

This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that all humanity has inherited a sin nature that can only be overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: Deity of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, possessing the fullness of deity like the Father and Son. His deity can be seen in the fact that He is eternal (Heb. 9:14), omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-8), the Creator and Giver of life (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30; John 3:5-7), and directly identified with the Triune God (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

Scripture: *Genesis 1:1-2; Matthew 3:13-17; John 3:5-6; Acts 13:2; Romans 8:13-14; 15:13; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Titus 3:5-6*

1 The Holy Spirit is God (Gen. 1:1-2; Matt. 3:13-17; Acts 13:2).

The Scriptures clearly show that the Holy Spirit is an active member of the Trinity and has eternally existed as God with the Father and Son. The Holy Spirit was present with the Father and Son in Jesus' baptism. The Holy Spirit spoke to the early church and gave them direction. The Holy Spirit was even an active part of creation, along with the Father and Son.

2 The Holy Spirit is the primary agent of our regeneration (John 3:5-6; Titus 3:5-6).

One of the most significant aspects of the Spirit's divinity is that He is the one who convicts us and leads us to repentance. The Holy Spirit applies the finished work of Christ to us when we believe and repent, causing us to become born again. He is present at the beginning of our salvation and sustains our faith throughout our lives.

3 The Holy Spirit helps us become more like Christ (Rom. 8:13-14; 15:13; 1 Cor. 3:16).

The work of the Holy Spirit doesn't end when we are saved but continues with us for the rest of our lives. The Holy Spirit dwells within believers and give us comfort, convicts us of sin, gives us the boldness to share the gospel, and allows us to understand the Scriptures. In all of these things, the Holy Spirit works to help us fight sin and become more like Jesus.

Opening Activity

Ask students if they have ever heard any urban legends like Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster. Invite them to tell you if they think these creatures are real or made up. Then, ask them to explore why they think some people believe in them and others don't. Explain that, if we aren't careful, we can begin to look at the Holy Spirit this way. We can imagine that He is a mythical being who we occasionally think about, but never see, hear about, or talk about. In reality, the Holy Spirit is an active part of your life every day and has been active in your life since you first trusted Jesus as your Savior. So, don't look at the Holy Spirit as some kind of spiritual urban legend, but as the real, divine member of the Trinity He is.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Holy Spirit" by Jesus Culture
(*Live from New York*, Sparrow Records, 2012)
- ▶ "This I Believe" by Hillsong Worship
(*No Other Name [Deluxe Edition-Live]*, Capitol/Sparrow Records, 2014)
- ▶ "Spirit Move" by Bethel Music
(*Have It All [Live]*, Bethel Music, 2016)
- ▶ "Yield My Heart" by Kim Walker-Smith
(*Still Believe [Live]*, Sparrow Records, 2012)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Pentecost Video" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Even There" *Skitguys.com*

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1 The Holy Spirit is God (Gen. 1:1-2; Matt. 3:13-17; Acts 13:2).

Option: Ask students to honestly share how often they think about the Holy Spirit on a daily basis.

It is easy to forget Him, but the Holy Spirit is fully God just like the Father and Son.

Read Matthew 3:13-17.

- ▶ *What was the Holy Spirit doing in this passage?*

Read Genesis 1:1-2.

- ▶ *What was the Holy Spirit's role in these verses?*

In both of these passages, the Holy Spirit was active along with the Father and Son. The reason is simple: He is God, just like them.

2 The Holy Spirit is the primary agent of our regeneration (John 3:5-6; Titus 3:5-6).

Option: Ask students to list all the ways the Holy Spirit has impacted their lives.

Read Titus 3:5-6 and John 3:5-6.

- ▶ *Did you know the Holy Spirit did all of this? How does this change the way you view Him?*

Since the Holy Spirit is central to us becoming believers, we must learn to rely on His power in us to effectively witness to people who need the gospel. Without the Spirit's help, our evangelism would be in vain.

3 The Holy Spirit helps us become more like Christ (Rom. 8:13-14; 15:13; 1 Cor. 3:16).

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16 and Romans 8:13-14; 15:13.

- ▶ *How often do you remember that the Holy Spirit dwells within you when you are battling sin or fighting for holiness?*
- ▶ *Do you fight sin with your own abilities or by the power of the Holy Spirit? How can you learn to rely on the Holy Spirit in your battle for holiness?*

The only way for us to fight sin in our lives is by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we make real choices to do the right thing, we trust that the Holy Spirit will empower us to abstain from evil and cling to what is good.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How does knowledge of the Holy Spirit's deity change the way you view God as a whole?*
- ▶ *What are ways you can actively remember the Holy Spirit's role in your life and praise Him for what He does?*

The Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, plays a crucial role in the life of every Christian. He is worthy of our praise for what He does.

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Essential Doctrine: Personality of the Holy Spirit

The Bible not only affirms the full divinity of the Holy Spirit but also His personhood. Many people have mistakenly believed that the Spirit is a force or power, not a person. However, Scripture affirms His personhood by acknowledging that He is treated as a person (Acts 5:3; 7:51; Heb. 10:29), acts like a person (John 14:26; 15:26; Rom. 8:14), has attributes of a person (1 Cor. 2:10-11; Eph. 4:30), and acts in personal ways (Isa. 63:10; Acts 13:2). In addition to these, the Bible also affirms that Christians relate to Him personally (Acts 5:3-4; 7:51).

Scripture: John 14:26; Romans 8:26-27; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:30

1 The Holy Spirit is a Person, equal with the Father and Son (John 14:26; 2 Cor. 13:14).

The Bible is clear that the Holy Spirit is just as much a person as the Father and Son. The Holy Spirit is not the spirit of the Father or the spirit of the Son, but is an equal member of the Trinity. Therefore, He is just as worthy as honor, praise, and glory as the Father and Son.

2 The Holy Spirit works in us on a personal level (John 14:26; Rom. 8:26-27).

The Holy Spirit is involved with the church on a daily basis, having even spoke and given direction to the early church (Acts 13:2). He daily convicts us of sin, illuminates God's Word, and helps us as we pray. He is our "Helper" sent from Jesus to guide us and mold us into His image. The Holy Spirit isn't an impersonal force, but an active, personal participant in our sanctification.

3 The Holy Spirit can be grieved or pleased by our actions (Eph. 4:30).

One of the most personal elements of the Holy Spirit is that He has emotions. Paul warned us against grieving the Holy Spirit with our actions. Likewise, we are also able to please the Holy Spirit when we do the right thing. The Holy Spirit was sent to us to help us fight sin and pursue righteousness. When we do those things, we please Him.

Opening Activity

Place a white board or large poster board at the front of the room. Ask for a volunteer to come up front, and make sure this student will be comfortable sharing his or her testimony. Then, ask the student when he/she got saved and how his/her life has changed since then. Next, ask the volunteer to list his/her favorite aspects of the Christian life (reading the Bible, praying, evangelizing, etc.). Instruct the student to write all of these answers (to both questions) on the board or poster.

Now, connect this activity back to the rest of the students by asking them what aspects of the Christian life they enjoy. Then, explain to students that without the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, none of these things would ever be possible. He is the one who gives us the ability to leave our old sins and enjoy the benefits of being Christ-followers.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Holy Spirit" by Francesca Battistelli
(If We're Honest [Deluxe Version],
Word Entertainment, 2014)
- ▶ "Set A Fire" by Jesus Culture
(Live from New York, Sparrow Records, 2012)
- ▶ "Holy Spirit" by Kristyn Getty
(The Apostles Creed, Integrity Music, 2006)
- ▶ "Spirit Fall" by Chris Tomlin
*(Passion-Here for You, sixstepsrecords/
Sparrow records, 2011)*

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Forgotten God by Francis Chan" *BluefishTV.com*

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1 The Holy Spirit is a Person, equal with the Father and Son (John 14:26; 2 Cor. 13:14).

Option: Have you ever felt undermined or forgotten? Why did that happen? How did that experience affect you? The Holy Spirit can be treated this way so often. We can easily forget that He is a Person, like the Father and Son.

- ▶ *What are some of the qualities that make a person a person?*

Read 2 Corinthians 13:14 and John 14:26.

- ▶ *What pronouns did Jesus use for the Holy Spirit in John 14:26? Why is this significant for showing His personhood?*
- ▶ *What does the passage in 2 Corinthians show us about the way the three Persons of the Trinity work together?*

2 The Holy Spirit works in us on a personal level (John 14:26; Rom. 8:26-27).

Option: Ask students to share about their closest friends. How do those friends interact with them on a personal level? Do they feel comfortable letting these people in on their secrets, struggles, and sufferings? What makes them comfortable enough around these people to let them in?

The Holy Spirit knows us better than any person ever will. He knows how we need to be ministered to, and He loves to provide us with comfort, help, and love.

Read John 14:26.

- ▶ *What does it mean to call the Holy Spirit our "Helper"? In what ways does He help us?*
- Again, Jesus uses "He" as a pronoun for the Spirit, reiterating the fact that the Spirit is a Person.

Read Romans 8:26-27.

- ▶ *Have you ever prayed for something but didn't know how to word what you were praying for?*
- ▶ *What does this passage say the Spirit does for us when we don't know how to communicate what we feel in prayer?*

The Spirit takes the things we don't know how to say to the Father, worded exactly the right way. He knows our hearts and loves to mold our prayers—no matter how weak they seem—on their way to the Father.

3 The Holy Spirit can be grieved or pleased by our actions (Eph. 4:30).

Read Ephesians 4:30.

- ▶ *What are some actions that grieve the Holy Spirit?*
- ▶ *What are some actions that might please the Holy Spirit?*

The Holy Spirit is pleased when we do the right thing and displeased when we fall into sin. Since He is a member of the Trinity, grieving Him is grieving God. Therefore, we must seek to honor Him with our actions.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What aspects of the Holy Spirit make Him a Person?*
- ▶ *What are some of the personal ways the Holy Spirit interacts with us on a daily basis?*

The Holy Spirit is so active in our lives in a personal way. We must seek to honor Him through our actions. And by honoring Him, we are honoring God.

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Essential Doctrine: Social Concern

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the Spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends, Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth (Mic. 6:8; Eph. 6:5-9; 1 Thess. 3:12).

Scripture: *Psalm 82:3; Proverbs 15:1; 31:8-9; Isaiah 1:17; Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 4:6; James 1:27*

1 God calls us to speak for those who have no voice (Prov. 31:8-9).

The marginalized and oppressed people in our society are often the ones without voices. Tragically, many people turn their noses up at different forms of oppression affecting people around us. Believers are called to speak up for those who have been silenced by society and promote the dignity of all people. However, we can't simply speak without action. Believers must be actively involved in helping the poor, defending the unborn, opposing racism, and so on.

2 Christians shouldn't be passive when it comes to social issues (Ps. 82:3; Isa. 1:17; Jas. 1:27).

One of God's most obvious traits is His justice. Everything He does is right, and He holds believers to high standards when it comes to matters of social justice. His commands are clear: to seek justice in the world and to care for orphans ("the fatherless"), widows and widowers, and any others who cannot speak for themselves. Therefore, Christians cannot be silent on these important matters; instead, we should take a bold stand and be vocal about bringing justice and a standard of morality into the culture around us.

3 We are called to stand for truth while showing compassion (Prov. 15:1; Eph. 4:15; Col. 4:6).

Even though it is important for Christians to share the truth of the gospel and care about social issues, it is equally important for us to do so with respect and kindness. We should never compromise the truth for fear of seeming "mean" or "intolerant," but we shouldn't be jerks for the sake of being right, either. That's why verses like Colossians 4:6 and Ephesians 4:15 are so important: they show us there is a way to do both. Phrases like "seasoned with salt" and "truth in love" encourage us to speak in a way that clearly communicates the truth in a gentle manner that will win people over rather than making them angry (Prov. 15:1).

Opening Activity

Begin by asking students to identify the top three things people are currently arguing about on social media, discussing on the news, or talking about around the lunch table. Then, ask them to give their own thoughts on these three issues. Invite them to think through the following questions:

- ▶ What does the Bible say about this issue?
- ▶ Does my opinion on this issue line up with what Scripture says? How does it line up? How is it different?

Many times, we have to correct our thinking because it is based on our own ideas of morality rather than God's perfect standard. Explain that God's will is for believers to care about social issues and think biblically about them and to influence the people around us to do the same.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "All the Poor and Powerless" by All Sons & Daughters (*Season One*, Integrity Music, 2012)
- ▶ "Come to Me" by Behel Music (*You Make Me Brave [Live]*, Bethel Music, 2014)
- ▶ "Hear My Heart" by Andy Mineo (*Uncomfortable*, Reach Records, 2015)
- ▶ "As It Is In Heaven" by Matt Maher (*Empty and Beautiful*, Provident Label Group, 2008)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Social Justice and the Gospel" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "Not My Problem" *Skitguys.com*

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1 God calls us to speak for those who have no voice (Prov. 31:8-9).

Option: Ask students to identify someone in their lives who is not entirely able to make decisions or "speak for" themselves (a baby, a person in a coma, an elderly person, etc.). Then ask them who is responsible for making sure this person is taken care of. Explain that Christians are called to care for these people and others (unborn children, orphans, single mothers, etc.) in various ways.

Read Proverbs 31:8-9.

- ▶ *What does it mean to be dispossessed?*
- ▶ *If God commands believers to fulfill these social duties, what does that say about His character and attitude toward us?*

2 Christians shouldn't be passive when it comes to social issues (Ps. 82:3; Isa. 1:17; Jas. 1:27).

Option: Show (or describe) a sad commercial such as a commercial for a hunger relief program or the ASPCA commercial with Sarah McLachlan. Ask students to describe how they feel during these commercials. Are they compelled to do something? In the same way, when we see injustice in the world around us, it should move us to compassion and action.

- ▶ *What is one social justice issue in the world that moves you?*

Read Psalm 82:3.

- ▶ *Name a group of people who are oppressed.*

It is important to mention that you should take action to help whatever social cause God puts on your heart, but you should also care about and pray for other social causes.

Read Isaiah 1:17.

- ▶ *How do we pursue justice for the fatherless or widows?*
- ▶ *What does it mean to "correct the oppressor"?*

- ▶ *What are some ways you have seen people do the wrong thing for the right reason?*
- ▶ *How can we as Christians fulfill both of these commandments while still showing mercy and compassion for those who oppress these groups?*

3 We are called to stand for truth while showing compassion (Prov. 15:1; Eph. 4:15; Col. 4:6).

Read Ephesians 4:15 and Colossians 4:6.

- ▶ *How can we consistently speak truth to others in a loving way?*
- ▶ *How do you respond when someone speaks to you out of anger? Have you ever been tempted to talk to someone in this way?*

We typically do not respond well. Usually, this means yelling back at the other person. However, even if someone speaks in a negative way to us, we are still called to respond in graciously and lovingly. This is far more powerful than retaliating in the same angry manner.

Read Proverbs 15:1.

- ▶ *Have you ever heard of the phrase, "kill them with kindness"? What does this mean in light of this verse?*
- ▶ *How can you use kindness to share a truth that might be difficult to hear?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Are you living a life that reflects these verses? In what ways?*
- ▶ *Are there any local organizations that support any of the causes you have talked about during this session? How can you personally begin to contribute to the elimination of these issues?*

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Essential Doctrine: Life After Death

The Bible teaches that when a Christian dies, he or she immediately is with the Lord (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8). This is what some people call an intermediate state, given that the final state for believers takes place at the future resurrection (Rev. 6:10-11). For those who are not in Christ, life after death results in being separated from Christ in a state of suffering, even though future judgment remains (Luke 16:19-31).

Scripture: *Matthew 3:2; 13:49-50; Luke 10:2; John 3:16; Romans 8:7-8; 2 Corinthians 5:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9*

1 After death, everyone who believes in Jesus will be with Him (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:8).

Heaven is God's dwelling place; it is reserved for only those who are righteous (Matt. 5:12). God is supremely holy, therefore He cannot be in the presence of sin. Those who repent of (turn from) their sins and believe Jesus is the only way to be made right before God will go to heaven when they die. They will be with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

2 Everyone who doesn't believe in Jesus will be separated from Him (Matt. 13:49-50; 2 Thess. 1:6-9).

There are only two possible destinations for a person after death: heaven or hell. No one can escape this reality, and once people die, there is no way to go back and change their destination. Hell, as the opposite of heaven, is a place filled with eternal misery and torment (Matt 13:50). It is for people who are not righteous, who have never repented of their sins or believed in Jesus as their Savior. God does not dwell in hell, but instead places His eternal judgment on the people who reside there. People do not end up in hell by accident or because God is unjustly mean; they go there as a result of their unwillingness to submit to Jesus' lordship while they were alive.

3 Eternal reality should motivate us to reach others with the gospel (Matt. 3:2; Luke 10:2; Rom. 8:7-8).

Christians should be telling others about the gospel for two reasons. First, Jesus has saved us we want others to experience the forgiveness and redemption He offers. Second, if other people do not confess their sins and believe in Jesus, they will inevitably be separated from Him for eternity. Furthermore, we do not know how much time we have left before we either die ourselves or Jesus returns to bring an end to the current age. There are still more people who need to be saved, but they will not get saved unless they hear the gospel and believe in it. This reality should give us an urgency to live out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) at any and every chance we get.

Opening Activity

Bring a helium filled balloon in front of the students. Explain to them that every one of us is a soul contained within a body, just like the helium is contained within the balloon. If we were to pop the balloon (at this point, pop the balloon), the rubber would fall to the floor and the helium would go somewhere else. In the same way, when we die our souls go to either heaven or hell, but our bodies remain here on Earth until the time of the future resurrection. How we respond to the gospel in this life is going to determine whether or not our souls go into heaven or hell.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "We've Got This Hope" by Ellie Holcomb
(*Red Sea Road*, Full Heart Music, 2017)
- ▶ "All We Sinners" by Passion
(*Salvation's Tide Is Rising*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow Records, 2016)
- ▶ "Let It Echo (Heaven Fall)" by Jesus Culture
(*Let It Echo [Live]*, Sparrow Records, 2016)
- ▶ "Heaven Come" by Bethel Music
(*Have It All [Live]*, Bethel Music, 2016)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "World vs Christian: Sheep and Goats" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Evermore" *Skitguys.com*

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1 After death, everyone who believes in Jesus will be with Him (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:8).

Read 2 Corinthians 5:8.

- ▶ *It seems like we wait a long time to be with Jesus once we are saved. How does it feel to know that as soon as you die, you are immediately with Him and nothing else will hold you back?*
- ▶ *Does this reality change your outlook of death? How so?*

Read John 3:16.

- ▶ *How does this verse give confidence to a believer in the face of death?*
- ▶ *Share about a time when you watched a Christian who was facing a terminal illness. How did that person act? Did he/she have peace about death or seem anxious? How did this affect you?*

2 Everyone who doesn't believe in Jesus will be separated from Him (Matt. 13:49-50; 2 Thess. 1:6-9).

Read Matthew 13:49-50.

Based on these verses, ask students to describe what they think hell is like. Encourage them to be as specific as possible.

- ▶ *Can you imagine spending eternity in a place like this, having no escape from the physical, emotional, and spiritual torment of God's judgment? Explain.*

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.

- ▶ *What words or phrases stick out to you in this passage? Why?*
- ▶ *Many people claim they know God, but how can people be sure if they genuinely know Him?*

3 Eternal reality should motivate us to reach others with the gospel (Matt. 3:2; Luke 10:2; Rom. 8:7-8).

Read Luke 10:2.

- ▶ *Have you ever been assigned to do a project or task for which you didn't feel prepared or equipped? How did you accomplish the assignment despite that?*
- ▶ *What did Jesus mean when He said that the "harvest is abundant, but the workers are few"? How can more workers be added?*
- ▶ *What did Jesus command His disciples to do first after hearing this? Why is prayer so important?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Think of at least three people in your life who have never placed their faith in Jesus. How does the reality of life after death motivate you to share the gospel with these people?*
- ▶ *What are some steps you need to take to make sure you do all you can to bring these people to a knowledge of saving faith?*

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Essential Doctrine: Mission of the Church

The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen king, Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the glory of God and the good of the world.

Scripture: *Psalm 96:3; Matthew 5:16; Romans 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Galatians 3:28-29; Colossians 3:15*

1 The church is called to spread the gospel to the world (Ps. 96:3; 2 Cor. 5:18-20).

The church is God's "Plan A" for spreading the gospel throughout the world—and He has no "Plan B." God instituted the church to function as His voice to all nations. Therefore, believers call all peoples to turn toward Jesus and accept His salvation.

2 The church is called to be a unified body (Rom. 12:4-6; Gal. 3:28-29).

The church is made up of many different people who are united by faith in Jesus Christ. God commands us to use our different gifts, talents, and abilities to serve one another in love. We are commanded to protect our unity with one another and be a testimony to the gospel's power to overcome threats to unity.

3 The church is called to be the visible representation of God's Kingdom (Matt. 5:16; Col. 3:15).

The church is a diverse body of believers who submit themselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Believers allow the rule of God to reign in our lives, showing the world what it looks like to be subjected to the King of kings. When the world sees our submitted lives, they will catch a glimpse of what it means to live in the kingdom of God. Through this, we pray they will see our good works and praise God for them.

Opening Activity

Select a group of eight to ten students come up to the front and stand in a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder, facing one another. Instruct them to reach out with their right hands and grab the hand of someone across from them. Then, instruct them to do the same with their left hands. Set a time limit, and tell students to attempt to untangle themselves without releasing their hands at any point. Explain how they will have to be unified, patient, and good communicators if they want to untangle themselves. The church has a responsibility to do the same if we hope to accomplish the purposes God has given us.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" by Hillsong UNITED (*Zion*, Hillsong Music Australia, 2013)
- ▶ "You Make Me Brave" by Behtel Music (*You Make Me Brave [Live]*, Bethel Music, 2014)
- ▶ "Open Up the Heavens" by Meredith Andrews (*Worth It All*, Word Entertainment, 2012)
- ▶ "City of Hope" by Amanda Cook (*Brave New World*, Bethel Music, 2015)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Awake O Sleeper" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "This Is Church" *Skitguys.com*

This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that all humanity has inherited a sin nature that can only be overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit. 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: Mission of the Church

The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen king, Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the glory of God and the good of the world.

1 The church is called to spread the gospel to the world (Ps. 96:3; 2 Cor. 5:18-20).

Option: Invite students to think of a time when they came up with a "Plan A" for something, but ended up having to resort to "Plan B." What happened to make them change their plans?

- ▶ *What is God's "Plan A" for spreading the gospel? Does He have a "Plan B"?*

Read Psalm 96:3 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

- ▶ *What does it mean to say that we have received a "ministry of reconciliation"?*
- ▶ *Who shared the gospel with you when you trusted Jesus as Savior? Are you thankful that person took the church's mission seriously? Explain.*

The church is God's "Plan A" for spreading the gospel, and He has no "Plan B". We have to take our call to impact others with the gospel extremely seriously.

2 The church is called to be a unified body (Rom. 12:4-6; Gal. 3:28-29).

Option: Ask students to think of a time when they had issues with another believer. How did they work out those issues? Ask them if they think it is important for Christians to work out their differences and why.

- ▶ *When Christians are not unified, what does it show the world about the power of the gospel?*

Read Romans 12:4-6.

Only the gospel has the power to unite millions of different people together in love.

- ▶ *Does it undermine the power of the gospel when we allow petty differences to divide us from other believers? What are ways you have struggled with this in your own life?*

Read Galatians 3:28-29.

- ▶ *How does the gospel free us to love and be united with people who are different from us? How has this happened in your life since you became a believer?*

The gospel destroys the boundaries that divide us from other people and frees us to be united to other believers by common faith in Jesus Christ.

3 The church is called to be the visible representation of God's Kingdom (Matt. 5:16; Col. 3:15).

Read Colossians 3:15.

- ▶ *When we joyfully, willingly submit to the rule of God in our lives, what does that show the world about God's kingdom?*

As Christians, we have what the world longs for: hope, joy, and peace. We know these are only found through submission to Christ's lordship. Our submission to Christ visually demonstrates the source of these things to the world.

Read Matthew 5:16.

- ▶ *What reason did Jesus give for us to let our lights shine before men?*
- ▶ *When people see our good works, what does that show them about the power of God in our lives?*
- ▶ *How can you best allow your light to shine before others?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What does it mean to say the church is the visible representation of God's kingdom?*
- ▶ *What are ways you can pray for God to use your local church to impact the nations with the gospel?*

As the church, believers are God's ambassadors on Earth, set apart to share the gospel, pursue holiness, and love one another.

This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that all humanity has inherited a sin nature that can only be overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: God's Plan and Human Action

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

Scripture: *Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 48:11; Romans 8:28; 10:14-15; Hebrews 1:3*

1 God is almighty over all (Ps. 115:3; Heb. 1:3).

Nothing in the universe is outside of God's direct control. God's involvement in the universe isn't passive; He is actively working all things according to His plan. Even the most insignificant event, like a leaf falling to the ground, is directly decreed by God. There isn't one molecule in the universe that isn't under the sovereign God's will. This should give us comfort in knowing nothing can stop God's plans.

2 God works all things for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28; Isa. 48:11).

Since God is in control, we can have assurance that He is capable of working all things for our good. A God who isn't sovereign over everything couldn't promise to work all things for our good because He wouldn't have any control. However, if God is in control of everything, we can have confidence that He can make all things work for our good and His glory.

3 God's sovereignty doesn't mean humans have no responsibility (Rom. 10:14-15).

Although God is in control over all things, believers still have to make a conscious choice to do the right thing. We can't go on sinning and blame God's sovereignty for our sinful decisions. We rejoice and take comfort in the fact that God is in total control, while we also make real decisions to follow His commands daily.

Opening Activity

Grab two chairs and stand with one foot on each chair, balancing your body between them. Explain to students the importance of having both chairs keeps you from falling into danger. If either one of the chairs is removed, you will inevitably fall and injure yourself. Both chairs are equally valuable and necessary for you to maintain your balance.

In the same way, one of the chairs can represent God's sovereignty and the other can represent human action (also known as man's responsibility). If you try to live in a reality from which either one of these concepts is "absent," your thinking will be flawed and lead to destruction. God's sovereignty does not nullify (remove) man's responsibility, and man's responsibility will never keep God from being sovereign.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Sovereign" by Chris Tomlin
(*Burning Lights*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow Records, 2013)
- ▶ "Relentless" by Hillsong UNITED
(*Zion [Deluxe Edition]*, Hillsong Music Australia, 2013)
- ▶ "Thy Will" by Hillary Scott & The Scott Family
(*Love Remains*, EMI Records, 2016)
- ▶ "Shepherd" by Amanda Cook
(*Brave New World*, Bethel Music, 2015)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Do you know your purpose?" *IAMSecond.com*
- ▶ "What Is God's Will?" *Skitguys.com*

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

1 God is almighty over all (Ps. 115:3; Heb. 1:3).

Option: Ask students to imagine the most insignificant happening they can think of (i.e. a leaf falling, an ice cube melting, etc.). Then, explain that even the most seemingly insignificant events are under God's direct control.

- ▶ *How does God's total control over all things expand your capacity to be amazed by Him?*

Read Psalm 115:3.

- ▶ *What other qualities of God help us take comfort in the fact that He is in total control?*

God is totally good, loving, merciful, and righteous, and all of this gives us confidence in His ability to rule the universe the best way possible.

Read Hebrews 1:3.

- ▶ *How does the reality of Christ's power change the way you view negative circumstances?*
- ▶ *Is there any amount of sin we can commit that can ultimately undo God's plans for our lives?*

If we could do anything to ruin God's plans for us, that would mean our sin was more powerful than our God, which we know isn't true. God has power to work all things—including our failures—for His purposes.

2 God works all things for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28; Isa. 48:11).

Option: This time, ask students to list off some negative experiences they have had (within limits). Were they ever able to see how those negative situations served a greater good? Are they still waiting to see how those experiences unfold? Explain.

Read Romans 8:28 and Isaiah 48:11.

- ▶ *How does the total sovereignty of God give us confidence that He will work all things for our good?*

If God is in control of all things, He is able to take any circumstance and work it for our good and His glory. God has no limits when it comes to His capacity to work good for His people.

3 God's sovereignty doesn't mean humans have no responsibility (Rom. 10:14-15).

Read Romans 10:14-15.

- ▶ *What does this passage tell us our responsibility is?*
- ▶ *Do you think some people use God's control as an excuse to be lazy in their spiritual lives? Do you ever do this? Why or why not?*

Sometimes people can look at God's sovereignty and think they don't have to work to share the gospel or fight their sin. But God's sovereignty should act as a motivator to push us toward good works. If it causes us to be lazy, we have misunderstood the doctrine.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *In what ways does knowing God is in control affect the way you view the world?*
- ▶ *How does God's sovereignty motivate you to do more good works?*

If God is almighty over all things, we can take comfort in knowing He will work all things for our good and His glory. Therefore, we can feel all the more emboldened to take risks for Him, share the gospel with others, and live a life that bears good fruit.

This midweek study will explore the doctrine of Jesus' humanity. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video idea 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: Isaiah 7:14; Luke 2:15-20; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 4:2

1 Jesus is 100 percent man (Luke 2:15-20; 1 John 4:2).

Jesus was not a half-and-half mixture of God and man. He was both 100 percent God and 100 percent man. Jesus has, and had, both a human nature and a divine nature. His human nature was much like ours in that He got hungry (Matt. 4:2), He got tired (Matt. 8:24), He got thirsty (John 19:28), and He was born of a woman (Gal. 4:4). He also experienced emotions and battled temptation like we do (Heb. 4:15).

2 The Old Testament promised that the Messiah would be a man (Isa. 7:14; 53:2-3).

God sent Jesus in the form of a man because it was necessary for Him to be a man if He was going to save us. As a man, Jesus experienced the same struggles, temptations, and pains we experience, but remained righteous through them all. And because of His righteousness, He was able to stand in our place and absorb the wrath of God meant for us.

3 Jesus is 100 percent perfect (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22).

The fact that Jesus is 100 percent perfect has two parts, and each part is equally important. First, He never did anything wrong during His thirty-three years on earth. Second, everything He did was always right. This is different from how we view normal human perfection, because even if someone doesn't do things we consider to be "bad," there are definitely other times when he/she might have an opportunity to do the right thing and fails to do it.

Opening Activity

Bring several pictures of different creatures (lizards, bumblebees, horses, cats, etc.) and one picture of a human being. Instruct students to list some similarities between these species, and then ask them to point out specific ways the human is different from the others. Ask:

- ▶ What makes humans unique?
- ▶ How can we know if something is a human rather than some other animal, insect, or reptile?

Explain that we have certain distinct features: speaking actual words in discernible languages, rational capacities, and most importantly, as well as other characteristics are all part of what distinguishes us from other species. Most importantly we are created in God's image. Explain that, because Jesus was human, He also had all these characteristics, and many more.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Jesus, Son of God" by Passion
(*White Flag [Deluxe Edition]*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow Records, 2012)
- ▶ "Your Great Name" by Natalie Grant
(*Love Revolution*, Curb Records, 2011)
- ▶ "You Are I Am" by MercyMe
(*The Hurt & The Healer*, Fair Trade Services, 2012)
- ▶ "Man of Sorrows" by Ellie Holcomb
(*Red Sea Road*, Full Heart Records, 2017)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Fully Human, Fully God" *Skitguys.com*

This midweek study will explore the doctrine of Jesus' humanity. 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: 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).

1 Jesus is 100 percent man (Luke 2:15-20; 1 John 4:2).

Read Luke 2:15-20.

- ▶ How does this passage prove Jesus' humanity?
- ▶ Why is this event so important?

Think about this: Every human who has ever existed began by being conceived in his/her mother's womb and born nine months later. Birth is the first major visible sign someone has life.

Read 1 John 4:2.

- ▶ What did John mean when he said the Spirit of God acknowledges Jesus being from God? How do we acknowledge this?
- ▶ What is the consequence for not acknowledging Jesus came in the form of a man?

2 The Old Testament promised that the Messiah would be a man (Isa. 7:14; 53:2-3).

Option: Ask students what they think is the most difficult part about being a human. Explain how Jesus felt emotions and dealt with difficulties just like we do, so He can sympathize with us perfectly. He had to grow up, learn, and experience life just as we do now.

Read Isaiah 7:14.

- ▶ What two prophecies (or predictions) are presented about Jesus in this verses?
His mother was a virgin, and His name would be given the title *Immanuel* (which means "God with us").
- ▶ Imagine Jesus as a baby. How do you think He was different from you, your sibling(s), or any other baby?

Read Isaiah 53:2-3.

- ▶ Retell these verses in your own words, and describe how you think Jesus looked.
- ▶ What emotions do you think Jesus often dealt with?

3 Jesus is 100 percent perfect (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22).

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; and 1 Peter 2:22.

- ▶ List some sins you might have struggled with in the past or struggle with now. Can you imagine how Jesus felt in those moments when He was tempted, too? Explain.
- ▶ Why did Jesus have to be absolutely, 100 percent perfect?
God required a perfect sacrifice for the many sins of His people. If Jesus had any "spot" on Him (in other words, if He sinned even once), God would not accept His death as a substitute for our sins. Jesus would not be the Savior; instead, He would be just like us—only a man—and would have no ability to save us.
- ▶ How should you live knowing Jesus (your Savior) was perfect? (Hint: Read Rom. 6:1.)

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ What do these facts ultimately tell us about Jesus? How does knowing these things affect the way you think about Him?

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

Essential Doctrine: Calling

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

Scripture: *Mark 16:15; John 3:1-8; 16:8-11; 2 Timothy 1:8-12*

1 God's call is external (Mark 16:15; 2 Tim. 1:11-12).

God has called the church to go out into all the world to proclaim the gospel. As we go out, we proclaim God's general call to the nations. This is the call that happens externally through the proclamation of the gospel. To say something is general is to say that it affects all people. As we proclaim the gospel, the call to repent and believe reaches all we come in contact with.

2 God's call is internal (John 3:1-8; 16:8-11) .

The internal call refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who hear the gospel. The Holy Spirit softens people's hearts to rightly receive the gospel and brings conviction and leads people to repentance, applying the work of Christ to those who believe.

3 God's call is only possible because of the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8-10).

Christianity has a certificate of authenticity to prove that the message of salvation is legitimate—the gospel. Paul said our salvation and calling are real and authentic because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. His death brought our life, and His resurrection certified its authenticity.

Opening Activity

With students, compile a list of places to which you could be called. The list of ideas may include things like: being called to a birthday party, invited to an online game, called to a job, called back to a studio try-out or band try-out, or being called by a major sports team, and so on.

At some point, transition to talking about God's call on all of our lives as Christians—to spread the gospel to people of all nations. Explain to students that God has commissioned His church—composed of individuals like us—to share in His mission of making disciples.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Beloved" by Jordan Feliz
(*The River*, Centricity Music, 2016)
- ▶ "Unfinished" by Mandisa
(*Out of the Dark*, Sparrow Records, 2017)
- ▶ "Hills and Valleys" by Tauren Wells
(*Undefeated*, Provident Label Group, 2017)
- ▶ "Be the Change" by Britt Nicole
(*Britt Nicole*, Capitol CMG Label Group, 2016)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Contagion" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "Leave: Follow" *Skitguys.com*

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

Essential Doctrine: Calling

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

1 God's call is external (Mark 16:15; 2 Tim. 1:11-12).

Option: Ask students to imagine they are in class and the intercom comes on. The principal makes an announcement to the whole school. This would be a general announcement, meaning it is directed toward everyone.

- ▶ *What are some other examples of general calls/messages (state of the union addresses, public service announcements, amber alerts, etc.)?*

Read 2 Timothy 1:11-12.

- ▶ *How did Paul describe himself in these verses?*
- ▶ *How would you describe your calling through the gospel to service and mission?*

Read Mark 16:15.

- ▶ *What did Jesus mean when He said "all creation"?*
We have been called by God to proclaim the good news to all the people we come in contact with. We should always be looking for opportunities to impact people with the gospel.

2 God's call is internal (John 3:1-8, 16:8-11).

Read John 3:1-8.

- ▶ *According to Jesus, how important is the work of the Holy Spirit in being born again?*
The Holy Spirit brings about spiritual change. When believers are saved, the Holy Spirit has convicted us of our sinfulness and our need for a Savior.

Read John 16:8-11.

- ▶ *According to Jesus, what is another role the Holy Spirit holds in these verses? Why is conviction necessary?*
The Holy Spirit's conviction helps believers know the difference between godly and sinful behaviors. When we get caught up in sin, He convicts us of our wrongdoing and our need for repentance. However, believers are still responsible for choosing repentance and godly behaviors.

3 God's call is only possible because of the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8-10).

Read 2 Timothy 1:11-12.

- ▶ *How did Paul describe his calling in these verses? How would you describe your calling as a believer?*
Though Paul was referring to his own specific calling in verse 11, the calling of every believer is essentially the same—first to salvation and also to service. The majority of Christians are not called to be preachers in the sense of pastoring a church, but all Christians are called to be people who proclaim the good news of the Jesus. Our identity in Christ is a missionary identity.
- ▶ *How does the message of the gospel—Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—stir up your faith and encourage you?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Explain how both God's external and internal calling are necessary in the task of missions.*

This midweek study will explore the doctrines of church and kingdom. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video idea to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: Church and Kingdom

The church and the kingdom of God are closely related, though not identical. When the Bible speaks of the kingdom of God, it is referring to the reign of God in the world. The church is the people of God who live under His loving rule now, anticipating the full manifestation of God's kingdom in the future. The church's mission is to witness to God's kingdom, proclaiming God's message of salvation through Christ and demonstrating the power of the gospel through good works so that others may be brought to live under God's reign.

Scripture: *Matthew 6:9-11; 19:24; John 3:5; 18:36; Acts 1:8; 28:30-31*

1 The kingdom of God refers to God's reign over the world (Matt. 6:9-11; John 18:36).

God is the King of kings, and His kingdom transcends any earthly ruler or authority (Rev. 1:5; 19:16). His kingdom has always existed, and His authority is above that of any human ruler. God's kingdom is both "now" and "not yet," meaning it is invisible at the moment but will one day be established as an actual kingdom on the new Earth, which will happen after Jesus' second coming.

2 All believers are members of God's kingdom (Matt. 19:24; John 3:5).

Although God rules over everything, His eternal kingdom is reserved for those who have trusted in His Son for the forgiveness of their sins. Non-believers will not live with God in eternity as His beloved people because they did not honor or obey Him while they were on Earth (Rom. 1:21).

3 Our job is to spread the rule of God's kingdom all over the world (Acts 1:8; 28:30-31).

Christians have been charged with a mission of expanding God's kingdom through sharing the gospel. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, which is why the church is commissioned to take the gospel to the nations. We do this in hopes that all people might be saved.

Opening Activity

Ask students to think of a unique business idea. How can they ensure their product or service will be good quality? How will they spread the word about their product or service? Explain that the church spreads the good news of God's kingdom by talking (sharing the gospel) and performing good works (meeting the needs of those around them).

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Born Again" by Newsboys
(Born Again [Miracles Edition], Inpop Records, 2011)
- ▶ "Throne Room" by Kim Walker-Smith
(On My Side, Sparrow Records, 2017)
- ▶ "Wonder" by Hillsong UNITED
(Wonder, Hillsong Music Australia, 2017)
- ▶ "For the One" by Bethel Music
(Starlight [Live], Bethel Music, 2017)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "More Than a Label" *Skitguys.com*

This midweek study will explore the doctrines of church and kingdom. 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: Church and Kingdom

The church and the kingdom of God are closely related, though not identical. When the Bible speaks of the kingdom of God, it is referring to the reign of God in the world. The church is the people of God who live under His loving rule now, anticipating the full manifestation of God's kingdom in the future. The church's mission is to witness to God's kingdom, proclaiming God's message of salvation through Christ and demonstrating the power of the gospel through good works so that others may be brought to live under God's reign.

1 The kingdom of God refers to God's reign over the world (Matt. 6:9-11; John 18:36).

Option: Invite students to think about different kings and queens they have studied in history class. Ask them to name the most powerful king/queen who has ever lived and explain why they think this person is the most powerful.

- ▶ *How does it feel to know even God's "weakness" is stronger than the strength of any person who has ever lived (1 Cor. 1:25)?*

Read John 18:36.

- ▶ *What can we learn from this passage about the nature of Christ's kingdom?*

Read Matthew 6:9-11.

- ▶ *What does it mean when we pray for God's kingdom to come? Where is it coming from?*
- ▶ *What should believers do while we wait on God's kingdom to arrive?*

2 All believers are members of God's kingdom (Matt. 19:24; John 3:5).

Option: Ask students to name some clubs or organizations they are a part of. How did they gain membership in these clubs? Did they have to pay membership fees? Write an essay? Get a teacher's recommendation or be invited by someone else in the club/organization?

Read John 3:3-5.

- ▶ *Has your mom or dad ever shared with you the story of when you were born? How did they describe the scene?*
- ▶ *What does it mean to be born again, even as a teenager?*

Read Matthew 19:24.

- ▶ *The eye of a needle is the little loop through which you feed a thread, located at the opposite end from the point. How easy is it for a camel to fit through this space?*
- ▶ *What was Jesus really saying here? What comparison was He really making?*

Just as it is impossible for a camel to fit through a space that small, it is equally impossible for a person obsessed with their material belongings to accept Christ. Following Jesus is costly, and unless people are willing to see and embrace Jesus as more valuable than anything this world offers, they are not worthy to be called His disciples.

3 Our job is to spread the rule of God's kingdom all over the world (Acts 1:8; 28:30-31).

Read Acts 1:8 and 28:30-31.

- ▶ *When your parents or teachers give you a chore or task to do, do you immediately go and do it, or do you stall a little bit and wait until later? How are your parents' commands both similar to and different from God's commands?*
- ▶ *Define the word hinder." What hinders you from sharing the gospel with your friends and/or family?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What are some ways you can become more mindful about your role in expanding God's kingdom? What part can you play now?*

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

Essential Doctrine: Justification and Works

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

Scripture: *Matthew 7:15-20; Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:11,19; 5:16; James 2:17*

1 The purpose of the Law is to show us that our works won't justify us (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:19).

God gave many laws to the Israelites in the Old Testament, not as the means to be made right with God, but to point out our sin and need for a Savior. God designed a law no man could ever keep in order to show us that we could never do enough good works to be made righteous before Him.

2 Justification is by faith alone (Gal. 3:11; 5:16).

No amount of good works will ever be able to make us righteous before God, only faith can do that. Salvation by faith alone means we rely 100 percent on Jesus to provide the righteousness we need to be made right before God. Salvation by faith alone keeps any glory from going to us because we rely on faith in Christ's work, not our own.

3 Saving faith is not alone (Matt. 7:15-20; Jas. 2:17).

Even though we are justified by faith alone, saving faith is not alone. This means true saving faith will be accompanied by a life-change. When we have true faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit begins to work in our lives to produce good fruit and kill sin. If someone claims to have faith in Jesus but they show no life change, their faith might not be genuine. True saving faith will produce in believers a desire to honor the Lord with our actions.

Opening Activity

Ask students to imagine walking through a neighborhood and seeing a window with a big sign above it that says "Do Not Look Through Window." Ask what they immediately want to do. It's simple: They're probably want to look through the window. Now, point out how this desire shows them something about themselves. When they were presented with a rule, their first inclination was to break it. Why? Because we are rule-breakers by nature. We do the same thing with God's law. God gave a law, and our sinful nature wants to break it. So if our justification (ability to be made right with God) was based on the Law, we would be doomed. But, since our justification comes by faith, there is hope for us. When we place our faith in Christ, we are justified before God and made into new people who no longer want to break God's law.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" by Hillsong UNITED (*Zion*, Hillsong Music Australia, 2013)
- ▶ "How Can it Be" by Lauren Daigle (*How Can It Be*, Centricity Music, 2015)
- ▶ "Clean" by Natalie Grant (*Be One [Deluxe Version]*, Curb Records, 2015)
- ▶ "The Cause of Christ" by Kari Jobe (*The Garden*, Sparrow Records, 2017)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Wash My Feet" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Do Good Loudly" *BluefishTV.com*

This midweek study will explore the biblical notions of justification and works. 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: Justification and Works

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

1 The purpose of the Law is to show us that our works won't justify us (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:19).

Option: Ask students if they can recite the Ten Commandments in order. If no one can, see who can list off the most. Ask them to raise their hands if they have broken at least one of these commandments.

- ▶ *Do you think it would be possible for you to go just one day without breaking one of the Ten Commandments? Would that be difficult? Why or why not?*

Read Romans 3:20 and Galatians 3:19.

- ▶ *According to these passages, what does God's Law show us about ourselves?*
- ▶ *What do these verses tell us about the possibility of earning our salvation through works of the Law?*

The Law was given to show us we were sinners. Since the Law sets an impossibly high standard for righteousness, we are made aware of our inability to do enough good works to meet that standard.

2 Justification is by faith alone (Gal. 3:11; 5:16).

Option: Instruct students to imagine they are in a courtroom with God sitting in the judge's seat. If He asks them why He should let them into heaven, what would their answers be? There aren't enough good works in us to even stand a chance before God. Therefore, the only hope we have in standing before Him would be faith in the finished work of Christ on our behalf.

- ▶ *Define the word faith. What does it mean to have faith in Jesus?*

Read Galatians 3:11.

- ▶ *If our righteousness can't be found through doing good things, how does this passage tell us we will be made righteous?*

Had we been justified by good works, we would get some of the credit for our salvation. Since our right standing before God can only be through Jesus Christ, then He gets all the glory for our salvation. When justification is by faith, Christ gets all the glory.

- ▶ *Why do you think every other religion makes salvation about doing good works? What does "faith alone" say about the character of the one true God?*

3 Saving faith is not alone (Matt. 7:15-20; Jas. 2:17).

Read James 2:17.

- ▶ *What did James mean when he said that, without works, faith is dead?*
- ▶ *Do good works produce faith or does faith produce good works? Explain.*

True saving faith produces in us a desire to do good works. Good works don't precede faith, but faith brings good works. If we claim to have faith in Christ, but do not desire to live the way He has called us to live, our faith might be fake.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Allow someone to give a brief explanation about how a sinner is justified before God. How is this different from other religions?*
- ▶ *What is the relationship between faith and works? Which comes first?*

True faith in Jesus Christ produces righteous deeds in believers' lives.

This midweek study will explore what it means to have a new identity in Christ. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: New Identity of the Believer

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

Scripture: *Romans 8:15-17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:17,21; Galatians 2:20; 3:26*

1 When we give our lives to Christ, we become new creations (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20).

Becoming new creations doesn't mean we are turning over a new leaf. It means, we are different people at our core. As we continue to walk with the Lord, our desires, dreams, and ambitions will begin to change from focusing around ourselves to focusing on Christ. We will begin to hate the things God hates and love the things He loves. We will see ourselves wanting to kill the sins we once enjoyed. When people who knew us before we were saved look at us, it will be as though we are a new people.

2 We have been adopted into God's family (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 3:26).

Adoption is a beautiful picture of the gospel because that is exactly what God did for us when He saved us. He took lost, sinful orphans and brought us into His family. Being brought into God's family means we will receive an inheritance from our Father that is beyond any earthly comparison. It means we bear His name and will be conformed into His image. It means we have a Father who will protect us, lead us, and keep us until He finishes the work He started in us (Phil. 1:6).

3 Our righteousness before God is based on Christ's work, not ours (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21).

As believers, we have been declared righteous before God. However, this has nothing to do with any righteousness we have in ourselves. The righteousness we have before God is based on Christ's righteousness. When Jesus died, all of our sin was transferred to Him and all of His righteousness was transferred to us. When God looks at us He no longer sees our sin, but the righteousness of His Son.

Opening Activity

Ask students who some of their favorite superheroes are. Choose one character the students mention, and ask what the superhero's secret identity is. Ask students what the difference is between the character's hero identity and normal identity (for example, Batman and Bruce Wayne). Ask students to identify specific ways these two identities are different. Explain that your identity is communicated by how you act and what you do. The identity change that comes with being saved isn't the same as us putting on a mask and cape. Instead, we become something new altogether (sort of like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly).

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "I Know Who I Am" by Israel & New Breed (*A Deeper Level*, Integrity Music, 2010)
- ▶ "In Your Eyes (Acoustic)" by Hillsong Young & Free (*Youth Revival Acoustic*, Hillsong Music Australia, 2017)
- ▶ "Starlight" by Bethel Music (*Starlight [Live]*, Bethel Music, 2017)
- ▶ "Broken Things" by Matthew West (*Broken Things-Single*, Sparrow Records, 2017)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Propaganda" *IAMSecond.com*
- ▶ "An Interview with Israel Houghton" *BluefishTV.com*

This midweek study will explore what it means to have a new identity in 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: New Identity of the Believer

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

1 When we give our lives to Christ, we become new creations (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20).

Option: Think back to science class. What is the difference between a chemical and a physical change? When something undergoes a chemical change, it cannot be changed back into its original state (like baking a cake or burning a piece of paper).

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

- ▶ *When Christ changes us, is it like a physical or a chemical change? Why?*

When Christ comes into our lives we are permanently changed.

- ▶ *How do our priorities and desires change when we become new creations?*

2 We have been adopted into God's family (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 3:26).

Option: Do you know anyone who has been adopted? Does that person treat his/her parents any differently than you do? Of course not! They have been adopted into a new family. Their parents are just as legitimate as anyone else's. Christians are also brought into new families with a new father: God. Once you enter into God's family, you will never be cast out.

- ▶ *What does it mean to say God is our Father?*

Read Romans 8:15-17.

- ▶ *In what way does our adoption into God's family keep us from falling back into fear? Fear of what?*
- ▶ *What are some ways your new identity in Christ has taken fear from you?*

Once we have been adopted into Christ's family, we are His forever. We will never fall back into our spiritual deadness again.

Read Galatians 3:26.

- ▶ *How does this passage tell us we become sons of God?*
- ▶ *Does it always feel like you are a son/daughter of God? What makes it difficult to feel that way?*

No matter how we feel, God has made us His children through Christ. That can never be reversed.

3 Our righteousness before God is based on Christ's work, not ours (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

- ▶ *How did Jesus make it possible for us to become the righteousness of God?*

We can be counted righteous before God because of Christ's righteousness transferred to us. When we place our faith in Him, God sees Christ's perfect righteousness covering us.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *List some specific ways your life (identity, dreams, desires, etc.) has changed since you have come to know Christ.*
- ▶ *Think of some practical ways you can remind yourself of who you are in Christ everyday.*

Encourage students to always strive to remember who they are in Christ, and let that reality affect the way they fight sin, treat others, and worship God.

This midweek study will explore the doctrine 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. Therefore, missionary effort from all believers rests upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in Jesus' teachings. 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 supported by a Christian lifestyle.

Scripture: *Psalm 67:4; Matthew 28:18-19; John 14:6; Romans 10:11-15; Revelation 7:9-10*

1 All authority belongs to Christ (Matt. 28:18-19).

Jesus opened up the Great Commission by saying all authority in heaven and on Earth belong to Him. This is important for us to remember as we go out to share the gospel. Jesus' rule over all things includes the hearts of the people we minister to. It isn't our job to make them believe the message; our job is to simply plant the seeds of the gospel and let the Holy Spirit do the rest. We can go in confidence because we know Jesus is in control.

2 Our lives are filled with people who need the gospel (John 14:6; Rom. 10:11-15).

We have to come face to face with this tough reality: Hell is real, which is why people need to hear the hope of the gospel. So, we have to understand and feel the weight and importance of the message we carry. The decision to share the gospel with others could affect their eternity. No excuse we come up with can justify being silent when so many people around us are on their way to an eternity separated from God.

3 God deserves to be worshiped by everyone (Ps. 67:4; Rev. 7:9-10).

The main reason we want to go out and share the gospel with our friends and family is because God deserves to be worshiped by all people. Christians have been confronted with the reality that Jesus died for our sins, was resurrected in power, and defeated death once and for all. We praise Him for that, but we don't want to praise Jesus alone; we want everyone in our lives to join in with us. So, we go out to share the gospel because we want people all over the world to worship God with us.

Opening Activity

Ask students to share about their favorite sports team, movie, or band. Encourage them to tell everyone what they love about those things, as well as why other people should enjoy those things too. Then, ask them how easy it was to share about those things and why they think it was so easy to share about them. It is easy for us to passionately share about what we love with other people. If our hearts are filled with love for Jesus, we should love to tell others about Him.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "The Cause of Christ" by Kari Jobe
(*The Garden*, Sparrow Records, 2017)
- ▶ "For the One" by Brian Johnson & Jenn Johnson
(*After All These Years*, Bethel Music, 2016)
- ▶ "To the Ends of the Earth" by Hillsong UNITED
(*To the Ends of the Earth*, Hillsong Music Australia, 2010)
- ▶ "Enter the Gates" by Brian & Katie Torwalt
(*Champion*, Sparrow Records, 2016)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "The Skinny on Evangelism" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Unleashed for the Gospel" *BluefishTV.com*

This midweek study will explore the doctrine 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. Therefore, missionary effort from all believers rests upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in Jesus' teachings. 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 supported by a Christian lifestyle.

1 All authority belongs to Christ (Matt. 28:18-19).

Option: Imagine your father was king over the country you lived in. How would that affect your feelings about living there? Would it give you a greater sense of comfort knowing your dad was in charge?

Read Matthew 28:18-19.

- ▶ *How does Jesus' authority empower us to take the gospel into the world?*

If all authority belongs to Christ, we can be confident that He is in control over the hearts of the people we share the gospel with. Their acceptance or rejection of our message rests on Christ, not us.

2 Our lives are filled with people who need the gospel (John 14:6; Rom. 10:11-15).

Option: Imagine you saw a devastating tornado in the distance headed for your neighbors' house. You know they are sleeping, so what would you do? Would you remain silent or try to wake them up?

- ▶ *Why do you think it is so easy to remain silent about the gospel?*

Read John 14:6.

- ▶ *Do you think most people believe in the exclusivity of Christ revealed in this passage? Why or why not?*

If we hold in our hearts the only truth that can save another human from eternal separation from God, we should feel a sense of urgency to go and tell everyone we can the good news of God's grace.

Read Romans 10:11-15.

God has sent us into the world to proclaim the gospel so all men would believe in Him.

- ▶ *Who in your life you know needs to hear the gospel? What is stopping you from having a gospel-centered conversation with those people?*

3 God deserves to be worshiped by everyone (Ps. 67:4; Rev. 7:9-10).

Read Psalm 67:4.

The reason we go is simple: so that all people would worship God.

- ▶ *Is it difficult to tell people about things you love (sports, movies, music, etc.)? Why or why not?*

When we talk about Jesus, we are talking about someone we love. When other people see our joy in Christ, they will want to share in that joy with us.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How will our love for others motivate us to share the gospel with them?*
- ▶ *Take a few minutes to practice sharing the gospel with a partner.*

This midweek study will explore the doctrine 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: *Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 11:1*

1 God calls us to make disciples (Matt. 28:19).

Jesus doesn't just want us to make converts, He wants us to make disciples. The difference is that we walk with disciples after they make a profession of faith. When we share the gospel, our work doesn't end because others believe in Jesus. God wants us to model for those people what following Jesus looks like on a daily basis. This can be done both through relationship building and Bible teaching. Discipleship is a process designed around the end goal of helping people become like Jesus.

2 God calls us to be disciples (1 Cor. 11:1).

No one graduates from being a disciple. All people need to have someone who consistently disciples them. We all need strong, more mature believers who can pour into us and help us through our spiritual journey. If we want to be disciples who are filled and equipped to go out and make disciples ourselves, then we need others who pour into us and model what discipleship looks like.

3 Discipleship involves being globally minded (Acts 1:8).

Discipleship is the way God decided to spread the gospel throughout the world. Jesus specifically instructed us to go and make disciples of "all nations." To do this, we can pack up and go out to the nations to make disciples, but we can also make disciples of all nations by discipling and training up other people who will go out into the nations. Discipleship was intended to be a cycle. We make disciples, who make disciples, who also make disciples, and so on. When we make disciples faithfully, the nations will be impacted with the gospel.

Opening Activity

Ask for a volunteer to work a couple of multiplication problems. Start out by asking them what one multiplied by two is. When they answer "two," tell them to multiply two by four. When they say "eight," ask them what eight by sixteen is (one-hundred and twenty-eight), and keep going until they can't answer. Do not allow the student to use a calculator. The numbers add up quickly. Explain that discipleship is a cycle of people who make disciples, who go on to make more disciples, and so on. If each Christian made just two disciples throughout his or her life, and those two disciples made two more, and the disciples kept multiplying, just think about how many disciples there would be. Just like our multiplication questions, you would be surprised at how quickly the numbers add up.

Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Overflow" by Hannah Kerr
(*Overflow*, Black River Christian, 2017)
- ▶ "I Will Follow" by Chris Tomlin
(*And If Our God Is For Us...*, sixstepsrecords/Sparrow Records, 2010)
- ▶ "We Are" by Kari Jobe
(*Where I Find You*, Sparrow Records, 2012)
- ▶ "Sons and Daughters" by Matt Maher
(*Saints and Sinners*, Provident Label Group, 2015)

Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Discipleship Clones" BluefishTV.com
- ▶ "Disciples: Disciple" Skitguys.com

This midweek study will explore the doctrine 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 God calls us to make disciples (Matt. 28:19).

Option: Ask students to share some specific fears they have about disciple-making.

- ▶ *What are ways we can overcome those fears and begin impacting people with the gospel through discipling relationships?*

Read Matthew 28:19.

- ▶ *What is the difference between a disciple and a convert?*
A convert refers to someone who becomes a Christ-follower. A disciple refers to the active, daily following of Christ for each believer.

2 God calls us to be disciples (1 Cor. 11:1).

Option: Ask students to share about the person who has been the most influential in their spiritual lives since they got saved. Instruct them to explain what made this person so influential.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:1.

- ▶ *Why would Paul tell the Corinthians to imitate him?*
Paul could tell them to imitate him because his life was a constant imitation of Christ.
- ▶ *Who has a spiritual walk you could imitate? What about this person makes you believe they have a strong spiritual life?*
- ▶ *Is your life worthy of being imitated by someone else? Why or why not?*

3 Discipleship involves being globally minded (Acts 1:8).

Read Acts 1:8.

Think about the fact that the gospel started with twelve men in Jerusalem and somehow ended up reaching you thousands of years later. This is the effect discipleship can have.

- ▶ *Is it ever difficult to think outside of the context in which you live? Why or why not?*

Global discipleship isn't just for the spiritual elite; it is for all believers who are passionate about spreading the name of Jesus all over the world.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What would it look like if all Christians in the world devoted themselves to making just two disciples?*

If we became serious about making disciples, the ways God could use that obedience to impact people all over the world are limitless.