



**Sermon Based Small Group
Leader Discussion Guide**

Sermon Title: "Keep Your Fork: The Best Is Yet to Come"

**Sermon by Reverend Brian Dixon
Week of November 14, 2010**

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Icebreaker	<p>Ask the question, "Describe the most beautiful place that you have ever seen."</p> <p>Say, "As you think about your answer, ask yourself what made it beautiful, how did the place made you feel and who was there with you?"</p>
Session Objectives	<p>Participants will have a better idea, based on biblical passages, as to what heaven will be like.</p> <p>Participants should be encouraged to know that Jesus has gone ahead to prepare a place for us and with that knowledge, not be discouraged by things that happen here on earth.</p>

<p>Personal Connection</p>	<p>How does my story connect to the reading?</p> <p>Do you believe in a literal Heaven?</p> <p>What verse or verses from the sermon text speaks to you most loudly about heaven?</p>
<p>Sermon Text</p>	<p>Isaiah 65:17-25</p> <p>17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. 19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. 20 "Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach [a] hundred will be considered accursed. 21 They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. 23 They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. 24 Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.</p>
<p>Digging Deeper</p>	<p>Many of the chapters in the book of Isaiah are warnings about God's judgment.</p> <p>In Isaiah 65:17-25, however, the message is of joy and hope. Isaiah 65:17 it states that "The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to</p>

mind."

* Leader note (The final chapters of the book of Isaiah (chapters 56-66) address God's people and their struggle against discouragement after the fall of Jerusalem and their exile in Babylon in the 6th century before Christ. Chapter 65 is God's response to the petitions in 63:15-64:12.

1. What former things do you think this refers to? Why might they be forgotten?
2. Why do you suppose new mothers sometimes say that the pain of childbirth is soon forgotten?

In verse 18 it tells us, "But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create."

Rejoice-- to be filled with joy.

Forever--eternity, without end.

Can you imagine what it would be like to "rejoice forever"?

Our human minds are so unequipped to even attempt to grasp what heaven will be like. But all we have to know is that the Bible tells us that God promises heaven to those saved by grace. (In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

John 14:2

*** (Leader) Ask, "Have you ever doubted the existence of heaven? What was going on in your life during that time?"**

Isaiah 65:19 says, "I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more."

During our times of weeping and crying, it is difficult to think about the joy that will be in heaven. But if we look to his word, we are reminded over and over again of His love for us.

4. Do you think that we ever have glimpses of heaven here on earth? What are some examples you can think of?

Isaiah 65:25 says, "The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion

will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food."

*** (Leader) These passages talk about the peace that will be in heaven. There are two ways to look at these verses; literally, meaning even the animals will be at peace with each other and figuratively, referring to God's people as the lambs and those who were formerly against God's people (for example Paul) as the wolves who have been changed.**

There are multiple descriptions of Heaven in the Bible. We should "be glad and rejoice" each day in anticipation of going home some day.

Revelation 7:16-17 (New International Version)

**¹⁶Never again will they hunger;
never again will they thirst.**

**The sun will not beat upon them,
nor any scorching heat.**

**¹⁷For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd;
he will lead them to springs of living water.**

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Revelation 21:11

¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

Revelation 7:9

⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

***Leader note**

C. S. Lewis has noted that some people have tried to make the Christian hope of heaven seem ridiculous by saying they do not want to spend eternity playing harps. But this is not a mature understanding of the Bible. All of the scriptural imagery of heaven – harps, crowns, gold, and so forth – are simply human attempts to describe what cannot be expressed in words. Harps are mentioned because, to many people, music is the thing known in this present life which most strongly suggests ecstasy and infinity. Gold, since it does not rust, is meant to suggest the timelessness of heaven, and the preciousness of it. Crowns are mentioned to suggest that those who live in eternity with Christ shall reign with him. Heaven defies description; however, we are

	<p>given a foretaste through our experience of the Holy Spirit.</p>
<p>Taking it Home</p>	<p>How will I live it? Apply it? Ask yourself the question, "What comes to mind when I hear the word Heaven?" Read the words from the chorus of "I Can Only Imagine," by Mercy Me. Surrounded by Your Glory, what will my heart feel? Will I dance for you, Jesus? Or in awe of You, be still? Will I stand in Your presence, or to my knees will I fall? Will I sing 'Hallelujah!'? Will I be able to speak at all? I can only imagine! I can only imagine! Share the good news about what a wonderful place heaven is with someone this week.</p>
<p>Looking Ahead</p>	<p>How can I prepare for the next Small Group meeting?</p> <p>Thank God each day during the next week for preparing a place for us in His House.</p>
<p>Prayer Focus</p>	<p>Prayer request and praises Reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care Coordinator Outreach Coordinator Social Coordinator

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