

# Critical Information about Preparing for Heaven

Let's begin with some critical information about preparing for heaven.

The temporary lives we are living right now are not our true, real lives. Now is like the caterpillar stage, leading to something far more wonderful and beautiful. Eternal life has already started for us, but life in heaven is the butterfly stage, so-to-speak, of our lives – and it goes on forever. Therefore, preparing for it rather than sinking all of our energies into this life makes a whole lot of sense.

I don't want you or I to miss out on any qualities or opportunities in heaven that we can prepare for now, before death takes us to heaven. Since the quality of our life in heaven will be effected by how much we have become like Jesus, there are some things that can only be done before we die to achieve being like Him as He was in the midst of sinful people. In heaven, there will be no sin and no opportunity to grow in things like forgiveness and bearing with those who hurt us as did Jesus. Although in heaven we will not need to forgive anyone or overlook harm done to us, these two qualities will enhance life in heaven in many ways, the most marvelous being a depth of relationship with Jesus not otherwise attainable after we get to heaven. Over half of the Togethers you will be learning and doing with other Christians cannot be done in heaven, and each one of them reflects a character of God the Father and God the Son.

So, start as early as you can to prepare for heaven! There is a lot that can be done, so use all the time you have left before you transition from here to heaven. Every change you allow the Holy Spirit to effect in you will make your spirit more like that of Jesus. Each change will have some advantage waiting for you in heaven, whether that be a higher level of joy, a deeper relationship with God, more possible exciting experiences, or some other wonder of eternal life with our creative God. I hope you will focus a good portion of your present life on your future, eternal life.

Probably all Christians want to believe that once we get to heaven, we will all enjoy it to its maximum. We want to believe that if we did not intentionally prepare for heaven, it won't matter. We want to believe that everyone's experience in heaven will be the same, just as wonderful as anyone else's experience. I would like it to be that way too, but the Bible clearly indicates that it will not be that way in heaven.

Before explaining this further, let me mention that in heaven we will be completely without sin, but not complete in every way. For example, it cannot mean that we will have complete knowledge, for only God is said to have that. Only God is omniscient.

Another thing we need to accept is that only that which is like Jesus in our spirits will go to heaven. Think about it. Anything not like Jesus is sinful and tainted. Therefore, it cannot go to heaven.

Another way to say this is that when we were made new by God through faith in Jesus, we received a "new self". Our old sinful self is still in us, but the new self is powered by the Holy Spirit to dominate our lives more and more. The new self thus becomes more like Jesus and at death goes to heaven. What of us is still dominated by the old self is left behind.

If the more we are like Jesus, the more portions of us will go to heaven, is it not wise to throw ourselves now into whatever will allow the Holy Spirit to make us more like Jesus?

Take for example holiness. Without sin dwelling in us, in heaven we will all be completely set apart, or holy, for God. However, each of our 100% holiness will be limited to how much we have become like

Jesus. Each of us will in heaven be completely set aside for God and do His bidding. But, some of us will have 100% of, allegorically, 200 pounds of holiness and others 100 % of 500 pounds. Or, to look at it another way, some of us will be like a 200 watt lightbulb with all 100% of our light shining and others will have allowed the Holy Spirit to make them into 500 watt light bulbs and will shine with 100% of all of those 500 watts.

This concept can be illustrated in quite a few ways. A nurse in a medical office can be completely committed to the healing profession, but limited to the degree of her or his education and experience. A doctor in that same medical practice can also be completely committed to helping people with diseases and injuries, but her or his is a more extensive experience and commitment. Both the nurse and the doctor enjoy the same level of commitment but not the same level of involvement and experience.

As you will learn in this *Preparing for Heaven: Building the Eternal Phase of Your Life* curriculum, we can help one another become more holy and committed to God. In other words, our spirits, who we are deep inside, the essence of ourselves that leaves behind our bodies and goes to heaven, these spirits can achieve higher levels of holiness with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit within the involvement of those believers in our Christian Inner Circles.

So, let me go back to where we were in the beginning, hoping that you will now be able to comprehend a bit better.

Probably all Christians want to believe that once we get to heaven, we will all enjoy it to its maximum. We want to believe that if we did not intentionally prepare for heaven, it won't matter. We want to believe that everyone's experience in heaven will be the same, just as wonderful as anyone else's experience. Unfortunately, the Bible says that it will not be this way.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:27, "*For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.*" This declaration, which also shows up in Revelation 22:12, should be enough to help us see that our wishes that we will all have the same quality and quantity of life in heaven is false.

Jesus also taught a parable about a king who gave money to his servants and then rewarded them differently based on how they had made that money grow. One was rewarded with being in charge of ten cities and another five cities. This also shows that our dreams of heaven being wonderful for all of us to the same degree are unfounded wishful thinking.

The reason you and I were not taken up to heaven the moment we trusted Christ for our salvation is that before we get to heaven God wants to make us more and more like Jesus – and more and more ready for heaven. Romans 8:29 says, "*those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son . . .*" I am hoping that you will cooperate with God's molding you into the likeness of Jesus. He will, if you let Him, through the power of the Holy Spirit, using biblical relationships with your Christian friends, Christian family members, and, if you have one, your Christian spouse.

One last warning, if I may. The Philippian church members were told in Phil 2:12 to "*continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*". Let it be enough for this verse to warn us to be fearful of losing quality of life in heaven by not actively pursuing becoming more and more like Jesus Christ now. In heaven, we will not look back and wish we had prepared to become even more like Jesus. There will be no sorrow there. Therefore, now is the time to be afraid of losing something wonderful in heaven, especially because becoming like Jesus in many critical ways needs to happen in the midst of a sinful and painful world.

All this is my attempt to dislodge from you and I any deception that we do not have to prepare for heaven because we will all end up the same in heaven anyway. Since that is not true, we need to focus on heaven in this life to have a greater experience in our next life, in heaven when we get there.

In some respects, going through this curriculum: *Preparing for Heaven: Building the Eternal Phase of Your Life* may be one of the most important things you will do in life before death.

### **Prayer**

*O, Giver of Eternal Life with its unending opportunities to glorify You and enjoy You and Your kingdom forever:*

*In our affections, help us to move away from love of this world and grow our love for You. Help us to help one another pay more attention to the warning in 1 John 2:15, which states, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

*Empower us through the Holy Spirit to help one another yearn more and more to speed up our transformation into the likeness of Jesus. Make us aware that we have no guarantee how long we will live and that preparing for heaven needs to accelerate right now.*

*In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*