



THE TREE OF LIFE—
LIFE AFTER DEATH
COURSE WORKBOOK

Also used for
Retreat/Small Group Leader Guide

THE TREE OF LIFE—LIFE AFTER DEATH

Retreat Leader Guide

WORKBOOK

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Dedication

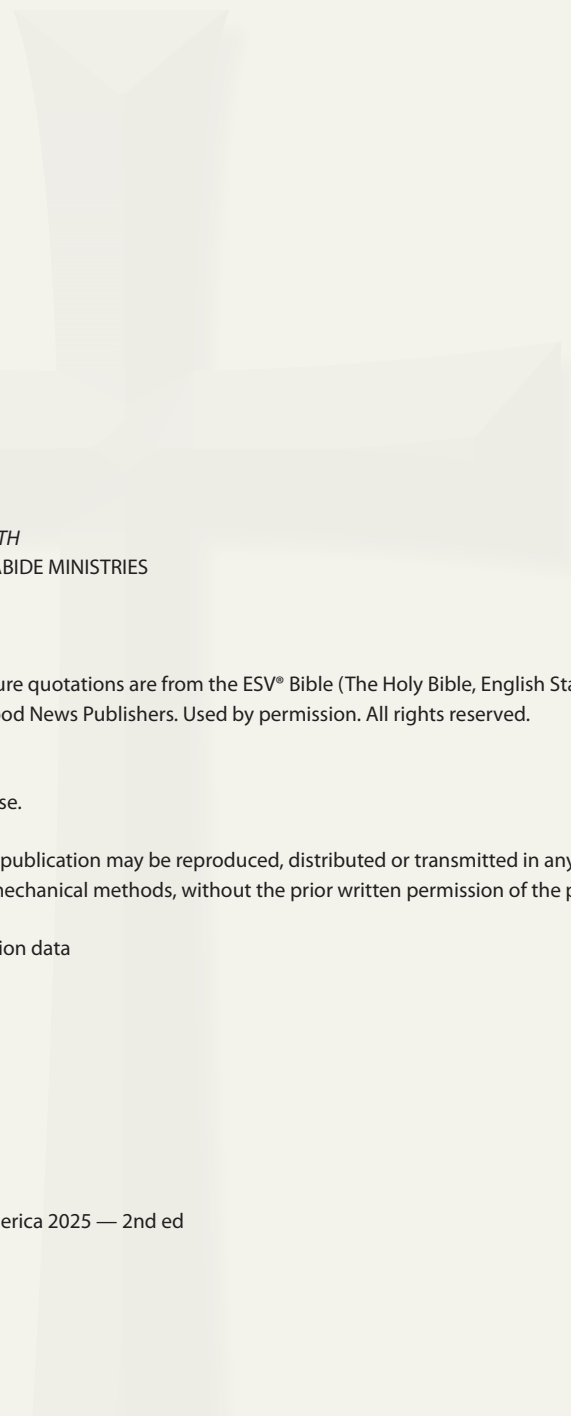
Linda and I dedicate this course to the memory of our daughter, Michelle, who passed away in 2022. She had experienced what was termed “long Covid”, and developed autoimmune problems, partially caused by her not taking care of her health and making poor choices. When she started to fail, we went to the Father and asked as we do with all issues of life: “What do You have to say about this?” He said she is coming home. Since we believed in healing, and had no doubt that God heals, we pursued this further to confirm what we were hearing and why, since separation from loved ones, especially what we thought premature, is most difficult to experience and understand. We did ask for confirmation. The Father provided it through a series of experiences whereby she told us she saw and talked to Jesus; and that she consented to “ascending” with Him. She also confirmed she saw angels. One afternoon there was a bright light that opened up through a completely cloudy day and shined directly on her—which we all clearly saw—it was brilliant. The Father showed us that He could have healed her at any time, so that we knew His will was for her to come home, which was best for her eternal life, and not to stay in sadness as we will be joining her “in just a moment”, as he helped us understand eternity is “a long time”. When we wondered about all this, He spoke to us to let her go and not carry any anger toward her or her choices. She is moving to a beautiful place with Him and to rejoice, while we grieve. After her passing, we had lots of questions about what life after death like is? was her life cut short and she will never experience the fullness of what we thought life to be here? and what can we then understand about life after death? After we started sharing this with others, we learned that these ARE the questions that all of us have, and why the Father asked us to share what we learned will all His children who will face these same things. By the Way, we have understood one important thing—there is not a season of grief, but moments of grief that are on-going, especially when there are moments of remembrance that trigger these emotions. Further, for us, we experience her memory specifically and often through being a place where we smell her usual perfume—especially when no one else around and it lasts for an entire walk that Linda and I take together. We know this is not her there with us (she is with God in the heavenly) but that God uses this to remind of us her, to rejoice at her while we grieve the separation, and that we will join her in life again, and why she does not forget us nor are we to forget the immediacy of her still. This course will discuss all these important questions and more, and provide important insight to all of us who do wish to understand life after death.

Acknowledgements

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



Lesson One

The Characteristics of Life After Death; the Differences Based Upon Our Beliefs
and How We Live Now 2

Lesson Two

What Happens, What Do We Experience in the Next Life? 30

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW



“We all live on Earth as physical humans, created in the image of God, and then we all are appointed to death to pass into eternity.”

Welcome to our course: *The Tree of Life—Life After Death*. We all live on Earth as physical humans, created in the image of God, and then we all are appointed to death to pass into eternity. This is something that my wife, Linda, and I personally faced when our daughter, Michelle, passed away. As you can imagine, we went through much grieving, and processed lots of questions as we tried to understand what life was really like after death—especially for our daughter. We knew all about the life that she had here, but we wondered what it is like for her now that she is with Christ in her new place. What is going to happen when Linda and I are there with her? What should our perspective be on what lies ahead? What should our expectations be of life ahead?

This search for answers began while Michelle was dealing with her sickness and God confirmed that He was taking her home. (We discuss our experience in our Abide Ministries podcast, for those interested in hearing our story.) We received clearly the message that He was taking her home. We were not left wondering or thinking that maybe we did not have enough faith for Him to provide healing. We experienced all the things that everyone experiences when trying to navigate through the death of a loved one.

We dealt with the grief for the loss of the life that we got used to and enjoyed. Some people say that upon death, there will be a season of grief that will pass at some point, but I can unequivocally say that is false. We do not have a season of grief, but rather, we continue to have moments of grief. These moments hit you any time something reminds you of your loved one. Perhaps it is the holiday season, or visiting a place that holds great memories. It could be a song on the radio or the scent of orange blossoms in the breeze when all of the sudden, the loss just hits you. And it hits you at a deep emotional level.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

We understand the grief, but we do not allow it to dominate us because even though we grieve, we also rejoice in knowing that she is in the best place possible, having the best possible time. As I processed this with God, He revealed that we are not to lose our memory of her, but instead continue to include her in our memories of life. We will rejoin her in His timing and pick up our life together that we knew here. She, too, will remember us for the same reason.

I recently had a dream where our family was out on our porch enjoying the day and each other, and up walked Michelle. My first reaction was how beautiful she looked. I looked at her and said, "Wow, look at you, Michelle!" It was clearly her, and she was physically stunning. I then said, "This is wonderful! Our family is back together!" And then I was reminded that she was not really there, but was visiting from heaven. Actually, this was not her really visiting but God revealing her life as it is now in heaven. When I realized that, I asked her, "How is it going there?" She responded simply, "Spectacular," and then I woke up.

I went to God and asked Him what this dream meant. He said that He wanted me to shift one of the views I continually had of her—the one that pictured her as her earthly body was failing. He wanted me to shift that image to her being stunning and living in a spectacular way. He wanted me to have this new, healthy, beautiful vision of her going forward and to know that Him taking her home brought her to that place. This was her life now, and for that, we should rejoice.

As we have processed, especially with that dream, we wondered what she was doing and what it was really like. Most people have a rather shallow view of heaven because what we have been taught does not reveal much. We are going to discover, however, that isn't really true. Additionally, as we see how heaven is depicted in movies and how people talk about it, we tend to think that heaven is not really related to our life on Earth. It is not connected, especially since we lived in a world of difficulty with a sin nature. Besides that, all we will be doing in heaven is sitting around strumming harps or such, worshiping, and not much else. We are just there, in eternity, where it seems like it would be...well, rather boring.

Through processing the Word with the Holy Spirit, we have learned that the life that we experienced on Earth actually continues. It just transitions to the next phase. So, what is life after death really like? We found some answers. The answers center on an interesting symbol that God uses called, "The Tree of Life." Let's begin:

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Read Genesis 2:7; 15–17:

⁷ then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat[a] of it you shall surely die.”

When Adam and Eve were created, God said He did breathe life into man and woman. He breathed in His spiritual life as well as the physical life, which is the essence of life formed into physical beings. He gave life—the life of God and the sustenance to be alive by breathing the spiritual life into us. These physical beings, Adam and Eve, then lived with God in the Garden of Eden. God told Adam to be fruitful—so when they had offspring, that life that He breathed into them would continue—from person to person to person. This is the essence of life.

Consider this, a baby becomes fully alive at birth when they breathe on their own—that breath continues. Life is God breathed.

God then said to Adam and Eve, you can eat of all the trees that I have created, but do not eat of the tree of what? The knowledge of good and evil. This is where the words really matter. The knowledge of good and evil is the knowing, experiencing, and discerning of what is “good.” The good is the spectacular, excellent, valuable, fantastic, and wonderful. Good describes the intended life of God, which is the nature of God. Evil, on the other hand, consists of things that annoy, frustrate, irritate and are going to cause you trouble. God already understood this, and in the original creation, evil was not present in the Garden of Eden.

However, God warned Adam and Eve that if they were to “eat of that tree,” what would happen? They were going to die. Eating of the tree would unleash evil, which would then dominate with a nature that was no longer righteous and whole. This is called the sin nature. The result of eating of the tree would not only impact them, the consequences were far greater as it would also unleash evil into the world—a world where evil did not currently exist. It didn’t need to exist if they followed what He had to say.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

So, life, by definition, has a corollary to it—death. Goodness has a corollary to it—wickedness, evil, difficulty, oppression, things that are going to cause harm. He clearly said not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because if they did, they would surely die. This is death to the fullness of life.

Read Genesis 3:22–24:

²² Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—”²³ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

In the garden was also the “Tree of Life,” of which they were supposed to eat. (We will explore many aspects of this since this is presented throughout scripture.) They were told to eat all of the fruit of the other trees, including the Tree of Life, as it was the place of the sustenance of life. They were told to eat of it regularly to keep receiving that life.

Instead of following His directions, they were tempted by Satan and did not remain in the life provided to them by God. They did not seek His guidance or ask for His insight and wisdom about the consequence of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Instead, they disobeyed God’s instruction and ate of this tree. When they did, as spoken by God, they died.

What died? The spiritual connectivity that Adam and Eve had with God. The Holy Spirit vacated them, and they became a sophisticated animal—flesh and soul, but no spiritual essence, which is the life of God in them. This death unleashed evil into the world—which then became under the control and authority of Satan. They handed this control and authority over to him.

But what about the Tree of Life? God said they, the trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, could not allow them to go back and eat from the Tree of Life, because they would then be permanently in that state. They would live forever in a state that could never be redeemed. So, the Father had to prevent them from going back, and He did this by placing a cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the tree.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Think about that: God guarded the Tree of Life. There was a path to the Tree of Life, and they could have returned and ate of it after they had died. They were supposed to eat the fruit of this tree regularly. I believe I have received revelation about this, because of what happened when they fell. When Satan said, "Did God really say...?" and then, "He did, but surely you won't die," they did not question it. I believe that they had lost some sensitivity to the life of God—I think they stopped eating from the Tree of Life.

Consider this, Adam and Eve were starting to experience more natural stuff, and they were losing that spiritual power from the Tree of Life. We know there was a path to the tree for them to visit regularly, as they were supposed to eat of it all the time. In this case though, they fell and were transformed from the spiritual and perfect relationship they had with God to a sin nature. Remember, sin nature is led by the flesh and is selfish and not under the leadership of God. They were separated from God.

Because of this, God guarded this path back to the Tree of Life because they were no longer allowed to eat of it as it would place them in a position of being devoid of the possibility of redemption and a rebirth of this life. Think about how important this is then to eat of the Tree of Life. You must be pure when you eat of it. Otherwise, if you bring impurity, you would mix holiness with unholiness, which is not possible with the life of God. So, He said, "We must stop them, prevent them, and then move them away from this place so flesh cannot be set above this life."

Read Revelation 2:7:

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

To the churches, God said, "If you have an ear to hear, hear what I have to say." He was going to give them the privilege to do what? Eat of the "Tree of Life." When? Now. So, it still exists? Yes, it still exists. Adam and Eve were prevented from going back on the path in the garden to eat of the Tree of Life, but it does still exist. You, we, all of us can still eat of the Tree of Life. Let's dig in further.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Read Revelation 22:1–5:

The River of Life

22 Then the angel^[a] showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life^[b] with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

At the very end of the existing earth, on which we now occupy and was created along with mankind in the beginning, God destroys this heaven and earth and creates a new one. He creates a new heaven and earth. It is going to be a physical place. This is an important piece of what Michelle is now part of and what we all are going to be part of. God is going to recreate this physical thing that will also have a Tree of Life in the center of it. The Tree of Life was there originally, we can eat of it now, and it will be there in eternity. This is something we need to understand. The Tree of Life is available now, which means we are to draw from it to have life, and it will still be there in eternity when everything is completely settled. There is no Satan. Everything will be destroyed, but there will be a brand new heaven and earth, as well as the Tree of Life. From this tree, what are we called to do? Eat from it. Let's find out what it means for those of us who are here now.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Read John 1:1–4:

The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In him was life,^[a] and the life was the light of men.

Who is “the life?” Christ, the Word who became flesh, is the Life and the Light. The Life shines in the darkness.

Read John 3:14, 21; 3:36:

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

The key to life is Christ. He is the Life. We are to partake of that Life. He is the Light—the Life is the Light. For us to participate in it, what do we have to do? Go to the light. If Christ is Life, then the Tree of Life must be Christ. He is the Tree of Life that we must go to. This is the Tree that we must partake of and eat from. If we do, we will have life, but if we don't, what happens? First John 5:12 says, “He who has the Son, has Life, and he who does not have the Son of God does not have Life. It is a twofold proposition: If you never partake of it, you will never be with God in eternity. But what if you do partake of it, but don't walk into the life? What if you believe that all you need to know is that you will be with Him in eternity so you don't need to partake in the Tree of Life regularly? This raises the question then: What is the difference in eternity for those who choose Life, those who don't choose Life, and those who choose Life on their terms?

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Read John 4:13–14:

¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.^[a] The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Then, 1 Corinthians 15:45–49:

⁴⁵ Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”;^[a] the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall^[b] also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Then, 1 John 5:11–15:

¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

That You May Know

¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Christ is the Tree of Life, and His desire is to be the giver of this Life. He wants this Life to flow through Him into you, where you are the recipient of the Life that He has for you. He wants this while you are here on earth and in eternity. Because the Tree of Life still exists, we are always in a position, just as Adam and Eve were, to keep eating of the Tree of Life. Today, we are called to do just that. Why? Because He is the giver of that life. Eternal Life resides in Him, and Christ defines what this is:

Read John 17:1–3:

The High Priestly Prayer

17 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.³ And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

He said He is the giver of Life. It is eternal life. This means experiencing the Father and the Son in your life today. Again, it is eternal life. You have to partake of it and receive it by eating of that Life. In doing so, you will experience and know the fullness of this Life of God here on earth. As He identifies this as eternal life, what does that imply? It is forever. Going one step farther, why would it change when we pass into the next dimension? Is it all over, or will it be significantly different? No. Eternal life continues in the same way. To know and experience the Father and the Son in this life is the same that we will experience as we go into eternity.

Read John 20:31:

³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John said that everything that was done was to write the Word. John 1 said, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God"—the Word is Christ. This was done so that you receive and believe the life; so that you have this life. This requires ongoing belief which means continuing to stay with Him.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Read Romans 8:9–11; 31–32:

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus[a] from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

God's Everlasting Love

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be^[a] against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

As believers, living here on earth in our mortal bodies, we operate in one of two modes:

1. If you are walking in the flesh, you are going to operate in death.
2. If you are walking in the spirit, you receive life. What kind of life? The resurrection life. The supernatural life, the fullness of the life of God.

If God is for you, who can be against you? No one. He freely gives you all the things of this life. If it is eternal, how does that work? This was one of the big questions I had about Michelle's situation, which I call, *a life cut short*. How come her beautiful life was cut short? Why didn't she get to live the long life that most of us get to experience? Why didn't she get to say that she lived a full life? As I pondered these verses, God spoke to me. He asked me why I was questioning that. I said, "Well, because her life is over, and she did not get to experience all the things of life that would be considered "full." He said, "Do you think it doesn't continue? You think she doesn't continue to partake of this life that she began on earth and that I still have for her. The resurrected power continues, and I freely give her life. There are elements of her life that are still happening for her."

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Be careful not to predetermine what really happens when we pass. It is important to expand your thinking. He asked me, "What do you know about her life?" Linda and I and our family talk a lot about Michelle. We reminisce, we share, we remember experiences, we share pictures, and discuss our memories.

God said to me, "You do know what that was like, so do you think that is not going to continue?"

Trying to understand, I asked, "You mean it keeps going with her and her unique characteristics and unique experiences of life?"

"Yes," He responded. "Life continues. All things are still being given to her. She doesn't receive it all at once though. Consider this: How do I guide My children in life here on earth? I guide them along a path. You have been taught that life is a path and not a destination, and the key to following Me is to live in the Kingdom, walking on My path."

Adam and Eve had a path to the Tree of life.

Read John 8:12:

I Am the Light of the World

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Then, Proverbs 12:28:

²⁸ In the path of righteousness is life,
and in its pathway there is no death.

Then, Proverbs 15:24:

²⁴ The path of life leads upward for the prudent,
that he may turn away from Sheol beneath.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Then, Matthew 7:14:

¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

God said that if you follow Him, He will take you on the path to life. There is a pathway to life. There is a walkway to life. There is a journey to life. Just like Adam and Eve had a pathway to eat of the Tree of Life. You still have that pathway. You are invited to go and eat of the Tree of Life, but the only way you can do it is by being pure. How are we pure? When are we pure? Only when we are with Him in the Kingdom, walking in the Spirit, with Him. For it is there that He covers us with His righteousness.

The moment Adam and Eve fell, is the moment they died—lost their righteousness. God could not allow them to eat of the Tree of Life, so He blocked the path. Why did God respond this way? At that time, Adam and Eve were disobedient, had died, and were no longer pure. This impurity meant they could not continue to eat of the Tree of Life. What does this mean for us today? It means the same thing it meant to Adam and Eve. The way for us to continue to eat of this tree is to walk the pathway to the Tree of Life by being pure. If we are not pure, we are disqualified from that pathway. This pathway is being in the Kingdom, where we experience His righteousness, and are pure. This is where we are capable of eating of the Tree of Life, where we experience this life, as intended. Let's take a look at what the Tree of Life provides us.

Read 2 Peter 1:1–4:

Greeting

1 Simeon^[a] Peter, a servant^[b] and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

² May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Confirm Your Calling and Election

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to^[c] his own glory and excellence,^[d] ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

What does eating of the Tree of Life provide? Everything we need for life and godliness. The divine nature—Himself. You begin to receive His nature, the very thing that allows you to live out this life with Him. Is this automatic given if you are a born-again believer? No. Remember, it is a battle of the flesh versus the spirit. Do you surrender your own will? Do you walk in the Spirit? If so, then you will receive and live in the divine nature. The Tree of Life gives you this divine nature. Now, if you are a born-again believer, when you pass from this physical life to the heavenly life, you will automatically receive this divine nature. This is so because there is no more sin nature. We have to be completely pure to be in His presence.

This truth presents some very interesting questions:

1. Does it really matter how we live here—in the flesh or in the Spirit—does that matter?
2. Does it matter what we do here?
3. Wouldn't it be better if we went sooner, rather than later?

Read 1 Peter 1:3–5:

Born Again to a Living Hope

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Then, Psalm 16:5–6:

⁵ The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.

⁶ The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

Then, Ephesians 1:13–23:

¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee^[a] of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,^[b] to the praise of his glory.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love^[c] toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

God said you will receive an inheritance. The inheritance is Him, and it is imperishable. It is pleasant. It is the fullness of life that you get to experience now. Ultimately, you will experience it to a greater level when you go to be with Him in eternity. But, the inheritance starts when? Now.

He will show you that you experience the inheritance in life here, which is partial. When you pass, it just continues. We tend to think that at death everything is instantaneously changed. And God said, "No, that is not what happens." Everything does not change instantaneously. We do understand that there are lots of things that do change, one of which is not having our sinful bodies with us anymore. Another is not having a sin nature. Hallelujah.

There is no more suffering, or sorrow, or tears. The things that He has been giving you continue on the same pace that you have been receiving them. Why? Because this life continues. He has given you the Holy Spirit, and you continue in the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians, He said that He is our inheritance. The inheritance we get is Him. He wants to experience this with us now, but this is dependent upon us choosing to walk in His Kingdom where we surrender our will to Him and are led by the Holy Spirit, who is resident within each of us.

God gets us fully when we die. This is something that has overwhelmed me. Remember, we are born with what kind of a nature? A sinful nature, a self-centered nature. Daily, we live out this life in the battle between walking in the Spirit and walking in the flesh. Our sin nature does not get any better, and in order to be led by the Spirit, we must be put to death every day, all the time. Failure to do so results in defaulting to the life of the flesh, not receiving and experiencing the divine nature.

We are born with a sin nature. God revealed this to me: When we come home, it is the first time He gets to experience us without that nature. It is spectacular for Him and the reason why He rejoices. We are His inheritance, and as we move into eternity with Him without the bondage of that sin nature, we are free to be fully His. This is one of the reasons He told us that it was time for Michelle to come home. She was His inheritance, and He rejoices at experiencing her this way. We will all receive the inheritance of His divine nature, and He will receive an inheritance, which is you.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Read Proverbs 13:12:

¹² Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

The hope desired is the Tree of Life. Let's put two and two together.

Read Psalm 33:18–22:

¹⁸ Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,

¹⁹ that he may deliver their soul from death
and keep them alive in famine.

²⁰ Our soul waits for the Lord;
he is our help and our shield.

²¹ For our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.

²² Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

Hope is certainty. We will receive what is promised—it is for certain ours. It is the Tree of Life. What is hope? It is what we are looking for. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." We are all hoping for the life that God has for us. We learn that it is always for good. It is always for the greatest. It is always for the grand. The word *hope* in the Bible is when you receive it from God, it is certain you will have it—you can expect it. It is not a wish. It helps you to keep moving forward in your walk with Him.

How does this relate to the Tree of Life? What is in eternity? The Tree of Life. This, by definition, means what? There is more to experience. So, keep hoping. Keep expecting the next. It is a progressive thing. There is still adventure. There is still movement. There are still things that are happening that have not yet been fully realized, but we still carry that hope. Because why? The Tree of Life is there, and it is our hope.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Read Proverbs 3:13–18:

- ¹³ Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,
¹⁴ for the gain from her is better than gain from silver
and her profit better than gold.
¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.
¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.
¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called blessed.

Then, Proverbs 8:32–36:

- ³² "And now, O sons, listen to me:
blessed are those who keep my ways.
³³ Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.
³⁴ Blessed is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.
³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the Lord,
³⁶ but he who fails to find me injures himself;
all who hate me love death."

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

“Whoever finds Me (wisdom) finds life.” He said wisdom comes from the Tree of Life. What do you need wisdom for? Everything. Every situation. You need answers to questions; direction as to what you are doing. Where does that come from? The Tree of Life—from Christ. Carry this forward. If we are in eternity eating of the Tree of Life, that means we are still receiving wisdom, answers to questions, and direction. We won’t be given the knowledge of everything all at once. There are things to learn when we get there. There are decisions we will need to make. God will guide us. And we must eat of the Tree of Life to receive it.

Life in eternity is still progressive. Life eternal is still an adventure of experiencing new things. This life is unique and is based upon where you came from—where you started. Life continues. The things that you still need to understand will be understandable. We will spend an eternity needing wisdom and insight and eating of the Tree of Life. Receiving wisdom in this place will be wonderful, and it will be a joy to receive. This is the way He designed it—the way He set it up. This is why He kept revealing to me that the life you live here and now continues in a similar way in heaven. It will not be all that much different. There will be differences, of course, since you are longer constrained by the world or your sin nature—but it will not be as different as you think. It will contain all the elements of life that you began while here.

The Lord’s Prayer begins, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...” Stop there for a moment. On earth as it is in heaven. This means it is in heaven. This made me think of the heavenly throne room scene that is described in Revelation. In particular, where it says: The elders are there, the great cloud of witnesses are there, and God does something new that overwhelms them. God did something new, something they had never seen before. It was a progressive, ongoing revelation of the greatness and majesty of God.

Read John 6:63:

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Then, Psalm 16:11:

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

God said that His words to us are rhema. His personal discussion with each of us is spirit and life. It is both, spirit and life. His words are spirit and life. From His speaking, we will discover His pathway for us. These are his great pleasures. The word He used in the verse above is *forevermore*, and it is what led me to investigate this thoroughly. He kept showing me the following words: forevermore, forever, eternal. This provided new perspective and understanding.

When you go through grief like we have, the one thing that God reminds us when experiencing the real pain of loss is that it is just for a moment. He talked to me in ways that were kind of funny. He said, "Rich, eternity is a long time. This is just a moment. You will be joining her soon." He further said that the path, which is forevermore, produces pleasure forevermore.

There are two things to note:

1. In heaven, there is a path.
2. When you are in heaven on this forever path, it will produce more and more pleasures.

God told me that there are things unique to Michelle that provide her pleasures, and He was starting to give those to her. Her path was still set, and she was receiving pleasures forevermore. This is the reason why I don't believe that it all just stops when someone dies. It progresses. She is on that path, and she is still having pleasures forevermore. She must be thrilled. That is why He keeps telling me that even though I grieve about her, she is actually doing fine. It will be just a moment. It is why He gave me the dream I shared earlier. Michelle is living a spectacular life, so I need to see her that way.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Read Psalm 36:5–9:

- ⁵Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.
- ⁶Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
your judgments are like the great deep;
man and beast you save, O Lord.
- ⁷How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
- ⁸They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.
- ⁹For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light do we see light.

As you may recall, the words “loving kindness” and “mercies” mean Covenant loyalty. The Covenant is eternal. The Covenant continues along the path of life. It is spectacular. It is abundant. It is pleasure. It is grandeur. He wants us to start walking on that path now so we can live the Covenant, receiving this spectacular place.

We know that we live in a world of trouble. We live in both places actually. We have trouble—difficulty, stress, oppression, but even as we do live in that world of trouble, we still get to experience the Covenant. God overcomes that trouble here. When we pass into the next life, we no longer have any trouble, but what continues? The blessing, the abundance, the pleasure that continues along the path. Interestingly enough, it is why Paul said: To live is Christ, but to die is gain. In death, the battle is over. Yes, we get to experience the pleasures on the path of life, but it continues since the Covenant is eternal.

What is the Covenant? It is God’s blessing so that we, too, can be a blessing. Given that the Covenant is eternal, what is Michelle experiencing? She is being blessed as she is blessing others. The Covenant exists. It is forever. It continues. There is a dynamic in the relationship with other believers who are engaged in the Covenant. Both parties receive blessings, and both give it away. It can’t be independent or experienced alone, as it is in relationship that we encourage and stimulate each other. This implies progression and dynamic relationship as we continue to move forward in eternity.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Read Psalm 3:1–6:

Save Me, O My God

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

3 O Lord, how many are my foes!

Many are rising against me;

² many are saying of my soul,

“There is no salvation for him in God.” Selah^[a]

³ But you, O Lord, are a shield about me,

my glory, and the lifter of my head.

⁴ I cried aloud to the Lord,

and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah

⁵ I lay down and slept;

I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.

⁶ I will not be afraid of many thousands of people

who have set themselves against me all around.

The path is based upon the lovingkindness and the tender mercies, which is the Covenant. If we walk with Him, we experience life, and we will be on the path of the eternal Covenant. God will keep guiding our steps in heaven. If we are guided with our steps, what does that imply? It implies that He is leading, and we are walking forward. In other words, we are not static. We are not just standing there doing nothing. We are moving forward, taking steps. In eternity, we continue to walk with Him on the beautiful path of the Covenant, step by step.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Read Psalm 21:1–6:

The King Rejoices in the Lord's Strength
To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

21 O Lord, in your strength the king rejoices,
and in your salvation how greatly he exults!

² You have given him his heart's desire
and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah

³ For you meet him with rich blessings;
you set a crown of fine gold upon his head.

⁴ He asked life of you; you gave it to him,
length of days forever and ever.

⁵ His glory is great through your salvation;
splendor and majesty you bestow on him.

⁶ For you make him most blessed forever;^[a]
you make him glad with the joy of your presence.

The word forever as spoken in the verses above means that you will be blessed forever. God will give you the desires of your heart. He will bestow goodness, majesty, gladness, glory, and splendor—forever. Somehow there will still be a desire within us when we are in heaven that He wants to fulfill—continually. He wants to give us the pathway of pleasure and the pathway of abundance and the pathway of joy. In heaven, we will not have any of the trouble we have on this side. It's progressive. There is desire. There is interest.

When we wonder about Michelle and her life cut short, He corrects us and says, "No, it was not. Her desires are still going to be fulfilled, she is still walking forward down the path. You can trust it."

Read John 10:10:

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Then, Psalm 103:1–5:

Bless the Lord, O My Soul

Of David.

103 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!

² Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,

³ who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

⁴ who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

⁵ who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Then, Ecclesiastes 5:18–20:

¹⁸ Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment^[a] in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. ¹⁹ Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. ²⁰ For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Jesus said He came to give us life, and to give it to us super-abundantly. Do not forget about all the benefits of this super-abundant life. He is going to keep us renewed so we can experience the fullness of life, the goodness, which is to be fully satisfied. He wants us to enjoy life now and into eternity.

One of the key elements of joy is work. Enjoy your work. Enjoy the occupation of what you do. Another element is to enjoy the fullness of being in fellowship, being in relationship that is stimulating. If this is life—abundant life—what will happen when we go to heaven? We will experience work and fellowship—still in abundance.

So, what exactly does He want you, personally, to be doing for work? What should you do for your occupation? God kept reinforcing to me that Michelle was still at work. Though this is not known from Scripture, I believe that most likely she is engaged in the things that brought her joy in her work here. She truly enjoyed running projects, and it was one of her great strengths and source of joy in her life. We are to keep picturing what we know about a person's life here and how that will continue.

When He creates a new heaven and a new earth, you will be working, you will be occupied, you will be busy. I have abided in the words written in Revelation 21, and I have received it as true. The problem I faced was not knowing what happens between the time we die and the time of the creation of the new heaven and earth. I assumed we were in a completely different dimension that had not much to do with our life here or our life to come. But God said, "No, your life is a continuation, and you will keep working."

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Read Psalm 27:1–5:

The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation

Of David.

27 The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold^[a] of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

² When evildoers assail me
to eat up my flesh,
my adversaries and foes,
it is they who stumble and fall.

³ Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me,
yet^[b] I will be confident.

⁴ One thing have I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to inquire^[c] in his temple.

⁵ For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will lift me high upon a rock.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

Then, Psalm 18:1–3:

The Lord Is My Rock and My Fortress

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who addressed the words of this song to the Lord on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said:

18 I love you, O Lord, my strength.

²The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

³I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.

Then, Psalm 56:1–4; 9–13:

In God I Trust

To the choirmaster: according to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths. A Miktam^[a] of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

56 Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me;
all day long an attacker oppresses me;

²my enemies trample on me all day long,
for many attack me proudly.

³When I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.

⁴In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.

What can flesh do to me?

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

⁹ Then my enemies will turn back
in the day when I call.
This I know, that^[a] God is for me.

¹⁰ In God, whose word I praise,
in the Lord, whose word I praise,
¹¹ in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.
What can man do to me?

¹² I must perform my vows to you, O God;
I will render thank offerings to you.

¹³ For you have delivered my soul from death,
yes, my feet from falling,
that I may walk before God
in the light of life.

In this world you are going to have trouble, and you are going to have people come against you. You will have things come against you that you can't figure out. But if you eat of the Tree of Life here, you will be in a safe place where there is no fear, where you will be protected, and where you will enjoy life—even while you are experiencing this trouble.

David had a solid understanding of this. He said he wanted to live eternally like that. He wanted to be in God's eternal place, living like that. Here is what God showed us:

Think of a trouble you have experienced, and consider how you felt at the very moment it was resolved. When God resolved it and it was done, how did you feel? Did you feel peaceful? Did you feel the release of pressure, or freedom. I am willing to bet that you were no longer concerned about the issue. You were excited, joyful, thrilled at the sense of release and hope for the future. That is life. David knew what that felt like. He also knew that when he died, he would go be with Him. Excitement and joy will always be felt. You are always in joy. You are always excited. You live with the expectation that blessings are coming, which is something we only received a taste of here in this life.

LESSON 1

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH; THE DIFFERENCES BASED UPON OUR BELIEFS AND HOW WE LIVE NOW

God said that I need to understand and know that this is now Michelle's life. She is in a place where she never has to experience any of the hardships of life at all. This is how she lives all the time, and for that, I should rejoice.

As we conclude this first lesson, we are to understand that the Tree of Life still exists. It is in Christ. There is a pathway to it. There are things that He wants us to experience now as we prepare ourselves for then. Christ said that eternal life is a continuation of the now. It is not unusual that most believe differently—that our life here does not matter. But, it does matter. Our experiences matter as we move into the next phase of it. There is work, and there is progression, and there is a path, and there is wisdom, and there are decisions to make, and there are desires of our hearts. The next phase of this life is going to be fun, and we can hardly wait to get there and be together with Michelle.

Go through these verses again and dive deeper into the Tree of Life and the truth about the Tree of Life. The next lesson is going to be about what matters. If what we do on earth matters, what does that mean as we go into eternal life, particularly given if we are truly a believer who knows where we are going to spend eternity. For what reason should we care about our life here? What does that mean as we go forward?

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?



**“The life He set
before us is
life eternal. It
starts now.”**

As we explore what “life after death” means, we understand from Lesson 1 that it is connected to the Tree of Life. The nature and the quality of eternal life is related to our life now, and is centered on the Covenant where God offers us blessings so that we, too, can be a blessing, with the elements of work and relationship, that continue into eternity. Throughout Scripture we see consistent and frequent references to this life, which is forevermore. The things that we experience here are going to be experienced in eternity—examples include the adventure, the step-by-step progression, the ability to move forward, and the ongoing dialogue with God, who instructs us and guides us. These are all experienced here in our life on Earth and continue in the next life.

Consider how beautiful this is going to be. If each of us wrote down all the questions we would like to ask God, it would fill page after page after page after page. “God, why are all these galaxies all over the place, millions of years apart? What does that mean? How did that go?” He will answer each of our questions, saying, “Come here, come with Me, and I will show you.” The time we get to engage with Him is not limited, which is one of the reasons we continue a step-by-step process of learning and understanding. In eternity, time stops. We do not have a marking of day and night anymore—but it progresses, and it does move forward.

It certainly will be intriguing to learn the answers to all the questions about this place and life, in general—to be able to ask all your questions about how it worked and what really happened. “God, what really happened with the dinosaurs?” “Abraham, what made you think it was a good idea to have a child with Hagar?” So many questions. Remember eternity is not finite, which means you can’t get to the end of it. And because we are in a dialogue, we are learning, processing, and stepping forward. This is something we will be able to do for the rest of our life. I believe this is the very nature of God, who is not static, but progressive. Let’s explore further receiving this life on Earth, as well as the impact of receiving that life:

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Read Deuteronomy 30:11–20:

The Choice of Life and Death

¹¹ “For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. ¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹³ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹⁴ But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

¹⁵ “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God^[a] that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules,^[b] then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰ loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

God said, “I set before you life and death, blessing or cursing.” The life He set before us is life eternal. It starts now. It is to be experienced with the blessing of it now. There is a choice involved if we are to receive the life, understanding that it will have eternal implications. It is necessary that we choose it now. In making that choice, is it permanent? No, it is a choice that needs to be made every day. Why isn't it permanent? Because we have a nature that gravitates back to the flesh, and this life can only be experienced by walking with Him, through our choice of following Him. He gives us this life because He is the life.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Read Proverbs 21:21:

²¹ Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness
will find life, righteousness, and honor.

How do we follow righteousness? By living in and following Christ. Christ is where you will find life. He is the life. He is the eternal life. If you choose to follow Him, you walk with Him. You are with Him. But again, receiving this life is a choice that needs to be made every single day.

Read Romans 6:1–4:

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Then, Colossians 3:1–4:

Put On the New Self

3 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your^[a] life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Then, 2 Corinthians 4:7–15:

Treasure in Jars of Clay

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

¹³ Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, ¹⁴ knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵ For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Then, Galatians 2:20–21:

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness^[a] were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

God said to choose life, and if you choose life, there is a daily action that you must go through. What is it? The action is to deny self, take up His cross, and follow Him. You have to die to self. God's instructions were not to simply do better. His instruction was to die to self, crucify the flesh, and put it to death.

Paul said that if we are going to live with Christ, we will always live at the same time with death. Death to what? Our flesh. What does that look like? It is surrendering our will to His will. This does not mean saying you are, but truly aren't. Being dead to self means to be truly dead, not simply operating in the way that you believe is right. If you claim to be surrendered to His will, but continue doing what you want because it doesn't matter and you believe God will bless you anyway, take note: It matters.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

The only way you can receive this life is to choose to receive it. This life that He has for you starts here and now and goes into eternity. It does matter if you live it here and now. It is important to know about life eternal. The condition to have life eternal with God is that we must be a true believer. Are we going to be in Christ enjoying the life of Christ when we go to heaven? Yes, but we can start experiencing that life here.

God said to keep thinking eternally. Enjoy the life that He offers now; learn the life that He has now. It will have a bearing on your transition because you will have already learned it—what it looks like, what it feels like, what it is. If you do not learn it here, you will still be able to experience this life, but you will have to start at a different place. We will explore that further. To live this life now, we must crucify the flesh by surrendering your will and choosing to walk with Him. He will give you the life you choose.

Read Proverbs 19:23:

²³ The fear of the Lord leads to life,
and whoever has it rests satisfied;
he will not be visited by harm.

Then, Psalm 34:11–14:

¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
¹² What man is there who desires life
and loves many days, that he may see good?
¹³ Keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking deceit.
¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Then, Proverbs 16:17:

¹⁷The highway of the upright turns aside from evil;
whoever guards his way preserves his life.

The fear of the Lord is what leads you to life. He said He would show us what that life looks like. So, how do you define the fear of the Lord? Reverence, respect, honor. What exactly does that look like? It is hearing and receiving what He says. Listening and receiving. It is receiving what you believe to be true, even when you don't understand it. If you fear the Lord and you read a truth that is not understood, what will you pursue? Peace, shalom.

Further, as you experience difficulty—which will be normal—choose to pursue God to receive His peace and shalom. Fear what He has to say, and do not be afraid of what He has to say. Have reverence for what He has to say. Do not reject it. Continue moving forward. Learn what it means, because if you do, you preserve the essence of your soul. What does this mean exactly? It means you receive His life in your soul—your inner self, your essence.

Remember, His life lasts into eternity, which also means our soul lasts in eternity. What is your soul? It is the essence of who you are. It is your personality. It is the way you operate. It is your place of your emotion, the place of your will. It is the place of your intellect. All of that continues into eternity.

When we go to see Michelle, will we recognize her? Yes. It is not like she is somebody different. We know what she is like here. Well, she is the same person there. Her soul is still there, and we get to experience that soul. If you receive His life here, those things that impact your soul continue. His life continues with you because it is at the soul level. The experience of this now, which progresses into eternity, is based upon being willing to follow Him, putting to death flesh and self, and being willing to trust what He says when He speaks to you and guides you on the path of life.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Read Matthew 10:34–39:

Not Peace, but a Sword

³⁴ “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Then, Matthew 16:24–28:

Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life^[a] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Christ said that in order to gain life, you have to lose it. And if you lose it, you gain it. What do you need to lose? Your life, by denying self and choosing Him above everything else. This includes the people closest to you who may create conflict. You must learn to love life, and loving life is always loving Him first.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

If you love Him first and you have conflict with relatives, what must you do? You are going to have to ask God what He has to say to you about the conflict. He will give you wisdom on how to operate with them, which could include setting boundaries. God does not want you to be bothered by or live with conflict. He does not want you to accept the conflict or cave to it. Instead, He said, "Follow Me." Why? What will you receive? You will receive life—life and life eternal. This implies that when we are in eternity, we will still be following Him. The self is out of the way. You are not in the battle anymore. There is no more conflict. Rather, you are following Him and moving forward along the path He has for you. There is something significant about the quality of that life in regard to how we received and lived this life here.

Read Psalm 133:

When Brothers Dwell in Unity

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

133 Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!^[a]

² It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down on the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down on the collar of his robes!

³ It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion!

For there the Lord has commanded the blessing,
life forevermore.

We are to dwell in agreement, in harmony, in oneness, and learn to follow His will. Remember, unity is with Him. For it is there that He commands blessing. If we live in unity and walk in unity, we will discover His will. We will recognize His will, so that when we get to heaven, we will be able to continue that process of discovering His will and receiving the blessing of His will. It will be easy to continue this because we will be with Him, and He will guide us step by step. It is important to learn the unity of the Spirit. If you can learn this, you will begin to experience the life now, and it will be even more beautiful when you get there.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Read John 5:19–24:

The Authority of the Son

¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father^[a] does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

If you believe His word, He speaks the truth to you. As you believe this, you receive eternal life, and you will experience eternal life. This means we experience the Father, and experience the life of the Son—by receiving what He speaks now.

Read 1 Timothy 6:13–16:

¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before^[a] Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

Life is to be received the way that Christ confessed before Pilate. If you do, you will have life everlasting. You will live out the life that Christ did when He had confessed before Pilate. What does that mean? Let’s go to scripture to help us understand.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Read John 18:28–38:

Jesus Before Pilate

²⁸ Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters.^[a] It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" ³⁰ They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." ³¹ Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." ³² This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

My Kingdom Is Not of This World

³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" ³⁵ Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." ³⁸ Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him."

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Here is the confession of Christ:

Pilate: "You are the king?"

Jesus: "Who is telling you that?"

Pilate: "Am I a Jew? They say you are saying you are a king—I don't really know what is going on here."

Jesus: "Yes, I am a king, and my Kingdom isn't from here."

Pilate: "Where is it from?"

Jesus: "It is from heaven, eternal heaven."

This is why the Kingdom is so critical. It is superior to the world because it is eternal. It is spiritual. It is from heaven. He said His Kingdom isn't of here. It is eternal. He also said He came to bear witness to that Kingdom and to provide truth and life. The key to everything is this: If you hear His word, you will understand the Kingdom and live the life of the Kingdom.

Paul instructed us, saying that if you live the life of the confession of Jesus to Pilate, you will experience this life in eternity. What is that exactly? It is receiving and following the Word of God. Will God keep speaking to you when you are in heaven? Yes, and you will continue understanding and experiencing truth. You will be of the Kingdom because you have a heart to hear His word.

Read Acts 5:20:

²⁰ "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life."

What gives you the ability to speak "all the words of this life?" You must first hear them. If you are truly hearing His words, you will be able to speak them. If you are here in this life, hearing His words, which are eternal and of the Kingdom, you must speak His words. In doing this, what are you building? A library of truth. It is only if you can receive it that you can speak it. We speak out what we hear, and we do that by abiding and receiving the truth of God. God builds our library, and the library grows and grows.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Consider a first grader who is learning math. What do they learn first? One plus one equals two, then eventually two times two equals four. They might not understand it initially but they at least have an awareness of it. They are building their library. What if they stop? They never learn another piece of math. They don't progress, and they don't move forward. If at a later date, they had to start over to learn those math skills, where would they start? Where they left off. First grade.

As we build our library, we hear and receive truth. If we fail to learn the truth, we must start at the beginning. When we go into eternity learning truth, our library is being built. As we continue in the next life, we go from there, continuing to receive truth and grow our library. If we have not learned much truth, we will start where we left off. God will meet us where we are and teach us what we need to know—whether it is at the first grade level or beyond. He will speak truth and build our libraries. Anyone who hears His voice will understand what He has to say. So, what exactly does it mean for our life eternal?

Read John 10:10:

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Then, Psalm 111:2-5; 9-10:

² Great are the works of the Lord,
studied by all who delight in them.

³ Full of splendor and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures forever.

⁴ He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered;
the Lord is gracious and merciful.

⁵ He provides food for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant forever.

⁹ He sent redemption to his people;
he has commanded his covenant forever.
Holy and awesome is his name!

¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.
His praise endures forever!

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Christ came to give us life—super-abundant life, which is the Covenant. He commands and is ever mindful of the Covenant. He will bless you to make you a blessing. When can you receive this super-abundant life? Right here and right now. This begs the question: Do you receive it?

Believers have had mixed responses. A lot of people say they receive it once in a while; others say not really; and others admit they have no idea what this even means. What you receive here does have impact on enjoying the fullness of it there, which is why He offers it to each of us now. So, are you receiving it now? It has a bearing on what happens later. Christ came to give us this life now.

Many believe that the ticket to heaven can only be bought by living a life full of misery, and they have accepted the misery as normal. They didn't know they could receive an abundant, grand life, or live the Covenant, or have the beautiful things that He has for them. They did not pursue it, which means they inadvertently rejected it. They wanted their own things and to control their own life. Having control means they never had to deny self at all. And besides, when they did pray—it seemed like God's answers were mostly no. This leads to another questions: If you are not receiving this life, are you truly a believer?

Read Matthew 7:15–23:

A Tree and Its Fruit

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

I Never Knew You

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Then, Revelation 22:12–17:

¹²“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes,^[a] so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

¹⁶“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

So, do we bear fruit or not? Do we experience abundance and enjoy the abundant life? It is not about perfection. It is just evidence that we are enjoying the life and walking in this life. If there is no evidence of it, are we truly a believer? If we do not observe fruit in others—or ourselves—or witness them experiencing the abundant life, we need to consider whether or not they truly have a relationship with Christ. This goes for each of us, too. Perhaps they/we do not have the Holy Spirit within them/us.

In eternity there is a qualification to meet. The qualification is to eat of the Tree of Life. In order to do that though, you must have righteousness. There are a lot of people who think they have righteousness, but don't. The only challenge we are to make if we don't see the fruit is to inquire: Are you sure that you have received Jesus Christ, because if you have, there should be fruit?

There is a possibility of not having fruit, though being a true believer. We do not have the right to say whether they are or not, as this is between them and God. But as a believer, it is okay to ask: Are you sure that you are a believer? Share your concern about not seeing any fruit. If they are a believer, the next questions would be: Would you like to experience the fruit of this relationship? Would you like to learn what it means to have the abundant life and bear fruit?

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Help people learn to receive life and experience this super-abundant life. Build your library of truth, which matters in eternity. But first, check in with yourself. How about you? Are you experiencing fruit and the abundant life? It is far easier to see those around who are not experiencing fruit than it is seeing it in yourself. After careful introspection, challenge others so they can be assured of spending eternity with God.

Read John 14:1–6:

I Am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life

14 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;^[a] believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?^[b] ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.”^[c] ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

If you are truly a believer, you have come to the Father through Him. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through receiving Him. If you receive Him, what will happen when you die? He will come to get you and will take you with Him. You get to be with Him, living in the great place He has prepared for you. Again, He will come and get each one of us to take us to be with Him in eternity where we will experience this life. We saw that happen with Michelle. We saw Him come and get her.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9:

⁹ But, as it is written,
“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Jesus said He prepared a place for us. He prepared the way and the place for us to live eternally with Him, and it is going to be spectacular. We will receive that as He reveals this life to us through revelation, through Him speaking to us. He will speak to us—not logically, but spiritually, of the things He prepared for us as individuals with our own unique path. There are eternal consequences to what we receive here.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:9–10:

⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

When we die, we are going to appear where? Before the judgment seat of Christ—called the Bema Seat. There He is going to share with you what happened on Earth. Did you follow Him or not? He had a plan. Did you experience the abundant life along His unique plan for you? Did you hear and receive this plan He prepared for you through His revelation to you? If you did, rejoice! If you lived here in the Covenant, you are blessed to be a blessing. Other people received blessing because of you.

When the time comes for Linda to take her place at the Bema Seat, God will ask who received a blessing as a result of the life of Linda. There will be thousands and thousands of people who respond—including some she had never even seen—because she gave it away. Her blessings became blessings for others who, in turn, blessed others, as well. Linda discipling just one person created a ripple effect that spread from one person to another who also gave it away. Well done, good and faithful servant.

In opposition, there are consequences to not following Him. When the time comes for a non-Christ follower to take his place at the Bema Seat, God will ask the same question: Who received a blessing as a result of this person's life? If there is no response, it will be because he never gave it away. He did not pursue the life of God, did not receive the planned revelation of truth, and did not build up his library. He never received truth of the Word—what God was speaking to him—so he could give it away to somebody else. He then will receive His judgment.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Read Matthew 5:17–20:

Christ Came to Fulfill the Law

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Then, Colossians 3:22–25:

²² Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters,^[a] not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. ²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

God said there is reward in heaven; and there is judgment in heaven. If you received and live out the truth of Scripture, which He built in you with a library where you hear and receive and follow, and then you gave that away to others, you will receive great reward. If you never received it, you never had the opportunity to teach anybody else, and there is a consequence to that. You have the opportunity to build this library which will have impact in heaven where there is both reward and judgment. Keep in mind we are talking about believers. On what basis are we judged?

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:5–22:

⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled^[a] master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

¹⁶ Do you not know that you^[b] are God's temple and that God's dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

¹⁸ Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness,"²⁰ and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."²¹ So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours,²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours,

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Then, Matthew 25:21:

²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.^[a] You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

In the book of Matthew, the parable describes how the person who increased the two received the same reward as the five. This is not about quantity, but was about being faithful to what God said. Paul said we are to build on the foundation of Christ. Christ is the architect who speaks and gives us instruction regarding what He is building. Consider this: If we are building a new place, we need an architect to design the building. As we have laborers build this place, we need them to follow what? The plans. The plans are designed by the architect, the master. If the laborers follow the plans, they will build a sound structure that will hold up because the master designed it for that purpose.

The laborers each have assignments based upon the plans. There are carpenters, cement contractors, and electricians, each with their own purpose and role to follow in the plan. Their instructions are simply to follow the plan. If the laborers build according to the plan and follow the instruction he gives them, day after day, week after week, there will be great reward. This is the same as it will be in heaven. If we live according to His plan and follow the instruction He gives, day after day, week after week, there will be great reward in heaven. If you don't, there will be no reward in heaven.

The good news is that if you truly are a believer, you get to go to heaven, regardless of how you carried out your assignments. This leads us back to the fruit. It is not our place to tell someone they won't be going to heaven because there's no fruit. However, we might be called to challenge a person when there is no fruit.

Understand that it would be better if we built as instructed, for there is reward with that. We are to build the house that He wants us to build according to the instructions He gives that are unique to each of us. The result will be gold and silver and precious gems. Well done, good and faithful servant. We receive this reward by following what He asks us to do. This is not achieved by evaluating or comparing what or how much others are doing. God's plans are individual, different for everyone. What He asks of one does not mean He will ask the same of everyone. The only question that should matter to every one of us is: Are you following His will? Are you being faithful to what He is calling you to do?

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

If you are unsure of where you stand, ask yourself: Do you have margin? Are you seeing fruit? Are you seeing abundance? Are you seeing the beautiful Covenant life? Are you enjoying this life and enjoying your assignment? Are you in the right spot? If you are not, because you answer these questions in the negative, then we invite you to seek and pursue the life of God. Don't put up with mediocrity. Instead, pursue the abundant life. God will walk with you into it—because it matters in eternity where you will be rewarded. Let's take a look at these rewards:

Read Luke 6:20–23:

The Beatitudes

²⁰ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

²² “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

Then, Matthew 16:27:

²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Then, 2 Timothy 4:6–8:

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Then, 1 Corinthians 9:24–27:

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵ Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control,^[a] lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Then, Matthew 19:28–30:

²⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world,^[a] when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold^[b] and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

What you do here in this life matters. There are eternal rewards. So, ask yourself: Wouldn’t you want that? Of course, you would. It is eternal. You can live the abundant life now—the Covenant, the blessing, the grand life. Why wouldn’t you want to do that? This is time spent building up your library and your eternal rewards. God wants you to progress and build your library of truth here. He doesn’t want you stuck in first grade, where many Christians find themselves. He doesn’t want you to stay in a place where you aren’t going anywhere, where you aren’t

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

learning anything, where you aren't building your library, and where you aren't experiencing the abundant life of God. When you die and enter the heavenly life, where does God want you to be? He wants you to be well beyond the first grade of learning, where you have progressed, moved forward, hear and receive His word, as well as abundant life, and have been building your library.

You have the potential to start at two different places in eternity. Your progression, your reward, and your joy will continue from that point. It will go deeper and deeper and deeper from there as you continue experiencing what is next. The further you are beyond first grade, the further you enter into His joy.

To further clarify, consider this example: Imagine a professional musician who knows how to play all of the instruments because he has been trained to do so. I am a novice. I like music but have never been trained in music and do not know the truth, the nuances of the symphony sounds. We both go to the symphony, but our experiences there differ greatly. Yes, I will find it enjoyable, but the professional musician will have a far deeper appreciation as he better understands the contributions of each instrument and what was accomplished by the people playing those instruments. Will he experience the same kind of joy? No. His enjoyment will consist of layers of depth that he can't even express because he experienced it at a different level than me. Yes, we were in the same place, listening to the same music, but the reward was different based upon our life before we walked through the doors of that event.

That is what heaven is going to be like. We will get to be there; we will get to experience it. But if you have already experienced it, already been trained in it, already received it, then your enjoyment of it will begin at a much deeper place. This is why He said, "Well done, good and faithful servant." You were faithful to what He asked you to do. You learned and heard and received His words, and your joy will be at this higher level. That is the reward.

In heaven, our rewards will never be compared or known by others. Our journeys are unique to each of us. You will experience the joy yourself, no matter where your starting point is, but keep in mind that your experience of heaven will matter based upon what you do here. It is a great privilege to be given these rewards. With all of this in mind, how do you view this life here? It would serve you well and be extremely valuable to be thinking eternally—to receive the abundant life here and to bear fruit—to walk with Him, learn, and receive.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Read Revelation 22:1–5:

The River of Life

22 Then the angel^[a] showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life^[b] with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

The Tree of Life is there. It will have fruit. It will be spectacular. There will be healing. There will be restoration. There will be progression. You will be organized in nations. You will be operating in organizations. Life will continue—similar to the life we have now in a way that we can understand it. That is why He created it that way. Heaven will be exciting. It will be fun. It will be adventurous. It will be where we experience new things, learn new things, and are full of wonder.

We will be who we are here, and know others for who they were here, as well—our personalities and our characteristics. We get to walk into that beauty of who we are. My life living with Linda will continue. It will be fun and joyful and adventurous. That is what we get to experience.

It will be full of progression and work. There will be exploration and investigation. There will be the unraveling of mysteries that are unknown in our current life. You want to know about rocket science? No problem. How about those dinosaurs? God will tell you everything you would like to know. He will show you and help you understand. It will be an eternity of progression and work that is learned step by step with great enjoyment.

So, why not choose that life now? The reward will be spectacular, and you will get the abundant life, the Covenant life, and the grand life now. It sets you on a different trajectory when you go to heaven, as opposed to doing nothing. Don't stay in first grade. Move beyond it and consider how spectacular it is all going to be.

LESSON 2

WHAT HAPPENS, WHAT DO WE EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

So, as we finish this course and think about eternity, remember, eternity is a long time. I will get to join my daughter Michelle soon. She is already in her next phase, and she is progressing. She is learning. She is having an adventure. She is having joy and excitement. Wherever it is that she started, I need not worry because she is there and is progressing and enjoying every moment of it.

As far as Linda and I are concerned, we receive the abundant life now. Our trajectory will be different, greater. Our reward will be greater, the enjoyment of that will be greater. What we do now truly matters. How we choose to live our lives here matters. Life after death is life, so where do you want your starting point to be?



