

## one

Do we really want to go to Heaven?

Many of us, if we're really honest with ourselves, would admit that we don't really want to go to Heaven – at least not yet...

Sure, we'd probably prefer heaven to the idea of hell, or even annihilation, but we're certainly not eager to get there right now. That's why we're all so afraid to die, and why we always try so desperately to delay death as long as possible, which is strange for people of hope who believe in heaven.

Why would we want to delay heaven as long as possible?

Why have we lost our desire for heaven, and what can we do to regain it?

## two

Cultivating the Desire for Heaven

As human beings, our desires are tied to our imagination. Unfortunately, most of us have a terribly impoverished *image* of Heaven.

When we think of Heaven, we think of a white room, or a big choir that sings "alleluia" all day long, or a bunch of people playing harps and sitting on clouds.

Obviously those images of Heaven aren't going to thrill us; they're not going to make us excited about the next life. We've lost sight of the glory, the joy, the total and perfect happiness that awaits us when we finally come home to God.

The New Testament, though, encourages us to use images of Heaven that reflect the very best moments of our earthly experience

Jesus presents heaven as a wedding feast. Think of the best wedding reception you've ever been to, good food, good music, family all happy to see each other, friends reunited. That'd be a great way to spend eternity, wouldn't it?

He also describes Heaven as being like good wine. He says in heaven everybody gets a mansion *with the mortgage paid off*. Or we read that heaven is rest, and reward, and praise for a job well done

## three

The Goods of this Life *are* a Foretaste of Heaven. Heaven will be different from earth, no doubt about it, but it won't be *completely* unlike earth, because it will still be the same God who governs it and fills it with creatures that reflect His goodness.

That's why revelation describes the next life as "a new heaven, and a new earth," all the good things of this world purified and freed from evil and weakness.

Jesus, in one of His most staggering promises, says, "Everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more" (Matthew 19:29).

Remember, all the things we love on Earth, every friend or child or sunset or book or building, we love these because they've been allowed to share in God's goodness. And God is pure goodness, He's the source, He's the undiluted spring that has filled all the cups of creation with the goodness that can only partially quench our thirst. So when we reach God, we'll have all goodness and all the joy we've ever known on Earth but scaled to infinity.

That's what Heaven means.

## four

So we don't have to cling to this life

We don't have to be afraid that by dying we're going to a lesser world, we're going to a richer one.

An unborn child couldn't imagine how much richer life is, how much more multifaceted his experience is going to be, when he leaves the womb. And we can't imagine how much richer, more exciting our experience will be when we're born to the next life.

So ignore the people who say, "You only live once," it's not true. You live twice, and the second time it's forever.

And ignore the people who say, "You can't take it with you" because all the good stuff, all the joy and happiness and love and friendship and insight and beauty and achievement and everything worthwhile, we *do* take to Heaven, and we find more of it there than we ever glimpsed here.

This life is good. Heaven is unimaginably better. So get excited, not scared, as it draws closer.

## five

What we need to do, then, is make new images of Heaven

Jesus took examples of the best moments of human life to give us some sense of the goodness that's waiting for us. So why don't we do the same thing?

Think of the five most wonderful, beautiful, perfect moments of your life.

Now thank God for those moments. Those moments were just a foretaste of what He's prepared for you. Imagine having that kind of experience, but more, and forever. That's what's waiting for us in heaven.

Sounds pretty good doesn't it! So hold on to that image.