



theme: Art & Design #3 – New World Order
materials: Paper, pencils, bibles

welcome

Give everyone paper and pencils and let them design their ideal house – the place where they would be happy to live for the rest of their lives. What would it look like? Where would it be? What special features would it have?

interact

Read out John 14:1-4 over the group. This is a promise that Christ is preparing a place for us to be with Him, to live with Him always.
Ask everyone to close their eyes, and in silence to consider what that really means. Ask God what He is preparing for you, and what it will be like to dwell with Him, to see Him face to face.
We cannot know what it will be like in fullness now. But do share with the group if God gives you any insights or glimpses.

read

Read Isaiah 65:17 – 66:2
Why are a new heaven and earth required?
How will it be different from the old creation? (List off the things that happened in the old earth that are promised not to happen in the new).
Which of the promises given speaks most strongly to you?
How is it possible to have a place where there is no weeping or crying? Is it just too good to be true?
Is this vision of a new heaven and earth good news to people, or do they just not believe in it? Why would someone not believe in it? Do you believe it? Why?
God created the first earth, and it was corrupted. Why would God allow his artwork to be wrecked like that? And how do we know the same thing won't happen to God's new creation?
In Isaiah 66:1-2 God talks about His handiwork, making heaven and earth. He asks why people would bother to try and make a dwelling place (a Temple) for Him. Yet people still do try. Why do you think that is?
What role do you think we many have in this new heaven and earth?

think

Read verse 25 again. The kind of peace and reconciliation portrayed here is remarkable, even unthinkable for us here and now. But are there any ways we can show people a glimpse of it now? Are there any fractured relationships that we can help mend? Is there anyone we need to forgive or whose forgiveness we need to ask? Which situations do we need to speak the peace and reconciliation of God into?



live & pray

Ask some of your friends this week to describe their ideal or perfect world. (How close is it to what God describes?) Ask them if they think it's possible. Let them know what God's perfect world is, and if/how you think it's possible.

useful resources

- Book: *Out of the Silent Planet* by C.S. Lewis
Book: *Perelandra* by C.S. Lewis
Movie: *The End of the Spear*
Movie: *Pan's Labyrinth*, (Warning: this movie is very violent in parts, but does have a beautiful message of hope and redemption and a new world.)

leader's guide

A new heaven and earth are required because sin marred the old creation. God has shown that He wants to dwell with His creatures, (which we get the foretaste of now through the presence of the Holy Spirit), and to do that fully a whole new order of creation must be accomplished. This is the New Jerusalem, the place where God and His children will dwell together.

Some might say this is merely a vision of utopia, not based in any kind of reality. And it surely won't be accomplished through any wisdom or works of our own. Only God could redeem and recreate everything in this way. If one doesn't believe in God, it would be hard to believe in this new creation.

The first creation was marred by sin, and God knew that this was possible. When speaking of the new creation, God promises that there will be no more crying or mourning or death (the consequence of sin).

There has always been a human desire to box God in, to understand and control the Divine. It is not possible, and yet we do try to bring God down to our level and denounce anything we do not understand. But God is so far bigger than our understanding of reality, than our world which he created.

It seems in the new creation, at least according to this passage, we will still be building houses, planting vines, etc...though this could merely be symbolic of a life of peace and fullness. It seems our role is to be loved by God and to enjoy Him forever.