

**Know It!**

The only reason Christ is delaying his promised and expected return is so more people worldwide can come to know him. It's God's will that everyone would follow him and live eternally. But he gives each person the freedom to decide.

**Read It!**

Matthew 5:29-30;  
Luke 12:5; 16:19-31;  
2 Peter 2:4

**Pray It!**

Ask God to help you view hell as a real place that exists for those who will be forever separated from him—so that it would spur you to tell your friends about Jesus.

"Hi, Pastor Steve," Lucy said in the hallway after youth group. "Um . . . there's something on my mind I'd like to talk with you about if you have a few minutes."

"Sure!" Pastor Steve said on the way into his office. "Grab a chair."

"I've been trying to share my faith at school, but sometimes my friends throw questions at me that I just can't answer. One of them is about hell."

"Let's hear it," Pastor Steve encouraged.

"Well, we always talk about how God is so good. But how can a loving God actually send people to hell?"

"Lucy, that's a great question! And a lot of nonbelievers get tripped up on it. First of all, God really *is* a God of love. He loves each one of us so much that he gave his only Son to die in our place so we wouldn't have to! But we have to accept his death as a gift."

"But still . . . since we know he loves us so much, why would he send us to hell?"

"Well, he loves us so much, he gives us freedom of choice. Would it really be genuine love if God forced us to accept his gift of eternal life?"

Lucy thought for a second. "No, I guess not," she concluded.

"Right," Pastor Steve continued. "But in giving us free choice also comes the reality that many people will choose not to serve Christ. They'll follow the world and do their own thing."

"And those are the people who will spend eternity in hell?"

"All people who have not repented of their sins and accepted Christ as their personal Savior. And Lucy, that's not just murderers and drug pushers. That's me, too!"

"What are you talking about, Pastor Steve?"

"We're all in the same boat," he explained. "Every single one of us was born with sin. So if I had never repented and asked Christ to forgive me, I'd be headed for hell, too."

"So what you're saying is that a lot good people—not necessarily criminals—will go to hell if they choose to ignore God."

"Exactly," Pastor Steve said.

"So it's not that God is deliberately sending people to hell," Lucy summed up. "He has clearly provided a way to escape hell by simply following him."

"Right, Lucy. God doesn't send anyone to hell. We send ourselves there."

"I really want my non-Christian friends to get to know Christ," Lucy told Pastor Steve, "but I keep getting tripped up on these tough questions they're throwing at me."

"They're asking you questions because they're curious about your faith. Take it as a compliment."

"I still have a few more questions about hell," she said. "Is it a real place?"

"Yes, hell is a physical place," Pastor Steve said. "The Bible tells us that our bodies will be raised on Judgment Day and will join our souls. Those physical bodies will have to be in a physical place. The Christians will spend eternity in heaven (a physical place), and the non-Christians will spend eternity in hell—which has to be a physical place to accommodate those bodies."

"Some of my friends say that hell will be one big party," Lucy said. "I know that's not true, but I don't know what to say."

"Think of it this way: Every time hell is talked about in the Bible, it's described as a place of great torment and pain. It's also described as total separation from God. That means love will not exist in hell. Neither will laughter or meaningful relationships. Every single person in hell will be there because he rejected Jesus Christ. Hell will be comprised of hate, selfishness, and all that is evil."

"It seems too easy to just accept Christ, live for him, and get to spend eternity in heaven," Lucy said. "So why don't more people accept his gift and avoid going to hell?"

"Lots of reasons," Pastor Steve said, "but let's just chat about two. One reason is that many people still haven't heard the wonderful news. And that's why it's so important to support missions through our local church, give in the offering, and participate on mission trips. And another reason is that many people simply don't trust God."

"So just because they can't see him, they choose not to trust him?"

"Lack of faith keeps a lot of people from coming to know Christ," Pastor Steve said. "But we can actually ask God to *give* us faith, and he will! And it doesn't take a ton of faith to come to Christ. The Bible says all it takes is a small amount—the size of a mustard seed."

"What a gift we have!" Lucy said smiling from ear to ear.

**Know It!**

God is going completely out of his way to make sure people know about his gift of eternal life. He gave his Son, he provided his holy Word, and he's sending missionaries all over the world to spread the gospel. Are you participating in the Great Commission?

**Read It!**

Genesis 18:25;  
Matthew 28:19-20;  
Acts 1:8;  
2 Timothy 4:2

**Pray It!**

Ask God to help you bring your non-Christian friends into a relationship with his Son, Jesus, so they won't have to experience hell.