

This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that God created the world and everything in it out of nothing. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: Creation Out of Nothing

The Bible requires us to believe that God created the universe—everything visible and invisible—out of nothing (sometimes said, “creation ex nihilo”). This means that before God created anything, nothing else existed except God Himself. Nothing in creation is eternal; every created thing has a beginning. Therefore, the eternal God rules over all of His creation and He alone is worthy of worship. Denial of this doctrine has implications for God’s independence from, sovereignty over, and providence in creation. Because God created out of nothing, creation has meaning and purpose and points us to the Creator.

Scripture: *Genesis 1:1; Psalm 19:1-4; John 1:1-3; Romans 1:20; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11*

1 Creation includes all things, both visible and invisible. (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16)

When we say that God created all things visible, that’s another way to say that God created everything in the material (physical) universe out of nothing. This includes planets and people to the smallest microscopic particles. When we say that God created all things invisible, we are affirming that God also created things that are immaterial as well (not made up of physical parts), such as the human soul.

2 Creation had a starting point. (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-3; Rev. 4:11)

The fact that creation had a starting point and isn’t eternal is troublesome for many people, particularly atheists. In fact, even the most secular theories of the origins of the universe claim that the world began at a certain time (despite the debate on exactly when that took place). Atheists believe it is impossible for something to come from nothing, which is why they have an extremely difficult time accepting the truth of creation. However, when filtered through a biblical worldview, it is perfectly reasonable to understand that an all-powerful God created all things out of nothing.

3 Creation reveals the nature and character of God. (Ps. 19:1-4; Rom. 1:20)

There are many people who think of creation as having ultimate control, sometimes hinted at in the phrase Mother Nature. We often refer to this as worshiping creation over the Creator. However, because God is the author of creation, this means that He is not only sovereign over all parts of it, but that He uses it to accomplish His purposes and will. Creation points us to a loving and sovereign God, bearing the marks of His power and goodness much like a potter leaving fingerprints in his own work.

Opening Activity

Distribute an index card to each student as they arrive, then lead them to list a man-made product on one side of their card. On the other side, they should list the materials necessary to create the product (to the best of their knowledge). Call on volunteers to share what they’ve written, then ask: What materials were required to create the world? What is the difference between creative humans and Creator God? Point out that God created the entire world *ex nihilo*—He had no supplies or materials from which to begin. He created everything from nothing.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “Everything Glorious” by David Crowder Band (*Remedy*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2007)
- ▶ “All Things New” by Steven Curtis Chapman (*All Things New*, Sparrow, 2004)
- ▶ “Indescribable” by Chris Tomlin (*Arriving*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2004)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “Which Came First?” BluefishTV.com
- ▶ “Accidental Masterpiece” BluefishTV.com

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1 Creation includes all things, both visible and invisible. (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16)

Option: Display a variety of craft supplies (anything you can find) on one or more tables. Post a “Create Something” sign. Direct students to the table(s) without any additional instructions. Allow at least five minutes for students to create something using the materials provided. Invite students to share their creations.

- ▶ *What are some other items you’ve created? (school project, music, art) What did you use to create these?*

Read Genesis 1:1.

- ▶ *What did God use to create the world?*

Share the following meaning of ex nihilo: Latin for “from nothing.” The term “creation ex nihilo” refers to God creating everything from nothing. God didn’t make the universe from preexisting building blocks. He started from scratch.

Read Colossians 1:16.

- ▶ *Who is this verse referring to? What does “all things have been created through Him and for Him” mean?*

Because God created all things, everything is under His authority.

- ▶ *How does the complexity of cells in plants, animals, and humans demonstrate God’s sovereignty?*

2 Creation had a starting point.

(Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-3; Rev. 4:11)

Read Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1-3.

- ▶ *How can we know that everything started with God? Where did God come from?*

The words “In the beginning God” reveal the existence of God from the very start.

- ▶ *Is the truth that God has always existed hard for you to comprehend? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *According to John 1:1-3, in what ways was Jesus involved in creation? Why do you think it’s important to acknowledge that Jesus was with God at creation?*

The Bible allows no place for atheism and no room for doubt about how God has spoken—through the Word. Before there was a beginning, the Word had been coequal with God throughout all eternity. . . . So Jesus, the Word, is eternal and personal. Nothing can separate the heavenly Father from his Son. (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

Read Revelation 4:11.

- ▶ *What makes God worthy to receive “glory and honor and power”?*

God not only created the universe, He sustains it.

- ▶ *Does your life testify to God’s glory, honor, and power? Why or why not? What are some ways you will be more intentional about making sure your life honors God this week?*

3 Creation reveals the nature and character of God. (Ps. 19:1-4; Rom. 1:20)

- ▶ *If someone were to ask you how you know God exists, how would you answer?*

Read Psalm 19:1-4.

Creation is evidence of the even more majestic Creator-God. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*)

- ▶ *What evidence of God do you see in creation?*
- ▶ *Do you need someone to remind you to do your homework? Take out the trash? Eat? What are some reminders people use so that they won’t forget to do certain things?*

Read Romans 1:20.

- ▶ *What are God’s “invisible attributes”? (His power, divine nature)*
- ▶ *What do you think Paul meant by the phrase “people are without excuse”?*

We have no excuse for not acknowledging God. All of creation reminds us that God is our sovereign Creator and worthy of our worship.

- ▶ *How have you seen God’s goodness in creation? His power?*
- ▶ *How does knowing God as your Creator help you trust Him to speak into all areas of your life?*

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

Essential Doctrine: The Goodness of Creation

In Genesis 1, God repeatedly affirmed that all of His creation was good, even “very good” (1:31). It is good, in God’s judgment, because He created it for a purpose that it fulfilled—to reflect and display the good character of the Creator. Therefore, sin and evil should not be seen as a foundational part of the creation but rather as a corruption of it. While the creation has been marred and distorted as a result of sin, it is still good in the hands of God and serves His purpose of proclaiming His glory in the world. God’s people should affirm and seek to preserve the goodness of God’s creation (Gen. 2:15).

Scripture: *Genesis 1:31; 2:15; Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 8:18-22; Revelation 21:1-2*

1 God created all things good. (Gen. 1:31)

The early chapters of Genesis leave no doubt in the reader’s mind that all of God’s creation was created good and without sin. From the largest planets to the smallest organisms, from various foods to human relationships, all things were originally good and without sin.

2 God’s creation has purpose. (Gen. 2:15; Ps. 19:1-6)

Not only was creation created good, but creation was also infused with design and purpose from the very beginning. Creation has always been intended to reflect God and display His glory. The fact that creation was created good and without sin tells us something about the good and holy character of God.

3 God’s creation will one day be restored. (Rom. 8:18-22; Rev. 21:1-2)

Even though sin has corrupted creation and distorted it from its original design, creation itself will one day experience a restoration when Christ returns to make all things new again. Christians should look forward to that future redemption and seek to preserve and proclaim to others the goodness that God has created.

Opening Activity

Dig through your junk drawer at home and find an old watch that doesn’t work anymore, or just buy a really cheap watch. Before the session, enlist a student who can ham it up in front of everyone. Explain that you are going to give him this watch and that after a few minutes he is going to throw it on the ground, stomp on it, smash it with a hammer, and so forth.

Wear the watch on your wrist as you welcome students to the meeting. After a few minutes, call your “plant” to the front and present him with the watch. Lay it on thick, sharing with the group that you are giving him this gift because you love him, you care about him, and you want him to have something special. Then, react with shock as he takes your gift and destroys it.

Discuss with students how they would feel if they saw someone abusing a gift they had given them. Point out that this study will help students consider how sin is a corruption of the world God gave us, and that we should seek to preserve and proclaim the goodness of God’s creation.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “Everything Glorious” by David Crowder Band
(*Remedy*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2007)
- ▶ “All Things New” by Steven Curtis Chapman
(*All Things New*, Sparrow, 2004)
- ▶ “Indescribable” by Chris Tomlin
(*Arriving*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2004)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “Creating the World” from *Toby Making Friends* (Bugbox Animation, 2013) WingClips.com

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1 God created all things good. (Gen. 1:31)

Invite students to call out some comments teachers often make on assignments. After they have identified several, write the words “Very Good!” on the board or a large sheet of paper.

- ▶ *What does it say about your work when you earn a “Very Good!” on one of your assignments?*

Read Genesis 1:31.

- ▶ *How does this verse describe God’s creation?*

The early chapters of Genesis leave no doubt in the reader’s mind that all of God’s creation was created good and without sin. From the largest planets to the smallest organisms, from various foods to human relationships, all things were originally good.

- ▶ *What does the “very good” creation tell us about God Himself?*

The fact that creation was created good and without sin affirms the good and holy character of God.

- ▶ *What is your response when you consider all the good things God created? (praise, thanksgiving, hope, belief, etc.)*

2 God’s creation has purpose. (Gen. 2:15; Ps. 19:1-6)

Option: Display several different tools for students. Discuss the intended purpose of each.

- ▶ *What is the purpose of creation?*

Read Psalm 19:1-6.

Not only was creation good, but creation was infused with design and purpose from the very beginning. Creation has always been intended to reflect God and declare His glory.

- ▶ *What in nature fills you with the most awe of God and His glory? Why?*

Read Genesis 2:15.

- ▶ *What two things did God place man in the garden to do? Does this seem like a difficult assignment? Explain.*

God assigned Adam a purposeful existence that included

the responsibility to oversee His creation. Some people think work and responsibility are a result of sin, but keep in mind that work was given to man from God before sin. It was a God-given assignment.

- ▶ *In what ways are we to continue to care for creation today? Why is this important?*

In following through on our responsibility as managers of creation, we declare the glory of God.

- ▶ *How would you rate your effectiveness in caring for God’s creation?*

3 God’s creation will one day be restored. (Rom. 8:18-22; Rev. 21:1-2)

- ▶ *How do you think Adam’s job of being a caretaker of creation changed after sin entered the world?*

When sin entered the world, all of creation was subjected to the curse of decay and death. While work is not a punishment, it did become harder in many ways as a result of sin.

Read Romans 8:18-22 and Revelation 21:1-2.

- ▶ *What hope do these Scripture passages offer believers?*

At present, the creation reflects the curse of sin; when sin is finally removed from the children of God, the creation will spring forth in glory. (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What would you say to someone who admires the beauty of nature, but does not believe that it testifies to the existence of a Creator?*
- ▶ *How would you prepare to share with that person why you believe nature declares God’s existence?*

Provide index cards. Challenge students to write one way they can be caretakers of creation this week. Pray that God, the Creator, will help students remember their responsibility to care for His “very good” creation.

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

Essential Doctrine: Image of God in Humanity

The image of God in humanity is understood as mirroring God's attributes in our nature, in our actions, and in our relational capacities. In Jesus, we see the true image of God. He perfectly mirrors God's attributes, fulfills God's will, and enjoys a perfect relationship with the Father. The Bible continues to speak of the image of God in humanity even after our fall into sin, even though our ability to rightly reflect God has been marred.

Scripture: *Genesis 1:26-27; 3:1-5; 5:1-3; Romans 1:18-25; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18*

1 All people are created in God's image.

(Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1-3)

The creation account testifies to the fact that the creation of humanity is unique among the rest of the created order. No other parts of creation—not animals or planets—are said to bear the image of God like humanity. This doesn't mean that God must, in some way, physically look like us—having two arms, two legs, a body, and so forth. Instead, it means, among other things, that every human being on planet earth inherently possesses dignity, value, and worth as a result of bearing the image of our Maker.

2 Sin has distorted that image.

(Gen. 3:1-5; Rom. 1:18-25)

With sin came a distortion of the image of God within us. The image hasn't been done away with completely, but has, in essence, been contaminated from its original design and purpose. We no longer reflect God as in a mirror, the way we once did. Instead, the mirror now bears more resemblance of our sin and selfishness.

3 Jesus will one day restore God's image within us.

(2 Cor. 3:17-18)

Unlike us, Jesus has perfectly reflected the image of God in every way, and in Him believers will be continually renewed in God's image until they are one day completely restored at the return of Christ.

Opening Activity

Gather baby pictures of church staff members and adult leaders in your student ministry. Create a slideshow with these pictures and list multiple choice options of who each baby might be. Allow students to get into groups and work together to match the correct name and picture. Consider awarding a small prize to the team who gets the most answers correct. Guide students to discuss what helped them determine who each baby was. Physical attributes, personality traits, and even mannerisms make us unique and recognizable to the world. God, in His infinite creativity, determined to shape every human life distinct with one common attribute—we are all created in His image.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Everything Glorious" by David Crowder Band (*Remedy*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2007)
- ▶ "All Things New" by Steven Curtis Chapman (*All Things New*, Sparrow, 2004)
- ▶ "Indescribable" by Chris Tomlin (*Arriving*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2004)
- ▶ He Knows My Name by Francesca Battistelli (*If We're Honest*, Word Entertainment, 2014)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "God Made Me Perfect" from *Toby Making Friends* (Bugbox Animation, 2013) WingClips.com

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1 All people are created in God's image. (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1-3)

Option: Provide paper and pens. Instruct students to draw a stick figure representing themselves. Encourage them to illustrate or describe any physical attributes or personality traits that are similar to their parents. (Even adopted children pick up certain traits from their adoptive parents.) After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their drawings.

Read Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1-3.

▶ *In whose image are we created?*

The creation account testifies to the fact that the creation of humanity is unique among the rest of the created order. No other parts of creation—not animals or planets—are said to bear the image of God like humanity.

▶ *What do you think it means to be made in His image?*

This doesn't mean that God physically looks like us—having two arms, two legs, a body, and so forth. Instead, it means that every human being has His imprint on their lives. He shaped us with unique qualities given to no other created thing—attributes that reflect Him, such as an eternal nature, the capacity to give and receive love, free will, and so forth.

▶ *Does believing you were made in God's image change the way you see yourself? the way you see others? Explain.*

2 Sin has distorted that image. (Gen. 3:1-5; Rom. 1:18-25)

▶ *Agree or disagree with the following proverb: A half-truth is a whole lie.*

▶ *What does it mean to bend the truth?*

Read Genesis 3:1-5.

▶ *What truth did Satan bend? How does He continue to bend the truth today? (You'll get to heaven as long as you're a good person; your parents are out of touch and don't understand you; a little lie won't hurt anyone; etc.)*

Read Romans 1:18-25.

▶ *How does God make Himself evident among us today? (i.e.: creation, His Word)*

▶ *How does sin prevent us from recognizing God? How does giving in to sin prevent us from reflecting God to others?*

Sin has distorted the image of God within us. The image hasn't been done away with completely, but has, in essence, been contaminated from its original design and purpose.

▶ *How could knowing that you are accountable to God help you recognize and turn from sin?*

3 Jesus will one day restore God's image within us. (2 Cor. 3:17-18)

▶ *When you're getting ready in the morning, how much time do you spend looking in the mirror? Why?*

Read 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

▶ *What does Paul say we are to reflect? Why?*

▶ *What does it mean to reflect God "as in a mirror"? What do we often reflect instead of God's glory?*

We no longer reflect God as in a mirror, the way we once did. Instead, the mirror now bears more resemblance of our sin and selfishness.

▶ *Who is the perfect reflection of God?*

Unlike us, Jesus has perfectly reflected the image of God in every way, and in Him believers will be continually renewed in God's image until they are one day completely restored at the return of Christ.

WRAP IT UP

▶ *How can we learn to better reflect God's glory?*

As we spend time in God's Word and grow in our relationship with Him, we will become more and more like Him.

▶ *How is Jesus working in your life to help you reflect the glory of God?*

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

Essential Doctrine: Sin as Rebellion

Because the Bible portrays people as responsible beings, called to respond in faith and obedience to God's revelation, the Bible often portrays sin in terms of defiance and rebellion toward God the King. Isaiah 1:2 is one of many passages that describes sin in terms of rebellion against God: "I have raised children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against Me." Seen in this light, sin is personal and willful disobedience, the raising of a clenched fist toward the One who made us.

Scripture: *Genesis 3:6-13; Matthew 15:10-20; Romans 1:18-25; 5:12-17*

1 Sin begins in the heart. (Matt. 15:10-20; Rom. 5:12-17)

The Bible is clear that sin isn't reducible to a list of things not to do or actions to avoid. Instead, at the root of every sinful action is a sinful heart that gave fruit to it. Sin starts within the human heart, and it is at the source of the human heart that sin needs to be addressed.

2 Sin leads to willful rebellion. (Gen. 3:6-13; Rom. 1:18-25)

While sin starts within the heart, it quickly surfaces to the level of action and behavior. Not only that, but one of the ways the Bible defines sinful action is with the language of willful rebellion. In other words, sin isn't an accident that we happened to fall into or something that blindsided us. Instead, sinning is intentional, designed, and orchestrated disobedience against God and His purposeful ways.

Opening Activity

Prepare a table filled with a favorite snack students enjoy, such as homemade chocolate chip cookies, popcorn, etc. Place servings of the snack on individual plates with appropriate utensils as needed. Post several signs that state: DO NOT EAT THE SNACKS! Sign your name at the bottom of each posted sign. Enlist another student or leader to use lies and half-truths to "tempt" students to eat the snack. As soon as a student takes one bite of the snack, send him or her to a designated holding area.

After several minutes, call the entire group together. Discuss with the detained students why they ate the snack when it was so obvious they were not supposed to eat it. Why did they choose to rebel against such a simple and clear rule?

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" by Hillsong UNITED
(*Zion*, Hillsong Music, 2013)
- ▶ "This Is Amazing Grace" by Phil Wickham
(*The Ascension*, Fair Trade Services, 2013)
- ▶ "All Things New" by Steven Curtis Chapman
(*All Things New*, Sparrow, 2004)
- ▶ "Your Grace Is Enough" by Chris Tomlin
(*Arriving*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2004)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Warning" *BluefishTV.com*

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1 Sin begins in the heart.

(Matt. 15:10-20; Rom. 5:12-17)

Option: Display a variety of random items bearing logos, such as a T-shirt, restaurant napkins, brand name baseball bat, and so forth. Make sure you can identify where each item came from. Call on volunteers to guess the origin of each item, such as the location of the factory where it was made, the restaurant or store where it was purchased, and so forth. Discuss the ease of tracing where each of these items came from, then ask: Where does sin come from?

Read Romans 5:12-17.

Point out that sin entered the world through Adam and Eve. Because of this, all people inherited Adam's sin nature.

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

Read Matthew 15:10-20.

- ▶ *What evil things come from the heart? What would you add to this list?*
- ▶ *If we can just avoid doing the things on this list, will we be OK? Why or why not?*

The Bible is clear that sin isn't reducible to a list of things not to do or actions to avoid. Instead, at the root of every sinful action is a sinful heart that gave fruit to it. Sin starts within the human heart, and it is at the source of the human heart that sin needs to be addressed.

2 Sin leads to willful rebellion.

(Gen. 3:6-13; Rom. 1:18-25)

- ▶ *When was the last time you did something you knew was wrong? What caused you to act in this way?*

Read Genesis 3:6-13.

- ▶ *What did Adam and Eve do even though they knew it was wrong? Why?*
Eve chose to listen to the serpent and to rebel against God. Adam willingly rebelled by making the same choice.
- ▶ *Do you struggle with temptation in a similar way that Adam and Eve did? Explain.*

Read Romans 1:18-25.

- ▶ *Why are people "without excuse" when it comes to sin?*

Because God has made certain facts about himself known instinctively, people will someday have to give an account before God of why they chose to ignore his existence and his character. (*Life Application New Testament Commentary*)

WRAP IT UP

While sin starts within the heart, it quickly surfaces to the level of action and behavior. Not only that, but one of the ways the Bible defines sinful action is with the language of willful rebellion. In other words, sin isn't an accident that we happened to fall into or something that blindsided us. Instead, sinning is intentional, designed, and orchestrated disobedience against God and His purposeful ways.

- ▶ *What hope do we have of overcoming sin?*
Sin entered the world through one man, but salvation also entered through one man—Jesus Christ. Jesus overcame sin, which leads to death, and offers us eternal life instead.
- ▶ *Do you believe the work of Christ can overcome the sin in your life? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *How would your life be different if you lived every day in the reality of Christ's victory over sin?*

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

Essential Doctrine: Sins Effects in the World

Sin does not only impact our relationship with God; it is also the root of our broken relationships with the people around us. Human sinfulness is the reason the creation groans in anticipation for redemption and deliverance from its bondage to evil powers (Rom. 8:20-22). Sin has infected and redirected the social structures of society, leading to injustice and oppression. The distorting effects of sin are visible all around us, but the good news of the gospel is that the battle against these powers will be won through the work of Christ.

Scripture: *Genesis 2:15; 3:23; 4:1-8; Romans 1:18-25; Colossians 1:20–2:3*

1 Sin distorts our relationship with others.

(Gen. 4:1-8; Rom. 1:18-25)

Sin has not only negatively affected our relationship with God—it has also negatively impacted our relationships with other people. We see this from the very beginning between Adam and Eve when they sinned against God in the garden, quickly followed with the relationship between two of their sons, Cain and Abel. The biblical storyline gives further evidence to this distortion as it bears witness to enmity, strife, conflict, violence, and war in the world of mankind.

2 Sin distorts our relationship with creation.

(Gen. 2:15; 3:23; Rom. 8:20-22)

Not only does sin distort our relationships with others, but it has also disrupted our relationship with the rest of creation as originally intended and designed by God from the beginning. Humanity was given stewardship by God over creation, intended to be co-managers with God over it. Because of sin, however, humanity has failed to rightly steward, resulting in a broken relationship between us and the rest of creation.

3 Jesus restores our broken relationships.

(Col. 1:20–2:3)

The gospel not only promises that one day all things will be made new again, but also that a present restoration of these broken relationships begins to take place for those who are in Christ. It is only through the gospel that broken relationships can be restored, that enemies can become reconciled, and a renewed stewardship of our responsibilities as co-managers with God over creation can begin to take place.

Opening Activity

Fireball contest: Allow volunteers to come to the front and face the audience. Place a bowl of Atomic Fireballs® candy nearby and instruct them to put several pieces of the candy in their mouth when you say go. The contestant who can stand still the longest with the fireball candy in their mouth wins. Allow participants to share about their experience. Highlight the fact that as the candy heated up in their mouths it became increasingly harder to stand still. The same is true in our spiritual lives. If we allow anger and frustration to heat up within us, we will eventually explode either in our words or in our actions.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “Slow Fade” by Casting Crowns
(*The Altar and the Door*, Reunion Records, 2007)
- ▶ “Remedy” by David Crowder Band
(*Remedy*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2007)
- ▶ “All Things New” by Steven Curtis Chapman
(*All Things New*, Sparrow, 2004)
- ▶ “Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)” by Hillsong UNITED
(*Zion*, Hillsong Music, 2013)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “Anger Only Makes Things Worse” *BluefishTV.com*

This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize the effects of sin in the world. 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: Sins Effects in the World

Sin does not only impact our relationship with God; it is also the root of our broken relationships with the people around us. Human sinfulness is the reason the creation groans in anticipation for redemption and deliverance from its bondage to evil powers (Rom. 8:20-22). Sin has infected and redirected the social structures of society, leading to injustice and oppression. The distorting effects of sin are visible all around us, but the good news of the gospel is that the battle against these powers will be won through the work of Christ.

1 Sin distorts our relationship with others.
(Gen. 4:1-8; Rom. 1:18-25)

Option: Share the following stats from *www.cdc.gov*: Homicide was the 2nd leading cause of death of 10-24 year olds in 2010; 31.5% of high school students report having been in a physical fight in the last year; Over 19% of high schoolers report being bullied at school; 16% of all violent crime arrests in 2008 were people under age 18.

▶ *What is at the root of all of these statistics?*

Sin has not only negatively affected our relationship with God—it has also negatively impacted our relationships with other people. We see this from the very beginning between Adam and Eve when they sinned against God in the garden, quickly followed with the relationship between two of their sons, Cain and Abel.

Read Genesis 4:1-8.

- ▶ *Why did Cain feel wronged in this situation?*
- ▶ *What warning did the Lord give Cain concerning the danger of sin? What wisdom did the Lord impart to Cain?*

God's advice was that if Cain would please God by doing what is right, all would be well. But if not sin would be crouching at his door, ready to overcome him. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*)

- ▶ *What are examples of how sin continues to distort our relationships today?* (broken relationships, strife, conflict, violence, war, etc.)

The image of sin crouching at the door is a powerful picture of Satan's relentless attempts to kill, steal, and destroy. The Lord says we must rule over sin.

2 Sin distorts our relationship with creation.
(Gen. 2:15; 3:23; Rom. 8:20-22)

Read Gen. 2:15 and 3:23.

- ▶ *What was Adam's responsibility in Eden? How did that change after he sinned?*

Not only does sin distort our relationships with others, but it has also disrupted our relationship with the rest of creation as originally intended and designed by God from the beginning. Humanity was given stewardship by God over creation, intended to be co-managers with God over it. Because of sin, however, humanity has failed to rightly steward, resulting in a broken relationship between us and the rest of creation.

Read Romans 8:20-22.

All of creation suffers under the curse of sin. The fall turned a perfect world into a fallen one. The new reality was that sin, death, disease, decay, loss, and so forth became a part of the world.

- ▶ *What hope do we have as part of a fallen world?*

3 Jesus restores our broken relationships.
(Col. 1:20-2:3)

- ▶ *What does it mean to be reconciled?*

To be reconciled is to be made right with someone.

Read Colossians 1:20-2:3.

- ▶ *Why were we alienated from God? (see v. 21) How did Jesus change that for us?*

Jesus came and died in our place so that we could be reconciled to (made right with) God.

- ▶ *What is the "mystery" Paul described in these verses?*

Jesus gives us the opportunity to know God; Jesus is God revealed in the flesh.

WRAP IT UP

The gospel not only promises that one day all things will be made new again, but also that a present restoration of these broken relationships begins to take place for those who are in Christ. It is only through the gospel that broken relationships can be restored, that enemies can become reconciled, and a renewed stewardship of our responsibilities as co-managers with God over creation can begin to take place.

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

Essential Doctrine: God's Glory

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

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

1 God's glory is visible in His character.

(Ex. 33:12-23)

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

2 God's glory is visible in His work.

(Ps. 19:1-6)

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

3 God's glory is for our good.

(Isa. 55:1-7)

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

Opening Activity

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

On the board or a large sheet of paper, list the following superheroes: Superman, Spiderman, The Hulk, Batman. Invite students to name the secret identities of each, then ask: Why did each of these superheroes choose to keep their identity hidden? Does God choose to keep His identity hidden? Explain.

In what ways has God purposefully revealed Himself and His glory to His people? to you personally?

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “For Your Glory and For Me” by NewSpring Worship
(*Salvation Rise*, NewSpring Music, 2014)
- ▶ “Show Me Your Glory” by Third Day
(*Come Together*, Essential Records, 2001)
- ▶ “Always” by Kristian Stanfill
(*Passion—Here for You*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow, 2011)
- ▶ “Our God Reigns” by Brandon Heath
(*Don't Get Comfortable*, Reunion Records, 2006)
- ▶ “Irresistable” by LifeChurch.tv Worship
(*Savior Forever*, Open.Church, 2015)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “Our God Reigns Worship Intro” *SkitGuys.com*

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

1 God's glory is visible in His character.

(Ex. 33:12-23)

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

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

Read Exodus 33:12-23.

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

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

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

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

- ▶ *How did God respond?*
- ▶ *Do you want to get to know God better, like Moses did? What are some ways you can do this?*

2 God's glory is visible in His work.

(Ps. 19:1-6)

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

Read Psalm 19:1-6.

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

Read Ephesians 1:18-23.

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

The power God demonstrated in raising Christ from the dead and placing him above all creation is the same power he is exercising toward us to bring about the blessings which he has promised us. (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

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

3 God's glory is for our good.

(Isa. 55:1-7)

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

Read Isaiah 55:1-7.

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

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

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

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

God promises mercy, forgiveness, blessings, and love.

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

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

WRAP IT UP

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

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

Essential Doctrine: God Is Transcendent

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

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

1 God's power is supremely above ours.

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

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

2 God's goodness is supremely above ours.

(Ps. 106:1-5)

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

3 God's thoughts and plans are supremely above ours.

(Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 8:28)

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

Opening Activity

Provide an envelope for each student. Inside each envelope, place a note card with the name of another student in the room and distribute the envelopes to students. Should a student accidentally receive their own name, guide them to switch with another student. Lead each student to write on the back of the note card what he or she would buy if they could get that person anything in the world. Instruct students to put the note card back in the envelope and give their "gift" to the person on their note card.

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

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

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "It Is Well" by Bethel Music
(*You Make Me Brave*, 2014)
- ▶ "Already There" by Casting Crowns
(*Come To the Well*, Provident, 2011)
- ▶ "No Other Name" by Hillsong Worship
(*No Other Name*, Hillsong Church, 2014)
- ▶ "Indescribable" by Chris Tomlin
(*Arriving*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2004)
- ▶ "How Can It Be" by Lauren Daigle
(*How Can It Be*, Centricity Music, 2015)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "More Coke" *SkitGuys.com*

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Essential Doctrine: God is transcendent

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Read Psalm 106:1-5.

- ▶ *For what did the psalmist praise God?*

The psalmist praised God for His incomparable goodness, loyal love, and power. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*)

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

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

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

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

Discuss some of the different ways people use Siri.

- ▶ *Is the information Siri has access to infinite? Explain.*

Read Isaiah 55:8-9.

Siri knows some things, but God knows all things.

- ▶ *If God is higher than us, why do you think people keep trying to figure Him out?*

We make God after our own image and conclude that He thinks and acts just as we do, and we are wrong. (*Bible Exposition Commentary*)

- ▶ *If God knows everything, then why doesn't He share that information with us?*

Read Romans 8:28.

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

WRAP IT UP

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

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

Essential Doctrine: Election

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:3-5

1 Election leads us to be God-focused. (Eph. 1:3)

Ephesians 1:3-6 is about getting something that's bigger. We get a bigger view of what God has done for us in Christ. We get a bigger view of how God sees us in Christ. And we get a bigger picture of the history and plan of God's eternal redemption. God was working out our salvation even before the foundation of the world was laid, and He's still at work today. For this we give Him glory. That's what this passage is about.

2 Election means God chose us. (Eph. 1:4-5)

In this verse we find what's called the doctrine of election—God elects, or God chooses, us in Christ. This doctrine can easily make some people nervous for a whole host of reasons, but it doesn't have to. In His electing purpose, God has chosen to regenerate (make alive or give new life), justify (declare innocent just as if you had never sinned), sanctify (make holy), and glorify (make perfect with Him for eternity) sinners—namely, you and me (Rom. 8:28-30). And He does this in a way that is consistent with the free decisions and choices of His creatures.

3 Election teaches that God has a plan. (Eph. 1:4-5)

When we really begin to understand predestination, our view of the world changes. No longer will we think, *I just happened to run across somebody who shared the gospel with me. I just happened to attend a church service where the gospel was proclaimed.* No, our being changed and saved by the power of the gospel was not an accident. God chose us, He elected us, and He predestined us. And His plan dates back to the beginning of time before the foundation of the world. We are not just lucky; we have been part of God's plan since before we were born, since before any of our ancestors were born. In love, He predestined us.

Opening Activity

Display several different types of tools, then ask: What is the intended purpose of each of these items? Continue to dig, asking how you know what the purpose of something really is and what would happen if that item did not fulfill its purpose. What happens (or could happen) when an item is used for something other than its intended/designed/created purpose? (i.e.: using a fork to pry open a paint can) What about you? What is your purpose?

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Meant to Live" by Switchfoot
(*The Best Yet*, Sony, 2008)
- ▶ "Everything Glorious" by David Crowder Band
(*Remedy*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2007)
- ▶ "Show Me Your Glory" by Third Day
(*Come Together*, Essential Records, 2001)
- ▶ "We Believe" by Newsboys
(*Restart*, Sparrow 2013)
- ▶ "He Knows My Name" by Francesca Battistelli
(*If We're Honest*, Word Entertainment, 2014)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "A Brief History of Mankind" BluefishTV.com

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Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

1 Election leads us to be God-focused. (Eph. 1:3)

- ▶ *What's your first reaction when you experience success?*
- ▶ *If you scored the winning touchdown at the end of a football game, would you be willing to share the spotlight with your teammates and coach? with God? Why or why not?*

Read Ephesians 1:3.

- ▶ *For what are we to praise God?*
God has given us "every spiritual blessing."
- ▶ *How does this compare to any gift or achievement we might experience on our own?*
Ephesians 1:3-6 is about getting something that's bigger. We get a bigger view of what God has done for us in Christ. We get a bigger view of how God sees us in Christ. And we get a bigger picture of the history and plan of God's eternal redemption. God was working out our salvation even before the foundation of the world was laid, and He's still at work today. For this we give Him glory. That's what this passage is about.
- ▶ *How often do you praise God for the blessings He has given you?*

2 Election means God chose us. (Eph. 1:4-5)

- ▶ *Read Ephesians 1:4-5.*
- ▶ *What does it mean to be adopted? Do the adopted children you know share the same rights and privileges as biological children? Explain.*
[God] made us his full-fledged children by formally adopting us into his spiritual family. In adoption, a child is brought into a family and given the same rights as a child born into that family. God did this through Jesus, and it pleased him. (Holman New Testament Commentary)
- ▶ *Does the fact that God chose you mean you had no choice in the matter?*

In His electing purpose, God has chosen to regenerate (make alive or give new life), justify (declare innocent just as if you had never sinned), sanctify (make holy), and glorify (make perfect with Him for eternity) sinners—namely, you and me (Rom. 8:28-30). And He does this in a way that is consistent with the free decisions and choices of His creatures.

3 Election teaches that God has a plan. (Eph. 1:4-5)

Invite students to call out definitions for the word "predestination." Write some of these on the board or a large sheet of paper.

- ▶ *What does predestination mean from a biblical view? Is it scary? Is it controversial? It shouldn't be.*

Read Ephesians 1:4-5

In love, God predestined us. So whatever predestination is, it is a function of God's love. Nothing scary or controversial about that.

- ▶ *Do you think it's a coincidence that someone took the time to share the gospel with you? Is it just by chance that you stumbled upon this class?*

When we really begin to understand just how big this is, our view of the world changes. Our being changed and saved by the power of the gospel was not an accident. God chose us, He elected us, and He predestined us. And His plan dates back to the beginning of time before the foundation of the world. We are not just lucky; we have been part of God's plan since before we were born, since before any of our ancestors were born. In love, He predestined us.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How does knowing that God has chosen you to be His child impact your relationship with Him?*
- ▶ *In what ways will you fulfill your purpose of praising God and glorifying Him this week?*

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

Essential Doctrine: Christ as Substitute

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

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

1 We need Christ as substitute to remove our guilt.

(Lev. 1:3-9; Heb. 9:12)

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

2 We need Christ as substitute to purify our hearts.

(Lev. 5:1-13; Heb 13:11-12)

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

3 We need Christ as substitute to cleanse our consciences.

(Lev. 5:14-19; Heb 9:13-14)

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

Opening Activity

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

When have you wished you could “undo” a sin? Is that even possible?

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

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “Jesus Paid It All” by Kristian Stanfill
(*Passion: Everything Glorious*, sixstepsrecords, 2006)
- ▶ “Glorious Day” by Casting Crowns
(*Until the Whole World Hears*, Reunion, 2009)
- ▶ “All Things New” by Steven Curtis Chapman
(*All Things New*, Sparrow, 2004)
- ▶ “Jesus Messiah” by Chris Tomlin
(*Hello Love*, sixstepsrecords, 2008)
- ▶ “Because He Lives (Amen)” by Matt Maher
(*Saints and Sinners*, Provident, 2015)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “He Was” BluefishTV.com

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

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

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

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

Read Leviticus 1:3-9.

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

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

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

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

Read Hebrews 9:12.

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

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

Read Leviticus 5:1-13.

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

- ▶ *What are some ways people try to cleanse their sin today? (church attendance, good works, etc.)*

- ▶ *Do any of these really work? Why or why not?*

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

Read Hebrews 13:11-12.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Read Leviticus 5:14-19.

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

Read Hebrews 9:13-14.

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

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

WRAP IT UP

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

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

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

Essential Doctrine: God Is Truthful

The Scriptures are clear that in God there is no falsehood (Heb. 6:18, Tit. 1:2). God represents things as they really are. Everything He says can be trusted because God guarantees the truth of everything He tells us. The call for humans to be honest and not to bear false witness is rooted in the utter truthfulness of our Creator. Telling the truth is one way we bear the image of God, whose Son is the Way, “the Truth,” and the Life (John 14:6).

Scripture: *John 10:27-29; Philippians 3:10-14; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18*

1 Because God is truthful, He is trustworthy.

(Heb. 6:18; Tit. 1:2)

God’s character is perfectly holy, and as a result, it would be impossible for God to lie or bear false witness. As John says, Jesus is “the Truth” (14:6), meaning He is the ultimate source of truth in creation. Because of these character qualities, God is trustworthy to the fullest extent.

2 Because God is trustworthy, we can fully rely upon Him. (John 10:27-29; Phil. 3:10-14)

Trusting in God means trusting in His promises throughout Scripture, such as the promise to never abandon us or to preserve us in salvation. In John 10, Jesus declared Himself to be the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep, assuring us that nothing can separate us from His love and protection. Not only do we know He can deliver on this promise—He is all-powerful and can protect His sheep from wolves—but His character would demand He speak the truth; and since He has spoken the truth, we can rest in Him alone.

Opening Activity

Stupid Human Tricks: Enlist a few volunteers to come to the front of the room and show off their “stupid human tricks,” such as rolling their tongue, showing off double-jointedness, and so forth. Next, instruct students to attempt something that is humanly impossible, such as being in two places at once, flying in the air, etc. (Note: Be sure the humanly impossible acts are safe. For instance, don’t encourage students to lift an extremely heavy object, jump off of something, etc.)

Point out that there may be certain things we have talent or skill in doing, but there are other things we will never be able to do.

Is there anything God cannot do?

Share with students that God cannot act outside of His character. That means He cannot lie, He cannot be tempted, and He cannot go back on His promises. God is completely worthy of our trust.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “Faithful” by Chris Tomlin
(*And If Our God Is For Us*, sixstepsrecords, 2010)
- ▶ “Amazed” by Kutless
(*It Is Well*, BEC Recordings, 2009)
- ▶ “More Than Enough” by Newsboys
(*God’s Not Dead*, InPop Records, 2011)
- ▶ “Indescribable” by Chris Tomlin
(*Arriving*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2004)
- ▶ “One Thing Remains” by Kristian Stanfill
(*Passion: White Flag*, sixstepsrecords, 2012)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “Trust the Almighty” *BluefishTV.com*

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1 Because God is truthful, He is trustworthy.

(Heb. 6:15-18; Tit. 1:2)

- ▶ *When have you lost the trust of a close friend or family member because of something you lied about?*

Read Hebrews 6:15-18.

Briefly provide the background for this passage and point out that Abraham waited patiently for God to act. God didn't fulfill His promise to Abraham right away, but Abraham continued to trust in God's faithfulness.

- ▶ *If you were in Abraham's shoes, do you think you would have started to doubt God's promise? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *What was the significance of God guaranteeing His promise with an oath?*

Whenever human beings offer oaths, they swear by someone greater than themselves. Since there is no one greater than God, He swore by Himself. He based His oath on His own great name, guaranteeing He would accomplish His purpose. *(Holman New Testament Commentary)*

Read Titus 1:2.

- ▶ *With what in your life is it hardest for you to trust God? How does knowing that God cannot lie help you trust Him more?*

God's character is perfectly holy, and as a result, it would be impossible for God to lie or bear false witness. As John says, Jesus is “the Truth” (14:6), meaning He is the ultimate source of truth in creation. Because of these character qualities, God is trustworthy to the fullest extent.

Option: Instruct students to divide into small groups. Inform them that they will be playing a game called “How well do you know your youth pastor?” Make a few different statements about the youth pastor and challenge students to decipher which ones are true and which ones are false. Illustrate how even simple things can be deceptive and are easily confused with fact. God, on the other hand, will never speak a lie because it is impossible for Him to do so.

2 Because God is trustworthy, we can fully rely upon Him. (John 10:27-29; Phil. 3:10-14)

- ▶ *Would you follow someone you didn't trust to a place you've never been? Why or why not?*

Read John 10:27-29 and Philippians 3:10-14.

- ▶ *What does it mean for Jesus to know His sheep?*
- ▶ *Based on these verses, why do we need to know Jesus?*

Jesus secures our eternal future.

- ▶ *How does the truth that Jesus knows you and secures your future help you rely on Him?*

There can be no greater security, no safer shelter, no more sure salvation, and no more clear signature than this relationship to the God of the Bible through his Son the Good Shepherd. *(Holman New Testament Commentary)*

Read Philippians 3:14.

- ▶ *What promises in Scripture has God made to you? Do you ever doubt those promises? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *How does knowing that God cannot lie give you confidence in His promises to you?*

Trusting in God means trusting in His promises throughout Scripture, such as the promise to never abandon us or to preserve us in salvation. In John 10, Jesus declared Himself to be the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep, assuring us that nothing can separate us from His love and protection. Not only do we know He can deliver on this promise—He is all-powerful and can protect His sheep from wolves—but His character would demand He speak the truth; and since He has spoken the truth, we can rest in Him alone.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *In what ways does it give you confidence to live boldly for Christ, knowing that He cannot lie, He knows you personally, and He is completely trustworthy?*

Close in a time of prayer and worship, inviting students to put their faith and trust in Christ.

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

Essential Doctrine: God's Plan and Human Action

God's sovereignty over all of life encompasses the free actions of human beings. Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many plans are in a man's heart, but the Lord's decree will prevail." In ways we are unable to fully comprehend, the Lord's plan goes forward in a way that extends to the choices of human beings as moral agents. Even freely chosen sinful actions are factored into God's overarching plan, as is the case with the crucifixion of Jesus—an event both purposed by God through foreknowledge yet carried out by the wicked decisions of human beings (Acts 2:23). Knowing that God is working all things for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28), we trust in His promise to fulfill His plan, even when we do not understand our present circumstances.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 46:9-11

1 God has a plan.

(Pr. 16:4)

Scripture is undeniable when it comes to the fact that God has a plan for the world He created. That ultimate plan of God includes everything from the rescuing of His people from their sins to the remaking of all things new when Christ returns. As Christians, we benefit from that plan since it was through the planning of the cross that we were able to be forgiven. Not only that, but the suffering and pain in our lives can also be used by God in the overall scope of His plan to bring good out of evil.

2 God's plan won't be stopped.

(Isa. 46:9-11)

Not only does Scripture teach that God is carrying out His overall plan, but it also affirms that God's plan will not be stopped. There is no force capable of stopping God fulfilling His plan of redemption—demonic or human. God's plan will be carried out no matter what, both for His glory and our good. And despite the amount of evil actions and intentions that clearly go against God and His will, God is still able to redirect and turn things for good, thus fulfilling His perfect plan.

Opening Activity

The *Merriam-Webster* definition for "visionary" is someone who has "clear ideas about what should happen or be done in the future." In other words, visionaries are people with plans. Invite students to call out some famous examples of visionaries as you write them on the board or a large sheet of paper. (i.e. Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart®; Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo®; Amelia Earhart, groundbreaking female aviator; and Walt Disney, artist, producer, creator of Disneyland.

What made these people great visionaries?

Who do you know that you would consider a visionary?

Are a visionary's plans ever 100% certain? Why or why not?

Do you think God has a plan that is 100% certain?

Share the following quote from Tim Keller: "God is so great that He works out a plan, a plan to work everything out for your good if you belong to Him, and His glory, which takes into consideration your choices, and still works His plan out infallibly."

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "I Am New" by Jason Gray
(*Everything Sad Is Coming Untrue*, Centricity, 2010)
- ▶ "Learning to Be the Light" by Newworldson
(*Rebel Transmission*, Platinum Pop, 2011)
- ▶ "Sovereign" by Chris Tomlin
(*Burning Lights*, sixstepsrecords, 2013)
- ▶ "Shoulders" by for KING & COUNTRY
(*RUN WILD. LIVE FREE. LOVE STRONG*, Word, 2014)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Louie Giglio: What Is God's Purpose for My Life?"
BluefishTV.com
- ▶ "Something Good" *WingClips.com*

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1 God has a plan. (Pr. 16:4)

- ▶ *What are some things in life that feel random or purposeless?* (pop quizzes, getting sick, etc.)
- ▶ *Do you believe God has a purpose even in these things? Why or why not?*

Read Proverbs 16:4.

God uses all things for His glory.

- ▶ *What does it mean that God has prepared "the wicked for the day of disaster"? How does this speak to the sovereignty of God?*
- ▶ *Do you believe God has a purpose in suffering? death? Why or why not?*

God isn't surprised by bad things that happen in our lives—He has a purpose in the disaster.

Option: Share the *I Am Second* video of Lauren Scruggs, a young woman who had to let go of her dreams after accidentally walking into a running airplane propeller. (Available from the Internet: www.iamsecond.com/seconds/lauren-scruggs) How did Lauren's trust in God's plan help her through her difficult circumstances?

- ▶ *Can we always expect to know what God's purpose is? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *When have you had to trust God's plan in a hard time? How was it difficult? How was it comforting?*
God's purpose may look extremely different than what we think it should.
- ▶ *How can trusting God's plan be a testimony to His work in your life?*

2 God's plan won't be stopped. (Isa. 46:9-11)

Share the following quote rumored to be from the builder of the Titanic: "God Himself could not sink this ship!"

- ▶ *What do you feel is "unsinkable" in life? Does anything override God's plan? Why or why not?*

Read Isaiah 46:9-11.

God is in complete control of the future.

- ▶ *Why did God call Israel to "remember what happened long ago"? How can remembering what God has done in the past give us confidence in His plans for the future?*

Invite students to add to the following list: "God's plan will take place no matter..."

- who wins the next election.
- what happens to the economy.
- who's fighting what war.
- whether or not you make the team.
- what school you get accepted to.
- ▶ *How can you be certain that God's plan won't be stopped?*
- ▶ *Is there anything you can do to change God's plan or get in the way of His will? Explain.*
God's plan is sovereign and constant.
- ▶ *How have you seen God's plan take place and His will be done in your life? How does this help you trust Him?*

WRAP IT UP

Discuss reactions to the following quote from Rick Warren: "You were made by God and for God, and until you understand that, life will never make sense."

- ▶ *Does your life show that you are trusting in God's plan or your own? Explain.*
- ▶ *In what areas of your life do you need to surrender your personal plans to God?*
- ▶ *How can you better trust God's plan in your life this week?*

Option: Distribute a picture of a blueprint to each student, explaining that a blueprint is a building plan for a house, school, church, etc. Guide students to write Proverbs 16:4 on their pictures to serve as a reminder that we are a part of God's perfect and unchanging plan.

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

Essential Doctrine: New Identity of the Believer

When a person places faith in Christ, that person undergoes a fundamental change of identity. He or she goes from being an enemy under God's wrath (Eph. 2:1-3) to being welcomed into God's family as a beloved child (Eph. 2:19). The believer in Christ is declared righteous on account of Christ's perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection. No longer is the person a slave to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. The person has been delivered from the realm of darkness and now belongs to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Anyone who is in Christ is a "new creation" in whom the old, sinful self has passed away and the new, redeemed self is alive and progressing, until the person becomes more and more like Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

Scripture: *John 14:16-18; Galatians 3:27-4:7*

1 In Christ we have a new identity.

(Gal. 3:27-29)

Who are you? Some might respond by highlighting their academic or athletic accomplishments and awards, while others would look to their social status for an answer. The Scriptures speak often to the question of identity, but the root of identity lies not in performance, looks, intellect, or personality. As important as those things may be, they are secondary to the one foundation for identity—the gospel of Jesus Christ and our relationship to the triune God. We either relate to God by humbly trusting Him as Savior or persisting in rebellion against Him as our Judge. Either way, it is our relationship to God that constitutes the most fundamental aspect of our identity.

2 In Christ we have a new inheritance.

(Gal. 4:1-5)

The Bible describes that through faith in Christ, people become sons and daughters because they are now united to the Son of God. As a result of this sonship, or adoption, Christians are now the recipients of an eternal inheritance because they are united to the true Heir and are a part of the King's family.

3 In Christ we have a new Spirit .

(John 14:16-18; Gal. 4:6-7)

Colossians talks about the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. Jesus alludes to the Spirit's presence in John 14:17, and this promise became a reality for His disciples at Pentecost. The indwelling presence of the Spirit is accomplished at the moment of salvation when we are born again. Indwelling refers to the Spirit's permanent presence in the lives of those who have been justified and adopted into the family of God. At the time of our conversion, we are sealed by the Spirit. He is our "down payment" for future salvation, the firstfruits of the blessing that will be ours when Jesus returns and restores all things.

Opening Activity

Before the session, enlist a student to put on an old T-shirt you've provided. Have on hand a drop cloth and some foods or other items that can stain the shirt (mustard, ketchup, permanent markers, paint, etc.). Direct the student to come to the front of the room and stand on the drop cloth. Invite students to call out things teens often find their identity in (sports, academics, failures, other people, etc.). As they call the words out, stain the T-shirt of the volunteer with the items you have on hand. Continue this until the shirt is covered in stains.

Point: Exchange the filthy shirt for a clean shirt and instruct the student to change. Emphasize that our identity doesn't come from anything we do, but from our relationship with Christ. When the student comes back in with the clean shirt on, throw the old shirt away.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Friend of God" by Philips, Craig, & Dean
(*Let the Worshipers Arise*, Fair Trade Services, 2004)
- ▶ "Who Am I?" by Casting Crowns
(*Casting Crowns*, Reunion Records, 2003)
- ▶ "Fix My Eyes" by For KING & COUNTRY
(*Run Wild. Live Free. Love Strong*, Word, 2014)
- ▶ "Be Glorified" by Chris Tomlin
(*The Noise We Make*, sixstepsrecords, 2001)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Chris Hill: Finding Your identity" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "I Am" *BluefishTV.com*

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1 In Christ we have a new identity.

(Gal. 3:27-29)

- ▶ *Have you ever wished you could start over in life? Explain.*

Invite students to share about an experience when they moved to a new school or town.

- ▶ *In what ways is becoming a Christian like starting over?*

Read Galatians 3:27-29.

- ▶ *What do believers "put on" according to this verse?*

In Roman society, when a youth became old enough to be considered an adult, he took off his children's clothes and put on an adult's toga. This switch indicated that he had adult citizenship and responsibilities. In the same way, the Galatians had laid aside the old clothes of the law and had put on Christ's new robes of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 4:23-24). (*Holman New Testament Commentary*)

- ▶ *What does it mean to be "one in Christ Jesus"? Does this mean we set aside all the things that distinguish us from other people, such as personality, intellect, talents, etc.? Explain.*

In Christ, our human distinctions become secondary. It is our relationship to God that constitutes the most fundamental aspect of our identity.

2 In Christ we have a new inheritance.

(Gal. 4:1-5)

- ▶ *What does it mean to be an heir? What are some things you hope to inherit someday?*

Read Galatians 4:1-5.

- ▶ *What do we inherit as children of God?*
- ▶ *How do we earn the right to be called children of God?*

In a sense, all people are God's children. We are all physically dependent on God (whether we acknowledge it or not) for life, but we do not all have a relationship with Him. In fact, all of us have turned away from God and rebelled against Him. Being family with God requires reconciliation with Him. (See Romans 5:6-11.)

- ▶ *How did Christ make this possible?*

Jesus died so we would no longer be slaves under the law, but heirs—children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ. As a result, Christians receive an eternal inheritance because they are united to the true Heir and are a part of the King's family.

3 In Christ we have a new Spirit .

(John 14:16-18; Gal. 4:6-7)

Read Galatians 4:6-7.

- ▶ *What is the significance of the word "Abba" in verse 6?*

Abba is the equivalent of our word "Daddy." Because of the Holy Spirit living within believers, we can have an intimate relationship with the Father.

Read John 14:16-18.

- ▶ *What do you learn about the Holy Spirit in these verses?*

The Holy Spirit is always there. If you have accepted Christ, He is there to guide you, comfort you, and help you.

- ▶ *How can knowing the Holy Spirit is always with you help when things in your life are a mess?*

When we have the Holy Spirit living in us, we will seek and follow His leading.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How can knowing that your true identity is in Christ impact the way you handle change in other areas of your life?*

- ▶ *How does knowing that God considers you His child give you confidence to live for Him?*

Close in prayer and worship. Invite students to place their hope and trust in Christ, the One who loves and values them so much that He sacrificed His own life so that they could spend eternity with Him.

Option: Distribute small pocket mirrors. Remind students that it is not what they think of themselves or what others think that really matters; what really matters is what God thinks of us—It's not what you see, it's what God sees.

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

Essential Doctrine: God Is Omniscient

Scripture teaches that God is all-knowing. He is the One who has “perfect knowledge” (Job 37:16), and this knowledge extends to all things past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. His knowledge is complete, and as He is outside of time, He has known from all eternity whatever will come to pass. In response to God’s omniscience, we recognize our finite knowledge and trust His decisions as wise and good.

Scripture: *Psalms 139:1-6; Proverbs 3:5*

1 God's knows all things. (Ps. 139:1-6)

The Bible is clear when it talks about the truth that God knows all things past, present, and future. This knowledge has not only to do with general truths—how many hairs are on your head, what will I look like when I’m older, and so forth—but intimate truths as well. David affirms this in Psalm 139, where he notes that God’s knowledge is intimate, personal, and relational. He knows our hearts, our motives, our thought life—He knows the deepest parts of who we are.

2 God's knows what is best for me. (Prov. 3:5)

It is a bit frightening to think about the reality that there isn’t one small part of yourself or your inner thought life that God hasn’t already known. He knows us completely, and that thought can sometimes scare us on account that we are often ashamed of our personal sin. However, even though God does know us completely, the Bible also affirms that He still loves us and desires us to be saved. When viewed in this light, God’s knowledge of all things can be both encouraging and reassuring. Nothing takes Him by surprise—not even your sin—which means you can rest confidently in His grace and love for you, relying not upon your own understanding, but upon His infinite wisdom.

Opening Activity

To begin the session, lead students through a few rounds of Trivial Pursuit®. The game board and “pie pieces” don’t need to be used; simply draw cards from the boxes (or Google “Trivial Pursuit questions”) and see who can answer the most questions correctly. If you have a large group, divide students into teams and offer a small reward to the winner(s).

What would it take for someone to be able to answer every question correctly?

Who’s the smartest person you know? Do you think they would have been able to answer all of these questions?

If time allows, search the Internet for a list of the smartest people in the world and discuss a few of these with students.

Do you think the smartest people in the world know everything there is to know about everything? Explain.

Share the *Merriam-Webster* definition of omniscient: having infinite awareness, understanding, and insight; knowing all things; infinitely wise

State that Only God knows everything.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “I Love the Lord” by Tommy Walker
(*Living in the Wonder*, LifeWay Worship, 2014)
- ▶ “Always” by Kristian Stanfill
(*Mountains Move*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2011)
- ▶ “How Can It Be” by Lauren Daigle
(*How Can It Be*, Centricity, 2015)
- ▶ “He Knows” by Jeremy Camp
(*I Will Follow*, Sparrow, 2015)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “I’m God” *WingClips.com*

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1 God’s knows all things.

(Ps. 139:1-6)

Invite students to call out the people in their life who know the most about them. This could be a parent, best friend, grandparent, brother/sister, etc.

- ▶ *How does their knowledge of you impact your relationship with them? Does it cause you to trust them more? Why or why not?*

Read Psalm 139:1-6.

- ▶ *What did God know about the psalmist?*

Nothing in David’s life was hidden from God. His knowledge of David was intimate, personal, and relational.

- ▶ *What was David’s response to God’s knowledge of him?*

God’s omniscience is both convicting and comforting. For David, it was humbling, beyond his human capacity to grasp. *(Holman Old Testament Commentary)*

- ▶ *Does it bring you comfort to know that God knows you just as intimately as He knew David? Why or why not?*

Emphasize that God knows our hearts, our motives, our thought life—He knows the deepest parts of who we are.

- ▶ *What are three things that only you and God know about you? How does this affect your trust in Him?*

2 God’s knows what is best for me.

(Prov. 3:5)

- ▶ *What does it mean to do something with “all your heart”?*

Invite students to share some examples of what it looks like to put all their heart into something.

Read Proverbs 3:5a.

- ▶ *What is the first part of this verse asking of you?*
- ▶ *In which areas of your life is it most challenging for you to trust God?* (relationships, grades, sports, etc.)

God is worthy of our complete trust. Trusting in any other person, thing, or ability will result in failure.

- ▶ *If God is completely trustworthy, why do we still struggle to trust Him at times?*

Read Proverbs 3:5b.

- ▶ *Do you always know what’s best for you? When have you relied on your own wisdom and it failed you?*

Human understanding will ultimately fail us. We must turn to God to truly find wisdom.

- ▶ *How can you learn to lean on God’s wisdom?*

Share with students that nothing takes God by surprise—not even your sin—which means you can rest confidently in His grace and love for you, relying not upon your own understanding, but upon His infinite wisdom.

- ▶ *What can you do to make it easier for you to trust God?*

Emphasize that the better we know someone, the more we trust them.

WRAP IT UP

The thought that God knows us completely can sometimes scare us on account that we are often ashamed of our personal sin. However, the Bible affirms that God still loves us and desires us to be saved. When viewed in this light, God’s knowledge of all things can be both encouraging and reassuring.

- ▶ *How can knowing that God is your Creator and knows everything about you help you during difficult times?*
- ▶ *Do you ever wish you could know God as well as He knows you? How can you begin to know Him better?*

Discuss the fact that God has given us all the information we need in His Word, even though it’s not all the information He has.

Close in prayer and worship, inviting students to trust in God, who already knows everything about them and always wants what is best for them.

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

Essential Doctrine: God Is Faithful

God's faithfulness means He keeps His word and always fulfills His promises (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:19). God's faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The apostle Paul linked the attribute of "faithful" to God coming through on His word: "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). We reflect God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

Scripture: *Psalms 89:8; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 4:4-5*

1 God's faithfulness is a testimony to His character. (Ps. 89:8; 2 Tim. 2:13)

God's faithfulness is rooted in God's character. Unlike people who can be unfaithful and untrustworthy, God's faithfulness never wavers like our own. If He commits Himself to doing something—like rescuing people from their sins—one can rest assured that He will be faithful to carry out His plan.

2 God's faithfulness works for our good and joy. (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:4-5)

God's faithfulness is good news for us. Because God is faithful, it means, among other things, that He will always fulfill His end of the covenant, as seen in the case with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And by staying faithful to His covenant, God brings forth life by recreating sinners and making them into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Not only that, but it also means that we can rest confidently that God will do what He has promised—He is faithful to keep His word.

Opening Activity

Prior to the session, search the hashtag "always" on Twitter. Share some tweets of things people find always true. Choose some that are funny and some that are serious. For example, "A burp in class will always get a solid laugh #always." Divide students into small teams of 3-5 and direct teams to write their own tweet with the hashtag "always" to express something they believe can always be counted on. Read these and let students choose a winning tweet by applause.

Truth be told, there are few things we can count on 100 percent. Benjamin Franklin said, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." François de La Rochefoucauld said, "The only thing constant in life is change." If we're defining the certainties and constants in life by what we see and experience in the world, then our understanding of who God is will come up short every time. People will let you down. God is not "people."

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Not for a Moment (After All)" by Vertical Church Band (*Live Worship from Vertical Church*, Essential, 2012)
- ▶ "Never Once" by Matt Redman (*10,000 Reasons*, Sparrow/sixstepsrecords, 2011)
- ▶ "He Said" by Group 1 Crew (feat. Chris August) (*Fearless*, Word Entertainment, 2012)
- ▶ "Love So High" by Hillsong (*Cornerstone*, Hillsong, 2012)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Amena Brown: He Is Here" *BluefishTV.com*

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

Essential Doctrine: God Is Faithful

God's faithfulness means He keeps His word and always fulfills His promises (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:19). God's faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The apostle Paul linked the attribute of "faithful" to God coming through on His word: "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). We reflect God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

1 God's faithfulness is a testimony to His character.

(Ps. 89:8; 2 Tim. 2:13)

- ▶ *What does it mean to "be yourself?"*
- ▶ *Have you ever been in a situation where you were tempted to compromise who you really are? Explain.*

Read 2 Timothy 2:13.

- ▶ *What can God not do according to this verse?*

Even when we fail to be faithful to God, He remains faithful to us. Faithfulness is part of God's character. He is always true to Himself and will never deny His nature.

Read Psalm 89:8.

- ▶ *What does "your faithfulness surrounds you" mean?*
Faithfulness is such a key part of God's character that the psalmist painted a picture here of God being completely surrounded by it.
- ▶ *Knowing that faithfulness is part of God's character, why do we still sometimes struggle with trusting God to be faithful to meet our needs?*

Unlike people who can be unfaithful and untrustworthy, God's faithfulness never wavers like our own. If He commits Himself to doing something—like rescuing people from their sins—one can rest assured that He will be faithful to carry out His plan.

2 God's faithfulness works for our good and joy.

(1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:4-5)

Read 1 Corinthians 1:9 and Galatians 4:4-5.

- ▶ *How was Jesus' death a demonstration of God's faithfulness?*
Jesus died so that we could be called children of God.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:18.

- ▶ *How does God's faithfulness work for our good and joy?*
When we trust Christ to save us, Jesus removes that heavy burden of trying to please him. His light dispels our ignorance, giving us a clear understanding of the gospel. By trusting Christ, we are loved, accepted, forgiven, and freed to

live for him. (*Life Application New Testament Commentary*)

- ▶ *What are some ways you've experienced God's faithfulness in your life?* (comfort when we're discouraged, reassurance when we doubt, strength when we're tempted, etc.)
- ▶ *In what ways does God's faithfulness impact your willingness and ability to live for Him?*

Because God is faithful, it means, among other things, that He will always fulfill His end of the covenant, as seen in the case with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And by staying faithful to His covenant, God brings forth life by recreating sinners and making them into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Not only that, but it also means that we can rest confidently that God will do what He has promised—He is faithful to keep His word.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How does God's faithfulness to you in the past help you to trust Him with your future?*
- ▶ *Is God more faithful to you than you are to Him? Explain.*

Option: Distribute paper and pencils and lead students to list everything they do in a typical week. What does this list reveal about what you are faithful to? How can you be more faithful to God this week? Remind students that God is our example of faithfulness. If we are created in His image, then we are created to be faithful like Him.

- ▶ *What are some ways you can reflect God's faithfulness to others this week.*