

# THE AFTERLIFE [heaven and hell]

## THIS WEEK

The Bible provides only glimpses of what heaven and hell will be like. But it clearly teaches that both exist. Even people who don't hold to religious beliefs express interest in the afterlife. Talk shows have guests who claim to have died and seen the afterlife, magazines write about people who claim they have lived before and will do so again, and opinion polls report people's views regarding the afterlife. This TalkSheet encourages a group examination of both heaven and hell.

## OPENER

To start, have your kids split into groups and find more information on heaven and hell throughout the Bible. Give each group one of these verses—

Revelation 4:1-6	Revelation 21:15-21
Revelation 4:6-11	Revelation 21:22-27
Revelation 5:1-5	Revelation 22:1-5
Revelation 5:6-14	Matthew 8:12
Revelation 6:8	Luke 16:19-31
Revelation 7:16-17	Matthew 25:41
Revelation 19:1-10	2 Peter 2:4
Revelation 20:10-15	Jude 1:6
Revelation 21:1-8	2 Thessalonians 1:9
Revelation 21:9-14	Mark 12:25-27

Have your groups read these verses and then write down or summarize what each set of verses says about either heaven or hell. You may want to have volunteers read different verses out loud and then talk about the verses with your group. What new understanding of heaven or hell do they have? What realities of both heaven and hell are given here?

## THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Allow students to share their thoughts about the afterlife. Pay particular attention to how your group has been influenced by secular views: there is no hell, the afterlife will be boring, reincarnation really happens, and so on.
2. Take a poll on each of the statements. If there is a difference of opinion, encourage a debate on their ideas. Does believing in heaven and hell keep Christians from serving God and others on earth?
3. People often think of heaven as blissful nothingness where we sit on clouds and talk about God. Yet the Bible speaks of real streets and actual work for God. Heaven is a very real place. Paul spoke of seeing things as a poor reflection in a mirror, but in heaven we shall see things as they really are (1 Corinthians 13:12).

4. What do your students think about earthly life versus heavenly life? In what ways do they think heaven may be like earth or not like earth? As the students share their answers, you may want to use 2 Peter 3:11-13 as a reference.
5. The Bible doesn't tell us everything we'd like to know about heaven and hell, but it does give us glimpses of both. Have the students share what they learned about heaven and hell and their attitudes toward them.

## THE CLOSE

Heaven and hell are a reality—the Bible tells us that both are real. God has given every person a choice—to love him and serve him, or not to. Your kids might ask why a loving God would condemn anyone to hell. But the real question is why would anyone want to reject God's love? God wants everyone to experience eternal life with him (John 5:24; 2 Peter 3:9). And each person is bound for one or the other (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14). Point out that this lesson is not meant to scare them into believing in Jesus—but it is information that they should know. Let them know that you are willing to talk with them one-on-one if any of them have questions or other concerns.

## MORE

- You may want to show some clips of a movie that portrays heaven or hell. Or ask your kids to brainstorm a list of movies and TV shows that have dealt with the afterlife. Need some suggestions? Try "What Dreams May Come" (PolyGram Films) and "Ghost" (Paramount Pictures). Also check out more movie reviews and summaries at [www.hollywoodjesus.com](http://www.hollywoodjesus.com).

After you watch part of the movie or talk with your kids about movies (or TV shows) they've seen, ask them a few questions. How did the characters deal with heaven or hell? What happened in the movie? Do your kids think these are accurate representations of heaven or hell? Why or why not? What have your kids heard differently in church or in school? What is different and why?

- You might want to have your senior pastor and a few other adults come into the meeting to help answer the questions that your kids may have about heaven and hell. No one knows all the answers, but your group might like to hear outside ideas and ask questions, too.