



A Tough Message

Focus The Bible directly refers to hell 167 times, describing it as a real place of eternal torment.

Open What is the worst place you've ever visited?

Read Many people are distancing themselves from the doctrine of hell, denying its existence. But the Bible teaches about both a literal heaven and a literal hell. Hell is a real place that was created for Satan and the angels who followed him, not for people (Matthew 25:41). Jesus came so we would never have to go there. He talked about hell 33 times while He was on earth.

Luke 16:19–31 is a true story—not a parable—that Jesus told about hell. It's about real, specific people. It describes the experience of a “certain rich man” who went to hell (Hades). Four times the passage refers to hell as a place of “torment,” which has three meanings: acute pain, severe torture and intense fire. From this story, we learn that when a person goes to hell, they will desire comfort, express concern for their loved ones and seek consolation.

Two physical properties on earth that help keep us physically and mentally stable are light and solid. Hell is a place of eternal darkness—you can try to adjust your eyes forever, but you will never see anything. Hell is a bottomless pit—no matter how hard you reach or how long you fall, you will never touch anything ever again. There is no light or solid in hell.

Two emotional properties on earth that help keep us emotionally stable are rest and hope. Revelation 14:11 says there is no rest in hell “day or night.” Hell is eternal torment—there is no hope for escape or deliverance.

It's a tough message, but it's up to us to warn people so they won't go to hell.

Talk

1. Read Luke 16:19–31. As you heard the story, what stood out most? Why? What do you think Jesus most wanted to communicate to us through this story?
2. Why must we not downplay or dismiss the doctrine of hell?
3. Read Mark 9:43–48 and Matthew 13:41–42. How do these passages describe hell?
4. Have you ever felt like you were tormented—have you experienced something so physically or mentally painful that you felt desperate for relief? Describe how you felt. Compare that feeling of torment with the Bible’s description of eternal torment—a bottomless pit, a lake of fire and sulfur with no light, solid, rest or hope. How do you feel when you imagine this *eternal* torment?
5. Jesus compared hell to the Valley of Gehenna—a place where the bodies of paupers and criminals were burned, and idolaters sacrificed their children (alive) to Baal and Molech. Imagine Jesus telling people about the realities of hell. What do you imagine Jesus’ demeanor was as He talked about it? How do you think He feels about people going to hell?

Live

1. a. Have you been afraid to talk to your friends and loved ones about the realities of hell or are you apathetic about sharing the gospel with other people? Why?
b. After thinking about the tough message of the realities of hell, do you consider your fears or apathy worth confronting in order to help others meet Jesus? What will you do?
2. If you’re not sure that when you die you’ll go to heaven, ask someone in your group to help you pray the following prayer: *“Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I ask You to forgive me for all of my sin. I ask You to come into my life and be my Lord and Savior. Thank You, Jesus, for saving me today.”*

Pray

Thank God for making a way for us to choose eternal life through Jesus Christ. Ask Him to help you share the gospel with the people within your sphere of influence so they can be spared. Ask Him to help you see eternity from His perspective and be bold to speak up and share Jesus with others.