

## STUDY GUIDE

### **WHAT ABOUT: Hell (Week 7)**

A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH (Fall 2011)

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The following content is based on the message “What about Hell?” spoken on 10/11/11 by Brian Kruckenberg at New City Church. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main take aways. For more context and understanding, please visit, [www.newcityphx.com/media](http://www.newcityphx.com/media) and listen to the message in its entirety.

For more background and further reading, we suggest:

*Erasing Hell* by Francis Chan  
*Surprised by Hope* by N.T. Wright  
*The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis

### **Luke 16.**

19 "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day.20 And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.22 Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.23 In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and \*saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.24 And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here,

and you are in agony.26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house-28 for I have five brothers-in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'29 But Abraham \*said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'30 But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'31 But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

**N.T. Wright, when asked about the topic of Hell, said...***In a sense, it is shocking and horrifying. Think about people we know! I'm sure most people, unless we live in very enclosed worlds, must know some people (if we truly hold to a theology of hell) who are going there! That should give us pause. That should cause us to pray for them and to weep over them. So I don't discuss hell with any relish at all.*

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What are your initial thoughts about hell?
2. Where do you get most of your ideas about hell?

### **Two things.**

As frightening as the doctrine of hell is, Dr. Tim Keller suggests (and we agree) that a proper understanding of hell should help us **understand our own hearts and know the love of God.**

In this parable we see 2 people, one with a name and one without a name. Why?

In *Sickness unto Death*, Soren Keirkagard defines sin as **building your identity on anything but God.** When we do this, we oppose God. We are telling God we don't need Him. That starts a fire, as Dr.

Keller suggests: a spiritual, cosmic fire that will burn forever if we don't repent and turn to God.

### **CS Lewis says it this way:**

*Christianity asserts that we are going to go on forever and that must either be true or false. Now there are a good many things that wouldn't be worth bothering about if I was only going to live 80 years or so, but I had better bother about if I am going to go on living forever. Perhaps my bad temper or my jealousy are getting worse so gradually that the increase in my lifetime will not be very noticeable but it might be absolute hell in a million years. In fact, if Christianity is true, hell is precisely the correct technical term for it. Hell begins with a grumbling mood, always complaining, always blaming others, but you are still distinct from it. **You** may even criticize it in yourself and wish **you** could stop it. But there may come a day when **you** can no longer do so. Then there will be no you left to criticize the mood or to even enjoy the mood, but just the grumble itself going on and on forever like a machine. It is not a question of God 'sending us' to hell. In everyone of us there is something growing, which will be Hell unless it is nipped in the bud.*  
- C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

### **Questions for Reflection**

3. Have you ever thought much about creating your own hell?

### **Blame game.**

Commentators note that the rich man is blind to his own faults, blame shifts and orders Lazarus around! Notice too, that the rich man doesn't ask to get out of hell **just to get Lazarus into hell!** Further, the rich man strongly insinuates that HE DIDN'T get enough information when he asks Abraham to send Lazarus to give his brothers more information about hell. We see no repentance...just complaining from the rich man.

### **Questions for Reflection**

4. Respond to this thought: **hell is freely chosen identity based on something else beside God going on forever.**

**C.S. Lewis says in the Problem of Pain:** "In the long run, the answer to those who object to the doctrine of hell is itself a question: What are you asking God to do? To wipe out past sins and at all cost give them a fresh start? He did, on Calvary. To forgive them? They don't ask for forgiveness. To leave them alone? This is what hell is. Only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done.' And those to whom God says, 'Thy will be done.' All of those in hell choose it and without that self choice, it isn't hell."

### **Questions for Reflection**

5. **Who are you really?** Is your core identity based in God? Do you have that no matter what? Is there stability or are you just a businessman or businesswoman? a mom? a husband? a father?

## **Finding Love through Hell.**

Tim Keller also suggests that understanding the doctrine of Hell is ...

### **Necessary for fully knowing the love of God.**

Notice that the rich man wants Abraham to perform a miracle to prove to his brothers that hell is well. Abraham says that they have all the information they need. Abraham is teaching us that **fear of hell and of damnation will never change the fundamental structures of the heart.** They may start behaving but they won't love God. Recognizing the love of Jesus is the only thing that will change us. Where do we find that love? The same place the rich man and his brother could find it... Moses and the Prophets:

*3 He (Jesus) was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem*

*Him. 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 10 But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.”*  
**Isaiah 53:6b-11.**

Why did Jesus talk about Hell more than anyone else in the Bible?  
Because He descended into hell and took our hell for us on the cross. He bore it for us. To know what He did for you...to understand hell, is to understand His love.

**Questions for Reflection**

5. Have you thanked Jesus for taking hell on your behalf?
6. Have you come to Him humbly in repentance and thanked Him for who He is?