

THE 49-DAY JOURNEY

A Higher Perspective To Living A Biblically Based Life

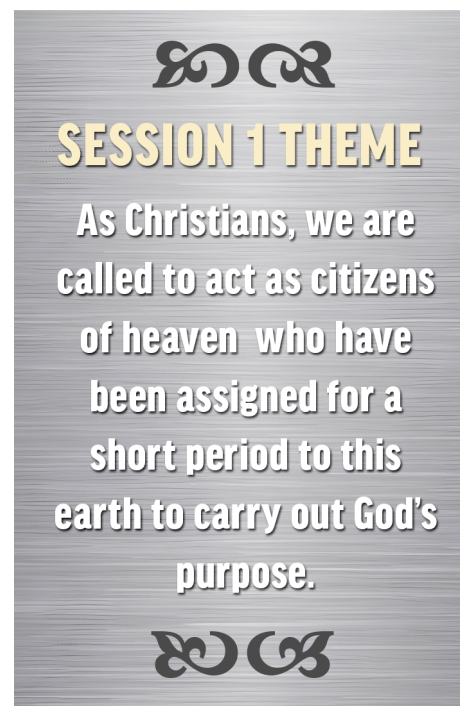


SESSION 1 - Looking Through God's Periscope



This session begins our seven-week study by exploring its central theme. Are you living your life with an eternal perspective? As Christians, we are now citizens of heaven temporarily assigned to this earth to be the central part of God's plan for redeeming mankind. How does this realization change our way of thinking and acting?

Selfishness and self-indulgence are eminently rational options—provided, of course, that there is no God, no future judgment, and nothing beyond this life! However, since we have good reason to believe in the reality of each of these things, the only wise course of action is to take a long-term perspective regarding how we live our lives. Indeed, it is probably not possible to effectively live the Christian life (in all its fullness) without embracing an eternal perspective on all we think, say and do in the present. Only by adopting an eternal perspective can we truly live consistently with the teaching of Scripture. Such a perspective offers us some of the necessary resources to make wise, holy, and God-honoring choices in the present, by reminding us: our lives do not end with the death of our bodies, and we will one day give an account of our lives to God. This is particularly true as we encounter various trials and difficulties, including emotional heartaches and physical suffering. It is also true as we attempt to determine how best to invest our time, talents, and treasures in the service of Christ, the church, and the world. As we saw in day seven of this week's reading in Periscope, "What we do on earth will have an impact in eternity. That is why an eternal perspective is so important. It helps us make right choices and orders our priorities."



FAST FACTS

Each week, we will share a few fast facts with you to help you in thinking about leading the small group discussion.

In our book, entitled *Understanding a Post-Christian America in 2020*, we document disturbing facts about the health of Christianity in America including these facts:

- The percent of emerging adults (ages 18 to 29) who do not claim any affiliation with Christianity (i.e. Evangelical, Mainline, or Catholic) has grown from about 20% of the population in 1990 to about 45% of the population in 2020. The growth has not occurred through emerging adults turning to other religions, e.g. Islam, Buddhism, etc., but rather through those who do not affiliate with any religion at all (we call them Unaffiliated). A 2019 Pew survey reported an even more alarming number with over 50% of emerging adults who claimed no affiliation with Christian churches of any kind.
- Those emerging adults with a biblical worldview are found to be only about 3.5% of all emerging adults and a disappointing 21% of emerging adults who claim to be born-again Protestants. Even among those under the age of 56, only 25% of born-again Protestants profess a strong biblical worldview. Thus, the overwhelming majority of born-again Protestant adults do not look at life in a way consistent with the fundamental teaching of the New Testament..

PRIOR TO THIS WEEK'S SESSION

- Participate in the experience by reading a chapter a day from the Periscope book. This week the assignment is Chapters 1 through 7.
- Make sure you are signed up to receive the daily email. Be sure to read and/or listen to these each day.
- Read this week's Facilitators Guide Session 1 in preparation for leading the session. Knowing the length of time you have allocated for your small group study, mark the time you want to start each major part of the outline. Within each activity, mark the questions that you want to be sure and have your group discuss.

LEADING THE SMALL GROUP SESSION

Begin with whatever fellowship time (if any) you normally include in your small group time. Begin the session by asking one of the group members to lead in a prayer specifically asking for God's presence and leadership during this time.

INTRODUCING THE TOPIC 10 - 15 minutes

Read the following statement to the group. *As Christians, we were all once captive in the domain of Satan according to Colossians 1:13, but now we are living in the kingdom of God's beloved Son. However, we still need to be on our guard against being taken captive by "philosophy and empty deception" as Paul warns us in Colossians 2:8. Many Christians have fallen heavily into captivity, while probably all of us display captive thinking in some areas of our life. This study is designed to help you regain and maintain your freedom in Christ.*



Press **Play** on this Thought Tickler Video – *Now I'm Bound*. Once it starts press **Pause** when you reach the questions at the beginning.

Warm Up Questions

1. If the people at work (school, senior citizen's center, etc.) were asked "Who is (insert your name) really?" What do you think they would say and why? Be sure to hear from several of your group members on this question.

WARNING: Press **Pause** when the Discussion Questions appear after the 4 minute mark. Rewind if necessary.

Group Discussion

1. The song says "Now I'm changed, my past does not define me." What are the two pasts identified in the lives of the young couple and the young father shown in the video?
2. In what ways would it have been easier for them to keep going down their original life path?
3. How does the idea of being "bound to liberty and freedom" in Christ help us to escape from the mistakes of the world? Have someone read Galatians 5:13

Close the Video Window

BODY OF SESSION**35 - 55 minutes**

Press **Play** on this **Teaser Video Link**: *How Big is an Elephant*. It lasts 3 minutes.
Press **Pause** when you reach the questions near the end of the video.

Group Discussion

1. Honestly, when you think about your life on earth, do you normally think as if it goes on forever or at least a really long time? Just like the elephant, how does your perspective shape the way you consider events in your life? Does someone have a real-life example of how an eternal perspective changes the way you view things?
2. The Christian philosopher William Lane Craig has argued that in order to have a truly meaningful life, two things are necessary, namely, God and immortality. Why do you suppose he thinks this? Do you think he is right? Why or why not?
3. Do you ever stop and wonder; why am I here? What do you tell yourself when this question comes to mind?

Close the Video Window

Press this **Play Button** to start the Teaching Video *Grasping Eternity*.
It is called *Grasping Eternity*.

WARNING: Be prepared to Press Pause when the First Set of Discussion Questions appear after the 4 minute mark. Rewind if necessary.

NOTE: Be aware that there are 2 Pages of questions.

General discussion questions around material presented in the video:

1. How does thinking about being a fisher of men automatically cause you to think from more of an eternal perspective? Does having an “eternal perspective” on life really make a difference in how one thinks about life? If so, how does it do so?
2. Would you say that you have an “eternal perspective” on life all the time, most of

the time, some of the time, or almost never? When you apply an eternal perspective, how has it changed your perspective on such things as suffering, service, giving, interruptions, and dealing with difficult people?

3. Have someone read Hebrews 11:9-16 aloud to the group. In Hebrews 11:9-16, we see that Abraham's real motivation was an eternal relationship and dwelling place, for *"they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one."* Can you think of some events in Abraham's life that showed his eternal perspective?
4. Later in Hebrews, we see Moses was also moved by an eternal perspective. *"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward."* (Heb 11:24-26) Do you have choices in your life that are like Moses' choice, choices between the passing pleasures of sin and the eternal reward in Christ? What are some issues like this that you have dealt with or are currently dealing with in your life?

Press Play on the Video to continue to the end. Discuss the Group Questions near the end of the Video, after the 9 minute mark. Rewind if necessary.

NOTE: Be aware that there are 2 Pages of questions.

1. What is so tragic about Christians living as if this life were all there is? Does this represent a form of "practical atheism"? Why or why not?
2. Our hosts tell us that true joy is rooted in an eternal perspective. Read Hebrews 12:1-2. Who is motivated by eternal joy in this passage? How does this passage sum up our call to apply an eternal perspective to all aspects of our lives?
3. Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8 where Paul is giving final instructions to Timothy. What do you think Paul meant about "being poured out as a drink offering"? What does this passage tell us about living from an eternal perspective?
4. Ask one of the group members to read 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, we are told that all believers must one day appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Understand that this judgment is not about salvation, but reviewing how we lived for Christ during our time on earth. Knowing this judgment seat is

coming, what sort of life changes should you begin making now so that you don't have so many regrets when you stand before the judgment seat of Christ?

5. Remember as God's children, our primary motivation is not avoiding judgment. It is pleasing our Lord and Savior through relying on and responding to His Holy Spirit in our lives. How often do you ask yourself; how would Jesus want me to act in this situation? What is the Holy Spirit telling me? Ask someone to share a time when this type of question changed the way you acted or responded in a real-life situation?
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CLOSING THOUGHTS 8 - 15 minutes

If the end of time will prove that Yahweh is the One True God, what does that have to say about how we spend our time on this earth?

Is there one specific person or situation that you should attempt to address in a fresh new way from an eternal perspective? What will you now do differently?

Encourage everyone to be diligent in reading the daily devotional Periscope selection and reading/listening to the email they will receive each day over this next week.

CLOSING PRAYER – Have someone lead in a closing prayer.

FOLLOW UP TO SMALL GROUP SESSION

Next week, your group is going to be talking about Satan and his strategy to deceive you. This session needs to be bathed in prayer as you take on the schemes of Satan with the truth of Jesus Christ.

