

TALK IT OVER

Key Scriptures

from the Message:

Matthew 7:21-23

1 John 5:13

Romans 8:15-16

Romans 4:1-3

Hebrews 9:25-26

Revelation 20:11-15

Luke 16:31

Start reading.

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast."

1 Thessalonians 2:13

"And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe."

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Have you ever wanted to join a specific group or club? Were there requirements that you had to meet? Were you able to meet them? Sometimes Christianity can be treated the same as joining a club, but let's jump into the questions and discuss what the Bible says about who gets in and why?

Start thinking and sharing. Ask a question to get your group thinking and to create openness.

- How do we know the answers to any questions about God? In order to respond to that question, we want to point out that one of the core values of Generations is Biblical Authority. "God speaks to us through the Bible and we recognize it as the final authority for our lives." Why is this value important to our discussion? Read and discuss 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Psalm 86:8-10, Romans 1:20, and 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
- Abraham lived in Old Testament times. Read Romans 4:1-3. What did Abraham "do" in order to be "righteous" in God's eyes? What are the first 2 words in all these verses; Hebrews 11:3-9, 11, 17, 20-24, 27-31. Read Hebrews 11:1-2, 13-16. In what did these people of the Old Testament (before Jesus' death on the cross) put their faith?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. In what do the people of the New Testament (after Jesus' death on the cross) put their faith?
- In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus is speaking to people who claim to be Christians, but they are frauds. Troy points out that this is different than a Christian who has truly trusted Christ as their Savior, but who feels like a fraud. Think about a time when you felt like a fraud because you were dealing with things like sin, busy life, doubts, or something else. Does just feeling like a fraud mean you're a fraud? Why or why not?
- We don't **feel** our way to salvation, we **faith** our way there. Read and discuss Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 10:9-10, 13, and John 3:16. Read Romans 1:16 and discuss if, when it gets right down to it, there is really any difference between the OT and NT way to heaven?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Have you put a "stake in the ground"? Discuss this idea with your group. Are you struggling with feeling unsaved, that your faith isn't enough? What's stopping you from putting a "stake in the ground" today?

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Pray for God to help you grow in your knowledge of HIS Word.

Start digging. For further study.

- Continue to discuss the question, "Is there some way for anyone to be saved after death?" Study through the article on the back of this sheet.

Question: "What does the Bible say about Purgatory?"

Answer: According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, Purgatory is "a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in God's grace, are not entirely free from venial faults, or have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions." To summarize, in Catholic theology Purgatory is a place that a Christian's soul goes to after death to be cleansed of the sins that had not been fully satisfied during life. Is this doctrine of Purgatory in agreement with the Bible? Absolutely not!

Jesus died to pay the penalty for all of our sins (Romans 5:8). Isaiah 53:5 declares, "But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed." Jesus suffered for our sins so that we could be delivered from suffering. To say that we must also suffer for our sins is to say that Jesus' suffering was insufficient. To say that we must atone for our sins by cleansing in Purgatory is to deny the sufficiency of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus (1 John 2:2). The idea that we have to suffer for our sins after death is contrary to everything the Bible says about salvation.

The primary Scriptural passage Catholics point to for evidence of Purgatory is 1 Corinthians 3:15, which says, "If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames." The passage (1 Corinthians 3:12-15) is using an illustration of things going through fire as a description of believers' works being judged. If our works are of good quality "gold, silver, costly stones," they will pass through the fire unharmed, and we will be rewarded for them. If our works are of poor quality "wood, hay, and straw," they will be consumed by the fire, and there will be no reward. The passage does not say that believers pass through the fire, but rather that a believer's works pass through the fire. 1 Corinthians 3:15 refers to the believer "escaping through the flames," not "being cleansed by the flames."

Purgatory, like many other Catholic dogmas, is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of Christ's sacrifice. Catholics view the Mass / Eucharist as a re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice because they fail to understand that Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice was absolutely and perfectly sufficient (Hebrews 7:27). Catholics view meritorious works as contributing to salvation due to a failure to recognize that Jesus' sacrificial payment has no need of additional "contribution" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Similarly, Purgatory is understood by Catholics as a place of cleansing in preparation for heaven because they do not recognize that because of Jesus' sacrifice, we are already cleansed, declared righteous, forgiven, redeemed, reconciled, and sanctified.

The very idea of Purgatory and the doctrines that are often attached to it (prayer for the dead, indulgences, meritorious works on behalf of the dead, etc.) fail to recognize that Jesus' death was sufficient to pay the penalty for ALL of our sins. Jesus, who was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14), paid an infinite price for our sin. Jesus died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 2:2). To limit Jesus' sacrifice to atoning for original sin or sins committed before salvation is an attack on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. If we must, in order to be saved, pay for, atone for, or suffer because of our sins, then Jesus' death was not a perfect, complete, and sufficient sacrifice.

For believers, after death is to be "away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:23). Notice that this does not say "away from the body, in Purgatory with the cleansing fire." No, because of the perfection, completion, and sufficiency of Jesus' sacrifice, we are immediately in the Lord's presence after death, fully cleansed, free from sin, glorified, perfected, and ultimately sanctified.