

What Does It Mean To Live With an Eternal Perspective?

Sue Bohlin, who has been working on developing an eternal perspective for decades, provides some examples of how to do that.

Years ago, after spending his whole life on the mission field, a career missionary made his final trip home on a passenger ship. One of the other people on his sailing was a celebrity, and as the ship made its way into the harbor, all those on board beheld a huge throng of well wishers at the pier with signs and instruments to celebrate the famous person's return.

The missionary stood at the railing, watching wistfully, knowing that not a soul was there for him. He said, "Lord, I've served You my whole life. Look at all the recognition and revelry for that famous person, and there's nobody here for me. It hurts, Lord."

He heard the still, small voice say, "You're not home yet, son."

I love this story that helps me keep in mind the big picture that includes the eternal, unseen realm, and the long picture that extends into the forever that awaits on the other side of death.

But how do we *get* an eternal perspective?

Seeing the Unseen

As I've grown older, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 has become my new life verse:

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal

weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

We have to work at seeing the unseen and eternal. We do that with the eyes of our hearts. We do that by training ourselves to view everything through the lens of God's word.

I've been working at developing an eternal perspective for years. For me, it's about connecting the dots between earthly things and heavenly things.

I look at earthly things and wonder, "How does this connect to the spirit realm? How does this connect to what is unseen and eternal?" (For examples, look at [Glorious Morning Glories](#), [Back Infections and Heart Infections](#), [Cruise Ships, Roller Coasters and Attitudes](#), and [Blowing Past Greatness](#).)

Jesus' parables are the world's best examples of using the physical to provide understanding of the eternal. He was always connecting the dots between the things He was surrounded by—different types of soil, lost coins and sheep and sons, a wedding banquet—and explaining how these things related to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another aspect of seeing the unseen is staying aware of the fact that we live in a permanent battle zone of spiritual warfare. We have an enemy who hates us because He hates God, and is continually attacking us with lies and deceptions. When we forget that we live in a culture barraging us with anti-God anti-truth, it's like going out in our underwear, needlessly exposing ourselves. Living with an eternal perspective means staying vigilant, donning our spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:10-18) and using it to fight back against the lies of the enemy.

One of the most important prayers we can ask is, "Lord, help me see Your hand at work"—and then intentionally looking for

it. For years I have kept a “God Sightings” Journal where I record evidence of God intervening in my life and the lives of others I have seen. I love to ask my friends and mentees, “Do you have any God Sightings to share?” to help them identify the hand of God in their lives.

One final aspect of seeing the unseen is to remind ourselves that everything we can see, is going away. Everything we can see and measure is temporary and passing. So we need to think about what’s around us that is permanent and eternal, and invest in those things.

God.

People.

God’s word.

God’s work in people’s lives.

And the things we do to honor God and bless others. [Randy Alcorn writes](#), “With eternity in view, nearly any honest activity-whether building a shed, driving a bus, pruning trees, changing diapers or caring for a patient-can be an investment in God’s kingdom.”

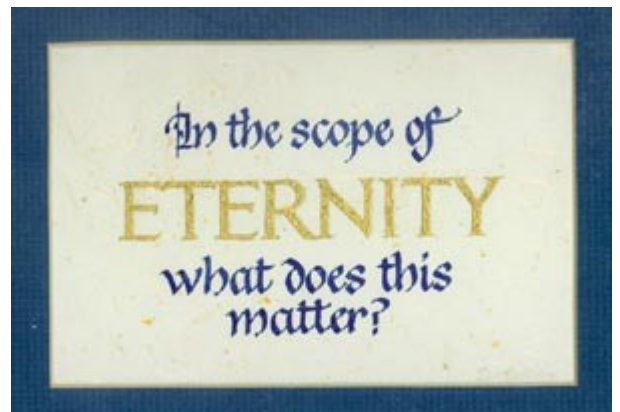
One of my friends is a TSA agent. She diligently reminds herself daily that every traveler who comes through the security line is infinitely valuable because they are made in the image of God, and Jesus died for them. She showers kindness on them because they are so important. One of her co-workers, for whom work is just a job where he punches a time clock, told her, “In two years you’ll stop being nice to everyone.” We don’t think so. She works at maintaining an eternal perspective, seeing the unseen, to the glory of God.

Remembering the Long View

Another aspect of living with an eternal perspective is focusing on the reality that our time on earth is short,

especially compared to the never-ending life on the other side of death.

Another one of my favorite questions is to ask, “A hundred years from now, when you are face to face with Jesus in heaven, what do you want to be glad you chose today? Indulging your flesh and doing whatever you think will make you happy, or making choices that honor God and bless other people?”



Several years ago I wrote a [blog post](#) about one of the power tools for our “life tool belt” that remains an essential part of my eternal perspective: passing everything through the grid of the great question, “In the scope of eternity, what does this matter?”

In the decades since I started asking that question, it’s still the best filter for deciding what’s worth getting upset about, and what to let go, and what to just roll over into the Lord’s hands.

Moses was very helpful for helping us develop an eternal perspective. He writes in Psalm 90:10, “Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures.” So we need to be sober about how much time we actually have. Then he writes a great prayer in verse 12 that helps us remember the long view: “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

So I did.

As of today, I have lived 24,500 days.

If I live to be 70, I have only 1,050 days left.

If I live to be 80, I have only 4,700 days left.

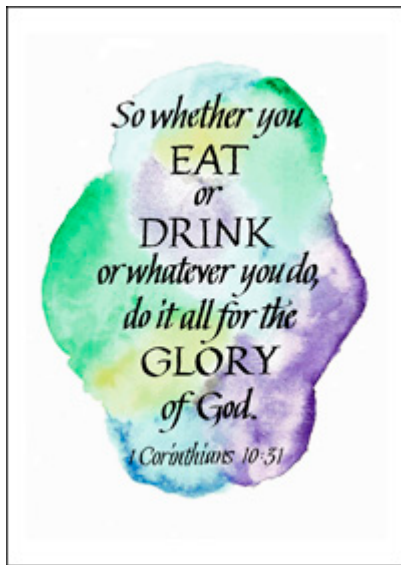
Oh my word, I have so much earthly work to do in a very short time, before my life continues on the other side! And I so want to grow older well.

One way to do that is to pre-decide now that we will use our earthly days fully, engaged in ministry, as long as God gives us breath.

Years ago, my view of living with an eternal perspective was shaped by a lady who decided to start college in her 70s. When they asked her why she would do such a thing when her life was basically over, she said, "Oh no! It's not over! I'm preparing for the next part of my life in heaven! The more equipped I can get on earth, the more ready I'll be for what the Lord has for me on the other side!"

Another lady was homebound because she was so disabled. She got the word out that every afternoon, her home was open for anyone who needed prayer. Some days it was like there was a revolving door, so many coming and going! She had a vibrant ministry in the waning days of her life because she was determined to use her remaining earthly days fully, to the glory of God.

In the time you have now, live well. To the glory of God. Keep reminding yourself that everything we do now has an eternal impact. Our choices, our behaviors, our words, ripple into eternity. Which is why we need to seek to do everything for the glory of God.



I lettered this calligraphy and put it in a frame in my kitchen next to the coffee maker so I see it and recite it to myself every morning.

Two great questions to consider: "Lord, in order to live well, in order to live to Your glory, with an eternal perspective, what do You want me to do less of in the time I have left? And what do You want me to do more of?"

As a mom of littles, Nicole Johnson was feeling sorry for herself when she met with a friend who had just returned from Europe. [She writes](#),

"My friend turned to me with a beautifully wrapped package, and said, 'I brought you this.' It was a book on the great cathedrals of Europe. I wasn't exactly sure why she'd given it to me until I read her inscription: 'With admiration for the greatness of what you are building when no one sees.'

"In the days ahead I would read—no, devour—the book. And I would discover what would become for me, four life-changing truths, after which I could pattern my work:

- "1) No one can say who built the great cathedrals—we have no record of their names.
- 2) These builders gave their whole lives for a work they would never see finished.

- 3) They made great sacrifices and expected no credit.
- 4) The passion of their building was fueled by their faith that the eyes of God saw everything.

“There’s a story in the book about a rich man who came to visit the cathedral while it was being built, and he saw a workman carving a tiny bird on the inside of a beam. He was puzzled and asked the man, ‘Why are you spending so much time carving that bird into a beam that will be covered by the roof? No one will ever see it.’

“And the workman replied, ‘Because God sees it.’”

Living with an eternal perspective as we make choices and invest our time to glorify God is like building a cathedral that we won’t be able to see finished.

But every “next faithful step” of the tasks in your life, is building something. The things you do that no one sees but God—the unseen and eternal—they matter!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/what-does-it-mean-to-live-with-an-eternal-perspective/ on March 17, 2021.

“Why Does God Create People Born Blind, Deaf, Etc.?”

Why does God create people who are born blind, deaf etc.? Why don’t they get a chance to live life the way others would?

The great thing about your question is that Jesus Himself

answered it! This account is found in John 9:1-3:

As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

God's got a plan for people born with a disability. In their weakness, He can display His strength, His goodness, and His grace. This passage was life-changing for Nick Vujicic, a young man born without arms or legs. After a time of despair-filled depression, he heard this passage and it was a major "light bulb moment" for him. It changed everything. Nick has grasped that the reason he was born without limbs was so that God could be glorified in him in a special way. Today, he is a life-changer in the lives of millions of people worldwide. Check out his website "Life Without Limbs" at www.lifewithoutlimbs.org Here's a YouTube video of Nick: www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8ZuKF3dxCY

Actually, this is not an abstract concept for me; because I was [crippled by polio](#) as an infant, I've lived my life as if I were born with a disability. It's not a matter of "their" weakness, but "our" weakness.

I respectfully suggest that the reason it's easy to put an inordinate amount of stress on the idea of living a "normal" life free of physical limitations is the culture's emphasis on the temporal, physical dimension of life. Consider 2 Cor 4:17-18:

"For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

When we ONLY look at "the seen," the temporal, we can forget

that the lasting, unseen realities outweigh them. I can promise you that since God has shown me that the limits of my physical life are only “momentary, light affliction” that are producing in me “an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,” it allows me to focus on the things that really matter—things like letting God shine His light through me. He has shown me that He has been using my disability to scoop out my soul and create a bigger place for Him to fill; that He balances my physically diminished capacity with a larger spiritual capacity—and I’ll take that trade any day!

Now, I do realize that not everyone born blind, dear, lame etc., turns in faith to Christ. Some people live their whole lives consumed by bitterness and anger at God for allowing them to be born that way. That is so sad, that they miss the opportunity to experience God redeeming their painful experience and turning it into something good and beautiful (in the unseen, eternal sphere).

I have written an article on our website called “The Value of Suffering,” that gives more reasons that God allows people to be born with disabilities and experience other kinds of suffering. I hope you will find it helpful in answering your question more fully:

Blessing you today,

Sue Bohlin

P.S. I just came across a phenomenal [blog post](#) by Randy Alcorn titled “Insights from a Precious Disabled Child of God.” He offers a short essay by a marvelously articulate 22-year-old woman. It’s one of the best things I’ve ever read.

Hearing God, and Sensing Life

Cass Harris 4/16/11

As I stood on the beach near my home in Alaska, taking in God’s creation, knowing full well that my precious Audience

of One had my heart completely, I couldn't help but remember.

God had never been silent in my life. At 10 months I was diagnosed with a mild case of cerebral palsy. Too early to tell all the implications, the doctor gave my mother and father the gravest of warnings. Known debilitations were the inability to talk, walk, comprehend, eat on my own, use my hands; the list was endless. There was also a possibility of epilepsy, but no one wanted to acknowledge that. So, being the people of faith that they were, my parents did the only thing they knew to do. They thanked the physician, took me home and prayed like crazy that they'd know how to raise a special needs child.

As it turned out, my cerebral palsy wasn't nearly as bad as—according to the doctors—it should've been. My speech abilities left something to be desired, but I was communicating. My entire right side was two times weaker and smaller than my left, but I was walking. I'd never use my right hand as a hand I could depend on, but I could move it. I misunderstood numbers, but I could comprehend the tools given me to overcome that. The dreaded epilepsy turned into a reality when I was 12, and by the time I was 16, I'd already undergone three brain surgeries to 'fix' the disorder. In all, my life was an unsung miracle. At least among most humans.

If there's anything I've learned as a disabled individual, it's that the quantity of misinformed or ignorant individuals is never ending. And on top of that, as sweet as they may come across, those people are the ones that talk and squawk the loudest. My heart was totally God's, but they had no problem questioning that. And they had no problem testing their boundaries of information in front of my very innocent and sensitive heart.

“So! Cerebral palsy, huh? Did you know that as recently as

1985 they still left kids like you in caves to die in parts of the world?!" The fact that I was born in '89 made that 'fact' even more fun to spout.

"It's too bad that your parents didn't catch the fact that you had cerebral palsy and epilepsy before you were born. Would've been so much easier on your parents to just try again, rather than stand by and watch you suffer through so much. You really are proof that abortion is merciful!"

Of all the insults, and all the "well-intentioned fact spewing," the merciful abortion line got to me the most. What God did they think they understood when they sweetly put the words "merciful" and "abortion" in the same sentence?!

As many disabled Christians will tell you; by the grace of God, having a disability, at times, is just a fast track to understanding His heart. When the rest of the world can rely on intelligent authors to explain heart issues; or motivational speakers to get them out of a funk, there isn't a known formula to explain away and comfort life-long rejection just because you don't look right. Sure, parents can give you love and support. And yes, friendship is still very possible, but, the only One that can truly make such pain worth living through is my Lord.

I remember the times that I'd brokenly inquired and cried out to God about how to handle the fact that my young heart felt as if the entire world just wanted me aborted; only because of two or three sweet yet ignorant individuals. I also remember feeling God's arm around me, rocking me to sleep after a mind-numbing seizure and my thought that "maybe abortion *would've been a Godsend!*"

His answer was simple, but amazingly just the thing that my broken heart had needed at the time. And to this day, at almost 22 years old, I still remember smiling as I heard Him

explain.

“Child, your heart breaks because you only hear the fact that people are trying to reason away their moral mistakes by making it logical; and you’re the perfect subject. My heart breaks, however, because in announcing that they think abortion is merciful, they are telling **ME** that they believe I wasn’t involved in your creation. That I somehow turned my back while you were being created, and when I looked at you again, there was an irreversible mistake that I could just hope one of my other creations would step in and fix themselves.

“What they don’t seem to understand is that the precious ones they decide they should have aborted, are the ones that I created exactly that way for a reason. Although I love each creation, I also love the fact that there are some where their hearts are 20 times stronger than their bodies, and I can give them tasks that I would never give someone who is what some may deem perfect.

“My Precious Little One, I made you this way because I love you. I knew that your strong will, crazy adventurous heart and love for people would have been amazing tools used to make you forget me if you had the chance. And although you still walked away for a time, and didn’t hear or see me, you remembered the fellowship we were perfecting within your imperfections—not outside of them.

“Abortion? Why would you ever take the chance away to see just how deep My love goes, just because you want to ‘try again.’ My sweet Baby Girl, I knew what I was doing when I allowed your mama to carry you in her womb the way she did. I saw the pain she went through, and I had one hand on your little head, and the other hand held your heart, the entire time.

“You’re my beloved, my child. And I wanted you here. Don’t

let the world tell you otherwise.”

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