

THEME: The Eternal Perspective

LOOKING BACK

- What was the most important thing you did or heard from the last session?

CONNECT

A Perspective of Eternity

Resources

Bibles, pen, small black paper, tape, rope/string

Icebreaker Activity - How Do YOU See Eternity?

Things to Prepare: Prepare a long rope or string that wraps around the home and goes into various rooms, if possible. You can tie together several lengths of string if necessary. Using the small black paper, put a small dot (draw it or tape it) on the end of the rope/string.

Activity – Eternity Made Visible:

Show everyone the long rope/string you have prepared. Lay out the rope/string so that it goes all around the place where you are meeting. Tell them to imagine that this rope/string is even longer! Ask them how they think this represents eternity. (*It goes on and on and on and on and on, like eternity does.*) Ask them what they think the small dot on the end of the rope/string represents. (*The small dot represents our life in this world right now.*) What does this tell you about our life as compared to eternity? (*It is very, very short!*)

Can anyone think of another creative way to represent and view eternity? Ask them to describe it and, if possible, show it to the group. They could use the rope/string differently or perhaps another idea.

Discuss

- **Ephesians 2:6** says that God has raised us up and seated us in Heavenly places with Jesus. What do you think this means, and how might it connect with eternity? When we follow Jesus and are filled with His Holy Spirit, we are given a higher perspective – an ability to see things more like Jesus sees them, from Heavenly places. This is what it means to have an eternal perspective and to see our lives here in this world from the viewpoint of Heaven and eternity.
- What stops Christians from having an eternal perspective? They are probably distracted by the things of this world. When we are focused too much on worldly things, we can feel more attached to them and are less likely to think about our eternal home.
- Let's look together at **Ephesians 1:17-21**. Notice that it talks about Christ seated at the Father's right hand in Heavenly realms. Remember that God the Father has also raised us up to these realms to be with Christ and share His eternal perspective.
- In **Ephesians 1:18**, Paul prays for the eyes of our hearts. What do you think this means? These are our spiritual eyes. When our spiritual eyes – when we look at things from God's angle (we are seated with Him in Heavenly places), then we can know the hope, riches, and power that Jesus has given us.
- In today's lesson, we will look at the importance of our spiritual eyes and what they focus on.

TRUTH TO KNOW

Faith Focus: Seeing Eternity

Introduction

We want to help you know the Truth and will do our best to tell you what is true, but you don't just need to take our word. You need to read it in the Bible for yourself. So we will open the Bible and read the Truth each time we meet. This week's "Truth to Know" is found in **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**.

Did you know the Bible tells us to look more at what is unseen than what is seen?

Background to This Bible Passage

The book of 2 Corinthians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul and Timothy, Paul's disciple, to the church in the city of Corinth. Paul wanted to give the Corinthians a different and higher perspective on life so that they could be strengthened to go through many challenges. In chapter 4 of this book, Paul tells the people not to lose heart during opposition. The minds of unbelievers are blinded. They cannot yet see the Truth of the Gospel. He explains that our bodies are ordinary, like jars of clay, but we contain the Holy Spirit, and His light shines powerfully through our lives.

The Unfolding Story - Your Interactive Teaching

Read **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**.

- What does Paul tell us things on earth are like for us? *We are wasting away (getting weaker) and facing troubles.*
- How does this compare to the eternal perspective of our lives? *We are being renewed daily by the Holy Spirit and are getting ready for the eternal weight of glory.*
- How can Paul say that our troubles and hardships are momentary? *Compared to eternity, they are. Remember the activity icebreaker with the string above.*
- How are these momentary troubles helping us? *They prepare us for the future and help us see things from a Heavenly perspective.*
- According to verse 18, how can we keep an eternal perspective? *We are to focus on things unseen (as they are eternal) and not on the seen (as they are only temporary).*
- When we have an eternal perspective, what can we do? *We can endure hardships. This was important in the early Church and is also important for us today, as we know that Jesus is coming back soon. Jesus said hardships would increase as we get closer to His return.*
- In **Romans 8:18** (NIV), Paul speaks a similar message in a letter to the believers in Rome. He says, "... our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us." He is referring to the eternal glory mentioned in **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**, which will be visible in eternity.
- An eternal perspective is very important and is needed by all believers in these days leading up to Jesus' return. Let's look at how we can develop our perspective into a more eternal one.

Activity Suggestion - Setting Our Minds, Fixing Our Eyes, and Looking Forward!

Aim: To consider strategies to sustain an eternal perspective.

Things to Prepare: Prepare three large paper signs as follows:

1. Fix Our Eyes – on the unseen
2. Set Our Minds – on things above
3. Look Forward – to the "day of God" (Jesus' return)

Prepare nine smaller papers as follows:

- Pray for our spiritual eyes that they'll understand the things of God.
- Reflect daily on what we have been putting our focus on.
- Pray our eyes will see the entire rope (our eternal destination) and not just the small dot on the end.
- The Bible says we are seated above, so our minds must operate from there.
- Redirect our thoughts daily to remember there is more to our lives than what is in this world.
- Evaluate our daily decisions in light of their eternal significance.
- Know the signs of Jesus' return.
- Understand that Jesus is returning soon.
- Know that Jesus is heralding a new eternal era.

Answers:

Fix Our Eyes – on the unseen: 1,2,3

Set Our Minds – on things above: 4,5,6

Look Forward - to the "day of God" (Jesus' return): 7,8,9

Activity - Strategy Matching!

Pass out the nine pieces of paper, each with a strategy, and ask kids to match the strategy to the most appropriate title (Fix Our Eyes; Set Our Minds; Look Forward). They can place their papers under the title that is the best match. When you have finished, go over the answers together.

Discuss

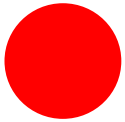
- Fixing our eyes on the things unseen rather than on what is seen is a powerful strategy for keeping our perspective on eternity. How can we do this? Each day, we should consider what we have been fixed on seeing and then readjust the focus of our spiritual eyes.
- God wants us to see our eternal destination because it is much more significant and lasting than the temporary life we now have on earth.
- What can we do each day to set our minds on the things above? We can spend time each day thinking about our decisions and actions and whether they were made from the perspective of a Heavenly position in Christ. Remember, the Bible says we are seated with Christ in Heavenly places.
- **2 Peter 3:11-14** tells us that we ought to live holy and godly lives as we look forward to the Day of God. This refers to the need to look forward to the return of Jesus. How can we best do this? First, we should be familiar with the signs of the end times and Jesus' return. Second, we should understand that He is returning soon. Third, we should know that Jesus' return will bring us closer to our eternal destination with Him.
- All these thoughts will help give us an ongoing eternal perspective.

READY TO GO

Thinking about how this affects our lives and our response to the signs we see.

Think about what you will do to gain and maintain an eternal perspective.

TIME FOR ACTION



1. "STOP & THINK" Action Point

Take two minutes to think about your own life. Are you fixing your eyes on the unseen, setting your mind on things above, and looking forward to Jesus' return?



2. "PAUSE TO PRAY" Action Point

Have a conversation with God about today's lesson. Ask Him to show you one area (fix your eyes, set your mind, or look forward) to grow in that will help nurture an eternal perspective.



3. "GO & DO" Action Point

Whatever the Lord showed you as you prayed, share with one other person and compare what you heard with what God is showing them. Discuss together what you might do to grow in that area.

SPRINGBOARD

Discuss what topic you would like to do together next time. After this session, you may wish to follow up next time with one of the following sessions:

- Keeping Jesus Central
- How to Be in the World and Not of It
- Whose Life Is It Anyway?

DEEPER STUDY

For those who would like to study further the themes raised in this session.

For Study

1. Look into **Matthew 6:19-21** (ESV): "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." How do these verses connect with having an eternal perspective?
2. Read **1 Peter 1:13-15** (NIV): "Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do." Does this verse connect with "fix your eyes," "set your minds," "look forward," or a combination of them? Explain why.

For Memorizing

1. **2 Corinthians 4:17-18** (NIV): "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."
2. **Colossians 3:2** (NIV): "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

For Observation

1. Notice what mature believers you know focus on and talk about.
2. Watch [this video](https://youtu.be/U6HBx3vD-pw) about trusting God's voice (<https://youtu.be/U6HBx3vD-pw>). How might this help you to fix your eyes on the unseen?

For Action

Choose one evening and reflect on your decisions and actions throughout that day or week. Imagine how the day/week might have gone differently if you had been actively fixing your eyes on things unseen, setting your mind on things above, and looking forward to Jesus' return. Represent this somehow, either by drawing a sketch, making a painting, or creating a collage.

Before the Next IN:Tribe

Think of a creative way to represent our position with Jesus in the Heavenly realms. Bring this to the next IN:Tribe meeting and share it with the group.