

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides

April 26th

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. What temperature does it have to be for you to start wearing summer gear? (shorts, t-shirts, ect...)

Bible Study Questions

1. What do you imagine heaven to be like? What were you taught about heaven growing up?
2. Read Isaiah 65:17-25 and Revelation 21:22-22:5
 - In these verses, what do you notice about heaven? What do you find to be most appealing?
3. How does God's presence impact your view of heaven? Is your view full of God or is he just a side character?
4. Jesus talked about there being a renewal of creation when he returns in in Revelation 21 we read of heaven coming to earth in an eternal embrace. How does it make you feel to know that our final destination is not heaven, but life in a renewed earth?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 16:58. What does Paul tell us to do as a result of our future resurrection?
6. In Philippians 3:20, Paul tells us that we are citizens of heaven. This doesn't mean that we are going there, but that we represent heaven wherever God has placed us. What does it mean to represent heaven in your context?

April 24th: What Happens Next? Heaven

We live in a culture in which 85% of the American people believe in the afterlife. But our views of the afterlife are diverse and greatly impacted by our culture. Today will be starting a series on death with a look at heaven.

- I. **What happens immediately after death?** There are three main views that Christians hold regarding death:
 - a. **Soul sleep: of unconscious state awaiting resurrection.**
This idea is that our spirits exist in a state of unconsciousness until the return of Christ. It is supported by both Jesus and Paul referring to dead people as sleeping. However, their idea of sleep does not refer to an unconscious state, but of state of existence that was meant to be temporary.
 - b. **Purgatory: place of refining before heaven:** This idea is very popular in the Catholic church and suggests that we must be purified of sin before entering into heaven. Yet, this is not found in the Bible and it cheapens God's work of grace.
 - c. **Immediate presence in heaven:** This is the position supported by Scripture. Jesus told the man on the cross that today he would be in paradise (Luke 23:43) and Paul talked about "being with Christ" following death (Philippians 4:2).
- II. **What is heaven?**
 - a. **The home of God:** Heaven literally means the "abode of God". Jesus refers it in John 14:2 as his "Father's House". In Revelation 22:5, God is talked about as the source of light
 - b. **A place for God's People:** Jesus clearly states that he is the only gate to heaven (John 10:9). Therefore, it is the place for God's people.
 - c. **A place for community:** It is notable that heaven is described as a city (Rev 21:2), a place of community. Jesus referred to those who obeyed him as being his family (Matthew 12:50)
 - d. **A place of beauty:** In Revelation, John describes it as a place covered in beautiful gems. We don't know if it is literal, but it describes what the first century would have interpreted as intense beauty (Rev 21:11, 19).

- e. **Meant to be temporary:** The Biblical story culminates in God renewing the world to make it as it was meant to be (Matthew 19:28, Rev 21:5). There will be a resurrection where we are given new bodies and dwell in his creation (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Heaven then comes to earth (Revelation 21:9-10)

III. How does heaven impact us now?

- a. **Make sure that you are following Jesus:** If heaven is for those who belong to God, then we need to make sure that we are in that category.
- b. **Serve God as citizens of heaven:** In 1 Corinthians 15:58, Paul tells people that in light of the coming resurrection, they should stand firm and devote themselves to the work of the Lord. In Philippians 3:20, we are told that we are citizens in heaven. That means that we have been positioned in our world to give people a taste of heaven. Therefore, we should be seeking to live as heaven people here and now.