

The Kingdom of God
Lesson 12: The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Part 1)
LifeWalk Leader Guide

Open/Icebreakers: What will Heaven be like? What Scriptures/images helped you form this picture? What will Hell be like? What Scriptures/images helped you form this picture? Discuss your responses.

Digging In: Luke 16:19-31

1. Jesus contrasts the rich man and Lazarus. Talk about their differences. Paint a picture of how you see each character. Why are these differences significant?
2. What happens when they die? Why would the rich man make the request he states in vs. 24? Can we learn anything about him from this request? Discuss Abraham's response to this request.
3. Is the first part of this account a teaching of Jesus meant to be taken literally or do you believe this is a parable? Present evidence for both positions.
4. Is Jesus seeking to teach on Heaven and Hell in this parable or is there another point/focus? Discuss your thoughts.
5. Tertullian suggested that one of the joys of Heaven will be watching those in Hell receive eternal punishment (perhaps torture). Does this passage support that conclusion? Will the final judgment send unbelievers to eternal torture?
6. Consider the following metaphors used for God's final punishment.
 - Chaff- Matthew 3:12
 - Gehenna- Matthew 5:29 garbage dump outside of Jerusalem
 - Separation, Darkness, Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth- Matthew 8:12
 - Death- Romans 6:23 and James 1:15
 - Destruction- Matthew 7:13 and Matthew 10:28
 - Perishing- John 3:16

Can you think of any other images?

7. How can a loving God punish people like this? Can we enjoy Heaven knowing ones we love will be punished like this? How will God enjoy Heaven if His love knows no bounds and people He loves are in Hell? Discuss the balance between God's holiness and His love. How do these beliefs form your thoughts on what Heaven and Hell will be like?

Reflection:

1. Regardless of what we think about what Heaven/Hell will be like, the point is we want to be in Heaven. From the 1st part of this parable, what behaviors/attitudes should kingdom citizens have if we want to be with "Abraham?"
2. How can your group carry out this call?

Prayer: God, help me notice people and see them as you see them. Help me ascribe unsurpassable worth to everyone. Holy Spirit, move my heart to love and service.