

WONDERFUL WORDS

Series Overview and Guides

2020-2021 ANNUAL THEME | SERIES 3

DECEMBER - JANUARY

Objective

what we hope to see God accomplish in us through this study

That we understand, relish, live by, and share God's wonderful words.

STATEMENTS OF THE OBJECTIVE

"Like apples of gold in settings of silver, so is a word skillfully spoken."

—Proverbs 25:11 (NET)

"...holding to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it."

—Titus 1:9 (CSB)

"What benefit can we reap from this generous gift if we have not the meaning of the words explained to us?"

—George of Nyssa
Sermons on the Beatitudes

Premise

why we are studying this

Within nations, words are under attack. Across our current age, various people are desperately trying to change word meanings or eliminate any meaning altogether. Part of this is the normal flow of civilization, but much contains sophistry that damages both individual human minds and communities. Within churches, doctrine is under a different kind of assault – one founded in apathy. Doctrine is mischaracterized as divisive or boring.

This combination of forces inside and outside the churches has resulted in at least two generations of Christians who are clueless about many of the great biblical terms. Tragically, that leaves these believers unprepared for effective living in a so-called post-modern world. We need to enjoy and understand the big idea terms of scripture. God's wonderful words truly make all the difference for each of us and for those around us.

STATEMENTS OF THE PREMISE

"...demonstrating utter faithfulness, so that they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people."

—Titus 2:10-11 (CSB)

Theme

what the study is about

There are a few words that convey a depth of thought distilled by centuries, words on which biblical doctrine is based and through which theology can be understood by all. These terms change lives. In this study we have selected eight such words, choosing those that are both very important and often misunderstood.

STATEMENTS OF THE THEME

"But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine."

—Titus 2: 1 (ESV)

"When [dealing with] a question of *ideas*, some words need, not another term to translate them, but a phrase, or a sentence, or even a paragraph. Further, words have associations. They have associations with people, with history, with ideas, with other words, and these associations give words a certain flavour which cannot be rendered in translation, but which affects their meaning and significance in the most important way. We [must] take certain great NT words and find out what those words meant to the writers of the NT and to those who read and heard their message for the first time."

—William Barclay
New Testament Words



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS

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SERIES 3 | SESSION 1

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Romans 5:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

KEY IDEAS

THEME

The best possible news is that we humans can be reconciled to God. Though helpless, ungodly sinners who are by nature enemies of the Holy Triune God, we can be changed to meet God's standard of righteousness. This occurs only via God's provision whereby God the Son bled on the cross and identified with sinners. Trust in that makes all things ever new in the life of the Christian and opens us to the commission of sharing reconciliation.

OBJECTIVE

We live the calling of reconciliation.

THE SUPREMACY OF GOD

"Paul uses the word of the relation between God and man. God reconciles us or the world to Himself [2 Cor. 5:18]. He is not reconciled. Nor does He reconcile Himself to us or to the world. On the other hand, we are reconciled to God [Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:20]. Thus God and man are not on equal terms in relation to reconciliation. Reconciliation is not reciprocal in the sense that both equally become friends where they were enemies. The supremacy of God over man is maintained in every respect."

—Frederich Büchsel
Theological Dictionary of the NT

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we faithfully fulfill the ministry of reconciliation.

Session 1: Reconciliation

1. Review the Premise and Theme of this study on page 1 of this guide. What are some examples of words (not necessarily theological ones) which are under attack in current society?
2. *Reconciliation* in the New Testament has the sense of "changed to meet a standard." What are some non-theological examples of this idea?
3. Read Romans 5:6-11 together.
 - a. Who is in need of reconciliation: man, God, or both? Explain.
 - b. Discuss the three ways in which Paul describes our natural state before being reconciled (look for "while we were . . .").
 - c. What does reconciliation allow us to avoid?
4. Discuss how Paul describes the means of reconciliation in each of the following three passages: Romans 5:9; Ephesians 2:14-16; 2 Corinthians 5:21.
5. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Paul mentions two results of our reconciliation.
 - a. How does God's action on our behalf change us?
 - b. Discuss the metaphor Paul uses to describe our new state. How can this idea affect our daily living?
 - c. What are some challenges with living in this way? How can this group pray for you?



SERIES 3 | SESSION 2

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Selected Scriptures

KEY IDEAS

THEME

The word “grace” has long been misapprehended and misused. In fact, the meaning of “grace” seems endangered by its overuse. Thankfully, God shows us the true measure of this idea – both in biblical verbiage and the Person of Jesus. In response, we should receive God’s grace, share it, stand firmly in it, and come boldly to the throne of grace for our every need.

OBJECTIVE

We stand firm in grace.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

“Grace refers to the central character of God and tells us what kind of God He is. Grace... comes to an individual because of what the One gracing is within Himself... God is kindly disposed toward the sinner! This is the quality of being of our God. All that comes to us from a God of grace, comes to us because He *is* a God of grace.”

—J. Dwight Pentecost
Things Which Become Sound Doctrine

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we truly thank God for His grace to us.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 2: Grace

1. Read John 1:16-17.
 - a. What does the word “grace” mean?
 - b. Discuss ways that Jesus demonstrated both grace and truth in His earthly ministry.
2. What role does grace play in the gospel?
 - a. Why do sinners need grace from God? Discuss Romans 5:6-10.
 - b. How was God’s grace manifested?
 - c. Read Ephesians 2:4-9. What did we do to earn God’s grace which saves us?
3. In Romans 5:1-2, why is our standing with God described as “in grace”?
4. According to 2 Corinthians 4:15, what is one end result of grace?
5. How is the doctrine of grace sometimes abused? Read and discuss Romans 6:1-14.
6. Read Hebrews 4:14-16.
 - a. Why should we feel confident to draw near to the throne of grace?
 - b. How will this help us to defeat sin in our lives?



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SERIES 3 | SESSION 3

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Selected Scriptures

KEY IDEAS

THEME

The amazing truth is that Jesus volitionally took our place on the cross. He substituted Himself for sinful people. Doing so, the Lord cut through the Gordian knot of God's mercy and justice. Justice was served as God's perfect character demands. Mercy was extended as the undeserving were blessed. That enables believers in Jesus to walk in good works, following Jesus in self-sacrifice and obedience to the Father's will.

OBJECTIVE

We imitate Jesus in self-sacrifice.

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

"God lays our sins on Christ and punishes them in him. And in Christ's obedient death, God fulfills and vindicates his righteousness and imputes (credits) it to us. Our sin on Christ; his righteousness on us... This is the gospel — the good news that our sins are laid on Christ and his righteousness is laid on us, and that this great exchange becomes ours not by works but by faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9)."

—John Piper
"The Great Exchange"
Desiring God blog

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that serve God faithfully by imitating Christ.

Session 3: Substitution

1. What does it mean to be a sinner by birth and by deeds?
 - a. Read Romans 3:23, 5:12, 16, 17a, 18a, and 19a.
 - b. According to Romans 6:23, what is the penalty for all sinners?

2. Why was Jesus the perfect, sinless sacrifice? Discuss 2 Corinthians 5:21.

3. Read Romans 3:23-26.
 - a. How was Christ's substitution effective?
 - b. What do we become when we have faith in Jesus?

4. Why do we need to be clear that saving righteousness is not of our efforts? See Philippians 3:9 and Isaiah 64:6.

5. What is our response as recipients of God's favor? Discuss Titus 2:14, 1 Peter 2:21, and 1 Peter 4:1.



SERIES 3 | SESSION 4

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Selected Scriptures

KEY IDEAS

THEME

The incarnation is the reason for the season and the basis of the great exchange of Savior for sinners. We are blessed when recognizing that Jesus is the Theanthropic Person. It allows us to respond in faith and walk in confidence.

OBJECTIVE

We celebrate the Son of Man.

COMPLETE HUMANITY

"Through the virgin birth, Jesus possessed a full and complete humanity... No animal could make a full satisfaction to God for the sins of men, for no animal was an equivalent substitute; no angel could offer satisfaction to God for the sins of men, for no angel was an equivalent substitute for humans."

—J. Dwight Pentecost
Things Which Become Sound Doctrine

O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

—Author Unknown

PRAYER

Pray for each other, that we celebrate the Son of Man, who is God with us.

Session 4: Incarnation

1. Read Hebrews 2:14-18. Why was the incarnation necessary?
2. Why was Jesus' favorite term for Himself "the Son of Man"? See Daniel 7:13-14.
3. Read Acts 7:55-56. Where is the Son of Man now?
4. Why is it important that we recognize Jesus as both God and man?
5. Why are each of the following events included in the Gospel?
 - a. Christ's death
 - b. Christ's burial
 - c. Christ's resurrection



SERIES 3 | SESSION 5

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

1 John 2:1-2, 4:10

KEY IDEAS

THEME

The term propitiation is an old one, but scripture uses it in a different and brilliant way. In paganism: Deity is motivated only by offense to the law; humans initiate propitiation; and human formula makes way for humans to be propitiation. But according to 1 John, God is the Mover, the originator; He is motivated by love for humans; and God the Son is Himself the propitiation.

OBJECTIVE

We rely on our Advocate.

GOD'S WRATH SATISFIED

"Jesus Christ did not just make satisfaction for our sins, though He did that. He is the satisfaction Himself. The Septuagint translators used the same Greek word (ἱλασμός, hilasmos) translated 'propitiation' here to translate the 'mercy seat' on the ark of the covenant. Jesus' body was the site where God placated His wrath against sin. Jesus' death not only expiated (cancelled, dismissed, waived) sins, but it satisfied God's wrath against sin with an acceptable offering."

—Leon Morris

The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we rely on our Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Session 5: Propitiation

1. Read 1 John 4:10.
 - a. Who is the initiator of salvation?
 - b. What motivated God to send Jesus to save us? See also John 3:16.
 - c. Why are these facts important to a gospel of salvation by grace?
2. Read Romans 3:21-26. How does Jesus as our propitiation satisfy God's justice and demonstrate God's mercy?
3. What is it about Jesus that makes Him the only possible propitiation?
4. Read 1 John 2:1-2.
 - a. John's first goal for his readers is that they might not sin. But what is the good news when we do sin?
 - b. How should our lives demonstrate the relationship we have with our Advocate?



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ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Selected Scriptures

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Possibly the most misunderstood doctrine is predestination. It's beauty and power for daily living is exactly the opposite of the slant given by those who morph it into fatalism. To grasp predestination, we need to know:

1. **Foreordination**—God planned all before time existed.
2. **Foreknowledge**—God knows His decree.
3. **Election**—God selects people according to His purpose.
4. **Predestination**—God determines the end beforehand.

Grasping these truths, we can and should live differently. We should live out our calling in godliness.

OBJECTIVE

We accept and live out our calling.

ELEGANT CREATION

"I did have the privilege of presiding over a 13-year journey [the Human Genome Project] ... For me, that was an experience both of scientific exhilaration, but also as a believer, of appreciating the incredible elegance of God's creation."

—Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D.

Is there a God and does He Care about me?

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we faithfully live out our calling. Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 6: Predestination

The focus of this session is on God's revealed actions. Man's response to God's actions is often included in such a discussion, but for this study, we focus on what the Bible says God has done.

1. Read Ephesians 1:3-6 together. Then, read the *Theme* for this session in the sidebar, noting the four terms and their definitions.
2. **Foreordination** speaks to God's plan and purpose.
 - a. Discuss when and what God purposed in Ephesians 1:4.
 - b. How comprehensive are the plan and purposes of God? Discuss in light of Ephesians 1:11 and Romans 8:28.
3. **Foreknowledge**: God knows what He has purposed. Discuss what God foreknew in these verses: Romans 8:28-29; and Acts 2:22-24.
4. In the Bible, **election** is not about voting; it's about God's purposeful choice.
 - a. Discuss Romans 9:10-12. Did God prefer Jacob over Esau because of what they did?
 - b. Review Ephesians 1:4 and 1 Peter 1:1-2. Who chose whom?
5. Finally, **predestination** speaks to the *ends* which God has purposed for us.
 - a. Discuss the ends described in each verse: Ephesians 1:4-6; Ephesians 1:11; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; and 1 Peter 1:1-2.
 - b. Read 2 Peter 1:6-10. How are you progressing in these ends of your calling? In which area can this group pray for you?
6. Consider further personal study on any or all of the four terms in the sidebar. If needed, ask a pastor for recommended resources.



SERIES 3 | SESSION 7

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 2:14

KEY IDEAS

THEME

This term doesn't usually appear on a list of important doctrinal words, but it likely should. *Exaleiphen* describes the mercy that wipes out sin. In the life of the Christian, such erasure is incredibly significant. The best way to understand erasure of sin is to study *harmartia* (sin), learning what it is and how God remedies the problems associated with it.

OBJECTIVE

We reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ.

CANCELLED OUT

"The Greek term translated 'cancelled out' (ἐξαλείψας, exaleipsas) suggests the smearing of letters written on wax. Our certificate of debt was hostile to us in that it hounded us through a guilty conscience and scriptural warnings. Christ erased the debt and removed the certificate. God crucified this certificate with Christ on the cross."

—F.F. Bruce

Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we do not let sin reign in us.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 7: Erasure

1. What are the two reasons why sin is a problem for everyone?
 - a. Read Romans 5:18a. To whose one sin does this refer?
 - b. What is the impact of being born with a sin nature?
 - c. How universal is sin? Read Romans 3:23, 5:12, Psalm 14:2-3, and Ecclesiastes 7:20.
2. How powerful is sin? Discuss Romans 6:6, 6:12, 7:20, and 7:23.
3. What is the good news in Colossians 2:13-14?
4. How can we overcome the grip sin has on our still earthly bodies?
 - a. Read Romans 6:11-14. How are believers in Jesus supposed to resist sin?
 - b. Discuss Romans 7:6. What is the difference between living by the Spirit and living according to the Law?
5. What can we do when we do yield to sin?
 - a. What did David do? Discuss Psalm 51:9-10.
 - b. Who is our advocate? Read 1 John 2:1-2.
 - c. What does God promise us in Hebrews 10:15-18?



SERIES 3 | SESSION 8

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Selected Scriptures

KEY IDEAS

THEME

The doctrine of the resurrection oddly gets short shrift these days. Possibly the Sadducee spirit is growing – an alliance with political power to create “a better world.” Could be people are so much better off materially that any desire for transcendence is blunted. Regardless of the cause, we are foolish if we continue to ignore the reality of resurrection life. Every human will receive a resurrection body and raise either to eternal fellowship or eternal damnation. Those who trust Jesus are guaranteed the former outcome and should live accordingly.

OBJECTIVE

We live in light of resurrection.

A SHORT MEMORY

“The point of the resurrection is that the present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die. What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it. These activities are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly until the day when we leave it behind altogether. They are part of what we may call building for God's kingdom.”

—N.T. Wright
Surprised by Hope

PRAYER

Pray for each, that we live like we believe we will live forever with God.

Session 8: Resurrection

1. Read Job 14:14a. Have you ever struggled with that universal question? Explain.
 - a. According to Job 19:25-27, what is the biblical answer?
 - b. Does Job state that the resurrection will be physical, or only spiritual? See also Isaiah 26:19.
 - c. Who will be resurrected? Read Daniel 12:2-3 and John 5:28-29.
2. What does the resurrection mean for believers in Jesus Christ?
 - a. What happens when we put our trust in Jesus? Read John 5:24.
 - b. Will any believers miss out on the event described by Jesus in John 6:39-40?
 - c. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, how important and how true does Paul consider the facts of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection?
3. What will the just-as-sure resurrection of unbelievers involve? See Revelation 20:5, 11-15.
4. Discuss each of these ways in which we should live in the light of our resurrection. In which area can this group pray for you?
 - a. Prepare: Build up rewards
 - b. Be assured: Know you are an heir
 - c. Be ready: Jesus can return at any moment
 - d. Care: Share the gospel with unbelievers
5. Review the Wonderful Words that we studied in this series. Which ones has God impressed the most upon your life or thinking through this study? *Reconciliation, Grace, Substitution, Incarnation, Propitiation, Predestination, Erasure, Resurrection.*

