

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER WE DIE?

Purpose

To make a space where people of all ages can explore together the question of what happens after we die.

Key Scripture

God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them! John 3:16-17 (CEV)

Consider & Prepare

- To decorate
 - ❖ Pitch one or more tents to provide a focal point in your space. This can be as simple as a sheet or blanket over a table or a gazebo
 - ❖ Print at least one arrow per person
 - ❖ Cut the arrows out and peg them to the tent
- For Before and After
 - ❖ A long rope. Colour a small section on the end with a red marker. Lay the rope out around your space with the red section near the front
 - ❖ Option 1: Enough paper and coloured pencils for everyone
 - ❖ Option 2: Download the story *Waterbugs and Dragonflies : Explaining Death to Young Children* by Doris Stickney
<https://www.rainbowsbridge.com/belovedhearts/stories/doris-waterbugsanddragonflies-632617144169637500.aspx>
- A Home that Lasts Forever
 - ❖ Bibles: preferably CEV
 - ❖ Print the pictures of different homes, one copy per group. OR Prepare a PowerPoint with the pictures
- What is Heaven like?
 - ❖ 1 sheet of cardboard per group
 - ❖ Markers
 - ❖ scissors
 - ❖ glue sticks



- ❖ magazines
- Prayer Activity
 - ❖ Option 1: Use the tent or tents that you have set up as your focal point
 - ❖ Option 2: Paddle pop sticks; string; strips of fabric; craft glue; fabric markers or strips of paper and small craft pegs

Song Suggestions

Give me a home among the gum trees

Amazing Grace

Forever

When we all get to Heaven

10 000 Reasons

Heaven is a wonderful place

Suggested Meeting Plan

Introduction

Have you ever been to Heaven?

Activity 1 Before and After

Link 1

Activity 2 A Home that Lasts Forever

Link 2

Activity 3 What is Heaven like?

Link 3

Prayer Activity

Reflection and Response

Benediction

Introduction

Good morning! I wonder what you have been doing this week and where you have been. Did anyone go somewhere exciting this week? Maybe you have been somewhere exciting sometime in the past.

- Has anyone here ever been to Antarctica?
- Has anyone here ever been to Timbuktu?
- Has anyone here ever been to Madagascar?
- Has anyone here ever been to the Moon?

We might not have been to these places, or even

seen pictures of them but we know that they are real places and they really do exist.

Has anyone here ever been to Heaven? We haven't been to Heaven and we haven't seen pictures of Heaven but we can know that it really does exist, just like those other places we mentioned.

The things of God are full of mystery. We often don't get all of the answers that we would like to have but God has given us enough information that we can believe that our lives do not end with death on earth.

Before and After

We know that everybody will die someday. This is a natural part of life. Look at this rope... See how long it is? Now, can you see the part that is red? Imagine that our lives are as long as this rope. The part of our life that we live on earth is only about as long as the red section compared to the rest of the rope.

Because of his great love for us, God has made a way for us to live on Earth then to live in Heaven.

Option 1 – Before and After Pictures

Take a sheet of paper and fold it in half.

On one half of the paper, draw a caterpillar. On the other half, draw a butterfly.

OR

On one half draw a seed and on the other half draw a tree.

OR

On one half draw some cake batter and on the other half draw a delicious cake.

When a caterpillar becomes a butterfly it is still the same creature but it looks completely different and it can do completely different and amazing new things. A caterpillar can crawl but a butterfly can fly.

When a seed is planted and watered it becomes a tree. The seed looks very different from the tree. The seed could make a small snack for a bird but it can't do much else. A tree can provide shade; it can be a home for birds and small creatures; it can give us wood for our fires; it can make mulch for our gardens; and it can grow fruit.

Cake batter is runny and flat and pale. When we bake it, it becomes fluffy and round and golden. The taste changes too, but the ingredients, what's inside it, are still exactly the same.

Option 2 – Tell a Story

Read Story – *Waterbugs and Dragonflies : Explaining Death to Young Children* by Doris Stickney

<https://www.rainbowsbridge.com/belovedhearts/stories/doris-waterbugsanddragonflies-632617144169637500.aspx>

Link 1

One day our bodies will die but the Bible tells us that a part of us will continue to live. We might look different, we might be able to do different things, but we will still be the same person, living for ever in a new home. Death is not the end. It is a change.

I wonder if you have ever moved into a new home. How did it feel to move somewhere new?

Usually, moving can be exciting but we might also feel a bit nervous about being somewhere new. Sometimes we can even feel afraid about moving into a new home. We might also feel nervous and excited about moving out of our bodies and into our new home in Heaven. We call this move dying and lots of people feel afraid about dying. It's ok to feel like this but God tells us that our new home is going to be even better than our home on Earth.

A Home that Lasts Forever

In small groups, read 2 Corinthians 5: 1 - 5

Our bodies are like tents that we live in here on earth. But when these tents are destroyed, we know that God will give each of us a place to live. These homes will not be buildings that someone has made, but they are in heaven and will last forever. ² While we are here on earth, we sigh because we want to live in that heavenly home. ³ We want to put it on like clothes and not be naked.

⁴ These tents we now live in are like a heavy burden, and we groan. But we don't do this just because we want to leave these bodies that will die. It is because we want to change them for bodies that will never die. ⁵ God is the one who makes all of this possible. He has given us his Spirit to make us certain that he will do it.

Take a look at these pictures of different houses that people live in...



(See Activity Sheet 1 for larger photo's pg5)

In your group, discuss:

Which of these homes looks most like where you live?

Which of these homes look like they might last forever?

Read 2 Corinthians 5: 1 again...

Our bodies are like tents that we live in here on earth. But when these tents are destroyed, we know that God will give each of us a place to live. These homes will not be buildings that someone has made, but they are in heaven and will last forever.

What do you think this might mean?

Link 2

2 Corinthians 5:1 tells us that our bodies are like tents.

A tent is not really a very strong home to live in. Sleeping in a tent might be fun for a while when we go camping but I wouldn't want to live in one all the time. They can be blown away in a strong wind, torn by something sharp or just get worn out over time. Tents are definitely not meant to last forever. Our bodies are a bit like that, they wear out over time, they do not last forever. But the people who live inside a tent can move out and into a new home. The part of us who lives inside our body can also move out and into the new home that God has designed for us.

What is Heaven like?

It is hard for us to imagine what Heaven might be like. We know that it is a place where we will be close to God, all of the time.

Everything in our world that is beautiful, creative, light, loving, healing and good is of God. But in this world there are also things that are ugly, boring, dark, hurtful and bad.

We have talked about how amazing our new home in Heaven will be.

BUT the Bible tells us very clearly that when people die, some will go to Heaven to live forever with God but some people will live forever away from God.

In your group, make a poster with two halves. On one half: write words, draw pictures or paste pictures that represent all of the things in life that are beautiful, creative, light, loving, healing and good

On the other half, write words, draw pictures or paste pictures that represent all of the things in life that are ugly, boring, dark, hurtful and bad.

Link 3

Because of his great love for us God has made a way, through Jesus, for every one of us to live forever with him in Heaven. But, because of his great love for us he also lets us make a choice about whether we want to live with him or not. Living with God starts right now and it can continue forever.

Prayer Activity

Option 1

Play some meditative music

Invite everyone to remove their shoes, enter the tent/s and spend time talking to God

Option 2

Make small model tents using paddle pop sticks and strips of cloth.

Use fabric markers to write your prayers on the tent or write prayers on small strips of paper and clip them to your tent with small craft pegs.

Opportunity for Reflection and Response **John 14: 1 - 7**

Jesus said to his disciples, "Don't be worried! Have faith in God and have faith in me. ² There are many rooms in my Father's house. I wouldn't tell you this, unless it was true. I am going there to prepare a place for each of you. ³ After I have done this, I will come back and take you with me. Then we will be together. ⁴ You know the way to where I am going."

⁵ Thomas said, "Lord, we don't even know where you are going! How can we know the way?"

⁶ "I am the way, the truth, and the life!" Jesus answered. "Without me, no one can go to the Father.

⁷ If you had known me, you would have known the Father. But from now on, you do know him, and you have seen him."

The way that we choose to live with God forever, starting now, is to choose Jesus. Jesus is the way to

life with God. Maybe you have already chosen to live forever with Jesus. Maybe you would like to make that choice for the first time today. Or maybe you still want to find out more before you choose to accept life with Jesus.

If you would like a reminder of the choice you have made you might like to come and take an arrow from the tent.



Jesus is the way to life forever!

Benediction

God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. ¹⁷ God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them! John 3:16-17 (CEV)

A Home that Lasts Forever – 2 Corinthians 5: 1 - 5



In your group, discuss:

- Which of these homes looks most like where you live?
- Which of these homes look like they might last forever?

Read 2 Corinthians 5: 1 again...

Our bodies are like tents that we live in here on earth. But when these tents are destroyed, we know that God will give each of us a place to live. These homes will not be buildings that someone has made, but they are in heaven and will last forever.

What do you think this might mean?