



masterwork

S P R I N G 2 0 2 3

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

In your opinion, what does it take for a person to get to heaven and have eternal life?
The Bible answers this question in one word—**FAITH**.

F is for FORGIVENESS

- Everyone has sinned and needs God's forgiveness: *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).
- God's forgiveness is in Jesus only: *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7).

A is for AVAILABLE

- God's forgiveness is available for all: *"God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).
- God's forgiveness is available but not automatic: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

I is for IMPOSSIBLE

- It is impossible to get to heaven on our own: *"You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

T is for TURN

- Turn means repent. Turn away from sin and self and turn to Jesus alone as your Savior and Lord: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6); *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation"* (Romans 10:9-10).

H is for HEAVEN

- Here . . . Eternal life begins now with Jesus: *"I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance"* (John 10:10).
- Hereafter . . . Heaven is a place where we will live with God forever: *"If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also"* (John 14:3).
- How . . . How can a person have God's forgiveness, eternal life, and heaven? By trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You can do this right now by praying and asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins and inviting Jesus into your heart.

Accepting Christ is just the beginning of a wonderful adventure with God! Follow Christ's command in baptism. Join a church where you can worship God and grow in your faith. Get involved in Sunday School and Bible study. Begin a daily personal worship time in which you study the Bible and pray.

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MasterWork: Essential Messages from God's Servants

Spring, 2023

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Books of Study

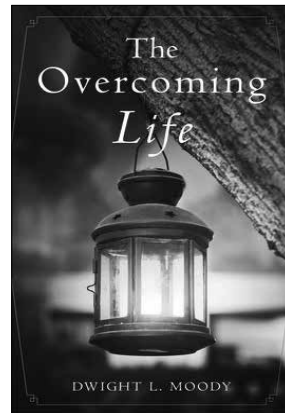
Further in-depth Bible studies by the authors presented this quarter in MasterWork® are available in their full-length books. To purchase your own copies to read and study, visit lifeway.com. Or you can order a copy by calling 1.800.458.2772.



Unfailing Love in Uncertain Times

J. Ryan Wicker

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The Overcoming Life

D. L. Moody

Moody Publishers
ISBN: 978-0-8024-5451-5

How to Use

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of this resource:

Group Members

1. Read Day One through Day Five prior to attending the group time. Complete the personal learning activities in bold type. Record your notes and questions.
2. Review your notes and questions a few moments prior to the group time as a means of preparing to be an active part of the group.
3. In the margins of this book, record insights gained during the group time.

Group Leader

1. Complete step 1 above.
2. Identify the one main idea and goal for the lesson. The main point of the lesson and the goal are printed on the leader guide pages at the end of each lesson. (See p. 18.) Focus on the session goal as you lead the session.

The main point of this lesson is: God begins to weave the seamless revelation of His plan from the opening of the Bible.

Focus on this goal: To help adults affirm the importance of the beginning in their walk with Christ

Key Bible Passages: Genesis 1–11

Leader Guide

- Read and study the key Bible passages listed at the top of the teaching plan.
- Develop a group time plan. Two options are offered in this book.

- One option is to follow the leader guide at the end of each lesson.
- A second option is to use the discussion questions in the margins of the lessons. Some group leaders use a combination of both group time plans.

<p>Written by forty authors over 1,600 years, sixty-six books tell one seamless story about how God redeems us, and has a future for us. Let's explore the beautiful story of Scripture. How does this story fit with Christians who were never successfully fitting in with Christians who were never...</p>	<p>DISCUSS</p> <p>When might a visit to a library be overwhelming? When might it be exciting?</p>
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Discussion Questions

- Customize the electronic versions of the suggested teaching plans, available on the Internet at masterwork.lifeway.com to fit your group.
- Review and refine your teaching notes as you move toward the group time.
- Arrive early, praying for the group time.

CHAPTER 1

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: God begins to weave the seamless narrative of His plan from the opening of the Bible.

Focus on this goal: To help adults affirm the importance of the beginning of their walk with Christ.

Key Bible Passages: Genesis 1-11

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Intelle adults to indicate if they've ever read books or watched movies that were part of a series. **Ask:** Is it possible to read the books or watch the movies out of order and still enjoy them? What's the value of reading or watching them in order?

Note: Reading or watching serial stories in order gives us a better grasp of the overall story and aids in deeper understanding of the characters and plot. **Help:** Use our book list below to discuss the series. **Share:** That's how Scripture is as well. We can know and love individual Bible stories but understanding how they fit together into one seamless narrative can bring the Bible's truth into much clearer focus.

STEP 2 - Getting Started

Intelle a volunteer to read the first two verses of Day One (p. 7).

Relate the author's experience of not understanding what Christians were talking about and how she gained a clearer grasp of the Bible (p. 7).

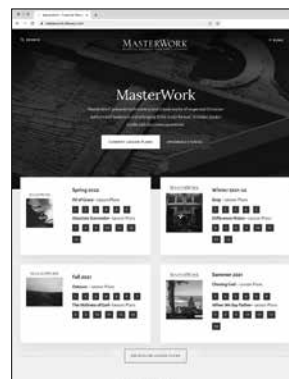
Intelle a volunteer to share what has helped them understand the Bible better.

Relate the author's desire for readers to see Scripture's overarching story and its characters and themes to come to life. **Relate** the author's challenge by reading the Day One paragraph (p. 10) beginning with, "Below we start..."

Discuss: Day One, activity 2 (p. 8).

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Leader Guide



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Study Series: Seamless
Author: Angie Smith

Lesson Title: "The Beginning" (pp. 6-13)
Session 1
September 4, 2022

The main point of this lesson is: God begins to weave the seamless narrative of His plan from the opening of the Bible.

Focus on this goal: To help adults affirm the importance of the beginning of their walk with Christ.

Key Bible Passages: Genesis 1-11

Before the Session

1. Prayers (10) (Step 1)
2. Karaoke (10) (Step 1)

During the Session

Step 1: Title

Intelle adults to indicate if they've ever read books or watched movies that were part of a series. **Ask:** Is it possible to read the books or watch the movies out of order and still enjoy them? What's the value of reading or watching them in order?

Note: Reading or watching serial stories in order gives us a better grasp of the overall story and aids in deeper understanding of the characters and plot. **Help:** Use our book list below to discuss the series. **Share:** That's how Scripture is as well. We can know and love individual Bible stories but understanding how they fit together into one seamless narrative can bring the Bible's truth into much clearer focus.

8

Customizable Teaching Plan



UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

ABOUT THE WRITERS

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Leslie Hudson wrote the personal activities, interactive questions, and leader guide teaching suggestions for this study. A member of First Baptist Church, Dickson, TN, where she serves with J. Ryan Wicker, Hudson strives to help other find “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” within God’s Word. She lives in the perfect small town of White Bluff, TN, where she drinks hot coffee and practices praying God’s Word for her family, Sunday School class, and community.

Uncertainty abounds in this life. Uncertainty abounds in our time—but then again, it always has. But consider the extraordinary uncertainty of the present time. Without discounting or downplaying the “normal” uncertainties of life, consider the more unique situation of these days.

We are still reeling from a disease that wrecked havoc around the globe, not only in lives lost and put on hold, but with worldwide economic impact as well. Even now, Covid 19 lingers, and experts hold their breath over what the next variant and surge might bring.

As we struggle to move on from Covid, inflation has sprung to its highest level in a generation. Food and energy costs have soared. Forget the American dream of owning a home, just renting one has, in a matter of months, reached nearly impossible levels for a swelling number of people.

And we add to this the most visible and prominent and extensive military conflict many of the world’s present occupants have ever seen. This warfare has not been relegated to some isolated corner of the map where we are tempted to see countries as backward and undeveloped. Rather, it has taken center stage among a modern, technological people like ourselves. And like Covid, this war has sent its ripples throughout many troubled waters around the world.

What happens next with Covid? With inflation? With war? We indeed live in uncertain times. And in the midst of these uncertain times, J. Ryan Wicker takes us into the first letter of John to find solace and encouragement—to find *Unfailing Love in Uncertain Times*.

CHRIST AND SIN

Day 1

Cherish Christ, the Word Made Flesh, Part 1

1. Before peeking at the paragraph below, write the answer to the following in your own words: Who is Jesus?

Who is Jesus? That's a question we all at some point wrestle with. The people of Jesus's day wrestled with it, so much so that Jesus one day asked His disciples, "who do people say that I am?" (Mark 8:27). That question had several answers: prophet, teacher, Elijah, John the Baptist, and so forth. Jesus then made it personal: "but . . . who do you say that I am?" (v. 29). Peter, speaking for the rest, answered truthfully that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Asking "Who is Jesus?" is life changing. How we respond has eternal ramifications.

No one knew better than the apostle John who Jesus was. His life's mission was to tell people Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him they might have life in His name. John wrote this letter to struggling churches. False teaching about Jesus was causing division among believers. Many were leaving the church. No wonder he begins with a bold affirmation of who Jesus is.

Many today are still confused about Jesus. But one thing we can be certain about—Jesus is who He said He was. God in His matchless grace made it possible for us to know Jesus, to share Jesus with others, and to find all our joy in Jesus.

DISCUSS

How did someone explain Jesus to you when you were younger? How accurate was that description? How did it affect your faith?

Know Christ, the Word Made Flesh (1:1-2)

The first test of fellowship among believers is what they affirm about Christ. Christianity stands or falls based on what we believe and teach about Jesus. What John affirms is so vital to Christianity we celebrate it every Christmas—the incarnation of God. God Himself became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son and second member of the Trinity. From the beginning of this letter John affirms two very important things about Jesus.

DISCUSS

The author states: “Christianity stands or falls based on what we believe and teach about Jesus.” How confident are you in the identity of Jesus? How important is this topic?

His Deity. John affirms “what was from the beginning.” Christ has always existed along with God the Father: “In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God . . . and dwelt [tabernacled] among us” (John 1:1,14). John’s Gospel also includes numerous “I am” statements from Jesus declaring Himself one with the Father (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7,11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1). In each passage, Jesus is declaring He is what only God can be. He puts Himself equal with God. He is our bread, provider, and sustainer. He alone is light in a dark world. He is resurrection; only in Him can the dead find life. He encompasses everything that is true. By opening each statement with “I am,” Jewish listeners would have understood Jesus was declaring equality with God. That is why many were so appalled and troubled by these statements.

His Humanity. John had “seen . . . observed . . . touched” Jesus as a tangible, flesh and blood human. The apostles saw Him with their eyes, observed His movements and actions, touched Him, embraced Him, walked with Him, and heard His words. First John was written in the AD 90s. Thus, sixty years had passed since Jesus had ascended, yet John still remembered vividly and fondly his encounter and relationship with Jesus. John was one of the closest disciples and friends of Jesus. He saw Jesus’s works and heard His words more than most of the other Twelve. This strongly affirms John’s account and his credibility with the churches. He was there when Christ was performing miracles and when He was crucified, and he was the first apostle to the empty tomb on resurrection morning. His closest friends had died as martyrs for their testimony about Christ.

2. Consider John’s relationship with Jesus. What questions might you ask John about Jesus?

John was not just a preacher of the Word; he intimately knew the Word. The gospel was not just a formula to a better life for him; it was eternal life itself. To know Christ, to John, was not just head knowledge. He LOVED Jesus. Because of this, he can't help but "testify and declare" what he has seen, touched, and heard. John knew that only a fully-human and fully-God Jesus can grant eternal life. And only a fully-human and fully-divine Jesus could shed His blood as atonement for our sins. Only Jesus could defeat death and the grave. That same Jesus still rules and reigns now, and He will return in glory and power to judge the world.

Day 2

Cherish Christ, the Word Made Flesh, Part 2

Share Christ, the Word Made Flesh (1:3)

It is hard to articulate Jesus's impact on His disciples. Evangelism is such a Christian buzzword. We have made it simply a church program and turned it into a formula. Go door-to-door, hand out this pamphlet, or memorize this acrostic. Evangelism was not a strategy, a program, or a once-a-week visitation to the disciples; it was their lifeblood, the air they breathed. What they had seen and heard was too amazing to keep to themselves. They shared about Jesus everywhere they went. Their desire was to see others have fellowship along with them (v. 3), to experience the radical grace and salvation they had, to hear Jesus's words, and to experience the power of His Spirit in them. To them, it was sin to remain silent about this good news. Their love for Jesus overflowed into love for others.

The Greek word for fellowship, *koinonia*, means "sharing in common something that is significant or important." To John, it was much more than meals or events or gatherings. Being together was important, but being in fellowship spiritually was much more. What held their fellowship together, the most significant thing they held in common, was the gospel. True fellowship is gospel centered. If a church does not fellowship together by sharing the gospel, their fellowship is lacking the key ingredient that truly makes it a fellowship. We cannot tell those around us we love them if we do not share Jesus with them. If we love Jesus and love people as Jesus commanded, we should be sharing Jesus with them.

DISCUSS

Considering the author's description of the early church, how similar (or dissimilar!) are we to them?

- 1. According to the previous definition and description of *koinonia*, with whom do you have this special spiritual fellowship? As you list their names, praise God for that relationship.**

For John, inviting people to trust Christ was inviting them to be a part of something much bigger than themselves. It was inviting them into fellowship with God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When we share Jesus with others, we are inviting them to be a part of the local and universal church, the *eklessia*, the assembly of the One True God. We are inviting them to be part of the family of God.

- 2. Does the preceding paragraph challenge your attitude and approach to outreach or evangelism? Explain.**

Find Joy in Christ, the Word Made Flesh (1:4)

A product of knowing Christ and a life of sharing Christ is joy, part of the fruit of the Spirit. God produces true joy in us. Joy is also the purpose of John's letter: "We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" (1 John 1:4). "These things" primarily refers to shared fellowship with Jesus the Son and God the Father that produces joy in our lives. God is glorified in His people when they find their joy in Him. John's joy was in knowing Christ, sharing Him with others, and seeing believers grow in their knowledge of Christ.

The Bible speaks loudly about true joy. First, it is a gift from God (Gal. 5:22). True joy arises from a heart transformed and changed by the Holy Spirit. We cannot experience joy in its truest sense without being born again. Second, it is not based on current circumstances but on God's promises. Joy is rooted in the truth of who God is and what He has done in Christ Jesus. To know Christ is to find lasting joy in Him and

Him alone. It is to lean on His promises and find all our hope in them. He is the source of all joy.

Third, the Bible speaks of joy in relation to suffering and tribulation (Jas. 1:2-4). Another way of saying this is that our joy amid suffering is made possible because of Christ's suffering for us. Finally, joy is centered on Christ's joy in us (Heb. 12:1-2). Christ endured a despised cross for the sake of His bride, the church. He looked ahead and saw the joy our redemption would bring to His Father and to Him. With that joy fueling and sustaining Him, He faced and endured the horror of the cross. What a life-giving and sanctifying thing joy can be in the life of a believer!

This isn't a partial joy either. God desires for our joy to be "complete." This means to make full. It is an all you could ever want or need kind of joy, a fulfilling joy, a "no matter what happens, I can still rejoice" kind of joy. In Christ, this type of joy is possible.

Day 3

Confronting The Problem of Sin, Part 1

Confronting Sin Means Exposing It to God's Light (1:5)

More than anything, John desired to tell people the truth about God. He is convinced his message has come from God. God has testified to us the truth about Himself and His Son, Jesus. We, like John, have good news that the world needs.

1. Reread the first sentence of Day Three. Complete the statement about yourself: "More than anything, I desire"

Explain your answer.

God Is Light. We often see light and dark compared in Scripture. Light is seen as pure and often refers to truth or holiness. Darkness is the

DISCUSS

Are most people's lives marked by joy? Are most Christian's lives marked by joy? What reasons do believers have for being joyful all the time?

opposite of light. It represents sin and falsehood. Psalms refers to God as “light and salvation,” (Ps. 27:1). Isaiah says the “glory of the LORD shines,” (Isa. 60:1). John calls Jesus “the true light” and “the light of the world,” (John 1:9; 8:12). Two truths about light are also true of God: light gives life, and light exposes what’s in the dark. Isaiah 9:2 says, “People walking in darkness have seen a great light; a light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness.” God is Light. He is holy, good, and pure. He is everything darkness is not, and by His light He drives out darkness. He gives life, and He exposes the dark places of our lives, the sin indwelling each of us.

NOTE

The Bible speaks of sin as a condition of our heart that leads to a lifestyle of disobedience to God.

John says “there is absolutely no darkness in Him” (1 John 1:5). In the Greek this is a double negative. A double negative strongly emphasizes something—the perfection and holiness of God here. Not even a single hint of a shadow of darkness is present in God’s nature.

God is sin’s antithesis. God’s character is everything sin is not, its exact opposite, and He stands opposed to it. This is the starting point to understanding the destructive nature of sin. You can’t possibly see how devastating the darkness is until it is exposed to the light of God’s holiness.

DISCUSS

How should our lives reflect that “God is light”? What does it mean to live in light?

Confronting Sin Means Walking in the Light (1:6-10)

Be Honest with Others About Sin (vv.6-7) False teachers of John’s day claimed to have fellowship with Christ, the Light, yet they walked in darkness; they claimed to be walking in the light, but lived a lifestyle of open sin. Their words and actions did not match. The Gnostics saw everything material as evil; only the spiritual was good. They taught you could do whatever you wanted in the flesh because it was evil anyway and would perish. They deceived people about their own sin. They downplayed the seriousness of sin. We, too, often allow culture to dictate what is good or bad, sin or not. The Bible speaks of sin as a condition of our heart that leads to a lifestyle of disobedience to God. Those who walk in the light are honest with others about sin. John says (v. 6) that “truth” must be practiced—not just talked about. To claim the truths about Christ but to live a lifestyle out of sync with those truths is to lie about who we are and who Christ is.

2. Who gives you an honest assessment about your life, walk, and sin?

DISCUSS

How can the definition of sin in the sidebar above help us see our own sin more clearly?

How can you further kindle that healthy spiritual relationship in the near future?

Who trust you enough to hear from you an honest assessment of their life, walk, and sin?

To “walk in the light” (v. 7) means to develop a continuous and consistent pattern of life, believing what Jesus taught about Himself and living out those truths daily. If we do this, two things happen. First, we have fellowship with each other (because we are not lying to each other about our sin). Secondly, Jesus cleanses us from sin. This is a beautiful truth. Walking in the light doesn’t mean we won’t stumble and sin. It means we will recognize sin for what it is and continually run to Christ for forgiveness. Cleansing in this verse is a continual cleansing. This means that every day Christ is removing the stain of sin from your life. We’ll understand more about this soon, but it is awesome to know that every day Jesus stands with us in our battle with darkness and the flesh.

Day 4

Confronting The Problem of Sin, Part 2

Be Honest with Yourself About Your Sin (vv. 8-9) Moral relativism teaches us to lie to *ourselves* about sin: “You are fine the way you are.” “If it is right to you then it’s right, so don’t believe what everybody else says.” “Live your truth.” We confront these lies by reminding ourselves daily who we are. First John 2:8 says we deceive ourselves when we aren’t honest about sin. Moral relativism is dangerous because it teaches us to lie to ourselves. If sin is relative, then it becomes easy to justify anything and everything we say and do. Don’t lie to yourself!

DISCUSS

What morally relative statements have you heard or read in the past few weeks? How does daily Bible study help us keep on our guard against moral relativism?

Those who walk in the light are honest with themselves about their sin. When we acknowledge sin in our lives, we can acknowledge our reliance on the Savior. As Christians, our lives aren't defined by sin any longer, but that doesn't mean sin won't happen. Genuine believers admit sin and repent or turn from it. Christ is both "faithful and righteous" (v. 9) to forgive.

1. What role does confession of sin play in your normal prayer time?

According to 1 John 2:8-9, what role should it play? Explain.

Be Honest About What God Says About Your Sin (v. 10) God has emphatically described mankind's condition as having the stain of sin:

"All have turned away; all alike have become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one." (Ps. 14:3)

"We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; . . . the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:6)

"The heart is more deceitful than anything else." (Jer. 17:9)

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
(Rom. 3:23)

God has declared two things about us that we best not ignore: 1) we are great sinners; 2) we are in desperate need of a Savior. John says, rather bluntly, that those who would claim to be without sin do not have God's Word in them—they have no fellowship with God.

2. Since “we best not ignore” these two truths, compose a prayer of confession to the Lord. Praise Him for giving you the opportunity to know your sin and agree with Him.

We dare not call God a liar nor dismiss sin as relative. It’s important we remember these truths as we seek to teach our children about the reality of sin. Our children, like us, are born sinners into a world cursed by sin. We don’t have to teach a child how to sin; it’s in their nature. We must be honest with them about sin. In our house, we teach our children we make bad choices because of a sin problem in our heart. We teach them Jesus died so our heart could be changed and we could be forgiven of our bad choices. Children will see no need for a Savior if they aren’t at some point crushed by the reality of their sin.

Walking in the light confronts sin because it reminds us of who we were when Christ rescued us. It also reminds us of who we are now: believers in the midst of being remade by the power of Christ. It assures us of who He is making us to be: His perfected children who will dwell with Him forever in His kingdom.

Day 5

Confronting The Problem of Sin, Part 3

Confronting Sin Means Placing All Our Hope and Trust in Christ Alone (2:1-2)

Christ, Our Advocate John has a deep, fatherly affection for the people (“my little children,” 2:1). He is grieved they have been led astray or have abandoned the church altogether to follow people who would lead them deeper into the darkness of sin. He has one desire for the people: “that you may not sin.” In a culture that dismissed the reality of sin, John told people

NOTE

Children will see no need for a Savior if they aren’t at some point crushed by the reality of their sin.

DISCUSS

How can walking in the light be a struggle?
How can walking in the light be a blessing?

to turn away from it. Sin happens to believers, but we are not powerless. God has put His Spirit in us, and He has made Christ our Advocate.

Advocate means one called to another's side. It pictures one who pleads the cause of another before a judge as legal counsel. It pictures Christ as a defense attorney. Revelation 12:10 calls Satan "an accuser." Christ is our legal defense against this accuser. Unlike earthly defense attorneys, Jesus can guarantee acquittal. In Christ, the guilty can stand before God and be declared innocent. Confronting sin means reminding ourselves daily that Christ is in our corner doing battle for us.

1. What accusations do you hear from Satan concerning you?

Thank Jesus for defending you, not because you deserve it, but because He loves you.

This is why moral relativism is so dangerous. It says you make the rules, you declare right from wrong, so live according to the values you set as good. In essence, relativism makes you God, your own defense attorney, judge, and jury. But what defense could you possibly offer that would acquit you before the holy and just God? There is none. It's why we need Christ as our Advocate.

Christ, Our Propitiation Christ can be our Advocate because He is also our propitiation or atonement. The Greek word simply means to appease or satisfy. What did Christ's death satisfy, and why does it matter? It satisfied God's wrath and punishment for our sins. A very real transaction took place on the cross. The cross isn't just a symbol of sacrifice, but the fulfillment of God's just penalty for sin. Paul explained, "He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross" (Col.2:14). That certificate of debt is our sin debt. Because of our sin, we deserve punishment. We could never satisfy the righteous requirements of holy God. We could never erase that debt. But Christ took it upon Himself on the cross. He took *our* punishment, *our* pain. He experienced the wrath of

DISCUSS

How do believers most often respond when they see a brother or sister who has been deceived about their sin? How often would you say the response is a broken heart? Explain.

God on *our* behalf. He atoned for *our* sin. Christ was crucified so we, by faith in Him, might be reconciled to God.

When Christ said on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30), that’s what He meant. He paid in full the sin debt we owed. The Righteous One hung on a cross in place of sinners. There the wrath of God and the mercy of God meet. Paul sums it up best: “God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

In a world where sin isn’t taken seriously, the cross says otherwise. We belittle the cross when we fail to see sin for what it is. Christ’s death wasn’t the result of a world gone mad, but the result of my sin meeting God’s love. To reconcile me, Christ had to be crushed. Do we mourn that? Do we rejoice in that? The beautiful thing is that for those who trust Christ, sin no longer has power. Christ set us free, not just from deserved punishment for sin, but from its power here and now and forever.

How do you confront sin in a culture of moral relativism? You shine a light on it, walk in the light, and embrace the cross. Sin and death are very real, but they hold no power over those in Christ because He has defeated both.

2. As you “confront sin in a culture of moral relativism,” are you living in obedience or following that culture? Explain.

If someone asked you why you live a life of obedience to Christ, how can today’s verses help you give an answer?

If you have never turned from your sin, trusted Christ, and placed all your hope in Him, I encourage you to run to Him. Do it in your heart now wherever you are. See the inside front cover for help. Tell someone about that decision.

DISCUSS

Considering the author’s discussion in this section, what does it mean that Christ is our propitiation?

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this lesson is: Jesus, the Word made flesh, is the answer to our sin problem.

Focus on this goal: To help adults look to Jesus as the answer to their sin problem

Key Bible Passage: 1 John 1:1–2:2

Before the Session

Gather a roll of duct tape, a container of dish soap, a black permanent marker, and an index card with *JESUS* written on it. (Step 1)

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Say: *I've brought with me today several items that solve problems. Let me hold these up and if you've used them to solve a problem, raise your hand.*

Hold up each of the items, one at a time, and **call on** a few volunteers to share how that product helped them solve a problem.

Challenge learners to consider how they might use the products in unconventional ways. (For example, a black marker can be used in a pinch on black leather that's scuffed. Dish soap removes stains in clothes. Duct tape can pull out a splinter.) **Hold up** the "JESUS" card last and **say:** *This is our lesson today; what problem does Jesus solve?*

STEP 2 - Cherish Christ, the Word Made Flesh, Part 1

Invite a volunteer to read 1 John 1:1-2 aloud.

Use the Day One paragraph (p. 7) that begins with the words, "No one knew better than the apostle John . . ." as well as the paragraph (p. 8) that begins with the heading "His Humanity" to paint a picture of the relationship

between Jesus and John. **Help learners see** not only John’s love for Jesus, but his love for his readers also.

Point out the verbs from these opening verses: *heard, seen, observed, touched, revealed, testify, and declare*. **Invite** a volunteer to restate these first two verses in one simple sentence.

STEP 3 - Cherish Christ, the Word Made Flesh, Part 2

Invite a volunteer to read 1 John 1:3-4. **Point learners to** the word in “fellowship” (v. 3). **Read** the second paragraph of Day Two (p. 9) regarding *koinonia*. **Using** the Day Two content (pp. 9-11), **help** learners understand that “fellowship” in the early church was much more than sharing a meal.

Consider the ability to see ourselves—and all believers—as part of the *eklessia* (“the local and universal church,” p. 10) as our impetus for fellowshipping with other Christians.

Point out the word “joy” in verse 4, **inviting** a volunteer to share a time when he or she had this very joy in spite of a terrible situation. **Emphasize** to learners Christ’s joy in us, completing our joy in Him.

STEP 4 - Confronting the Problem of Sin, Part 1

Invite a volunteer to read 1 John 1:5-7 aloud. **Share** a story from your own life in which you were overwhelmed by either bright light or intense darkness (such as moving from a darkened room out to a bright sunny day or being in a cave with all lights off). **Draw** a parallel with your own experience and the author’s explanation (pp. 11-13) of God being light and our instructions to walk in the light.

Point learners to the Scriptures referenced in the Day Three paragraph (p. 11-12) that begins with the heading “God Is Light” and **help** learners see that God exposes sin because He is perfect truth and holiness.

Use the second part of Day Three (pp. 12-13) to **encourage** learners to consider their own lifestyles: do they walk in the light? Or are they saying they walk in the light but actually hide in the darkness?

STEP 5 - Confronting the Problem of Sin, Part 2

Invite a volunteer to read 1 John 1:8-10. **Use** the opening paragraph of Day Four (p. 13) to **discuss** the pervasive teaching of moral relativism. **Engage** learners in considering moral relativism’s danger: when we don’t acknowledge our sin, we do not align our beliefs with what God teaches us in His Word.

Ask: *How can we be more honest with ourselves about our own sin?*

Stress the spiritual disciplines of solitude, prayer, fasting, and Bible study will help our self-honesty.

As a group, **consider** the Scriptures in Day Four (p. 14). **Invite** volunteers to evaluate how honestly they believe that they are great sinners in desperate need of a Savior.

STEP 6 - Confronting the Problem of Sin, Part 3

Invite a volunteer to read 1 John 2:1-2. **Use** the first paragraph (pp. 15-16) of Day Five to **help** learners understand the grief that John felt over the sins of his brothers and sisters.

Emphasize believers are not powerless to sin: we have Christ as our Advocate. **Read** the second paragraph of Day Five (p. 16) to **paint the picture** of Christ as a defense attorney who can guarantee acquittal.

Draw attention to the paragraph (pp. 16-17) with the heading, “Christ, Our Propitiation” and **help** learners understand that Christ’s death was monumental because it satisfied the wrath of God; His death on the cross finished the debt we owed for sin.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Say : *We’ve seen two problems here: moral relativism and sin. But we also see the solution: Jesus Christ, the light of the world. He defeated sin on the cross, defeated death when He rose from the grave, and He gives us the ability to walk as lights in our sinful or sin-denying world.*

Close in prayer, inviting people to group into pairs or threes to pray for each other’s walk of faith this coming week, that we would all walk in the light of Christ.