

Lesson 1: The God Who Saves

Objective: The point of the lesson is that your students would understand how truly remarkable it is that God offers salvation to humankind, and that they would have the chance to express praise and thanks to God for His unfailing desire to offer them life.

Scripture Focus: Genesis 2:15-17, 3:6-7, Romans 5:12, Romans 3:23, Psalm 40:1-3

Overview: When we talk with students about the idea of salvation, we often start with the story of Christ's atoning death on the cross. This isn't wrong by any means. It's just incomplete. To fully understand the work Jesus did on our behalf, not only do students need to understand *why* they need salvation in the first place, but they also need to see God's great desire to give us life . . . especially when we deserve death. In lesson 2, you'll lead your students to understand the depth of the salvation they're offered in Christ, and the means by which it's made available. But in this lesson, Lesson 1, your students will be taught the powerful back-story that will help them grasp the fullness of the salvation God offers.

Teacher Prep Video

The *elements Teacher Prep Videos* are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your "Salvation Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/salvation-teacher-prep>
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Bible Background

The **Bible Background** is a simple and straightforward way to help you prepare to teach the lesson.

The Details

Who wrote these Books?

While there's no specific author named within the text, the traditional authorship of Genesis (as well as the rest of the Pentateuch) is attributed to Moses. The Apostle Paul wrote the Book of Romans. Of course we know Paul as the one-time chief enemy of the Church. After his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul would go on to have a position of great importance in the early Church and beyond. Romans, addressed to the Christ-followers throughout Rome, is one of the many letters Paul penned to various churches and individuals. The writer of Psalm 40 is clearly identified as David, the giant-slayer who would rise to become the second king of Israel and a man after God's own heart. David wrote 73 of the 150 psalms.

When were the Books written?

Put simply, it's hard to know exactly when Genesis was written. There are two different arguments for the date of the actual Exodus of the Jewish people from Israel, an earlier date (around mid 1400s B.C.) and a later date (around the mid 1200s B.C.). The writing of Genesis would fall sometime around these general dates. Romans was probably written somewhere close to A.D. 60, most likely A.D. 57, from the city of Corinth. There are no textual clues that provide the means to date Psalm 40, other than to hold it was written during the lifetime of King David.

What was the purpose for writing these Books?

Genesis

Our English title for the book Genesis actually comes from the Greek translation of the Pentateuch. The Greek word for *Genesis* means “origins.” The Hebrew title is derived from the first phrase in the book: “In the beginning.” So Genesis is a book of origins, or beginnings. Genesis tells the story of the beginning of creation, humankind, and God’s people.

Romans

Paul wrote Romans to address the issues that would no doubt come up in a body of believers that was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Paul addressed big-picture issues such as whether or not the Law could save a person, what the implications of God making salvation available to the Gentiles was for the Jews, and how Christ-followers were to handle such delicate issues as observing Jewish dietary restrictions based in the Law.

Psalms 40

This psalm is written to bear witness to God’s grace shown at some time in the past, and to request once again that God would usher in deliverance.

The Main Point

These passages serve very specific functions in making a case for the amazing nature of the salvation God offers. The Genesis account of the Fall serves to simply remind students of where this all started. It shows God giving the command not to eat from the tree of “knowledge of good and evil,” and it shows Adam and Eve violating it. Romans 5:12 serves as a sort of summary statement and helps students grasp the idea that we inherited Adam and Eve’s sin nature, and Romans 3:23 wraps a nice bow on the predicament we find ourselves in.

If we left it at that, there really wouldn’t be much we could say. It’s an airtight case against us. And we don’t have a lot of options. But, as we’ll see powerfully in lesson 2, Jesus erupts on the scene and brings hope where there was none. But for now, you’ll wrap up with Psalm 40:1-3, using these verses to simply establish that in light of what we deserve, God is in the business of salvation. It is a remarkable act of love and mercy.

Lesson Plan

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

The Lead In

- **Goal:** The idea is to get the students thinking about what it means to be saved from a situation that we put ourselves in.
- **Set-Up:** If possible, arrange to show a clip from YouTube. If you can’t show the clip, consider either watching it ahead of time and summarizing it for your group, or asking a student to be prepared to summarize it.

FIRST, preview the clip of “Biscuit” the dog being rescued from the middle of the icy lake. Attempt to access the clip using this URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rioWxggTjg8>. If the URL is no longer accessible, simply search YouTube for “dog rescue.” Any clip reflecting a rescue will suffice.

Start by telling the students that you’re going to watch a video clip of a rescue mission. Once you’ve showed the clip, ask students to think about a time when they experienced a rescue of some sort. They may have

never experienced something as extreme as getting rescued off an icy lake, but we've all been bailed out of situations at some level. Make a list on the board of some of their responses. Examples might include:

- **Getting a ride when you're stuck in a bad environment**
- **Being reminded to study for a test you completely forgot about**
- **Being rescued from a dangerous situation**
- **Being rescued from a particularly awkward interaction of some sort**

NEXT, take a moment and talk to students about how they felt when they realized that they'd been bailed out or rescued. (If you have a dry-erase board, consider writing the emotions they name and, if possible, leave them up during the lesson. You'll return to them in the "**Last Word**" section.) Some emotions may include: *happiness, relief, gratitude, amazement, and so on*. Then, lead students in a brief discussion about these emotions. Ask:

- **What caused these emotions?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **How did the seriousness of the situation relate to the level of emotion you felt? (Remembering a test is going to be different than being pushed out of the way of an oncoming bus.)**
 - *Answers will vary.*

FINALLY, explain to students that this lesson will focus on what God has rescued us from. Say something like:

- **In many ways, we were all in the exact same situation as the dog in the video. Now, none of us are running out to buy our "I am Biscuit" T-shirt. But, we all find ourselves in a terrible situation, even if we don't know it. We are completely helpless to rescue ourselves. In the next lesson we're going to talk a lot about Jesus' role in the salvation God offers. But before we get to that point, we have to understand what we need saving from.**

Explain to students that once they realize the depth of what they've been saved from, they'll have a greater appreciation of what Christ has done for them and for all humankind. Transition into "**The Main Event.**"

The Main Event

- **Goal:** The goal here is for the students to understand that all have sinned, and all deserve death. But we serve an awesome God that wants to rescue His people.
- **Set-Up:** None

FIRST, kick things off by talking to the students about the words "saved" and "lost." Ask:

- **These two words get tossed around a lot in our churches. When we use these terms in church or Christian circles, what do we mean exactly?**
 - *Answer:* "Lost" refers to separation from God. "Saved" refers to being redeemed by God.

Explain that when we use the term "lost," it implies that something has gone wrong; at some point things went off course. Explain to the students that you're going to go all the way back to the beginning and take a look at what God intended for us to have from the very start. Explain that this will help us understand the true depth and gravity of our "lostness," which in turn helps us grasp the awesomeness of our salvation.

NEXT, without opening their Bibles or their Bible apps, have students think back to what they know about the Garden of Eden. Ask them:

- **What were some of the characteristics of the Garden that you remember?**
 - *Answer:* Beauty, provision, protection, God's presence, and so on.
- **What did Adam and Eve experience in the Garden?**

- *Answer:* They experienced unbroken communion with the Lord. Genesis 3:8 tells us that God walked in the garden. His presence was there with them. They experienced their roles exactly as God originally intended them.
- **What does the Garden tell us about God’s desire for His people?**
 - *Answer:* He wants us to experience full, true life, where He is our provision. This can only be found in a relationship with Him.

Explain to students that all of these things are valid, and important, and wonderful. But, the most beautiful aspect of the Garden was the unbroken communion Adam and Eve experienced with God. Say something like:

- **How amazing it must have been for Adam and Eve to walk and talk with God! God gave them everything they could possibly need. In fact, as you probably remember, there was one rule He put in place. Let’s look at it.**

THEN, read or have a student read Genesis 2:15-17. Ask if this rule seems too complicated to follow. It seems like a simple rule, but Adam and Eve were deceived. Read or have a student read Genesis 3:6. Then, ask:

- **Though it’s impossible to explain for sure, it’s helpful to put ourselves in their places. So, what do you think: why do you think Adam and Eve disobeyed?**
 - *Answer:* Maybe they decided they wanted to take control of things, and they wanted to be in charge. They wanted to be their own gods. So, they rebelled against God.

Explain to the students that at its core, sin isn’t about bad actions; it’s about a rebellious heart (which leads to bad actions). True wisdom and knowledge can only come by fearing the Lord. Yet, Adam and Eve tried to obtain it in another way. In the Genesis 2 passage we read, God was very clear. He said in verse 17, “for in the day you eat of it *you shall surely die.*” Ask:

- **Why do you think Adam and Eve’s sin was so serious? What implications did it have for all of us?**
 - *Answer:* Adam and Eve were the representatives for the rest of humanity. Their rebellion spread to all of us. We all suffer the consequences of sin.

Read Romans 5:12. Then, ask:

- **So, can we blame Adam for our own sin? Why or why not?**
 - *Answer:* No. Adam was our representative, but we’re still responsible for our own sin. We’ve all attempted to take matters into our own hands and do things our way, i.e., be our own god.
- **Does that seem fair?**

Allow students to wrestle with this for a bit. Then, read Romans 3:23. Explain that this verse seems clear: there are no exceptions. Say something like:

- **God told Adam that he would die if he sinned. We inherited Adam’s sin nature. And we inherited the same punishment. What consequence is there for our sin? Death is the consequence of our sin.**

NEXT, take a moment and name some of the sins teenagers struggle with. Explain that these are ways many teenagers rebel and try to be our own gods. Name things like lying, cheating, pornography, gossiping, being judgmental or harsh toward others, and so on. But then make sure students hear you say that it’s deeper than that. Say something like:

- **Why do we do these things? The answer lies not in these sins. They’re just symptoms of a deep-seated illness. The illness is our hearts. At our core, the sin behind the sinful actions is a heart that doesn’t trust that God’s ways are best. It’s a heart that says we know better. Not trusting that God alone is worthy of our allegiance and adoration is rebellion. And based on our rebellion, based on our place as sinners, we are in desperate need of rescue. Our hearts need to be fixed and we can’t fix them on our own.**

THEN, explain to students that the incredible thing for us is that God wants to save us. Most have heard this so often they've become numb to the awesome nature of it. But remind them that God wants to rescue us and mend our rebellious hearts. Explain that throughout the Old Testament we see even more evidence of this desire. (If you want, be prepared to read Psalms 68:20 and 116:8 to support this point.)

FINALLY, have a student read Psalms 40:1-3. Explain that David was writing here about a time in his life where God moved to rescue him. Ask:

- **What does this passage say about God's character? Why is it amazing that He "inclined to" David and "heard [his] cry"?**
 - *Answer:* It means that He's a God that truly wants to be with His people. It shows great intentionality.
- **What are "the pit of destruction" and the "miry bog" representative of here?**
 - *Answer:* The psalmist isn't referring to a physical place. He's talking about the helplessness and destruction of sin and separation from God.
- **So, what does it say about God that He "set [David's] feet upon a rock" and gave him a firm place to stand? What does it tell us about God's desire for His people?**
 - *Answer:* God's desire is for His people is to have abundant life. He isn't just getting them back to a neutral state. He wants us to experience true life, which is life that can only be found in Him.

Allow students to respond to whether or not they are getting just how huge this all is. The God who made us and had to watch us turn from Him, still pursues us, giving us the rescue only He can give. What an amazing truth! Transition to "**The Last Word**" by reminding students that God didn't just pull David up and leave it at that. No, He set David's feet on a solid and firm foundation, which allowed him to move forward with secure steps.

The Last Word

- **Goal:** The goal of this section is for the students to reflect on the incredible nature of salvation and how our lives are to be lived in response to this truth.
- **Set-Up:** You'll only need the list you made on the dry-erase board during the Lead In section.

FIRST, talk to the students for a little bit about different motivations for obedience. You're obviously driving towards talking about their obedience to God, but kick off the discussion by having them think about their relationship with their parents, teachers, coaches, etc. Ask them:

- **Why do you think people like your parents, your teachers, or your coaches want you to obey?**
 - *Answer:* These adults (at least the ones that are thinking about obedience correctly) aren't just seeking obedience from you so they can control you. They're seeking to protect, guide, and shape you, even if it doesn't always seem that way. Parents with a healthy approach to parenting would rather their children obey out of love and trust. The same is true for good teachers and coaches.
- **Why do you obey these people?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Some will be positive, such as a loving response to someone that cares for them. Make sure students address the more neutral/negative motivations for obeying, as well, such as fear of punishment, a desire for approval or reward, and so on.
- **What's the difference in obeying out of fear, desire of approval, or promise of reward and obeying out of love and trust?**
 - *Answer:* The answer is in the question. One involves love, the other doesn't. One is selfishly motivated and the other is grounded in love and adoration.

NEXT, draw the students' attention back to the list of emotions they talked about in "The Lead In." (Recall, these were emotions they felt as the result of being bailed out or rescued from a troublesome situation.)

- **Think about the pit and bog of sin that separates us from God. Think about the salvation, or rescue, that God offers to us. Move through the list of emotions. Do the same ones come into play when you think about your salvation? How are they the same? How are they different?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **So, here's the million-dollar question, one that you might need to noodle on for a few days. Ready? What's your heart's response to the salvation God offers? What does this gift do to you? How in awe are you of God and His amazing, unparalleled rescue plan for you?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Allow students to process this, if they will.

FINALLY, drive home how we should be inclined to respond based on the incredible nature of our salvation. Help students understand that a right response to God's amazing gift of salvation only comes when we truly realize how amazing the gift is and how undeserving we are. Encourage the students to find time this week to really think about what God offered when He made a way for them to be saved from separation from Him. Encourage them to voice praise and worship to Him out of their gratitude.

Close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the "Salvation: Lesson 1" devotions to your students. If you're printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you're texting a link, posting them on Facebook, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Consider texting students a couple of times during the week to encourage them to follow through with reading the 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.

