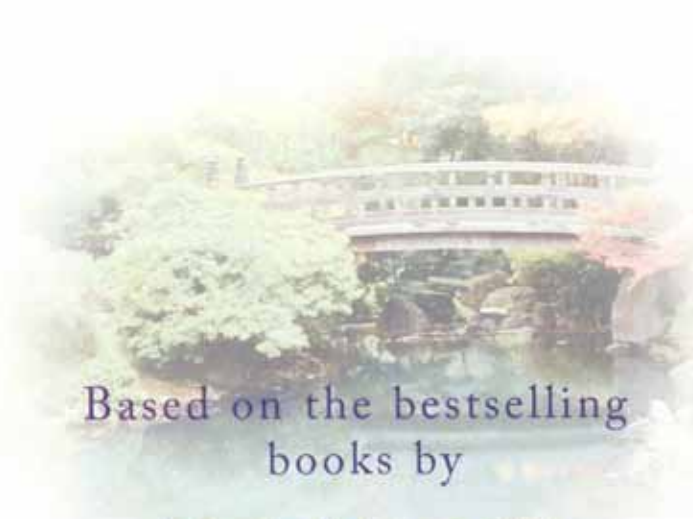


SMALL GROUP  
DISCUSSION GUIDE



# HEAVEN

A faded, artistic illustration of a stone bridge spanning a river. The bridge has a curved arch and is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. The scene is rendered in a soft, painterly style with a light, hazy atmosphere.

Based on the bestselling  
books by

RANDY  
ALCORN

## SESSION 1: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT HEAVEN

**Memory Verse:** *And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.”*  
Revelation 21:2–3 (NLT)

Many people don’t look forward to Heaven because it is a realm that we lack the ability to see or easily understand. We are naturally hesitant or even fearful in uncertain situations. This session will give us perspective on what Heaven is like.

We have included *Reflections* at the end of each session that correlate to Randy Alcorn’s *50 Days of Heaven* book. We suggest you read the *Introduction* and *Days 1* through *7* in the book as you work through the *Reflections*, one each day, before each group meeting. We have provided space at the end of each *Reflection* where you can write your thoughts. These pages are for personal reflection that will not be shared during group time.

If you don’t have time to work through all the *Reflections* before the next group meeting, we suggest you work through the day(s) marked with an asterisk.

Open your group with prayer.

### Group Values

**Attendance.** Give priority to the group meeting. Call or email if you will be late or absent.

**Environment.** Help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (No quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

**Respect.** Be gentle and gracious—people have different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, and temperaments. Remember, we are all works in progress.

**Confidentiality.** Keep everything that is shared in the group strictly confidential—no exceptions.

**Welcome Newcomers.** Keep an open chair and share Jesus’ dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

**Group Ownership.** Remember that every member is a minister. Each group member should take on a small role or responsibility in the group over time.



### CONNECTING WITH GOD'S FAMILY (10 MIN)

1. Read through the Group Values panel on page 7. Take some time to reflect on these values together. Choose one or two values to emphasize during this study—values that will take your group to the next stage of intimacy and spiritual health.
2. What do you think Heaven is like?
3. How do you think Heaven compares to our lives here on earth?
4. Who do you think will be in Heaven?

Watch the DVD teaching for this session now. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions in the *Growing* section and direct the group discussion.



### GROWING TO BE LIKE CHRIST (30 MIN)

Randy Alcorn's books, *Heaven* and *50 Days of Heaven*, were born out of his realization that many people don't really know what Heaven is like. Randy desires to give us purpose, perspective, and hope as we look forward to eternity in a real, tangible Heaven.

5. Based on the video teaching, how has your perspective of Heaven changed?  
Identify and discuss some of the misconceptions people have about Heaven. (*Heaven*, pp. 5–13)
6. In Isaiah 65:17a God says *Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth* (NIV).  
How does this verse help you see Heaven as a real place? What do you think the New Earth will look like? What will we look like? (*Heaven*, pp. 51–63)

7. One of the criminals crucified with Jesus said to him, “*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*”<sup>43</sup> Jesus answered him, “*I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise.*” Luke 23:42b–43 (NIV)

Where is Jesus now according to this verse? What does this say about where believers currently go when they die?

8. One of the biggest misconceptions is that the current Heaven, or Paradise, is our final destination when we die.

Read Revelation 21:2–3 and discuss where God will ultimately dwell with humankind. (*Heaven*, pp. 41–42)

We tend to picture the permanent Heaven rather than the temporary one. How does the dwelling place described in Revelation 21:2–3 differ from most people’s understanding of Heaven?

9. A New Jerusalem, on the New Earth, will be the dwelling place of all God’s children after the Resurrection (see the timeline in the *Introduction*.) Take turns reading Isaiah 65:17–25.

According to this passage, what kind of place will the New Earth be? How important is this to you? Why? (*Heaven*, pp. 95–99)

10. *For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.* Romans 1:20 (NIV)

Romans 1:20 speaks of how we can see God today. According to this Scripture, how is God revealed to us? How does God reveal himself to you?

11. Speaking of the New Jerusalem, John said in Revelation 21:26–27, *And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. <sup>27</sup>Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life* (NLT).

*Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup>But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.* Matthew 7:13–14 (NIV)

After hearing Randy’s teaching today, and reading the verses above, what is the default destination for unbelievers when they die? (*Heaven*, pp. 23–29)

12. Job said *I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. <sup>26</sup>And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God...* Job 19:25–26 (NIV)

How does this verse give you assurance that you can live for eternity with the Lord?



### SHARING YOUR LIFE MISSION EVERY DAY (15 MIN)

We can live with optimism and hope in the midst of all the sin in the world because of Jesus’ redemptive work on the cross.

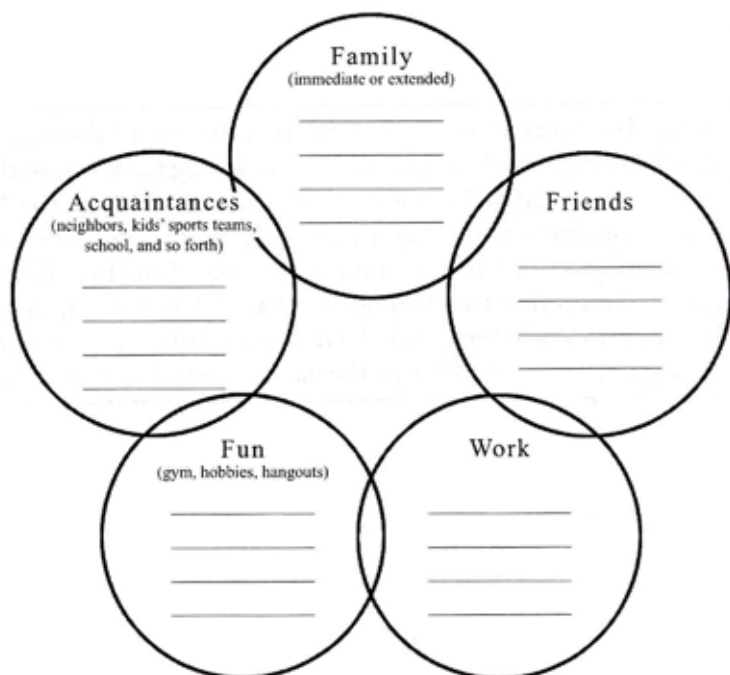
13. Jesus took our sin upon himself, paying the price on our behalf, so that we can be with him for all eternity.

Since the default destination of unbelievers is hell, what should be our mission?

14. The Bible says, *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.* Colossians 3:1-3 (NIV)

God says *Set your minds on things above....* How do you think living your life with an eternal perspective would affect the way you live your life each day?

15. Take a look at the *Circles of Life* diagram below and write in each circle the names of two or three people you know who need to connect in a Christian community like your small group. Commit to praying for God's guidance and an opportunity to invite them to your next group meeting.





## PRAYER AND SURRENDER (10 MIN)

16. This study has revealed many ideas about what Heaven is and is not. You may be surprised about or even disagree with what you've heard. Take a few minutes to pray for your response to this study. Also, ask God to help you find answers to any questions you still have regarding what Heaven is really like.
17. Share prayer requests in your group and record the requests and praises on the *Prayer and Praise Report* beginning on page 123. Commit to praying for each other throughout the week between group meetings.

**Note:** The contents of the *Reflections* at the end of the session correlate to Randy Alcorn's *50 Days of Heaven* book. We suggest you read the *Introduction* and *Days 1* through *7* in the book as you work through the *Reflections*, one each day, before your next group meeting. We have provided space at the end of each *Reflection* where you can write your thoughts. These pages are for personal reflection that will not be shared during group time. If you don't have time to work through all the *Reflections* before your next group meeting, we suggest you work through the day(s) marked with an asterisk.

## SCRIPTURE STUDY

If you want to dig deeper into the Bible passages about the topic at hand, we've provided suggested study passages below. The *Growing* section provides you with plenty to discuss within the group, so we recommend that participants study these passages on their own between group meetings, if desired.

- Colossians 3:1–3
- 1 Corinthians 15:55
- 2 Corinthians 5:6–8
- Ephesians 1:10; 2:8–9
- Exodus 33:18–23
- Galatians 3:13–14
- Genesis 3:8
- Habakkuk 1:13
- Hebrews 2:14–15; 11:16; 12:14; 13:8
- Isaiah 59:2; 65:17–25
- Job 19:25–27
- 1 John 1:9
- John 1:14, 10:30; 14:2, 9, 23; 16:33
- Luke 2:36–38; 10:20; 15:8; 16:19–31; 19:10
- Matthew 1:23, 5:8; 7:12–14; 8:12; 13:45, 18:12; 25:46
- 1 Peter 1:18–19; 3:18
- 2 Peter 3:13
- Philippians 1:21–23; 3:12–14
- Proverbs 28:13
- Psalm 19:1; 27:4; 42:1–2; 63:1; 73:25
- Revelation 21–22
- Romans 1:20; 3:23; 8:20–25, 32
- Romans 12:2
- 1 Timothy 6:16–17
- Titus 3:5

## REFLECTIONS

Each day, read a *Reflection* below, giving prayerful consideration to what you learn about God, his Spirit, and his place in your life. If you don't have time to work through all the *Reflections* before your next group meeting, we suggest you work through the day(s) marked with an asterisk.

### \*Day 1 – If We Can Just See the Shore

If we can learn to fix our eyes on Jesus, to see through the fog of our present trials and circumstances, and picture our eternal home in our mind's eye, it will comfort and energize us, giving us a clear view of the shore—our eternal destination. Like the apostle Paul, we are encouraged to forget what is behind and press on toward the goal to win the prize.

Use the space included for each day to write down any thoughts or feelings that God is putting on your heart.

*No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven. Philippians 3:13–14 (NLT)*

**Reflection:** Are you able to see the shore? What is God revealing to you?

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