

# 2022 Community Groups

## WEEKLY GUIDE

Feb 27 - Community Guide

It's hard to imagine what heaven will be like, but the bible has a lot to say about heaven. As Pastor Aaron guides us these next three weeks through the final chapters of Revelation, we get some amazing glimpses of eternity for those whose names are written in the Book of Life.

### **Community Prayer:**

Lord, we invite you to guide our time together as we dig into your word and share with each other. More than anything, we ask that you would be with us and would help us to see you more clearly through this time of study. All these things we ask In Jesus' name, Amen

### **Opening Questions:**

1. When you think about the future, where do you see yourself in 10 years? 20 years? 50 years?
2. When you think about what heaven will be like, what do you imagine?

### **Exploration:**

There are a lot of views about heaven and the "afterlife." Many people have imagined their own version of heaven that sounds wonderful to them, but may sound awful to someone else.

- Endless singing
- Floating on clouds
- All my favorite foods
- Getting everything I want, whenever I want it
- Cherubs with harps flying around everywhere

If we are not careful, we can make up our own picture of heaven. Pastor Aaron encouraged us to use our imagination as we think about heaven, but when he said, "use your imagination", what he meant was to use your God given, scripture revealing, Jesus-centering, Spirit-saturating, prayerfully guided and community affirmed imagination. This is not make-believe or make it up as you go! Heaven is Real!



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### **Revelation 21:1**

From the very beginning, in the book of Genesis, we see that God created the heavens and the earth so that he could live with his people in a loving relationship. Everything in all of creation was created for God's glory, but sin entered the world and God's beautiful design was damaged. The description in Revelation 21 brings us full circle to see that the restoration of God's original design will finally be completed!

"The biblical story began, quite logically, with a beginning. Now it draws to an end, not quite so logically, also with a beginning. The sin ruined creation of Genesis is restored in the sacrifice-renewed creation of Revelation." Eugene Peterson

3. What do you think are some of the ways that sin has damaged or even ruined creation?
4. What do you imagine or hope the "sacrifice-renewed" new earth might look like?

### **Revelation 21:2**

The final scene of scripture is not ultimately one of God's people taking off from earth to head toward heaven but of the new work of heaven and earth coming together, united as it once was at the beginning. However, this time, the scene is not in a garden but in a city where there are streets and walls, trees, rivers, etc. Citizens of a holy city living in complete unity and connection with God.

In his book, *Heaven*, Randy Alcorn says "...the old Earth will pass away. But when people pass away, they do not cease to exist. As we will be raised to be new people, so the earth will be raised to be a New Earth."

5. What are some ways you hope life might be the same and what are some ways you hope it will be different in heaven?
6. What are some things about you that you hope will be different in heaven?

### **Revelation 21:3**

The words "dwelling place" are the same as the word "tabernacle". If you have ever spent time reading through the Old Testament you will probably remember reading about the tabernacle as the place where people could meet with God.



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In the New Testament we see a shift. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and made **his dwelling** [tabernacle] among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

And then in 2 Corinthians 6:16 Paul tells us, "...For we are the **temple** [tabernacle] of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'"

7. What feelings does this bring up for you as you reflect on the truth that God lives with you and walks with you every moment of every day?
8. Knowing that God is always with you, is there anything in your life that you think might need to change? If so, share that with the group.

**Leader Note:** *Sharing these kinds of deep and vulnerable realizations may be hard for some people in your group. This might be a good time to stop and pray for one another.*

### **Revelation 21:4-5**

It is an intimate act to wipe away someone's tears, it requires physical nearness. What a beautiful thought, that God will live with us in such close proximity that he will not only wipe away our tears, but will resolve the issues that caused the pain in the first place. The life we know now that is deeply impacted by evil and sin will be wiped away as God makes everything new. It is his perfect design for us to live with one another and with him in joyful unity.

What's Not in Heaven:

- Fear
- Sickness / Death
- Mourning / Crying
- Pain
- Destructive habits
- Barriers to freedom

This is not an exhaustive list, but just imagine what your life would be like with all of these things eliminated.



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9. From the list of things that will **not** be in heaven, which is most appealing to you and why?

### **Revelation 21:6-7**

When you are thirsty, what is going on? There is a legitimate desire that your body has...and there is something called water to satisfy that desire. In these scriptures we see a picture of God providing for every legitimate desire we have in ways that will bring complete satisfaction.

10. What are some of the desires you currently have that you long to see God fulfill?

### **Revelation 21:8**

Once again we see the warning that we have seen throughout the book of Revelation. There will come a day of judgment, but God in his great mercy wants everyone to accept his incredible gift of love and grace so that we can enjoy him forever!

This gift of grace comes only through the death and resurrection of Christ. It is available to all who will turn in faith and believe. We don't have to wait to die to get in on the goodness of heaven, it begins in us the moment we surrender!

11. Who are the people in your life that have not yet responded to God's invitation of grace?
12. Is there anything you can do to encourage or inspire them to respond?

### **The Takeaway:**

- Heaven is real, it is the fulfillment of God's original design.
- Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, we can begin to experience the goodness of heaven right now!
- God wants every person to get in on his gift of grace so that we will all experience heaven together.



