

Lesson 16

How to Live Forever

Group Icebreaker:

Have you ever become lost trying to get to a new destination? If so, describe the steps you took after becoming lost in order to get to your destination.

Introduction:

In the previous lesson Jesus began teaching His disciples about spiritual discernment. He wants them to discover and apply spiritual truths. *In this lesson . . .* He is pressing them to spiritually discern how to live forever.

Living life forever or “eternal life” encompasses more than just **how** a person gets “saved” and goes to heaven. It’s the **manner** in which a person lives life eternally. It’s how God sees life being lived. The Hebraic mindset of this is, that as long as man has breath he has life. And for as long as he has breath he should live a life that is honoring to God, because God is the creator and sustainer of his life. The concept that man lives one way while on earth and another way when he “gets to heaven” does not exist.

After teaching the disciples what living the “eternal life” is like (not being angry with your brother, being faithful, letting your yes be yes, praying, forgiving, etc.) Jesus returns to His main point. *“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*¹ In rapid-fire succession Jesus issues five commands that leave His hearers with clues on gaining entrance into the kingdom of heaven.²

Reading the Scripture:

How to Live Forever The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 7:7-14

Scripture excerpts from “Follow Me: A Message from God”

Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will he give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

The Commands:

- ❖ Ask, and it shall be given to you.

¹ Matthew 5:20

² The terms “Kingdom of Heaven” and “Kingdom of God” are identical and can be used interchangeably. Both simply means, “the place where God rules.” A more in depth discussion on the Kingdom of God or Kingdom or Heaven is in the introduction to Lesson 18.

- ❖ Seek, and you shall find.
- ❖ Knock, and it shall be opened to you.
- ❖ However you want people to treat you, so treat them.
- ❖ Enter by the narrow gate.

The Lesson:

Upon first reading Matthew 7:7-14, it appears that Jesus is talking about three different subjects: prayer, the Golden Rule, and entrance into the narrow gate that leads to life.³ However, upon reflection, a larger picture comes into view. It is a summary of how people should live life from God’s perspective. How to live forever has a starting point, a route and a destination.

Sometimes by substituting a natural example, a spiritual one is more easily understood. So we will use the following illustration. When people want to go to someone’s house that they’ve never been to before, they first **ask** for directions. Secondly, they **seek** to follow the directions. Some people will take a map along in case they get lost or confused about the directions. Others take their cell phones! And finally upon arrival at the individual’s home, they **knock** to gain entrance.

Jesus said that the first step towards how to live forever is to **ask** for directions. He then states that the one to ask is God, the Father. Jesus assures His hearers that everyone who asks God will receive, because God is good. “*Ask and it shall be given to you.*” James 1:5 also says, “*But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*”

It is also implied but not stated that someone besides God might be asked for directions on how to live forever, since there are two ways, two gates and two destinations being compared. Asking God for directions shows that a person has a right heart, one that is filled with faith and is dependent upon God’s provisions.

The second step is to **seek** to follow the directions or “the way” to the destination. Jesus makes the directions or “the way” to the destination quite easy to understand: *Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.* By treating others this way proves that a person has right thinking, he considers others equal to himself and is not hindered by pride. It is the narrow way! Jesus assures His hearers that everyone who seeks to follow these directions or find the narrow way will do so. “*Seek and you shall find.*”

The final step is to enter through the correct gate or door. Jesus indicates that there are two gates or doors through which men may pass. One leads to life eternal, the other to destruction. Jesus tells His disciples that they must enter the narrow gate if they want to live forever, otherwise they will be destroyed. The narrow gate is only the width of a man and one person at a time may enter it. That gate is Jesus! In John 10:9 Jesus declares, “*I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*” To anyone who **knocks** on Jesus’ door . . . He will open it.

All the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are involved in helping people live forever. The Father gives the way, the Holy Spirit leads the way, and the Son opens the door. The directions for living forever are simple: 1) depend on God, 2) follow the Holy Spirit and 3) go through Jesus. To make it easier God provides a road map called the Bible in case people get lost. He also stations other people along the way to redirect the steps of those who get off the route. They are

³ These individual subjects are dealt with in other lessons.

called apostles, prophets, *evangelists*, pastors and teachers. And if those things weren't enough, God sent the Holy Spirit to live inside His people, so they would have a direct line of communication to Him.

There are other conclusions that can be drawn from Jesus' lesson on living forever. If a person doesn't ask the Father for the directions on how to live, he will only discover what others believe the way to live is. Of course those people haven't lived forever, didn't create this world and certainly don't have an eternal perspective, so how would they know the way? Their way is broad and easy to find.

People are followers. Like sheep, they will follow a shepherd to safety and pasture. But they will also follow a goat to slaughter. Jesus said He was the good shepherd and sent the Holy Spirit to lead and guide His flock. He also gave them His commandments and godly people to assist them along the way. The goat (Satan) on the other hand wants people to go the way of the world and uses false prophets and false teachers to deceive them.

Life without end is gained by entering one of two gates, a narrow one or a wide one. Jesus said He was the narrow gate (door) of the sheep. And in John 6:37 Jesus said, *"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."* On the other hand, the wide gate leads to destruction. It is well advertised, easy to find and many people can get through it at one time.

An analogy of the two gates can be drawn from the world we currently live in. The gate that leads to destruction can be compared to the entrances of movie theaters, amusement parks, and sporting events. The crowds are huge, people are pressing to get in and many can enter at one time. On the other hand the gate that leads to eternal life can be compared to the entrances of homes. The crowds are sparse, no one stands in line and usually one at a time goes in.

The gate that leads to eternal life is small in comparison to the gate that leads to destruction and there are few who find it. However, many people can enter through a narrow gate over a long period of time. And the gate can become busier and easier to find when those who have once entered it show others the way to the gate.

Group Discussion:

1. What clues does a person leave when they are lost?
2. What is your response to people who are lost or going the wrong way?
3. What do you think God needs to do in order to get more people saved?
4. What could God do that would make **you** more effective at showing the lost how to live eternally?

The Point of the Lesson:

If you want to get to a new destination follow the instructions of those who have been there before.

Application:

Pray for the thing that you need from God that will make you more effective at showing the lost how to live eternally.