

## ***Series: Behold! The City***

### **Lesson 2: Hope Ahead**

#### **Lesson Objectives:**

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Identify some of their questions about the future
- Search scripture to find God's promises about the future

#### **Materials Needed:**

- ☐ Strips of scrap paper
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Board and markers
- ☐ Table (optional)
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ DVD copy of *What Dreams May Come*
- ☐ Copies of handout "Behold! The City: Two"

## **Lead In:**

Ask the students if they remember some of the content of the previous lesson. Solicit some answers. Ask them if they still have any questions about life after death? If they don't, close in prayer and go play basketball. Just kidding! Who doesn't have more questions about life after death?

Say something like, *In the last lesson we uncovered some of our own and our culture's popular ideas about heaven or life after death. We learned that heaven is not an individual ride but a group experience. This is a good thing to learn as it gives us hope for the future. However, we likely have more questions than just this. In fact, we may find that we are full of questions about what will happen to us when we die. This week, we are going to uncover some of those questions and explore the Bible for answers. We'll begin by uncovering some of our questions.*

## **Task One:**

Similarly to last week, have a pile of scrap paper available along with pens. Have the students write their questions, one per strip, on the scrap paper (without putting their names on the strips). Have them put the strips in a pile. They can write more than one. Begin by doing an example together. For example, you might want to know, "When I die, will I become an angel?" You would write that on one strip of paper and put it face down into the pile.

When students are done generating questions, turn the strips over and gather any duplicates. For any question that was written down more than once, record that on the board. On the board you should now have a list of the most common questions. Have a look at what remains. Choose a few more answers (or all if space permits) to record on the board. You can aim to have about 10-12 questions recorded on the board. You can leave all of the strips on the table. Let the students know that you will be returning to

these questions in the third task but that first you are going to do some answer-hunting in the Bible.

## **Task Two:**

Say something like, *People from all cultures and all times have wondered about life after death. People have wondered if they would see their loved ones again and whether there would be another place for them to continue living. Painters have painted their ideas, novelists have written their ideas, and movie makers have filmed their ideas. I'm going to play you a clip from a movie called What Dreams May Come. In this clip, the main character, Chris, has just arrived in heaven. Watch the clip and identify at least one question from our list that this movie maker is also trying to answer. (It might be helpful to know that Chris's wife was called Annie and she was a painter.)*

Play the clip that begins at 24:25 in chapter 6 (Chris is running down the tunnel towards the light) and ends at 31:44 (Chris and his friend are approaching the house). Ask the students what questions they think the movie is trying to answer.

Transition by saying something like, *What a beautiful picture of heaven! It is fascinating to imagine what life might be like after we die, but is there anything in the Bible that can help us understand what God has said and promised about our future? Let's work together to find out.*

## **Task Three:**

Instruct students to gather in pairs and give them copies of the handout, "Behold! The City: Two", and pens. The instructions for the task are on the handout. It may be very helpful to do the first example together.

When students have finished Task Two, stop for feedback. Solicit their responses to each of the scripture passages. Sample answers are provided below but students will answer in their own words. Record the answers on the board if you still have space (do not erase the questions from Task One).

When you have agreed on a set of answers, solicit their summary statements (at the bottom of the handout) and decide on one that you all agree on together. Emphasize, as scripture does, that in the future, God will live directly with the people. This is repeated again and again in the relevant scripture verses but is sometimes downplayed in our popular impressions of life after death. Other things that are emphasized are God's compassionate and loving actions towards people and creation as well as God's abundant provision for the new creation.

#### **Task Four:**

Now instruct the students, still in their pairs, to turn their attention to the questions from Task One, which are written on the board. Have students review the questions and decide together whether there are any questions that have been answered by the work they have done in Task Two. For example, if one question is "Will heaven be really boring?," they might refer to the Parable of the Great Feast and decide that the Bible teaches that our future with God will be more like a luxurious party. The pairs can use the back of their handout to record any partial or complete answers to the questions on the board.

When they are finished, draw the whole group's attention to the board. Solicit some responses. Remove the questions that are suitably answered. For example, if you did have a question such as "Will heaven be really boring?" and a student is able to convince the group that the Bible answers that question, erase it. Continue with as many answers as your group can agree on.

At the end of the task, you will likely have unanswered questions. That is okay. Keep reading.

### **Closing:**

*Say something like, Today we have disclosed some of our questions about life after death and we have found the Bible's answers to some of our questions. But as you can see, we have not found the Bible's answers to all of our questions. Does that mean that the Bible doesn't have all of the answers? Does it mean we didn't read enough or work hard enough? Are some of our questions wrong or unanswerable? In our next lesson, we are going to explore some of these remaining questions. Stick around to find out some of the controversial and often confusing questions about our future life.*

Close by thanking God for the awesome teachings of the Bible and the hope that they give to us.

Note: It would be ideal to leave the unanswered questions on the board and/or to record them for use in the next lesson.

## Task Two (Answers)

Have a look at the Scripture verses below and record anything in the verses that gives us hope for the future.

John 14: 1-7

- There is room for many
- Jesus is preparing a place for his disciples
- Jesus will be with his disciples in the place he is preparing

Luke 14:15-24

- The future with God is not for the elite; there are many places at the banquet for all kinds of people
- God treats his guests like a king treats the elite, bringing out all the best for them
- God will be with his people at the banquet

Revelation 21:1-5

- God will dwell with the people, who will be his children
- God will comfort people and there will be no suffering or pain; these things will be gone forever

Revelation 22:1-6

- There will be plenty and healing
- The Lord will be there with the people
- There will be no more curse on creation

Have a look at your answers. What do you think is the main message of these verses? If you had to sum them up in only a few words, what would you write? Write it here:

After death, God and people will be in harmony again and he will take care of them with great abundance and love!