

Fall 2009

Central Community Church Spiritual Growth Ministries



Small Group Guide: Heaven

What Will We Do in Heaven?

Revelations 21:1-2

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.



GATHER: Spend some time in fellowship, make sure everyone is acquainted with those in the group.

PRAY: Open your group in a time of prayer

OPEN: Read the following from Philip Yancy

Philip Yancy, writing in *Christianity Today*, noted that although 71 percent of Americans believe in an afterlife, no one talks about it much. "Percentages don't apply to eternity, of course; but for the sake of argument, assume that 99 percent of our existence will take place in heaven. Isn't it a little bizarre that we simply ignore heaven, acting as if it doesn't matter?" Yancy concludes, "To people who are trapped in pain, in economic chaos, in hatred and fear—to these, heaven offers a promise of a time, far longer and more substantial than this time on earth, of health and wholeness and pleasure and peace. If we do not believe that, then, as the Apostle Paul noted, there is not much reason for being a Christian in the first place." Yancy suggests that:

- Affluence has given us in this life what former generations longed for in anticipation of heaven.
- Our society (Paganism) invites us to accept death as the culmination of life on earth.
- Older images of heaven, even biblical ones, have lost their appeal. Walls of emerald, sapphire, and jasper, streets of gold, and pearly gates may have inspired Middle Eastern peasants, but they don't often relate as well to our modern world.

ASK: What do you think heaven is? What do you think heaven is like?

If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next.

-C.S. Lewis

Aim at Heaven and you will get earth "thrown in"; aim at earth and you will get neither.

-C.S. Lewis

STUDY & DISCUSSION:

What will we do in heaven? Let's explore just a few of the things we will do!

• ***Continual Discovery***

In heaven we'll learn all the great mysteries of the world, and no longer deal with confusion and doubt.

-Ephesians 2:6-7 (NIV) "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

• ***Meaningful Work***

In heaven we'll no longer struggle with wasted effort, loss of time, and meaningless labor.

-Genesis 3:17b "...cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life."

• ***Perfect Rest***

In heaven we'll never be tired, sore, or weary. There will be an eternal zeal and refreshment.

-Hebrews 4:10 (NIV), "for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his."

• ***Loving Relationships***

In heaven we'll experience a unity and intimacy both with God and others unlike anything we've experienced in this life.

-Revelations 21:3 (The Message), "Look God is moved into the neighborhood, making His home with men and women. They are His people and He is their God."

• ***Unequaled Joy & Pleasure***

In heaven we'll experience an abounding joy—we'll be eternally content.

-Psalm 16:11, "...in your presence is fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures for evermore."

-Revelations 19:9 (NIV), "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"

SHARE:

- Which one of the above aspects is most needed in your life right now, and why?
- How do these characteristics and realities of heaven give you hope for living life right now?
- How can your small group embody or reflect these heavenly characteristics this year?

Pondering heaven the famous blind hymnist Fanny Crosby once asked herself, "I wonder what my first impression of heaven will be?" She answered her own question with this insight, "Why, my eyes will be opened and I will see my Savior face to face." A few days later, she wrote one of her most famous hymns:

*And I shall see Him face to face, and tell the story—Saved by grace;
And I shall see Him face to face, and tell the story—Saved by grace.*

PRAYER: Spend some moments in prayer as a group