

What Will Heaven Feel Like?

1. Warm-up Question: No all worship experiences are created equal. Some can be downright bad. What's the worst worship experience you've ever had?
2. Over the course of a lifetime, we've all had some bad worship experiences. So when we hear that heaven will be a place of worship, we might find ourselves thinking, "How much time will we be "required" to devote to worship in heaven? And what will it be like?" On Sunday we focused on one of the Bible's great descriptions of worship in heaven. Read Revelation 4:1-11.
 - a. What do you make of the description of God found in verse 3? Based on what's said there, what do you imagine John saw?
 - b. What's the significance of the emerald rainbow?
 - c. What's the significance of the 24 elders casting their crowns at the foot of God's throne?
 - d. What do you like most about John's vision? What do you like least?
 - e. When we get to heaven, do you think we're going to experience something that's literally like what John describes or is John speaking in metaphor?
 - f. Whether John is speaking literally or metaphorically, the fact remains that worship in heaven will feel like what John describes. When you experience it, how do you imagine you will feel in that moment?
3. Jeff said, "Reduced to its essence, worship is a way of feeling; it's a perspective; it's a way of seeing and being that looks and feels like this," then he stretched out his arms with palms toward heaven. Jeff suggested that genuine worship requires two key things. **First, worship is a state of awe.** We can't experience genuine worship without awe.
 - a. Tell us about one of the most awe-inspiring things you've ever experienced.
 - b. Awe is not just something that happens during "mountaintop experiences." When we open our eyes, we realize every single day is a miracle that's far bigger than we can ever take in. Jeff told how, when he recently drove by his mother's childhood home, it awakened lots of glowing memories of the place and reminded him how incredible everyday life is. Where is someplace like that for you? What are some of the glowing memories evoked by that place?
 - c. In *Joe vs. the Volcano*, Patricia says, "My father says almost the whole world is asleep. Everybody you know, everybody you see, everybody you talk to. He says only a few people are awake. And they live in a state of constant, total amazement." Do you feel like you're "awake"? What tends to get in the way?

- d. Jeff said, “When I get in touch with the awe of life, I let go of a lot of nonsense that holds me back. I stop fighting life and start accepting it as it is. I stop trying to figure everything out and start embracing the mystery.” What’s something you’re fighting that you need to accept? What’s something you’re trying to figure out that you probably never will?
4. But worship is not just awe, it’s also a state of receptivity to the presence of God with us. Jeff shared the story of a soldier in Vietnam who, when severely injured, cried out to God, “Let me know if you exist!” The soldier heard God saying, “I am God. I care for you and will spare your life. You’re going to find me.” As Leonard Cohen said, "I know there’s a spiritual aspect to everybody’s life, whether they want to cop to it or not. It’s there; you can feel it.”
 - a. Can you feel it? How would you describe what it feels like?
 - b. Jeff told a story about a little girl who knew she’d found the right puppy when she picked him up and he sighed as she held him. Jeff compared “puppy sighs” to the way we humans feel in the presence of God. Tell us about a time you really felt the presence of God. How would you describe the feeling?
5. We won’t make it alone in life, and we don’t have to. That’s why we worship. That’s why once a week we intentionally participate in a worship service. We go to worship like some people go to yoga. Yoga is a series of postures and exercises (physical and mental) that train you to see and feel life a certain way. Worship services are like that. In worship we practice seeing life through the perspective of awe and practice receptivity to God’s presence, hoping we can carry that same way of seeing and being into the week until it becomes our way of life – a life of worship.
 - a. What do you think of the yoga analogy? Does it resonate with you as a way of understanding worship? Why or why not?
 - b. Some people get so much out of worship, they almost melt into it. Others feel little or nothing. What makes the difference?
 - c. What do you find most difficult or intimidating about worship?
 - d. Jeff suggested the worship exercise described on p. 3. Have you had a chance to try the exercise? If so, how was it for you?
 - e. As we go through the week, Jeff urged us to find times when we stretch out our arms with palms to the sky as a way of weaving a spirit of worship into the ebb and flow of our daily routine. Have you tried it? How does it feel to you?
6. Imagine the best, most moving worship experience you’ve ever had, then multiply that many times, and you can begin to imagine what heaven will feel like. Earthly worship gives us a chance to experience a little bit of heaven on earth. In Jeremiah 29:13, God says, “You shall seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” What does that verse say to you?

Worship As A Way of Life

A Home Exercise

Step 1: Find a private place.

Step 2: Call up a great worship song, such as “Psalm 23 (I am not alone)” presented by the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AftSd8xQVX4>.

Step 3: As you listen, assume a posture where you’re hands are outstretched and palms toward heaven.

Step 4: Let yourself feel the music and the posture.

Step 5: Carry that posture with you through the week. When the stress is on, when aggravation is great, stretch out your hands for a moment and feel the presence of God.

***Remember, genuine worship is a way of seeing and being.
We practice that way of seeing and being in structured worship experiences,
So we can carry that way of seeing and being with us into all of life.***