youthESource Bible Study

The End (on a napkin in three minutes or less)

By Rev. Jay Reed

Leader's Notes for the Series

This series is designed to do three things:

- 1- Help participants get a simple, clear, scriptural understanding of what happens when you die, how the world will end, Judgment day and Heaven and Hell;
- 2- Challenge them to relate the truths of Scripture in a simple drawing that they can share with a friend;
- 3- Share the hope they have in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior in a relevant way.

It is designed in a catechetical format (question and answer) with Scripture references. My encouragement would be for you to look through the Scriptures and focus on those which would be most instructive and helpful for your group.

Allowing participants time to search for verses, read and discuss amongst themselves how they apply before the teacher answers is a valuable learning practice. Allow your students to wrestle with the Word!

The napkin drawing is to help students visually process what they are learning as well as give them a tool to share these truths with others. Have fun with it, and, if time allows, encourage them to practice with each other.

The explanation is simply a summary of the verse content and designed to assist you in teaching.

The discussion questions are designed to help participants process what they're learning and give you the opportunity to answer questions that they may have, but aren't considered in the study.

You will see some verses and themes repeated throughout the four sessions. Repetition of basic truths helps combat the deluge of misinformation and speculation about the subjects.

Below are listed some of the resources I used in putting together the study. It would be a good idea, especially on the "How the World will End" study to look through them.

The End: A Seminar on the End Times and Dispensationalist Millennialism, by Tim Pauls http://www.stpaulwv.org/scholia/42%20The%20End%20- %20Study%20on%20End%20Times%20for%20Youth%20and%20Parents.pdf

"Concerning the Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him: A Lutheran Response to the "Left Behind" Series

www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=406

"Concerning the Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him: A Lutheran Response to the "Left Behind" Series Bible Study by Reed Lessing

http://issuesetcarchive.org/issues_site/resource/archives/lessing.htm

"The End Times: A study on eschatology and millennialism" www.LCMS.org/document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=417

Christian Dogmatics, John Mueller (CPH) pp.613-644

A Summary of Christian Doctrine, Edward Koehler (CPH) pp.292-317

Session 1: What Happens When You Die (on a napkin in three minutes or less)

Objectives

Participants will:

- 1- Know the scriptural definition of physical and spiritual death,
- 2- Using a napkin drawing, share what the Scriptures say about what happens after death, and
- 3- Share why they have a confident hope in life after death through Jesus Christ.

Materials

Bibles, pens, paper napkins, whiteboard or newsprint, 3x5 cards for Bible verse assignments

Group Guidelines

If you have a large group, split them into groups of 3-4.

Opener

Have participants take turns sharing their responses with each other to the following questions:

- 1- If you could pick how you were going to die, what would it be and why?
- 2- What, to you, would be the worst way to die and why?

Looking at God's Word

Distribute paper napkins to participants and explain that the goal of your time together is for them to be able to explain to a peer what happens when you die by drawing on a napkin.

If you have a large group, copy the following questions and verse citations onto 3x5 cards and hand them to groups to look up and answer. If you have a small group, you can work through the questions together.

The Napkin Drawings

On the white board or newsprint, you will demonstrate what participants will draw on their napkin.



In the upper left hand corner draw and label according to this picture.

Explain to participants that, from a scriptural point of view, human life consists of having a body and a soul. We are both physical and spiritual beings, and both body and soul are created and given life by God.

After drawing the picture of body and soul, invite participants to copy the drawing onto their napkins.

When they have completed that, ask questions 1-5, having them look up the verses and then share their answers, adding clarification where needed.

1- Why is there death? (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23) (Death is the consequence of sin)

- 2- What is physical death? (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Matthew 27:50; Luke 12:20)
 (The Scriptures describe physical death as the separation of the body from the soul)
- 3- What is spiritual death? (Matthew 22:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:9)

(Spiritual death is not the annihilation or complete destruction of a person's existence but being totally cut off and separated from the presence of God and His grace)

Discuss- What are some common views of death and what do people think happens when you die?

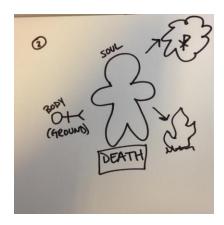
- 4- What happens to the body upon death? (Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastes 3:20) (The physical body returns to dust)
- 5- What happens to the soul after death of:

a) believers (Luke 23:43; Acts 7:59; Philippians 1:23-24; Revelation 14:13) and

b) unbelievers (1 Peter 3:19-20; Acts 1:25)?

(The souls of believers go to be in the presence of Christ, the souls of unbelievers are cut off from His presence in "prison." In both cases the souls await the final resurrection on the day of judgment.)

Discuss- How do any of these passages shed light on what people normally think about death and what happens afterwards?



Next, in the upper right hand corner, draw and label this picture, reviewing with participants what you just discovered from the Scriptures. Invite them to duplicate your drawing on their napkins.

When they have completed their drawings, move on by asking questions 6-7 and discussing their responses.

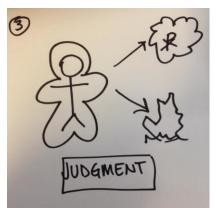
6- What happens to body and soul on the last day, the day of judgment for:

- a) believers (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:50-52) and
- b) unbelievers (Revelation 20:12-15)?

(There will a bodily resurrection of all people. Believers will receive new bodies in line with Christ's glory and join Him in Heaven. Unbelievers will be reunited with a physical body which will be condemned to an eternity of torment in hell)

7- What about the idea of people "getting their wings" (becoming angels) when they die, coming back in a different life form (reincarnation), coming back as ghosts or becoming one with some great cosmic energy? (Hebrews 9:27)

(One life, one death one judgment. Angels are a different created being. Only in this life, whether we receive Christ by faith or reject Him, determines eternity. No second chances. People don't become disembodied spirits)



In the lower left corner of your napkin, copy this picture and invite participants to do the same on their napkins.

Finally, ask question 8 and discuss responses.

8- How can someone be sure of going to Heaven after they die? (Romans 6:23; John 3:17-17; 1 John 5:11-12)

(Salvation is a free gift God gives through faith in Jesus' Christ. Jesus' death on the cross pays for our sin and His rising from the dead is our promise of eternal life. We can be sure of going to Heaven because He is faithful to His promises! Jesus also meets us in the Means of Grace—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through the Means of Grace we are assured of forgiveness of sins.)



In the lower right portion of the whiteboard, draw this image and have participants copy it on their napkins as well.

Summarize the session by giving a challenge to see if someone wants to try explaining what happens when you die through the napkin drawings in three minutes or less. Another option, if you have time, is to encourage them to do it in their small groups.

Session 2: How the World Will End (on a napkin in three minutes or less)

Objectives

Participants will:

- 1- Be able to draw a scripturally faithful timeline of the end of the world.
- 2- Understand the difference between the historic understanding (amillenial) of the end of the world and the more recent (premillennial) view popularized by the Left Behind movie and book series.
- 3- Share why we have a confident hope even in a time of tribulation and the end times through Jesus Christ.

Note

The scope of this study is not an exhaustive look at the end times from many points of view, but to present a scripturally accurate account in such a way as participants would be able to explain to others what the Bible says will happen at the end of time. For a more exhaustive study on the difference between the Lutheran view (Amilennialism) and Predispensational millennialism, see the following:

The End: A Seminar on the End Times and Dispensationalist Millennialism, by Tim Pauls http://www.stpaulwv.org/scholia/42%20The%20End%20- http://www.stpaulwv.org/scholia/42%20The%20End%20End%20Times%20For%20Youth%20and%20Parents.pdf

"Concerning the Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him: A Lutheran Response to the "Left Behind" Series www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=406

"Concerning the Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him: A Lutheran Response to the "Left Behind" Series Bible Study by Reed Lessing http://issuesetcarchive.org/issues_site/resource/archives/lessing.htm

Materials

Bibles, pens, paper napkins, whiteboard or newsprint, 3x5 cards for Bible verse assignments

Group Guidelines

If you have a large group, split them into groups of 3-4.

Opener

Have participants take turns sharing their responses with each other to the following questions:

- 1- How do you think the world is going to end?
- 2- If you knew the end was coming tomorrow, what would you do today?

Looking at God's Word

Distribute paper napkins to participants and explain that the goal of your time together is for them to be able to explain to a peer how the world will end by drawing on a napkin.

If you have a large group, copy the following questions and verse citations onto 3x5 cards and hand them to groups to look up and answer. If you have a small group, you can work through the questions together.

1- Why is the world going to end? (John 14:1-4; 2 Peter 3:7-13)

(God will use the end times to destroy the physical world that has been tainted by sin and then bring forth a new, perfect Heaven and earth. He will also judge and condemn those who rejected His love and disbelieved while restoring believers to Himself forever.)

Discussion- The end of the world is part of God's plan. From God's point of view, why do you think it's necessary?

2- What will the signs of the end be? (Matthew 24:3-14; Luke 21:7-33)

(People claiming to be the Messiah, wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes, Christian persecution, the rise of false prophets, increasing lawlessness and people growing colder toward one another)

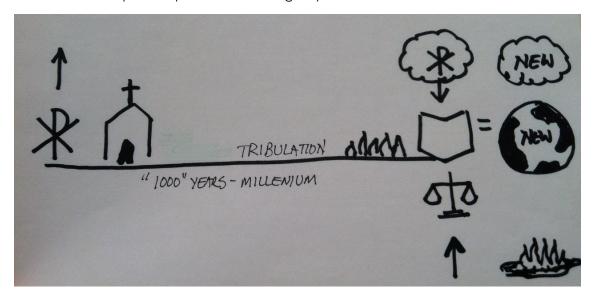
Discussion- Which of these signs do you see happening today? (point out that many of these signs have already taken place and are happening right now)

3- When will the end come? (Matthew 24:36; Matthew 24:21-22 & 29-31; Revelation 20:3,7)
(The exact day is unknown, but Scripture indicates there will be a time of increasing persecution against God's people and His purposes immediately preceding Jesus return—"Satan's little season")

Discussion- For Christians, what is our hope in persecution and in the end?

4- What will be the defining moment of the end? (Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:27-30; Revelation 20:11-21:2) (Jesus will appear in glory and everyone on earth will know it. All people will be judged and a new heaven and new earth will be established)

Summarize the timeline of questions 1-4 by reproducing the illustration below and invite participants to do the same on their napkins. Explain the following as you draw each item:

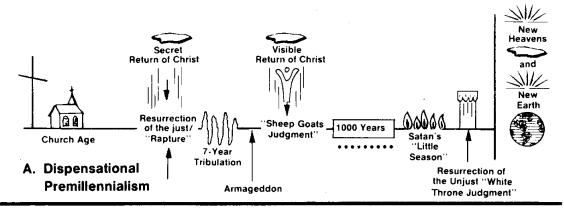


The Chi Rho symbol represents Jesus' first advent: His birth, life, death on the cross, rising from the dead and ascending into Heaven. The church represents Christ continuing to reign in and with His church. The "1000" year reign is a figurative number of completeness. During this time the church will face times of persecution and tribulation, but will be strengthened by God through His Word and Sacraments. The little flames represent "Satan's little season" or a time of increased persecution and difficulty. The Chi Rho in the descending cloud represents Jesus' visible return to earth. Upon His return, He will resurrect the dead (the arrow pointing up) and judge them (scales). Believers (those whose names are written in the Book of Life) will join Christ forever, enjoying a new Heaven and Earth. Unbelievers will be cast into hell (the lake of fire bottom right)

5- What about the "Left Behind" movie and series?

The Left Behind movie and series is based on a view of the end times called Dispensational Premillenialism (PDM). This view takes a literal reading of the book of Revelation and the descriptions of the end of time found in the Bible. The position of most Christian churches throughout history is called Amillenialism (AM) and understands the book of Revelation as a series of visions containing figurative as well as apocalyptic literature. Below are listed a few differences between a PDM and AM view of terms.

Teachers' note: Trying to explain the DPM view can get pretty involved and complicated. Below is a simple graphic to help compare the two views. You might want to use this portion as a study on it's own, or simply do a cursory explanation and refer your students to the links mentioned earlier for a more thorough understanding.



(Reproduced from The "End Times" A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod September 1989 (Appendix I)

Rapture- (1 Thessalonians 4:17; Matthew 24:40-41)

PDM- A secret coming of Christ when all believers who are alive will be taken up off the earth to be with Christ, ushering in the tribulation.

AM- Not a secret, first time return of Christ for believers, but another way of expressing what happens at the final coming of Christ

Tribulation- (Revelation 7:14)

PDM- A seven year period of suffering, plagues and warfare upon people "left behind" after the rapture. It brings a second chance for people to turn and believe in Jesus.

AM- A description of suffering and persecution that happens in many ways and times during the church age (from Jesus' death and ascension until His return) because of existing in a world of sin and Satan's influence.

The Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 13:11-18)

PDM- A world leader that will rise up during the tribulation and lead the world astray from God and persecute anyone who would believe.

AM- Not necessarily a single individual, but representing a system that would imitate or substitute anything in place of the Gospel of saving faith through the finished work of Christ alone.

Armageddon- (Revelation 16:16)

PDM- Not the last battle, but the one that will end the tribulation and usher in the "sheep/goat judgment" and millennium.

AM- A plain near a mountain in northern Israel (Har Megiddo) designated by the book of Revelation as the site of the final, decisive battle between the forces of evil and good on the day of judgment.

Millennium - (Revelation 20:1-7)

PDM- A literal 1000 year reign of Christ and His people over the earth

AM-- A figurative number, starting with the first coming of Jesus and ending when He comes again (also known as the "church age")

Satan's "Little Season"- (Revelation 20:3,7-10)

PDM- At the end of the Millennium, Satan is released from his bondage and has a "little season" where he is released to deceive the nations and war against the Lord one last time. God will finally defeat and destroy him forever.

AM-Seen as a time of Satan's increasing persecution of God's people and of deteriorating conditions on the earth, just before the final return and judgment.

White Throne judgment- (Revelation 20:11-15)

PDM- The final resurrection and judgment of the unjust

AM- The second advent of Christ, resurrection of all the dead, final judgment of all people. Unbelievers cast into the lake of fire, believers enter into the presence of Jesus forever.

6- Why hasn't God ended the world yet? (1 Timothy 2:1-4; 1 Peter 3:8-10; 2 Peter 3:15)

(God has no desire for people to perish and is using this time to work through the Gospel to bring people to Himself)

Discussion- Do you know anyone who is not a Christian? What do you think they would say if you shared your napkin drawing with them?

- 7- What are two important things for God's people to remember when thinking about the end of the world? (Luke 21:27-28; Luke 21:13-15)
 - (1- The end times are actually good news for God's people as it means the goal of their faith, being in the presence of God forever, is drawing near; 2- In the meantime, God will use trouble and persecution in the lives of Christians as a witness of His faithfulness to unbelievers)

Discussion- If someone asked you, "Are you afraid of the end of the world?" what would you say?

Challenge a participant to try reproducing the drawing and explaining how the world will end in three minutes or less. If you have time, have them practice sharing with each other in their small groups.

Session 3: The Judgment (on a napkin in three minutes or less)

Objectives

Participants will

- 1- Know the Bible teaches that there will come a day of judgment when all people who have ever lived will be judged.
- 2- Using a napkin drawing, explain how one goes from being condemned in judgment to being declared pardoned and forgiven in Jesus Christ.
- 3- Share why they have a confident hope when it comes to Judgment Day through Jesus Christ.

Materials

Bibles, pens, paper napkins, whiteboard or newsprint, 3x5 cards for Bible verse assignments

Group Guidelines

If you have a large group, split them into groups of 3-4.

Opener

Have participants take turns sharing their responses with each other to the following question:

When you think of judgment day, what comes to mind?

Looking at God's Word

Distribute paper napkins to participants and explain that the goal of your time together is for them to be able to use a napkin drawing to explain to a friend how Jesus gives hope and confidence about judgment Day.

If you have a large group, copy the following questions and verse citations onto 3x5 cards and hand them to groups to look up and answer. If you have a small group, you can work through the questions together.

1- Why does there have to be a judgment? (Matthew 25:34,41; Acts 3:17-21; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
(Judgment day is part of God bringing about the new heavens and the new earth. It is the way God will separate the wicked from His own, casting them into outer darkness, while the righteous inherit His perfect kingdom)

Discussion- Why is it important that God is both loving and just?

2- When does judgment take place? (Hebrews 9:27; Matthew 24:36)

(In one sense, each person's judgment is rendered on the day of their death according to their receiving or rejecting the Gospel. When Jesus appears a second time to judge the living and the dead, what we refer to as Judgment Day, is known only to God)

Discussion- Why do you think God does not reveal when the last day will be?

3- Who is the judge? (Matthew 25:31-32; John 5:22; Acts 10:42) (Jesus will be the judge)

Discussion- How does this add to or change your understanding of who Jesus is?

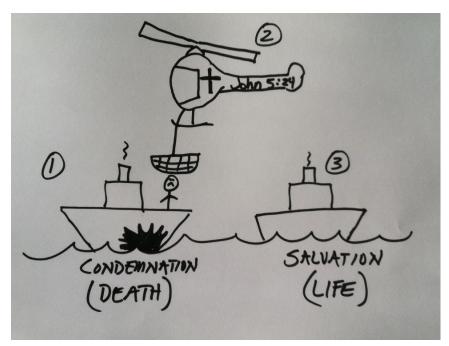
4- How will people be judged? (John 12:48; Romans 2:16; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 10:11-15) (People will be judged based on their disposition toward Jesus Christ and the Gospel. Those who receive Him by faith, will inherit eternal life. Those who reject Jesus, will be condemned.)

Discussion- How does this compare with how most people think God will judge them?

5- What condemns someone to Hell? (Romans 3:23; John 3:18; John 3:36; John 8:24)

(By virtue of original sin, we are conceived and born under God's wrath and condemnation. That is, we sin and rebel against God because it is the natural state of humanity since the Fall in Genesis 3. God reaches out to all fallen people in love by sending Jesus to redeem them from original sin and pay for

their rebellion against Him. What condemns someone to Hell then, is rejecting the only thing that can save them. It's like clinging to a sinking ship and refusing an airlift to safety.)



Draw the first part (only the guy on the sinking ship) of this illustration on the white board and have participants copy it onto their napkins. Explain that the ship represents the world, sinking as a result of sin. Anyone on it is condemned to die.

6- What releases someone from guilt and condemnation? (John 19:30; John 5:24; Romans 3:24; Romans 8:1) (Jesus' death on the cross paid for the sins of the world and guarantees forgiveness and eternal life for anyone who would trust in Him. This is a free gift which is received by faith. The Gospel is God's way of airlifting us from the sinking ship of condemnation to salvation.)

Now draw parts 2 (the helicopter with the hanging basket) and 3 (the other ship) of the illustration on the white board, asking participants to do the same on their napkins. Explain that the helicopter represents Jesus rescuing us from condemnation through faith in Him. Ask someone to read out loud John 5:24. (Jesus promises that anyone who hears and believes His word passes over from death to life.)

Discussion- What does it mean that the "wages" of sin is death? What's the difference between wages and a gift? So then, what gets people condemned and what gets them saved?

7- What about babies and people who haven't heard the Gospel? (Romans 2:14-16; Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33-36)

(The Scriptures tell us that God will judge according to what's in people's hearts and consciences. They also tell us that many of God's ways are a mystery to us. The Bible is His revealed Word to us, but there are things we don't get to see or know, and for those things we trust His mercy and judgment to be perfect.)

Discussion- Is the fact that God is a mystery difficult for you? Why or why not?

8- What is delaying judgment day? (Matthew 24:14; Luke 14:23; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4) (God's heart is that all people would believe in His Son and be saved. He continues to patiently reach out with the Gospel to turn the hearts of people to Himself.)

Discussion- If God delays Judgment Day so that more people can hear the Gospel and be saved, what's one of our purposes as believers?

Summarize the session by giving a challenge to see if someone wants to try explaining how one goes from being condemned in judgment to being declared pardoned and forgiven in Jesus Christ using the napkin drawing in three minutes or less. Another option, if you have time, is to encourage them to do it in their small groups.

Session 4: Heaven and Hell (on a napkin in three minutes or less)

Objectives

Participants will

- 1- Know the scriptural description of Heaven and Hell.
- 2- Using a napkin drawing, share what the Scriptures say about how to escape damnation (hell) and receive salvation (heaven).
- 3- Share how God's promise in His Word gives them a confident hope of eternal life in heaven.

Materials

Bibles, pens, paper napkins, whiteboard or newsprint, 3x5 cards for Bible verse assignments

Group Guidelines

If you have a large group, split them into groups of 3-4.

Leader's note: In this study, I use the terms "Heaven" and "Hell" because those are both familiar and misunderstood terms. We often think of them as physical locations. While the Biblical portrayal does include that concept, it is probably helpful to describe Hell as a state of damnation and total separation from God's grace and love and Heaven as a state of salvation, in God's presence where there is great joy. Obviously, you could spend many hours studying all the Scriptures referring to both Heaven and Hell, so the above definition is very simple. But it's designed to help teens get a clear, scriptural view description that they can relate to a friend in an understandable way. Thus the napkin...

Opener

Have participants take turns sharing their responses with each other to the following questions:

- 1- Describe what you think Heaven will be like.
- 2- Describe what you think Hell will be like.

Looking at God's Word

Distribute paper napkins to participants and explain that the goal of your time together is for them to be able to explain to a peer what the Bible says about Heaven and Hell and how the Gospel erases our fear of Hell and gives us the confidence of Heaven by drawing on a napkin.

If you have a large group, copy the following questions and verse citations onto 3x5 cards and hand them to groups to look up and answer. If you have a small group, you can work through the questions together.

The Napkin Drawings

On the white board or newsprint, you will demonstrate what participants will draw on their napkin.

1- What decides whether people go to Heaven or Hell? (John 3:16-18,36; Romans 3:23-24; Romans 6:23; 1 John 5:11-12)

(Since all mankind is born under and into sin, they come into the world already under condemnation or "God's wrath". Unless that sin is taken care of, they will be condemned to Hell. God, who loves people and desires all people to spend eternity with Him, sent Jesus to take care of sin, dying on the cross in their place. So Heaven, eternal life, is a free gift offered to all people who would trust in God's promise by faith. Those who "have the Son"—who trust in Jesus' work on their behalf—"have life", the hope and promise of eternity in God's presence. Those who do not have the Son—who reject Him as the only way of forgiveness and salvation, do not have life—they are condemned by their choice to Hell.)

Discussion- What about Heaven and Hell are hard for you to understand?

2- What about good things people do? Can they do enough good things to outweigh the bad and go to Heaven? (John 6:28-29; Galatians 2:16; John 14:6)

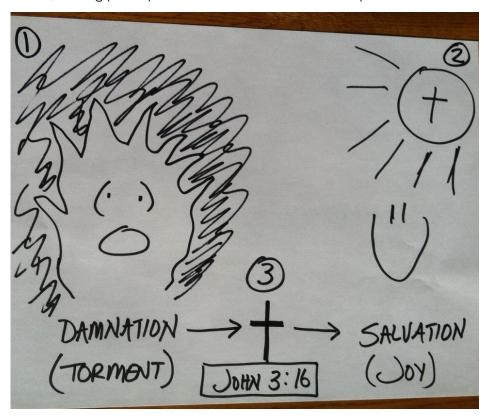
(Many people and religions teach if you do enough good things, if you're a good enough person, you can earn your way to Heaven. Eternal life is based solely on Jesus' work on behalf of mankind and is received only by trusting in Jesus. The only "good work" acceptable before God, is actually a gift that He gives: "That you believe in Him (Jesus) who He (God) has sent."

Discussion- How do these passages conflict with how most people think about "Getting into heaven"?

3- What is Hell Like? (Matthew 13:41-42; Matthew 25:41,46; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Jude 13; Revelation 20:14-15) (It is being cast from the presence of God, a place of outer darkness where the condemned suffer torment forever and ever)

Discussion- The reality of Hell is pretty scary. What do you think God is trying to communicate to people in the descriptions of Hell?

Draw portion 1 (the tortured face in the flame surrounded by darkness) of the drawing below on the white board, inviting participants to do the same on their napkins.



4- What is Heaven like? (Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 2:4-7; Revelation 21:1-7; Revelation 21:22-22:5)
(It is being fully in the presence of God and His glory. It is the absence of pain, suffering, fear and all the things people were afflicted by under sin, and instead living under His abundant blessing.)

Discussion- Heaven sounds like a great place! What do you think God is trying to impress on people through the Bible's description of heaven?

Draw portion 2 (the sun with the cross and the happy face, with the words "Salvation (Joy)" underneath and instruct participants to do the same on their napkin.

- 5- Can people get out of hell or fall from heaven? (Luke 16:25-26; Matthew 25:46) (No. Both the states of salvation and damnation are fixed for eternity)
- 6- Is there a purgatory, an "in-between" place to make up for sins on earth? (Mark 16:16; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 9:27)

(No. The Scriptures teach that judgment is based strictly on receiving or rejecting Jesus Christ in people's lifetime on earth. Once death occurs, or Christ's second coming, eternal destiny is set.)

7- How can anyone be assured of going to Heaven? (John 5:24; John 6:40; 1 John 5:11-13)

(Assurance of "going to Heaven" comes from faith in Jesus and His promises found in His Word. Faith is a free gift of God that allows us to simply take Him at His Word, trusting in His promise that whoever hears His word and believes in Him, has eternal life. Jesus also meets us in the Means of Grace—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through the Means of Grace we are assured of forgiveness of sins.)

Finally, draw portion 3 (the cross on "John 3:16" and the two arrows pointing from damnation to salvation) on the white board and have participants copy it to their napkins.

Discussion- If someone asked you, "Are you sure you're going to Heaven?", what would you say?

Summarize the session by giving a challenge to see if someone wants to try explaining what the Bible says about escaping damnation (Hell) and receiving salvation (heaven) by drawing on a napkin in three minutes or less. Another option, if you have time, is to encourage them to do it in their small groups.