

This midweek study will explore what the Bible means when it describes the world as being opposed to God. 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: The World Opposed to God

There are times in Scripture where the term world refers to more than the physical planet Earth or the collective human population. In many instances, the term refers to an active and evil spiritual force that is in direct conflict with God and His kingdom. This evil world force operates under Satan's control (John 14:30; Eph. 2:2), displaying the same self-centeredness and deceit that is found in his character. Christians are called to overcome this world of spiritual evil by faith in the Son of God (1 John 5:4-5).

1 The world represents the collective forces in rebellion against God, headed by Satan (Luke 4:6; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17).

- ▶ Overall, do you consider the world a safe place or a scary place? Why?
- ▶ On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all dangerous and 10 being as dangerous as it gets, where would you rank Satan and his forces? Why?

The same word can have different meanings based on who uses it, and when. For instance, "hit" means different things to a baseball player, a poker player, and a street fighter. Keep this idea in mind.

Read 1 John 2:15-16.

- ▶ What did John mean by the word "world" here? Did he mean all the people alive?
- ▶ Is the world inherently good or evil? How do you know?
- ▶ What could be a good working definition for world so far?

Read Luke 4:6.

- ▶ What kind of authority does Satan hold, according to this verse? Is this scary information? How should we add Satan's authority into our definition of world?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:4.

- ▶ What title did Paul give to Satan here? What does that title indicate His power? How does he use his power in this verse? Is this idea scary?

Read 1 John 2:17.

- ▶ What hope do you see in this passage?
- ▶ On a scale of 1 to 10, how scary is Satan (and the world) now? What is our comfort?

2 Christians should expect hostility from the world (Matt. 10:16-18; John 15:18-25).

- ▶ Given what we've learned so far, what kind of attitude do you think Christians should expect from the world?

Read Matthew 10:16-18.

- ▶ What image did Jesus use for Christians in the world? How comforting is this image?
- ▶ What kind of treatment did He say Christians should expect?

Read John 15:18-25.

- ▶ How did Jesus say the world would treat Christians?
- ▶ What reason did He give for the world's hostility?
- ▶ What is comforting in this passage?

3 Christians should meet the world's hostility with love (John 3:16; Rom. 12:21; 2 Cor. 5:19).

- ▶ How might you expect Christians to respond to the world's hostility?
- ▶ How did Jesus react to the world's hostility against Him?

Read John 3:16.

- ▶ What emotion does God show the world here? How?
- ▶ By extension, what emotion should Christians show the world? How?

Read Romans 12:21.

- ▶ What are some of the evils we have to overcome in this world?
- ▶ How might we overcome them with good?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:19.

- ▶ What business is God trying to accomplish with the world? How do we factor into that business?
- ▶ What specific ideas could we implement to reconcile the world to God?

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ How might you comfort a Christian who feels attacked by the world?
- ▶ How would you show love to a lost, dying, and hostile world?
- ▶ What might such love cost us? How is it worth the cost?