

## Small Group Leader Notes Week of 9/23

Romans 8:37-39 is a powerful promise to place our hope upon. Let me encourage you to begin this weeks study by reading through Romans 8:18-39 as an opening devotion to the love of God. Just like an opening prayer or worship song, an opening reading of God's promise puts our hearts ready to receive the working of His Spirit.

Father, we look for you to work powerfully in the hearts of your people through this study. Amen

New Jerusalem  
Where are the people who die in Christ?  
Revelation 21:2-4

In preparation for this lesson if you have not already, I recommend you read chapter 5 & 6 and 24 of the book Heaven by Randy Alcorn.

**Memory Verse: Revelation 21:3**

*"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'"*

Isaiah 7:14 prophesied to the Israelites the promise of the coming of the Messiah (coming to man) and in Matthew 1:23 the Angel tells Mary that Jesus is about to be born (among man) and he will be called Immanuel which means "God with us". In Revelations 21:3 our memory verse this week we see once again that God's plan is to live among us and we will be his people and he will be our God forever and ever. This time He is bringing us to Him and we are all going to live together with our Lord in New Jerusalem.

**Weekly Reading:**

Day 1	Romans 8:18-27
Day 2	Romans 8:28-39
Day 3	2 Corinthians 5:1-10
Day 4	2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2
Day 5	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

**Study Questions:**

Begin encouraging people to come up with scriptures that support their opinions on Heaven. Ask them to share what they are learning as they read through the Bible and the Heaven book.

1. Where do you think people go when they die in Christ? What scripture would support your answer? (Look at Ecclesiastes 12:7)

In Ecclesiastes I read that at death the spirit returns to God, our giver of life. What does 2 Corinthian 5:1-10 say about this? What about 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18?

2. Based upon what you read in God's word, how confident are you that you go immediately to heaven when you die?

Let people discuss and wrestle with this question and encourage one another in truth. Your job as the leader is not to convince them but to encourage them to seek the truth from the Holy Spirit.

### 3. How does the word Paradise give you a glimpse of Heaven?

Greek Word: paradeisos is translated Paradise and refers to a garden or park. The word is only used in the following verses; Luke 23:43, 2 Corinthians 12:4, Revelation 2:7.

Paradise in my mind reflects a perfect place where I long to be. When I think of Paradise I think of the island of Kauai that my wife and I vacationed at a couple times. The tropical beauty is overwhelming and the peace and tranquility give me a glimpse of paradise (Dennis' view). It reflects in my mind a place of rest and a delight to the senses. Also, the fact that the word indicates a garden or park leaves me with a remembrance of the original "Garden of Eden."

- What do we learn about Paradise in Luke 23:43?

By all means this is one of my favorite messages in the Bible. These words of Christ assure me that Paradise is my promise on the day that I die. Heaven is not something I will have to wait upon. To believe we go into some la-la land waiting to be with Christ would be saying that Jesus was either wrong or a liar, neither stance which I will choose to take. So rather I take this as a promise, the day my life is taken is the day I will be with the Lord. (Remember Philippians 1:23 and 2 Corinthians 5:8)

- What do we learn about Paradise in 2 Corinthians 12:4?

Paul went also into this place we know as Paradise and all he could tell us was it was inexpressible (KJV: unspeakable). The Greek word used here is arrhetos and is only found in two other passages, 1 Peter 1:8 and 2 Corinthian 9:15. These passages leave us with the understanding that when something is arrhetos (unspeakable or inexpressible) it is really because it is a God thing and it is something we cannot explain or completely comprehend but at the same time we can believe it, know it and experience it and it affects our lives and our faith.

- What do we learn about Paradise in Revelation 2:7?

In this passage I find that the "tree of life" is in Paradise as it was in the Garden of Eden and as it will be on the New Earth. In this verse I see the ongoing plan of God for the tree of life to be available to His children