

*This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of Jesus' humanity.
Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

Essential Doctrine: Jesus' Humanity

In addition to being fully divine, the Bible also affirms that Jesus is fully human. Not only does the Old Testament affirm that the Promised One (Messiah) would be a man (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Mic. 5:3), but the New Testament also affirms that Jesus' earthly life bore all the marks of being a human. He experienced the circumstances common to living as a human being, such as hunger (Matt. 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), weariness (Matt. 8:24), sorrow (John 11:35), and pain (the crucifixion).

Scripture: *John 19:34; Romans 5:15,19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:1-3; Hebrews 2:9; 4:15*

1 Jesus' humanity enables Him to be the last Adam and thus fulfill God's plan for mankind (Rom. 5:15,19).

God originally told Adam to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth with image of God's glory (Gen. 1:28). Adam obviously failed. However, God did not abandon His plan. God still planned for humanity to rule the earth and cultivate it for His glory. That plan was (and will be) fulfilled in the Last Adam—Jesus. Because Jesus is as fully human as Adam, He can be the last Adam.

2 Jesus' humanity enables Him to be our sympathetic high priest (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15).

Jesus' humanity means that He experienced the pains human beings feel. Tiredness, illness, toothaches, headaches, and so on. He also experienced temptations like we do (Heb. 4:15). These experiences allow Him to sympathize with us: literally, to "suffer with" us. He knows what it is like to be tempted to lose your temper, spread gossip, or succumb to anxiety, but He never sinned. Such first-hand knowledge of our temptations gives Jesus the unique ability to comfort and encourage us during our temptations and failures.

3 Jesus' humanity enabled Him to die for us and be our atonement (John 19:34; Heb. 2:9).

The greatest reason Jesus became human was so He could die. Human beings die, and in order for Jesus to take our place as a substitutionary sacrifice, He had to die. Being fully human (and fully God), Jesus experienced the human pain and suffering of death on our behalf so that we who believe in Him might not die spiritually. Jesus' humanity is most evident in His amazing death.

Opening Activity

Place students into small groups of 2-3 people each. Ask them to imagine that ET (or some other alien) has landed on Earth. The aliens are interviewing groups of people and asking them, "What does it mean to be human?" These interviews will be recorded and sent back to the aliens' home planet for research purposes. Have students take some time and formulate the answers they would give the aliens.

Let them present their answers. Give others a chance to respond to what they said—they can suggest additions or changes. Point out how their answers capture the essence of humanity, and then point out that many, if not all, of these same answers applied to Jesus. He was (and is) a full human being in every sense of the term.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Jesus in Disguise" by Brandon Heath (*Blue Mountain*, Provident, 2012)
- ▶ "Endless Light (Live)" by Hillsong Live (*Cornerstone [Live]*, Hillsong Music, 2012)
- ▶ "Jesus, Son of God" by Chris Tomlin (*Burning Lights*, Sparrow, 2013)
- ▶ "Your Great Name" by Natalie Grant (*Love Revolution*, Curb Records, 2010)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Fully Human, Fully God" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Chip Ingram: Who is Jesus?" *BluefishTV.com*

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1 Jesus' humanity enables him to be the last Adam and thus fulfill God's plan for mankind (Rom. 5:15, 19).

Read Ephesians 2:1-3.

- ▶ When God first created Adam, what was His plan for humanity? Did Adam fulfill that plan?
- ▶ When Adam fell, how did God's plan change? Did God's long-term goal change?
- ▶ Why do you think Jesus is sometimes called the last Adam?

Read Romans 5:15,19.

- ▶ According to Romans 5:15 and 19, what came about as the result of Adam's sin?
- ▶ In the same verses, what parallel did Paul draw between the consequences of Adam's sin and the consequences of Jesus' obedience?
- ▶ In verse 15, how did Paul describe Jesus? What did Paul call Him? Why do you think Paul called Him "the one man, Jesus Christ"?
- ▶ What will be the long-term, ultimate result of Jesus' obedience?
- ▶ If Adam had remained perfect in His obedience, what would have happened to the earth? Because of Jesus' perfect obedience, what will happen to the earth? How are these two answers parallel? How is Jesus the last Adam?
- ▶ So why was it necessary for Jesus to be fully human, just like Adam was fully human?

2 Jesus' humanity enables Him to be our sympathetic high priest (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15).

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

- ▶ When you are in pain, suffering, or having a bad day, what are some things you would like and appreciate?
- ▶ Have you ever heard someone tell another person, "I don't really want you to solve my problem. I just want you to empathize with me." If yes, what does that speaker mean?
- ▶ How do people view others differently when they have "walked a mile in their shoes?"

Read Hebrews 4:15.

- ▶ What are some of the temptations that Jesus would have experienced?
- ▶ Think of some temptations and suffering you experience. How did Jesus experience the same temptations and sufferings? How can Jesus sympathize with you in such weakness?
- ▶ How does Jesus' humanity comfort those who might say that they just want someone to empathize with them?

3 Jesus' humanity enabled Him to die for us and be our atonement (John 19:34; Heb. 2:9).

- ▶ Is there anything that a human being can do that God cannot? Can God sin? Can God get tired? Can God get a stomach-ache? Can God die?

Read John 20:34.

- ▶ Why do you think John emphasized that water and blood came from Jesus' wound?
- ▶ Why was it necessary for Jesus to become a human being in order to save us? What did He have to do in His humanity that He could not do in His divinity? (Answer: die).

Read Hebrews 2:9.

- ▶ According to the verse, for whom did Jesus taste death?
- ▶ So in what sense is Jesus the ultimate sympathizer? What ultimate pain does He not only share with us, but bear for us?

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ How can Jesus' humanity make us feel His closeness all the more this week? How does the fact that He experienced everything there is about being human make Him more comforting and more precious?

*This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching on angels.
Use the following outline, activity, and playlist to lead a midweek event for your students.*

Essential Doctrine: Angels

Besides the creation of humanity and animals, the Bible also speaks of other beings that God created—angels, who are also referred to in Scripture as “sons of God,” “holy ones,” “spirits,” “principalities,” and “powers.” In the original languages of the Bible, the word “angel” carries the meaning of a messenger, which indicates one of their primary reasons for existence. Angels carry out a number of other functions throughout Scripture: bringing God glory, carrying out God’s plans and purpose, and reminding humanity that the unseen world is real.

Scripture: *Psalm 103:20; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Hebrews 1:14; 2:6-7; 1 Peter 1:12*

1 Angels are currently above us but will later be below us (1 Cor. 6:3; Heb. 2:6-7).

The Bible doesn’t tell us much about angels. We know they are sentient, spiritual beings, but the Bible doesn’t tell us when God made them (they seem to have preceded physical creation according to Job 38:7) or what they look like (some appear to have wings as in Isa. 6:2 and Rev. 4, while others do not). They often appear as men in white, too (Luke 24:4). One thing we do know is they are currently above us in power, but we will one day rule over even them (Heb. 2:6-7; 1 Cor. 6:3). We often think of angels as mighty, glorious beings who are over us, but because of Jesus, we will one day be over even them!

2 Angels exist to serve God and us (Ps. 103:20; Heb. 1:14).

Angels seem to be about God’s business (this is in reference to good angels here, not to demons). Psalm 103:20 captures their job description: They perform God’s word. Whether they worship Him before His throne (Isa. 6:2-3) or carry His messages to others (Luke 1:26; 2:9), they are His servants. But they don’t only serve God; amazingly, they also minister to us (Heb. 1:14). We don’t know exactly what this ministering looks like, but it could be anything from physical or spiritual protection to administering a spirit of comfort to us (Luke 22:43).

3 We are the particular recipients of grace in a way angels are not (1 Pet. 1:12).

We can think that angels have things better off than us because of their current higher position. Yet, we are blessed in a way they are not. Angels were not made in God’s image; human beings were. Jesus did not become incarnate as an angel, but as a man. We are particular recipients of grace such that angels marvel and long to understand the tremendous blessing shown to us (1 Pet. 1:12).

Opening Activity

Option 1: Place students into a few small groups. Ask them to put together a short skit entitled, “A Day in the Life of an Angel.” Give them some time to prepare the skits, then ask each group to perform their skit. Debrief by asking the following: Which ideas were biblical? Which ideas were based on popular perception but weren’t necessarily biblical? You might wish to re-do the skits after the lesson and see how they have changed.

Option 2: Tell your students you’re going to play a drawing game. Ask for three volunteer drawers. Have the first one draw a man in white (Luke 24:4). Have the second one draw the description of the seraphim from Isaiah 6:2. Have the third one draw the description of the creatures in Ezekiel 1:5-11. Then ask the rest of the group to guess what these students have drawn. The answer to each drawing, of course, is angel. Talk about how the three pictures are so different, and point out how the Bible’s description of angels may be different from the pop-culture understanding of a man with white wings.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “Whom Shall I Fear [God of Angel Armies]” by Chris Tomlin (*Burning Lights*, Sparrow, 2013)
- ▶ “Angels” by Hillsong Live (*Hope [Live]*, Hillsong Music, 2010)
- ▶ “Entertaining Angels” by Newsboys (*Newsboys: Greatest Hits*, Sparrow, 2007)
- ▶ “Angels We Have Heard On High” by Mandisa (*It’s Christmas [Christmas Angel Edition]*, Sparrow, 2012)

This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching on angels. 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: Angels

Besides the creation of humanity and animals, the Bible also speaks of other beings that God created—angels, who are also referred to in Scripture as “sons of God,” “holy ones,” “spirits,” “principalities,” and “powers.” In the original languages of the Bible, the word “angel” carries the meaning of a messenger, which indicates one of their primary reasons for existence. Angels carry out a number of other functions throughout Scripture: bringing God glory, carrying out God’s plans and purpose, and reminding humanity that the unseen world is real.

1 Angels are currently above us but will later be below us (1 Cor. 6:3; Heb. 2:6-7).

- ▶ Why do we tend to think angels are more powerful than human beings?
- ▶ What are some things you know are true about angels? How do you know they are true?
- ▶ When do you think were angels created? Do we really know?
- ▶ What do you think angels look like? Do we really know?

Read Hebrews 2:6-7.

- ▶ According to the text, who is the higher being right now, angels or human beings?
- ▶ According to the text, will this arrangement always be the case?
- ▶ When do you think this arrangement will change?
- ▶ In what sense do you think we will be higher than angels?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:3.

- ▶ Why do you think God bestows this remarkable privilege on us?
- ▶ What is the proper reaction to this privilege of being higher than angels? Pride? Boasting? Responsible stewardship?

2 Angels exist to serve God and us (Ps. 103:20; Heb. 1:14).

- ▶ Imagine you were supposed to be a substitute angel for a day. What kind of jobs do you think you would be doing?

Read Psalm 103:20.

- ▶ According to this text, what do angels do?
- ▶ What are some appearances of angels in the Bible? List as many as you can.
- ▶ What jobs did the angels do in each of these appearances?
- ▶ It’s safe to say that angels serve God. What do you think their role is toward Christians?

Read Hebrews 1:14.

- ▶ According to this text, whom do angels also serve?
 - ▶ How might these angels minister to Christians?
- Remember the Bible isn’t perfectly clear here, so we shouldn’t be rigid.

- ▶ What response ought we have, knowing angels serve us?
- ▶ How should this hope embolden us to risk and to sacrifice for Jesus?
- ▶ How should the idea that angels serve us make us treasure Jesus even more?

3 We are the particular recipients of grace in a way angels are not (1 Pet. 1:12).

- ▶ If you could choose, would you rather be an angel or a human being? Why?
- ▶ Between angels and man, who do you think has a better experience of God’s love?

Read 1 Peter 1:12.

- ▶ According to the text, who has been given a more particular revelation of the gospel?
- ▶ Why do you think the angels desire to look into the things that we have heard and experienced?
- ▶ Why do you think human beings receive this particular blessing when angels do not?
- ▶ Between angels and men, which was created in God’s image?
- ▶ Did Jesus become incarnate as a man or as an angel?
- ▶ As Christian human beings, we have experienced a grace that angels can only wonder at. How should this particular grace affect us?

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ How can we guard ourselves against getting too caught up in angel-fixation? How should the little information the Bible gives about angels compel us to a greater love of Jesus and love of people?

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Essential Doctrine: Virgin Birth

The Bible affirms that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38). The virgin birth affirms the historicity of the incarnation, where the eternal Son of God took on human flesh. The virgin birth is significant in that it serves as a reminder of Old Testament prophecies (Isa. 7) while also affirming both the deity and humanity of Christ.

Scripture: *Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:1-16; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:30-35; Galatians 4:4-5*

1 The virgin birth indicates Jesus' divinity and humanity (Luke 1:30-35).

The Incarnation is a mind-blowing, wonderful mystery: Jesus is 100 percent God and 100 percent man. The virgin birth shows this mystery from the very beginning of the incarnation. Gabriel's initial words to Mary emphasize Jesus' humanity as the descendant of David (and the biological offspring of Mary). After Mary asked her very good question, Gabriel's explanation clarified that Jesus is also divine, the very Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit.

2 The virgin birth indicates Jesus as the promised seed of woman (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4-5).

Way back at the fall, God promised Eve that one of her seed would crush the head of the serpent. The Old Testament saints had been looking for this promised "seed of the woman" ever since. Jesus' virgin birth, with no earthly father, indicates He is the promised "seed of woman." Galatians 4:4-5 further clarifies that His birth from a woman (not a man and a woman, but just a woman) enables Him to bear the curse for all the children of God, crushing the serpent's head by removing Satan's ability to accuse Christians of guilt.

3 The virgin birth indicates Jesus as the promised Messiah who was greater than anyone had previously understood (Isa. 7:1-16; Matt. 1:23).

If you read Isaiah 7:14 in its context, the immediate fulfillment was the promise to King Ahaz that the two enemy kings would not overcome him. In the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament), Isaiah 7:14 uses a word meaning "virgin." Matthew pointed out that Isaiah's promise is bigger than we thought: This virgin birth doesn't just indicate the end of Israel's enemies. Isaiah's promise spoke of Immanuel, God Himself dwelling with us.

Opening Activity

Tell the students to imagine that they are tabloid reporters for Israel during Jesus' lifetime. They have been assigned to research and follow around this Jesus guy, who seems to be raising eyebrows all over Palestine. Their job is to try to find headlines and stories about Jesus that can be printed for your supermarket tabloid.

Give them a few minutes to consider Jesus' life, flip through their Bibles, and jot down some potential headlines.

Once everybody has some ideas, imagine your group is in a conference room presenting their ideas for headlines to you, the chief editor. Let them share, and then talk about what the group thinks would make the best scandals to report.

Once you're done, ask if the virgin birth came up. If so, why did some choose to include it? What makes this event news worthy? And why do they think it was important for the gospels to mention it?

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "We Believe" by Newsboys
(*Restart*, Sparrow, 2013)
- ▶ "This I Believe" by Hillsong Worship
(*No Other Name [Live]*, Hillsong Music, 2014)
- ▶ "Be Born in Me" by Francesca Battistelli
(*Music Inspired by the Story*, EMI, 2011)
- ▶ "Mary and Joseph" by Dave Barnes
(*Very Merry Christmas*, Razor & Tie, 2010)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "First Christmas: Mary" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Advent Story 1" *Skitguys.com*

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1 The virgin birth indicates Jesus' divinity and humanity (Luke 1:30-35).

- ▶ What are some of your favorite movie opening sequences? What makes them so great?

Read Luke 1:30-35.

- ▶ If this scene were the opening sequence to Jesus' life movie, do you think it would be received well or not? Explain.
- ▶ Does Gabriel's announcement to Mary cause you, as a reader, to feel more of a sense of fear, or of excited anticipation? Or something else? Explain.
- ▶ How do verses 30-33 emphasize the humanity of Jesus?
- ▶ After Mary's question in verse 34, how does verse 35 emphasize Jesus' divinity?
- ▶ How does the virgin birth already capture the beautiful tension of the incarnation: namely, that Jesus is fully man but also fully God?
- ▶ How does this "opening sequence" create excitement for the "movie" to come?

2 The virgin birth indicates Jesus as the promised seed of woman (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4-5).

- ▶ Think back to the fall. How did God curse the serpent?

Read Genesis 3:15.

- ▶ There's a lot in this one verse. What were some of the other curses put upon the serpent in this passage?
- ▶ According to this verse, what would the seed (offspring) of the woman do to the serpent? What would the serpent do to the offspring of the woman?
- ▶ When did the serpent's head finally get crushed? Who crushed it? In what sense did the serpent bruise this man's heel?
- ▶ Any thoughts on how the virgin birth fulfilled Genesis 3:15?

Read Galatians 4:4-5.

- ▶ How would this text be different if Paul had said that Jesus was born "of a man and a woman" instead of "born of a woman"? Why do you think Paul only said that Jesus was "born of a woman"?
- ▶ How does this promised "seed of woman" who was also the one "born of a woman" redeem His brothers and sisters?
- ▶ So how does the virgin birth affirm that Jesus is the promised seed of woman, the one who carries out the glorious promises of Galatians 4:4-5?
- ▶ You may be familiar with the Apostles' Creed. One line of the creed affirms Jesus' virgin birth. Based on what we just learned, why do you think the early church considered the virgin birth important enough to include it in the creed?

3 The virgin birth indicates Jesus as the promised Messiah who was greater than anyone had previously understood (Isa. 7:1-16; Matt. 1:23).

Read Isaiah 7:1-16.

- ▶ What problem did King Ahaz face?
- ▶ In the immediate context, what hope did Isaiah 7:14 provide? It gave a timetable by which the two enemy kings would be gone.

Read Matthew 1:23.

- ▶ According to Matthew 1:23, how does Jesus fulfill Isaiah 7:14?
- ▶ How does Jesus turn out to be an even bigger and better Messiah than expected?
- ▶ How is the virgin birth a great model for how God gives us things we never expected but that show His glory so wondrously? Any other examples from history or your life of God surprising you with mysterious and glorious things?

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ The virgin birth reflects many of the Bible's wonders: it is glorious, mysterious, and beautiful. How does Jesus' birth encourage you?

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Essential Doctrine: Sinlessness of Jesus

While the Bible affirms the full humanity of Jesus, it also affirms that Jesus was completely sinless throughout His earthly life (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22). Nevertheless, because Jesus was fully human, He experienced real temptation of sin, as seen during His trials in the wilderness (Matt. 4). Yet even though His trials and temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity's, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.

Scripture: Exodus 12:5; Luke 4:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 1 Peter 1:18-19

1 The Bible affirms Jesus' sinlessness, a prerequisite for His being our sacrifice (Ex. 12:5; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The Passover sacrifice was to be a spotless, perfect lamb (Ex. 12:5). Peter affirms that Jesus was the fulfillment of this spotless lamb (1 Pet. 1:18-19). If a lamb had a blemish or an imperfection, it would not be acceptable as a Passover sacrifice, and the Israelite family that used it for the Passover would be in mortal danger. If Jesus had not been sinless, we would have perished in our sin for lack of a fitting substitute. But because Jesus was sinless (Heb. 4:15), we have a perfect sacrifice.

2 The Bible also affirms the reality of Jesus' temptations throughout His life (Heb. 4:15; Luke 4:13).

Theologians sometimes debate about whether it was really possible for Jesus to sin. Isn't the idea of God sinning a bit like a circle with corners: self-contradictory? Wherever you land on the issue of Jesus being able to sin, the Bible is clear that His temptations were real. Hebrews 4:15 affirms that He was tempted in every way like we are. Luke 4:13 affirms that when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus resisted every temptation. Luke also told us that Satan would return to tempt Jesus at an opportune time. Jesus spent His life surrounded by temptation, just as we are.

3 Because Jesus was truly tempted, He can empathize with us; because He was truly righteous, He can impute His righteousness to us (Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Because Jesus was tempted in every way as we are (Heb. 4:15), He can empathize with us even more closely than any other human being. But His righteous, sinless life also is *imputed*, or *credited*, to us when we trust in Him (Heb. 7:26, 2 Cor. 5:21). His being tempted lets Him connect with us; His being sinless lets Him count us as righteous.

Opening Activity

Place students into two groups. Instruct each group to try to pitch a movie to a producer. The first group features a movie whose hero eventually triumphs, but gets battered along the way. Perhaps this hero stumbles and errs, but eventually overcomes. The second group features a movie whose hero is successful at whatever he or she does; this hero is smooth, suave, and classy. If it's an action movie, the first group might propose a hero like Jackie Chan or Indiana Jones. The second group might propose a James Bond-style hero. The hero/heroine for the first group might be blustering and awkward; the hero/heroine for the second group might be a Zac Efron-style smooth guy or girl.

Give them a few minutes to prepare their arguments, then let each team try to pitch to you why their hero would be better received by the audience.

Afterward, debrief. What is attractive about a hero who stumbles? We can connect with them. What about a hero who is nearly perfect? We admire them. We can connect with Jesus in His temptation, but we admire Him in His sinlessness.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Jesus Messiah" by Chris Tomlin
(*Passion: Awakening [Deluxe Edition]*, Sparrow, 2010)
- ▶ "Sinless Savior" by Aaron Keyes
(*Dwell*, Integrity, 2011)
- ▶ "Jesus Paid it All" by Kristian Stanfill
(*Hello*, Kristian Stanfill, 2007)
- ▶ "Revelation Song" by Kari Jobe
(*Kari Jobe*, Integrity, 2010)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "The Birdcage" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Because He Lives" *Skitguys.com*

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1 The Bible affirms Jesus' sinlessness, a prerequisite for His being our sacrifice (Ex. 12:5; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

- ▶ *When have you really wanted something to be perfect? Why did you want it to be perfect?*
- ▶ *When does the Bible call for something to be perfect?*

Read Exodus 12:5.

- ▶ *What was the Passover Lamb for?*
If your students don't know the Passover story, please fill them in.
- ▶ *What were the requirements for the Passover Lamb? Why do you think the Lord ordained these requirements?*

Read 1 Peter 1:18-19.

- ▶ *What connection did Peter make between Jesus and the Passover Lamb? What particular characteristics of the lamb did Peter emphasize?*
- ▶ *Why, then, is Jesus' sinlessness so precious? What would happen to our salvation if Jesus were not sinless?*

Read Hebrews 4:15.

- ▶ *What does Hebrews 4:15 guarantee us about Jesus' state of sin? How should our hearts respond to this assurance?*

2 The Bible also affirms the reality of Jesus' temptations throughout His life (Luke 4:13; Heb. 4:15).

Read Hebrews 4:15.

- ▶ *We've seen that Hebrews 4:15 teaches us about Jesus' sinlessness. What other truths can we pull from this verse?*
- ▶ *Do you think it was possible for Jesus to sin? Were Jesus' temptations real?*
- ▶ *What are some of the temptations we (or others) face?*
- ▶ *According to Hebrews 4:15, did Jesus face the same temptations we did? How many of them?*

- ▶ *Jesus wasn't tempted in exactly the same way we are (for instance, Jesus would not have been tempted to text in class since He didn't have access to a smartphone). In what sense, then, was Jesus tempted in the same way we are?*
- ▶ *Consider some of the temptations we listed earlier that we face regularly. In what way did Jesus face these same temptations?*
- ▶ *How does that fact that Jesus identifies with your temptations but never succumbed to sin help you in your war against sin?*

3 Because Jesus was truly tempted, He can empathize with us; because He was truly righteous, He can impute His righteousness to us (Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Read Hebrews 4:15 (again).

- ▶ *What comfort should we get from Hebrews 4:15?*

Read Hebrews 7:26 and 2 Corinthians 5:21.

- ▶ *What is the flip side of Jesus being tempted? How did he respond to every temptation?*
- ▶ *Jesus was sinless. What happens to Jesus' righteousness, according to 2 Corinthians 5:21?*
- ▶ *Theologians often marvel at Jesus' " manifold excellencies," to quote Jonathan Edwards; that is, seemingly opposite glories that are both a part of who Jesus is. How is the dual truth of Jesus' temptation and Jesus' sinlessness one of those manifold excellencies? How should these contrasting but complementary glories compel our hearts to revere and treasure Him?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How does Jesus' temptation and sinlessness bring comfort to us when we fail? How does it give us courage and strength when we war against sin? How can we use these truths to love others well?*

▶

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Essential Doctrine: Baptism

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

Scripture: Acts 2:38; 10:48; 19:4-5; Romans 6:2-7; 1 Corinthians 1:13; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:12

1 Baptism unites us with Jesus, particularly in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:2-7; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:12).

Baptism is more than a symbolic act. When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit descended on Him like a dove (Luke 3:21-22). When we are baptized, the Spirit seals us to Jesus Himself. Paul says we are united in His death and His resurrection (Rom. 6:2-7; Col. 2:12). In baptism, we die to ourselves and we can say with Paul that we have been crucified with Christ and that He now lives within us (Gal. 2:20). And when we rise from baptism, we can say, the lives we live now, we live by faith in Jesus (Gal. 2:20).

2 Baptism identifies us with Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 19:4-5; 1 Cor. 1:13).

In Acts, baptism is often described as being "in Jesus' name," especially in contrast to the baptism of John (Acts 10:48; 19:4-5). To be baptized in Jesus' name publicly identifies us with His name. The connection is so strong Paul reminded the Corinthians that they were not baptized in Paul's name, but in Jesus' name (1 Cor. 1:13). Baptism identifies us not with a specific church, movement, or group, but with Jesus Himself.

3 Baptism unites us with the body of Messiah, believers everywhere (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:5).

Baptism unites us with God's people. Each baptized believer is connected to Jesus and becomes part of His body, the church; so we also become members of one another. Paul pointed out in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that baptism is a great equalizer: our baptism makes all of us—rich or poor, red, yellow, or black, male or female—members of Jesus' body and thus members of one another. Ephesians 4:5 acknowledges there is but one baptism that unites us all into one faith.

Opening Activity

Option 1: Imagine you are having a baptismal service. Just then, an interdimensional portal opens, and travelers from the other dimension come through. They can't speak your language, and their translators are limited to words of no more than three syllables. They are confused as to what is going on in this baptism service. Try to explain to them, in a way their translators can handle, what is happening.

Option 2: Imagine there is a preliterate (non-reading) people group in a remote, mountainous region of the world. Bibles have been air-dropped in, and many of the people want to believe in Jesus. They know they should be baptized, but are confused on how to do it and on what it means, exactly. Your group is to create wordless baptism "diagrams" that will be air-dropped to these people in order to help them understand how to be baptized and what it means. Do your best to convey the truths of baptism with your stick-figure diagrams.

Afterward, debrief. What beliefs do we hold about baptism? Can we support those beliefs biblically?

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Beneath the Waters (I Will Rise) [Live]" by Hillsong Live (*Cornerstone [Live]*, Hillsong Music, 2012)
- ▶ "Enter This Temple" by Leeland (*Opposite Way*, Provident, 2008)
- ▶ "The God I Know" by Love & The Outcome (*These Are the Days*, Word Entertainment, 2016)
- ▶ "Follow Through" by Unspoken (*Follow Through*, Centricity, 2016)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "40 Days: John the Baptist" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Water" *BluefishTV.com*

This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of Jesus' sinlessness. 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: Baptism

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

1 Baptism unites us to Jesus, particularly in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:2-7; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:12).

- ▶ When have you joined yourself to an organization or a group of people? Was there any kind of initiation or joining ritual?
- ▶ Would you consider baptism a ritual to join the church? Why or why not?
- ▶ Is baptism purely a ritual? If not, what more is there to it? If yes, why do you say it is only a ritual?
- ▶ What exactly happens in a baptism? Why do you think we do it the way we do it?

Read Romans 6:2-7.

- ▶ Paul presented two ways in which baptism unites us to Jesus. What is the first?
- ▶ What did he mean that we are united to Jesus in His death? In what sense do we die in baptism?
- ▶ What is the second way baptism unites us to Jesus? In what sense are we raised to new life in baptism?
- ▶ In this context, Paul was particularly concerned about our relationship to sin. As we remember our baptism, how should we view sin?

2 Baptism identifies us with Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 19:4-5; 1 Cor. 1:13).

- ▶ What does it mean to do something in the name of something else? For instance, suppose an explorer arrives at a new land and says, "I claim this land in the name of my home country." Or if someone claims to do something in the name of love, what does he or she mean?
- ▶ What are some other examples of places where people do things "in the name" of something or someone else?

Read Acts 2:38.

- ▶ In what name were the people to be baptized? Considering the group in Acts 2 is mostly Jews, the very people who crucified Jesus, what is the significance of them being baptized in His name?

Read Acts 10:48.

- ▶ In what name were these Gentiles baptized? What is the significance of these former outsiders being baptized in Jesus' name?

Read Acts 19:4-5.

- ▶ Before this baptism, in what name had these people been baptized? According to Paul, in what name would they be baptized? Why do you think Paul insisted they be baptized specifically in Jesus' name?
- ▶ So what does it mean to be baptized in Jesus' name? How does being baptized in Jesus' name publicly identify us with Him?
- ▶ In what ways is it risky to be identified with Jesus' name? In what ways is it glorious?

3 Baptism unites us to the body of Messiah, believers everywhere (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:5).

- ▶ Does baptism unite us to anything else besides Jesus?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Ephesians 4:5.

- ▶ What are some of the different groups Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:13? How would they have related to one another?
- ▶ According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, what relationship did these different people have once they were baptized?
- ▶ So besides Jesus, with whom else are we united in baptism?
- ▶ What point did Paul emphasize in Ephesians 4:5 (you may need to look before and after this verse) in pointing out that we all have one baptism?
- ▶ If all Christians are united to one another in their baptism, how should we treat one another? How should we act toward one another when we wrong one another?

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ Imagine you meet someone who believes in Jesus but hasn't been baptized (maybe this is true for you). Would you advise them to get baptized? Why or why not? If yes, what would you say to them?

*This midweek study will explore the biblical understanding of sin and temptation.
Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video idea to lead a midweek event for your students.*

Essential Doctrine: Temptation and Sin

Temptation is not the equivalent of sin. Temptation can refer to natural and good desires that are twisted and directed toward pleasing of self rather than giving glory to God. Jesus was tempted like we are (Matt. 4), and yet He never sinned but faithfully resisted temptation and followed the will of His Father. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on guard against temptation that may lead us to sin (Matt. 26:41), and we pray for God to deliver us from evil (Matt. 6:13).

Scripture: Psalm 119:9; Proverbs 27:7; Hebrews 11:24-26; James 1:13-17; 4:1-6

1 Temptation rises from distorted desire and doubt in God's faithfulness (Jas. 1:13-17; 4:1-6).

Desire is an appropriate thing when directed toward an appropriate object in an appropriate measure; temptation takes the breeze of desire and turns our hearts toward something other than God. James pointed out that temptation comes from our own hearts, not from God; temptation rears its head when we desire to take God's place (1:13-17). Temptation whispers to us that we will make ourselves happier than God will. But James reminds us that good gifts come from God, not from anyone or anything else (v. 17). Knowing God is the source of all delight cuts off the temptations, sin, and strife James described (4:1-6). Note that James ended by reminding us that God provides good things (grace) to those who humbly look to Him, instead of themselves.

2 We fight temptation with the superior pleasures of God's promises (Ps. 119:9; Prov. 27:7; Heb. 11:24-26).

Proverbs 27:7 tells us that when you're hungry, you'll eat anything; but if you're full, even honey is unappealing. The best weed-killer to spray on the dandelions of temptation is satisfaction in God. The best way to be satisfied in God is to know and rest in His magnificent promises (Ps. 119:9). Moses gave us a great example of someone who smothered the fire of temptation (Egypt's treasures) with the blanket of God's sweet promises (Heb. 11:24-26).

3 We also fight temptation best by preventing it (Rom. 13:14) and by fleeing it (2 Tim. 2:22).

Throw mulch over the garden of your life so no weeds of temptation have opportunity to grow (Rom. 13:14). Set good boundaries. Stay away from certain places. Avoid certain people or websites. When temptation does rise, run from it (2 Tim. 2:22)! We rarely win when we step into the ring with temptation. When temptation starts (gossiping, lust, irritation), run away—even physically if necessary. Remove the wax of your flesh from the heat of temptation.

Opening Activity

You'll need crayons and various sources of heat. Maybe some matches, a lighter, a light bulb, a candle, or even the interior of a hot car or open sunlight. You'll also want some paper towels to catch dripping crayon wax.

Pass out the crayons and paper towels to the students. Show them your heat sources (lighters, matches, outside, etc.). Tell them their job is to melt crayons as many ways as possible. *(Note: if you don't want actually to melt crayons, you could just ask your students the different ways they could melt a crayon.)*

Once they've melted crayons (and, hopefully, cleaned up the wax), ask them what the common denominator was for melting crayons (heat). How much heat did it take? How close did the crayon have to get to the source of the heat?

Start drawing analogies to the lesson. Heat corresponds to our desires. Melting corresponds to sin. Does heat automatically mean melting? Not if the crayon is far enough away. Same with desire not turning into sin. How do we re-solidify the crayon wax? By removing heat. Same with resisting sin: turning away from temptation.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Brokenness Aside" by All Sons & Daughters
(*Season One*, Integrity, 2012)
- ▶ "Monster" by Skillet
(*Awake*, Atlantic Recording, 2009)
- ▶ "The Disease & the Cure" by Kutless
(*To Know That You're Alive*, Capitol Christian, 2008)
- ▶ "The Fight Inside" by Red
(*Innocence & Instinct*, Provident, 2009)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Darth Vader in My Youth Group" BluefishTV.com

This midweek study will explore the biblical understanding of sin and temptation. 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: Temptation and Sin

Temptation is not the equivalent of sin. Temptation can refer to natural and good desires that are twisted and directed toward pleasing of self rather than giving glory to God. Jesus was tempted like we are (Matt. 4), and yet He never sinned but faithfully resisted temptation and followed the will of His Father. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on guard against temptation that may lead us to sin (Matt. 26:41), and we pray for God to deliver us from evil (Matt. 6:13).

1 Temptation rises from distorted desire and doubt in God's faithfulness (Jas. 1:13-17; 4:1-6).

- ▶ *If sin were a plant, what would its seed be?*

Read James 1:13-17.

- ▶ *According to this text, what is the source of temptation?*
- ▶ *What is the eventual outcome of sin, according to verse 15?*
- ▶ *What does the death described in verse 15 look like, both ultimately (hell) and in this life?*

Answers may include: spiritual numbness, selfishness, inability to treasure Jesus, triviality and frivolity, and so on.

- ▶ *In verses 16 and 17, what did James suggest as a far better way to achieve satisfaction than sin?*
- ▶ *How many good things come from God, according to verse 17?*
- ▶ *Why do you think James emphasized that God is Father in verse 17?*
- ▶ *Why did James go out of his way to point out that God never changes? How does God's unvarying, good Fatherhood help us in specific times of temptation?*
- ▶ *What are some specific instances of temptation where we can remember God the Father gives far better gifts than sin does?*

2 We fight temptation with the superior pleasures of God's promises (Ps. 119:9; Prov. 27:7; Heb. 11:24-26).

- ▶ *Is there ever a time you would turn down free pizza? If a millionaire promised you a thousand bucks for not eating a particular pizza, would you still eat that pizza? Why?*

Read Hebrews 11:24-26.

- ▶ *Why did Moses choose not to enjoy all the riches Egypt had to offer?*
- ▶ *How does Moses' preference for the reproach of Christ parallel the millionaire paying you not to eat pizza? In both instances, what is the superior pleasure?*
- ▶ *How do we find greater satisfaction in God?*

Read Psalm 119:9.

- ▶ *How does Psalm 119:9 encourage us to stay pure? What would be in the Word that would keep the young man from sin?*

Read Proverbs 27:7.

- ▶ *When would the honey of temptation not be appealing to us?*
- ▶ *When are we most susceptible to think the bitterness of sin is sweet? How can we keep ourselves "full" in God?*

3 We also fight temptation best by preventing it (Rom. 13:14) and by fleeing it (2 Tim. 2:22).

Read Romans 13:14.

- ▶ *What did Paul mean when he said to make no provision for the flesh? How do we not allow temptation even to have a foothold?*
- ▶ *What are some common places we are prone to be tempted? What are some people around whom we are easily tempted? Some circumstances in which we are easily tempted? How do we avoid these places, people, or circumstances?*

Read 2 Timothy 2:22.

- ▶ *According to this verse, how do we "fight" temptation? Why is the command in this verse kind of a reversal of what we think of as "fighting" temptation?*
- ▶ *In your experience, what happens the longer you wrestle with a temptation? As we continue to come up against a temptation, do we get stronger or weaker against it?*
- ▶ *What are some examples from the Bible, history, or life of people fleeing temptation?*
Joseph in Genesis 39 would be one example.
- ▶ *What are some real-life ways we need to flee temptation?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What is the difference between temptation and sin? What is the best way to "fight" sin? What are some specific temptations you will face this week, and how will you resist them?*

This midweek study will explore the biblical understanding of union with Christ. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video idea to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: Union with Christ

At the heart of our salvation is our union with Christ. The Bible describes salvation as entering into a covenant relationship with God and also describes the church (which is made up of believers) as the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32). Christians believe that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Christ in us) and that we are simultaneously dwelling in Him (Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27; 3:1-4). This union is indissoluble; it will last for all eternity.

Scripture: *Jeremiah 23:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 1:3-14*

1 Our union with Jesus is the foundation for every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3-14).

Read over Ephesians 1:3-14. Note how often the phrases "in Him," "in Christ," or "in the Beloved" appear. The promises of Ephesians 1 are huge, but they are all based on our being "in Christ," that is, united with Jesus. In Jesus we are loved, adopted, sealed by the Holy Spirit, redeemed, and recipients of a great inheritance. Note that our blessing was accomplished before we ever came into being because that blessing was based on our union with Jesus.

2 Our union with Jesus keeps us humble when we are in danger of pride (Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30).

One danger of flying too high spiritually is that the wax of our humility can melt from the sun of pride. There are periods of our lives where things seem to go "right" spiritually: We've mostly kept our minds pure, we haven't lost our temper, we've helped some people out. Our union with Christ protects us from falling into the pit of pride. However "good" we may be, we remember the Lord is our righteousness (Jer. 23:6). We remember that He, not our actions, has become our righteousness and sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30).

3 Our union with Jesus gives us hope and assurance when we stumble and fall (2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:20).

There are other seasons in our lives where we seem particularly prone to sin. We snap at people, we despair, and we slander others. In these periods, too, our union with Christ is our hope. Our being loved by the Father depends not on our actions, but on the righteousness of Jesus, with whom we are united. Jesus takes our sin, and we receive His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). That's why we can say it's no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20).

Opening Activity

Tell your students to prepare a three-scene skit called, "A Day in the Life of Stan/Jan." (It'll be Stan if the main character is a boy, Jan if the main character is a girl.) They should prepare a short skit of a normal day; the three scenes could be home, work, school, or home, school, practice, and so on. The skit should be pretty mundane.

Next, ask them to re-do the skit in its entirety, but with one change. This time, Stan/Jan has been adopted by royalty. He/she has yet been brought to the palace, but Stan/Jan has found out he/she is fully accepted into the royal family. Re-do the skit.

What changed? How is Stan/Jan different in the second skit? Did Stan/Jan act better or worse?

Draw parallels between Stan/Jan being adopted into royalty and our being united to Jesus. How does our union with Jesus change things? How do we change, even if our circumstances do not?

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Holy (Wedding Day)" by City Harmonic (*I Have A Dream [It Feels Like Home]*, Integrity, 2011)
- ▶ "Even So Come" by Passion (*Even So Come [Live]*, Sparrow, 2015)
- ▶ "Your Love Awakens Me" by Phil Wickham (*Children of God*, Fair Trade Services, 2016)
- ▶ "When I'm with You" by Citizen Way (*2.0*, Fair Trade Services, 2016)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "The Bride" *Skitguys.com*

This midweek study will explore the biblical understanding of union with Christ. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.

Essential Doctrine: Union with Christ

At the heart of our salvation is our union with Christ. The Bible describes salvation as entering into a covenant relationship with God and also describes the church (which is made up of believers) as the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32). Christians believe that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Christ in us) and that we are simultaneously dwelling in Him (Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27; 3:1-4). This union is indissoluble; it will last for all eternity.

1 Our union with Jesus is the foundation for every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3-14).

- ▶ *Imagine you die and appear at the door of heaven. An angel is guarding the door. He asks you, “Why should you be let in here?” How would you answer?*
- ▶ *Imagine that one day, out of the blue, Satan suddenly appears in your classroom, at your practice, or in your home. He points at you and begins listing off the reasons why you don’t deserve any blessings, just total misery. How would you answer him?*

Read Ephesians 1:3-14.

- ▶ *What patterns do you see repeating in this passage?*
- ▶ *Find as many “in Him,” “in the Beloved,” or “in Christ” phrases as you can.*
- ▶ *What is the basis for all the wonderful blessings talked about in this text?*
- ▶ *According to this text, what are some of the blessings we receive?*
- ▶ *Imagine a Christian says he feels worthless. How would you use the “in Christ” promises of Ephesians 1 to encourage him?*
- ▶ *Imagine a Christian says she feels like she has no hope and no future. How would you use the “in Christ” promises of Ephesians 1 to encourage her?*
- ▶ *How would you use the idea of our union with Christ to answer the angel and the devil in our first questions?*

2 Our union with Jesus keeps us humble when we are in danger of pride (Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30).

- ▶ *What do you think it looks like when things are going well for us spiritually?*
- ▶ *Do you think God loves you more when you are living the “right way”? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *When we are doing well spiritually, what sin are we most at risk of falling into?*

Read Jeremiah 23:6.

- ▶ *In this text, what title is given to the Lord? What do you think that means? How can the Lord be our righteousness?*

Read 1 Corinthians 1:30.

- ▶ *According to this text, what did Jesus become for us?*
- ▶ *If Jesus is our righteousness (and our wisdom, redemption, and sanctification), how should we view our best days, spiritually? How does Jesus being our righteousness keep us humble?*

3 Our union with Jesus gives us hope and assurance when we stumble and fall (2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:20).

- ▶ *What do you think it looks like when things aren’t going well?*
- ▶ *How do you tend to feel when things aren’t going well spiritually?*

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

- ▶ *How does this sweet promise keep us from falling into despair when we seem unable to break out of a rut of sin? How is this promise rooted in our union with Jesus?*

Read Galatians 2:20.

- ▶ *According to Galatians 2:20, how do we live our lives now? Is this verse true on our best days spiritually? Is it true on our worst days spiritually?*
- ▶ *How is Galatians 2:20 rooted in our union with Jesus?*
- ▶ *How can you use this verse to give yourself hope and rock-solid assurance when you’re in a spiritual rut?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Some Christians consider union with Christ to be one of the most central doctrines of the Christian faith. Would you agree or disagree? Why?*

*This midweek study will explore the biblical understanding of discipleship.
Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

Essential Doctrine: Discipleship

Discipleship is a process that takes place both formally and informally to effect spiritual maturity as people follow Jesus. Informal discipleship, as passages like Deuteronomy 6:4-9 suggest, happens everywhere, in every arena of life. Growing in our faith and deepening our walk with Christ is something that requires our whole life, not just the mind. Formal discipleship refers to periods of instruction. We make disciples through our words and actions, providing verbal instruction from God's Word and non-verbal examples through our lives (Acts 20:17-24).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 22:6; Matthew 22:37; 28:18-20; Acts 20: 17-24; Ephesians 4:11-17

1 Discipleship is a process

(Deut. 6.4-9; Prov. 22.6).

Unlike regeneration, discipleship isn't a one-time event in someone's life. Discipleship is a continual process of becoming more like Christ over the course of one's entire life. Deuteronomy and Proverbs even instruct parents to disciple their children from birth so that when they are grown, they will not forget what they were taught.

2 Discipleship involves every part of life

(Matt. 22:37).

Discipleship isn't only an act of the mind. Deepening our discipleship requires believers to bring their minds, hearts, motives, attitudes, and emotions under the lordship of Christ. To be fully effective, discipleship requires disciples to be fully committed to discipleship.

3 Discipleship happens through both words and actions

(Acts 20:17-24).

Discipleship is more than words, more than just a good idea. Discipleship is something that inspires real action in our lives. At the same time, discipleship isn't only action. Discipleship also requires correct doctrine, which acts like the engine of Christ-honoring behavior. For those who are disciples of Christ, both right words and actions will be present.

Next, discuss with the group people who do what the student does professionally. Ask students what level of work would it require to achieve professional status in the mentioned fields.

Discuss with the students that success in any area does not happen by accident—it's intentional. Successfully building and honing a skill requires determination, hard work, and perseverance. Sometimes, we can develop skill out of natural ability, but skill is shaped by hours of repeated practice, coaching and instruction, and taking action using what has been learned and practiced. Point out that this study will help students consider how, like anything worth doing, our growth in Christ is a process which requires complete devotion and putting our faith into action.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Move (Keep Walkin')" by TobyMac
(*This Is Not a Test*, ForeFront, 2015)
- ▶ "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" by Hillsong UNITED
(*Oceans-EP*, Hillsong Music, 2013)
- ▶ "Soul on Fire" by Third Day
(*Lead Us Back: Songs of Worship*, Provident, 2015)
- ▶ "Go" by Hillsong UNITED
(*Aftermath*, Hillsong Music, 2011)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Leave: Follow" Skitguys.com
- ▶ "Discipleship Clones" BluefishTV.com

Opening Activity

Ask students what hobbies, sports, clubs, arts, and other activities they are involved in. Then, enlist a few volunteers to describe what it takes on a daily basis to be skilled in that area. (Examples may include: individual practice, team practice, focused instruction, such as classes, camps, tutoring.) Also, ask them to share the social and time expense of developing their skills. Ask them to describe the time spent with their coaches, instructors, and mentors.

This midweek study will explore the biblical understanding of discipleship. 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: Discipleship

Discipleship is a process that takes place both formally and informally to effect spiritual maturity as people follow Jesus. Informal discipleship, as passages like Deuteronomy 6:4-9 suggest, happens everywhere, in every arena of life. Growing in our faith and deepening our walk with Christ is something that requires our whole life, not just the mind. Formal discipleship refers to periods of instruction. We make disciples through our words and actions, providing verbal instruction from God's Word and non-verbal examples through our lives (Acts 20:17-24).

1 Discipleship is a process

(Deut. 6.4-9, Prov. 22.6).

Invite students to discuss what it takes to build a house. Ask them what it would be like if the builders didn't believe building a house was a process and tried to frame the house without allowing the concrete foundation to dry.

- ▶ *What happens when we get ahead of ourselves with things that require a process?*

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

- ▶ *How do these verses describe the process of discipleship?*

These verses make it clear: Discipleship is slow and repetitive. Our growth in Christ isn't something that occurs overnight. Discipleship is intentional and takes place over the course of our entire lives.

- ▶ *What actions do these verses tell believers to do when discipling others?*

The process of discipleship is not just memorizing words, but requires living out those words.

Read Proverbs 22:6.

We can often become impatient in our discipleship, especially when we are young. Even though discipleship is a process, you can see immediate benefits in your life.

- ▶ *What is the purpose of training young people in the way they should go?*
- ▶ *In what ways do you get frustrated with the process of becoming a disciple of Christ? How can you trust more in Christ's process of discipleship in your life?*

2 Discipleship involves every part of life

(Matt. 22:37).

Option: Have a student attempt a "burpee" exercise, but allow them to use only one arm and one leg to accomplish the exercise. Discuss how "burpees" require the use of the entire body.

- ▶ *Why do certain activities require the entire body or complete, focused attention?*

Not only does discipleship require mental effort, but it also requires the heart, soul, and strength to be fully engaged.

Read Matthew 22:37.

- ▶ *Describe how discipleship involves the areas of heart, soul, and strength. Why are each of those aspects of who we are vital in the process of discipleship?*
- ▶ *What would it look like if you loved God with all your mind but without your heart, or with all your strength but didn't pursue Christ with your mind? Is this possible? Why or why not?*

Similar to an endurance race—in that it relies not only on your physical endurance, but also on your technique, mental focus, and positive attitude—discipleship requires our whole lives to focus on Christ.

- ▶ *What areas of your life can you focus more intentionally on Christ to become a more committed disciple?*

3 Discipleship happens through both words and actions (Acts 20: 17-24).

Read Acts 20:17-24.

Paul believed his ministry was not limited to words, but that it mattered what he did with those words. Paul didn't only believe the truth in his mind and heart, but he was willing put his faith into action.

- ▶ *Paul said he didn't consider his life as valuable to himself so that he might preach Christ. What does tell believers about discipleship?*

Paul actions were motivated by his desire for people to know the truth about the gospel that he received from Jesus. Paul wanted them to have a correct understanding of who Jesus is and His offer of grace through faith alone.

- ▶ *Why is important for our discipleship that we have not only right actions, but right beliefs about why we do what we do as Christians?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How are you trusting in the process of discipleship with both your words and actions? How would you answer someone if asked what it means to be a disciple of Christ?*
- ▶ *Challenge students to write their personal definition of what it means to be a disciple, along with three specific ways they could grow in their discipleship with Christ.*

*This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of regeneration.
Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

Essential Doctrine: Regeneration

Regeneration takes place at the beginning of the Christian life and is the miraculous transformation, or the new birth, that takes place within an individual through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). It is the divine side of conversion (a person turning to Christ in repentance and faith), being the work of God within a person's life that causes him or her to be born again, a work that human effort is unable to produce.

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:26; John 3:3-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5

1 Regeneration is miraculous (2 Cor. 5:17).

Miracles are something outside human ability to produce. Only the supernatural hand of God can bring about miracles. Therefore, when someone experiences regeneration, it's a miraculous event. Because God is the one doing the miraculous event of regeneration, the Bible can say truthfully that those who are "in Christ" are new creations.

2 Regeneration can't be produced through human effort (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

Because of sin, we are unable to produce regeneration. No amount of good works are sufficient to pay the sin debt we owe. It is only by God's mercy that we are renewed. We need the miraculous work of God to do for us what we are unable to accomplish on our own.

3 Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:26; John 3:3-8).

Since we are unable to pay the sin debt we owe, only God is in a position to do something miraculous to save us from our sin. We must be "born of the Spirit" (John 3:6). Anything we could do would be "born of the flesh" (3:6), and because of that, our efforts would be insufficient. God promises to "give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you" (Ezek. 36:26). This occurs through regeneration, which is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who illuminates the truth of Scripture, convicts of sin, and reveals the goodness of Jesus Christ.

Opening Activity

Open up a discussion in the group. Bring in a random object and tell the students it grants you the unbelievable power to give each student *one* superpower (compare it to Green Lantern's ring, etc.). Go around the class, and ask the students what superpower they would choose, if they could only have one, and why.

After students express their dream superpower, break the sad news to them that your super-powered object is bogus and can't grant them any power. Say that even though having superpowers would be amazing, humans simply aren't capable of superpowers. Discuss some reasons humans don't have superpowers. For example: They're outside human abilities to produce, outside the laws of physics, it would be a miracle if we did possess them, and so on.

Tell students that while believers don't have superpowers, they have been given a miraculous trait, something impossible to produce on our own. Point out that this study will help students understand the act of regeneration—that it's miraculous, impossible for us to produce on our own, and is the exclusive work of the Holy Spirit.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Rebirthing" by Skillet
(*Comatose*, Atlantic Recording, 2006)
- ▶ "Alive in You" by Jesus Culture
(*Let It Echo [Live]*, Sparrow, 2016)
- ▶ "One Step Away" by Casting Crowns
(*The Very Next Thing*, Provident, 2016)
- ▶ "Redeemed" by Big Daddy Weave
(*Love Come to Life*, Word Entertainment, 2012)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "A New Day" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "God Of The New" *Skitguys.com*

This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of regeneration. 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: Regeneration

Regeneration takes place at the beginning of the Christian life and is the miraculous transformation, or the new birth, that takes place within an individual through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). It is the divine side of conversion (a person turning to Christ in repentance and faith), being the work of God within a person's life that causes him or her to be born again, a work that human effort is unable to produce.

1 Regeneration is miraculous

(2 Cor. 5:17).

Invite students to list different miracles they know from Scripture.

- ▶ *Have you ever thought of your salvation as something just as miraculous as any other miracle in Scripture?*
- ▶ *In what ways are we tempted to think of our salvation less miraculous than any other miracle in Scripture?*

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

- ▶ *What does the passage say the miracle of regeneration does to a person?*

Regeneration doesn't just make people different, it transforms everything about who they are.

- ▶ *How should believers feel about themselves once they experience regeneration?*
- ▶ *How does regeneration effect how a person lives on a daily basis?*

2 Regeneration can't be produced through human effort (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

Option: Have students imagine their worst subjects in school. Next, have them imagine a world-famous historian, scientist, or mathematician turned in an important test in that area on their behalf, and they received credit for the work.

- ▶ *How does it make you feel that even though we are sinful, the Holy Spirit accomplished what we can't on our own power?*

Read Ephesians 2:8-9.

- ▶ *How did Paul say we are saved?*
- ▶ *Who offered us the "gift" of salvation? Why did Paul say this understanding was so important (v. 9)?*

There is nothing we can do to earn salvation, or to change ourselves. As James said, our works demonstrate our faith, they do not secure it for us (Jas. 2:14-24). Only God could do that. Our salvation is a gift from Him. Paul and James both confirmed that our works can't change our hearts.

Read Titus 3:5.

Regardless of how good we might seem, in the end, we are sinful. We don't have the ability to produce regeneration. It is only through the mercy of Christ that we are saved.

- ▶ *What did Paul say regeneration does to a person?*
 - ▶ *What images should we take from this passage when it says believers are "washed by regeneration"?*
- You are not only "cleaned" by regeneration, but Titus 3:5 says you are made completely new as well.
- ▶ *Why is important for us to realize it is impossible to produce regeneration through human effort?*

3 Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:26; John 3:3-8).

Read Ezekiel 36:26.

- ▶ *According to this verse, who is responsible for giving a new heart and new spirit?*
- ▶ *What does God promise to "give" in this passage? What does He promise to remove?*
- ▶ *Why do you think it's important to realize that God has to remove the old and place the new within us?*

Read John 3:3-8.

- ▶ *Why do you think Nicodemus was surprised at Jesus' answer in this passage?*
- ▶ *Why is it often difficult to accept regeneration as an action that only the Holy Spirit is able to do?*
- ▶ *In what areas of your life can you respond better to the Holy Spirit in thankfulness for your regeneration?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How does knowing your regeneration is a miracle of the Holy Spirit affect the way you live?*
- ▶ *How does knowing human effort is unable to produce regeneration effect your relationship with Christ?*
- ▶ *Challenge students to jot down their thoughts in a "thankfulness letter" to Christ. Instruct them to express their gratitude for the miraculous work of regeneration brought about by the Holy Spirit in their lives.*

This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of evangelism.

Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: Evangelism

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

Scripture: *Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; John 13:35; 14:11-12; Acts 10:42-48; Romans 10:13-15; 1 John 3:17-18*

1 Evangelism is both a command and an honor (Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20; Acts 10:42-48).

It may be difficult to think of something as both an honor and command. Throughout Scripture, Jesus instructed His disciples to go and tell others about Him, and to pass on to others what He had taught them. And they did. Although telling others about Jesus is a command in Scripture, it's also an honor because of what Christ has done in us.

2 Evangelism means loving others (John 13:35; Rom. 10:13-15).

We don't evangelize others simply because we feel obligated. Practicing evangelism shows our love for others because it shows that, even if we don't know them, we want to tell them the saving message of Christ. It seems that people who know the truth of the gospel, yet purposefully withhold that information from others, must not think much of those people. Therefore, evangelism is the ultimate form of loving one's neighbor.

3 Evangelism involves both words and actions (John 14:11-12; 1 John 3:17-18).

Evangelism isn't limited to only saying Christ-like, gospel-centered words; We have to them out as well. In the same way, we can't only demonstrate Jesus' love with our actions, we must also speak the gospel message. Words and action in evangelism are two sides of the same coin. Christian testimony without a lived witness is hypocrisy, and Christian living without clear Christian testimony is no more than good morals.

Opening Activity

Enlist the help of students with opposing viewpoints on a trivial matter, such as being fans of rival sports teams, *Apple vs. Android, Mac vs. Windows, Ford vs. Chevy*, and so on. Let each student give their very best "pitch" to the group about why someone should not only agree with them, but be a fan or buy the product, too.

Afterward, poll the group to see who was more convincing and why. Transition by talking about how easy it was for them to talk about their beliefs because they had genuine love and passion. They weren't awkward making the "pitch," in fact, it was an honor for them to talk about what they loved. They felt that the object they loved would improve your life (act of loving) and were willing to not only profess their preference to you, but live it as well. Essentially, they evangelized the other students about their passion. Discuss that this lesson will help students understand evangelism and how they should practice evangelism daily.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Messengers (feat. For KING & COUNTRY)" by Lecrae (*Anomaly*, Reach Records, 2014)
- ▶ "God is On the Move" by 7eventh Time Down (*God is On the Move*, BEC Recordings, 2015)
- ▶ "For Your Glory" by Leeland (*Invisible*, Bethel Music, 2016)
- ▶ "Here Am I, Send Me" by Matt Papa (*Destiny Road: Official Soundtrack*, Center Sound Records, 2016)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "The Skinny on Evangelism" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "A Faithful Friend" *BluefishTV.com*

This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of evangelism. 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: Evangelism

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

1 Evangelism is both a command and an honor

(Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20; Acts 10:42-48).

Invite students to list activities they are commanded to do, but that are also an honor (i.e. loving one's family, respecting the elderly, etc.).

- ▶ *Why is evangelism both honor and command?*

Read Matthew 28:18-20; 24:14.

- ▶ *How does this passages reveal the command to evangelize?*

According to these verses, we are commanded to go into the world and make disciples of all nations, but we do this willingly, out of love for Christ.

- ▶ *When have you shared the gospel solely out of love for Jesus?*

Read Acts 10:42-48.

Commands are not negative, they assist believers in knowing what to do and what not to do.

- ▶ *How does the command to evangelize assist us in knowing how to act as believers?*
- ▶ *How should the command to evangelize impact the way the church functions?*

2 Evangelism is loving others

(John 13:35; Rom. 10:13-15).

Option: Ask students to share about a time they were thankful to be told something hurtful or negative out of love (perhaps by a parent or a teacher), which saved them a lot of pain later.

- ▶ *How does evangelism say to others that you care for them, even if they reject what you say?*
Even though we tell the truth, we must do so with a heart of love and concern and not with harsh words and attitudes.

Read John 13:35.

- ▶ *How will people know that we are Jesus' disciples?*
- ▶ *Why do you think it's important that people see our love for each other?*

Read Romans 10:13-15.

- ▶ *How did Paul describe the gospel in verse 15?*
- ▶ *Describe how evangelism looks without the presence of love.*

- ▶ *Consider the message of the gospel: is it one of condemnation or of love? How can your evangelism be more like Christ's?*

When we evangelize it can often appear unloving because we talk about personal sin, but like a doctor diagnosing a patient, unless the cause of the problem is addressed, true healing can't take place.

- ▶ *In what areas of your life can you focus more intentionally on loving evangelism? What holds you back from sharing the gospel more effectively?*

3 Evangelism is both words and action

(John 14:11-12; 1 John 3:17-18).

Read John 14:11-12.

The Christian life isn't limited to moral behavior, nor it is just amazing concepts and words. If our words and life do not match, then it sends the wrong message. We are a people of both word and deed.

- ▶ *What did Jesus say the one who believes in Him will do?*
Jesus told His disciples they were capable of doing even greater things than He did on earth if they would follow Him in both word and deed.
- ▶ *How does it feel to know that when the Holy Spirit dwells within you, Jesus says you are capable of "greater works than these"?*
- ▶ *What does this reveal about how Jesus thinks about our actions and our words?*

Read 1 John 3:17-18.

- ▶ *What does this passage tell us about the importance of our actions?*
- ▶ *How do positive and negative actions affect our witness?*
- ▶ *What steps can you take to make sure your actions and words line up?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Who are three people in your life you need to lovingly evangelize with words and actions?*
- ▶ *What holds you back from sharing the gospel more effectively?*
- ▶ *Challenge students to write out their strategy for loving evangelism and place it in their Bibles, marking Romans 10:13-15.*

*This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of God as infinite.
Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

Essential Doctrine: God is Infinite

God's infinity means that there are no boundaries on His qualities and existence (Job 11:7-9; Ps. 147:5). For instance, God is infinite when it comes to space and time, meaning He is not confined by material space nor is He restricted by time since He is timeless (Ps. 90:1-2). God's infinity also extends to His knowledge of things as well as His power to do all things according to His will.

Scripture: Job 11:7-9; 42:2; Psalm 90:1-2; 139:8; 147:5

1 God has no boundaries (Job 11:7-9; Ps. 90:1-2).

There are boundaries to any of our characteristics as humans. Even though we might like to think of ourselves as patient, kind, or loving, there is a limit to our good qualities. However, God is boundless in His qualities and His existence. We can't measure or describe *all* that He is. God is the only truly limitless being.

2 God is not restricted by time or space (Ps. 139:8).

Even though humans can now travel with relative ease, there are restrictions on where we can go (like going to space without a ship, sneaking into the White House, or seeing the future). God has full access to any place and time He wishes. He is not bound by the physical human laws of space or time.

3 God is infinite in both knowledge and power (Job 42:2; Ps. 147:5).

The theological terms for this infinite knowledge and power are *omniscience* and *omnipotence*. In other words, God is both all knowing and all-powerful. God doesn't need to access information, because He is the source of all information. God doesn't need to find or have power granted to He, He possesses all power, infinitely.

Opening Activity

Instruct students to imagine being called into a law office and the lawyer informs him/her that he/she is the only surviving relative of the richest man on earth, and the man has just passed away. The student has just inherited more than 50 billion dollars. Ask the students what they would buy or do with their new inheritance. What would be the limit on what they could do or purchase? What new power would this new inheritance grant them socially, politically, and so on?

Ask students to consider the prospect of almost unlimited power and potential due to the amount of money they would possess. Further the discussion by asking them what their true limitations would be at that point. By having almost unlimited money and power, could they create out of nothing, have a perfect knowledge of all future events, make themselves fly, or become invisible at will?

Point out to the students that, at some point, human power has limitations. Tell the students that this lesson will help them understand that God is the only One who is truly infinite.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Exalted Over All" by Vertical Church Band
(*Frontiers*, Provident, 2016)
- ▶ "Same Power" by Jeremy Camp
(*I Will Follow*, Sparrow, 2015)
- ▶ "He Knows My Name" by Francesca Battistelli
(*If We're Honest*, Word Entertainment, 2014)
- ▶ "The Stand" by Kristian Stanfill
(*Passion: Awakening [Deluxe Edition]*, Sparrow, 2010)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "A Majestic God: Psalm 8" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "Amena Brown: You" *BluefishTV.com*

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Essential Doctrine: God is Infinite

God's infinity means that there are no boundaries on His qualities and existence (Job 11:7-9; Ps. 147:5). For instance, God is infinite when it comes to space and time, meaning He is not confined by material space nor is He restricted by time since He is timeless (Ps. 90:1-2). God's infinity also extends to His knowledge of things as well as His power to do all things according to His will.

1 God has no boundaries

(Job 11:7-9; Ps. 90:1-2).

Invite students to consider something infinite such as numbers, the edges of space, and so on. Ask them what it would be like if space or numbers had an end.

- ▶ *What is it like to have boundaries in a world where there are certain things which have no boundaries?*

Read Job 11:7-9.

- ▶ *In what ways does this passage describe God as infinite?*
God having no boundaries is more than just being able to do anything anytime; it's a reflection of His character and authority.
- ▶ *What would it look like if God had boundaries?*
Since God has no boundaries, He is the only truly limitless Person in creation.

Read Psalms 90:1-2.

Since God has no boundaries, He is outside of space and time as we understand them. Just as He will live eternally in the future, He existed in eternity past.

- ▶ *How does it impact your life knowing that God stands outside of space and time?*
- ▶ *In what ways does it cause you to trust God more knowing He is boundless and outside the rules we are subject to follow?*

2 God is not restricted by time or space

(Ps. 139:8).

Option: Ask a student to attempt to play an instrument, read a book, and carry on a conversation with someone at the same time. Start out with one challenge, then make it more complex by adding a new task. Emphasize at some point, we are restricted in what we're able to accomplish.

- ▶ *Why are we restricted in what we can accomplish?*
Not only is God unrestricted in what He can accomplish, but also in where He can go.

Read Psalm 139:8.

- ▶ *How is it encouraging to know God is fully present in all places at all times (omnipresent)?*

- ▶ *How does this impact your relationship with God when He is unrestricted and omnipresent in your life?*

Even though God is unrestricted, He still wants you to open your life willingly to Him and develop a growing relationship with Him.

- ▶ *In what areas of your life can you develop a better relationship with Christ knowing He is unrestricted and omnipresent?*

3 God is infinite in both knowledge and power

(Job 42:2 Ps. 147:5).

Read Job 42:2.

- ▶ *What can God do? What can He not do?*
- ▶ *How is this different from what we can do or not do?*
- ▶ *Why do you think God's plans cannot be "thwarted" or prevented?*
God can do anything, and His plans will always prevail, no matter what we decide to do.

Read Psalm 147:5.

God isn't only able to easily and accurately access all information, God is the source of all information. He knows all things.

- ▶ *How does God being omniscient affect your passion to know Christ and the world around you?*

Power is not something simply obtained by God and used for His purposes. God is the source of all power and it is at His disposal at all times. His power cannot be diminished or removed.

- ▶ *How does God being omnipotent affect the way you process world events and how you view God's plan for your life?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How are you trusting in the fact that God is infinite? On a practical level, why do these things matter in how you live your life?*
- ▶ *How would you answer people when they ask what it means for God to be infinite?*
- ▶ *Challenge students to make a list of at least five things they can change in their lives in light of knowing God as infinite.*

*This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of Christ as Prophet.
Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

Essential Doctrine: Christ as Prophet

As one of His offices, Jesus fulfills the role of prophet: He alone is the ultimate teacher and has the words of eternal life (John 6:68). Jesus is also God's ultimate revelation of Himself.

Scripture: *Matthew 4:17; 5:38-40; Mark 1:22; John 6:63; 10:30; 14:6*

1 Christ is the ultimate preacher (Matt. 4:17; 5:38-40).

Biblical preaching is centered upon the Word, and the Word is centered upon the person of Jesus. All biblically faithful preaching stands in the shadow of the ultimate preacher—Jesus—who not only faithfully communicated God's counsel to the world, but also manifested God to the people through the incarnation.

2 Christ is the ultimate teacher (Mark 1:22; John 6:63).

Jesus knew how to perfectly teach God's Word, because He perfectly understood everything written in Scripture. Jesus was able to proclaim God's Word and teach in a way that was understood by His audience.

3 Christ is the ultimate revelation of God (John 10:30; 14:6).

Jesus isn't just similar to God—He is the exact representation of God. Jesus was the perfect representation of God on earth in every possible way. While we may occasionally act similar to Jesus because we are His followers, Jesus showed us what God was like because is one with God.

Opening Activity

Place students into small groups and give them concepts that are difficult for early elementary school children to understand, but not for middle/high schoolers (how to use a combination lock, how our body breaks down food when we eat it, etc.). Ask the students to come up with creative ways to explain these ideas to be easily understood by children.

Invite students to present their teaching ideas to the entire group, or bring in a small group of kids and see if they can understand what they're being told.

Discuss with students how it affects them when they can't understand something that seems too abstract, especially in the Bible. Point out this lesson will help them understand Jesus' role of being a prophet who preached and taught with clarity.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Psalm 51 (Wisdom in the Secret Heart)" by Shane & Shane (*Psalms, Vol. 2*, WellHouse Records, 2015)
- ▶ "Jesus" by Chris Tomlin (*Jesus – Single*, Sparrow, 2016)
- ▶ "You Hold It All Together" by All Sons & Daughters (*Poets & Saints*, Integrity, 2016)
- ▶ "Battles" by The Afters (*Live on Forever*, Fair Trade Services, Year)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Jesus (Worship Intro)" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Who Was Jesus" *BluefishTV.com*

This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of Christ as Prophet. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.

Essential Doctrine: Christ as Prophet

As one of His offices, Jesus fulfills the role of prophet: He alone is the ultimate teacher and has the words of eternal life (John 6:68). Jesus is also God's ultimate revelation of Himself.

1 Christ is the ultimate preacher

(Matt. 4:17; 5:38-40).

Invite students to consider the differences between teaching and preaching. Point out that teaching others something you're passionate about looks different from proclaiming why it's wonderful.

Read Matthew 4:17.

- ▶ *How does this verse reveal Jesus as an ultimate preacher?*
- ▶ *Why do you think people were drawn to His message?*

In this passage, Jesus was a great preacher because He was extremely clear about what He proclaimed. As Christians, we also need to be extremely clear about the message we proclaim to the world around us.

- ▶ *How can you be more clear about the gospel to your friends?*

Read Matthew 5:38-40.

As He preached, Jesus often used good sayings that were common in His day. Jesus used those sayings because people were familiar with them. However, He also revealed His authority by saying things like, "But I tell you" (v. 39). This phrase showed that His power in teaching rests in His authority as the Son of God.

- ▶ *How does the phrase "But I tell you" give Jesus' preaching more power?*
- ▶ *How does the fact that Jesus' words are authoritative make a difference when you read something in your Bible that challenges your way of thinking?*

2 Christ is the ultimate teacher

(Mark 1:22; John 6:63).

Option: Jot down different "off-the-wall" topics on slips of paper (nuclear physics, the origin of pizza, governmental organizational structure, etc.). Ask a few students to pull out a topic and attempt to teach a 3-minute lesson on the topic, putting their "off-the-cuff" teaching skills to use.

- ▶ *What is required to be an ultimate teacher?*

Read Mark 1:22 and John 6:63.

- ▶ *How does the Scripture say people reacted to Jesus' teaching? Why do you think they reacted this way?*
- ▶ *How did Jesus' words communicate more than information?*
Jesus' teaching wasn't just conveying information, it brought life to His listeners.
- ▶ *How does Jesus' being an ultimate teacher change the way you read His words in the gospels?*

3 Christ is the ultimate revelation of God

(John 10:30; 14:6).

Read John 10:30.

Jesus wasn't a representation of God in the sense of plastic fruit resembling the real thing. No, He represented the Triune God because He is the second person of the Trinity, fully divine. If you know Jesus, you know God the Father.

- ▶ *How does Jesus being one with the Father affect your concept of God?*

Read John 14:6.

- ▶ *Why is it important for us to understand Jesus isn't just the path to God, but God Himself?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How does Jesus as prophet give you more confidence when you read your Bible?*
- ▶ *How would you answer someone if asked what it means for Jesus to be a prophet?*
- ▶ *Challenge students to record a situation they are currently facing where they need to fully trust Jesus as prophet and teacher in their lives.*

*This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of God's graciousness.
Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

Essential Doctrine: God is Gracious

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

Scripture: Romans 3:2; 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:8-9

1 We are undeserving (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

The standard God sets for His people is perfection. Due to sin, there is no way we can possibly live up to that standard. There is nothing we can say or do to earn God's redemption or forgiveness.

2 God delights in giving unmerited favor (Eph. 2:8-9).

God would be completely justified to fully punish our sin. However, God receives the highest glory by forgiving sin and giving unmerited favor to those who place their faith and trust in Christ alone for salvation.

3 God's graciousness is found in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).

God's gift of unmerited favor is exclusively given to those who place their faith in Christ alone. Jesus accomplished everything we need for forgiveness by His death and resurrection. God's graciousness to atone for sin is found in the work Christ accomplished during His earthly ministry.

Opening Activity

For this option you will need something valuable to give to some of the students, such as nice candy treats or money, and so on. At the beginning of the session, say, "Before we get started, I need to give out some things." Pass the items to a few random students and tell them they can keep it. Indignant reactions should immediately occur in the group because only certain people received a treat.

Explain to the students how you are free to distribute the item however and to whomever you choose. Tell the students that receiving the item is not based on their worthiness, in fact, no one deserved to receive the item. Tell them it simply makes you happy to give unmerited favor.

Discuss with the students that God is gracious and gives gifts not based on merit, but because He delights in showing unmerited favor, and that unmerited favor can only be found in the Person of Jesus Christ. Tell students this lesson will help them understand how God is gracious and desires to extend His mercy to those who trust in Christ.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Stars" by Skillet
(*Unleashed*, Atlantic Recording, 2016)
- ▶ "Trust in You" by Lauren Daigle
(*How Can It Be*, Centricity, 2015)
- ▶ "Deliver Me" by Aaron Shust
(*Morning Rises*, Centricity, 2013)
- ▶ "Lift Your Head Weary Sinner (Chains)" by Crowder
(*Neon Steeple*, Sparrow, 2014)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Grace" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "The Face of Grace" *Skitguys.com*

This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of God's graciousness. 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 Gracious

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

1 We are undeserving

(Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

Invite students to consider what it would be like to give a place on the Olympic team to someone drastically out of shape, uncommitted, and unreliable. We would be upset, especially if we tried out for that spot, because the one who got it was undeserving.

- ▶ *Why does someone getting something they don't deserve make us upset?*

Read Romans 3:23.

- ▶ *Why do we get upset about receiving grace from Christ that we do not deserve?*

While watching someone receive something undeserved can feel wrong, in the eyes of Christ we are all undeserving because of our sins.

- ▶ *How does the fact that you were undeserving of Christ's love affect how you approach those who are not yet believers?*

Knowing we are undeserving of Christ's love should drive us to humility.

Read Romans 6:23.

When we earn wages, we are paid according to our work. The Bible says our wages, or sin, earn the payment of death. However, since we are undeserving, God gave us a gift—the gift of eternal life through Christ.

- ▶ *How does it make you feel knowing that your only spiritual "wages" have earned you death?*
- ▶ *In what ways should being undeserving of grace make believers more compassionate and loving?*

2 God delights in giving unmerited favor

(Eph. 2:8-9).

Option: Distribute candy bars to each student for "no reason." The gift wasn't based on your work. You received the candy simply because it made the leader happy to give you candy. God gives out favor we have not earned and does so because it brings Him joy and honor.

- ▶ *What surprising gift or reward have you received that you didn't earn?*

Not only does God's unmerited favor meet our need, but it goes above and beyond with benefits that only make us more Christlike.

Read Ephesian 2:8-9.

- ▶ *Based on this passage, describe how boasting about our works has no place in the Christian life.*
- ▶ *What would be some specific impacts on the church if every believer practiced the truth found in this passage?*

God not only gives us gifts because we need them, but also because it is His joy and pleasure to do so. It brings God delight to give believers unmerited favor.

- ▶ *Why would God delight in giving unmerited favor to those who trust Him?*

3 God's graciousness is found in Christ

(2 Cor. 5:21).

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

While it is God's delight for believers to receive unmerited favor, it did not come without a price. Jesus became unrighteousness on the cross on our behalf so we could know Him. Therefore, it is through Jesus alone that the unmerited graciousness of God can be found.

- ▶ *How does it affect you, knowing the unmerited favor we received was not simply waved away, but paid for with a high price?*
Since God was the only One who could have paid such a high price for our sin, it is through Jesus' death and resurrection alone that we have redemption and salvation. Seeking salvation in any other way is simply insufficient to pay the debt we owe.
- ▶ *Why is the exclusivity of Christ's death and resurrection essential and necessary for salvation?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *In what ways can you display that you possess the unmerited favor of Christ through your humble actions?*
- ▶ *How would you answer someone if asked what it means for God to be gracious?*
- ▶ *Challenge students to record three specific examples, in addition to their salvation experience, where they have found the unmerited grace of God to be a reality in their lives.*