



WHAT CAN WE EXPECT AFTER WE DIE?

GRACESPRING GROWTH GUIDE





APRIL 28 – MAY 12, 2019

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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ONE DIES?

WEEK 1 | APRIL 28, 2019

[PERSONAL GROWTH GUIDE]

What happens when we die? In our culture this question is sometimes either glamorized or glossed over. There is hardly any in between. Some would point towards an abrupt and final nothingness, while others have grand ideas of ghosts, astral plains, or perpetual happiness. As a Christian there is a lot of noise to suss through to get to the truth of what the Bible actually tells us.

2 Corinthians 5:8 gives Christians the hope that to be absent from the body is to be present with Christ. The Bible says that what happens on earth is like sleeping in a tent. Your body wears out and eventually dies, yet your spirit endures forever. So physical death is leaving this 'tent' to be in the presence of Jesus in Paradise. As Christians, we should not fear death, but see it as moving towards the glorious hope of being united with Christ for eternity.

As you read this week and press into the Biblical truth of what happens next, we want to encourage you to be real and experience the emotions that come up with this topic. There might be fear or uncertainty, but as you read, journal, and worship this week, we truly hope that you find the peace and hope of God's promise! God is making all things new and through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, He holds the power over death, hell, and the grave!

PRAYER

Take time this week to pray through the words of Psalm 23. Each day pick out a different word or statement and reflect on the truth of God's provision and power in our lives.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

READING PLAN

In your reading and journaling this week, use the HOPE method of Bible study to unpack what the truth of scripture speaks to you.

Honor - Before you open the Bible, honor God! Give Him praise for who He is and that He would provide His words for us to study. Thank Him for how he is moving in your life and for His truth.

Observe - Read the scripture several times. Make some observations. What is the scripture presenting? Observe the nuances of the words and what they are speaking to your heart.

Pray - Ask the Lord to show you His hand and His heart in the words that you are reading. Do as much as possible to approach the scripture from a place of openness to the Holy Spirit in humble submission to what God would teach you about what you just read.

Engage - Take time to journal about how you might engage these scriptures throughout the week. What are some practical applications that you might use to put these truths into practice? Think about the people around you. Who could benefit from hearing the truth that you've read today?

SCRIPTURE

Monday - 2 Corinthians 5:1-9

Tuesday - Philippians 1:19-30

Wednesday - Luke 23:32-43

Thursday - 2 Peter 3:1-13

Friday - Revelation 21:1-8

Saturday - Catch Up and Reflect



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ONE DIES?

WEEK 1 | APRIL 28, 2019

[COMMUNITY GROWTH GUIDE / QUESTIONS]

BELONG

Play the “I’m going on a trip, and I’m going to take...” circle game. To play, arrange your chairs in a circle. Designate someone to start, and then take turns going around the circle. The first person should say, “I’m going on a trip, and I’m going to take an _____,” naming something that begins with the letter ‘A.’ The second person should say, “I’m going on a trip, and I’m going to take a _____ [an object that begins with the letter ‘B’] and an _____ [naming the item that the first person named].

Continue around the circle, with each person naming a new object in alphabetical order and all of the previous named objects, going backwards in the order they were said. Keep going until the group has made it through naming items beginning with each letter of the alphabet.

GROW

For the upcoming group of questions, refer to the following scripture passages: Luke 16:19-31, 1 Corinthians 15: 42-58, 2 Corinthians 5:1-9, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and Revelation 20:1-15. Compare and contrast popular opinions and beliefs with what the Bible tells us regarding each of the following:

- How does what you believe line up with Biblical truth regarding each?
- What is death? What will happen after death?
- What is Paradise?
- What is heaven like? What is hell like?
- Who will go to heaven? Who will go to hell?
- What are the differences between the natural and the physical?
- What are the differences between Adam and Christ?
- Will we have a physical body in heaven? If so, what will our body be like?
- What is the difference between our bodies on earth and in heaven?
- Look at 2 Corinthians 5:1-9, Philippians 1:21-24. Was Paul afraid to die? Why or why not? As a believer, do you fear death? Why or why not? What are your assurances as a believer?

REACH

Considering Luke 16:19-31, how long do people have to hear the message of the Gospel and repent? When is it too late? How does this motivate you to spread the message of the Gospel?

Going Deeper:

According to 2 Corinthians 5:5-9, what does the Holy spirit guarantee now and in the future? In what ways are you being transformed right now? Does this passage bring you hope? Why or why not? If yes, what is your hope?



THE BEMA JUDGMENT

WEEK 2 | MAY 5, 2019

[PERSONAL GROWTH GUIDE]

Have you ever had a near-life experience? One of those times where the beauty of what the world could be shimmers to the surface and you see glory of normal moments transformed into something bigger than yourself? Maybe you were a part of seeing someone come to know Christ. Maybe you saw or participated in an outrageous act of generosity that changed someone's life. These moments are the echoes of eternity that whisper, "the Kingdom of God is here."

One of the more famous lines from the movie Braveheart goes something like this: "Every man dies, but not every man really lives." Have you ever felt that way? That maybe, just maybe, you were meant for great things? That there is more to life than a daily routine? That greatness lives inside of you each and every day? It does! And it's possible.

The Bible talks about this great judgment that will occur after the rapture and before the Millennial Reign of Jesus. At this judgment, God will reveal the quality of our service to Him and He will reward the faithfulness of our service. When we take part in these amazing near-life experiences, we are actively working to see the Kingdom of God advance on the earth and the Bible tells us that God is watching us and keeping track of our service! God loves to see us become truly alive in Him, doing the things that He has put before us to do and He will evaluate all of these works at the Bema seat. Let us truly come alive so that we can point to Christ who is alive in us!

PRAYER

As we reflect on the Bema Judgment, pray this week asking God to bless the work of our hands for His kingdom.

O Holy One,

Blessed be these hands that have touched life.

Blessed be these hands that have nurtured creativity.

Blessed be these hands that have held pain.

Blessed be these hands that have embraced with passion.

Blessed be these hands that have tended gardens.

Blessed be these hands that have closed in anger.

Blessed be these hands that have planted new seeds.

Blessed be these hands that have harvested ripe fields.

Blessed be these hands that have cleaned, washed, mopped, scrubbed.

Blessed be these hands that have become knotty with age.

Blessed be these hands that are wrinkled and scarred from doing justice.

Blessed be these hands that have reached out and been received.

Blessed be these hands that hold the promise of the future.

Blessed be the works of your hands, O Holy One.

Prayer by Diann Neu from Imagining the Word

READING PLAN

In your reading and journaling this week, use the WORK method of Bible study to unpack what the truth of scripture speaks to you. Each of these passages deal with the Bema Judgment and how we will stand before God.

Write - First pray and then read the passage. Write out one specific verse that stands out to you.

Observe - Use the 5 W's (Who, What, When, Where, Why) to make observations about the passage that you are reading. Dig in and find out as much as you can, making use of Bible study tools (Study Bible, Commentaries, Concordances, etc...)

Relevance - How is the verse you wrote down relevant and applicable to your life right now? Write out the relevance and application! Put into your own words why it applies.

Know - Take time to memorize the verse!

SCRIPTURE

Monday - 2 Corinthians 5:9-21

Tuesday - 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

Wednesday - 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Thursday - James 1:1-12

Friday - 1 Peter 5:1-11

Saturday - Catch Up and Reflect



THE BEMA JUDGMENT

WEEK 2 | MAY 5, 2019

[COMMUNITY GROWTH GUIDE / QUESTIONS]

BELONG

1. Describe a time when you were recognized or rewarded for an accomplishment?
2. How do you feel when you know you haven't given your best effort to something important?

GROW

1. 2 Cor. 5:10 is written to believers and states that "... each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." Since believers are not judged for sin, why does Christ judge their deeds?
2. 1 Cor. 3:10-15 talks about how believers will be judged. What things in life would you consider to be "gold, silver or precious stones"? What types of things would be "wood, hay and straw"? What will be God's standard of judgment?
3. Read Luke 14:12-14 and 1 Tim. 6:17-19. What do these passages tell us about how/why God rewards believers? What do you think our motivation should be regarding rewards?
4. Will some believers experience regret because they used God's blessings only for their own benefit instead of trying to glorify Him? Are you looking forward to this judgment or dreading it? Why?

REACH

1. What is the easiest resource (time, money or talent) for you to share with others? Why? What is the hardest? Why?
2. Identify ways you can build with "gold, silver and precious stones" on the foundation of Christ?



THE TRUTH ABOUT HEAVEN AND HELL

WEEK 3 | MAY 12, 2019

[PERSONAL GROWTH GUIDE]

Part of the beauty of Christ being taken into heaven after His resurrection was that He provided His people with a mission, with provision, and with a promise. When He was taken up to heaven, he commissioned His disciples to make other disciples who then multiply themselves. This mission continues on to us and we saw how disciple-making honors God last week in looking at the Bema Judgment.

Christ's provision to His people was giving them with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our counselor and helper, but He also empowers us to live lives that are honoring to God. In Ephesians 1:14 Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit is also the guarantee, or down payment of our inheritance until all is made perfect and we are made whole in Christ.

Christ's promise is that not only is He with us always, but that He is returning for us. This promise is not just a punch card into heaven, but an opportunity to join with Him as His bride and as His chosen people when He returns to the earth to make all things new. He has promised a new heaven and new earth and to give us eternal bodies as we commune with Him. This beautiful promise represents the consummation of God's plan for His people. Although we were sinful, He has chosen us and given us new life so that we can spend all eternity worshipping Him and enjoying Him.

PRAYER

Reflect on the truths of this prayer this week as we look towards heaven and what God has prepared for us.

Lord, I confess I don't often long for heaven. I'm a creature of this world and crave worldly things, not heavenly ones. I ask you would grow a desire in me for heaven. Help me not be satisfied with the things of this world, but long for closeness with you and the perfection of eternity in your presence. Lord, thank you for the hope of heaven and the joy we will have when we get there! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Dr. John Barnett - Heaven is a Real Place

READING PLAN

In your reading and journaling this week, use the SALT method of Bible study to unpack what the truth of scripture speaks to you. Each of the passages this week reflect some of the amazing things that will happen on the new heaven and new earth.

Supplication - Pray earnestly and humbly to God. Confess what you're going through and ask Him for His presence. Ask Him for what you need today. Ask Him to prepare your heart for what He would teach you.

Absorb - Read the passage several times. Absorb the theme and the message of the verses. Take time to write some of the verses out. Say the verses aloud. Let them absorb.

Learn - Write down any questions you might have. What else about these verses do you need to know? Use Bible study tools to find out the answers!

Thanksgiving - What promises stand out in the verses that you've read? Thank God for those promises and hold on to them today! Write them somewhere that you'll come back to them when you need to remember. Share them with someone else and pray them together!

SCRIPTURE

Monday - Revelation 22:1-5

Tuesday - Revelation 7:9-17

Wednesday - Revelation 5:6-14

Thursday - John 14:15-31

Friday - Hebrews 12:18-29

Saturday - Catch Up and Reflect



THE TRUTH ABOUT HEAVEN AND HELL

WEEK 3 | MAY 12, 2019

[COMMUNITY GROWTH GUIDE / QUESTIONS]

Icebreaker

“Magic Word” - Have the group spend 1 minute in silence, instructing each group member to think of a word that they find to be odd/funny/uncomfortable/etc. Then go around the circle and have each person share their word and why they chose it. After everyone has shared their word, tell that group that by the end of the night, every person must use the “Magic Word” from the person to their left in the course of the group’s discussion tonight.

BELONG

1. Does it make you uncomfortable to think or speak about Hell? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel like you have a decent picture of what Heaven will be like? Or are you unsure what it will look like, what you will spend eternity doing, etc.? Have you ever thought that you might be bored in heaven?

GROW

1. In the book of Revelation, we are given the most in-depth view of Heaven that is presented in all of Scripture. Assign the following verses to members of your group and have them read them in turn:
 - a. Revelation 22:1-4 (River and Tree of Life)
 - b. Revelation 7:9 (A Great Multitude)
 - c. Revelation 5:6-12 (Worthy is the Lamb)
 - d. Revelation 21:1-6 (New Heaven and New Earth)
 - e. Revelation 21:15-27 (New Jerusalem)

What do you think about these verses? Do you feel that there is anything missing from these descriptions? Are you left with any questions after reading these passages?

2. Will the joy of Heaven come from the visible, tangible beauty, or from the depth of joy and peace from being in God’s direct presence?
3. In Scripture, much less is given by way of physical description of hell. We are told that it is:
 - a. A lake of fire (Revelation 20:10-15, Mark 9:43, Jude 1:7)
 - b. A fiery furnace, with weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:50)
 - c. A place of gloomy darkness (2 Peter 2:4)
 - d. A place of shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2)
 - e. The “second death” (Rev. 2:11, Rev. 21:8)

What are your thoughts regarding these verses? Does it make you uncomfortable to think about the existence of such a place?

REACH

1. “How can a loving God send someone to Hell?” This is a question that is often asked and is difficult to answer. How would you answer this question if you were asked today?

- a. Consider this: God is Love, no doubt about it, but God is also Holy, and Infallible, and Just, and Merciful, and the list goes on-and-on. He is not just one thing that we can wrap our minds around and fully understand His ways or His thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). And as a part of His holiness, He cannot be in the presence of evil or imperfection of any kind, just as light cannot mix with darkness...the two are exactly opposed. As a way to cleanse ALL of mankind, God made the greatest sacrifice possible, by sending His only Son to die and pay the penalty required for our sins. But God does not force our hand or make us choose to accept this gift...He has given us free will to receive this atonement and cleanse ourselves from sin in a way that makes us able to enter His presence...and He has given us free will to decline this gift as well. And although the physical torment of Hell is difficult to understand or justify with human rationale, it is likely the separation from God that bears the greatest pain. Even Jesus, when beaten beyond recognition as a man, and suffering physical pain greater than we can imagine, was not focused on the physical torment, but on his separation from God (Matthew 27:46). So it is not God's intent or desire to send anyone to Hell, but it is man's choice to decline the work of cleansing that God offers.
- b. Have a member of your group read the following verses and discuss in closing:
 - i. Ezekiel 33:11 (I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked)
 - ii. 2 Peter 3:9 (Not willing that any should perish)

BELONG. GROW. REACH.

