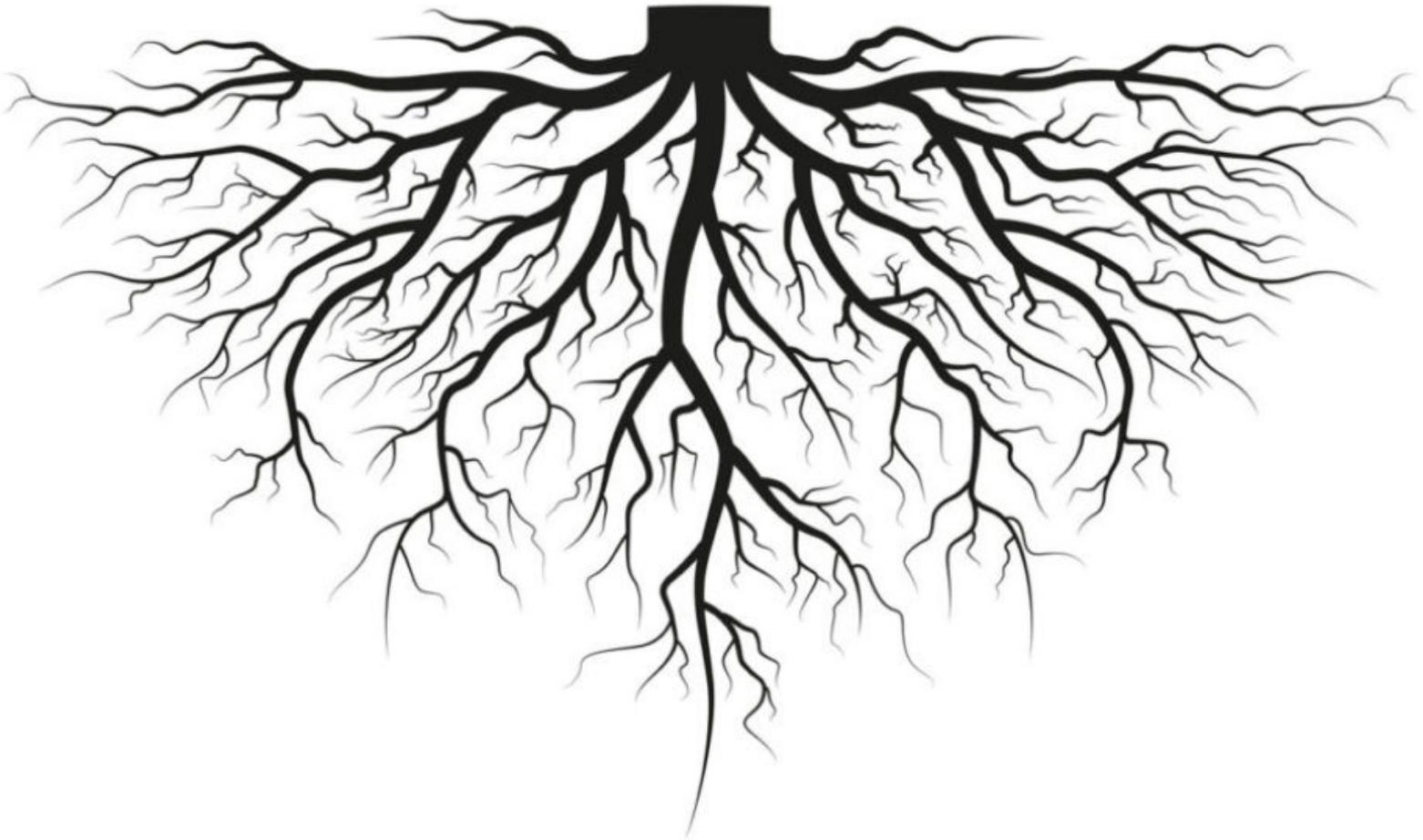


Roots.

A dive deeper into the truths
of the Gospel.



The Truth about Sin

If you are reading this article, you have expressed interest in learning more about what it means to have a relationship with Jesus. You may even be asking the question, “why do I need Jesus?” Here are some of the more common reasons people think they need a relationship with Jesus:

- To make me feel better.
- Because I know that it is the right thing to do.
- Because my parents told me this is what I am supposed to believe.
- Because I am afraid of not believing in God for some reason.
- Everyone believes in God.
- I don't want to go to hell.

Do you identify with any of these?

All of these reasons and many more like it are shared by many that want a relationship with God. And although the reasons have good intentions, they are not why the Bible tells us a relationship with God is necessary. The primary reason you need Jesus is that you are a hopeless sinner.

But in today's society, we do not tend to see ourselves in this light. Instead, we tend to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt in most situations. The danger is that we move through life never really understanding who we are in the eyes of God.

If we want to know what God says and thinks about us (or anything for that matter), we must begin by looking at his words in the Bible. Below is a list of verses from the Bible that will grow our understanding of our sinful nature.

Point 1: We are _____ Sinful

Galatians 5:19-21 - It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on.

“Trying to get your own way all the time” is another way of saying sin. The verse above make the claim that it is obvious what happens when we gives ourselves to this way of life.

DISCUSS: TAKE A MOMENT TO TALK THROUGH THIS LIST TOGETHER WITH THE PEOPLE/PERSONS AROUND YOU. SPEND TIME LOOKING AT EACH WORD AND ASK THE QUESTION, “IS/WAS THERE A PATTERN OF THIS SIN IN MY LIFE AT ANY POINT?”

Point 2: Sin is our _____.

James 1:14-15 - But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

“Lured and enticed” is a fishing metaphor for drawing prey away from the shelter to trap them with a deadly hook. Sin is appealing, and it doesn't sit idly by waiting for someone to stumble upon it; instead, it appeals to your desires. We must realize that these desires are from within ourselves, and it is our nature, before Jesus, to give into them.

DISCUSS: SHARE ABOUT WAYS YOU HAVE SEEN SIN LURE YOU IN THIS WAY IN THE PAST OR CURRENTLY?

Towards the end of the verse, it says, “when it is fully grown brings forth death.” Death can be both a spiritual death as well as consequences that have adverse effects on your life.

DISCUSS: HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF SIN BEFORE? IF SO, HOW?

Point 3: Sin is a _____ !

The odds are that if you grew up in the south, you are familiar with the word sin. If you have a church background, you probably associate sin with bad morals. But this attitude towards sin does not do it justice. Here is what you need to know about sin.

You are designed to be in a relationship with God. Outside of a relationship with God, we will always feel like fish out of water. Things will not make sense, and we will strive to find life in other things that continually fail us.

But God is holy.

HOLY = SET APART; SINLESS

And because of God’s holiness, He can not be in the presence of sin. Take a minute to look at the following Bible verses that describe God’s attitude towards sin.

Psalm 11:5 - The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death...

DISCUSS: HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED YOUR SIN BEING THIS BIG OF A DEAL? WHY OR WHY NOT?

God’s attitude towards sin is serious. There is no way around the fact that he despises sin. Now take a minute to look through a few Bible verses that describe you and me.

Romans 1:18 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Romans 3:10-12 - None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

DISCUSS: IN YOUR OWN WORDS, HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN TO SOMEONE WHY GOD HATES SIN?

Do you feel the weight of your sin?

Every person who desires a relationship with Jesus must feel the weight of their sin. As we come to grips with how sinful we are and how Holy God is, it should leave us broken, bankrupt, and in a place of desperation.

If you don’t feel desperate for a relationship with Jesus, the problem lies in your misunderstanding of sin.

When we truly consider our sin, its weight and consequences, and our inability to do anything about it. Jesus becomes the only answer. In the same way that the nourishment of water can only save a dying man in the desert. The nourishment of Jesus is the only solution to sin that is killing humanity.

DISCUSS: HOW HAS GROWING YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR SIN AFFECTED YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS JESUS?

Someone Has to Pay

What if...someone you have never met got incredibly drunk one night and decided to drive themselves home. On their way, they fell asleep and swerved into oncoming traffic, and hit another car head-on. They escaped with minor injuries, but the other driver wasn't as fortunate and died on impact. Imagine for a moment that the driver that died was one of your family members heading home from a late night at work.

A few weeks later, you walk into a courtroom and find yourself standing before a judge, jury, and the man who killed your family member.

DISCUSS: WHAT TYPES OF THINGS ARE GOING THROUGH YOUR MIND RIGHT NOW?

After the lawyers battle it out, the verdict of the jury is read. "We, the jury, find the defendant NOT GUILTY."

Now how do you feel? I guess that you would be appalled, and rightly so. The feeling you are experiencing is called injustice, and it resonates with anyone who realizes that something isn't right.

As a human being, you are hardwired to want justice or for things to be made right. This quality is an attribute you received from God because God is perfectly just. In this study, we will look at some of the implications of God's justice in light of what we discussed last week concerning our sin.

Point 1: God is Perfectly _____.

This means that God must do what right all of the time is. Unlike our court systems, God never makes a wrong verdict.

Isaiah 61:8 - For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong;

A misunderstanding of God's justice can lead to a handful of wrong thinking about God and how he interacts with the world. Here are a few misconceptions it can develop, see if you identify with any.

- God loves everyone, so I am sure we will all be fine in the end.
- I do not sin as much as some other people I know, so I will be good.
- God wouldn't punish anyone or send anyone to hell.
- God is not that concerned with my sin; sure it is wrong, but everyone is doing it, and God knows that.

When we misunderstand that God is perfectly just, we will ultimately think things like the statements above.

Point 2: Because God is Just, He must _____ Sin

Think back to that initial courtroom illustration with the drunk driver. When you first heard the verdict of not guilty, it didn't feel right, and that is because it isn't right. When someone does wrong, we expect justice to be served.

In the same way, when someone does wrong against God, also known as sin, justice must be served. What is the punishment of sin? Well, let's look back at the verse you saw a few weeks ago.

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death...

The penalty of our sin is spiritual death or separation from God on earth and eternity in Hell.

DISCUSS: WHY DO YOU THINK PEOPLE ARE QUICK TO WANT JUSTICE WHEN SOMEONE DOES WRONG TO THEM BUT DO NOT LIKE THE IDEA OF JUSTICE WHEN WE DO WRONG TO GOD?

Point 3: God's Solution is _____

Now I didn't tell you the whole story of the courtroom illustration at the beginning of this study. There was a reason that the drunk driver was found not guilty, and here is what happened.

The jury went back into the deliberating room, and all 12 of them said without a shadow of a doubt that this kid was guilty and needed to go to prison for a very long time. But just as they were about to walk out, a man came into the room and pleaded with them. He said, "I know this kid very well. He is my son. We created him, raised him, and cared for him up to this point. I want him to experience a full life so much that I am willing to take on the penalty of his actions."

The jury decided that as long as someone paid for this kid's wrongdoing, he could go free.

There is no perfect illustration, and this hypothetical story can not happen in the human court of law. But in God's court of law, this is exactly what happened. You see, you are going to stand before God one day because of your sin, and the verdict will be an overwhelming GUILTY! But Jesus will speak to God on our behalf and say, "I know this person by name, I created them, raised them, and care for them up to this point. I died for their sin, and they believed me with all of their heart."

And there will be no jury because God the Father is a perfect judge. God will say, "God must punish the sin of all humanity, and through your faith in Jesus, it has. Therefore you will be freed from the penalty of your sin and experience life forever in my kingdom. You are NOT GUILTY!"

2 Corinthians 5:21 - For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

DISCUSS: HAS ANYTHING IN THIS STUDY CAUSED YOU TO THINK OF OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD?

DISCUSS: HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED THAT JESUS TOOK ON THE PENALTY OF YOUR SIN LIKE THIS? HOW DOES IT IMPACT YOU AS YOU CONSIDER IT MORE DEEPLY?

A New Father.

What if...you found yourself sitting on death row because of a crime you committed that is too heinous to speak of. You are in solitary confinement twenty-three hours a day. All legal appeals to spare your life have been exhausted, and the inevitable draws nearer every day.

Suddenly the door to your cell flings open, and there stands the Judge, who sentenced you to death, with a full pardon in his hand. But on the other hand, he carries papers of adoption into his very own family. The Judge who sentenced you to death has now adopted you into his very own family.

Rather than being alone, you are now in the home of the Judge who provides you with all of the love and care as though you were his child.

DISCUSS: WHAT TYPES OF THOUGHTS ARE GOING THROUGH YOUR HEAD?

We truly did live on God's "death row" before we decided to turn and trust in Jesus. The last few weeks have shown us that our sin is a BIG DEAL and that because God must punish all sin with spiritual death because God is just. But Jesus was the solution. Through Jesus, God opened a way for us to be freed from the penalty of our sin, but more than that, look at how the Bible describes our new relationship with Him.

1 John 3:1 - Behold what manner of love the Water has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

We are now sons and daughters of the very judge that rescued us from our death. Let's spend some time learning what this new truth means as we follow Jesus.

Point 1: We are _____ of God

John 3:8 - The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

In this passage, Jesus uses the phrase, "born of the Spirit." This idea of being born again is used many times in the Bible.

DISCUSS: WHY DO YOU THINK DECIDING TO FOLLOW JESUS IS DESCRIBED AS BEING "BORN AGAIN" OR "BORN IN THE SPIRIT?"

The idea that Jesus is trying to communicate is that just in the same way that parents pass on specific physical and personality traits to their natural-born children, so traits of divine life are passed on to those born of God.

Because of this, God has no problem allowing the worst of sinners to be a part of his family. Regardless of who you were before you decided to follow Jesus, you now have a new heart through your new birth.

DISCUSS: IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU SENSE A NEW POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND MINDSET TOWARDS FOLLOWING JESUS?

***DISCLAIMER:** IF YOU DO NOT DESIRE TO FOLLOW JESUS AND LIVE A NEW LIFE THAT OKAY. IT COULD BE THAT YOU ARE NOT QUITE READY TO MAKE THIS DECISION.

Point 2: We are _____ by God

Galatians 4:5 - But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Although adoption may appear similar to being born of God, there are some significant differences. The adoption Paul is speaking of is not that of an infant or small child, as is typical in our culture today. In Jewish culture, it would refer to the status of those who had advanced from minors to full-grown adults. This means that adoption has to do with receiving our full rights. A great example of this comes from a parable Jesus told in Luke 15. Let's read some of it and see what we can learn.

READ LUKE 15:11-24 TOGETHER ON BIBLE APP.

DISCUSS: WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU FROM THIS STORY ABOUT THE SON? HOW ABOUT THE FATHER?

DISCUSS: ADOPTION HAS TO DO WITH BEING BROUGHT INTO THE FAMILY. THIS STORY IS A GREAT PICTURE OF HOW GOD ADOPTS US INTO HIS FAMILY. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DESCRIPTIONS OF HOW THE FATHER RECEIVES HIS LOST SON?

This is a fantastic picture of our new position before God. We were once enemies of God because of our sin, like we discussed in the previous weeks, but now we are children born of God with the full right of adopted sons.

Point 3: God is our _____

DISCUSS: HOW DOES THINKING ABOUT GOD AS YOUR FATHER MAKE YOU FEEL?

It is important to remember that regardless of your own experience with your earthly Father, that God is different. Psalm 145:8 says that God "is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love."

Whether we have a father whom we respect and cherish or one who is worthy of being despised, we should never form our view of God from any human pattern. Instead, we should go to the Bible to get an accurate picture of our heavenly Father.

God is an amazing Father. Let's look at three more characteristics that will further convince of this truth.

1. God _____ for us
 - Philippians 4:19 - And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
2. God _____ us.
 - Matthew 10:29-31 - Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.
3. God _____ us.
 - Psalm 10:17 - O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear.

DISCUSS: WHICH OF THESE CHARACTERISTICS RESONATES WITH YOU AND WHY?

DISCUSS: ARE THERE ANY CHARACTERISTICS ON THIS LIST THAT YOU HAVE NEVER CONSIDERED? IF SO, HOW DOES IT CHANGE THE WAY YOU INTERACT WITH GOD KNOWING THE TRUTH ABOUT HIM NOW?

A New Heart.

What if... a buddy of yours approaches you and says, “why are you a Christian?”

DISCUSS: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO THE QUESTION ABOVE?

These types of questions catch us off guard because odds are you have never been asked. If we asked this question across the college campus, I would assume we would get all kinds of answers. Answers like “because I believe in Jesus” or “because I grew up going to church and was baptized.”

Whether you are asked this question or not, the truth is that we are all answering it daily. Your words, actions, and thoughts all attest to what you truly believe being a Christian is.

The real question you should consider is, are you right? Do you know with 100% certainty what it means to be a legitimate Christian?

Think back to our bible study last week for a moment. We talked about the phrase “born again.” This week, I want to strengthen our understanding of becoming Christian by considering our descriptions in these verses.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a NEW CREATION. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

DISCUSS: WHAT DO YOU THINK THE BIBLE MEANS WHEN IT DESCRIBES A BELIEVER IN JESUS AS A NEW CREATION?

Let's take some time to consider what this description means.

Point 1: We Have a _____ Heart

How do we know if we have decided to follow Jesus wholeheartedly? Read the following statements and circle which of these would describe your feelings right now.

- It is a logical decision. I weigh the pros and cons, and it is better to follow Jesus than not to.
- It was an emotional decision. I can't explain it, but it just feels right to me.
- It was a pressured decision. I was in a church service or camp, and I felt like I had to make this decision. Or it is expected by others that I make this decision.
- It was a thoughtless decision. I am just a Christian because that is what I have always been, I never put too much thought into it.
- It was an intellectual decision. I did a lot of research and was convinced that Christianity had the strongest evidence compared to other religions.

DISCUSS: WHICH OF THE STATEMENTS DID YOU RELATE TO? SHARE A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT WHAT THAT LOOKED LIKE FOR YOU SPECIFICALLY?

Each of these statements has some truth to it. Picking apart how much of each would be impossible, but it is also unnecessary because a characteristic trumps them all. We find it in the verses below.

Ezekiel 36:26 - And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

The thrust of these two verses is that anyone who wholeheartedly follows Jesus is a new person. Our heart is new, and we now have an entirely new way of thinking about how we live our lives.

To answer the question, “do I have a new heart?” We must consider the two truths below.

Truth 1: A Growing _____ towards Sin?

1 John 1:6 - If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.
Romans 12:9 - Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

One of the more mysterious side effects of Covid-19 is losing your ability to taste and smell. Many have described losing the joy for foods they once loved because the taste was different. There is a similarity here when it comes to a new heart. The thing we once loved (sin) begins losing its appeal.

When we have a new heart, we no longer “walk in darkness.” To be sure, we must understand that it isn’t saying we will not sin, and instead, it is pointing out that those who truly follow Jesus will have a desire to flee from the things God hates and desire something new.

Discuss: Have you noticed a hatred for sin in your life? If so, share an example with the group.

Truth 2: A Growing _____ to _____ Jesus?

“In our culture, Christianity has a much more “pick and choose” identity. It is a “build your own” version of faith where each person creates the version of Christianity that is most convenient to their lifestyle.”

DISCUSS: DO YOU THINK THE ABOVE STATEMENT IS TRUE? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Whether you agree or disagree with the statement above, it is still important to look at what the Bible says when discussing what it means to follow Jesus. The verse below is very straightforward.

John 14:21 - **Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.**

DISCUSS: DO YOU THINK JESUS IS ASKING US TO DESIRE TO OBEY ALL OF HIS TEACHINGS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

DISCUSS: HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED IF YOU HAVE A DESIRE TO FOLLOW JESUS TEACHING WHOLEHEARTEDLY? EXPLAIN.

Conclusion...

How do I know if I am a Christian? Easy. Do you have a new heart? Is there a growing hatred towards the sin in your life, or do you still love and embrace it? Is there a growing desire to obey Jesus, or do you still live your life the way you want to live it?

Spend some time this week considering these questions. Remember that these passages are not saying that Christians can not sin. Instead, they are directing us to our attitude towards that sin and our attitude towards obeying Jesus.

Simply put, following and obeying Jesus is a joy for all Christians, not a burden. If following Jesus feels like a burden, ask the person leading this Bible study to help you process through those feelings.

A New Eternity.

As a young boy, I remember watching the movie Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. In this movie, Charlie is a young boy from a low-income family attempting to win a competition by discovering 1 of 5 golden tickets hidden in different candies throughout the world.

SPOILER ALERT: He finds the ticket!

Sorry, you have had plenty of years to watch the movie, but the point I want to share is that this “golden ticket” mentality is shared with many people who say they follow Jesus.

There was most likely a moment when someone talked about the idea of Heaven and Hell in your life. Maybe this was from their parent, a church service, or some summer camp. Regardless, it is rare for anyone who grew up in the south not to have some exposure to faith.

Circle any of the following statements that you can identify with at any point in your life:

- I decided to follow Jesus at a young age, but not much in my life changed.
- I claim to be a Christian, but many people I know who are not Christians live better lives than me.
- I follow Jesus, but I am just as stressed and anxious as all my other friends.
- I had a period when my faith was essential to me, but now that I am in college, it has almost become non-existent.
- I rarely think about my faith throughout a given day unless someone brings it up.

DISCUSS: SHARE ONE OF THE STATEMENTS YOU CIRCLES AND EXPLAIN A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT WHAT THAT WAS LIKE?

Having a relationship with Jesus does allow you to spend forever in Heaven, but that doesn't mean that our time on earth is just a waiting period to do whatever we please until that time comes. Instead, our understanding of eternity can have a tremendous impact on how we live right now. Let's look at a few reasons why.

Point 1: Heaven gives us _____.

Matthew 6:19-21 - “Don't hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or—worse!—stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it's safe from moth and rust and burglars. It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

In this passage, we are reminded of the danger of treasuring the wrong things. If we treasure worldly things, we will be left feeling empty because those things perish. But if we treasure the things that matter in Heaven, we will experience a peace of knowing that what we cherish will last!

DISCUSS: SHARE ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU CHERISHED SOMETHING OF THE WORLD AND THEN EXPERIENCED THE PAIN OF IT BEING LOST, STOLEN, OR JUST LOSING ITS APPEAL.

Point 2: Heaven gives us _____.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 - And regarding the question, friends, that has come up about what happens to those already dead and buried, we don't want you in the dark any longer. First off, you must not carry on over them like people who have nothing to look forward to, as if the grave were the last word. Since Jesus died and broke loose from the grave, God will most certainly bring back to life those who died in Jesus.

When someone passes away, it is the pinnacle of loss. The pain associated with this loss is hard even to understand until it is personally experienced. The people during the Bible times felt the same pain we do today when someone they loved died. But Paul (the author) reminds them of this simple but profound truth; we do not have to experience loss in the same way as the rest of the world. We can have hope knowing that life doesn't end on this earth!

Now, this does not mean we won't experience sadness, but our sadness shouldn't be like those who don't believe. We mourn our loss while simultaneously celebrating the significant gain of that person being with Jesus in Heaven forever.

DISCUSS: DO YOU CONSIDER HOW WONDERFUL LIFE AFTER DEATH WILL BE? IF NOT, WHY DO YOU NOT THINK ABOUT IT? IF SO, WHAT BENEFIT TO YOUR LIFE DOES IT HAVE?

Point 3: Heaven gives us _____.

Colossians 3:1-2 - So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, *act* like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from *his* perspective.

This is directly opposed to the "golden ticket" mentality we mentioned at the beginning. Heaven is not a license to live however we please. Instead, it is the motivator by which we live a life for Jesus and his purposes.

DISCUSS: IN WHAT WAYS CAN WE GET BETTER AT TRYING TO "SEE THINGS FROM HIS (JESUS) PERSPECTIVE?"

Conclusion...

Heaven is important news to those who follow Jesus. Not only because it gives us an eternity with Jesus, but because of how it shapes our time on earth. The promise of eternal life gives us peace from the stresses and anxieties of the rest of the world, and it provides hope even to the darkest moments of our lives. And if this isn't enough, it gives us purpose and inspiration to share the same meaning as Jesus! I hope this week you will spend some time considering how amazing the gift of Heaven is and that it will unlock new ways of viewing your life on earth.

Blanks

WEEK 1

Point 1: We are **VERY SINFUL**

Point 2: Sin is our **FAULT**

Point 3: Sin is a **BIG DEAL**

WEEK 2

Point 1: God is Perfectly **JUST**

Point 2: Because God is Just, He must **PUNISH** Sin

Point 3: God's Solution is **JESUS**

WEEK 3

Point 1: God is **BORN** of God

Point 2: We are **ADOPTED** by God

Point 3: God's is our **FATHER**

1. God **PROVIDES** for us
2. God **PROTECTS** us.
3. God **ENCOURAGES** us.

WEEK 4

Point 1: We Have a **NEW** Heart

Truth 1: A Growing **HATRED** towards Sin?

Truth 2: A Growing **DESIRE** to **OBEDY** Jesus?

WEEK 5

Point 1: Heaven gives us **PEACE**

Point 2: Heaven gives us **HOPE**

Point 3: Heaven gives us **PURPOSE**