

Die for One Another

Lay your life on the line for other Christians. Risk reputation, financial security and anything necessary in order to help. Let go of the idols of safety, comfort and pleasure. Enter further into eternal life.

**John 12:23-25; John 15:12-14; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Phil 3:7-11;
Heb 13:14-16; 1 Tim 6:17-19; 1 Peter 2:20-21; 1 John 3:16**

Dying for one another is the way to embrace eternal life now and build up treasure for when you get to heaven.

Don't we wish we were more aware of our eternal life? Isn't it tremendously valuable to know we have it now and not be so worried about death and whatever comes after it? Each decision to lay down our lives for one another helps us integrate eternal life into this life before death. Dying for one another usually requires that we be certain of heaven so we can let go of whatever is necessary to help another. If we can truly believe that we are already citizens of heaven and that we will go there upon death, as only those who trust in Christ can, then we can let go of unnecessary parts of this life before death.

Jesus told us, as recorded in John 15:13, "*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*" Jesus made this declaration just hours before dying on the cross for us. He was expanding on the new commandment He had given the disciples to love one another as He had loved them.

We are to lay our lives on the line for other Christians. We are to risk reputation, financial security and anything necessary in order to help those in desperate situations. To do so, we will have to let go of the idols of safety, comfort and pleasure. Every time we do, we enter a little further into eternal life because we have to trust that God will provide for us – as it will be forever in eternity.

The important point in laying down our lives for one another is that we die to something in our lives that we do not pick back up for the duration that another Christian needs it to be dead in us. And we do it willingly.

Dying for one another can take many forms. To grasp what we are considering, let me tell you how my wife let go of something forever for my benefit. It was the first year of our marriage, which has now lasted 53 years. I grew up in a home with violent spouse abuse and bouts of uncontrollable child abuse. I had a sister nine years older who, when she was not hiding for safety, was a source of love and gave me a little bit of peace. But, she used sarcasm when her own peace disappeared, and that took away from me what little emotional stability I had. So, when my wife used sarcasm at the start of our marriage, I explained that I just could not handle it. Although she had used it all her life for her own safety in a highly dysfunctional family, she stopped immediately and has not been sarcastic now for 52 years. That is what dying for another is like.

This Together of "Dying for One Another" is a bit like Jesus' death on the cross. It truly accelerates our

transformation into the image of Christ, something that honors God and brings wonderful benefits to us when we get to heaven.

This dying for one another goes far beyond the daily kind of love we should extend to one another. This is exceptional love that is called for in drastic circumstances. We may deny ourselves some luxury to help a friend in need, but this greatest expression of love is more like diving on top of a grenade to save the life of a friend.

Most likely we will never have the opportunity to physically die for a Christian friend, family member or spouse, but there may be ways that we choose to put to death some part of ourselves for those in our Christian Inner Circles. Here are some examples.

- 1) We may have to act for another Christian's good and face danger. In such a case we would die to safety. For example, Christians in a dangerous neighborhood might stand up to the gangs on behalf of themselves and others and expose themselves to possible retaliation.
- 2) We might have to set aside some talents, skills, hobbies, sports, or projects in order to have time and money needed by God for the good of other people.
- 3) We may be asked by God to do something righteous that will cut off an important opportunity. For example, one of us might stand up for another Christian who is treated very unfairly at work and anger those who give out promotions.
- 4) We may at some time obey a Scripture that will tarnish our reputation for a long time. For example, we may anger relatives who want us to stop going to church, get drunk with them, gossip, or something else.
- 5) We may be called by God to a life of less financial security than we want. For example, any of us could be on a fast track for promotion and a higher salary and be called by God to something else He wants us to do that brings in far less income. Instead of relying on a substantial bank account, we would have to learn to trust God for whatever we need, just as we will do in heaven.
- 6) We may need to act for the good of another and lose permanently some aspect of physical vitality. For example, there might be that rare occasion when we would lay down our life to keep another from harm and be permanently injured, like saving them from a fire and being seriously burned ourselves.
- 7) We may have to cut off some friends we truly enjoy because of circumstances beyond our control. By making one person a top priority, we may have to set aside another cherished relationship. This happens all the time when a couple divorces. Often their friends have to emotionally support one party and limit or end the relationship with the "ex" husband or wife.
- 8) We will all definitely let go of some recreation to serve the Lord and be available to one another. For example, a father will give up lake fishing when there is not enough money to send his kids off to college and also buy and maintain a boat.
- 9) We all need to give up our exaggerated need for privacy. This may be the biggest transformation in most Christians who decide to lay down their lives for others. So many of the Together's require openness and risk. Privacy gets in the way of so many powerful spiritual things such as confessing sins, asking for help in some way or other, and discipling others, to name only a few.

Laying down important things in our lives for the good of others may seem like more than we want to do at times. However, it is one of the greatest of privileges because it is one of the few things we can do that is so much like the most wonderful thing Jesus has done for us. Furthermore, as we let go of something important, we can let go of this world a bit and grasp eternal life a bit more.

It is when Satan strikes his most deadly blows against Christians that we need to die for one another. This is not a new concept. During peacetime the citizens of a nation go about their easy lives, but when that country is at war, many of the pleasantries cease and everyone gets down to the business of fighting and watching out for one another.

We are at war with the devil and once in a while the battle will heat up in our lives and the lives of those in our Christian Inner Circles. The evil one may create problems and needs with those we love requiring us to delay, detour, or destroy some part of our lives. When this happens we will need to defeat the devil's plans by laying down our lives for one another in some sacrificial way. This is a great privilege to be obedient to Scripture and serve God by dying for one another in whatever way is necessary. But, if we do lay down our lives but resent it, Satan succeeds in removing God's glory from our actions. And, if we do not lay down our lives, the devil wins on two fronts: we are not obedient to God's instruction to love others and dishonor Him, and whoever Satan has attacked gets no help and may turn against God.

Jesus told us in Scripture, John 12:25, "*Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*"

We enhance our sense of eternal life by not hanging on to things in this life. This present life must be lost and hated in the sense that it is much less important than our eternal life in the kingdom of heaven which has already begun even though we have not yet died physically.

Clearly, walking away from a motor home God does not agree with takes us into the essence of eternal life which is laying down our lives for one another. Eternal life is clearly about relationships, our relationship with God for eternity and our relationships with heaven's citizens forever. So, staying at home rather than sightseeing in that motor home that God did not want for us (but perhaps did allow for someone else), is an act of losing our lives and gaining lives transformed into eternal lives which last forever.

When those in our Christian Inner Circles and others need our time, we usually have to die to something we wanted to do. It would be great if each time we scrapped our plans and gave up something we wanted to do or have because of someone else's urgent need, we heard the tinkling of heaven's coins going into our treasure chests.

Laying our lives down for others, in effect losing our lives in some significant costly way, brings us further into eternal life, what in 1 Tim 6:17-19 is called "*true life*". We do not have many chances in life to die for another – to lose rather permanently something we have deemed extremely essential. There are limited opportunities for our spirits to change to never again over-value this life. So when those few opportunities present themselves, we should not want to hang on to this life, as if this life is all there is.

We cannot live as citizens of heaven now if we for any length of time have forgotten that heaven is our true home and that it is coming soon and will last forever. In contrasting the lives of those of us who believe and those who do not belong to God through Jesus, the Apostle Paul wrote, "*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*" (That is Phil 3:20-21.)

Citizens of heaven should be noticeable. They should not be so attached to the values of this world. They should not be afraid of death. They should not live like this is the only life they get and heap upon themselves one pleasure after another. They should let go of things they really want in order to make sure that truly critical needs of others in their Christian Inner Circles are met.

When you choose to lose a lot for a crisis of another, you can deal with it by becoming more aware of the eternal life that awaits you. For example, forfeiting an expensive vacation because the Lord has put in your mind that you should use that money to help someone of limited finances save their house would be an opportunity to become more aware that your life in Jesus Christ is eternal and heaven awaits with endless vacations.

Dying for the needs of one another now will allow us to enter heaven ready for its way of life of holding on to spiritual things far more than physical things. We will have already experienced eternal life by giving up some part of ourselves to a significant degree because we become more aware of heaven.

Here is a story where I illustrate what we are discussing. A person in heaven is speaking.

I wasn't really ready for the angels in heaven. Sure, I knew about them, but seeing their variety and communicating so uniquely with them was something for which I was not prepared. However, I was ready for relating to the human citizens of heaven.

Through growing less and less attached to the things in my world before I died and came here, I saw enough of eternal life to fit right in from the start. I was able to see God's perspective more clearly as a result of seeing how much of my culture had captured me for lesser things than what truly mattered. This prepared me to relate with others here in heaven without self-focus – God's way of life.

In the ten years before I died and came here, I let the Holy Spirit reveal God's spiritual perspective about life. Much of what the world promoted became insignificant. I first noticed this when television shows and commercials seemed to be foreign. Before dying to the things of that world to be able to give sacrificially of my time and money for those in need around me, I loved to dream of having an expensive new car. The auto commercials fascinated me. Then, understanding eternity better, those commercials lost their appeal. And, so many of the programs I watched seemed hollow, like a culture in which I no longer lived.

[end of story]

Having let go of worldly values and adopted the values of heaven through obedience to the Bible's instruction to lay down our lives for one another, we will enter heaven ready to go. We will have left behind so much focus on ourselves and be free to focus on God, the other citizens of heaven, and new spiritual qualities of life that we have never experienced. If we have more of the values of eternal life when we get to heaven, it will feel more like we are coming home.

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There is more about dying for one another at our website ChristiansTogether.org. Just go down the list of the Togethers and click on: "Die for One Another".

Prayer to Embrace this Together

Dear Lord, I know that You are waiting for me to lose my life so that I can gain that life wherein You become more real and personal to my spirit. Help me place You as much, much more important than anything in this world.

I and those in my Christian Inner Circle will need Your help to grow our spirits to be able to more often lay down our lives for one another. Help us to yield to the work of the Holy Spirit for all of us to give You more glory in the way we live selflessly and risk reputation, financial security and pleasure when You ask us to for the benefit of one of Your children.

Please help us all to become more like Jesus by making life-altering sacrifices for one another, at least a few over our lifetimes. Help us, like Jesus, to live to serve You and to not hesitate to give up a few treasured things or experiences for Your glory and someone else's urgent need.

May our lives worship You more because we consider You completely worth sacrificing cherished parts of our lives for the good of others in times of emergency. Help us to hang on to You more than to things in our life when You need them for others.

Make us strong in Your power to defeat the devil so that we are able to delay, detour, or destroy some part of our lives to meet a crisis created when Satan attacks someone in our Christian Inner Circles. And, when we do lay down some aspect of our lives out of necessity for someone's need, fill us with joy rather than resentment.

Help us all to prepare for heaven by growing more completely to not be so concerned for ourselves. Watching out for ourselves will be unnecessary in heaven as, without sin, we are able to completely trust in You and depend on Your provision. Help us to be so aware of our eternal life and the life with You in heaven that the things of this world are not so important that we cannot give them up for a critical need of another Christian.

Help me to help those in my Christian Inner Circle be less attached to this world and its comforts. Allow me to help them enter further into eternal life which is life more in the spirit than in the flesh. Help me to help them lay down their lives for others.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.