

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

LESSON 10: ETERNITY

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled *Understanding Salvation*. This series of lessons examines the very foundational idea of salvation, and what occurs in the life of a person who becomes a Christian. These lessons are critical for every believer to understand before they can effectively share the Gospel with others. Each lesson examines a concept from a Biblical perspective and includes time for discussion of these principles as well as how to effectively apply them to your life. This set of lessons is ideal for use with discipling new believers to ensure they fully understand these ideas.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians or those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christian salvation. Those who are preparing for evangelism and discipleship may benefit from discussion of these ideas. These lessons assume the participant has made a decision to follow Jesus and wants to explore Christianity further.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help the leader prepare for the lessons and can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

LESSON 10: ETERNITY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to give participants a clearer picture of the afterlife as it is explained in the Bible, as well as prepare them when discussing the afterlife with those of differing worldviews.

LEADER'S NOTE

This lesson can be heavy and may be difficult for some of your participants – especially those who have unbelieving loved ones, or have lost family or friends who were not saved. It is important to place this lesson in the context of understanding our salvation. It is important when conveying this message to focus on the hope of the Gospel. Having an eternal perspective changes how we live our day-to-day lives. When we ask ourselves, 'Will what I am doing today matter for all eternity?', we gain a new passion for God's work and eternal purposes. You are doing God's work by leading this study. Pray and prepare as though teaching this material will have an impact for eternity!

INTRODUCTION

(Select two or three of the following questions)

- ❖ What is the concept of the afterlife held by popular culture around you?
- ❖ What are your feelings about discussing death and the afterlife? Does it make you afraid, confused, nervous, joyful?
- ❖ Death and what comes after is a difficult subject for some people. Some avoid the topic while others are fixated on it. When was the last time you had a conversation with someone about the afterlife? Is this something people around you talk and think about?
- ❖ How does it make you feel to know that God will punish evil, and does so out of His love and justice? Is this a satisfying idea? Frightening?



STUDY

TEACH

- ❖ **What Does Eternity Mean?** : The basic dictionary definition of eternity is time without end. From a religious perspective this is generally characterized by some sort of afterlife. In the world around us we experience beginnings and endings all the time. It might be difficult to understand that, as a person, you will exist for eternity. We must look to the Bible to understand this clearly and get a picture of how we will spend eternity.
- ❖ **What Happens After We Die?** : There are several worldviews about what happens to us after this life on earth. Some of them include:
 - We no longer exist after we die — we stop experiencing anything. Death is the end.
 - The life we live is one of many. We will return in a different form — reincarnation.
 - We become spirit, at which time it is possible to communicate with people and move among people as ghosts — a spirit world.
 - Unlike other faiths, Christianity believes that we never cease to exist. We had a beginning when we were created by God, but we do not have an end. The Bible says that after this life, Christians will go on living in the presence of God for eternity. If we die before Jesus returns, our bodies will be buried and we will go to heaven. Our bodies will later be resurrected at the time of His coming, and changed into glorified immortal bodies. Read [1 Corinthians 15:12-58](#) and discuss as a group referring to the following points:
 - The dead in Christ are described as having fallen asleep (vs. 18 and 20). Though our bodies are “asleep”, we will be very much awake in His presence! This should bring us comfort.
 - We shall not be separated from God, even in death (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
 - All will be resurrected (vs. 22 and 51-52).
 - Every ruler, authority, and power will be destroyed (vs. 24-26).
 - We shall bear the image of the man of heaven, Jesus (vs. 49).
 - We will be renewed in our bodies and become immortal (vs. 53).
 - We must not forget that the Bible promises us that Jesus will return, and we will be resurrected. Jesus Himself will judge where each person spends eternity. Our eternal placement is decided not by how much good we did on earth, but on our standing before God. Have our sins been forgiven, or not? Those who have received the gift of God's grace and salvation through faith in Christ will stand forgiven before Him. Those who reject God's gift of salvation will spend eternity apart from Him.
- ❖ **Eternal Reward and Eternal Punishment**



- The Bible speaks of the afterlife as a reward for those who are forgiven, and punishment for those who die still in sin. Consider the Biblical picture of what these two realities look like:

Picture of Eternal Punishment	Picture of Eternal Reward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Luke 16:19-31</u> <i>Anguish</i> • <u>Matthew 13:50</u> <i>Weeping</i> • <u>Revelation 14:10</u> <i>God's anger and wrath.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Revelation 21:4-8</u> <i>There is no more sorrow or pain.</i> • <u>Revelation 22:3-7</u> <i>There is no more night.</i> • <u>Revelation 21:3</u> <i>God will dwell with them and we will enjoy the presence of God.</i> • <u>1 Thessalonians 4: 17</u> <i>We will always be with the Lord.</i> • <u>1 John 3:2-3</u> <i>We will see Jesus and be made like Him.</i>

- From Luke 16:19-31 we get a clear picture of the truth of eternal punishment. It is important to note the following:
 - People don't stop existing when they die.
 - Not everyone is saved.
 - After passing judgement, there is no second chance for those in hell.
 - There is no hope for a change of heart after death.
 - The rich man's thirst tells us there is no end to basic human needs in hell.

❖ **The Eternal Perspective:**

- What you do today may have eternal consequences. Every person you meet is an eternal being — each person will spend forever either in the presence of God or apart from Him. The words you speak to them may change the course of their lives forever!
- Consider the things you fill your time with. What can you do this week that will have eternal value?
- As believers in Jesus Christ we have a lot to look forward to. Death isn't a scary unknown thing, but rather a transition into eternity.



DISCUSSION

- ❖ How can you discuss the subject of eternity with people of other faiths in a manner that conveys a sense of hope? We are called to present the Good News as the way to escape the punishment we deserve. How can we do this in a clear yet loving manner?
- ❖ Considering that the possibility of spending eternity apart from God is very real for some of your friends or loved ones, do you feel a sense of urgency to share the Gospel with those who do not yet believe?
- ❖ Look at how you plan to fill your time in the coming week. Many things are important like doing our jobs well, taking care of our families, and working at something useful. However, some things we do may have more eternal value than others. What can you do this week that will have eternal value?
- ❖ Have you ever felt unsure of where you will spend eternity? Why or why not? Spend some time examining the Scriptures to see what God says to you.

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Ask God to fill you and participants with the hope of eternal life in heaven while giving opportunities to share this hope with unbelieving friends. Praise God that He has made a way for us to spend eternity with Him, and also that He is just and will see that evil is punished eternally.