

This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize Christ was the substitute for our sin. 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 We need Christ as substitute to remove our guilt. (Lev. 1:3-9; Heb. 9:12)

Share the following *Merriam-Webster* definition of *sacrifice*: *The act of giving up something you want to keep*, especially in order to get or do something else or to help someone.

- ▶ *When have you sacrificed in order to get or do something else?*

#### Read Leviticus 1:3-9.

- ▶ *How is our understanding today of what it means to sacrifice different from the Old Testament teaching?*

The Old Testament sacrifices found in Leviticus tell a story of blood, guts, and animals being skinned and burned on altars. There is a lot of bloodshed, and there is a lot of death.

- ▶ *Why the brutality? What was the purpose of the bloodshed?*

The blood of animals is incapable of removing sin, but God temporarily accepted these sacrifices in order to foreshadow the ultimate sacrifice to come—Jesus. These sacrifices shine light on the ugliness of our sin, as well as give us a glimpse into the cost of it.

#### Read Hebrews 9:12.

Hebrews teaches the blood of bulls and goats offered in the Old Testament were signs that pointed to the greater sacrifice—the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It was through His blood the payment for our sin was made.

### 2 We need Christ as substitute to purify our hearts. (Lev. 5:1-13; Heb 13:11-12)

#### Read Leviticus 5:1-13.

The *Bible Reader's Companion* notes, in the sacrificial system of Israel, the Old Testament believer was able to confess sins and find forgiveness, express thanks, and experience intimate fellowship with God. (

- ▶ *What are some ways people try to cleanse their own sin today? (church attendance, good works, etc.)*
- ▶ *Do any of these really work? Why or why not?*

We live in a quick fix world, but there is no quick fix for sin. Sin is not an issue to get over or a problem to be quickly solved. It is the disease at the heart of humanity.

#### Read Hebrews 13:11-12.

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament required unblemished animals to be offered for the people's sin. However, it was never enough to provide complete forgiveness. Year after year sacrifices had to be made.

- ▶ *What did Christ's sacrifice do that animal sacrifices never could?*

The *Life Application New Testament Commentary* indicates "Christ's sacrifice could make his people holy by shedding his own blood." Purity matters to God. The sin offerings in the Old Testament pointed forward to Jesus, who became the sin offering in our place in order to purify our hearts and make us holy.

### 3 We need Christ as substitute to cleanse our consciences. (Lev. 5:14-19; Heb 9:13-14)

- ▶ *What does it mean to have a guilty conscience?*

People today tend to think of guilt in terms of feelings, but the Bible treats it as fact. As such, guilt brought consequences.

#### Read Leviticus 5:14-19.

The guilt offering was intended to restore the relationship of the offender with the victim, cleansing the conscience as a result.

#### Read Hebrews 9:13-14.

Thankfully, the New Testament shows how Christ's substituting and atoning work cleanses our conscience so we are freed to serve God and join Him in His work of living on mission.

- ▶ *If Jesus' sacrifice took care of sin permanently, why do we sometimes worry or believe our sin is still upon us?*
- ▶ *What guilt from past sins are you holding on to? How can you turn over to Christ?*

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Are you holding on to the guilt of past sins? If so, why?*

Distribute note cards and lead students to list sins they've been either unwilling to give up or to accept forgiveness for. Distribute red markers and invite students to give their sins and their guilt to Christ by writing *Paid In Full* across their cards.