

## LEVEL 1

# LESSON 1

## ETERNAL LIFE

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One of the most familiar passages of Scripture is John 3:16. It seems like everybody knows that verse from a young age, yet I believe it has really been misunderstood and misapplied. John 3:16 says, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.*”

Traditionally, this scripture has been used to teach that Jesus came and died for our sins so that we wouldn’t perish. As true as this is, this verse is saying that the real purpose of Jesus coming to this earth and dying for us was so that we could have everlasting life. It just so happened that our sins were a barrier that stood between us and this everlasting life.

It is true that Jesus did die for our sins, and it is true that if we believe on Jesus, we will not perish, but there is much more to the Gospel than that. The real message of the Gospel is that God wants to give you everlasting life. Now let me explain that.

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus was praying, and He said, “*This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ*” (John 17:3)

This says that everlasting life is knowing the Father, the only true God, and knowing Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. That’s what everlasting life is. Many people think that everlasting life is living forever. Well, every person lives forever. It’s a misconception to think that when a person dies they cease to exist. The spirit and the soul go back to God. The body decays in the grave. The truth is, every person who has ever lived on the face of the earth will continue to live in spirit form. So, to say that eternal life is living forever is not the whole truth—everybody lives forever. This verse makes it very clear that eternal life with God is not automatically given to everyone.

Some people would say, “Eternal life is living forever in heaven versus living forever in hell.” But eternal life is just what Jesus said in John 17:3—to know God and Jesus Christ. It’s more than an intellectual knowledge. This word “know” is used throughout Scripture to describe the most intimate, personal relationship that you can have.

The real purpose of salvation is not living forever in heaven, as great as that will be. The real purpose of salvation is to have intimacy—a personal relationship with the Lord God. There are multitudes of people who have cried out to God for the forgiveness of their sins but have never had intimacy with God as a goal.

By not explaining the real purpose of salvation, we are doing a disservice to the Gospel. When we present salvation as something that deals with just spiritual things that will only benefit us in the future, in eternity, we are not helping people. There are some people who are living in such a literal hell right now on earth. Many are depressed, living in poverty, dealing with strife, rejection, hurt, and failed marriages. People are just trying to survive day to day. They are just trying to keep their heads above water. By making salvation something that deals only with the future, many people put off that decision because they are too busy just trying to survive today.

The truth is that Jesus not only came to affect our eternal destinies so that we can live forever in heaven in blessing instead of the punishment and curse of hell, but Jesus also came to deliver us from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4). Jesus came to give you intimacy and a personal relationship with God the Father today.

Jesus came to bring you back into close, personal relationship with Him. Jesus loves you. Jesus wants to know you personally. Jesus wants to give you a quality of life that is greater than anything you could obtain through any other source.

Jesus put it this way in John 10:10: "*The thief [speaking of Satan] cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*" (brackets mine). God wants to give you eternal life. God wants to give you abundant life, and I believe that you need that today—that you want that. Christ died not only to forgive your sins, but to bring you close to him. If you don't know the Lord, you need to know Him for that purpose. If you've already been born again, you need to go beyond just getting your sins forgiven and enter into everlasting life with the Father.

#### FACTS ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE

- A. The purpose of the Gospel is eternal life (John 3:16).
- B. Eternal life is knowing God (John 17:3).
- C. Knowing God is an intimate relationship (1 Cor. 6:16-17).
- D. Eternal life is available now (1 John 5:12).
- E. God wants a personal relationship with you (Rev. 3:20).

**DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS**

1. Read John 3:16. What was the purpose of God sending Jesus into the world?
  
2. The biblical usage of the word “know” means to have an intimate, personal relationship with a person (Gen. 4:1). Read John 17:3. What is eternal/everlasting life, according to this verse?
  
3. Read 1 John 5:11-12. According to these verses, when does eternal, or everlasting, life begin?
  
4. Read John 10:10. What kind of life did Jesus come to give us?
  
5. Explain in your own words the attributes of an abundant life.
  
6. Do you believe that God sent His Son Jesus into the world to die for the sins of the world, thereby giving us who believe eternal/everlasting life?
  
7. Is it clear to you that eternal/everlasting life is not only a length of time (eternity) but a quality and quantity of life?

**SCRIPTURES TO USE WITH QUESTIONS**

**JOHN 3:16** – *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

**GENESIS 4:1** – *And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.*

**JOHN 17:3** – *And this is life eternal [eternal life], that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ (brackets mine).*

**1 JOHN 5:11-12** – *And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. [12] He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*

**JOHN 10:10** – *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

**ANSWER KEY**

1. Read John 3:16. What was the purpose of God sending Jesus into the world?  
*To save the world, giving all who believe on Jesus everlasting life by removing sin's penalty*
2. The biblical usage of the word "know" means to have an intimate, personal relationship with a person (Gen. 4:1). Read John 17:3. What is eternal/everlasting life, according to this verse?  
*Eternal life is knowing God and Jesus Christ (not physically but intimately)*
3. Read 1 John 5:11-12. According to these verses, when does eternal/everlasting life begin?  
*When we receive the Son (Jesus Christ) into our lives*
4. Read John 10:10. What kind of life did Jesus come to give us?  
*Abundant life!*
5. Explain in your own words the qualities or attributes of an abundant life.  
*Abundant life would be the opposite of what Jesus said the thief came to do*
6. Do you believe that God sent His Son Jesus into the world to die for the sins of the world, thereby giving us who believe eternal/everlasting life?  
*Yes*
7. Is it clear to you that eternal/everlasting life is not only a length of time (eternity) but a quality and quantity of life?  
*Yes*