

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

LESSON 10: ETERNITY

INTRODUCTION

This Study Guide is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled *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 discussing these principles as well as how to effectively apply them to your life. This module is ideal to use when discipling new believers to ensure they fully understand these concepts.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

LESSON 10: ETERNITY

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

This lesson deals with eternity and the afterlife as outlined in the Bible. Different worldviews and religions have their own stance on what happens – if anything – to a person after their life on earth is over. This lesson will give you clarity about the Christian position.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Have you ever wondered what happens to us after we die? Is this life all there is? Many religions and worldviews have a viewpoint on this question. The Christian view is that there will be a resurrection of our bodies and eternal life for those who belong to God. Those who reject God will receive punishment for their sins, and face an eternity of separation from God and all goodness. Those who have believed in Jesus Christ as Saviour will escape the penalty due them and will gain the blessings of God in their lifetime. 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 His eternal purposes.

GETTING STARTED

1. What are your feelings about discussing death and the afterlife? Does it make you afraid, confused, nervous, joyful?

2. 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?



STUDY

- ❖ **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. The Bible uses the words ‘eternity’ and ‘everlasting’ to describe what awaits all of us in our future, after this life. Can you imagine that? 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 be sure about where and how we will spend eternity, this time without end!

- ❖ **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. This is called reincarnation.
 - We become spirit, at which time it is possible to communicate with people and move among people as a ghost. This is the belief in a spirit world.

Unlike other faiths, Christianity believes that we will 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](#). What do we learn about what will happen to us who belong to God when we die? Will we ever be separated from God? What will we be like?

The dead in Christ are described as having fallen asleep. Though our bodies are “asleep”, we will be very much awake in His presence! This should bring us comfort. God promises that we will not be separated from Him, even in death, and that we will be renewed in our bodies and become immortal. The Bible promises us some things about our future.



➤ Look up each of these verses and write down what awaits us.

John 6:40	
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	
Acts 24:15	
2 Corinthians 5:10	
Revelation 20:11-15	

The Bible promises us that Jesus will return, and we will be resurrected. We will be given new immortal bodies, and Jesus Himself will judge where each person will spend eternity. Our eternal placement is not decided by how much good we did on earth, but by 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. Many people have a concept of heaven and hell and what one must do to deserve one or the other. While we would like to know every detail, the Bible tells us only what we must know. It is important to base our conclusion on these facts rather than our own dreams or wishes about the afterlife.

➤ Look at the Verses below and write out what the Bible tells us about Heaven and Hell

Hell (Eternal Punishment)	Heaven (Eternal Reward)
Luke 16: 19-31 Matthew 13:50 Revelation 14:10 1 Thessalonians 1:9	Revelation 21:3-8 Revelation 22:3-7 1 Thessalonians 4:17 1 John 3:2-3



- Jesus talked a lot about hell while he taught His disciples. One of the stories He told is found in [Luke 16:19-31](#). While it is a very sad story, we know that Jesus' message was to make His friends aware of the reality that could await them and rescue them from it. What do you learn from this story?

We learn that people do not stop existing after they die. We also see that not everyone is saved from punishment. After Jesus passes judgement, there is no second chance for those in hell. There is no hope for a changed heart after death. The rich man's thirst tells us that 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 what you have learned in this lesson. We all fill our days with many things. What can you do this week that will have an eternal value?

- Consider the hope that God is giving us by sharing with us His plans for eternity! 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. We can rejoice when a brother or sister in Christ dies and goes to be with God. Read [John 11:26](#) and answer the question it poses.



IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Eternity means time without end. Within Christianity it refers to the afterlife.
- ❖ There are many ideas about what happens to a person after they die – the Bible tells us that we do not cease to exist, but there is an afterlife.
- ❖ We who are Christians will not be separated from God, even in death. If we die before Jesus returns, we will go to be with Him in heaven.
- ❖ At the time of Jesus' return, our bodies will be resurrected from the dead and changed into immortal bodies.
- ❖ Jesus will judge where each person spends eternity. Our eternal placement is decided not by what we have accomplished in our life, but whether our sins have been forgiven by Jesus.
- ❖ Those who reject God's offer of forgiveness and the Lordship of Jesus Christ will spend eternity apart from Him, and suffer the penalty for their sins.
- ❖ What we do every day has eternal consequences. Every person we meet is an eternal being – each person will spend forever either in the presence of God or apart from Him.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1.

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?

2.

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.