

BEYOND

What the Bible says about about life after death

— The New You —

1 Corinthians 15 Small Group Plan

There are two common ways to think about heaven. For some, heaven is the natural conclusion and climax to a life lived for God here on earth. For others, longing for a future heaven is not really connected to day-to-day living in the present world. Once the “salvation” ticket is punched, life is lived just as it has been with little or no growth or change.

A friend of mine once asked the question, “*What’s the difference between a man with ten years of experience and a man with one year of experience, ten times?*” His answer? “*The first man actually grew each year, while the second man just repeated his first year over and over.*” I think this is what modern writer Brian McLaren had in mind when he said,

“The Gospel is not an evacuation plan but a transformation plan.”

Thomas Hardy, a much older writer, followed the same line of thought (1909),

*“The main object of religion is not to get a man into Heaven;
but to get Heaven into him.”*

Will heaven be a ticket that I purchase and then put away until I pull it out at the end of my life? Or, will heaven be the next logical, seamless step from a life that has been growing and changing since the first day that God’s grace entered?

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- If a young child were to ask you about heaven, what would you say, how would you explain heaven to their young mind?
- If an older child were to ask the same question, how would your answer be different? How would it be the same?

1 Corinthians 15:42-44

³⁵ But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” ³⁶ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else ... ⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ 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.

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— STABILITY —

verse 42

*Your earthly body is perishable,
the resurrection body is imperishable.*

- What has been the most difficult health issue you have had to face?
- How much of your time and resources are spent dealing with illnesses and staying well?
- How would your life be different if you did not have to deal with health issues?

— SPLENDOR —

verse 43

*Your earthly body is buried in dishonor,
the resurrection body is raised in glory.*

- “Dishonor” - **τιμία** - describes a body that has been used “shamefully or disgracefully”
“Glory” - **δόξα** - describes a body that will be used to “praise, honor or glorify”
- Imagine and describe the actions of a body raised for the purpose of glory.

— STRENGTH —

verse 43

*Your earthly body is weak,
the resurrection body is raised in power.*

- The child runs with energy. The young adult moves with strength. The older adult walks with care. The aged adult walks with difficulty.
- What kinds of tasks were you once able to accomplish easily that you now approach much more carefully?
- How would it feel to always be able to walk with strength and power and never have to worry about falling or needing a joint replaced or an organ transplant?

— SUBSTANCE —

verse 44

*Your earthly body is natural,
The resurrection body is spiritual.*

- To say that our earthly body is **natural** is to say it is best suited for life here on earth. Even with physical limitations, how have you enjoyed the natural world you live in?
- Now, imagine a **supernatural** world. What might the mountains, valleys, oceans, colors, tastes and smells be like in this amazing new world?
- Also, imagine having a **supernatural** body. Pick one of the senses — heighten it by a factor of 100 or 1000 and bring that sense to bear on this amazing **supernatural** world. Try to describe this encounter. What would it be like?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- How would it feel to live and move with a body that is stable and indestructible?
- What experience with creation most fills you with a sense of God's presence — oceans, mountains, wind, spring, family, winter, or _____?
- Why do our experiences with God's creation produce feelings of wonder, awe and an amazing appreciation for our creator God?
- If this motivating power is available now, in our present world, with all its weaknesses and limitations, describe how you would feel if you lived in a world without any limitations or weaknesses?
- Close in prayer by thanking God for His amazing presence right here in our present world. Ask for His strength to use your time here to prepare your "*heart, soul, mind and strength*" (Mark 12:30) for an even more amazing time in the next world.