

*This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that all humanity has inherited a sin nature that can only be overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

#### Essential Doctrine: God is Love

Saying God is love means God is the essence of love or that perfect love resides and resonates within God Himself—one God in three Persons. The imperfect love that human beings share between one another is a dim reflection, a sign that points to the perfect love that resides within God. God's greatest act of love toward humans isn't the giving of earthly goods but the giving of Himself in Christ so that we might become reconciled to Him.

#### 1 Love is when you find your joy in the joy of another person (Phil. 2:2; 1 John 1:3-4).

- ▶ True or false: In order for an act to be loving, the person doing the act has to be happy when he or she does it.

#### Read Philippians 2:2.

- ▶ What did Paul want the Philippians to do? What motivation did he give them at the start of the verse?
- ▶ Was it selfish for Paul to be pursuing his own happiness in this passage? Why or why not?

#### Read 1 John 1:3-4.

- ▶ What did John want for his readers? Why did he want it?
- ▶ Was it selfish for John to want his own joy to be complete? Why or why not?
- ▶ When we love someone like the apostles loved their readers, how are we pursuing our happiness? In love, what is the relationship between the lover's happiness and the loved one's happiness?

#### 2 True love compels us to imitate the Godhead's love for one another by joyfully pursuing other people's joy (Matt. 3:17; John 8:30; 1 Cor. 13:3; 1 John 4:8).

- ▶ What does it mean when the Bible says God is love?
- ▶ Did God love anyone before He created the angels and the rest of the world? Whom did God love then?

#### Read Matthew 3:17 and John 8:30.

- ▶ How does God the Father feel about God the Son (Matt. 3:17)? How do you think this makes God the Son feel?
- ▶ What kind of things does Jesus do (John 8:30)? Why? Do you think Jesus does these things joyfully or begrudgingly?
- ▶ What can we conclude about the Trinity's love for one another?

#### Read 1 John 4:8.

- ▶ Considering what we learned about God's love within the Trinity, why is it impossible for someone to know God without also loving like God?

- ▶ When Jesus pursues our good, does He do so joyfully or begrudgingly? (Hint: look at Heb. 12:2.) So what emotion should mark our attitudes when we love people (when we pursue their happiness)?

#### Read 1 Corinthians 13:3.

- ▶ What is the consequence if we give everything away but don't have love?
- ▶ What exactly do we gain if we give away everything with love?

#### 3 God's greatest act of love is giving us Himself, because He alone can ultimately satisfy us (Ps. 16:2; 43:3; 1 Pet. 3:18).

- ▶ True or false: The greatest love would pursue the greatest happiness.
- ▶ What would be the greatest happiness a human being could experience?

#### Read Psalm 16:2; 43:3.

- ▶ What is the best thing for a human being?

#### Read 1 Peter 3:18.

- ▶ According to this verse, why did Jesus die?
- ▶ Connecting these three passages together, what end did God have in mind by saving us? How was this act love on God's part?
- ▶ If we really love people, then what should we be pursuing for them? With what attitude?

#### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ Who in your life do you love "naturally"? How can you ask God to help you be happy in loving others you don't "naturally" feel affection for? What specific loving actions might you do this week?