

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that biblical faith rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: Faith

Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Christ alone for salvation (John 3:16-21). More than being simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:13-16) followed by receiving Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life (John 1:10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith; rather, it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

**Scripture:** *1 Corinthians 15:12-23; Hebrews 11:1-6*

### 1 Genuine faith trusts. (Heb. 11:1-6)

Genuine Christian faith is more than a mere agreement of historical and biblical facts, such as Jesus existed, Jesus is the Son of God, and Jesus died to save us from our sins, etc. One can easily believe these things to be true yet remain separate from Christ, as clearly seen in the case of the demons. (James tells us they know and believe these things to be true, yet are not saved.) Of course, genuine faith doesn't bypass these truths either. Instead, biblical faith goes beyond merely consenting to their truthfulness to actively resting and trusting in Jesus alone for salvation.

### 2 Genuine faith isn't blind. (1 Cor. 15:12-23)

There are some who try to argue that faith is blind or goes against any sort of historical and/or rational evidence and support. For them, faith should be relegated to the area of opinion and personal value as opposed to reality and fact. However, the Christian faith is very much a reasonable faith, grounded in the historical truth of Jesus Christ. Unlike skeptics who argue that faith is blind, Christians have historically been known for weighing the evidence and using reason as an aid to faith (interviewing eyewitnesses, providing detailed historical accounts and records, verifying the resurrection, etc.), knowing that all truth is God's truth, and that all truth will inevitably point to Jesus.

### Opening Activity

Select three students to perform the following "Trust Fall" activity. Instruct two of the students to face each other and lock arms. Direct the third student, facing away from the other two, to stiffen his or her body and fall backward into the arms of the other two students. Challenge students to repeat this activity several times, with the third student falling farther backward each time.

As you wrap up this activity, ask: What's the most important element of a trust fall? (trust) Do you find it easy to trust other people? Why or why not? What does it take to have faith in someone or something? Share that the Hebrew word for *faith* denotes reliability, stability, and firmness. How is that similar to the "trust" activity we just did?

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Me Without You" by tobyMac  
(*Eye On It*, Forefront Records, 2012)
- ▶ "Matter of Faith" by Peter Furler  
(*On Fire*, Sparrow Records, 2012)
- ▶ "Impossible" by Building 429  
(*Impossible - Single*, Provident, 2015)
- ▶ "What Faith Can Do" by Kutless  
(*It Is Well*, Capitol Christian Music Group, 2009)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Core Strength" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "Believer's Creed" *SkitGuys.com*

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### 1 Genuine faith trusts. (Heb. 11:1-6)

Option: Invite students to share the name of their favorite roller coaster and why they like it so much. State that one of the most thrilling roller coasters in the world is Kingda Ka at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson, New Jersey. Not only is it the world's tallest roller coaster at 456 feet, it also has the biggest drop at 418 feet and goes from 0 to 128 mph in just 3.5 seconds.

- ▶ **Does the Kingda Ka sound like a roller coaster you would like to ride? Why or why not?**  
Most states have laws to ensure the safety of park rides, requiring inspections, daily equipment tests, and so forth.
- ▶ **If you thought you would be safe, would you be more likely to ride a roller coaster such as the Kingda Ka? Explain.**  
Even with the safety precautions, you are still placing faith in the ride operators, engineers, mechanics, etc.
- ▶ **If you had a bad experience on a roller coaster, would you ever get on it again? Why or why not?**
- ▶ **When people let you down or disappoint you, how does that impact your faith in God?**

#### Read Hebrews 11:1-6.

- ▶ **What does faith have to do with our hope for eternal life?**  
According to *Dictionary.com*, faith is confidence or trust in a person or thing.
- ▶ **How does faith give confidence to believers?**  
Faith goes beyond merely consenting to the truthfulness of biblical and historical facts to actively resting and trusting in Jesus alone for salvation.
- ▶ **If you have faith in God, how do you trust Him to guide you?**

### 2 Genuine faith isn't blind. (1 Cor. 15:12-23)

#### Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-23.

As believers, our hope for today and for eternity rests on the historical resurrection of Jesus from the grave. Ours isn't a faith of wishful thinking, but is instead grounded in the reasonable evidence that Christ rose from the dead. Unlike skeptics who argue that faith is blind, Christians have historically been known for weighing the evidence and using reason as an aid to faith (interviewing eyewitnesses, providing detailed historical accounts and records, verifying the resurrection, etc.), knowing that all truth is God's truth, and that all truth will inevitably point to Jesus.

- ▶ **Why did Paul say our hope rested on the truth of the resurrection?**
- ▶ **How does the resurrection give us hope?**  
Because Jesus defeated death, everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. Not many things in life are guaranteed, but we can be guaranteed eternal life through faith in Christ.

#### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ **What are some things that have helped you trust God? How does this give you faith in His promise of salvation?**
- ▶ **In what things are some people putting their faith for eternity? In their goodness? In their church attendance?**
- ▶ **In what are you putting your faith for eternity?**  
Print Hebrews 11:1-6 on strips of paper to place in small gift boxes as a reminder of God's gift of salvation through faith.

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

### **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 3:1-13,15*

### **1 Transgression is willful disobedience.** (Gen. 3:1-6)

When God created humanity, he created us to flourish while living as His people under His loving rule. However, that design became quickly distorted as the first humans willfully disobeyed God, transgressing His loving rule over their lives.

### **2 Transgression results in a broken relationship with God.** (Gen. 3:7-13)

After Adam and Eve sinned, God came to them and asked them some tough questions that were designed to expose both God’s righteousness and man’s sinfulness. In Genesis 3:9 God asked, “Where are you?” Of course, God knew where they were. However, he was prompting them to acknowledge that they were not where they were supposed to be in relationship with Him. Another question God asked in verse 13 was, “What is this you have done?” This is the only question directed to Eve, and it was meant to prompt a confession of sin.

### **3 A broken relationship with God can only be restored through Jesus.** (Gen. 3:15)

Even though Adam and Eve actively rebelled against God by transgressing His good rule over their lives, God was still gracious, promising the man and woman that one day there would come a King who would undo the curse that resulted from their sin. It is only through Jesus that people can be restored to a right relationship with God, experiencing the joy and happiness that comes from living as His children under His loving rule.

### **Opening Activity**

Write “BAD” on the board or on a large sheet of paper. When did you do your first bad thing? What was it? Who taught you to do bad things? What was the last bad thing you did?

Point out that the Bible identifies bad things as sin. When you hear the word “sin,” what comes to mind?

List some of the obvious ways students might be tempted to sin. (cheating, plagiarizing, lying, stealing, disobeying authority, gossiping) What else would you include on this list? Why do we find it so difficult not to sin?

### **Worship/Playlist Ideas**

- ▶ “Slow Fade” by Casting Crowns  
(*The Altar and the Door*, Reunion Records, 2007)
- ▶ “Flawless” by MercyMe  
(*Welcome to the New*, MercyMe, 2014)
- ▶ “How Can It Be” by Lauren Daigle  
(*How Can It Be*, Centricity Music, 2015)

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

- ▶ “Experience Life” *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ “To Catch a Double Dipper” *SkitGuys.com*
- ▶ “God of the Broken” *SkitGuys.com*

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### Essential Doctrine: Sin as Transgression

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### 1 Transgression is willful disobedience. (Gen. 3:1-6)

- ▶ *When something bad happens in the world, who do you tend to blame? Why?*
- ▶ *Can we trace all the bad things that happen in our world back to Adam and Eve’s sin in the garden of Eden? Explain.*

#### Read Genesis 3:1-6.

The serpent tempted Eve. She and Adam gave in to the temptation.

- ▶ *Was Adam and Eve’s disobedience the serpent’s fault? Why or why not?*

When God created humanity, he created us to flourish while living as His people under His loving rule. However, that design became quickly distorted as the first humans willfully disobeyed God, transgressing His loving rule over their lives.

- ▶ *With what does Satan tempt you today?*

### 2 Transgression results in a broken relationship with God. (Gen. 3:7-13)

- ▶ *When was the last time you did something that hurt or upset your parents, a teacher, your coach, or maybe even a friend? How did your wrongdoing affect the other person? How did it affect your relationship with them?*
- ▶ *How did Adam and Eve’s choice to sin affect their relationship with God?*

#### Read Genesis 3:7-13.

Adam and Eve’s relationship with God was now broken. As a result of their shame and guilt, they fled from God’s presence out of fear. (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

- ▶ *What question did God ask Adam and Eve in verse 9? Why do you think He asked this?*

In Genesis 3:9 God asked, “Where are you?” Of course, God knew where they were. However, He was prompting them to acknowledge that they were not where they were supposed to be in relationship with Him.

- ▶ *What is the appropriate response once we realize we have sinned?*

Another question God asked in verse 13 was, “What is this you have done?” This is the only question directed to Eve, and it was meant to prompt a confession of sin.

- ▶ *How likely are you to own up to your sin? Do you regularly confess your sin to God? Why or why not?*

### 3 A broken relationship with God can only be restored through Jesus. (Gen. 3:15)

Invite students to describe a time when something good came out of a bad situation.

#### Read Genesis 3:15.

- ▶ *What is the promise in this verse? What hope does it offer fallen humanity?*

Even though Adam and Eve actively rebelled against God by transgressing His good rule over their lives, God was still gracious, promising the man and woman that one day there would come a King who would undo the curse that resulted from their sin.

- ▶ *How does the knowledge that Jesus has fulfilled God’s promise from the beginning affect how you live today?*

It is only through Jesus that people can be restored to a right relationship with God, experiencing the joy and happiness that comes from living as His children under His loving rule.

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Where would you be in this life and eternity without this fulfilled promise?*
- ▶ *Have you acknowledged this promise and placed your faith in Christ? Why or why not?*

Close in prayer, reminding students that even though we live in a fallen, sinful world, we have the hope of new life in Christ.

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

### Essential Doctrine: God Is Omnipotent

God is all-powerful: there is nothing God cannot do so long as it does not contradict His own nature or law. God has power and authority over the universe He created, from the largest solar system to the smallest particle. Affirming that God is all-powerful does not mean that God can sin—since that would go against His perfect moral nature. As Christians, we rest in the belief that the God who has all power is good, and we gain great comfort by knowing that an all-powerful God is working for our good and joy.

**Scripture:** Job 42:2; Psalm 135:5-7; Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26; Romans 8:28

### 1 God is all-powerful. (Ps. 135:5-7)

To be omnipotent means to be all-powerful. The Latin term omnipotence combines two words: *omni*, meaning “all,” and *potens*, meaning “powerful.” In many passages, the Bible affirms that God has the power to do whatever He decides to do, for “Our God is in heaven and does whatever He pleases” (Ps. 115:3).

### 2 We are not all-powerful. (Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26)

Many of us live under the assumption that we have control over our lives both now and in the future. However, this is simply not the case, and we are better off because of it. Jesus testified to our limited nature indirectly when He stated that “with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). Even though the context has to do with salvation, which certainly speaks to a person’s inability to save him- or herself, it can be applied to other things as well, drawing a comparison between our very limited capabilities and God’s all-powerful nature.

### 3 God is working all things for good. (Job 42:2; Rom. 8:28)

We can know, based on God’s character, that God is working out all things for His glory and for our good and joy. This means that He isn’t surprised by anything, nor is any circumstance we face beyond His control. He is sovereign over all, and we can rest assured through faith in Christ that He is with us. Not only that, but when we are united with Him, His power is available to us and His purpose cannot be stopped. And by His great power, He has saved sinful people like you and me. His Great Commission will be accomplished, and we get to be a part of that as we rely upon His power and strength as we seek to live on mission for Him in this world.

### Opening Activity

Separate students into two 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: Out of all the superheroes mentioned, who do you think is the most powerful? Where does their power come from? Do you consider superheroes to be “all-powerful”? Why or why not?

Point out that God is more powerful than the most powerful superhero, then ask: What are some examples of God’s power in Scripture? (i.e. the parting of the Red Sea) Complete the activity by emphasizing that God is the ultimate source of power.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “One Thing Remains” by Kristian Stanfill  
(*Passion: White Flag*, sixstepsrecords, 2012)
- ▶ “God’s Not Dead (Like a Lion)” by Newsboys  
(*God’s Not Dead*, Inpop, 2011)
- ▶ “Greater” by MercyMe  
(*Welcome to the New*, MercyMe, 2014)
- ▶ “Same Power” by Jeremy Camp  
(*I Will Follow*, Stolen Pride Records, 2015)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “Louie Giglio: Who Is God?” *BluefishTV.com*

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### 1 God is all-powerful. (Ps. 135:5-7)

Discuss the following *Merriam-Webster* definition of *omnipotence*: almighty; having virtually unlimited authority or influence.

- ▶ *What does it mean that God is all-powerful?*

#### Read Psalm 135:5-7.

- ▶ *How does creation testify to God's sovereignty and power?*

Only God is powerful enough to create something out of nothing.

- ▶ *Based on this passage, what does God have control over?*

God has control over all things and the power to do whatever He decides to do. We cannot limit or place restrictions on what God can and will do.

- ▶ *Do you like the idea that God does what He pleases? Explain.*

Just because God doesn't always do what pleases you doesn't mean He isn't all-powerful or can't do what pleases Him.

### 2 We are not all-powerful. (Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26)

Invite students to identify some things that seem impossible. (Examples: driving hover cars, living on Mars, time travel)

- ▶ *Do you believe that nothing is too difficult for God?*

#### Read Matthew 19:26.

While some things may be impossible for us, nothing is too difficult for God. In this verse, Jesus testified to our limited nature. Even though the context has to do with salvation, which speaks to a person's inability to save him- or herself, it can be applied to other things as well, drawing a comparison between our very limited capabilities and God's all-powerful nature.

#### Read Jeremiah 32:17.

No matter what our shortcomings or problems, God is greater. By focusing on God's power, Jeremiah's faith was strengthened.

- ▶ *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 put your problems in perspective?*

Many of us live under the assumption that we have control over our lives both now and in the future. However, this is simply not the case, and we are better off because of it.

### 3 God is working all things for good. (Job 42:2; Rom. 8:28)

Option: Share a personal experience about a time when God worked out a tough situation for good.

- ▶ *When have you seen God bring something good out of a bad situation?*

#### Read Romans 8:28.

God has orchestrated a perfect plan for His children.

- ▶ *What does God promise in this verse? What is the ultimate "good" that the Lord is orchestrating?*

Not everything is good in and of itself, but God uses everything for our good. (HCSB Study Bible)

#### Read Job 42:2.

There is nothing that can stop God's plan from taking place.

- ▶ *What are some examples of God overruling the authority of men and nations in Scripture? (i.e. the exodus, Jericho)*
- ▶ *Do you believe He still does this today? Explain.*

God's Great Commission will be accomplished, and we get to be a part of that as we rely upon His power and strength as we seek to live on mission for Him in this world.

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How are you comforted by the truth that God can handle any situation you're in, no matter how difficult it may seem?*

We can know, based on God's character, that God is working out all things for His glory and for our good. He isn't surprised by anything, nor is any circumstance we face beyond His control. We can rest assured through faith in Christ that He is with us. Not only that, but when we are united with Him, His power is available to us and His purpose cannot be stopped. And by His great power, He has saved sinful people like you and me.

*This midweek study will explore what it means for students to be in the world but not of the world. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### **Essential Doctrine: The World Opposed to God**

There are times in Scripture where the term “world” refers to more than the physical planet Earth or the collective human population. In many instances, the term refers to an active and evil spiritual force that is in direct conflict with God and His kingdom. This evil world force operates under Satan’s control (Eph. 2:2; John 14:30), displaying the same self-centeredness and deceit that is found in his character. Christians are called to overcome this world of spiritual evil (1 John 5:4-5) through faith in the Son of God.

**Scripture:** Proverbs 14:12; Isaiah 55:8-9; Acts 17:22-31; Ephesians 1:3-5,14; Titus 2:11-14

### **1 The “world” is against the kingdom of God.** (Prov. 14:12; Isa. 55:8-9)

When we talk about the “world,” it is often in reference to the spirit of this age and/or the secular worldview of the culture surrounding us. This attitude and outlook on life goes against the kingdom of God and the values that Christians hold dear, as can often be seen in social debates throughout different cultures. It is a worldview that sees mankind as the sum total of all there is, much like the lie that Adam and Eve fell for when they thought they could become like God.

### **2 Christians are in the “world.”** (Acts 17:22-31)

Being a Christian in this world is like being a resident of two cities. We live in this world, but we are more like foreigners in that our ultimate citizenship isn’t to a state or country, but to Christ and the kingdom of God. (Of course, that doesn’t mean one can’t be loyal or patriotic to one’s country—only that ultimate allegiance is given to Christ and His kingdom.) While we are here, however, we are not to either retreat from culture nor immerse ourselves into it; instead, we are to engage culture with the hope of transforming it for Christ.

### **3 Christians are not of the “world.”** (Eph. 1:3-5,14; Titus 2:11-14)

As we engage culture with the transforming hope of the gospel, we are to “deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, while we wait for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:12-13). This means that we don’t become gluttons of culture, passively consuming the things of this world without thinking critically about those things from a Christian perspective. We are to engage culture as people who have been brought out of darkness into God’s marvelous light, as people who are being continually transformed into the image of Christ. We may be in the world, but we are commissioned to go forth and engage culture with the mind and love of Jesus Christ.

### **Opening Activity**

Play a game of “Forced Choices.” Designate one corner of the room as Choice A, the opposite corner as Choice B, and the center of the room as Choice C. Call out the following choices and instruct students to move to the corresponding location:

- A) McDonalds, B) Taco Bell, C) Other fast food;
- A) Xbox, B) PlayStation, C) Wii;
- A) Superman, B) Batman, C) Other superhero;
- A) Mountains, B) Beach, C) Other location;
- A) Football, B) Soccer, C) Other sport.

What contributed to the choices you made? Would you say they were based on marketing, peer pressure, personal conviction, or biblical principles? Does it really matter? Why or why not?

Continue with the activity using the following set of choices:  
A) The Koran, B) The Book of Mormon, C) The Bible.

Share the following American Heritage® Dictionary definition of *worldview*: “The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world.” Point out that a worldview dictates how we respond to the world around us; a biblical worldview sees everything through the lens of Scripture.

Why is it important for a Christian to have a biblical worldview? How would you describe your worldview?

### **Worship/Playlist Ideas**

- ▶ “First” by Lauren Daigle  
(*How Can It Be*, Centricity Music, 2015)
- ▶ “Feel It” by tobyMac  
(*This Is Not a Test*, Forefront Records, 2015)
- ▶ “Fix My Eyes” by for KING & COUNTRY  
(*RUN WILD. LIVE FREE. LOVE STRONG.*, Word, 2014)

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

- ▶ “Change the World” *SkitGuys.com*
- ▶ “David Nasser: Witnesses for Christ” *BluefishTV.com*

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### 1 The “world” is against the kingdom of God. (Prov. 14:12; Isa. 55:8-9)

Option: Identify some popular dystopian movies or books. (e.g. *The Giver* (2014), *The Hunger Games* (2012), *Divergent* (2014)) Discuss the various worldviews portrayed in these films. (Remind students of the definition for *worldview* from the Opening Activity.)

- ▶ *What are some worldviews we observe in society today? (relativism, humanism, fatalism, hedonism, etc.) How are these worldviews contrary to God’s Kingdom?*

#### Read Proverbs 14:12.

Our human understanding is limited. Just because something may seem right doesn’t mean it is.

- ▶ *In your opinion, what are the problems of a worldview that has no place for Christ? What is the ultimate danger in living according to anything other than a biblical worldview?*

### 2 Christians are in the “world.” (Acts 17:22-31)

- ▶ *How many people do you think there are today who have never heard that God loves them and sacrificed His Son for them?*

#### Read Acts 17:22-23.

Paul, after observing and listening to the religious men at the Areopagus, realized they did not know the same God he knew.

#### Read Acts 17:24-31.

- ▶ *Why do you think Paul didn’t start out by telling the people they were wrong about what they believed?*  
Paul began by affirming the religious nature of his audience by explaining what he had seen in their city. He chose a starting point, a place where they could agree, rather than starting with their differences. (*Life Application New Testament Commentary*)
- ▶ *Paul earned the right to be heard by those around him. What can we do today to earn the right to be heard?*
- ▶ *How did Paul use things in the culture to introduce Jesus?*  
Paul quoted from some of their own poets. Then he explained some simple truths about God, emphasizing that the God he knew was not an image made with human hands, nor even

needed to be served as if He needed anything, since He Himself gives life and breath to all. Jesus made a similar statement when He said He did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

- ▶ *What are some points of contact we could use today to begin a conversation about God?*

Point out that although Paul changed his approach to fit his audience, he never changed the truth of his message.

### 3 Christians are not of the “world.” (Eph. 1:3-5,14; Titus 2:11-14)

#### Read Ephesians 1:3-5,14.

- ▶ *What does it mean to be “adopted” by God?*

We have been chosen by God to be His children.

#### Read Titus 2:11-14.

- ▶ *How are God’s people supposed to live as we await Jesus’ return?*  
We are to live as people who have been brought out of darkness into God’s marvelous light, as people who are being continually transformed into the image of Christ. We may be in the world, but we are commissioned to go forth and engage culture with the mind and love of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ *If one of your friends said to you, “Explain to me what it means to be a Christian,” what would you say?*

### WRAP IT UP

- Print both a black/white and a color image from the Internet that has lots of objects in it. Display the black/white image first and lead students to describe what they see. Next, display the color image. Discuss how perceptions changed based on reality.
- ▶ *In what ways might this be similar to living without and with a biblical worldview? What does the way you are currently living your life reflect about your worldview? In what ways does your lifestyle need to change to better reflect your faith in Christ?*



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

### Essential Doctrine: Sin and Death

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

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:15-17; 3:2-5; John 17:1-3; Romans 5:12-17; 6:23

### 1 Sin results in physical death.

(Gen. 2:15-17; Rom. 5:12-17)

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

### 2 Sin results in spiritual death.

(Gen. 3:2-5)

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

### 3 Sin results in eternal death.

(John 17:1-3; Rom. 6:23)

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

### Opening Activity

Enlist several students to play a speed round of The Game of Life® by taking turns spinning the wheel 10-12 times in a row and quickly jotting what each space says for that player on a sheet of paper. Note: You are not using game pieces, taking turns, or playing a regular game. The idea is just to create a series of possible life scenarios for students. The page may end up with a variety of things, based on which version of The Game of Life® you are using, such as: complete college education; incur educational loans of \$45,000; land a job making \$43,000 per year; get married; have twins; buy a house; lose your job; have a son; and so on.

*Point:* We can't predict what every person's life on earth may end up looking like; however, we can know what eternal life for everyone who chooses to believe in Jesus will look like.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Flawless" by MercyMe  
(*Welcome to the New*, MercyMe, 2014)
- ▶ "Lift Your Head Weary Sinner (Chains)" by Crowder  
(*Neon Steeple*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow, 2014)
- ▶ "Forever Reign" by Hillsong Live  
(*A Beautiful Exchange*, Hillsong Church, 2010)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Club Paradise" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "Good News" *SkitGuys.com*

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

### Essential Doctrine: Sin and Death

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

### 1 Sin results in physical death.

(Gen. 2:15-17; Rom. 5:12-17)

Option: Invite students to identify physical features or personality traits they've inherited or have adapted from their parents.

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

- ▶ *What did all people inherit from Adam?* (a sin nature)

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).

- ▶ *Why do you think Adam and Eve still chose to sin?*

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

- ▶ *How does Adam's sin affect you and me today?*

All human beings have two characteristics in common: They are sinners, and they will die. (*Life Application New Testament Commentary*)

- ▶ *What hope do we have of overcoming our sin nature? Can we do this on our own? Why or why not?*

Sin entered through one man, but salvation also entered through one man—Jesus Christ.

### 2 Sin results in spiritual death.

(Gen. 3:2-5)

Share the following proverb with students: "A half-truth is a whole lie."

- ▶ *What does it mean to twist the truth?*

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

- ▶ *What truth did Satan twist?*
- ▶ *What were the actual consequences of Adam and Eve's actions?*

Upon their disobedience, Adam and Eve's relationship with God was broken and they experienced the shame and guilt of their sin—trying to hide from God's presence. The consequences of their decision would be passed down from generation to generation as was soon evidenced when Cain murdered Abel.

- ▶ *What are the consequences of our sin today?*

Just as Satan lied to Eve, he continues to twist the truth today. Regardless of how tempting and promising sin may appear, it always results in spiritual separation from God.

### 3 Sin results in eternal death.

(John 17:1-3; Rom. 6:23)

#### Read John 17:1-3.

- ▶ *What did Jesus say eternal life is?*

Eternal life is more than where you exist after death. Eternal life includes knowing God and living in fellowship with Him.

- ▶ *If eternal life is knowing God, what is eternal death?*

#### Read Romans 6:23.

- ▶ *How is eternal life described in this verse?*

God offers eternal life as a free gift, asking only to be the Lord/Master of our life. One master (sin) pays an earned wage of death; the other master (God) pays in unearned grace, resulting in eternal life.

- ▶ *How do you get this gift of God?*

### WRAP IT UP

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

- ▶ *Do you believe the work of Christ can overcome the sin in your life? Why or why not?*

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to understand that justification is not the result of good works, but of faith in Christ. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: Justification and Works

Justification is not the result of human effort or good works, but of faith in the righteousness of Christ. Although good works do not lead to justification, justification leads to good works in the life of a believer (Eph. 2:10). Faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17). While good works do not establish justification, they do verify a genuine faith and make our justification evident to others.

**Scripture:** *Romans 3:28-30; Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-18; 1 John 3:16-18*

### 1 Justification comes through faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:28-30)

The term justification is a legal term that refers to our right standing before God. Through faith in Christ, we are justified in God's sight as Jesus' righteousness is applied to us. There is no amount of "good works" that can lead to justification—it is only by faith in Christ alone that we can be justified on the basis of His righteousness being applied to us.

### 2 Justification leads to good works. (Eph. 2:10; 1 John 3:16-18)

Even though justification isn't the result of good works or effort, being justified through Christ produces a heart change within the believer that leads to both a desire and ability to live in a way that points to the grace in his or her life. In this sense, good works don't lead to grace or justification, but spring forth from it. Christians seek to live lives that display holiness and good works in response to the grace and mercy they have been shown from God, wanting to glorify and make much of Him as they emulate His holiness and goodness.

### 3 Good works are a sign that one is justified. (Jas. 2:14-18)

One way we might know that we have been genuinely saved is by looking at the evidence of grace in our lives—whether we are living in a way that is commensurate to the grace we have been shown. By looking at our works and the way we conduct ourselves after placing our faith in Christ, we can get an idea of whether or not a heart change has actually taken place. Of course, wondering about our salvation involves much more than looking at the fruit (or lack of fruit) within our lives. We can be easily deceived by what we think are "good works," which is why this is only one of many ways to examine whether we have genuine faith. Ultimately, if we are questioning our salvation, it is best we look to Christ and not to our own lives, trusting in Him and in His righteousness for the forgiveness of our sins.

### Opening Activity

Some things just go together. Write the following items on the board as you invite students to add to the list: peanut butter and jelly; spaghetti and meatballs; mustard and ketchup; etc.

We say those things go together, but can they exist separately? You can have peanut butter without having jelly. You can have spaghetti without meatballs. Each of those things can stand on its own. But can you have faith without works? Can faith stand on its own? Explain.

Alternatively, there are lots of people in the world doing good things, like helping the poor, feeding the hungry, and caring for the sick. Because they are doing those things, does that mean they are going to heaven? Why does doing good works not automatically get us into heaven?

If you say you're a Christian, shouldn't there be evidence of that? If so, what would that evidence look like?

Point out that an authentic Christian life will result in doing works that affirm Christ lives in you.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "We Believe" by Newsboys  
(*Restart*, Newsboys/Sparrow Records, 2013)
- ▶ "Soul On Fire" by Third Day  
(*Lead Us Back*, Provident, 2015)
- ▶ "Thrive" by Casting Crowns  
(*Thrive*, Provident, 2014)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Faith Without Works" [BluefishTV.com](http://BluefishTV.com)
- ▶ "The Jesus Memo" [SkitGuys.com](http://SkitGuys.com)

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### Essential Doctrine: Justification and Works

Justification is not the result of human effort or good works, but of faith in the righteousness of Christ. Although good works do not lead to justification, justification leads to good works in the life of a believer (Eph. 2:10). Faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17). While good works do not establish justification, they do verify a genuine faith and make our justification evident to others.

### 1 Justification comes through faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:28-30)

Discuss reactions to the following quote: "I'm afraid that in the United States of America today the prevailing doctrine of justification is not justification by faith alone. It is not even justification by good works or by a combination of faith and works. The prevailing notion of justification in our culture today is justification by death. All one has to do to be received into the everlasting arms of God is to die." —R.C. Sproul, *Saved from What?*

- ▶ Do you agree with Sproul? Why are people so confused about what it takes to be saved? Who do you know that is like this?

#### Read Romans 3:28-30.

The Bible makes it clear, only faith in Jesus justifies.

- ▶ What does it mean to be justified? Why can't we be justified by works?

To be justified means to be made right in God's sight.

Share the following quote: "If you try to add to God's salvation you subtract. If you try to merit God's salvation you haven't believed at all, even if you try to do a little bit." —Timothy Keller

- ▶ Do you ever find yourself trying to win God's approval through your behavior? Explain.

Neither the amount nor the type of good works matters. Salvation is by God's grace, through faith.

### 2 Justification leads to good works. (Eph. 2:10; 1 John 3:16-18)

Invite students to identify movies where someone risked their life to save another. (For example: *Frozen* (2013), *The Guardian* (2006))

- ▶ Who would you put your life on the line to save? Explain.

#### Read 1 John 3:16-18.

Our actions will show our love.

- ▶ How did John express how serious it is to put faith in action?

- ▶ If you're a believer and you see someone in need, what should you do? Is that what you would do? Why or why not?
- ▶ How do our actions toward those in need reflect our faith?

#### Read Ephesians 2:10.

- ▶ Based on this verse, what is our purpose as God's creation?

We are created by God for His purposes, to do His good works that bring glory to Him.

This doesn't mean that we do a good work for God. It means that God does a good work through us as we are faithful and obedient to Him. (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

### 3 Good works are a sign that one is justified. (Jas. 2:14-18)

Option: Display an image of an iceberg, then ask: What percentage of an iceberg is below water? Share the following information: The surface of an iceberg consists mostly of snow, which is not very compact. This portion, which is approximately 10% of the iceberg, remains above water. The very compact ice core is heavier and holds the remaining 90% below the waterline. The exposed tip of the iceberg points to the fact that there is a lot of substance underneath. Do our good works point to our faith in a similar way? Explain.

#### Read James 2:14-18.

Faith is evidenced by works.

- ▶ What does James mean that faith without works is dead? Discuss the difference between works providing salvation and works evidencing salvation.
- ▶ Do your works evidence your salvation? If so, how?

#### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ If you were to be arrested for being a Christian, what evidence would be used to convict you? List three things you will do this week to put your faith into action.

As a result of this study, some students may realize they don't really know Christ. Be prepared to share the plan of salvation and allow time for students to respond.

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

### Essential Doctrine: God Is Just

God established standards for humanity that are in accordance with His righteousness, and all people will be judged according to those righteous standards (Lev. 11:44-45; Rom. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:10). It would be an injustice if God did not uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character. Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both just and the justifier of those who place their faith in Christ (Rom. 3:25-26).

### Scripture: Romans 3:9-12,19-26

#### 1 We all believe in justice. (Rom. 3:9-12)

Even though cultures may differ on what acts are just or not, deep down we all believe in this notion of justice. We all hold to absolute standards, and we believe that these standards, such as the standard to treat all people as having inherent value, worth, and dignity, should be upheld no matter what culture or time a person lives in. Our courts, governments, and laws are built upon the concept of justice, and the people of those governments often recognize when justice is not being carried out appropriately (as in the case of slavery or the civil rights movement).

#### 2 Justice is rooted in God's holy character. (Rom. 3:19-21)

Justice is not a human invention but is something that flows from the character of God. God has established moral standards for humanity, and He is just in expecting us to follow them both for our good and for His glory. However, we have all committed injustices of some kind or another as we have all transgressed God's moral standard for our lives. We have rebelled, and because of that rebellion we have failed to reflect God the way we were originally designed to.

#### 3 We are justified by Christ. (Rom. 3:22-26)

Because we have all transgressed God's moral law, we are all deserving of God's just punishment for our sin. Because God is just, He is morally unable to overlook sin or sweep it under the rug. The wages of sin must be accounted for. However, because of God's great love and mercy, He has taken it upon Himself to satisfy His own justice for sin in the death of His Son, so that He might also become the justifier of those who believe in Him for the forgiveness of their sins. In this way, God's holiness and justice remain intact, and His love and grace are magnified in that He bore the penalty for sin that we deserved.

### Opening Activity

Invite students to identify different ways people break rules or even laws today as you list their answers on the board. (For example: telling a lie, punching someone in the face, threatening someone with violence, selling illegal drugs, stealing a cell phone, breaking into a house, stealing a car, kidnapping, murder, etc.)

What is the appropriate punishment for each of these crimes you've identified? (grounding, jail time, death penalty, etc.)

As Christians, what should our punishment be when we violate the standard of righteousness God has called us to live by? Explain.

We all tend to point out the mistakes of others while thinking we are doing everything right. Paul made it clear that we are all sinners. We are incapable of living the life displayed and lived out by Jesus.

In His earthly ministry, Jesus was clear that He didn't come for those who were well, but for the sick (Mark 2:17). Until a person accepts the Bible's diagnosis of sin—that we have all come up short, even at our best—there will be no hope of a rescue.

Romans 2:5 says that man has hardened his heart toward God. When people play the comparison game and refuse to confess their own sins, God's wrath rises.

There is no way we can measure up to God's perfect standard. So where does this leave you? Are you suppressing the truth and turning a blind eye to your sin?

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Flawless" by MercyMe  
(*Welcome to the New*, MercyMe, 2014)
- ▶ "How Can It Be" by Lauren Daigle  
(*How Can It Be*, Centricity Music, 2015)
- ▶ "This Is Amazing Grace" by Phil Wickham  
(*The Ascension*, Phil Wickham, 2013)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "SLAP" *BluefishTV.com*

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### Essential Doctrine: God Is Just

God established standards for humanity that are in accordance with His righteousness, and all people will be judged according to those righteous standards (Lev. 11:44-45; Rom. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:10). It would be an injustice if God did not uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character. Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both just and the justifier of those who place their faith in Christ (Rom. 3:25-26).

### 1 We all believe in justice. (Rom. 3:9-12)

- ▶ *Have you ever witnessed a game in which the referee or umpire didn't call the penalties or fouls well? How did you respond? Did you feel like the players got ripped off? Did you want justice? Explain.*

#### Read Romans 3:9-12.

All of us wrestle with the notion of injustice. In Romans 3:9-12, Paul settles the idea that God is right to call our fouls and to penalize us for our sins.

- ▶ *What are some things we are all guilty of?* (envy, greed, pride, slander, lust, idolatry, etc.)
- ▶ *What do you think would be a just punishment for each of these things?*

Based on these verses, we are all placed behind bars; we all belong there. Forever. No one is innocent.

### 2 Justice is rooted in God's holy character. (Rom. 3:19-21)

- ▶ *How do you know when you've done something wrong? Does someone else have to point it out? Explain.*

#### Read Romans 3:19-21.

All people are accountable to God for their sin.

- ▶ *What is the purpose of the law?*  
The law reveals our sin and need for redemption.
- ▶ *Does keeping the law make someone righteous? Why or why not?*  
Many religious Jews and self-disciplined Gentiles believed they were righteous, but their righteousness was not acceptable to God.
- ▶ *What is the difference between man's righteousness and God's righteousness?*

Man's righteousness is self-proclaimed and obtained through religious ritual and outward conformity to law. God's righteousness originates with Him and cannot be produced through human effort. Therefore it is a righteousness apart from the law.

- ▶ *If we cannot attain righteousness on our own, what hope do we have?*

We can't meet God's standard on our own. When we see our sin in light of God's glory, we begin to recognize our need for a Savior.

### 3 We are justified by Christ. (Rom. 3:22-26)

- ▶ *In what recent situation have you wanted a do-over? What would you do differently to try to "fix" what went wrong?*

#### Read Romans 3:22-26.

When it comes to sin, we can't fix it ourselves. No human being has the power to put things right again. There is no way to travel back and do it over. However, God's way is to move beyond a repair; the Lord wants to begin things fresh. This new start comes by the simple act of faith and by trusting in the grace and mercy of God.

- ▶ *How would you define the word "grace" in verse 24? Why do we sometimes struggle to accept God's grace?*  
Grace is the "undeserved acceptance and love received from another." (*Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*)
- ▶ *What does it mean to be justified? How are we justified freely?*  
Through His death and resurrection, Jesus paid the penalty for our sin and made us righteous in God's eyes.
- ▶ *Have you been justified freely by His grace? If not, why not? If so, how are you displaying the righteousness of God in your life?*  
We cannot save ourselves by actions, words, or deeds. Only by faith can we be made right with God.

#### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Are the truths from this lesson popular in our society? Why or why not?*  
Emphasize that truth is truth whether it's popular or not.
- ▶ *Who are some people you need to share this with and how will you share it?*

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### **Essential Doctrine: Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of a Christian**

The Holy Spirit's work in the life of a Christian begins with salvation, bringing a person to faith in Christ, and is continued through the process of sanctification, helping that person become more like Christ throughout the course of his or her life. The Spirit empowers and indwells believers, intercedes on their behalf, and equips them with special gifts for service in God's kingdom. He is also our Comforter and Teacher, helping us to interpret and understand Scripture.

**Scripture:** *John 16:5-15; Acts 1:4-8; Romans 8:5-11*

### **1 The Holy Spirit reveals.** (John 16:5-15)

One of the ways the Holy Spirit works in the life of a Christian is by revealing certain things to us, such as our sin and God's righteousness. In convicting us about our sin, the Spirit reveals to us how we have chosen to live according to our own desires rather than according to God's Word. He shines the light of Scripture on our lives, making us able to see where we have fallen short of God's standards. In addition to that, the Spirit opens our minds to the truth and beauty of God's Word, allowing it to flood our hearts so that we might be transformed by the good news of the gospel.

### **2 The Holy Spirit transforms.** (Rom. 8:5-11)

As Christians, we continue daily to depend on the Holy Spirit's work in our lives to purify us from the sin that remains. This process is known as sanctification, and refers to the ongoing work of the Spirit to make us more like Christ. Sanctification is not about us trying to become something we're not; rather, it's about being empowered by the Holy Spirit to embrace who we truly are in Christ. It is about putting aside our former way of life which gave way to sinful desires and putting on the new identity we have in Christ.

### **3 The Holy Spirit empowers.** (Acts 1:4-8)

During Jesus' earthly ministry, He promised a day in which God would dwell in the hearts of His people. At Pentecost, He took up that residence through the Holy Spirit, and at the end of time, He will be with all believers forever. One of the benefits of the Holy Spirit indwelling believers today is that the Spirit equips and empowers us to live on mission in this world. Thus, the Holy Spirit is not merely given for our personal benefit, but for our missional empowerment. The Spirit gives us everything we need to continue Christ's work of proclaiming the gospel to the world.

### **Opening Activity**

Everyone can use some guidance in life. When do you need guidance? To whom do you turn for guidance? Why do you turn to that person/those people? What type of guidance do they give?

Invite students to identify several popular "Movie Mentors," those knowledgeable, wise, charismatic, loyal, and encouraging characters in the movies who guide some of our favorite heroes to become something more (and often better) than they were when we first met them. (For example: Alfred Pennywise (*Batman*); Professor Charles Xavier (*X-Men*); Haymitch Abernathy (*The Hunger Games*))

Which one of the characters we named is your favorite? Why? Who would you add to the list?

When you consider the sport you play or an activity you enjoy doing, who are some people who have helped you? How has their help given you the ability to succeed? Where would you be if you hadn't received their guidance?

Just as we need mentors to help us accomplish our athletic, academic, and other goals, we need spiritual mentors to help us grow spiritually. The best spiritual mentor we have lives inside us—the Holy Spirit.

How is the Holy Spirit like a spiritual mentor? How has He helped you to grow spiritually?

### **Worship/Playlist Ideas**

- ▶ "Voice of Truth" by Casting Crowns  
(*Casting Crowns*, Reunion, 2003)
- ▶ "Word of God Speak" by MercyMe  
(*Spoken For*, Integrity Media, 2002)
- ▶ "Holy Spirit" by Francesca Battistelli  
(*If We're Honest*, Word Entertainment, 2014)

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

- ▶ "How Do We Grow?" *BluefishTV.com*

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

The Holy Spirit's work in the life of a Christian begins with salvation, bringing a person to faith in Christ, and is continued through the process of sanctification, helping that person become more like Christ throughout the course of his or her life. The Spirit empowers and indwells believers, intercedes on their behalf, and equips them with special gifts for service in God's kingdom. He is also our Comforter and Teacher, helping us to interpret and understand Scripture.

**1 The Holy Spirit reveals.**  
(John 16:5-15)

Invite students to share about some of their favorite teachers over the years and how those teachers helped them learn.

- ▶ *When you did something wrong, how did that teacher let you know?*

**Read John 16:5-11.**

When you do wrong, the Holy Spirit will let you know.

- ▶ *What does it mean that the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment? How do you know when that is happening? What does conviction feel like?*

Share the following definition of *conviction*: a sense of guilt and shame leading to repentance.

- ▶ *How is conviction different than condemnation? Why do we need to be convicted?*

The purpose of the Holy Spirit's conviction isn't to make you feel guilty and condemned, it's to move you to repentance.

**Read John 16:12-15.**

- ▶ *How does the Holy Spirit guide you into all truth?*

Write John 3:16 in Swahili (or another language) on the board: *Maana Mungu aliupenda ulimwengu hivi bata akamtoa Mwana wake wa pekee, ili kila amwaminiye asipotee, bali awe na uzima wa milele.* Make the point that to understand these words, you need someone to guide you.

- ▶ *Why do we need the Holy Spirit to teach us God's Word? How does this happen?*

The Holy Spirit shines the light of Scripture on our lives, making us able to see where we have fallen short of God's standards. In addition, the Spirit opens our minds to the truth of God's Word, allowing it to flood our hearts so that we might be transformed by the good news of the gospel.

**2 The Holy Spirit transforms.**  
(Rom. 8:5-11)

- ▶ *When have you tried to change something about yourself? Did you try to change habits? attitude? lifestyle? How did it go?*

We can change our physical looks and maybe some of our

behavior, but we cannot change our hearts. Only the Holy Spirit can transform lives.

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

The Holy Spirit living in you changes the way you think.

- ▶ *What is the flesh that Paul speaks of? What is the difference between living according to the flesh and according to the Spirit?*

As Christians, we continue to depend on the Holy Spirit's work in our lives to purify us from the sin that remains. This process is known as sanctification, and refers to the ongoing work of the Spirit to make us more like Christ.

**3 The Holy Spirit empowers.**  
(Acts 1:4-8)

- ▶ *What does Iron Man rely on for power? Is that the way the Holy Spirit empowers us? Explain.*

**Read Acts 1:4-8.**

- ▶ *For what does the Holy Spirit empower believers?*

The Holy Spirit empowers us to share the gospel.

- ▶ *How does the Holy Spirit empower you?*

Option: Bring a model or show a picture of a sailing ship. Point out that a sailing ship doesn't move on its own power, but needs the wind to lift its sails.

- ▶ *How can knowing that the Holy Spirit empowers you give you the boldness you need to share your faith?*

The Spirit equips and empowers you to live on mission, giving you everything you need to continue Christ's work of proclaiming the gospel to the world.

**WRAP IT UP**

Discuss reactions to the following quote: "And this is the question I just can't get around: If it's true that the Spirit of God dwells in us and that our bodies are the Holy Spirit's temple, then shouldn't there be a huge difference between the person who has the Spirit of God living inside of him or her and the person who does not?" —Francis Chan

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



*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize what it means to be called into a relationship with Christ. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: Calling

The call to salvation happens in two ways: externally through the proclamation of the gospel, and internally through the Holy Spirit working in the heart of the person who hears. Both of these callings are essential, and both work together to bring someone to faith in Christ (2 Tim. 1:8-10).

**Scripture:** *Romans 10:6-13; 2 Timothy 1:9*

### 1 Our call to salvation is only possible because of the gospel. (Rom. 10:6-13)

If you buy collectibles of any type, then you know the importance of having a certificate of authenticity. Christianity has a certificate of authenticity to prove that the message of salvation is legitimate. Paul said that our salvation and calling are real, and the certificate of authenticity is found in the gospel—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus lived the perfect life that we could not live. He died the death that we deserved to die. And He rose again with power that we do not possess. These are real events that actually happened within space-time history, and it is only through the gospel that our calling to salvation is made secure.

### 2 Christians have been called out of the world and set apart to God. (2 Tim. 1:9)

In 2 Timothy 1, Paul encouraged Timothy to remember the gospel's power, and then he rehearsed the gospel message itself. He reminded Timothy about what happened to him when he was saved. In verses 9-10, Paul puts into words what happens to every believer when he or she comes to know Jesus—God has saved us out of darkness and called us to realize a completely new identity as one holy and set apart to God in Christ. In other words, we didn't save ourselves or decide to come to God on our own; God called us. The thing that makes the gospel utterly different from every other faith system in the world is that it is based not on what we do for God but on what God has done for us.

### Opening Activity

Poll students to determine how many use Twitter, Instagram, etc. What does it mean to follow someone on social media? Who are some famous people you follow? Why do you follow those people?

Share the following information: In Jesus' day it was a great honor to be invited, or called, by a rabbi to become his disciple. Becoming a disciple meant actually following the rabbi from place to place, becoming like him, emulating his actions and attitudes, and developing his character. A student was called a *talmid* in Hebrew (translated *disciple*). A talmid wanted to be like the teacher, that is, to become what the teacher was.

Today, what does it mean to follow Jesus?

When we are called to follow Jesus, it is our task as disciples to learn, study, and pass along the teachings of Christ.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "We Believe" by Newsboys  
(*Restart*, Newsboys, 2013)
- ▶ "That Was Then, This Is Now" by Josh Wilson  
(*That Was Then, This Is Now*, Sparrow, 2015)
- ▶ "Come As You Are" by Crowder  
(*Neon Steeple*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow Records, 2014)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Unleashed for the Gospel" [BluefishTV.com](http://BluefishTV.com)

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize what it means to be called into a relationship with Christ. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

#### Essential Doctrine: Calling

The call to salvation happens in two ways: externally through the proclamation of the gospel, and internally through the Holy Spirit working in the heart of the person who hears. Both of these callings are essential, and both work together to bring someone to faith in Christ (2 Tim. 1:8-10).

#### 1 Our call to salvation is only possible because of the gospel. (Rom. 10:6-13)

- ▶ *What are some things people collect? Do you collect anything of value? If so, what is the importance of having a certificate of authenticity?*

Share that Christianity has a certificate of authenticity to prove that the message of salvation is legitimate. Paul said that our salvation and calling are real, and the certificate of authenticity is found in the gospel—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

#### Read Romans 10:6-8a.

- ▶ *What was Paul's message in these verses?*  
Christ has already come to us from heaven; Christ has already been raised from the dead. There is nothing else that needs to be done other than admitting our need for a Savior.
- ▶ *What does it mean to believe in Jesus? Does it just mean that we believe certain things about Him?*

#### Read Romans 10:8b-13.

- ▶ *What are you to believe in your heart to be saved?*  
The resurrection is the center of the Christian faith. It is an amazing work of God that defies all the laws of nature. It validates the work of Jesus and authenticates Him as truly the Son of God. (*New American Commentary*)
- ▶ *Why is knowing facts about Jesus not enough for salvation?*
- ▶ *What does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord? How do you confess Jesus is Lord of your life?*  
When we confess that Jesus is Lord, we acknowledge His rank or supreme place. We are pledging our obedience and worship; we are placing our lives under His protection for safekeeping. We are pledging ourselves and our resources to His control for direction and service. (*Life Application New Testament Commentary*)
- ▶ *What evidence is there in your life that Jesus is Lord?*  
There is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ. It is only through the gospel that our salvation is made secure.

#### 2 Christians have been called out of the world and set apart to God. (2 Tim. 1:9)

Recall the opening activity and point out that while we can follow celebrities on Twitter, that does not give our lives purpose.

#### Read 2 Tim. 1:9.

Answering Jesus' call to follow Him gives us a life with purpose.

- ▶ *What is the "holy calling" according to this verse?*  
Jesus, our standard for holiness, has called us to a new life, a holy life set apart to God. This is our holy calling—to live holy lives. This call should impact all our choices: words, thoughts, actions, and attitudes.
- ▶ *In your opinion, how can following Jesus impact your words, thoughts, actions, and attitudes?*  
Share the following definition of *purpose*: the reason for which anything is done, created, or exists; a fixed design, outcome, or idea that is the object of an action or other effort.
- ▶ *Is Jesus part of your purpose, or is He your purpose? What's the difference?*  
In verse 9, Paul puts into words what happens to every believer when he or she comes to know Jesus—God has saved us out of darkness and called us to realize a completely new identity as one holy and set apart to God in Christ.
- ▶ *Have you answered the call to follow Jesus? If so, what steps will you take this week to make sure you are living out your purpose as a follower of Christ?*

#### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What are some choices you make every day? What are some important decisions you have to make in the coming years?*  
Emphasize that we can afford some wrong choices in life, but one choice must be made correctly.
- ▶ *Why is answering Christ's call to salvation the most important decision you will ever make?*  
Lead students in a time of prayer, allowing those who desire to receive Christ the opportunity to do so.

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that 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)

Guilt is one of the common emotions that people of all ages experience. Some people use guilt as a means to manipulate others in getting their way, while others experience guilt simply 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)

Guilt and shame highlight the sin within our lives. This is seen pretty clearly in the Old Testament sacrificial system, where 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, etc. Not only that, but the sacrifice required the one offering it to lay his or her hand on the head of the animal before the person killed it. All of this, especially the personal connection, was intended to highlight the weight and heinous 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 has 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 shoe.) Once all students have a pebble, instruct them to remove their shoe, place the pebble inside, and then put their shoe back on. Discuss how it feels to have a pebble in their shoe. Challenge students to keep the pebble in their shoe the rest of the session. They should notice that it will be annoying, painful, and uncomfortable.

How is the discomfort you feel from the pebble similar to walking through life with unconfessed sin?

Point out that 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 has 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**

- ▶ "Live Like You're Loved" by Hawk Nelson  
(*Diamonds*, Hawk Nelson, 2015)
- ▶ "At the Cross (Love Ran Red)" by Chris Tomlin  
(*Love Ran Red*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow, 2014)
- ▶ "Come as You Are" by Crowder  
(*Neon Steeple*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow, 2014)

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

- ▶ "The Weight of the Cross" *BluefishTV.com*

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### 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.

### 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, but 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 that 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 right to do that? Why or why not?*

#### Read Leviticus 1:3-9.

In the Old Testament, when God reminded the sinner of a particular shortcoming, he would then offer a sin or guilt offering. (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

- ▶ *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, where 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 weight and heinous 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 has 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 that 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 does it make/should it make each day?*

We all sin and suffer consequences, but not condemnation.

Distribute notecards 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 notecards.

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to understand what it means that God is love. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: God Is Love

To say that God is love is to say that God is the essence of love, or that perfect love both resides and resonates within God Himself—one in three Persons. The imperfect love that human beings share between one another is a dim reflection of the perfect love that resides within God. The greatest act of love by God toward humans isn't the giving of earthly goods, but the giving of Himself in Christ so that we might be reconciled to Him.

**Scripture:** *Romans 5:6-8; 1 John 4:7-12*

### 1 Love comes from God. (1 John 4:7-8)

Love, in both its verb and noun form, finds its source within the person and nature of God Himself. God is the essence of love, and God's perfect love has existed eternally between the members of the Trinity.

### 2 God loves us. (Rom. 5:6-8; 1 John 4:9-10)

People often question whether God loves them or even humanity as a whole. The Bible speaks directly to this, saying that God loved us to the point that while we were still sinners, Christ gave His life for us (Rom 5:8). God's love wasn't contingent upon us getting our act together before He sent Christ to save us. No, God sent His Son while we were still dead in our sins, while we were still actively living a rebellious life against His authority over our lives. It is an unconditional love, which means there is nothing we can do to earn it, but instead is freely given by God's unmerited favor.

### 3 We are to love others. (1 John 4:11-12)

Given that love is a communicable attribute of God, humanity can share in love to some degree, however imperfect. This means that the most pure and true form of earthly love between two people, such as the love between a man and a woman in marriage or the love experienced between a parent and child, is merely a dim reflection of the love that resides within God Himself. While earthly love may not be perfect, the Bible calls us to love others as ourselves. This means that we consider the love we have for ourselves as a measure for how we are to love others. I love myself enough to want to be happy, to feed myself when I'm hungry, to clothe myself when I'm cold, to shelter myself from the elements, etc. According to the greatest commandment, I am to use that as a measure for how I am to love others. In doing so, I reflect the love of Christ to the world.

### Opening Activity

Place a chair in the center of the room. Enlist two volunteers: one to sit in the chair and keep a straight face no matter what; another to challenge the person in the chair to smile or laugh. Remind participants to be appropriate in what they say or do. Caution that there can be absolutely no physical contact—and each volunteer must keep his or her eyes open during the activity. Explain that the volunteer sitting in the chair will be eliminated if he or she smiles or laughs. They win their round if they can speak a simple sentence without smiling or laughing.

Begin the first round by asking the challenger to look at the volunteer sitting in the chair and say, "If you love me, then you will smile. Do you love me?" At that point, the challenger will continue to attempt to make the volunteer smile or laugh. If the volunteer in the chair is able to say, "Friend, I love you but I just can't smile," without smiling or laughing, the challenger is eliminated. Continue for a couple more rounds as time permits.

The point of this game is to demonstrate that human love is imperfect. Our love contains if/then statements. We stated it this way: "If you love me, then you will smile." In a world filled with if/then types of love, we may wonder what it means when we read in Scripture that God is love. Does God love me with an if/then kind of love? Is God's love different? How?

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "At the Cross (Love Ran Red)" by Chris Tomlin  
(*Love Ran Red*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow, 2014)
- ▶ "The Proof of Your Love" by for KING & COUNTRY  
(*Crave*, Word Entertainment, 2012)
- ▶ "How He Loves" by David Crowder Band  
(*All This for a King*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow, 2013)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "God Loves You" *SkitGuys.com*

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### 1 Love comes from God.

(1 John 4:7-8)

- ▶ *From where does real love originate?*

#### Read 1 John 4:7-8.

- ▶ *What is the difference between "being" love (God is love) and showing love? How are the two connected?*

Love is not only something God gives or does; it is His character. There is no greater expert or source than He.

- ▶ *How has God demonstrated His love?*

Share the following Greek words for love:

*Eros*: romantic love, passionate love, love beyond a friendship.

*Philia*: brotherly/friendship love, loyalty to friends and family.

*Agape*: sacrificial love, unconditional love of God.

- ▶ *God's love is sacrificial and unconditional. What does that mean?*
- ▶ *Why do some people have a hard time believing that God loves them unconditionally? Do you ever struggle to believe it? Why or why not?*

### 2 God loves us.

(Rom. 5:6-8; 1 John 4:9-10)

Option: Invite students to name some of the great love stories that are familiar to them. (Romeo and Juliet; Peeta and Katniss; Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth; Rose and Jack; etc.)

- ▶ *In your opinion, is the story of Romeo and Juliet a good demonstration of love? Why or why not?*

Agree or disagree: Lots of people will say they love you, but few will actually demonstrate how much they really love you.

- ▶ *How do you show love to other people?*
- ▶ *What are some ways God shows His love for us?* (provision, presence, guidance, relationships, redemption)
- ▶ *What do you think is the best demonstration of God's love?*

#### Read 1 John 4:9-10.

Jesus clearly shows us God's love.

- ▶ *Why is Jesus the best demonstration of God's love?*

#### Read Romans 5:6-8.

While we may sometimes wonder if anyone will ever truly love us for who we are, the answer stands as a historical fact.

Though we did not deserve it, Christ demonstrated His love for us by giving His life for us on the cross.

- ▶ *Why is it difficult to get our minds around just how much God loves us?*

Share the following: "I could more easily contain Niagara Falls in a tea cup than I can comprehend the wild, uncontainable love of God." —Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*

- ▶ *What difference could it make in our lives if we truly understood just how much God loves us?*

### 3 We are to love others.

(1 John 4:11-12)

#### Read 1 John 4:11-12.

- ▶ *Is it really possible for us to love others in the same way God loved us? Explain.*

Years after her imprisonment in a German concentration camp during WWII, Corrie ten Boom was confronted by a former guard who had since given his life to Christ. He told her that he knew God had forgiven him for the horrible things he had done, but he pleaded for her forgiveness as well. With the help of the Holy Spirit, she forgave the guard. Recalling that moment, she said, "I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then." ([www.guideposts.org](http://www.guideposts.org))

- ▶ *How is her story an example of God loving through us?*
- ▶ *How does the way we love one another reveal who God is?*
- ▶ *In what ways does the Holy Spirit help us love others?*

We cannot love others with the love of Christ in our own power. It is the Holy Spirit's power working through us to make us a conduit of God's love.

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What difference would it make in all your relationships (identify specific relationships such as parents, friends, and so on) if you loved with the love of Christ?*

Challenge students to evaluate how they are currently doing at showing the love of Christ in all their relationships.

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

### Essential Doctrine: Clarity of Scripture

Because God gave us His Word as authoritative in all matters related to life and faith, we believe His Word was written in a way that can be understood with the help of the Holy Spirit. Believing the Scriptures are clear does not mean that every part is equally easy to interpret; neither does it mean we will never make mistakes in our interpretation. It does mean that, with God's help, people are capable of understanding the biblical text for themselves as they employ correct methods of interpretation.

**Scripture:** *Mark 4:1-9; Luke 24:13-35; John 5:39; Colossians 3:16-17; 2 Timothy 3:14-15*

### 1 Read the Bible in light of the Bible. (Mark 4:1-9)

One way to gain clarity when reading Scripture is by reading the Bible through the lens of the Bible itself. The Bible, with all of its different books, is actually one overarching story about what God is doing to rescue His people. When we approach the Bible this way, we recognize that we need to know the big picture of Scripture in order to shed light on certain areas that seem more or less difficult.

### 2 Read the Bible in light of Christ. (Luke 24:13-35; John 5:39)

Another lens for reading the Bible that brings clarity is reading it in light of Christ. Not only does all the fullness of the Godhead dwell in Jesus (Col. 1:19), but the whole story of the Bible centers on Him. Thus, even in the midst of all of these biblical stories and details, it is vital that we not overlook the reality that all of the Bible is pointing to Christ in some way. This doesn't mean, of course, that every passage in Scripture is speaking about Christ specifically. However, it does mean that every passage relates to the message of Christ and the person of Christ in some way.

### 3 Read the Bible in community. (Col. 3:16-17; 2 Timothy 3:14-15)

A third way to bring clarity to our reading of God's Word is by being a part of a community that seeks to dive into the riches of God's Word for everyday life. As a community, Christians can come together around God's Word and accomplish far more than what is possible through isolated studying. For instance, we can encourage one another in the Word, as well as admonish and challenge one another. We can collectively provide greater insight into the text and relevant questions that help one another think about how God's Word connects with our lives. There is much to be said for reading the Bible in community and how it can serve to protect us from slipping into error from only reading the Bible in isolation.

### Opening Activity

What are some things you are taught as an infant? toddler? pre-teen? teen? college student? adult? What is the difference in all the things you are taught over the course of your life?

How do you know if something you've been taught is true? How have the things you have been taught proven to either be true or false?

What are some things that you've been taught from the Bible? When, where, and from whom have you learned these things?

Display a Rubik's Cube (or place several cubes on a table) and call for volunteers to solve the mixed-up cube. Share that the Cube is a mystery to some. However, to others—those who are familiar with it and have practiced solving it—it is something with which they are comfortable. They understand it and are able to put it in order.

Point out that God gave us His Word, the Bible, so that we would read it and know Him better—not to be a complete mystery to us. Engage students in speculating on different ways to truly understand God's Word. Steer them in the direction of the necessity of the Holy Spirit.

So, what do you think: How can we best understand the Bible?

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Holy Spirit" by Francesca Battistelli  
(*If We're Honest*, Word Entertainment, 2014)
- ▶ "Thrive" by Casting Crowns  
(*Thrive*, Provident, 2014)
- ▶ "Word of God Speak" by MercyMe  
(*Spoken For*, MercyMe, 2002)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "How to Avoid Misusing the Bible" *BluefishTV.com*

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### 1 Read the Bible in light of the Bible. (Mark 4:1-9)

Share the following *Merriam-Webster* definition of *context*: the interrelated conditions, such as environment and setting, in which something exists or occurs.

- ▶ *Have you ever misunderstood someone or taken what they said out of context? What was the result?*

Context is always important, especially in the study of God's Word. His truth is absolute, but we can misunderstand or distort that truth if we are not thorough in our study.

#### Read Mark 4:1-9.

- ▶ *What is the context here?*

Option: Divide students into teams and provide large sheets of paper and markers. Instruct teams to read Mark 4:1-9 and determine the context by looking for details that describe the Who, Whom, What, When, and Where for these verses. After five minutes, call for teams to share what they found. (Who: Jesus; Whom: crowds of people (multitudes were following Jesus everywhere He went because of the miracles He had performed and the wisdom in His teaching), His disciples are also present; What: Jesus was preaching using parables (stories and illustrations with spiritual implications); When: daytime (see verse 35); Where: By the lake. Ask: Why do we need to know this information? (Why is it included?)

- ▶ *What is the point of this particular parable?*

We tend to listen on our own terms and can sometimes choose to hear only what we want to hear. Here, Jesus was pointing out how foolish it is to hear truth but not take it to heart.

- ▶ *How does understanding the context of this story make a difference in how you read the Bible as a whole?*

The Bible, with all of its different books, is actually one overarching story about what God is doing to rescue His people. When we approach the Bible this way, we recognize that we need to know the big picture of Scripture in order to shed light on certain areas that seem more or less difficult.

### 2 Read the Bible in light of Christ. (Luke 24:13-35; John 5:39)

Invite students to share their favorite stories from the Old Testament. (creation, the exodus, Noah and the ark, etc.)

- ▶ *What do these stories tell us about Christ?*

#### Read Luke 24:13-35.

- ▶ *Why did Jesus call these disciples "unwise and slow"? What point were they missing?*

Jesus showed just how the intention and wording of the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures perfectly prepared the way for Jesus to come...God had been preparing Israel for this all along. Scripture was full of Jesus. (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

- ▶ *Is studying the Bible for the sake of knowing Scripture enough? Why or why not?*

#### Read John 5:39.

Jewish scholars thought they could gain eternal life by simply studying the Scriptures; however, in doing so they missed the purpose for which the Scriptures exist: to point people to Christ.

- ▶ *What role did the Bible have in leading you to faith in Christ?*

### 3 Read the Bible in community. (Col. 3:16-17; 2 Timothy 3:14-15)

- ▶ *Who is your favorite professional athlete? Why do you think even professionals need coaches?*
- ▶ *What things has someone taught you to do? (ride a bike, play guitar, swim, dance, read, etc.)*

#### Read 2 Timothy 3:14-15.

God will use other believers to teach you His Word.

- ▶ *Who has taught you the Bible? How? What specific biblical teachings have you learned from someone else?*

#### Read Colossians 3:16-17.

- ▶ *Why is it important to study Scripture with other people?*

As a community, Christians can encourage one another in the Word, as well as admonish and challenge one another. We can collectively provide greater insight into the text and relevant questions that help one another think about how God's Word connects with our lives.

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Challenge students to study the Bible for at least 10 minutes each day this week. Follow up throughout the week to remind them and hold them accountable.*



*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to understand the purpose of Christ's exaltation. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: Christ's Exaltation

Whereas the death of Christ was the ultimate example of His humiliation, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the first and glorious example of Christ's exaltation. Christ was exalted when God raised Him from the dead, and Christ was exalted when He ascended to the Father's right hand. He will be exalted yet again by all creation when He returns. All of these aspects work together to magnify the glory and worth of Christ, resulting in the praise of the glory of His grace in rescuing sinners.

**Scripture:** *Philippians 2:6-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Peter 1:3-9*

### 1 King Jesus is exalted. (Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Thess. 4:16)

Jesus was not only exalted through His resurrection from the dead and His ascension to the Father's right hand, but He will be exalted by all creation as every knee will one day bow and every tongue will one day confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. All of creation will exalt King Jesus when He returns to make all things new, praising Him for who He is and what He has done.

### 2 Jesus' exaltation is for our good. (1 Pet. 1:3-9)

It is a good thing that King Jesus is at the center of the universe and we are not. If God were not at the center and did not receive the praise and adoration and exaltation that He deserves, then our joy would ultimately be lost. Why? Because we were made and designed to enjoy God our Creator for the supreme treasure that He is. If we as individuals place ourselves at the center of our world and existence, we will surely be let down given that genuine happiness can never be found by looking inward. It is only in looking outward, to He who is greater, that true joy can be found.

### Opening Activity

What is the most anticipated arrival of a piece of electronic equipment/technology/software/video game that you have witnessed or are anticipating? What made the arrival such a big deal?

Why do people wait in lines to buy Apple products? Do you have an iPhone (or an iAnything)? Did you wait in line to get it? Why or why not?

Share an experience about waiting at the airport for someone to arrive. Why will we wait for something like a piece of technology or for a loved one to return home?

What are some of the things that will happen when Christ returns? Are you waiting with the same anticipation for Christ's return as you have for some of the other things we've mentioned? Why or why not?

The Bible indicates that all creation waits in anticipation for the return of Christ. (See Romans 8.)

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Soul on Fire" by Third Day  
(*Lead Us Back: Songs of Worship*, Provident, 2015)
- ▶ "We Believe" by Newsboys  
(*Restart*, Newsboys/Sparrow, 2013)
- ▶ "God's Not Dead" by Newsboys  
(*God's Not Dead*, Inpop, 2011)
- ▶ "I Can Only Imagine" by MercyMe  
(*Almost There*, MercyMe, 2001)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "King of Kings" *SkitGuys.com*

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to understand the purpose of Christ's exaltation. 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's Exaltation**

Whereas the death of Christ was the ultimate example of His humiliation, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the first and glorious example of Christ's exaltation. Christ was exalted when God raised Him from the dead, and Christ was exalted when He ascended to the Father's right hand. He will be exalted yet again by all creation when He returns. All of these aspects work together to magnify the glory and worth of Christ, resulting in the praise of the glory of His grace in rescuing sinners.

**1 King Jesus is exalted.**

(Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Thess. 4:16)

- ▶ *Who would you say is currently the most important person in the world? Why? What makes someone important?*

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

Everyone will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

- ▶ *Why will every knee bow?*

Jesus was not only exalted through His resurrection from the dead and His ascension to the Father's right hand, but He will be exalted by all creation as every knee will one day bow and every tongue will one day confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. All of creation will exalt King Jesus when He returns to make all things new, praising Him for who He is and what He has done.

- ▶ *What are some things you typically celebrate?* (birthdays, anniversaries, victories, holidays, etc.)

**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16.**

The return of Christ will be heralded with great celebration.

- ▶ *What is the cause for this celebration?*

The same love that unites believers in this life (4:9) will unite them when Christ returns and reigns for eternity. *(Life Application New Testament Commentary)*

- ▶ *If Jesus were to return this afternoon, would that be a cause of celebration for you? Why or why not?*

Discuss reactions to the following quote: "Live as though Christ died yesterday, rose from the grave today, and is coming back tomorrow." —Theodore Epp

**2 Jesus' exaltation is for our good.**

(1 Pet. 1:3-9)

- ▶ *What are some of the good things God has done for you over the past year? How have you experienced joy through those times?*
- ▶ *When we think about God's goodness to us, big blessings are probably the first things that come to mind. But what are some ways God reveals His goodness to us in our everyday lives?*

When we understand who God is and all He has done for us, our hearts should be filled with joy.

**Read 1 Peter 1:3-9.**

New birth through salvation brings inexpressible joy.

- ▶ *How does having and/or experiencing a new birth lead to being joyful?*

Share the following information:

**New Birth:** In the new birth, we become dead to sin and alive to God with a fresh beginning. This transformation comes only through the power of God. *(Life Application New Testament Commentary)*

**Inheritance:** This refers to our eternal life with God. Jesus Christ, as God's only Son, is the sole heir (Mark 12:7).

However, because we are now children of God through the new birth, we also become heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). *(Life Application New Testament Commentary)*

**Imperishable:** Not subject to decay; indestructible; enduring. *(Dictionary.com)*

- ▶ *Does knowing you have an imperishable inheritance make you joyful? Explain.*
- ▶ *What does Peter mean when he says this kind of joy is "inexpressible and glorious"?*
- ▶ *Is that how you feel about your salvation in Christ? Explain.*

We were made and designed to enjoy God our Creator for the supreme treasure that He is. If we as individuals place ourselves at the center of our world and existence, we will surely be let down given that real joy can never be found by looking inward. It is only in looking outward, to He who is greater, that true joy can be found.

**WRAP IT UP**

- ▶ *When you think about this grand celebration when Christ returns, with whom would you want to share this experience?*
- ▶ *What will you do this week to share your belief in Christ's return with your friends?*