

Heaven

Identity Restored

“Heaven is that remote music we are born remembering.” - C.S. Lewis
“To visualize heaven accurately, study the Bible continually.” - D. Jeremiah
“Nothing is more often misdiagnosed than our homesickness for Heaven.” - R. Alcorn

What is heaven?

What will heaven be like?

Who will be there?

But until then...

Growth Group Homework

For the week of November 26, 2017

Because this is the last meeting of the fall quarter, the homework is shorter than normal. As usual, your final meeting will include a look back on how God has worked this past quarter, communion, and time to complete Feedback Forms. Our winter Growth Group quarter will begin the week of January 14, 2018. Have a great few weeks off celebrating the birth of our Lord! Merry Christmas!

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything new you learned or anything that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. Given the facts that there will be work to do in heaven (Genesis 2:15 & John 5:17) and that heaven will be a place of paradise (Luke 23:43), if you could pick any work to do in heaven that would be ultimately fulfilling, what would it be?
2. As you look back on this quarter, what are one or two things about your Growth Group experience that you have appreciated most? (It can be time spent together, how your group has encouraged you to continue to live your life for Christ, something new you learned, a service project, spiritual breakthrough, growth challenge or anything else.)

DIGGING DEEPER

1. This weekend Christopher talked about heaven and asked the question, "If heaven is for real, what kind of emergency does that put on you?" While many of us believe in heaven, it's easy to get caught up in our daily lives and view heaven as something far off. How do the following verses address heaven and being ready, and how might that challenge the idea of heaven being far off?

Matthew 24:44 *New International Version (NIV)*

⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

1 John 2:28 *New International Version (NIV)*

God's Children and Sin

²⁸ And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

Romans 13:11-14 *New International Version (NIV)*

The Day Is Near

¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Given the specifics of your life, your relationships and your ministry, what might being ready for heaven look like for you?

2. Throughout Scripture we see God's great desire to have his children (us) with him in heaven. The picture often given is one of a loving shepherd taking care of and looking for his lost sheep. The role of shepherd is also one we can emulate as we look after and care for "lost" people. What principles of good and bad shepherding are found in the following verses that could help us shepherd as well?

Matthew 9:11 *New International Version (NIV)*

¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Matthew 9:36-38 *New International Version (NIV)*

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Matthew 10:16 *New International Version (NIV)*

¹⁶ "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

Ezekiel 34:1-6 *New International Version (NIV)*

The LORD Will Be Israel's Shepherd

¹ The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? ³ You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. ⁴ You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. ⁵ So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. ⁶ My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

How might the above verses help you focus your interactions with lost people?

As you think through your school, work, neighborhood or home, can you think of any lost person/people who need(s) a shepherd?

Can you think of any reasons that keep you from pursuing lost people?

THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

As followers of Christ we can be excited about God's great gift to us, Jesus. God loved us so much he was willing to send his son to us, born that we might have life through his death and resurrection. As John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Because of Jesus, we have the awesome opportunity of heaven some day and that is something to be excited about! Communion is all about remembering the great lengths God was willing to go to have a relationship with us. Your last Growth Group for this quarter will conclude by taking Communion and remembering this great gift God gave us through his son Jesus.

To prepare for Communion, read Luke 2:1-7, Luke 22:19-20 and John 15:12-17.

What catches your attention as beneficial to remember as you take Communion in your group?



YOU'RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Thanks for all you have done to make a difference in our community this past quarter. Below are a few more great opportunities that you may want to consider for yourself and/or your Growth Group:

❖ **Christmas Outreach Tree:**

Beginning November 25, stop by the Christmas Outreach Tree on your campus and choose an ornament. Presents listed on the ornaments include toys, sports equipment, diapers and baby blankets, along with items for parents in need and local homeless shelters. Return the unwrapped present to your campus by December 10 with the ornament and help make a difference!

❖ **Gift Sorting Day:**

Volunteers are still needed for our special “gift sorting” day on Monday, December 11, at the Vista Campus. We’ll take all the donated gifts from Christmas Outreach Tree and sort them for our organizations to pick up. Be a part of this fun day and help make an amazing Christmas for many North County families! To sign up, go to NorthCoastCommunityService.org and search for “gift sorting.”

❖ **Adopt A Family For Christmas – North County Lifeline:**

Your help can make all the difference for a family this Christmas. For low-income families, holiday dinner and gifts for their kids can be an impossible dream. Make their holiday special with toys, clothes and gift cards in order to guarantee a festive season. To sign up, go to NorthCoastCommunityService.org and search for “adopt.”

As the New Year begins, watch for more opportunities to serve as a Growth Group and make a difference in our community in the name of Jesus.

