

## **01 | The Reality of Eternity**

ETERNITY Series

Well, hello, and welcome to part one of five of this new series on Eternity. I'm so excited that I get to be here with you guys. My name is Jonathan Dirmann, in case you don't know who I am. And let me start off by saying this: in this series, I believe that God wants to help you grasp the reality of eternity. And if you do, if you actually really grasp it (and it's a hard concept to grasp), but if you do, it'll change everything about your life. And I know that's a big claim, but I really believe it's true. So, stick with it through these five parts. I know it's five parts, it's quite a few, but stick with it and just watch what God will do. I'm convinced that He will use it to shape your life.

Let's start in Matthew 16:24-27, and it says this: "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, but loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in His glory, in the glory of His Father with his angels, and then He will reward each according

to his works.'" I know what you're thinking, "Jonathan, I've heard this my entire life and generations before me that Jesus is coming back soon." However, let me just share a couple of things that point to the fact that He's coming back sooner rather than later.

If we believe that eternity is real, it should affect the way that we live our lives. People should be able to tell that we believe in eternity by the way that we live, that there's something different, and I think one of the big problems with believers is that we blend in too much. You can't tell the difference between now and a lot of ways a modern-day Christian versus a non-Christian or somebody who doesn't believe in God or doesn't believe that eternity is real. But when you catch it, it'll shape the way you make decisions. In fact, you'll have a whole different process now of decision-making, which leads to entirely different outcomes. Now, when you make decisions, you don't just make decisions based on what feels good, what sounds good, what would make you the most comfortable, but you make decisions based on what is the best to do in light of eternity.

And Jesus asks us to do something big. He says, "If you desire to follow after Me, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me." And then it says this again in verse 26, "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" So, Jesus is asking a really good question there. What profit do you get if you gain the whole world,

if you spend your whole life getting whatever it is that you're after in this life, but then you lose your soul--what good does that do? What benefit, what profit is that to you? All of a sudden, when you keep eternity in mind, when you keep that your soul has to end up in one of two places, right? That eventually every single one of us, every human being, both past, present, and to come, will end up in one of two places, heaven or hell. That's it. There's no middle ground. There's no [alternative], it's just those two. And there are no second chances after this life; this life is the one shot that we get. And when you keep that in mind, all of a sudden your perspective changes, right? Because the perspective you have makes a huge difference on the decisions you make.

Think about this. When David went up against Goliath, right here, you have the whole body of the children of Israel who are looking at Goliath and comparing him to themselves. And when they compare Goliath to themselves, what they see as a giant, they see somebody that can't possibly be defeated, and so they all quivered in fear for a long period of time. But when David came and he saw Goliath, he didn't compare Goliath to himself; he compared Goliath to God. And when you compare it to the right thing or the right person, now all of a sudden it changes whether or not it looks too big or small, right? So Goliath to David looks like no big deal. And that's why when he talked about Goliath, he said, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?" This person that has no covenant with God that thinks that they

have a right to stand up against us. And so while everyone compared Goliath to themselves and quivered in fear, David compared Goliath to the right thing, which was to God, and was able to run boldly. What are you comparing your life to when you think about your life, these 100 years we get, maybe, what are you comparing it to? Because if you compare it just to today, it seems pretty long, right? You think we have 24 hours in a day. And if you're comparing your whole life to the way you feel right now, then your life seems like it's pretty long, like it'll last for awhile, like you can really emphasize this life. But when you start to think about eternity and compare your life, the maybe 100 years you get right now to the bigger picture of eternity, all of a sudden your life starts not to feel so big. Your life starts to feel small. In the mindset we're in when we're just in the moment, we view things that aren't big deals as if they are, and we view things that are big deals as if they aren't.

Have you ever had a moment where maybe you were embarrassed or something happened and you felt like it was the end of the world? I remember one time I was a new pastor. I was young, I was maybe 22 years old, and I had never led a funeral before. I had never done a memorial. I didn't know how to. If I was asked to, it would have taken me a long time to prepare because I simply never done it. And I remember one time, being in Lake Elsinore as a young pastor, somebody in our congregation had passed away, a great man. And one of the family members shot me a text before the

memorial and said, "Hey, Pastor, would you mind at the memorial saying a prayer?" To which I responded, "Of course it would be my pleasure." I love to pray. I pray all the time. It would be my pleasure to pray at this memorial. And I lead prayer quite often as a young pastor, 22 years old. When I got to the funeral, I got to this memorial and when I got there, the host of the service was doing their thing, letting them know kind of how the flow is going to go. And then he said (there were maybe 100 people there), "Alright, at this time, I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to Pastor Jonathan Dirmann, who's going to lead the rest of the service." Now, you can imagine how my heart sank! Having never led a funeral before, I had no idea what to say. So, I walk up to the front (this is no joke), I probably talk for somewhere between 90 seconds and maybe 3 minutes about what a great guy he was. And he was a fantastic man of God, a good person and all that. And I wrap it up after just a few minutes, and I say, "Let me pray," and I pray, and I say, "...in Jesus' name, amen." And then the host of the memorial says in front of everyone, after I finished praying, he literally turns around and goes, (because I was motioning back to him that it's time for him to take it again), and he literally says in front of everyone, "Wow, that was short!" and then moves on. And you know what? I felt like my heart sank. I felt like in that moment, my life was over, right? Me as a pastor, everything felt like that was the biggest thing in that moment. But you know what happens? And that was, by the way, the most embarrassing moment in my life. I felt so

bad. And then I had sweet people come up afterwards and thank me for leading the service. I'm like, I didn't, I didn't do anything. I felt so embarrassed. But in the moment, it feels like such a big deal, right?

Have you ever experienced something similar, maybe it's something much more serious than that, right? That was embarrassing for me. But maybe it's that you've lost a job or there are health complications or you're in a storm. And in that moment it feels like this is such a big deal. But when you keep your mind on eternity and you remember there's a reality that's bigger than the here and now, it causes you to have the right perspective so that when you look at this storm that at first was seemed so big (like how Goliath seemed so big because they were comparing it to the wrong thing) ... now, when you look at the storm, you realize, oh man, that that is actually not that big! That's not going to destroy me. That's not going to take me down because nothing and no one can separate me from the eternity that I have in store.

Have you ever had a dream that you felt was so real in the moment? I have this every once in awhile. I'm not a super big dreamer, like all the time, but I've had dreams where, in the moment, in the dream, I feel like whatever scenario is going on, like that is the biggest deal in the world, right? I'm very present in the moment, in my dream, and I'm trying to figure out how to solve this problem. And I feel it! And maybe you've experienced this as well. I feel the emotions of how big that

scenario is. And sometimes sad things happen; if somebody passes away in the dream or something terrible happens. I feel the emotions. But then when you wake up, all of a sudden it's like you wake up and then you have this moment where you realize, "Oh, that's not the real thing, this is the real thing." That was just a moment that came and went and that was just a dream. And then you wake up and realize this is reality. I have a feeling that a lot of us are going to have a similar feeling to that when we eventually die or when Jesus comes back and we end up in eternity; where it's as if we realize in that moment, like when we wake up from a dream and then realize, "Oh, this is the real thing!" that we're going to realize that for eternity, that we're going to wake up in eternity and realize, "Oh, our life on Earth, that wasn't the real thing, this is the real thing." And it doesn't mean we don't have real moments, but this life compared to eternity is so small.

And that's why Jesus says this in Matthew 6:19-21, "Do 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." Jesus is saying there's a bigger picture, that we're laying we're laying up treasures here on this earth as if this is the big picture, as if this is everything. And Jesus is saying, here on this earth, moth and rust, time and erosion are going to destroy all this stuff that we

have. But why don't you lay up for yourself treasures in heaven, were neither moth nor rust destroy and thieves can't break in and steal? When you compare your life to eternity, not only is your life no longer everything, but compared to eternity, it's basically nothing. And how many believers live their entire life as if this life is the big picture, right? As if this life is the big thing, and it's not worth it.

James 4:14 says this: "...whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life?" That's a good question; that's kind of the question that everyone wants to know. What is your life, or what is life? What's the meaning of life? What is this? And it says our life is "even a vapor that appears for a little time and that vanishes away." Poof! It comes and it goes. That's your life. It's just like a puff of smoke that comes and then evaporates. It's gone. But in that moment, in that short timespan, that is a vapor, a puff of smoke, we feel like that is the thing. And so, we spend our lives laying up treasures, and it's just not worth it.

And that's the cry of the Bible. And Jesus in many ways is crying out through what He's saying, don't treat this life as if this is the big thing, because it's not. And when you shift that in your mind and you recognize, wow, there is a bigger picture, bigger than the here and now, your life will look different. It can't not look different than other people's. And that's why believers' lives should look way different than other

people's because we believe that there is a big picture which makes our life and the things of this world and in our life much smaller. Let me give you an example, an analogy. Picture if you were going on a trip or let's say you had a friend that was going on a little vacation, they were going somewhere for a week and they rented an Airbnb, which is simply like a house that you can rent for a small period of time, maybe like a week or so. And let's say your friend rented that house and they were telling you, they said, "Yeah, we got this Airbnb. It's great, it's beautiful. So what we did was we hired contractors, and so they're going to actually start putting in a pool; we just signed the contract. We're going to get this place repainted. We're going to add a surround sound system in here, and we're going to get new roofing. So, we're all set and all that." What you would reasonably say to your friend, if you were a good friend, is, "Hey, buddy, (bro or sister, whoever it is), that's a bad decision to invest everything you have in something that's not your final landing place." Right? If you're just passing through there, why would you spend all your life savings upgrading and doing things to a place that you're not going to land in ultimately? Right? You're just passing through. That's not wisdom. And in the same way, we as believers need to be able to tell each other if we focus or if we realize that the people around us focus is all on the here and now. We need to be able to have a loving, yet truthful conversation as believers to say, "Hey, hey, man, it feels like your entire life is based on this life, which we're

just passing through." Right? Which is hard to grasp.

You know, as a child, I remember growing up and it always felt like the next milestone was so far away. I remember feeling like it'll be forever before I can drive. It'll be forever before I graduate high school, forever before I get married or have kids. But those of you that have grown up, you know this, it comes though. It does. It shows up. You end up in these moments that feel like it's going to be forever off and we will end up in the moment, every single one of us, where we're in the judgment room before Christ, and we find out and hopefully we know beforehand already where we're going. But for some people they're going to find out where they're going. And for some people it's devastating. And for some people, it's the greatest statement that they can possibly hear: "Well done, good and faithful servant." But in that moment, all of a sudden, then your eyes are going to be open to see that this life just went so quickly and that everything that you had obtained in this life you don't get to take it with you into heaven. That's it. It's over. You had one shot. You played that one life that you had. You played your cards. You did your thing. Did you do the right thing, were you who you were called to be? And did you live with eternity in mind? This is why some people are able to sacrifice for the Kingdom of God without losing joy and peace. It's because they see the big picture. Maybe, you know, people like that that they're just big givers or they sacrifice in big ways. They lay down their life for the gospel or for

the kingdom of God. It's because they recognize that eternity is waiting. That this is just where we're passing through, but this is not our ultimate landing place.

Luke 12:16-21 says this: Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself saying, 'What shall I do since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this; I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I'll store my crops and my goods. And I'll say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry."' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." So here you have this person that's been laying up treasures for themselves, and they got to the point where their barn was completely filled. So they said, "Well, what do I do? I have extra treasure now." And so they built a bigger barn so that they could house all of their treasure. And they said, "Okay, now it's time for me to just kick back and relax and enjoy the spoils of all of my work that I've laid up over many years." And the Lord responded to that person and said, "You fool. This night, your soul will be required of you." In other words, you didn't know this, but you're going to die, and when you die, this stuff, all this stuff you've built up for years, that does not go anywhere with you, that's gone. It's over. This person acted like that was the end destination, like

the end destination was not eternity, but the end destination was in this case, retirement, which, by the way, there's nothing wrong with having a nice retirement. Notice what it says at the end in verse 21: "So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." So, it's not just talking about laying up treasure for yourself being wrong. But when you lay up treasure for yourself and you're not rich towards God, if the treasure is your priority, now that's wrong. It's out of bounds. It's out of place.

How many believers do we know--Christians, followers of Jesus, that live their whole life trying to get to the end destination, not eternity, but retirement, that we get to take it easy. And again, there's nothing wrong with setting things aside for retirement. That's called wisdom. But there is something wrong with that being the goal of our life, like the entire goal of our life. The purpose of our life is just to work really hard so that eventually we can just be really comfortable here on this earth. And the Bible calls us up from that; the Bible calls us to a higher calling than that; that cannot be the purpose of our life. That can't be what our life is all about, to just obtain more so that at the end we get to be comfortable until we die. And then what? And then we go to heaven. And then we're there for eternity. And we're there with the fruit and the rewards based on what we did here on Earth. And that's why, again, Jesus said, if you're going to focus on building up treasure, why build a treasure here on earth that you don't get to take with you? Why not

build up treasure in eternity that's going to last forever? Let's say you got that dream house, the dream car. Maybe you're after something else. Maybe popularity, fame, whatever it is that you're after. Let's say you got it. So what? Everything that you dream. If you could write down everything that you want here on this earth: possessions, notoriety, that job, the career and all that. Let's say you got it all. What difference is it going to make in eternity? And the Lord wants to bless us here on this Earth. I believe the Lord wants us to be blessed and wants us to be good stewards, but the Lord does not want us to prioritize those things above Him and His Kingdom.

So, as believers, we need to live our life prioritizing number one: the reality of eternity. We need to grasp the reality of eternity, that there's a bigger picture than the here and now. And when you grasp the bigger picture of the here and now, like I said in the beginning, it'll change the way you make decisions, because all of a sudden you look at something that maybe could get you more money and maybe normally your natural inclination would be to jump on it. But instead, you pause and pray and say, "Lord, but is that what You have for me? Because my purpose is not just obtaining more here on this earth." How many believers do we know that that's their whole life's purpose? They spend their whole life on this life. And then they die. And that's it. How many believers do we know that do that? It ought not be so. Maybe that's you. Maybe that's been me at times where my life starts getting

off track and I start focusing on how I can obtain more. The Bible says do nothing out of selfish ambition, that our life should not be in any way motivated by, "How can I get more? How can I end up more comfortable or in the right place?"

And let me close with this. In Luke 16:19-31, it says this: And then there was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus full of sores who was laid at the gate desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that when the beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom, the rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." But Abraham said, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. But now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you, there is a great gulf fixed so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those pass from there to us." Then he said, "I beg you, therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment." And Abraham said to him,

"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." And he said, "No, father Abraham; but if one goes from the dead, they will repent." But he said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead." So, notice a few things in here. First of all, notice what the rich man cared about now that he's in eternity. He only cared about two things, right? The only two things he cared about was, number one, can my suffering be eased at all? That was number one. And the second thing, the people in my life that I care about, could you help make sure that they know not to come here? Those are the only two things he cared about. Notice he didn't ask Abraham to send up Lazarus to check on his favorite vase, to see if it's still intact or to check on his possessions to make sure everyone's keeping up with his house. He at that point, he does not care at all. He's in torment. He's in agony. And the only things he cares about is how can my torment be relieved? And how can the people that I care about be saved from this place.

In your life, what are you valuing? Are you living with the understanding that there is a reality called eternity, called heaven and hell? Are you living your life as if they don't even exist? How many believers live not only as if they're not important, but as if they just they don't even exist. In our minds, we have to figure out, Lord, how can You help reveal it to us so that when we look at our life, we put it in the right place and we don't view our life as the big thing and eternity as

the little thing? The enemy loves to, in our perspective, try to keep the things that are important as if they're not, and vice versa; the things that aren't important as if they are. And one of the ways he does that is he magnifies (or tries to magnify) in our life, this life, the things of this life, as if they are the big thing, and they're just not. There is a reality called eternity that every single person will interact with; every human being, past, present, and then the future will end up in one of these two places. And the question, one of the questions, that we're going to ask during this time is, first of all, where are you going to end up? You need to make sure that you're on the right track if you're not already. But also, what about the people around you? How can we better reach them? And how can we prioritize reaching them over even our own comfort zone?

I want to take a moment and just pray right now, and I want to encourage you to evaluate yourself: what's driving you in your life? What is it, you know, what you're after again-- stuff, notoriety, career--whatever it is. And again, I want to say it very clearly: not all that stuff is evil in and of itself. The Bible doesn't say money is evil; It says the love of money is evil. But can we take a moment? Can we evaluate within ourselves what is it that we're prioritizing? Are we living with the reality of eternity, or are we living like everybody else does, which is acting as if it's a non-factor? And how can we present ourselves before the Lord and help to value the right thing? So, if you could, take a

moment, I'm going to pray right now. But if you're in a place where you can, also take a moment before the Lord, and let's pray together and ask the Lord to help you in this moment.

Lord, I pray that every single person watching this and listening to this, Lord, I pray that you help them and me to have the right perspective, God, to understand the reality of eternity; that there's a bigger picture than the here and now, God. And not to overvalue this life, Lord, but to put the right value on this life compared to eternity, Lord, and to ultimately live for eternity, God. So help us to value the right things. Help us to shift our perspective, Lord, that ultimately lands us in different foundational ways to make decisions. so that we end up in the right place that you have for us, which is a purpose-filled life beyond the here and now, but for eternity. We pray all of this in Jesus' mighty name, amen.