

HEAVEN IS . . .

by Cindy S. Hansen

PURPOSE

To provide a time for youth to voice thoughts about heaven, to imagine what heaven is like, and to discuss scripture references about heaven.

PREPARATION

Gather a Bible, paper, pencils, crayons, tape, a record player and a white piece of posterboard.

Obtain the song "Dear Father" by Neil Diamond on the **Jonathon Livingston Seagull** album, or other types of "heavenly" music.

Cut the piece of posterboard in the shape of a cloud and at the top print "Heaven is . . ."

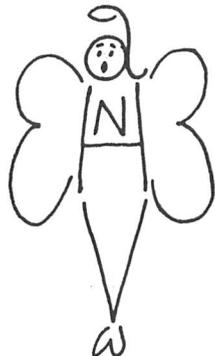
Write the words to the song "Heaven Is a Wonderful Place" on a chalkboard (optional). This can be found in the songbook: **Kids Praise**, Marantha Music, Word, 4800 W. Waco Dr., Waco, TX 76703.

Mix a batch of sugar cookie dough and refrigerate it for the optional activity in the Response section. You also will need an oven, frosting and decorating candies.

OPENING

Hand out paper, pencils and crayons and instruct the youth to draw a picture of heaven. Tell them to incorporate the letters of the word "heaven" in their drawings. For example, if they think heaven is full of angels, an H could be the body of an angel; E, the wings; A,

the head; V, the legs; E, the feet; and N, the songbook. At the bottom of the page have the youth finish the sentence, "Heaven is . . ." . . . a place with angels singing praises to God.



Save these pictures until the Response section.

THE "MEAT" OF THE MEETING

Play "Dear Father" or other samples of "heavenly" music and instruct the young people to mingle. Periodically stop the music. At each musical rest, the youth choose a partner and answer the following questions as the leader asks them:

- What is one word that describes your feelings of heaven?
- It has been said that earth is the real heaven or the real hell. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

- What types of activities will we do in heaven?
- What does it take to get into heaven?
- Do you think St. Peter will meet us at the pearly gates? If not, how will we know we are in heaven when we get there?

Next, instruct the young people to find a partner with the same color of eyes. The partners answer the following questions as the leader asks them. Allow a few minutes for each question.

● Mark 12:25 says, "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." What are angels in heaven like?

● Will we meet our family in heaven and have the same relationships?

● Isaiah 66:1 says, "Thus says the Lord, 'Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?'" Compare earth to a footstool. Why is it that way?

● Compare heaven to a throne. Why is it that way?

● How does thinking about heaven make you feel about problems on earth?

RESPONSE (OR CLOSING)

Gather in a large group. One at a time, have the participants share

their pictures of heaven from the Opening and the answers to "Heaven is . . ."

Ask the youth if their thoughts of heaven remained the same or changed since the beginning of the meeting. Discuss the differences and similarities of the participants' definitions of heaven.

On the back of their pictures of heaven, have the youth write a prayer of thanks for God's presence on earth as well as in heaven. Share these in a closing circle prayer. Have the young people tape their pictures to the posterboard labeled "Heaven is . . ." and sing the song "Heaven Is a Wonderful Place."

If time permits, participate in a variation of Cookie Decorators.¹ Each person is given a small amount of cookie dough that was prepared before the meeting. Ask the youth to make one or two cookies that represent something discussed in the meeting (angels, thrones, clouds, pearly gates). Bake the cookies in an oven (10-15 minutes) and add frosting and decorating candies.

Display the finished cookies and ask the youth to explain the design. After sharing the ideas, share the cookies.

¹Thom Schultz, ed., **More . . . Try This One** (Loveland, Colo.: Group Books, 1980), pp. 40-41.