

HOW COULD A LOVING GOD SEND SOMEONE TO HELL?

Some people struggle with the reality of a biblical hell because they cannot imagine how a loving God could send people there. One way they may deal with this struggle is by assuming there is no hell. Others believe that hell exists but God will not send anyone there except those who are **really bad** . . . how do you define "really bad"? In light of God's standard of perfection, we all fall short. We are all sinners. That's important to keep in mind as we look at this issue today. Ask God to give you understanding and wisdom as you look to His Word.

LOOKING UPWARD

1. How would you answer the question, how could a loving God send someone to hell?

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

2. Let's begin by looking at what the Bible has to say about hell. What do you learn about hell from these passages?

Matthew 5:22

Matthew 8:11

Matthew 13:42

Matthew 25:30

Matthew 25:41

Matthew 25:46

Matthew 18:8

Mk 9:43-48

Luke 16:23-24

3. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10, what awaits those who do not know God or obey the gospel of God?

4. How does verse 9 describe hell?

It is not pleasant to read these verses about hell because it reminds us of how terrible it is. I don't want anyone to have to endure that for eternity. Reading these verses, it is easy to understand why people struggle with the thought of a loving God sending anyone there. But, we must remember God's character and who He is.

5. What insight does John 3:16-21 give? List your observations.

6. What additional insight does 2 Peter 3:9 give?

God is a God of love, but He is also a God of justice. He is just and, therefore, there must be a penalty for sin and disobedience. But God is loving and couldn't bear the thought of someone going to hell. So He sent His Son to pay the penalty for our sin. Each person must individually accept that gift from God to pay the penalty, but God will not force anyone to accept it if he doesn't want it. Some people choose to say no.

Is hell real? Yes. Does God send people to hell? No.

"God does not send man to hell. Man sends himself by rejecting God's offer of salvation and restoration. Christ claimed He came not to send us but to save us from hell, if we would only believe (John 3:17)."¹

Jonathan Edwards had this to say about hell: "It is a most unreasonable thing to suppose that there should be no future punishment, to suppose that God, who had made man a rational creature, able to know his duty, and sensible that he is deserving punishment...should let man alone, and let him live as he will, and never punish him for his sins, and never make any difference between the good and the bad... How unreasonable it is to suppose, that he who made the world, should leave things in such confusion, and never take any care of the governing of his creatures, and that he should never judge his reasonable creatures." [Edwards, 2.884]²

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

Thank Him for your salvation and for eternal life in His presence.

If you have accepted His payment for your sins, thank Him that you will not have to experience hell, eternal separation from His presence.

¹ Ken Boa and Larry Moody, *I'm Glad You Asked* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor Books, 1994), 146.

² Norm Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 313.