



# A Time for Everything

## Lesson 2

### A Time for Perspective

#### Prayer

#### Introductory Activity

#### What will they say?

A popular productivity guru tells people to imagine what people will say about you at your funeral. He says this gives you perspective as you make decisions on how to spend your life. Read the following words about two dead “kings,” and compare especially the words in bold. Which one of these “eulogies” do you think people would generally prefer at their funeral?

#### King One:

Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
 Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,  
 Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
 The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:  
 And on the pedestal these words appear:

**'My name is \_\_[name]\_\_, king of kings:**

**Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!**

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.<sup>1</sup>

#### King Two:

**“Now when [name] had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed.”<sup>2</sup>**

Give people a little bit to look at these. King One has a more impressive “eulogy.” He was great! A king of kings! King 2 doesn’t have much to say for him in his eulogy. He died. He was buried. He

<sup>1</sup> *Ozymandias* by Percy Shelley (1792-1822)

<sup>2</sup> Acts 13:36

decayed. How'd you like that for your obituary? "Frank served God's purpose, then died and was buried. He's decaying now." Not what Steven Covey was thinking when he said to live so you have a good eulogy! But it's a wonderful eulogy as we'll see.

**King Two** is King David, one of the most important figures in the Bible. In small groups, do the following:

- List as many impressive "eulogy-worthy" accomplishments that David had in life as you can.

Classic Sunday school examples from David's life... defeating bears/lions, Goliath, sparing Saul, taking Jerusalem, defeating enemies, becoming king, etc....

- Read 2 Samuel 7:12 and reread the words above from Acts 13:36. **Then finish this sentence:**

"One of the most important things you can say about the life of David (or any believer who has died) is..."

"...that he was connected to Jesus." in 2 Samuel 7:12, GREAT KING DAVID is told, "You're going to die. But don't worry—a better king will come." That's the most important thing for us in our lives too. I'll serve God's purpose, then die—but if I'm connected to Jesus, that's the best life ever.

- Describe how the way someone finishes that sentence can affect their perspective on life.

If my life is about my connection to Jesus, then the things that keep me connected to him matter. My perspective is eternal, not just focused on ME for 70-80 years.

## Take Up Your Cross

1. Read Mark 8:31-33. Describe the "concerns of God" that Jesus has in mind as he looks ahead in his earthly life.

Jesus wasn't concerned about saving his own life; he was concerned about saving the world. That was his Father's will, so that's what he spent his life fulfilling.

2. What are the human concerns of Peter that led him to want to avoid God's plan?

Peter had the classic human concerns of avoiding pain and having a life of ease and pleasure.

3. Read Mark 8:34-38. Apply these verses to a person's perspective on... *This is a great question to do as groups and give plenty of time. Or you could assign different items to different tables. Lots of possible answers...*
- Career - Should I take a better paying job in a city without a WELS church? Should I take a job that has me work too much and I can't lead my family in devotions or make it to church? Will this job influence me in a bad way? Will it help me support my family and my church?
  - Singlehood/Marriage/Choice of Spouse - She might be beautiful—but is she a believer? He might be rich—but is he rich in faith? I might feel lonely, but is my position as a single person an opportunity to devote myself more to service? I might be happier with someone else, but can I stay married to this person in order to do God's will and reflect his love?
  - Children - Children are not my idol—they are people to bring up to know Jesus. Should I have them do a hundred activities and spend more time driving them around than bringing them up in the faith? Should I NOT have children because I want to do more fun things for myself? Or because I don't trust God to provide? Should I feel like my life is incomplete without children when God has seen fit to withhold them?
  - Sports - How much of a priority are sports in my life? Is it lining up with God's priorities?
  - Money - Am I using my money FOR ME or to glorify God? Life will probably be less fun if I give more to God or save up to send my kids to Christian schools!
  - Crippling/Terminal Illness - Is it a "bad" thing for me to be sick/crippled/dying? What's God's perspective on it? Can I bear this cross gladly and willingly if it will glorify him and he will use it for my faith and for the good of the church?
  - Technology - Are there things I should deny in order to avoid temptation/time wasting/stress? Can I deny buying the latest thing and be a better steward of my money? Is it worth it to gain the latest iPhone but lose my soul?
  - News/Shows - My "fear of missing out" may lead me to the news—but is it beneficial for my spiritual welfare? Am I "informed," or am I simply going with the times and paying attention to earthly concerns and not spiritual ones? Are my shows entertaining but soul rotting?
  - Anything else?

## I'm but a Stranger Here...

*If you have less time or the previous section took a long time, this section can be skipped...*

4. A well-loved hymn reads, *"I'm but a stranger here, heav'n is my home..."* Hebrews 13:14 says, "For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come."<sup>1</sup> Peter 1:17 says, "Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, *live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.*"

- a) Describe the difference in how you treat a friend's guest room where you are staying for two nights and how you treat your own room at home.

*You don't get quite as "cozy." You keep things nice; you don't move out of your suitcase. You don't throw your socks in the corner.*

- b) Describe the difference between treating this world as a guest room or as your permanent home.

*You don't get quite as "cozy." That retirement home is not your final home. You don't get as comfortable with the world's priorities and aren't as concerned about your "legacy" on earth because you're just passing through.*

5. Ruth is a great example of someone living as a foreigner. She was not from Israel; she was from the foreign nation of Moab. Yet she chose to live as a foreigner. **Read Ruth 1:8-9, 11-13, and 16-18. Then answer the following questions.**

- a) Identify earthly reasons Naomi had to urge Ruth to go back to her homeland?

*Earthly speaking, she had better prospects for marriage and for a prosperous life.*

- b) Identify some earthly reasons people may have to live only for this life and not for God.

*Earthly speaking, you may have a more enjoyable life. More money for yourself, less restrictions, you can do what YOU want.*

- c) In your own words, what was Ruth's motivation for choosing to live as a foreigner in Israel despite the earthly difficulty?

*She knew the true God was worth any sacrifice—even death.*

- d) Reread Ruth 1:17 and think back to Mark 8:34-37 above. In your own words, what is the Christian's motivation for living as a foreigner in this life despite the difficulty?

*We also know that the true God is worth any sacrifice. His grace to us motivates us. (2 Cor 5:14-15—one died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves...)*

- e) Ruth's faith-filled perspective led her to treat Naomi with faithfulness and love. **Read 1 Peter 1:18-23, especially verses 21 and 22.** For what reasons does an eternal perspective help us "love one another deeply from the heart"?

I'm not worried so much about what it costs me to serve others, because my reward and legacy are in heaven. My faith and hope aren't in people paying me back, but in God (verse 21). Our souls are purified, and that leads us to have love constantly this side of heaven (v 22).

- f) Read Ruth 4:13-22. Identify the most important details of Ruth's "eulogy." Imagine how this portion of Scripture might look different if she had been focusing on human concerns in Ruth 1:17?

Some important details are that the LORD enabled her to conceive, the Lord gave her a son who gave Naomi such joy, and who redeemed her family, and this boy would be in the line of the Savior. If Ruth would have had human concerns, she might not be in the line of the Savior at all! And Naomi wouldn't have had a redeemer!

## Group Discussion

In 2 Corinthians 4, the apostle Paul is talking about how he and his coworkers are suffering all sorts of difficulties in this life because of their weak (jars of clay) bodies and because of persecution. And yet because they know the risen Jesus, they are happy to suffer these things for their sake, "that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God."

### Read 2 Corinthians 4:15-18.

- List at least five possible troubles in this life. Put a check by the ones that *feel* light and momentary when you're going through them.

Answers can vary—get creative! Sickness, stress, car trouble, food poisoning, inflation, getting cut off in traffic, family problems, money problems, physical ailments, conflict at work, etc.... Probably FEW of them feel light and momentary at the time!

- Circle the troubles that *are* light and momentary compared to the eternal glory waiting for us?

ALL OF THEM!

- We can't see the unseen. We can see troubles and toys and everything else that might distract us from heaven. Brainstorm ways Christians can keep their eyes fixed on the eternal things that are unseen.

Many possible answers. E.g.: Prayer. Listing their troubles and read 2 Cor 4:15-18. Calling Christian friends. Going to church. Devotions. Asking yourself, "Is Jesus still risen?"

## Closing Activity

### What will they say?

In the introductory activity, we thought about what people might say about our lives after we die. Much of our life as Christians is lived among the body of Christ, in a local congregation. Share some nice things you've heard or remember about sainted Christians who served in ways big and small in our church.

Funeral dinners won't be the same. "Good" Lutherans rarely want people talking about them after they die, but it's good to have this perspective on life. It's a God-pleasing thing when you spend your life participating in congregational life, encouraging young people, sharing cards, visiting shut-ins, greeting people before and after church, going to Bible study, singing or speaking in services. Many people just go to church and then vanish as quickly as possible after the service! But an eternal perspective helps us see little things we can do at church as important things because they are connected to Jesus. The best thing someone can say is, "They were connected to Jesus, and Jesus really loved them!"