

Study Series: Mere Hope

Author: Jason Duesing

Lesson Title: “Look Down: Mere Hope’s Foundation”

(pp. 119-131)

Session 10

August 7, 2022

The main point of this lesson is: The believer’s hope rests on the foundation of the doctrine of propitiation.

Focus on this goal: To help adults begin to grasp the significance of Jesus’s being the propitiation for their sins

Key Bible Passage: Hebrews 2:17

To the Leader: Propitiation is a key word and concept in this week’s study. Since it is not a known word to most people, you will want to be thoroughly familiar with it and prepared to help adults understand it. The Day One content and reading Hebrews 2:17 in several Bible versions (some of which use “propitiation” and some of which use alternate expressions) will help familiarize you with the word and its meaning and help prepare you for Step 2.

Before the Session

1. Label seven index cards with one of the following: sleep, transportation, nutrition, exercise, happiness, communication, and comfort. (Step 1)

2. Read and review Leviticus 16. (Step 4)

3. Have available a large writing surface. (Step 5)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Say: Today, we’re going to consider having a good foundation. You likely think of the foundation of a building or a house when you hear that term, but let’s dig a little more deeply to get this conversation started. Hold up one card and ask: What is the foundation for good \_\_\_\_\_\_? filling in the blank with the word on the card. Some of the questions are easy (the foundation for good sleep is a good mattress). But some (“What is the foundation for good comfort?”) might have several different answers or interpretations. That’s okay.

Step 2. A Philology Problem

Say: Before we get started in our discussion, let’s consider today’s main word: propitiation. Does anyone know what this means? After a few offer answers, feel free to use the definition from the ESV Study Bible in the third paragraph of Day One (p. 119).

Read Hebrews 2:17 from the ESV, NKJV, NASB, or another version that uses “propitiation.” Invite volunteers to read the verse from Bible versions that do not use that word. Say: Not all Bibles use the word propitiation because some major versions interpret rather than translate this word. But that’s fine; the meaning is still there.

Read the Day One pull quote (p. 120) and express in your own words how our cynical world needs a foundation of hope.

Step 3. A Doctrine to Know, Part 1

Briefly remind learners that the book of Hebrews has an unnamed author who was a Jewish Christian writing to Jewish Christians; therefore, much of its content looks back to the Old Testament and points to how Jesus fulfilled or completed its intent.

Use the content from Day Two (pp. 121-122) to dig deeply into the phrase “had to be” from Hebrews 2:17, being sure to read the John Owen quote (p. 122).

In small groups, consider the Chalcedonian Creed portion (p. 122), and boil its meaning down to a simpler statement (activity 2, p. 122).

Step 4. A Doctrine to Know, Part 2

Enlist a volunteer to read Luke 23:15,41, and 47. Say: This is the difference between Jesus’s humanity and ours: He did not sin. As a group, consider the verses and how these testimonies point to the perfection of Jesus’s humanity.

Invite a volunteer to quote or read John 3:16. Use the content from the Day Three paragraph (p. 124) that begins, “John 3:16 says God loved the world . . . .” to help answer the question of why Jesus took humanity upon Himself.

Briefly describe the high priest’s actions on the day of atonement and how Jesus fulfilled that role with an eternal impact (pp. 124-125 and Lev. 16).

Step 5. A Doctrine to Know, Part 3

Invite a volunteer to read Hebrews 9:24-26. Say: We now have the three aspects of propitiation: Jesus as fully God and fully human, Jesus as our mediator, and Jesus as our sacrifice.

Write Propitiation on the board and write those three elements beneath it. Say: We may struggle to remember the details of this series, but these three things should come to mind when we see the word propitiation.

Read from the second paragraph of Day Four, beginning with the sentence that begins “But what is remarkable . . . .” (p. 126) and continuing to the end of the paragraph. As a group, spend a few minutes praising God for providing the sacrifice needed to make atonement for sins against Him.

Step 6. A Doctrine to Know, Part 4

Invite a volunteer to read Mark 14:32-42 and then use the information in the second paragraph of Day Five (pp. 127-128) to enlighten learners as to the symbolic meaning of the “cup” identified in the Bible.

Encourage learners to put the truths into their own words by asking: What did Jesus mean when He asked the Father to remove the cup from Him? Point out that Jesus indeed took the cup, drinking it “to the dregs” (Isa. 51:17).

Say: As we consider God’s propitiation, let us not forget that the wrath was most certainly poured out upon Jesus. He took the wrath we deserved.

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Direct attention to and summarize “A Doctrine to Share” from the end of Day Five (pp. 128-129). Say: We aren’t taught this grandiose word—propitiation—just so we can add it to our vocabulary. It’s not something we learn so we can feel better about ourselves. It’s a one-word summary of the gospel, and it’s our job to help other people learn it, too.

Guide group members to consider a few people in their lives who don’t know Jesus. Discuss how the idea of propitiation can be explained to people who have no biblical basis. Pray for unsaved friends and family.

