

02

Salvation

Why did Jesus have to die?

Read Romans 5:1-5

In verse 2, most Bible translations state that through Christ we have “gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” Something has changed. You are no longer condemned.

You have been set free. With Christ as the key, you have been admitted into a new world where things work differently.

ACTION STEPS

Read these passages that communicate the gospel. Pray before you read, that God would speak to you through the Scriptures.

John 3:16-18

Ephesians 2:1-10

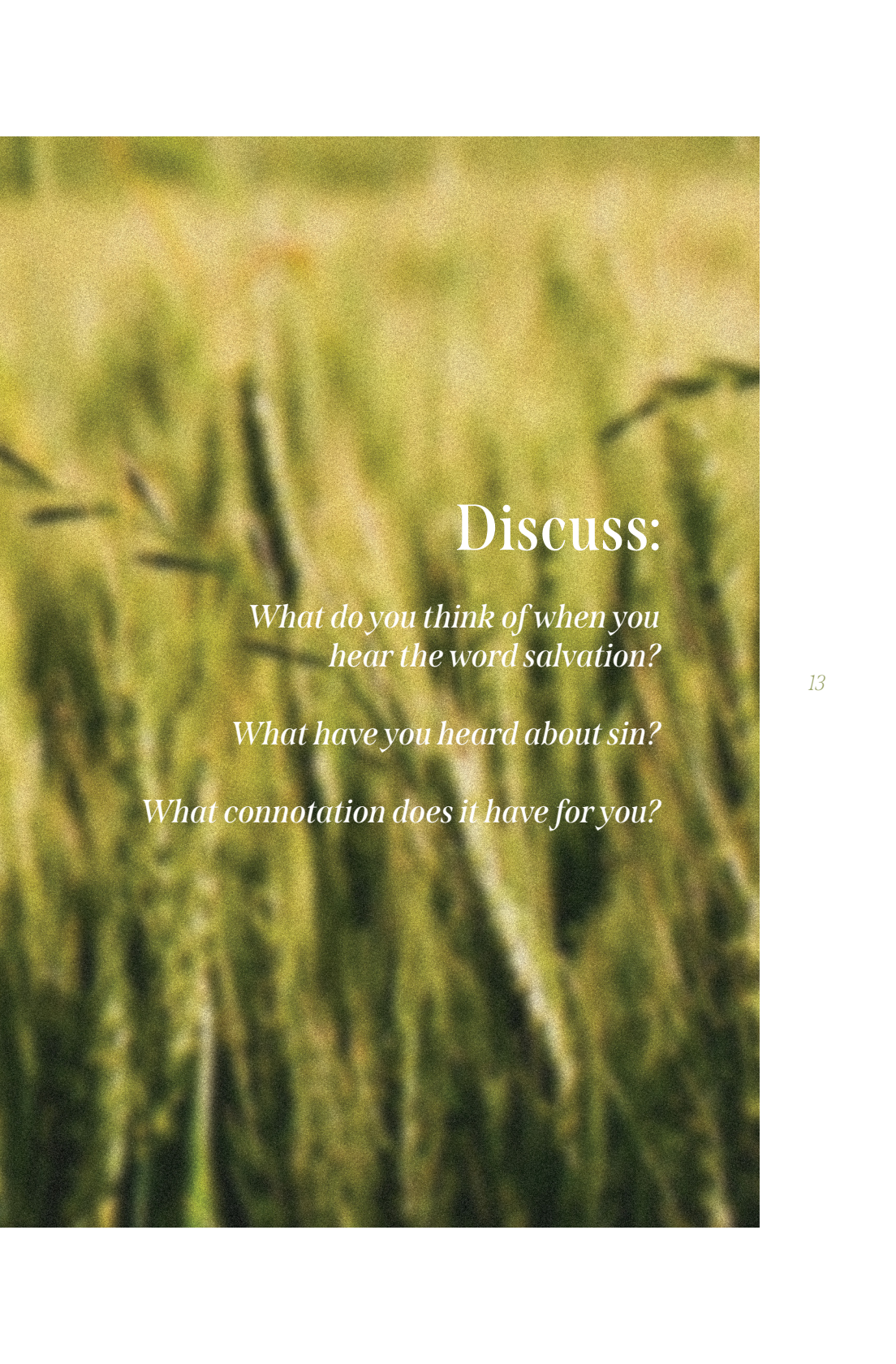
Colossians 1:21-22

19

Ask yourself the following questions:

What seems unclear to you about the gospel?

What has been your personal experience with the gospel?



Discuss:

*What do you think of when you
hear the word salvation?*

What have you heard about sin?

What connotation does it have for you?

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

¹ Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.



A photograph of a vast field of golden wheat under a clear blue sky. The wheat stalks are in sharp focus in the foreground, with some seed heads visible. The background shows a flat horizon line where the field meets the sky.

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

As we begin, we want to start with the ideas that define our faith. In the Bible, a man named Paul, who God used to spread our faith in the 1st century, wrote a number of letters to help establish the beliefs of new Christians in the early church. These letters make up a large portion of the New Testament.

In one of these letters to the Corinthian church, Paul stresses the gospel, or the good news, that “Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again” (1 Corinthians 15:4) as of first and utmost importance. Prior to its use as a Christian term, the word gospel (which is the Greek word “euangelion”) referred to the reward given to a messenger who brought good news.

Eventually, the term came to represent the good news itself – news of military victory or of an escape from danger. Paul applied this word to our faith to illustrate the victory of Christ in the battle that persisted since the beginning of mankind. The Bible is where we find the backstory of this battle and learn why the victory is truly good news. Since the gospel is what Christianity revolves around, this is where we will start.

16

Open to Romans 5

The book of Romans is another letter written by Paul, this time to the church in Rome. In this chapter, he explains the gospel and what happens when you accept it. The chapter goes backwards through history as it begins with the effects of Christ’s victory, moves to how He won the victory, and then tells the story of why a victory was needed. Therefore, in order to fully understand what is going on, let’s start at verses 12-14 and work our way back to verse 1.

Read Romans 5:12-14

How would you define sin?

Here we see a world where sin and death reign, but, as this first verse suggests, it was not how things started. In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, we see God create a perfect and beautiful world out of nothing. Then we watch as Adam, the first man, decides to go his own way and rebel against God, thereby introducing sin and its consequence of death into this new world. All humans, as descendant of Adam, follow in this rebellion. We want to do things our way; as a result death passes to all of us. This was not what God intended.

Read Romans 5:6-11

What are some of the words used to describe us in this passage?

17

As humans, we have rebelled, destroyed what God intended us to be, and separated ourselves from God. Here is where the good news comes in: while we rejected God, Christ died for us – the rebels, the ungodly. This whole passage shows the victory of Christ. God found a way, through the death of Christ, to satisfy the punishment that we brought upon ourselves. We can now be made right with God and given a clean slate.

In verse 9, we see the idea that we have been set right. In most translations, the word “justified” is used. This is a legal term for the formal acquittal of guilt by a judge. Imagine yourself on trial. You have committed a crime and the penalty is death. You could try to deny your guilt, but the truth is obvious to everyone. You are guilty as charged, when an innocent person comes, confesses to your crime and takes on your penalty of death, thereby satisfying your sentence and releasing you. This is the picture we are getting from the passage.

In another example, imagine yourself in debt – the Mafia loaned you money – and the time has come to settle your account. The problem is that you do not have the money you owe. You are in trouble, but then someone who cares for you decides to pay the debt on your behalf. You did not deserve for them to do this. At the end of the day, it should have been you who paid the debt, but it has been taken care of nevertheless. You have been justified. The only catch is you have to let this person take care of it. What if, in this scenario, the person had warned you not to take money from these guys, but you ignored him and left him for friends who supported your decision. Letting him help requires you to not only admit that you were wrong, but also return to a relationship you rejected. This is what Christians call repentance.

This is the gospel. You were condemned to die for the crime of rebelling against your Creator. But God would not leave you alone. Knowing that no one else could live the sinless life that was required, Christ came to earth to be the needed sacrifice and die in your place. Through his death, you were declared right before God. This is justification. However, for you to be saved, you have to allow Him to rescue you; stop trying to do life your way. Accepting His payment requires you to return to Him, repent, and die to the part of you that thought your way was best. It is not easy and some people will find it too humiliating and difficult. And yet, if you have been justified, your sin was taken care of and the wrath of God was appeased. Through Christ's death you have been forgiven.

Have you ever accepted the gospel and been “justified” by God as it's described in the paragraph above and in Romans 5?
