

A Life God
REWARDS™

 BIBLE STUDY 



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Author of the #1 New York Times Bestseller The Prayer of Jabez

WITH DAVID KOPP

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| *For Personal or Group Use* |

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Introduction

THE AMAZING LINK

What if I told you that your actions today could actually change what you experience after you die...and keep on changing it forever? Would that possibility surprise you?

The truth is, Jesus revealed a direct and powerful link between what we do for God today and how He will reward us in heaven. The Bible study you're holding—based on the book *A Life God Rewards*—could be the most life-transforming study you've ever undertaken, because it carefully explores what God said on this vital subject. I promise that once you understand how much your life is supposed to add up for God's glory and your eternal reward, you'll never look at any day as ordinary again.

Unfortunately, among followers of Jesus today there is widespread confusion about the importance of our work for God. Many think that their *belief* is all that matters, and that once they've received the gift of eternal life, any *works* for God are not very important. Many Christians believe, in fact, that what they do on earth has no effect on their eternity.

Could you be one?

Jesus came to show us something else entirely. Jesus revealed that you and I have been more than saved *from* something; we have been saved *to* something—an amazing destiny of serving Him and enjoying His favor.

And it is supposed to start right now.

YOUR GOD IS A REWARDER

Jesus spread the news of reward in heaven in His first major teaching, the Sermon on the Mount. He talked about its certainty with His disciples in private. And He shocked the religious experts of His day with its promise.

As you'll discover in this study, Jesus urgently wanted His followers to know that whatever good works they did for God would reap a tangible and significant reward from Him in eternity...and that they had been created and called to do *a lot of good works* for Him!

Jesus was both direct and specific in what He revealed. For example:

A DIFFERENT KIND OF BIBLE STUDY

The four-week Bible study you're holding invites you to go deeply into God's Word to see what Jesus and the apostles taught about eternal rewards. We adhere to the key doctrines and beliefs that followers of Christ have historically affirmed. Besides being biblically based and felt-needs oriented, the study has several key distinctives:

It's topical. We focus on the biblical support in key areas—our life in eternity, the rewards Jesus promised, the believer's judgment at the bema, and defining a productive life of service God can reward.

It's conversation friendly. Some questions are information based. Some are intended simply to provoke a helpful discussion.

It's designed for individual or group use. Each week is broken down into seven major segments (see the numbered questions at the top of the page). Students can use these for a daily study plan, if they wish.

It's question driven. Sometimes called the Socratic method, this teaching method pulls you from topic to topic through a sequence of key questions.

It incorporates several learning approaches. You'll find inductive studies, fill-in-the-blanks, personal inventories, character profiles, Bible exposition, and inspiring quotes.

It offers plenty of options. The study presents more learning opportunities than a class can complete in an hour. Select the material that will work best for you. Some groups will want to extend the four-part study to an eight-week course or longer.

It's all about life change. The whole purpose of studying God's Word is to be changed in our character, beliefs, and behavior so that we please God more, become more like Christ, and serve Him more every day.

BIBLE VERSION

The Bible study, as well as the book it is based on, has been prepared using the New King James Version of the Bible. Using that version privately or in class will ensure convenience and clarity, but is not required.

- Any disciple who experienced suffering for His name could “rejoice in that day and leap for joy!”—why? “For indeed your reward is great in heaven” (Luke 6:23).
- Anyone who invited the hungry and needy into their homes could know for certain that they would be blessed—“For you shall

HELPING YOU GET AROUND

You’ll see three icons used throughout the study to help you use the material more quickly.



indicates a key verse, definition, or explanation that you won’t want to miss.



indicates optional material for further study. Use this icon to help you decide what materials you can leave for later.



indicates a group process question that focuses on life experience.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- ◆ *A Life God Rewards*, by Bruce Wilkinson with David Kopp, is the basis for this study. Reading it first, or in conjunction with the study, will greatly multiply the personal benefits to you.
- ◆ *A Life God Rewards Devotional* (and accompanying *Journal*), by Bruce Wilkinson with David Kopp, is a thirty-one-day devotional that also follows a four-week structure. On the first day of each week’s study, the student is keyed to which chapters in the book and devotional apply to the discussion at hand.
- ◆ The eight-part *A Life God Rewards* video series, led by the author, will take you to greater depths in each area. Visit www.globalvisionresources.com for more information.
- ◆ *A Life God Rewards Audio*, read by the author, can provide busy people with an easy way to learn and review the message of the book.
- ◆ If you are a teenager (or have one in your home), I recommend *A Life God Rewards for Teens*, by Bruce Wilkinson and David Kopp.
- ◆ For children, see the age-specific *A Life God Rewards* children’s books, by Bruce Wilkinson with Mack Thomas, listed in the back of this book.
- ◆ Visit www.thebreakthroughseries.com for recent updates from Multnomah Publishers authors, new product information, inspiring stories from readers, and other help.

be repaid at the resurrection” (Luke 14:14).

- Every servant who gave money or possessions to God’s work on earth could look forward to a lasting return later—“You will have treasure in heaven” (Matthew 19:21).
- And He promised that anyone who gave his life for Christ’s sake would actually “find it,” because “the Son of Man will come...and then He will reward each according to his works” (Matthew 16:25, 27).

When you begin to see what the New Testament teaches on eternal reward, you’ll understand, perhaps for the first time, what the Bible means when it says, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him, *for he who comes to God must believe that...He is a rewarder*” (Hebrews 11:6).

BREAK THROUGH TO ETERNAL REWARD

If you haven’t read *A Life God Rewards* yet, I highly recommend that you do so right away. I also encourage you to enhance your learning experience each day for the next month by following along in the *A Life God Rewards Devotional*, the companion *Journal*, and the video series.

By the time you complete this *Life God Rewards Bible Study*, you will see God’s tenacious love for you in a new light. You’ll better understand His expectations of your life. You’ll feel a growing motivation to invest your energies in doing what matters to God. You’ll break free from the sins that sabotage your joy now and your potential for even greater joy in heaven.

And you will join millions of others who are living eagerly for the day Jesus promised on the last page of the Bible: “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Revelation 22:12).

Blessings on your journey!

—Bruce Wilkinson

Week One

THE TRUTH
ABOUT YOUR
ETERNITY

*Take interest in the future.
That is where you will spend
the rest of your life.*

ANONYMOUS



RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

A Life God Rewards, Chapters 1–2
A Life God Rewards Devotional, Introduction
A Life God Rewards Video Series, Sessions 1–2

GETTING STARTED

I read once that looking at the stars through a telescope on earth is a little like looking up from the bottom of a swimming pool. No matter how powerful the lens, images are unclear. The reason is that a telescope looks up through a deep ocean of atmosphere, so light rays from outer space appear blurred and wobbly.

Now you know why stars appear to twinkle.

And now you know why astronomers were so excited when, in 1990, they launched the Hubble Space Telescope. Hubble studies the stars from an orbit *above* earth's atmosphere. No blur. No wobble. No twinkle. Almost every week, scientists are making new discoveries far out on the edges of time and space.

What if you could see your life like that? What if you could clearly see the results of a choice you make today from a no-wobble viewpoint far out into your future? Think how much it would help you to make the important choices every day brings.

You and I can't see into the future, but Someone can. His name is Jesus. He's not a captive of earth like you and me. Jesus can see the whole truth—past, present, and future—and tell you exactly how to prepare for what is to come.

This chapter has one simple but extremely important purpose: to show you the future Jesus talked about so you know what to do now.

THIS WEEK YOU'LL DISCOVER...

- ◆ the real timeline of your forever life.
- ◆ the two keys that unlock the truth about your eternity.
- ◆ surprising truths about heaven and hell.
- ◆ how your actions today will affect your life in eternity.
- ◆ how knowing the truth about your future can change your life, starting now.

1. WHAT DO I REALLY BELIEVE ABOUT ETERNITY?

1. *How much time do you spend thinking about what will happen in your eternal future? Why do you think this is so?*

YOUR ETERNITY IQ INVENTORY

2. *The following inventory will show what you believe about your eternal future. Score yourself with the numbers 1 through 5 as follows: 1 Strongly agree. 2 Agree. 3 Unsure. 4 Slightly disagree. 5 Strongly disagree.*

- ___ After I die, the only thing that will matter is whether I accepted Christ as my Savior while I was alive on earth.
- ___ Once I go to heaven, the big events of my existence will be over.
- ___ No one can really know what will happen in eternity.
- ___ It's faith, not works, that will affect my experience of eternity.
- ___ All of us will experience heaven in the same way.

- ___ YOUR SCORE: Total the values assigned to the five statements. If you scored...

21–25 **WOW!** *You're at the top of your class.*

16–20 **WHOA!** *You've got a passing grade.*

11–15 **WISHY-WASHY.** *Eternity is a big question mark in the sky for you.*

5–10 **WATCH OUT!** *You're in for a big shock about how eternity works!*

3. *How would you live differently if you were absolutely convinced that everything you did in this life had a direct and eternal consequence in the next life?*

“ ” TALK POINT “ ”

If you could ask God one question about your eternity, what would it be?

2.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN
IN ETERNITY?

If we look closely at the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, we can construct an accurate timeline of our eternal existence.

THE SIX MAIN EVENTS OF YOUR ETERNITY

EVENT #1: LIFE. *You are created in the image of God for a life of purpose.* You didn't exist forever in the past, but you will continue to exist forever in the future.

- a. Read Genesis 1:27–28. What unique identity and responsibility sets a human apart from other life forms?
- b. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Between birth and death, you live on earth as _____, _____, and _____.

EVENT #2: DEATH. *You die physically, but not spiritually.* The death of your body is your exit from life on earth. Yet your life as soul and spirit continues.

Read Hebrews 9:27. Every man will _____ and this will happen only _____.

EVENT #3: DESTINATION. *You reach your eternal destination after death.* Jesus identified only two possible locations in the afterlife: heaven or hell (Matthew 23:33; John 14:2).

Read John 3:18. Jesus explained clearly how to avoid hell and go to heaven: "He who _____ in Him is not condemned; but he who does not _____ is condemned already, because he has not _____ in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

EVENT #4: RESURRECTION. *You receive a resurrected body.* You will receive a new, immortal body (John 5:28–29; 1 Corinthians 15:51–58).

Read Philippians 3:20–21. Jesus will transform your earthly _____ so that it will be conformed to His glorious _____.

HAVE I BEEN HERE BEFORE?

Around the world, many believe they have lived previous lives as other humans or animals. But neither reincarnation nor “soul sleep” is taught in the Bible. We only die once (Hebrews 9:27). And Jesus revealed that after death our soul is either with God in heaven or apart from God in hell (Matthew 25:41; 2 Corinthians 5:8).

EVENT #5: REPAYMENT. *You receive your eternal reward or your retribution based on what you did on earth.* Everyone’s works will be judged by Jesus Christ (John 5:22). They will determine the degree of reward in heaven or retribution in hell (Matthew 23:14; Revelation 20:11–15).

Read 2 Corinthians 5:10. For we must all _____ before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may _____ the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether _____ or _____.

EVENT #6: ETERNITY. *You will live forever in the presence or absence of God.* Eternity is a real life in a real place where you will experience the consequences of your beliefs and actions on earth.

- a. *Read Matthew 25:46. Jesus said that those who have rejected Him will experience everlasting _____, while those who have chosen Him will receive eternal _____.*
- b. *Read John 14:1–3. What did Jesus promise His friends in heaven?*

“ ” TALK POINT “ ”

Did any of the events described in your timeline surprise you?

If so, why?

How could this information change your life today?