

This midweek study will explore the moral influence theory of atonement. 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: Moral Influence Theory of Atonement

According to this theory, Christ's sacrifice should be seen as a demonstration of God's love, a display that produces a change of attitude within humanity. This theory falls short of all Christ accomplished on the cross, since it leaves out God's wrath against sinners and His requirement of satisfaction for sin. Still, it does remind us that the cross is the greatest example of God's love, and this love must provoke gratitude and praise on our behalf.

1 Even though Christ's death demonstrates God love, it is not all that was accomplished (Gal. 3:13-14).

Invite students to discuss why it is potentially dangerous to have a superficial view of God?

- ▶ *Why is it important that we know that the cross was more than just an emotional action or an action showing humanity what "good morals" are?*

Read Galatians 3:13-14.

- ▶ *How does this passage emphasize there was more going on in Christ's death than just emotion?*

This verse clearly states how Jesus actually became "a curse for us" (v. 13) through His death on the cross.

- ▶ *How does Jesus becoming a curse for you affect how you think about your sin?*

Jesus didn't become a curse for us because He wanted us to feel guilty. This passage says Jesus became a curse so we could receive the Holy Spirit, as He promised, when we place our faith in Him.

- ▶ *According to this passage, what does Jesus do for us when the curse of sin is removed?*
- ▶ *In what ways does Jesus' death have a greater depth than just emotions and morals?*

2 Christ's death on the cross satisfied God's wrath and paid the price required by our sin (Rom. 5:10-11; Col. 2:13-14).

Option: Show students pictures of the Hope Diamond. Invite students to imagine a museum allowed them to hold the diamond and examine it close up. Ask students to imagine a terrible accident—they dropped the diamond, shattering it into thousands of pieces. The museum was, understandably, very upset and required them to compensate the museum for the diamond. Needless to say, the price would need to be paid in order to satisfy the museum's anger and to repay the museum for the diamond. Explain that they would need someone with the capability to pay the debt and the desire take on the responsibility.

In Christ, we have someone with the capability to pay our debt and willingness be held responsible for sin by God the Father.

- ▶ *Why is Christ's death on the cross the only fitting satisfaction of God's wrath and payment for our sin?*

When humans sin, we earn a debt to be repaid and a reaction from God in the form of wrath. Both must be satisfied in order to purchase our salvation. In Jesus' death, we find God's wrath satisfied and our sin debt paid.

Read Colossians 2:13-14, Romans 5:10-11

- ▶ *According to Colossians 2:13-14, what is our eternal state if we remain in sin?*
- ▶ *What do these verses say God does with us after He pays our sin debt?*
- ▶ *Why is reconciliation to God not only good, but also necessary for salvation?*

3 The cross motivates believers toward gratitude and praise (2 Cor. 4:15; 1 Thess. 5:18).

Christ's death on the cross, in all its depth and richness, motivates believers toward gratitude and praise. Without Christ's atonement, people remain eternally condemned.

Read 2 Corinthians. 4:15 and 1 Thessalonians 5:18

- ▶ *According to 2 Corinthians 4:15, what should motivate believers to increase thanksgiving?*
- ▶ *What is your typical response to knowing you are in Christ? How often do you respond in gratitude for your salvation?*

WRAP IT UP

Challenge students to recognize that even though God's love is wonderful and overwhelming, there is more to Christ's death than emotions. Encourage students that Christ's death satisfies the wrath of God and the legal requirements for their sin; because of that we should respond and be motivated toward greater gratitude and praise.