

RCF

WHO IS JESUS?

AND WHAT IS SALVATION?

Knowing Christ, His Saving Work, and the New Life He Gives

A FOUR-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

Month 2 of the Foundations of the Faith Series

MONTHLY THREAD

WHO IS JESUS? -> WHY DID HE COME? -> WHAT DID HE DO? -> HOW SHOULD I RESPOND?

KEY VERSE

John 20:31 - The Gospel was written so that we may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in His name.

PREPARED BY

Redeemed Campus Fellowship (RCF) - Leadership & Theology Department

"Who do you say that I am?" - Matthew 16:15

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This month brings two foundations together that really belong together: who Jesus is and what salvation means. We begin with Jesus Himself because salvation makes sense only when we know who the Savior is. From there, we ask why He came, what He accomplished through His death and resurrection, and how we are called to respond to Him (John 20:30-31; Acts 4:12).

Each lesson is for all RCF students to read, discuss, and respond to together. Begin with the main passage. Notice what is actually in the text before moving to explanation or application. Then consider the context, discuss the main truth, and respond personally. The goal is to see Jesus clearly in Scripture and respond to Him (Luke 24:27, 32; John 5:39-40).

SUGGESTED FORMAT - 60 TO 75 MINUTES

- Worship & Opening Prayer - 10 minutes
- Read It Together + Context - 8 to 10 minutes
- Opening Hook - 5 minutes
- Teaching / Let's Dig In - 25 to 30 minutes
- Discussion + Engagement Activity - 10 to 15 minutes
- Response & Closing Prayer - 10 minutes

A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before each study, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand and respond to Scripture. This guide is a tool, not a substitute for His leading (John 14:26; 16:13). Come ready for honest questions. Stay close to the text, test what you hear by Scripture, and keep studying when a question needs more time (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15).

During Response & Prayer, do not feel pressured to manufacture emotion. A biblical response may be worship (Romans 12:1), repentance and faith (Acts 2:37-38; Mark 1:15), confession (1 John 1:9), thanksgiving (1 Thessalonians 5:18), or obedience (James 1:22). Remember: a prayer is not a magic formula; Jesus saves, and prayer is one way to express repentance and faith (Romans 10:9-13).

Level Up is especially for those who already know Christ and want to grow deeper. Use it to clarify questions, strengthen your understanding of Jesus, and live out what you believe (Colossians 2:6-7; 2 Peter 3:18). Scripture references are included throughout so you can check each point and study further (Acts 17:11).

THE FOUR-WEEK JOURNEY

Week	Lesson	Main Passage	Big Idea
Week 1	Who Is Jesus? - More Than a Teacher	John 1:1-18	Jesus is the eternal Son of God who became truly human to reveal God to us.
Week 2	Why Did Jesus Come? - The Savior We Needed	Luke 19:1-10	Jesus came to seek and save people who are lost in sin and unable to rescue themselves.
Week 3	What Did Jesus Do for Us? - The Cross and the Empty Tomb	1 Corinthians 15:1-8	Jesus died for our sins and rose again, opening the way to forgiveness, reconciliation, and new life.
Week 4	How Do I Receive and Live Out Salvation? - Grace, Faith, and New Life	Ephesians 2:1-10	Salvation is God's gift of grace received through repentance and faith, and it begins a new life of following Jesus.

LESSON 1: WHO IS JESUS? - More Than a Teacher

BIG IDEA

Jesus is the eternal Son of God who became truly human to reveal God to us (John 1:1, 14, 18). Because of who He is, He deserves more than admiration - He deserves our trust, worship, and obedience (John 20:28; John 14:15; Luke 9:23).

KEY SCRIPTURE

Main passage: John 1:1-18. Supporting passages: Matthew 16:13-17; Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:1-4.

LESSON AIM

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to explain what Scripture reveals about Jesus and why His identity changes the way you respond to Him.

READ IT TOGETHER

Main passage: Read John 1:1-18 together. As you read, notice every statement John makes about "the Word" - who He is, what He does, and what happens when He comes into the world.

Context: John does not begin with Bethlehem. He begins before creation, echoing the opening words of Genesis: "In the beginning" (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1). Before Jesus is introduced as a baby, teacher, or miracle worker, John introduces Him as the eternal Word who was with God, was God, and through whom all things were made (John 1:1-3). Then John says that this Word became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14). That opening prepares us to read the rest of the Gospel with one question in mind: Who is Jesus?

OPENING HOOK

Imagine someone on campus asks you, "Who is Jesus?" You have thirty seconds, and you are not allowed to hide behind church phrases you cannot explain. What would you say? A good teacher? A prophet? A miracle worker? The founder of Christianity? The Son of God? Tonight we will not begin with popular opinions. We will begin with what Scripture says about Him.

LET'S DIG IN

1. Jesus existed before Bethlehem (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17).

When John says, "In the beginning was the Word," he deliberately takes us back before Bethlehem and even before creation. Jesus entered human history at a real time and place, but the Son did not begin to exist when Mary gave birth to Him. John says the Word already was, that He was with God, that He was God, and that all things were made through Him (John 1:1-3). Paul says the same thing from another angle: all things were created through Christ and for Him, and He is before all things (Colossians 1:16-17). So when we meet Jesus teaching, healing, forgiving sins, and calling disciples in the Gospels, we are meeting the eternal Son who stepped into the world He made (John 1:3; Colossians 1:17).

2. The eternal Son truly became one of us (John 1:14; Philippians 2:6-8).

Then John says something astonishing: "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). God did not send us only an idea, a philosophy, or a message from a distance. The Son truly entered human life. Jesus became hungry and tired, wept at a friend's tomb, experienced sorrow, suffered physical pain, and died (John 4:6; John 11:35; Matthew 26:37-38; Philippians 2:7-8). Yet He remained without sin (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22), and He is fully divine (John 20:28; Colossians 2:9). Both truths stand firm: Jesus is truly God and truly human. He is the eternal Son who truly entered our humanity without ceasing to be God (Philippians 2:6-8). Because He truly shares our humanity, He can sympathize with our weakness and represent us faithfully before God (Hebrews 2:17; 4:15-16). As the eternal Son, He makes the Father known and is able to save completely those who come to God through Him (John 1:18; Hebrews 7:25).

3. Jesus is the promised Christ and Lord - and that calls for a response (Matthew 16:15-16; Philippians 2:9-11).

"Christ" is not Jesus' surname. It is a title - Messiah, the Anointed One. Israel had been waiting for the One God promised: a King from David's line, a servant through whom God would bring salvation, and the One through whom God's reign would be made known (2 Samuel 7:12-13; Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 53:4-6). When Peter says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living

God," he is saying far more than "You are inspiring" (Matthew 16:16). Scripture also names Jesus as Lord: every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). John tells us that the Son makes the Father known, Hebrews says the Son is the exact imprint of God's nature, and Jesus says that to see Him is to see the Father (John 1:18; Hebrews 1:1-3; John 14:9). His identity brings the question into our own lives: Who do you say He is? And does the way you live agree with your answer? (Matthew 16:15; Luke 6:46).

DISCUSS IT

1. What about Jesus stands out most clearly in John 1:1-18?
2. Why does it matter that Jesus is both truly God and truly human?
3. What is the difference between admiring Jesus and recognizing Him as Lord?

YOUR TURN

TRUTHS ABOUT JESUS. In small groups, reread John 1:1-18 and make a list of every truth the passage reveals about the Word/Jesus. Then read Matthew 16:13-17 and Colossians 1:15-20 and add anything those passages show you. Circle the three truths your group thinks are especially important. When you come back together, use the passages to build one shared answer to the question: "Who is Jesus?" Let Scripture shape your answer before moving to personal application.

RESPONSE & PRAYER

Sit for a moment with Jesus' question in Matthew 16:15: "Who do you say that I am?" You may know the expected church answer and still keep Jesus at a safe distance. You may admire Him without fully trusting Him, or call Him Savior while resisting His authority as Lord. Scripture calls us not only to know who Jesus is, but to receive Him and follow Him (John 1:12; Luke 9:23). Answer Him honestly in prayer - with worship, confession, renewed trust, or a desire to know and follow Him more deeply.

Pray: *Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see You as Scripture reveals You. Forgive us for reducing You to whatever is comfortable or familiar. You are the eternal Son who came near. Help us not only to know facts about You, but to trust You, worship You, and follow You. Amen.*

LEVEL UP - GOING DEEPER

DEEPER QUESTION: What does it look like to truly live with Jesus as Lord? Knowing that Jesus is Lord is more than knowing the right answer about Him. Jesus asked, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46). His Lordship reaches ordinary life: how we speak (Ephesians 4:29), how we treat people (Colossians 3:12-14), how we use our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:18-20), how we handle money (Matthew 6:24), and even how we make plans for the future (James 4:13-15). This does not mean we obey to earn His love or salvation; we obey because we belong to Him and love Him (John 14:15; Ephesians 2:8-10). For a college student, living under Jesus' Lordship can mean asking, "What would honor Christ here?" before a decision and being willing to obey even when His way is costly or unpopular (Luke 9:23; Romans 12:1-2). Growth in Christ is moving from simply calling Jesus Lord to increasingly letting His Lordship shape how we actually live (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:6-7).

THIS WEEK'S WALK - Seeing Jesus Clearly

Read slowly each day. Keep returning to Jesus and the gospel throughout the week.

Day 1: John 1:1-5 - List what these verses say about the Word before He entered the world.

Day 2: John 1:9-18 - What do grace, truth, and revelation look like in Jesus?

Day 3: Matthew 16:13-17 - Answer Jesus' question in your own words: Who do you say He is?

Day 4: Colossians 1:15-20 - Underline every statement about Jesus' relationship to creation and the church.

Day 5: Philippians 2:5-11 - Notice the movement from humility to exaltation. What kind of Lord is Jesus?

Day 6: Hebrews 1:1-4 - How does the Son reveal God more fully than a message alone could?

Day 7: John 20:24-31 - What does Thomas confess, and what response does John want from every reader?

LESSON 2: WHY DID JESUS COME? - The Savior We Needed

BIG IDEA

Jesus came because humanity's deepest problem is sin and separation from God (Romans 3:23; 6:23). We could not rescue ourselves, so the Son came to seek, save, and give His life for the lost (Luke 19:10; Mark 10:45).

KEY SCRIPTURE

Main passage: Luke 19:1-10. Supporting passages: Genesis 3:1-13; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Mark 10:45; Luke 5:27-32.

LESSON AIM

By the end of this lesson, you should understand why salvation is necessary, what Scripture means by sin and lostness, and why Jesus came as Savior rather than merely as a moral example.

READ IT TOGETHER

Main passage: Read Luke 19:1-10 together. As you read, notice who initiates the encounter, how Zacchaeus responds, how the crowd reacts, and how Jesus explains His mission in verse 10.

Context: Jesus is on His way toward Jerusalem, where His ministry will culminate in His death and resurrection (Luke 18:31-33). Jericho is one of the last major stops. Zacchaeus is a chief tax collector - wealthy, socially despised, and connected to a system known for exploitation. Yet Jesus deliberately calls him by name, enters his home, and then explains the encounter with a summary of His mission: "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:5-10).

OPENING HOOK

Some problems can be fixed with more effort. A poor grade may improve with better study habits. A messy room can be cleaned. A weak skill can be practiced. But what happens when the problem is deeper than effort? If someone is drowning, they do not need a motivational speech from the shore; they need rescue. Scripture describes humanity's deepest problem as something we cannot solve by ourselves, and Jesus says He came "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10; Ephesians 2:1-5).

LET'S DIG IN

1. We were made for God, but sin turns us away from Him (Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 3:1-7).

The Bible begins with human beings made in God's image and given the dignity of living under His good rule (Genesis 1:26-28). Sin enters when humanity distrusts God's word and chooses independence from Him (Genesis 3:1-7). That same pattern shows up in us. Sin is expressed in wrong actions, but it is deeper than a list of bad things we do; it is the posture of wanting life on our own terms rather than God's (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 1:21-25). Scripture says that all have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). The gospel is therefore not for a special group of unusually "bad" people. Every one of us needs the grace God gives in Christ (Romans 3:23-24).

2. Sin is deeper than self-improvement can fix (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-3).

We often soften sin by calling it a mistake, a weakness, or "something everybody does." Sometimes those words describe part of the situation, but they do not tell the whole biblical story. Sin separates us from God and leads to death (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23). Ephesians describes our condition apart from Christ as spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1-3). That is why salvation cannot simply mean "try harder" or "be more religious." Better behavior cannot erase guilt or make God owe us salvation; He saves us because of His mercy, not because of righteous things we have done (Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:8-9). Good works matter, but they cannot be our savior. We need the rescue God provides in Christ (Acts 4:12; Titus 3:4-7).

3. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10; Mark 10:45).

In Luke 19, Jesus is the One who notices Zacchaeus, calls him by name, and chooses to enter his home (Luke 19:5-7). Grace moves toward Zacchaeus before he has cleaned up his life. But grace does not leave him unchanged: his response includes repentance and a willingness to make restitution (Luke 19:8). Jesus then explains the whole encounter in one sentence: "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Elsewhere He says He came for sinners, not for people who think

they are already spiritually well (Luke 5:31-32), and that He came to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). If Jesus came to save us, the next question is clear: what did He do to accomplish that salvation? (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

DISCUSS IT

1. How does Luke 19:1-10 show both grace and repentance?
2. How would you explain sin to someone who thinks it only means "doing really bad things"?
3. Why can good behavior not function as our savior?

YOUR TURN

DIAGNOSIS AND RESCUE. In small groups, draw two columns: "What is wrong?" and "What kind of rescue is needed?" Use Genesis 3, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, and Luke 19 to fill the first column with Scripture's description of the human problem. Then discuss what kind of salvation would actually answer those problems. Let the passages show why the gospel must be bigger than self-improvement.

RESPONSE & PRAYER

Take a moment to identify where you have minimized sin or trusted yourself to fix what only God can save. Your response may be confession (1 John 1:9), or it may be the first honest admission, "I need a Savior." Biblical conviction is not meant to leave you trapped in shame. Jesus came precisely for sinners and the lost, and He receives those who come to Him (Luke 5:31-32; Luke 19:10; John 6:37).

Pray: Father, thank You for loving us enough to tell us the truth about our condition and for not leaving us there. Jesus, thank You for coming to seek and save the lost. Show us where we have trusted our own goodness, religion, or effort. Give us hearts that are quick to repent, and help us understand more deeply the grace You have shown us. Amen.

LEVEL UP - GOING DEEPER

DEEPER QUESTION: Why can't I just be a good person? Being a sinner does not mean a person never does anything good in ordinary human life. Human beings still bear God's image (Genesis 1:27), and Jesus Himself acknowledges that sinful people can give good gifts to their children (Matthew 7:11). Paul also recognizes that people without the written law can sometimes do what the law requires, showing the work of the law written on their hearts (Romans 2:14-15). But the question is not whether we have ever done anything good; it is whether our goodness can remove sin or make us right with God. Scripture says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and that we are saved by grace through faith, not by our own works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-5). That is why Jesus came. We did not simply need better behavior; we needed forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and new life (Romans 5:8-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19). So the question is not, 'Have I done some good things?' but, 'Can my goodness save me?' Scripture's answer is no. We need Christ.

THIS WEEK'S WALK - Understanding Why We Need a Savior

Read slowly each day. Keep returning to Jesus and the gospel throughout the week.

Day 1: Genesis 3:1-13 - Notice how sin begins with distrust and how it affects relationship, shame, and hiding.

Day 2: Psalm 51:1-12 - What does genuine confession sound like? What does David ask God to do?

Day 3: Romans 3:21-26 - What problem is described, and what solution does God provide?

Day 4: Romans 6:20-23 - Compare the fruit and outcome of sin with the gift of God.

Day 5: Luke 5:27-32 - Who does Jesus say He came to call, and what does that reveal about His mission?

Day 6: Luke 19:1-10 - What changes in Zacchaeus after Jesus comes near?

Day 7: Mark 10:35-45 - What does Jesus say His mission is, and what does "ransom" suggest about our need?

LESSON 3: WHAT DID JESUS DO FOR US? - The Cross and the Empty Tomb

BIG IDEA

Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Through His saving work, forgiveness, reconciliation with God, victory over death, and new life are offered to us (Romans 5:10-11; 1 Peter 1:3).

KEY SCRIPTURE

Main passage: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. Supporting passages: Isaiah 53:4-6; Romans 5:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Colossians 2:13-15; Luke 24:1-8.

LESSON AIM

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to summarize the core gospel events and explain why both the cross and the resurrection are essential to salvation.

READ IT TOGETHER

Main passage: Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 together. Identify the events Paul says are "of first importance" and notice the witnesses he names as evidence of the resurrection.

Context: Paul writes to a church that had received the gospel but had become confused about resurrection. Before correcting them, he reminds them of what he had already preached and what they had received: Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, and appeared to witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). Paul calls these truths "of first importance." The death and resurrection of Jesus are not side topics in Christianity; they are at the center of the gospel.

OPENING HOOK

Imagine a friend says, "I understand that Jesus died, but why does His death matter to me? And why does His resurrection matter so much? Wouldn't His teaching still be valuable either way?" Those questions take us to the center of the gospel. Our faith rests not only on what Jesus taught, but on the truth that He died for our sins and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 14, 17).

LET'S DIG IN

1. Jesus went to the cross knowingly and willingly (Mark 10:33-34, 45; John 10:17-18).

Jesus did not stumble into the cross as though His mission had gone wrong. He repeatedly told His disciples that He would suffer, be killed, and rise again (Mark 8:31; Mark 9:31; Mark 10:33-34). He said that He came to give His life as a ransom for many, and He described His life as something He willingly laid down (Mark 10:45; John 10:17-18). Human injustice was fully present at the cross - betrayal, false accusation, mockery, violence, and execution - yet God's saving purpose was also at work through it (Acts 2:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3). The cross shows us both the seriousness of our sin and the depth of God's love for sinners (Romans 5:8).

2. At the cross, Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves (Isaiah 53:4-6; Romans 5:8-11).

Scripture uses several pictures to help us understand what Jesus accomplished at the cross. Isaiah speaks of a servant who bears the sins of others, and Peter says Christ bore our sins in His body on the tree (Isaiah 53:4-6; 1 Peter 2:24). Paul speaks of justification and reconciliation: while we were still sinners and enemies, Christ died for us so that we could be brought back to God (Romans 5:8-11). Colossians adds the picture of victory, describing our debt as cancelled and hostile powers as disarmed through the cross (Colossians 2:13-15). Together these pictures show that our guilt needs forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7), our alienation needs reconciliation (Romans 5:10-11), our bondage to sin needs freedom (Romans 6:6-7), and the power of death must be defeated (Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57). Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

3. The resurrection is essential to the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 14, 17).

The gospel does not end with Jesus in a grave. Paul says Christ was buried, raised on the third day, and seen by many witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). He goes on to say that if Christ has not been raised, our faith is empty and we remain in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17). Because Jesus rose, death did not get the final word. His resurrection gives us a living hope and points forward to the resurrection believers will share (1 Peter 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22). Salvation therefore includes both forgiveness for our past and new life in the risen Christ, with the promise that death itself will not finally win (Romans 6:4-5; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

DISCUSS IT

1. According to 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, what belongs at the center of the gospel?
2. What different problems do words like forgiveness, reconciliation, ransom, and victory help us understand?
3. Why is the resurrection essential rather than just a happy ending after the cross?

YOUR TURN

THE GOSPEL IN FOUR MOVEMENTS. In small groups, write four headings: OUR NEED; CHRIST'S DEATH; CHRIST'S RESURRECTION; OUR NEW REALITY. Using this week's passages, write one or two clear sentences under each heading. Then explain the gospel in about sixty seconds without relying on church words you cannot explain. Aim for clarity, not speed.

RESPONSE & PRAYER

Begin with gratitude. Thank Jesus specifically for what His death and resurrection mean: forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7), reconciliation with God (Romans 5:10-11), new life and living hope (1 Peter 1:3), and the promise of resurrection beyond death (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). If you are carrying guilt, bring it honestly to Christ instead of hiding from Him; there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). If you are still exploring faith, consider the central truth of the gospel: Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Pray: *Lord Jesus, thank You for giving Yourself for us. Thank You that You did not ignore our sin, and thank You that Your grace is greater than our failure. Thank You for the cross, the empty tomb, and the hope of new life. Teach us to rest in what You have done and to live as people reconciled to God. Amen.*

LEVEL UP - GOING DEEPER

DEEPER QUESTION: Why does the cross matter for forgiveness? Biblical forgiveness never means pretending evil does not matter. Scripture presents God as both holy and merciful (Isaiah 6:3; Exodus 34:6-7). Romans 3:25-26 points to the cross as the place where God's righteousness and His saving grace are displayed together. The New Testament also does not picture the Father punishing an unwilling outsider: the Son willingly gives Himself (John 10:17-18), and Paul says God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). Scripture uses several images to show what Christ accomplished: sacrifice (Hebrews 9:26), ransom (Mark 10:45), reconciliation (Romans 5:10), justification (Romans 5:1), and victory (Colossians 2:15). Together they show both the seriousness of sin and the depth of God's self-giving love (Romans 5:8).

THIS WEEK'S WALK - Living in the Cross and Resurrection

Read slowly each day. Keep returning to Jesus and the gospel throughout the week.

Day 1: Isaiah 53:4-12 - List what the Servant bears and what comes to others through His suffering.

Day 2: Mark 15:21-39 - Read slowly. What details reveal both suffering and Jesus' identity?

Day 3: Luke 24:1-12 - What changes when the women discover that the tomb is empty?

Day 4: Romans 5:6-11 - Underline what Christ's death accomplishes for people who were sinners and enemies.

Day 5: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 - What does reconciliation mean, and what new identity follows it?

Day 6: Colossians 2:13-15 - What does God do with guilt, debt, and hostile powers through Christ?

Day 7: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 - Explain the gospel from this passage in your own words.

LESSON 4: HOW DO I RECEIVE AND LIVE OUT SALVATION? - Grace, Faith, and New Life

BIG IDEA

Salvation is God's gift of grace received through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9; Mark 1:15). It is not earned by good works, but genuine salvation begins a new life of following Jesus (Ephesians 2:10; Luke 9:23).

KEY SCRIPTURE

Main passage: Ephesians 2:1-10. Supporting passages: Mark 1:14-15; John 3:1-17; Romans 10:9-13; Titus 3:3-7; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

LESSON AIM

By the end of this lesson, you should understand grace, repentance, faith, and good works; know how to respond personally to the gospel; and identify practical next steps in following Jesus.

READ IT TOGETHER

Main passage: Read Ephesians 2:1-10 together. As you read, look for four movements: what we were, what God did, how salvation is received, and what we are saved for.

Context: Paul has just described God's power displayed in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ (Ephesians 1:19-23). He then turns to believers and explains what that grace has done in them: God has brought them from death to life (Ephesians 2:1-5). The passage keeps the spotlight on God's mercy, love, grace, and action. Verses 8-10 then hold together two truths we often separate: salvation is not earned by good works, yet those who are saved are created for a life of good works.

OPENING HOOK

What is the difference between knowing something is true and actually entrusting yourself to it? You may know that a bridge can hold your weight, but stepping onto it is different from standing at a distance discussing it. In the same way, you can know facts about Jesus and still never personally rely on Him. Scripture calls us not only to know about Christ but to receive Him, believe in Him, and follow Him (John 1:12; Romans 10:9-13; Luke 9:23). This final week asks the question the whole month has been moving toward: How should I respond to Jesus and the salvation He gives?

LET'S DIG IN

1. Salvation begins with grace, not performance (Ephesians 2:4-9; Titus 3:4-7).

Ephesians 2 makes God the main actor in salvation. We are described as spiritually dead, and then the whole direction of the passage changes with two simple words: "But God" (Ephesians 2:1, 4). Because He is rich in mercy and great in love, God makes us alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5). Salvation is therefore a gift of grace, not a reward for being moral, religious, generous, educated, or active in church (Ephesians 2:8-9). Titus says the same thing: God saves us because of His mercy, not because of righteous things we have done (Titus 3:4-7). Grace removes our reason to boast and gives hope to anyone who knows they have failed (Ephesians 2:8-9).

2. We receive salvation through repentance and faith - not a formula (Mark 1:15; Romans 10:9-13).

Jesus begins His public preaching with a simple call: repent and believe the good news (Mark 1:14-15). Repentance is more than feeling guilty; it is turning from self-rule toward God. Faith is more than agreeing that Jesus exists; it is placing our trust in who He is and what He has done (John 1:12; Romans 10:9-13). Repentance and faith are not payments we make so that God will give us grace. They are the response of a person who stops relying on self and turns to Christ (Acts 20:21; Ephesians 2:8-9). That is also why a salvation prayer should never be treated like a formula. A prayer can express faith, but the power is not in getting the wording exactly right. Salvation is found in Christ Himself (Acts 4:12; Romans 10:13).

3. Salvation begins a new life of following Jesus (Ephesians 2:10; Luke 9:23).

Ephesians 2 does not end with "not by works." The next verse says we are created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10). Obedience is not the price we pay for salvation; it is part of the life salvation produces. In Christ we become a new creation, and Jesus calls those who follow Him to daily discipleship (2 Corinthians 5:17; Luke 9:23). That new life begins to touch ordinary things - our relationships, sexuality, money, speech, ambitions, forgiveness, integrity, and service (Colossians 3:5-17). Growth is not instant perfection, but grace is also not permission to remain unchanged (Titus 2:11-14). We grow through Scripture, prayer, baptism, Christian community, and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit as we learn to follow Jesus (Acts 2:41-42; Galatians 5:22-25).

DISCUSS IT

1. What words in Ephesians 2:1-10 emphasize what God has done rather than what we achieve?
2. How would you explain the difference between repentance, faith, and good works?
3. Why is it helpful to say that a prayer itself does not save someone?

YOUR TURN

TRACE THE GOSPEL IN EPHESIANS 2. Read Ephesians 2:1-10 again and mark four movements: BEFORE - what we were; BUT GOD - what God did; BY GRACE - how salvation comes; FOR GOOD WORKS - what follows salvation. In your group, summarize each movement in one sentence. Then take a quiet moment for yourself: Where do I currently see myself in this story, and what question do I still have?

RESPONSE & PRAYER

Take a few quiet moments for an unpressured gospel response. Ask yourself: Do I only know about Jesus, or am I actually trusting Him? Have I acknowledged my sin and my need for grace? Am I willing to turn to Jesus and follow Him as Lord? Scripture calls us to repent, believe, and call on the Lord (Mark 1:15; Romans 10:9-13). If you want to trust Christ, speak to God honestly. The prayer below is not a formula; it is one way of expressing repentance and faith. If you make this response, or if you are still unsure and want to talk, speak with an RCF leader afterward so someone can pray with you and support you (Galatians 6:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Pray: *Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You died for my sins and rose again. I acknowledge my sin and my need for Your grace. I turn to You and place my trust in You. Forgive me, make me new, and teach me to follow You as Lord. Thank You for the gift of salvation. Amen.*

LEVEL UP - GOING DEEPER

DEEPER QUESTION: If we are saved by grace through faith, where do good works fit? Ephesians gives the order clearly: we are not saved by works, but we are created in Christ for good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). James challenges a profession of faith that remains only words and produces no visible fruit (James 2:14-18). Paul rejects works as the basis of salvation; James rejects an empty profession that never becomes living faith. Good works do not purchase acceptance with God. They are the fruit of a life that has been changed by grace (Titus 2:11-14). It also helps to see salvation across the Christian life: believers have been justified, are being sanctified, and look forward to final glorification (Romans 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Romans 8:30). This keeps us away from both legalism - "I obey so God will save me" - and carelessness - "because grace saves me, obedience does not matter."

THIS WEEK'S WALK - Receiving Grace and Following Jesus

Read slowly each day. Keep returning to Jesus and the gospel throughout the week.

Day 1: Ephesians 2:1-10 - Write the four movements: BEFORE, BUT GOD, BY GRACE, FOR GOOD WORKS.

Day 2: Mark 1:14-20 - What do repentance, belief, and following Jesus look like in this passage?

Day 3: John 3:1-17 - What does Jesus say must happen, and what does God's love lead Him to give?

Day 4: Romans 10:8-13 - How do belief, confession, and calling on the Lord describe a personal response?

Day 5: Titus 3:3-7 - Underline why God saves, how He saves, and what He gives.

Day 6: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 - What does it mean to be a new creation and reconciled to God?

Day 7: Matthew 28:18-20 - Salvation begins discipleship. What next step of following Jesus will you take?