

Salvation

By John Taylor

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Find out the salvation story of a friend or family member. Write it down. Prepare to share the story with your group.

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Ephesians 2:4-10 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: Why does God act to save the people He created?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to 1 Timothy 2:1-6 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Is there any other way to salvation than through faith in Jesus Christ?

Scripture to Memorize

"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." Ephesians 2:8-9

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will better understand salvation and how it comes about.

John Taylor is associate professor of New Testament at Southwestern Seminary. Born in Australia, he studied at the University of Melbourne, Fuller Theological Seminary, and at the University of Cambridge in England. He teaches the letters and theology of Paul and New Testament Greek. His passion is to teach people to read the Bible well because it is the Word of God and to multiply the ministry of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit into the world. John and his wife, Heidi, were missionaries in England for many years, working in the inner city. They have four grown children.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

You have a friend who has had an escape from near death and is suddenly open for the first time to talking about spiritual things. What would you say about salvation which does not simply create false comfort, but offers real hope?

Read Ephesians 1:7 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 7. In Him. That is, in Jesus Christ. To be “in Christ” means to belong to Him and to be joined to Him in such a fundamental way that we become united with Him. **redemption.** This is another word for *salvation*. The word *redemption* means “to be released from captivity.” **blood.** When the Bible talks about the blood of Christ, it is a way of talking about His death. From the perspective of the Romans, Jesus died as a political troublemaker. But in God’s eyes—and that is what counts!—Jesus’ death was the atoning sacrifice for sin. This is like the Old Testament Passover, when lambs were sacrificed for Israel’s redemption from slavery. Or the day of atonement, when a goat was sacrificed for Israel’s sin. **forgiveness.** The captivity, or slavery, which we need to be released from is the captivity of our own sin and trespasses (lawbreaking).

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on the salvation story of a friend or family member.

Read Ephesians 2:4-10 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 4. rich in mercy. Salvation comes from the overflowing and abundant mercy of God. *Mercy* means that He has compassion on people, even when people don’t deserve it.

Verse 5. dead. Read again Ephesians 2:1. **made us alive.** Salvation means being rescued from death and brought to life. **together with Christ.** We who believe are brought to life from the dead through Jesus’ own resurrection because we are in Christ. **by grace.** Paul is going to enlarge on this concept in verse 8.

Verse 6. raised . . . seated. Although our bodily resurrection is still to come, in an important sense believers have already been raised with Christ and given spiritual authority with Him.

Verse 7. in the coming ages. God’s plan is to put believers on display as trophies of grace. It is going to be obvious for all eternity that our salvation is only by grace.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on what motivates God to save.

Studying the Passage

Verse 8. by grace. By the generous gift of God. **saved.** Rescued from the power of sin and death. Rescued from the wrath of God (see Ephesians 2:3). Notice this is a present reality. **faith.** A simple decision to trust in the gospel of Christ and in God. **that not of yourselves.** In

the original Greek text, the “that” which is not of yourselves is not a reference to faith, or grace, but to the verb: “You have been saved.”

Verse 9. works. Works are actions or deeds. Nothing we do can save us. Otherwise we would be able to boast, and God’s grace would be lost to view.

Verse 10. created. This word tells us that Paul saw salvation as a new creation, when we are made all over again. **good works.** We are not saved *by* good works, but we are saved *for* good works. God has saved us for a purpose.

Discussion Question

What are the works people sometimes depend on for salvation?

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-6 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 1. prayers. Paul called for repeated prayer for all people.

Verse 2. High positions. Pray especially for leaders. **quiet life.** At peace and free from excessive governmental interference.

Verse 4. all people. God our Savior wants prayer for all people, especially leaders, because He wants all people to be saved. Through our prayer, we can be involved in the great plan of salvation. **knowledge.** Salvation involves a certain amount of knowledge. **truth.** Reality.

Verse 5. one God . . . one mediator. There is only one way to receive the gift of salvation and restore your relationship with God and that is through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Verse 6. ransom for all. Jesus gave Himself for all. Therefore, everyone can be saved.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now discuss whether there are other ways to salvation than through faith in Jesus Christ.

Discussion Question

What must a person know to be saved?

On Your Own

Now is the time to establish for sure if you have received salvation through Christ. Write a brief prayer of faith which affirms or reaffirms your trust in God for salvation by grace, through Christ alone. Pray your prayer.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

You learned in the lesson last week of the terrible and destructive consequences of human sin. Because of sin, all people are lost, subject to death and to the wrath of God. This week, through three key passages (Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 2:4-10; and 1 Timothy 2:1-6), you were reminded that God has acted to save sinners.

God has acted, according to Ephesians 2:4-8, out of His mercy, love, kindness and grace. In other words, as much as it is in God's nature to grieve over sin, it is also in His nature to save. Nothing outside of God forces Him to provide salvation. It comes right from His heart, from the depths of His being.

The salvation God has provided is in and through His son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the only mediator between God and man. That is to say, only through Christ can sinful humans be reconciled to God and rescued from sin and its consequences. The means of that salvation are the sacrificial death of Christ for all and His resurrection through which death is overcome. No human works of any kind can accomplish salvation. It cannot be earned, but it can and must be received by faith.

Believers are not to keep their salvation to themselves, but to pray for all people. Christ died for all, and God desires all people to be saved.

Follow up Question

What must a person do to be saved?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.