

Eternal Rewards

Eight Week Small Group Series on Eternal Rewards

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:20-21





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Contents

- Instructions for the Study i
- Session One: Eternal Rewards Intro 1
 - Part One: Personal Bible Study 1
 - Part Two: Eternal Rewards Intro Study Notes 2
 - Part Three: Small Group Plan 4
- Session Two: The Parable of the Talents Part 1 – Faithfulness and Joy 5
 - Part One: Personal Bible Study 5
 - Part Two: The Parable of the Talents Part 1 Study Notes 6
 - Part Three: Small Group Plan 8
- Session Three: The Parable of the Talents Part 2 – Suffering Loss 9
 - Part One: Personal Bible Study 9
 - Part Two: The Parable of the Talents Part 2 Study Notes 10
 - Part Three: Small Group Plan 12
- Session Four: Principles of Eternal Rewards (Part 1) 13
 - Part One: Personal Bible Study 13
 - Part Two: Principles of Rewards Part 1 Study Notes 14
 - Part Three: Small Group Plan 16
- Session Five: Principles of Eternal Rewards (Pt 2) 17
 - Part One: Personal Bible Study 17
 - Part Two: Principles of Rewards Part 2 Study Notes 18
 - Part Three: Small Group Plan 20
- Session Six: Principles of Eternal Rewards (Part 3) 21
 - Part One: Personal Bible Study 21
 - Part Two: Principles of Rewards Part 3 Study Notes 22
 - Part Three: Small Group Plan 24
- Session Seven: Principles of Eternal Rewards (Part 4) 25
 - Part One: Personal Bible Study 25
 - Part Two: Principles of Rewards Part 4 Study Notes 26
 - Part Three: Small Group Plan 28
- Session Eight: Principles of Eternal Rewards (Part 5) 29
 - Part One: Personal Bible Study 29
 - Part Two: Principles of Rewards Part 5 Study Notes 30

Part Three: Small Group Plan	32
Appendix 1: Types of Eternal Rewards	33
Appendix 2: Why Believers Should Desire Eternal Rewards	35
Why Believers Should Desire Eternal Rewards	36
References	38

Instructions for the Study

A thematic study is a great discipleship tool. This Study has been designed to have two main components each week. We recommend that you take eight weeks to complete the study (one session per week), but feel free to adapt as needed.

1. Personal Study at Home (including study notes)
2. Small Group Session (optional)

The Personal study at home allows the participant to reflect on the Bible themes and passages at home and work through personal application questions on their own. Then, the person comes to the small group meeting ready to share what God has already been showing them.

The small group conversations and discussions are useful in diving deeper into the topic and seeing things from a different perspective or helping you see something that you may have missed when studying the topic at home on your own.

Doing a thematic study can be very simple. Just follow the template given for each session and make sure that each member of your group has a copy of this booklet so they can journal their responses and come to the small group meeting ready to share. This helps the small group time stay focused and gives everyone an opportunity to think through what they would like to share, adding value to the small group time.

If you have any questions about facilitating this Bible Study, give the church office a call. Someone from Cell Ministry would be happy to speak to you.

Session One: Eternal Rewards Intro

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read 1 Cor. 3:10-15 and the Session 1 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- What does the idea of receiving eternal rewards tell you about the heart of God?
- How do you feel about the idea of eternal rewards? For example, does it motivate you, does it scare you, etc.
- What does this idea of eternal rewards being the great equalizer mean to you?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's session and memorize it.

Part Two: Eternal Rewards Intro Study Notes

- The topic of eternal rewards was one that Jesus talked about often.
- This subject is important because it gives us an eternal mindset and motivates us to Abide in Jesus and work on growing fruit in our lives.
- It is quite clear in the Bible that God gives rewards in eternity to believers based on how they have lived their lives.
- Salvation is a free gift that cannot be earned in any way. Salvation is by faith alone, never by works.
- **Ephesians 2:9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast.**
- Eternal rewards are given based on our good works, which is anything we do in service to Jesus according to His will and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- **Matthew 6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...**
- The opportunity to receive eternal rewards has huge implications for the believer.
- How we live our lives matters. For believers who choose to squander what Jesus has given them, they may face Jesus one day and regret those life choices.
- As we think about eternity, it helps put this life in proper perspective.
- It doesn't matter how many people are applauding you here on earth or criticizing you.
- The only thing that matters is what Jesus has to say about how you lived your life.
- Each believer will stand before Jesus to give an account of themselves and to receive rewards.
- The Bible speaks of a special judgment seat that God will hold for believers only. It is known as the judgment seat of Christ.
- **2 Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done whether good or bad**
- All believers will stand before God and be individually judged.
- **Romans 14:10-12 We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...Then each of us shall give an account of himself to God.**
- The participants in the judgment seat of Christ are believers.
- The Greek word for the judgment seat is *bema* which is a term that is used for an athlete receiving reward for an athletic contest like the Olympic games. The *bema* seat is the place where rewards are given so it has a positive connotation.
- The reward received is based on what was done with what He gave us.
- Each person has been given varying abilities, life circumstances, emotional make-up, finances, opportunities, family situation and so on.
- Jesus is a fair and righteous judge and will only have us answer according to what we have been given.
- Jesus is eager to reward even the smallest things that we do that show our love towards Him. He will even reward something as simple as a cup of cold water given in His name. (Matt. 10:42).
- Jesus rewards are gracious, generous, merciful and very loving! This is not a place of condemnation.
- The only negative aspect comes when we realize that we lost opportunities because of neglecting the will of God or making wrong choices as believers.

- **1 Cor. 3:8-15** ⁸Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor... ¹¹No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each one's work...will be revealed by fire... ¹⁴If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
- In this passage Paul is giving us an insight into the most important appointment in our life – the judgment seat of Christ.
- In verse 8 Paul tells us that we will receive rewards based on the labor or work that we have done while on earth.
- In verse 11, he says that the foundation for that work is Jesus – salvation is a free gift from God.
- In verse 12, he explains that anyone who builds on that foundation (your life choices) will be seen by God as gold, silver, precious stones or be seen by God as wood, hay, straw.
- In verse 13, Paul says that each person's life work will be revealed by fire. This is not just the ministry that you have done in the church, it is the entire composite of your life including the nature of your heart, your motivations, attitudes, character, and so on.
- Verse 14 tells us that if the work endures or lasts through the fire, that person will receive a reward.
- This is good news! This means that each deed, the way you spend your time and money, your words – it all matters and will be rewarded.
- God will test the nature of everything that you have done with His fire. Some will stand the test like gold, silver and precious stones and will not be hurt by the fire and will be rewarded.
- But some will be outside of God's will and not in obedience to Scripture or the Holy Spirit and will be like wood, hay, and straw and when the fire comes will be consumed.
- Verse 15 says that if the works (life choices) are burned up, that believer (although they are in heaven) will suffer loss.
- This means that this person potentially could have had more rewards, but they are still in heaven for all of eternity.
- The rewards that we receive in eternity are based on our humility and obedience not on our gifting.
- God rewards diligence and faithfulness.
- You can be the most ungifted person, no one paying attention to you, seemingly not making any impact on anybody, and if you are obeying Jesus and walking in humility you can be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- The judgment seat of Christ is the great equalizer because some who are seen as great here on earth, if they are not responding to God in obedience and humility, their life choices will not be considered great and be rewarded in the age to come.
- But some little nobody, who loves Jesus and obeys Him with humility will hear Jesus say, "Your choices were great!"
- Jesus loves righteousness and will reward every choice of righteousness, even though it may go unnoticed and out of the sight of others.
- We can use whatever He has given us in this life to exchange it for treasures in the next life.
- **Col. 3:1-2** ...seek those things which are above, where Christ is...Set your mind on things above.
- Paul exhorted the saints to seek those things which are above – this includes eternal rewards.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- Why is the topic of eternal rewards one that is important for believers?
- What are some of the benefits of studying eternal rewards? Think about how it can impact a person, and so on.
- What does the promise of eternal rewards tell you about God's character? His generosity?

4. Sharing

- Share 3 things from the study notes that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

5. Pray for Each other

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation

Session Two: The Parable of the Talents Part 1 – Faithfulness and Joy

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read Matt. 25:14-30 and the Session 2 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- The main message of this parable is the idea that Jesus entrusts gifts, abilities, and opportunities to believers, and he will ask them to give an account for what they did with these things. What are some of these things in your life? How are you using them for Jesus?
- The man with two talents was entrusted with less abilities, gifts, increase, impact, and recognition than the man with five talents, yet they both received the same affirmation and reward. What does this tell you about having an eternal perspective?
- Jesus rewards our “few things” with “many things.” What does his tell you about Jesus generosity?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week’s session and memorize it.

Part Two: The Parable of the Talents Part 1 Study Notes

- The parable of the talents reveals how generously God rewards the small things that His people do in serving Him. Jesus highlighted similar truths in Luke 12:34-48 and 19:12-29.
- In this parable Jesus entrusts His servants with a stewardship that they must give account for.
- **Matt. 25:14-19** ¹⁴The kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one ...¹⁶Then he who had received the five talents...traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. ¹⁸But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.
- The main message of this parable is the idea that Jesus entrusts gifts, abilities, and opportunities to believers, and he will ask them to give an account for what they did with these things.
- **Verse 14 – the Kingdom of heaven is like a man travelling to a far country who called his servants and delivered his goods to them.**
- Each believer has been given abilities such as physical, spiritual, emotional, economic as well as a life situation like their family background.
- Some have more abilities and better circumstances and others have more challenging circumstances which makes life much harder.
- On the last day, Jesus will ask us for an account of what each person did with their abilities according to the life circumstances that they faced.
- **Verse 15 - And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one**
- A talent was a unit of economics or money. The master gave in different measures. The person with five talents had more ability, more gifting and more opportunity than the one who was given two talents.
- **Verse 16 - He who had received the five talents...traded with them, and made another five talents**
- For our purposes, let us say that 5 talents are worth \$5,000.
- This man used the money wisely, maybe buying property or growing crops. The investment doubled to \$10,000.
- **Verse 17 - he who had received two gained two more also**
- The man who was given two talents took that \$2,000 and doubled it as well to \$4,000.
- Both the first and the second servant doubled their master's investment.
- The first two servants are a picture of faithfulness and a picture of diligence.
- **Verse 18 - But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money,**
- The third servant only received one talent or \$1,000. This servant was also entrusted with an ability, opportunity, and a stewardship from the Lord, but he squandered it. He is a picture of unfaithfulness. He had received one talent, but instead of investing it, he dug a hole in the ground and hid the money.
- After a long time, the Lord, or the master came to settle the accounts.
- The man with five talents and the man with two talents each received the same affirmation for their faithfulness and the same eternal reward of being made "a ruler over many things" (Mt. 25:21, 23).
- **Matt. 25:20-23** ²⁰"So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents..."²¹His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will

make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’²²He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘...look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’²³His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”

- The man with two talents was entrusted with less abilities, gifts, increase, impact, and recognition than the man with five talents, yet they both received the same affirmation and reward.
- The master responds to the first and second servant with FIVE phrases:

Phrase #1 Well done

- To those who are faithful and obedient, Jesus will look you in the eye and say, “well done”.
- Can you imagine anything more powerful than that on that day?

Phrase #2 Good and faithful servant:

- Note three affirmations:
 - Good – your motivations were godly, and you did God’s will.
 - Faithful – you were diligent and you did good in the face of pressure, obstacles, mundaneness, and temptation.
 - Servant – you were willing to sacrifice comfort, honor, and your personal agenda.

Phrase #3 Few things

- These servants were commended for being faithful in a few things or small things.
- Some believe that their work only matters if it impacts many people.
- But the reality is that most people’s sphere of influence is really small and that is the will of God.
- A lot of people do not get that...they keep waiting for a huge breakthrough. They want to do BIG things for God. And they can get jaded if the big impact never comes.
- We are called to be faithful no matter how big the impact (that is up to God).

Phrase #4 I will make you ruler over many things

- Jesus’ generosity is seen here in that He rewards our “few things” with “many things.”
- Jesus made this point in another parable while in Jericho: being faithful in “very little” leads to having authority over “ten cities” (Lk. 19:17).
- **Luke 19:1 Well done...you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.**
- The few things we do translate to ruler over many things in the age to come.
- Your reward in the age to come is directly related to your faithfulness to Him in this life, not the size of your ministry in this life.
- Your sphere in the age to come is not related to how big an impact you made. It is how big a response from your heart you gave to Jesus.

Phrase #5 Enter into the joy

- We have joy in knowing that He values our efforts to serve and that our choices matter to Him.
- When we enter eternity, we enter into JOY.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- How does the parable of the talents reflect how God has given each believer varying gifts, abilities, and opportunities? What do some of these “talents” look like in our lives?
- Consider how the man with 2 talents received the same reward as the man with 5 talents. What does tell you about God and His ways?
- Of the 5 affirmations, which one impacts you the most? Why?

4. Sharing

- Share 3 things from the study notes that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

6. Pray for Each other

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Three: The Parable of the Talents Part 2 – Suffering Loss

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read Matt. 25:14-30 and the Session 3 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- In this parable, fear kept the third servant from investing his talent. What are some fears that you have struggled with? How are you working to overcome them? For example, fear of failure, rejection, shame, difficulty, mundaneness, fatigue, loss of free time, inconvenience and so on.
- What are some ways that you can keep your relationship with Jesus growing and vibrant?
- Is there a person in your life who you have seen grow spiritually dull? Take a moment to pray for that person. Ask Jesus to give you a word, thought or picture as a strategy to pray.

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's session and memorize it.

Part Two: The Parable of the Talents Part 2 Study Notes

- In this part of the parable Jesus described the mindset of the man who responded wrongly to God's grace. Here we see the tragedy of a wasted opportunity and loss.
- **Matt. 25:24-27** ²⁴“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown...’²⁵I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’²⁶But his lord answered..., ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown...’²⁷So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.”
- These verses are sobering. the master calls this servant wicked and lazy. The wise will look at this passage as a warning to believers and learn from it.
- **Verse 24: I knew you to be a hard man.** This type of person complains that Jesus' leadership is unfair and unreasonable.
- Those who allow such accusations against Jesus' leadership to take root in their heart open the door to spiritual dullness to hinder them.
- We must be aware of this attitude that can find its way into the church.
- Subtle complaints about God can morph into accusations which put believers into a trajectory of dullness.
- **Verse 25: I was afraid.** This servant claimed that he buried his talent in the ground because of fear.
- There are many ways fear can hinder us...there is fear of failure, rejection, shame, difficulty, mundaneness, fatigue, loss of free time, inconvenience and so on.
- Fear can cause many to refuse to seek and serve God with diligence and consistency.
- In the parable the man was afraid to take his \$1,000 and do something with it because he feared the master's response if he lost the investment. So, he buried the money.
- Fear causes so many godly men and women to get out of the race and to go camp out and just kind of isolate themselves.
- **Verse 26: You wicked and lazy servant.** The issue was the servant's sinfulness and laziness because his fear kept him from using the investment he was given for God's purposes.
- The wicked servant had all sorts of excuses. But the manager saw through it.
- The parable ends with a spiritual principle containing a promise and sober warning.
- **Matt. 25:29-30** ²⁹“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.”³⁰And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
- **Spiritual principle:** “Everyone who has, more will be given, but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away” —Jesus spoke this principle five times (Mt. 13:12; 25:29; Mk. 4:25; Lk. 8:18; 19:26).
- Truth is not neutral—it tenderizes or hardens those who hear it.
- The main idea is that we need to continually take new ground in our spiritual growth to keep from losing the ground we previously gained.
- **Verse 29: To everyone who has...more will be given.** This includes spiritual understanding, inspiration, a tender heart, responsiveness to God, and opportunities to grow in knowing and serving God, etc.
- God says, use what you have and I will increase it in your life.

- We are never at a standstill; we are either gaining ground or losing ground.
- If you are not taking new ground, if you are not growing in understanding and in faithfulness, you are going the other way.
- You are never the same day after day. You are incrementally going one way or the other.
- All who faithfully respond to spiritual understanding, inspiration, tenderness, and opportunities to know and serve God will in due time experience an increase in their capacity to experience these aspects of grace more and more.
- **Luke 8:18 “...whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.”**
- Those who fail to respond to various aspects of God’s grace will find that those aspects of grace will diminish and eventually be removed.
- When the Spirit gives understanding, we must respond to it in an appropriate way or our heart will slowly harden until it is eventually unmoved by the truths that deeply moved us in the past.
- What one has can diminish or be taken away by one’s lack of response to the Spirit and progressive hardening of the heart. This describes the tragedy of a wasted opportunity in God’s grace.
- **Verse 30: Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.** Jesus described the most extreme scenario—a servant of God whose heart became progressively hardened until he fell away from the faith (Rom. 11:22; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 5:15; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5; Heb. 3:12; 6:4-6; 10:26-31, 39; Jas 5:19-20; 2 Pet. 2:1-3, 20-22; 3:17).
- Jesus ends this parable with a worst-case scenario. He describes that unfaithful servant being cast into outer darkness, under eternal judgment.
- He is describing a servant who does not respond, who is becoming cold towards the things of God.
- As years go by his dullness is increasing. It gets to such a point, that in some cases, this person steps across a line and denies their faith. That is the worst-case scenario.
- Paul described a less extreme scenario—one whose heart grew progressively hard, but not to the point of falling away, yet suffering the loss of rewards that were within reach in grace.
- **1 Cor. 3:15 If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved.**
- This parable speaks of glorious promised rewards for even small faithfulness.
- But it also has a warning to keep your relationship with Jesus fresh.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Questions to Consider

- The wicked servant has all sorts of excuses for hiding his talent. What are some the excuses that people make in our culture today?
- How is this parable a warning to keep your walk with God fresh day by day?
- What are some specific ways you can protect yourself against spiritual dullness and complacency?

4. Sharing

- Share 3 things from the study notes that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

5. Pray for Each other

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Four: Principles of Eternal Rewards (Part 1)

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read Matt. 10:40-42 and the Session 4 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- If we give a cup of cold water in His name, He rewards us with treasure in heaven. What does this tell you about God's character?
- It is amazing to think that He rewards us even though everything that we do for Him is ultimately empowered by His grace in the first place. It is the Holy Spirit that motivates us, inspires us, gives us ideas, empowers us and so on. How does this draw you into love and worship of Jesus?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's session and memorize it.

Part Two: Principles of Rewards Part 1 Study Notes

Principle 1: Eternal Rewards are an Expression of Grace

- The rewards that we receive are far greater than anything we could ever deserve. We could never do enough to earn anything from God.
- Jesus gives generously beyond anything we could ever be worthy of.
- What we have done is so little in comparison to the greatness of God. Yet He rewards us to generously. (Mt. 10:42; 25:21; Lk. 19:17).
- For example, we give a cup of cold water in His name and He rewards us with treasure in heaven.
- The gulf between what we do and what He gives us is so great.
- **Luke 19:17 Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities. NIV**
- There is no way that we can construe that these rewards have been earned.
- Jesus expresses extravagant generosity.
- **Matthew 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. NIV**
- It will never enter anyone's mind in that day they earned the reward that they are receiving.

Principle 2: Eternal Rewards are Given According to Works

- Jesus specifically used the word "reward" (Mt. 5:12, 46; 6:4, 6, 18; 10:41-42; 16:27; Mk. 9:41; Lk. 6:23, 35; Rev. 22:12; cf. Isa. 40:10; 62:11) and the phrase, "according to his works" (Mt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12) and even that some would be "repaid" in the resurrection (Lk. 14:14).
- **Matt. 16:27 The Son of Man will come...then He will reward each according to his works.**
- **Rev. 22: 12 I am coming...My reward is with Me to give to everyone according to his work.**
- **Luke 14:13-14 But when you give a feast, invite the poor...the lame, the blind. ¹⁴And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection...**
- **Matt. 5:12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**
- **Luke 6: 35 Love your enemies, do good...and your reward will be great...**
- Some people do not like this concept because it feels a lot like it betrays the grace of God. But Jesus specifically uses the word "reward".
- The reward is because of His grace, it is not earned.
- It is amazing to think that He rewards us even though everything that we do for Him is ultimately empowered by His grace in the first place.
- It is the Holy Spirit that motivates us, inspires us, gives us ideas, empowers us and so on.
- Works are not contrary to grace; they are evidences of grace. We are not earning His favor.
- Jesus rewards good works that flow out of the grace of God.
- We are rewarded for our acts of righteousness done in this age.
- **1 Cor. 3:8, 14 Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor [work]...¹⁴If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.**

- Our works include our actions, words, and how we spend our time and money and care for our families and others.
- Words are very important. Taking the time to say kind words to people and blessing someone with your words matters – to family, strangers, even enemies.
- The way we spend our time and money really matters.
- The way we care about our families matters.
- James teaches us that faith without works is considered to be dead faith.
- **James 2:17-26** ¹⁷Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead...¹⁸I will show you my faith by my works....²²Do you see that faith was working together with his [Abraham's] works, and by works faith was made perfect? ...²⁶so faith without works is dead also.
- Salvation is a free gift from God, through faith. Eternal rewards are given according to our works.
- Our entrance into heaven is not based on our works, but our role in heaven is.
- Some think that because we are not saved by works, they falsely conclude that works do not matter.
- Some misunderstand the value of works thinking that if they value works they diminish the grace of God. We are not trying to earn favour with God.
- God sees us through Jesus completed work on the cross – something we have not earned.
- This is motivation for us to stand before the Jesus and offer Him a life of devotion to Him.
- Most of our service is small, unrecognized, out-of-the-way things that nobody even knows.
- Our words will be evaluated on the last day since they reveal our heart.
- **Matt 12: 36-37** ³⁶...for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. ³⁷For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.
- **Matt. 10:32** ...whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father...
- Our works include the small things that we do—speaking kind words, small attitude adjustments, little acts of service, and sacrificially giving small amounts of money (Lk. 21:1-4).
- **Matt. 25: 21** ...you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.
- Some people misapply eternal rewards thinking that they have to do big things in order to receive rewards. Jesus rewards the little things.
- Jesus said that the widow who gave two pennies sacrificially gave more than what the wealthy men.
- **Matt 10:42** And whoever gives...only a cup of cold water...he shall by no means lose his reward.
- **Heb 6:10** God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints...
- Every small act of love He remembers, even if it was just as small cup of water.

Principle 3: All of our Works are Written in God's Books

- The works of humans are important and have a lasting impact—so much so that God keeps detailed records of what each person does (Dan. 7:10; cf. Ps. 69:28; 87:6; 139:16; Rev. 20:12).
- **Dan. 7:10**...the court [in heaven] was seated, and the books were opened.
- God keeps detailed records of what people do and say (believers and unbelievers)
- God's books contain the names and actions of all believers (Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27), even their conversations (Mal. 3:16; Mt. 12:35-37).
- **Mal. 3:16** Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so, a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord...
- Every conversation that you have the uplifts and encourages through the Holy Spirit is rewarded.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- Of the three principles in this week's material, which one impacted you the most? Why?
- What is one thing from this week's material that encouraged you? Challenged you?
- Is there something that impacted you about God's character?

4. Sharing

- Share 3 things from the study notes that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

5. Pray for Each other

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Five: Principles of Eternal Rewards (Pt 2)

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read Rev. 2-3 and the Session 5 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- How does the idea of many types of eternal rewards make you feel? Excited? Curious? Enthusiastic? Why?
- 1 Cor. 2:9 says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." Meditate on this verse, asking Jesus to press it onto your heart.
- The New Jerusalem will be spectacular because its designer is Jesus. Do you have a longing or a hunger for eternity? Talk to Jesus about this, dialoging with Him in your journal.

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's session and memorize it.

Principle 4: There are Many Types of Eternal Rewards

- In Revelation 2-3, Jesus highlighted many different rewards:
 - receiving heavenly garments (Rev. 3:5, 18)
 - reigning with authority (Rev. 2:26; 3:12, 21)
 - receiving a crown or jewels to honor one's obedience (Rev. 2:10, 17)
 - the story of one's loving devotion to Jesus being made known (Rev. 2:17; 3:5)
 - receiving heavenly treasure (Rev. 2:11; 3:18)
 - receiving revelation to encounter God with greater capacity (Rev. 2:28; 3:12, 18, 20)
 - dining with Jesus (Rev. 2:7, 17)
 - being vindicated before one's enemies (Rev. 3:9).
- In addition, there are many rewards listed in other places in scripture.

Principle 5: Eternal Rewards are Glorious

- Paul gave us a grid for understanding eternal rewards. They are far more glorious than anyone imagines—exceedingly beyond what we can fathom.
- **1 Cor. 2:9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."**
- **Eph. 3:19-21 ...to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge...²⁰To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think...²¹to Him be glory in the church...**
- In 1 Cor. 2:9, Paul is saying that it has never entered into the heart or the imagination of man the things that God has prepared for His people, those who love Him.
- God has things prepared in the age to come that are so spectacular in glory they have never entered the imagination of a man or a woman.
- When we think of what they could be, we are not even close to the dimension of what that reward will be like.
- Paul mentions it again in Ephesians when he says that the love that Jesus, "passes knowledge." Meaning, it is beyond the human grasp of understanding.
- The main idea here is Christ's love but it is more than just love.
- God's love and eternity are far beyond what human knowledge has grasped in this age.
- God is the architect of the New Jerusalem and there we will find spectacular creativity.
- The rewards we will receive in eternity will also be spectacular.
- The New Jerusalem will be spectacular because its designer is Jesus.
- The celestial city will have transparent gold, foundation stones of jewels, and walls and pearl gates, and rivers, and the tree of life, and fruit, and angels, and music, and fragrance, and beauty beyond imagination. Everything associated with that city will be glorious.
- Eternal rewards need to be proportionate with the glory of the New Jerusalem and the glory of the resurrected body.

Principle 6: We Compare Scripture with Scripture to Gain Insight

- We compare scripture with scripture to gain insight on the possible implications of the glorious nature of various eternal rewards. We cannot know for sure, but we get a good idea.

Example: The Priestly Garments

- The priestly garments that God designed give insight into His creative abilities related to garments.
- God designed them for beauty and to show both His glory and the dignity of the priesthood.
- **Exod. 28:2 You shall make holy garments for Aaron [high priest] ... for glory and for beauty...**
- It was God's idea to make these garments beautiful and glorious. He could have made them beggarly and poor.
- When we look at how God designed the garments for the priests it gives us insight into what God thinks about garments.
- God designed garments for beauty, to show the glory of the office of the priest, to show the dignity of the one chosen that He put His favor on.
- The garments in eternity will have a comparison.

Example: The Elaborate Crowns

- Zechariah 6:11, 14 speaks of the elaborate crown.
- God says to make an elaborate crown for the priest. Make it beautiful!
- When we study crowns in the Bible, we get insight into heavenly crowns.

Example: God's leadership over the angelic realm

- We gain insight into eternal rewards by seeing what the Scripture says about God's leadership over the angelic realm. Angels have varying roles, capacities, and degrees of glory in their garments.
- **Rev. 18:1 I saw another angel...having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.**
- **Rev. 15:6 Clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.**
- God's leadership over angels gives us insight into His creative design, His leadership, what He thinks, and what possibilities in His mindset.
- In Rev. 18:1 we see one angel who has so much authority the whole earth is illumined with His glory.
- God has created beings that are lower than humans who have a glory so intense it illumines the whole earth.
- We can't know for sure, but we get a good idea of what things will be like in eternity by looking at these areas.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- Of the three principles in this week's material, which one impacted you the most? Why?
- What is one thing from this week's material that encouraged you? Challenged you?
- Is there something that impacted you about God's character?

4. Sharing

- Share 3 things from the study notes that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

5. Pray for Each other

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Six: Principles of Eternal Rewards (Part 3)

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read 1 Kings 10:4-13 and the Session 6 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- In what areas of the natural realm do you see the fingerprint of God? (Psalm 19:1)
- How does the splendor of Solomon and his royal household impact you when you think that eternity will be much more magnificent?
- Earthly treasure is susceptible to rust, decay, stock market crashes, etc. Eternal rewards never diminish. In light of that, where do you want to make your investment? Why?

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's session and memorize it.

Principle 7: Gaining Insight from the Natural Realm

- We can gain insight about eternal rewards by looking at the natural realm.
- Now we have to be careful, as our insight is limited, but in the natural world there is a glorious fingerprint of God, of His leadership, His creative design, His intelligence, and His passion for beauty.
- **Gen. 1:26-31 God said, “Let Us make man in Our image...let them have dominion over...all the earth...” ³¹God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.**
- In Genesis 1:26 God said, “Let Us make humans in Our image.”
- Being created in the image of God means that we have the capacity to interact as God interacts with Himself as part of the trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).
- We are going to have that same capacity in the age to come.
- When Jesus came back in His resurrected body He could talk, teach, eat, embrace people and so on.
- In eternity we will have all those same capacities.
- In Genesis 1:31 it says that God saw His creation and said that it was “very good”.
- There are elements of the natural created order that are very good.
- The taint of sin has brought other challenges and dimensions but still today there is the element of God’s genius in the natural order.
- We can look at the natural order and get some implications of eternity.
- We can see the glory of God in the natural realm which is just a snapshot of the glory of God.
- We get a glimpse of God’s glory—the vastness, the beauty, the diversity, the creativity—when we look at the skies and the heavens.
- **Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.**

Principle 8: The Splendor of Eternal Rewards

- Jesus is the King of kings and in eternity we will be the companion of the King of kings.
- He brings us into His family as His children. Believers are the royal family.
- **1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you...into His marvelous light...**

Illustration: Solomon in all His Splendor – Heaven will be better than that

- When we look at the biblical record of the splendor of Solomon in his royal household, we see the pinnacle of beauty and glory here on earth. Yet in eternity, the beauty and glory for believers as part of God’s royal family will be immensely greater.
- **1 Kings 10:4-13 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, ⁵the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. ⁶Then she said..., ⁷“Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard ⁹...because the Lord has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness” ...¹³Now King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever she asked, besides what Solomon had given her according to the royal generosity.**
- In this passage the queen of Sheba came up to Jerusalem to visit Solomon.

- She saw the house, his residence and was overwhelmed with the splendor, the creativity, and the functionality.
- Then she looked at the food at his table, not just the quality of the food, but the service and the coming and the going and the whole royal court related to food.
- Then she looked at the seating of the servants and how they were honored and how there was such dignity and honor and even the way they were honored, not just verbally, but the gifts that were given and the way they were seated and the way they were presented.
- Then she looked at the service of the royal court, which in the New Jerusalem would be the angels.
- Then she looked at their apparel, their garments. Then she looked at the cupbearers, even the most out-of-the-way detail that would not be the biggest thing a queen would look into.
- She said, “Even the smallest details, the entry ways, the ways you go into the house, the big foyers and the grand entrances and the stairways,” she went on, “everything is amazing.”
- She saw these and “there was no more spirit in her.” She was overwhelmed by how amazing these things were.
- In verse six she says, “Your wisdom exceeds” which means your wisdom is far beyond what I was thinking—Your prosperity is remarkable.
- We know that eternity will be much grandeur than anything we could ever have here on earth.
- Just like the Queen of Sheba was overwhelmed with Solomon’s splendor, we will be overwhelmed by Jesus and the splendor of eternity.

Principle 9: Rewards are Eternal and Never Diminish

- Heavenly rewards are eternal and imperishable—they will never diminish (Dan. 12:3; Mt. 6:20; Lk. 12:33; I Cor. 9:5; 2 Cor. 4:17; I Pet. 5:4).
- **Luke 12:33 Provide for yourselves that which will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.**
- People who have millions of dollars are consumed with the idea of how it is protected, preserved, and multiplied.
- When you are making investments in this age, you want investments with the highest returns possible. You want low risk, security, theft protection, and so on.
- In Luke 12:33, Jesus is saying that treasure in heaven has the highest return of any investment in human history. There is no risk, the investment is secure and protected. It will never, ever diminish.
- When Jesus addressed the permanence of the treasure, He was talking to the mindset of wealthy people for whom their biggest fear in life was losing their treasure.
- Another example of this is when scripture speaks about how our resurrected bodies will shine like stars forever. Their brightness will never diminish.
- **Dan. 12:2-3 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life... ³Those who are wise shall shine...like the stars forever and ever.**
- This passage tells us that after the resurrection we are awakened to everlasting life and these new resurrection bodies are going to shine, the main point being that the brilliance and the splendor of the shining will last forever. It will never ever diminish.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- Of the three principles in this week's material, which one impacted you the most? Why?
- What is one thing from this week's material that encouraged you? Challenged you?
- Is there something that impacted you about God's character?

4. Sharing

- Share 3 things from the study notes that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

5. Pray for Each other

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Seven: Principles of Eternal Rewards (Part 4)

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read 1 Cor. 3:10-15 and the Session 7 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- Does the idea of rewards varying in measure motivate you to follow Jesus in obedience in this life to gain great reward in the next? If so, in what way?
- Think about judgment being stricter for leaders. Ask Jesus to show you a leader whom you can pray for today. Then ask Him to show you how you can pray for this person.
- 1 Cor. 3:15 talks about suffering loss of rewards. Ask Jesus to speak to you about this in your life, how you can take steps to ensure you get your full reward for following Him.

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's session and memorize it.

Principle 10: Eternal Rewards are Given in Varying Measures

- There will be a vast difference in heavenly rewards, varying according to each one's obedience.
- **1 Cor. 15:41-42** ⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. ⁴²So also is the resurrection of the dead.
- There are billions and billions of stars, and no two stars are the same just like no two human beings are the same. Each star has its own mass, weight, energy, brightness and so on. Each star is radically different from other stars.
- In the same way that stars vary, there is diversity of glory in eternity.
- The realm of "the resurrection" includes our body, garment, thrones, crowns, and more—each area of our life in the resurrection will express a measure of the glory of God.
- There is diversity of glory in eternity just like there is diversity in the natural realm.
- Paul said that as one star or one sun differs from another sun in glory, the whole realm of the resurrection will follow this principle.
- This could mean that no two believers will be identical in their eternal reward.
- In eternity, some in the kingdom will be called least, and some will be called great (Mt. 5:19; 11:11; 18:4; Lk. 9:48; Rev. 19:5).
- **Matt 5:19** Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments...shall be called least in the kingdom ...but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom.
- When Jesus is speaking this, He is talking about the age to come.
- Some will be called least and some will be called greatest. This will not have a negative put-down attitude as those attitudes will not be in heaven.
- **Rev. 19:5** Then a voice...saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants...both small and great!"
- This is happening around the throne; the voice acknowledges the small and the great among the family of God.
- There are believers who are considered great and those who are considered small due to how they lived their lives in this life.
- Everyone has the opportunity to be called great in the age to come.
- The judgment seat is the great equalizer as we are rewarded based on what we did with what He gave us in this life.
- That way everybody can contend for greatness.

Principle 11: Eternal Judgment is Stricter for Leaders

- There are stricter or higher standards of judgment for leaders at the judgment seat.
- **James 3:1** ...let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.
- This principle involves those that have a larger sphere of responsibility, whether it is teaching or shepherding and may not just involve those who work in vocational ministry.
- Some of God's best teachers and best shepherds are in the marketplace.
- So do not imagine you have to be on the church staff in order to have the stricter standard.

- What does the stricter measure mean? It means that at the judgment seat, Jesus will require a greater response of faithfulness, humility, and diligence from those who were given more in this age.
- **Luke 12:48 For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.**
- This is for those whom He has given a greater gifting, greater resources, greater platform, greater favor to impact people.
- To those who He has given greater measures, more is expected of them. He will require greater diligence, greater humility, greater love, greater generosity, etc.
- Of the man or woman to whom much has been given, sphere of influence, finance, gifting, personality, whatever, whatever—He says, “I will ask more.”

Principle 12: Some will Suffer Loss at the Judgment Seat

- Some will suffer the loss of rewards that could have been received (1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Jn. 8; Rev. 3:11; 16:15).
- Suffering loss does not involve physical suffering but forfeiting potential rewards—by neglecting God’s will or refusing to repent of sinful activities, or not persevering in our calling.
- **1 Cor. 3:15 If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved...**
- Losing reward is not about Jesus taking away a reward that you had gained.
- It is not like an Olympian being stripped of a medal for testing positive for a banned substance.
- The loss does not involve physical suffering as suffering does not exist in heaven.
- This is about forfeiting potential rewards, losing of what would have been.
- **2 John 8 Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for but that you may be rewarded fully.**
- This passage in 2 John says to watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, that you may be rewarded fully.
- It’s a warning that even if you are going the right way (walking in the spirit, growing in humility, growing in wisdom, being diligent) you need to be careful that you don’t stumble into compromise, into bitterness, and so on.
- Some people struggle with feeling condemnation and then hide for years. In that sense that you pause, you are losing that which was well within your reach.
- Jesus wants us to receive a full reward, so He lovingly warns us about this.

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Discussion Questions

- Of the three principles in this week's material, which one impacted you the most? Why?
- What is one thing from this week's material that encouraged you? Challenged you?
- Is there something that impacted you about God's character?

4. Sharing

- Share 3 things from the study notes that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

5. Pray for Each other

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Eight: Principles of Eternal Rewards (Part 5)

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read Rev. 2-3 and the Session 8 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- What does it mean for you to continue in the path of being an overcomer? Are you willing to content for righteousness in an area that is hard for you to overcome? For example, lying, pride, sexual sin, anger, fear, etc.
- Ask Jesus to give you a glimpse of the people in your life whom you have impacted for the kingdom. Let this be a motivation to continue to impact many for Jesus.
- The measure of judgment with which we judge others influences the standard of judgment that we will receive. Talk to Jesus about growing in mercy and compassion with truth and love. Ask Him to show you deeper meaning for this concept.

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this material into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's session and memorize it.

Principle 13: The Fullness of Rewards for Overcomers (Rev 2-3)

- Jesus mentioned 18 eternal rewards in Revelation 2-3 for those who repent and are overcomers.
- If these rewards are automatically received by everyone without regard to being faithful, then the warnings associated with these scriptures are “empty,” with no real loss for those who do not repent in the ways Jesus indicated in these passages.
- It seems that most of the 18 rewards listed in these chapters will be received by all believers in part but only overcomers will receive them in the fullest measure.
- In Revelation 2-3 Jesus tied the rewards to specific actions.
- The question is, who are these overcomers? Jesus tells us that being an overcomer is related to a very specific issue that needed overcoming.
- If everybody is automatically the overcomer, then Jesus’ warnings to repent are empty.
- Overcomers are spoken of in two different contexts in the New Testament (1 Jn. 4-5; Rev. 2-3).
- John the apostle presents overcomers in two different contexts.
- Context #1: Overcoming worldly unbelief: All believers are overcomers in this general way. In this context, John wrote of overcoming the world by believing in Jesus and refusing the heresies that John confronted in his epistle, namely, that Jesus was not God and did not come in the flesh (1 Jn. 5:4-5). The issue here is to overcome heresies by believing in Jesus.
- **1 John 5:4-5 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. ⁵Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**
- Context #2: Overcoming unfaithfulness: Not all believers overcome in this specific way. John wrote of overcoming areas of unfaithfulness in a believer’s life as specifically defined in different ways in each of the seven letters to the churches in Revelation (Rev. 2-3).
- There are many believers who continue to be unfaithful in an area of their life until the end, but they are still believers and they are still in the eternal city.
- Jesus has convicted them and highlighted it to them and told them over and over, but they have just settled into a pattern where they are not going to change that area. This is not overcoming.
- Summary: We overcome unbelief and the world on the day we are born again (1 Jn. 5:4-5). As believers, we overcome unfaithfulness after we persevere in obedience to the end of our life.

Principle 14: Rewards have Correspondence with Our Relationships

- Our rewards have some correspondence with our earthly relationships.
- This means that the people we know, we serve, the people we support and give money to, the memory of it and the cherished value will still exist in the age to come.
- **1 Thess. 2:19 What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?**
- Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:19, “What is our hope? What is our joy? What is our rejoicing? It is you.” In effect he is saying that the people we know in this life we will know in the next. Our relationships in this age are not all forgotten.

- When we understand eternal rewards, it needs to be in a relational context as well. We will know people and remember things. We will talk to friends, family, and those you have been in cell with and served with in eternity.
- **Luke 19:9...make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail [physical death], they may receive you into an everlasting home.**
- Jesus speaks of friends receiving us, after death, into their eternal homes.
- This is an exhortation to spend money and to make friends in a way of being welcomed into heaven after we die.
- The godly use of money will enhance our relationships in the age to come with those we helped.
- Jesus was exhorting His people to spend their money in a way to make friends for eternity.
- The godly use of money will enhance our relationships because people will have fond remembrance of the money we gave. They will, with affection and fondness, remember and say, "Thank you."
- By financially supporting people, we become fellow workers, or partners, in their labors, including their rewards.
- **3 John 6-8 ...If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well...⁸We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.**
- John talks about "your fellow workers" when you support people in a way that is worthy of the Lord financially. They are your fellow workers, not just in their labors, but in their reward.
- We can receive a prophet's reward by receiving and supporting a prophet.
- **Matt. 10:41 He who receives a prophet...shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man... shall receive a righteous man's reward.**
- Jesus talked about receiving a prophet's reward, receiving a righteous man's reward.

Principle 15: The Way We Judge Others Impacts How We Are Judged

- The measure of judgment with which we judge others influences the standard of judgment that we will receive.
- **Matt 7:2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."**
- This is not the total standard for judgment, but it does impact the way we are judged.
- This means that if you are harsh or overly strict there is going to be an element of that judgement coming your way.
- That is not the whole of our judgment, but your standard will be reflected back on you.
- If you are zealous about putting a person in their place, but you are doing something similar, then that judgment will be applied on your account.
- You won't lose your salvation over this.
- Have your goal to stand before Jesus and be known for being tender and merciful to people.
- We are only to judge or point out negative things to people with the goal of restoring them.
- We must judge others with the right spirit, in the right process, and with the right information.
- **Gal. 6:1...if a man is overtaken in any trespass...restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness...**

Part Three: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Sharing

- Share 3 things from the study notes that stood out to you and why.

4. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

5. Pray for Each other

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Appendix 1: Types of Eternal Rewards

- There are different types of heavenly rewards. Jesus highlights 18 different rewards in Revelation 2-3. There are probably about 10-15 other rewards listed in addition to that.
- **1 Cor. 2:9 But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”**
- **2 Cor. 4:17 For our light affliction...is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,**
- Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 2:9 that no eye has ever seen and that no ear has ever heard how amazing the things that God has prepared for the believer in eternity.
- The most glorious thing that you can imagine here on earth will pale in comparison to what Jesus has planned for you one day. Heaven will be AMAZING! The streets are transparent gold, there are gardens, rivers, the tree of life and so on. It will be spectacular glory.
- Let's not dumb down the idea of rewards to things that are not interesting to us.
- What we will be given in heaven will BLOW OUR MINDS!
- And what is given to one may not be given to all.
- **Matt. 5:19 “Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments...shall be called least in the kingdom ...but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom.”**
- Matthew tells us that some in the kingdom will be great and some will be the least.
- God will call some people's life choices least and God will call some people's life choices great.
- Heaven will be a glorious place filled with joy and love so it's not like anyone will be putting anyone down or comparing but there will be a range of differences of people's rewards.

Example Reward #1: Garments

- **Rev. 19:8 To her [Bride of Christ] it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**
- **Ex. 28:2 And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.**
- The garments in heaven are going to be beautiful and diverse, beyond anything we can imagine.

Example Rewards #2 Authority

- **Luke 19:17-19 “...because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.”¹⁸ And the second came...¹⁹likewise he said to him, “You also be over five cities.”**
- We will all have different work assignments with varying measures of authority and responsibility (Mt. 19:28, 30; 25:23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21).
- Not everyone will rule over nations or cities in heaven, but some will be.

Example Reward #3 Praise

- Each will receive varying praise from God (1 Cor. 4:5; cf. Mt. 25:21; 1 Pet. 1:7).
- **1 Cor. 4:5 The Lord comes...then each one's praise [affirmation] will come from God.**
- When we see Jesus we will be affirmed for our life's choices.

Example Reward #4 Crowns

- Some will receive crowns (Rev. 2:10; cf. 1 Cor. 9:25; Jas. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 3:11).

- Receiving a crown is not synonymous with the gift of eternal life that is freely given to all believers.
- **Rev. 2:10 ...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

Example Reward #6 Treasures

- Jesus' call to gain treasure in heaven includes many different things (Mt. 5:12; 6:4, 6, 18, 20; 10:41-42; 16:27; 19:21; Mk. 9:41; 10:21; Lk. 6:23, 35; 12:21, 33; 18:22; Rev. 3:18; 22:12).
- The treasures that you can receive you get by obeying, by diligence, by humility, by generosity, by acting in purity.
- It does not matter if people recognize these things in you. What matters is that Jesus recognizes these things in you.

Example Reward #7 Communion

- Our communion with God will vary according to our spiritual capacity.
- Jesus will reward some by writing the Father's name on them, which includes receiving insight about God.

Appendix 2: Why Believers Should Desire Eternal Rewards

- What we do with our time, our money, our deeds, and our words really matter.
- Being in the Word and in prayer is foundational in our walk with God. It is essential.
- Being faithful to God includes more than spending time in prayer and in the Word.
- The endless tasks that a mother does in the name of love as a godly woman wanting to serve her family – that is being faithful to God.
- Doing small menial tasks for the Kingdom really matters and gives value to our lives.
- When we look at eternal rewards what we find is that Jesus is watching everything that we are doing. And everything that we do is important – no matter how small!
- The framework for understanding eternal rewards is an understanding that God’s purpose is for Jesus to return to earth and gather all the things that are in heaven and all the things that are on earth and bring them together.
- **Eph. 1:9-10 Made known to us the mystery [hidden plan] of His will... ¹⁰that He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. NKJV**
- When Jesus returns He is bringing heaven down to the earth and bringing the New Jerusalem with Him.
- We are going to have a physical resurrected body. We are going to eat physical food.
- It is important to think rightly about heaven and eternal rewards in the right way, in a way that has a physical dynamic to it, (not floating around in the clouds) because it motivates us to desire the next life and to work towards it.
- Jesus gave over 50 references to eternal rewards (Mt. 5:5, 12, 19; 6:4, 6, 18, 20; 10:41-42; 16:27; 18:4; 19:21, 28, 30; 20:26-27; 23:12; 25:21, 23; Mk. 9:41; 10:21, 43-44; Lk. 6:23, 35; 9:48; 12:8; 21, 33; 14:11; 16:11; 18:14, 22; 19:17, 19; 22:30; Jn. 12:26; Rev. 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-27; 3:4-5, 11-12, 18, 21; 16:15; 19:7-8; 20:4, 6; 22:5, 12) making it one of his most emphasized themes.
- Jesus taught on eternal rewards calling His people:
 - to become great (Mt. 5:19; 18:4; 20:26; 23:11; Mk. 10:43; Lk. 6:23, 35; 9:48);
 - to receive rewards (Mt. 5:12; 6:4, 6, 18; 10:41-42; 16:27; Mk. 9:41; Lk. 6:23, 35; Rev. 22:12);
 - to gain riches (Lk. 12:21; 16:11; Rev. 2:9; 3:18)
 - and treasure in heaven (Mt. 6:20; 19:21; Mk. 10:21; Lk. 12:33; 18:22);
 - to be ruler over much (Mt. 25:21; 23);
 - to have authority over cities (Lk. 19:17, 19),
 - power over nations (Rev. 2:26-27)
 - and in society (Mt. 5:5);
 - to sit on thrones (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30; Rev. 3:21; 20:4, 6; 22:5);
 - to gain crowns (Rev. 2:10; 3:11)
 - and heavenly garments (Rev. 3:4-5, 18; 16:15; 19:7-8);
 - to be exalted (Mt. 23:12; Lk. 14:11; 18:14)
 - and receive honor from God (Jn. 12:26);
 - and to be first in receiving blessing (Mt. 19:30; 20:26-27).
- This is exciting! Jesus has amazing things in store for those who love Him and are faithful and obedient to Him,

- When thinking about your future, it is not enough to think about the time here on this earth. Think about the next life and what you want to receive from Jesus and be doing there. That is where you will end up spending most of your time.
- We will literally be living in the New Jerusalem, reigning with Jesus and what that looks like is impacted by the things we do in this life, not entirely, but it is impacted by what we do.
- God does not leave us guessing as to what He considers first and greatest. Loving God with all our heart is the first emphasis of the Spirit in our lives and is the greatest calling on anyone's life.
- The primary success or greatness of anyone's life is found in walking in a loving relationship with Jesus.
- **Mt. 22:37-38 You shall love the Lord with all your heart...³⁸This is the first and great commandment.**
- The subject of eternal rewards is really about love.
- Loving God with all your heart and mind and strength and soul – this is the only way we will overflow in loving people with all your heart.

Why Believers Should Desire Eternal Rewards

Reason One: Love

- Rewards are about Jesus expressing how he feels about the way we loved Him in this life.
- He delights in making known how He feels about the way you lived.
- We have great joy in hearing His affirmation of our love.
- He wants us to know that our choices did not go unnoticed.
- **The Lord comes...then each one's praise [affirmation] will come from God. 1 Cor. 4:5, KJV**
- He is not saying that you are awesome and superior to other people. No. I want you to know that I care about every act that you did for me, I see how you went through that tough time and endured, I was present with you and connected to you and I want you to know that you did a good job.
- Jesus will make known to you how He feels about the way you lived – this will be such a joyful time when our choices are affirmed by Him. He remembers them, nothing we did for Him will go unnoticed.

Reason Two: Partnership

- Rewards are about working in close proximity to Jesus as He reigns over the earth.
- He desires that we will be with Him to reign in partnership with Him.
- **Jn. 17:24 Father, I desire that they...may be with Me where I am... NKJV**
- **Rev. 3:21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne... NKJV**
- At the second coming Jesus returns to earth and the New Jerusalem descends to earth. That is where His throne is and that is where we will live for all eternity.
- Believers will have their resurrected bodies which are real, physical bodies just like Jesus had in Luke 24. We will have flesh and bones.
- It will be a supernatural flesh, not a corruptible flesh. We will look like we look now but in perfection. And we will be interacting with other believers.
- Believers will work in partnership with Jesus in varying measures depending in part on the measure of responsibilities with which they are entrusted.

- We aren't going to heaven to have an endless picnic with Jesus. We are going to work and have tasks and enjoy that work because sin no longer is tarnishing work.
- And the work that we will be doing will in part be related to the measure of responsibility we are entrusted based on how we lived our earthly lives.
- **Matthew 25:23** "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' NIV

Reason Three: Righteousness

- Rewards are about Jesus celebrating our choices for righteousness.
- He loves righteousness (Heb. 1:9), and His name is righteousness (Jer. 23:6); therefore, He celebrates even our smallest acts of righteousness.

Reason Four: Truth

- Rewards are about the truth regarding our love and obedience to Jesus being openly displayed.
- God is love (1 John 4:16) and Jesus is Truth (John 14:6) so whatever is truth about how we loved Him will come to light in His presence.
- What is true about us cannot stay in darkness when we are in the presence of the one who is truth.
- Our choices to love Him will come to light – even our weak and small love is real love and it will be openly known. This is a wonderful thing.
- The judgment seat of Christ is a positive thing! We are going to be rewarded for our love for Him.

Reason Five: Joy

- Believers will have great joy in working closely with Jesus and reigning with Him (Matt 25:21).
- There will be joy in seeing Him affirm our love for Him.
- There will be no competition or envy.
- **Matthew 25:21** "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' NIV
- Jesus highlights that He will make them a ruler and enter into JOY! They will LOVE this.
- There will be great joy and happiness upon receiving reward and ruling with Him in eternity.
- It will be an occasion of great joy.

Additional thoughts

- Rewards are not about gaining superiority or status before others.
- Jesus called us to reject the idea of seeking honor or superiority.
- Not caring about eternal rewards because of the idea that it's gaining superiority shows a lack of understanding about the attitudes we will have in the next life.
- Jesus is against putting others down, envy, jealousy, superiority, and so on. These are sinful attitudes.
- Heaven is a sinless place therefore our attitudes will be of joy and love.

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