

STUDY GUIDE

Spring 2026



 **CONCORDUNITED**

Introduction

Do I need to be saved? Am I saved? How do I know I am saved? What will happen if I am not saved? These questions have stirred Christians and non-Christians for centuries. Before Jesus' birth, an angel announced that he would "save his people from their sins," and throughout his ministry, he promised eternal life to those who follow him. But his teaching surprised almost everyone: we cannot earn eternal life by obedience or moral effort; we can only receive it as a gift of grace, through faith, for a life that begins now and continues into eternity.

These teachings were new to everyone at the time. And at some point in each of our lives, they are new to each of us.

In this series, we will look directly to Jesus' life and the wider witness of Scripture to understand what we are saved from, how we are saved, how we know we are saved, and what it means to be saved for eternity.

How to Use This Guide

This study guide is developed to be used in multiple ways. First, this guide provides group leaders with content and questions to guide group time. Second, this guide allows individuals to engage in the questions, content, and prayers as a resource for this series. If using this guide as an individual, adapt the questions to individual use. Reach out to a friend to discuss the questions and the topic.

Each session is divided into sections to guide engagement with the topic.

➤ *Let's Pray* - We begin and close each session in prayer, using the language God gave us to communicate with God. Use the prayers provided or pray your own words.

➤ *Let's Get Started* – This section provides a way for engagement in the topic in a general way. The questions can be used within the group setting or individually.

➤ *Let's Review* – A review of the action taken in the previous session provides space to consider how we have interacted with the topic from the previous session. There is no "Let's Review" in the first session because no previous content has been presented.

➤ *Let's Gain Information* – The content of each session is provided in this section. The written content exists in the study guide, while supplemental videos with this content are available through Amplify Video. To gain access to the videos, please email nextsteps@concordunied.org.

➤ *Let's Search Scripture* – This section provides the group/individual the opportunity to engage in scripture related to the topic for the session. Discussion questions are provided in this section as well.

➤ *Let's Engage* – This section gives an action for folks to engage in over the upcoming week, related to the topic and scripture.

Session 1

Saved From Sin Week of April 12, 2026

Let's Pray

Holy God, you created us for life with you, yet we confess that we often choose our own way. You sent Jesus to save us from our sins and to restore our relationship with you. As we begin this series, help us see clearly what sin is, why we need to be saved, and how Christ's gracious work draws us back to you. Free us from shame that keeps us hiding and from pride that keeps us denying our need. Open our hearts to your mercy and your truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's Get Started

Discuss the following in your group or reflect on them individually:

- When you hear the word “sin,” what emotions or images come to mind—guilt, shame, rebellion, brokenness, something else?
- Growing up, what were you taught (explicitly or implicitly) about what it means to “be a sinner”?
- If someone said, “I’m a pretty good person—why would I need to be saved?” how do you think many people around you would answer?

Let's Gain Information

What are we saved from?

Before Jesus is born, an angel announces that “he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21. Sin in Scripture is not only individual bad actions but a power that leads to death and pulls us away from God’s design for our lives. Ephesians 2 and Romans 6 describe sin as a way of life in which we “make ourselves god” instead of following the one true

God. Under sin's power, we chase our own desires and treat God as a distant helper we call on only when it suits our goals.

This self-centered life creates estrangement from God. We drift from the life we were created for and lose sight of who God is and who we are meant to be.

What does it mean to be saved from sin?

To be saved is to have that estrangement overcome by the gracious work of Christ. Jesus bears our sin, heals our separation, and restores us to a right relationship with God so that we can again see God clearly and know ourselves as God's children and servants. Salvation is not just avoiding punishment; it is being brought from death to life, from self as center to God at the center, from alienation to communion.

There is a real "wages of sin"—spiritual, relational, even physical death—but there is also the "free gift of God... in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23.

Let's Search Scripture

Read Ephesians 2:1–9.

- How does Paul describe our condition "before" Christ in verses 1–3? What words or images stand out?
- In verses 4–9, what motivates God's saving action, and what does Paul emphasize about grace and works?

Read Romans 6:20–23.

- What does Paul mean by "wages of sin" versus "gift of God"? How have you seen "wages of sin" play out in real life?
- How does this passage deepen your understanding of what Christ saves us from?

If time allows, also read Romans 3:23–24, 1 John 1:8–9, and Psalm 51.

- How do these passages hold together honesty about sin and hope for forgiveness?

Let's Engage

Over the next week:

- Each day, honestly name before God one way you tend to “make yourself god”—placing your desires above God’s will.
- Pray using the spirit of Psalm 51, asking God to cleanse you, restore your joy in salvation, and realign your heart with his purposes.
- Be prepared next session to share one insight: What did you notice about your patterns of sin, and what did you experience as you brought them to God?

Let's close Session 1 with a brief prayer:

Merciful Savior, thank you that you came not to condemn us but to save us. Where sin has distorted our desires and estranged us from you, bring forgiveness, healing, and new life. Help us to trust that your grace is greater than our sin. In your name we pray. Amen.

Session 2

Saved by Grace

Week of April 19, 2026

Let's Pray

Gracious God, you know our sins, weaknesses, and failures better than we do, and yet you love us with steadfast love. Thank you that salvation is a gift of your grace, not a reward for our performance. As we study your word, help us grasp more deeply the wonder of your unmerited forgiveness and blessing. Free us from striving to earn what you delight to give. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's Get Started

- Share about a time when someone treated you better than you deserved—offering forgiveness, understanding, or another chance. How did that affect you?
- Many people think God's acceptance must be earned. Where do you think that idea comes from in our culture and churches?
- When you think about your relationship with God, do you tend to feel more like you're "performing" for him or receiving from him? Why?

Let's Review

In Session 1, we explored what it means to be "saved from sin" and how Christ restores our relationship with God. Your engagement was to name places where you "make yourself god" and to pray with the spirit of Psalm 51 throughout the week. Share anything you are comfortable sharing:

- What did you notice about your patterns of sin or self-centeredness?
- How did it feel to bring those honestly before God?
- Did anything in your understanding of salvation begin to shift?

Let's Gain Information

Grace: God's unearned favor

We can be saved only by grace—God's unmerited forgiveness and blessing given right in the midst of our sinfulness. Grace is not something we achieve; it is a gift we request and receive. Ephesians 2:8–9 insists that we are saved “by grace... through faith... not the result of works, so that no one may boast.”

A story of grace: the prodigal son

To help us understand grace, Jesus tells the story of a son who deeply wrongs his father and wastes his inheritance. Luke 15:11–32. When he has nothing left, he remembers his father's character and decides to return home, prepared to beg for a servant's place. Instead, the father runs to meet him, embraces him, clothes him, and throws a feast. The son's repentance is real, but it is the father's gracious heart that restores him.

This is how God meets repentant sinners—with joy, generosity, and a willingness to restore what our sin has damaged.

Let's Search Scripture

Read Ephesians 2:4–9.

- List the verbs that describe what God does in this passage (for example, “made us alive,” “raised us up”). What does this show about who takes the initiative in salvation?
- How does verse 9 correct the idea that we can earn or deserve salvation?

Read Luke 15:11–32.

- What aspects of the younger son's behavior show he does not deserve the father's welcome?
- What specific actions and words from the father reveal grace?

- Where do you see yourself in this parable—more like the younger son, the older son, or the father watching for someone to come home?

If time allows, read Titus 3:5–7.

- How does Paul describe what God has done for us in Christ?

Let's Engage

Over the next week:

- Each day, thank God specifically for one way his grace has met you—past forgiveness, present strength, or future hope.
- When you catch yourself thinking, “God will love me more if I ,” pause and remind yourself: “I am saved and loved by grace, not by performance.”
- Consider one relationship where you have the chance to show undeserved kindness or forgiveness. Take one concrete step of grace, remembering how God has treated you.

Let's close Session 2 in prayer:

God of amazing grace, thank you that you welcome prodigals home and run to meet us when we turn toward you. Teach us to live as people who are forgiven, not as people who are trying to earn your love. Let your grace shape the way we treat ourselves and others. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Session 3

Saved Through Faith

Week of April 26, 2026

Let's Pray

Faithful God, you invite us to trust you—your character, your promises, your Son. Thank you that salvation is by grace, but received through faith. As we study your word, deepen our understanding of what faith is and how your Spirit nurtures it in us. Help us bring our doubts and fears honestly to you, and teach us to live by trusting you in both this life and the life to come. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's Get Started

- When you hear the word “faith,” what do you think of first: beliefs, feelings, or actions? Why?
- Who is someone whose faith you admire? What do you see in how they live, decide, or endure?
- In your own life, where do you find it easiest to trust God, and where is it hardest?

Let's Review

In Session 2, we learned that we are “saved by grace,” using the story of the prodigal son to picture God’s unearned forgiveness and joy in restoring us. Your engagement was to thank God daily for specific expressions of grace and to extend grace to someone else. Share:

- How did focusing on God’s grace each day affect your prayers or your mood?
- Were you able to take a step of undeserved kindness toward someone? What was that like?

Let's Gain Information

By grace, through faith

Though we are saved by grace, we are saved *through* faith. Faith is the means by which we receive what God freely gives. Hebrews 11 describes faith as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Faith is not blind wishful thinking; it is a Spirit-given confidence in God’s character and promises, even when we cannot yet see the outcome.

Faith as trust and way of life

Through faith, the Holy Spirit gives us an internal witness that we belong to God and can trust him for eternity and for daily guidance. Living by faith means:

- Trusting God to save us rather than trusting our own goodness or efforts.
- Following God’s guidance and calling in this life.
- Trusting that God is preparing a place for us in his eternal kingdom.

Faith involves our minds (what we believe to be true), our hearts (what we trust and desire), and our actions (how we live in response).

Let's Search Scripture

Read Hebrews 11:1, 6, and then scan Hebrews 11 for one or two examples (Abraham, Moses, etc.).

- In your own words, how would you define faith based on verse 1?
- What does verse 6 teach about God’s response to those who seek him?
- Choose one person in Hebrews 11. What did faith look like in their life? What did they trust God for that they could not yet see?

Read John 3:16–18 and Galatians 2:16–20.

- According to these passages, what role does believing or faith play in salvation?

- How does Paul contrast trusting in “works of the law” with trusting in Christ?

If time allows, also read Ephesians 3:17.

- What does it mean for Christ to “dwell in your hearts through faith”?

Let’s Engage

Over the next week:

- Identify one specific area where God may be calling you to take a step of faith (for example: generosity, reconciliation, serving, or a change in priorities).
- Pray daily, asking God to strengthen your trust in that area, and take one concrete step of obedience, even if it feels small.
- Notice how acting in faith affects your sense of God’s presence and your own growth.

We close Session 3 with prayer:

Lord Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, thank you for all those who have gone before us, trusting you in what they could not see. Give us courage to live by faith in our time and place. Help us to trust you with our past, our present, and our future. May your Spirit bear witness in our hearts that we belong to you. Amen.

Session 4

Saved For Eternity Week of May 3, 2026

Let's Pray

Eternal God, you promise more than a few extra years of life; you promise eternal life with you. Thank you that Jesus came to give us life that begins now and continues beyond death. As we consider what it means to be saved for eternity, open our minds to the hope of your kingdom and our hearts to trust your promises. Give us wisdom and humility as we wrestle with questions about assurance and the destiny of others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's Get Started

- When you imagine “heaven” or “eternal life,” what comes to mind—clouds, a city, a feast, relationships, something else? Where did those images come from?
- Do you think more often about life after death or about following Jesus in everyday life now? Why?
- Have you ever struggled with the question, “Am I really saved?” What stirred that question for you?

Let's Review

In Session 3, we saw that we are “saved through faith,” trusting God’s promises in ways that shape our decisions and hope. Your engagement was to identify one area where God is calling you to a step of faith and to act on it. Share:

- What step of faith did you sense God inviting you to take?
- What happened as you took (or wrestled with) that step?

Let's Gain Information

Jesus' promise of eternal life

Jesus tells his disciples that he came to offer eternal life to those who believe in and follow him. In John 10, he describes his followers as sheep who hear his voice, whom he knows, and who follow him. He promises, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand." John 10:27–28.

Eternal life in Scripture is pictured in several ways:

- Knowing Jesus deeply and personally.
- Belonging to the heavenly city and the eternal kingdom.
- Living in a restored community where every wound is healed and we are able to love as God has loved us.

Revelation 21–22 portrays a renewed creation with God dwelling among his people, the river of life, the tree of life for the healing of the nations, and no more death or night.

Two big questions

1. *Can we know we are saved?*

The outline affirms that if we have sought Christ's forgiveness and placed our trust in him for this life and eternity, we can trust his promise even if we did not feel anything dramatic when we prayed. Jesus promises to send his Spirit to give us assurance and calls us to trust his word that he will be faithful to those who seek him. Sometimes we must wait longer than we wish for a deep sense of assurance, but God's apparent silence can be an invitation to pursue him more.

2. *Can we know others aren't saved?*

Christians disagree here. Some traditions teach that those who never publicly profess faith are condemned. Many others hold out hope that Christ can still work in the lives of those on their deathbeds or those who sincerely sought God but lived where they never clearly heard the gospel. As Methodists, we believe in free will and that God will not force salvation on anyone; if a soul chooses darkness over light, God

will respect that choice. We are invited to trust both God's justice and God's mercy, while taking seriously the call to share the good news.

Let's Search Scripture

Read John 10:27–30.

- What does Jesus say about his sheep hearing his voice, following him, and being secure in his hand?
- How might this passage speak to someone wrestling with assurance of salvation?

Read Romans 10:9–10 and 1 John 5:11–13.

- According to Paul and John, what does it mean to confess and believe in a way that leads to salvation?
- How does 1 John suggest believers can “know” they have eternal life?

Read Revelation 22:1–5 (and, if possible, Revelation 21:9–27).

- What aspects of this vision of eternity are most compelling or comforting to you?
- How do these images reshape or expand your earlier pictures of heaven?

Let's Engage

During this week (and especially as you come to Holy Communion):

- Spend time with 1 John 5:11–13. Write a simple statement of your own trust in Christ: how you turned (or are turning) to him, and what you are trusting him for in eternity.
- If you still wrestle with assurance, talk with a trusted Christian friend or leader, sharing your story and your questions. Invite them to pray with you.

- Pray regularly for one person who does not yet follow Christ, asking God to draw them toward salvation and to show you how to live and speak as a witness of his love.

We conclude Session 4—and this series—with prayer:

Lord Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd who laid down your life for the sheep and holds us securely in your hand. Thank you for the promise of eternal life and the hope of a renewed creation where every tear is wiped away. Give us confidence in your saving work, humility about the mysteries we cannot fully resolve, and urgency to share your love with others. Keep us faithful until the day we see you face to face. Amen.