

END TIMES

Week 2:
Heaven and Hell

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW

Many people have misconceptions about heaven and hell. Heaven is sometimes seen as a place where “good” people play harps and sit around on clouds all day. Hell is seen as the place where all the “bad” people end up—a really hot lava cave or something. In this lesson, we’ll see what the Bible says about heaven and hell, and your students will discover that the most important difference is this: God is present in heaven but absent in hell.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT: Heaven is the place we can spend eternity with God, and hell is the place we can spend eternity without God. Our destination is determined by our faith in Jesus.
2. WHY: Everyone will live in eternity, either with or without God.
3. HOW: Students will examine biblical ideas about heaven and hell, and they’ll be challenged to look at their own lives to determine if they’ve made the decision to follow Jesus.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 7:13-14

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

Matthew 25:41-46; Mark 9:42-48; Luke 16:19-31; Philippians 3:20-21; and 2 Peter 2:4

TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you’ll definitely want to refer to it as you lead your lesson.



Read Matthew 7:13-14.



In these verses, Jesus declares a simple yet profound truth: The path to hell is wide and easy, but the path to heaven is narrow and difficult. The path to heaven is difficult because we need to sacrifice our selfishness and follow Jesus with all that we are.

Your students probably already have lots of visual images of what heaven and hell are “supposed” to look like. Our suggestion is that you don’t spent a lot of time debating the imagery; focus on the truth that heaven is eternity with God, while hell means spending eternity separated from God. Help your students realize that God doesn’t randomly send people to hell or allow people into heaven—it’s based on whether we’ve chosen to follow Jesus in faith and receive his gift of forgiveness for our sins. If we have, then we can be confident that we’ll spend eternity with God.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

Text Message Questions

We’ve provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- Are heaven and hell real? Let’s talk about it tonight at small group.
- How do you get to heaven, and how do you avoid going to hell? Get some answers at small group tonight.

Parent Email

We’ve provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

Our small groups are continuing their series on the End Times, and this week they examined heaven and hell.

Many people have misconceptions about heaven and hell. Heaven is sometimes seen as a place where “good” people play harps and sit around on clouds all day. Hell is seen as the place where all the “bad” people end up—a really hot lava cave or something.



Our groups examined Matthew 7:13-14, where Jesus declares a simple yet profound truth: The path to hell is wide and easy, but the path to heaven is narrow and difficult. It's easier to follow the path to hell because that path doesn't require any personal change. The path to heaven is difficult because we need to sacrifice our selfishness and follow Jesus with all that we are.

God doesn't randomly send people to hell or allow people into heaven—it's based on whether we've chosen to follow Jesus in faith and receive his gift of forgiveness for our sins. If we have, then we can be confident that we'll spend eternity with God.

Here are some questions you might want to ask your teenager to fuel discussion about this week's lesson:

- Do you think most people believe heaven and hell are real places? Do you most of your friends believe they're real places?
- Does it matter if heaven and hell are real places? Why or why not?
- Why is the path to heaven so narrow and difficult? Why is the path to hell so broad and wide and easy to find?

I pray that you and your family have a blessed week!



END TIMES

Week 2:
Heaven and Hell

2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then ASK:

- *What are some of the common ideas in our culture about what heaven and hell are like?*
- *Do you think most people believe heaven and hell are real places? Do you most of your friends believe they're real places?*
- *Does it matter if heaven and hell are real places? Why or why not?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Many people in our culture have misconceptions about heaven and hell. Heaven is sometimes seen as a place where “good” people play harps and sit around on clouds all day. Hell is seen as the place where all the “bad” people end up—a really hot lava cave or something. Today we are going to see what the Bible says about these two places.*



LEADER
TIP

If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you'd like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.

TEACHING POINTS



LEADER
TIP

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) Heaven and hell are real, (2) Everyone will spend eternity in one or the other, and (3) Heaven and hell are defined by the presence or absence of God.



LEADER
TIP

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Matthew 7:13-14 together as a group. Consider allowing one or more of the teenagers to read the text.



SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *It can be exciting yet scary to think about eternity and heaven and hell. Let's focus on some of the truths presented in the Bible.*

1. Heaven and hell are real

ASK:

- *Where do you think most people learn their ideas about heaven and hell?*
- *In these verses, Jesus is talking about a heaven and hell that are real. What's your first response to this? How does it make you feel? Even if you've known this for a long time, what's your response today?*
- *How do you think most people might live differently if they truly believed that heaven and hell were real places?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *If we believe that heaven and hell are real places, it will affect our perspective of this world and this life we've been given. It means that we can enjoy and value this lifetime, but we also need to realize there's something more after we die.*

2. Everyone will spend eternity in one or the other

ASK:

- *Why does talking about heaven and hell feel so serious? Why do you think the Bible speaks about them in such an urgent tone?*
- *"Eternity" is a huge concept to grapple with. How would you explain it someone else?*
- *Why is the path to heaven—which Jesus refers to as "God's Kingdom" in this passage—so narrow and difficult?*
- *Why is the path to hell so broad and wide and easy to find?*
- *How do we get into heaven?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *One day, you and I will die. It sounds really mean and sad to say that, but it's true—and it's important to think about because our life on earth is a preparation for eternity. We'll either be in heaven or hell. It's easier to follow the path to hell because that path doesn't require sacrificing our selfishness and following Jesus and pursuing God with everything we have. We get into heaven through the decision to follow Jesus in faith, receiving forgiveness for our sins because he died on the cross.*



3. Heaven and hell are defined by the presence or absence of God

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Beyond all the good (and bad) images for heaven and hell stands the most important reality: Heaven is eternity with God, and hell is eternity without God.*

ASK:

- *Why do you think our culture uses so many different images to talk about heaven and hell? [NOTE: This could be a good opportunity to point out the world's fascination with the afterlife—consumed with talking about it but not believing in it.]*
- *What do you think it would feel like to know that Jesus is real but you wouldn't spend eternity with him?*
- *What does it feel like to know Jesus is real and you can spend eternity with him?*

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask your students to form groups of two or three. Have each group read through the following verses: Matthew 25:41-46; Mark 9:42-48; Luke 16:19-31; Philippians 3:20-21; and 2 Peter 2:4. Have each group examine what each passage says about either heaven or hell. After about five minutes, bring all of your students back together to share their answers.

APPLICATION

ASK:

- *Earlier we talked about how most people might live differently if they truly believed heaven and hell were real places. But what about you personally? How can knowing that heaven and hell are both real places affect your daily life?*
- *How might knowing that everyone will spend eternity in one place or the other affect your relationships?*
- *Who has God put in your life that may not know the truths about heaven and hell? What can you do about it?*



SUMMARY



End your small group lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.



FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

“But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it” (Matthew 7:14).

