Introduction: *Engage your group by stimulating their thinking.*

Write the following quote from Warren W. Wiersbe on the board for your group to consider as they enter the room:

> As believers, we have this confidence: *God is always in complete control.*
> When God permits Satan to light the furnace, He always keeps His own hand on the thermostat.

Divide into two groups and give members a couple of minutes to discuss the quote together. Allow each group to then share with the entire room.


**Point 1: Provide an example from pop-culture.**

In 1991, Disney released an animated movie called *Beauty and the Beast*, in which an arrogant, self-centered prince gets turned into a hideous beast until he can learn to express true love. Throughout the movie, the antagonist is a muscular, good-looking man whom all the girls have a crush on, except for Belle, one of the two main characters. She sees through his pride and wants nothing to do with him. Eventually, the beast and Belle build a friendship and he ends up sacrificing his life for her, thus showing true love and turns back into the prince. The movie shows the importance of focusing on the character of a person rather than on their looks.

Ask your group by show of hands if they have ever seen this movie. Then allow 2-3 volunteers to describe the lessons they learned about worldly expectations versus godly ones.

**Point 2: Help your group members connect with the major theme through an article.**

Enlist a volunteer to read the following article aloud to the group:
Ed Leonard, an employee of a Canadian mining company, was working in Colombia, South America, when he was captured by rebel soldiers in 1998. In an unprecedented move, Norbert Reinhart, the owner of the company, secured Leonard’s release by taking his place. Reinhart was then held hostage for 94 days.

Centuries ago, Jesus took our place, becoming our substitute. Romans 5:8 says, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

So profound is the meaning of that act that scholars have struggled to explain its mystery. The Bible teaches that God loves us but must uphold His perfect justice by punishing us for our sin. As part of His plan to redeem us, He sent His Son Jesus to become a member of the human race (John 1:18). Although He was sinless, Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, took our punishment on the cross. With sin’s penalty paid, He rose from the grave and offers forgiveness and eternal life to all.


Point 3: Check for understanding using “Think-Pair-Share.”

Play the Michael W. Smith song “Awesome God” (3 minutes, 30 seconds): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PP9BjKnDaFk

Before you play the song, ask group members to pay attention to the lyrics, and once the song is over, instruct them to give you reasons why God is “awesome” and why He alone deserves glory.

Then put the following instructions into your own words: “Think for thirty seconds about why God is awesome in light of the passage in Point 3. Then I want you to discuss your thoughts in pairs with a person on your left or right who is not your spouse.” Pause for one minute, and then call on 3-4 pairs to share one idea from their discussion.
**Conclusion:** Challenge your students to live the lesson.

Read aloud the following quote to the group: “True worship is all that I am responding to all that He is in gratitude and praise.”

As we reflect on the willing substitutionary sacrifice of the Lord on our behalf, we should be thankful. Ask your group members to spend a couple of minutes thanking the Lord for what He did for them.


**Teaching Tip of the Week**

Group discussion is particularly good at revealing people’s attitudes. The questions presented by the teacher as a stimulus for discussion should frequently focus on students’ emotional predisposition or values. For example, you might ask a question like this: “Are you or are you not in favor of homosexual marriage, and how did you arrive at your position?”

Whether they participate in the discussion or not, group members will be more aware of their own attitudes and values by comparing them with the values and attitudes of others. When they have strong and differing opinions about concepts, it is relatively easy to bring these out in discussion. Then we should point our students to the only infallible source of truth, the Bible, and have them evaluate their presuppositions in light of it.