

What On EARTH Are You Doing For HEAVEN'S Sake?

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One of the greatest needs among Christians is to have an eternal perspective. We live in a culture that places great emphasis upon the here and now. Yet, God's Word admonishes us to live our lives on earth with a view of life after earth (i.e., eternal perspective). Leonard Ravenhill says, "One of the main reasons we are so ineffective in this life is because we give such little thought to the life hereafter."

Before you read this tract I want to warn you. Your life will never be the same if God stamps upon your heart the principles contained here. I can say this because my life has never been the same since God stamped eternity on my eyeballs. Please read this very prayerfully. Listen carefully to what God's Word has to say to you.

Tony Campolo, in his book *Who Switched The Price Tags?*, cites a sociological study in which 50 people over the age of 95 were asked this question: "If you could live your life over again, what would you do differently?" It was an open-ended question and yet three answers constantly re-emerged and dominated the results of the study. These three answers were: If I had it to do over again I would:

1. Reflect more.
2. Risk more.
3. Do more things that would live on after I am dead.

Answer #3 points to a need that we all have to give our lives for things that are bigger than we are. This need comes from our Creator. God has "set **eternity** in the hearts of men" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Repeatedly in God's Word we are exhorted to live with an eternal perspective: store up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21); work for food that doesn't perish (John 6:27); set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:2); and fix our eyes on on what is unseen and not on what is seen...for what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Now, let's get a bit more specific and discover just exactly what things are eternal.

What is Eternal?

God's Word teaches us that only four things are eternal:

1. God Himself. "From everlasting to **everlasting**, You are God" (Psalm 90:2).
2. God's Word. "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of God stands **forever**" (Isaiah 40:7).
3. The souls of people. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that **whoever** believes in Him shall not perish but have **eternal** life" (John 3:16). After death, each individual faces an eternity either with Christ in heaven or apart from Christ in hell (2 Thessalonians 1:6-12).
4. Godly character and pure works. "For bodily disciplines is only of little profit, but Godliness is **profitable** for all things, since it holds promise for

the **life to come**" (1 Timothy 4:8). Godly character and pure works are eternal because they will be rewarded by the Lord in heaven.

Whatever we do in reference to these four things is eternal. For example, developing our relationship with God and allowing Him to develop godly character in us is eternal. Spending time in God's Word is eternal. Praying for others is eternal. Witnessing to unbelievers or helping a Christian grow in Christ is eternal. Giving tithes and offerings to further God's kingdom is laying up treasures in heaven and thus eternal (Matthew 6:19-20).

As you evaluate your life, how much of your time, talents, and treasures are invested in eternity? **Determine from this day forward to give your life for what is eternal!**

C.T. Studd was a rich and famous English athlete who sold his entire estate, gave the money away, and went to the mission field to serve Christ. This is the way he summed up the perspective that motivated him: "**Only one life 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last.**"

Our Lives Are Short

One of the key ingredients in gaining an eternal perspective is to realize the brevity of life. From eternity's viewpoint, our lives are very short:

1. "You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before You. Each man's life is but a **breath**" (Psalm 39:5). In comparison to eternity, our lives are as short as the amount of time you see your breath on a cold day.
2. "What is your life? You are a **mist** that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:14).
3. "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and then withers away; like a **fleeting shadow**, he does not endure" (Job 14:1-2). A shadow can so quickly be gone when the sun goes down or moves behind a cloud. The shadow is here one moment and gone the next. So it is with our lives.
4. Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 tell us that one day to God is like a 1000 years and a 1000 years is like one day. Psalm 90:10 says that the length of our days is 70 years, or if we are blessed, possibly 80 years. If 24 hours = 1,000 years to God, then 70 years = 100.8 minutes and 80 years = 115.2 minutes. Pretty short, huh? You can take a nap for 100 minutes and not even know where the time went.

Is this how you view your life, or do you tend to live each day assuming you have many more? Thomas Kempis said, "Thou oughtest so to order thyself in all thy thoughts and actions, as if today thou were about to die."

Cemetery Project

If you want to experience first hand how short your life is, take a walk through a cemetery. feel the eternalness of what is around you. Look at the names on the tombstones and note the ages at which they died. Then ask questions like: "Who remembers this person? Who thinks about them anymore? What did they do on earth that is still being felt by others today?" Most importantly ask: "Did they do anything that is remembered in heaven? Are they remembered for earthly achievements or heavenly accomplishments?"

As you continue to walk through the cemetery, think about your life. What will people think and say when they see your tombstone one day? Who will remember you? More importantly, what will God remember about your life? **What on EARTH are you doing for HEAVEN'S sake?** What are you investing in that is certain to outlive you?

In the movie "Dead Poets Society", I love the scene where the instructor (Robin Williams) is having his class look into the trophy case of past athletic heroes. He then reminds them that each of these past heroes are now dead. Their bodies are being eaten by worms. He then gives his students a challenge: "Carpe diem"- Seize the day! We as Christians need to seize every day for eternity.

Leonard Ravenhill challenges us with these thoughts: "We live too much in time. We're too earthbound. We see as other men see. We think as other men think. We invest our time as the world invests it, but if we took hold of eternity as reality, I'm convinced we'd be a different breed of people."

It is so easy to give precious time and energy to things that will not remain. Think of the many hours we waste in front of the TV, the money we spend on things that will eventually burn, and the emotional energy exhausted on events that will not matter in two years, much less 2000 years. I often think about this on Sunday afternoons during football season. How easy it is to sit for three hours to watch a football game, when three weeks later I probably won't even remember who won the game.

Opportunity Costs

In business there is a term called "opportunity costs". When a company is trying to decide whether or not to buy something or give time to a project, they not only examine the time and energy they might spend on project A, but they also look at what they are giving up in not doing project B. What they give up in not doing something is called the opportunity costs. We as God's people need to examine the opportunity costs of things in our lives. It is not wrong to watch a three hour football game. However, the opportunity cost of watching the game is the time that we could have spent in a more eternal way. God does not want an eternal perspective to cause us to become legalistic about how we spend each minute of every day, but He does want us to become more strategic about how we spend and invest our days on earth.

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10

2 Corinthians 4 and 5 give us four things that will characterize a person with an eternal perspective. See how many of these characterize your life.

A person with an eternal perspective will:

1. **Look more at the unseen than the seen.** "We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is **unseen is eternal**" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

This issue of the seen versus the unseen is probably why having an eternal perspective is so difficult for people. Most of what is eternal is not seen and most of what is temporal is seen. Therefore, we can so easily allow the seen to dominate our lives. The seen is right in front of us every day beckoning for our time and attention.

This is why so many people focus strictly on things like material possessions, and yet Jesus said, "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). Paul said, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain" because "we brought nothing into the world, and we will take nothing out of it" (1 Timothy 6:17, 7). I have never seen a U-Haul behind a hearse. You can't take it with you!!! After John D. Rockefeller died, someone asked his accountant, "How much did he leave?" His accountant wisely responded, "All of it."

We must let the grid of eternity evaluate every facet of our lives. Go back through your checkbook and examine how much money was invested in the eternal. This is sobering to do. Go through your schedule and look at how you spent your time. Ephesians 5:16 exhorts us to "make the most of every opportunity for the days are evil."

The second thing we learn from 2 Corinthians is that a **person with an eternal perspective will:**

2. **Learn the eternal value in the midst of trials.** "For our light and momentary **troubles** are achieving for us an **eternal** glory that far outweighs them all" (2 Corinthians 4:17). This is the passage God used in my life when I was a young Christian struggling with acne. Though the pain was very real, God showed me that He wanted to use it to develop my character.

I'm not saying such a perspective will take all of our pain away, but it will provide us with a new view from heaven. God views our lives like one who looks down upon a parade and sees the whole picture. We are at ground level and often see only one or two blocks ahead of us or behind us. What God wants to do in our lives is lift us up to the tenth story to see life from a different perspective, from the perspective of eternity. When we allow God to do this, we will have a different perspective on our trials and hardships.

And whether we like it or not, God's method of developing us is often through the fires of life. It is in those fires that He burns out the sin and refines us as pure as silver and gold. The degree to which we have an eternal perspective is the degree to which we will be able to endure tough times with the proper focus, and then the fires of life will refine us rather than destroy us.

What are you going through right now that needs an eternal perspective? Are you kicking and screaming and becoming

bitter at God over something, that from God's perspective, is designed to produce Christ-likeness in your life?

Dave Dravecky is the former all-star pitcher for the San Francisco Giants who, in 1988, was diagnosed with a tumor in his pitching arm and eventually had to have it amputated. He is a very committed Christian and says that, "Without Christ, I couldn't have endured all this... I find great comfort knowing we're here on this earth for just a short period of time. Then I'll go to a glorified body. All this is temporary."

Dravecky understands that God is more interested in our character than He is with our convenience; He is more interested in our holiness than He is in our happiness; and He is more desirous of our eternal development than our external delight.

The psalmist wrote, "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees" (Psalm 119:71). Paul said, "I consider that the **sufferings** of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the **glory** that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18; NASB). The glory that will be revealed to the Christian is ultimately the glory of being with God forever in heaven, receiving our glorified bodies, having every tear wiped away, and experiencing once and for all complete fulfillment and contentment. This leads us to our third point. **A person with an eternal perspective will:**

3. Long for heaven more than earth. "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an **eternal** house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our **heavenly dwelling**" (2 Corinthians 5:1-2).

Paul uses the language of an earthly tent to speak of our physical bodies, and uses this to show how temporary our bodies are. If you are experiencing physical hardships right now, the truth that you will one day receive a glorified body should give you great comfort. Our broken down bodies will **not** greet us in heaven. This is why Paul could say, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Do you long for heaven? Are you so sick of the sin and the rebellion and the hurting of this life that you groan because you so long to be with the Lord? If so, good! This may be an indication that God is stamping eternity on your eyes.

So many Christians are so in love with this world and the things in this world that they do not long for heaven. If you visit countries where there is real persecution and suffering for the sake of the Gospel, you will find people who long for heaven.

The story is told of a missionary couple that was returning from Africa after years and years of service for the Lord. It just so happened that President Teddy Roosevelt was on the same ship. He had been on a big game hunting expedition. When the ship approached the dock, a great crowd of people began to cheer and wave flags. At first the missionaries thought it was for them. When they discovered it was for the President, the man struggled. He angrily said to God: "Lord, we served you all these years and yet we get no great welcome when we return, and this earthly

leader receives a great reception from merely going on a hunting trip. Why God? You aren't treating us fairly." He struggled with these thoughts into the night, until finally he felt the Lord say to him: "**But you are not home yet!**"

Christian, you aren't home yet, either!!! And when this life doesn't treat you like you think it should, just remember there is a life to come for you where there will be no more pain or death or suffering or crying (see Revelation 21). This world is not our true home. We are aliens and strangers here (1 Peter 2:11).

Speaking of the end, 2 Corinthians 5:10 gives us another characteristic of the person with an eternal perspective and that is **a person with an eternal perspective will:**

4. Live with the final judgement in mind. "For we all must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him, for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

There is one thing for sure: every person will one day have to stand before the Lord to give an account of his/her life. The passage before us says, "We must **all** appear before the judgement seat of Christ." Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes the judgement" (NASB). **Every day is somebody's last day.**

Someone once asked the great scholar Noah Webster, the brilliant man who wrote most of the dictionary: "What is the greatest thought that you have ever had?" He said, "I've thought about many things, but the most awesome, the most terrifying, the most shattering thought I've ever had, is my personal accountability to God one day." Here was a man with eternity stamped upon his eyes. Martin Luther said that on his calendar there were only two days: "today" and "that day."

I know it is not popular today to talk about the judgement of God, but the Bible frequently speaks of it. We learn in God's Word that there will be two judgements, one for the Christian and one for the unbeliever. For the Christian, the judgement will not be for punishment of sin, because Christ bore our punishment on the cross, and this is why "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Instead, the judgement that the Christian faces is to have the quality of his/her works tested for the purpose of rewards. "If any man builds upon this foundation (Jesus) using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the **quality** of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his **reward**. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames" (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

All Christians will go to heaven because of their faith in Jesus. However, some Christians will receive greater rewards based upon their faithfulness and purity of devotion to Christ while on earth.

For the non-Christian (the person who never trusted in Christ for salvation) there is to come a dreadful and terrible and fierce judgement for sin. This judgement will result in eternal separation from God (2 Thessalonians 1:7-12). "If

anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). The Bible describes hell as a place of great physical pain (Luke 16:24), such as weeping, gnashing of teeth (Luke 13:28) and wailing (Matthew 13:24).

Once we see the reality of hell, we can understand why Paul said, "Since then we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11).

Someone once said: "there are many roads into hell but only one out of hell," and that road is Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by Me" (John 16:6). If you have not trusted in Christ alone for your salvation, you can do so now and be assured of eternal life. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have **eternal life**" (John 3:16). If you have received Jesus, you have the answer to eternal life. God wants you to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others. This is one of the most eternal things you can do. An eternal perspective is a great motivation to being concerned about others' standing with God. I saw a t-shirt recently that said: "Friends don't let friends go to hell."

The Privilege of an Eternal Perspective

One thing I do not want this tract to do is cause anyone to fall into legalism (doing good deeds to gain a better standing with God). We do not live for eternity to try to earn God's love or favor. Instead, we should live this way out of an overflow of our love and devotion to Christ and all that He has done for us. God wants an eternal perspective to be one of the greatest joys of being His child. One of the main reasons I am a pastor is because God has shown me that pastoring is the way I can have the most eternal impact for Jesus in light of the gifts, abilities, and desires that He has given to me. I cannot imagine being more fulfilled in my vocation. God wants all of His children to be able to say this.

Final Challenge

Imagine a huge string hanging from one end to the other of the room you are now in. Think of that string representing eternity. Now picture a tiny pin hole through the string. This hole represents your time on earth. My question to you is: Are you going to live for the hole or the string? Are you going to live for the temporal or for the eternal?

What on EARTH are you doing for HEAVEN'S sake?

As you seek to live with an eternal perspective, imagine for a moment what it would be like to have people come up to you in heaven and say things like: *"Thanks, I'm here today because you told me about Jesus... You gave me a tract 20 years ago, and I know I didn't show any interest, but later that year I read it and became a Christian. Thank you... You know all that money you gave to the missions' ministry of your church? I just want you to know that some of that was given to me as I ministered in Africa. Thousands of people came to Christ and many churches were planted because of that money. You played a part in that... Dad/Mom, I came to know and follow Jesus so easily because of the life you lived and the things you shared with me... You taught my Sunday School class and I grew much in my Christian character because of that class. I am eternally grateful."*

What will people say to you in heaven??

Take time today to allow the Holy Spirit to search your life: your schedule, your checkbook, your use of your gifts and abilities, your relationships. Might we filter everything through the grid of eternity? Give your life for the things of eternal significance!!!

We would do well to pray what Jonathan Edwards, that great preacher of the 1700's prayed before he preached his famous sermon, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God": "Lord, stamp eternity on my eyeballs."

We would do well to pray Psalm 90:12, "teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

We would do well to live Ephesians 5:16, "making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."

John Tillotson said: "He who provides for his life but takes no care for eternity is wise for a moment but a fool forever."

Lord, stamp eternity on our eyes - for your glory!!!

Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotes are taken from the New International Version. All emphasis are mine.

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