

Forever

Why you can't live without it

By Paul David Tripp

Michael E. Breece contributor

Discussion Guide to be used with the conference on DVD
(10 – 25 minute sessions)
for Church-wide Events, Classes,
Small Groups, or Personal Study

This is a resource of:

Paul Tripp Ministries

7214 Frankford Ave.

Philadelphia, PA19135

(800) 551-6595

www.paultrippministries.org

forever

INTRODUCTION

This present life is not all there is. There is a forever on the other side of this life. It is the product of God's plan and design. And once you believe in forever and live with forever in view, not only will you understand things you have never understood before, but you will live in a radically different way than you did before.

The following pages will provide practical discussion and application of material presented in the *Forever* DVDs to encourage you to live with eternity in view. It is recommended that you use this guide within a small group setting. Discussion with others can stimulate ideas and questions you may not have otherwise considered. You may find in your discussions and answers that your trials are not unusual, and you can find encouragement and accountability. If you do not have a small group to participate in, consider inviting others to join you in going through this material. Nonetheless, this material can be beneficial as an independent study. Reading the book, *Forever*, will further benefit you since material in the book, although related to the DVD, is distinct.

The study is designed for you to write down your answers and thoughts. It is useful to write out answers and not just think about them. Writing deepens and clarifies your thinking, and writing it down acts as a stronger form of commitment than just saying it in your thoughts.

At the end of each session are suggested Scripture passages and chapters from the book, *Forever* that can deepen your study and understanding of each topic. A time of prayer after answering the application questions can be a good way to reinforce them and to make further application. Prayer can be a way for you to make a commitment to God with what you want to apply and a good way to hear what God may be saying to you.

As you share your thoughts, feelings, struggles, and accomplishments, speak humbly, honestly, and in love. We all have sin; we all have great value in God's sight; and we all are on a journey growing and becoming more like Christ. May God bless you greatly!

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SESSION 1

Opening Discussion:

Define belief.

“It’s hard for us to be content with the world that is, because all of us have an inclination to crave for what could be.”

Forever, chapter 1

Give examples of how our culture encourages a focus on the here-and-now.

What things in life make you long for more than the here-and-now?

Scripture Passage: Romans 8:18-25

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for⁽ the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

NOTES:

KEY POINTS:

- True belief is more than knowledge; it is always something that is lived.
- Every human being has eternity hardwired in his/her heart.
- The cries of our hearts caused by suffering and trials are the result of our longing for Forever.
- We cannot make sense out of our lives without eternity.
 - Life on earth will never be Paradise.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to believe?
2. What is the danger of not living with Forever in mind?
3. According to Romans 8:18-25, what are some of the elements that define the here-and-now?

APPLICATION

1. How much does your belief in eternity shape the way you live and respond to life? What areas of your life do you tend to treat as if this is all there is?
2. In what areas of your life have you expected Paradise instead of futility, decay or pain?

Further Reading: Hebrews 11:6; Ecclesiastes 3:11; Psalm 73
Forever, chapter 1
Forever, chapter 5

SESSION 2

Opening Discussion:

What are things or events you are unwilling to wait for?

What are you willing to wait for, even if you don't want to?

Scripture Passage: Romans 8:18-25

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

NOTES:

KEY POINTS:

- Eternity helps us make sense out of life.
 - Life on earth will never be Paradise.
 - The futility, decay and pain of life cannot be understood without Eternity.
 - Futility, decay, and pain are not in the way of God's Plan; it is the Plan.
- Because we all have Forever within our hearts, we will respond to life in one of two ways:
 - We will thank God for blessings but eagerly wait for what is to come or
 - We will try to create or find Paradise in the here-and-now.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In Romans 8:18-25, what elements of Forever are present and how are they contrasted with the here-and-now?
2. Why does God include futility, decay, and pain in his plan?

APPLICATION

1. Has the presence of futility, decay, and pain caused you to try to create/find Paradise in the here-and-now or has it drawn you to seek satisfaction in God?
2. In what areas of your life do you tend to find frustration by trying to create Paradise in the here-and-now?
3. How does knowing that it is God's plan to include futility, decay, and pain, change the way you face futility, decay, and pain?

Further Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:19
Forever, chapter 1
Forever, chapter 5

“When we live knowing that the God of grace will lift us out of this broken world and is now readying us for the world to come, we can face difficulty without wanting to give up and experience pleasure without becoming addicted to it.”

Forever, chapter 2

SESSION 3

Opening Discussion:

How is eternity portrayed by movies, books, television, and other popular media?

“If this is all the life we have, then the name of the game is this: experience, possess, and accomplish everything we can right here, right now. . .”

Forever, chapter 2

Do you think our culture tends to encourage, accept, ignore, or reject the idea of eternity?

Scripture Passage: Colossians 3:1-4

¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

NOTES:

KEY POINTS:

- The idea of Forever has been largely removed from our culture, and we are not immune from that influence.
- We all live and act from one of two mindsets that determines how we view ourselves, how we define the purpose of life, and how we view God.
- Since we have been raised with Christ, our mindset ought to flow from an eternal perspective, not from things on earth.
- This life is not our destination; it is a preparation for Forever.
- We have to fight and work to maintain an “above” mindset—it is a constant battle.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Colossians 4:2, there are two overarching mindsets. What are the two mindsets and how does each influence how life is lived?

2. What helps you to restore or maintain an “above” mindset?

APPLICATION

1. What earthly things did you place too much priority on this past week? How did that affect your relationships with others and with God? How did it affect your use of time and money?

2. What primarily controls your mindset; things on earth or things in heaven?

3. What is one area in your life that tends to move your focus away from things above to earthly things? What could help you to keep your mind on things above in that area?

4. What is God doing in your life right now that you can trust God is using to prepare you for Eternity?

Further Reading: *Forever*, chapter 2; *Forever*, chapter 7
 Forever, chapter 9; *Forever*, chapter 11

SESSION 4

Opening Discussion:

What tends to cause you to give in and surrender?

“When we forget eternity, we look to people to give us what only God can give. This always leads to disappointment, frustration, criticism, and conflict.”

Forever, chapter 9

Describe a time when you quit and then deeply regretted it or felt deeply satisfied about it?

Scripture Passage: Colossians 3:5-14

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

¹² Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

NOTES:

KEY POINTS:

- If you do not live with God’s agenda and plan in mind, life will become all about you.
- Christ died and rose again to save us from the idolatry of self.

Forever

- Because we live in the middle of the Already and the Not Yet, we struggle between an “On Earth” mindset and an “Above” mindset.
- Eternity Amnesia leads to unrealistic expectations, a self-oriented focus, a need for control, the temptation to doubt the goodness of God, disappointment, and a lack of motivation and hope.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How is our sin a symptom of living with a “here-and-now” mindset?

2. How are unrealistic expectations and a need for control symptoms of living with a “here-and-now” mindset?

APPLICATION

1. We all suffer from Eternity Amnesia from time to time. Which symptoms most often occur when you face Eternity Amnesia (unrealistic expectations, a self-oriented focus, a need for control, the temptation to doubt the goodness of God, disappointment, and a lack of motivation and hope)?

2. Who else suffers because of your Eternity Amnesia? Does forgiveness need to be sought?

3. Are your hopes and dreams attached to eternity or only the here-and-now? How might God want to shape or transform your earthly hopes and dreams?

4. Are you fighting the war against your “on earth” mindset or have you surrendered? What helps you or could help you to persevere in the fight?

5. What earth-focused areas do you need to surrender to God? In what eternity-focused areas do you need encouragement to persevere?

Further Reading: 1 John 3:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:14-16; *Forever*, chapter 1; *Forever*, chapter 3
Forever, chapter 5; *Forever*, chapter 6; *Forever*, chapter 9

SESSION 5

Opening Discussion:

What do you most look forward to in Paradise?

What was the worst time of waiting you have ever experienced?

Scripture Passage: Mark 6:45-52

⁴⁵ Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷ And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸ And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, ⁵⁰ for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." ⁵¹ And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, ⁵² for they did not understand about the loaves, but their heart were hardened.

NOTES:

KEY POINTS:

- As Christians, we live in the middle of the Already (that Christ has already come, won our salvation, and given the Holy Spirit) and the Not Yet (sin and death have not yet been fully defeated, we are not yet in Paradise).
- This time is designed to be a preparation for our final destination.
- Divine power + divine compassion = everything you need.
- Our trials are purposed by God.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is God doing with us in this moment between the Already and the Not Yet?

How does this perspective help us in the challenges of life?

2. Explain biblical waiting.

3. How is God's plan for us in the middle of the Already and the Not Yet illustrated in Mark 6:45-52?

APPLICATION

1. What is a trial you are facing that challenges and requires you to maintain a Forever perspective?

How can having a Forever perspective help you in this trial?

What might God be teaching you through this trial?

Further Reading: *Forever*, chapter 2; *Forever*, chapter 5
Forever, chapter 8; *Forever*, chapter 9

"Today I can face life with courage, not because I am able, but because I know I will always have the grace I need to do what God has called me to do."

Forever, chapter 13

SESSION 6

Opening Discussion:

When are times that you have had difficulty believing God was in control?

“If you are ever going to properly evaluate your life and properly perceive the suffering you have endured, you must factor in eternity.”

Forever, chapter 8

Scripture Passage: Mark 6:45-52

⁴⁵ Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, ⁴⁹but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, ⁵⁰for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” ⁵¹And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, ⁵²for they did not understand about the loaves, but their heart were hardened.

NOTES:

KEY POINTS:

- God wants to use trials in our lives, not just remove them.
- God is present with us in the midst of our trials.
- God’s grace can be uncomfortable because God will take you where you haven’t intended to go in order to produce in you what you could not achieve on your own.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are God’s plan and grace for us living in the middle of the Already and the Not Yet illustrated in Mark 6:45-52?

2. Explain the difference between faith and amazement.

APPLICATION

1. In what ways do you live according to your own agenda, seek your own glory, or overlook God's purposes?

How might God be working in you and your circumstances to cause you to live according to his agenda, to seek his glory, and to see his purpose?

2. Currently, or in the past, how have you seen God's patience, presence, and blessings in the midst of your trials?
3. Are there areas in your life where you have been resistant to change?

What fears or desires do you have that keep you from wanting to change?

Further Reading

Forever, chapter 2; *Forever*, chapter 3
Forever, chapter 8; *Forever*, chapter 12
Forever, chapter 13

SESSION 7

Opening Discussion:

Make a list of things that are often important to people on a typical day.

“In a world that idolizes power, position, fame, and material wealth, we constantly need our sense of what is important clarified and reoriented.”
Forever, chapter 11

Think to yourself whether you have had a good day/week. What determined whether it was a good day/week?

Scripture Passage: Revelation 19:6-9

⁶Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

⁷Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

NOTES:

SESSION 8

Opening Discussion:

Read Revelation 19:6-9.

God gives us a glimpse into Eternity in this passage and we get to see, now that the battle between the Already and the Not Yet is over, what is truly important not only in Eternity but today. List what these worshippers view as important.

Scripture Passage: Revelation 19:6-9

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"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God
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for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

NOTES:

“Hell is the ultimate reminder that we live in a moral universe under the care of a perfectly holy God.”

Forever, chapter 4

SESSION 9

Opening Discussion:

Read the following passages together:

- Hebrews 9:27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, . . .
- Acts 17:31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.
- 2 Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.
- Mt. 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
- Mark 9:43-48 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'
- Luke 16:23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.
- Rev. 14:11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

NOTES:

KEY POINTS:

- The doctrine of Hell is important even for Christians who will not face this particular consequence.
- We all have moments when we think our behavior will not have consequences, that God's moral law will not affect us.
- Breaking God's commands is always first a breaking of relationship with God.
- The Bible teaches that there will be an inescapable moment of judgment and an actual place of eternal punishment and torment.
- When we minimize God's holiness and the sinfulness of sin, we struggle to understand Hell.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were the lies Adam and Eve believed in the garden and that we also often accept?

2. How does understanding God's holiness help us to understand the presence of Hell?

3. How does an accurate understanding of sin help us to understand the presence of Hell?

APPLICATION

1. Is your view of sin accurate and in line with God's view of sin?

Are you grieved over your sin?

Are you concerned about how sin breaks your relationship with God?

Would you be ashamed if God were to show up at your house unannounced?

Do you live out of a heart of gratitude for the grace God has given to you?

2. Since Hell reveals to us the purity and wonder of God's holiness, what do you need to change in your life?

Further Reading: Galatians 6:7; *Forever*, chapter 4; *Forever*, chapter 10

SESSION 10

Opening Discussion:

Review Session 9:

How can the reality of Hell impact our lives as Christians?

“Living in the light of the dark of forever provides protection from temptation and leads us to celebrate the grace promised to all who have put their trust in Jesus.”

Forever, chapter 4

NOTES:

KEY POINTS:

- The doctrine of Hell is important even for Christians who will not face this particular consequence.
- Because there is a Dark Side to Forever:
 - Hell should break your heart.
 - We should never ignore the reality of consequences in breaking God’s moral laws.
 - We should never minimize the sinfulness of sin.
 - We should be very thankful for the final justice of God and the defeat of evil.
 - We should daily celebrate grace.
 - We should live according to what is truly important.
 - We should be sharing the Gospel with others.

