

BIG IDEA

There is a turning point for every person that is necessary for relationship with Christ.

INTRODUCTION

If someone asked you what it means to be saved, how would you answer?

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your comfort level in talking about the gospel with other people, with 10 being “extremely comfortable”? How would you like for that to change or grow?

Invite students to recall last week’s memory verse, Ephesians 2:8-9.

You can know about grace and even sing that it’s amazing, but nothing changes unless you place your trust in Jesus to receive it. The same is true for your friends. They can know about Jesus but they are not saved from their sins unless they put their full trust in Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

> ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 3:16.

Why do you think John 3:16 is the one verse everyone seems to know?

Have you ever thought about what it really means? Has your understanding of that verse changed as you’ve gotten older? Explain.

Put John 3:16 in your own words.

What facts can you learn from this verse?

The whole Bible comes to focus in this verse. Because of His great love for us, God reached out to us in the most personal, sacrificial way—He paid the debt of our sin with the life of His Son, Jesus.

Lead volunteers to share about when they got saved. What did God do so that moment could take place? What did you do?

What does it really mean to “believe” in Jesus? What doesn’t it mean?

Salvation comes only to those who believe in Christ and His death on the cross (John 3:18). When we believe in Him, we are restored in our relationship with God, no longer separated from Him or under His judgment. The result of this restoration is eternal life, meaning that after our physical death, we will live forever in the presence of God. John had been writing about changed lives—this was Jesus’ message to Nicodemus. Salvation is the work of God internally through the Holy Spirit, which demonstrates itself outwardly in godly living.

> ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 2:40.

Why did Peter feel the need to warn his audience and plead with them?

Can you really “save” yourself? What did he mean?

The reason Peter preached—and the reason any preacher preaches—is that many people are not yet converted.. Repentance is a critical part of each person’s conversion. Following Jesus and following sin are two different paths. We cannot truly believe in Jesus without turning away from sin.

Why can’t we truly follow Jesus and still hold onto our sin?

What’s wrong with the idea that you can live however you want during the week because God will forgive you on Sunday?

Does this mean that when a person is converted he or she never struggles with sin again? Explain.

When we come to faith in Christ, we must do it with the understanding that sin leads to death and Jesus leads to life. We must have the attitude that the way of sin is one path and the way of Jesus is another. In our hearts and minds, we must leave the world behind.

> ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 2:37-39.

The people were convicted in their hearts. God was drawing them to Himself, and they needed to know what to do. How did Peter answer them?

How would you explain what “repentance” means to someone? Can a person be saved without repenting of (turning from) their sins?

Since repentance means turning from our sins, to what or whom are we supposed to turn?

Many people want to turn from sin, but not everyone turns to Jesus. Turning to good works or any other philosophy is a path that still ends in the same place—death. Only in turning to Jesus are we converted. Only in turning to Jesus do we find eternal life.

How does Peter’s answer help you understand what it means to be converted?

What questions do you have about that?

APPLICATION

What is your background or family tradition of religion? Regardless of what that is, why must you be converted?

Based on the passages studied today, can salvation take place in a person without any evidence of a changed life? Explain.

Who do you know that needs a turning point in relationship to God? From today’s lesson, how would you explain that process to them?

PRAY

Thank God for the simple truths of His gospel message—that Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins and restore us to God—and the confidence we can have in our salvation. Pray that you will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to spread the good news of the gospel by living in obedience to God and sharing the gospel with others.

MEMORIZE

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. —John 3:16

COMMENTARY

JOHN 3:16

Eternal life comes not because of anything we do. Salvation comes as a free gift when we believe what God has said. “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Four times in three verses (vv. 16-18) Jesus uses variations of the word “believe,” perhaps the most important key word in John’s Gospel. Jesus classified the entire human race into two groups—those who believe and are not condemned, and those who do not believe and are condemned already. The gospel begins with God’s love, continues through the cross and the empty tomb, and results in eternal life for those who believe. The verb “perish” speaks of eternal death in contrast to eternal life. It represents the opposite of preservation, since death is the opposite of life. Those who refuse God’s gift are alienated from Him without hope for both the present and the future.

ACTS 2:37-40

2:37. The combination of God’s Scripture and God’s Spirit working through God’s servant had the intended effect. From their initial question What does this mean? (2:12), the people now progressed to specific response— Brothers, what shall we do? The phrase cut to the heart translates *katenugesan* meaning “stung” or “stunned.” Had some people listening to Peter that day also screamed for blood in Pilate’s hall? While the word conviction does not appear in our verse, this clearly reflects that heart attitude. The New Testament uses this word to describe the work of the Holy Spirit by which we see ourselves as we are in God’s sight.

2:38-39. Peter hesitated not a moment for the answer to their question, calling for repentance and baptism and offering forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Repentance is not a new theme in the New Testament, having appeared in the ministry of John the Baptist (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) and in the preaching of Jesus (Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3). The context shows baptism here refers to water, not the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, water baptism became the uniform of the Lord’s people. Today we call it “believers’ baptism,” the conscious identification with Jesus on the part of those who have trusted him for salvation. The gift of the Holy Spirit then became the seal of salvation. To whom is this available? For all whom the Lord our God will call.

2:40-41. Luke hastens to tell us we do not have the entire sermon recorded in his book. Peter spoke many other words and pleaded with his hearers who responded. That day God added three thousand people to the small number of believers already serving as Christ’s witnesses. But wait. Don’t miss the importance of what Luke does not say. This time there was no sound, no flame, and no foreign language. These people received the Holy Spirit because that’s what Peter promised in Jesus’ name. Pentecost was a one-time event, with only a mild echo or two appearing elsewhere during the first century.

Are we to believe that Peter baptized three thousand people on that one day? Of course not. The Bible knows no hierarchical system whereby people must be baptized at the hand of some official or titled clergy. We should probably assume all 120 believers assisted in this magnificent demonstration.

In the space of just a few verses, we see what happens when people trust Christ for salvation. First, they must recognize their need; then, they must receive God’s gift; and finally, they must obey the message.