

Living with an Eternal Perspective

Zoom Bible Study | Tuesdays @ 7:00pm (CST)

Led by Mary Lowman

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Lesson Three

2 Corinthians 4:17 – 18:

“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.”

Introduction

Imagine that you could change every person in your life so that each one is just the way you want him or her to be. How much happier your life would be!

What if we saw the people in our lives through a totally different perspective than we normally do—through an eternal viewpoint? It would change the way we respond and react to the people in our lives.

Looking at Difficult People with an Eternal Perspective

An eternal perspective requires an intentional decision. That’s the way it is if you and I want to have God’s perspective of the people in our lives. We have to choose to do it, and it will usually go against our grain.

Philippians 2:5 – 8:

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

1 Corinthians 2:16:

“Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

That’s how we can see people the way God sees them—because we’ve been given this incredible power through God’s Spirit.

Think about how you were raised; that beginning set you on a trajectory to see people in your life from a limited perspective. Our perspective is limited by our upbringing—whether it was a wholesome one or not. Can you see ways that you’ve had to learn to see the people in your world with a different perspective?

Is there a person in your life now who you would put in that “difficult” category? It could be a casual acquaintance or a relative. Have you asked God to help you see that person the way God sees him or her? If so, has that made a difference in the relationship—or maybe just in you?

Looking at Different People with an Eternal Perspective

Is there a person in your life whose lifestyle is simply foreign to yours? Do you mentally condemn them or have a self-righteous attitude toward them?

Or maybe someone from a different culture, a different skin color? I would love to think that Christians don't go there anymore, but unfortunately discrimination has not been erased in our culture.

Looking at Relationship Problems with an Eternal Perspective

Philippians 4:2 – 3:

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

How would you like to have a personal spat recorded in Scripture for all time? Imagine meeting Euodia in heaven, and you ask her, "What was the problem you and Syntyche had?" Do you think either of them will remember what caused this disagreement?

How can two family members—like spiritual sisters Euodia and Syntyche—be at each other's throat? We all know how that can happen, both in our heavenly family and in our earthly family. Whatever the cause of these relationship difficulties, do you really think it will be of any consequence in heaven?

When you approach a difficult relationship with an eternal perspective, your words, your body language, and your objectives are immensely different – changed for the better.

Looking at Unbelievers with an Eternal Perspective

Proverbs 24:19-20: "Do not fret because of evildoers or be envious of the wicked, for the evildoer has no future hope, and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out."

Note this Psalm by Asaph:

Psalm 73:1 – 5, 12 – 20:

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. ²But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. ³For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. ⁵They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills.

This is what the wicked are like— always free of care, they go on amassing wealth. ¹³Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. ¹⁴All day long I have been afflicted and every morning brings new punishments. ¹⁵If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children. ¹⁶When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply ¹⁷till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. ¹⁸Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. ¹⁹How suddenly are they destroyed completely swept away by terrors! ²⁰They are like a dream when one awakes; when you arise, Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.

Asaph looked with an eternal perspective, and it totally changed his view of those people without God. And he concludes that Psalm by saying:

"But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds" (Psalm 73:28).

When dealing with people who are not yet believers, we must intentionally enter into God's presence. Thankfully, we can enter his presence anytime, anywhere, because Jesus has opened the curtain into the Holy of Holies.

The hard part is being willing to give up the pity party, the anger, the self-focus, and go into God's presence. But once you do that, and begin to pray for an eternal perspective, you will see their final destiny.

Romans 5:5: And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

An eternal perspective will give you compassion and empathy, and yes, even love for that person.

Looking through Eyes of Love

1 Corinthians 13:8a: "Love never fails."

1 Corinthians 16:14: "Do everything in love."

Paul tells us to operate out of love all the time because love will never fail.

Sometimes we must confront, but even constructive confrontations fail. Negotiation is another good skill to use in dealing with people, but negotiations can fail. Even sympathy and empathy can fail.

But operating out of a heart of genuine love never fails. The challenge is, how do you do that in the heat of the moment, when your emotions are going in the opposite direction? You train yourself to take an eternal perspective and see the end.

1 Timothy 4:7: Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.

Living with an eternal perspective causes real spiritual and emotional maturation!

Proverbs 12:16: "Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult."

Another great benefit in learning to see people through God's eyes is that you see potential and possibilities you would never otherwise see. What are some pre-conditioned and/or prejudiced ways we can look at people?

The story of how Samuel anointed David as the coming king illustrates the point.

1 Samuel 16:6 – 13

When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD."

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him.

The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." ⁹ Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the LORD chosen this one." ¹⁰ Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these." ¹¹ So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered. "He is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives."

¹² So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one." ¹³ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

It was obvious that Jesse never thought David would be selected. Why would Samuel pass over the seven sons and ask for the youngest – the shepherd boy? Because God sees beyond the outward appearance and looks at the heart. That's why we need God's perspective of everything and especially of people.

I hope you are beginning to get a little flavor of how powerful an eternal perspective is!