

Eternal Life

Key Verse

"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."
John 17:3

Basic Biblical Understanding

When people think of eternal life, several ideas usually come to mind: heaven, salvation, God's gift, etc. Eternal life is a concept that Jesus addressed regularly. He said...

- "Whoever believes will in Him have eternal life." John 3:15
- "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life..." John 6:40a
- "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Matthew 25:46

While Jesus spoke of eternal life often, He didn't define it at first. People started coming to Him with questions. A lawyer asked Jesus, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25b). The same question was asked by a young ruler in Luke 18:18. Knowing people were searching for answers, Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me" (John 5:39).

It's not until John 17:3 that Jesus defined eternal life. "This is eternal life, that they may know You..." This verse is like the Rosetta Stone for much of God's activity. Each passage that speaks of eternal life can now be seen in its true context. Eternal life is to know God.

The reason Jesus set aside the glory of heaven and came to earth is that we may know God. The purpose of Christ's trial, beatings, and death on the cross was that we might know God. God's offer to humanity in Romans 6:23 is the free gift of knowing Him. Eternal life is to know God.

Eternal life is not going to heaven when we die; eternal life is the free gift of knowing God. Heaven is an incredible benefit given to those who know God. That changes everything.

It changes the way we read the Bible. Scripture is God's revelation of Himself. As we read, we get to know God. It changes our understanding of God's ultimate plan. The plan was not religion but relationship. It changes our understanding of discipleship. The goal of discipleship is not transferring information; the goal is developing an intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ. If we fail to understand eternal life, we pursue religion and miss God. We learn about God and miss knowing Him.

Verses (ask God to show you how they apply to your life)

- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16
- "...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death..." Philippians 3:10
- "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
Romans 6:23

Helpful Questions and Application

1. Do you know God? Do you have eternal life? If the answer is "Yes," how can you know Him more? If the answer is "No," what's holding you back from believing in Him today?
2. We get to know someone by spending time with them where the focus is on them. The same is true of God. We get to know God by spending time with Him in Scripture, in prayer, in worship, etc. How is God prompting you to spend time with Him today, and what do you need to do to make that happen?

Additional Resources

Scripture references: Jeremiah 9:23–24; Jeremiah 31:34; Exodus 33:13a

WordTruth articles: ["Knowing Jesus Or Just Knowing About Jesus"](#)
["Life's Most Important Decision"](#)