

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Hell the Motivator

Many pulpits have grown cold on the topic of Hell. Gone are the days of fire and brimstone sermons.

Those days have been replaced with lessons that are warmer, and make Christians feel better about themselves and life in general. But the silence has come at an extreme cost. We have several generations who have heard many lessons on the love of God and the grace of God—which I firmly believe must be taught. But they have never heard about Hell.

How can Christians truly appreciate the love and grace of God if they don't understand His wrath? I was not much older than 4 or 5 years of age when I first comprehended the concept of Hell. While I didn't understand all of the dynamics, I knew this was a horrible place to which I never wanted to go. During my adolescence and formative years, the fear of Hell kept me out of many bad situations, as my conscience reminded me of the consequences of choosing the wrong path.

Hell was a real motivator in my early years, as I knew I didn't want to "burn." That "motivating factor" has been diminished in the past few decades—but not of my own choosing. I honestly cannot

recall the last "hellfire and brimstone" sermon I've heard. In fact, a few years ago I began speaking on the topic of Hell because I was afraid yet another generation would grow up having never heard this portion of God's Word.

The darkness of Hell has been replaced with the sunshine of grace and love. Death has been replaced with fun and entertainment. Want proof? Take a look at the activities your youth group is involved in and the material they study and then compare them in light of Scripture: "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart" (Ecclesiastes 7:2). Six Flags? Absolutely! The cemetery? Not on your life.

While we don't like to think about it, every human being came into the world with an expiration date—this is a date that we will not miss (unless Jesus comes first). In Ecclesiastes 3:2 we are reminded that there is "a time to be born and a time to die." The writer of Hebrews acknowledged, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

World	Death	Rates
2011 (according to the U.S. Census		

Bureau)

- 8 Deaths/100 Population
- 55.3 million people died each year
- 151,600 people died each day
- 6,316 people died each hour
- 105 people died each minute
- Almost 2 people died each second

Most humans cringe at the very thought of stepping out into eternity. As such, we make light of the concept of Hell. We joke about this "devil" creature with horns and a pitchfork. We find it much easier to laugh than to truly meditate on the reality of Hell. But that light-hearted attitude and the ongoing silence in pulpits has caused many Christians to become apathetic in our outreach to the lost. If we aren't worried about or focused on people actually going to Hell, why would we reach out? The silence from the pulpit and "feel-good" propaganda from popular preachers has damaged the church and has cast many souls into danger.

Add to this that modern-day charismatic preachers are telling people that Hell is either not real or won't last for eternity. Rob Bell had a New York Times best-selling book titled *Love Wins* in which he contended that the phrase "eternal punishment" should be translated as "a period of pruning" or a "time of trimming." Bell proclaimed, "If we want Hell, if we want Heaven, they are ours. That's how love works. It can't be forced, manipulated, or coerced. It always leaves room for the other to decide. God says yes, we can have what we want, because love wins."

Love wins? Then how shall we reconcile the words of Jesus when He said: "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46)? Are we to believe that Jesus was wrong or lying about this "everlasting punishment"? Christ went on to say, "But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12). If Hell is not a

real place that lasts forever, how do we harmonize the sobering instructions of Jesus: "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to Hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where 'Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched'" (Mark 9:43-44)?

An honest evaluation demonstrates that Jesus believed in Hell, a place of torment and everlasting devastation. This is supported by a passage found in Revelation 20:10: "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

Consider that after a soul has been in Hell for 150,000 years, they have no hope of relief. This is a torment that will go on and on through eternity. We read, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Our casual and relaxed attitude has caused us to forget that sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2). We don't truly meditate on the holiness of God. Consider what we find in Habakkuk 1:13, "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness." God is holy (1 Peter 1:16).

For just a moment I want you to imagine what it would be like if we could peel back the lid of Hell. What would it sound like? What would it smell like? During my time at Vanderbilt Hospital, I witnessed many gruesome sights. But the area that always stood out the most was the burn unit. Once you have smelled burning flesh, you will never forget that smell.

Could it be that we have come to view sin as not that big of a deal? Have we reached the point that we don't view it as stench in the very nostrils of God? I believe that we have sanitized and recast God's wrath and His Word.

We view the Flood account as a cute children's story—not grasping that God wiped out every human and animal except those on the ark. Jeremiah proclaimed, "Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; It will fall violently on the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord will not return until He has done it, and until He has performed the intents of His heart. In the latter days you will consider it" (Jeremiah 30:23-24). Nahum paints an even better picture of the wrath of God: "God is jealous, and the Lord avenges; The Lord avenges and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies; The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked" (Nahum 1:2-3).

Does this sound like the "love-and-grace-only" God you frequently hear about? Having traveled across the world, I am convinced that many who wear the name of Christian are—through our actions, words, or thoughts—offering up dung in the nostrils of God. Maybe it is the television show that we know Christians shouldn't watch, but we tune in anyway. Or maybe it is the music with repulsive lyrics. Or maybe it is gossiping lips or a hateful attitude. For others it may be Internet pornography or immodest clothing. Or maybe it is sexual activity outside of marriage or drinking alcohol with friends. But the bottom line is we are offering up dung in the nostrils of the living God. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Hell is a real place. I long for the days when that motivator is back and pulpits have warmed back up to this topic. The Bible records: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it" (Matthew 7:13). How many people will we continue to watch step out into eternity—who are not prepared—all because we would not speak up? All because we were afraid it might "offend" them? They need to know—and you are the perfect one to share the Truth in love.

Brad Harrub

Happy Moments,
Praise God.

Difficult Moments,
Seek God.

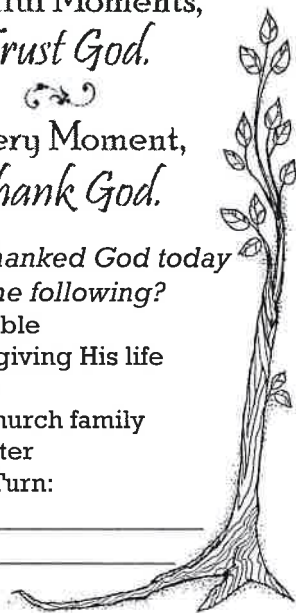
Quiet Moments,
Worship God.

Painful Moments,
Trust God.

Every Moment,
Thank God.

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- Laughter
- Your Turn:



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BIBLE Trivia!

DIRECTIONS: After searching through your Bible, circle which answer is correct.

1. What are the only books of the Bible named after priests?

- a) Samuel and Ezekiel
- b) Ezra and Nehemiah
- c) Joshua and Samuel
- d) Ezra and Ezekiel

2. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, what did they think He was?

- a) An illusion
- b) An angel
- c) A ghost
- d) A big fish

3. What epistle mentions Tryphena, a faithful church worker?

- a) Romans
- b) Ephesians
- c) Colossians
- d) 2 Timothy

4. Who spoke about God laying a precious cornerstone for Jerusalem?

- a) Jeremiah
- b) Isaiah
- c) Elijah
- d) Nehemiah

5. According to Ecclesiastes, what is better than being a dead lion?

- a) A bitter meal
- b) A lame camel
- c) A hundred rabbits
- d) A live dog

6. Where did Paul have a vision asking him to preach in Europe?

- a) Thyatira
- b) Antioch
- c) Troas
- d) Thessalonica

7. Which of Jacob's sons was described as having teeth whiter than milk?

- a) Judah
- b) Manasseh
- c) Issachar
- d) Asher

8. How many jars of water did Jesus turn into wine?

- a) Four
- b) Ten
- c) Seven
- d) Six

9. Who said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau?"

- a) Rachel
- b) Isaac
- c) Abraham
- d) Rebekah

10. In Paul's speech to the men of Athens, he mentions the altar of a god. What is the altar's inscription?

- a) "To the Unknown God"
- b) "Praise Zeus"
- c) "To Every God"
- d) "Oh Wise and Powerful Athena"

LAST MONTH'S ANSWERS & VERSES:

- 1) A, Reference: 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2:7
- 2) D, Reference: Jonah 1:3
- 3) B, Reference: Genesis 1:9-13
- 4) D, Reference: Luke 20:20
- 5) C, Reference: Luke 24:30

- 6) A, Reference: Psalm 119:105
- 7) C, Reference: Acts 13:4-7
- 8) B, Reference: 1 Chronicles 15:29
- 9) C, Reference: John 11:16
- 10) B, Reference: 2 Kings 2:11