CHARIS YOUTH

Series: Salvation

Lesson 1: What's Your Story?

About This Lesson

The decision to receive salvation is the most important decision in each person's life. Many young people think they can put off this decision, assuming they can enjoy the pleasures of sin now and repent later when they are older. This lesson shows the value of receiving salvation now and living the rest of life glorifying God.

Key Takeaway: Jesus loves and values each person and will not stop pursuing you! Salvation is the best decision you will ever make!

Key Verse: 2 Peter 3:9, *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."*

Teaching Outline:

I. JESUS GOES AFTER THE LOST

A. In Luke 15:1–7, the parable of the lost sheep shows that Jesus prioritizes seeking and saving the lost. He wants each lost person to be found.
Luke 15:4 *"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?"*

1. When you lose something valuable, you keep searching for it until you find it.
2. You are valuable to Jesus!

B. Jesus never stops going after the lost! Right before His death on the cross, He continued to seek the lost. Even in these last moments on the cross, Jesus' heart was to save and forgive!
Luke 23:34 *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."*

C. Salvation isn't automatic if your parents are Christians or you are born in a country that is "Christian." It is God's will for everyone to accept salvation through Jesus. God doesn't force anyone to accept salvation—He gives everyone the choice.
2 Peter 3:9, *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."*

D. God is patiently waiting for you to choose to receive salvation, but don't put off this important decision because you think you can sin now and repent later in life. No one knows how long we have on this earth.

E. Rather than waste time without Jesus, you can experience fullness of life with Jesus as you fulfill God's plan for your life!

II. HOW IS SOMEONE SAVED? THE MIRACLE OF SALVATION!

A. You must say YES to Jesus! The only way to be saved is to say YES to Jesus, who paid for your sins through His death and resurrection!
   1. You can't buy salvation. You can't earn salvation. Only Jesus could pay the debt you can't pay and give you the reward of heaven that you don't deserve!

B. Luke 23:32–43: The two criminals on crosses next to Jesus represent the entire world as lost or saved people.
   1. Those who say NO to Jesus will be separated from Jesus for all eternity in a place called Hell.

   2. Those who say YES to Jesus will be with Him in Paradise, in Heaven.
      a) This man saw that he was a sinner and Jesus was his Savior.
      Luke 23:41 "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong."

b) This thief looked at Jesus, who was completely broken, bloodied, torn apart, a crown of thorns piercing his forehead, exhausted, barely able to walk, and barely able to talk. In the natural, this would be the most difficult time to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the King of Heaven, and the Lord of all creation.

c) He didn't confess his sins in a prayer in a church. You can get saved anywhere and at any time. He professed Jesus as Lord.

d) Salvation is not natural—it is supernatural. The Holy Spirit is always present at the miracle of salvation! The Holy Spirit was moving on this man's heart! The Holy Spirit's job is to "convict the world of sin" (John 16:8).

C. Everyone needs to know Jesus! Beyond a shadow of a doubt, knowing Jesus as your Savior is the best thing that could ever happen to YOU!

II. HOW IS SOMEONE SAVED? THE MIRACLE OF SALVATION!

A. When we get to heaven, everyone there will have a salvation story. Be proud of your salvation story—now and in eternity!
   1. If your salvation story is dramatic, rejoice that Jesus came and found you!
   2. If your salvation story is what you might think is "boring," rejoice that you found Jesus and your decision kept you on His pathway for your life. Many people wish they hadn't gone through what they had to go through to find Jesus.

B. Salvation is the best thing that will ever happen to you! A miracle happens inside your heart!
   Romans 10:9–10 *That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.* [10] *For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*
   1. Leader: share the story of your salvation.

C. So, what's your salvation story? Don't leave Earth without one!
   1. Leader: give the young people the opportunity to pray to receive salvation.

NOTE: For students who pray to receive salvation, discuss with them receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If your church has a pamphlet about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, share it with them.

Bottom Line:

Salvation is a choice that must be made here on the earth. Don't put off the decision that starts your salvation story right now.

Small Group Time:

1. The Bible mentions heaven 582 times. There are books and movies about people who died, went to heaven, and returned to the earth. We know heaven is real, and the only people in heaven are those who received the free gift of salvation while they lived on the earth. Heaven is the only place where 100% of the people have a salvation story.
   - Who would you like to talk with in heaven?
   - Whose salvation story has impacted you, and how?

2. When people hear about Jesus offering them salvation, they must choose to receive His free gift or to reject it. Many who say YES experience instant peace from God. Some people say NO because they are afraid of how other people will react to them if they become Christians.
   - What is the best thing about saying YES to salvation?
   - What was/is the hardest thing about saying YES to salvation?
   - If you haven't received salvation, what is holding you back from saying YES to Jesus?

Declaration:

"I know Jesus loves me and died on a cross to pay for my sins. I will not put off receiving His gift of salvation."

Youth Weekly Journal:

Handout, Email, or Download

- **Question:** Who needs to hear your salvation story, and what will help you tell it to them?
- **Pray:** Thank God for loving you so much that He sent Jesus to pay for your sins.
- **Read:** Luke 15:1–32 contains three parables Jesus told to illustrate how He seeks each lost person. Read this chapter each day and list what similarities you see in the stories, differences, and insights into God's love that pursues until the lost are found.
- **Live It:** Practice sharing your salvation story. Start by saying your testimony in front of a mirror, then tell your family. Ask God for opportunities to share your salvation story with someone who needs to know about God's love for them and salvation.
- **Create:** Write or draw your salvation story. Put a copy in your Bible as a reminder. Share it on social media or with your youth group.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

Icebreaker Question: What is your favorite dessert, and why?

Opening Activity Suggestion: Invite the young people to share experiences of losing something and then the joy of finding it in an obscure location or amazing way.

Opening Affirmation: "I am loved by God. Jesus pursues me because He wants me to accept His gift of salvation. This is the best decision I will ever make in my life."

Giving Time: Luke 6:38 *"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*

Jesus said "Give," He didn't ask or beg people to give. Whenever Jesus gives a command, there is a promise attached to it. You will receive back from Him, in the measure you give. Are you a stingy giver or a generous giver?

BEYOND –
ADDITIONAL APPLICATION FOR CHURCH OR HOME

Challenge: Sharing salvation stories has power because it prophetically tells other young people that what God did for you, He will do for them. Challenge the youth group to share their salvation story with at least one unsaved friend or family member this week. Next week, have them share what happened.

Biblical Worldview: People who don't use the Bible as their guidebook have no hope of salvation because they don't know the only source of salvation is Jesus. There are popular beliefs that there are many roads to God/heaven, such as reincarnation and other religions. People who believe that good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell are hopeful that in the end, they will be one of the good people who go to heaven. The young people who live by their biblical worldview have peace and purpose in their lives to fulfill God's plan for their lives, and one day, they will be with Him in heaven. Affirm that making the decision to receive salvation is the best decision of their lives, and they will be able to spend their lives now and in eternity bringing glory to God.

Outreach/Missions: Many people look at missionaries and evangelists as the people in the body of Christ who have the role of sharing the Gospel and helping lead people into salvation. The Bible is clear that when you say YES to Jesus, you join in the role of making disciples (Matthew 28:19–20). Help the young people desire to share their salvation story and help others hear about Jesus. Give an opportunity for the young people to spend time praying for each other to be bold and share about salvation with people who are spiritually lost.