

Developed by Desiring God

 **JOHN PIPER**
SMALL GROUP SERIES

TULIP

*The Pursuit of God's Glory
in Salvation*

A STUDY GUIDE TO THE DVD
featuring **JOHN PIPER**

TULIP

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*The Pursuit of God's Glory
in Salvation*

STUDY GUIDE DEVELOPED BY DESIRING GOD

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TULIP Study Guide

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CONTENTS

Introduction to This Study Guide	7
Lesson 1: Introduction to <i>TULIP: The Pursuit of God's Glory in Salvation</i>	13
Lesson 2: A Summary of the Five Points of Calvinism	17
Lesson 3: Irresistible Grace: Six Arguments	31
Lesson 4: Irresistible Grace: Conditional Language and Biblical Truth	45
Lesson 5: Total Depravity: Sin Is about God	58
Lesson 6: Total Depravity: What Does "Total" Mean?	73
Lesson 7: Unconditional Election: God Chose Individuals	85
Lesson 8: TULIP: Reviewing Total Depravity and Irresistible Grace	97
Lesson 9: Unconditional Election: Doing Missions When God Is Sovereign	111
Lesson 10: Unconditional Election: What about Foreknowledge and Faith?	127
Lesson 11: Unconditional Election: Romans 9 and the Two Wills of God	139
Lesson 12: Limited Atonement: Why Did Jesus Need to Die?	150
Lesson 13: Limited Atonement: Who Limits the Atonement?	161
Lesson 14: Perseverance of the Saints: The Necessity of Endurance	173

Lesson 15: Perseverance of the Saints: Kept by the Power of God	186
Lesson 16: Ten Effects of Believing the Five Points of Calvinism	200
Leader's Guide	202
Appendix: Leading Productive Discussions	209



INTRODUCTION TO THIS STUDY GUIDE

“DOCTRINE DIVIDES; CHRIST UNITES.” Many in the church today would echo this sentiment. To them, controversial doctrines simply promote disunity in the body. Instead of spending our time arguing and debating about theology, we should be evangelizing our neighbors, looking out for the poor, advancing the kingdom, and completing the Great Commission. Doctrine simply gets in the way of these important efforts.

No doubt doctrines have, at times, needlessly divided the church of God. But there is another, deeper, more biblical use of doctrine. Paul exhorts Timothy to “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:16, NIV). Peter also exhorts his readers to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18), and what is the “knowledge of Christ” if not another way of describing doctrine? Here is how John Piper describes the usefulness of biblical doctrine: “Our experience is that clear knowledge of God from the Bible is the kindling that sustains the fires of affection for God.”

Introduction to This Study Guide

This is our conviction: that biblical doctrine awakens, sustains, and increases our love and joy in God. Piper continues, “Probably the most crucial kind of knowledge is the knowledge of what God is like in salvation. That is what the five points of Calvinism are about. We do not begin as Calvinists and defend a system. We begin as Bible-believing Christians who want to put the Bible above all systems of thought. But over the years—many years of struggle—we have deepened in our conviction that Calvinistic teachings on the five points are Biblical and therefore true.”

The aim of this study guide is to explore biblical teaching on the sovereignty of God in salvation. We will move systematically through each of the five points of Calvinism, examining relevant biblical passages and asking key questions. Our primary goal and deepest prayer is that God would be pleased to awaken in his people a deeper knowledge of and love for the great work of the gospel whereby he unconditionally elects depraved rebels to be his people, sends his only Son to secure their salvation, irresistibly and effectually calls them to himself by the Holy Spirit, and keeps them in faith until they acquire possession of their glorious inheritance, all to the praise of the glory of his grace.

This study guide is designed to be used in a sixteen-session, guided group study that focuses on the *TULIP: The Pursuit of God’s Glory in Salvation* DVD set. After an introductory lesson, each subsequent lesson examines one thirty-minute session from the *TULIP* DVD set. You, the learner, are encouraged to prepare for the viewing of each DVD session by reading and reflecting upon Scripture, by considering key quotations, and by asking yourself penetrating questions. Your preparatory work for each lesson is marked with the heading “Before You Watch the DVD, Study and Prepare” in Lessons 2–15.

Introduction to This Study Guide

The workload is conveniently divided into five daily (and manageable) assignments. There is also a section suggesting further study (see below). This work is to be completed individually before the group convenes to view the DVD and discuss the material.

Throughout this study guide, paragraphs printed in a shaded box (like this one) are excerpts from a book written by John Piper, or excerpts taken from the Desiring God Web site. They are included to supplement the study questions and to summarize key or provocative points.

Throughout this study guide, we will reference and examine key excerpts from the Bethlehem Baptist Church (BBC) Elder Affirmation of Faith. This document is the defining doctrinal position for Bethlehem Baptist Church (where John Piper is the Pastor for Preaching and Vision) and Desiring God. This document may be accessed online by performing a search for “Our Beliefs” at the Desiring God Web site and clicking on “Desiring God: An Affirmation of Faith.”

The second section in Lessons 2–15, entitled “Further Up and Further In,” is designed for the learner who wants to explore the concepts and ideas introduced in the lesson in greater detail. This section is not required, but will deepen your understanding of the material. In this section you will be required to read online sermons or articles from the Desiring God Web site, www.desiringGod.org, and answer relevant questions. These sermons can be found by performing a Title Search at the Desiring God Web site.

The third section in Lessons 2–15, entitled “While You Watch the DVD, Take Notes,” is to be completed as the DVD is playing. This section includes fill-in-the-blanks and leaves space for note-

Introduction to This Study Guide

taking. You are encouraged to engage with the DVD by filling in the appropriate blanks and writing down other notes that will aid you in the group discussion.

The fourth section in each normal lesson is “After You Watch the DVD, Discuss What You’ve Learned.” Three discussion questions are provided to guide and focus the conversation. You may record, in the spaces provided, notes that will help you contribute to the conversation. Or you may use this space to record things from the discussion that you want to remember.

The fifth and final section is an application section: “After You Discuss, Make Application.” You will be challenged to record a “take-away point” and to engage in a certain activity that is a fitting response to the content presented in the lesson.

Group leaders will want to find the Leader’s Guide, included at the end of this study guide, immediately.

Life transformation will only occur by the grace of God. Therefore, we highly encourage you to seek the Lord in prayer throughout the learning process. Pray that God would open your eyes to see wonderful things in his Word. Pray that he would grant you the insight and concentration you need in order to get the most from this resource. Pray that God would cause you to not merely understand the truth, but also to rejoice in it. And pray that the discussion in your group would be mutually encouraging and edifying. We’ve included objectives at the beginning of each lesson. These objectives won’t be realized without the gracious work of God through prayer.

NOTES

1. John Piper, “What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism,” an online article at the Desiring God Web site (www.desiringGod.org).

Introduction to This Study Guide

Throughout this study guide, articles and sermons by John Piper may be found by performing a Title Search at the Desiring God Web site.

2. It is possible to complete this resource in less than sixteen sessions. However, this would require the group to meet for two hours per session and complete two lessons per week. If a group chooses to complete the lessons in this way, then the leader could assign selected questions from the two lessons to be studied rather than have the group participants complete all ten questions per lesson.
3. Although this resource is designed to be used in a group setting, it can also be used by the independent learner. Such learners would have to decide for themselves how to use this resource in the most beneficial way. We would suggest doing everything except the group discussion, if possible.
4. Thirty minutes is only an approximation. Some sessions are longer; others are shorter.