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Fresh Start— God's Call to Salvation



Words to Know

Christian: to be Christlike.

Discipleship: to be a follower of Jesus in what we say and what we do.

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

Salvation: to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Sin: separating ourselves from the desires of God for our lives.

Cultivating the Ground

Even as a teenager there are important decisions you are going to have to make for your life. Take time now and list five decisions you believe will be crucial for your growth, maturity, and living. List them according to their priority, with the most important being first.

If you are a Christian, what influence, if any, did your faith have upon your list? In what ways do you see your Christianity coming into conflict with your list? If you are not a Christian, what are the reasons you have not become one? For everyone, what are some important steps each person must take to have a fresh start in Jesus Christ? How do we maintain this throughout our lives?



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.

Planting the SEED

Accepting salvation is a personal decision that each person must make for him- or herself. It is not something that can be given to you by your parents or friends. Though they may be able to help you understand what it means to be a Christian, you have to make the final choice for yourself. To be a Christian is more than just being baptized. To be a Christian is more than saying you are a Christian. To be a Christian is more than just coming to church, or singing in the choir, or ushering, or participating in youth activities. All of these should be done as a result of your being a Christian and not just acting as if you are a Christian.

The challenge many of us have is that we have already started developing patterns of living which are focused on the world. How we think is based on what we are exposed to. How we dress is based on what we see in terms of fashion, culture, and society. So many of our views are based on what we see on television. So much of our understanding about relationships comes from what we hear in the music to which we listen. Not all of what we see and hear is bad. The challenge for Christians is knowing what is good and what is bad. An even greater challenge is answering for ourselves, "How does what I have been exposed to in the world speak to my desire to live and walk as a Christian?"

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)**



Nurturing the SEED

One of the simplest explanations of the salvation experience is called “The Roman Road.” Notice which book of the Bible all of these passages come from. This is why it is called the *Roman Road*. These are the passages of Scripture which help us to know how to be saved, and they are found in the book of Romans. These four passages of Scripture give an excellent roadmap on how a person can have a fresh start.

From Romans 3:23 we learn we must first admit (confess) that we have done things which are against what God wants us to do. In order to have a fresh start we have to admit that our previous start was not a good one. Our previous start was when we were physically born into the world; that was when we started a pathway of self-destruction. We have made choices in our lives which are not pleasing to God. That is called *sin*. Sin is our separation from God.

We must not be so shortsighted that we think that sin is limited to only a few things. Sin comes in many different forms.

Look at the list below and talk about why each of these is a sin:

- Cheating on an exam.
- Intentionally giving wrong information on a registration form or application.
- Using illegal drugs and alcohol.
- Having sex before getting married.
- Taking something that does not belong to you.
- Trying to hurt or kill someone.
- Staying out late on Saturday and not coming to church on Sunday.
- Using profanity.
- Not respecting your parents, other adults, and other people.
- Saying negative things about the way a person looks.
- Hating on someone because of some things that person may have or do that you do not have or do.
- Failing to help people who need your help.
- Doing what someone else wants you to do even though it may get you into trouble.
- Not taking time to pray to and worship God.

This list is only a sampling of some of the sins in people's lives. The truth is that all of us have committed sin at various points in our lives, and we become subject to God's wrath because of it.

From Romans 6:23 we learn that doing things that are against what God wants us to do causes death. The Bible tells us that sin causes death in us. It causes physical death. If you have ever been to a funeral, then you have seen someone who has physically died. There is no more life in that person's body. Every person who has died has died as a direct or indirect result of sin. Some die because of health issues, accidents, or old age. Others die while committing acts that are against the will of God.

But even more importantly is that sin causes spiritual death. Though you may still be physically alive and you don't look dead, you can still be dead in your soul. This means that you do not have a heart for God. It means that you do not want to follow the things the Bible teaches. It means that you only look for those things that you believe will make you feel good right now, knowing that there may be trouble for you later on in your life. It means you have turned your back on God.

From Romans 5:8 we learn that even though we made the mistake, God fixed the mistake by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And what is so amazing about salvation is that in spite of our turning our backs on God, God never turned His back on us. He always is making a way for us to start fresh and get on the right track. The Bible teaches that the only way for people to get back on the right track with God is through a worthy sacrifice. The only worthy sacrifice was the life of God's Son, Jesus Christ. He was the only one who could do it, and the only one who needed to do it to fix the wrong things we have done in our lives.

From Romans 10:13 we learn that it is necessary for each one of us to personally ask the Lord to save us. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ fulfills God's requirement for justice against sin. Jesus did what needed to be done for us to get back on the right track. We are saved when we accept and believe in Jesus Christ. This is what is meant when it is said that Jesus paid the price for our sins. He saved us. We must ask not just with our mouths or even just through our prayers. We ask with our hearts and with our lives. We ask God to save us by our sincere desire to turn away from the things which are wrong (sin) and turn toward those things which are right (salvation). This turning is called "repentance."

We can sum up the understanding of salvation in a passage of Scripture from the gospel of John: "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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:16-18).

Fruit from the SEED

The question many may still have is, "How do I know that I am saved?" One of the interesting things about salvation is that God provides it and it is universal, which means it is free to all who believe. However, the proof of a person being saved does not lie with God, but it is based on the person who wishes to be saved. The person's repentance must be real, authentic, and sincere. We cannot and should not play as if we are saved when we have not truly accepted Christ. It is too serious of a matter. The proof is in what you believe and how you act based on what you believe. Those who are saved will still deal with the same things others will experience in their lives. They will have to deal with mistakes, sickness, death, misfortunes, disappointments, betrayals, and so forth just like anyone else. The difference is in our having the ability to handle these hard times. We never lose hope, regardless of the situation. We always seek to respond in a godly way and not a worldly way.

The Old Testament speaks about the joy of salvation—Psalm 51:12: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." This is a joy that comes when we have handled the tests that life gives us and we know that our actions please God. This joy is not a worldly joy that is given by the world. This is the joy that only God provides that is better than any other joy. There is a song that is sung sometimes that has as some of its words, "This joy I have the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away."

Gather in groups of two to four students for this next exercise.

For each of you who is a Christian:

- Talk about when you truly knew that you were a Christian and made the choice to follow Jesus Christ (this may or may not be the time when you were baptized. It is the time when you truly began to feel Christ moving in your life).
- Talk about some of the challenges you have faced since becoming a Christian. Share with the others what you are comfortable in sharing.
- Talk about how you have handled some of the challenges.

- Talk about ways you are planning to deal with other issues which hinder you from being the Christian you want to be.

For those of you who are not Christians:

- Talk about what you believe it means to be a Christian.
- Talk about what you are still wrestling with that keeps you from making the decision to follow Jesus Christ.
- What do you need the others in your group to do to encourage you as you determine to follow Jesus?
- If you believe you are ready today to make the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, ask the others in the group to pray for you and then let your teacher know you are ready to take that step for Jesus.
- Finally, what will you write in your journal regarding what you have learned or experienced in class today?



Harvesting Time

Opportunities for Growth Spurts, Pruning, and Maturing

You should have gained some insight about the difference between being saved and being unsaved from this session. Tradition may have taught or suggested to you some things about salvation that are not necessarily true. What are some things that you have learned about salvation as a result of this session?

Digging Deeper

Use a concordance and a study Bible to find more Scriptures that teach about salvation. Write them in your journal and one or two sentences about what you learn from them.

Closing

You are encouraged to close out the session with prayer—either through group prayer, with prayer partners, or individual prayer. You can close out the session with this prayer: *Father, we thank You for Your gift of salvation and that we have the opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ and be His disciples. Help us as we grow in Your Word. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*