

# Eternal Perspective

If you had unlimited money and resources to do whatever you wanted for one whole day, how would you spend your time? What if God told you exactly how to spend your time each day, what do you think he would want you to do with your time? There are *many* things that are important to God. In this study, we want to look at two main principles that reveal what the most important things are to God.

## 1. The Eternal Over the Temporal

We tend to place great emphasis on the here and now. But God, while not dismissing the temporal as totally irrelevant, places much greater emphasis on the eternal.

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So 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 4:17-18*

In the verse on the left, what do you think Paul is referring to when he writes of "light and momentary troubles?" (For extra insight, check the context: verses 8-16.)

How does he compare those "troubles" with what is to come - unseen and eternal?

How could fixing your eyes on eternal things be more beneficial to you than fixing your eyes on temporary things?

In the verse on the right, which does Jesus say is more desirable?

- Staying alive; enjoying the here and now
- Producing fruit; sacrificing in this life for eternal benefits

What do you think Jesus was talking about when he referred to the kernel of wheat "dying" and thereby producing many seeds?

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

*John 12:24-25*

How can we involve ourselves in the eternal?

The Bible tells us that, other than hell, there are only three things that are eternal. They are found in the three passages listed below. Look up each scripture and write down the three eternal things.

Passage	The Eternal Thing
Psalm 90:2	
1 Peter 1:25	
1 Thessalonians 4:16-17	

To the extent that you are involved in these 3 eternal things, you are involved in eternity!

## 2. The Spiritual Over the Material

It's easy to get attached to material things, isn't it? We can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell them, and in this way they provide sensual gratification to some degree - usually immediately. But the payback regarding spiritual things is often intangible or deferred. Because of this, we may sometimes wonder if there even is any payback. However, this is what walking by faith is all about - valuing the unseen spiritual things, regardless of the payback. Jesus Christ tells us that it *will* be worth it in the long run!

In the verse on the right, what are two reasons Jesus gives us as to why we shouldn't focus so much on amassing this world's treasures?

1. (From verses 19-20)
2. (From verse 21)

How do you think one goes about "storing up treasure in heaven?"

<sup>19</sup>Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup>But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For wherever your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

*Matthew 6:19-21*

Find and read **Luke 12:13-21** in your Bible. In verse 15, Jesus gives us a stern warning. What is it?

In what way is His warning at odds with the prevailing sentiment regarding possessions in society today?

In the parable Jesus shared, a successful businessman was the focus. Was Jesus condemning his financial success or something else? What was it?

How do you think one can become "rich toward God (verse 21)"?

Referring to the verse on the right, how do you think someone can save their life in such a way that they lose it?

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

*Matthew 16:25-26*

Other than actual martyrdom, how does one lose his life for Christ in such a way that they find it?

### Our Primary Focus

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

*Matthew 16:25-26*

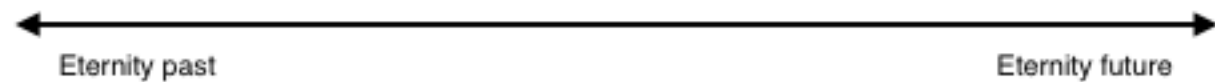
Read the verse on the left. What are we commanded to do in the last sentence?

Why do you think we should not set our minds on earthly things?

One reason we're told to set our minds on eternal things is because earthly things won't last. Look up the verses and fill in the chart below about what the Bible says about our lives:

Passage	Truth about our life
James 4:13-14	
1 John 2:15-18	
Philippians 3:17-20	

In Philippians 3:17-20, Paul taught that our real citizenship is in heaven, not on earth. Consider the line below representing eternity. Draw a dot on the line to represent your time on earth.



### Reflection

In light of the brevity of life and all that lies ahead in eternity, reflect on these questions:

1. We must consider how we will invest our lives. Are you living for the dot or the line?
2. Where are you setting your mind on at this time in your life? Why? Why is it so difficult to keep our minds on things above?
3. Are there any changes you need to make in order to live more for eternity in your every day life? Changes in what you value? Changes in how you spend your time? Changes in your priorities?
4. When you look back on your life, what things will you want to have accomplished or been true of you?

Most people live their lives in the fast lane only to come to the end and realize that they have nothing of significance to show for their lives. What a tragedy! Read the following quote by Bill Bright:

*After 2 years of marriage, Vonette and I began the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ on a modest scale. We both had been very materialistic in our youth. But we soon came to the conclusion that serving Jesus was the most important thing in the world. So on a Sunday afternoon in the spring of 1951, Vonette and I, in our home in the Hollywood Hills, got on our knees and prayed, "Lord, we surrender ourselves completely, irrevocably, to You. We will go wherever You want us to go and do whatever You want us to do."*

This doesn't mean you must start a ministry in order to have eternal perspective. But hopefully it shows the strategic decision of living your life with eternity in mind, investing your time, talents and resources in things that matter.

