

Confronting Christianity

Week Twelve: How Could a Loving God Send People to Hell?

Pre-Group Reading Material: Chapter 12 (Pages 209-223)

Questions:

- When we think about hell, what things come to mind?
- What objections to the concept of hell do people have? What about the idea of hell do you find most troubling?
- McLaughlin begins by describing the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing and reflecting on how we respond to the evil actions of others. (209-210) What evil actions done in our world bother you the most?
- Atheist Sam Harris argues that ultimately humans are not morally accountable for the wrong things they do. What problems arise if we choose to see all human behavior as merely a result of a person's upbringing or biological makeup?
- When he was suffering in a Soviet gulag (prison camp), Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn had a powerful realization; *"Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart—and through all human hearts."* (213) Why do you think he came to this conclusion?
- McLaughlin raises the #MeToo movement and the case of Larry Nassar who sexually abused more than 250 girls. What do people generally want in response to horrific cases like this? Would it be just to let Nassar or other abusers off without somehow paying for their crimes?
- Most people don't like to think of themselves as evil or even sinful. They think if anyone is evil, it must be murders and rapists – along with Hitler and Stalin. We might believe these people deserve eternal judgment, but definitely not "normal" people. Hell just doesn't make sense when we have a high option of ourselves. But what does the Bible say about the sinfulness of humanity? (Read **1 John 1:8**, and **Romans 3:10-12**)
- How does McLaughlin suggest that God's love and judgment are interconnected? Can we have one without the other? (216)
- In light of God's judgement, what is one way you experience God as a God of love and faithfulness, and how does that impact your relationships and conversations with others? (217)
- While we often think about heaven and hell as places to be sent, McLaughlin challenges this idea. How does she describe heaven and hell? (218-219)
- The author says that; *"Christianity... demands that we identify with the worst criminals... not because they (like us) are innocent, but because we (like them) are guilty."* (220) Why is it hard for most people to accept what the Bible says about universal human sinfulness?
- Do you have any other questions or concerns about hell that the author didn't address?

Recommended Resource: *The Skeletons in God's Closet: The Mercy of Hell, the Surprise of Judgment, the Hope of Holy War* by Joshua Ryan Butler