

Lesson 12: “The HOPE I Anticipate”

A Facilitator’s Guide for All Ages—Bible Classes, Small Groups, Family Studies, Individual Studies

I. Lesson Outline for Bible Class (Mid-Elementary to Adult Bible Classes)

A. Welcome & Prayer (5 mins)

B. Ice-Breaker (2-3 mins)

- What are some of your New Year’s resolutions? **Or** What are you asking Santa for this Christmas?

C. Activity (5 mins)

- Have everyone come up with a fun acronym for H.O.P.E. that explains/defines it. They can draw pictures, act it out, or just write a few words, such as: “**H**elping **O**ut **P**eople **E**verywhere,” or finish the statement: “I am hopeful when I am...(example-“**H**appy, **O**n-My-Game, **P**resent, **E**nergetic). Have 2-3 people share.

D. Discussion & Application (30 mins) – write comments on the board to build momentum & reflection.

*Try to get to all 3 discussion questions. There are time suggestions below, but you can adjust as needed based on the needs of your particular class, or until the stories dry up. Help everyone leave with a good sense of what it looks like to live with a Christian hope versus the temporary hope of this world.

1. **Worldly Hope (5-10 mins):** Where does the world find its hope? What are all the options for what happens when we die (teacher’s help: non-existence, purgatory, reincarnation, resurrection, heaven, hell, universalism [everyone is saved], rapture, the tribulation, the 1,000 year reign, etc.).
 - a. **Follow up:** Where does the world teach its views? How successful are they in evangelizing?
2. **The Christian Hope (5-10 mins):** What does the Bible teach regarding the various views of the afterlife (e.g. reincarnation, non-existence, purgatory, rapture, 1,000 year reign)? What does the Bible teach concerning what happens when we die and where in Scripture does it teach this? (Have people search BibleGateway.com for specific scriptures about resurrection, heaven, hell, & new creation. Teachers may use the “additional scriptures” on page 3 for help on these biblical topics.) Fill the board with the insights.
 - a. **Follow-up:** How has your own view on what happens when we die grown over the years?
3. **Living into the Christian Hope (5-10 mins):** How does our view of life after death affect how we live in the present? For example, does a person who believes in the resurrection treat their body, their marriage, their speech, the world differently than a person who believes in reincarnation or non-existence after death?
 - a. **Follow-up:** Have you ever had a discussion with someone else about the afterlife? How did it go?

E. Application and Homework (2 mins to explain):

Believe: Consider what it might mean to live today as though are you going to live for eternity with God and fellow Christians in a new creation. Write, draw, talk about the implications of eternal life or death.

Act: Who do you need to be reconciled with so that you might be excited about spending eternity with them in heaven? What do you need to do differently today to have more eternal security?

Teach: Who do you need to talk to about heaven or hell in order to help them make a decision about eternity? Tell us how it’s going on [College Church Chat](#) or in person next week in Bible class.

II. Lesson Outline for Bible Class (Birth to Mid-Elementary)

Believe: Share about heaven and the beauty of New Creation—how there will no longer be any more sadness or evil but only life and good. Share stories and passages from the Bible to illustrate (e.g. Gen 1-3; Rev 21-22; Isa 11; 65-66; Zech 8; the parables of Jesus; the 10 resurrection stories). Use pictures, songs, videos, or act this out to bring it to life.

Act: Invite each child to share their favorite day or thing to help imagine what heaven will be like (e.g. ice-cream sandwiches every day, a favorite birthday, trampolines, always playing sports, etc.). Talk about how exciting it will be to experience life forever with God, our families, and friends forever. Discuss what we need to do in order to get to heaven to be with God and our loved ones.

Teach: See if each child can remember what the Bible says about heaven and how we get there. See if they remember it next week. Bonus points if they tell their parents what they learned in class.

III. Lesson Outline for Small Groups & Families

Believe: Have everyone (all ages) contribute to one picture about what the afterlife might look like (heaven, hell, the resurrection, new creation). Share scriptures that help inform this picture from Gen 1-3; Rev 21-22; Isa 11; 65-66; Zech 8; the parables of Jesus; the 10 resurrection stories, and elsewhere. Discuss how your views of the afterlife have grown over the years and how they stand in relation to views taught by the world.

Act: As a family or small group, decide 1 thing you will do more of, less of, or differently to be prepared for the resurrection, new creation, heaven, and hell. And how it affects your life (and hope) in the present.

Teach: Ask other families or small groups about their pictures and discussions about the afterlife. How are your discussions similar and different? What are the essentials when it comes to the Christian view of the afterlife? Encourage one another with these words.

IV. Lesson Outline for Individual Study

Believe: Spend some time reflecting on what you love and don't love about the idea of a bodily resurrection, heaven, hell, and eternal life in a New Creation. Search the scriptures, talk with others, and read books about the Christian hope to grow in your understanding.

Act: Make appropriate changes in your life, whether to avoid evil or to do good, in order to draw closer to God unto eternal life. Make a "1,000 year plan" regarding what you look forward to doing with God, your loved ones, and the heroes of faith to help guide you to live righteously in the present.

Teach: Share your plan with someone else and hold each other accountable as you are walking down heaven's road.

V. Additional Scriptures & Discussion Questions for Weeks 2-5 (Bible Class, Small Groups, Families, or Individual Study)

General Prompts

1. What is the world teaching us to believe or not believe about the afterlife? How is the world teaching us this? What difference does it make if we believe or if we don't believe the world?
2. How are these different views on the afterlife being taught by the world—whether in movies, songs, tv, books, social media, or by other religious groups?
3. What *resources & people* have helped you come to better know, live, & share a Biblical view of the afterlife (e.g. heaven, hell, resurrection, new creation, eternity)? What *strategies* have you used to live better, teach others, and guide your family in light of eternity?

Week 2: Death & Resurrection — Read 1 Thessalonians 4-5 and 1 Corinthians 15.

Discuss how to live in such a way that you are not afraid of death (e.g. tell stories of people in your family or friends who have died with hope and faith). Discuss how 1 Thess 4-5 and 1 Cor 15 offer this hope to everyone in Christ. Look through these scriptures for lines of hope, such as—“I do not want you to be uninformed...do not grieve like the world grieves, without hope” (1 Thess 4:13), “He [Christ] was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:4). You can even discuss what it will look like to be raised like Christ (1 Jn 3:2). How do Christians grieve at funerals? How does the world grieve? How should we live so that we are ready to die? What hope can we offer loved ones as they prepare to die? How can we live resurrected lives even this week?

Week 3: Heaven, Hell, & the Intermediate State — Read Luke 16:19-31; Luke 23:43; Matthew 25:31-46

Discuss what Luke 16 teaches about what happens when we die: what happens to the righteous? What happens to the wicked? What does this parable teach us about theories of purgatory, ghosts, ancestor worship, talking to the dead? What do we learn about life after death from Matthew 25—what is God looking for in the righteous? What is he looking at in the wicked? What happens to each group at the judgment day (for additional passages and discussion on hell, consider Mt 8:12; 13:42; Mk 9:43)? Talk about how your views of the afterlife have grown over the years? What do we still not know about life after death? What do we need to affirm? What should we remain humble about not knowing?

Week 4 (Christmas): New Creation & Worldly Alternatives — Read Revelation 21-22 (cf. Isa 65-66) and Romans 8:18-25.

Discuss what we learn about New Creation from Revelation 21-22. From where does God come? To where does God go? What is the goal of New Creation? What will be the result of New Creation? To where does evil, pain, suffering, and death go? How far will righteousness spread throughout the earth? What does this perfect state of the world remind you of? (Read Gen 1-3 and discuss the similarities and differences. As you have time, include Isaiah 65-66 in the discussion.) Draw a picture of what the New Creation will look like based on these passages. What is everyone most excited about in these descriptions of the New Creation? How should we live in light of the coming New Creation? For a deeper study, consider Romans 8:22-25 and 2 Peter 3:13.

Week 5 (New Year’s): Eternity & Planning Accordingly — Have everyone use their phones to search BibleGateway.com for all occurrences of the word “Eternal” in the New Testament in the English Standard Version:

Take turns reading a verse or two that describe heaven as “eternal life/salvation/redemption/inheritance/glory/kingdom/dwelling” and hell as “eternal destruction/judgment/chains/fire”. What does this mean for how long life-after-death lasts? How should we live our few years in light of eternity? Why do people say that life-after-death is only temporary? How might we respond to them using these passages? Create a New Year’s Resolution plan individually or as a family/small group that plans for the eternity to come—what do you look forward to doing for eternity in heaven? Have a great new year!