

Living with an Eternal Perspective

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

Led by Mary Lowman

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Lesson Six

Do you know the story of Esau and Jacob?

Genesis 25:19 – 28

This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹ Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. ²² The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

²³ The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

²⁴ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁵ The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. ²⁶ After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

²⁷ The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. ²⁸ Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

We already see some significant dysfunction in this family. Then we read further:

Genesis 25:29 – 34

Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. ³⁰ He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.)

³¹ Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

³² "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?"

³³ But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

Esau never seemed to look beyond the moment. He was consumed with the here and now, having what he wanted when he wanted it. Esau knew the importance of that birthright, but in a moment of hunger, he could only see his temporary need.

How was Esau so deceived that he was willing to do this? Esau told himself a lie and he believed it.

When Needs Become Addictions

We all have Esau natures, wanting what we want when we want it! And we're pretty good at deceiving ourselves when we want to.

Esau's need was a normal one: food. Our legitimate needs must be acknowledged. But when we look at our legitimate needs only through earthly eyes, we will often become addicted to them. And then what God intended for good in our lives becomes a stumbling block and an entry point for sinful choices.

Finding Deliverance from Need Addictions

How do you make yourself believe that you can be delivered from an addiction?

I often think of the man who came to Jesus with his demon possessed son, hoping he could be healed. He said to Jesus: *"But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."* *"If you can?" said Jesus. 'Everything is possible for one who believes.'* *"Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief'" (Mark 9:22b – 24).*

He wasn't sure Jesus could do it, but he was desperate enough to ask.

Psalm 103:13–14: *As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*

Asking for the faith we need to believe God is often where we have to begin, and our God is faithful to take us right at that weak point and implant faith in our hearts.

Eternity in Your Heart

From *A Diary of Private Prayer* by John Ballie:

"I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou has so set eternity within my heart that no earthly thing can ever satisfy me wholly."

The wise Solomon wrote:

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Eternity has been set in your heart. You are born with the instinctual knowledge that there is more than this present life, and that eternity is far more important than the here and now.

Romans 1:20:

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

What do you think drives people to addictions of all kinds, to poor choices, to wrong behavior?

Can you identify some of your own addictions, whether in the past or even now—something you thought would satisfy your heart needs?

View Your Needs through God's Eyes

Psalm 16:11: *You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Eternal pleasures can only be seen with God's eyes, but they are real and they are lasting.

Earthly pleasures often leave us more than just empty; they leave us with regret and guilt.

Hebrews 11:24 – 26:

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

Psalms 103:2 – 5:

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The Freedom of an Eternal Perspective

Romans 6:11 – 14:

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Paul reminds us that we are slaves either to sin or to righteousness. If you do not choose to be a "slave to righteousness," you will default your life to be a slave to sin.

Romans 6:18: *You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

Romans 6:22: *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness and the result is eternal life.*

Being a slave to righteousness simply means choosing to do the right thing at every decision point in your life.

Looking at Marriage and Singleness with Forever Eyes

We know from scripture that there will be no marriage in eternity. We will all be single.

"You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:29-30).

Singleness through Earthly Eyes

Given our natural desires to want to be married and have a family, singleness can sometimes seem like a prison or a punishment. To look at singleness with an eternal perspective is very difficult for some to do.

When you look at your singleness with earthly eyes, it will lead you to desperateness, to anger with God, to despair, to wrong choices, to sinful lifestyles, to settling for less than God's best. That, then, becomes self-inflicted suffering.

Singleness and Marriage through God's Eyes

1 Corinthians 7:25 – 28:

Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶ Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is. ²⁷ Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife. ²⁸ But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.

Let me remind you that relationships are never easy. A good relationship – especially with someone as close as a mate – requires lots of dying to self. It is a never-ending challenge to put the other person first, to adjust to that mate, and that means there will be lots of give and take.

When you look at your marriage with God's eyes, you are taking very seriously those vows "'til death do we part." What will matter in eternity? What is the best choice for your children, who are eternal?

Through God's eyes marriage vows are of great importance and preserving the marriage if at all possible should be our earnest goal.

Either Way, Have an Eternal Perspective

So, whether married or single, our challenge is to see it the way God sees it. Neither marriage nor singleness will give us any advantage in heaven. But how we handled our single or married status here on earth will matter, because it will demonstrate our trust – or lack of trust – in God.