

Heaven & Hell

Small Group Series & Study Guide

Small Group Guide:

Heaven & Hell, Week 3

Key Takeaways:

1. **We receive a spiritual body immediately upon death** - not a disembodied spirit floating around.
2. **Our memory and consciousness remain fully intact** in the afterlife.
3. **Those in heaven can see what's happening on earth** - our loved ones are watching us.
4. **There is continuity between our earthly life and heavenly life** - what we do here matters there.
5. **Before Christ's resurrection, believers went to Abraham's bosom; now they go directly to heaven.**

Discussion Questions:

1. **Pastor Allen explained that we receive a spiritual body immediately when we die, before receiving our resurrected physical body at the rapture.** How does this understanding differ from what you previously thought about the afterlife?

2. **In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Paul couldn't tell whether he was in his body or out of his body when caught up to heaven.** What does this tell us about the nature of our spiritual body?
3. **Looking at the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31),** what specific details show us that the rich man had a recognizable form and functioning senses even without a physical body?
4. **Hebrews 12:1 speaks of being "surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses."** How does knowing that loved ones in heaven are watching you run your race affect your perspective on daily life?
5. **Pastor Allen mentioned that Moses and Elijah knew what was happening on earth when they appeared at the Transfiguration.** What does this reveal about heaven's awareness of earthly events?
6. **The rich man in the parable remembered his five brothers and his past life.** How does knowing you'll retain all your memories in heaven change how you think about your life experiences - both good and difficult?
7. **The sermon emphasized that "there is continuity between your life here on this earth and your life in heaven."** What does this mean practically for how we should live today?
8. **Peter, James, and John immediately recognized Moses and Elijah without introductions.** What does this suggest about relationships and recognition in heaven?

Practical Application:

1. **Live with Eternal Perspective.** Each morning this week, remind yourself that loved ones in heaven are watching you "run your race."
2. **Lay Up Treasure in Heaven.** Identify one way you're currently focused on earthly treasure, and take one concrete step to redirect that focus toward eternal investment (serving others, generous giving, sharing the gospel, etc.).
3. **Encourage Someone in Their Race.** Think of someone who needs encouragement in their Christian walk. Commit to being an earthly encourager to them this week

Closing Prayer:

- **Comfort** - For those grieving loved ones, that they would find hope in knowing their loved ones are alive and aware in heaven.
- **Motivation** - That the reality of heaven watching would inspire us to run our race with perseverance.
- **Eternal perspective** - That we would live with the continuity between earth and heaven in mind.
- **The lost** - For unsaved family and friends, that heaven would rejoice over their salvation.

5-Day Devotion: Living Between Two Worlds

Day 1: The Reality of Heaven

Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:1-4

Devotional: Paul's experience of being caught up to the third heaven reveals something profound: the spiritual realm is not less real than our physical world—it may be more real. Paul couldn't tell if he was in his body or out of it because the spiritual body functions so similarly to our physical one. This should transform how we view eternity. Heaven is not a vague, ethereal existence but a concrete reality where we will have form, recognition, and continuity with this life. Today, consider that your eternal existence is not an escape from reality but an entrance into ultimate reality. How does knowing heaven is tangible and real change your perspective on daily challenges? Live today with the confidence that your future home is as real as the ground beneath your feet.

Day 2: A Great Cloud of Witnesses

Reading: Hebrews 12:1-2

Devotional: You are not running your race alone. Scripture reveals that those who have gone before us are watching—a great cloud of witnesses surrounds us as we navigate life's marathon. Your grandparents, your spiritual mentors, the faithful saints of ages past are cheering you on. This truth should both comfort and challenge us. We are comforted knowing our loved ones haven't forgotten us; they're invested in our journey. Yet we're also challenged to run with greater perseverance, knowing we have an audience. The race marked out for you is unique, designed specifically by God for your life. Today, run with renewed purpose. Throw off the sin that entangles you. Remember that heaven is watching, heaven is cheering, and heaven is waiting for you to finish strong.

Day 3: Heaven Rejoices Over One Sinner

Reading: Luke 15:1-10

Devotional: There is an intercom system in heaven, but it's not mechanical—it's relational. When one sinner repents, all of heaven erupts in celebration. The saints aren't disconnected from earthly events; they're watching in real time as their prayers are answered and their loved ones come to faith. Imagine the joy when a mother in heaven sees her prodigal son finally surrender to Christ, or a father witnesses his daughter's baptism. This reveals God's heart: He values each individual soul so profoundly that its redemption causes cosmic celebration. Today, pray for someone far from God. Your prayers join with the prayers of heaven. And remember, if you've recently come to faith, you caused a party in heaven. You are deeply loved, eternally valued, and forever celebrated in the presence of God.

Day 4: Memory and Recognition in Eternity

Reading: Luke 16:19-31

Devotional: The rich man and Lazarus retained their memories, recognized each other, and remained conscious of their earthly relationships. This parable destroys the myth that heaven means losing our identity or forgetting our past. Your memory will be intact—you'll remember your childhood, your struggles, your victories, and your relationships.

You'll recognize family members you never met on earth. This continuity between earth and heaven is beautiful and purposeful. It means the relationships you build, the love you share, and the investments you make have eternal significance. Nothing done in Christ's name is forgotten or wasted. Today, consider how you're building relationships that will continue into eternity. Are you pointing people toward heaven? Are you investing in what lasts? Your earthly life is not separate from your eternal life—it's the foundation.

Day 5: Eagerly Watching

Reading: 1 Peter 1:10-12

Devotional: Even the angels are eagerly watching. The word "eagerly" indicates continuous, present-tense action—heaven is watching in real time as God's redemptive plan unfolds on earth. The prophets spoke of things they didn't fully understand, but now both saints and angels watch as these promises become reality in our lives. This means your daily faithfulness matters to heaven. When you choose obedience over compromise, when you share the gospel, when you persevere through suffering—heaven takes notice. You're not living an insignificant life in an insignificant time. You're part of the grand narrative that captivates even celestial beings. Today, live with the awareness that your choices echo in eternity. The race you're running, the faith you're demonstrating, the love you're showing—it all matters. Heaven is watching, not in judgment, but in anticipation and joy.