

4

The Greatest Gift

WHAT'S
THE BEST
GIFT
YOU'VE
EVER
RECEIVED?

The POINT >

We can receive no greater gift than a relationship with God.

> ROMANS 5:6-11,18-21

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

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¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

Drumming can be a good workout. In fact, studies show that drumming can burn more calories than cycling, hiking, and weight lifting.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

Before the beginning of time, God's plan for salvation centered on Jesus's death and resurrection, which make salvation possible.

Gifts can be tricky. When someone gives us a gift, we feel the pressure to act like it's what we've always wanted—even if it's socks from Grandma. On the other hand, when we give a gift, we often feel nervous, crossing our fingers in hopes the person will really like what we picked out.

When I was a kid, I desperately wanted a set of Hit Stix for my birthday. These were electronic, toy drum sticks that created different drum and percussion sounds. In the commercials, the kids had cool clothes and funky hair, made incredible music with their friends, and were backed by amazing 80s hip-hop tracks. When I tore the paper off the gift box from my parents, I was overjoyed to see that it was exactly what I wanted. It didn't take long to figure out that playing by myself at home—with little skills, no backing track, and no group of amazing musicians—wasn't anything like the commercials. Reality didn't meet my expectations, and the gift I'd wanted most turned out to be pretty disappointing.

Scripture speaks of Jesus—His salvation, His grace, and Jesus Himself—as the greatest gift ever given. And we can be sure that Jesus will not disappoint.

ROMANS 5:6-8

1 What does it mean that Jesus came at the right time?

2 Why do you think it was the right time when Jesus came?



ROMANS 5:18-21

6 Why is it important to understand that sin always affects others?

7 What was the “act” or work of Jesus that made justification for sinners possible?

8 What is the role of grace in the life of a Christian?

ROMANS 5:9-11

3 What does it mean that we are justified in Christ?

4 In your own words, what are the three tenses of salvation?

5 What is God’s wrath? How are we saved from it?

Our sin separated us, but through His sacrifice, Jesus has brought us back together with the Father. #BSFLTheGOAT



LIVE IT OUT



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

Before the beginning of time, God's plan for salvation centered on Jesus's death and resurrection, which make salvation possible.

God provides many good gifts—including the sun that gives warmth and light, and the rain that gives water to drink and makes food grow—not only to His own people, but also for all the people of the world. Still, there's something better than any earthly gift, and it's salvation that makes a relationship with God possible. Jesus gave Himself as the payment for our sin, and Jesus is Himself the greatest gift we'll ever receive.

> CHRIST

God requires perfect righteousness to live in relationship with Him, but that's a standard we simply cannot live up to. However, Jesus did! And when we trust and follow Him, Jesus takes our sin on Himself and gives us His righteousness as a free gift.

9 Take a moment and meditate on this truth.

10 Say a prayer of gratitude, thanking God for His gift of forgiveness in Christ.

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD



> COMMUNITY

God went to great lengths to reconcile us to Himself. Are you experiencing conflict or separation in any of your relationships?

11 If so, what steps can you take to begin the reconciliation process? Get started this week.

12 Consider asking a trusted leader to help you work through the process.

> CULTURE

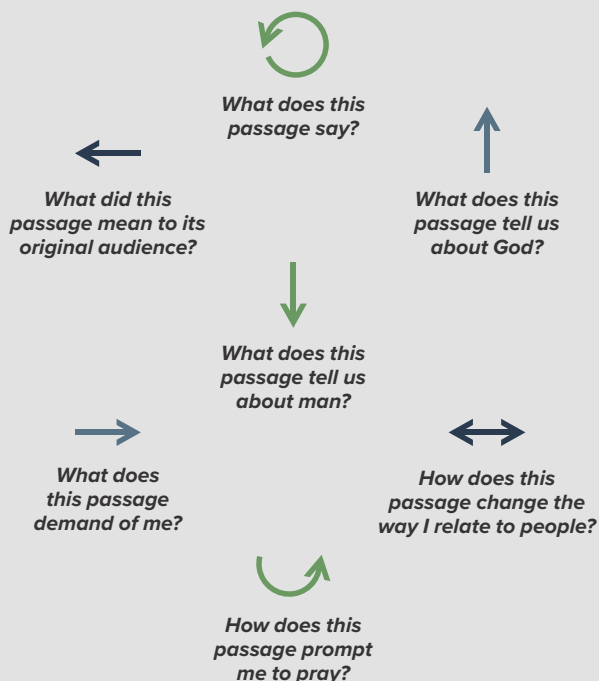
In our culture, many people experience disagreements, conflict, or relational struggles on many levels. And we're surrounded by people who don't know God and need to be reconciled to Him.

13 This week, share your story of how God reconciled you to Himself through Jesus with a non-Christian friend or neighbor.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One **JAMES 4:4**

Previously, James called Christians to live not according to earthly wisdom but wisdom from above. Further, James pointed out that the conflict people experience, specifically in the church, comes from pursuing selfish pleasures rather than serving one another. As God's people, we live in a covenant relationship with Him, much like the commitment of a husband and wife to each other. In the same way a husband pursuing pleasure outside the marriage is adultery, James said the church was being unfaithful to God in pursuing worldly pleasures. They were adulterers! Friendship with the world refers to living by the world's values and finding pleasure in the same places as ungodly people. When we live this way, we set ourselves in opposition to God. As God's people, we are to reject the values of the world and find our joy and meaning in Christ.

➤ **Why did James call these professing believers adulterers?**

➤ **How are you tempted to live as a friend of the world?**

Day Two

JAMES 4:5



When we come to saving faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. The Spirit opens our eyes to the truth, convicts us of sin, comforts us when we grieve, and provides strength for living well. Further, because we are in a committed covenant relationship with God, it provokes the Spirit to jealousy when we find pleasure in things of the world. In a certain sense, jealousy is wrong—we aren't to be envious or covetous toward others, specifically the good things they possess that we might want for ourselves. However, from another angle, jealousy is totally appropriate. For instance, it's good for a husband to have healthy and balanced jealousy for his wife's affection and faithfulness. The Spirit, who is Himself God, is jealous for our love and affection, and He envies intensely for our hearts when we seek pleasure and fulfillment in worldly things.

- **When have you experienced jealousy in a healthy way?**
- **Are you faithfully living out your commitment to God in the places you seek pleasure and fulfillment? Why?**

Day Three

JAMES 4:6

Grace is specifically a free gift that we don't deserve and can't earn. Grace is central to our salvation—we could never earn God's forgiveness, and we certainly don't deserve God's favor. It's pretty clear that grace is the only way we could be saved. However, it might be less obvious how grace plays a part in our lives beyond salvation. Here's how: We're not only saved by grace, but God's grace also provides the strength to follow Jesus every day. It's God's grace at work in our lives that moves us to find pleasure in Him. It's God's grace that helps us to live sacrificially and with love toward others. It's God's grace that leads us toward unity in the church. It's worth asking how we can put ourselves in the position to receive this grace. The answer is clear: When we're prideful, we set ourselves in opposition to God, and He withholds His grace from us, at least in an immediate sense. If we want to receive God's overflowing grace, we must choose humility as the pattern of our lives.

- **In your own words, what is grace?**
- **How are you putting yourself in the position to receive God's grace in real ways?**

Day Four

JAMES 4:7

James was writing specifically to Christians who were being persecuted for their faith. They were experiencing some really tough things, and they were surely tempted to complain or even walk away from their faith. However, James told them that God uses struggles and trials in the lives of His people to shape us into Christlikeness. Submitting to God isn't always easy, not only because we can be naturally prideful and selfish, but even more so when life brings suffering and we wonder why God isn't working things out the way we want. James wanted the church to know that the devil will tempt us to rebel against God, especially when life isn't easy. The answer is to resist the devil. The word *resist* used here is a military term which means to put on the armor of God and take a stand against the devil and his temptations. When we do this by the power of God, the devil will flee, and we will be blessed even in the midst of difficulty.

➤ **Why did James feel the need to remind the church to submit to God?**

➤ **How are we called to resist the devil?
How are you doing this?**

Day Five

JAMES 4:8



When we're tempted to complain, or even to give up, James issued two challenges. The first was to resist the devil. However, this is only half the equation. At times as Christians, we can focus too much on the sin in our lives, specifically avoiding it or putting it to death. We are to put off the attitudes and actions associated with the flesh, but if this is all we do, a void is left for sin to creep back in. Once we've resisted the devil, it's just as important that we pursue God with our whole heart. It's good to hate sin. But even more, we're called to love God with everything we are. When we pursue God, we'll find that He welcomes us into His presence and He draws near to us in incredible ways.

➤ **Why is it not enough to resist the devil?**

➤ **How are you drawing near to God every day?**