

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

Essential Doctrine: Christ as Substitute

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

1 Jesus serves as our substitutional sacrificial lamb (Lev. 1:4; 3:2; 5:9).

- ▶ Why do you think so much of the Old Testament worship consisted of animal sacrifice?
- ▶ What were some of the different kinds of sacrifice? (Hint: Skim Leviticus 1–5 for some examples.)

Read Leviticus 1:4; 3:2; and 5:9.

- ▶ What common practice did the Israelites do regardless of the type of sacrifice?
- ▶ Why do they lay their hands on the animal just before sacrificing it (Lev. 1:4)?
- ▶ What do we mean when we say that the animal was a substitute?
- ▶ John calls Jesus the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). In what sense is a Jesus a substitute Lamb for us?

2 Jesus serves as our substitute in taking our sins upon Himself (Isa. 53:4-12).

- ▶ What are some of the most heroic substitutions you can think of from history or literature?

For example, think of Katniss volunteering in the place of her sister Primrose, or Sydney Carton taking the place of Marquis Evremonde at the end of *A Tale of Two Cities*.

- ▶ What makes these examples heroic?

Read Isaiah 53:4-12.

- ▶ Consider Isaiah's description of the coming Messiah. Would the Messiah's road be a pleasant or difficult one?
- ▶ Why was the Messiah punished so grievously?
- ▶ Look at verse 4. How is this an example of Jesus being our substitute?
- ▶ List other places in Isaiah 53 where Jesus serves as a substitute for us in some way.
- ▶ What sort of emotional response should we have in light of this grand substitute?

3 Jesus serves as our substitute in being our righteousness (Rom. 5:18-21; 2 Cor. 5:21).

- ▶ Have you ever experienced blessing in your life because someone else did something good? For example, maybe you were a benchwarmer for a team who won a championship, or you enjoyed cake at someone else's birthday party.

Read Romans 5:18-21.

- ▶ What is the "one trespass" that caused condemnation for everyone? (Hint: Adam committed the "one trespass.")
- ▶ Paul paralleled the "one trespass" with the "one righteous act." Who did the one righteous act?
- ▶ It's hard to identify one single act that Jesus did as the righteous act. What do you think Paul was referring to?
- ▶ Whatever the righteous act was (whether Jesus' entire life or His death), what was the result?
- ▶ So in what sense was Jesus our substitute in a positive fashion? How were we blessed by His actions?
- ▶ Look at verse 20. Which is greater: sin or grace?
- ▶ Is it better to stand before God as an innocent person or a righteous person? Because of Jesus as our substitute, which are we?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

- ▶ What was Jesus made to be? For whom did God do this? What happened as a result?
- ▶ How does this summarize the verses in this session about Jesus as our substitute?

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ How does Jesus' as substitute affect the way you look at Him? How does it affect your relationship with Him?
- ▶ How does knowing Jesus is your substitute give you confidence in the gospel?

Encourage students to allow this truth to increase their thankfulness for what Jesus has done for them as their substitute, paying for their sins Himself.