

GLORY

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Paper, pens or pencils; small opaque container, timer
- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: THE BEST POSSIBLE THING

As the teens arrive, give each of them a pen or pencil and some small pieces of paper and ask them to write down some ordinary nouns —a person, place or thing — one item on each separate piece of paper (for example: armchair, grocery store, plumber, etc.). You may want to add a few yourself. Gather in a circle with the papers in an opaque container for this story-telling improvisation game. The first person selects a piece of paper and begins to tell a story that incorporates the word selected, starting with the words, “*It was the best possible thing...*”. After thirty seconds the storyteller finishes. The next person selects a new piece of paper and continues the story, beginning with the words, “*Then the best possible thing happened,*” and continuing the story, making sure to incorporate the newly selected word.

FOR SMALL GROUPS HAVE THE TEENS WRITE AS MANY OF EACH CATEGORY OF NOUN ON DIFFERENT PIECES OF PAPER AS THEY CAN THINK UP. DEPENDING ON YOUR GROUP, YOU MAY HAVE ONE LONG STORY OR SEVERAL SHORT ONES. THERE ALSO MAY BE TIME FOR EACH PERSON TO HAVE MULTIPLE TURNS. YOU MAY FIND IT SMOOTHER WITH SMALL OR SHY GROUPS TO ALLOW EACH PERSON TO TELL THE STORY UNTIL THEY EITHER GET STUCK OR HIT A NATURAL BREAK POINT RATHER THAN TIMING THEM.

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: HEAVENLY ASSOCIATIONS

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- Share the following verse with your teens and ask them to respond:

“In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures for evermore.” – Psalm 16:11

 What do you think people generally imagine heaven will be like? Have you ever thought about what heaven will be like? How do these ideas compare or contrast with this verse?

A few things worth pointing out (if they don’t otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *Modern western thought about heaven has often been influenced by centuries of art and literature rather than by what scripture has to tell us. Many past generations (in the west) have had a greater exposure to the imminence of death due to war, starvation and disease than we do today. Perhaps that’s why depictions of peace and rest in heaven resonated throughout those years. But some of these same images have left many in our contemporary*

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culture with the misconception that heaven will somehow be “boring”. This misconception is well illustrated by a “Far Side” cartoon by Gary Larson which shows a man sitting on a cloud wishing he’d brought a magazine. Even Christians can be drawn into this way of thinking, but nothing could be further from the psalmist’s words about being in God’s presence and finding “fullness of joy” and “pleasures forevermore”.

THE LESSON: REVELATION 7

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

(IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO HELP RESPOND TO QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE RAISED DURING THIS UNIT, WE RECOMMEND “DISCOVERING THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: A HANDS-ON APPROACH, VOLUME 3: SPECIAL OCCASIONS” BY SUE CARELESS.)

There’s a lot that we don’t know about heaven. But here are a few things we do know. We know that we will be where our Lord is. We know that every tear will be wiped from our eyes; there will be no more pain, death or grief. And we know that the experience will be wonderful beyond human ability to describe or understand: “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Writer Gavin Ortlund puts it this way:

“Imagine yourself newly arrived in heaven. God Almighty summons you. As you stand trembling before him, he surgically draws up the deepest wound of your life, healing you and transforming your pain into glory and joy. Such imagery is tender to the point of embarrassment. Dare we believe it? Dare we not? ...Such an encounter with the glory of Christ can scarcely be imagined. How will we even endure such light and joy? Surely this will be the pinnacle moment of our existence”.

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The Book of Revelation records for us St. John’s divine vision. We’re going to take a look at one passage that offers us a glimpse of the intense joy – the *euphoria* – of heaven.

Refer to Revelation 7:9-17.

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS’ NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they’ve just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- How does this passage describe those who will be in heaven at that time?
- What does it describe as taking place?
- What promises does the passage offer?
- How do you think scriptural visions of heaven can help us today?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *St. John describes “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” (v9). This is a great and diverse crowd of believers, dressed in white robes, worshipping with full hearts. John is informed by one of the elders that these particular believers have come “out of the great tribulation” and “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (v14). In addition to this multitude the passage describes angels, elders, and “four living creatures” (v11)*

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- *The passage describes the faithful, together with the angels, elders and living creatures, offering loud and passionate worship to God, before his heavenly throne and in his heavenly temple (v10-12, 15).*
- *The faithful departed who have come out of “the great tribulation” are in God’s presence, before his throne, in his service, and under his protection. They will not experience hunger or hardship. Jesus will be “their Shepherd”. He will guide them to springs of living water. And every tear will be wiped from their eyes (v15-17).*
- *The Apostle Paul, after writing about the coming of the Lord in glory, said this: “Therefore encourage one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Knowing something of what awaits us in heaven can inspire and encourage us in the here and now. Or as Gavin Ortlund put it, “In order to persevere through the fog and fatigue of life, we need a mental image of the eternal shoreline toward which we swim”. Studying what scripture has to tell us about heaven equips us in just this way.*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON’T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU’LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer).)

Spend some time reflecting on the words of Psalm 16:11 and 1 Corinthians 2:9: “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”. “In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures for evermore”. Conclude your time with the following prayer:

O almighty God, the God of the spirits of all flesh: Multiply, we beseech thee, to those who rest in Jesus, the manifold blessings of thy love, that the good work which thou didst begin in them may be perfected unto the day of Jesus Christ. And of thy mercy, O heavenly Father, grant that we, who now serve thee here on earth, may at the last, together with them, be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light; for the sake of the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

(PRAYER FROM THE ORDER FOR THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD, P. 600)

CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE “PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS” SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU’RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the “Grace”, the final prayer in the booklet.

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REVELATION 7: **EUPHORIA REDEFINED**

⁹After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ¹¹And all the angels were standing round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, ¹²saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.”

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” ¹⁴I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. ¹⁶They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”