



HERE OR THERE?

Disciples & Early Church • U7#3 1st-3rd Gr. • Jan.19, 2025

Concept

In Christ there is meaning in life and gain in death.

Goal

Students will learn that heaven is their real home since they are children of God. They will see how they can get excited for heaven and what it will be like!

Passage

Philippians 1:20-25, 3:20

Key Verse: "I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live."

Philippians 1:23-24

Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p>Learning Activity #1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "A Peak at Heaven", 1/class <p>Learning Activity #3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Velcro or Gaffer's Tape, 8' piece/room</i> 	<p>Activity Stations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Someday Heaven, Larry Libby</i> • Drawing paper, 1/student • Crayons, markers

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information (for the teacher)

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Paul's attitude in Philippians 1:20-26 is foreign to most of us. How can he view life and death as equally desirable, not knowing which to choose?

"For the Apostle, the service of Jesus Christ, the honor of Jesus Christ, has given life and death their meaning. Paul desires that he will not be ashamed of Christ. He longs for the courage to honor Him 'in his body.' Christ has liberated Paul from selfishness, having become the focus, center, motivation and goal of his life. Having answered the question of Christ, the questions of life and death are now answered through Him.

"Death becomes gain (1:21). In the paraphrase of J.B. Phillips, 'to die is to gain more of Christ.' Death means departing and being with Christ and this is 'very much better' (1:23). The quality of life in Christ which Paul has received cannot be destroyed by death. Christ is the resurrected Lord. He promises that those who believe in Him will 'never die' (see John 11:26). We no longer face death alone. Christ has gone through it for us. He will go through it with us. Nothing, not even death, can separate us from His love (see Rom. 8:38,39).

"To depart and be with Christ is 'very much better' because it will turn faith to sight (see 1 Cor. 13:12). Paul longs to see the Lord and be fulfilled in His presence. Heaven is also 'very much better' because it means the end of sin, suffering, loneliness, anxiety, and death. Furthermore, it means reunion with those who have gone before us in Christ. No wonder Paul longs to depart. Christ gives us an authentic 'homesickness' for heaven, to hold His gaze, to be held in His hand, to know and be known. Because we know where we are going, the journey in this world gains authentic meaning.

Life becomes full. Life is Christ (Phil 1:21), and life is Christians (1:22,24-26). Freed from the fear of death, Paul is able to live with abandonment, 'careless' about the future, investing himself in the cause of Christ, which centers in people. His 'fruitful labor' is the 'progress and joy in the faith' of the Christians at Philippi (1:25). As the Philippians grow in Christ their joy increases. Paul's ministry helps accomplish these results.

"Philippians 1:21 is Paul's motto; 'For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' It is Christ who, resolving the issues of life and death, gathers the fragments of Paul's life into a whole. Christ places the mark of eternity upon all the Apostle does. He brings unity, purpose, and direction. He is Lord over the life Paul lives. Here is Paul's journey into joy—nothing more or less than Christ."¹

¹ Don Williams, *Philippians-Inductive Bible Study Series*, ©1979 by G/L Publications, pp. 104, 105.

Activity Stations:

- **Craft – "My Favorite Place"**
 - **Instructions:** As students arrive, have them draw a picture of their favorite place or the best place they can imagine.
- **Imagination Station – "The Best Place of All"**
 - **Goal: Time to imagine the best place of all.**
 - **Instructions:** On the white board make 4 columns – Favorite Place, Perfect Place, Want to do?, Who would go? In the appropriate column, list the things the students mention as they answer following questions to use in the Introduction: (1) Tell me what you like best about your favorite place; (2) Imagine the most perfect place, better than anywhere you have ever been. What would it be like?; (3) What would you want to be able to do there?; (4) Who would you want to go with you to that place?
- **Research – Someday Heaven by Larry Libby**
 - **Instructions:** Look through the book with the students; have them tell you what they know about heaven and let them ask questions.

**Introduction
Lg. Group**

When you came in to class, some of you drew a picture of your favorite place and some of you put your ideas together as you imagined the most perfect place. Do you ever think about your favorite place and wish you could be there? Do you get excited about going to your favorite place?

Have you ever thought that there really is a perfect place? Do you know what it is? (It is heaven.) What do you think heaven is like? Do you think it is like the things we listed in these first two columns? Or is it even far more wonderful than all of these put together? It is going to be even better than we can imagine! Do you ever think about heaven and get excited about being there someday?

Transition

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul was very excited about seeing Jesus face to face. Let's read what Paul wrote!

**Lesson
Lg. Group**

Listen as I read Philippians 1:20-25. In this 1st chapter of Philippians, Paul told his friends that he was in prison and might be killed. He said he hopes he'll never be ashamed but instead he would continue to be bold for Christ and trust that his life would bring honor to God whether he lived or died. "Bold" means to be fearless and adventurous. So thinking about Paul being in prison waiting to see if he is going to be killed for telling people about Jesus, what does it mean that he wants to continue to be bold for Christ? How do you think his life would bring honor to God whether he lived or died? These are very important things to think about. Paul had to decide if he would protect himself by not talking about Jesus or to trust God and be bold whether it meant he would live or die.

Paul wasn't afraid to die. Death meant that he would begin life forever with Jesus. In fact he wanted to be with Jesus more than anything!

Lesson Continued

But he also loved people and wanted them to know Jesus and to grow in their faith. No one, not even the King, could cause Paul to die before God said it was the right time. Our key verse this week is, "I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live" (Philippians 1:23-24). If he had a choice, he didn't know what he would choose. On one hand, he wanted to be in heaven with Jesus; but, on the other hand, he was willing to stay to do God's work for the sake of other people.

- How do you know if you will be in heaven? Who can tell me how we can be sure we are going to heaven?

So, first of all, it is crucial we all understand that everyone isn't going to heaven. Just because we think we are, doesn't make it true. God wants everyone to have a relationship with Him and He has provided the way. But we have to do it His way. That is to admit that we sin and ask Him to forgive us. The Bible tells us that the minute we do that, we become His child. John 1:12 says, "... as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." As a child of God, we have the promise that we will spend eternity in heaven with Christ and everyone else who accepts Christ's forgiveness.

Have you ever thought about what work God has for you to do in this life? Paul thought the way he did because he knew and loved Jesus. He knew why he was here on earth and where he would be after he died. Just as Paul did, we have very exciting and important things to do for Him in this life and then go to heaven to live with Him forever when we die.

Philippians 3 verse 20 says, "... our homeland is in heaven, and we are waiting for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." As God's children, heaven is our real home. Seventy, eighty or even ninety years sounds like a very long time when you have only lived for 8 or 9 years. But even if we live to be 90 years old, it is really only a short time when compared with eternity. Paul always remembered that heaven was his real home. Jesus was his life and heaven was his real home.

I have a story to read now that tells a little about heaven. Let's get up and stretch a minute before I read the story.

Story -- "A Peek at Heaven" read by a teacher

Let's get into small groups to talk about this a little more and to pray.

Transition

Learning Activity#1 Lg. Group

Transition

Learning Activity#2 Sm. Groups

- What is our key verse? What does it mean?
- Do you ever think about what it will be like for you after you die? There are many people who think they will go to heaven after they die. How can we know for sure?
- Why is it difficult for Christians to live as though this life is all that matters?
- Have you ever heard anyone talk about the perspective Paul had in key verse? What do you think about that? If you lived believing that every day, would your life look any different? (Suggestions: want to know Christ more, be less afraid to do God's work and more anxious to please Him than to please ourselves, friends or other people. Although sad when a Christian we love dies, can have joy because know we'll see them again. We'd also be very eager to look for ways to serve others so we can tell them about Jesus. We want to tell them about the far better life waiting for us and invite them to join us.)

Missions Prayer: Talk about and pray for the Oasis Giving Campaign.

Let's pray and thank Jesus for providing a way through His sacrifice for us to be with Him. If you have a relationship with God through Jesus, you can pray that God will draw us more and more to Him so we will have the perspective that Paul had, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Let's pray that those who don't know Jesus will consider asking Him into their lives.

Let's get up and play a game.

Game - HERE... OR THERE...

- **Goal:** To consider the value of life here and the anticipation of heaven and to distinguish between them.
- **Instructions:** Place a Velcro (or Gaffers tape) line on the carpet to divide the room into "HERE" and "THERE." Have the students consider things about life on earth and heaven that excite them. Call on a volunteer to come up front and share his or her idea. When the idea has been shared, the rest of the students will determine if this occurs "HERE," i.e., on earth, or "THERE," i.e., in heaven, and move to the "HERE" or the "THERE" side of the line. Then have the student say who is correct. You may need to begin with some of your own ideas to help them understand the game. Some suggestions: no one ever gets sick, people learn that Jesus died for their sins, no one ever sins, even though we can't see Jesus we can pray to Him, we can tell others about Jesus, we have cars so we can travel and visit our friends, etc.

Game: "Hello Neighbors!" guessing game/role play

Goal: Students will consider meeting other believers in heaven

Transition

Learning Activity#3 Lg. Group

Optional Activity

Instructions: Teachers will act as believers the students have read or heard about. The students will ask questions to guess who they are. Teachers can begin with one or two clues. Example: I am a woman who lived in Nazareth; you can read about me in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the Bible. Keep it fun. See list of possible characters below. If enough time, allow the kids to act out the characters.

Suggestions for "Hello Neighbors" Teacher role Play:

- Mary (Jesus' Mother)
- Moses
- David
- Gabriel (the angel)
- Jonah
- Noah
- Abraham
- Daniel
- Paul
- Yourself
- Peter
- Silas