

# What Happens Five Minutes After You Die?

We love beginnings, but what about endings? Some endings, like the end of life or the end of the world, can even feel scary. But we need not fear; we just have to be prepared. Let's talk about how to live now in light of what's to come.



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## INTRODUCTION

Regardless of our age or our life circumstances, we all want to understand what happens at the end of our lives, should we die before the Lord returns. Death can seem scary and uncertain, but as believers in Christ, we can trust that God holds us safely in His hands. He is with us now, and He will carry us into eternity with Him.

## STARTER QUESTION

Throughout our lives, we hear stories that are funny, scary, and even thought-provoking about death and dying. What kinds of stories have you heard? What stories make you scratch your head and wonder about the end of our lives? What has been your experience with and understanding of this topic, especially as it relates to God's Word? Have you ever considered that the end of a matter is greater than the beginning?

## INTO THE WORD

### Question 1:

Pastor David referred to the story Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:22-23. What happened to Lazarus after he died in verse 22? How does this contrast with the rich man in verse 23?

Read Matthew 5:1-12. This is the first sermon Jesus ever preached, which turns the world (and especially the Pharisees at the time) upside-down! How does the story Jesus told in Luke of the rich man and the beggar (Lazarus) also support His famous "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew?

### Question 2:

Read 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. Bible scholars believe Paul told of this incident and was actually referring to himself when he says, "*I know a man in Christ,*" to show that he had been uniquely touched by God. He briefly details his own experience with death. What stands out to you from this passage?

Read Acts 14:19-20. Is it possible that the timeline Paul notes in 2 Corinthians 12:2 "*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven*" is actually a personal reference from when "*they stoned Paul... thinking he was dead*" in Acts 14:19? What stands out to you about Acts 14:20?

### Question 3:

Read Ecclesiastes 7:1-18. These verses are full of contrasts. What can we learn about our own experiences with contrasting situations (that is, in times of happiness versus in times of sadness)? How can we control our attitudes and responses when dealing with life's difficulties and/or life's blessings?

## **APPLICATION**

### **Application #1:**

Pastor David referenced I Thessalonians 4:14-18, which contains additional information on our lives after we have left this earth. Verse 18 specifically says we should encourage one another with these words. We were challenged to consider how we would live our lives differently if we knew we had only one week to live. While this can be a sobering thought, what would you reevaluate, change, and/or do differently in the next week if you knew it was truly your last? Write down your thoughts. What do you notice in your choices? Are there recurring themes?

### **Application #2:**

Pastor David said that the moment we die wisdom ends and foolishness is revealed. We were encouraged to live every moment to reduce that "foolishness." What are some practical steps that we can take every day that will help us to:

- a. Think deeper thoughts
- b. Have better attitudes
- c. Prioritize people
- d. Do the wise thing, not the foolish thing

### **Application #3:**

We were encouraged to live in a way that we experience gratitude instead of regret. However, we all experience regret in this life. What can we do about regret in this life? What realities help you to deal with personal regret?

## **PRAYER**

God, while there is so much we do not understand in this life, we do know that you have gone to prepare a place for us when we reach the end of our lives – you have told us so in your Word! We know that you hold all our days in your hands. Show us how to live purposefully for You each day. We want to live in a place of gratitude and not regret, following the example of Lazarus, who strove for spiritual riches. And when the end of our lives does come, reassure us that we will leave this earth to live forever with You. Thank you, God. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:**

### **In reference to question 1 for Into the Word:**

In *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee* (Matthew through Romans; page 320-321) regarding the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, he writes:

“This is the story of a rich man who lived and died without God. It moves into a realm that we know nothing about. The Lord (Jesus) passes from this world to the next without making any break at all. Although we cannot penetrate the curtain between this life and the next life, our Lord (Jesus) speaks of the next world as naturally as He speaks of this life.”

Discuss how your belief in Jesus' victory over death, and your corresponding faith in Him, can give you confidence and peace of mind about your own eventual passing.

Discuss the idea of patterning our thoughts and behaviors after Jesus while in this life to be a witness to those who do not know Christ.

### **In reference to question 2 for Into the Word:**

In *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee* (1 Corinthians through Revelation; page 141) regarding 2 Corinthians 12:2, he writes:

“Paul speaks of his experience of being taken up into the third heaven. He dates it for us. He says it happened fourteen years before he wrote this epistle. That would be approximately the time when he made his first missionary journey. ...Howbeit, as the disciples stood around him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barbara's to Derbe? Was he dead? I don't think they would have left him there unless they were pretty sure he was dead. It is my personal opinion that God raised him from the dead. Paul was rather uncertain whether this was a vision or whether he had been caught up in reality at that time. It is quite evident that he is describing his own experience here.”

As you read Paul saying, “God knows” and “but God knows” in 2 Corinthians 12:2-3, where does the Holy Spirit lead you? Do you believe Lazarus found hope in these truths as he begged for crumbs?

### **In reference to question 3 for Into the Word:**

In Ecclesiastes 7:14, it says that God has made both the good times and the bad. This suggests that both have their purposes. Romans 8:26-28 reinforces the point by saying, for followers of God, **all** things work together for good.

The Ecclesiastes passage heavily emphasizes the wisdom that is gained because of going through trials. The use of the word “Inheritance” as a comparative to wisdom in Ecclesiastes 7:11 ties into Hebrews 12: 3-11, which calls us God's sons. The inheritance (wisdom) in Ecclesiastes goes hand in hand with the discipline (trials) that are given by God to his sons in Hebrews.

In contrast to allowing trials & tests, God also provides for his children. Refer to James 1:17-18, Matthew 6:25-34, and Isaiah 41:17-18.

Are there any verses or phrases in Ecclesiastes 7:1-18 that will bring you peace in life's trying times? What other verses do you use to keep you humble when things are good or to bring you peace when things are hard?

**In reference to question 1 for Application:**

The Matthew Henry commentary expounds upon verse 18 with the following:

“We should endeavor to support one another in times of sorrow, not deaden one another’s spirits, nor weaken one another’s hands, but should comfort one another; and this may be done by serious consideration and discourse on the many good lessons to be learned from the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the second coming of Christ, and the glory of the saints in that day.”

Discuss examples of each of the above topics: 1) Support during times of sorrow, 2) Encouraging others, 3) Strengthening others, and 4) Comforting others through the lessons we learn in God’s Word.

**In reference to question 2 for Application:**

None of these things come naturally for us. Humans can be selfish, avoid thinking about things that are difficult, and tend to do the easy thing, not the right thing. With God’s guidance and support from other believers, we can become more like Christ every day!

- a. **Think deeper thoughts:** Philippians 4:8, Psalm 4:3-4, and Psalm 19:14 – These are just a few of the verses that talk about meditating on God and the scripture. Psalms is full of them. One thing they all seem to have in common is: this should be a daily practice. “Day & Night,” “When I’m in my bed,” and other similar phrases are common in these verses.
- b. **Have better attitudes:** Romans 15:1-7, Galatians 5:22-23, Colossians 3:23, and Philippians 1:27 – The Bible stresses that our mindset and attitudes should reflect that of Christ. How do we achieve that? The more time we spend focused on God (see part ‘a’ above), the more natural it becomes to respond like Christ.
- c. **Prioritize people:** Deuteronomy 15:11, Hebrews 6:10, and Philippians 2:1-4 – According to Deuteronomy, there will always be those in need around us. These may be people you know and/or people you randomly encounter on any given day.

**In reference to question 3 for Application:**

Realize that we are all broken people. Without Jesus we are all failures. Romans 3:10-12 and John 15:5 remind us that Jesus does good through us. We need to abide in Him, and He does His work.

It is never too late to repent, turn around, and make new choices. Ezekiel 18:21-30 reminds us it is not so much what you have or have not done as it is what you are or are not doing. So many people in Scripture who started out badly are remembered well because they allowed God to change them. Discuss people in Scripture who allowed God to make them into new creations.