



## START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

**This week we started the message off by talking about phobias. Do you have any specific phobias?** (i.e., heights, small spaces, spiders, romantic comedies etc.)

## SHARE

Welcome to our teaching series called “Off The Record.”

Have you ever wondered about certain topics that never seem to be talked about in church? Topics that stand like elephants in the room, yet the church seem to shy away from? Many times we like to talk about these things ‘off the record,’ because we are either too afraid of what people might think of us or many times, we are not sure how to answer tough topics that are difficult to answer. As a church, we believe that we are accountable before God to bring the full counsel of the word of God and that we can’t shy away from the truth.

The truth is we are all broken, we all struggle and that the life Jesus offers us is better; better than anything else the world offers. So during this series, we are going to be full of grace. Every one of us needs grace. There is not one of us who should point the finger at another broken person, for we are all at the table of grace thanks to Jesus Christ. We will allow the word of God to speak to us and trust that even if we differ in opinion at times that we can trust the Holy Spirit to do what He does. It is the very spirit of God that will bring change and conviction, not a domineering argument.

Last week we talked as a church about the biblical view of the end times and what that means for us today. This week we will take it a step further and talk about heaven. For many people, when we think of heaven we think of clouds, harps, endless church services and boredom, when in fact it is so great, it is hard to even imagine it. C.S. Lewis said it best in a book called “The Weight of Glory” regarding our weak human viewpoint:

*We are halfhearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.*

**Let's start by reading:**

Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:7-13 & Revelation 21:1

In Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament, Mr. Wiersbe discusses Heaven:

The Greek word for "new" means "new in character" rather than "new in time," and this suggests that God will renovate the old heaven and earth and remove all that is sinful and destructive. Note 2 Peter 3:7-10, where we are told that a fiery judgment brings about this renewal of the old creation. "Passed away" does not mean "destroyed." The fact that there is "no more sea" is significant, since John was exiled on an island and separated from those he loved. Two-thirds of the globe today is water; so that in the new creation, God will have devised a whole new system for watering the earth.

**Is it hard for you to comprehend a place free of all that is sinful and destructive? How would that change how we live our lives?**

**In Isaiah, God tells us that there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Were you aware that God will create a "new heaven and a new earth"?**

## **GROW**

In the message this week, Chad talked about the Bible's assurance that if we are absent from the body, we are immediately present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Jesus himself gave that assurance to the thief on the cross and assured him that he would be with him in paradise (Luke 23:43). Yet God will create a new heaven and a new earth someday.

Randy Alcorn's book called "Heaven" gives us great insight to this:

The present Heaven is a temporary residence where the departed saints live until the return of Christ and our bodily resurrection. The eternal Heaven, the New Earth, is our true home, the place where we will live forever with our Lord and one another. The great redemptive promises of God will find their ultimate fulfillment on the New Earth, not in the present Heaven. Once we abandon the assumption that Heaven cannot change, it all makes sense. God does not change; He is immutable. But God clearly says that Heaven will change."

### **Revelation 21:27**

**Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of Life.**

Imagine a place where nothing impure will ever enter it, where there is no deceit or shameful acts that hurt other people. Someday that will happen; God promises that. It is hard to think about because of our fallen world. Imagine if earth was like that this very day. Could you imagine the impact it would have on the planet? Security companies would be out of business, no lock-makers, the entire porn industry would crash. There would be no stealing, no cares of identity theft. Imagine a world where we wouldn't have to have our guard up against predators, thieves, con artists or being ripped off. Even the exercise of thinking about this is difficult, because we are so accustomed to a fallen state of living, but God will create things anew!

**Can you talk about some examples of how sin has affected how we live today?**

**Does it excite you to think of living in eternity with God in a place free of worry?**

## MOVE

So what's next then? What will we look like in eternity? What will we do? Will we eat? Will we be creative? So many questions flood in as we read through scripture. As we read throughout the bible, we realize that it is a far more amazing place than we ever thought.

### Let's read 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

In Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament it gives us clarity:

"How are the dead raised?" is the key question here. Paul uses illustrations from nature to show that there is no life apart from death. The seed that is planted dies and bears fruit, and the fruit, while identified with the original seed, is different from it. The resurrection body, like the bodies in the heavens, will have its own kind of glory. It is not the same body that was planted (v. 37), but there is continuity between the buried body and the resurrection body. The physical body laid in the grave is liable to corruption; it is humble, a body of humiliation; it is weak; it is suited to a natural environment. The resurrection body will not decay; it will have power and glory; it will be suited to a spiritual environment. It will bear the image of the heavenly.

The resurrection body of Christ illustrates what Paul is teaching here. The believers recognized Him, so there was continuity between His crucified body and His glorified body. But He was also able to change His appearance. He passed through locked doors, yet He also ate fish and honey (Luke 24:41-43) and invited the disciples to feel Him. It was the same body, yet it was also a different body. The resurrection body retains the personal identity and individuality of the believer, but it will be suited to a new way of life.

In the message this week, Chad talked about many of the verses that talk about our new heavenly bodies, resurrected bodies that will not break down. We will eat, laugh, dance and where there will be culture, art, food and animals according to scripture. (Take time to read these scriptures this week: Isaiah 11:6-8, 2 Cor. 4:16-17, Luke 12:37, Isaiah 25:6, Matt 8:11, Luke 22:29-30, 2 Cor. 5:3)

### 2 Corinthians 4:16-17

We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

**Are there some things you might be facing today that are making you 'lose heart?'**

**How can we pray for you today to be renewed?**

## PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

## TO GO

Revelation 22:17

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

Additional reading:

Signs of the Times by Greg Laurie: What the Bible Says about the Rapture, Antichrist, Armageddon, Heaven, Hell, and Other Issues of Our Day

Heaven by Randy Alcorn

\*We would also highly recommend when studying the Bible that you should find a solid study bible with notes. The NIV Study Bible or the ESV Study Bible, are both, excellent Bibles that have scholar notes, cultural content and timeline charts. This will change the way you read the Bible and help engage you into what is really happening as you read.