

Love and Hell

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of what we want to walk away from the discussion with—knowing, feeling and doing.

Main Idea: Justice and love demand that crimes against God's people be punished. Not to do so would be to perpetuate injustice.

Head Change: To understand that our actions today have eternal and even serious consequences.

Heart Change: To be stirred in our spirits to lead lives that are pleasing to God.

Life Change: To become more intentional about our priorities, decisions and choices; to speak about the reality of hell to our loved ones who are not yet saved.

OPEN

Two young girls, aged 9 and 7, were kidnapped from a shopping mall, while they were waiting at a table for their parents, who were in a line to pick up their food. Even after several weeks, the girls have not been found. Police suspect that the girls have been trafficked out of the country.

Crimes like trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse hit the headlines on a regular basis.

Discuss in what way, if any, participants feel that such crimes are justified. Do those crimes deserve to be punished? If the public justice system were to take a lenient view to such crimes, what would the response be? How much would they trust such a system to care for them when they needed justice?

In our hearts is a deep desire for justice. When we read accounts of people who have been wronged, our hearts burn with anger as we long for justice on behalf of the victim. Retribution is an integral part of every legal system and the system that fails to punish wrongdoers would be a flawed and ineffective one.

In this session, Anand Mahadevan explains how it would be impossible for a loving and just God to simply overlook sin. Hell is a reality and the inevitable consequence of consistently rejecting God's offer of grace.

Here are a few things to look for in the upcoming session. As you watch, write down how Anand Mahadevan answers these questions.

What are the three common questions that people have regarding hell?

Why can't a loving God simply forgive sins instead of subjecting people to eternal hell?

How do we know that hell really exists?

Would the presence of hell imply a sadistic and cruel God?

WATCH

SESSION 5: *Love and Hell* (10 minutes)

[illegible]

REVIEW

Anand Mahadevan reminds us in The Parable of the Talents, the master punished the servant who had not carried out his responsibilities by consigning him to hell. What is your emotional response to this? In what ways do you think the measure of the retribution matches or does not match the gravity of the 'crime'?

What do you think the servant was actually guilty of? How does his response to the master show his real heart condition?

Anand talks about two 'after death' possibilities. Which notion do you subscribe to? How does your belief impact your everyday life? What would your life look like if you believed the alternative?

How do you think that your perspective on eternity would affect your life on earth?

Anand says that often we might find ourselves wondering why God cannot just be merciful and forgive everyone. If God was like that, how do you think it would affect your response to Him? How would it alter the course of your daily life?

What emotions does the concept of a just God evoke within you? How do you think the lack of hell as a real place would thwart moral justice?

Anand notes that hell is a state of perpetual rebellion against God. It is a state of 'self-imprisonment' brought about by hatred for God. How do you think this observation holds true for the servant in the parable? In what matters, if any, are you guilty of rebelling against God and locking yourself in against Him? How does this passage challenge you to alter your response?

A holy and just God cannot simply ignore acts of rebellion against Him. That would negate the efforts of those who lead upright lives. And yet, amidst the moral necessity of hell, we find that God has been merciful. What are the 'acts of mercy' that you recognize even with regard to hell? What is your assurance that you will not face hell?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Read through Revelation 20:10–15, 21:8, Matthew 13:50, 25:46, Luke 16:23, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, 2 Peter 2:4. List out the words and phrases used in each of these references to describe hell? What emotions do these verses evoke?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9–10. According to these verses, who is condemned to hell? How do you think the judgment befits the gravity of the crime?

What is the end of people who are condemned to hell?

Read Matthew 7:21–23. What words of caution do these verses hold?

Why does Jesus call the professing believers ‘workers of lawlessness’ when they were doing things for him?

What are some ways in which we could be active in God’s work and yet miss out on being a true follower?

Read Luke 9:23–26, James 2:14,21, 26, Galations 5:22. According to these verses, what are the three ways in which we can become ‘true’ disciples or followers of Christ?

James emphasizes the importance of work and faith. Explain this verse in context of Jesus’ words that one’s works, even when done in Jesus’ name, cannot save him.

How can the fruits mentioned in Galations 5:22 be an indication of our standing in Christ?

Hell is perhaps the most uncomfortable aspect of Christian doctrine. And yet, the Bible categorically states that hell is real. Jesus spoke more about hell than about heaven, because of His deep desire to save mankind from it. However, as Christians we have a hope—Jesus already experienced hell on our behalf.

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

PRAY: Thank God for standing in the gap and filling in on areas where you fall short, through His death on the cross. Pray that you will be sensitive to His correction and leading.

ACT: Hell is real but Jesus experienced hell for us because of His love. He stood in the gap for us by taking the death we deserved. How will you stand in the gap for someone you love?

JOURNAL: Write down in a journal what has stood out for you in this teaching. What life changes will you incorporate as a result?
