

Salvation

God Gives Us a Second Chance

Begin the small group study with a time of fellowship. Have the students discuss the following questions. Use this lighthearted discussion as a lead-in to the study topic.

1. Have you ever been in a funny situation where someone you knew had to “bail you out” of a tough spot that came about of your own making? Explain. *(Try to keep the discussion focused on more lighthearted examples, such as running out of gas, not enough money at the checkout counter, etc.)*

2. What did you learn from the situation? *(They probably learned everyone—themselves included—sometimes makes really bad choices. Unfortunately, bad choices have consequences. In times like those, they might need help from the outside to make things right again.)*

Explain that during life’s journey, we all do some stupid things and make some regrettable decisions of the very worst kind—decisions that impact us spiritually and leave us feeling separated from God. Such decisions leave a lot of people wondering if they can somehow find a second chance: forgiveness for what they’ve done wrong and an opportunity to know God and experience His plan for our lives. That’s what salvation is all about. Through Jesus Christ we have the opportunity to put the past completely behind us and experience a relationship with God. Through Him we find the life, purpose, and eternity that we may have never thought possible.



Salvation Discussion

1. What is sin and how does it affect our relationship with God? How does it affect our relationships with others?

(The Bible offers some very descriptive input on how to define sin: Disobedience [Hebrews 2:2]; Ungodliness—literally giving little or no thought to God and His ways [Titus 2:11-13]; Error—committing sins through ignorance or thoughtlessness [Hebrews 9:7]. In essence, sin means going our own way instead of following God’s plan for us [James 1:13-15]. Sin ultimately destroys our relationship with God and leads to judgment [Hebrews 2:2,3]. The consequences of sin on our relationships with others is at least two-fold. First, going against God’s plan for us will often hurt those closest to us and alienate us from them, in areas such as infidelity, addiction, and dishonesty. Sin also destroys our testimony, leaving us unprepared to share our faith with the lost and even undermining their impression of the gospel as a result of our actions.)

2. What happens when we get saved? How does our standing with God change, and what affect does this have on how we live?

(The Bible aptly describes salvation as being “born again,” offering a powerful picture of the radical life-change that takes place when we surrender our lives to Christ [John 3:1-8]. The experience changes our past, present, and future. Our past is no longer held against us, as we are declared righteous and pure in God’s eyes [Romans 5:1].

Salvation also changes how we live in the present, as we are called to be holy. This means shunning the wrongs of our old life while pursuing God’s plan for us [Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 2:3-5]. And, finally, salvation changes our destiny, as God promises us eternal life. God intended for us to be immortal, never to die, but sin got in the way. Through a relationship with Christ the promise of eternal life is restored [Romans 6:23].)

3. How would you respond to someone who presented you with this argument: “Why do you believe Jesus is the only way to salvation? What makes your way better than mine?”

(The argument that there are many ways to God is very common today. Proclaiming this fact often leads to Christians being labeled “intolerant” or “narrow-minded.” Yet the exclusivity of Christ is fundamental to Christianity. Jesus himself declared it [John 14:6], affirmed by the apostle Peter in Acts 4:12. When someone rejects Christ, he or she rejects the sole means to salvation. There is no other road to take [Hebrews 10:19]. One might say that Christianity, then, is entirely exclusive in that Christ is the only way to salvation, and entirely inclusive in that Christ died to give every human being opportunity to experience salvation regardless of their past.)

4. Does God really forgive everything? How can we be certain that God will forgive all of the past when we accept Christ?

(Scripture is filled with assurances that God does forgive our sins regardless of the past. He offers us a second chance no matter where we've been or what we've done [Psalm 103:12; Galatians 2:20,21; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 1:9]. This fact should impact our faith in two ways. First, we must resist the urge to evaluate someone's worth as a person and a believer by the life they lived before accepting Christ. He makes all things new when we turn to Him [2 Corinthians 5:17]; thus we have all had our past erased, never to be held against us again. Second, we must not judge our own self-worth based on personal guilt or regrets. Jesus sets us free from the past [John 8:34-36]. We all become God's valued children when we turn to Christ [John 1:12]. There is no differences of status between Christians in God's eyes.)

5. Do good works matter when it comes to our standing with God? Why won't good works alone save us?

(It's common in our world today to claim that salvation and a right standing with God is obtained by simply being a "good person." When exploring this question, keep in mind that works do not save us [Ephesians 2:8,9]. Our own merits will never win God's favor. Salvation is a tribute to God's immeasurable grace, not our relative goodness.)

6. How would you respond to this argument: "Why does a person need to be 'born again'? A loving God wouldn't really send people to hell for their sins, would He?"

(John 3:3 leaves no room for ambiguity. Nothing less than radical transformation takes place when we begin a relationship with Christ. This stands in stark contrast to the prevailing attitude of many in the world, who hold that we don't need to be dogmatic about our faith—that its impact on our lives can be virtually invisible. It is a tragic mistake to take a casual attitude about the status and destiny of our souls. Judgment is real [Hebrews 2:2,3]. The idea that God will not judge is often rooted in the attitude that God is too "big hearted" to actually judge us for our sins. God is perfect, and His nature demands that He not deal lightly with sin [Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13,14; Hebrews 9:16-28]. God's grace results from the fact that He Himself, through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, has paid the penalty for our sins. We are pardoned not because God excuses sin, but because Christ paid the price we could never pay. If we fail to embrace God's offer of salvation through Christ, we choose for ourselves the path that leads to judgment.)

Salvation Discussion / Q & A

1. What is sin and how does it affect our relationship with God? How does it affect our relationships with others?

Hebrews 2:2
Titus 2:11-13
Hebrews 9:7
James 1:13-15
Hebrews 2:2,3

2. What happens when we get saved? How does our standing with God change, and what affect does this have in how we live?

John 3:1-8
Romans 5:1
Hebrews 12:14
1 John 2:3-5
Romans 6:23

3. How would you respond to someone who presented you with this argument: "Why do you believe Jesus is the only way to salvation? What makes your way better than mine?"

John 14:6
Acts 4:12
Hebrews 10:19

4. Does God really forgive everything? How can we be certain that God will forgive all of the past when we accept Christ?

Psalm 103:12
Galatians 2:20,21
Titus 2:11-14
1 John 1:9
2 Corinthians 5:17
John 8:34-36
John 1:12

5. Do good works matter when it comes to our standing with God? Why won't good works alone save us?

Ephesians 2:8,9

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1 John 3:3
Hebrews 2:2,3
Ephesians 1:7
Colossians 1:13,14
Hebrews 9:16-28