

James 4:13-14

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

There exists a temptation for all of us, and especially us youth, to allow the phrase “living in light of eternity” to become a cliché. I want to ask all the youth a question: what could be more important than being ready for the moment you die, the moment that mist disappears? The first question that comes to mind is will I stand before a Holy Judge or a Father who welcomes me with open arms on the merits of Jesus Christ? I don’t want to feel the great weight of regret. Randy Alcorn defines “living in light of eternity” as “being prepared for the day of your death.” Teens, are you ready for the day of your death?

Matthew Henry said: “it ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our last day.” Contemplating death is not a common thought for anyone, but especially so with youth who feel they have a full life ahead of them. But I’d encourage you all to ask God to help you see from a larger perspective.

Guys, either the gospel is true or its not; either eternity is real and just around the corner or its not. If none of it is true, then why bother? But if it is true, the implications are so huge that how can we live as if it were not? Why live a half-hearted life for God?

The truth is, there really is no question over whether any of this is real or not. There is no denying of the reality of our Creator and the reality of eternity.

The fraction of our lives that’s spent on earth is so extremely short, and God made it that way for a reason. Because this world is not our home, it is not the place that we were made for. This life is a dot and eternity is a line extending forever onward. The Lord intends us to use this dot to prepare for that line. And we only get one chance.

I want to read to you from Alcorn’s chapter, *Stones from the Riverbeds*, from *In Light of Eternity*:

Midway through *Edge of Eternity*, Nick and his fellow travelers are met by the King’s messenger. She gives them burlap sacks and instructions to fill them with stones from the riverbeds they’ll cross at night. Then she leaves them with the cryptic words, “In the morning you will be both glad and sad.” But in the morning, they’re unable to open their bags and see what’s inside. In fact, throughout the journey they’re only able to open the bags at night when and if they choose to add more stones. Nick is reluctant to follow these apparently senseless instructions. Isn’t the added weight of these worthless rocks just an unnecessary burden for a weary traveler? Later, as they finally near the City, they’re met again by the messenger and told to present their gifts to the King.

“Gifts?” the travelers ask.

“Yes. The stones you picked up in the riverbeds.”

My heart pounded. I put down my worn sack, just over half-full. I pulled out a stone. It glimmered in the sunlight.

“It’s gold!” I said. I reached into the sack. “Silver! A ruby. Look—two diamonds. An emerald! And this one...I’ve never seen anything like it!”

“Vaguely aware of the others shouting. I looked up to see them rifling through their bags holding up precious stones in the rosy sunlight. I reached further into my bag and found what I’d thought were some light stones. I pulled them out and stared at them.”

“They’re not stones at all,” I said. “They’re just crumpled balls of straw.”

I turned the bag upside down. One last gem fell out, a small one. The rest was straw and stubble.

The contents from Nick’s sack are then placed on a grate above a raging bonfire.

“The fire immediately consumed the straw, while it burned off impurities from the gold and silver and gems. They glowed with an otherworldly beauty, and I stared at them breathlessly, held captive by their radiance.”

When your life is done, do you want a bag of empty straw to present to your King? Straw that will burn away in the fires of eternity? I think we’d all agree that we want to our bags to be full of treasure and not trash, but those gems are only acquired by living everyday as if were it were our last. Nick had no idea that what he thought were only heavy rocks were actually precious jewels. Everyday is an opportunity for us to build for eternity...and we’ll be there very soon.

Now don’t misunderstand. None of this is possible without God’s grace—God’s grace that first saved us, and that continues to work in us for His glory. But I challenge you to ask God to give you the grace and the power to live this hour as if it were the last you had on earth. One of them actually will be our last hour, and by God’s grace, I want to be ready.