

SESSION 7  
**YOUR BEST LIFE ... LATER**

**For more information on the material in this session, read chapter 7 of the book *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God*.**

Should the reality of life after death affect our lives before death? Paul thought so. In the midst of speaking about the implications of Jesus' resurrection for our lives, Paul said, "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (1 Cor. 15:32). This statement reflects the beliefs of the ancient Epicurean philosophers who believed that death was nothing—it's simply the separation of the elements that make up our bodies and souls. How would the Epicureans advise us to live in light of this inevitable end? Enjoy life to the fullest, because this is all we get.

Paul would agree with this philosophy of life, but only if the dead are not raised. For Paul, the reality of the resurrection and the hope of eternal life should have a profound impact on the way we live our lives now. If all we get is this life, why not live it up? But if the dead are in fact raised, then our lives should reflect that reality. We should live as though we believe in life

after death. We should not be trying to find as much pleasure as possible in this life, because we believe that the best is yet to come. What we do in this life matters, and our lives should reflect our belief about where history is headed.

I don't think any Christian will seriously disagree with what I've just said. But take a minute to think about the implications of the resurrection for your life. Start by asking yourself a simple question that should have a simple answer: Do you believe in life after death? If the answer is yes, then take some time to consider whether that belief changes anything about the way you live now.

**1. Is your life shaped in any way by the hope of eternal life? If so, how? If not, why do you think this is the case?**

If we truly believe that life continues after death, we would be foolish to ignore those aspects of our existence that will continue to matter long after our life here is ended. Take some time to evaluate the things you value, the things you pursue with your time, money, and energy. Consider whether you find more fulfillment in Christ or apart from Him.

**2. Have you ever come to a point where you realized the foolishness of seeking fulfillment outside of Christ? If so, what prompted that realization and what was it like?**

Up to this point in our study, we've spent a lot of time discussing the importance of complete surrender to God. As simple as that may sound (or maybe it doesn't sound simple at all!), complete surrender to God does not come naturally. As Christians, we want to please God. But all Christians have tried pleasing God on their own terms. We want God to be pleased with us, but we imagine that we can serve Him adequately without sacrificing our comfort—this is the essence of serving our leftovers to a holy God. But Jesus calls us to pick up our cross and follow Him, and anything less amounts to disobedience.

**3. Have you ever come to a point where you realized that it's impossible to please God apart from wholehearted surrender? If so, what prompted that realization, and what was it like?**

**4. In what other ways have you tried to please God?**

Hebrews 11:6 says it's impossible to please God without faith. After this potent statement, the rest of the chapter contains a long list of faithful people and what they did for God through faith. None of the people in the list is perfect, but they all surrendered themselves to God through faith, and God used them to accomplish amazing things.

Take some time to read through Hebrews 11. Try to identify with some of the characters listed in this inspiring passage. These people were simple, sinful, weak human beings. What

the author of Hebrews admires about them is their faith and how that faith played out in their lives. Think about the things that God used these people to do and how foolish these things would be if life ended with death. As you try to identify with these people, begin to analyze your life in light of these acts of faith.

**5. Which examples of faith inspire you the most? Why?**

6. **Have you ever done anything that wouldn't make any sense if all we have is this life, but makes perfect sense in light of eternity? If so, describe what you did and why you did it. If not, why do you think you've never done anything like this?**

In chapter 7 of *Crazy Love*, I mentioned that one of my college professors challenged me to ask myself what I was doing that requires faith. This is a convicting question to put to yourself. Most of us can explain every aspect in our lives without appealing to supernatural power or godly motivations. Take some time to consider this question yourself, especially in light of what you read in Hebrews 11.

**7. What are you doing right now that requires faith?**

The solution to lukewarmness and the appropriate motivation for wholehearted surrender to God is love. Remember that this is the greatest commandment. But I've known a lot of people who talk a lot about loving God yet treat the people around them horribly. For these people, loving God is an abstract concept that doesn't necessarily affect the other areas of their lives.

But the Bible doesn't speak about love in such ambiguous terms. For the biblical writers, love is real and concrete. Love transforms us from the inside out; it spreads to every aspect of our existence.

Take two particularly potent examples from 1 John. Read through 1 John 3:16–20 and 4:19–21. Allow your thinking to be shaped by John's descriptions of what it means to love God. As you read these passages, evaluate your love for God in light of your love for the people God has placed in your life. After you've spent some time with these two sections of Scripture, answer the questions below thoughtfully.

8. **Describe the way you tend to interact with people. Would you characterize this as sacrificial love? Why or why not?**

9. **Think very practically here: How should your love for God flow out in sacrifice for the sake of others?**



**If you have the *Crazy Love DVD Study Resource*, watch the video for session 7 now, particularly if you are meeting with a group. After the video, work through the rest of this session.**

The Christian life is not about money. That is, being a Christian does not automatically mean that you should be rich. But it also doesn't automatically mean that you should be poor. There have been groups of Christians throughout history who have adamantly pursued both ends of the financial spectrum as an end in itself. Money is an important part of our daily lives, but we don't always think of our finances in light of our love for God.

Money is not the point. Love for God is the point. But this doesn't mean that we can separate our love for God from the way we pursue, gain, and spend our money. John says this explicitly in the passage you just looked at: "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). The things we pursue and the way we spend our money absolutely reflect what's going on inside our hearts. Jesus gave an important warning: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21).

The easiest way to "Christianize" our finances is to declare all spending of money on non-spiritual things sinful. But this misses the point. It's about our hearts. It's about the way our love for God flows in the way we care for and bless other people. It's about enjoying God's good gifts so much that we go to great lengths to enable other people to enjoy them as well. Ultimately, allowing God to control our hearts will also mean allowing Him to control our wallets.

Using our money to bless other people is not the only way to express our love for God, but it is an important way that we often sidestep for the sake of our own comfort.

**10. Assess your earning, saving, and spending habits in terms of wholehearted devotion to God. Which of these habits might be foolish in light of eternity? How so?**

**11. Do you have any possessions or resources that God might be calling you to give away to someone who is in need? What and why?**

**12. End this session by praying that God would work in your heart. The concept of wholehearted devotion to God can quickly degenerate into a legalistic denial of all God's gifts. Instead, ask God to show you distractions in your life and expose things that you desire more than you desire God. Ask Him to decrease your desire for these things and increase your desire for Him. Ask Him to multiply your love for Him to such an extent that it spills out into every area of your life and into the lives of the people He has placed in your life.**