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INTRODUCTION

Wouldn't it be incredible if you could see life from heaven's perspective, even for just one day? I believe that one day would change the rest of your life. If you could walk with Jesus and ask him, "Lord, what are you up to? And how can I help out while I'm here on earth?" The answer to that question alone would set your life on a whole new course. But that's only the beginning; after all, you have the whole day! It would be the best-spent day of your life.

Well, here is the opportunity to do something like that. This is a book that can literally change your life if you let it. Learning to think the way heaven thinks is the most important transformation that can happen in anyone's life. The ability to think clearly affects everything about us. In essence, you are as you think. This wonderful and mysterious ability is the part of us that has been made in the image of God. And so it is the part of us that Satan seeks most to destroy.

I am convinced that the enemy has done everything in his power to keep this book out of your hands. But for whatever reason, he has not succeeded. You are well on your way to doing something that will mark a before and after period in your life. I feel so

strongly about this I would encourage you to pray before each reading, asking the Lord Jesus Christ to open the eyes of your heart to the message of each chapter. In fact, *I don't recommend reading this whole book in a single day!* The subject matter is too serious and important to be hurried through. So take your time. One or two chapters a day is a good pace.

The *Leader's Edition* is designed to be used along with the shorter *Class Edition*. The latter has condensed chapters and a study guide for use in discipleship groups, Sunday school classes, and house-church fellowships. The *Leader's Edition* goes into more depth and will be helpful to facilitators.

Finally, I would love to hear from you. Let me know what happens and how I can be praying for you (ev@finishthetask.org). We are in this together and soon we will be standing before him, face to face, in all his glory. Let us press ever onward toward that day and work to see it come! (2 Pet. 3:12).

David Taylor
January 2005

CHAPTER ONE



GETTING PERSPECTIVE

*“Take hold of the eternal life to
which you were called.” (1 Tim. 6:12)*

What is the most important thing I can do *now* as a follower of Jesus that I can never do again throughout *eternity*?

Have you ever asked yourself this question? It is perhaps the most important question you can ask yourself at the present time. In Christ, I have all the time of eternity to do an endless number of things. All my dreams and desires will be fully met far beyond what I could ever imagine possible. But is there something I must do *now* for Jesus that I will never be able to do again? Is this one thing the priority of my life, is it my passion and heart’s desire, or could it be that I am missing out on what might be the most incredible opportunity I will ever be given?

That is the idea behind this book, and I think you will be amazed at how much Scripture has to say about it. In the span of eternity our presence in time is but a tiny blip on the screen. But where we are in eternal history is far more significant than we could ever understand or appreciate. All time before us and all eternity ahead of us will point to the time in which we are now living. Incredible as it

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may seem, according to Scripture, we have been given the opportunity to participate in the last battle of the last war that *eternal* history will ever know.

Opening our eyes to this reality was the number one thing Jesus came to accomplish. He came to set us free through an act of love never before witnessed in any previous age and never to be repeated again. He was sent to refocus our vision, to deliver us from demonic bondage, and to build an army of the Kingdom with one very focused mission: to bring about an absolute and final end to Satan's rebellion and influence in this universe.

With this in mind, it should come as no surprise that Satan also has one objective for you and one standing order for all of his demons. His goal for you is simple: *Just stay out of the action*. Don't move. Stay put. Keep quiet and keep the TV guide handy. The greatest tragedy that can happen to any believer is to go through life and not recognize the time in which he lives—like someone from the 10th century walking around on the streets of Manhattan today without a clue what's going on. In the same way, Satan doesn't want you to recognize your place in eternal history.

Scripture tells us Satan is filled with fury because he knows his time is getting short (Rev. 12:12). Jesus told us an "end" is coming, and there is no more frightening prospect for the enemy than this impending reality. It is the end of a heavenly rebellion that has ravaged the lives of billions over the centuries and continues to this day. But according to Scripture, it is coming to an end, and you and I as followers of Jesus have a unique and urgent assignment in this final campaign. For there is one reason and *one reason only* why Jesus has not returned up until this moment. He said, "This gospel of the kingdom *will be* preached and *must first* be preached in all the world as a testimony to all nations *and then* the end will come" (Mt. 24:14;

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Mk. 13:10). The last battle of the last war that eternal history will ever know centers on the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Indeed, this *is* the last battle!

Now depending on where you stand, this can be a very exciting reality. The Bible doesn't tell us how long Satan has been in rebellion against God, but it does tell us his days are coming to a rapid and final ending. And that is why you and I, if we consider ourselves followers of Jesus, are Satan's greatest enemy and worst nightmare. Coming to understand this, and learning to see your life in the context of this heavenly war, is the most important thing that can happen to any believer at the present time.

Without a doubt, opportunity is winding down for the enemy. But for us it is just beginning. We are on the verge of something so incredible it will forever divide eternal history like B.C. and A.D. Generations before us have looked forward to our day and have longed to see it come. They are watching us from above and cheering us on. They are in the stands and they are rising to their feet. The roar of their triumph is deafening as the finish line comes closer into view. The final trumpeter is moistening his lips and filling up his lungs. And there at the end, an angel stands ready with a massive chain. With it he will bind the authority and power of Satan and cast him into the lake of fire.

WE ARE WINNING!

The most exciting reality of our day is how close we are to fulfilling the Great Commission. No other generation has been as close as we are today. Now as never before, it is especially critical that each of us pay careful attention to what is happening in our world. We need to be alert and focused, ready and waiting, prepared and willing to

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go anywhere and do anything that might be necessary to finish the task of world evangelization.

Now we are all very busy people. We have errands to run, people to answer to, bills to pay, and a whole shopping list of things we may never get around to unless we get a fully paid vacation for two years. We all know the feeling. Sometimes life itself is just too overwhelming to think about anything beyond just getting by. But we need to wake up and realize what's going on. Satan wants our eyes focused on things that seem urgent, but don't really matter.

Jesus is inviting us to a celebration, a wedding feast. Like the wedding he told us about 2,000 years ago, many people are too busy to make it (Matt. 22:1-14). And some people who would like to be there aren't getting ready. They had many excuses back then. Much like today. I'll learn to pray *tomorrow*. I'll get into the Word *after work*. I'll start supporting missionaries *when I can afford it*. I'll just be a missionary where I am and *hope someone notices*.

The sad thing is, these people won't have much to celebrate on that awesome day when Jesus comes to take us home. What an awkward bunch they will be, as they are called to celebrate something they had nothing to do with! Jesus warned us that these people would be called "least in the kingdom of heaven," for they disregarded his commands and lived as they pleased (Matt. 5:19).

Scripture clearly warns us about two kinds of believers who will be living in the end-times. Jesus told a parable about ten virgins who were awaiting the coming of the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1-13). They were people like us. They read the signs of the times, they understood his coming was near, but some of them were getting ready and others were not. Some of them were filling up on the oil of the Holy Spirit, and others were hoping to just get by on what they had and take from the others if they needed it. But it didn't work out

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that way. They were gambling with eternity and the odds were against them, infinity to one. For in the end, the issue is not how much you know about his coming, or how many books you have purchased on the subject, but the issue is, *What are you actually doing about it?*

We live in an age where the second coming of Christ is one of the hottest topics around. It's not surprising because the signs of the times are everywhere. Turning on the news is like reading Scripture. The eyes of the whole world are focused on Israel, just like the Bible said they would be in the end-times. The nations surrounding Israel are preparing for war against her, just as the Bible said would happen (Zec. 14:2). But at the same time, something else is happening—exactly as was promised. This you may not read about in the news. But all over the world, the Great Commission is rapidly being completed. Breakthroughs into new areas and untouched regions, languages and peoples are happening at a speed never before seen in any other generation.

Yet the amazing thing is, this great progress, which is the most exciting thing going on in our generation, is being organized and implemented by a relatively small minority of believers. Only a few are aware of this great achievement and even less are actually participating in it. Remarkably, only a fraction of those who claim to follow Jesus are on board with his program for this generation.

However, this should not surprise us. Jesus told us it would be like this. He asked his disciples, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). It's a good question, because we live in an age of great paradox. We believe Jesus is coming soon, but so many don't have a clue what that means for their lives. Like the ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom, many are running out of oil and they don't even recognize it.

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George Barna, a well-respected Church researcher of many years, just concluded another study of evangelicals in America. His findings show evangelicals declining in America from 12% ten years ago to 5% today. Now this does not mean there are less people going to church. People are still in the pews and still warming benches. But what it does mean is that people who believe in basic scriptural principles, such as Jesus being the only way to salvation, are rapidly decreasing in number.¹

The “love of many” is growing colder as the days grow steadily more evil and the remaining hours slip fast away before our Lord’s second coming. The enemy is waging war against our capacity to fulfill the Great Commission as never before. In the subtlest ways possible, he is gradually eroding the foundations of holiness, purity and faithfulness to the Word of God. He has only one objective and that is to shut us down altogether. He doesn’t care about anything else. He knows exactly what awaits him when the Great Commission is finished. He has only one focus and he will never lose it. Can you just imagine what it might be like to work for this guy? Imagine the intensity of someone who is fighting to escape eternal judgment and his end is only moments away!

There is no doubt in my mind that Satan takes the Great Commission far more seriously than we do. Millions of people have bought into his lie that the lost are going to be okay. Millions of believers have written off the Great Commission as a relic from the past. Millions have succumbed to the brain washing of a cleverly organized campaign to eliminate from our hearts and minds any passion for those who are perishing. We have told ourselves, “They’re going to be okay. There is good in every religion. Don’t they all believe in God anyway? You know if I were God I would find a way to save everybody. What’s so hard about that?”

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But here is what the Bible says and I would encourage you to memorize this. These are the words of Jesus to the apostle Paul. These words will rise up and come to life and they will accuse many in this generation. Jesus said:

“I am sending you to them
to open their eyes and turn them
from *darkness to light*
and from the *power of Satan to God*,
so that they might *receive forgiveness* of sins
and a place among those
who are sanctified by *faith in me.*”
(Acts 26:17-18)

From this heavenly mandate we can learn three important things. First, the lost *are* in darkness. Second, as if that were not enough, the lost *remain* under the power of Satan. And third, the whole reason we are being sent, the whole purpose of our going, is so that—and mark those words—*so that* they might receive forgiveness of sins. The Great Commission is not an option. It is a rescue operation where the lives of billions are at stake. It’s the only priority we’ve been given and if it’s not your top priority, you need to ask yourself *why not* and *whose program am I following?*

NEW VISION

I once asked a friend, “If you could go to heaven and ask God one question, what would it be?” Immediately she replied, “I would ask him what I am supposed to do with my life.” What an awesome heart! I think everyone would like a clear answer to that question (well, I hope so anyway). And while I can’t tell you specifically what

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God has planned for you, I know this much, until we enter into eternity, God's plan for you will involve your participation in fulfilling the Great Commission and preparing the way for his coming. It's the only thing on the agenda!

The Kingdom's objective for our time is not a mystery. It is clear and focused: every person in every language, tribe and nation must be given an opportunity to say *Yes* to Jesus and become his disciple. Therefore, if you are in the Kingdom this is your mission statement also. The issue is not whether you are to be involved, but *how*.

Since God is our commander, he is the one who will be setting up opportunities for each believer to make the greatest impact possible in bringing the gospel to all people, everywhere. If we want to be effective for Jesus we have to think in these terms:

How can I use the gifts God has given me,
combined with the opportunities he has opened up,
to further the *completion* of the Great Commission
in the *greatest* possible way?

If this becomes the focus of your life, no matter where you are, you will make an eternal difference. Most people miss out because they refuse to ask the question. They refuse to put Jesus on the throne of their life. They simply don't want to find out. But what a sad way to blow off the most incredible moment of your eternal life in Christ!

The fact is, these are very exciting times to be alive. You don't want to be left out! Most people don't understand or aren't aware of the significant things that are going on all over the world to "hasten his coming" (2 Pet. 3:12). We have to ask God to open our eyes and lift them up to the harvest fields. Did you know that we are in the

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midst of the greatest harvest the world has ever known? More ethnic groups have seen the Church established among them in the 20th century than in all other centuries combined! This is a very frightening reality for the Devil. But very exciting for us! It means we are close. *Very close*. For the first time in history we are only a few years away from seeing the gospel proclaimed in every nation, tribe and tongue. Jesus said this *will* happen. He said not only will this happen, but it *must* happen before the end can come (Mt. 24:14; Mk. 13:10). Everyone in the final generation before the Lord's return will be given an opportunity to give their lives to Jesus.

That final generation may very well be the one we are living in today. The signs of the times are exciting. The gospel is accelerating with tremendous speed in a way that no other generation has ever witnessed. In the first century after Christ there were 400 unbelievers for every one believer. Today there are only 10 unbelievers for every one believer! Most people find this hard to believe. But it's true. There are over 550 million evangelical Christians in the world today. 90% of these live in the non-western world and are the result of missionary efforts over the last century. This means that believers are now strategically spread out all over the world. They live in every country and major city, and speak a total of over 4,000 languages. Close to 300 million evangelicals have come to Christ as a direct result of missionary sending all over the world. And while this is tremendous, we must keep in mind that much remains to be done. There is still an urgent and costly rescue operation under way and the lives of billions are at stake.²

In our world today, there are 2.7 billion persons who live with virtually no access to the gospel. They live among the least evangelized peoples of the world—receiving the least amount of organized missionary effort. In a region known as the 10/40 Window (so

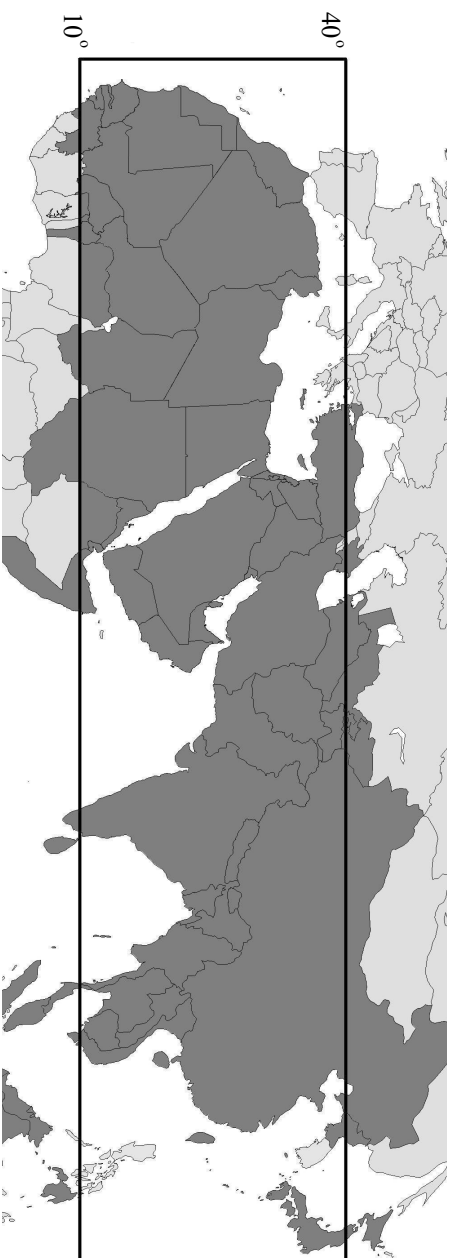
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called because it is between ten and forty degrees latitude—see map), 1.3 billion Muslims, 800 million Hindus and 500 million Buddhists live in absolute darkness and Satanic bondage. Missionaries have identified close to 2,000 tribes and ethnic groups that have yet to see a disciple-making movement established among them. In India alone there are over 500,000 villages without a church. They have never heard of Jesus, they don't know what he has done for them, and unless someone goes they will never know. Among those in the 10/40 Window, fifty thousand people will die every day, most of whom never had someone come live among them to share Christ's love.³

In almost every country in the 10/40 Window, missionary work is greatly restricted. You can't show up in these countries and say, "I'm here to tell your people about Jesus—the only way, the truth and the life." *Visa denied! Confiscate his luggage and put this guy back on the plane!* In many countries it's illegal to share your faith. In over a dozen countries, Christians are greatly persecuted and many are imprisoned for following Christ. But in all of these countries the gospel is being preached. The Holy Spirit is working. And you can be a part of it on your knees in prayer and intercession, and perhaps one day, if the Lord opens the door, by going in a creative way to let the light of Christ shine through you in a land of great darkness.

There is a war going on and the lives of billions are at stake. This is not the time for timidity. This is not the time for living in comfort and security. This is the time for risking everything to rescue those for whom Christ died. This is the eternal moment for being willing to go anywhere and do anything for the sake of the Kingdom. This is *not* the occasion for saving one's life. I often wonder, "What exactly are people saving their lives for anyway?" What a shock it must be that death comes just the same! This is the *only* opportunity you

10/40 WINDOW



- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 90% of the least evangelized | 1.3 billion Muslims |
| 50,000 die every day without Christ | 800 million Hindus |
| 85% of the poorest of the poor | 500 million Buddhists |
| 90% of the world's "restricted" countries | 2,000 least-evangelized ethnic groups |



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will *ever* have to give your life away for the sake of the One who gave up everything that all men might be saved.

So let's ask ourselves: what exactly is *our* responsibility to those in our generation? Or to put it another way, what is *my* responsibility, now that I have been rescued, to seek out others who might also need rescuing? I believe the answer is obvious to anyone with a listening heart. Quite simply, we are not only called, but we are quite *able* to reach all of them. There is no reason why we cannot give every person in this generation a personal invitation to become a follower of Jesus.

So why don't we? If Jesus were walking among us today, where might he lead us? What might he ask of us? If the apostle Paul were here today, what might he be doing—where might we find him? You might look for him in the jungles of Indonesia, searching with determination for that lost tribe. You might catch him cruising the Ganges River into the heartland of India, on his way to some unevangelized Hindu village. Who knows, he might even be dodging bullets in an inner city school. He said, "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known" (Rom. 15:20). And he lived his life to the very end like these words really mattered. May his prayer and his life's ambition become the heart-cry of this generation!

CHAPTER TWO



STAYING FOCUSED

*“I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which
God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:14)*

The closer we get to the end, the closer we need to pay attention to our Heavenly Coach. If you’ve ever played on a championship team, or had the privilege of coaching one, you know what this means. The final few moments of a game can be the most crucial. Each player needs to stay focused and work as a unit with the others. In the midst of all the pressure, and in spite of any surprises, a winning team has to keep it together and focus on the game plan. The job of the coach is to make sure that happens.

Jesus did something like this with his team in Matthew 24, just two days before he would go to the cross. His disciples asked a good question. “Tell us,” they said, “what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3). Notice they were not looking for “the signs” (plural), but *the sign* (singular). They wanted something so clear, no one could possibly miss it.

So Jesus took the opportunity to give them a glimpse into the

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future. He spoke directly to a generation that would be living in the last days and he made it clear what their world would be like. In a way, his words are even more relevant today than they were two thousand years ago. The description he gave us has proven to be accurate in every detail. Pick up any newspaper on any given day and you will practically be reading a description from Matthew 24. Violence fills the headlines. Terror, uncertainty, and natural disasters fill all the earth. Injustice prevails. Evil men have their way. Christians are being hounded, persecuted and martyred in dozens of countries.

Now to the triumph-seeking disciples, this may have sounded a little disappointing. But a perfect world was *not* the sign he gave them. He left his disciples no grand illusions of creating a utopian world, free of disease, suffering and war. Rather, he said wicked and evil men would triumph until the end. The love of many would grow cold. There would be famines, civil unrest and international turmoil up until the last moment of the final hour of the final day (Matt. 24:6-8).

But then in the middle of all this, Jesus stops and gives a warning. He adds, "See to it that you are not alarmed. Such things much happen, but the end is still to come" (v. 6). In other words, these things are not the main event. In fact, they are the distractions. Or to put it like a football coach might say it, "Whatever happens out there, keep your eye on the ball. Watch for the diversions. Stick to the game plan."

In the same way, Jesus wanted his disciples to remain focused. They would not be able to stop the terrible things coming in the days ahead. But just the same, they were not to bury themselves in underground bunkers and disappear. They had a job to do, a special focus to keep until the end. And so as requested, they were given a clear and definite sign that would guide them to the finish:

STAYING FOCUSED

THE SIGN OF THE TIMES

This gospel of the Kingdom *will be* preached,
and *must first be* preached,
in all the world as a testimony to all nations
and then the end will come.
(Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)

The sign Jesus left his disciples was the fulfillment of the Great Commission. It was like a measuring stick that would let us know how close we were to the end. This assignment had to be completed, and then, and only then, would he return. In effect, Jesus was throwing the ball back in their court. He was saying, “Finish what I’ve started and I’ll be back.” In other words, *Don’t wait around for the end—get out there and do something about it!*

Certainly there will be famines and earthquakes and wars (and every generation can point to such things). But the final stroke on heaven’s end-time clock will be something so unique, no other generation can claim it. The result will be a great multitude that no one can count—from every “nation, tribe, people and language”—standing before the throne, worshiping the Lamb (Rev. 7:9).

Everything else that we do will perish. All other endeavors will be forgotten. All else will fail. But not the Great Commission. It is the *only* assignment we’ve been given to *complete*. That is why Scripture says we are to “look forward to the day of God and *speed its coming*” (2 Pet. 3:12).

Now this priority focus does not exempt us from speaking out against evil and fighting injustice wherever we find it. We should, and we must, oppose every work of the evil one. But we must always keep the big picture in perspective. We must not be distracted from doing the one thing which *only we can do*. Our assignment is to

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go make disciples of all nations. The World Health Organization is not going to do this for us, nor is the United Nations. *Nor can they.* What's more, these organizations will not succeed in eradicating poverty, disease, injustice and war. As long as Satan is on the loose, as long as people are under his control and living under the curse of sin, this world will go from bad to worse. We live in a condemned world that awaits a final judgment from the Lord. Our only lasting hope is his return. He is the only one who will give us a "a new heaven and a new earth." Not the United Nations. Not the European Union. And certainly not the Americans!

Jesus will return the moment his global mission is completed. This means the timetables of history have been turning in perfect alignment with our obedience and faithfulness to the Great Commission. Two thousand years ago this assignment was given, and true believers in Christ have come a long way in fulfilling it. The finish line is well within view, and his coming has never seemed so close. We all know it and feel it. But how many, I wonder, are actually doing something about it? How many are in the race, running faithfully to the end? And how many are merely spectating, with popcorn and binoculars in hand?

The truth is, most of us still need to wake up, take a deep breath, and smell planet earth. The place is rotten to the core, but how many have become accustomed to the stench! We need to pull ourselves together and get on board with God's program for this generation. This is not a time for wondering. It's a time for knowing. We need to recognize why we're here and get moving with that purpose.

If the love of many is sure to grow cold before the end, we ought to make sure we are white hot and getting hotter. All of us need to seriously re-examine the direction our lives are headed in



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and cut out all distractions, hindrances and foolish desires. As time begins to run out for this world, we need to keep our eyes on Jesus and find out what he wants done. We need to ask and we need to listen. We need to remember what this place is all about and how we ought to live in light of his soon coming. We need to protect our eternal vision by living holy lives and learning to pray in faith and perseverance. We need to remember who we are and what we've been called to be, and why it matters.

REMEMBERING WHERE WE ARE

Heaven's Hall of Fame is filled with people who came to understand where they were living and who made up their minds to live accordingly. Trapped in enemy occupied territory, they refused to cower beneath the radar, but instead they resolved to resist and fight and pursue the enemy. Think of Hitler's Nazi Germany or Stalin's communist regime, and you're just getting warm. What might it mean to live in such places as a follower of Jesus?

It's a challenging question, because the world we live in, when viewed through spiritual lenses, makes Nazi Germany look like a walk in the park. Hitler in his worst moments could never have conceived what Satan and his demons do to billions of people all over the world, day and night without pause or mercy. If only we could see our world the way heaven sees it, even for a brief moment, we could never go about our lives, business as usual. We would be immediately challenged to join in heaven's rescue operation and engage the enemy, though it cost us all we possess. We would be compelled to set aside all other ambitions and desires, personal plans and petty agendas, and fight hard until the last battle was won and the Great Commission was finally finished.

The Bible tells the story of such people, who saw this world for

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what it was, and who refused to ignore or set aside the implications of this reality for their lives. Scripture says, “They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, *destitute, persecuted and mistreated*. They wandered in deserts and mountains and in caves and holes in the ground” (Heb. 11:37-38).

The great missionary Paul said of himself and his fellow believers, “To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless . . . up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth and the refuse of the world” (1 Cor. 4:11-13). I don’t know about you, but I think we have a lot to learn about what it means to follow Jesus. If this were the description on the wanted ad, how many today would sign up? Can we really identify with these guys? Would they feel at ease with our modern, comfortable Christianity?

Somehow these guys just got it. They saw the oppression. They heard the cries. They felt the suffering of those around them. They knew exactly where they were and what mattered most in a place like this. They chose to understand it. They lived in a reality that very few, even today, remotely understand. They saw the spiritual barbwire, the invisible watchtowers, and the shrouded prison guards. They smelled the stench of death all around them. They saw this world as a Satanic controlled prisoner-of-war camp, where the only thing that mattered was resistance against the enemy and rescuing those within. There was nothing else to live or die for. Only one struggle. One purpose. One mission. One rescue operation.

So the question begs itself to be asked, *are there really two kinds of believers?* Those who work hard and those who take it easy? Those who risk their lives and those who shrink back? Those who fight against the tyranny of this evil age and those who comply with it?

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What does Scripture mean when it says, “*Everyone* who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus *will be* persecuted?” (2 Tim. 3:12). Is there something about truly following Jesus that demands a life of conflict with the world? Are we all called to the same fellowship as those who went before us and refused to settle down here? Those who *could not* close their eyes and shut their ears to a world that was dying? Is God still calling? Is he calling me? Is he calling you?

During World War II, Americans were asked to consecrate themselves to a *wartime lifestyle*. Not everyone could make it out to the frontlines, but each had a part to play. They were asked to buy war bonds, grow Victory Gardens, and conserve metal and rubber. Families bought world maps and put them up in their dining rooms. Each night they would listen to the radio and get the latest reports, placing pins on the map to mark the progress of the Allied efforts. They were asked to send their sons and daughters. They were asked to pray. They were asked to volunteer. It was an all-out mobilization effort to stop a madman from enslaving the world.

I think that’s a great example of how we are called to live today as followers of Jesus. We have become members of a Kingdom that has launched a full-scale assault against the forces of darkness. We are in a war like no other, and our lives must reflect that reality. We can’t just spend money any way we like. We can’t just take a break for ten years and let others pick up the slack. We can’t just use our talents as if they were ours to gamble. We’re gambling with people’s lives! During WWII the entire country mobilized for war because they understood what was at stake. Every industry, every scrap of metal, every skill was subject to the urgency of the cause. Signs on the highways read, “Is this trip really necessary?” People would confront each other if they saw something out of line and say, “Hey, don’t you know there’s a war on?”

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We can learn a lot from this period about how Jesus intended his disciples to live and think. Jesus came to put an end to a rebellion that has enslaved the lives of billions of people. Signing up to follow Jesus is signing up to fight in this cause. Wherever there are people created for worship who are being held captive by Satan's dark regime, that's where the cause is and that's where we're headed. It's a full-scale mobilization of all that is required to rescue as many people as possible and get out of here before this world heads into its final meltdown. It's as simple as that. The complete dedication of our hearts, minds, talents and resources is being asked of us. No less is worthy of the cross that saved us. Nothing less is required for those who seek to be His followers.

Now perhaps this idea is new to you, as it once was to me. No one ever told me in the beginning that becoming a Christian was signing up to fight in this war. I was told about the cross and it was the most wonderful message I had ever heard. But no one told me about *my* cross, the one I was supposed to pick up every day. No one warned me about a struggle that is *not* against "flesh and blood," but against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). No one explained to me that this was a life and death matter for billions of ruthlessly corrupt and tirelessly evil spiritual beings. No one ever cautioned me that the moment I signed up to follow Jesus I immediately became a mortal enemy of all of them!

But now that I know, I need to ask myself: Am I taking this war as seriously as my enemy does? When Jesus called people, he didn't hesitate to tell them what they were getting themselves into. On the first day of his conversion, Jesus confronted the apostle Paul with this reality. He said, *I am sending you to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:17-18)*. He said the same thing to a group of fishermen on the lake shore,

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“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!” You couldn’t change his mind or the subject. He was, and is, a recruiter for a global rescue operation.

Signing up to follow Jesus is signing up for his mission, his cause. It means we are under his command. Scripture says, “No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer” (2 Tim. 2:4). As soldiers under a heavenly commission, we have an obligation to stay focused on our Commander’s objectives. Can you imagine an officer in the heat of battle suddenly forgetting who he is, where he is, and what he’s supposed to be doing? It sounds ridiculous, but it can happen to the best of us if we turn aside from where Jesus is leading us. We need to ask ourselves: If Jesus is my commander, am I really free to pursue whatever it is I want to do down here? Does his cause take precedent over my career? Should his heart overrule my personal desires?

The fact is, 2.7 billion souls remain without the gospel message in their language and culture. Now why is that? What has gone so wrong with our concept of who Jesus is that we would allow such a thing to happen in our generation? Two thousand ethnic groups still await faithful messengers to show them the way. If the Great Commission is God’s priority, what does that say about our priorities? Are we following his program, or do we have some other, perhaps more pressing, agenda?

We really ought to see all of this from his perspective. He gave *everything* for us! He left it all! He was completely sold out to save us. He was all passion. All heart. All commitment. Somewhere, something has broken down between us—we just don’t get it! If the President of the United States asked the Marines to deliver a personal message to every person living today, how long do you think it

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would take them? Probably only a few years or less. But here we are, acclaimed followers of the supreme Allied Commander of the Universe, and we have yet to fulfill the mission we have been given! Do the Marines actually have more loyalty and sense of obligation to their earthly commander than we do to our Heavenly Commander? What other conclusion can we make but that this is *absolutely* the truth?

So let's do some wondering together: Are we willing to consecrate ourselves to a wartime lifestyle today—to do whatever it takes to finish the Great Commission? Are we willing to think it through, and refuse to settle for shallow, lukewarm answers? Do we really want to know what Jesus expects from us, and once we get it, are we prepared to accept it?

If we're willing to start the journey, perhaps one good place to begin is in Hebrews, chapter 11. Here we find the most incredible list of first-place winners ever compiled. Emmy nominees, Nobel Prize winners and Olympic champions will all be forgotten, but not the people on this list. Their names are etched in the eternal pillars of God's Hall of Faith. Here we find a sacred fellowship of all those who finished the race and received their reward.

What made them so different?

What set them apart from their generation?

As you study their lives, one thing will begin to stand out. Each of them had a simple faith in God's heavenly promise—an enduring conviction about the eternal significance of what we do here in this life. Scripture says, "They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God" (Heb. 11:16). Generally speaking, it wasn't the rich and powerful, the well spoken of and appreciated that made it on his list. It

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was the people who were headed somewhere, and they weren't afraid to move against the flow of popular opinion or man-made tradition. They didn't go looking for persecution or the glory of a martyr's death. But they knew what God wanted done and they were determined to do it no matter what.

I'm convinced that anyone who wants to make it into God's Hall of Faith will find life increasingly uncomfortable down here. That is why the Bible tells us that friendship with the world is hatred toward God (Jas. 4:4). And I think you will find that as people begin to follow Jesus, the things of this world become dimmer and darker and altogether unattractive. Now, more than ever, we ought to heed the advice of those who made it out of here with honor. They said, "Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. *Do not* love the world or *anything* in the world" (1 Pet. 1:17; 1 John 2:15). They left us a dozen letters to warn us. They wrote to our generation and they said, "Don't forget what this is all about. This is not a playground, a vacation spot, or a retirement village. In the eyes of heaven it is a war zone, a toxic wasteland, a brutal concentration camp. It's the most spiritually dangerous place there has ever been or ever will be. And you *must* live accordingly."

REMEMBERING WHAT TIME IT IS

Have you ever thought about what makes the difference in the lives of those who will be ready for Christ's second coming and those who are in for a big surprise? Clearly there are going to be two kinds of Christians living in the last days—those who are working hard to see Jesus return—and those who have their own mission, their own sacred plan which no one must interrupt. But Jesus came to disrupt careers. He came to empty bank accounts. He called to anyone who would listen, "Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand." And yet

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very few paid any attention, though he was King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

James wrote to the wealthy people of his day, “Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. . . . You have hoarded wealth in the last days” (Jas. 5:1-2). Apparently these people didn’t know what time it was. It wasn’t time to hoard wealth. It was time to give it away—to put it to good use for the Kingdom’s final campaign. Jesus came to set in motion this very special time. He called it the “end of the age”—a period of history that was going to be different from all those preceding it and one that would require a change of lifestyle and attitude.

I was once talking with a wealthy lady, who was also a believer, and I challenged her with what Jesus said about wealth: “Woe unto you who are rich, you have already received your comfort. Sell your possessions and give to the poor, provide purses for yourself that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted” (Luke 6:24; 12:33). She replied, “But what about Solomon, and Abraham, and David? Were they not all wealthy?” Sure enough they were. But the difference, I explained, is that Jesus is here. This is not the time for business as usual. We have entered into the final phase of the last war that eternal history will ever know. And in this final phase, lifestyles have to change—radically. There are no exceptions.

Now if you are a wealthy person reading this, you may object. But on what basis? Make sure it’s solid, because if it’s not, you will have no one to blame but yourself when you stand before the Lord. Only in the eyes of eternity can the few pieces of paper or the few bits of data on a bank’s hard drive—that mean so much to us—be seen in their proper light. The fact is, you will never know if wealth is your master until the day you ask yourself, “Am I willing to give it

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all away?” And that’s exactly the question Jesus is asking you to make. Only when you’ve come to terms with this question will you be in a position to make wise Kingdom investments with what has been entrusted to you. When Jesus says, “Sell your possessions and give to the poor,” he is not saying be irresponsible with what you own. He is simply saying: “At the present time, don’t live on what you don’t need. Use the extra you have to invest in eternity.”

A lot of lifestyle issues get cleared up quickly when we begin to understand where we are on God’s timetable. It’s like my family when we were growing up and our parents would leave us on our own for a few hours. The moment we heard that car rolling up the driveway, we knew our parents were coming home and the party was over. It’s kind of the same thing here: if we knew Jesus was coming back tomorrow, how might that change things? How might we reorganize our priorities, our finances, our lifestyles? Are we doing anything that we would be ashamed of, were he to come today? Are we *not* doing some things that we *should* be doing?

To be sure, these are tough questions for even the most saintly and committed! And we all need to have answers for them. But let’s take them one step further. Jesus coming back tomorrow is fairly simple. We clean up our lives and get our priorities straight and in 24 hours we’re out of here. Not a bad deal. But what about ten years? What about a whole lifetime? What if you knew for sure that you would live to see Jesus come back at some point in your life, but you weren’t told exactly when? Would you be hanging in there? Would you have forgotten?

This may sound a little radical, but there is one way to know for sure you will remain on track with God’s program. Why not think of every new day as an extended bonus to reach more people with the gospel and invest in eternity? Daily taking up your cross is about

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just that: living each day as though it were the absolute last to honor and serve the Lord here on this earth—because one of these days *will be* the last one! Live that way, one day after the next, and you'll be right in step with the heartbeat of the Father.

John Wesley, one of the most famous evangelists in England during the 18th century, was once asked what he might do differently if he knew Jesus was coming back at noon the next day. He said, "Not a thing." Then he took out his schedule and told his friend exactly what he would be doing tomorrow. All his appointments remained intact; he had no need to readjust his lifestyle! He was already doing everything he could to serve his Commander-in-Chief. He was already living in such a way that he might help the most people possible prepare to meet the Lord.

So here's the question: Is everyone called to be John Wesley? Are we all called to this same singular focus, *reaching as many lost people as possible with our lives*? Is this rescue operation really the only thing that matters right now? Well, look at it this way, if everyone *did* live like John Wesley, it would only be a matter of a few years before the Great Commission would be completed and everyone on the planet would be reached with the gospel. Is that worth it? A few years of radical living so millions of lost people can enjoy eternity with us?

Some people say, "We can't all be radicals!" But this misses the point. If we were all radicals, there would be no radicals. It would just be normal. It would be heaven, for that is what heaven is, the eternal sanctuary for God's radicals. The Bible calls them the Holy, the Set-Apart, the Saints. We would call them the Radicals. But whatever you want to label them, it would be Biblical. It would be Satan's worst nightmare and heaven's delight.

The Radical Paul was given some wisdom about this by the Lord. He said, "What I mean, brothers, is that *time is short*. From

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now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of this world, as if not engrossed with them. For this world in its present form is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:29-31).

Now you can just imagine what might happen if someone were to say these words today. Marriage counselors would walk out. The businessmen on the church board would call an emergency meeting. This guy would not be invited back. But of course that would be a mistake. Scripture is not saying that married people should ignore each other. No one is suggesting that personal property is a bad thing. But the apostle is trying to put things in their proper perspective. He’s asking, “Are you happy—well, watch out, what are you happy about? Are you sad—well, wake up, what are you sad about? This world is passing away and we all need to sober up. Stay alert. Remain focused. Be on your guard. Are you depressed? Snap out of it. Are you happy-go-lucky? Open your eyes. Are you single? Marry carefully. Are you financially set? Think again. Is that your mission in life?”

You see, all of these are temporal values when viewed from the eternal perspective. Success in God’s mission will go to those who keep their eternal vision by learning to manage their temporal distractions (explain this diplomatically to your spouse!). If married people place their marriage before the Lord’s agenda, it’s nothing short of idolatry. And the one who seeks to save his marriage in this way will lose it. The right thing done the wrong way becomes the wrong thing. But it doesn’t have to be that way. To the contrary, those who are married should work together to advance the Kingdom. Indeed, marriage can greatly enhance your effectiveness in the Lord’s work. So marry carefully! Because the opposite is also true.

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The overall point is basic: *the time* takes precedent over *the ideal*. In the ideal world you have heaven. But we are not there yet. We are at war. And things are very different. Not only are we at war, but we are in the final phase of that war. There will be storms like never before. Hardships and disasters will go from bad to worse. But through it all, “This gospel of the Kingdom *will* be preached and *must first* be preached in all the world as a testimony to all nations, *and then* the end *will* come” (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10). Christ’s victorious kingdom will prevail and all nations will be reached; it’s only a matter of time—and not much more at that!

REMEMBERING WHO YOU ARE

The most incredible thing that happens when you put on your eternal lenses is you get to see who you really are in Jesus. Not surprisingly, this is the one Satan wants to keep most out of focus. You are not a threat to the enemy on your own. You are a victim and a captive. But in Christ you are the most dangerous person in the world. Now I think some of us need to be reminded of this. I know I do!

HEAVENLY REMINDER

“For though we live in the world,
we do not wage war as the world does.

The weapons we fight with
are not the weapons of the world.

On the contrary, they have divine power
to *demolish* strongholds.

We demolish arguments and every pretension
that sets itself up
against the knowledge of God.”

(2 Cor. 10:3-5)

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In Christ we have become agents in a heavenly war. On our own we are mere “flesh and blood.” But in Christ, we have been lifted up into the heavenlies as agents of his life-changing power. We are stronghold busters and heavenly lie-detectors. We carry the Light that expels the darkness and brings freedom to the captives.

Jesus said, “I have given you authority to overcome *all the power* of the enemy. *Nothing* will harm you” (Luke 10:19). This is the vision heaven wants us to see. It is the eternal side of who you are that makes Satan a little more than afraid. In fact, he is down right terrified of you discovering who you are in Christ. Fortunately for him, most believers are living at only a fraction of their true potential. The Bible says that Christ is able to do “immeasurably *more than all we ask or imagine*, according to his *power* that is at work within us” (Eph. 3:20). This, and this alone, is what makes Satan worried when he thinks about you. But most people never bother to find out what it means.

Jesus said to his disciples, “Wait in Jerusalem until you receive what was promised . . . you will receive *power* when the Holy Spirit comes upon you” (Acts 1:4,8). Up until this moment, all the disciples could think about was getting political power for themselves. But on the day of Pentecost, all of that changed. When the Holy Spirit’s power filled their lives, they stood before a hostile crowd, boldly proclaimed the gospel, and saw 3,000 souls rescued from the power of Satan to the power of God in a single day.

Now that’s what Christ intends for his Church! That’s the future as he sees it. But how many are living like it? How many would rather settle for less? How many are content with the tyranny of shallow Christianity? One thing is certain, nowhere in Scripture do we read, “The disciples of Christ must limit their activity to attending a gleaming white, steepled church in the middle of suburbia,



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once a week for an hour or two.” It’s not in my Bible and I hope it’s not in yours. But if our lives are a reflection of what we truly believe, then it might as well be one of our most cherished doctrines.

If we want our lives to make an eternal difference, our passion for Jesus must come from something far deeper than a casual commitment to church meeting participation. It must come from a desire to love him so much we would go anywhere and do anything for the sake of his Kingdom. If there is a need and we’re able, then we’re there. That’s why we’re here. Jesus didn’t come here to be analyzed in theological laboratories. He came here to challenge people to take up their cross and obey him by serving those whom he came to rescue.

He is calling us, *each one of us*, to follow him into the places where his heart is broken. He is saying, “Come and open your eyes. Then let me fill them with tear drops from heaven for a world that is dying.” That’s what eternal vision is all about. It’s seeing the world clearly through tear-stained lenses. Only then will you begin to understand who you are and what you can become in Christ. For the more you die to yourself and your desires, the more Christ will live in you, and the more he lives in you, the more he will change the world around you.

The sooner we start seeing ourselves and others in this way, the better. Jesus sees our potential. He sees Christians that need to be activated. He sees the best in all of us and he knows how to get us there. Our Lord wants every one of us to be eternal harvesters, winning hundreds, even thousands to Christ with our lives. That’s the power we’ve been given. That’s why we’re here. That’s how heaven sees us. And the truth is, if knowing Jesus does not leave you with a passion to make him known, then you don’t really know him. You’re in touch with the wrong person!



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When Jesus has invaded your life, you will know it. There are no shortcuts to following him. There is no substitute for full surrender. We have to kneel at the foot of the cross before we can stand and say, “I know him.” There’s no other way. But how many are willing? How many are asking, “Lord Jesus, take control. Have your way in me. Whatever you want me to do, whoever you want me to be, it’s all yours. You’re the captain of this ship from now on”?

It’s absolutely impossible to make that decision without being changed for eternity. *You will know the difference!* The temporal things that seem so important now will soon become so tasteless and boring, you will never look back on them again. That’s when living really begins. It’s when Christ wraps you in his arms and says, “Welcome home. I missed you. Now let’s get to work!”

So why wait? After all, it’s not going to be Harvest Time ever again, throughout all the ages of eternity. You have nothing to lose, except what you cannot keep anyway, and everything to gain, which you can never lose. That’s who you are in Christ, and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. You alone must make the choice, and you alone must answer for it.

Let no one deny you the glory of living for Jesus 100%.
Let nothing stop you from *being* who Christ died to make you.