

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

### Essential Doctrine: New Identity of the Believer

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

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 36:26-27; Romans 4:5; 5:1; 6:4; 8:15-17; 2 Corinthians 5:17,21; Ephesians 2:1-3,19; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:10; 1 John 4:18

### 1 A Christian is a child of God. (Rom. 8:15-17; Eph. 2:1-3,19; Heb. 12:10; 1 John 4:18)

When we trust Christ for salvation we go from being enemies of God to greatly loved members of His family. It's a radical displacement of the best kind. As adopted sons and daughters, we no longer go through life fearing God's punishment, because His perfect love casts out fear. He may discipline us for our good, but it is only and always for our good. Moreover, our future is incredibly bright. We are heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, which means that we are eternally secure and blessed beyond measure. There is nothing more identity affirming than knowing you are a child of God.

### 2 A Christian has received the righteousness of Christ. (Rom. 4:5; 5:1; 2 Cor. 5:21)

If our adoption cures our alienation from God, then justification, or being declared righteous on account of Christ, resolves our guilt problem. The perfect law of God, which only Christ can fulfill, stands against us. We feel guilty, and we are guilty. Faith in Christ sets us free from the law's condemnation. He was punished for our sins so that we might receive His perfect record. He not only took the punishment we deserved, but also gave us His perfect righteousness. Sometimes referred to as "the great exchange," justification by faith frees us from a guilty conscience so that we might live for God.

### 3 A Christian is a new creation. (Ezek. 36:26-27; Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:13)

When God saves us He doesn't just make a few small tweaks to our personality or habits. Instead, a complete overhaul takes place, beginning with the gift of a new heart. With a new heart, our desires begin to change. Instead of pursuing our own selfish ends, we begin to want what God wants. The experience of His love, grace, goodness, and power has a transformative effect on us. The new self aims at becoming more and more like Christ and is empowered by His Spirit to set aside old ways of living and embrace the new life God has for us.

### Opening Activity

Ask students if they've ever seen the popular home improvement show Fixer Upper. Explain the premise of the show and then ask the students why they think the show is so popular. What is it about transformation that resonates with us? How are people like broken-down homes that need to be fixed up? How are people different? Is the process of fixing up a home generally quick and easy or does it require a lot of hard work? What encourages people to persevere and finish the job? (Consider asking students to list some common things that might need fixing as well as some of the ways God might want to transform us.)

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "New Creation" by Leeland  
(*Love Is on the Move*, Provident, 2009)
- ▶ "Redeemed" by Big Daddy Weave  
(*Love Come to Life*, Word, 2012)
- ▶ "To Live Is Christ" by Sidewalk Prophets  
(*Something Different [Deluxe Version]*, Word, 2015)
- ▶ "I Am New" by Jason Gray  
(*Everything Sad Is Coming Untrue*, Centricity, 2010)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "We Are His" *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ "Identity" *Skitguys.com*

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### Essential Doctrine: New Identity of the Believer

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### 1 A Christian is a child of God. (Rom. 8:15-17; Eph. 2:1-3,19; Heb. 12:10; 1 John 4:18)

Invite students to call out some things they are tempted to base their identity on. Jot down the answers on the board or a large sheet of paper. When you've collected several, ask them what's wrong with basing your identity on things on the list (other than Christ).

#### Read Ephesians 2:1-3.

##### ▶ What does it mean to walk in the ways of the world?

To walk in the ways of the world is to live in such a way that you suppress God's truth and ignore His authority. In other words, you typically follow the crowd and your own selfish desires.

##### ▶ Whose authority are you under before becoming a Christian? Does that seem unreal or surprising?

The influence and power of Satan is not a particularly popular topic of conversation. This would be a good time to talk about how the Bible gives a version of reality that differs greatly from anti-supernatural thinking.

##### ▶ Why do you think the Bible paints such a bleak picture of unredeemed humanity?

Consider mentioning that we need to see the seriousness of the problem of sin and rebellion against God if we want to understand and appreciate the miracle of God's saving grace.

### 2 A Christian has received the righteousness of Christ. (Rom. 4:5; 5:1; 2 Cor. 5:21)

#### Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

##### ▶ Why is the sinlessness of Christ necessary for our salvation?

Only a perfect sacrifice could satisfy a holy and perfect God. Christ was a spotless Lamb, the perfect sacrifice (1 Pet. 1:19).

##### ▶ How is it that God is able to count us as righteous?

Because Christ is our substitute. When God looks at us, He sees Christ's righteousness.

### 3 A Christian is a new creation. (Ezek. 36:26-27; Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:13)

#### Read Colossians 1:13.

##### ▶ What is the "domain of darkness"?

It is living in the world blinded to the truth of God. It may sound harsh, but it describes the condition of unbelievers.

##### ▶ Why is the nature of the kingdom believers belong to?

It is living under God's loving rule and reign in this world and in the world to come.

#### Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

##### ▶ What is it important for Christians to believe they are new people? How does that help us grow?

First, because it's true—we are new people with new hearts and new desires. Second, because we tend to live out of our identity. In other words, we live up to our own expectations. When we believe that God has changed us and expect Him to continue changing us, we're much more cooperative in the process.

#### WRAP IT UP

Who we are in Christ should define us. If we find our identity in the shifting sands of the world, we'll never be secure and steady, much less joyful. There might not be anything more important to our walk with God than understanding who we are in Christ.

##### ▶ How can we grow in our understanding of our identity in Christ? What is working against us?

##### ▶ How can we help others trust in their identity in Christ, too?

*This midweek study will explore the biblical design of the church and God's kingdom.  
Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas 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, in anticipation of 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:** *Psalm 98:4-9; Luke 17:20-21; 19:17; 1 Peter 2:9*

### **1** The kingdom of God is wherever people joyfully acknowledge and rejoice in the reign of God. (Psa. 98:4-9)

God's kingdom is composed of space and time—wherever the Spirit of God is at work to bring about or maintain peace and fullness. For example, the Kingdom includes the hearts of people, as well as racial reconciliation, responsible environmental stewardship, and care for those in need.

### **2** The church of God is the collection of people who joyfully acknowledge Jesus as Lord. (1 Pet. 2:9)

The kingdom of God is composed of the people of God—the church. The church transcends cultural and social barriers and is made up of those who have submitted to the lordship of Christ. If you have trusted in Jesus as Savior, then you are part of God's kingdom, no matter your age, social status, or nationality.

### **3** The church is, for the most part, responsible for the cultivation of the kingdom of God. (Luke 17:20-21; 19:17)

Though God holds the ultimate responsibility for cultivating His kingdom, the church is the main instrument for expanding the kingdom now and stewarding the kingdom both now and forever (Luke 17:20-21). The church proclaims the excellencies of God to one another and to the world, with the hope that they will trust Him and live out that trust in every way (social justice, beautiful art, cultural development, etc.). Individual Christians' faithfulness in promoting and stewarding the kingdom now is a direct reflection of their future responsibility in co-ruling the completed kingdom when Jesus returns (Luke 19:17).

### Opening Activity

Choose some random cultures across geography and time. Place students in groups. Assign each group a specific culture (smaller groups can assign individual cultures to individual students). For instance, maybe you assign one group Thai culture, another group the Iroquois, another group the Malays, another group the native Hawaiians, and so forth. Each group should take a few minutes to gather (either from memory or from the Internet) information about their assigned culture (music, architecture, art, values, stories, etc.). Gather all students together and ask each group to share about their culture.

Then, point out how each culture is a manifestation of the values of the people in that culture. Note that the people are distinct from the culture, though their culture is a part of who they are. Similarly, the kingdom of God is everywhere that Jesus Christ is valued, but the church is the people in that kingdom.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Build Your Kingdom Here" by Rend Collective (*Campfire*, Integrity, 2013)
- ▶ "Hear the Call of the Kingdom" by Keith and Kristyn Getty (*In Christ Alone*, Getty Music, 2006)
- ▶ "There is a Kingdom" by Laura Story (*God of Every Story*, Fair Trade Services, 2013)
- ▶ "Even So Come (Live)" by Passion (*Passion*, Sparrow, 2015)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "This is Church" *Skitguys.com*

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### 1 The kingdom of God is wherever people joyfully acknowledge and rejoice in the reign of God. (Psa. 98:4-9)

- ▶ *What is England? (Give students time to answer). Did your answers focus on England as a political nation, or as a culture?*  
Chances are your students focused on England as a political nation. Discuss how England is also a culture (tea, fish and chips, God save the Queen, etc.).
- ▶ *In what sense is England both a political nation and culture?*  
Note that either way, England is a visible entity. In the same way, the kingdom of God is a visible entity.
- ▶ *In what way is the kingdom of God a visible entity? What are some examples of how we can see the kingdom of God today?*  
You may need to give students some ideas, such as soup kitchens or hospitals or schools.
- ▶ *How will the kingdom of God be visible when Jesus returns?*

#### Read Psalm 98:4-9.

- ▶ *How is this passage a description of the kingdom of God?*
- ▶ *How does Psalm 98 show the kingdom of God is a place of full peace?*

### 2 The church of God is the collection of people who joyfully acknowledge Jesus as Lord. (1 Pet. 2:9)

- ▶ *What is the difference between England and the people of England?*  
The difference between England and the people of England is like the difference between the kingdom of God and the church. How would you define the church?

#### Read 1 Peter 2:9.

- ▶ *How does Peter define the church?*
- ▶ *What inferences can we draw from each of these analogies?*

### 3 The church is, for the most part, responsible for the cultivation of the kingdom of God.

(Luke 17:20-21; 19:17)

- ▶ *Imagine that China, the United States, England, Russia, and India each founded their own colonies on Mars. What responsibilities do you think the leaders of each country would give their colonists?*

Each colony would be interested in advancing its own culture and establishing itself on this new planet. In the same way, the church bears witness to and grows the kingdom of God on earth until Jesus returns.

- ▶ *What responsibilities would you give to the church to advance the kingdom of God? What responsibilities does God give to the church?*

Answers might include things like evangelism, stewardship, justice, reconciliation, and so on.

#### Read Luke 19:17.

- ▶ *What did the master say to the faithful steward here? By extension, what will God say to faithful Christians who have sought to advance the Kingdom?*

Our responsibility and authority will not end with Jesus' return, but actually increases. We will rule with Him (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:21).

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What are some small ways we can advance the kingdom of God this week? What are some big ways we can advance the Kingdom over the next ten years?*

*This midweek study will explore God's unlimited power.*

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

### Essential Doctrine: God is Omnipotent

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

**Scripture:** *Job 42:1-2; Psalm 103:19; 135:6; 139; 145:9,17; Jeremiah 32:27; Ephesian 1:11-12; Hebrews 6:18*

### 1 God's power is unlimited and He is sovereign over the universe He created. (Job 42:1-2; Ps. 135:6; Jer. 32:27)

God's omnipotence is difficult for us to understand. We are limited in virtually every way, but He has no limits whatsoever. He created all things, sustains all things, rules over all things, and is subject to nothing. He does whatever He pleases without restriction or obligation. Things that seem impossible to us are possible with God. In fact, they're easily done. The miracles we see throughout the Bible are nothing compared to speaking a word and creating a universe. The more we understand that God is all-powerful, the less we will be impressed by the power of governments, people, or anything else.

### 2 God cannot do anything that would violate His own moral perfection. (Ps. 145:17; Heb. 6:18)

An all-powerful God who wasn't good would be our worst nightmare. Thankfully, that's not who He is. He is absolutely good, kind, loving, merciful, faithful, righteous, holy, and the list goes on. He literally can do no wrong. The combination of an all-powerful God who is completely good should be a great comfort to us. The challenge we face, though, is the condition of the world and our lives due to sin. The pain we experience in this life, along with the lies of the enemy, can cause us to doubt God's sovereignty, His goodness, or both. When that happens, we need to trust what He sees and not what we see.

### 3 God's sovereign control of the world is for our good and His glory. (Ps. 103:19; 139; 145:9; Eph. 1:11-12)

We've said that God is all-powerful, in control, and good, but we especially need to understand that He is working for our good. He created us and calls us to Himself for salvation. He knows everything about us. He has good plans for us. And, thankfully, His perfect love for us is not limited by our many imperfections and failures. Our whole lives are lived under His loving care. There is no conflict between His glory and our good. In fact, pursuing His glory is our ultimate good.

#### Opening Activity

Ask students to consider how powerful the President of the United States is. Many would consider him the most powerful man in the world. Where does he live? How is he treated? What can he do? What can he not do? Is he always right? How long will his power last? How does the most powerful man in the world compare to Almighty God when it comes to power?

#### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Same Power" by Jeremy Camp  
(*I Will Follow*, Stolen Pride, 2015)
- ▶ "Indescribable" by Laura Story  
(*Great God Who Saves*, Fair Trade Services, 2008)
- ▶ "Mighty Fortress" by Matt Maher  
(*All the People Said Amen [Live]*, Provident, 2013)
- ▶ "God You Reign" by Lincoln Brewster  
(*Today Is the Day*, Integrity, 2010)

#### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Our Great God and King" *Skitguys.com*

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### 1 God's power is unlimited and He is sovereign over the universe He created. (Job 42:1-2; Ps. 135:6; Jer. 32:27)

Option: Invite students to call out some things they see or experience that make them think of God's power. (Perhaps a thunderstorm, the ocean, a tornado, etc.)

#### Read Job 42:1-2.

- ▶ *Job said that no plan of God's can be thwarted. What does the Bible tell us of God's plans for the world?*

Among other things, that the gospel will be preached to the nations and then the end will come (Matt. 24:14).

- ▶ *Job said that God can do anything. What are some examples from the Bible of God's power? How about from Job's life?*

Answers may include: The Israelites crossing the Red Sea, God raising Jesus from the dead, and so on. God allowed Satan to take away almost everything from Job, but then God was able to restore much of what Job had lost.

- ▶ *How does creation reveal God's power?*

### 2 God cannot do anything that would violate His own moral perfection. (Ps. 145:17; Heb. 6:18)

#### Read Psalm 145:17.

- ▶ *What do we mean when we say God is righteous?*  
He does what is fair and just. He always does what is right.
- ▶ *What do we mean when we say God is gracious in all He does?*  
God's grace is His undeserved favor. We receive good things from Him only as a gift, not because we deserve them.

### 3 God's sovereign control of the world is for our good and His glory. (Ps. 103:19; 139; 145:9; Eph. 1:11-12)

#### Read Psalm 103:19.

- ▶ *What is God's kingdom and how does it relate to His power?*  
God's kingdom is His rule or reign, in which He exercises His power for His glory and the good of all creation.

#### Read Psalm 145:9.

- ▶ *Why is it important for Christians to believe they are new people? How does that help us grow?*
- ▶ *In what ways is God good to everyone?*  
God's common grace is freely given to all people (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17). This includes being made in His image and having what we need to survive.

### WRAP IT UP

God would not be God if He was not all-powerful. If He was limited in some way, then He would be subject to whatever or whoever was limiting Him. Thankfully, that is not the case. His omnipotence is not just a theological concept; it is a great reality that should boost our confidence in His ability to help us in any situation.

- ▶ *How have you seen God's power in your own life? Is His power always flashy or can it be subtle sometimes too?*
- ▶ *Why do you think God restrains His power to immediately wipe out all evil?*

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

### Essential Doctrine: Priesthood of the Believer

God's intention for humanity is that we be a kingdom of priests, not just a kingdom with priests. Although God set up the priestly system in the Old Testament due to the sinfulness of humanity and people's need for a mediator, His ultimate purpose is that we come to God directly, through the mediating work of Jesus Christ, thus eliminating the need of another priest. Because of the work of Christ on the cross (exemplified in His tearing down the curtain that prevented access into the holy of holies), Christians are free to approach God with boldness (Rom. 5:1-5; Heb. 4:14-16).

**Scripture:** Numbers 18:8-14,20; Hebrews 10:11-18; 1 Peter 2:9,12

### 1 The Old Testament priesthood is a foreshadowing of Jesus' high priesthood. (Heb. 10:11-18)

The goal of the Old Testament priesthood was to point to Jesus. The repeated sacrifices were an indication of an incompleteness to the atoning work of the old sacrificial system. Yet, the author of Hebrews made it clear that Jesus offered one sacrifice (Himself) one time (at the cross) and is now our high priest forever. Because He is our high priest, He has made all of us priests.

### 2 We now are priests, enjoying direct intimacy with God. (Num. 18:8-14,20)

We often miss the gold in the law books of the Old Testament. God revealed to His people that the priests would have the great privilege of receiving the very best Israel had to offer. They did not receive any land for their inheritance because the Lord Himself was their inheritance. In the same way, we have a deeper intimacy with God now because we have direct access to God through Jesus, just as the priests did through the temple. The main difference is that no intermediary but Jesus is necessary for us. Since we know God intimately (Jer. 31:34), we experience the very best. He who did not spare His only Son, but offered Him as a sacrifice for us all freely gives us His best (Rom. 8:32).

### 3 We are now priests, bringing God to the world and the world to God. (1 Pet. 2:9,12)

A priest's job is to bring God to the people, and to bring the people to God. Because we are now priests, we are also now intermediaries between God and this fallen world, ambassadors for Him (2 Cor. 5:20). We are called to live and love and give in such a way that we show God's nature to others and invite them to come to the Lord.

### Opening Activity

Place your students into three groups. Tell them to imagine they are the hiring committee for their local village's new priest. Each group has been given a specific thing to write for the job ad. The first group should list the expected previous experience for the priestly candidate. The second group should write up the expected characteristics of the priestly candidate. The final group should write up the responsibilities the priest will have. When students have finished writing up their section, ask them to share it with the group.

Talk about what aspects of the experience, characteristics, and responsibilities line up with the Bible. Point out how Jesus fulfills these qualifications perfectly. Then move into how we are called to be priests. How are we doing on these qualifications?

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Christ in Me" by Jeremy Camp  
(*I Will Follow*, Stolen Pride, 2015)
- ▶ "Be One" by Natalie Grant  
(*Be One [Deluxe Version]*, Curb, 2015)
- ▶ "Pushing Back the Dark" by Josh Wilson  
(*Carry Me*, Sparrow, 2013)
- ▶ "Priceless" by for KING & COUNTRY  
(*Run Wild. Live Free. Love Strong. [Deluxe Anniversary Edition]*, Word, 2015)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "The Jesus Memo" *Skitguys.com*

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### 1 The Old Testament priesthood is a foreshadowing of Jesus' high priesthood (Heb. 10:11-18).

- ▶ We did a job description activity for priests earlier. What would the job description be for a priest in the Old Testament?
- ▶ How often were the Israelites supposed to offer sacrifices? Why do you think they were supposed to sacrifice so much so often?

#### Read Hebrews 10:11-18.

- ▶ According to this passage, how does Jesus fulfill the Old Testament priesthood? How is Jesus better than the Old Testament priesthood?
- ▶ Do you remember who qualified to be a priest in the Old Testament?  
Only the descendants of Aaron.
- ▶ If the family of Aaron were priests, what about the family of Jesus?
- ▶ Jesus is our high priest (Heb. 4:15), but we are now also priests, thanks to His consecrating us. How does this knowledge affect you?

### 2 We now are priests, enjoying direct intimacy with God (Numbers 18:8-14,20).

- ▶ Would you have wanted to be a priest in the Old Testament? Why or why not?
- ▶ What special privileges, if any, did Old Testament priests get? What special responsibilities did they have?

#### Read Numbers 18:8-14,20.

- ▶ Now, having read Numbers 18, would you want to be a priest?  
The Old Testament priests received the very best Israel had to offer. Their inheritance was God Himself. The very best we can have today is God Himself.
- ▶ Just as God was the priests' inheritance, He is also ours. The priests had direct access to God, and so do we. What are some of the ways we get to enjoy God directly through Jesus?

Answers might include speaking to God in prayer, His concern for the details of our lives, the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, and God speaking to us directly through His Word.

- ▶ What are some ways we take our direct relationship to God for granted? What are some things we can do to keep our zeal for God's personal fellowship?

### 3 We are now priests, bringing God to the world and the world to God (1 Peter 2:9,12).

- ▶ Think back to the job description we made earlier for a priest. If you had to explain the priest's job in a sentence or two, what would you say?
- ▶ I'd like to suggest to you that the job of a priest is twofold: to bring God to the people, and to bring the people to God. What do you think?

#### Read 1 Peter 2:9,12.

- ▶ Does this passage support the idea that priests bring people to God and vice-versa? Why or why not?
- ▶ What are two ways this passage tells us to bring people to God and God to people?

We can bring people to God and show them who He is by singing His praises, while behaving in a godly manner and maintaining a good attitude.

- ▶ What are some ways we can bring God to people?
- ▶ What are some ways we can bring people to God?
- ▶ How can we remind ourselves to rely on the Holy Spirit and not our own power as we seek to be priests in this present age? What specific promises can we trust for power and grace?

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ List the names of some specific people to whom you can be a priest this week. What specific actions can you take to be a priest for them?



*This midweek study will help students understand how God has preserved the Scriptures for the Church. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: Preservation of Scripture

God has chosen to reveal Himself to humanity through the text of Scripture, having inspired it and directed it to be free from error. God has also acted providentially throughout the course of history to ensure the biblical text is faithfully preserved for future generations. Our belief in the preservation of Scripture is supported by investigation into how the canon of Scripture was formed, and how manuscripts were faithfully transmitted throughout the centuries.

**Scripture:** *Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:18; 24:14,35; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 13:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Peter 1:24-25; 2:2; Jude 3; Revelation 22:18*

### 1 God reveals Himself through inspired Scripture.

(Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 1 Pet. 2:2)

God gave us the Scriptures so that we might know Him, love Him, and worship Him. The Scriptures teach us how to receive salvation through Jesus, which is the most important thing we can know. They instruct us on how to live a God-glorifying life. They give us hope, endurance, and encouragement when we face trials and challenges. They train us in righteousness, enabling us to do the good works God has planned for us. They help us grow in maturity and become more like Christ. They are highly valuable to us and evidence of God's great love for us.

### 2 God has providentially preserved the Scriptures for us.

(Isa. 40:8; Matt. 5:18; 24:14,35; 1 Cor. 13:3-4; 1 Pet. 1:24-25)

God has sovereignly overseen the preservation of Scripture. The New Testament writers considered the Old Testament to be Scripture, quoting from it frequently. They also knew that what they were recording was Scripture because it lined up with the Old Testament writings. The fact that we don't have the original manuscripts in no way diminishes the preservation of Scripture. The many copies we do have contain only minor differences, making it possible to confidently confirm the accuracy of Scripture. The Word of God itself testifies again and again to its permanence, indicating that it has been preserved and will be preserved forever.

### 3 God oversaw the forming of the canon of Scripture.

(Jude 3; Rev. 22:18)

Not only has God supernaturally preserved the Scriptures, but He also oversaw the forming of the *canon*, or *the collection of inspired books comprising the Bible*. The Church, influenced and empowered by the Holy Spirit, recognized which books were inspired and which ones weren't. When read by God's people,

the Scriptures testify about their own authority. The Scriptures were given for Christians once and for all—there won't be any additions to the Bible. God has included in the Bible everything we need to know for life and godliness.

### Opening Activity

Give out index cards to students and ask them to copy Psalm 23 word for word. When everyone is finished, have them exchange cards and then compare to the text to make sure it's accurate. (In most cases, perhaps all in such a small sample size, it will be.) Talk about how even if they were asked to do that for the whole Bible and there were some mistakes made in copying, it would be very unlikely for everyone to make the same mistake. We can trust the accuracy of the Scripture manuscripts we have.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Speak O Lord" by Keith & Kristyn Getty  
(*In Christ Alone*, Getty Music, 2006)
- ▶ "Word of God Speak" by MercyMe  
(*Spoken For*, Fair Trade Services, 2002)
- ▶ "Your Words" by Third Day  
(*Lead Us Back: Songs of Worship*, Provident, 2015)
- ▶ "Closer" by Charlie Hall  
(*Flying into Daybreak*, Sparrow, 2006)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Bible Brainstorm" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "The Skinny on the Bible" *Skitguys.com*

*This midweek study will help students understand how God has preserved the Scriptures for the Church. 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: Preservation of Scripture

God has chosen to reveal Himself to humanity through the text of Scripture, having inspired it and directed it to be free from error. God has also acted providentially throughout the course of history to ensure the biblical text is faithfully preserved for future generations. Our belief in the preservation of Scripture is supported by investigation into how the canon of Scripture was formed, and how manuscripts were faithfully transmitted throughout the centuries.

### 1 God reveals Himself through inspired Scripture. (Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 1 Pet. 2:2).

Invite students to call out some things they see or experience that make them think of God's power. (Perhaps a thunderstorm, the ocean, a tornado, etc.)

#### Read Romans 15:4.

##### ▶ *Why were the Scriptures given to us?*

So that we may have hope. If we read the Scriptures and walk away without more hope, we might be reading them through the wrong lens. We need to remember that all Scripture is ultimately about Jesus, and He gives life and hope.

##### ▶ *How can the Scriptures help us in tough times?*

The Scriptures give us a long-term view of life. We see that suffering is temporary and that God can bring good out of it in ways we never could have imagined. Joseph's life is a good example of that.

##### ▶ *What Scriptures do you find particularly encouraging?*

This varies for each person, but many people find the Psalms encouraging. Psalm 103 is a good one. Also, the Book of Galatians is an encouraging reminder of the gospel.

### 2 God has providentially preserved the Scriptures for us. (Isa. 40:8; Matt. 5:18; 24:14,35; 1 Cor. 13:3-4; 1 Pet. 1:24-25)

#### Read Matthew 5:18.

##### ▶ *Why was it important for Jesus to affirm the permanency of the Scriptures?*

Because some people were accusing Him of invalidating the Old Testament Scriptures. He said He fulfilled them rather than doing away with them as the religious elite suggested.

#### Read Matthew 24:14.

##### ▶ *How is the Word of God crucial to the mission of the Church?*

The gospel will be preached to all the nations before Jesus returns. The Word of God creates mission and fulfills it. The great Reformation pastor/theologian Martin Luther attributes all of his success in ministry to the power of the Word of God.

### 3 God oversaw the forming of the canon of Scripture. (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18).

#### Read Jude 3.

##### ▶ *Why is it important that our faith was delivered once for all?*

Because it indicates that Scripture is complete and sufficient. We can have confidence that God communicated in His Word what He wanted us to know. We are not lacking knowledge of His will or His ways.

#### Read Revelation 22:18.

##### ▶ *Why must we avoid adding to or subtracting from the Word of God?*

When we add or subtract from God's Word we potentially change the meaning in significant ways. Plus, we don't have the authority to do that. God's Word comes from Him, not from us.

### WRAP IT UP

You might not have thought much about the preservation of Scripture and how we can be sure that what we have is the Word of God. It's an important doctrine (and reality) because the world will always question the authority of the Bible. When we think of God's power and control, we tend to think of big, flashy miracles, but He works in quieter ways, too. He has supernaturally preserved His Word for the Church. He is communicating God, and His Word still speaks, giving us hope and changing our lives.

##### ▶ *Why do you think people question the preservation of the Bible?*

*This midweek study will help students understand how God's Word is without error and fully trustworthy in all it says. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: Inerrancy of Scripture

Inerrancy refers to the belief that the Scripture is completely truthful, without any mixture of error, in all its teachings, no matter what subject it addresses. Believing the Scriptures to be inerrant does not preclude the biblical authors' inclusion of observations from a human observer, the use of round numbers, unusual grammatical constructions, or varying perspectives on a particular event. It does mean, however, that Scripture is an infallible guide to salvation and that it is truthful in all that it affirms (Matt. 5:18; John 10:35; Titus 1:2; Heb.6:18).

**Scripture:** Psalm 12:6; 19:7; 119:89; Proverbs 30:5; Matthew 5:18; John 6:68; 10:35; Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:15-16; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; 2 Peter 1:20-21

### 1 God's Word is without error and is truthful in all it says. (Ps. 12:6; 19:7; Prov. 30:5; Matt. 5:18; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18)

Truth has fallen on hard times in our culture, but we can trust that what the Bible says is true. Rather than truth being a matter of opinion or perspective, it is a matter of reality. Truth corresponds with reality, and the Bible describes reality. God Himself is true, determines what is true, cannot lie, and communicates His truth through His Word. That doesn't mean the Bible is exhaustive—it doesn't directly address every issue under the sun—but it does say everything we need to know for life and godliness. And it does give us wisdom and principles that can be applied in any and every situation.

### 2 God's Word was recorded by people inspired by the Holy Spirit. (2 Tim. 3:15-16; 2 Pet. 1:21)

The Bible did not drop down from the sky, nor was it dictated to just one person as we see with Islam's Koran. Instead, it was written by many people over hundreds of years, all inspired by the Holy Spirit, who all told the same story of Jesus Christ. What this means is that the Bible was communicated through human personality. For example, Luke was a doctor and recorded events in great detail. His Gospel was shaped by his personality and background. Multiple writers and differences in perspective in no way diminish the truthfulness of the Bible. It's not hard for a God who created the universe to use different people with different personalities to record Scripture just as He wanted it done.

### 3 God's Word reveals His will and the way of salvation. (Ps. 119:89; John 6:68; 10:35; Rom. 10:17)

While the Bible doesn't tell us everything we'd like to know, it does tell us everything we need to know. It teaches us what God's will is through principle and commands, law and gospel. Most importantly, it tells us who Jesus is and that salvation is found in Him and Him alone. Having confidence that the promises in God's Word are true helps us trust Him when life is difficult and He seems absent. On the other hand, if we don't have confidence in the truthfulness of God's

Word, our faith will suffer. There's no higher authority and nothing else to hang onto. God determines the truth. If we can't trust what He says, we don't have a basis for trusting anything at all.

### Opening Activity

Ask students to name the best movie of all time. Point out that while there may be some consensus on some of the top films, it's still a matter of opinion unless you go by a more objective measure like ticket sales. And even then, there are plenty of bad films that make a lot of money. Then ask students to imagine if they were all asked to watch the same movie and then summarize what happened in it and what the movie was trying to say. Point out they would remember different things and take away different things. These differences would not necessarily be errors, but just different perspectives based on each student's personality, experiences, and so on. In some ways, that's how the Bible was recorded—through the individual personalities of each writer. The difference is, these writers were supernaturally inspired by the Holy Spirit to record what they did in a way that was natural to their own personality and experiences. What we're left with is God's truth communicated through human personality.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "We Are Listening" by Stephen Curtis Chapman  
(*Worship and Believe*, Provident, 2015)
- ▶ "Oxygen" by Lincoln Brewster  
(*Oxygen*, Integrity, 2014)
- ▶ "Remember" by Passion  
(*Salvation's Tide Is Rising*, Sparrow, 2016)
- ▶ "Lamp" by Charlie Hall  
(*The Rising*, Sparrow, 2010)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Rest in God's Word" [BluefishTV.com](http://BluefishTV.com)

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### Essential Doctrine: Inerrancy of Scripture

Inerrancy refers to the belief that the Scripture is completely truthful, without any mixture of error, in all its teachings, no matter what subject it addresses. Believing the Scriptures to be inerrant does not preclude the biblical authors' inclusion of observations from a human observer, the use of round numbers, unusual grammatical constructions, or varying perspectives on a particular event. It does mean, however, that Scripture is an infallible guide to salvation and that it is truthful in all that it affirms (Matt. 5:18; John 10:35; Titus 1:2; Heb.6:18).

### 1 God's Word is without error and is truthful in all it says. (Ps. 12:6; 19:7; Prov. 30:5; Matt. 5:18; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18).

#### Read Psalm 12:6.

- ▶ *What strikes you about the description of God's Word in this verse?*

Perhaps the vividness of the description. These are not just abstract truths, but concrete images. God's Word is utterly pure, completely untainted by error.

- ▶ *How can we remind ourselves that when we read the Bible we're not just reading a normal book but a book containing the very truth of God?*

One suggestion is to pray Psalm 119:18 before engaging with God's Word: "Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wonderful things from Your instruction." We need to approach Scripture with the understanding that we are under its authority—it judges us, not the other way around. We also need to recognize that we need the Holy Spirit's help to understand the Scriptures.

### 2 God's Word was recorded by people inspired by the Holy Spirit. (2 Tim. 3:15-16; 2 Pet. 1:21)

#### Read 2 Peter 1:20-21.

- ▶ *With respect to the inerrancy of Scripture, why is it important to understand that the writers were guided by the Holy Spirit? What does that tell us about the process that produced the Scriptures?*

It says that the Scriptures are of divine origin. Many people believe that Scripture must have errors because men wrote them. However, that leaves God out of the picture, and there is no good reason to do that other than an unsupported bias against supernatural involvement in the process.

### 3 God's Word reveals His will and the way of salvation. (Ps. 119:89; John 6:68; 10:35; Rom. 10:17)

#### Read Psalm 119:89

- ▶ *What does this tell us about God's Word? Is it subject to change?*

Times and cultures may change, but God's Word remains the same. In a turbulent world where not much seems stable, we can trust that God and His unchanging Word are steady as a rock.

#### Read Romans 10:17.

- ▶ *According to this verse, how do people come to faith or grow in faith?*

They have to hear the Word of God. Christians are called to share the Word with others.

- ▶ *What is the "message about Christ"?*

It's the gospel message that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead to save us. When we read any part of the Bible we should keep in mind its connection to the gospel, which is the very heart of the Bible.

### WRAP IT UP

Knowing that the Bible is without error and can be counted on to be true in all it affirms keeps our faith strong and vibrant. We can know the will of God—maybe not all the particulars, but enough to guide us and give us hope. It's safe to say that every confident Christian has great confidence in God's Word since the Scriptures come from Him. When we don't trust God's Word, we don't trust Him. For that reason, inerrancy is an important doctrine to understand and believe.

- ▶ *How can we grow in confidence in God's Word?*

*This midweek study will help students understand how God sovereignly cares for and directs all things for His glory and our good. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: God's Providence

Providence refers to God's continuing work and involvement in His creation. This includes, in various degrees, God's preservation of the created order, His governance, and His care for His people (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Gen. 8:21-22). Christians believe the world, and even the cosmos itself, is contingent upon God, incapable of existing apart from Him. Christians also believe in God's personal and direct intervention in the world—as opposed to a hands-off approach to creation—that affects not only the natural order, but also the individuals and events within human history.

**Scripture:** *Genesis 8:21-22; Psalm 4:8; 66:7; 103:19; 145:15-16; Daniel 2:21; Matthew 5:45; Luke 1:52; Acts 17:26; Romans 8:28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3*

### 1 God preserves and directs all of creation. (Gen. 8:21-22; Ps. 103:19; Matt. 5:45; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3)

The Bible repeatedly says that God is sovereign over the universe He created. He is in control of all things—seasons, weather, events, everything. He not only created everything, He sustains everything moment by moment. The “laws of nature” are simply a description of how God normally runs the world. He is free to do a miracle at any time. God's providence means that the world doesn't operate according to fate, but according to His will. Obviously, there's a lot that's wrong in the world due to sin. God has allowed sin for a time, but He is not the author of sin, and He will eventually create new heavens and earth free from sin.

### 2 God governs the world, including all nations and people. (Ps. 66:7; Dan. 2:21; Luke 1:52)

In ways we can't fully understand, God sovereignly rules over the nations, all rulers, and all people. This can seem hard to believe given how many nations and rulers and people are in rebellion against Him. While that's true, God still has the last word about what happens in the world. He's still in control. No one can thwart His will. That doesn't mean we aren't responsible for our choices—the Bible says we are. But beneath our choices lies the providence of God.

### 3 God cares for all people, especially those who trust Him. (Ps. 4:8; 145:15-16; Acts 17:26; Rom. 8:28)

The most personal and comforting aspect of God's providence is how He cares for us, His people. He provides what we need to live. He arranges when and where we live. He even brings good out of the bad things that happen to us during this life. Probably the best biblical example of this is the story of Joseph. Joseph was sold into slavery and shipped off to Egypt. He eventually became governor of Egypt, sustaining the people during a seven-year famine. What people meant for evil, God used for good.

### Opening Activity

Use the example of how an author or screenwriter can seem a little godlike in that he or she can create a story and generally determine what happens within the story. (That being said, even authors say they're not sure what their character is going to do. Despite doing the writing, they are often surprised by some of the things a character says or does.) Then ask the students to explain where the analogy breaks down. Here are some thoughts on that: God created everything, including imagination, so unlike human stories that borrow from various things, the story God is writing is truly original. Humans, more than characters in a book, really do have choices. While these choices are real, they are taken into account by God and His plan. Alternatively, ask students to talk about times when they've experienced God's providence, which is to say, times when they've been aware that life is not random and that God is active in their life.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “Good Good Father” by Chris Tomlin  
(*Good Good Father - Single*, Sparrow, 2015)
- ▶ “Trust in You” by Lauren Daigle  
(*How Can It Be*, Centricity, 2015)
- ▶ “My Savior My God” by Aaron Shust  
(*Anything Worth Saying*, Brash, 2005)
- ▶ “King of Glory” by Third Day  
(*Chronology, Vol. 1*, Essential, 2007)

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### Essential Doctrine: God's Providence

Providence refers to God's continuing work and involvement in His creation. This includes, in various degrees, God's preservation of the created order, His governance, and His care for His people (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Gen. 8:21-22). Christians believe the world, and even the cosmos itself, is contingent upon God, incapable of existing apart from Him. Christians also believe in God's personal and direct intervention in the world—as opposed to a hands-off approach to creation—that affects not only the natural order, but also the individuals and events within human history.

### 1 God preserves and directs all of creation. (Gen. 8:21-22; Ps. 103:19; Matt. 5:45; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3)

#### Read Psalm 103:19.

- ▶ *Why is it sometimes hard time to believe that God rules over everything?*

Sin and suffering obscures God from our sight. In this world, we see through a glass dimly. There's so much that we don't understand.

- ▶ *How can the Scriptures help us in tough times?*

The Scriptures give us a long-term view of life. We see that suffering is temporary and that God can bring good out of it in ways we never could have imagined. Joseph's life is a good example of that.

- ▶ *What Scriptures do you find particularly encouraging?*

This is personal choice, but many people find the Psalms encouraging. Psalm 103 is a good one. The Book of Galatians is also an encouraging reminder of the gospel.

### 2 God governs the world, including all nations and people. (Ps. 66:7; Dan. 2:21; Luke 1:52)

#### Read Psalm 66:7.

- ▶ *How is God's providence related to His power?*

God's almighty power enables Him to govern the world as He desires.

- ▶ *Why are the rebellious playing with fire?*

Many people in this world who don't love God and are in rebellion against Him seem to be doing just fine. The thing to understand, though, is that God will judge justly sooner or later. Psalm 73 is a helpful perspective in that regard.

### 3 God cares for all people, especially those who trust Him. (Ps. 4:8; 145:15-16; Acts 17:26; Rom. 8:28)

#### Read Psalm 145:15-16.

- ▶ *Who does God provide for?*

God provides for all living things, including people in rebellion against Him. His common grace extends to all.

#### Read Romans 8:28.

- ▶ *Why is this verse so highly valued among God's people?*

"All things" really means "all things." We don't know how God will work things out, and it might not even happen in this life, but we can trust that He's good and that He's working for our good.

### WRAP IT UP

Understanding God's providence is largely what faith is all about. We interpret life according to God's promises and His character. We relax, knowing that He is in control and just asks us to trust and obey.

- ▶ *Google and read through the lyrics of William Cowper's classic hymn, "God Moves In a Mysterious Way." Which lines stand out to you most? Why?*

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

### Essential Doctrine: Christ's Humiliation

Although God the Son was equal with God and worthy of all the glory God receives, He chose to humble Himself by taking on human flesh. He left His glorious state and came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), and experienced a humiliating death on a cross (Phil. 2:6-8) by becoming sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 53:9; Luke 2:7; 22:52-53 John 1:1-2,14; 18:20-23; 19:1,41-42; Philippians 2:5-8

### 1 Jesus humbled Himself first by becoming a human being. (Luke 2:7; John 1:1-2,14; Phil. 2:5-7)

Christians have historically understood the state of Jesus' humiliation in three phases: His incarnation, His passion, and His death and burial. What we can sometimes miss is that Jesus' incarnation was itself a humiliation. He who was in the beginning with God, and was God (John 1:1-2), took on the form of man (Phil. 2:5-7), and found His first physical resting place in a manger (Luke 2:7). The One surrounded by angels found Himself surrounded by smelly beasts; the One seated on a heavenly throne found Himself on scratchy hay and rough wood. It's both amazing and humbling that the second person of the Godhead became subject to same physical norms, pains, and nuisances that we experience today.

### 2 Jesus suffered torture, mistreatment, and injustice more than any other human being. (Luke 22:52-53; John 18:20-23; 19:1; Phil. 2:8)

After loving and serving people His entire life, Jesus was subjected to a sham arrest (Luke 22:52-53), a sham trial (John 18:20-23), and torture (John 19:1). If a crime's severity is measured by the status of the victim, no worse humiliation occurred to any human being in history.

### 3 Jesus, the Son of God, died, was buried, and rose again. (Isa. 53:9; John 19:41-42)

This final point might not initially seem like a big deal, but it carries major significance. The second person of the Godhead died. The perfect Lamb died. Jesus became man to experience death on our behalf. Not only did He die, but He also didn't have His own tomb. Instead, Joseph of Arimathea offered his tomb as Jesus' burial place (John 19:41-42). Consider the depth of humiliation the Son of God endured on our behalf.

### Opening Activity

Place students in groups of three to five. Ask them to jot down some ideas as you read the following prompts to them.

- What is the most embarrassing thing you can think of that could happen to a animal?
- What is the most embarrassing thing you can think of that could happen to a little kid?
- What is the most embarrassing thing you can think of that could happen to a CEO?
- What is the most embarrassing thing you can think of that could happen to a politician?
- What is the most embarrassing thing you can think of that could happen to God?

Allow time for each group to share their ideas. Point out that as the thing embarrassed gets bigger, the level of shame and humiliation increases. Once the students get to the seventh prompt, introduce the idea to them that God the Son experienced the greatest humiliation ever.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Death in His Grave" by John Mark McMillan (*The Medicine*, Integrity, 2012)
- ▶ "Glorious Day" by Casting Crowns (*Until the Whole World Hears*, Provident, 2009)
- ▶ "This is Love" by Kutless (*Believer*, Capitol, 2012)
- ▶ "Buried in the Grave" by All Sons & Daughters (*Season One*, Integrity, 2012)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "The Day that True Love Died" *Skitguys.com*

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

### Essential Doctrine: Christ's Humiliation

Although God the Son was equal with God and worthy of all the glory God receives, He chose to humble Himself by taking on human flesh. He left His glorious state and came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), and experienced a humiliating death on a cross (Phil. 2:6-8) by becoming sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

### 1 Jesus humbled Himself first by becoming a human being. (Luke 2:7; John 1:1-2,14; Phil. 2:5-7)

#### Read John 1:1-2,14.

- ▶ According to John, in what way did Jesus experience a degree of humiliation by becoming a human being?

Jesus is one with God and was with God since the beginning. Despite this, He became like us; He left heaven and came to earth to dwell among sinful man. He was still full of glory, yet lived in our broken world. God's one and only Son left the presence of His Father and His home and came to us.

#### Read Philippians 2:5-7.

- ▶ How did Paul point out the tremendous humiliation God the Son underwent by becoming a human being?
- ▶ What status did Jesus assume as a human being?  
Not a king or official, but a servant. Jesus set aside His royalty and "rights" as the Son of God and became like a slave.

#### Read Luke 2:7.

- ▶ In what way could Jesus' birth be seen as humiliating?
- ▶ When Jesus became incarnate, "reduced" to flesh, what kind of initial reception did He have?
- ▶ So how does the simple fact that God the Son became human show the first aspect of Jesus' humiliation?

### 2 Jesus suffered torture, mistreatment, and injustice more than any other human being. (Luke 22:52-53; John 18:20-23; Phil 2:8)

- ▶ What do you know about crucifixion as punishment? Why would this be humiliating?

A crucifixion was a humiliating experience. This punishment was so grotesque that the Romans typically reserved it only for slaves. Eventually, it became a popular way to dissuade criminal activity.

#### Read Luke 22:52-53.

- ▶ How should our hearts respond to God the Son being humiliated even the point of death? Even a criminal's death where His clothes were gambled for by soldiers?

#### Read Philippians 2:8.

- ▶ How did Jesus' death cause further that humiliation than becoming a human being and a servant?  
Though Jesus had done nothing illegal, He was sentenced to death on a cross and all of the humiliation that came along with such a punishment.

### 3 Jesus, the Son of God, died, was buried, and rose again. (Isa. 53:9; John 19:41-42)

- ▶ Have you ever been to a graveside funeral service where they lowered the coffin into the ground? How did the family respond when the coffin was lowered?

#### Read Isaiah 53:9.

- ▶ God died. How was Jesus' succumbing to death a humiliating act?

#### Read John 19:41-42

- ▶ In what ways was Jesus' burial in the tomb humiliating?  
It wasn't even His tomb, and He was buried in it because they needed to bury Him quickly.

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ Knowledge should be the wood that becomes fuel for the furnace of the heart. How does this lesson on Jesus' humiliation cause us to treasure Him more? To be more like Him?



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

### Essential Doctrine: Prayer and Providence

If God is in control and already knows the future, why pray? The Bible teaches that, although God has a plan for this world that He promises to fulfill, prayer is often the means God uses to accomplish His divine purpose. Even though God may know the end result, the means that lead to that end result will be accomplished through prayer. In this sense, it is true that “prayer changes things,” and it is also true that God uses prayer to change our hearts so that our will comes into conformity with His.

**Scripture:** *Daniel 9:2-3; Matthew 6:10; Acts 4:23-30; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Colossians 4:12; 2 Peter 3:12*

### 1 God’s sovereignty compels us not to refrain from praying, but to pray all the more. (Acts 4:23-30)

We look to the Bible not merely to learn *what* to think, but to learn *how* to think. We find one such instance in the relationship of God’s sovereignty (providence) and our prayers. Logically, we might think that since God is sovereign, we don’t need to pray. However, the Bible doesn’t allow us to think this way. For example, in Acts the new disciples had just been threatened with persecution if they continued to preach Jesus (4:23-40). They could have said, “God is sovereign, so he will work it out”; instead they went to Him on the very basis of His providence (v. 28). God’s sovereignty shouldn’t cause us to stop praying; it should increase our prayers.

### 2 We don’t simply rely on the promises of God; we also pray them. (Dan. 9:2-3; Matt. 6:10)

The Bible also shows us how to think about prayer in Daniel chapter 9. We should rest in God’s magnificent promises, but did you know we should also pray them? Daniel realized the promised 70 years were almost over, but he didn’t sit back and rejoice; he actively fasted and prayed for the promise to arrive. In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus instructed us to also pray for something that is already promised: the Lord’s return (Matt. 6:10). So don’t simply rest on the promises: pray them!

### 3 Prayer allows us to participate in God’s providential work. (2 Cor. 1:11; Col. 4:12; 2 Pet. 3:12)

Prayer is often the specific means God has appointed for his providential will. When we pray, we become participants in God’s work. Paul invited the Corinthians to help him with their prayers (2 Cor. 1:11). Peter indicated that our holy work (including prayer) can actually hasten the Lord’s arrival (2 Pet. 3:12). Finally, Epaphras labored in prayer for the Colossians (Col. 4:12). When we pray, we become partners in God’s mighty work.

### Opening Activity

If students have access to the Internet, ask them to find the “biggest fan” of a sports team, band, movie, or something else. Ask them to share about the fan they found and tell why they think this person is the biggest fan.

If students don’t have access to the Internet, place them in groups. Tell them that a certain team (or whatever other thing you can think of) is holding a contest to find their biggest fan. Each group should come up with a plan to show that one of them is the biggest fan. You can tell them they are limited to a \$500 budget to keep things from getting too extravagant. Ask each group to share ideas.

After the activity is done, ask them why people want to be part of something big. What lengths will people go to be part of something glorious? What kinds of things can we do to be part of God’s glorious kingdom work?

See if prayer comes up in their answers. If not, point out that prayer is one way we can participate with God’s sovereign work.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ “Need You Now (How Many Times)” by Plumb  
(*Need You Now*, Curb, 2012)
- ▶ “Desert Song” by Hillsong UNITED  
(*Across the Earth: Tear Down the Walls [Live]*, Hillsong, 2010)
- ▶ “In Your Presence” by Jeremy Camp  
(*Stay*, Capitol, 2002)
- ▶ “Lord, I Need You” by Matt Maher  
(*All the People Said Amen [Live]*, Provident, 2013)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ “What is Prayer?” *BluefishTV.com*
- ▶ “World vs. Christian” *Skitguys.com*

*This midweek study will explore the biblical doctrine of prayer and providence. 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: Prayer and Providence

If God is in control and already knows the future, why pray? The Bible teaches that, although God has a plan for this world that He promises to fulfill, prayer is often the means God uses to accomplish His divine purpose. Even though God may know the end result, the means that lead to that end result will be accomplished through prayer. In this sense, it is true that “prayer changes things,” and it is also true that God uses prayer to change our hearts so that our will comes into conformity with His.

### 1 God’s sovereignty compels us not to refrain from praying, but rather to pray all the more. (Acts 4:23-30)

Option: Ask students to discuss people or teams who have recently won a major competition. You may include things like The Voice, American Idol, the Super Bowl, the World Cup, or the NBA Finals. Many times a good team will be predicted to win again the next year, but past success doesn’t guarantee success in the future.

- ▶ *Imagine one of these winners decided to slack off after their success, saying, “We’re going to win anyway.” How would you motivate them to start giving their best?*
- ▶ *Consider that God is sovereign and in control of everything that will happen. Does this knowledge move you to pray more or less?*
- ▶ *How does being on God’s team parallel being on a championship athletic team? How should being on God’s team motivate us to pray like being on the championship team would motivate us to practice hard?*

#### Read Acts 4:23-30.

- ▶ *The religious elite recently arrested and threatened the disciples, then released them with a warning not to speak about Jesus anymore. How did they decide to address this threat?*
- ▶ *Look at verse 28. Does God’s providence discourage or catalyze their prayers?*
- ▶ *How should God’s sovereignty affect our prayers, if we model them after Acts 4?*

### 2 We don’t simply rely on the promises of God; we also pray them. (Dan. 9:2-3; Matt. 6:10)

#### Read Daniel 9:2-3.

- ▶ *What is surprising about Daniel’s actions? Why?*
- ▶ *If you were in Daniel’s place, how would you act as the close of the 70 years approached?*

- ▶ *Was Daniel’s praying for what God promised an act of doubt (as in he wasn’t sure that God would keep His promise), or an act of faith? Why?*
- ▶ *How did Daniel show us to “work” as God’s promises come to us?*

#### Read Matthew 6:10.

- ▶ *Is it certain that Jesus will return and God’s kingdom will come? If so, why do we pray for it?*

### 3 Prayer allows us to participate in God’s providential work. (2 Cor. 1:11; Col. 4:12; 2 Pet. 3:12)

#### Read 2 Peter 3:12.

- ▶ *If the day of the Lord’s return is set, why do you think Peter suggested we can “hasten” it?*
- ▶ *If prayer is a work we can do, just like Epahras and Daniel did, what is one way we might “hasten” the day of the Lord?*

#### Read 2 Corinthians 1:11.

- ▶ *How did Paul invite the Corinthians to work with him? What was the outcome of their work?*
- ▶ *How amazed would we be to get invited to take part of a magnificent team? How should we react to the invitation to participate in God’s sovereign work through prayer?*

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How would you answer someone who says, “God’s just going to do whatever He wills anyway. Why should I even bother praying?”*

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

### 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, and 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. (Micah 6:8; Eph. 6:5-9; 1 Thess. 3:12).

**Scripture:** *Leviticus 19:33-36; Deuteronomy 10:17-19; Isaiah 58:6-12; Amos 5:10-15 Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16-17; Matthew 22:37-39*

### 1 Social concern is one significant way we fulfill the command to love our neighbors. (Lev. 19:33-36; Micah 6:8; Zech. 8:16-17; Matt. 22:37-39)

Most Christians learn early on that the command to love our neighbors as ourselves is the second most important command (Matt. 22:39). However, they might be surprised to see the original context of the command in Leviticus 19:33-36. God instructed the Israelites on how to deal with aliens and sojourners. The original context called for the Israelites to be just in their economic and legal dealings with foreigners. This emphasis never went away. About 700 years after God gave this command, Micah called for us to do justice and to love (not merely to do, but to love) kindness (Micah 6:8). And even after the return from exile, once again God's commands emphasized just, gracious, honest dealings with one another as part of loving our neighbors (Zech. 8:16-17).

### 2 Our social concern shows the world who God is and what He has done for us. (Deut. 10:17-19)

While being commanded to love our neighbors with social concern should be enough, there are two God-centered reasons for social concern (Deut. 10:17-19). First, God Himself is concerned with equity and meeting the needs of the downtrodden and oppressed (v. 18), so we should reflect God's nature. Second, we were also aliens, enslaved by Egypt (for the Israelites) and sin (for us all), so we should empathize with the "outsiders" of our culture (v. 19).

### 3 Social concern is not merely for the recipients; it also is a means of God blessing us. (Isa. 58:6-12; Amos 5:10-15)

We might be tempted to think of social concern as primarily for others, but God actually views it as beneficial for the doers. The prophets Isaiah and Amos invited believers to do social justice in order that they might experience goodness (Isa. 58:6-12; Amos 5:10-15). Isaiah even said our light will rise in darkness, and God will satisfy us and make us like a watered garden (v. 11).

### Opening Activity

Ask each student to imagine he or she has just become the President of the United States. (*Tip: If you have lots of students, you can place students in pairs or groups of three and tell them they are members of the newly-elected President's cabinet.*) They are to create a list of "Top 5 Priorities," things they intend to do with their newfound power. Will they work toward world peace? Build up domestic energy? Strengthen the military? Give them some time to make their lists, and then let them share.

Now, repeat the same exercise, except instead of becoming President of the United States, they have accepted the highest office in your denomination (or church, if you're not in a denomination). What would they list as the "Top 5 Priorities" for the church?

See if social concern or anything like it (caring for the poor, justice for minorities, etc.) came up. Talk about why it did or didn't. Should it be at the top of the church's list?

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Do Something" by Matthew West  
(*Into the Light: Life Stories & Live Songs*, Sparrow, 2013)
- ▶ "We Are" by Kari Jobe  
(*Where I Find You*, Sparrow, 2012)
- ▶ "Give Me Your Eyes" by Brandon Heath  
(*What If We*, Provident, 2008)
- ▶ "Courageous" by Casting Crowns  
(*Come to the Well*, Provident, 2011)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "Social Justice and the Gospel" *BluefishTV.com*

*This midweek study will explore the biblical doctrine of social concern. 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: 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, and 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. (Micah 6:8; Eph. 6:5-9; 1 Thess. 3:12).

**1 Social concern is one significant way we fulfill the command to love our neighbors.** (Lev. 19:33-36; Micah 6:8; Zech. 8:16-17; Matt. 22:37-39)

#### Read Matthew 22:37-39.

- ▶ *What is the first, greatest commandment? What is the second-greatest commandment?*
- ▶ *What does it look like to fulfill the second-greatest commandment?*
- ▶ *How high would you rank caring for the poor and seeking justice for the oppressed when it comes to loving our neighbors?*

#### Read Leviticus 19:33-36.

- ▶ *What familiar command do we see in this passage?*
- ▶ *In the original context, whom did God want the Israelites to treat as themselves?*
- ▶ *Why does this make the command to love others as oneself surprising?*
- ▶ *If we look at verses 35 and 36, how specifically were the Israelites to love the foreigner?*

The measures refer to economic transactions of weighing out grain and gold, and the Israelites were told to treat them fairly in regard to the way they handled these resources.

- ▶ *What does Leviticus 19:33-36 look like in our culture? Who are the foreigners? How can we, as both individuals and as the church, ensure that they are treated with just balances?*

#### Read Micah 6:8.

- ▶ *This text was written 700 years or so after Leviticus. What priority has not changed?*
- ▶ *How would the text be different if we only had to do kindness, not love it? How does the “love kindness” command indicate our need for the Holy Spirit?*

We need Him to give us a new heart to enjoy doing good to the oppressed, and not just do it.

**2 Our social concern shows the world who God is and what He has done for us.** (Deut. 10:17-19)

Both Ann Landers and Samuel Johnson have been attributed as saying, “The true measure of a man is how he treats someone who can do him absolutely no good.” What does that quote mean?

- ▶ *Who would be the down-and-out (those who can do no good to others because of their low position) in our culture?*

Examples may include: Minorities, the oppressed, the forgotten, shut-ins, the homeless, the physically handicapped, the mentally handicapped, the poor, and so on.

#### Read Deuteronomy 10:17-19.

- ▶ *How does God treat those who can do Him absolutely no good?*
- ▶ *According to this text, for whom does God have a particular concern? Does His concern for them surprise you? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *If God has such concern for the downtrodden and forgotten, shouldn't we? What might such concern look like?*
- ▶ *According to verse 19, what is another reason we should care for those outside the spotlight of our culture? In what sense were we once aliens, downtrodden, and poor? How did God provide for us and meet our needs? How can we do so for those in need?*

**3 Social concern is not merely for the recipients; it also is a means of God blessing us.** (Isa. 58:6-12; Amos 5:10-15)

- ▶ *Why should we make social justice a priority?*

#### Read Isaiah 58:6-12 and Amos 5:10-15.

- ▶ *What promises did Isaiah and Amos hold out to us to compel us to social mercy?*
- ▶ *Who benefits from social concern? Is it just the poor and forsaken? Is it just the recipients?*

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What social concern are you interested in helping with individually? As a group? How might you stir up your church to good works for social justice in the name of Jesus (Heb. 10:24)?*

*This midweek study will help students understand how God divinely influenced the human authors of the Bible so that what they wrote was the very Word of God. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.*

### Essential Doctrine: Inspiration of Scripture

The inspiration of Scripture refers to God's direction of the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded His message to humankind in their original writings (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). Occasionally, this inspiration was achieved through dictation, where God directly spoke to the original authors. Most of the time, however, this inspiration was achieved through the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit through the personalities of the authors so that their writings can be considered the very words of God.

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 23:2; Psalm 1; Jeremiah 1:9; 26:2; Matthew 5:17-18; John 17:17; Acts 1:16; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Revelation 2:1

### 1 God's Word was recorded by people inspired by the Holy Spirit. (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-1:21; Rev. 2:1)

As we noted when we looked at the inerrancy of the Bible, God's Word was written by many people over hundreds of years, all inspired by the Holy Spirit, and all telling the same story of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are divine in origin. They are God's Word to us. Nevertheless, the Bible is communicated through human personality. With a few possible exceptions (Rev. 2:1), God's Word was not dictated to the writer, but came through each writer's understanding. Again, it's not hard for a God who created the universe to supernaturally inspire different people with different personalities to record Scripture just as He wanted it done while maintaining the various writers' active involvement in the process. In other words, they weren't just passive Scripture recording machines.

### 2 The actual words of the Bible are inspired, not just concepts or ideas. (Jer. 1:9; 26:2; Matt. 5:17-18)

The technical term for this is *verbal plenary inspiration* and it simply means that *the original words of Scripture are inspired*. Probably the clearest statement of this is Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:18 that "not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all things are accomplished." Jesus was referring to the original writings, but as we said when discussing the preservation of Scripture, we have plenty of reliable copies. Incidentally, if you've ever heard a pastor talk about the Greek or Hebrew meaning of a word, it's because every word in the Bible matters, and sometimes an English translation might not completely capture the distinctions of the original language.

### 3 God's Word is prophetic, transformative, and can only be understood with the Spirit's help. (Ps. 1; John 17:17; Acts 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:12-13)

We can't emphasize enough that the Scriptures are divine in origin. We read them differently than we read other books. They are above us and we submit to their authority just as we submit to the authority of their Author. Given the supernatural nature of the Scriptures, it's not surprising that we find fulfilled prophecy in the Bible (Acts 1:16). And we shouldn't be surprised that the Bible can change us unlike any other book (Ps. 1; John 17:17).

And because of the spiritual nature of the Scriptures—they are inspired by the Holy Spirit—we need the Spirit's help to understand them (1 Cor. 2:12-13). Our attitude toward the Scriptures should be one of reverence and humility.

### Opening Activity

Read the following definition of inspiration to your students: *Inspiration is the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something*, especially to do something creative. Ask students to name some inspiring people and some inspiring things. What about them makes them inspiring? Note that the people or things who inspire us create change in us, spurring us into action or making our emotions come alive. The truth is, we're meant to be inspired and to inspire others on a regular basis. After all, Jesus said He came to give us abundant life (John 10:10). That doesn't sound like we should be simply going through the motions. When we say that the Bible is inspired, we're mainly referring to the "God-breathed" nature of it. God spoke out His Word for us. While keeping that idea in mind, we can also talk about how the Bible is meant to inspire us in the normal sense of the word. Instead of approaching the Bible as a rule book, we ought to see it as a telescope for God's glory. And there is nothing more inspiring than seeing more of God.

### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Holy Spirit" by Francesca Battistelli  
(*If We're Honest [Deluxe Edition]*, Word, 2014)
- ▶ "Holy Spirit" by Kari Jobe  
(*Majestic [Live]*, Sparrow, 2014)
- ▶ "Spirit Speak" by All Sons & Daughters  
(*Season One*, Integrity, 2012)
- ▶ "Same Power" by Jeremy Camp  
(*I Will Follow*, Stolen Pride, 2015)

### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "World vs. Christian: The Bible" *Skitguys.com*

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### Essential Doctrine: Inspiration of Scripture

The inspiration of Scripture refers to God's direction of the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded His message to humankind in their original writings (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). Occasionally, this inspiration was achieved through dictation, where God directly spoke to the original authors. Most of the time, however, this inspiration was achieved through the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit through the personalities of the authors so that their writings can be considered the very words of God.

### 1 God's Word was recorded by people inspired by the Holy Spirit. (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-1:21; Rev. 2:1)

#### Read 2 Samuel 23:2.

- ▶ *David said that God was speaking through him. Sometimes we talk about God speaking through people today. What's the difference? What's the same?*

David's words were Scripture. (Note that the Spirit of God spoke through Old Testament saints, too.) Today when we say that God spoke through someone, we don't mean that what they said is on the level of Scripture, because the canon of Scripture is closed. We mean that what they said agrees with Scripture and was the right word at the right time.

#### Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

- ▶ *What does this tell us about the whole Bible?*  
That all of it is inspired and all of it is valuable, even the parts that are difficult to understand.
- ▶ *According to these verses, why are the Scriptures so valuable?*  
The Scriptures point us to Jesus and they instruct us on how to live.

### 2 The actual words of the Bible are inspired, not just concepts or ideas. (Jer. 1:9; 26:2; Matt. 5:17-18)

#### Read Jeremiah 1:9.

- ▶ *What does that tell us about the nature of inspiration?*  
That the writers of Scripture wrote down exactly what God wanted, down to the word. It wasn't just general concepts or ideas that God wanted them to communicate.

#### Read Matthew 5:17-18.

- ▶ *What's the significance of Jesus' statement?*  
Again, that the Scriptures are accurate down to the word. He also pointed to their prophetic nature—they will be fulfilled.

### 3 God's Word is prophetic, transformative, and can only be understood with the Spirit's help. (Ps. 1; John 17:17; Acts 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:12-13)

#### Read John 17:17.

- ▶ *How is the truth of the Word connected to our growth in Christ?*  
We are *sanctified*, or *made holy*, by the truth as it is in Jesus. He is the truth and the Word of God points to Him.

#### Read Acts 1:16.

- ▶ *How can this verse, and others like it, increase our confidence in the Word of God?*  
It shows the prophetic nature of the Bible, which indicates that it truly is from God.

#### Read 1 Corinthians 2:12-13.

- ▶ *What do these verses tell us about the Spirit of God?*  
They tell us that He enables us to understand spiritual truth. In other words, we can't understand the Bible on our own.

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *If you stop to think about it, the fact that the God of the universe has given us an inspired book telling us how to know Him and how to live is truly remarkable. Yet, we so often take the Bible for granted. It is so easily accessible to us. Most of us can even pull it up on our phone. As we conclude this study it would be good to remind ourselves what a gift we have in the Bible. The psalmist wrote: "Instruction from Your lips is better for me than thousands of gold and silver pieces" (Ps. 119:72). That's how valuable the Word of God ought to be to us.*

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

## Essential Doctrine: Worship

While many reduce worship to an event or the singing of worship songs, worship is first and foremost something of the heart and extends to all areas of life. The aim and focus of worship is God, giving Him the exact due of praise and adoration that He deserves. Worship should be carried out not only at a personal level within a Christian's life but also in joining with other Christians in the corporate act of worship and stewarding our gifts for the glory of God. Corporate worship not only serves to edify and strengthen other Christians, but it also serves as a witness to non-believers of the greatness of God.

**Scripture:** *Psalm 9:1-2; 34:1-2; 86:12; 138:1-6; Romans 14:17-19; Colossians 3:16-17*

### 1 Worship involves the entirety of our being, not merely musical or music-related expressions.

(Ps. 34:1-2; 86:12)

Worship is more than music—it involves the entire person. David opened Psalm 34 by saying he would always praise the Lord (not just when he sang). In another passage, David promised to give thanks (i.e., praise) with his whole heart forever (Ps. 86:12). While music was a normal part of his life (as it is for most of us), it was not all of his life. True worship involves more than music.

### 2 Worship delights in who God is and invites others to join in that delight. (Ps. 9:1-2; 138:1-6)

To worship God is to delight in all He is and to invite others to join in that worship. Over and over, the psalms relate who God is and what He does. David said he would tell about what God had done (Ps. 9:1-2). David also mentioned praising God with his whole heart (Ps. 138:1), and later in the same passage, the kings of the earth joined David in singing of God's ways (vv. 4-5). So David's praise (his delight in who God is and what God does) in the first three verses invited the kings of the earth to join in the delight of God's person and work—that's worship.

### 3 Social Worship includes a strong corporate element, not merely an individual one.

(Rom. 14:17-19; Col. 3:16-17)

In our individualistic culture, we emphasize worshiping God in the way we (as individuals) feel best, but there also should be an element in which we recognize the togetherness of worship. Corporate worship is more than the sum of our individual praises. Paul instructed believers to teach one another in spiritual songs right before he instructed us to do everything to the Lord (Col. 3:16-17). Therefore, our worship should be corporate, mutually edifying, and encompass all our lives. That's why Paul also said that the church should build each

other up in the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17-19). It's not just about our individual worship; it's about our growing together in our worship.

#### Opening Activity

Give each student paper and a pencil (colored pencils or crayons would be great, if available). Instruct students to draw entries for *The Visual Dictionary of Christian Terminology*, a wordless book that will be used to teach non-reading audiences (young children, pre-literate people groups on the missions frontier, uneducated people, etc.). They've been assigned to make the entry for "Worship." Allow adequate time for this activity. Then ask them to share their entries and explain why they drew what they drew.

Transition into the lesson by talking about what they drew. Was it mostly musical worship? Did they include other things? What common themes were in all the pictures? Suggest the idea that worship includes more than the use of music to stir up the affections for God.

#### Worship/Playlist Ideas

- ▶ "Desperate People" by Hillsong UNITED  
(*All of the Above*, Hillsong, 2010)
- ▶ "10,000 Reasons" by Matt Redman  
(*Sing Like Never Before: The Essential Collection*, Sparrow, 2012)
- ▶ "All Because of Jesus" by Fee  
(*We Shine*, Fair Trade Services, 2007)
- ▶ "Open Skies" by David Crowder Band  
(*Illuminate*, Sparrow, 2003)

#### Video Idea(s)

- ▶ "This Is about Jesus" *Skitguys.com*
- ▶ "Worship Jesus" *Skitguys.com*

*This midweek study will explore the biblical doctrine of worship. 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: Worship

While many reduce worship to an event or the singing of worship songs, worship is first and foremost something of the heart and extends to all areas of life. The aim and focus of worship is God, giving Him the exact due of praise and adoration that He deserves. Worship should be carried out not only at a personal level within a Christian's life but also in joining with other Christians in the corporate act of worship and stewarding our gifts for the glory of God. Corporate worship not only serves to edify and strengthen other Christians, but it also serves as a witness to non-believers of the greatness of God.

### 1 Worship involves the entirety of our being, not merely musical or music-related expressions

(Ps. 34:1-2; 86:12).

- ▶ How would you define worship?
- ▶ What do we mean when we say "worship music"?
- ▶ If you were deaf, how do you think you would worship?

#### Read Psalm 34:1-2.

- ▶ According to this Psalm, when would David bless (or praise) the Lord? Does David sing all the time? Then how can he worship God all the time?
- ▶ Using just these two verses, how would you explain that worship is more than music?

#### Read Psalm 86:12.

- ▶ With what did David say he would give thanks to God? For how long?
- ▶ How does this verse fit with the idea that worship is more than music?

### 2 Worship delights in who God is and invites others to join in that delight (Ps. 9:1-2; 138:1-6).

#### Read Psalm 9:1-2.

- ▶ What elements of worship from point 1 do you see in this passage?
- ▶ What made up the content of David's worship (v. 1)? What attitude comes in worship (v. 2)? Based on this, how would you define worship?

#### Read Psalm 138:1-6.

- ▶ In Psalm 9 David sang of God's wonders. What does this passage say about who God is and what He does?
- ▶ In what way did David express joy in this Psalm?
- ▶ In verse 4, who joined David in worship? Why is their inclusion significant?
- ▶ According to verses 4-6, why did the kings join in worship?  
There are several different answers found in verses 4-6.

- ▶ What attitude did the kings demonstrate?

They give thanks in verse 4 and sing in verse 5.

- ▶ At this point in our study, how would you define worship?

### 3 Worship includes a strong corporate element, not merely an individual one (Rom. 14:17-19; Col. 3:16-17).

We just saw how worship is not merely a genre of music. Now we'll see how it's not merely an individual thing.

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

- ▶ The word worship was not mentioned in this text. What elements do you see in the text that indicate worship?
- ▶ According to verse 16, who is involved in the worship? When they sing, to whom are they speaking besides God? What are they saying to one another?
- ▶ How should true worship be more than a bunch of Christians individually praising God? What can we miss if we worship alone?
- ▶ How might we teach one another in our worship? How might we admonish one another?
- ▶ How does verse 17 remind us that worship extends beyond music and the scheduled service?

#### Read Romans 14:17-19.

- ▶ According to verse 17, what is the kingdom of God? How are each of these three nouns significant?
- ▶ What connections can you make between righteousness, peace, and joy with teaching and admonishing one another in Colossians 3:16?
- ▶ According to verse 19, what are the implications of our togetherness for worship? What might it look like to pursue peacemaking and build up one another look like in this group?

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ If you were to draw the entry for the word worship in the *The Visual Dictionary of Christian Terminology* now, what would your picture look like?