

This midweek study will explore what life after death is like for believers. Use the following outline, activity, playlist, and video ideas to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: Life After Death

The Bible teaches that when a Christian dies he or she immediately is with the Lord (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8). This is what some people call an intermediate state, given that the final state for believers takes place at the future resurrection (Rev. 6:10-11). For those who are not in Christ, life after death results in being separated from Christ in a state of suffering, even though future judgment remains (Luke 16:19-31).

1 When believers die, they are immediately with the Lord (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8).

The Scriptures say that at the moment of a believer's death they are present with Christ. There isn't a place where believers must wait before access to heaven is granted. Heaven is immediate and believers are aware that they are there.

- ▶ *How does being with God immediately after death remove a certain level of anxiety about death?*

Read 2 Corinthians 5:8.

- ▶ *In what terms did Paul describe our dwelling with the Lord when we are away from the body? Why is that significant?*
Because we know we will be with God immediately after death, we are free to trust God in obedience on earth today.
- ▶ *What are some additional ways being present with the Lord immediately after death gives us courage in the present?*

Read Luke 23:43.

In this passage, Jesus assured the thief on the cross of being with Him in paradise immediately. Jesus said this, not as a possibility, but as a sure fact.

- ▶ *Why was Jesus able to assure the thief on the cross that he would immediately be in Heaven?*

2 The final state for believers takes place at the future resurrection (Rev. 6:10-11).

Option: Think of the best sports team possible (basketball, cheerleading, football, soccer, etc.). Ask students to list their favorite championship teams and to tell why these teams are the best in their eyes. Ask the students to imagine that their team has been ranked first throughout the entire season and is easily recognized as the best team. Even though they have an unchallenged ranking, the team doesn't fully earn its title until mid-season. When does that final crown come? Obviously, when they win the championship at the final game of the year.

While we are on the winning, number one ranked squad with Christ as our Coach, the final, ultimate and greatest resting place for us will be after the final resurrection and judgment. At this point believers will be at the final state with Christ.

Read Revelation 6:10-11.

- ▶ *In your own words describe what happened in this passage. How does it hint at our final state in Christ?*

- ▶ *At the final judgment and resurrection, what does this passage say Christ will accomplish?*

At this judgment and resurrection, Christ will judge the nations and set everything right. Sin and death will be abolished and those who have trusted Him will reign forever with Christ.

- ▶ *How does this realization affect the way you live your life now as a child of God?*

3 For those not in Christ, life after death is separation from Christ in a state of suffering (Luke 16:19-31).

Read Luke 16:19-31.

In this passage, we read a parable of a man who lived richly on Earth, but missed the kingdom of God. This passage describes the final condition of the individual who treasures earthly possession over Christ.

- ▶ *In what ways is this story applicable today? How does the truth of this story still ring true?*

Hell isn't an in-between place, or a time-out, designed to warn people to turn to Christ. Hell is permanent, and at the final judgment and resurrection, those who have rejected Christ will be sent there forever.

- ▶ *In what ways does the reality of hell wake you up to the urgency of the gospel message?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What ways can the knowledge of your life after death effect how you live today?*

Challenge students to know a believer is present with the Lord immediately after death, even though the final state for the believer occurs at the future resurrection.