

WEEK 6: HOW COULD A LOVING GOD SEND PEOPLE TO HELL?

ABOUT THIS SERIES

As we start the new year, join St. Mark on Sunday mornings for conversations on faith and doubt in our series *Reason for God*. Together, we'll take on some of the common questions people have about faith and Christianity.

ITEMS NEEDED

Bibles

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

Pray for your group Read through the Discussion Guide Refreshments (optional)
 Clean meeting area Clean bathroom Crack front door

OPENING (5 MIN)

After a general welcome, say: Okay, friends, let's get going with today's icebreaker—

WHAT'S A FUNNY STORY ABOUT A TIME GROWING UP YOU GOT CAUGHT DOING SOMETHING WRONG, AND WHAT WAS YOUR PUNISHMENT?

After a brief discussion, say: Today, as we continue *The Reason for God* series, we're looking at another idea of punishment as we ask, "How could a loving God send people to hell?"

But first, let's pray.

OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

Host, lead the group in prayer.

A PLACE PREPARED (15 MIN)

After a prayer, say: On Sunday, we heard how Jesus described hell as a place with eternal fire, with weeping and gnashing of teeth, the absence of all that is God's, a prison, and the outer darkness. We also heard that hell is a place God prepared for the devil and his angels after their rebellion. Let's read about this revolt in three sections of Scripture:

I'LL ASSIGN A FEW VERSES, THEN, READ THEM ALOUD FOR THE GROUP:

REVELATION 12:7-10

ISAIAH 14:12-15

EZEKIEL 28:12-18

HOW DOES THIS CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT HELL?

After a discussion, say: At the risk of being simplistic, one way to think about faith is that you and I, under the curse of sin, are a part of the rebellion. But when we pledge our allegiance to the High King of heaven in faith, we "pass from death to life", to use Jesus' words.

CAN SOMEONE READ COLOSSIANS 1:12-14 ALOUD FOR US?

HOW DOES THIS CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK OF HEAVEN?

A DIFFICULT TOPIC (15-20 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Despite this good news about living forever in the kingdom of God, there's a tension Christians feel in talking about hell.

WHY DO CHRISTIANS HAVE SUCH A HARD TIME TALKING ABOUT HELL WITH NON-CHRISTIANS?

After a discussion, say: Over time, when Christians tend to avoid the topic of hell to focus on other parts of faith, church starts to become a country club more than a rescue mission to save as many as possible.

HOW DOES THE CONVERSATION ABOUT HELL CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH?

HOW DOES THE CONVERSATION ABOUT HELL CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR ROLE IN GOD'S MISSION?

After a discussion, say: During this discussion, someone has likely come to mind for you.

WHO IS SOMEONE YOU LOVE WHO IS IN DANGER OF PERISHING APART FROM GOD?

After a discussion, say: I wouldn't suggest leading with the topic of hell with a non-believer. If they're going to believe, it's going to be because they believe in the resurrection of Jesus. But the topic of hell does give motivation and urgency to reach them.

HOW CAN YOU INVEST IN THEM THIS WEEK TO EARN THE CHANCE TO TALK ABOUT JESUS OR INVITE THEM TO CHURCH?

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT AND PRAYER (5 – 7 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Before we get to our prayers, we have two quick announcements—

One, Prosper the City is going to be coming up after Easter, so just prepare your calendars now for some more Small Group meetings in late April and May.

Two, every Small Group is going to sponsor one of the prayerwalks this summer. We'll help plan routes, plan Scripture, and bring refreshments for our particular week. So be looking at which of your Wednesday evenings this summer would be good for that.

Let's close things out with prayer—

ARE THERE ANY PRAYER REQUESTS TODAY?

We'll start our time of prayer with a few moments of silence for you to say the name of the people in your life who are far from God. Then, we'll get into the rest of our prayer requests.

Host, begin the prayer by saying, "Heavenly Father, we come to you now asking you to save the people we love, including..." and then leave a time of silence for people to say the name of the loved ones on their minds. After a few moments, continue with the rest of your prayer request.