

OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF DEATH

book forty-eight in the series:

THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU

DOUG BRITTON, MFT

Five-day Bible study for individuals, small groups, and churches

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- Day One: We will Spend Eternity in Heaven with Jesus
 - Day Two: Overcome Common Fears about Death
 - Day Three: Frequently Asked Questions
 - Day Four: Keep an Eternal Perspective
 - Day Five: Review and Test

Overcoming the Fear of Death: Book forty-eight in “The Owner’s Manual to the New You”

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The Owner's Manual to the New You

Forty-eight short books

(Each book includes a five-day Bible study and homework)

By Doug Britton, MFT

Twelve books on “Knowing God”

Twelve books on “Developing a Godly Character”

Twelve books on “Enjoying Healthy Relationships”

Twelve books on “Overcoming Personal Problems”

For

Individuals

Small Groups

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The Owner's Manual to the New You

"The Owner's Manual to the New You," published by LifeTree Books, is a series of forty-eight cross-cultural discipleship books by Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist Doug Britton. LifeTree Books is making these books available free of charge for individual use.

Each book is ideal for a five-day study by small groups, classes, or individuals. Although this is a forty-eight-book series, each book can be studied as a complete book by itself.

Knowing God

- Book 1: Who is God?
- Book 2: Becoming a Believer
- Book 3: Your Identity in Christ
- Book 4: Quick Overview of the Bible
- Book 5: How to Study the Bible
- Book 6: How to Pray
- Book 7: Key Christian Practices
- Book 8: Successful Christian Living
- Book 9: Living a Joyful Life
- Book 10: Knowing God's Will
- Book 11: Obeying God
- Book 12: Living in God's Power

Developing a Godly Character

- Book 13: Growing in Christ
- Book 14: Changing Your Self-Image
- Book 15: Changing Your Attitudes
- Book 16: Living with Humility
- Book 17: Living with Purpose
- Book 18: Living with Self-Control
- Book 19: Living with Integrity
- Book 20: Growing through Problems
- Book 21: Trusting God
- Book 22: Breaking Free from Our Culture
- Book 23: Handling Money Responsibly
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- Book 25: Keys to Healthy Relationships
- Book 26: Making Friends
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- Book 28: Forgiving Others
- Book 29: Serving Others
- Book 30: Resolving Conflicts
- Book 31: Overcoming Peer Pressure
- Book 32: Helping Others with Wisdom
- Book 33: Dating, Marriage, and Sex
- Book 34: Embracing the Body of Christ
- Book 35: Respecting Authority
- Book 36: Sharing Your Faith

Overcoming Personal Problems

- Book 37: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 1)
- Book 38: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 2)
- Book 39: Overcoming Rejection
- Book 40: Overcoming Temptation (Part 1)
- Book 41: Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)
- Book 42: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear
- Book 43: Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
- Book 44: Overcoming Self-Sufficiency
- Book 45: Overcoming Guilt and Shame
- Book 46: Overcoming Discouragement
- Book 47: Overcoming Failure
- Book 48: Overcoming the Fear of Death

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Foreword

When I was first asked to write a series of downloadable books for intensive discipleship training, I was excited. Jesus has revolutionized my life, and I am glad to share his truths with you.

The pages you are about to study come straight from God's word. They contain truth that puts our feet on the path to the fullest life possible—truth that sets us free.

As Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

May God speak to your heart as you read, and may he bring his truth alive in your life.

Your brother in Christ,

Doug Britton

P.S. LifeTree Books is offering this downloadable book and all the other books in “The Owner's Manual to the New You” series free of charge. If you find these books helpful, please feel free to spread the news to churches, ministries, and individuals who might benefit from them.

Small Group Leader's Guidelines

Introduction. These studies are for new believers as well as mature Christians. They are for small groups, discipleship classes, mentors, and individuals. They are ideal for studies lasting from sixty to ninety minutes.

Choose the key points, verses, and discussion questions you will talk about. Don't think you need to cover every verse and question. With new believers, go over the main points, key verses, and selected questions. Go into more depth with mature Christians.

Begin and end each study with prayer. Start by asking God to help each person grow from the study. At the end, ask everyone to pray for help to put God's truth into practice.

Review homework. Before starting the current lesson, ask group members to discuss their answers to some of the previous day's homework questions.

Personalize the lesson. Although it's okay to read each lesson word-for-word, the material will "come alive" if you discuss some of the key points in your own words. Share your own experiences and struggles, and how God has helped you.

As you read, identify important points and key parts of verses. Ask group members to circle them, and then explain why you want to emphasize these points.

Get everyone involved. The more people are actively involved, the more they are impacted by what you are studying. Don't ask questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, don't ask, "Do you have any thoughts about this?" Instead, ask, "How does this insight speak to you?"

Consider breaking up into smaller groups to discuss the questions if you are leading a large group or class.

Use day five for a review and test. Use the questions in day five as a review and/or test. Remove these pages if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

Want to Learn More?

Free online resources: For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups

Small group leader's book: For detailed information on how to lead small groups and overcome typical problems, visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups.

Day One: We will Spend Eternity in Heaven with Jesus

Countless people are consumed by the fear of death. Some aren't sure what happens after they die. Others are afraid of suffering before they die. Many have other fears, such as, "My children need me."

In today's study, you will learn the answer to life's big question for many people—What happens after I die?

Death is a transition, not an end

Death is not the end of life. Our physical bodies die, but our spirits are eternal. If you are a believer, when you die you transition from your physical body to a spiritual (or "glorified") body.

Jesus said we never actually die.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)



Death is not the end of life. It is a continuation.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55)

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. (Romans 6:5)

Discussion questions

1. Have you been afraid of death or dying? Why or why not?
2. What does "death is a transition, not an end" mean?

You will be with Jesus after you die

As believers, we have the privilege in this life of being united with Jesus spiritually. But we haven't seen Jesus face-to-face. That will change when we die, for we will be with Jesus. That's why Stephen—as he was being stoned to death—could say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59).

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14)

Notice that in 1 Thessalonians 4:14, Paul referred to people who have “fallen asleep” in Jesus. As falling asleep is a figure of speech referring to death.

When Jesus was crucified, two thieves were also crucified, one on either side of him. One of them told the other that Jesus had done nothing wrong, then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:42-43)

Discussion question

3. How does knowing that you will be with God for eternity affect you?

You will be in heaven after you die

You will be with Jesus, but where will you be? Paul wrote that when our body (which he called a “tent”) is destroyed, we will have an eternal house in heaven.

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)

Just as it's not possible for us to fully understand time, space, and eternity, it is not possible for us to locate heaven through the senses of sight, touch, hearing, taste, or smell—or in any other way. There is a giant part of reality that we cannot see.

Sometimes God has opened the door a little so we can get a glimpse of heaven. Paul was caught up into heaven, but he was not allowed to repeat what he heard. Stephen also saw heaven and was allowed to say what he saw.

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:55-56)

Although Stephen “looked up,” it's clear he did not see heaven through his natural eyes. Rather, God opened up a supernatural view of reality to him.

Not only does the Bible say Stephen looked “up” to heaven, it also says God dwells in heaven and “looks down” on us.

The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. (Psalm 14:2)

From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind. (Psalm 33:13)

The LORD looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth. (Psalm 102:19)

Discussion question

4. Why do you think Paul called our body a tent?

The “new heaven and new earth”

The Bible says that eventually God will destroy the earth and create a new heaven and earth where we will dwell, a heavenly city called the New Jerusalem.

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. (Isaiah 65:17)

“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure.” (Isaiah 66:22)

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. (2 Peter 3:10)

Not only will God create a new earth, he will create a remarkable city in it with dwellings (sometimes translated as “rooms” or “mansions”) for us—the new Jerusalem.

Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:16)

Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. (Revelation 3:12)

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (John 14:2-3)

What is heaven like?

In Bible passages about the new heaven and the new earth, it can be difficult to know what is a literal description and what is a figure of speech. In either case, the views we are given are breath-taking. I love this passage in Revelation 21:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:1-4)

There are lots of ideas about what we will do in heaven. The idea of playing harps as we float on clouds is not biblical and misses the mark. A friend of mine says he is sure we will play golf in heaven, but I suspect he misses the mark too. Since we will be in such a different type of realm, I don't think it's possible to imagine exactly what it will be like.

However, the Bible helps us know we will be in a place of exquisite beauty. Each gate of the new Jerusalem will be made of a single pearl, and the great street will be made of pure gold, like transparent glass (Revelation 21:21).

More importantly, we will be surrounded by the glory of God. In fact, the city will not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God will give it light, and the Lamb (Jesus) will be its lamp (Revelation 21:23). We will be free of self-doubt and confusion. We will know friendship and companionship that goes way beyond anything we have known. We will worship God. And we will be with our Savior, the one who gave his life for us, Jesus Christ.

Discussion questions

5. What is one point in today's study that encourages or excites you when you think about spending eternity with Jesus?

6. What is one verse about heaven that inspires you? Why do you find this inspiring?
7. Have you been afraid of death or dying? Has today's lesson helped? Why or why not?
8. Do you expect to be with Jesus for eternity? Why or why not?
9. What is one Bible verse that supports your answer?

Do you know Jesus?

This book was written to help believers in Jesus grow in their faith and personal life. You will get the most out of these pages if you know Christ, since it is through his love and power that you can truly change. If you have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to accept him as your Savior and Lord. Make this your personal prayer:

Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, and I need your help. I confess I have sinned and failed you in many ways. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord, and I ask you to help me follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me, forgiving me, and accepting me as your child.

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God. God has plans for you—to transform you. You have an exciting life ahead of you!

Memory verse

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

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Book by Doug Britton

First Things First (Chapter 6, "What Happens After You Die?")

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/first-things-first

Homework – Day One

1. Have you been afraid of death or dying? Why or why not?
2. Has today's study been helpful to you? Explain your answer:
3. Jesus said you will never die if you believe in him (John 11:25-26). What does that mean?
4. This study says you will be with Jesus after you die. It also says you will be in heaven. Do these two points contradict each other? Why or why not?

Day Two: Overcome Common Fears about Death

As you prayerfully meditate on the truths in Chapter 1, you can begin to overcome the fear of death. Remember, death is just a transition. It is not final.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

Although many people fear death, some people say it's not death itself that worries them—it's the process of dying or what they will go through before they die.

In today's study, you will read about four fears people have about dying. More importantly, you will read how the Bible says you can overcome these fears.



Don't fear suffering before you die

You may be afraid of going through pain before you die. That's a reasonable fear. Some of the events that precede death—injury, illness, extreme poverty, persecution—bring suffering.

Sometimes medical care can minimize suffering. Sometimes God miraculously intervenes with comfort or healing. However, that's not always the case.

The Bible gives us examples of people who suffered greatly but who were encouraged as they looked forward to spending eternity in heaven. Let's look at two of them, Paul and Peter.

Paul looked forward to heaven in the midst of his suffering.

Paul endured an amazing amount of persecution, pain, and suffering. (See 2 Corinthians 11:23-29.) However, in spite of everything he went through, he wrote that his sufferings were not worth comparing to the glory that would be revealed in him.

He actually called his troubles "light and momentary." That's because he fixed his eyes on "an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. (Romans 8:18-19)

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)

Discussion questions

1. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. How would you describe Paul's sufferings?
2. How would most people respond to similar sufferings?

3. Why did Paul describe his sufferings as “light and momentary troubles”? (2 Corinthians 4:17)

Peter likewise encouraged those who were suffering to look forward to heaven.

Peter encouraged those suffering grief in all kinds of trials by reminding them of the inheritance God had for them.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. (1 Peter 1:3-6)

Discussion questions

4. What do you think Peter meant when he wrote about “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade”? (1 Peter 3:6)
5. Is it possible to rejoice in God’s promises even though you have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials? Why or why not?

Don’t fear that you will be a burden to others

Some people fear becoming seriously sick or incapacitated before they die because they don’t want to be a burden to others. That’s understandable. We don’t want our family to suffer because of us.

However, if a relative or close friend helps you, that’s not necessarily a bad thing. Caring for others and being cared for are part of God’s plan for us. He has promised that those who do the care giving will be blessed, for “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Discussion question

6. Could these verses help you overcome guilt or regret about being a burden to others? Why or why not?

Don’t fear for those you will leave behind

If you die before your spouse, children, parents, or other important people in your life, it’s likely they will greatly miss you. Yet God loves them much more than you do.

Provide the best you can for their future. Write a will or set up a living trust. Then put your family in God’s hands. Don’t be afraid for their sake. If you die first, God will be with them.

But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless. (Psalm 10:14)

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. (Psalm 68:5)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Discussion questions

7. What steps, if any, could you take in advance to help care for family members you leave behind if you die?
8. If you die before family members, does God love them? Is God capable of helping them? Explain your answer.

Don't be afraid that you will have bad memories or regrets in heaven

If you are like me, you have many regrets—things you wish you had done and things you wish you hadn't done. One great thing about heaven is that we won't experience sorrow or tears. God will wipe them away.

He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 25:8)

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. (Isaiah 65:17)

For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Revelation 7:17)

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. (Revelation 21:4)

Discussion question

9. Are you encouraged by knowing that God will wipe away your tears in heaven? Why or why not?

Memory verse

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. (2 Corinthians 4:17)

Want to learn more?

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Studies on anxiety and fear

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Notes

Day Three: Frequently Asked Questions

In today's study, you will read some common questions people ask about death and heaven, and you will read how the Bible answers these questions.

Will I be judged after I die?

Everyone will be judged after he or she dies (2 Corinthians 5:10). However, the names of those who have accepted Christ will have been written in the "Book of Life" (Philippians 4:3 and Revelation 20:12), meaning that Jesus already paid the penalty for their sins.

Although followers of Jesus have their names in the Book of Life, they will account for their actions and will receive greater or lesser rewards depending on their faithfulness.



For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation 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 3:11-15)

What kind of reward do you think the apostle Paul was looking forward to in heaven? It was not a high position or wealth. It was the joy of knowing his ministry had an impact on people's lives.

For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? (1 Thessalonians 2:19)

Discussion questions

1. What type of reward in heaven was Paul looking forward to? Did he care about getting a place of prominence?
2. What does this tell us about Paul's priorities while he was on earth? What can we learn from his example?

What about hell?

Those who reject God's great gift—salvation through Jesus—will suffer an eternal separation from God. Most Christians think this involves eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46) in hell (Matthew 23:33) or the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power. (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)

Some Christians think these verses don't refer to a literal hell. I disagree with them because of the verses you just read as well as other passages such as Mark 9:42-48.

In any case, it's obvious that hell, the lake of fire, or separation from God are all really bad places to be for eternity. If someone expects to go to hell and hang out or have fun with friends, he or she will be severely disappointed (to say the least).

God doesn't want anyone to go to hell. That's why he made the ultimate sacrifice of his son—to offer everyone eternal life through him. Those who know him do not need to fear going to hell.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

Discussion questions

3. Does God want anyone to “perish” (2 Peter 3:9)? Why or why not?
4. Does a Christian need to fear going to hell? Why or why not?

Will I have a body?

In heaven you will have a spiritual (or “glorified”) body that will be different from your current mortal body. It will be a body like our resurrected Lord's (Philippians 3:2).

Although your body will be spiritual, it will also have a physical aspect to it. You can see this when you read about what Jesus did after he was resurrected and glorified. One time, he had Thomas put his hand on his wounded side (John 20:27). Another time he asked his disciples to touch him, then he ate fish with them (Luke 24:38-43).

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

Since you will be “like him,” you can assume that not only will you have a body, but that you will not be subject to the limitations of your current body. You can see this, for example, in the fact that Jesus was able to “supernaturally” enter a room with locked doors.

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” (John 20:26)

Discussion question

5. Are you looking forward to having a spiritual (or glorified) body? Why or why not?

Will I fight temptation in heaven?

The fight against temptation can seem never-ending here on earth. That will no longer be true in heaven, for God will make you perfect in heaven.

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24)

Will I recognize people in heaven?

Some people wonder if we will recognize one another in heaven. They point out that on at least three occasions after Jesus rose from the dead, his followers did not recognize him until he revealed himself to them (Luke 24:15-16, John 20:14, and John 21:4).

However, at those times they were still alive on earth and had not received their spiritual bodies. When we have our spiritual bodies, we will be able to see even as Jesus can see. We can assume this means we will recognize others just as Jesus recognized his disciples.

Several other passages imply that we will recognize one another in heaven. For example, Jesus said his followers would sit at the dinner table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matthew 8:11). Paul wrote that we will be together with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18).

Will I become an angel when I die?

You won't turn into an angel when you die. Angels are an entirely different type of being created by God. The Bible says that humans will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). It also says that at the resurrection, people will be *like* the angels in heaven, but it does not say they will *be* angels. (Matthew 22:30 and Mark 12:25).

Discussion question

6. Do you think you will become an angel when you die? Why or why not?

What about reincarnation?

When you die, you will not be reborn as an animal, insect, or anything else. You will only die once. After you die, you will appear before God.

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. (Hebrews 9:27)

Discussion question

7. Would it be okay for a Christian to believe in reincarnation? Why or why not?

Will I become a god when I die?

Some people think there are many gods since the Bible sometimes calls people "gods." However, this is simply a word sometimes used to describe rulers and judges. The Bible makes it clear that there is only one God. You will not become a god when you die.

So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but

one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. (1 Corinthians 8:4-6)

For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. (Psalm 86:10)

Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. (Isaiah 46:9)

One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:6)

Discussion question

8. Why is it a bad idea for a Christian (or anyone else) to think we become gods when we die?

Memory verse

For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. (Psalm 86:10)

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Free online Bible study

Conquer the Fear of Death and Dying

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Day Four: Keep an Eternal Perspective

When I first read the book of Acts, I was struck by the apostle Paul's single-minded dedication to living for Christ. Then when I read Paul's letters, I was overwhelmed by his intensity. In fact, at first I thought he was much too intense.

Paul's eternal perspective

Over time I realized that Paul saw a much bigger picture than most of us, and that this picture drove him to make a difference while here on earth.

Eternity was always on Paul's mind. He lived intensely and purposefully, aware that our time here is short. He lived in the present, but always was aware of the future beyond this life.

He did not fear death. Rather, he looked forward to it, for he knew he would be with Jesus forever. As he wrote:

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 4:18)

Discussion question

1. Why do you think Paul was so intensely devoted to serving Jesus?

The importance of having an eternal perspective

Thinking about death and where we will go after we die can be a good thing.

It's easy to get so caught up in our day-to-day living that we don't think about what's important. Having an eternal perspective—being mindful that we have a limited time on earth and that what we do matters—can help us focus on loving God and loving others.

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. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)

When you have an eternal perspective, it can have a tremendous impact on how you live:

- It can help you avoid getting irritated at little things.
- It can help you forgive big things.
- It can help you through hard times.
- It can help you focus your time on what matters, not on unimportant things.



- It can motivate you to grow closer to Jesus.
- It can motivate you to help others grow closer to Jesus.

Discussion questions

2. The Bible says. "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Colossians 3:1). What does that mean?
3. Review the list of ways having an eternal perspective can have an impact on you. What are one or two ways that you think will make a difference in your life? Explain your answer.
4. How can you remember to keep an eternal perspective when you get upset over problems or when you become preoccupied with relatively unimportant things?

Keep an eternal perspective — Look forward to being with Jesus

Paul did not simply have no fear of death. He eagerly looked forward to seeing Jesus. He knew he had a purpose here, and he was glad to fulfill it, but he was excited about being with Jesus in heaven.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3:20-21)

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. (Romans 8:18-19)

Discussion questions

5. Are you looking forward to being with Jesus? Why or why not?
6. Take a few minutes to pray quietly or as a group, asking God to help you remember to keep an eternal perspective.

Keep an eternal perspective —Remember that you have a purpose

Let the verses in this study help you overcome being afraid of death or afraid of dying. But don't stop there. God wants you to make a difference while you are here on earth. He wants you to be his ambassador wherever you go.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me. (Philippians 1:21-26)

If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. (Romans 14:8)

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. (2 Corinthians 5:9)

Discussion questions

7. What is our purpose in life?
8. Paul wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). What does that mean?
9. How can keeping an eternal perspective help us fulfill our purpose?

Memory verse

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21)

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Notes

Homework – Day Four

1. What do you think was the driving force behind Paul's intense service for Christ?
2. What does "keeping an eternal perspective" mean?
3. How can keeping an eternal perspective change the way you live?
4. Paul wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). What did he mean?

5. How can keeping an eternal perspective help you forgive people?

6. According to today's lesson, what is God's purpose for you?

How can keeping an eternal perspective help you fulfill this purpose?

7. What are distractions that might keep you from fulfilling this purpose?

How can you overcome these distractions and stay focused on your purpose?

Day Five: Answer Key to Test (may be removed by leader)

Note to teachers and small group leaders

Remove this page if you do not want group members to see these answers ahead of time.

True or false

- F 1. When you die, you will become a ghost.
- T 2. You will be with Jesus when you die.
- T 3. Paul actually looked forward to dying and being with Jesus.
- F 4. Heaven is not real. It is simply a figure of speech.
- F 5. Christians are guaranteed a life and death without suffering.
- F 6. Christians are reincarnated as people, not animals.
- F 7. We will become angels when we die.
- T 8. There is only one God.
- T 9. Keeping an eternal perspective can help you forgive people.
- T 10. Keeping an eternal perspective can help you stay focused on what is really important.

Memory verses

- 1. John 11:25-26

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

- 2. Philippians 1:21

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.



About the Author

Doug Britton, Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist, has helped hundreds of thousands of people as a therapist, clinical director of a treatment center, seminar speaker, radio co-host, and author of over twenty books that show people how to apply God's truths in their daily lives.

He has also trained pastors, counselors, mentors, and lay leaders in biblical counseling, mentoring, and small group leadership.

Doug and his wife Skeeter live in Northern California.



Books

Doug has written Bible-based books on many daily-living topics. Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore.

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Seminars and retreats

Doug is the founder and president of LifeTree Institute and LifeTree Books. If you would like him or another member of the LifeTree team to speak in your church on any of the above topics, please visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com and click on the "Seminars" link.

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In addition to “The Owner’s Manual to the New You,” Doug Britton has written many more cross-cultural, Bible-based books on leadership, discipleship, and key areas of daily living.

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Living by Grace

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Defeating Temptation
Healing Life’s Hurts
Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
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