"New City People"

Rev 21-22:6

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell

Part of the RBC family of Ministries

Group Study Introduction

Use the following questions and exercises as your group time allows. Feel free to skip one or more questions in each section as necessary. If you have less then thirty minutes for group discussion, we recommend skipping the "Getting Started" section. Be sure to save time for prayer at the end of your meeting, using the "Strength through Prayer" section.

Getting Started:

Joe Stowell states that not thinking about heaven is like getting a flat tire—you're by the side of the road, stuck in the muck of this world.

- Did you ever get a flat tire on your way somewhere?
- What other interruptions have you encountered in the midst of a journey?
- How did you feel when your journey was sidetracked? Do you feel that way when heaven is no longer the destination point of your heart? Why?

Strength through Scripture:

Open your Bibles to 1 John 3 and have a volunteer read verses 1-3 out loud.

1. What is the difference between the way we commonly use the word hope (e.g., "I hope the Cubs win the World Series") and the biblical meaning of the word, as it is used in 1 John 3:3?

2. Joe presents five habits of those who are passionate about heaven, the first being that we are undistracted, confidently riveted on Christ's return and on heaven. Joe illustrates this point with a story about mentally challenged children who keep pressing against the windows and looking to the sky to see if Jesus is coming. When was the last time you looked to the sky because you were riveted to the reality of Christ's return to take you to heaven? What is it that distracts your attention?

Notes:

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."

Rev 21:1

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3. The second habit of those who are passionate about heaven is that we are increasingly pure and ready for His return (see 1 John 3:3). Do you feel motivated to purify your attitudes and actions so that you will be ready to see Jesus when he comes for you? Can you think of ways to refocus toward purity?

4. Have a member of your group read Hebrews 11:13-16 out loud. The third habit of those who are passionate about heaven is that we confess that we are strangers and aliens, refusing to get stuck in this world. In what way do you tend to get stuck here—e.g., through material things, relational offenses, difficult circumstances? What could you do to get unstuck? In what ways could you transfer your distractions to eternal gain—e.g., giving, forgiving, and so on?

5. Have a member of your group read Luke 12:31-34 aloud. The fourth habit of those who are passionate about heaven is that we are futurists, living and leaning toward what is ahead and investing in eternal things. How difficult is it for you to invest heavily in the kingdom of heaven financially? How hard would it be to say to your children or closest loved ones, "If God calls you to Romania, go! I'm so proud of you"? What one thing could you do today to live like a futurist?

Digging Deeper:

If your group has enough time (i.e., you've listened to the audio on your own), answer one or more of these optional questions.

1. In years past, did you sing a lot of songs about the fact that we are really just pilgrims and aliens here and we're on our way to a much better place? Do you sing many songs about heaven now? Why do you think that is the case?

2. What does John mean when he says that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2)?

3. Why do you think that throughout the New Testament the strongest motivation for purity is always connected to the return of Jesus Christ?

Strength through Sharing:

1. How do you feel about Joe's suggestion that we greet one another each day with "See ya in heaven. This could be our last day on earth"?

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2. The fifth habit of those who are passionate about heaven is that we are wise, living as though this were our last day on earth. In Psalm 90:12, we read this prayer: "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." How would you live if this were your last day on Earth?

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments as a group in silent, personal prayer. Tell the Lord you want to be the kind of person who knows about heaven and who cherishes His promise to come to take us there.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

"Lord Jesus, I do want to be passionate about heaven and live out these five highly motivated habits. Help me to be undistracted and confidently riveted on Your return and on heaven. Help me to be ready for Your return with a pure heart. Help me not to get stuck in this world. Help me to live and lean toward what is ahead and invest in eternal things. Help me to live as if this were my last day on Earth."

When you are finished with this time for silent, personal prayer, you may want to move into a time of group prayer, praying for one another.

Closing Call to Action:

Take the five habits we've learned (if you need to, go back and write them down). Use these five habits as a measurement point for your life. Be specific about how you can apply these habits in your life today; and keep track of your progress.

As a closing action point: How would your life be different today if you knew Jesus Christ would be back by six o'clock? Make a commitment to incorporate those changes—and then live like this was your last day on Earth.

Notes:

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