



Community: Its Purpose, Its Power, and Its Promise Reaching The Lost

Jesus said that heaven and hell are real places with real people in them. Heaven and Hell are literal. They are not mythical. They are not analogies that represent something else.

It is very hard for us to relate to Hell. It is hard for us to relate to anything that is never ending. It is hard for us to relate to a place where people are suffering and the suffering never ends. It is hard for us to accept that the God of love that we know would create such a place and send people to Hell forever to experience His wrath. We have trouble with the truth that God is angry with the wicked every day and that He is storing up His wrath for the day of wrath. We feel a need to defend God's reputation when we see examples of God's terrifying wrath in the scripture.

Since I have compassion for anyone who is suffering in this world, I would prefer that Hell did not exist. But what I prefer about the existence of hell carries no weight with a holy, just, and all knowing God. God knows things I don't know and He makes just decisions based on information I do not have.

Throughout the course of my life I have come to accept this about authority figures. They know things I don't know and make decisions based on that information. Since the character of God is immutable, I can trust that all His decisions are just, even sending people to hell.

Jesus is sometimes viewed as the good guy in the Trinity who has intervened to save us from the bad guy in the Trinity. There is no such division. Whatever is true of one member is true of all.

Jesus revealed the love of God in a way that even the angels did not understand.

But Jesus also revealed the wrath of God in a way that is more terrifying than any revelation that preceded Him.

Prior to the coming of Jesus what was known about what happened to the unrighteous after they die was very limited and very vague. It was so vague that one of the leading sects among the Jews did not even believe there was a resurrection of the dead.

Here is what they knew from the Old Testament.

- The OT prophets spoke about God's wrath. (Deuteronomy 32:22; Psalm 2:12; Psalm 18:7; Psalm 7:11).

They frequently said God is angry at the wicked. Psalm 7:11 is one of many verses that indicate this indignation or anger is directed toward those who perpetrate wickedness ("the wicked").

- The OT prophets spoke of a time when God would have His "day." (Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1,11,31; 3:14; Amos 5:18,20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7,14; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi. 4:5).

The day was a day of justice in which God would express His anger toward sin and visit judgment on the wicked. They referred to this as "The Day of the Lord." The Psalmist also refers to this day as one of wrath and judgment:

The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on **the day of his wrath**, (Psalm 110:5 ESV)

- The OT prophet Daniel described the duration of this "day" of wrath as eternal: (Daniel 12:2)

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and **everlasting** contempt. (Daniel 12:2 ESV)

- The last OT prophet, John the Baptist, warned the Jews about the wrath of God. (Matthew 3:7-12).

Matthew 3:7

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" NKJV

He warned the Jews that the messiah would expedite God's judgment on the wicked. He warned them that they were not exempt just because they were Jews.

Matt 3:8-12

8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

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Jesus revealed the love of God in a way that even the angels did not understand. It was even rather confusing to John the Baptist.

But Jesus also revealed the wrath of God in a way that is more terrifying than any revelation that preceded Him.

- Jesus described hell as the eternal home to the wicked. (Matthew 25:46).
- Jesus said hell is a place where the wicked are like worms that do not die. (Mark 9:44).
- Jesus said hell is a place that the wicked experience incredible torment. (Luke 16:28).
- Jesus said hell is a blazing furnace where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:50).
- Jesus said the fire never goes out and that wicked can find no relief from their torment. (Mark 9:43).
- Jesus said that in hell both the body and soul of the wicked is destroyed. (Matthew 10:28).
- Jesus told the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar. (Luke 16:19-31).

Luke 16:19-31

19 "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. 20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, 21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

25 But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. 26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

27 "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' 29 Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

NKJV

The parable described the suffering and hopelessness the rich man was suffering in hell.

- Jesus portrayed Himself as the final judge; a terrifying figure who would determine the eternal destiny of the wicked. (Matthew 25)

Imagine a place where everything that you consider good is gone.
When God is gone, good is gone! (James 1:17)

James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

NKJV

Hell is a place that is void of God and the goodness of God.

Wicked men in this world want God's goodness but they do not want God. (They are like dead beat adult children.

When the wicked die they will no longer be able to enjoy a life without God and the goodness of God. If the wicked do not want God in their lives in this world, they will get what they want after they die in eternity. The wicked will be sent to a place that is void of God and void of His goodness.

Hell was created before the world was created for the devil and his angels who rebelled against God. (Matthew 25:41). By creating hell, God gave them what they wanted but without His goodness.

Wicked men often ask the question, "If God is good, why is there suffering in this world."

The wicked should be asking, "Since mankind is wicked why is there any goodness in this world?"

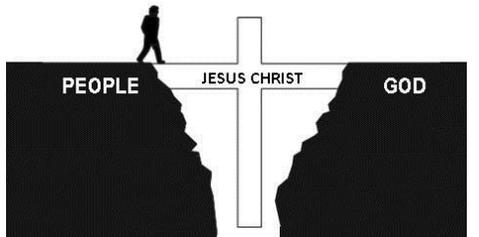
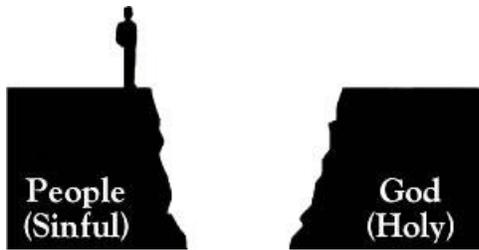
The only reason that there currently is any goodness in this wicked world is the mercy of God.

One day the wicked will get what they have wanted for eternity. They will live in a world void of God but it will also be void of His goodness. What a terrible place!

Are you the wicked? Do you perpetrate evil? Do you intentionally commit immorality? Do you encourage others to commit evil by your evil influence; the influence of your actions; the influence of your words; the influence of your attitudes?

Do you want God in your life? Yes, or no? If you don't want God now, God is going to give you what you want when you die.

If you want God in your life, Jesus said you must receive Him. (John 14:6)



To escape the final judgment Jesus must consider you morally pure rather than wicked.

Jesus said there was only one way to be considered righteous, pure, holy, clean, virtuous, perfect, a child of God, His friend, and good. Trust Him for your salvation.

He is God. He was born of a virgin. He performed signs. He lived a perfect life. He was executed for sins He did not commit. He died in the place of the ungodly. He died for us. He died to save us from wrath.

If you will receive Him, your sins will be blotted out and erased from your account. You will be considered righteous, pure, holy, clean, virtuous, perfect, a child of God, His friend, and good. God will come into your life.

Will you receive Jesus right now?

Will you work as a team to save others from the wrath to come?

Many do not work in community to reach the lost because they know that their Christian community is not very attractive to the lost. "Why would I invite one of my lost friends into our Christian community?"

Many churches have identified this problem and have made changes to try and make their Christian community more seeker friendly. The focus is the worship service and other events.

I do not have a problem with being seeker friendly.

But here is our vision. We want our small groups to practice team discipleship to reach the lost.

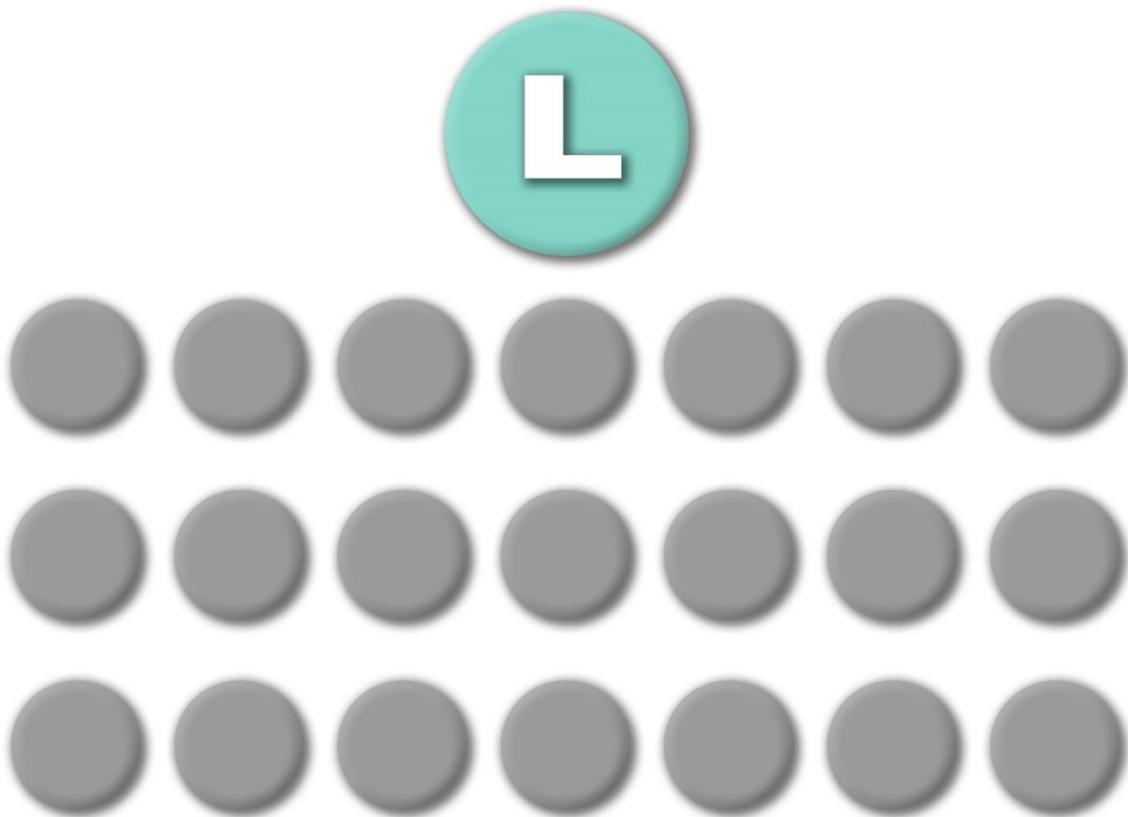
If we will practice team discipleship when an unbeliever attends our small group meeting they will experience...

The presence of Christ

The power of Christ

The love of Christ

Most small groups in churches are speaking in tongues to unbelievers. They look like this.



As the teacher is teaching in Christianese they have no understanding of what is being said. They do not see the group being transparent, encouraging, and supporting one another.

The members of the group are not that excited about inviting their lost friends to attend the group because they are not that excited about attending the group.

Our vision is to change this. We want our small groups to look like this.

[Discipleship Is A Team Sport](#)



This will enable every member of the silent majority to have a place to participate. And as we practice team discipleship here is what will happen.

1 Cor. 14:23-25

23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. 25 And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

Will you work as a team to reach the lost?