



The promise is eternal life. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me though he were dead, yet shall he live." Jesus also said, "I have come that you might have life . . ." This life certainly is directly related to love for God and love for others, but it is also "eternal." Eternal life is one of the most significant promises of Christ, of biblical faith, of those who choose Jesus. The last few weeks, the message series has been *Seasons*, as together we walked through the seasons of life — spring, summer, fall and winter. This last weekend we looked at winter.

*How does believing in eternal life impact transitioning through the seasons of life?*

*How does belief in eternal life impact our choices, decisions, what and who we choose to live for? How do you feel about being accountable to God, especially eternally?*

MESSAGE

"Winter"

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Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:

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**GPS for Families**

*GrowPrayStudy.org/family*

According to research, teens cannot express their faith with clarity. They like the concept of being Christian, and "they are more likely to pray, go to worship services, read the Bible and attend youth group meetings than teens a dozen years ago." But they cannot put their faith into words. The shocking part of this research is that these kids emulate their parents in religious matters. They tend to behave and talk about religion just like the adults in their lives.

So what's a parent to do? Engage your kids in discussion about your faith. This does not mean you have to get out the family Bible each Sunday and sit down for devotion time. While family devotions work well for some, it is equally important to make discussions of God an everyday part of your life. Point out God at work in your life. Spend time around the dinner table pointing out where you saw God bless you that day. Acknowledge your weaknesses and how you need God to help you. Admit mistakes and pray out loud for forgiveness and help with difficult situations. Let them ask questions about God and acknowledge your own questions concerning your faith. Talk about choices your family makes because of your effort to follow Jesus and how those decisions may put you at odds with the culture or their friends. Don't be afraid to not know the right thing to say or have the right answer. God isn't expecting you to be perfect, he just wants you to make him an integral part of your everyday life.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

*Dear God, I want to stop for a moment and thank you for life, for my life, for your grace that gives me existence right this minute. Forgive me for even a tinge of ungratefulness, for a second of taking it for granted, for sometimes failing to miss the joy of life itself, a joy just because you love me and I am learning to love you. What ever season of life I am in I am grateful for it, for it is your will for me. I pray that as the outer nature of my life disappears, that the inner nature is renewed day by day, producing an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. God is big enough. Amen.*

The apostle John writes these words in the winter of his life, speaking God’s Word to a world that was changing rapidly, yet also a world where some embraced the good news of Jesus Christ and some rejected it. The world was a dark place. Not only did the Roman ways continue to dominate the culture, but the Church was being persecuted for its differences. John tells us that God is light and that those who believe in Him are drawn to and walk in that light.

*An important part of walking in the light is that the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. Is there any hidden sin in your life, a darker place that needs to be confessed?*

*Why might God consider it a problem if we say we have no sin to confess? Confession and grace are where God’s light shines brightest.*

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Jesus said in the gospel of John, chapter 14, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Decades later these words were written by the apostle John near the end of his life here in 1 John. John recorded them as a young man in the Gospel and then repeats them here to the church 40 years later. These verses encourage us not to sin. If we do, there is an advocate, Jesus Christ, who died as a “propitiation” for our sins, so absolute forgiveness is granted. But the verse still firmly addresses that those who know and love God will avoid sin and walk in God’s way.

*Why do you think that loving and knowing God incorporates abstaining from sin, accepting grace when we do and walking in the way of God rather than the way of the culture? Do you think there is power in loving God?*

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Jesus said long before these words from 1 John were written that the greatest commandment was, “Love God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself.” They would become the distinct truth that would shape and still shapes the church and the follower of Jesus Christ, “the power of the resurrection and the love God’s people had for each other and the hurting of the world.” What is added, though, is the idea that loving one’s brother and sister is part of walking in the light, and hating others is a significant part of walking in the dark. Those who love God and walk in the light should always be growing in love; it is one and the same.

*Why do you think that loving God must include loving others?*

*Why does hate and resentment lead to darkness?*

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We can best understand love, not just as an emotional feeling, but by what we live for, what we would die for, even what we pursue. Jesus loved in purity and holiness and lived for God, lived for the people God sent Him to, lived for things of eternal value, lived for the will and purpose of His heavenly Father. In this week’s reading we have been taught to love God and love others. Here it says what not to love — the things of this world.

*How do we know what “the world” is? The distinction these verses use is that “the world is passing away” and “the one who does the will of God abides forever.”*

*What do you live for? Who do you love? Is your love for God growing? Does love dictate your choices and what you really live for?*

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