

The Way to Happiness

Hope

by Annette Gulick 10/1/2001

Lesson Three

Bible Passage: John 11: 17-27

Bible Truth: Jesus promises Martha that anyone who believes in Him will never die

Lesson Objective: That students know the hope of eternal life

Memory Verse: Jn. 11: 25

What you need: handout "the Truth about Life after Death," materials for "wordless book" or bracelet (see "Commitment"), optional: ball of yarn

Opening:

Word Association. Have the students sit in a circle. The leader begins the activity by saying one of the words listed below and the person on his or her left will then say the first word that comes into their mind (obviously non-obscene.) Then the person on their left says the first word that comes into their mind after hearing what their neighbor said, and so on until it reaches the leader who then begins with a new word. This process should be done fairly quickly, if a student gets stuck or embarrassed, encourage them by saying something like "You have to have had some idea when you heard "x", what was it? Any word is fine." Do not skip over anyone and make sure that no one is made fun of by the others. The leader should use the following words--bride, groom, feast, crown, ruler, heaven, hell-- but feel free to add any others or allow the words to continue around the circle more than once, depending on the time you have available.

Interactive Learning

Go around the room and have each student tell the group about the best dinner party, banquet or holiday meal they have been to and explain what made it so special.

- ***The Bible frequently talks about heaven using the image of a wedding feast. What elements that made these meals so special will we experience in heaven?*** [shared happiness and fun, fellowship, celebrating together, being with people we love and who love us, etc.]

We are thinking today about special feasts and heaven because an important part of finding happiness in this life is the hope that our lives don't end with death. Jesus gave Mary and Martha the assurance that anyone who believes in him will live, even though he dies. That knowledge gives meaning to our lives and fills up with hope.

Bible Application

Have a few of the students respond to the following question:

- ***Has anyone you were close to ever died? If so, what, if anything, brought you comfort?***

Have someone read John 11:17-23, then ask:

- ***How did Jesus try to comfort Martha?*** [by reminding her that her brother would rise again]
Have someone read John 6: 39-40 and someone else read John 11: 24-27. Then say,

We see that what Martha believed about the afterlife is what Jesus himself taught. But in verses 25, 26 Jesus adds to her understanding. When Martha says that her brother will rise "in the resurrection at the last day" it sounds very distant, but Jesus says, "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies", which is emphasizing that the life of a Christian goes on even after their physical death. But the most important change in emphasis that Jesus makes is from a focus on impersonal facts, "there is a resurrection of the dead at the last day", to himself, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Because there are a lot of different questions and confusion about what happens after we die, we are going to spend a few minutes studying what is true and what is false according to the Bible.

Pass out handout, "the Truth about Life after Death", and ask the students to write "true" or "false" by each question and to then look up the scripture verses and match them with the statement they relate to.

Answer key:

1	When you die you cease to exist	F	Luke 16: 22-26
2	A Christian can believe in reincarnation	F	Heb. 9: 27
3	The devil doesn't really exist	F	Matthew 4: 1-3
4	When the Bible talks about "heaven" it means "where God dwells"	T	Ps. 33: 13, 14
5	After the resurrection we will be spirits without bodies	F	Luke 24: 38-43
6	Christians shouldn't cry when someone they love dies	F	John 11: 32-36
7	Hell is a real place	T	Matthew 13: 49-50
8	No one knows how soon we go to be with God after we die	F	Luke 23: 39-43
9	Heaven sounds boring	F	Rev. 19: 6-8
10	Hell sounds interesting	F	Luke 16: 27-28

Commitment

Write on the board [or a large piece of paper] the following diagram:

I'm not convinced that what the Bible says about the afterlife is true.	I hope that the good things that I've done in my life will outweigh the bad one.	I became a Christian once so I have "fire insurance" against going to hell.	I have a deep assurance that if I die tonight I will go to heaven.	I can't wait until I can finally be with God in an even more real way.
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Ask the students to reflect on these five statements and decide which one most closely describes how they feel about heaven. Then explain that just like there are lots of false ideas about heaven, there are lots of false ideas about how to get there, so you are going to show them a simple method which explains how to get to heaven and which they can use to explain it to others.

Choose the option that best suits your resources:

- 1) Have the students make "wordless book" bracelets. For each student you need a 10 to 12 - inch (25-30 cm) leather strap and beads that can be strung onto the strap (one of each of the following colors: yellow (gold), black, red, white, green).
- 2) Pass out a "wordless book" to each student. They are available at many Christian bookstores or through Child Evangelism Fellowship at <http://www.gospelcom.net/cef>.
- 3) Tell the story of the "wordless book" using pieces of colored construction paper stapled together to form a "book." (Use the same colors as the beads: black page first, then red, etc.)

Here is a brief outline of the concepts and verses you can use to tell the story of the "wordless book." Do not read them off the paper but read the verses and explain the concepts conversationally. If some of your students are already familiar with it, they could help you teach it.

The gold or yellow page/bead represents heaven. As we have already discussed, heaven is where God lives and we use the color yellow or gold because the Bible tells us that heaven is so wonderful that the streets are made of gold. We know that God wants us to be able to enjoy heaven because Jesus promised us in John 14:2,3 ...[read verses]. But there is a problem because there is something that can never be allowed into heaven...

The dark page/bead reminds us of the darkness and sin that are in our lives. The Bible says in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." That means that every single person is a sinner, everyone has disobeyed the rules that God has given us in the Bible. Because God is perfect, our sin separates us from Him so that we cannot be in His presence -- heaven. And our sin must be punished. But God loves us and wants to have a relationship with us so much that he made a way for our sins to be paid for.

The red stands for blood. Hebrews 9:22 says that without the shedding of blood there is no pardon for sin, so Jesus shed his own blood on the cross to pay for our sins, as it says in 1 Cor. 15: 3, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

The white stands for the how clean our hearts become in God's sight when we confess our sin and believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. The Bible assures us that when we ask for forgiveness, God will forgive us (1 John 1:9) and when we believe on Jesus as our savior we are given eternal life (John 3:16.)

The green reminds us of growing things like grass and flowers because after we have been washed clean by Jesus' blood we need to grow in our relationship with him, 2 Peter 3: 18.

Closing

In Ephesians 1:18 Paul says that other Christians are part of the riches that God gives us. In closing we are going to share something we value about each other by saying "I am glad we are going to be in heaven together because..."

Option 1: Have the students stand and form a circle. Hold the loose end of a ball of yarn and throw it to someone in the group. After you say a reason why you are glad that you are going to be in heaven together, that person should then hold the yard taut and throw the ball to another person. Do this until everyone has had the yarn at least once.

Option 2: Go around the room and have everyone tell the person on their right why they are glad they will be in heaven together.

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 Matthew 13: 49-50
 Luke 16: 22-26
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