



# Our Salvation

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## Facilitator Notes

### What does it mean to be a Christian?

*For now we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and we who have been baptized into union with Christ are enveloped by Him. We are no longer Jews or Gentiles, or slaves or free men, or even merely men or women, but we are all the same — we are Christians; we are one in Jesus Christ.*  
(Galatians 3:26-28 – LB)

Per Galatians 3:26, Christians “*are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.*” Notice that it's not through being a church member, not through baptism, not through good works; it says through faith in Jesus Christ we become children of God.

### What does it mean that “*we are no longer Jews or Gentiles or slaves or free men or even merely men or women?*”

This says that when you become a believer and you become a part of God's family, in God's eyes all of the distinctions are wiped out; that the church is a united family. There is no place for discrimination. There is no place for racism. There is no place for even gender differences. It says we're all the same in God's eyes. We're all equally valuable to Him in the family of God.

### What makes us a part of the family of God?

Christians are all related to each other in that we are all related to God the Father through Jesus Christ His Son.

### Why am I here?

#### What do most people think is the meaning of life?

Most people live their entire lives without ever knowing “*WHY?*” They exist year after year with no idea of why they live or God's purpose for their lives. The most basic question a person can ask is, “*What is the meaning of life?*”

- Those who think they know the meaning of life often say it is to be happy...

#### In what ways do people seek happiness?

People try, primarily, three different ways:

- **Acquiring possessions.** Get, get! Get all you can, can all you get, sit on the can and spoil the rest! That's the philosophy of many people. “*I'll be happy if I just get more things... whoever dies with the most toys, wins!*”

- **Experiencing pleasure.** They'll try this drug or that pill or that experience or that trip -- looking for pleasure to be the meaning of life.
- **Gaining prestige and power.** They think, “If I'm just liked, if I'm just famous, if I'm popular then I'll be happy in life.”

### But where does real happiness comes from?

Real happiness comes from understanding it's not pleasure, possessions or power but from knowing my purpose in life.

### Where can we find out why are we here?

The Bible is God's love letter to us, that's where we can find out why we're here. The Bible tells us that we are here to prepare for eternity. And there are two primary reasons for why God created us...

### What is the first reason God put us on this earth?

*The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying:  
“I have loved you with an everlasting love!”*

(Jeremiah 31:3 – NIV)

God made us to love us... You were created to be loved by God.

### What is the second reason God put us on this earth?

*Ephesians 1:4-5 - Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be His through our union with Christ because of His love. God had already decided that through Jesus Christ He would make us His children. This was God's pleasure and purpose.* (GN)

We were created to enjoy a personal relationship with God. This makes us special...

*Genesis 1:26-27 - So God created human beings, making them in His image. He blessed them, and said,... live all over the earth and bring it under control. I am putting you in charge.* (LB)

Note that God also made us stewards of His creation. He put mankind in authority over His creation to maintain it and use it for our needs...

*1 Timothy 6:17 - God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.* (LB)

God said, I am putting human beings over all the rest of creation and you are to manage the rest of the world. He gave that responsibility to Adam and Eve and then on to us. The benefit is that when we manage it as God's representative we get to enjoy it.

### **What did Jesus say that life is all about in John 10:10?**

John 10:10 – “*I have come in order that you might have life — life in all its fullness!*” (LB)

If Jesus came to give us life it means we're not really living until we know Jesus. In fact, until you know Christ you're not living, you're just existing because you were made to love God and be loved by Him, to know him and be known by Him. Having a relationship with God means that you have more than eternal life (quantity), you also have a great life (quality).

### **What do the following passages have to say about the benefits Christians enjoy when they are fulfilling God's purpose in their lives?**

Romans 8:1 - *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* (NIV)

If you are in Christ Jesus, you are fulfilling His purpose for your life and you have a clear conscience.

Romans 8:6 - *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;* (NIV)

If you are controlled by the Holy Spirit, you are fulfilling His purpose for your life and you enjoy eternal life and peace with God.

Romans 8:26 - *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.* (NIV)

If you have the presence of the Holy Spirit, you will have help with your weaknesses.

Romans 8:28 - *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* (NIV)

If you love God, you've been called to serve His purpose and God will turn even the bad things in our lives into a blessing. We may not realize what good is coming from the bad in our life time but this will become apparent in eternity.

Romans 8:31- *What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?* (NIV)

If we are serving God's purpose, we can have confidence that no serious harm can befall us. What is the worst that can happen? If we die, we go to be with the Lord in a much better place than this sin corrupted world.

Romans 8:39 - *neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (NIV)

If we are serving God's purpose, we have security that nothing can take us away from our relationship with God.

Philippians 4:13 - *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.* (NIV)

If we are serving God's purpose, He gives us power and strength to do what He has called us to do.

Philippians 4:19 - *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.* (NIV)

If we are serving God's purpose, He fulfills all our needs.

John 8:31-32 - *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* (NIV)

If we are a disciple of Christ, you are serving God's purpose and He will set you free from the power and consequences of sin.

### **The purposeful lifestyle is what God intends for us to live. Why then aren't most people really happy? What's the problem?**

Man has a natural desire to be boss and to ignore God's principles for living. You can see this all the time in our society around us. You hear phrases like:

- Look out for number one...
- Do your own thing...
- If it feels good, do it regardless of what God says.
- It's my life and I'll do what I please
- Or as the great theologian Frank Sinatra sang, "I did it my way."

We want to be our own boss. We don't want God to be our boss.

### **What does the Bible call that attitude of wanting to be your own boss instead of God?**

The Bible calls this attitude sin. If you're taking notes, you may want to circle the middle letter of the word "sin." The center of sin is "I". I want to do my own thing. I want to be my own boss. I want to live my own life the way I want to regardless of God.

### **Who has this sin problem?**

Isaiah 53:6 - *All of us like sheep have gone astray and each of us have turned to his own way.* (LB)

We all have a sin problem... today we'd say, "All of us have gone astray and everybody's done their own thing."

Romans 3:23 - *All have sinned and fall short of God's glorious ideal.* (LB)

When it says "all", does that include Billy Graham? Yes. The pope? Yes. Everybody in this room? Yes. We have all sinned. There's no perfect person in the world.

1 John 1:8 - *If we say we never sin we're only fooling ourselves and we refuse to accept the truth.* (LB)

### **What is the problem with sin?**

Isaiah 59:2 - *The trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God.* (LB)

Sin always has consequences. At the very minimum, sin breaks our close relationship to God and it causes us to fear God and to try to live our lives outside His will.

### **Are most people afraid of God?**

Most people are indeed afraid of God because most people don't have a relationship with Him...

Matthew 7:13-14 - *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.* (NIV)

If you're standing around talking with a bunch of friends at work and you bring up God, all of a sudden they freeze up. They get nervous. It's because people are afraid of God. Why? Because they want to be their own boss and they know that the relationship between them and God is broken. They may not understand it but they feel it.

### **What kind of problems does sin cause in the life of people?**

When our relationship to God is not right, it causes PROBLEMS in every area of our lives — marriage, career, relationships, finances, etc.

### **What do people generally do instead of turning to God when they have problems in their life?**

When people have problems they often try many different ways of coping before turning to God. When we have this relationship that we were meant to have with God and it's broken, when we feel this emptiness inside, we don't always know that what we're yearning for is God. So instead of looking to God to fill this emptiness, we try all kinds of things. Alcohol, drugs, an affair, therapy, thrills... They're trying to fill the emptiness in their heart when really what they're longing for and they don't know it is a relationship with God.

Proverbs 16:25 - *There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.* (NIV)

### **Even if you know that your deepest need is God, what wrong ways to people pursue in getting to know Him?**

- "My mother was a Christian so..."
- "It doesn't matter what you believe, just be sincere."
- "I'll give up all my bad habits."
- "I'll work real hard and earn it."
- "I'll be religious and go to church."

### **What is the problem with salvation by heritage – thinking you are a Christian because your parents were?**

This idea is not even logical. For instance... what if I said, "My mother was married therefore I'm married." I'm not automatically married just because my mother was married. I'm only married if I make the choice to get married, whether my mother ever married or not.

### **What is the problem with believing you have a relationship with God if you are sincere in this interest?**

The problem with thinking sincerity is what a person needs to have a relationship with God is that people can be sincerely wrong. I could sincerely think something is water, but if it's arsenic, and I'd be sincerely dead. It takes more than sincerity to get to heaven.

### **What is the problem with thinking that you can have a relationship with God by giving up all your bad habits?**

Rick Warren calls this salvation by subtraction. "I don't do this and I don't do that... I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't cuss, I don't chew, I don't run around with girls that do." If being a Christian is a matter of just don't do bad things, then everybody who's dead qualifies as a Christian, because they don't do anything.

### **What is the problem with pursuing a relationship with God by being involved in religious activities?**

This is the myth that most people have. They think in their mind that God has a scale and on one side are my bad works, all the bad things I've done, and all the other side are all the good things. If somehow I manage to do more good in my life than bad then God's going to let me into heaven.

- The Bible says heaven is a perfect place. Only perfect people get to go there. If God let imperfect people into heaven, then it wouldn't be perfect any more.

Someone may be thinking, "If only perfect people get to go to heaven, then I don't stand a chance." You're right. You don't and neither do I. So God had to come up with Plan B whereby we could get in on somebody else's ticket who was perfect. His name was Jesus Christ.

### **What is the solution?**

#### **How may we truly have a relationship with God?**

John 14:6 – [Jesus said:] *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me."* (LB)

Notice Jesus didn't say, "I might be the way ... I point the way ... I teach the way ... I'm looking for the way." He said, "I'm it!" Then He said, "I'm the Truth."

**All the major religions claim to point to the truth... So what is the difference between them and the claims of Christ?**

- Buddhism says truth is found through an eight fold path and if you strive all your life, you may eventually discover the truth. But Buddha at the end of his life in a famous statement said, "I'm still searching for the truth."
- The Hindu scripture says truth is very illusive and you'll probably never find it. It's like a butterfly and just about the time you grab it, it'll fly off.
- Others say truth must be searched for by purifying yourself by chanting and maybe you just might get to the truth.
- Mohammed said, I'm a prophet and I point toward the truth.

Then Jesus comes along and He says, "*I am the Truth.*" Not, "I point to it... I teach it ..." But "*I am the Truth.*" He's either who He says He is or He's the biggest liar who ever lived.

**What does it mean when Jesus said, He is the Way?**

Jesus is saying, He is the only way to heaven. God, Himself, came to earth as a human being to bring us back to Himself. If any other way would have worked, Jesus Christ would not have had to come. The Way is not a religion, the Way is not a path, the Way is a person. God wants you to know Him personally.

**What has Jesus done to be the Way for us to have an eternal personal relationship with Him?**

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

Jesus has already taken care of our sin problem. "*The wages of sin is death, [that's the bad news; then the good news] the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" God did this for us because He loves us and wants us to know Him...

Romans 5:8 - *God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still separated from God by sin, Christ died for us.* (LB)

God has already done His part to restore our relationship to Him. He took the initiative. Now He waits for each of us to individually accept what He has done for us.

**What is the problem with thinking you are a Christian because America is a Christian nation?**

This is confusing cultural Christianity with having a relationship with the Creator.

**What is the problem with someone who says, "I joined the church, so I'm a Christian?"**

- If you join the Lion's Club, does that make you a lion?
- Likewise, people who say, "I was born in the church." If you were born in a car, does that make you a spare tire?

**What is the problem with someone who says, "I got baptized, so I'm a Christian?"**

You could be baptized in the ocean until every fish knows you by name but baptism is not what gets you into heaven.

**What is the problem with someone who says, "I believe that God exists, so I'm going to heaven?"**

It takes more than just knowing about God... so do demons:

James 2:19 - *You believe that there is one God. Good!*

*Even the demons believe that--and shudder.* (NIV)

Demons are fallen angels who know there's a God but you're not going to find them in heaven.

**So what's the difference in having a belief about Christ versus believing in Him?**

Knowing about someone is not sufficient to have a relationship with them. I know about President Bush but I doubt he'd take a call from me.

Here's what it means to be a Christian... You may be a church member. You may have known about God all your life. You may have wondered, "Am I really a Christian?" Maybe you've had doubts about it. You can know for sure today. I don't want any of you to leave here today without knowing for sure that you've settled this issue.

**There are four critical steps to becoming a Christian represented by the following Scripture passages...**

**What do the following Scripture passages tell us God wants us to do to have a personal relationship with Him?**

1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* (NIV)

First you need to admit to being a sinner. I admit that God has not been first place in my life and I ask Him to forgive my sins.

Romans 10:9 - *That 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.* (NIV)

Next you believe. I believe that Jesus Christ died to pay for my sins and that He rose on Easter and is alive today.

- Circle the word "will". It doesn't say you might be. It doesn't say you can hope to be. It says you will.

Many Christians go through life wondering, "Have I really given my life to Christ? Am I really going to go to heaven?" They doubt their salvation over and over. You need to settle this today. If you call on the name of the Lord He says, "I will". God will not lie. It doesn't matter how you feel. Feelings come and go.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.* (NIV)

The third step is to accept God's free gift of salvation. A gift does not become yours until you receive it. You can not earn salvation so don't even try. Our relationship to Christ is not the result of anything we do, but on the basis on what Jesus Christ already did for us on Calvary – by dying in our place to pay the penalty for our sin debt.

John 1:12-13 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.* (NIV)

The fourth step is to invite Jesus Christ to come into your life and be the director or Lord of your life. This is what children do, they obey their Father...

Matthew 7:21 – *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."* (NIV)

- Circle "receive" and "believe". What does it mean to be a Christian? You must believe and receive.
- If you have done this, you should consider yourself under new management. No longer are you calling the shots in your life. Jesus Christ is your manager. He's the CEO. He's the President, the boss-man.

**If someone does not have Jesus Christ in their life, where will they spend eternity?**

Matthew 13:49-50 - *"This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (NIV)

Those who are without Jesus Christ are on one side of a great canyon on the road to hell. On the other side of the canyon are children of God headed to heaven. How do you get from one side to the other. You walk across a bridge. And who's the bridge over troubled waters? Jesus Christ.

And how do you get across the bridge? You must believe and receive.

**Where are those on that bridge to eternal life who say, "I believe in Jesus Christ; I just don't know if I've ever received Him into my life?"**

Those who believe Him but have not received Him are halfway there! What you need to do is invite Him into your life.

**How do you invite Jesus into your life?**

[Jesus says,] *"Listen! I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in."* (Revelation 3:20 – LB)

You simply ask Jesus to come into your life. You can take these steps by praying a simple prayer of commitment to God. If you've never settled this issue or if you've always had doubts, "Am I really a Christian? Do I know for sure I'm going to heaven?" You can know for sure tonight by doing what Christ has said to do, by praying this prayer and meaning it in your heart:

**Example of a simple prayer of commitment to God:**

"Dear Jesus, Thank you for making me and loving me even when I've ignored You and gone my own way. I realize I need You in my life and I'm sorry for my sins. I ask You to forgive me. Thank You for dying on the cross for me. Please help me to understand it more. As much as I know how, I want to follow You from now on. Please come into my life and make me a new person inside. I accept Your gift of salvation. Please help me to grow as a Christian. Amen."

**How does the person who has asked Jesus to come into their life know they are saved?**

Acts 2:21 - *everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* (NIV)

The one who has sincerely asked Jesus to come into their life has called on the name of the Lord. Since God can not lie, they can believe that they are saved on the basis of the character of God. There is a lot the newly born-again Christian does not understand but this is normal and natural... newborn babies have a lot to learn about the world.