

This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize how God is distinct from and independent of His created world. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: God Is Transcendent

God's transcendence refers to the fact that He is distinct from and independent of His created world. He is transcendent over us in regard to His greatness and power as well as His goodness and purity. The implication of this doctrine is that God is inherently superior to humanity; His thoughts and ways are higher than ours (Isa. 55:8-9). When God saves us, He restores us so we can fulfill our human purpose; this does not mean that we become God or that distinctions between God and humanity are obliterated.

Scripture: *Psalm 106:1-5; Isaiah 55:8-9; Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26; Romans 8:28*

1 God's power is supremely above ours. (Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26)

God is infinite in power. The term *omnipotence* combines two words: *omni*, meaning *all* and *potens*, meaning *powerful*. When used in reference to God, we mean to say He is all powerful, and His power is supreme above all earthly powers. Jesus Christ affirmed this all throughout His ministry, such as when He said "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

2 God's goodness is supremely above ours. (Ps. 106:1-5)

When we say "God is good," we mean everything God is and does is worthy of approval, and He Himself is the final standard of determining what is worthy of approval. From the very beginning, Scripture has affirmed this understanding of His goodness (Gen. 1:31). This goodness is rooted in God's character. His good character leads Him to purpose good toward others and to act in accordance with His goodness.

3 God's thoughts and plans are supremely above ours. (Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 8:28)

Because God knows all things past, present, and future, knowing the end from the beginning, we are encouraged to hold on to the truth that the things in our lives do not go unnoticed by Him. We can trust Him to sovereignly work for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). While our vision sometimes seems narrowly focused, God sees and understands the big picture, having thoughts and plans supremely above our own.

Opening Activity

Provide an envelope for each student. Inside each envelope, place a note card with the name of another student in the room and distribute the envelopes to students. Should a student accidentally receive his or her own name, guide him or her to switch with another student. Lead students to write on the back of the note card what they would buy if they could buy anything for the person listed. Instruct students to place the note card back in the envelope and give their "gift" to the person whose name is listed on the card.

Briefly discuss with students what they received. Did you like the gift that was given to you? Why or why not? In what ways does your gift reflect how well the giver knows you? What does the gift you received say about the person who gave it to you?

Point out God knows what we need better than anyone, and His goodness can be seen in the love and plans He has for us.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "God You Reign" by Lincoln Brewster (*Today Is The Day*, Integrity Music, 2010)
- ▶ "All Around Me" by Audio Adrenaline (*Until My Heart Caves In*, Sparrow Records, 2005)
- ▶ "A Might Fortress" by Christy Nockels (*Life Light Up*, Sparrow Records, 2009)
- ▶ "How Great Thou Art" by Carrie Underwood (*Greatest Hits: Decade #1*, Sony Music, 2014)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "A Majestic God" BluefishTV.com
- ▶ "You Are God's Idea" Skitguys.com

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1 God's power is supremely above ours.

(Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26)

Option: Separate students into groups and challenge each group to list as many superheroes as they can. Award a small prize to the team that lists the most, then ask: Who is the most powerful superhero? Where did their power come from?

Share the following *Merriam-Webster* definition of *omnipotence*.

- ▶ Do you consider superheroes to be "all-powerful"? Why or why not?

God is more powerful than the most powerful superhero. By saying God is omnipotent, we declare He is all-powerful and His power is supremely above all earthly powers.

- ▶ What are some examples of God's power in Scripture?
- ▶ When have you felt like you had a problem that was too difficult for God to handle? How can focusing on God's greatness help you gain a more accurate perspective on your problems?

Emphasize how Jesus Christ affirmed God's greatness all throughout His ministry, such as when He said "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

2 God's goodness is supremely above ours.

(Ps. 106:1-5)

- ▶ What would you say are your defining qualities? Would good be on the list? Explain.

Read Psalm 106:1-5.

- ▶ For what did the psalmist praise God?

According to *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, the psalmist praised God for His incomparable goodness, loyal love, and power.

- ▶ What do we mean when we say that God is good (v. 1)?

When we say "God is good," we mean everything God is and does is worthy of approval and He Himself is the final standard of determining what is worthy of approval. From the very beginning, Scripture has affirmed this understanding of His goodness. (See Gen. 1:31.)

- ▶ Does it bring you comfort to know God's character is good? Explain.
- ▶ How would your life be different if you strived to make God's standard of goodness one of your defining qualities?

3 God's thoughts and plans are supremely above ours. (Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 8:28)

Discuss some of the different ways people use Siri.

- ▶ Does Siri have access to infinite information? Explain.

Read Isaiah 55:8-9.

Siri knows some things, but God knows all things.

- ▶ If God is higher than us, why do you think people keep trying to figure Him out?
According to the *Bible Exposition Commentary*, we make God after our own image and conclude that He thinks and acts just as we do. However, this assumption is wrong.
- ▶ If God knows everything, then why doesn't He share this information with us?

Read Romans 8:28.

You may not understand what God is doing, but you can trust His purpose. Because God knows all things past, present, and future, knowing the end from the beginning, we are encouraged to hold on to the truth that the things in our lives do not go unnoticed by Him. We can trust Him to sovereignly work for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. While our vision sometimes seems narrowly focused, God sees and understands the big picture, having thoughts and plans that are supreme above our own.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ What kinds of distractions can keep us from recognizing God's power and goodness in the world today?
- ▶ How does knowing everything about God is superior to humanity help you to trust His purpose for your life?

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WRAP IT UP

- ▶ What kinds of distractions can keep us from recognizing God's power and goodness in the world today?
- ▶ How does knowing everything about God is superior to humanity help you to trust His purpose for your life?

This midweek study will explore the topic of God's immanence—the biblical truth that God is personable and relatable to those made in His image. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: God Is Immanent

When we say that God is immanent, we mean that God is personable and relatable to those made in His image, while remaining completely distinct and unique from all of His creation. It means that God is not a distant deity (as imagined by the deist) who only sits on His heavenly throne with no interaction, but instead is a personal God who created people in His image to be in personal relationship with Him.

Scripture: *Exodus 40:34-38; Isaiah 43:7; 55:9; Jeremiah 24:7*

1 God is distinct from His creation. (Isa. 55:9)

Unlike some worldviews which imagine God is somehow one with creation, the biblical worldview makes it clear God, much like an artist who paints or sculpts, is distinct from that which He creates. We may be able to infer certain things about God by looking at the things He made, but God is not one in the same with those things.

2 God draws near to His creation. (Ex. 40:34-38)

Even though God is distinct from His creation, like a loving father we see Him draw near to His creation, even declaring it to be good in the opening chapters of Genesis. The best example of God drawing near to His creation is seen in the incarnation of Christ—God with us.

3 God has uniquely created humanity to be in relationship with Him. (Is. 43:7; Jer. 24:7)

Out of all of creation, God uniquely created humanity in His image and likeness, making us capable of relating to Him in a loving relationship. This intimate relationship is one of the distinguishing characteristics of humanity, separating us from other parts of creation. While God certainly loves and cares for all of His creation (Matt. 6:26), humanity has a privileged position among the created order given the fact that God created us uniquely in His image in order to reflect and enjoy Him in all we do.

Opening Activity

Ask one of the students in your group to stand up or come forward so everyone can see him or her. (*Tip: You may want to plan with a student ahead of time so there aren't any surprises.*) Ask the rest of the students to assume they don't know anything about the people standing before them—they don't know their names, where they are from, what schools they go to, and so forth.

With this assumption, instruct the students to think through what they could know about these people just by looking at them. Students will likely give some general truths like: The person is tall, is a nice dresser, looks athletic, and so forth. However, these inferences will just be general in nature, not very specific or personal.

Explain to students people have to reveal themselves to us, in order for us to truly know them. They have to speak and open up about the personal details of who they are and what they like. Not only that, but explain to them God is much the same way—we can know certain truths about God by looking at the things He created, but in order to fully know Him it is necessary for God to speak and draw near to us—which is exactly what He has done.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “God with Us” by All Sons & Daughters
(*All Sons & Daughters*, Integrity Music, 2014)
- ▶ “Divine Romance” by Phil Wickham
(*Phil Wickham*, Fair Trade Services, 2006)
- ▶ “Draw Near” by Passion
(*Passion: Even So Come [Deluxe Edition - Live]*, Sparrow Records, 2015)
- ▶ “Our God” by Chris Tomlin
(*And If Our God Is for Us*, Sparrow Records, 2010)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “Love Note from God” *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ “God Wants Us” *Skitguys.com*

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1 God is distinct from His creation. (Isa. 55:9)

- ▶ *What makes God different from the world He created?*
- ▶ *What are some ways God is distinct from us?*

Read Isaiah 55:9.

- ▶ *Why is it important to remember God's ways and thoughts are higher than our own?*
- ▶ *How can knowing His ways and thoughts are higher than our own encourage us during difficult times?*

2 God draws near to His creation. (Ex. 40:34-38)

Instruct students to turn to the selected passages and summarize how God dwells among His people in these verses. A summary has been provided for you.

- Genesis 1–3. (Given the length of these chapters, you may just want to provide a summary for your students). God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden before their sin resulted in banishment from God's presence.
- Exodus 29:42-46. God gave Moses intricate details for the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant in order to establish His presence among Israel and meet with them regularly.
- Ezekiel 10:18. When Israel failed in their faithfulness to God's covenant, the most severe form of judgment from the Lord was removing Himself from the temple.
- Matthew 1:23. God's promise to revisit His people and establish them once again is fulfilled in Jesus, who was called "Immanuel, which is translated 'God is with us.'"
- Revelation 21:3. At the end of history, when all things are set right, we read this promise from Revelation: "God's dwelling is with humanity, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God."

- ▶ *What should be our response to the truth that God not only desires to draw near to us, but He has also taken great strides to make this happen?*

3 God has uniquely created humanity to be in relationship with Him. (Jer. 24:7; Isa. 43:7)

- ▶ *What is the purpose of life? Why do you think we were created?*

Read Isaiah 43:7.

- ▶ *According to these verses, why were we created?*
- ▶ *What are some ways we can glorify God?*
- ▶ *How can being in a loving relationship with Him make much of Him (i.e. glorify Him)?*

Read Jeremiah 24:7.

- ▶ *According to these verses, what is the main reason we don't glorify God the way we were created to?*
- ▶ *What has God done to correct this problem?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How have you responded to God's desire to draw near to you this week?*

This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize all humanity is guilty of sin and in need of a Savior. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: Guilt and Shame

Guilt refers to the objective status of someone being found guilty for a wrong committed, as well as the incurring of punishment that comes with it (Matt. 5:21-22; Jas. 2:10). Shame is the emotional pain that comes from sinful actions. Scripture teaches that human beings are guilty in an objective sense, and also feel the weight of shame in a subjective sense.

Scripture: *Leviticus 1:3-9; Psalm 103:8-14; Romans 7:25-8:8; Hebrews 9:12*

1 Guilt and shame are real. (Rom. 7:25-8:8)

Shame is one of the common emotions people of all ages experience, given all people experience guilt to some degree. Some people use guilt as a means to manipulate others in getting their own way, while others experience the results of guilt—shame—because their consciences condemn them for their actions or inactions.

2 Guilt and shame point to our sin. (Lev. 1:3-9; Ps. 103:8-14)

Guilt and shame highlight the sin within our lives. This is seen pretty clearly in the Old Testament sacrificial system, in which the burnt offering was intended to remove an individual's guilt through the specific sacrifice of an innocent animal. There were several steps and ingredients needed for this sacrifice, such as an unblemished bull, an altar, wood, fire, water, knives, and so on. The sacrifice further required the one offering it to lay his hand on the head of the animal before the person killed it. All of this, especially the personal connection, was intended to highlight the despicable nature of sin and what it costs to be made right with God again.

3 Guilt and shame point to our need for a Savior. (Heb. 9:12)

While guilt and shame inevitably highlight the sin within our lives, they also conversely point to our need for an ultimate Savior—One who can permanently erase the penalty of sin, unlike animal sacrifices. Thankfully, we don't have to offer sacrifices to atone for guilt today since Jesus obtained eternal redemption through His blood. The offerings we make today aren't to appease our conscience, or gain favor with God. They're grateful and faith-filled responses to His work of salvation within our lives.

Opening Activity

Provide each student with a small pebble (or colored aquarium stone), or if time permits allow for students to go outside and find their own. (If they get their own, make sure they know it must be small enough to fit in their shoes.) Once all students have a pebble, instruct them to remove a shoe, place the pebble inside, and then put the shoe back on. Discuss how it feels to have a pebble in their shoes. Challenge students to keep the pebble in their shoe the rest of the session. They should notice it will be annoying, painful, and uncomfortable. Ask: How is the discomfort you feel from the pebble similar to walking through life with unconfessed sin?

Point out *shame is the emotional pain that comes from sinful actions*. We are all guilty of sin and feel the weight of shame as a result. However, because of the work of Christ on the cross, we are no longer condemned by our sin. Christ made us holy by taking our guilt on Himself. He became our substitute for sin. All we have to do is confess our sin and trust Him as our Savior.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "How Can It Be" by Lauren Daigle
(*How Can It Be*, Centricity Music, 2015)
- ▶ "Calvary" by Hillsong Live
(*No Other Name [Deluxe Edition - Live]*, Hillsong Church, 2014)
- ▶ "Greater" by MercyMe
(*Welcome to The New*, Fair Trade Services, 2014)
- ▶ "Come As You Are" by David Crowder
(*Neon Steeple [Deluxe Edition]*, Sparrow Records, 2014)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Doug Fields: Getting Rid of Guilt" BluefishTV.com
- ▶ "Identity" Skitguys.com

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1 Guilt and shame are real. (Rom. 7:25–8:8)

Option: Call for a show of hands from all students who feel holy today. State that we may not feel as if we are living holy lives because of the guilt and shame we carry as a result of sin. However, if we've accepted Christ as Savior, we are holy in His eyes.

- ▶ *What is something all people are guilty of? (sin)*

Read Romans 7:25–8:8.

- ▶ *How do these verses describe our battle with sin? What is the difference between being ruled by sin and living according to the Spirit of God?*

A battle is being waged even now between your flesh and the Spirit living within you. The flesh longs to please self, war with God, and seek death. The Spirit longs to please God, have peace with God, and seek life.

- ▶ *When was the last time you felt the sting of guilt and shame because of sin in your life?*

Guilt is one of the common emotions people of all ages experience as a result of their consciences condemning them for their actions or inactions.

2 Guilt and shame point to our sin. (Lev. 1:3-9; Ps. 103:8-14)

- ▶ *When was the last time someone told on you or called you out for something? Do you think they were justified in doing so? Why or why not?*

Read Leviticus 1:3-9.

According to the *Holman New Testament Commentary*, when God reminded the sinner of a particular shortcoming in the Old Testament, the person would then offer a sin or guilt offering.

- ▶ *How do you know when you've sinned? What do you usually do to try to make up for or atone for your sin?*

Guilt and shame highlight the sin within our lives. This is seen pretty clearly in the Old Testament sacrificial system, in which the burnt offering was intended to remove an individual's guilt through the specific sacrifice of an innocent animal. This was intended to highlight the despicable nature of sin and what it costs to be made right with God again.

Read Psalm 103:8-14.

The psalmist used the analogy of a courtroom and God as the judge.

- ▶ *How is this scene similar to or different from what it's like when we get in trouble at home or at school?*

Even though we deserve to be punished for our sins, God is compassionate.

3 Guilt and shame point to our need for a Savior. (Heb. 9:12)

Read Hebrews 9:12.

While guilt and shame highlight the sin within our lives, they also point to our need for an ultimate Savior—one who can permanently erase the penalty of sin, unlike the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. Thankfully, we don't have to offer sacrifices to atone for guilt today since Jesus obtained eternal redemption through His blood.

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

Jesus offered His life as the perfect sacrifice, paying for our sins once and for all.

- ▶ *How will you live differently knowing your sin has been totally paid for?*

When you mess up, you must confess your sin, allow Christ to restore you, and set out again to live a holy life for Christ.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Are you still holding on to guilt and shame as a result of sin in your life?*

Reread Romans 8:1.

- ▶ *What does "in Christ" mean? What difference should this make each day?*

We all sin and suffer consequences, but not condemnation.

Distribute note cards and lead students to list sins they've been unwilling to give up. Distribute red markers and invite students who are ready to give their sins to Christ to write *Paid In Full* across their note cards.

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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 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 the idea of moral perfection. While this 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 how He is different from all parts of creation, just as a painter is different from his painting. The Bible affirms 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 holy lives. We should be distinct and separate from the rest of the world. While Christians should engage culture with the love and message of Christ, we should also 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 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 (The first person would change it from car to robot, and the next person would change it from robot back to car, etc.). 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 lives inside you and makes you holy. God's Holy Spirit is within believers, constantly transforming you into the likeness of Christ.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Holy Is The Lord" by Chris Tomlin
(*Arriving*, Sparrow Records, 2004)
- ▶ "O Praise Him (All This for A King)" by David Crowder
(*Illuminate*, Sparrow Records, 2003)
- ▶ "Holy (Wedding Day)" by The City Harmonic
(*I Have A Dream [It Feels Like Home]*, Integrity Music, 2011)
- ▶ "Great I Am" by Phillips, Craig, & Dean
(*Breathe In*, Fair Trade Services, 2012)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "A Prayer for Holiness" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Oh My Larry" *Skitguys.com*

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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 this 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 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 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.

According to *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 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. ()

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

It is not enough to simply 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 God's holiness make in your life?*

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 holy lives. 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 morally perfect here on earth, we can strive toward greater degrees of holiness within our lives as we are transformed daily into the image of Christ (Rom. 12:1-3).

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

Essential Doctrine: Christ as Substitute

At the heart of the atonement is Jesus Christ substituting Himself for sinners as He died on the cross. This truth is seen against the backdrop of the Old Testament sacrificial system, which provided a picture of humanity's need for sin to be covered and guilt to be removed by an innocent sacrifice. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with humankind, yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of humanity from sin.

Scripture: *Leviticus 1:3-9; 5:1-19; Hebrews 9:12-14; 13:11-12*

1 We need Christ as substitute to remove our guilt. (Lev. 1:3-9; Heb. 9:12)

The Old Testament sacrifices found in Leviticus tell a story of blood, and guts, and animals being skinned and burned on altars. There is a lot of bloodshed, and there is a lot of death. But why the brutality? What is the meaning of all of it? Answer: These sacrifices shine light on the ugliness of our sin, as well as give us a glimpse into the cost of it. Hebrews teaches the blood of bulls and goats offered in the Old Testament were signs which pointed to the greater sacrifice—the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It is through His blood our redemption has been made.

2 We need Christ as substitute to purify our hearts. (Lev. 5:1-13; Heb 13:11-12)

Purity matters to God. In fact, Jesus said, “The pure in heart are blessed, for they will see God” (Matt. 5:8) during His Sermon on the Mount. Not only that, but there were offerings in the Old Testament that centered around transferring the “uncleanness” of the worshiper to the animal being sacrificed. The sin offerings in the Old Testament pointed forward to Jesus, who became the sin offering in our place in order to purify our hearts and make us holy.

3 We need Christ as substitute to cleanse our consciences. (Lev. 5:14-19; Heb 9:13-14)

Where the sin offering was meant to cleanse Israel from impurity, the restitution offering served to remove the residue of sin—the guilty conscience. The intent of this offering was to restore the relationship of the offender with the victim, cleansing the conscience as a result. Thankfully, the New Testament shows how Christ's substitutionary and atoning work cleanses our conscience so we are freed to serve God and join Him in His work of living on mission.

Opening Activity

Before the session, gather the following items: clear pitcher filled with water, red food coloring, small cup of bleach, eyedropper, spoon. To begin the session, invite students to share some sins they've been guilty of in the past. Be sure to share a few sins you've been guilty of as well. As you share, add a few drops of food coloring to the water. Point out that in the same way food coloring contaminates water, sin contaminates our relationship with God and others. Ask: When have you wished you could “undo” a sin? Is that even possible?

Draw attention back to the pitcher of red water. Slowly stir in the bleach until the water becomes clear again. Point out there's nothing we can do to remove the stain of sin in our lives, but the blood of Christ made it possible for us to be forgiven and made pure.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “Beautiful Lord” by Leeland
(*Sound of Melodies*, Essential Records, 2006)
- ▶ “At The Cross (Love Ran Red)” by Chris Tomlin
(*Love Ran Red [Deluxe Edition]*, Sparrow Records, 2014)
- ▶ “Jesus Paid It All” by Kristian Stanfill
(*Hello*, Independently Released, 2007)
- ▶ “You Alone Can Rescue” by Matt Redman
(*Passion: Awakening*, Sparrow Records, 2010)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “He Was” *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ “The Cross” *Skitguys.com*

This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize Christ was the substitute for our sin. 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 Substitute

At the heart of the atonement is Jesus Christ substituting Himself for sinners as He died on the cross. This truth is seen against the backdrop of the Old Testament sacrificial system, which provided a picture of humanity's need for sin to be covered and guilt to be removed by an innocent sacrifice. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with humankind, yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of humanity from sin.

1 We need Christ as substitute to remove our guilt. (Lev. 1:3-9; Heb. 9:12)

Share the following *Merriam-Webster* definition of *sacrifice*: *The act of giving up something you want to keep*, especially in order to get or do something else or to help someone.

- ▶ *When have you sacrificed in order to get or do something else?*

Read Leviticus 1:3-9.

- ▶ *How is our understanding today of what it means to sacrifice different from the Old Testament teaching?*

The Old Testament sacrifices found in Leviticus tell a story of blood, guts, and animals being skinned and burned on altars. There is a lot of bloodshed, and there is a lot of death.

- ▶ *Why the brutality? What was the purpose of the bloodshed?*

The blood of animals is incapable of removing sin, but God temporarily accepted these sacrifices in order to foreshadow the ultimate sacrifice to come—Jesus. These sacrifices shine light on the ugliness of our sin, as well as give us a glimpse into the cost of it.

Read Hebrews 9:12.

Hebrews teaches the blood of bulls and goats offered in the Old Testament were signs that pointed to the greater sacrifice—the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It was through His blood the payment for our sin was made.

2 We need Christ as substitute to purify our hearts. (Lev. 5:1-13; Heb 13:11-12)

Read Leviticus 5:1-13.

The *Bible Reader's Companion* notes, in the sacrificial system of Israel, the Old Testament believer was able to confess sins and find forgiveness, express thanks, and experience intimate fellowship with God. (

- ▶ *What are some ways people try to cleanse their own sin today? (church attendance, good works, etc.)*
- ▶ *Do any of these really work? Why or why not?*

We live in a quick fix world, but there is no quick fix for sin. Sin is not an issue to get over or a problem to be quickly solved. It is the disease at the heart of humanity.

Read Hebrews 13:11-12.

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament required unblemished animals to be offered for the people's sin. However, it was never enough to provide complete forgiveness. Year after year sacrifices had to be made.

- ▶ *What did Christ's sacrifice do that animal sacrifices never could?*

The *Life Application New Testament Commentary* indicates "Christ's sacrifice could make his people holy by shedding his own blood." Purity matters to God. The sin offerings in the Old Testament pointed forward to Jesus, who became the sin offering in our place in order to purify our hearts and make us holy.

3 We need Christ as substitute to cleanse our consciences. (Lev. 5:14-19; Heb 9:13-14)

- ▶ *What does it mean to have a guilty conscience?*

People today tend to think of guilt in terms of feelings, but the Bible treats it as fact. As such, guilt brought consequences.

Read Leviticus 5:14-19.

The guilt offering was intended to restore the relationship of the offender with the victim, cleansing the conscience as a result.

Read Hebrews 9:13-14.

Thankfully, the New Testament shows how Christ's substituting and atoning work cleanses our conscience so we are freed to serve God and join Him in His work of living on mission.

- ▶ *If Jesus' sacrifice took care of sin permanently, why do we sometimes worry or believe our sin is still upon us?*
- ▶ *What guilt from past sins are you holding on to? How can you turn over to Christ?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Are you holding on to the guilt of past sins? If so, why?*

Distribute note cards and lead students to list sins they've been either unwilling to give up or to accept forgiveness for. Distribute red markers and invite students to give their sins and their guilt to Christ by writing *Paid In Full* across their cards.

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

Essential Doctrine: God's Glory

The glory of God is His manifest work, the way He represents His perfect character through His activity. It also refers to His excellent reputation and is given as one of the reasons we are to praise His name. Another sense of the word is the inherent beauty of God, the unbearable brightness and beauty of His being as He radiates His own attributes and characteristics for all to witness. The Scriptures speak of humanity as having “fallen short” of God's glory (Rom. 3:23) because we have rejected the purpose for which God created us—to glorify Him.

Scripture: *Exodus 33:12-23; Psalm 19:1-6; Isaiah 55:1-7*

1 God's glory is visible in His character. (Ex. 33:12-23)

God's glory is His holiness on display. One can see an example of this in Exodus 33:12-23. In this account, Moses asked God if he could see His glory (v. 18), and God responded by saying He would cause all of His goodness (v. 19) and glory (v. 22) to pass in front of Moses. This passage, along with others, makes it clear God's glory and goodness are intertwined with one another, the former springing from who He is.

2 God's glory is visible in His work. (Ps. 19:1-6)

God's glory is tied not only to His character, but to His work and actions as well. Ephesians 1 made it clear God's work in salvation was to the praise of the glory of His grace. Rescuing sinners and transforming their hearts are glorious acts of grace and mercy, which spring from the glorious goodness of God's character. Also, the works of God in creation also testify to the glory of God, as Psalm 19 describes: “The heavens are telling the glory of God, the expanse is declaring the works of His hands” (v. 1).

3 God's glory is for our good. (Isa. 55:1-7)

Humanity was created and designed to glorify God. Not only that, but humanity was also designed by God to find ultimate happiness and satisfaction from being in relationship with Him, since He is the greatest treasure in the universe. Seeing His glory and rejoicing in it not only glorifies Him, but also brings lasting satisfaction to our souls.

Opening Activity

Invite students to reveal something about themselves no one else knows. If time allows, make this a game, leading each person to write something about themselves on a card. As you read each card aloud, challenge the group to guess which card belongs to whom. Following the game, ask students: Why did you choose to reveal this particular thing about yourself?

On the board or a large sheet of paper, list the following superheroes: *Superman, Spiderman, The Hulk, Batman*. Invite students to name the secret identities of each, then ask: Why did each of these superheroes choose to keep their identity hidden? Does God choose to keep His identity hidden? Explain. In what ways has God purposefully revealed Himself and His glory to His people? To you personally?

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “Glory” by Phil Wickham
(*The Ascension*, Fair Trade Services, 2013)
- ▶ “Glory to God Forever” by Steve Fee
(*Hope Rising*, INO Records, 2003)
- ▶ “Revelation Song” by Phillips, Craig, & Dean
(*Fearless*, Fair Trade Services, 2010)
- ▶ “King of Glory” by Chirs Tomlin
(*Arriving*, Sparrow Records, 2004)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “Glory Forever” *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ “Now Is The Time” *Skitguys.com*

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The glory of God is His manifest work, the way He represents His perfect character through His activity. It also refers to His excellent reputation and is given as one of the reasons we are to praise His name. Another sense of the word is the inherent beauty of God, the unbearable brightness and beauty of His being as He radiates His own attributes and characteristics for all to witness. The Scriptures speak of humanity as having "fallen short" of God's glory (Rom. 3:23) because we have rejected the purpose for which God created us—to glorify Him.

1 God's glory is visible in His character.

(Ex. 33:12-23)

- ▶ *If I were to ask you to tell me about your best friend, how would you respond?*

Oftentimes, we include details that go beyond physical attributes when asked to describe someone. We usually describe the person's character as well.

Read Exodus 33:12-23.

- ▶ *What did Moses already know about God?*

Moses knew God was merciful and gracious. He knew God kept His promises and did not lie.

- ▶ *How is God's goodness an expression of His glory?*
- ▶ *What did Moses ask in verse 18?*

According to the *Holman Old Testament Commentary* Moses wanted to physically see God's glory. "Through all his adverse circumstances he grew in his faith and spiritual hunger. He wanted to know more of God's ways so the favor of God would rest not only upon him but on his people as well."

- ▶ *How did God respond?*
God responded by saying He would cause all of His goodness to pass in front of Moses. This passage, along with others, makes it clear God's glory and goodness are intertwined with one another, the former springing from who He is.
- ▶ *Do you want to get to know God better, like Moses did? What are some ways you can do this?*

2 God's glory is visible in His work.

(Ps. 19:1-6)

God's glory is tied not only to His character, but to His work and actions as well. On the board or a large sheet of paper, invite students to list some of the ways creation reveals God's glory.

Read Psalm 19:1-6.

- ▶ *What central message does creation reveal to us about God?*
Creation declares the truth about God to all people.

Read Ephesians 1:18-23.

- ▶ *How did Christ's work on the cross declare God's glory?*

The *Holman New Testament Commentary* says the power God demonstrated in raising Christ from the dead and placing Him above all creation is the same power He exercised toward us to bring about the blessings which He has promised us.

- ▶ *How is God at work in your life? If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, how does your life declare the glory of God?*

3 God's glory is for our good.

(Isa. 55:1-7)

- ▶ *If you could request an invitation to any event in the world, all expenses paid, what would it be? Why?*

Read Isaiah 55:1-7.

God does not wait for us to invite Him; He invites us to be part of His family now.

- ▶ *According to verse 2, how do you "spend money on what is not food, and your wages on what does not satisfy"?*

People seek pleasure in many things, but God is the only source of true satisfaction.

- ▶ *How does God's glory set Him apart from all the pleasures we tend to seek in life?*

God promises mercy, forgiveness, blessings, and love.

- ▶ *How is God's glory for our good?*

Humanity was created and designed to glorify God. Not only that, but humanity was also designed by God to find ultimate happiness and satisfaction from being in relationship with Him, since He is the greatest treasure in the universe. Seeing His glory and rejoicing in it not only glorifies Him, but also brings lasting satisfaction to our souls.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What do you find most remarkable about God? Why?*
- ▶ *How does God's goodness impact your willingness to trust Him as your Savior?*

This midweek study will explore the doctrine of God's grace, showing how we are not only the undeserved recipients of His grace, but also has His grace toward us is what motivates us to extend grace toward others.

Essential Doctrine: God is Gracious

God's nature is to delight in giving unmerited favor to those who are undeserving (Eph. 2:8-9). His grace toward sinners is found most clearly in the salvation He has provided through Christ. Because of sin, humanity is undeserving of salvation: All of us have turned our backs on God, and as a result, we deserve death (Rom. 6:23). However, instead of leaving people in their sins, God has demonstrated His graciousness by providing atonement and forgiveness for our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21).

Scripture: *Isaiah 64:3-4; Luke 7:47; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 8:1*

1 God's grace is a gift (Isa. 64:3-4).

Isaiah 64:3-4 shows us how incredibly gracious God is. Grace is, by definition, unexpected—if we don't deserve something, we don't expect it to happen. Yet God comes down to us in order to save us, love us, and have fellowship with us so we can be satisfied in Him.

2 God's grace is a gift to sinners (Rom. 5:8).

God's grace isn't just a gift, it is a gift to undeserving, sinful humanity. We would not expect our enemies to freely grant us pardon or give us gifts. Yet, God extends grace to people who deserve wrath, while being completely undeserving of His grace. As a gift, grace is not something we could earn. Only God could give such an extravagant gift to such an undeserving people.

3 We ought to emulate God's graciousness (Luke 7:4; 2 Cor. 8:1).

Luke 7:37-39 recounted the story of the sinful woman washing Jesus' feet. Notice the way grace affected this woman: Because she was forgiven much, she also loved much. A similar pattern occurred in 2 Corinthians 8. The Macedonians felt the depth of God's grace to them and responded with extreme generosity in spite of their own poverty. We who have received His gift of grace should also show grace to others. We should give them the benefit of the doubt and love people the most when they deserve it the least.

Opening Activity

Place students into groups of three or four. Tell them they have been assigned to assist with *The Visual Dictionary*. This dictionary is a hypothetical attempt by YouTube to make a "dictionary" of videos defining words in English. Their job is to prepare a short skit to be videoed for defining the word *grace*. Make sure to note we're talking about mercy-grace, not opposite-of-clumsy-grace.

Allow time for them to prepare their skits and act them out. Then, ask each group to explain exactly how their portrayal demonstrated grace. Wherever possible, point out how the grace in their skits was a gift to the undeserving and if anyone who received grace in the skits later showed grace themselves, or would be likely to do so.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Your Love Never Fails" by Jesus Culture
(*Your Love Never Fails [Live]*, Sparrow Records, 2008)
- ▶ "Never Too Far Gone" by Jordan Feliz
(*The River*, Centricity Music, 2016)
- ▶ "You Are Loved" by Stars Go Dim
(*Stars Go Dim*, Word Entertainment, 2015)
- ▶ "It's Not Over Yet" by for KING & COUNTRY
(*Stars Go Dim*, Word Entertainment, 2015)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Amazing Grace featuring Francis Chan" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "The Face Of Grace" *Skitguys.com*

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1 God's grace is a gift

(Isa. 64:3-4).

- ▶ Have you ever had a summer job? If so, when you received your paycheck at the end of the week, was that grace? Why or why not?
- ▶ Imagine your boss from a summer job called you at Christmas and said he was sending you a Christmas bonus. Would that bonus be grace? Why or why not?

Read Isaiah 64:3-4.

- ▶ Were the people speaking this text surprised or not? Why do you think they reacted this way?
- ▶ Why do you think they did not expect God to come down and do "awesome works" (v. 3)?
- ▶ Why do you think God came down to save them?
- ▶ How does this text show us grace is a gift we don't deserve?

2 God's grace is a gift to sinners

(Rom. 5:8).

- ▶ What was the most surprising kind thing someone has done for you? What made it surprising?
- ▶ Who are some people you would never expect to do something kind to you? Why wouldn't you expect them to be kind to you? What would you think if they were kind to you?

Read Romans 5:8.

- ▶ While the word grace doesn't occur in this verse, the concept is here. How does this verse show us tremendous grace?
- ▶ How is the grace in this verse even more powerful (perhaps) than the grace shown in Isaiah 64?
- ▶ How did you react to God's grace knowing you deserve wrath instead of kindness?

3 We ought to emulate God's graciousness

(Luke 7:47; 2 Cor. 8:1).

- ▶ Under what conditions are you more likely to be kind to people? When are you more likely to be hateful to people? Explain.
- ▶ Imagine you just won the lottery. Do you think you would be more or less kind to those around you?
- ▶ Imagine your teacher just dropped your lowest grade. Would you be more or less likely to be kind to others the rest of the day?

Read Luke 7:47.

- ▶ According to this text, why was this woman so gracious? (Incidentally, you may need to clarify that this woman was not forgiven because of her kindness toward to Jesus. Her kindness showed she knew she was forgiven).

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-4.

- ▶ According to this text, what did the Macedonian churches do that was so good? Why did they do it? According to verse 1, what was this called? (The grace of God.)
- ▶ What parallel do you see between the woman in Luke 7 and the Macedonians in 2 Corinthians 8?
- ▶ So how should people who have received grace act toward others?
- ▶ How does showing grace toward others display God's beauty to them?

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ How can we treasure grace this week? What are some specific examples of people you can show grace to this week, knowing you have been forgiven much? What are some specific examples of actions you can take toward these people?

This midweek study will explore the doctrine of God's mercy toward us sinners through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Essential Doctrine: God is Merciful

Mercy refers to God's compassion and is often expressed in God withholding something, such as punishment for sin (Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:5). Both mercy and grace are undeserved, meaning that there is nothing humanity can do to earn God's mercy and grace. If one could, then it would no longer be the free gift of mercy or grace.

Scripture: Luke 7:47; Romans 3:25-26; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:18

1 Mercy is the marvelous, undeserved removal of punishment for sin so we can treasure God (Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:18).

Mercy is compassion shown to someone who has specifically disqualified themselves from receiving compassion. Mercy often includes the idea of not administering an appropriate judgment. Titus 3:5 mentions God's mercy being shown to us even though we deserve His wrath. Another great example is Peter in John 21. Imagine what kind of wrath Peter expected when he first saw Jesus whom he betrayed. Instead, Jesus mercifully reminded Peter of his role to shepherd God's sheep. God's mercy exists not so we can avoid consequences for our sin, but so we are able to treasure God and be happy in Him.

2 God can be merciful to us because he was unmerciful to Jesus (Rom. 3:25-26).

Understandably, you might ask how God could rightfully show mercy to anyone. As the Upholder of justice in the universe, does this mean He turns a blind eye to wickedness when He withholds punishment for our sins? Paul recognized this possibility and assured us God does not blindly turn aside from justice (Rom. 3:25-26). In fact, God was so serious about justice that He inflicted His wrath on his own Son to punish our sin (v. 26). So God's mercy was granted to us by enacting justice through Jesus' sacrifice.

3 We are to reflect God's mercy to others (Luke 7:47).

Those who have received mercy treasure it, and so they treasure passing that mercy on to others. This is why Jesus said the sinner-woman in Luke 7 loved so much. Jesus told a similar parable to Peter in Matthew 18:21-35. Once we realize the enormity of the mercy shown to us, we will love to reflect His mercy to others.

Opening Activity

Tell your students they have been tasked to help create a new book coming out from LifeWay: *The Youth Minister's Encyclopedia of Illustrations*. These illustrations are not drawings, but stories or examples the youth minister can use when he wants to give an example of a certain virtue. Your group has been assigned the topic of *mercy*. Students should take a few minutes and try to find the best illustration of mercy they can from a film, a book, the news, a comic, a song, or some other pop-culture reference. They can do this as individuals or in pairs. Allow the students to share their illustrations and explain why they think these would be good additions to the encyclopedia. Give any debriefing or clarification you think necessary.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "If We're Honest" by Francesca Battistelli (*If We're Honest*, Word Entertainment, 2014)
- ▶ "Mercy Reigns" by Shane & Shane (*Carry Away*, WellHouse Records, 2003)
- ▶ "Lord Have Mercy" by Lecrae (*Gravity*, Reach Records, 2012)
- ▶ "Good Good Father" by Chris Tomlin (*Single*, Sparrow Records, 2015)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "I Am A Christian" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Glory Forever" *Skitguys.com*

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Mercy refers to God's compassion and is often expressed in God withholding something, such as punishment for sin (Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:5). Both mercy and grace are undeserved, meaning that there is nothing humanity can do to earn God's mercy and grace. If one could, then it would no longer be the free gift of mercy or grace.

1 Mercy is the marvelous, undeserved removal of punishment for sin (Titus 3:5).

Imagine a usurper took a good king's kingdom. The good king raised an army and fought through the usurper's army and castle until it was only the two of them fighting. The good king defeated the usurper and won back his kingdom. However, when it came time to punish the usurper, the man said, "I deserve mercy!" Explain what is wrong with the usurper's declaration.

- ▶ Can you think of any circumstance where someone could deserve mercy?

Read Titus 3:5.

- ▶ How would you define mercy?

Read 1 Peter 3:18

- ▶ What is the purpose of God's mercy? (To bring us to God)

2 God can be merciful to us because he was unmerciful to Jesus (Rom. 3:25-26)

Imagine someone burned your house down. The police caught the arsonist. However, when the arsonist's court date came, the judge decided to have mercy on the him. How would you react? Would you consider this act of mercy a good thing?

- ▶ What accusation might someone be able to make against God?
- ▶ How would you respond to someone who accused God of ignoring our sin instead of being merciful?

Read Romans 3:25-26.

- ▶ This is a difficult passage, but it addresses this very problem. What does it mean that God passed over former sins? (i.e., God did not punish those sins justly).
- ▶ So how does God sending Jesus as a propitiation make God both just and a justifier? (i.e., God sees justice is done on Jesus).

3 We are to reflect God's mercy to others (Luke 7:47).

- ▶ Share about a time when you showed mercy to someone. What happened?
- ▶ Share about a time when you saw someone show mercy to another person or when someone showed mercy to you? Why did these people show mercy?

Read Luke 7:47.

- ▶ According to this text, why was the woman so lavish in her kindness to Jesus?
- ▶ What does this imply about the way we should treat one another?
- ▶ This theme of showing mercy because we've received mercy is prevalent in Scripture. Where else have you seen this concept in Scripture? (Ex. Matt. 5:7 ; 6:12,14-15; 18:21-35).
- ▶ Name a few people you know to whom you need to show mercy.
- ▶ What are some specific examples of ways you can show mercy this week?
- ▶ In the process of showing mercy, how can you try to show your mercy is a reflection of the mercy Jesus showed to you?

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ How has this lesson helped you marvel at God's mercy?
- ▶ How can you help others marvel at God's mercy?

This midweek study will explore the doctrine of repentance and the implications of it in the Christian life.

Essential Doctrine: Repentance

Repentance is a response to God's gracious call to salvation, and includes a genuine sorrow for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Ps. 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God's work of regeneration, helping us to see what takes place from the human side of conversion.

Scripture: *Jeremiah 2:12-13; Matthew 27:3-5; Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25; Hebrews 12:17*

1 Repentance is a gift of God, but it is something we do (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25).

It is correct to say repentance is something we do. We turn from sin. We flee sexual immorality (2 Tim. 2:22). We embrace God as satisfying. Yet the Bible also talks about repentance as a gift from God (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25); it is something God grants to us. Therefore, when we repent, we should recognize even our repentance is the Holy Spirit working in us (Phil. 2:12-13). Our appropriate response is to give thanks and glory to God for moving in us to turn our hearts from sin toward Him.

2 Repentance includes more than remorse (Matt. 27:3-5; Heb. 12:17).

Repentance is not merely feeling sorry for our sins. Judas felt regret for his betrayal. Esau was so deeply affected by his sin he was moved to tears. Still, neither of these men repented. Indeed, they were not able to. Therefore, repentance includes remorse, but it is more than remorse. To repent also means you actually flee from sin and run to God.

3 Repentance is ultimately a reorientation of our joy (Jer. 2:12-13).

A pastor once said where you run after you sin is vitally important. Do you run from God, or do you run to God? Running *from* God indicates you view Him as a tyrannical judge. Running *to* God means you view Him as a gracious father. When we repent, we actually turn to God to receive joy. We sinned because we thought it would give us joy. In truth, sin is a broken cistern and can hold no water (Jer. 2:13), meaning that sin promises joy but only delivers fleeting pleasures. So, instead of pursuing sin, we pursue our joy in God, the fountain of living water. Repentance is turning from broken cisterns to living water.

Opening Activity

Ask for some volunteers to play improv theater. Assign the actors an impromptu situation to act out. At certain moments, tell the actors to freeze. Then, give them a new situation, and ask them to start the scene from their current position.

Optional: Ask students to jot down ideas and situations on note cards. Collect the note cards, and ask the volunteers to draw a card and act out that scene. Also, you may want to ask for several different groups of volunteers.

At some point, insert situations wherein one person does something wrong to get in trouble with the rest of the group. For example, "One of you borrowed the other person's car and wrecked it. One of you lost the other person's wallet. One of you just sat on the other person's phone and cracked it. You're a waiter who just sneezed on someone's food."

Debrief by talking about how the actors responded when they got in trouble. Did they try to cover it up? Did they apologize? Did they make it right? Connect the skits to repentance.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "You Love Me Anyway" by Sidewalk Prophets (*These Simple Truths*, Word Entertainment, 2009)
- ▶ "I Will Rise" by Chris Tomlin (*How Great Is Our God: The Essential Collection*, Sparrow Records, 2011)
- ▶ "Remember" by Passion (*Salvation's Tide Is Rising*, Sparrow Records, 2016)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Dust" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Grace" *Skitguys.com*

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1 Repentance is a gift of God, but it is something we do (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25).

- ▶ Describe a situation in which your parents or some other authority figure made you apologize to someone else. What happened?
- ▶ Did they ever tell you to say you were sorry like you really mean it? What's the problem with this demand?
- ▶ Is repentance difficult for you? Why or why not?
- ▶ What suggestions would you give to someone who is struggling to repent?

Read Acts 11:18 and 2 Timothy 2:25.

- ▶ According to these passages, where does repentance come from?
- ▶ If God himself grants us repentance when we sin against him, how much more passionate and joyous and strong should our worship of Him and treasuring of Him be?

2 Repentance includes more than remorse (Matt. 27:3-5; Heb. 12:17).

- ▶ How would you define repentance?

Read Matthew 27:3-5 and Hebrews 12:17.

- ▶ Was there evidence of Esau or Judas' repentance?
- ▶ What is the difference between remorse and repentance?
- ▶ Can you give an example of people being sorry for their sin, but not truly repenting?
- ▶ How can you ask the Holy Spirit to be sure your repentance is true repentance and not just remorse?

3 Repentance is ultimately a reorientation of our joy (Jer. 2:12-13).

- ▶ Some say repentance involves a turning, a re-orientation. What do we turn from? Where do we turn?
- ▶ Why do we sin in the first place? (Because we think it will provide us with happiness.)
- ▶ Ultimately, why do we need to repent? What do we get out of repentance?

Read Jeremiah 2:12-13

- ▶ What two evils did God say His people committed?
- ▶ According to this passage, what is sin? (Turning from happiness in God to happiness in something else.)
- ▶ What can this passage tell us about repentance? If evil means turning from God to the world, what is repentance?
- ▶ How does joy factor into our repentance? Ultimately, when we repent, what are we looking for? (Joy in God Himself.)
- ▶ How does knowing repentance is turning to greater joy make it easier to repent?

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ How does repentance involve the entire person: heart, mind, head, emotions, words, actions, attitude?

This midweek study will explore the doctrine of evangelism and its implications in the Christian life.

Essential Doctrine: Evangelism

It is the duty and privilege of every Christian and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Scripture: *Psalm 67:3-4; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:1*

1 Evangelism is commanded (Matt. 28:18-20).

During His earthly ministry, Jesus emphasized He was sent to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 15:24). However, upon His resurrection, He commanded the apostles to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). Those in the heavenly multitude come from all nations and peoples (Rev. 7:9). The means by which Jesus appointed those sheep to be gathered is by the witness of Christians. So we are commanded to go into all the world to proclaim the good news of the risen Lord.

2 Evangelism should be compassionate (Rom. 10:1).

Because evangelism is commanded, we can too easily view it as a duty rather than relational. We want to be sure we've witnessed to someone, almost making evangelism a checklist rather than a conversation. This approach is dangerous because it fails to recognize the other person's humanity. We don't make them feel cared for and appreciated. Paul's heart's desire in Romans 10:1 should inspire us to approach evangelism not as a religious duty, but as a means of loving and caring for people.

3 Evangelism should be driven by and towards joy (Ps. 67:3-4).

Psalm 67:3-4 calls for the peoples to come to God for joy. God had blessed the Israelites richly; they desired all nations to share in that same blessing (Ps. 66:5-9). This desire is a big deal, considering the all-too-common disgust that Jews held against Gentiles. Yet the Jews call the Gentiles to come rejoice in God! How much more so should the same joy drive us to evangelize others now, in a desire for us to rejoice together in God.

Opening Activity

Give each student a note card. Ask them to record something they love (*a food, a band, a film, a sport, etc.*). They should also write their names on the cards.

Collect the cards. Explain to the students that they are being trained as salespeople. They will come to the front, one at a time, and draw a random note from the pile. Their job is to try to "sell" the item written on the card and to convince the rest of us to fall in love with whatever is on the card. Ask for about five volunteers.

Pass the note cards back to the students who wrote them. Ask five students to do the same sales pitch, but this time with whatever they wrote on their own cards.

Talk about what was different each time. In the first example, students sold things because they were told to do so. In the second, they did because they loved the item on the card. We often approach witnessing as only a command. In reality, evangelism should flow off our tongues because we love Jesus and want to share Him like we wanted to share the items on our cards.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Alive In Me" by JJ Weeks Band
(*As Long As We Can Breathe*, Centricity Music, 2016)
- ▶ "Oceans (Where My Feed May Fail)" by Hillsong UNITED
(*Zion*, Hillsong Music, 2013)
- ▶ "Good to Be Alive" by Jason Gray
(*A Way to See in The Dark*, Centricity Music, 2011)
- ▶ "We Are" by Kari Jobe
(*Where I Find You*, Sparrow Records, 2012)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Life On Mission" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "Bad Ways to Witness" *Skitguys.com*

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1 Evangelism is commanded (Matt. 28:18-20).

- ▶ *Who enjoys being told what to do?*
- ▶ *When you were young, was there anything you really should have done on your own, but needed to be told to do? For example, brushing your teeth?*

Read Matthew 28:18-20.

- ▶ *What is the main command given in this text?*
- ▶ *Why do you think Jesus saw the need to command us to share the gospel?*
- ▶ *Look at verse 18. Why did Jesus tell us this fact? How should it compel us to evangelize? How does it give us hope when we share?*
- ▶ *Look at verse 20. Why do you think Jesus reminded us He would be with us? How should this affect our desire to share the gospel?*
- ▶ *What four commands did Jesus give in this passage?*
- ▶ *How should we carry out those commands?*
- ▶ *Jesus told us to teach others all the commandments He gave. What does this tell you about your role after someone becomes a Christian?*

2 Evangelism should be compassionate (Romans 10:1).

- ▶ *What is your reaction when someone tries to sell you something?*
- ▶ *How do we as Christians sometimes resemble bad salesmen when it comes to sharing the good news?*
- ▶ *What are some common complaints non-Christians have about Christians "pushing their religion" on them?*

Read Romans 10:1.

- ▶ *How does Paul model for us the proper heart for evangelism?*
- ▶ *How can we approach people with Jesus in a way that shows we genuinely care for them?*
- ▶ *How important is a solid, loving relationship with God to evangelism?*
- ▶ *How can we ask the Holy Spirit to work in us to care for the unsaved the way Jesus cares for them?*

3 Evangelism should be driven by and towards joy (Psalm 67:3-4).

- ▶ *Imagine you are witnessing to someone. She asks you, "Why do you care whether I believe in Jesus? You're already going to heaven." How would you answer her?*

Read Psalm 67:3-4.

- ▶ *According to this Psalm, who should praise God?*
- ▶ *Did the Israelites merely want the nations to know about God? What did they want the nations to experience?*
- ▶ *What should be our motive in sharing the gospel with others?*
- ▶ *How should it make us happy to share the gospel with others?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Given the ideas we've discussed this week, what should our evangelism look like?*

This midweek study will explore the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian.

Essential Doctrine: Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Christian

The Spirit's work in the life of a Christian begins in the work of salvation in bringing a person to faith in Christ, and is continued through the work of sanctification in helping the Christian to become progressively more like Christ throughout the course of his or her life. He also empowers and indwells believers, intercedes on their behalf, and equips them with special gifts for the service of God's Kingdom. He is the Comforter to the believer and aids us in properly interpreting the Bible.

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:27; John 14:16-17; 16:7,14-15; Philippians 2:12-13

1 He enables the Christian (Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:12-13).

Jesus promised we would receive power from on high (Luke 24:49). The power He mentioned comes in the form of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit whom the Lord places within us according to Ezekiel 36:27. No wonder Paul tells us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12)—it is an awesome and wondrous thing to know God is truly acting in us (Phil. 2:13). So, any time we initiate an act of holiness, we should realize it is actually the Holy Spirit working in us. We should love, act, share, and speak with trust in His leading us (Rom. 8:14).

2 He comes alongside the Christian (John 14:16-17).

Before Jesus died, rose again, and ascended, He told the apostles it was to our advantage He went away, because then He could send us the Helper (John 16:7). When Jesus ascended into heaven, He sent to us the Holy Spirit to be a *Paraklete*. This means *one who comes alongside* and is often translated *Helper* or *Comforter*. It is amazing to think God the Holy Spirit not only indwells us, but also comes alongside us. He is both in us and with us.

3 The Holy Spirit's primary role is to glorify Jesus (John 16:7,14-15).

Because the Holy Spirit is both in us and with us, He empowers and aids us in all things holy and in all things truly joyous. He helps us understand the Bible (1 Cor. 2:14); He intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26-27); He convicts us of sin (Rom. 8:13). In all these things, He has one primary purpose: to help us rejoice in Jesus (John 16:14-15). We know the Holy Spirit is at work in us because we value Jesus more and more.

Opening Activity

Where's Waldo? is a book series wherein readers locate a figure amid a colorful picture featuring many characters. If you can find a picture or two, show them to the students.

Have them draw pictures of *Where's the Holy Spirit?* The Holy Spirit doesn't have a body, but where would you draw Him?

After the lesson, see if they want to try drawing *Where's the Holy Spirit?* again. According to the three points of the lesson, He is in us (enabling us), beside us (coming alongside us), and pointing us to Jesus (glorifying Jesus).

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Holy Spirit" by Kari Jobe
(*Majestic [Live]*, Sparrow Records, 2014)
- ▶ "Build Your Kingdom Here" by Rend Collective
(*Campfire*, Integrity Music, 2013)
- ▶ "All That I Am" by The Afters
(*I Wish We All Could Win*, Simple Records, 2005)
- ▶ "Abide with Me" by Matt Redman
(*Unbroken Praise [Live]*, Sparrow Records, 2015)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Forgotten God" BluefishTV.com
- ▶ "Seek" Skitguys.com

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Essential Doctrine: Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Christian

The Spirit's work in the life of a Christian begins in the work of salvation in bringing a person to faith in Christ, and is continued through the work of sanctification in helping the Christian to become progressively more like Christ throughout the course of his or her life. He also empowers and indwells believers, intercedes on their behalf, and equips them with special gifts for the service of God's Kingdom. He is the Comforter to the believer and aids us in properly interpreting the Bible.

1 He enables the Christian

(Ezek.36:27; Phil. 2:12-13).

- ▶ *Would you consider the Christian life difficult? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *Where do we get the strength to do what God calls believers to do?*

Read Ezekiel 36:27.

- ▶ *What promises were stated in this verse? What does God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) do?*
- ▶ *Does this promise of the Spirit's work give you hope? Why or why not?*

Read Philippians 2:12-13.

- ▶ *Why does Paul want us to work our salvation with fear and trembling? (Note: You may need to clarify to the students what "working out our salvation" is. Paul doesn't mean we do anything more to get saved; rather, we live out who we truly are in Jesus.*
- ▶ *What unbelievably awesome and magnificent truth is in the second verse? Specifically, which person of the Trinity works in us?*
- ▶ *According to verse 12, who does the work? According to verse 13, who does the work? So when we will to do something holy, who is truly working in us?*

2 He comes alongside the Christian

(John 14:16-17).

Read John 14:16-17.

- ▶ *According to this text, what would the Holy Spirit's job title be? How do you react to this title?*
- ▶ *The original Greek word for Helper or Comforter is Paraklete, or one who is called alongside. In what ways might the Holy Spirit be called alongside us?*
- ▶ *What might it look like for the Holy Spirit to be called alongside us when we are distraught? Depressed? Rejoicing? Weary? Excited? Enthralled? Grateful?*
- ▶ *According to John 14:16, for how long does this Helper stay with us?*

3 The Holy Spirit's primary role is to glorify Jesus

(John 16:7,14-15).

Let's do a scavenger hunt. If you have a Bible app or a computer, search for "Holy Spirit" and see what you can find. If you don't have an app, do some flipping through the Bible on your own. Find the different things the Holy Spirit does to us and for us. Share the list. What did you find?

- ▶ *What common themes do you hear concerning the Holy Spirit's role in our lives?*

Read John 16:7.

- ▶ *Does anyone see anything surprising in the passage? How could it be to our advantage for Jesus to go away? What does this passage indicate to us about how blessed we are to have the Holy Spirit?*
- ▶ *Seeing all the wonderful things the Holy Spirit does, do we see how it was to our advantage Jesus went away so He could send the Holy Spirit?*

Read John 16:14-15.

- ▶ *We learned the Holy Spirit's main title is Helper. Now we see His main objective. What is it?*
- ▶ *Look at the list of things the Holy Spirit does. How do these things help us glorify Jesus?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Which superhero do you think is most like the Holy Spirit? Why?*
- ▶ *How can we glorify Jesus through loving others and acting in faith this week while consciously relying on God the Holy Spirit within and beside us?*

This midweek study will explore the biblical notion of sin as transgression.

Essential Doctrine: Sin as Transgression

The word *transgression* means to *cross over* or to *pass by*, and is often used in reference to transgressing God's explicit commands. When God gives a specific command, as He did with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and when that command is disobeyed, transgression has taken place (Rom. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:14). In this sense, sin is law-breaking.

Scripture: *Genesis 3:5; Romans 3:25-26; 8:4; 1 John 3:4*

1 Sin is transgressing God's good rule (Gen. 3:5; 1 John 3:4).

Part of God's perfect, loving rule is His institution of commands for us. These commands are always for our good, meaning they direct us to the best and happiest life possible. From the beginning, sin has refused to obey those commands and desires to transgress them. When the serpent tempted Eve by telling her she would be like God (Gen. 3:5), she transgressed her appointed place as creature and assumed the role of creator and sovereign over her own life. In essence, we do the same thing when we sin—we transgress God's law and assume sovereignty over our own lives. This is why John calls sin lawlessness (1 John 3:4), which is every man doing what is right in his own eyes (Judg. 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

2 Jesus' death is a picture of the enormity of our transgression (Rom. 3:25-26).

Did you ever wonder why Jesus had to die? Could God not simply forgive our sin and let it go? According to Romans 3:25-26, Jesus died as a propitiation to show God didn't just pass over sin. The gruesomeness of Jesus' death shows how strongly God cares for justice, and how horrific a violation any sin is. Our wrongdoing transgresses God's law and demands God's justice, as so terribly and beautifully seen on the cross.

3 The Holy Spirit works in us so we might not transgress (Rom. 8:4).

Becoming a Christian does not mean we cease to pay attention to God's law. Instead, by the power of the Spirit indwelling us we fulfill the law. We should transgress less and less as we grow in sanctification, which happens as we walk according to the Spirit. If we live by the Spirit, we should also walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25) and thus no longer live in a pattern of transgression.

Opening Activity

Set up a game of charades. The students will come up, one at a time, in front of the group. You'll give each student a word or phrase, and the student must act out the word or phrase with no words until the other kids guess the word or phrase (*Note: If you want an additional challenge or fun, you can have the kids do the charades in pairs rather than one at a time.*) Beforehand, come up with a list of as many crimes as you can think up. This list will be what you use for charades. Your list might include: theft, murder, breaking the speed limit, robbery, assault, or drug use. Ask the students to do charades of the crimes.

When everyone is finished, ask if anyone sees a common theme among the words used for charades (the theme is crime). Another word for *crime* is *transgression*, which is *the breaking of an explicit law*.

You can ask the kids how acting out those crimes made them feel: good or bad? The lesson today will show why transgression is such a terrible manifestation of our sin nature.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "I'm Not Who I Was" by Brandon Heath
(*Don't Get Comfortable*, Reunion Records, 2006)
- ▶ "Who Am I" by Casting Crowns
(*Casting Crowns*, Reunion Records, 2003)
- ▶ "Empty My Hands" by Tenth Avenue North
(*The Light Meets The Dark*, Provident Label Group, 2010)
- ▶ "Monster" by Skillet
(*To Know That You're Alive*, Capitol Christian Music Group, 2009)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "ACTS Body Spray" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "Iodine" *BluefishTV.com*

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1 Sin is transgressing God's good rule

(Gen. 3:5, 1 John 3:4).

- ▶ What are some of the ways you understand sin?
- ▶ Sin can be thought of many different ways. How can we think of sin in relation to God's commands? Breaking a command is called a transgression. It's crossing the line beyond what God has appointed.
- ▶ Why do you think God gives us laws and commands?
- ▶ Why do we decide to break God's laws and commands?

Read Genesis 3:5.

- ▶ What part of the serpent's speech do you think most appealed to Eve? What part most appeals to you?
- ▶ Why would Eve like the idea of being like God? Do you like the idea of being like God?
- ▶ What happens if all people decide to be like God and transgress God's commands?

Read 1 John 3:4.

- ▶ Why did John equate sin with lawlessness?
- ▶ We sometimes romanticize lawlessness and rebellion. Does the Bible? Should we?

2 Jesus' death is a picture of the enormity of our transgression (Rom. 3:25-26).

- ▶ Why do you think Jesus died on the cross? Why couldn't God simply forgive our sin with a wave of His magic wand?

Read Romans 3:25-26.

- ▶ What is a propitiation? (You may need to explain that it is appeasing someone's wrath and resuming right relationship).
- ▶ Why did God need to put Jesus forward? Why did God need to show His righteousness? Why was God's righteousness in doubt?

So Jesus' death displays God's justice. Jesus' death shows how awful transgression is.

- ▶ If Jesus underwent such torture, and death to show us how awful transgression is, how should we view our sin?
- ▶ What are some sins with which we struggle? Why do we struggle with them? How can we use the picture of the cross to defeat the false promises of sin (Heb. 3:13)?

3 The Holy Spirit works in us so we might not transgress (Rom. 8:4,13).

- ▶ Think back to last week's lesson. What are some of the things the Holy Spirit does in us and for us?

Read Romans 8:13.

- ▶ According to this verse, what role does the Holy Spirit play in our fight against sin?
- ▶ So if the Holy Spirit is at work in us, what should be true about our tendency to transgress?

Read Romans 8:4.

- ▶ What is being fulfilled in us?
- ▶ According to this verse, how are do we fulfill this righteous requirement? How are we not transgressing?
- ▶ How should this text make us dependent on the Holy Spirit to work in us not to transgress God's law?

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ How can you begin to take the battle against sin in your life more seriously?

This midweek study will explore the biblical doctrine of the resurrection.

Essential Doctrine: Resurrection

Both the Old and New Testament teach that one day believers will experience a resurrection of the body from the dead (Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:12-14; John 11). The promise of the resurrection is found in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and will take place at the future return of Christ. Because Christ was the first fruits of the resurrection, Christians can be assured that their resurrection will be similar in nature, meaning it will be both bodily and glorious (Rom. 8:22-23; Phil. 3:20-21). The hope of the future resurrection gives Christians confidence that death has been defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Scripture: *Genesis 1:28; 1 Corinthians 15:42-49; Ephesians 2:7; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 21:1-2*

1 The resurrection completes the work of the first Adam in the last Adam (Gen. 1:28; Rev. 21:1-2).

Adam's original job was to fill the earth with the image of God through his loving dominion over it (Gen. 1:28). Even though Adam failed, Jesus finished his task. Note the new heavens and the new earth, on which we will be bodily resurrected, is a new city, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1-2). The creation, like our bodies, is set free from its bondage to corruption to the glory of the freedom of the children of God (Rom. 8:21). If our bodies will be resurrected physically, we'll need a physical place to use them. In this, we will finally complete the first Adam's work under the lordship of the last Adam.

2 Our resurrection will be like Jesus': physical and glorious (1 Cor. 15:42-49).

Jesus' resurrection was physical. Mary clung to Him (John 20:17); He ate fish (Luke 24:42); Thomas could touch Him (John 20:27). Yet His body was also supernatural. He walked through walls (John 20:19) and ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9). Likewise, our body will be both physical and supernatural (1 Cor. 15:42-49). How marvelous! A note on 1 Corinthians 15:44's statement that the resurrection is a spiritual body: This does not mean our bodies will have no physicality. Rather, like Jesus' body, they will also be supernatural.

3 The resurrection is to enable us to enjoy God more and more (Eph. 2:7; 1 John 3:2)

The logic of 1 John 3:2 is remarkable: John says we will be like Jesus because we will see Him as He is. There are spiritual glories and realities we cannot yet experience because these bodies aren't able to do so. However, our resurrection bodies will be capable of experiencing spiritual glory. This is why it will take ages for God to show His riches in kindness to us (Eph. 2:7). There are untold pleasures we cannot anticipate, any more than a deaf person could anticipate music. Yet we will spend eternity enjoying the abundant pleasures of God.

Opening Activity

Tell your students they have been hired by a committee of angels from heaven to create the official *Welcome Guide* for the new heavens and new earth when Jesus returns. Give them paper and colored pencils or crayons to create these guides (or, if you have tech-savvy kids and sufficient resources, they can design these guides online). They should create pamphlets to be given to new souls upon their arrival to eternity. The guides could mention things like, "Things to do" or "Places to stay" or "People to see" or "Suggestions and Guidelines."

Give them time to prepare their pamphlets, then allow time for each student to show his or her pamphlet.

Debrief with them about common expectations of the new heavens and new earth shown in their pamphlets. Did their pamphlets anticipate physical bodies or simply spirits? Was it an eternity-long church service, or were there other things to do? Today's lesson will be about the physical resurrection that will accompany Jesus' return.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Beneath The Waters (I Will Rise)" by Hillsong Live (*Cornerstone [Live]*, Hillsong Church, 2012)
- ▶ "Forever" by Kari Jobe (*Majestic [Deluxe Edition-Live]*, Sparrow Records, 2014)
- ▶ "Because He Lives (Amen)" by Matt Maher (*Saints and Sinners*, Provident Label Group, 2015)
- ▶ "Glorious Day" by Casting Crowns (*Until The Whole World Hears*, Provident Label Group, 2009)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Hope Has Risen" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Because He Lives" *Skitguys.com*

This midweek study will explore the biblical doctrine of the resurrection.

Essential Doctrine: Resurrection

Both the Old and New Testament teach that one day believers will experience a resurrection of the body from the dead (Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:12-14; John 11). The promise of the resurrection is found in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and will take place at the future return of Christ. Because Christ was the first fruits of the resurrection, Christians can be assured that their resurrection will be similar in nature, meaning it will be both bodily and glorious (Rom. 8:22-23; Phil. 3:20-21). The hope of the future resurrection gives Christians confidence that death has been defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ.

1 The resurrection completes the work of the first Adam in the last Adam (Gen. 1:28; Rev. 21:1-2).

- ▶ What was God's original plan for humanity?

Read Genesis 1:28.

- ▶ So what exactly were Adam and Eve originally supposed to do?
- ▶ How would things be different if Adam and Eve had successfully obeyed this command?
- ▶ What happened to this command when Adam and Eve failed? Does this command still have any relevance for us today?
- ▶ What will the final heaven be like when Jesus returns?

Read Revelation 21:1-2.

- ▶ According to this passage, where is "heaven" primarily located after Jesus' return? (Note: You may find it necessary to distinguish between heaven as it is now and heaven as it will be after Jesus' return. Right now, heaven is a spiritual realm. After Jesus returns, "heaven" will enter the physical realm.)
- ▶ Is Revelation 21:1-2 a picture of what would have happened if Adam and Eve had succeeded?
- ▶ Who finishes what Adam and Eve started?
- ▶ Where will we be in this new creation? If the new creation is a physical place, what kinds of things might we be doing there?

2 Our resurrection will be like Jesus': physical and glorious (1 Cor. 15:42-49).

- ▶ Why do Christians make such a big deal about the empty tomb?
- ▶ Do you think it's important to know Jesus' resurrection was physical, not merely spiritual?
- ▶ What about our resurrection? Will it be physical or just spiritual? Does it matter? Which would you prefer?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:42-49.

- ▶ How does Paul repeatedly compare our present bodies to our future bodies? Does this description get you excited for our resurrection?

- ▶ Paul calls the raised body a spiritual body, but he doesn't mean it's a spirit only. He means it's a physical body that is supernatural. Consider Jesus' physical resurrection. What supernatural things could His body do? What supernatural things might we be able to do?

3 The resurrection is to enable us to enjoy God more and more (1 John 3:2; Eph. 2:7).

- ▶ We just talked about the supernatural physical bodies we will have. Why do you think God will give us such supernatural physical bodies in the resurrection?

Read 1 John 3:2.

- ▶ Look carefully at the flow of John's logic. According to this verse, could we see Jesus like He is now? Why not? What is necessary for us to see Him like He is?
- ▶ What was John saying about resurrection bodies? What will happen to our capacity for wonder and joy and pleasure when we are resurrected like Jesus?
- ▶ Can you imagine what it would be like to see color for the first time after being born blind? Does this idea of being able to enjoy new experiences excite you?

Read Ephesians 2:7.

- ▶ Why do you think Paul said it would take ages for God to dispense the glorious riches of His grace to us?
- ▶ How do promises like these compel us to build up treasures in heaven now? What are some specific examples of storing up treasures in heaven?
- ▶ How do promises like these compel us to share the good news of Jesus with those who currently reject Him? How might you use these glorious promises to attract people to Jesus?

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ Imagine someone said to you, "Ugh. Eternity in heaven. How boring. I don't want to be a wafting spirit in an eternal church service." Use today's lesson to respond to him or her.