

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

LESSON 5: WHAT IS SALVATION ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE?

INTRODUCTION

This Study Guide is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled *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 discussing these principles as well as how to effectively apply them to your life. This module is ideal to use when discipling new believers to ensure they fully understand these concepts.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The purpose of this lesson is to understand the message of salvation as it appears in the Bible, and how to share it with those around us. We must have correct information about what salvation is, how we can get it and what it does for us in order to have freedom from sin and life in Christ.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Salvation is the word Christians use to mean being freed from sin – its power, its penalty, and its presence in our lives. This is an incredible gift from God, and it is critical that we take it to heart. It is important to understand that salvation is not something we can purchase or earn. We might be tempted to try and acquire the favour of God through good works, but this is contrary to His grace! During this lesson you might think through the ways you try to earn your salvation. It is liberating to realize that God loves us despite our failures, and while He is pleased with obedience, we can't do anything to add to our salvation. It was all accomplished by Jesus!

GETTING STARTED

1. What is the best gift you have ever received? Who gave it to you, and what made it such a special gift?

2. 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?



STUDY

- ❖ **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 repent (turn away from a life of sin). They must believe that Jesus died for their sins, and that He rose again in the power of God.
- ❖ **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. What do these verses tell us about good deeds and faith?

Titus 3:5	
Romans 4:3-5	
Ephesians 2:8-9	

- **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. What do the following verses have to say about the law?

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. What do these verses tell you about who can know God?

1 Timothy 2:3-4	
Titus 2:11	
Colossians 2:8	

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

❖ **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.

Sometimes it is tempting to trust the work of our own hands for our salvation. If we can prove we are better than others, then God must be pleased with us, right? Unfortunately this is a lie that Satan tells us too often. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. There is nothing we can do to secure our salvation other than receive the gift from God and treasure it.

❖ **GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION:** So if we cannot earn our salvation ourselves – how do we receive it? We must first know what we need to be rescued from, and why we can trust God to deliver us.

- Read [Romans 6:23](#). What does it say?



What does it mean that the wages of sin is death? A wage is something that is justly owed as a result of actions. For example, we may earn a wage through work well done. We receive wages for work just as we should receive punishment for crimes we commit. Since sins are crimes committed against God, He can set the wage for them. The penalty for sin is death and since all of us are sinners we face that penalty. Jesus took this penalty on himself and died for the sins of the world. Those who believe Jesus died for their sins receive pardon for their sins and the gift of eternal life through Him.

- ❖ **The Perfect Substitute:** Jesus became a perfect substitute taking 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, 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.
- ❖ Read the following verses. How do they demonstrate the perfection of Jesus Christ, and His ability to be a substitute sacrifice for us?

Hebrews 1:1-14	
Hebrews 10: 4-14	
1 John 2:2	
Acts 4:12	

- ❖ **The Free Gift of Life in Christ:** When we accept the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf, we can claim God’s forgiveness of our sins and receive the gift of eternal life. 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, friends of God, heirs with Christ Jesus, saints, a new creation and slaves to righteousness 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’.



IN SUMMARY

- ❖ To receive salvation means to repent from our sin and receive forgiveness from God.
- ❖ Salvation cannot be achieved by good works, accumulation of knowledge or dedication to God's Law.
- ❖ We cannot achieve a sinless perfect state on our own.
- ❖ The wages of sin is death.
- ❖ The free gift of God is eternal life.
- ❖ When we receive salvation, the Bible calls us God's child, an heir with Jesus Christ, a friend of God, a saint and a new creation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Is it hard to think about every selfish thought as a sin? In fact, everything we do that falls short of God's standard is a sin. How has your concept of sin changed throughout your life?

2. How would you explain to a friend the concept of sin as revealed to us from God's Word?