

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

LESSON 5: WHAT IS SALVATION ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE?

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled *Understanding Salvation*. This series of lessons examines the very foundational idea of salvation, and what occurs in the life of a person who becomes a Christian. These lessons are critical for every believer to understand before they can effectively share the Gospel with others. Each lesson examines a concept from a Biblical perspective and includes time for discussion of these principles as well as how to effectively apply them to your life. This set of lessons is ideal for use with discipling new believers to ensure they fully understand these ideas.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians or those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christian salvation. Those who are preparing for evangelism and discipleship may benefit from discussion of these ideas. These lessons assume the participant has made a decision to follow Jesus and wants to explore Christianity further.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help the leader prepare for the lessons and can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to understand the message of salvation, and how to share it with those around us.

LEADER'S NOTE

There are many lessons in this module, but this may be one of the most important. If there are participants in your group who do not understand salvation clearly, this could be one of the most important lessons of all! Even though it is simple enough to explain to a child, the Good News that we no longer have to pay a debt we could never afford can be difficult to explain! Ask questions as you go through this material to ensure comprehension. Even if your group has believed in Jesus for a long time, it is important to remind them of the wonderful gift of grace at the heart of the Gospel. It should astound us, and make us love God all the more each time we hear it!

INTRODUCTION

(Select two or three of the following questions)

- ❖ What is the best gift you have ever received? Who gave it to you, and what made it such a special gift?
- ❖ What does the word "salvation" mean? How would you explain it to someone who had never come across it before?
- ❖ What are some ways that people try to earn favour with God? Have you ever fallen into a trap of trying to **DO** enough for God so that He would count you worthy of receiving salvation?
- ❖ Share briefly with others in the group about when you first received salvation and accepted the gift of forgiveness from Jesus Christ.



STUDY

TEACH

- ❖ **What Do We Mean By Salvation?** It can mean to be saved or protected from harm. It is also more commonly used in a religious context. Many religions agree that humanity needs to be rescued from its present condition. The Bible explains that salvation is a gift of grace, meaning that we receive the undeserved favour of God. It is offered freely to all. The requirement is that a person surrenders self-reliance, and trusts that God will solve their sin problem. They must believe that Jesus died for their sins, and that He rose again in the power of God.
- ❖ **What Salvation Is Not.** There are several misconceptions about salvation that are held by those of other worldviews. Examine these together:
 - **Salvation by Works:** Some people believe that by doing good things one can obtain salvation. In this thinking, if your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds, it would seem reasonable that God would allow you into heaven, because you must be a good person. The problem with this is that *even one sin* disqualifies us from the presence of God. Consider these verses:
 - [Titus 3:5](#)
 - [Romans 4:3-5](#)
 - **Dedication to the Law:** Some people believe they can earn their salvation by following the law. This could mean Biblical laws such as those listed in the book of Leviticus, or laws of other religions. Rituals and sacrifices have traditionally been what many consider to be the way to gain access to the presence of God both in Christianity and other religions. The Bible makes it clear we cannot earn our salvation this way. Consider these verses:
 - [Romans 3:20](#)
 - [Galatians 5:4](#)
 - [Romans 3:27](#)
 - **Accumulation of Knowledge:** Some people believe that knowledge is the way to obtain salvation. Sometimes this is secret knowledge passed down to only a few, or knowledge that requires a lifetime of study. While knowing the Scriptures is good, and we must understand our faith, Christians believe salvation can be received by anyone who believes in Jesus Christ – not just a few who hold the right secrets. It is a gift of grace and it is God's desire that all would come to a saving faith. Consider these verses:
 - [1 Timothy 2:3-4](#)
 - [Titus 2:11](#)
 - [Colossians 2:8](#)
- ❖ **Grace Is Received, Not Achieved:** Remember that [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) says "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." The requirement for salvation is our faith in God to save us. We must understand it is not our merit that pays for our entrance into the Kingdom of God. Only Christ could pay that for us.



ASK PARTICIPANTS

- ❖ Have you ever held one of these views? Why might people be attracted to these distortions of the Gospel?

TEACH

❖ Receiving Salvation:

- **The Wages of Sin is Death:** Romans 6:23 says “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” A wage is something that must be justly owed as a result of actions done. For example, we may earn a wage through work well done. Hopefully you receive a just wage of money for the work you do, just as you receive a just punishment for crimes you commit. This too can be considered a wage or what is owed.
- **The Free Gift of God:** Jesus was a gift to us — a perfect substitute to take the wage we ourselves had earned. God Himself provided the sacrifice. He became a man so that He could be the sacrifice to satisfy His perfect justice. In God's great love for us, He designed a way for fallen, sinful people to be reunited with Him after our relationship was broken by sin. This is the story of salvation. Jesus, God taking the form of a man, was the perfect sacrifice we needed. We had an infinite debt, and only an infinitely perfect person could pay it. God's Word demonstrates Christ's perfection in many ways.
 - 1 Timothy 3:16
 - Hebrews 10:4,10,14
- **Eternal Life in Christ Jesus Our Lord:** When we accept the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf, we can claim God's forgiveness of our sins. We must agree with God about what sin is and confess our sins to God. This allows us to stand before God blameless and perfect in His sight. Those who receive salvation are called many things in the Bible, including God's children, heirs with Christ Jesus, slaves to Christ instead of slaves to sin. We have a new position, new identity, new family, and new freedom. We call this 'becoming a Christian' or 'being born again,' or simply 'receiving salvation.'



DISCUSSION

- ❖ What key points are important when explaining the Gospel to someone else?
- ❖ How should you respond if you encounter someone who has a distorted view of salvation as outlined in this lesson? Have you ever met someone who called themselves a Christian but had a distorted view of salvation?
- ❖ What is repentance, and why is it necessary for salvation? What does repentance look like in a person's life? How does it help restore us to a relationship with God?
- ❖ How does the Christian understanding of salvation as a free gift, or how we attain eternal life, differ from other worldviews?
- ❖ How has receiving salvation changed your life? Does it change how you see yourself and those around you?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Thank God for the way of salvation that He provided for us and that Jesus Christ is our substitute. Pray that your participants would be protected from distortions of the Gospel and would learn to recognize the truth as they study the Scripture.