

LESSON ESSENTIALS

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 4: LIVING WITH AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

While it is easy, and understandable, to get caught up in the details of day to day survival, Jesus teaches us to pursue an eternal perspective.

Having an eternal perspective means that we choose to view every aspect of our lives through God's point of view and with His will in mind. Through His Word, and through His example, Jesus teaches us how to retrain our thinking and to gain this eternal perspective.

When you look at the events around you, do you see the hand of God moving? Do you watch as life unfolds to see how even trials and difficulties can bring glory to God?

Being able to view every event in our life as an opportunity to glorify God and to make us more like Christ is all part of having an eternal perspective. And having God's perspective will bring us greater peace during those trials. Read on to learn how you can develop this new way of seeing things.

Living life with an eternal perspective not only helps us to live at peace with our circumstances but also allows us to glorify God for His sovereign care, and to look towards the future with hope.

Thankfully, scripture not only informs us that we need to make this perspective switch, it also teaches us how and why we ought to make this shift to the eternal view.

Each one of us is an eternal being. We have souls that will never die. As such, it makes sense that we ought to view life with eternity in mind. How can you tell if you are experiencing your life with the eternal or with the temporal in mind? You may find you are a worrier. Do you worry about your daily necessities? Are you afraid of dying? Are you having a hard time coping with your trials? Do they seem too big to bear? Are you possessive of your belongings, or overly focused on acquiring more belongings? Any of these traits, and others, could indicate that you are focused on the temporal over the eternal.

Living life with an eternal perspective not only helps us to live at peace with our circumstances but also allows us to glorify God for His sovereign care, and to look towards the future with hope. Scripture instructs believers to shift our attention away from earthly things and onto the eternal. Colossians 3:1-4 says, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

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One familiar passage that teaches us to view life with an eternal perspective is Matthew 6:31-34: “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” Jesus tells us that by seeking His kingdom, by aligning our will with His, that we will be free from the anxieties that often drive our decisions and pursuits. If we focus on the eternal Kingdom and trust the Lord to provide for our every need, we will be at peace in our current state.

Sometimes, the trials we endure seem more than we can bear. And certainly, life is often very difficult. However, when we are feeling burdened and weighed down with our circumstances, or when we are feeling like we can't go on another day, the Word of God encourages us to view our current state in light of God's eternal

glory in order to gain the hope we need to persevere. Romans 8:18: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Imagine! A coming glory that makes today’s trials pale in comparison!

When we feel like our immediate needs aren’t being met, or when we are worried that we might lose what little we have, Jesus instructs us to “not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” (Matthew 6:19-21). By keeping our desires placed on eternal, rather than temporal, treasures, we find that we become at peace with our ‘stuff’ as our hearts become increasingly satisfied by Jesus Christ.

Finally, as we develop our relationship with Jesus Christ, we will want to share that Good News with others. While we know we ought to tell people about Jesus, we also know that it can be dangerous to do so, or we may worry that we aren’t properly equipped to do it well. The Great Commission, recorded in Matthew 28:18, gives us the directive to go out and tell others about Jesus. That feels very much like a ‘here and now’ job that is all our immediate responsibility. Overwhelming! However, a closer reading of the passage shows an eternal perspective present in the instruction, and a great burden-lifting as we see who is truly responsible for the success of the mission: “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” Jesus has the authority. It is in His name that we endeavor to win the lost. It is His commandments that we teach. And best of all, it is His presence that is with us today, and every day, even for all eternity.

There is not one aspect of our lives that is not under the Lord’s loving and sovereign care. And He promises that He is working out all of these details for our good and for His glory (Romans 8:28). Choosing to develop our eternal perspective will enable us to truly see the good and glorious things He is doing.

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IN REVIEW

- Living life with an eternal perspective not only helps us to live at peace with our circumstances but also allows us to glorify God for His sovereign care, and to look towards the future with hope.
- When we are feeling burdened and weighed down with our circumstances, or when we are feeling we can't go on another day, the Word of God encourages us to view our current state in light of God's eternal glory in order to gain the hope we need to persevere.
- By keeping our desires placed on eternal, rather than temporal, treasures, we find that we become at peace with our 'stuff' as our hearts become increasingly satisfied by Jesus Christ.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- In which areas of your life are you viewing the details with a temporal perspective?
- Can you see circumstances in your life where a having temporal perspective is increasing your anxiety?
- How will you 'seek His kingdom first' in your current circumstances?
- Spend some time meditating on the 'glory that is to be revealed' (Rom. 8:18) and asking the Lord to help you persevere with your eyes set on Him.

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