain behaviors and thoughts within their lives are wrong. However, too often people try to address the conscience with self-help techniques. If they have a speech problem, they focus on using certain words (and avoiding others). If it is an anger problem, they look for ways to control their temper. However, the problem with these strategies is that they never get to the root of the issue—namely, that it is a heart problem.

- ▶ **What are some careless words or outbursts you've heard from other people when talking to or about someone else?**
- ▶ **Why is it so important that your words, decisions, and actions be different than those who aren't living for Christ?**

Heart

Purity of heart has always been of great importance for God. Jesus went to great lengths to emphasize purity of heart in His teachings. For example, it was not only the act of adultery that was evil, it was also the lustful heart behind the act (Matt. 5:28). Purity matters to God, and therefore it should matter to God's people. Like God Himself, Christians should be set apart from the rest of the world, demonstrating the purity that has been freely received through the moral perfection of Christ on their behalf.

- ▶ **Think about the words you've used today when talking with your parents, friends, teachers, and others. How would you (or others) rate the condition of your heart based on your words?**
- ▶ **When you consider the decisions you've made over the past 24 hours, would Jesus be pleased? Why or why not?**

Hands

Purification and restitution lead to evangelization. If we've been the recipients of these gifts through the sacrificial death of Christ on our behalf, we should likewise proclaim to others how purification of sins is found in the atoning death of Christ alone for their sins.

- ▶ **What evidence do your thoughts, words, and actions give to others that you are a Christian?**
- ▶ **How can you make sure your words and actions are a reflection of Christ this week? In what ways can this be a testimony to the purification and restitution you've received from Christ?**

HIS STORY

The Law is for Our Good

In Deuteronomy 10, we can see that Moses indicated a number of truths about the law. First, the law reveals the greatness and goodness of God. Notice how Moses spoke about God in these verses.

In addition, we see specific guidelines on what the Lord meant when He asked His redeemed people to love Him “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:5). Here are the ways that the law guided Israel’s understanding of what it means to love God:

- Fear the Lord (10:12,20).
- Walk in all His ways (10:12,13).
- Worship the Lord (10:12,20).
- Circumcise your hearts (10:16).

► **What does your love for God have to do with your obedience to God?**

► **Does God only love us if we obey Him? Explain.**

The Law Requires Perfection

As noted throughout these sessions, God gave the law to people whom He had already redeemed. The commands of God were never, ever, intended by God as a way to earn salvation. In fact, the laws about sacrifice were given to guide Israel in what to do when people broke the law. The law was meant as a blessing for the good of God’s people.

But what if the Israelite people misunderstood? What if they came to think that the way they related to God was essentially a matter of law-keeping? Even worse, what if they came to think that by doing the works of the law, they earned favor with God or even merited salvation? It is not surprising that many Israelites made this mistake. Unquestionably, as sinful humans we suppose that by our own deeds we earn divine favor. As can be easily observed, most of the world’s religious activities can be understood as an attempt to work one’s way to God.

In Deuteronomy 11:1 Moses noted the strictness of the law. Notice the term “always.” The demands of the law were relentless. There was no time off for good behavior. The essence of living under the demands of the law is that it requires perfection. And because no one is capable of perfectly obeying the law, all have broken it. In fact, by knowing the strict demands of the law, human beings actually become more and more aware of how far short of perfection they have come.

Essential Doctrines

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.*

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YOUR STORY

- **Why do you think many people focus on God's law apart from His goodness? What is the danger of doing that?**
- **What practical examples can you give of the law providing specifics on how to love God and others?**
- **How does understanding God's moral laws help you understand His character? How should understanding His character in this way shape the way you treat others?**
- **How has this session challenged the way you understand God's commands in your own life?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

Rules get a bad rap sometimes. We tend to think of regulations as unnecessarily confining and restricting. But rightly understood, rules do not oppose freedom; they make freedom possible. A home without any rules would mean that the loudest, strongest-willed child would rule the roost, leaving everyone else to no longer have the freedom of a happy, well-balanced home. God's people need guidelines for their life.

- **Have you ever had the impression that God's Commands are restrictive and burdensome? Why or why not?**
- **Why is it important to see God's commands as flowing from His character?**

Heart

In Deuteronomy 11:1 we see two words that are very important. The first is love the Lord your God. We know from Jesus' words that obedience is the sign of love. In other words, the way we express our love for God is to obey Him without begrudging or with a bad attitude. And that leads us to the other scary word—always. We are to always keep His mandate and statutes, ordinances, and commands. God demands total obedience from a loving heart.

- **What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word obedience? Why does obedience have such a negative connotation?**
- **How does understanding the demands of the law help increase our desire and gratitude for grace?**

Hands

Once we realize that God's commands are for our good and joy, and that they reflect the moral character of God Himself, the way we treat and approach His commands in our everyday life should change. And once we do that, people around us will see that instead of treating them as burdensome and constraining, we seek to live according to them so that we might emulate God's holiness in our own lives.

- **How can following God's commands show your love for Him?**
- **How can others be challenged when they see the difference being obedient to God makes in our lives?**

The Point: Christmas isn't about holiday decorations and gifts, but about God coming to dwell among His people.

HIS STORY

God Dwells With His People

The word incarnation means “in flesh.” For Christians, the word is more than a technical term. It brings us comfort and joy because it reminds us of the moment the grace of God became personified through the birth of Jesus Christ. In the incarnation, God invaded our world so that He could save sinners who were unable to save themselves.

In John 1:14-15, John informed his readers that they observed “the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” This phrase expresses the unique quality of Jesus. He is the Father’s only Son, who is absolutely full of grace and truth. Simply put, Jesus is in a class all by Himself.

God Gives Grace and Truth

Our salvation is an extension of the grace of God’s incarnation. God is continuously giving us grace after grace, meaning, we can never out-sin the amount of grace He supplies us with. When we fully grasp the beauty of God’s grace, we don’t see His forgiveness as a license to sin (see Romans 6), but rather as an open-door policy with a loving Father who holds us to the highest standards and showers us with the deepest love.

Through the incarnation, Jesus entered into our fallen world in order to place Himself under the Law of Moses (Gal. 4:4-5). He did this to meet God’s requirements for humanity. His perfect life was the payment He submitted as a substitution for sinners on the cross (Mark 10:45). The evidence of His payment being accepted by God is His literal, physical, and visible resurrection from the grave (Rom. 4:24-25).

► **How does our inability to keep God’s laws demonstrate our need for grace?**

► **Is merely consenting to the truth about Jesus enough for salvation? Why or why not?**

Jesus Reveals God to Us

In Exodus 33:20, God said that no human being can see God’s face and live. But in that same narrative, we read about Moses getting a glimpse of God.

John’s statement in verse 18 highlights two important truths: there is a unique relationship between God the Father and God the Son (Jesus), and the depth of this unique relationships allows Jesus to reveal the Father to humanity. Put another way: Through Jesus, we see God Himself.

Essential Doctrines

Jesus’ Deity: *Within the person of Jesus Christ, there are two natures—the divine nature and the human nature. Scripture teaches Jesus is fully divine and fully human. His divinity is on display in passages that describe Him as being equal with God (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 (Mic. 5:2; John 1:4), how He performs works that only God performs (Mark 2:5-12; John 10:28; 17:2), and how He Himself claims to be the Son of God (John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5; Matt. 26:63-64).*

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YOUR STORY

- ▶ How is Jesus different from other religious leaders?
- ▶ Why is believing Jesus is completely God and completely man so important?
- ▶ What does Jesus reveal to us about the Father?
- ▶ What are some things you can do this Christmas season to focus more exclusively on Christ and the true meaning of what this season represents?

YOUR MISSION

Head

The verses we covered mention John the Baptist (v. 15), the most sought-after minister during this time in Israel. He was the talk of the town, followed by large crowds who listened to his teaching and went into the Jordan River to be baptized. Yet he recognized that he was in no position to rob Jesus of His glory. In humility, he directed the eyes of the public to Jesus. He wanted Jesus to get the glory.

- ▶ How has God revealed Himself to you recently?
- ▶ What are some things that might keep people today from recognizing Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords?

Heart

In the incarnation, God “took up residence” on this earth. In our salvation, God takes up residence in our hearts (Rom. 8:9-13; Eph. 1:13-14). He empowers us to say no to the desires of our flesh and yes to that which pleases God. However, since we live in unredeemed flesh (Rom. 7:7-25) and still commit sinful acts, God the Holy Spirit reveals His presence in our hearts by convicting us and leading us back to the cross of Christ to confess our sins, repent, and receive forgiveness (1 John 1:8-10).

- ▶ What is one way you can express your gratitude to Jesus for being your Savior?
- ▶ How should the incarnation impact the way we respond to sin within our lives?

Hands

There’s no greater way to show our neighbors that God has not forsaken them than to be present with them. “Take up residence.” The principle of incarnation means we love people enough to bear with them, to be patient as we show them the love of Christ. We are open about God’s ongoing work in our lives, and we offer the Savior to the people around us—that He might work in their lives too.

- ▶ If someone’s only picture of who God came from the way you live, what kind of picture would they get?
- ▶ How does your life declare the glory of God to those around you?