

40-DAY DEVOTIONAL

DRIVEN BY ETERNITY



*Make your life
count today
and forever*

JOHN BEVERE

BroadStreet
P U B L I S H I N G

BroadStreet Publishing Group, LLC
Racine, Wisconsin, USA
BroadStreetPublishing.com

**DRIVEN BY ETERNITY: MAKE YOUR LIFE COUNT TODAY AND FOREVER
40-DAY DEVOTIONAL**

Copyright © 2016 John P. Bevere, Jr.

ISBN-13: 978-1-4245-5353-2 (hardcover)

ISBN-13: 978-1-4245-5363-1 (e-book)

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.

Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188, USA. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.* Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. Copyright © 2000; 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible, © Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Scripture quotations marked MSG are from THE MESSAGE. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. Scripture quotations marked TLB are taken from The Living Bible copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked AMP are from the Amplified® Bible (AMPC), © Copyright 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org. Scripture quotations marked TEV are from the Good News Translation in Today's English Version. Copyright © 1966, 1971, 1976 by American Bible Society. Used by permission. Scripture quotations marked TPT are from The Passion Translation®. Copyright © 2014, 2015, 2016 by BroadStreet Publishing Group, Racine, Wisconsin. thePassionTranslation.com. Used by permission.

Stock or custom editions of BroadStreet Publishing titles may be purchased in bulk for educational, business, ministry, fundraising, or sales promotional use. For information, please e-mail info@broadstreetpublishing.com.

Edited by Nathanael White

Cover design by Allan Nygren

Interior by Katherine Lloyd at theDESKonline.com

Printed in China

16 17 18 19 20 5 4 3 2 1

INTRODUCTION

I'm so excited to put into your hands this 40-day devotional on the topic of eternity. Each day contains a devotional reading inspired by my book *Driven by Eternity*, additional Scriptures for study, an eternity truth, key action steps and points of reflection, and a personal prayer.

It's easy to get stuck in the busyness of life and miss what's most important. I pray this devotional will help you focus your life on what matters most so that you are able to stand confidently before Christ at the end of the age.

I invite you to pray with me as you begin this 40-day journey:

Father in heaven, I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn what you have in store for the future. I want to be prepared so that I hear "Well done, good and faithful servant" when I stand before Jesus on that day. Do your good work in me so that all that I am and all that I do pleases you. Holy Spirit, open my eyes to see and my ears to hear what you have for me as I meditate on this message and your Word. Make my life count today and forever. Amen!



LISTEN WITH YOUR HEART

(Inspired by chapter 1)

“No one can begin to understand eternity.” (Job 36:26 TLB)

He has put eternity in their hearts. (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

Concepts like eternity and the size of our universe are too big for us to understand with our minds. Our logic cannot grasp them. Our words cannot accurately define them.

Try imagining the edge of the universe. Think of what the outer limit of the universe is like. Would you find a wall there? What would happen if you somehow stepped outside the end of the universe? What is beyond the wall? Would it simply be more empty space where no stars or galaxies can yet be found? Wouldn't that simply be an extension of the universe and not really the end? Where is the end? Can you grasp with your mind the endlessness of the universe?

The same is true for the eternal. We cannot grasp with our minds the endlessness or the enormity of it; however, God has placed it in our hearts. Even those who have hardened their minds to convince themselves there is no God still often, at the end of their lives, come to realize a deeper knowledge that has

always been there. They find they always knew there is something more beyond death. They know there is eternity, even if they don't know what it holds.

Truth be told, we are eternal beings now, yet the reality of eternity awaits all of us. Every man, woman, and child will one day cross over from this world defined by time into a completely different realm—God's realm of eternity. Scripture tells us that God is the Creator of eternity (Psalm 90:2), the Father of eternity (Isaiah 9:6), and the King of eternity (1 Timothy 1:17). Eternity is bigger than we can comprehend, yet we believe that God is bigger still.

We will be discussing eternity throughout this devotional. Since we cannot grasp it intellectually, we will have to listen with our hearts for anything meaningful to happen. In fact, this is necessary for you to get any benefit out of this devotional.

Two steps will help you learn to do this. First, acknowledge that you need the Holy Spirit to help you, and ask Him to do so. Second, stop to ponder and meditate on truths that grip your heart. Don't rush past them or you will limit what this book can do for and in you. Don't just read for mental understanding, which is easily forgotten, but hide these truths in your heart.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. (Psalm 90:2)

“For a Child hath been born to us, A Son hath been given to us, And the princely power is on his shoulder, And He doth call his name Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6 YLT)

Now to the King of the ages [eternal], immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17 AMP)

ETERNITY TRUTH

The reality of eternity waits for all of us.
Every man, woman, and child will one day
cross over from this world defined by time
into a completely different realm—
God's realm of eternity.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Write your first impressions about knowing the reality of eternity waits for you at the end of your life.
- ◆ What does it mean to you that Jesus is Lord of eternity?
- ◆ Put into your own words what it looks like to listen with your heart.



PRAYER

Lord God, you created eternity, and you created me. Only you can teach me what I need to understand about eternity. I invite your Holy Spirit to speak to my spirit as I read this book. Show me where I need to pause to let you work in me more deeply and speak to me as I meditate. Open my heart to the truth about eternity. Give me the wisdom to look ahead to the end of my life and what is beyond it, and then to live the days I have until then with eternity in mind. Thank you for walking with me through this. I begin this journey by giving myself to you completely. Now, please show me your ways.



SUCCESS THAT LASTS

(inspired by chapter 1)

Teach us to make the most of our time . . . and make our efforts successful. Yes, make our efforts successful! (Psalm 90:12, 17 NLT)

Most people want to succeed in life. This desire is almost certainly placed in each of us by God, because He also wants us to succeed.

Just look at the verses above. This prayer of Moses asks God not once, but twice, “Make our efforts successful.” Hebrew writers didn’t waste words. They didn’t repeat things just to fill in extra space. In fact, when they did repeat something it was to intentionally bring emphasis, much in the same way as we might write something in bold, italics, or with all capital letters. More than that, those words come from God’s holy Word, revealing to us His purpose, heart, and intent for your life and mine.

Yes, God’s desire is to help us be successful! Yet we must remember that God has a much different perspective than ours. God is eternal. He therefore does not view our lives the same way we often do. He knows that even the longest human

life cannot be measured against the immensity of the eternity that waits for us beyond this life. For this reason, God's definition of success is not our earthly, human definition of success.

Our world is continually changing. Names are remembered for a time and legacies endure for a season, but eventually history moves on. Even the things we consider to be most certain now will be vastly transformed, or perhaps will even cease to exist only a few hundred years from now.

It is not so with God. He never changes and He never will. From beginning to end, throughout all eternity, God will remain the same. His standard will never change. His heart toward us will never change. His definition of success will never change.

If we are to truly succeed in life, we must succeed by God's eternal definition. All other success will one day fail. Only success by God's definition will endure.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“The Lord your God will then make you successful in everything you do.” (Deuteronomy 30:9 NLT)

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (Joshua 1:8)

He who loves wisdom loves his own best interest and will be a success. (Proverbs 19:8 TLB)

ETERNITY TRUTH

If we are to truly succeed in life,
we must succeed by God's eternal definition.




MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ What does it mean to you to know that God wants you to be successful in life?
- ◆ Describe what it would feel like to you to have confidence that your life will be eternally successful.
- ◆ When you consider God's perspective, how does that change how you view your own life?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, it's amazing to think of how you have both my perspective of human life and God's perspective of eternity. I give my mind and my heart to you. Please teach me to see my life the way you do. Teach me to measure success the way you do. As I walk with you toward eternity, help me to be patient with the process. I know that one day I will leave this world to join you in yours. Help me to not be so caught up in my world right now that I miss the importance of where I will spend eternity. And, please, make my efforts successful!



CONFIDENCE AT THE JUDGMENT

(inspired by chapter 1)

“He who . . . does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.” (John 12:48–49)

It’s shocking how many people are basing their lives on what is not eternal. They build their lives on everything from complete falsehoods to partial truths, but anything less than the full truth is a setup for disaster.

Jesus made it very clear in today’s verse: Everyone will face judgment one day, including Christians. No one is exempt. This day is fixed by God and it will surely come for both the Christian and the non-Christian.

The basis for God’s judgment is equally fixed. No human can bring their own standard to that day. No one can say, “I tried my best to live a good life.” It will do no good to claim that Jesus’ mercy as Savior prevented you from also knowing Him as Judge.

Moreover, the term of God’s judgment is firmly decided. It

is eternally final (Hebrews 6:12). His verdict is final and there is no appeals court. No higher authority can challenge God's eternal ruling. There are no second chances.

Does it shake you to know these things? By God's mercy, we can face these truths with confidence.

Look again at today's verses. They tell us the basis of God's judgment. It's no secret. God's own words that He has already spoken will judge us on that day. It is simply a question of whether we have taken care to examine God's entire Word, and not just part of it, to see what God commands. We demonstrate His love by carefully following all the precepts He has clearly laid out for us, living them by the grace He gives us to do it.

The topic of God's judgment may not be pleasant for many people, but while we approach it with reverent fear, we do so with confidence. Many students fear their final exam, knowing they are unprepared. But those students who have been diligent to study and know what their teacher requires will approach that day with confidence.

We cannot discuss eternity without discussing God's judgment, for His judgment is what decides the fate of our eternity. Do not be shaken. As you continue this study, God's Word will show you everything you need to become confident for that day.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:31)

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:1–2)

And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world. (1 John 4:17 NLT)

ETERNITY TRUTH

The words God has already spoken will judge us on Judgment Day. It is simply a question of whether we have taken care to examine God's entire Word, and not just part of it, to see what God commands and then live in a manner careful to obey those commands.




MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Take time to really feel the difference inside you between having confidence and lacking confidence on the Day of Judgment. Let that experience sink in.
- ◆ Now, in your own words, express the value of knowing how to have confidence on the Day of Judgment.



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you that your judgment is good and right. Thank you also that I can have confidence on the day I stand before your judgment seat. My life is open before you. Teach me your Word and place it deep in my heart, so I live my life in a way that pleases you and leads to rewards from your hand on that day. Spirit of grace, empower my actions and make my life a testimony of your glory, truth, and love.



ETERNAL DECISIONS

(inspired by chapter 4)

Therefore let us go on and get past the elementary stage in the teachings and doctrine of Christ (the Messiah), advancing steadily toward the completeness and perfection that belong to spiritual maturity. Let us not again be laying the foundation of . . . eternal judgment and punishment. [These are all matters of which you should have been fully aware long, long ago.] (Hebrews 6:1–2 AMP)

The author of Hebrews called the subject of eternal judgments one of six elementary stages of Christian teaching. (I did not list the others in the Scripture passage above.) Really think about that for a moment. Consider what “elementary” means in our education system. The elementary principles of our education system are reading, writing, and arithmetic—the things you absolutely must know in order to move on to more specialized subjects. These subjects form the foundation of our education. This is what eternal judgments should be like for everyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

If we do not have eternal judgments firmly established in our understanding, then we will not be capable of building a proper life in Christ. It could be compared to trying to advance

your high school or university education without being able to read, write, add, or subtract.

God has blessed me with the opportunity to travel a lot to minister for Him over the past thirty years. One thing I have found is that understanding the matter of eternal judgments is far from common. In fact, it is rare, and I'm even talking about deeply committed Christian leaders. This is even worse when we consider what the author of Hebrews writes, "These are all matters of which you should have been fully aware long, long ago." As an elementary principle of our faith, eternal judgment is a subject we should know fully and completely.

I'll tell you what the problem here is and why believers have not continued to emphasize this truth as the early church did. It's because, when we see that word "judgment," we think it means "condemnation." But let me tell you what it really means.

The word *judgment* in this verse is the Greek word *krima*, and the base definition of this word simply means "a decision." Read through the verse again and exchange the word *judgments* for *decisions*. That has a much different feel to it, doesn't it?

What we know then, is that there is an appointed day—a day of judgment. On that day, God will make decisions about every man and woman who ever lived on Earth. Those decisions are going to be eternal decisions. God is going to weigh our lives and the decisions He makes, based on His careful investigation, will be eternally firm.

These truths are foundational for all Christians. They will impact our lives forever. This is why we have to understand them going forward.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. (James 2:12 NLT)

However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. (1 Corinthians 2:6)

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food...But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12, 14)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Understanding eternal judgments must be a part of our foundation as we build our life in Christ.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Reflecting on the weeks and months after you came to Jesus, what were the “elementary teachings” you first received?
- ◆ How are those first teachings you received as a Christian influenced when you understand that eternal judgment is an elementary teaching of Christianity?”
- ◆ What thoughts did you have when you learned that “judgment” really speaks about “decisions”?



PRAYER

Father, you are so good! Thank you for putting eternity in my heart. As I look into your Word to discover what you have already said about eternity, please give me your grace to make this subject as simple and clear as reading and writing. I pray, also, for the rest of your children throughout the world, that we would return to understanding eternal decisions, making it an elementary teaching once again.



IS HELL REAL?

(Inspired by chapter 4)

“Go in through the narrow gate, because the gate to hell is wide and the road that leads to it is easy, and there are many who travel it. But the gate to life is narrow and the way that leads to it is hard, and there are few people who find it.”
(Matthew 7:13–14 TEV)

Many pastors and teachers in the church today avoid the subject of hell, afraid it will make people uncomfortable. However, Jesus had no problem talking about hell and did so often. Our verse for today is just one example of His many words on the subject. And, according to Jesus, hell is a very real place.

In fact, the Gospel of Luke records a time when Jesus tells of an actual incident regarding a rich man and a poor man named Lazarus. In the story, Jesus reports that a certain poor man named Lazarus died and was taken to the holding area for Old Testament saints until Jesus made the way for them into heaven. The rich man died and was taken to Hades. The full story is too long for me to tell in full here, but you can read it for yourself in Luke 16:19–31. However, here are some bottom-line truths we learn about hell from this account:

First, hell is a place of conscious torment. The words used to describe a person's experience of hell include great pain, anguish, torment, and agony. It could be none of these things if those who suffer there were unaware of their pain.

Second, souls are very much still human in hell, maintaining their reasoning faculties, emotions, wills, physical features, and senses. The rich man demonstrates all of these attributes.

Third, those in hell will have some form of a physical body. We know this because the rich man longed to have his tongue cooled with water. Jesus said both body and soul are eternally destroyed in hell, so we know hell means continual, everlasting torture of the flesh with fire and worms.

Fourth, hell is a merciless place from which no one can escape. The rich man begs for mercy, but Abraham reminds him that a chasm exists between hell and all other places so no one can cross, either to get in or to get out.

Fifth, hell is a place of utter loneliness and hopelessness. The rich man pleads for Abraham to send Lazarus to his family. Why else would he do this unless he was forced to suffer alone regardless of who else also suffered? Hell's misery is denied the comfort of company.

This may seem difficult, especially if it is new for you, but nothing proves stronger to build our faith than God's Word. The good news is hell does not need to be your eternal destination!

Know that hell is a very real reality, but there is unwavering hope in Jesus. He gives us every reason for confidence.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28 NLT)

As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. (Numbers 16:31–33 NASB)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Know that hell is a very real reality,
but there is unwavering hope in Jesus.
He gives us every reason for confidence.




MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ How is Jesus' description of hell different, if at all, from how you have understood hell?
- ◆ Describe your feelings or thoughts as you read what hell is like.
- ◆ How does knowing the realities of hell affect your motivation to live for heaven?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for giving us a clear description of hell. Thank you for your mercy that saves me from hell! I put my hope in you alone to save me from that terrible eternity. Please help me to see this as clearly as you do. Help me to never forget this truth, or to ever let it become dull inside me. Instead, please make this reality firm in my heart, not to shake my own confidence in you, but to help me remain faithful. Let your Word have its full effect in me, and let my witness lead many more to your salvation.



THE SECOND DEATH

(inspired by chapter 4)

“But cowards who turn back from following me [Jesus], and those who are unfaithful to me, and the corrupt, and murderers, and the immoral, and those conversing with demons, and idol worshipers and all liars—their doom is in the Lake that burns with fire and sulfur. This is the Second Death.” (Revelation 21:8 TLB)

The picture we examined on Day 5 shows the holding place for those who are not saved until they are judged. Only after their judgment do they go to their eternal punishment, a place that is much worse.

Jesus Himself tells us of this place in our verse today, introducing us to the “Lake that burns with fire and sulfur.” This is yet another sobering description of what waits for those who reject the truth of Jesus and a life of following Him. Look at the different groups Jesus lists among those who will be sent to this Second Death; there are three of them.

First, those who once believed in Jesus but fell away from Him because of fear. They felt the pressure from the world around them to lessen their stand for Jesus, they became embittered through painful experiences, or they failed to finish what they once began. Their end will be the Lake of Fire.

Second, we see those who are unfaithful to Jesus. Many profess a love for Jesus, but do not live according to what they profess and in fact deny Him by what they do. These so-called believers will stand before Jesus and plead with Him, saying, "I went to church! I even became involved in many activities!" Jesus will not have mercy on these whose faith did not carry them into action.

Third, we see those who never followed Jesus at all. Most churchgoers think this is the only group who will be sentenced to the Lake of Fire, but they are wrong. Jesus is quite clear.

This Second Death is a place of unbearable, unimaginable, indescribable pain and torment. We know from Scripture this suffering is an everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46) and will not cease day or night (Revelation 20:10). We know it is a place where a person's flesh is continually consumed by worms that don't die. They are always being eaten by worms and always being consumed by the flames.

And we know this place was never meant for humans. It is, in fact, the place designed for Satan and his fallen angels.

None of these truths are cheerful, but would you rather be ignorant of them? It is Jesus' kindness to warn us of such terrible dangers so that we may avoid them. Let us heed His warning and remain faithful to the end!

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“And I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated upon it . . . And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and Hades (the realm of the dead) surrendered the dead who were in them; and they were judged and sentenced, every one according to their deeds. Then death and Hades [the realm of the dead] were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire [the eternal separation from God]. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was hurled into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11, 13–15 AMP)

“And if your eye makes you lose your faith, take it out! It is better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with only one eye than to keep both eyes and be thrown into hell. There ‘the worms that eat them never die, and the fire that burns them is never put out.’” (Mark 9:47–48 TEV)

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’” (Matthew 25:41)

ETERNITY TRUTH

The only people safe from the Lake of Fire are those who remain faithful to Jesus until the end. It is Jesus’ kindness to warn us of such terrible dangers so that we may avoid them.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Do Jesus' teachings on hell surprise you? Why or why not?
- ◆ How does what the Bible says about the Lake of Fire impact your life?
- ◆ If you could ask God one question about the Lake of Fire, what would it be?



PRAYER

Father God, hearing that Christians can still be in danger of spending eternity in the Lake of Fire is honestly a bit frightening. But thank you for your grace, that you earnestly desire my salvation and work for me and with me to help me endure to the end. Please help me guard my heart from offense and bitterness that could make my love for you grow cold. I choose instead to pursue you wholeheartedly, to fix my gaze on you and never look back!



HOPE IN JESUS

(inspired by chapter 4)

“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”
(Deuteronomy 5:29)

If hell frightens you, that would be completely understandable! I fully believe there is a good kind of fear, and the fear of hell is that kind. As a well-known rock star friend of mine once told me, it wasn't the love of God that made him turn to Jesus. It was the fear of hell that did it.

But it isn't God's plan for us to live in fear. His plan is for us to know confidently that we have hope in Him on the Day of Judgment. Even if you know Jesus, I encourage you to look at this good news through your new understanding of what you have been saved from.

The hope we have, despite the terrors of hell, started in an unlikely place: the very moment when the first man, Adam, chose to sin. That decision determined that all his descendants would become slaves to Satan and to sin. Just after Adam sinned, God promised to send a Savior.

Thousands of years later at the perfect time, God sent

Jesus into the world, born of a virgin so He was not Adam's descendant and did not then inherit a sinful nature. Jesus lived a perfect life, then willingly died as a blood sacrifice to pay for your debt and mine, a debt we never could pay on our own. His sacrifice sets us free from our old sin nature and makes us new.

God's good news is truly simple. Jesus made a trade with us. He exchanged our fate for His. He took our sin, but gave us His righteousness. He descended to Hades, but rose again to go ahead of us to heaven and into eternity.

Eternal life is simply to know Jesus, to put our trust in His work instead of ours, and to follow Him to the end. Follow Him today and never give up your faith.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“Therefore, [King David] being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.” (Acts 2:30–32)

God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. (Ephesians 2:8–9 NLT)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Jesus came to save us from paying the eternal penalty of sin, which was originally intended for Satan and his cohorts. His life being given for us reveals the amazing love of God.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ When you consider what Jesus went through to purchase your salvation, what stands out to you the most? Why?
- ◆ What does it mean to you that Jesus went to Hades for a time, now that you understand what Hades is?
- ◆ Describe the hope you have in Jesus in your own words.



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, how can I even begin to thank you enough for the hope you offer me? I was the rebel. I was full of sin. And you were blameless, completely perfect. Not to mention that you are God and I am just one person. But you died for me! Whether for the first time or simply with new understanding, I receive your sacrifice on my behalf. I receive your life and your righteousness. I exchange my old sinful nature for your sinless nature. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and make me your child. Thank you for not leaving me alone. Thank you for giving me hope now and always!



GOD'S OUTRAGEOUS GOODNESS

(inspired by chapter 5)

“You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day.” (Genesis 2:16–17 TEV)

God does not open heaven for those who simply call themselves Christians; He opens it only for those who have become Christians in truth by following Jesus and His teachings.

True Christianity begins with the goodness of God. In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve within a world designed for His presence. His desire was for us to never taste of the curse designed for Satan alone—the curse of separation from God. Yet that world only had value if mankind had the genuine authority to choose for themselves. That’s why God placed within the Garden of Eden a tree that offered mankind a choice. Would they choose fellowship with Him and life, or would they choose their own way and death?

We know the choice they made. Satan came, tempted Eve, and deceived her. She ate the forbidden fruit. Adam also ate,

and his sin was worse because he was not deceived (1 Timothy 2:14). He rebelled. This rebellion sentenced all mankind to become enslaved to Satan and inherit a nature of sin. More than that, it subjected all of creation to a curse of futility and death. There was no death or decay until Adam sinned. Tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, famines, disease, and pestilence didn't exist until sin entered the world. These all resulted from man not guarding what God entrusted to his care and choosing to go his own way instead.

Nature was cursed because of Adam's insubordination. Adam failed to protect his family and he failed to protect the world God gave him to tend. This was rebellion, treachery, and treason! If God had chosen to send all mankind into the Lake of Fire along with Satan and his angels at that point, He would have been just in doing so.

Yet instead, God chose to send His Son, Jesus, to suffer with us and for us. Jesus took the brunt of the punishment for our sins upon Himself. He chose to endure with us patiently. He chose to leave His throne and become our Redeemer. That is the goodness and love of God extended to save us.

That is the context of our salvation. We cannot talk about being saved unless we clearly understand what we are being saved from or until we know the nature of the One who saved us.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Against its will, everything on earth was subjected to God's curse. All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. (Romans 8:20–21 NLT)

Heaven belongs to the Lord alone, but he gave the earth to man. (Psalm 115:16 TEV)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Jesus chose to leave His throne and become our Redeemer, taking our punishment upon Himself. What an expression of His goodness and His love!





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Imagine someone doing to you what Adam did to God. How would you respond?
- ◆ If someone did to you what Adam did to God, what would it feel like to give your own son's life for them?
- ◆ Describe the love that's powerful enough to compel God to give His Son to cover our betrayal.



PRAYER

Father God, I don't want to just move past my past. I want to remember the life I was born into—a life of sin and slavery. I want to remember what Adam did to you, what all humans have done to you, and what I have done to you. I want to remember those things so I can know how truly good you are. Show me what I have been saved from and the glory of what I have been saved into. I want to see you for who you are. Thank you for saving me and setting me free! Fill me with your love and teach me to be a vessel of your outrageous goodness to others.



NEW LIFE

(inspired by chapter 5)

When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun! (2 Corinthians 5:17 TLB)

Many Christians have no idea of just how saved they really are. This deception can lead to unfruitful living that puts eternity in jeopardy for those who think they are safe.

The deception these people believe is that they keep their old life when they become a Christian. But Scripture is quite clear, telling us directly that anyone who has become a Christian is completely recreated from scratch. They are a new creation; they are at the beginning of a brand new life.

This means they no longer have to be subject to the old sin nature they inherited from their forefather, Adam. Instead, they have a new nature—the nature of Jesus. As Christians, we are no longer slaves to sin. We are free.

When we receive Christ Jesus, we experience a spiritual death and resurrection. Our old self is crucified with Jesus on the cross and we become a brand new person. This is what it means to be born again. We are truly and wonderfully born a second time, and this time born into true life in Jesus. When

our old life died, all that was sinful lost its power over us. We died to the power of sin.

It makes no sense for a Christian to malign a non-Christian for the way they live. How could we expect godliness from someone who is enslaved to sin? But what is even more unnatural is for a Christian to continue living in sin! If someone declares with their words that Jesus is their Lord, but in their actions they do not follow Him, then they prove they are lying and their words have neither value nor power. If Jesus is truly in someone's life, He will manifest in them the fruit of His presence through their transformed life.

Jesus even warned us to be careful to watch for the fruit of our lives and the lives of those around us. He said we can know a tree by its fruit, that bad trees cannot produce good fruit and good trees cannot produce bad fruit. If the fruit of someone's life is sin, they have not yet been redeemed by Jesus no matter how much they think they are saved.

This isn't about how often a person goes to church or how religious they are. This is a question of what they do in their lives. Is their fruit selfless and kingdom-focused? Or is their fruit selfish and worldly?

One of the biggest reasons so many self-proclaimed Christians still bear the fruit of their old life is they believe the lie that sin still controls them. Once they understand how saved they really are, knowing they are fully new creations, suddenly their old habits of sin fall away.

Christians are not just saved for heaven one day. They are saved from the influence of sin right now, and their lives prove God's saving power.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Don't love the world's ways. Don't love the world's goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out—but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity. (1 John 2:15–17 MSG)

“Different kinds of fruit trees can quickly be identified by examining their fruit. A variety that produces delicious fruit never produces an inedible kind. And a tree producing an inedible kind can't produce what is good. So the trees having the inedible fruit are chopped down and thrown on the fire. Yes, the way to identify a tree or a person is by the kind of fruit produced.” (Matthew 7:17–20 TLB)

And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives . . . Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. (Romans 6:4, 6–8 NLT)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Christians are not just saved for heaven one day. They are saved from the influence of sin right now, and their lives prove God's saving power.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ When you were first saved, what were you taught about your old and new nature?
- ◆ How did those lessons about your nature impact what you believed and how you lived?
- ◆ What does it mean to you to know now that sin has no power over you?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I can't believe how good this news is! You have saved me, not just for heaven someday, but from the destruction sin brings in my life right now. I don't have to put up with it anymore! I'm free forever! Thank you so much for delivering me from the evil of my past. I repent now from any way I have still lived by the lie that sin has power over me and I take up your truth instead—the truth that I am a new creation. I am not the person who struggled with those things. I am brand new!



EXCHANGING LIVES

(Inspired by chapter 5)

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 7:21 NIV)

Could you imagine your spouse saying to you, “I promise to be faithful to you, along with all the rest of my lovers . . . but you will be first”? Would you accept this level of commitment? Of course you wouldn’t. Yet this is exactly what many people try to say to Jesus.

In fact, this might even be the most common type of “conversion” to Christianity today. It comes in the form of churches where a speaker preaches a message that’s more like a sales pitch, telling only of the blessings God offers those who come to Him (which are all true, yet only half the story). The speaker concludes by cornering his audience with the question, “If you were to die tonight, do you know with certainty that you would go to heaven?” He then asks each person to see if those around them can answer yes, and if not to lead them by the arm to the front. Those who respond to this altar call pray a simple prayer to receive Jesus into their heart.

In this kind of situation, there is no talk of repentance from disobedient lifestyles, no renouncing of self or the old, sinful

life. There is a confession of taking Jesus as Savior, but there has been no heart change. They, like the spouse with many lovers, are agreeing to make Jesus important in their lives, just not important enough to commit their lives solely to Him.

The King of Kings and Lord of Lords does not want to come into anyone's life as second—or even first—among rival lovers. He will be the one and only, or He will not be at all. He is not interested in competing with others for our heart. He is the master, and our lives become His and His alone.

In many nations there is persecution to such an extent that Christians come to Jesus knowing it will cost them their lives. Yet in Western cultures, we sell Christianity as a better life and a way to heaven, deceiving people by not telling them we must lose our lives, too. No wonder so few Christians understand the cost of their faith. No wonder so many attend church as if it were another social club, shifting their membership from church to church whenever things become too unpleasant.

Our entrance to Christianity is an exchange. We give our lives completely, but we receive Jesus' life in return. Jesus does not suffer us to have divided hearts. He gave Himself to us completely, He simply requires us to do the same.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“If anyone intends to come after Me, let him deny himself [forget, ignore, disown, and lose sight of himself and his own interests] and take up his cross, and [joining Me as a disciple and siding with My party] follow with Me [continually, cleaving steadfastly to Me].” (Mark 8:34 AMP)

“If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will find true life.” (Mark 8:35 NLT)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Our entrance to Christianity is an exchange. We give our lives completely to Jesus, and we receive true life through Jesus in return.




MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ In what ways was your conversion to Christianity similar or different from the situation described above?
- ◆ Consider the exchange Jesus offers, both the cost and what you receive. What does this exchange mean to you?
- ◆ What changes do you need to make in your life to honor the true commitment Jesus requires?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I want to mean it when I call you "Lord." I want my whole heart to get behind those words. Today I make the choice afresh to give all of myself to you, holding nothing back. I make the exchange you ask for, my life for yours. Take my life. Take all my old ways of living. Take everything of who I used to be. I receive your life in return. I receive the grace to live obedient to your Word. I receive your Spirit to work in me to bear good fruit. And I declare your lordship over all areas of my life. Come and have your way in my home, my family, my work, my hobbies, my possessions, my habits, my relationships, my finances, and every other part of my life. I am completely yours.



FINISH YOUR RACE

(inspired by Chapter 5)

This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. (Titus 3:8)

Faith alone is not enough. It's a tragedy that that statement is controversial in our day, but it is. Yes, we do need faith, but Scripture is clear—we also need works.

James wrote to make this point, saying, “So then faith that doesn't involve actions is phony. But someone might object and say, ‘One person has faith and another person has works.’ Go ahead then and prove to me that you have faith without works and I will show you faith by my works as proof that I believe. You can believe all you want that there is one true God, that's wonderful! But even the demons know this and tremble with fear before him, yet they're unchanged—they remain demons” (James 2:17–19 TPT). Consider this! If a Christian is saved by believing in Jesus alone, without corresponding works of obedience, then every single demon should also be saved, yet they remain unchanged.

Please don't misunderstand me: without faith our works are nothing—no one could ever earn salvation through good

works. But without the evidence of good works, God's saving power isn't a reality in our lives.

We find this truth throughout Scripture. Paul wrote to Titus, a man who led a church, telling him to "affirm constantly" that faith must carry over into good works (Titus 3:8). How many churches today apply Paul's advice? How many of them ever affirm the importance of good works, let alone Paul's standard of constancy in this issue?

Christians must be vigilant to keep this truth about the importance of good work and proclaim it often. When we don't, our lives can become out of balance and, as a result, we are not being faithful to witness to those around us, risking instead that they might suffer eternity away from God. Jesus Himself told us that many will call Him by name and say to Him, "Lord, Lord," but He will send them away because He never knew them (Matthew 7:22–23). Paul also wrote that it was only because he carefully preached the "whole counsel of God" that he would be innocent, with no one's blood on his hands (Acts 20:26–27).

Could the church today have blood on its hands because we have failed to proclaim the whole counsel of God? It doesn't have to be this way. Even as we proclaim faith in Jesus, let us also proclaim a life of good works, a life that reflects the power of God's grace and the work of His Spirit.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

For it was only through this wonderful grace that we believed in him. Nothing we did could ever earn this salvation, for it was the gracious gift from God that brought us to Christ! So no one will ever be able to boast, for salvation is never a reward for good works or human striving. We have become his poetry, a re-created people that will fulfill the destiny he has given each of us, for we are joined to Jesus, the Anointed One. Even before we were born, God planned in advance our destiny and the good works we would do to fulfill it! (Ephesians 2:8–10 TPT)

Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. (Acts 20:26–27)

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Without good works there is no evidence
of God's saving power in our lives.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ What does it mean to you to truly make Jesus Lord of your life?
- ◆ Ask God what good works He is calling you to do. Write what you feel Him telling you.
- ◆ What changes do you need to make in your life to make sure you are “innocent of the blood of all men” on the Day of Judgment?



PRAYER

Father God, thank you for giving me this warning. Thank you for telling me how important it is to believe that my faith will lead to good works. Please lead me and guide me into the good works you desire for my life. I want to be found faithful on that day. Teach me to live in such a way that when I stand before Jesus, He receives me and declares me faithful. Let me not only call you Lord, but let me live in obedience to you every day!



KNOW THAT YOU'RE KNOWN

(inspired by Chapter 6)

“On the day of judgment many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, don’t you remember us? Didn’t we prophesy in your name? Didn’t we cast out demons and do many miracles for the sake of your name?’ But I will have to say to them, ‘Go away from me, you lawless rebels! I’ve never been joined to you!’”
(Matthew 7:22–23 TPT)

If you or I saw someone casting out demons and doing miracles in Jesus’ name, we would probably assume that person had a thriving relationship with Jesus. But that’s not what Jesus said. In fact, He said there would be *many* who come to Him having done those things and He will tell them He never knew them.

I want you to be confident on the day you stand before Jesus, so we have to understand what Jesus was trying to tell us. In Matthew 7:22–23, Jesus tells us there will be many who called on His name to great effect who never actually knew Him. Jesus calls these people “lawless rebels,” or as the NKJV translates, “you who practice lawlessness.” Someone who is lawless is someone who simply does not submit to God’s laws or authority. This is all of us at some point in our lives, even as

genuine Christians. However, Jesus highlights the difference by singling out those who *practice* lawlessness. This indicates that He is not talking about a baby Christian still learning to become free from sin or someone who stumbles occasionally, but rather someone who sins regularly and lacks true repentance.

Many people try to join themselves to Jesus for their own selfish reasons. Judas saw it as a means of getting ahead in life. Maybe he expected a big payday when Jesus would, presumably, overthrow the Romans. Regardless of his expectations, he never waited for Jesus to promote him, but instead regularly stole from the donations given to Jesus' ministry. He is the perfect example of someone who forms just enough relationship with Jesus to do miracles and cast out demons (and Judas did both), but who never submits their heart to His Lordship.

Judas' problem was that his relationship with Jesus was self-focused, aimed at promoting himself. A true relationship with Jesus must be focused on love. We know from Scripture, "But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him" (1 Corinthians 8:3). Loving God genuinely and unselfishly, being motivated to please Him, is how we become known by Him.

There are those who make great sacrifices for the ministry, yet they have never become intimate with Jesus. Their motive, the truth of what's in their heart, is what matters. Do they sacrifice to gain something for themselves? Are they building their own ministry-kingdom? Or are they building up a love offering for Jesus? Do they seek to bring Him glory?

Knowing Jesus, and being known by Him, is all about our heart attitude. What is the motivation of your heart today?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. (1 Timothy 5:3–5)

Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. (John 6:70–71)

ETERNITY TRUTH

A true relationship with Jesus must be focused on love. Loving God genuinely is how we become known by Him.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ If the measure of our love for Jesus is how obedient we are to Him, how hot or cold is your love for Jesus?
- ◆ Describe the person you know whom you perceive to have the best relationship with God. How can you tell they love Jesus?
- ◆ Why would Jesus hold so strictly to only giving salvation to those who embrace His commands?



PRAYER

Lord God, you are my only hope for eternal life. I don't want to serve you for my own personal gain. I don't want to simply build my own kingdom. I want to build your kingdom and only your kingdom. So please fill me with your love. I invite you, by your Holy Spirit, to come touch me with love so I can love you better. Each day, help me to pursue love and to not get discouraged along the way. Help me to fix my heart toward that day when I will stand before you and live in such a way that it will not be fearful, but instead be like a meeting of two old friends.



FALLING AWAY

(inspired by Chapter 6)

But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die. (Ezekiel 18:24)

The way into heaven is so narrow that even some who once were saved will not pass through. Hell is not only for the deceived (who thought they were saved, but never were), those who lived a double life (who talked a good talk, but never fully submitted their lives to Jesus), or those who always openly rebelled against God, but it is also for those who used to be saved yet exchanged God's righteous life for the life offered by the world.

Ezekiel shows us this potential, telling us that even a "righteous man," if he permanently turns away from his righteousness for the sins of a wicked man, will not live. God will forget all that man's good works and only remember instead his unfaithfulness.

We often talk of how God forgets our sins when He forgives us. This is very true, and it is right for us to teach this,

but we must also know God can forget our righteousness, too. When God forgets something, whether our sin or our righteousness, it is as though it never happened. All record of it is completely gone. If God forgets our righteousness, we have no relationship with Him. It is severed and we are headed for eternal separation from Him in the Lake of Fire.

Jesus warned a church of this very fate when speaking to them directly in Revelation 3:5, saying, “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not *blot out* his name from the Book of Life.” Jesus spoke these words to a church, not a city, region, or group of people who worshipped idols. He does not promise them that simply because they prayed a prayer to ask Him into their hearts they will live forever with Him. Instead He warns them, saying they must overcome till the end in order to keep their names in the Book of Life. Otherwise, He will blot out and completely erase their names. Whoever’s name is not found in the Book of Life will not receive life everlasting!

In many, if not most, churches around the world, this basic important teaching would be controversial, yet it is so clear in Scripture. Salvation begun must also be completed. Righteousness granted can become forgotten. Our eternal home is not securely decided until we step foot into it, and once we do, we will remain there forever.

Continue pursuing Jesus today and every day. Abide in Him and let His Holy Spirit transform your life. Then, with all prudence, maintain your relationship with Him throughout all your earthly days. Only then when you have overcome does Jesus promise you will find your name written in the Book of Life.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:19–20)

Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15)

A man who wanders out of the way of understanding shall abide in the congregation of the spirits (of the dead). (Proverbs 21:16 AMP)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Salvation begun must also be completed.
Righteousness granted can become forgotten.
Our eternal home is not securely decided
until we step foot into it, and once we do,
we will remain there forever.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Imagine reaching the judgment seat and finding your name was removed from the Book of Life. Describe what that moment would be like for you.
- ◆ Now imagine reaching the judgment seat and hearing that you have overcome and your name is written in the Book of Life. Describe what that moment would be like for you.
- ◆ What can you do to make sure you experience this second scenario instead of the first?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for being clear in your Word about how I need to continue life with you until the end. While this is sobering, I'd much rather know this clearly than make assumptions that I'm safe when I'm not. I want to live as you have commanded me to, but I need your help. I can't do this without you! Holy Spirit please lead, guide, teach, and transform me as you reveal Jesus to me. I know you are good and I can trust you to help me every step of the way. I submit myself to you and trust you to guide me all the way safely to my eternal home with you.



THE FEAR OF FALLING

(inspired by Chapter 6)

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He [Jesus] will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. (1 John 5:16)

Every Christian has sinned at some point since coming to faith in Jesus. So how do we know when we have sinned so much we are cut off from Jesus and headed for hell? I want to answer this question clearly, not for the sake of telling Christians how close they can get to hell without falling in. That's the wrong attitude. But many Christians worry they have fallen from Christ because of their mistakes and need reassurance that they have not.

Hebrews 6:4–6 gives us a clear description of the kind of believer who can fall away or, as our verse today says, commit sin leading to death. There are three qualifications given to us for this kind of believer:

First, they must have been enlightened and tasted the heavenly gift. All those who have genuinely recognized Jesus for who He is are those who have been enlightened, and whoever

then received Him into their lives are those who have tasted the heavenly gift, for Jesus is that gift.

Second, the person must be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit's job to conform us to the image of Christ and remind us of all Jesus taught, so we desperately need His presence in our lives in order to fulfill Christ's commands.

Third, this believer must have tasted of the good Word of God and of the powers of the world to come. This indicates a measure of profound experience, a genuine touch of God and hearing of His voice that marks a person and transforms them. This sort of encounter with God cannot be conjured or made up. It is unmistakable.

What we can see from these qualifications is that God is not warning baby Christians, but mature believers. Anyone who has had children can tell you infants do stupid things. They make messes, mistakes, even reject their parents' help, and so it is with baby Christians. They are still learning the ways of God. But a mature believer is someone who has left those ways behind, tasted of the goodness of God firsthand, walked with Him deeply and powerfully, and understands the work He has done in their lives.

If a believer like that falls away from Jesus, letting the attractions of the world or difficulties of the walk of faith draw them away from their first love, there is no hope for them. As 1 John 5:16 says, we are not even to pray for them. Jude 12 tells us they are now twice dead and cannot be again revived. For this reason, this sort of former believer will never pursue repentance. They cannot and will not, because repentance is

a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and He has left these former saints. So if you fear you've lost your salvation, but still wholeheartedly desire to be obedient and close to God, that's the work of the Spirit. Take courage because you've not permanently fallen from grace.

If you sin, repent and be free from it. If you see a mature believer whose love is growing cold, warn them earnestly. Live soberly, but do not be afraid, because while Christians can walk away from God, He does not give up easily.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

It is impossible to restore an apostate. For once a person has come into God's light, and tasted the gifts of the heavenly realm, and has received the Holy Spirit, and feasted on the good Word of God, and has entered into the power of the age that is breaking in, if he abandons his faith, there is no use even trying to lead him to repentance. By their sin of apostasy they re-crucify the Son of God, and have publicly repudiated him. (Hebrews 6:4–6 TPT)

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24–25)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Live soberly, but do not be afraid.
While Christians can walk away from God,
He does not give up easily.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ What does the encouragement that God will not give up on you easily mean to you?
- ◆ When you look at the three marks of a mature Christian, where do you see these things in your life?
- ◆ What changes can you make in your life to pursue a deeper presence of these marks of maturity?



PRAYER

Father God, it's so good to know that you are patient with me. Help me not to take your kindness and patience for granted, but instead to see your heart and become more like you. Let your grace, mercy, and peace always cover me, filling me with the true treasures of your kingdom so I am never enticed by the lesser treasures of this world. I pursue you today, and I praise you all my days.



SEEING SPOTS

(inspired by Chapter 6)

“But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.”
(Luke 12:45–46)

A believer may walk away from God, but that does not mean they will also walk away from the church. When this happens—and it does happen—it is a doubly dangerous situation, for now there is a wolf disguised as a sheep among the flock, looking to benefit himself off those around him.

Jude calls these wolves spots on the body of Christ and compares them to Cain, Balaam, and Korah, from the Old Testament (Jude 11, 12). All three of them once had relationships with God, and two were even ministers, but were led astray through various sins. Cain directly refused to obey God. Balaam abandoned his love of God to love money instead. Korah refused to submit to God’s appointed authority. All three of them fell into sin and walked away from God.

Korah's story gives us particular warning because his rebellion spread until 250 people were swallowed alive into hell, while another 14,700 Israelites who followed him were struck down by a plague. As his sin spread to others, the same can happen within our churches. This is why our apostolic fathers so frequently warned us about this kind of people.

One particular danger that I see very commonly in churches is the danger of bitterness and unforgiveness. This can become all the more dangerous when there are wolves prowling and looking to satisfy their own selfish desires. When one person acts selfishly, it is guaranteed to hurt someone, sometimes deeply. When we as believers are hurt or offended, we have a choice. We can hold on to that bitterness, or we can forgive.

Yet while we technically do have a choice in this, Jesus makes His stance clear. He says, "But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:26). You see that He says, "your Father," so we know He is talking to believers, not to unbelievers. To unbelievers He is still God, whether they acknowledge it or not, but He is only Father to those who have established a relationship with Him. It is to us who believe that Jesus gives this dire warning—if we do not forgive those who sin against us, our Father will not forgive us our sins against Him.

God's kingdom advances through forgiveness and reconciliation. If we refuse to forgive, the world will not know and experience Christ's forgiveness. We are His ambassadors, agents of His forgiveness. This is why you'll find forgiveness

right in the heart of The Lord's Prayer: "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" (Matthew 6:12 NLT).

Could there be anything more important for us to understand when it comes to walking out our faith? Christians know we come to Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, but how many of us also know we must do for others what Christ has done for us, or our sins will not be forgiven in the end? I cannot tell you how many times I have prayed for people in churches who were not able to receive their healing, comfort, or deliverance simply because they held bitterness and unforgiveness in their heart.

What is our response to this? First, stay on guard for those who have walked away from the Lord, yet remained in the church. Second, ensure you do not become one of them by learning the lessons of Cain, Balaam, and Korah. Third, as Scripture says, let no root of bitterness find a home in you, but instead forgive so you may also be forgiven.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25)

“And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” (Matthew 18:34–35)

Watch over each other to make sure that no one misses the revelation of God’s grace. And make sure no one lives with a root of bitterness sprouting within them which will only cause trouble and poison the hearts of many. (Hebrews 12:15 TPT)

ETERNITY TRUTH

God’s kingdom advances through forgiveness and reconciliation. As we forgive, we are His ambassadors, agents of His forgiveness.




MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ With such a clear warning about wolves in the church, how do you pursue discernment while avoiding suspicion?
- ◆ What thoughts or feelings did you have as you read about the importance of forgiving others?
- ◆ Ask the Lord to show you anyone you need to forgive (it may be yourself, or even Him). Write down their names and take time to process forgiveness.



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I wish I could say your church was completely pure, with no spots or wolves among us, but I know that isn't true yet. I want to be part of the solution and not the problem. Purify my heart of anything that would lead me in the ways of Cain, Balaam, or Korah, and please give me grace as I work through forgiveness toward those who have done wrong to me. Let nothing remain hidden in me that could disqualify me on that day when I see you! And let nothing hinder me from being the witness you desire, one fully able to bring you glory!



GOOD FEAR

(inspired by Chapter 7)

He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure. (Isaiah 33:6 NIV)

Jesus could hardly have been clearer in His comparison. “Do not fear men, who can merely destroy your body, but cannot touch your soul,” He said. “Instead, fear God, who has the power to kill you and then destroy your soul in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

Isn't it interesting to hear these words coming from Jesus? After all, He is the one who left the glories of heaven and laid aside equality with God all for the sake of showing us God's merciful goodness by taking our sins on the cross. He came so we could know God's love and forgiveness. So how is He also the one telling us we should fear God?

As contradictory as this might seem, it was a regular habit for Jesus to talk about hell. In fact, Jesus spoke much more often about hell than about heaven, and for good reason. Proverbs tells us the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). Isaiah tells us the fear of the Lord is the key to God's salvation, wisdom, and knowledge (Isaiah 33:6). Isaiah also says that the Messiah (Jesus) would be given the Spirit of the fear of

the Lord, one of seven names the prophet gives to the Holy Spirit in that passage (Isaiah 11:1–2). Who would possibly be better qualified, then, to tell us about the fear of the Lord than Jesus?

When we see Jesus' warning, it is easy to see the truth in it. Only God can render our eternal judgment. No one else will sit on the great throne on that day to make the final proclamation over our destiny. God assigns many jobs to others for them to faithfully carry out, but this is one He reserves for Himself alone. His is the absolutely only voice to speak with authority over our eternity, so why would we live to please anyone else above Him? If we know our actions on earth have consequences in eternity, why wouldn't we live in such a way as to hear, "Well done, my good and faithful servant" on that day?

It is only the fear of the Lord that will guide us into that kind of wisdom—the wisdom of living for eternity instead of for this world. We need to firmly understand each of us has an appointed time that will come when we will be held accountable for every moment of our life here on Earth. Once we understand that we will gain the wisdom we need to live life as God requires. And it is only when we live the life God requires that we can be sure of the foundation beneath us on that day of judgment. Godly fear is the key to God's sure foundation.

Jesus came to show God's goodness, and in His goodness, He warned us about hell. This might seem like a contradiction, but it's true. It might also seem like a contradiction that the fear of God leads us to having confidence before Him, yet this is also true. Godly fear will lead us into God's presence. And it's in God's presence that we experience the greatness of His love.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. (2 Corinthians 5:10–11 NASB)

“Everyone who hears my teaching and applies it to his life can be compared to a wise man who built his house on an unshakable foundation. When the rains fell and the flood came, with fierce winds beating upon his house, it stood firm because of its strong foundation. But everyone who hears my teaching and does not apply it to his life can be compared to a foolish man who built his house on sand. When it rained and rained and the flood came, with wind and waves beating upon his house, it collapsed and was swept away.” (Matthew 7:24–27)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Godly fear is the key
to God's sure foundation.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ As you contemplate the day you stand before God, does it produce fear in you? Why or why not?
- ◆ Describe the connection between wisdom and the fear of God in your own words.
- ◆ Explain how the fear of God and the love of God are not a contradiction.



PRAYER

Father God, I know that I will one day stand before you, and that what you say on that day will determine my fate forever. That's a really sobering thought for me, and I want to make sure I'm ready when that day comes. Teach me the fear of the Lord so that I may also learn wisdom and understanding. This life is such a short opportunity to prepare for eternity, but I know you will help me make the most of it as I submit myself to you. So that is what I do today—I submit myself to you. Holy Spirit, direct my heart toward the eternal!



WHEN FEAR ISN'T BEING AFRAID

(inspired by Chapter 7)

“Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.” (Exodus 20:20)

How can we have intimacy with the Lord (which He truly desires) if we are afraid of Him? Is that really what the fear of the Lord means?

The fear of the Lord and being afraid of the Lord are two very different things. Moses understood this difference, and he showed us that they are not the same thing in what he said at Mount Sinai. The context tells us God had just descended upon the mountain and spoken the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel. All the people responded to this magnificent display of God's power and presence by running away from Him and pleading with Moses that God would never speak to them again. They were afraid of God.

It is in that moment when Moses spoke to them, saying, “Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin” (Exodus 20:20). Do you see how he tells them not to be afraid, yet also tells them God wants the fear of Him to be before them so that they

may not sin? This shows us the significant difference between being afraid of God and having the fear of God.

People are only afraid of God because they have something to hide. We don't want to be near Him because we are ashamed of our sin. This was Adam and Eve's response in the Garden of Eden. They hid when they heard God coming near to them because they were afraid. Israel was repeating this same mistake as God again drew near to them in the wilderness to speak to them.

The fear of the Lord, however, is entirely different. When we are afraid of the Lord, we run from His presence so we cannot hear His word, but when we have the fear of the Lord we run to His presence and tremble at His word. Then, because we tremble at His word, we obey it completely to the end, even if it hurts, doesn't make sense, or we don't see the benefits.

You'll notice the vast difference between Moses and the rest of Israel. Moses had the fear of the Lord, so he was able to have fellowship with God, walk right into God's presence, see His glory, and hear His words. Then, because Moses trembled at God's words, he obeyed them, leaving a legacy of faith we can still follow today. Israel, on the other hand, being afraid of God, ran from His presence and within forty days had constructed a golden calf to worship instead of the Lord, leaving us an illustration of failure we can still learn from today.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.” (Jeremiah 32:38–40)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Proverbs 9:10)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)

ETERNITY TRUTH

When we are afraid of the Lord, we run from His presence so we cannot hear His word.
When we have the fear of the Lord, we run to His presence and tremble at His word.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Would you say you are more afraid of God, or filled with the fear of the Lord? Why?
- ◆ What benefits does the fear of the Lord have over being afraid of God?
- ◆ What stood out to you the most from the comparison between Moses' fear of the Lord and Israel being afraid of God? Why?



PRAYER

Father God, this is good news to me. I've heard of the fear of the Lord, but never understood how it's different from being afraid of you. Thank you that I don't have to be afraid of you, that I can draw near to you with confidence! Thank you that I can enjoy your presence as I listen carefully to your words. Please help me to tremble at your words, that I will live carefully to do all that you speak to me. Help me to make time to listen for your words and give me courage both as I draw near to you and as I obey you.



WHAT KEEPS US FROM SIN

(inspired by Chapter 7)

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (Philippians 2:12)

The fear of the Lord accomplishes something amazing for us—it keeps us from sin.

Such truth is apparent throughout Scripture. Paul wrote to the Philippians, telling them, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Notice that Paul did not tell them to work out their salvation with love and kindness. Those are important, even necessary, qualities in the life of a believer, but not the qualities that keep us from sin.

God, speaking to the nation of Israel through the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, said, “They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will

not depart from Me” (Jeremiah 32:38–40). When we become followers of Jesus, we are grafted into this promise.

Did you see where God said fearing Him forever is good not just for us, but for our children as well? We might think it is in our best interest to avoid every kind of fear, but the fear of the Lord does us good. One might ask why the fear of the Lord works this way, since it is so counterintuitive; God explains why. It’s because when His fear is in our hearts, we will not depart from Him. We know there is no good apart from God, so the fear of the Lord brings us good because it keeps us near Him.

Fear destroys intimacy—any marriage counselor will confirm this. But the fear of the Lord enhances our intimacy with God and everyone else in our world. In a sense, the fear of the Lord is a sanctified fear leading us to a perfect love.

Moses also understood the role of fear in keeping us near the Lord. We hear it in his words to Israel, “Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin” (Exodus 20:20). He exhorted Israel to soften their hearts to the fear of the Lord for the very reason that doing so would keep them from sinning.

Consider what happened in certain lives when they did not fear God. Lucifer was the lead worship angel in heaven. He continually beheld and proclaimed the beauty of the Lord, declaring His splendor and majesty for all creation, yet he did not fear the Lord, so he sinned and fell from God.

One-third of the angels also fell away from God. Though they had seen God and served Him by ministering before His throne, they did not fear Him, so they did not endure forever.

Adam and Eve also walked with God in His glory. They fellowshiped with Him and loved Him deeply. Yet all these things were not enough to keep them from sinning. They did not fear the Lord, so they did not tremble at His word and instead sinned against Him.

All these fell because they lacked the fear of the Lord. We must learn from them. Love God, yes, but while you love God, fear Him, too.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. (Hebrews 4:1)

Since we are receiving our rights to an unshakeable kingdom we should be extremely thankful and offer God the purest worship that delights his heart as we lay down our lives in absolute surrender, filled with awe. For our God is a holy, devouring Fire! (Hebrews 12:28–29 TPT)

“He who endures to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 10:22)

ETERNITY TRUTH

The fear of the Lord is a sanctified fear
leading us to a perfect love.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ How do you feel about the statement that it is the fear of the Lord that keeps us from sin, and not just our love for God?
- ◆ Explain in your own words how God does us good by putting the fear of Him in us.
- ◆ How could Adam, Eve, Lucifer, and the angels have been so close to God without learning the fear of the Lord? How can you avoid their mistake?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for teaching me such an important key to living the life you call me to live. Thank you also for your promise through Jeremiah that you will be good to me and put the fear of the Lord in me. I ask you to fulfill this work in me. Teach me to fear you, to tremble at your words, to work out my salvation with fear and trembling. Let the fear of you be always before me so that I may not sin! Keep me ever close to your heart in this; I do not want to fall short. Help me to endure all the way to the end!



THE FUTURE OF BELIEVERS

(inspired by Chapter 9)

As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness. (Psalm 17:15)

Many people hope their eternal destination will work itself out, but those who believe in Jesus can know exactly what to expect when they leave this world for the next. This comes as no surprise. After all, they have begun to taste their eternal life already.

The very moment a person places their faith in Jesus, they become a new creation. Their spirit is born again and is recreated in the image of Jesus. This is our first taste of eternal life, but it is not our last.

Every person is made up of three parts—spirit, soul, and body. We are spirits with souls (a combination of intellect, will, and emotion) who live in physical bodies. When our spirits are born again, we become able to enter God's throne room in heaven by the grace of God and the blood of Jesus. We do this in prayer or through worship. And, once our spirit is saved, the salvation of our soul begins.

Our soul carries all that we have learned during our earthly

life through either experiences or formal training, along with all the emotions associated with these lessons. These can be good lessons, like those learned from a godly and loving family, or they can be bad lessons, like those learned through trauma or abuse. Regardless of what our souls carry in our moment of salvation, it must be redeemed unto God's salvation. Our intellect must learn to affirm God's truth, our will must become submitted to God's, and our emotions gloriously become healed and whole through God's freedom and wisdom. We engage in this process through the Word of God and our obedience to it. The soul is the only part of man whose rate of salvation we help determine. The transformation of our soul is crucial to our finishing well as believers.

Finally, our bodies will be saved. As Paul writes, "So, while living in this 'tent,' we groan under its burden, not because we want to die but because we want these new bodies. We crave for all that is mortal to be swallowed up by eternal life" (2 Corinthians 5:4 TPT). We already feel the tension between the eternal realm and the temporary one we still live in, for our spirits have joined the eternal already, but our bodies are still mortal. Yet we know our bodies are only like tents, temporary dwellings that will be rolled up by death so that our eternal spirits can be given a new, eternal body. These new bodies truly will last forever, never aging, and will have new abilities just as Jesus did after He was raised from the dead.

If you believe in Jesus, God's salvation has already begun and it will one day be completed—spirit, soul, and body. Let God's salvation grow in you today.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

So then, my beloved brethren...lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:19, 21–22)

For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down—when we die and leave these bodies—we will have a home in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long for the day when we will put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. For we will not be spirits without bodies, but we will put on new heavenly bodies. Our dying bodies make us groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and have no bodies at all. We want to slip into our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by everlasting life. God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit. So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. That is why we live by believing and not by seeing. Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:1–8 NLT)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Those who have truly united themselves to Jesus have had their spirit reborn and remade already in this life. This is our first taste of eternal life, but it is not our last.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ How does it affect the way you view yourself to know your spirit is already a perfect, new creation?
- ◆ What are three ways you can change how you engage with God in the process of saving your soul?
- ◆ Imagine what it will be like when all three parts of you have been perfectly made new. What do you think that experience will be like?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I love to meditate on your salvation! Knowing the future you have purchased for me gives me hope and encourages me to press deeper every day into the process of becoming more like you. Thank you for the promise that every part of me will be fully recreated and made new! It's so amazing how you think of every detail and provide for my every need, even throughout eternity. Your goodness never ends! Let my heart never grow dull as I think about your love toward me in all these things, and let my awe regarding how you have saved me only ever grow!



THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

(inspired by Chapter 9)

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6)

If you were to go on a long journey, you would look ahead to where you wanted to go and what you could expect once you arrived. Knowing these things in advance will always impact how you travel and the route you take. Why do so many believers, then, go through life without giving much thought to what they can expect when they reach their destination?

The truth is that the final destination for all believers is actually not heaven. Heaven is simply the temporary holding place for those who have become righteous through faith, just as Hades is the temporary holding place for those who face God's eternal judgment. Heaven will one day pass away and be made new. When this happens, the Bible calls our new dwelling place the New Jerusalem, or the Heavenly City, which is built on Mount Zion.

However, before any of us will reach that blessed place

where we will dwell for eternity, there are two important periods of time that will follow this Christian age. The first period is a seven-year period called the Great Tribulation. It is a time when the Antichrist will be revealed and lead many into deception. He will oppose every religion and rise up against God, establishing himself on a throne to be worshiped for a time. This will be a time of great trouble.

The end of this time will be marked by a great battle. All those who have chosen rebellion against God by aligning with the Antichrist will be destroyed in a single day by Jesus, leading His army of saints. After the battle, Satan and all his demons will be locked away for one thousand years. Despite the casualties sure to mount high in this battle, there will still be multitudes of survivors who gave allegiance to neither Christ nor the Antichrist.

This leaves two groups of people on earth after the Tribulation—survivors and saints. The saints will have glorified bodies and will rule with Jesus on the earth. They will relate to the survivors in a similar manner to how Jesus related to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. During this time there will be global, even universal, peace, because this time will be marked by a great turning of the nations to the Lord. This will be an incredible time!

Think of what it would be like to be a saint during these thousand years! First, you would follow Jesus into the most epic battle of all history, finally ridding the earth of Satan's influence. Then, immediately following the battle, you would be placed in authority over some part of the world, maybe

even several cities. Then, for the next one thousand years, your job would be to seek the blessing and prosperity of all that lies under your authority, leading the inhabitants of that land to give themselves wholly in worship to God and to raise them up into His Lordship. And through it all, you would have access to Jesus Himself, who will also remain physically upon the earth.

This is the future for all who believe in Jesus and endure to the end. Can you imagine it?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

In the last days, the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem will become the most important place on earth. People from all over the world will go there to worship. Many nations will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Israel. There he will teach us his ways, so that we may obey him.” For in those days the Lord’s teaching and his word will go out from Jerusalem. The Lord will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end. Everyone will live quietly in their own homes in peace and prosperity, for there will be nothing to fear. The Lord Almighty has promised this! (Micah 4:1–4 NLT)

Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:20–21)

ETERNITY TRUTH

The final destination for all believers is actually not heaven. Even heaven will one day pass away and be made new.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Did anything in this description of what will happen at the very end of history surprise you? How so?
- ◆ While some take dogmatic positions about when Jesus will come for those who believe, what is most important is that we are ready when He does finally come. How can you ensure you are ready?
- ◆ What stood out to you the most in the descriptions of the millennial kingdom? What made this stand out to you?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you are the conquering King! I look forward to the day when you place all your enemies under your feet. My heart leaps knowing that I will get to stand with you on that day. Thank you that I can look forward to that day with confidence! But, I know there are many around me who cannot have that same confidence. Please help me be a voice of loving warning to them. Give me your heart for these people so that I can become an agent of your light and hope.



WHEN EVERYTHING BECOMES NEW

(inspired by Chapter 9)

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.” (Revelation 21:1)

When a man in America gets married, he chooses a ring for his wife with the most precious stone he can find. Jesus is planning something similar. However, as is often the case with Jesus, He is lavishly going above and beyond in what He will give His bride.

Jesus' bride is more than just the church. While the church is all those who believed in Him and endured to the end, His bride is comprised of all those ransomed of the Lord from Adam to those brought into glory by Christ's second coming. When God makes a final end to the present heaven and earth, causing both to be consumed in a great fire, He will bring forth a new heaven and earth.

This new heaven, which Scripture calls the New Jerusalem, will descend from above to actually rest eternally on the new earth. And what a city it will be! The foundations of the city are inlaid with twelve kinds of precious stones, while the walls themselves also sparkle like a gem. There are twelve gates made

of gigantic pearls, and the whole thing radiates with the glory of God! The stature of the city will be almost unimaginable—walls that are 216 feet thick and spread 1,400 miles high, deep, and broad. Inside the city, every street is made of the purest gold, so pure it is transparent. We cannot even begin to imagine the splendor, radiance, and opulence of this city, yet Jesus promises to give it to us as our new home.

God sits enthroned in the very center of this city and is its source of light. There is never night and never any need for a sun. Even as God is enthroned forever, the saints will also rule with Him forever and ever.

The river of life runs through the city clear as crystal from the throne of God. Trees of life grow on the banks of the river, bearing twelve different kinds of fruit, one each month. The leaves of the trees are used to heal the nations.

As wonderful as all these things are, the best is this, that we will be with God for all eternity. We will see Him face-to-face, a privilege even Moses was not given! This is the ultimate blessing of the New Jerusalem—being perfectly united with the One we have served, loved, and longed for our whole lives.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:7)

“Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth—so wonderful that no one will even think about the old ones anymore. Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people [the redeemed saints] will be a source of joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more.” (Isaiah 65:17–19 NLT)

The nations of the earth will walk in [the New Jerusalem’s] light, and the rulers of the world will come and bring their glory to it. Its gates never close at the end of day because there is no night. And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. (Revelation 21:24–26 NLT)

ETERNITY TRUTH

This is the ultimate blessing of the New Jerusalem—being perfectly united with the One we have served, loved, and longed for our whole lives.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Which aspect of the new heaven and earth are you looking forward to the most. Why?
- ◆ When you consider all God has planned for His bride, what does it reveal to you about Him?
- ◆ Those in the new heaven will rule with Jesus. Describe how you imagine this will be.



PRAYER

Father God, even with how much you describe the home you are creating for me, it's hard for me to imagine what it will be like. Every part of that heavenly city is packed with more life than I have ever experienced even for a moment in this world. That you are going to promote me to a place of authority alongside you in your kingdom is truly humbling. Most of all, I can hardly believe I will get to see you, to know you as you know me, deeply and completely. Lord, come soon, and empower me to live worthy of the home you are preparing for me!



THE BELIEVER'S JUDGMENT

(inspired by Chapter 10)

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:10, 12)

How terrible would it be to reach the beginning of eternity and find all you thought you knew about it was wrong? Many believers are in this condition and they do not know it.

I meet Christians everywhere I go who assume heaven will be the same for all of us. They believe judgment is only for unbelievers—that because they have placed their faith in Jesus they have escaped all trials of their own. Their assumptions lead them to believe all believers receive an identical eternal reward. This simply is not what the Scripture teaches.

Quite to the contrary, there will be a judgment for believers as well as unbelievers, though they are two very different judgments. The judgment for unbelievers is known as the Great White Throne Judgment and it is a judgment of condemnation. All who stand before this throne will answer to Jesus for their lives and unbelief. If their name is not found written in

the book of Life, they are immediately thrown into the Lake of Fire where they will suffer eternally.

The judgment for believers is vastly different, but we must understand it, for we will all face it one day. I believe Scripture clearly says this judgment will happen long before the judgment of the unsaved, perhaps before the millennial reign of Jesus in Jerusalem. What we do know for certain is that every believer will face this day and will have to answer for their deeds in life.

You might be thinking, "I thought we were saved apart from our works. Why will I be judged for my works?" You're right, we are saved by grace alone, completely based on Jesus' work for us on the cross. None of our works can save us, but it is impossible for us to be faithful to the salvation God gives us without good works. Paul described this very clearly to the Corinthians, saying Jesus is our only foundation, but we all must choose carefully how we build on that foundation.

Paul goes on to say we build on a foundation through every choice we make every day of our lives. We can build with gold, silver, and precious stones, or we can build with wood, hay, and straw. Everyone's works will be tested with fire on that day, and those who built with wood, hay, and straw will watch their fleshly works burn up. Paul warns that those believers will still be saved, but barely, as those who just make it through flames. Those who built wisely, however, by allowing God's Word to work in their heart and guide their steps through life, will watch as God's fire proves their work as sure. These will then move on to great reward.

Judgment is sure for everyone, both believer and unbeliever. Live in such a way as to be ready.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

We are coworkers with God and you are God's cultivated garden, the house he is building. God has given me unique gifts as a skilled master builder who lays a good foundation. Afterward another craftsman comes and builds on it. So builders beware! Let every builder do his work carefully, according to God's standards. For no one is empowered to lay an alternative foundation other than the good foundation that exists, which is Jesus Christ! The quality of materials used by anyone building on this foundation will soon be made apparent, whether it has been built with gold, silver, and costly stones, or wood, hay, and straw. Their work will soon become evident, for the Day will make it clear, because it will be revealed by blazing fire! And the fire will test and prove the workmanship of each builder. If his work stands the test of fire, he will be rewarded. If his work is consumed by the fire, he will suffer great loss. Yet he himself will barely escape destruction, like one being rescued out of a burning house. (1 Corinthians 3:9–15 TPT)

So whether we live or die we make it our life's passion to live our lives pleasing to him. For one day we will all be openly revealed before Christ on his throne so that each of us will be duly recompensed for our actions done in life, whether good or worthless. (2 Corinthians 5:9–10 TPT)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Judgment is sure for everyone, both believer and unbeliever. Live in such a way as to be ready.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ How does knowing you will face judgment for your actions one day change the way you think about your life?
- ◆ Describe in your own words the difference between the judgment of unbelievers and the judgment of believers.
- ◆ What does it mean to build with gold, silver, and precious stones? How can you make sure you are doing this in your life?



PRAYER

Holy Spirit, Jesus said you would lead us into all truth. He promised you would remind us of the things He spoke. As I understand that I will face judgment one day, I know I need you to do this work in my life. I need you to teach me what you desire in my life. I need you to wash over me to remove anything in me that hinders me from living faithfully to your call. I need you to establish your heart and passions in me, so my life is no longer mine to live as I please, but now I live for you and you alone. Teach me to live in a way that you will find faithful on that day!



LIVING TO WIN

(inspired by Chapter 10)

You also must run in such a way that you will win. All athletes practice strict self-control. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I am not like a boxer who misses his punches. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. (1 Corinthians 9:24–27 NLT)

If you knew you had one day to determine where you would live, what house you had, how much money you possessed, the car you would drive, and the people you worked with for the next million years, would it change how you lived in that one day? This is similar to the opportunity we have as believers to make the most of our eternity.

Judgment is sure for every human being, believer and unbeliever alike. Unbelievers will one day receive a judgment of condemnation, sentencing them to eternity in the Lake of Fire. Believers, however, will receive a different judgment. We must know that a judgment is, at its roots, simply a decision based on careful investigation. Every day Jesus is making a careful investigation of our choices and one day we will stand

before Him to hear His decision based on those choices. Ultimately, we are saved only by faith in Him, but our faithfulness to work out that salvation by doing good with our lives and living by His Word will determine the quality of our eternity. Or to say it another way, our faith in Jesus determines *where* we spend eternity, but our faithfulness to His Word determines *how* we spend eternity.

The decisions Jesus will make on His judgment seat are eternal, lasting forever without any possibility of change or alteration, yet He will make those decisions based on our choices during this brief span of time we call life on earth. I remember from my basic math classes that anything divided by infinity is zero. Eighty years divided by infinity is zero, and one million years divided by infinity is still zero. No finite number can compare to eternity.

That is the state of our lives here on earth. It is so short compared to eternity it's essentially zero. That is how comparatively long the decisions we make today will matter. How foolish must we be, then, to allow the distractions and fears of this life to wear away at our faithfulness to God and His Word.

We need to take up the same attitude as Paul, who spoke of athletes who carefully discipline their bodies to receive a prize that will fade and wither, but we race after a prize that will last forever. If the athletes of this world so consume themselves with diligence for temporary things, how much more should we cultivate the same all-consuming focus and diligence to chase after and win Christ's eternal victory?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

But you don't have a clue what tomorrow may bring. For your fleeting life is but a warm breath of air that is visible in the cold only for a moment and then vanishes! (James 4:14)

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:10, 12)

"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" (Matthew 25:21)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Our faith in Jesus determines *where*
we spend eternity, but our faithfulness to
His Word determines *how* we spend eternity.



MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY





- ◆ The disciplines of an athlete are easy to see in how they practice, train, and manage their diet. How does a Christian train in a similar way for a godly life?
- ◆ When you learn these truths about eternity, what stands out to you the most? Why?
- ◆ Imagine you were sitting with a child to lay these truths as a foundation for their lives from the beginning. What would you say to them?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you are a good judge, and I know the decisions you make about my life will be just. You already show me your goodness simply by telling me how to be ready for that day, by encouraging me that I can set myself up for great reward on that day! You tell me that it's okay to run to win eternally, to push myself hard in this short life so I will receive a reward that lasts forever. Please help me to live in such a way that not only qualifies for a great prize throughout eternity, but that also inspires many others to do the same.



LIFE IN THE LIGHT

(inspired by Chapter 10)

“For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.” (Luke 8:17–18)

When children are young, parents almost never stop saying, “Be careful! Don’t jump off the furniture. Don’t climb on the counter. Don’t touch the pan of cookies that just came out of the oven.”

Like a parent, Jesus often tells us to be careful about things that He knows would bring us harm, but of which we are ignorant. In one such verse, Jesus says, “Be careful how you hear” (Matthew 8:18). He is telling us to be careful of how we listen to His Word. Do we listen passively or attentively? Do we tremble at His word? Do we have honor toward Him when we hear Him? Or do we give heed equally to other voices as much as we do His? If we will pay attention to this one simple thing Jesus teaches us, we can gain valuable insight into how to prepare ourselves for the Day of Judgment when we will stand before Him.

Jesus mercifully gives us advance notice, saying, “Nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that

will not be known and come to light” (Matthew 8:17). This is the reason He tells us to take care how we hear: every last detail of our lives—inwardly and outwardly—will one day be made known to all creation. This is a guarantee; everything will be exposed, not just our outward actions, but also our inward thoughts, intentions, and motives.

God calls us now to be courageous by choosing to enter His light. Doing so will allow His Word to expose our hearts privately, sifting through our intentions and motivations as only His Word can, and allowing Him to shape our hearts. We are to do this now so that when everything becomes publicly brought to light at the Day of Judgment it can be an occasion of celebration and not rebuke. Consider what is possible here. We know that our spirits are made new when we turn to Jesus in faith. The innermost part of our being is recreated in His likeness and the influence of sin is broken off our lives. This is all true, so think about this: If Jesus were to have the private intentions and motives of His heart exposed before all, would it bring shame or would it only make His goodness known to all?

If we allow God to sift our hearts with His Word now, He will transform us to be like Jesus until all that remains to be exposed publicly can only bring us joy, as we celebrate with Him that we took the opportunity to make wise choices and build a heavenly reward. But if we wait until Judgment Day to let Him expose our hearts it will be an experience of loss when we realize just how many opportunities we missed to live for Christ.

Jesus knew all of this was coming. That’s why He told us to be careful how we hear. How are you listening to God’s words today?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

But when anything is exposed and reproved by the light, it is made visible and clear. (Ephesians 5:13 AMP)

“And here is the basis for their judgment: The Light of God has now come into the world, but the hearts of people love their darkness more than the Light, because they want the darkness to conceal their evil. So the wicked hate the Light and try to hide from it, for their lives are fully exposed in the Light. But those who love the Truth will come out into the Light and welcome its exposure, for the Light will reveal that their fruitful works were produced by God.” (John 3:19–21 TPT)

So do not make any hasty *or* premature judgments before the time when the Lord comes [again], for He will both bring to light the secret things that are [now hidden] in darkness and disclose *and* expose the [secret] aims (motives and purposes) of hearts. Then every man will receive his [due] commendation from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5 AMP)

ETERNITY TRUTH

If we allow God to sift our hearts with His Word now, He will transform us to be like Jesus until all that remains to be exposed publicly can only bring us joy.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ What does it reveal to you about God that He would warn us that everything about us will one day be exposed?
- ◆ Identify behavior patterns in your life you would not want revealed at the judgment seat. Repent and humble yourself before God, and He will redeem your mistakes and give you the grace you need.
- ◆ Describe in your own words what it means to be careful how you listen.



PRAYER

Father God, thank you that you will one day expose all the thoughts and intentions of my heart. I know that day can be a day of celebration, while at the same time a day of glory for you because the only way there is anything good in my heart is because you put it there. I invite you as earnestly as I know how to shine your light on me now. Please reveal anything in me that is not as it should be and change it into your likeness, so my judgment day can be a day of celebration. Thank you for working in me to make this happen!



JUST BARELY SAVED

(inspired by Chapter 10)

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:10–11 NIV)

God has given us a haunting description of what will happen to many believers when they stand before Him on the Day of Judgment. He tells us that many will stand before Him on that day only to watch as all they built with their lives is burned into nothing. In the end, they are saved, but just barely.

Perhaps it's difficult to relate this situation to our own lives without an example, so imagine this scenario with me. I know many wise people who have followed a particular course for their lives, which was intended to prepare them for retirement. They work hard through college to earn high scores so they can land a good job. Then, having succeeded in getting a good job, they immediately begin working toward buying a home so they can build equity. Soon they are taking extra money from their income and investing it in a retirement fund, even beyond what they continue to save in their own bank account.

All these things are wise choices intended to make sure they will be provided for during their retirement years.

But imagine with me that on the very day one of these wise persons retires, Social Security goes bankrupt so that it has no funds left to give him on a monthly basis. Next, the stock market crashes so he no longer has any value in the investments he has so carefully made over the years. On top of that, the bank where he has held all his money closes, that very same day, so he cannot access all he has saved. As if all these things were not enough disaster, he wakes up that morning with flames in his home. His house is on fire and he barely escapes with just the clothes on his back. Not only that, he learns that very day his insurance company has no remaining funds to cover his losses. He has spent his entire life planning for a retirement he expected to start that day, but instead he is left completely destitute and with nothing but his life. In mere moments, everything this person spent their life working for is gone with no hope of restoring it.

As sad as this picture is for us to imagine, it's still better than what awaits many Christians who have no idea that their actions in life determine their investment toward eternity. At least in our imaginary scenario, all the losses are temporal, earthly losses, and if that person has lived their life wisely before God they can still anticipate their heavenly reward. But someone who has wasted their earthly life and not planned ahead for their eternity has nothing waiting for them, except barely their salvation.

Your life is before you and your eternity has yet to begin. Live wisely today to plan for an eternity filled with reward.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Or, to put it another way, you are God's house...Take particular care in picking out your building materials. Eventually there is going to be an inspection. If you use cheap or inferior materials, you'll be found out. The inspection will be thorough and rigorous. You won't get by with a thing. If your work passes inspection, fine; if it doesn't, your part of the building will be torn out and started over. But you won't be torn out; you'll survive—but just barely. (1 Corinthians 3:9; 12–15 MSG)

Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God...So don't lose a minute in building on what you've been given, complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others. With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will grow under your feet, no day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus (2 Peter 1:3, 5–8 MSG)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Your life is before you and your eternity has yet to begin. Live wisely today to plan for an eternity filled with reward.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ How did you feel about the story of the person who lost their whole retirement?
- ◆ What does it mean to plan wisely for your eternal life with God?
- ◆ Why do you think the judgment seat is a place of such overwhelming joy, even though it is also a place where the works of many peoples' lives will be completely burned up?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I want to be faithful and wise. I want to build well during my earthly life so what I build is not destroyed by your fire when you test it on that Day of Judgment. Let your love test me now and purify me of anything that leads me to build unwisely. Let your joy sustain me as you work in my heart. Let your Holy Spirit teach and train me in your wisdom so I number my days rightly, living wisely for when that number is complete. I do not want to suffer loss on that day. Lead me and have your way in me to such a degree that my whole life brings you honor and glory.



HOPE FOR A HOPELESS ASSIGNMENT

(inspired by Chapter 11)

Thus says the Lord: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.”
(Isaiah 66:1–2)

You are both a builder and a gardener, and your great purpose in life is to build a house for God. What’s more, you are not just one of the builders of God’s house; you are part of the material out of which the house is being built! How you build God’s house is the ultimate basis for how God will determine whether to reward you or how greatly to reward you.

But who are we to build a house for God? God asked the people of Judah through the prophet Isaiah, “I made all the heavens and the earth with my own hands. What are you going to build for me that could possibly serve as my home?” The truth is, none of us are qualified for this job, and none of us can do it in our own strength or wisdom. We need God’s Spirit.

The Psalmist declares this, saying, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1). This is true of anything we undertake with hopes of it enduring for the kingdom of God. A pastor cannot plant a church for God’s kingdom unless the Lord builds it with him. An entrepreneur cannot establish a business unto God’s glory unless the Lord is his partner. In short, we can build without the help of the Spirit, but all of that will be useless in the light of eternity. Only what we build with God will endure the test of fire on that day.

This is why God directly followed up His word to Isaiah with a call to His people, “But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word” (Isaiah 66:2). God delights in those who humble themselves before Him.

Humility God delights in is not the sort of humility that says, “I’m no good. I can’t do anything.” This humility is of no use to God because it tends to lead people into doing nothing. They get caught in their own abilities and stop there.

However, the humility God delights in partners with faith. It is a humility that says, “I cannot do this alone. I depend on God to establish the works I do for Him.” This humility is proactive and eager, anticipating the great things God will empower us to do with Him for His kingdom. Our humility draws us into relationship with God, recognizing our complete need of dependence on Him, while our faith propels us forward into great exploits for His kingdom that we can only do because He is with us. This partnership between humility and faith is what builds God’s house, sustaining us in faithfulness to one day receive a great reward.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts.” (Zechariah 4:6)

You also are being built together for a dwelling place of God. (Ephesians 2:22)

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

ETERNITY TRUTH

You are both a builder and a gardener, and God wants to partner with you to do great things with Him for His kingdom.

MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ How is this description of humility similar to or different from how you have previously thought about humility?
- ◆ How do you feel about being given an assignment by God that you cannot do without God?
- ◆ What does it tell you about God's thoughts and intentions toward you that He would give you this kind of assignment?



PRAYER

Father God, thank you that you never give me an assignment I can't do, as long as you're with me. And I know that if you are the one who has told me to build you a house, then you will certainly help me accomplish everything I need to do. So teach me to be a wise builder, building through my choices and my life a house worthy of you. Show me the tools and how to use them. Give me courage to try new things, to step out in faith that you are with me as I build a house for your glory.

CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

(inspired by Chapter 11)

We are coworkers with God and you are God's cultivated garden, the house he is building. (1 Corinthians 3:9 TPT)

God has limited Himself on our behalf. No one could have ever forced Him to do this, yet He has chosen to simply by giving man authority over the earth from the beginning. Because He has delegated authority over the earth to man, we can restrict God.

You might be surprised, but there are examples throughout Scripture of times when God was held back because mankind refused to partner with Him. We must choose whether we will partner with Him to bring His plan and purpose to fulfillment in the earth.

Look no further than the Great Commission, where we find Jesus' final words before ascending to heaven. He said, "All the authority of the universe has been given to me. Now go in my authority and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And teach them to faithfully follow all that I have commanded you. And never forget that I AM with you every day, even to

the completion of this age” (Matthew 28:18–20 TPT). The very first thing we see here is Jesus declaring that all authority belongs to Him, yet instead of using His authority Himself, He sends us. He limits Himself to whether or not we will faithfully obey His command to go make disciples of all nations. He delegates His authority to us, sending us on a mission.

Jesus’ words follow the pattern God set for us from the very beginning when He created Adam and Eve in His image, then gave them dominion over all the earth, commanding them to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:26–28). That was man’s commission from the beginning, now clarified by Jesus as He sends us with His authority into the world. We must recognize God’s insistence that we take responsibility for our assignment. He is patient and He will not violate His Word by doing our job for us. He will not give up on giving us chances to be faithful.

At the same time, we must also see clearly that we are never alone. God does not give us this humanly impossible task of discipling nations—of building His house—without giving us adequate help. He promises nothing less than that He is with us always, even to the very end. He is fully committed to building His kingdom through us. All His resources are already assigned, waiting to be sent into the earth on our behalf as we choose to partner with Him.

It’s all waiting on us. Will we partner with Him? Will we faithfully obey His Word? Will we take up our responsibility to co-labor with Him to build His kingdom?

This is the calling set before us. How will you answer?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. (Psalm 78:41)

“Thus you are nullifying and making void and of no effect [the authority of] the Word of God through your tradition.” (Mark 7:13 AMP)

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion” ...Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:26–28)

ETERNITY TRUTH

We must choose whether we will
partner with God to bring His plan
and purpose to fulfillment in the earth.

MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Does it surprise you that Jesus has given you His authority? What are we to use this authority to do?
- ◆ How might the world be different if God had not given authority to man?
- ◆ What could it look like specifically in your life to co-labor with God to build His kingdom?



PRAYER

Father God, it's amazing to me that you would place yourself in such a vulnerable position as to wait for me before you work in this world. That's such a huge responsibility to give to people like me, and we are so small and incapable compared to you. But I know that's not what you say about me. You tell me to have faith, to believe that you are with me, and having you with me makes all the difference in the world. You took uneducated fishermen and made them into world-changers. Please, Lord, come and do the same with me!

GOD'S CUSTOM HOME

(inspired by Chapter 11)

For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place: “This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.” (Psalm 132:13–14)

There's a big difference between a custom home and a model home. If you walk into a model home, you can see a sample floorplan and then talk to a realtor about how you can buy a home with a similar floorplan and similar features. You will have some freedom and flexibility in your choices, but all the major decisions have already been chosen for you. All this serves a purpose—it's so each house within a neighborhood can have just enough distinctness to feel personal, while maintaining enough similarities that the builder can keep the benefits that come with mass production. God's home, however, is not a model home. It is a custom home.

There is no house in all eternity that will ever be like God's house. I understand this personally, because there was a time many years ago when a builder approached my wife and me, offering to build us a custom home, taking no profit for himself so we could afford it. At the very beginning of the process, he approached Lisa and me with some blank paper and said, “Draw your dream house!” While it took me a little longer to

join the process, Lisa was able to start right away. She had been dreaming of an opportunity like this for years. Our builder then took our drawings to an architect, who was able to fill in every last detail we needed.

This is the process every custom home goes through. Even the smallest parts of the plans have to be measured and accounted for before the work begins or there is a danger the house will not be properly built. Then, once all the details are planned, the contractor sets the schedule for construction. He does not do all the work himself, but hires subcontractors—excavators, concrete workers, framers, plumbers, electricians, sheet rockers, finish carpenters, floor layers, painters, and more. All of these workers must be scheduled in the right order; imagine what a mess it would be if the sheetrock were put on the walls before the electrician wired the house! Each of these workers must do their job well or it will have to be redone by someone willing to do the work faithfully. Throughout the entire process, each subcontractor will work from the plans designed by the architect from the very beginning, all according to the desires of the one who commissioned the custom home at the start.

We are God's subcontractors. He is the architect and general contractor, training and scheduling each one of us for our service to Him to build His custom dream home. God planned your life before you were born, arranging the good works you are created to do ahead of time, just as a contractor schedules each worker in his proper time. Your role in the kingdom is significant! All that's required from you is to answer His call when He says it is time to build your part.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

"I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my spokesman to the world." (Jeremiah 1:5 NLT)

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10 NIV)

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. (Psalm 139:16 NLT)

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him. (Ephesians 1:4)

ETERNITY TRUTH

God is the architect and general contractor, training and scheduling each one of us for our service to Him to build His custom dream home.




MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ How does knowing that there are many different roles in building God's house impact how you relate to other believers?
- ◆ What does this imagery of helping God build His home show you about your personal significance?
- ◆ God calls each one of us to help Him build His home. How will you know your role and when to do your part?



PRAYER

Lord God, I know you truly will have the most splendid and amazing house, so I can hardly believe you trust me to help you build it. Help me to take this important job with confidence, trusting you to prepare me beforehand, believing you are with me to help me be faithful in my role. Teach me who you created me to be in your kingdom. Train me to do what you have planned ahead for me to do. Lead me in your way, reveal your blueprints, and strengthen me to be faithful. I know that, working together, we will build your home!



LIVING YOUR UNIQUE CALLING

(inspired by Chapter 11)

“I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my spokesman to the world.” (Jeremiah 1:5 NLT)

Everyone has a divine calling on their lives. We all serve important roles in building God’s house. It’s important for us to know that in regard to our calling we won’t be judged according to what we did but according to what we were called to do.

I have met several examples of this throughout my years in ministry. I have a close friend who pastors a thriving church he started in 1991 with twenty-two people. Now there are almost four thousand people attending this church.

As the church grew through hard work, diligent ministry, and much prayer, they needed to build a beautiful building to meet the needs of the growing congregation. After a number of years, my friend noticed a distinguished, white-haired man regularly attending their services, and he would weep every week. Finally, the man approached one of my friend’s associates and shared that in 1981, the Lord gave him a dream, telling him to start a church, and showing him the building in which

the church would meet. It was so vivid, in fact, that he had a professional draw a rendition of the building he dreamed. He worked to establish a church for a while, but stopped because of difficulty, and after a few years of traveling ministry he ended up back in the business world.

He unfolded the picture he'd had drawn up so many years before and showed it to the associate, who almost went into shock. It was an exact picture of the church my friend now pastored. The man clearly saw God was serious about this assignment, needing someone to faithfully build His house, and he knew the Lord had given his assignment to someone else because of his failure.

My friend has since ministered to this man to help restore him, as obviously God doesn't want him to remain broken, but to learn from his mistake. I tell his story here so many others may also learn from his mistake, a mistake I have seen all too often. I could also tell of a pastor who became offended by this message, but repented, gave his ministry to an associate, and followed the direction God had told her to follow thirty years earlier. I heard from her one year later, reporting that she was thriving more than ever and had finally discovered why she was born.

Each of us has a calling. Some have gone into business who were called into ministry. Some have gone into ministry who were called into business, government, or education. There is no universally right answer to the question of your calling, except that we are all accountable only for our own.

Discover your calling, then live it to the fullest. It's the only thing you'll be held accountable for by God when you stand before Him.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14)

God called me by his grace; and in love, he chose me from my birth to be his. (Galatians 1:15–16 TPT)

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10 NIV)

ETERNITY TRUTH

In regard to your calling, you’ll not
be judged according to what you did,
but what you were called to do.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ What new thoughts did these examples give you in regard to your own calling?
- ◆ How did you feel about the testimony of those who realized they had abandoned their calling?
- ◆ What has God spoken to you about your calling?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I really need to slow down to take this in and give it the attention it deserves. I realize now that I won't just stand before you to account for my works in a general sense, whether I did good or evil, but in a truly specific sense, whether I did what you created me to do. How desperately I need you in this! I know you desire faithfulness of my life, and you do not leave me alone to accomplish it by myself. You will give me all I need. So speak to me clearly. Give me confidence and faith. Give me courage and boldness. Then let me never look back as I follow you into who you made me to be.



DISCOVERING YOUR CALL

(inspired by Chapter 12)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5–6 NLT)

When someone discovers they can choose a different path for their life other than the one God intended for them, and that they will be held accountable by God for that choice, it can be justifiably terrifying! This understanding quickly moves us to ask the question, “How do I know my calling?”

Once you begin asking this question, you must also seek God for the answer. He is the only one who knows why He created you, so you cannot find the answer anywhere else. I remember clearly when I first came to the Lord when I was in college studying to earn a degree in engineering, I was also interning at IBM. While I was there, I attended a party celebrating an employee who had worked there for thirty-eight years. He revealed he had hated every day working for the company, and as I looked around the room I was shocked to discover all the other employees felt the same way. I determined then and

there that no money, security, or anything else was going to keep me from my reason for being placed on earth.

With this determination, I began to seek the Lord. I discovered that God will give you the overall picture for your life, showing you the end from the beginning. He told Joseph he would be a great leader while he was still a boy. Moses knew he would lead Israel, but it didn't come to pass for at least forty years. David was anointed king as a child and waited at least fourteen difficult years before he took the throne. There are numerous examples like this in Scripture. God speaks to us this way so we must continue relying on faith, instead of reason. We must trust in His understanding rather than our own.

I thought I would graduate with my engineering degree, pursue an MBA from Harvard, get a job in high-level management, get married, take several vacations a year, and give a tenth of all I earned. That was my idea of how I would faithfully serve God.

As I sought God, however, I felt increasingly drawn to ministry. While I didn't like that idea, I was thankfully smart enough to know I would find fulfillment and satisfaction only if I obeyed God. Before I was even out of college, God had already made clear to me that I would one day influence many nations with the Word of God. This blew my mind. I had no connections and no idea how to do this, but I was willing.

The next step God led me on looked as though it went in the opposite direction, just like Joseph going into slavery in order to become a great leader or Moses running into the wilderness before saving his people. God led me to take an

engineering job in Dallas, far away from any ministry school I knew at the time. He told me which church to go to, and He told me to plant myself there. This was the church where I was raised up through serving, which was the start of the path that brought me to where I am now.

God's ways do not normally align with our understanding, but if we seek Him He will reveal our calling. As we continue to seek Him, He will lead us in the path to fulfill it, even if it does not make sense to us. What matters is not whether it makes sense, but whether we are obedient. What will you do to pursue your calling today?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, “This is the way you should go,” whether to the right or to the left. (Isaiah 30:21, NLT)

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)

ETERNITY TRUTH

God's ways do not align with our understanding,
but if we seek Him, He will reveal our calling.



MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ What does it mean to seek the Lord with all your heart? How can you do this?
- ◆ How have you sensed the Lord's leading in your life? How did you respond?
- ◆ When have you experienced in your own life the truth that God's understanding is different from ours? What did God reveal about Himself to you during that experience?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I wonder what it was like for you when you were on earth. Did you ever wonder about the way your Father led you through life? Did all His instructions make sense to you? I know that I often don't understand why you lead me the way you do, but I know you saw the path of my life before I was even born. In fact, you are the only one who can lead me to my purpose and calling. I give myself wholeheartedly to you for the sake of pursuing my calling. Lead me, guide me, and help me never stop seeking your face. Let me always be faithful to your call!



PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

(inspired by Chapter 12)

Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. (Psalm 92:13)

Have you planted yourself in a local church? If you haven't, it's to your benefit to get connected to one. This is one of the most important steps to discovering and living out the call of God on your life.

Many people today don't like the church. They don't see the importance of gathering together with other believers, or they are jaded from bad experiences within the church. We know from Scripture, however, that the church is Jesus' idea and He is the one building it (Matthew 16:18). He works through us to accomplish this building, giving us the ability, grace, and supernatural power, but He still needs willing and obedient vessels.

More than that, God's church is subdivided in two different ways. We see in the book of Revelation that it can be divided regionally or geographically, as shown in His letters to the seven churches. The church is also His body, so it is divided into different members, each performing different roles.

Jesus is the one who assigns each member of His body with the roles He created us to fulfill, therefore we must remember we are not the ones who decide where we will go to

church—He is! This may be shocking for many reading this, but I'll say it again—we are not the ones who get to make this choice. We must submit to God to let Him arrange His body the way He determines is right. The way many people pick churches is shallow, dividing over issues of whether we like the music style or the personality of those who minister from the pulpit. All this tends toward building our own agenda, but instead, we must seek God's agenda.

The problem with this is when we do not plant where God calls us, His body becomes crippled because it is missing certain parts. However, we see in Acts that when the body functioned as it was designed to function it resulted in explosive growth. The early believers we see in the book of Acts were truly planted in the local body. They met together, devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, ate together, and visited each other's homes every week. In other words, they held a common vision and did life together. When the need arose to serve food to the widows, they chose seven men to serve the practical needs of the congregation (Acts 6).

One of these seven, Philip, eventually grew into a well-known evangelist, yet even after his reputation and influence grew, he was still known as "one of the seven" (Acts 21:8). He was still recognized for where he had been planted all those years before, where he unglamorously waited on tables to serve food to widows.

In looking for your calling, be like Philip. Plant in the local church where God leads you and serve there. This is God's prescription for learning to flourish in His kingdom.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. (1 Corinthians 12:18 NKJV)

They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer...And all the believers met together constantly... They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42–47 NLT)

“Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, ... whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:3–7)

ETERNITY TRUTH

As you pursue God's calling for your life, plant yourself in the local church where God leads you and serve there. This is God's prescription for learning to flourish in His kingdom.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ What benefits have you received from your local church or other churches you have visited?
- ◆ It's possible to fill our lives with good things and still miss out on God's call. How can planting in a local church help you avoid doing this in your life?
- ◆ What do you do when staying at the local church where you planted becomes difficult? How would you handle that sort of situation?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I am part of something bigger than myself, and I don't always see my part. Honestly, sometimes I wonder if I've ever seen my part. Please show me where to plant and how to stay there while I wait for you to bring your plan about in my life. Help me to know how to co-labor with you in that plan, not only waiting for you, but also growing, learning, and anticipating the day you move me into what you have called me to do. My life is only for your kingdom, Lord. Take me where you want me to go and use me however you see fit. I am yours!



REMOVING ENTANGLEMENTS

(inspired by Chapter 12)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. (Hebrews 12:1–2 NIV)

We discover our calling in life when we seek God wholeheartedly. We develop it by planting ourselves within a local church. But even after doing these things, we may still fall short of God's intended purpose for our lives if we have become entangled in the things of this world.

Jesus gives us a clear example of this in Luke 9–10. Traveling with what was likely an enormous entourage, Jesus is approached by one man who volunteers to follow Him. He replies, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Luke 9:58). This man probably found great comfort in the securities he had provided for himself on earth. Jesus perceived these securities would become a hindrance to the man as he tried following Him, so He gave this warning to give the man an opportunity

at freedom. Instead, the man slunk back into the crowd, and likely a great number of the crowd who had similar entanglements to earthly securities slunk away with him.

Jesus looked at another man and called him to follow. The man replied, “I will follow you, but first let me go bury my father.” Jesus’ reply was harsh, saying, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:59–60). Like the first man, this one was also entangled. What we need to understand is firstborn sons, upon fulfilling their duties to bury their father, would receive a double portion of inheritance. If they slacked in their duty, the double portion would be passed to the next son. Jesus could see this man cared much for money and it would hinder him from following Jesus wholly. This man, and likely many others in the crowd who had a similar dependency, slipped away quietly.

Finally, a third man said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say goodbye to those at my house.” Jesus’ reply to this man was direct as before, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:61–62). This man apparently felt very closely connected to his family, friends, or girlfriend back home, wanting to let their voice be the final influence before he gave himself fully to following Jesus. The Lord saw through the hindrance and addressed it directly, and yet again we see a man walk quietly away with more than likely a huge part of the crowd.

These men, and all the others who left for similar reasons, all wanted to put something first before Jesus. They would still follow Him, but not with their whole heart. They would

help on worship band, usher, and help with local conferences when they came to town, but they would not put away all that entangled them to take hold of Jesus' calling on their life. These men also reveal to us what, in my experience, are the three main entanglements people face—security, money, and relationships.

It's no wonder Jesus said, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 20:16). Truly, every believer is called, but few are chosen (or appointed) to fulfill that call. Why are so few appointed? Because only a few are willing to forsake all their own desires, securities, lust for money, hindering relationships, and all else to fulfill the call on their lives.

Many will not follow Jesus all the way to their calling. Will you?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” Then He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.” And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.” But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. (Luke 9:57–10:2)

“But whether I live or die is not important, for I don’t esteem my life as indispensable. It’s more important for me to fulfill my destiny and to finish the ministry my Lord Jesus has assigned to me, which is to faithfully preach the wonderful news of God’s grace.” (Acts 20:24)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Truly, every believer is called,
but few choose to fulfill that call because
only a few are willing to forsake all else to
fulfill the call on their lives. Be one of the few.



MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY





- ◆ Which of the three men's stories stood out to you the most and why?
- ◆ What do you think about Jesus' demand that those who follow Him leave all entanglements behind?
- ◆ What, if any, entanglements do you have hindering you from wholeheartedly following Jesus' calling on your life? Know that it's not too late for you. Ask God to forgive you, and to mercifully sever those entanglements from your soul. His grace is sufficient for you!



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, your demand is as high as it can get, but I know that is the standard by which I will be judged when I stand before you. More than anything, I recognize that when you have given your all, it is perfectly just for you to demand I give my all as well. So I do, I give my all to you. If there is anything holding me back, please reveal it to me and set me free. I trust you and know that you are good. I know that anything hindering me isn't as good as I think it is, and it certainly can't compare to what you have in store for me. I lay down right now all I have in exchange for all you promise.



DISPLAYING YOUR WORK FOREVER

(inspired by Chapter 12)

If your work passes inspection, fine; if it doesn't, your part of the building will be torn out and started over. (1 Corinthians 3:14–15 MSG)

Many begin their work in God's house well, but then veer off and fail to finish. Whether financial worries, relational pressures, the trap of offense, hurt, disappointment, or some other entanglement ensnared them, the final statement on their lives is they did not fulfill their calling. This work must be torn out and redone, leaving these saints nothing to show for their labors when they reach eternity. Can you imagine that?

Perhaps it would help if I shared some of my story from when builders worked on my family's custom house. I came to the worksite so frequently the subcontractors began to recognize me and called me, "the preacher." When I arrived at the construction site, the workers would be blaring their acid rock music, but when they saw me someone would always rush over to switch it off. My frequent visits led to many conversations with the men as well as some ministry opportunities.

Sometimes as we sat there talking, different subs would tell

me stories of the great projects they had done or the magnificent homes they had helped build. Their eyes always glowed with a healthy pride at what they had been able to accomplish, something anyone with an eye for good work could recognize.

It made me wonder what it would have been like to be one of the subcontractors working to build the White House. Could you imagine what it would have been like to be part of that? You might come home to find your child excited at having learned about the President's home, and even more excited that next week they would take a field trip to see it. You would go with the class and be able to tell them with joy which parts of the building you helped establish and relish their awe that you were a part of something so important.

This is the opportunity all of us have as we work in this life to build God's house, a house that will never fade, age, or be destroyed. When we reach eternity, we will be able to point out, even to the nations, the parts of God's home that we built—work well done that will last for eternity. We will be able to carry that healthy pride in a job well done forever, but only if we see it faithfully through to completion. If we let ourselves get sidetracked or stopped for any reason, God will have to tear out our contribution as though it never happened. If we do not build right, He will not let our work remain in His house.

I know this is hard to hear, but the good news is you can determine today to not suffer this loss! You can choose that, no matter what comes, you will finish the task assigned to you. God wants to keep your work, and by His grace you are able to see it through to the end.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7–8)

Watch out, so that you do not lose the prize for which we have been working so hard. Be diligent so that you will receive your full reward. (2 John 8 NLT)

Many nations shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion the law shall go forth.” (Micah 4:2)

ETERNITY TRUTH

When we reach eternity, we will be able to point out the parts of God's home we built, but only if we live faithfully to the end.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Describe how you would feel being able to show your friends and family the sections of God's house you built.
- ◆ Describe how you would feel arriving at God's house to discover all you built had been torn out.
- ◆ How can the vision of seeing your completed work standing strong eternally help you remain faithful until the end?



PRAYER

Holy Spirit, you are my teacher, my comforter, and my strength. You show me how to build your house. You are near me when times are good and easy, and you sustain me with hope when times are difficult and painful. Through everything, you are with me. Thank you for always being there for me. My only hope for seeing my work still standing strong for eternity is you. I can only do it because you are with me, so let me always have a heart to press deeper into you, to walk more in your presence, and to let your Word enlighten my path.



EMPOWERED BY GRACE

(inspired by Chapter 13)

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10)

It's easy to admire those who have large international influence reaching millions of people for Jesus Christ, but that is not the call on every person's life. God will not give us our eternal rewards based on man's standard, but by whether we were obedient to our own call. For this reason, our calling is never about us, but only about the grace with which we are empowered to accomplish what God sets before us.

The apostle Paul easily had the greatest impact during his lifetime of any of the apostles, yet he said of himself that he was the least of the apostles. Interestingly, though, he immediately follows that claim by saying, "But by the grace of God I am what I am...but I labored more abundantly than [all the other apostles]" (1 Corinthians 15:10). We see then that Paul understood the significance of his accomplishments; it's just that he didn't see them as his accomplishments, but rather as God's.

He knew who he had been until God's grace transformed his life. He remembered how far God had brought him, and he knew full well his accomplishments had little to do with him, except that he chose to be faithful to God's call.

This was the summary of his entire success in ministry: grace. It's something I'm thankful to be able to relate to in my own ministry experience. The books I've written are in ninety languages worldwide. They number in multimillions, and the testimonies of changed lives are countless. Many wonder how I write books, yet I remember how terrible I was at writing and English until God's grace came upon me to do it. I hated writing English papers, struggling to finish two pages, even with notebooks full of scribbles trying to just come up with the first paragraph. Now when I write it just flies out from me freely, so much so that I really consider myself to simply be the first one who gets to read my books, because I know I lack the ability to write them.

Perhaps to the rest of the world it looks like I have some incredible talent or intelligence and that is why my books have reached so far through the nations, but I know better. I know it is grace.

I also know there is nothing more significant about me than a rural pastor who shepherds a church of one hundred people, a missionary serving an obscure unreached people group, or an urban worker risking their lives for people whom many consider worthless. More than that, I know there is nothing more significant about me (or any other international minister) than a businessman, politician, police officer,

designer, teacher, engineer, manufacturer, programmer, stay-at-home mom, or anyone in any other industry, so long as they are faithfully doing what God called them to do.

Our lives are never measured against one another. There is no human standard we can look to in order to measure our eternal success. Our only standard is the call God has given us, and the only way we can fulfill it is His grace.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him. That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past” (Ecclesiastes 3:14–15)

“The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! You know the saying, ‘One person plants and someone else harvests.’ And it’s true.” (John 4:36–37 NLT)

The one who plants and the one who waters work as a team with the same purpose. Yet they will be rewarded individually, according to their own hard work. (1 Corinthians 3:8 NLT)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Our lives are never measured against one another. Our only standard is the call God has given us, and the only way we can fulfill it is His grace.



MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY





- ◆ Have there been times you have considered your calling higher or lower than another believer's? Repent to God for this and ask Him to give you His perspective. Write what you feel He tells or shows you.
- ◆ With no pressure to compare your calling to anyone else's, what do you feel is your calling in which God is looking for you to be faithful?
- ◆ How can you know you are being faithful to the calling God has given you?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, in your Word you called people to be apostles, prophets, kings, and priests, but you also called some to simply be mothers and fathers. I choose to focus only on what you have called me to, refusing to long for or be jealous of what you have called others to do. Teach me the joy of being who you made me to be while doing what you created me to do. I may not always see exactly how my calling builds your kingdom, but I put my confidence in you and not in my own understanding. Thank you for helping me always stay faithful by your grace!



BUILDING WITH WISDOM

(inspired by Chapter 13)

Through wisdom a house is built. (Proverbs 24:3)

My wife once had a dream from God so vivid she woke me up at four in the morning to tell me about it. She had seen an army in the dream, all marching in perfect unison, everyone in their exact place, no one needing to look at another soldier because they all looked at the Master. She commented that no one coveted another soldier's rank or position, but everyone was content to serve in the way they were created to serve.

This is an image of the mature body of Christ and it reveals something important as we think about how to build God's custom house. Scripture tells us, "Through wisdom a house is built" (Proverbs 24:3), but there are two different kinds of wisdom—the wisdom of God, and the wisdom of the world. Both forms of wisdom are able to build things that look godly, but only one comes from a heart that is able to build something of eternal worth.

Wisdom of this world has a nature of selfish ambition. Anything we build out of selfish motives, no matter how good

it looks, will not accrue any reward for us before God because it is fleshly, unscriptural, and demonic in nature. Simply put, it is of this world, which means it is of no value to the next world. People use this kind of wisdom for all sorts of things, even ministry. Paul wrote about those who preached the gospel because they envied his success. Rather than producing good fruit for the kingdom, this sort of ministry produces strife, division, disorder, and all sorts of evil.

God tells us how to recognize wisdom that comes from above. First, it is pure. In other words, its outward actions match its inward motivations. It is authentic and has integrity through and through, not faking something on the outside that has no root on the inside. Its motive is to be faithful to the Lord, to manifest His love to the world. It celebrates however the kingdom advances and whoever advances it, regardless of whether we are the ones doing it. There are many who endure doing what is right, because it is merely an obligation to them and not done from their heart, but wisdom from God leads us to love genuinely and then to serve because of that love.

Second, wisdom from above is submissive. When we are content with our own calling, we are submissive to godly authority. We entrust ourselves to God's authority and direction, believing in Him to provide for us all we need, whether that is finances, opportunities, platforms, or anything else. Those on earth who carry God's delegated authority truly do carry His authority, and God will not take lightly those who have acted in rebellion to them. Associate pastors who split churches, employees who subversively built their own

business while working for someone else, and even those who refused to submit to their parents will all suffer great loss at the judgement, regardless of what they produced through their rebellion.

Results are not what matters to the wisdom of God; obedience from a pure heart is what matters. This is what will bring about maturity in the body of Christ until we all walk in unselfish unity, like the army in my wife's dream.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. (James 3:17 NIV)

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition. (Philippians 1:15–17 NIV)

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. (James 3:13–16 NIV)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Results are not what matters to the wisdom of God; obedience from a pure heart is what matters.




MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ What are the characteristics of an army that is completely unified under its commander? What training is required to accomplish that level of unity?
- ◆ Godly wisdom is pure and submissive while worldly wisdom is rooted in selfish ambition. Using this contrast, how would you further describe the nature of godly wisdom?
- ◆ Why do you think God cares more about heavenly wisdom from a pure heart than He does about results?



PRAYER

Father God, you are the source of heavenly wisdom. I know that as I draw near to you, I will gain wisdom from you, and not only that, I will see the purity of your heart. I will see how you do nothing from selfish ambition, but only act on the best interest of others. I will see how you serve from a heart of pure, genuine love. And the more I see those things in you, the more I will become like you. So I choose to draw near to you today. Please reveal yourself to me and teach me your wisdom.



MULTIPLYING GRACE

(inspired by Chapter 13)

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:2–3)

Jesus had an important message about how we may be found faithful. It was so important, in fact, that He told this lesson twice in two similar, yet significantly different, parables—the parables of the talents and the minas.

In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30), Jesus tells of a ruler who was going to travel abroad, so before he left he entrusted his property to his servants. He gave five talents to one, two talents to another, and one talent to a third, each according to the ability he knew them to have. In their culture, talents were a measurement of money, but because this is a parable we know it represents something else. I believe these talents represent the level of our gifts and calling.

Not every believer receives the same level of gifts or calling, but we each receive a certain measure from the Lord. This is yet another reason we cannot compare our callings to one another. One believer may be faithful simply by studying hard, going to college, getting a good job, and pulling his family out of

generational poverty, while another believer is called to create businesses that shape an entire industry. One is not measured by the other's standard, but each one is measured according to what they were given in proportion to their ability.

After a time, the ruler comes back and calls his servants to present their earnings. The one with five made five more, and the one with two made two more. The master celebrated these two, but he sternly rebuked the one who hid his talent, doing nothing with his gift or calling, using it only for himself. The ruler commanded that his talent be taken from him and given to the one who had ten. By this we know that if we are not faithful with God's call on our lives, He will give our calling to someone else who has already proven faithful. This loss costs us not only in this life, but even more so in eternity.

The minas (Luke 19:11–27) were also a unit of money, but in the parable they represented what every believer is given in common through Christ, as this time ten servants were each given one mina equally. Every believer is given the same access to Christ's infinite grace and we are all called to multiply it through prayer, obedience to His Word, following the Spirit's leading day by day, giving, reading Scriptures, worshiping, and many other things. God rewards our diligence to multiply His grace in our lives by granting us varying levels of authority in the millennium and the new heaven and earth. In the parable, Jesus declares those faithful servants will be given authority even over cities!

God has given you gifts, a calling, and access to His grace. He has called you to multiply what He has placed in your hands. What will you be able to offer Him when He returns?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’...And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’” (Luke 19:12–13, 15–17)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)

ETERNITY TRUTH

God has given you gifts, a calling, and access to His grace. He has called you to multiply what He has placed in your hands.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ Describe what the grace found through Christ Jesus means to you.
- ◆ Was it new for you to hear God may give your calling to someone else? How did you feel about this when you read it?
- ◆ God has given us the potential to multiply His grace in our lives, grow our abilities into something much greater than we first received, and receive authority to govern cities in eternity. How do you respond to this amazing offer?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you have a way for offering two choices with absolutely no middle ground. Receive heavenly authority to govern, or have everything taken away from you. Grow your calling, or it will be given to someone else. So I see what you've given to me must really be very valuable to you. Help me to understand your heart in giving me such stark choices, and help me to remain steadfast in choosing to multiply and grow what you have given to me. Teach me to do this well!



LEARNING TO MULTIPLY

(inspired by Chapter 13)

As it is written, He [the benevolent person] scatters abroad;
He gives to the poor; His deeds of justice and goodness and
kindness and benevolence will go on and endure forever!
(2 Corinthians 9:9 AMP)

The greatness of our eternal reward depends wholly upon our faithfulness to multiply what God has given us on earth. For this reason, we must understand clearly how to multiply for the eternal kingdom what God has given us in this life.

There are many ways to do this. First, we can give, and the more generously we give the more generously we will receive from God. Giving in faith is a sure way to multiply what we have as we use our finances to affect lives for eternity. This includes giving to the poor and needy, but it's good to remember that financial poverty is not the only way to be poor. There are also those who are poor in spirit—those who know they are desperate for God—regardless of their worldly wealth. When we give financially to the work of God, we sow into the poor, and our deeds endure forever. It is like planting an apple

seed that grows a tree that bears many apples, each with more seeds to grow more trees. Your heavenly reward is not based only on the one seed you planted, but by all that came from it. In this way, sowing financially is a necessary way of multiplying what God has given to us.

Second, we can form partnerships in the gospel. Paul wrote to churches he planted, sometimes thanking them for their financial partnership and sometimes exhorting them that they should financially partner with him. He tells us plainly that those who financially support those who minister will be equally rewarded by God as those who actually do the ministry (Philippians 4:17). Think about it: those who go to fulfill God's command to disciple the nations cannot do so without those who remain home, work their jobs, earn income, and support the expansion of the kingdom. Each believer must work according to their own gift and calling, not being ashamed of where God planted them, and giving generously toward the kingdom however God has enabled them.

Third, you can pray. Honestly, prayer is a necessary element of every believer's life. We cannot grow intimate with God without talking to Him. But prayer is also a powerful way to multiply what God has given us in this life toward a heavenly reward. We can use prayer to multiply the works of the kingdom through other believers. No great work of God has ever been done without prayer; it is that important of an ingredient in building God's kingdom.

Fourth, you can serve. Like any other part of the body, ministers (and pastors) only have a certain gift, yet running

an effective ministry (or church) requires multiple gifts. This means ministers need help from those willing to serve behind the scenes, and such service will be rewarded by God for all the work done by the ministry because the ministry could never have done its job without the help of those who served.

If you do these things, you will prepare for yourself an eternal reward, but one more thing is important to say. Whether giving of finances, time, labor, or prayer, what matters is not the amount you give compared to other people, so long as it is generous for your life situation, and that you give with a good attitude. Grumbling about giving will produce nothing for you, but giving with thankfulness will multiply your heavenly reward.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. (2 Corinthians 9:10 NIV)

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:6–7 NIV)

Not that I seek or am eager for [your] gift, but I do seek and am eager for the fruit which increases to your credit [the harvest of blessing that is accumulating to your account]. (Philippians 4:17 AMP).

ETERNITY TRUTH

Whether giving of finances, time, labor, or prayer, what matters is not the amount you give compared to other people, so long as it is generous for your life situation, and that you give with a good attitude.



MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY





- ◆ Have you ever realized how you steward your money will affect your position at God's judgment seat? What does this truth mean to you?
- ◆ When you consider your life, which of these means of growing your reward have you been the strongest? Weakest? How can you grow in any of these areas?
- ◆ There's nothing wrong with seeking heavenly reward, but we shouldn't serve or give for selfish reasons. How do you maintain the right heart attitude while seeking greater reward from God?



PRAYER

Father God, when you wanted to gain many children to be with you for eternity, you gave all you had—your one and only Son. Now you show me that my reward in heaven also grows as I give the best I have. Please help this truth sink deeply into my heart. I want this generosity to simply become part of who I am. I want to make sure I keep the right attitude in my giving, serving, praying, and living for you. You are my example in this, so I draw near to you today. Fill me again with your Spirit and have your way in me!



ATTITUDES FOR VICTORY

(inspired by Chapter 14)

But you know...how I live, and what my purpose in life is. You know my faith and how long I have suffered. You know my love and my patient endurance. (2 Timothy 3:10 NLT)

Our faithfulness—what God will base His eternal judgment on—includes every area of life, including how we live and daily treat those around us. Our acts of kindness to those around us can have deeply profound impact that store up eternal rewards for us. Whether we will live well or not is determined in large part by how we see those around us.

When I was first saved, I was extremely self-focused. I didn't understand God's love toward the people around me, so I only valued them for what they could do for me. This is the only response toward others that makes sense to a self-focused person, because to that person, the only person who matters is themselves. Consequently, I took their needs lightly and tended to speak down to them, viewing most people as below me.

This attitude opened even more doors to sin in my life, including the sin of sexual lust. Pornography had a deep hold

on me, so that if I felt tempted I had a very difficult time trying to resist. While God delivered me from this addiction on the fourth day of a fast in 1985, I had lived as a Christian with this sin for six years. It was even more years before I realized the root of this sin had been my self-focused attitude. I finally realized how selfish my habit of pornography really was, reducing the women I lusted after to being nothing more than pieces of meat, an object of desire whom I valued only for selfish reasons.

As God worked in my heart to fill me increasingly more with His love, I began to be repulsed and disgusted by the very same things that used to attract, and even addict, me. If a pornographic image flashed up on a billboard, magazine cover, or television screen, I would feel compassion for them. A righteous anger would rise up in me because of how these daughters, created in God's image, were being treated by people using their bodies to make a profit.

How I responded to women dramatically changed. I realized that men and women are created equal in Christ Jesus. I learned that husbands do not fulfill their role of headship by demanding authority in the home, but by laying down their lives for their wives, putting their wives above them, placing their needs first, and being the greatest servant in their home. Had I not repented of this attitude and the actions it inspired, I would have had to give an account for them at the judgment.

The way I treated women, and the way I treated people in general, were merely symptoms of a wrong heart attitude. When we do not have the right attitude, we will not have the

right actions. It can be easy to hide a wrong attitude during our occasional times of ministry or during the few hours a week we attend church, but it comes out in the way we treat family, coworkers, neighbors, and people like waiters, bellmen, or other service people. If you allow a worldly attitude to grow, you will live a worldly life. But if you cultivate a godly attitude, you will live a Christ-like life.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:3–7 NASB)

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:12–15 ESV)

ETERNITY TRUTH

Faithfulness to God must include every area of our lives, including how we live and daily treat those around us.





MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ When in your life did you encounter someone who touched you through the way they lived their daily life? What impact did this have on you?
- ◆ Why do you think God cares so much about our daily lives, and not just the moments when we minister intentionally?
- ◆ If someone asked you how to cultivate a godly attitude, what would you tell them?



PRAYER

Holy Spirit, you are the one who can teach me a godly attitude, helping me to see the people around me the way you see them. Change my mind to be like your mind. Change my heart to be like your heart. Give me your compassion and love, your wisdom for justice, your mercy and forgiveness, so I can live like you. Let my walk with you never be just some show I put on a few hours a week, but let it be living and thriving every moment of the week! Only you can help me with this. I give myself to you!



THE CONFRONTATION OF LOVE

(inspired by Chapter 14)

So above all else, let love be the beautiful prize for which you run. (1 Corinthians 13:13 TPT)

Many people know the darkness of their hearts when they come to Jesus. This is why they cry out to Him in the first place. Many others, however, have no idea just how much sin is hiding in their hearts until after they give their lives to Jesus, for it is then when He begins confronting areas of our lives that will rob us of reward on Judgment Day.

One such area in my life was selfishness. Elements of my selfishness lingered even years into my career in ministry when I began working at my church. This selfishness hid secretly in the way I treated people, and was all the harder to find because I was so kind to people that I built a reputation as one of the nicest people on staff. However, I was kind even when I should have confronted things. I said nice things about people even when it wasn't true. I was polite to a fault.

Finally, God confronted me. He showed me that 1 Corinthians 13 says nothing about love being nice. Then He asked me if I wanted to know the reason why I sometimes lied for the

sake of being nice. Now, if God asks you this sort of question, be sure you are ready to listen to the answer, because it very well may shock you!

God told me that I lied because I feared being rejected. I thought that if I said things that confronted people, they would reject me, and my selfishness didn't want that. I suddenly saw clearly that my kindness toward people was actually motivated by selfishness and not the love of God! More than that, instead of going to God to allow Him to meet my need for acceptance, I was looking to people to meet that need.

I repented from this manifestation of selfishness in my life, yet my repentance only led me to swing to the opposite extreme. I became harsh in my preaching because I still did not have God's love in my heart. This continued even into the early days of my traveling ministry, where I look back now and marvel at the messes I left for pastors to clean up. Through all this time the focus was still on me.

Praise the Lord, though it was extremely hard, a well-known minister criticized me to some influential leaders. Word of his comments came to me from three different continents, and let me tell you that it was very painful. Thankfully, I chose to not become offended, so instead I could learn from his words. It took some time, but God had finally saved me from the extremes and centered me in a healthy place. Now I can confront without fear of rejection, but I also speak with love and humor.

This is the story of my walk with the Lord, but you will have your own. God will work with you through your own issues that hinder your faithfulness. Even if it takes time, stick with it. Stay faithful. He will reward you for it on that day.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25–27)

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

ETERNITY TRUTH

God's love confronts us to remove things
that hinder us from living faithfully.



MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY





- ◆ When have you experienced God's loving confrontation in your own life? What did His confrontation produce in your life?
- ◆ As you look back on your walk with Christ, what do you marvel at that He has set you free from?
- ◆ God often works to add good character into our life by revealing those aspects of His nature to us more clearly. What aspect of God's nature stands out to you the most? How do you see this influencing your life?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you that you don't leave me where you found me! I praise you that each and every day, week, month, and year you have a plan to make me more and more like you. Thank you for how you are working in me even now to remove anything that would keep me from living faithfully for you to the very end, even in the simple daily things of my life. May my heart always be soft to you, that it would be easy for you to mold and shape me into who you created me to be. May my life increasingly be driven by your love until the day I finally see you face-to-face.



THE LEGACY OF LOVE

(inspired by Chapter 14)

Why do you criticize and pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you look down upon or despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God...And so each of us shall give an account of himself [give an answer in reference to judgment] to God. (Romans 14:10, 12 AMP)

It's hard to believe that our faithfulness in life can come down to something as simple as how we view the people around us, but it's true. If we don't view those around us as God views them, we won't treat them with the love God has for them. When we live toward people with God's love we will be found faithful, and it is when we are found faithful that God will reward us eternally.

What is necessary for us to realize is that God does not *have* love; He *is* love. We also must recognize that love is not God, for any concept of love we have will be false until we encounter the selflessness of God. We won't know love until we know Jesus, then we will find ourselves growing in our understanding of what love truly is.

As this understanding grows, our lives will grow as well.

God's love is never an intellectual thing; it's too powerful for that. If you know God's love, it's because it has touched you, and if it has touched you then it has transformed you at least in some measure. This is why, once we know God's love, we begin to treat people differently. Love doesn't stay trapped in our words alone, but moves out from us in our actions. We are patient and kind to people. We do not envy them when they receive what we need or want. We don't brag or insist on getting our own way. We seek the benefit of others and celebrate their successes as though they were our own. We remain faithful through difficult times and forgive those who hurt us. At the very heart, we live for the godly edification of others, which is only found in their conformity to Christ and the fulfillment of His will in their lives.

While this life is the most powerful thing on earth, it is not complicated. The simple life of one janitor, and the incredible legacy he left, proves this truth. This janitor, a man named Charlie, took in a boy who wasn't his own and took care of him for seven years. It was financial stress that forced this boy's mother to give him up, but other issues plagued this family as well. Six of the boy's nine aunts and uncles eventually were committed to an insane asylum, and the boy's mother as well. Both of his grandfathers were shot by other men. Had he not been rescued, this would have described the boy's life as well.

Instead, through the janitor's teaching and example, the boy, whose name is Mike, received Jesus, went to school, and became an accountant. Mike has helped several ministries set up their bookkeeping. He shares the gospel with nearly all

of his clients, numbering in the multiple thousands, and has led hundreds to Jesus. Mike also deeply influenced my life, in addition to helping our ministry get started on the right foot.

This is the legacy of God's love working simply through a person's life. Charlie loved Mike. Mike has led hundreds to Christ and shared God's love with many others, including me. I am blessed to have reached millions of people worldwide. I also led my wife to the Lord, and now she also has reached millions worldwide. All this impact can in some way be traced back to one simple janitor who loved a boy who was little more than an orphan.

God wants to leave a legacy of love—through you—that will have eternal significance.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

If I were to speak with eloquence in earth's many languages, and in the heavenly tongues of angels, yet I didn't express myself with love, my words would be reduced to the hollow sound of nothing more than a clanging cymbal. And if I were to have the gift of prophecy with a profound understanding of God's hidden secrets, and if I possessed unending supernatural knowledge, and if I had the greatest gift of faith that could move mountains, but have never learned to love, then I am nothing. And if I were to be so generous as to give away everything I owned to feed the poor, and to offer my body to be burned as a martyr, without the pure motive of love, I would gain nothing of value. (1 Corinthians 13:1–3 TPT)

Yes, each of us will have to give a personal account to God. So don't condemn each other anymore. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not put an obstacle in another Christian's path...Let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up. (Romans 14:12–13, 19 NLT)

ETERNITY TRUTH

We must view those around us as God views them, so that we can treat them with God's love.




MOVING TOWARD ETERNITY

- ◆ What stood out to you about Charlie's story? Why is that significant to you?
- ◆ What do you have in your life that looks small, but is big and important to God? How does this view change the way you see your life?
- ◆ How can you begin living right now in a way that has eternal significance?



PRAYER

Father God, it really does all come down to your love. Do I believe your love enough to live it? Do I really believe you are good? Well, I choose to believe, and I choose to seek you until I know it deeply for myself. Then I will choose to keep seeking you to know you even more. May I never stop seeking you for more of your love, because I know your love is never-ending. You always love more than I understand, more than I know, and more than I have experienced or seen. Please perfect me in your love. Then I will live in your ways, and then I will live with eternal influence, for your name's sake.



JohnBevere.com