



SESSION **4**

New heaven, new Earth



MEETING AIM

To look at how God is going to make everything new again.



BIBLE PASSAGE

Revelation 21:1-8; 22:12-21



BACKGROUND

This session deals with a big (and potentially difficult) issue: heaven and the recreation of the world. Do be particularly aware of group members who have been through bereavements. The message is hopeful, but it may still be a tough session for them so consider how you might handle that. You might need to rethink the session topic on their behalf.

Because the concepts of recreation and the end of the world are hard to pin down and understand, this is a particularly creative session, using imagery alongside words to help the group get their heads around the ideas explored in the passage.

+ GATHERING TIME



Welcome the group and begin by asking them to discuss the best party they've ever been to. Why was it so good? Who was there? What were they celebrating?

+ DESIGN A NEW PLANET



You will need: paper; pens; art materials

Ask the group to design a new planet. They could draw it, write it down or just discuss it. Get them to think about:

- If we were starting afresh, knowing what we know now, what would we consider as important?
- What would the planet look like?
- What would you call it?
- Would humans be allowed on it?
- What creatures would you make?
- How much of our technology would be included?
- How would different climates work?
- How would countries and communities work together?
- How would people think?

If you have a large group, you may want to split it into smaller groups to think about

this. After about ten minutes, you could ask the groups to come back together and tell each other what kind of things you'd planned or thought about.

+ BIBLE EXPLORATION



You will need: Bibles; paper; art materials

Read the passage together. You could read it to the group, or ask for volunteers. Sometimes it helps to split the reading up and go around the group where everyone reads a verse, as this helps everyone follow it.

Split the group into two and give them one of the passages each. Ask them to draw what is going on in the passage.

When they've finished, ask the two groups to present their images to each other. Allow them to explain why and how they've included different things, and how the imagery makes them think about what's happening in the passage. Encourage the other group to ask any questions they would like to.

+ CHATTING TOGETHER



You could continue to keep the images out as prompts to discuss the passages. Again, be aware that this is a pastorally sensitive subject and therefore needs care and attention to those who might be finding this difficult. It may be helpful to voice the fact that it's not an easy topic to discuss and that the group should be aware of any difficult emotions. Use the following questions to discuss, but encourage the group to ask their own questions within it, because they may have some important and interesting ones:

- What is going on in the passage?
- What do you think is literal and what is metaphorical? (You might need to explain what a metaphor is.)
- In what ways are these passages exciting or hopeful?
- In what ways are these passages scary or a warning?
- Why are these passages so important to how we understand faith?
- How should thinking about heaven change the way we live today?

Give the group time and space to reflect silently on what you have just read. Explain that there is no need for the group to respond out loud, unless they want to.

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: A5 card; art materials

The language in these passages

says a lot about celebration, as when this happens we'll be celebrating with God for all he's done for us. Ask the group to design an invitation to the big party in heaven. Get the group to think about who the invite is to and from, what kind of things will be there, what to bring, what the dress code will be, and the date and time. Encourage the group to think outside the box and even be wacky or funny. As you work, chat about what they've come up with and investigate why.

You might want to invite the young people to take their invitations home and put them somewhere to remember that they are invited to the big party in heaven, and that God promises hope even when things feel really broken.

+ PRAYER



You will need: gold pens (gel pens are ideal); newspapers (check these beforehand for inappropriate content); reflective music and the means to play it

There is a beautiful Japanese art called Kintsugi. It's a practice where broken pottery is put back together with super glue mixed with gold leaf so the cracks are filled with gold. Explain this to the group, ideally with the help of a picture of Kintsugi pottery (easily found online). This is a beautiful metaphor for God's plan to take all the broken parts of our world and make them new and beautiful, as we've looked at in this passage.

As an act of praying for the broken parts of the world, you're going to write Kintsugi prayers. Spread out the newspapers and fan the pages so that the group can browse through different stories. Invite your young people to write prayers of hope and redemption over the stories that reveal brokenness in our world. If they aren't sure what to write for different stories, encourage them to simply write Revelation 21:4 over them as an act of prayer and God's promise: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

To create a prayerful and reflective atmosphere, it may help to play some music in the background. A particularly apt song would be Gungor's 'Beautiful things'.

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