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A F T E R: A New Series on Life Beyond Death

Session 1 - Discussion Guide (LEADER COPY)

Watch:

“What’s After” Discussion Group SESSION 1 Video here: <https://vimeo.com/394799775>.

After watching the video, answer these questions:

1. What has been your view of what happens when we die?
 - *Personal. Be open and honest about how you viewed this topic before becoming a Christian. How has Jesus and the Bible changed your view on eschatology? What are you still not sure of? (It’s okay to tell your group you don’t know everything about this topic!!!!!!)*
 - *In light of the Easter sermon we just heard, what happened to Jesus after he was crucified and died? Be specific. He is alive! Spent 40 days on earth in a new body proclaiming the gospel, (1 Peter 3:19-20 states Jesus proclaimed his resurrection to everyone), ate and drank with his disciples, ascended into heaven...*

2. Why do you think people often avoid thinking or talking about what’s after life?
 - *Personal. It’s uncomfortable and morbid. Christians have also used it as a fear tactic for conversion. We also know that death is not natural for us, it is the wages of sin, and we were not created for death!*
 - *Psalm 90:12 tells us to “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” The Psalmist is telling us that a heart of wisdom is to understand our mortality.*

3. Does any of the scientific evidence surprise you? Do you find it credible? If it’s true, what difference would that make for you?
 - *Personal. Try to distinguish scientific evidence from conjecture.*

Read 2 Corinthians 12:2-4.

What’s the significance of this passage?



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“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴ was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.”

This suggests that Paul at least knew of someone that had an NDE.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:43-44.

How do these verses give you hope?

*“it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; **44** it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

- *Follow up question: What is the difference in our natural body and spiritual body? Similar but different. An example would be seeing someone after 30 years and vaguely recognizing them until they introduced themselves. Read John 20:13-6 (Mary doesn't recognize Jesus until he “introduces” himself)*

Read Philippians 4:7 & Ephesians 3:19.

How are these verses similar to the experience of NDEers (Near Death Experiencers) ?

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7

*“**19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Eph. 3:19*

Love and peace that surpasses all understanding! Bring up examples from videos.

Read Matthew 12:36-37 & Luke 12: 2-3.

In light of these verses, how does this affect how you live out today? This Week? During this COVID-19 crisis?



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“36 But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” Matt. 12:36-37

“2 There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 3 What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.” Luke 12:2-3

- ***Speaks to Eric’s first sermon. Take heart! There is no condemnation in Jesus Christ because He is risen! Romans 8: 1-2 “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.” This is the good news of the gospel!***
AND
John 3:17 “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

Watch:

The previous Sunday’s sermon and work through the study guide questions here:

<https://thestory.church/sermons/after/>



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Session 2 - Discussion Guide

Watch:

“What’s After” Discussion Group SESSION 2 Video here: <https://vimeo.com/403915570>

After watching the video, answer these questions:

1. When you think of relationships on earth, or those you want to have, what matters most to you? Why?

Personal, but things like love, trust, vulnerability, honesty, loyalty. Dig into what each person WANTS to have more of. Why do we have those desires/longings and how will they be satisfied in eternity with God?

2. Why do you think we struggle to love one another on earth as in Heaven?

We live in a Genesis 3 (The Fall) world. Sin has entered the world and with it has come idolatry, selfishness, greed, envy, strife, malice, disobedience, infidelity, etc. We struggle to value others' interests before ourselves, but in the presence of God, all of those things wash away as we forever praise Him. We won't struggle to love like Jesus when we are in the fullness of God's glory and love. However, we can have a glimpse of that here on earth as we're filled with His spirit and overflowing with his mercy, grace, and love.

3. If this is true, that love and relationships last forever, how might that change what we prioritize in our lives today?

We should view all relationships not just as in this lifetime, but eternal. That will give us even more depth and meaning to all of our relationships. All of our relationships and interactions have an eternal impact! Even the ones we're creating in this group right now! Paul says it this way in 2 Corinthians 4:18 “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”



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Read Luke 16:9.

What's the significance of this passage?

Bible verse link for share screen:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+16%3A9&version=NIV>

This is in context of the parable of the shrewd manager (Luke 16:1-15). In the context of Jesus' own teaching, this may mean giving away your possessions to the less fortunate that will have an eternal impact. Worldly gains should not be used to satisfy the desires of this world; instead, they should be used for things that are of eternal value. These followers will be welcomed either by friends whom they have helped or by God himself, who will reward them for their generosity.

Read John 17:21-23.

If eternity with God is about perfect unity, perfect love, perfect communication, how can you reflect, grow, and perfect your character in these ways to become more like Jesus?

Bible verse link for share screen:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+17%3A+21-23&version=NIV>

Personal. Jesus' prayer implies that the unity believers have is not yet perfect, but that they must grow in their unity. We will know the fullness of this because the Father loves believers as extravagantly as he loves his Son.

Read John 14:1-3 and Matthew 26:29.

How do these verses give you hope?

Bible verse links for share screen:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+14%3A1-3&version=NIV>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+26%3A29&version=NIV>

Even as Jesus is headed for the agony of the cross, he still comforts his disciples in this way. Jesus, in the ultimate temple/the new Jerusalem, provides more than enough space for every one of his followers to dwell, and he will even come back and lead us there. We shouldn't be



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troubled, but we have hope because Jesus' death comes with the ultimate hope of resurrection when he defeated death!

Jesus may have left the fourth and final cup of wine of the Passover ceremony undrunk to anticipate the great banquet still to come.

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Session 3 - Discussion Guide

Watch:

“What’s After” Discussion Group SESSION 3 Video here: <https://vimeo.com/403902740>

After watching the video, answer these questions:

1. What do you love most about the beauty of the earth? What are the most beautiful places on earth to you?

Personal. Could include sunsets, sunrises, beaches, mountains, wilderness...

2. When you think about the beauty and the possibility of a renewed world to come - what do you most hope for or wonder about?

Personal, but try and find the “why” behind what members hope for and wonder about. Follow up questions are great for this question.

3. If time and travel are not an obstacle in Heaven, what would you love to do or see and with whom?

Be careful to not let this conversation go off the wheels!

4. If all we love about earth pales in comparison to Heaven, how might that change how you live now?

We can only see glimpses now, but one day all will be renewed and restored and will be even more beautiful.



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Read Isaiah 6:1-3

What stands out to you in this passage?

Bible verse link for Zoom share:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+6%3A1-3&version=NIV>

During a time of crisis (740 BC), Isaiah received this vision of divine kingship. This is the only mention of seraphim in the entire Bible, but there is a mention of six-winged living creatures in Rev. 4:9. Seraphim literally means “fiery ones” that revere God and proclaim his supreme glory. The trihagion (holy, holy, holy) is significant because it expresses that God is holy from the beginning, the middle, and the end. And that the whole world is filled with the weight of his glory!

Read the following verses and describe what happens in your own words:

Ask the members of your group what stood out to them. What were they surprised to hear? Did they learn anything new? What are they hesitant about? What gives them hope?

Revelation 7:9 -

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=revelation+7%3A9&version=NIV>

Every nation, tribe, people and language worshipping God.... can you imagine????

Revelation 7:17 -

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=revelation+7%3A17&version=NIV>

Jesus will still be leading us to life everlasting where there will be no more pain or death or decay or tears.

1 Corinthians 2:9 -

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+corinthians+2%3A9&version=NIV>



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Revelation 21:23-24 -

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=revelation+21%3A23-24&version=NIV>

The Light of the world; the lamp on the lampstand.

Revelation 22:1-2

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=revelation+22%3A1-2&version=NIV>

The new Jerusalem. Abundant water with the twelve trees (tribes) yielding fruit, and the fruit will bring healing. There will be no decay, only living things producing continuous fruit.

Romans 8:20-22 -

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans+8%3A+20-22&version=NIV>

Even the earth knows that death and decay is unnatural, and it will be set free from the chains of sin and made new with us.

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Session 4 - Discussion Guide

Watch:

“What’s After” Discussion Group SESSION 4 Video here: <https://vimeo.com/403886641>

After watching the video, answer these questions:

1. We all grow up with ideas about God, whether raised in a religious home or not. What have been your thoughts of God to this point?

Personal. Try and dig into each member’s religious or non-religious background, and how that affects their current theology. Make the distinction between people’s views about God, and not what they have heard about God. There’s no better source than the Bible to learn about God and prayer and community to experience God.

A follow up question could be:

“How has your religious or non-religious background affected your view on God positively or negatively?”

2. NDErs consistently say that God knows and loves you more than anyone on earth, and in God’s presence you’ll never want to leave. If true, how does that affect your perception of God and eternity?

Heaven definitely won’t be boring. It also won’t be up in the clouds; it will be in a renewed and restored earth in perfect, loving communion with God and every other living thing. God’s presence and love will overwhelm even the most intense love we’ve ever felt on earth, and we’ll feel the warmth of the light of his love forever. There will be only one marriage in Heaven, and that’s with Christ and His bride, His people which is the church. Eternity is one long, perfect marriage. Jesus inaugurated His Kingdom by defeating death, and He will consummate His Kingdom when He comes again for eternity.



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3. What are you most looking forward to, or most fearful of, when you think about seeing God?

Personal. Be honest and vulnerable.

4. How does the thought of God revealing himself through Jesus come across to you? Why?

Jesus is with us and for us. God isn't a distant God, but a God who draws near to us so we can imitate Christ's humility. The apostle Paul puts it like this in his letter to the church in Philippi:

Philippians 2:6- 8

6 Who, being in very nature[a] God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

7 rather, he made himself nothing

*by taking the very nature[b] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

*8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself*

*by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

5. If there's evidence that God is real and wants to be known, and has revealed himself in a relatable way through Jesus- does that make you want to learn and discover more about him? Why or why not?

Personal. Loving God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind and loving your neighbor as yourself go hand in hand. Learning more about Jesus is discovering the way, the truth, and the life.



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Read Matthew 17:2, Revelation 21:23, and John 8:12

What's the significance of Jesus being the "light of the world?"

Light in the world overcomes darkness. Jesus is the light that defeats death. Jesus is our ultimate prize for the glory of God; He is an everlasting light. We need to let Jesus shine a light in our darkest places, and be able to let Jesus shine a light through us in dark places.

Read Acts 22:6-11

Describe in your own words what happens in this passage.

"About noon..." - Same word/time as when darkness fell over the earth after Jesus' crucifixion.

Jesus comes as a bright light, and Saul hits his knees. Jesus says that it is Him who Saul is persecuting as he persecutes the church. Once Saul encounters and experiences Jesus, he says, "What shall I do, Lord?" Saul is blinded by the brilliant light, and is helped by his friends/community into the city he was already going into to be the light that has changed him forever.

Watch:

The previous Sunday's sermon and work through the study guide questions here:

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A F T E R: A New Series on Life Beyond Death

Session 5 - Discussion Guide

Watch:

“What’s After” Discussion Group SESSION 5 Video here: <https://vimeo.com/403893007>

After watching the video, answer these questions:

1. After hearing about the life review, how does that impact you today?

Personal, but the hope is that we understand that what we do every single day matters. Psalm 90:12 tells us to “teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Everyday and everything we do has an eternal impact.

2. When you imagine feeling and experiencing the way you’ve treated others, both good and bad, how does that motivate you?

Motivates us to be kind, compassionate, loving, gentle, truthful, etc. It should motivate us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

3. When you think about all the glory, honor, fame, fortune, exotic vacations, exploration, ecstatic joy of earth - and realize all these rewards are but a shadow of what’s to come- what do you look forward to most about Heaven?

Personal.

4. What questions or struggles do you wrestle with hearing all this?

Personal. Be honest with your group. Let them know that you don’t have all the answers.



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Read Matthew 6:1-6 & 16-21

What do you learn about the rewards of God?

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6%3A1-6&version=NIV>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6%3A16-21&version=NIV>

*God rewards us for our actions, whether that's with earthly praise or rewards from Him. Jesus cares about your heart and He desires mercy, not just the action or sacrifice. (Matthew 9:13)
God rewards and weighs our motives, and cares more about what is right and just than sacrifice.*

Proverbs 16:2-3 "A person may think their own ways are right, but the LORD weighs the heart. To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice."

Notice Jesus says, "when you give... when you fast... when you pray..." He doesn't say if, He says when.

Read Matthew 16:27 & Matthew 25:21

What are the things you are faithful with? What are some of the things you are unfaithful with?

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16%3A27&version=NIV>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+25%3A21&version=NIV>

Personal, but encourage your group members to keep being faithful with the gifts and the resources they are given. Can you imagine God telling you, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Also remember to not let anyone in the group try to fix one another with the second question. Let's make sure to give support rather than advice-giving. Trying to "fix" someone else is usually a sign that we don't want to deal with our own stuff.



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Read Matthew 19:16-21 & Matthew 22:35-40

What's the significance of these passages?

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+19%3A16-21&version=NIV>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+22%3A35-40&version=NIV>

Jesus teaches us the way to eternal life by following the commandments and gives us the double love command, which encapsulates the entire Hebrew Bible. These great commandments form the core of the Christian ethic. Jesus goes a step further and says that if we want to be “perfect” (the same command in Matthew 5:48) then we should follow Him and give up anything that stands in the way of true discipleship. It’s when we understand where our true treasure lies, when we “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14). Jesus is our treasure, our goal, and our prize.

Read Ephesians 2:8-10

How have you experienced God's grace in your life?

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+2%3A8-10&version=NIV>

This is the gospel. We are saved by grace through faith alone. Share with your group how you have been saved by and experienced God's grace!

Nerd note: The word “handiwork” or “workmanship” in verse 2:10 in the original Greek text is “poiema.” It’s where we get the English word “poem” from, and Paul is saying that we are God’s poetry. We are an epic poem made in the image of God!

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A F T E R: A New Series on Life Beyond Death

Session 6 - Discussion Guide

Watch:

“What’s After” Discussion Group SESSION 6 Video here: <https://vimeo.com/403875889>

After watching the video, answer these questions:

1. When have you experienced suffering or injustices in your life?

Personal.

2. Why do you think humans complain about suffering if it’s natural and normal to human existence?

We complain about pain and suffering because deep down we know that this isn’t the way that it’s supposed to be. The Bible says when we suffer, not if we suffer in this life. It doesn’t make it easier, but we know it’s universal. Jesus and his disciples talk quite a bit about suffering because they suffered as well. The book of Psalms is filled with poems about joy, lament, and thanksgiving and they’re often in the same hymn! We come to a God who understands our pain and suffering because He went through worse, and He promises that one day there will be no more pain, no more suffering, no more tears.

3. If NDErs have heavenly and hellish experiences, how does that affect your beliefs about how people end up at one or the other?

Our decisions and actions from this temporary life carry over into eternity. If we choose to follow Jesus’ leadership and be in relationship with Him, then that will extend for eternity. If we choose to turn away from God and towards ourselves, then that will extend for eternity as well.



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4. What do you think about the idea that our choice to say “yes” or “no” to God in this life determines whether we will be with or without God in the afterlife?

God is such a loving God that He gives us free will to make a decision to say yes or no to Him. It would be unloving to do otherwise.

5. Have you ever cried out to God for forgiveness and guidance? If so, what was the circumstance?

Personal.

Read Matthew 18:12-14

What does this tell you about God’s will and character?

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+18%3A12-14&version=NIV>

God’s will is that no one should perish but have eternal life through Jesus. God will search and pursue everyone who wanders off and rejoice when we are found. God is unrelentingly personal in his dealings with us.

Read John 3:16-17

Why did God send Jesus to the world? Why DIDN’T He send Jesus and why is that significant?

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A16-17&version=NIV>

God the Father sent the eternal begotten Son Jesus into the world so we can have eternal life with and through Him. Jesus did NOT come for condemnation, but we condemn ourselves when we turn away from Him. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). The purpose of the Son’s mission was and is to save the world, and he completed that mission and inaugurated His kingdom with his life, death, and resurrection.



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Read Romans 10:9-13 and Revelation 5:9

How and why do these passages give you hope?

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+10%3A+9-13&version=NIV>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+5%3A9&version=NIV>

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved,” Everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and everyone who professes their faith will be saved. There are no exceptions. You can’t out sin God’s grace and forgiveness, and you can’t outrun God’s pursuit. I cannot wait to be in the midst of God’s people of every tribe, every nation, every tongue praising His glory and goodness and honor and power. We catch a glimpse of this during every corporate gathering worship service around the world!

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