

Does *Everybody* Get to Heaven?

Intro: The question of the exclusivity of Christianity is a hot topic in the Western world (North America, Europe, Japan). Because of the Christian philosopher Kant who argued that faith was over and above empirical fact (you can't empirically measure faith) and ended up saying that faith was really only a matter of opinion, there's a common perception that one religion is just about as good as another - after all, faith is a *personal* issue and a loving God wouldn't really send anybody to hell anyway. Or so the argument goes. Interestingly enough, the vast majority of the world's Christians by far believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven and there is a concerted and even a frantic effort to share the Gospel with every soul.

However, that's "over" there and we're here where the majority of Christians maintain that faith is a private matter and that, when pressed, believe that almost everyone who is sincere in their faith are going to make it in the end. Which is probably *the* reason why the church is shrinking at a rate of over one-million people per year. So, this week, we're look at what the Bible says about "universalism," that is, everyone making it to heaven in the end.

What the Bible Teaches: Break into Groups of Four, read the following Bible verses, and discuss the questions. You may want to jot down notes and thoughts on the back of this page.

For each of the Scriptures, answer the following questions:

1. What did Jesus teach about heaven and hell?
2. Who goes where and why?

Matthew 7:13-23; Matthew 10:28-40; Matthew 13:36-43; Matthew 25:31-46; John 12:44-50;
John 15:1-6

What does the following Scripture teach about our responsibility?

Romans 10:6-17

What I Believe: Take ten minutes for silent reflection and thought. Ask yourself what you believe about whether everyone gets to heaven. Use the back of this page to formulate a response to the question:

“Does everybody get to heaven?”

Write your final response here: _____

Articulations: Pair up with one other person and share your response with one another. Take five minutes each. Try to *not* look at your written statement; instead, try to tell your beliefs from your heart. This will prepare you to share whenever you are asked about what you believe.

Therefore: Jesus said His followers should Go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). One of the first steps in making disciples is being ready and able to share the reason for the hope we have (1 Peter 3:15), in other words, knowing what we believe, why, and then being able to share it. Sharing your faith is important. This week, find someone—it can be *anyone*—and articulate your belief about this issue. If you have an unchurched/unreached friend whom you can share with, all the better (you can always say you have a homework assignment from church and you'd like to share it with them). Be ready to talk about your experience next week over the meal at your House Church.