

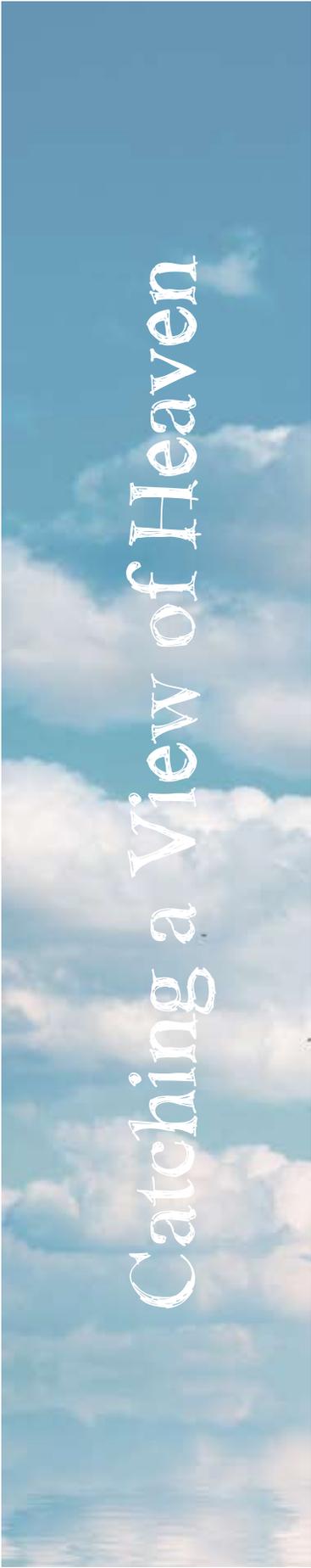
SAMPLE

Catching a View of Heaven

 **access**
downloadable curriculum

ISBN: 9780892651542

© 2009 Randall House Copying, distributing, or sharing this study beyond the use of the purchasing church or single campus site is a breach of ethics and illegal. It is also a breach of the license agreement to remove this statement from the study or from any customized or derivative study. To purchase this study or others like it, visit <http://AccessBibleStudies.com>



Catching a View of Heaven

INTRODUCTION

Catching a View of Heaven is a four-week study that will help participants realize that Heaven is a real, physical place. The various sessions discuss specifics regarding the geography, aesthetics, and population of our eternal home. Groups will be challenged to invite people to go to heaven with them and give encouragement to those who are almost home.

Session One: Catching a View of Heaven

Session Two: What Will Heaven Be Like?

Session Three: All Things New

Session Four: The New Jerusalem: a City of Lights

SAMPLE

Session One

Catching a View of Heaven

TEXT

2 Corinthians 12:1-7
Revelation 21:1
Revelation 21 & 22
2 Corinthians 5:8
Philippians 1:21-23

Romans 8:23-25
1 Thessalonians 4:13-14
Titus 1:2
Colossians 1:5

MATERIALS NEEDED

- 3x5 index cards
- Pencils or pens
- Copy of student handout for each participant
- Bibles

LESSON OBJECTIVE

Empowered by the Holy Spirit and yielded to His leadership I will seek to lead group members to . . .

Cognitive – Understand that we can catch a vision of heaven.

Affective – Anticipate the joy of catching a vision of heaven.

Value – Value catching a vision of heaven.

Action – Commit to catching a vision of heaven by participating in this study.

CONNECT

Pastor Robert Morgan writes: *While in San Diego I noticed a manicurist's shop called "Heavenly Nails." Recently I checked into a hotel that touted its "heavenly beds." My wife and I ate at a popular restaurant in West Palm Beach called "Hamburger Heaven." There appear to be about 200,000 small businesses in the United States with the word "heaven" in their title, such as Heaven's Spa, Stationery Heaven, and, of course, "Heavenly Hams." There is a coffee shop known as Heavenly Grounds, a business known as "Heaven's Best Carpet Cleaning," a beautician with a shop called "Heavenly Hair," and a dealer who calls his business "Heavenly Hot Tubs."*

This week we begin a study of the subject of heaven. Ask: *Where did you get your first impressions about heaven? What do you think it will be like there?* At this point in the study do not comment on the responses you receive. Do we have the right ideas? A look at the Scripture will guide us.



CONSIDER

Paul caught a real vision of a real heaven (2 Corinthians 12:1-7).

Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-7 and ask: *What revelation does the Apostle Paul describe in 2 Corinthians 12:1-7? What do we learn about heaven from Paul's revelation?* Paul had been attacked by some in the Corinthian church who were saying that he was inferior to the other apostles. It was a personal attack on Paul, casting the doctrines he preached into doubt. Paul was firing back. Out of modesty he referenced himself in the third person. *"I know a man in Christ,"* he said, *"who was caught up."* The phrase "caught up" means to be suddenly seized. Paul used this word in 1 Thessalonians 4 to describe the way Christians will be snatched away from this earth at the time of the rapture.

"Caught up to the third heaven." This is the only time the phrase "third heaven" occurs in the Bible, but there's little doubt what it meant. The first heaven is the heaven of the clouds, the second heaven is the realm of the stars, and the third heaven is the dwelling place of God Himself. The event was so real to Paul he was not sure whether it was physical or just visual. The third heaven seems to be synonymous with paradise. The word *paradise* has its roots in the Persian language. It was a word used by the Persians and later by the Greeks to describe a beautiful garden typically set aside as a private park for the royal family. This garden, usually enclosed within a lovely wall, was well-cultivated, spreading, and fruitful. The significance of the word seemed to be that it described a place of privacy, lush cultivation, absolute security, and breathtaking beauty.

What happened to Paul there? He tells us he heard words that are inexpressible—words that it is not lawful for man to utter. There are two options for what Paul meant here. The first is that Paul heard words in a heavenly language, but they were not translated for him and he did not understand them. The other view is that he did hear and understand the meaning but was forbidden to share it in his preaching or writing. The latter seems to be the correct view. The Lord gave Paul any number of visions for sharing, but this particular experience was for his own soul alone, to strengthen him and to encourage him as he launched out into a very demanding and difficult, world-changing ministry.

A vision of heaven can leave us undaunted by the fear of death (2 Corinthians 5:8 and Philippians 1:21-23).

Ask: *How did Paul's revelation affect his attitude toward death (2 Corinthians 5:8 and Philippians 1:21-23)?* The interesting thing is that after this remarkable experience, Paul seemed to have no fear of dying. He was eager to return to this fabulous place he had visited. His visit to heaven removed his fear of death, gave him a great anticipation for going to be with the Lord, and made the trials of this world much less daunting; for His attention was fixed, not on the light and momentary afflictions, but on his exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Ask: *What has been your attitude toward death? How might a clearer vision of heaven change your attitude?*

A vision of heaven can infuse us with hope.

His experience infused Paul with a hope he referenced again and again in his letters to the churches. Ask: *To what hope do each of the following passages of Scripture point?*

- 
- *Romans 8:23-25*—We live in a fallen world where decay and death are inevitable realities. However, in the life to come we will have new, eternal, incorruptible, resurrected bodies.
 - *1 Thessalonians 4:13-14*—When we face the death of one who knows Christ we do not have the hopeless grief of never again seeing the one we loved. Instead, we have the passing grief of those who anticipate a glad reunion to come.
 - *Titus 1:2*—We are born with a desire for eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11). As we catch a vision of heaven we realize this eternity is real, literal, enjoyable, familiar, and worth anticipating.
 - *Colossians 1:5*—Once we come to faith in Jesus Christ—confessing our sins and accepting His sacrifice on our behalf—we look forward with eager anticipation to spending eternity with Him. This hope of heaven infuses us with joy in this life.

Ask: *What area of your life most needs an infusion of hope?*

A vision of heaven can be the experience of every believer.

Ask: *What effect do you hope a clearer vision of heaven will have on your life?* Paul's experience was wonderful. Memories of it refreshed and encouraged his soul as long as he lived. We are assured by Paul's experience that heaven is real and catching a vision of it encourages our hearts. However, since he was not allowed to speak about it, his experience reveals none of the details we might hope for. Fortunately, what was inexpressible to Paul—the apostle of Justification—has been revealed to us by John—the apostle of Revelation. As we increasingly absorb his incredibly detailed and specific description, it will turn our fear of death into anticipation of the future and will change the way we feel about time and eternity. We are all by nature afraid of dying, but the Christian gradually replaces his apprehension of dying with anticipation for this City Foursquare whose builder and maker was God, and anticipation is a wonderful thing.

COMMIT

Ask the groups to discuss the “Examining My Life” section of the handout. Allow about 5 minutes for discussion and then review the questions together:

- Who have you known who seemed to live with a clearer vision of heaven than most? How did it affect their lives?
- How might a clear vision of heaven change the average believer today? How might it change you?
- What do you hope to gain from this study of heaven?

As you conclude today, challenge participants to do two things this week:

1. Ask five people to describe their understanding of heaven.
2. Read John's vision of heaven in Revelation 21 and 22.

If time permits read as a group John's travelogue of that great city in Revelation 21 and 22.

Student Handout 1

Catching a Vision

In three to five sentences describe your current understanding of heaven:

CATCHING A VISION OF HEAVEN

1. Paul caught a _____ of a _____ .

What revelation does Paul describe in 2 Corinthians 12:1-7?

What do we learn about heaven from Paul's revelation?

2. A vision of heaven can leave us undaunted by the _____ .

How did Paul's revelation effect his attitude toward death (2 Corinthians 5:8 and Philippians 1:21-23)?

What has been your attitude toward death?

- I simply don't want to be there when it happens.
- I am scared.
- I am looking forward to opening my eyes in heaven.
- I eagerly await my reunion with those I love.

How might a vision of heaven change your attitude toward death?

3. A vision of heaven can infuse us with _____ .

The following passages point to what hope?

Romans 8:23-25 –

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 –

Student Handout 1

Titus 1:2 –

Colossians 1:5 –

What area of your life most needs an infusion of hope?

4. *A vision of heaven can be the _____ (Revelation 21 and 22)*

What effect do you hope a clearer vision of heaven will have on your life?

Examining My Life

- *Who have you known who seemed to live with a clearer vision of heaven than most? How did it affect their lives?*
- *How might a clear vision of heaven change the average believer today? How might it change you?*
- *What do you hope to gain from this study of heaven?*

My Response

Here is your assignment for the coming week:

- Ask five people to describe for you their understanding of heaven (send an e-mail or bring it up at the water cooler).*
- Read John's vision of heaven in Revelation 21 and 22.*