

Big Idea: Jesus calls us to accept salvation.

Primary Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10

Supporting Scripture: Ephesians 4:18; 2 Corinthians 13:5

CAPTURE (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)

- Desmond Doss, a medic in World War II, is a great example of bravery and faith.
- At 22 years old, Doss enlisted in the army during WWII.
- His unique choice was refusing to carry a weapon due to his faith.
 - He faced mockery and was called a coward.
- The Battle at Hacksaw Ridge changed everything.
 - Doss faced incredible danger when soldiers had to climb a 30–40-foot cliff under heavy enemy fire.
 - Despite no weapon, Doss ran toward gunfire, searching for wounded soldiers.
 - He prayed repeatedly, “Lord, please help me get one more.”
 - Even after being wounded multiple times, Doss saved 75 soldiers, displaying extreme courage and selflessness.
- Doss’ actions exemplify what it means to “level up” in courage and faith.
- His heroism saved lives in a dire situation, showing a commitment beyond the ordinary.
- Over the next four weeks, we’ll dive into the Book of Ephesians, exploring how we, like Desmond Doss, are called to go all in for God.
- Today’s passage highlights our spiritual need for Jesus, showing we are spiritually dead without His intervention—just like the soldiers were as good as dead without Doss’ help.

SCRIPTURE (What does God’s Word say?)

- Have you ever had your phone completely die on you?
It’s frustrating when it looks fine but is powerless.
- Paul writes about something similar in Ephesians 2.

¹ Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. (Ephesians 2:1 – NLT)

- Paul isn't referring to physical death. He's talking about spiritual death.
- Just like a dead phone looks fine but can't function, we might look alive but are missing the connection we were meant to have with God.

² You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³ All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. (Ephesians 2:2-3 – NLT)

- Paul says there are only two paths
 - Walking with God
 - Walking away from Him.
- There's no middle ground. You're either connected to God, or you're not.
- Just when things seem hopeless, Paul introduces two of the most important words in the letter.

*⁴ **But God** is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) (Ephesians 2:4-5 – NLT)*

- Did you catch the first two words? "But God..."
 - Whenever these words appear in the Bible, something amazing is about to happen.

⁶ For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. ⁷ So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6-7 – NLT)

- God doesn't just give us a spiritual jump-start. He gives us a completely new life!

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (Ephesians 2:8-10 – NLT)

- Have you ever tried to earn someone's friendship or approval by doing nice things for them?
- We often think we need to earn our way back to God the same way.
- But Paul is saying that's not how it works at all.
- We can't earn our way back to life. We need someone to save us.

INSIGHTS (What might this Scripture mean?)

1. Sin destroys.

- In video games, your character has a health bar that drops when taking damage, but you can usually restore it with health packs or power-ups.
- In real life, sin doesn't just damage us a little; it completely disconnects us from God.
 - Sometimes, we justify our actions, thinking:
 - "I had to cheat on that test... my parents would kill me if I failed!"
 - "It was just a little lie..."
 - "Nobody got hurt, so it's not a big deal..."
- Paul mentions sin or its effects eight times in these ten verses—he's trying to grab our attention.
- Look at what he says later in Ephesians 4:17.

¹⁸ Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. (Ephesians 4:18 – NLT)

- Sin doesn't just affect our actions. **It changes our hearts.**
- It's like a virus that corrupts our whole spiritual operating system.
- We can't fix it ourselves.

2. Jesus brings the dead to life.

- Imagine a phone that's completely dead, with a busted charging port.
- It can't be fixed without someone repairing what's broken.
- This is like what Jesus does for us:
 - "Once you were dead" (Eph. 2:1) – Our broken state without Jesus.
 - "BUT GOD" (Eph. 2:4) – The turning point.
 - "Gave us life" (Eph. 2:5) – Jesus' work through His life, death, and resurrection.
- Jesus doesn't just repair us. He completely transforms us.
- Even while we're still broken, Jesus comes to us, just like Desmond Doss went to the wounded soldiers.

3. We are saved for a purpose.

- Let's look at verse 10 again:

¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (Ephesians 2:10 – NLT)

- Paul calls us God's "masterpiece" (Greek: poiema), meaning a carefully crafted work of art.
- God doesn't just fix what's broken; He makes us entirely new and beautiful.
- We're saved not only from spiritual death but for something: to do the good things God planned for us.
- Before we were born, God had good works planned for us based on our unique gifts and experiences.
- Through Jesus, we receive both a fresh start and a purpose.

ACTION (How could we live this out?)

1. Ask yourself difficult questions.

- Sometimes the most important questions are the ones we've been avoiding.
- The Apostle Paul challenges Christians to examine their faith and test its genuineness

⁵ Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ lives in you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith. (2 Corinthians 13:5 – NLT)

- This week, honestly ask yourself these questions:
 - If you've grown up in church:
 - Is my faith real, or am I just going through the motions?
 - Have I personally accepted Jesus' gift, or does my faith depend on others?
 - Is anything holding me back from fully committing to Jesus?
 - If you're new to church:
 - What do I believe about God?
 - What questions do I still have about salvation?
 - Is anything preventing me from taking my next step with Jesus?
- These questions might be uncomfortable, but discomfort shows you're seriously reflecting on your faith.
- It's okay to have questions; they show you're thinking about what matters.
- You don't need to have everything figured out to take the next step with God.

2. Step into God's plan.

- You are God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus to do good works He planned long ago.
- Salvation is not about earning; it's about living out who God created you to be.
- This week, take two specific steps:
 - Start each day asking God to show you the opportunities He's prepared for you. Your prayer can be simple: "God, show me what you've prepared for me today."
 - Look for ways to share your story, like:
 - Sharing with a friend how God has changed your life
 - Being more open about your faith at school
 - Telling your small group about what God is doing in your life

Level Up | Session 1 of 4 – Salvation | Teaching Outline

- Stepping into God's plan and asking tough questions can feel scary, but you're not alone.