

## Aim of lesson

To enable the young people to understand, in an objective way, what other denominations believe about Hell and the grave, and to appreciate the importance of the Bible teaching, so that their beliefs are clarified and they are better able to discuss their faith with others. It is also important to understand that not everyone believes the same, and that some believe the same as we do.

## Bible background

This lesson is intended to reinforce the points made in the two previous lessons.

## Preparation required

The students' notes contain the text of an article from the Encyclopaedia Britannica on Hell, an extract from 'An Introduction to the Christian Faith', and the text of an American tract. Also relevant is the section of the text in lesson 7 that relates to what Roman Catholics believe about hell and the grave. It may be appropriate to ask the young people to read part of this text during the lesson, but you will need to decide in advance how much to get them to read. This will depend on how much time you have, and on their inclination and ability to read a long and sometimes difficult text.

## Suggested outline of lesson

Review briefly the subject matter of the previous lessons, then get the young people to read the sections of text that you have decided are appropriate, and to summarise what they have learned. The main points to bring out are:

- All the main religions of the world have some idea of a place of eternal punishment, so it is easy to see how this belief was incorporated into Christianity. There are many common elements - bridges, for example.
- However, they actually believe very different things on questions such as:
  - Once in hell, is it possible to leave?
  - Is hell hot or cold?
  - Is hell a real place or imaginary?
  - Is hell one place or several?
  - How does someone get there?
- The beliefs of Roman Catholics are different from the rest of Christendom, as they believe not only in Hell but also in Purgatory and Limbo. Hindus and Buddhists believe in something similar.
- Judging from the extract from 'An Introduction to the Christian Faith', the modern Anglican church believes something much closer to the teaching of the Bible than in the past, in the sense that they believe hell to be a figurative, not a literal, place. However, since they also believe in the immortality of the soul, they have to have somewhere for wicked souls to go: hence the two views described in the third paragraph of that extract. It all adds up to a rather confusing picture.
- The tract published by the Fellowship Tract League gives the opposite end of the spectrum. Discuss the difference between a faith based on the fear of eternal flames and one built on God's promise of eternal life.

## Relevance to our lives

It is important that we all appreciate that the truth about death is very simple. It is the end of life, and it is a punishment for sin. The only hope is resurrection. These truths focus our minds on the lives we are living now, and the need for salvation from sin and death.

## Prayer

There are several things that you could pray about. The need to understand difficult passages of scripture; to help others to appreciate the truth and not be led astray by nice words that amount to a cruel lie; to realise that the Bible teaching about hell is meant to teach us how awful it would be to see Christ return and realise that we had failed to respond to his message.

## Other suggestions for activities

1. Write a letter to the author of one of the articles pointing out what the Bible teaches.
2. Write a newspaper article as though you were an investigative reporter who had just unearthed the fact that what many people believe about life after death is wrong.