

Series One: Discipleship and New Life

Session 1

Fresh Start: God's Call to Salvation

The SEED

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.



Words to Know

Christian: one who is like Christ; a follower of Christ.

Salvation: the saving of the soul through the atonement of Jesus.

Sin: a transgression of God's Word/law.

Discipleship: a lifestyle of following Christ (i.e., doctrines, principles).

Plan of Salvation: a process whereby a person can be saved.

Cultivating the Ground

New life in Christ brings peace and joy unspeakable, and full glory! We as Christians do not realize the privilege and blessings we have because of our salvation. Many Christians walk around with a defeatist attitude, not realizing that in Christ all things are possible and that we are more than conquerors. We need to reach into our toolboxes, which consist of God's Word, prayer, and meditation. We would be surprised to discover that we can live victorious lives even in the midst of world crises. Although salvation is a free gift from God, we have to develop the kind of commitment that propels us to want to know more about the will of God and the plan that God has for our lives. If we really want to experience the true joy of salvation, we need to build an intimate relationship with God!

- **ROLE-PLAY:** Write a paragraph about a situation in your life that you are dealing with in your Christian journey; then fold up the paper and place it in the box (anonymously). Each person will pick one randomly out of the box and role-play the situation—and the group will help to solve the problem.

- **LET’S TALK ABOUT GOALS:** Think about what you want to gain from this lesson; we will revisit that goal and see where you are.



Planting the SEED

God sent His Son to save us. Saving us is more than preparing us for heaven. God wants us prepared for this life. Life brings about situations that cause us to question whether or not we have all we need to conquer the problems and crises that we are confronted with. Just as parents desire to see their children grow and become the best that they can, so it is with God. In sending Jesus to our world, God was giving us the best foundation that we would need in order to grow and develop into the kind of Christians who can live victoriously. God gave us His best so that we could be His best!

Resources for the SEED

Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9



For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (*Romans 3:23*)

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But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (*Romans 5:8*)

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For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. (*Romans 6:23*)

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If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (*Romans 10:9*)

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (*Romans 10:13*)



Nurturing the SEED

These verses are popularly known as the Roman Road to salvation. Examining these verses is a clear way to look at the simplicity of salvation, the power of salvation, and the ultimate purpose of salvation.

THE HIGH FIVES

- Romans 3:23—Yes, we are all sinners. Sin caused us to fall short of the goodness that God wants to direct toward us—the deeper depths that He desires to give us. We all start at the same place—as sinners—but the good news is that we do not have to end there.
- Romans 5:8—God made a sacred demonstration of His love for us. Even though we were sinners, He died on a cross, bearing all the shame and humiliation just for us. At Calvary, every charge that could be brought against us was cancelled!
- Romans 6:23—There is a consequence for sin: death. The good news is that God’s gift brings life!

- Romans 10:9—We must confess that Jesus is Lord and the ruler of our lives, and believe that after His death, the power of God raised Him from the dead—that He is alive forevermore! We have the gift of salvation! We are saved, redeemed, and delivered from death. This gift of salvation is for you, for me—for all of us who call on His name with sincere hearts; hearts of repentance and thanksgiving receive this gift of salvation.
- Romans 10:13—This is your assurance. If you call on Jesus, he will save you and receive you.

Now this is a road worth travelling! Are you on this road? Were there any stumbling blocks? Talk about them. Then write some of your thoughts in your SEED journal.



Fruit from the SEED

We move now to consider a more tangible expression of our personal walk with God. Salvation is that pivotal moment in our lives when we confront all that is wrong or depraved about us. Salvation brings about transformation. We are saved by grace—“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). The goal of our lives is to regain the broken fellowship with God. We are aware that sin caused us to “fall short” of God’s glory.

Being sinners by nature, we fail in achieving the chief end of humanity. We failed to reach the full mark, the full potential. Our ultimate purpose is to glorify God. Even in our sinful state, God demonstrated His love for us in Christ. The theme of both the Old and New Testaments is salvation. God wants to salvage/rescue us from damnation and grant us His grace that we might walk into our destinies. God wants to salvage us during these difficult times that we are facing. How does



God salvage us? God gives us the wherewithal to endure, to flourish, and to thrive during times that could possibly bring about doubt, depression, distress, and disillusionment.

Experiencing salvation is an allusion to more than a spiritual liberation. We can thus find liberation in all of life’s adversities. How do we rely on God’s redemptive power to transcend all physical, spiritual, and emotional perplexities? Is our salvation limited to “pie in the sky”? God wants us to be conquerors. Living life victoriously requires a continuous personal, theological, and ethical reflection. Current issues such as economic instability, health care reforms, and unemployment are having a devastating effect on persons all around our world. Have you considered their implications for you as a Christian? Will these issues make you stronger and propel you to seek a closer walk with God? We who are connected to Christ—who are well-versed in Scriptures and have fellowship with other believers—will find spiritual resources that will enable us to stand. We can yet flourish during difficult times

(see Psalm 37:25). Having a closer walk with God can help us survive the stressors of our times. What is going on in this world right now that is causing you some concerns? How are you coping? Write your responses to these questions in your SEED journal.



Harvesting Time

Opportunities for Growth spurts, Pruning, and Maturing

We have been considering in this lesson some dynamics of our early development in Christianity. Our personal walk with God is a daily decision. Having a strong foundation, being grounded in God's Word, and living a life of obedience are key factors for the power-filled journey. Taking our salvation to the next level, we must seek to be change agents in a world that needs salvation and resurrection. But it must first begin with our own understanding of salvation and its propensity to change not only us, but also the world around us. It is time to mature in Christ. We should experience growth spurts. In order to do that, it will take the process of *pruning*. Pruning usually involves a snipping off, a cutting off so that growth can take place. Hopefully you took inventory of your life throughout this lesson. What needs to be pruned—cut off or cut out? What is it that is hindering you from moving forward, from reaching your potential in Christ? When God saved us through His Son, He gave us His best. Why not give God our best? As we focus on our lives, the Holy Spirit will direct us to areas of weakness and places in our lives that need cultivating. Yes, we can!



Digging Deeper

ASSIGNMENT

(Choose any three.)

1. How has knowing about the Roman Road to salvation (the High Fives) helped you to grow in Christ?
2. Write a short essay about the person you were prior to salvation, and the person you are today. Identify areas of growth and areas of weakness.
3. Using some incident from your past or some aspect of your present life, reflect on the meaning and relevance of salvation.
4. Choose a metaphor that describes your walk with God (i.e., my walk with God has been like that of a turtle: slow growth; stubborn/hard shell).

Closing

Salvation is God's gift to us through His Son, Jesus the Christ. Though we are sinners saved by grace, our walk with God is a daily process. There are various stages of development as we move toward maturation. In order for us to grow deeper roots in God, we must seek an intimate relationship with Christ. In conjunction with life's struggles, we are faced with societal problems that can affect our spiritual growth. Issues of social justice, racial and ethnic inequi-

ties, and inadequate health care have detrimental effects on our ability to live life to its fullest potential. Our degree of connectedness with God will determine our response to the many issues of life. It is conceivable that unless we are building a stronger foundation, our attention can easily be diverted away from God. We must become firmly planted in Christ and thereby experience exponential growth.

Prayer

Thank You, God, for Your work of atonement in giving us Your dear Son for the pardon of our sins. As we seek to reach our fullest potential in You, allow our lives to reflect more of You and less of us. Help us to demonstrate love, forgiveness, and grace. As we live in this world, help us to focus on areas that need salvation and resurrection. Help us to delight in the pruning process so that when harvest time comes, You will get the glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.