



high school group study

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general editor



winning
spiritual
battles



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how to use the *uncommon* group bible studies

Each *Uncommon* group Bible study contains 12 sessions, which are divided into 3 stand-alone units of 4 sessions each. You may choose to teach all 12 sessions consecutively, to use just one unit, or to present individual sessions. You know your group, so do what works best for you and your students.

This is your leader's guidebook for teaching your group. Electronic files (in PDF format) of each session's student handouts are available for download at www.gospellight.com/uncommon/. The handouts include the "message," "dig," "apply," "reflect" and "meditation" sections of each study and have been formatted for easy printing. You may print as many copies as you need for your group.

Each session opens with a devotional meditation written for you, the youth leader. As hectic and trying as youth work is much of the time, it's important never to neglect your interior life. Use the devotions to refocus your heart and prepare yourself to share with kids the message that has already taken root in you. Each of the 12 sessions are divided into the following sections:

starter

Young people will stay in your youth group if they feel comfortable and make friends in the group. This section is designed for you and the students to get to know each other better.

message

The message section will introduce the Scripture reading for the session and get students thinking about how the passage applies to their lives.

dig

Many young people are biblically illiterate. In this section, students will dig into the Word of God and will begin to interact on a personal level with the concepts.

apply

Young people need the opportunity to think through the issues at hand. This section will get students talking about the passage of Scripture and interacting on important issues.

reflect

The conclusion to the study will allow students to reflect on some of the issues presented in the study on a more personal level.

meditation

A closing Scripture for the students to read and reflect on.



unit I

prepare for battle

It was in the fourth grade that Roger's dad saved his life. For weeks he had been threatened, harassed and frightened by a kid from his neighborhood elementary school. The only reason Roger could find to justify this kid's behavior toward him was that he was the only kid in the class that was smaller than he was. That made Roger an obvious target for a preteen trying to affirm his growing manhood.

The two boys were fighting across the street from Roger's home. He had just plunged his fist into the garage door in a poor attempt to defend his honor against this bully. Like two bad dancers, they then did what many untrained preteen fighters do: fell to the ground and rolled across the cement in an effort to get a punch in here or there. Suddenly, the figure of a man appeared and quickly pulled apart the sparring partners. It was Roger's dad. *Where did he come from?*

Roger's dad held this kid high off the ground by his collar, and then placed him down just inches from his own feet. Looking him in the eye, he gave a huge karate-style "hey!" into his face. The yell was so shocking that it scared the fluids right out of this kid's body.

Roger's dad then stepped up to the bully and said, "I understand you have been threatening my son. Is this true?" The kid squeaked out a yes. "Well, the truth is," continued my dad, "when you mess with a child of mine, you mess with me. Now get out of here and don't bother us again." They had never seen a kid with wet pants run away so fast.

In Romans 8:31-32, Paul writes, "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" As you lead your students through this section, remind your students of how much the heavenly Father does to protect His children. Help them to understand that He is always on their side, supporting them in battle as they fight against the spiritual darkness that is in this world.

The truth is that all of us need to be intimately acquainted with our heavenly Father, who waits to give us loaves of bread, not bags of rocks (see Matthew 7:9). As you and your group work through this unit together, it is my prayer that the security of a life-changing Christ would become the source of strength that you and they need to stand strong against the enemy.



session 1

**secure in
salvation**

*The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.
The Lord protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, he saved me.*

PSALM 116:5-6

As a youth worker involved with the critical task of shaping, nurturing and developing the lives of young people, you are a target for spiritual attack.

Now, before you get the willies, don't think that the devil lurks behind every 7-Eleven® Slurpee machine or that every misfortune or accident is caused by the devil himself. No, Satan is smoother than that. He is slick, calculated and deliberate. His schemes are designed to wreak the most havoc they can and impact as many lives as possible. That's why you and every person involved in active ministry are targets for his demonic work in this world. If you were a naval commander, would you go after individual planes or

the aircraft carrier itself? Youth workers are like aircraft carriers deploying young Christians all over the world in various missions.

Lions don't stalk dead or diseased prey. In the same way, Satan, like a roaring lion (see 2 Peter 5:8), pursues living, active followers of Christ—those who are truly making a difference in this world for the kingdom of God. This is why it is so important for your group members to have a clear perspective on salvation. They can stand firm in the knowledge that they are children of God who have been saved by His grace. They are heirs of His kingdom!

Yes, your students are in a spiritual battle, and Satan will use the weapons at his disposal to try to destroy their relationship with God, their Commander-in-chief. However, they do not need to think of themselves as defenseless sheep surrounded by ravenous wolves, because God has promised to be their protector. Furthermore, they are fighting an enemy with limited power. Satan has limited abilities, limited resources and, best of all, limited time to wage his attacks!

Helping your students discover the security of their salvation in Christ is a wonderful gift to impart to them. When they are secure in their salvation, they will be in a position to firmly stand their ground against the enemy. They will know that they have all of God's unlimited firepower to fight off Satan's attacks. They will be indestructible targets who are willing to go on the offensive and fight back against the darkness that surrounds them in this world.

*If salvation could be attained only by working hard,
then surely horses and donkeys would be in heaven.*

MARTIN LUTHER



group study guide

secure in salvation

starter

ACT IT OUT: Make copies of the following “Act It Out” assignments (these are also available for download in pdf format). Divide students into three groups, and give each group a copy of one of the three situations. Allow students to have about seven minutes to read and discuss their group’s situation.

After the groups have read their situation and discussed the two questions, have a volunteer from each summarize their answer to question 2 (or have two members from each group role-play the situation for the whole group). At this point in the session, don’t focus on helping them answer question 2 correctly—just give them the opportunity to explore how well they understand what salvation means.

Note: You can download this group study guide in 8½" x 11" format at www.gospellight.com/uncommon/winning_spiritual_battles.zip.

act it out #1: kathy and zack

Zack has been a Christian for five years and has just returned from camp. He finally understands what it means to experience salvation through Christ. One day, he is sitting reading his Bible when Katy walks up and sits down next to him.

“Zack, my life is a mess,” Katy says to him. “I feel so lost. I wish I had something that would save me from my circumstances and change my life forever.”

Discuss the following questions:

1. Katy needs to understand what salvation through Christ means and how it will change her life. How would you explain this to her?
2. What do you think Katy needs to know about salvation before she chooses to give her life to Christ?

act it out #2: liza and julia

Liza has quite a reputation around school for being worldly. Her parents are pretty wealthy. Liza has a nice car, nice clothes and plenty of spending money.

One day while having a conversation with Julia, Liza mentions that she is unhappy with her life. Julia and Liza know each other, but they have never been good friends. They first met in fifth-grade Sunday School back when Liza and her family went to church. Julia realizes that Liza needs to know Jesus and understand what it means to be saved by Him.

Discuss the following questions:

1. How would you explain to Liza the salvation that believers receive from Christ?
2. What do you think Liza needs to know about salvation before she chooses to give her life to Christ?

act it out #3: james and the coach

James is the shortstop on his school's baseball team, and all the players look up to him. One day, the baseball coach calls James into his office and asks him if he would be willing to share a team devotional and pray for the team before each game. James didn't even know that the coach realized he was a Christian. James and the coach begin to discuss what the team needs to know about salvation.

Discuss the following questions:

1. What are the important concepts a person needs to understand in order to experience salvation in Christ?
2. What do you think James needs to share about salvation before his team members will be able to choose to give their lives to Christ?

message

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are engaged in a battle that is being waged each day on this earth. While you won't necessarily be able to see this battle—it is *spiritual* in nature—the struggle and your enemy, Satan, are very real. The reason you are under attack is because when you accepted Jesus into your life, you cancelled your allegiances with the kingdom of darkness and joined with God's forces in the kingdom of light.

Of course, Satan is not happy about losing you—and he certainly doesn't want to lose more because of your witness—so he will do whatever he can within his means to make you doubt that you really are a child of God. This is why having a clear understanding of what it means to be saved is so essential to living a victorious Christian life and overcoming Satan's attacks. Fortunately,

God's Word, the Bible, shows you exactly what salvation is, how it has been offered to you, and how it should affect your life.

what salvation is

Being saved means we are rescued from *something*. When a person first becomes a Christian, he or she is saved from sin and the eternal consequences of sin.

1. What does Ephesians 2:1 say is the result of living a life of sin?

2. Look up Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. Through whom did we inherit spiritual death? How did it happen?

3. Who and what does Ephesians 2:2 say we were following before we accepted salvation in Christ?

how salvation is offered

Once we acknowledge our need to be rescued from sin, we need to understand how salvation is offered to us and how we can receive it.

1. Read Ephesians 2:4-5. Why does God want to make us alive with Christ even though we were dead in our sin?

2. In 1 John 4:8, we read that if we do not love, we do not _____ because _____.

3. Read Ephesians 2:8. What must we have to be saved?

4. From where does Ephesians 2:4-8 say the love, faith and grace we need for our salvation comes?

5. What does 1 John 1:8-9 say about how we can respond to God's love and grace? What does God promise to us in these verses?

how salvation affects our lives

Finally, we need to recognize how accepting God's gift of salvation will ultimately affect our lives.

1. Ephesians 2:8-10 says we are brought to a love-filled life for a reason. What is that reason?

2. Whose example does Ephesians 5:1-2 tell us we can follow?

3. How does this verse say we can imitate God?

dig

What is amazing about salvation is that the Bible says that God actually *seeks out* those who are lost. Rather than just sit back and wait for people to realize their condition, He actively engages them and calls them to come to Him. In Luke 15:1-32, Jesus told three parables to illustrate just how God seeks out those who are lost in sin. Read those parables and answer the questions that follow.

1. What was the attitude of the person seeking the lost item?

2. What was his or her response when what was lost was found?

3. What does this tell you about God’s desire for people to be saved?

4. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word “lost”?

5. What do you think it means when a person who does not know Christ is called lost (see Ephesians 2:1-2)?

6. What does it mean to you that before receiving salvation from Christ, you followed the ways of the enemy?

7. Read Ephesians 5:3-6. Listed below are some words from these verses that describe behaviors that are associated with a life of sin. Under each word list things that people do today to act out that sin.

Sexual Immorality

Impurity

Greed

Obscenity

Foolish Talk

Coarse Joking

8. The opposite of being lost is being found. What are things that must happen for something that is lost to be found?

9. How will a lost person who is seeking to be found feel about his or her sin? How is an awareness of sin and the need to escape its control a first step toward being saved?

apply

In Romans 3:23, Paul says that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Each of us is guilty of sinning against God, and

none of us can escape the consequences of our actions. We are all trapped by our sin, much like the man in the following story:

Many years ago, two men were canoeing down the Colorado River. At one point as they were leaving a dock, they accidentally maneuvered their canoe sideways in the current and capsized it. One of the men decided he was strong enough to hold the canoe, swim to the side of the river, and save all of their camping equipment.

The man quickly realized his mistake when the rushing current pulled him, his belongings and the canoe back against the dock and down to the bottom of the river. He soon found himself 10 feet below the surface, pinned by the current between the canoe and the dock pilings.

Up on the surface, the dock attendant frantically rushed around, looking for a way to keep the man from drowning. Spotting a green garden hose lying nearby, he picked it up and quickly began to lower it down to the bottom of the river. The drowning man saw the hose, grabbed it and began to breathe through it. Within 30 minutes, divers arrived and jumped into the water. They were finally able to free the man from the place where he was trapped and save his life.

1. What would you have done if you were the dock attendant?

2. If you were the man who was stuck, what would you have been thinking and feeling about your situation?

3. Spiritually, we find ourselves trapped in a similar circumstance in need of being rescued. What does Paul say in Ephesians 2:1-3 is the cause of our being trapped?

4. According to Ephesians 2:4-5, what saves us?

God has provided a way for us to be saved from our sins so that we can have fellowship with Him and one day spend eternity with Him. Note that this salvation is a *gift*—we can't buy it or do anything to earn it, but we must accept it in order to receive it. Once we have allowed God's life-giving love into our lives, we can stand secure in our salvation. As Paul writes in Romans 8:38-39, "I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height

nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

1. In these verses in Romans 8:38-39, Paul describes some things that separate an unsaved person from God. What type of challenges do you face in this world that attempt to come between you and God?

2. How does it make you feel to know that no matter what spiritual attack comes your way, nothing can separate you from God’s love?

3. What are some things about salvation that you have a hard time understanding?

4. How can you find answers to your questions?

5. If you are a Christian, when and how did you come to understand the salvation you received from Christ?

6. What did it take (or would it take) for you to recognize that you need salvation through Jesus?

reflect

1. Someone once described a sin-filled life as “a life lived separated from God’s life-giving love.” What are some ways (outside of seeking God) that you have been tempted to meet your need for life-giving love?

2. How do you see your sin? (No big deal? A little out of control? Beyond forgiveness?)

3. Why is it important to see salvation as a gift? What choice have you made to respond to Jesus' offer of this gift of salvation?

4. If you have accepted God's gift of salvation, how has it affected your life? What difference has it made?

5. How does knowing that you can never be separated from God's love affect your relationship with the Lord? How does it affect the way you see yourself?

meditation



But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

EPHESIANS 2:4-5