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THE
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OF FAITH

What we want students to learn: That only through faith in Christ's work on the cross can they be saved from death.

What we want them to do with what they've learned: To discover and live out God's purpose for their lives.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 1:18-23, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Ephesians 2:1-10

Overview: Lesson 8 helped your students ground the concept of salvation in the character of God. Lesson 9 connects the dots, helping students see how Christ was always God's ultimate answer for the salvation of His children. In this lesson, students will see that Jesus alone can grant us access to God and life. This access is only available to those who believe that Jesus was who He said He was, and in this belief seek the salvation God offers through grace. Out of this new life, there comes a new purpose.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **Activate** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **Salvation** lesson 9 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 9, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The **Bible Background** is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Who wrote these Books?

Matthew's Gospel bears the name of its author. Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates. John the Apostle wrote the Gospel of John. John was one of Jesus' closest disciples, forming what is known as the "inner three," along with Peter and James. John wrote his Gospel, but also wrote 1, 2, and 3 John, and Revelation. Acts was written by Luke, the Greek physician who was a traveling companion of the

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Apostle Paul (who is the author of Ephesians).

When were the Books written?

Most people hold to Matthew's Gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. Though an exact date is tough to pin down, most scholars believe John wrote his Gospel after 70 A.D., probably from the city of Ephesus. Similarly, while there are good arguments to be made for other dates, most scholars date Acts to have been written around A.D. 62. Paul provided detailed information surrounding the writing of this letter, most importantly, mentioning his imprisonment. As such, we can be reasonably sure that Ephesians was written in the early 60s AD.

What was the purpose for writing these Books?

Matthew

Matthew was probably writing to a primarily Jewish audience. He intended to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah that prophets had been foretelling for hundreds of years. But Matthew was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as well, as his Gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

John

John had one purpose in mind: that his readers would know Jesus Christ as Messiah. John's message is evangelical at its core. He was chiefly concerned with both Jews and Gentiles knowing Jesus' true identity, and knowing it in such a way that they came to a vibrant faith in Him.

Acts

The purpose of Acts is simple: to record the history of the early Church, and by extension the spread of Christianity, after the death and resurrection of Christ.

Ephesus

Paul had a very close relationship with the church in Ephesus. It seems as if the motivation for the letter was merely that the church would know how he was faring in his imprisonment. But, true to form, Paul couldn't help but teach. The letter covers general teaching on the work of Christ to redeem believers, unity among believers, and how believers are supposed to conduct themselves.

THE MAIN POINT

The Matthew, John, and Acts passages each serve to build upon the case that Scripture makes for Christ as the unique answer to our sin predicament. The New Testament positively and emphatically identifies Jesus as the only source of salvation, a source sent by God and whose birth was announced by angels. Jesus is the only way to access the remarkable salvation God offers to us, His children. Paul's words in Ephesians pick up this thread and round it out. These verses provide one of the clearest pictures of Christ as the means of salvation, and grace as the only pathway to discover it. This lesson will shine a spotlight on the salvation God offers us through His Son, Jesus, the only way to eternal and abundant life.

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LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** The goal of this section is for the students to begin thinking about Jesus as the only solution to their sin problem.
- **Set-Up:** None

FIRST, explain to students that you're going to start the lesson with a short discussion. Explain that in our world, choice rules. Because of advances in technology, it seems like there are a million ways to do just about anything. Explain that 15 years ago, when you wanted to take a picture, you had to use an old-school camera that had (gasp!) film that had to be developed before you could see your photos!!!! Ask:

- **Let's say I wanted to take a picture. What are the options at my disposal?**
 - Answer: Regular cameras, digital cameras, phones, laptops, desktop webcams, tablets, etc.

Then explain the process for sharing a photo 15 years ago. Say:

- **If I wanted to share the photo with my friends, I had to first get it developed (which if you were lucky and the one-hour photo was up and running down at the local drug store, could be done while you waited), then I either had to take the printed photo around to people manually and personally show them (Crazy, right?) or, get this . . . Mail it. Like, put a photo in an envelope and send it through the mail!!!! What are some of the options you have at your fingertips for instantly sharing photos you take?**
 - Answers will vary and be plentiful.

Explain that these days, there are so many different ways to accomplish tasks that there used to be only one way to get done. But, explain to students there are still aspects of our world where there is only one right way, one right answer for completing a task. One of these areas is in the field of mathematics.

NEXT, explain to your students that there is a math problem that is widely regarded as the most challenging problem in the world. Say:

- **Bernhard Riemann proposed a math problem that's become known as the "Riemann Hypothesis" in 1859. Want to know something amazing? It has yet to be solved. There are dozens of books written about this one problem. People have been trying to solve it for over 150 years with no success! It's too complicated for most people to even understand what's being talked about, much less solve it. (If you want to add an extra level of interaction to this, search for "Riemann Hypothesis" on Wikipedia, and take a screenshot of the description of the problem. Display it for your group and have a student attempt to read the description.)**

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Allow students a chance to react to this concept. Ask if anyone has the solution and if so, if they'll need a ride to the Nobel Prize ceremony when they win the award for mathematics.

FINALLY, before transitioning to the Main Event, explain how this ties into the lesson. Say:

- **Many things in our world have multiple ways from which to approach them. Some problems, like the "Riemann Hypothesis" only have one answer. The biggest problem we face in life? It's our sin problem. It's the biggest one because it's the one that separates us from God. For that problem, there's only one possible solution, and we're going to talk about it in depth today.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** The goal of this section is to help students understand that only through faith in Christ's work on the cross can they be saved from death.
- **Set-Up:** None

FIRST, remind your students that this is the second part of a three-part study of salvation. Take some time to talk to them about last week's lesson. See if they're able to talk about what they learned in the first lesson. Here's a review to help you:

- **Our desire to take matters into our hands and be our own "gods," i.e., rule our own lives by our standard, separated us from God.**
- **As a result, the punishment we deserve for our sin is death.**
- **However, the amazing news is that God desires to save us and bring us back into a right relationship with Him.**

Then, explain to students that this lesson is going to look at the precise way that salvation is offered to us.

Remind students that, as you talked about last week since Adam sinned in the Garden, God has had a rescue plan in place. Read or have a student read aloud Matthew 1:18-23. Ask:

- **What are some things we learn about God's plan for salvation from this passage?**
 - Answer: God has a plan to save people from their sins. This plan was for God to come to earth in the form of a human. (A baby to be exact.) Jesus was born so He could save His people from their sins.

THEN, read or have a student read John 14:6 and Acts 4:12. In Matthew 1 the angel said that Jesus would save His people from their sins. These two passages drive that truth home even more. Ask:

- **What's the central truth that both of these passages communicate?**
 - Answer: Both passages tell us that Jesus alone is the only way to salvation.
- **It might seem overly obvious, but what does this mean exactly? In other words, what are the implications of this?**
 - Answer: This might seem like an easy question, but once you begin to break it down, there are a few essential parts. First, it implies there is salvation to be had. (Which implies that there's also judgment and condemnation in the absence of salvation.) Second, Jesus said He was THE way, not A way, or

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ONE of MANY ways. Third, these passages could not be any clearer: outside of Jesus, salvation isn't happening. There's no end-around, no bait, and switch. God won't be fooled on this one.

- **Why does this fact bother so many people in our culture today? Why does the truth that Jesus is the only way to salvation rub people the wrong way?**
 - Answer: What has happened is that instead of being curious, or in awe over the thought of there being the possibility of salvation and eternal life with the God of the Bible (and this thought potentially leading people to actually search and see if it's a possibility), people hear that there's only one option, and they bristle. When Jesus puts Himself in the position of authority, and in turn makes people feel A) helpless or B) the weight of their sin, they begin to back-pedal. People want to be able to do and follow whatever they want and still get their desired results.

Explain to the students that Jesus being the only way to salvation wasn't just some random rule that God came up with. If you think back to the last lesson and your discussion of sin and its result, and if you think about who Jesus is, you quickly realize that only Jesus can fix the problem.

NEXT, read or have a student read Ephesians 2:1-3. Provide the context for this passage using the "The Details" section of your Bible Background. This passage is a bit of a recap of the last lesson, but make sure the students grasp the gravity of our situation apart from Christ. Ask:

- **What does it mean to be "dead in your transgressions and sins"? We obviously weren't physically dead, so what does this mean?**
 - Answer: We aren't just physical beings. So even though we might be physically alive, we've all been at a point where we were spiritually dead. This means we were separated from God.
- **What does this tell us about what God sees as true life?**
 - Answer: Anyone can be physically alive, but that doesn't mean they're experiencing true life. When we're dead in our sin, we aren't living the abundant life God has for us. True, full life is only found in Christ. Anything else is merely surviving.
- **Can a dead man bring himself to life?**
 - Answer: The answer is obviously no. Clearly this isn't much of a discussion question, but the point is to drive home how utterly helpless we are.

Explain that, as you mentioned last week, the great news is that God not only can save us, He wants to save us. Continue with the same Ephesians passage, reading or having someone else read verses 4-7. Then, ask:

- In some translations, the first two words of verse 4 are, "But God . . ." These are two incredible words! What's the significance of "But God . . ." ? Why is that such great news?
- Answer: It means that although He would be entirely justified to do so, God didn't leave us in our sinful, dead state.
- **Why didn't He leave us for dead? Can we benefit Him at all?**
 - Answer: No, we don't benefit him at all. Verse four makes it clear that the offer of salvation is because of His great love for us.

Explain to the students that salvation isn't a matter of us just getting a clean slate. We aren't just put back on neutral ground. Explain that God has incredible things in store for us. Not only are we made alive in Christ, but verses 6-7 say

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that God “raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” Whoa. Ask:

- **God did all of that for us. He did it for you. And the phrase “so that” in verse 7 gives us even deeper insight into why God has given us new life in Christ. What do you take away from that verse? What does it tell us about God’s desire for us in the “coming ages” (eternity)?**
 - Answer: God has given us new life in Christ so we’ll marvel at His great love for us forever. He receives glory from His people being enamored with His beauty and love. How incredible!
- **Verse 8 drives home the truth that we can’t earn or obtain that salvation on our merit. How do we receive salvation?**
 - Answer: Salvation comes through faith in Christ. The passage tells us it’s “not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”
- **What does it mean to have faith in Christ? How is it more than just head knowledge?**
 - Answer: Faith in Christ is fully trusting Him as the Lord and Savior of your life. It means realizing that you aren’t your own god, that He alone is worthy of honor, praise, and obedience, and that salvation only comes through a relationship with Christ. It’s easy to say all of that and to believe it in your head. Believing it in your heart and living it out is something so much more.

FINALLY, wrap up “The Main Event” by taking a look at verse 10. Our salvation isn’t just about getting a ticket punched to heaven. It’s about more than just avoiding hell. It’s about the full, abundant life that we talked about earlier in the lesson. Ask:

- **What do you think it means that we were created for “good works”? Why did God create us to walk in them?**
 - Answer: Faith in Christ radically changes us. It makes everything different. Our fulfillment, joy, peace, and satisfaction now come from knowing Christ, not the things of this world. Our priorities become different. This is excellent news, but it’s not something to be kept just between us.

Explain that God has created us to be new creatures so that we can be a light to those around us. So that we can reflect His glory to a lost and dying world. The absolute beauty of salvation isn’t just that God saved us from death. It’s that the life He gave us is so immeasurably beyond anything we could ever expect or deserve. Explain that the last part of this lesson will be about the purpose that accompanies salvation.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** The goal is for the students to understand that their salvation comes with a purpose and calling on their lives.
- **Set-Up:** You’ll need to arrange a way to display the “What’s the Purpose?” PDF to your students. You can print the PDF, or you can arrange to show it in the digital means of your choosing. The PDF is located in your Lesson 9 folder.

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FIRST, explain that you'll be wrapping up the lesson by examining exactly how what you've just learned impacts your lives. Display the first page of the "What's the Purpose?" PDF, the image of the blender. Ask students a simple question about the blender, and about each of the following objects:

- **"What's the purpose? What was this made for?"**

Allow students to answer. Proceed in the same manner through the images, allowing students to give you a purpose for each object. You're not looking for in-depth answers here. Simple responses will work. You're merely moving students to the point where you show the final image.

THEN, display the final image, the image of the teenager. Explain to students that this picture represents a teenage Christ-follower, someone who's accepted the salvation God offers through Christ. Ask the same question as you did of the other items:

- **What's this teenager's purpose? What was she made for?**

Allow students to attempt to articulate a response. (Remember, silence is your friend! Don't be quick to rush in and bail them out. You want them to have some time to process this.) If they'll engage in a discussion, that's great. If not, or when the discussion stalls a bit, explain to the students that while human beings are more complicated than a coffee pot or shovel, we were also made with a particular purpose in mind.

NEXT, have someone re-read Ephesians 2:10. Remind them how at the end of the Bible study, you talked a little bit about the concept of being "created in Christ Jesus for good works." Explain that this is where the answer to your purpose lies. Ask the students:

- **Thinking big picture, what do you see as the "good works" Christ created you to be about? Keep it big picture; we'll talk specifics soon.**
 - Answers will vary. Lead students to see that we are to bring glory and honor to God in all that we do. This means that our lives are to be all about pointing to Christ. Before a relationship with Christ, our lives were like a mirror, and everything was about it pointing back to us. Now, we desire to deflect attention from us and to point them to Jesus.
- **So, the question becomes: As a ___th grader at _____ School, how do you do that? (This is where you talk specifics.)**
 - Answers will vary. Fight to keep responses from getting bogged down in details or from becoming legalistic. They might speak of their language, gossip, things NOT to do, etc. Those things are essential, but also make sure to talk to them about loving people, engaging them in conversations about the Gospel, and genuinely reflecting Christ's love in all they do. The remarkable thing is that this is unique for everyone. We have the same big picture calling, but God has gifted and equipped us for different things, and we all get to fulfill that calling in unique ways.
- **What's the biggest struggle you face in fulfilling this calling on your life?**
 - Answer: These answers will vary.
- **How do you address these struggles?**
 - Answer: Talking about specific behavioral changes is essential, but we have to get at the root of the problem. Their hearts have to grasp the truth of the salvation Jesus offers. Their love for Jesus has to grow.

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FINALLY, conclude by reminding students that for those who have put their faith in Jesus, they've been saved, redeemed for a purpose. Life can be nuts. They've been given a firm foundation in Christ and tasked with a specific calling. Remind them that this is an incredible privilege. Challenge them to embrace it and make an impact for the Kingdom.

Close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.