

DRIVEN *by* Eternity



MAKING YOUR
LIFE COUNT
TODAY & FOREVER

JOHN BEVERE
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *BAIT OF SATAN*

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I dedicate this book . . .

to all who labor tirelessly to build lives for eternity.

Be encouraged in your quest.

His coming is certain and His reward is with Him.

*“And this is eternal life,
that they may know You, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*

JOHN 17:3-4

INTRODUCTION

What is it about the word *eternity* that catches our attention; in fact, has the potential to influence an entire nation? Such is the story of Arthur Stace, an Australian born into a life of hopelessness at the turn of the century. His life was that of a bum filled with petty crime and alcoholism between the First World War and the Great Depression. All this changed when he met Jesus on August 6, 1930, and soon afterward heard his pastor cry, “I wish I could shout *eternity* through all the streets of Sydney!” He felt driven to make this cry a reality.

Arthur would rise early each morning, pray for an hour, and leave his home between 5:00 and 5:30 A.M., to go wherever he felt God led him. For hours he would write one word, *eternity*, approximately every hundred feet on the sidewalks of Sydney. For more than twenty years his work was a mystery. Who was writing this single word that caused countless thousands to pause and ponder its meaning, both immediate and long range? Had this mystery man captured the impact and portion of this single word’s power? It wasn’t until 1956 that the puzzle was solved.

Two years after Arthur’s death in 1967, Sydney poet Douglas Stewart published these words and immortalized the word of this graffiti preacher:

That shy mysterious poet Arthur Stace
Whose work was just one single mighty word
Walked in the utmost depths of time and space
And there his word was spoken and he heard
ETERNITY, ETERNITY, it banged him like a bell

Dulcet from heaven sounding, sombre from hell.

A one-word sermon touched a nation. His message was secured for generations by architect Ridley Smith, who put it in copperplate in the Sydney Square. It was later viewed by over 4 billion souls worldwide as they watched by television the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney Olympics, and again when it was emblazoned in fireworks on the Sydney Harbor Bridge on the Eve of the new millennium.

Eternity arrests the attention of all mankind. No race, tribe, or gender can resist its draw. We were created with eternity in our hearts and sense the immanent unknown extension of our existence. Therefore, it's wise to delve deeper into what our Creator says concerning eternity; after all, His word states, "From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can oppose what I do" (Isa. 43:13, TLB). It is the very reason you've picked up this book. I believe your choice was wise.

Let's pray together before beginning. I've prayed this aloud in my study in anticipation of you praying with me:

Dear God of Eternity, Creator of all, and Lord of the Universe, I come to You in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son. I ask in agreement with Your servant John Bevere that this day You would anoint my eyes to see; my ears to hear; and give me a heart to perceive and understand what You are saying to me through this message. I acknowledge my need for the Holy Spirit's help to know Your will and ways for my life. It is my desire to please You all the days of my life as well as throughout all eternity. Show me not only Your ways, but Your heart, that I may know You, for this is eternal life to know You intimately as my Heavenly Father. Thank You for Your amazing faithfulness, grace, and mercy.

Let's begin knowing the Holy Spirit will give you insight and understanding that you couldn't have obtained on your own. How exciting!

Chapter 1

THE ETERNAL

Teach us to make the most of our time . . . and make our efforts successful. Yes, make our efforts successful!

PSALM 90:12, 17, NLT

The desire of most people is to live a life that counts. This is a right and godly aspiration. It was Moses' request in the above prayer. He began by asking for wisdom to make the most of time. Many things lost in life can be restored; however, time misused can never be recovered. Once the sun goes down, the day is forever gone.

His prayer concludes with, "Make our efforts successful." The exact phrase is repeated. Why repeated? Moses didn't have a problem with grammar or memory. Rather, this represents a literary style found in Hebrew writing. The repetition is a form of emphasis. In English when we want to emphasize the importance of a word or phrase, we have several methods. We can make it bold, italicize it, underscore it, use all capitals, or add an exclamation point for emphasis. These are all ways of calling the reader's attention to something that is very important. However, the Hebrew writers would write a word or phrase twice to bring emphasis, and they weren't known to overstate—they were always careful with their words. The fact that this was repeated twice in Scripture shows it is not only God's will for us to succeed, but He is passionate about it. He is the one who has placed emphasis on it.

We were created to be successful. God wants our life to be significant! It was God's desire first, not ours. He makes this known throughout Scripture. Let me just list two, "The Lord your God will make you *successful* in everything you do" (Deut. 30:9, NLT, emphasis mine). Notice the word *everything*, not *some things*! Again we read: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way *prosperous*, and then you will have *good success*" (Josh. 1:8, emphasis mine).

It takes godly wisdom to enjoy success. Scripture states, "He who loves wisdom loves his own best interest and will be a success" (Prov. 19:8, TLB). Wisdom gives us the knowledge and ability to make right choices at the opportune time. True wisdom is not given to the mentally sharp; it is for all who fear the Lord and are found in Christ. In order for you to build a life of eternal significance, you must do it through godly wisdom, and that is what this message is all about.

Wisdom breeds success, which brings enduring satisfaction and rewards, "If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you" (Prov. 9:12, NIV). Not only does the Lord desire your success, but He longs to reward you for it. Again we read, "Day by day the Lord observes the good deeds done by godly men, and gives them eternal rewards" (Ps. 37:18, TLB).

The fact that God desires us to succeed has been emphasized in a good segment of the church in recent years, as it should. However, success is many times perceived the way society defines it, rather than the way God views it. It's seen through the eyes of the temporal rather than the eternal. This creates a blur in understanding, which results in misguided pursuits. We will all one day stand before the Judge of the universe, Jesus Christ, and if we've made our life count through godly wisdom, we will be rewarded eternally.

If we've been misguided in our affairs, we will either be punished or suffer eternal loss. So it's wise to spend a few hours finding out what He is looking for.

This is the focus of this book: Making your life count not only today, but throughout eternity. The Bible is clear about how to do this. If we are to be motivated by the eternal, let's start off by getting an understanding of it.

ETERNITY

Read carefully these two Scriptures:

“No one can begin to understand eternity.”

JOB 36:26, TLB

“He has put eternity in their hearts.”

ECCLESIASTES 3:11

Eternity. What is it? How can it be defined? How can it be understood? One dictionary defines it as *infinite time*,¹ yet another, *the state of existing outside of time*.² How can one dictionary define eternity to exist within the state of time, and another as outside time? And why has it gone unquestioned? Wouldn't we question one of two science books if they define something in our world to exist in different states? Suppose one book defined a fish to be a vertebrate living in water while another reports they live in environments free of water. We would immediately conclude one to be wrong and throw it out. Yet why do we not question and throw out one of the dictionaries' definitions of eternity?

The truth is that eternity cannot be mentally comprehended. Our minds are finite, prohibited from grasping perpetual or everlasting concepts. Allow me to illustrate. Take a moment and imagine where the end of the universe is. Think of its outer limits. If you can, then what do you find at the external boundary? A wall? What's it made of? How thick is it? Would the outer side of the wall be the exact point of the end of the universe? If so, what is beyond the outside of the wall? More space? Wouldn't this constitute a continuation of the universe? Where is the end? Can your mind take in the endlessness of the universe? Just stop and think about it.

Or what about a bottomless pit? Can you imagine falling into a hole in which you never stopped falling? You would never hit or even see the floor; you just keep falling and falling forever. Two things, not just one, short-circuit our mental reasoning here: first, no bottom; second, an endless time of falling. It's hard to comprehend, and it sounds like a concept from science fiction, yet there is such a place referenced seven times in Scripture.

What about God Himself, man's Creator? Pause a moment and think of His beginning, or I should say, "No beginning." Scripture declares that He is, "from everlasting to everlasting." If He wasn't born, if no one created Him, then how did He begin to be who He is? How did He evolve? The truth is He didn't evolve into God, for the Psalmist declares, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Ps. 90:2). Meditate on this a while. If you do, you'll frustrate your intellectual reasoning since, as Job wrote, "no one can begin to understand eternity."

PLACED IN OUR HEARTS

What is in truth declared unreachable to our natural mind is placed in our heart by the Creator. Eternity is known in our heart. It is born in every human being. This is why "the fool has said in his *heart*, 'there is no God'" (Ps. 14:1, emphasis mine). Notice Scripture does *not* say, "The fool has said in his *mind*." There are many atheists who emphatically deny the existence of God, but in their heart they know He exists, for it is planted there. They've not yet hardened their heart to a complete degenerated state.

I have a friend who, years ago, was a staunch atheist, or so he thought. He wouldn't allow anyone to witness to him; in fact, he ripped a Bible from the hands of a coworker one day and threw it on the ground and stomped on it, cursing the man and his Bible. He accused this Christian man of being weak and brainless.

Later, after years of confessed atheism, he suffered severe chest pains. Doctors opened him up for exploratory surgery. They immediately closed him up and told him he had less than twenty-four hours to live.

While he lay on the bed that night, he realized he was going to his eternal abode and it was not at all where he wanted to end up. How did he know that since he would not allow anyone to share the Scriptures with him? Could it be he had eternity planted in his heart, just as Scripture states of all mankind, "For the truth about God is known to them instinctively. God has put this knowledge in their hearts" (Rom. 1:19, NLT).

That night his heart stopped. He left his body and descended into deep darkness. The darkness was so thick he felt he was wearing it, not a glimmer of light could be seen. After falling for what seemed to be quite

some time, he heard the horrifying screams of tormented souls. He was pulled by a strong force right up to the gates of hell when suddenly he was able to retreat back to his body. He had been revived.

The next morning he called for the only Christian man he knew. His friend came and proclaimed the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Once he'd received Jesus Christ into his life as Lord and Savior, his friend prayed for his healing. Three weeks later he walked out of the hospital and is still alive at the writing of this book. He's a walking miracle.

As an atheist, he proclaimed there was no God, yet eternity was planted in his heart. The fool, on the other hand, is the one who has not just denied God mentally, but has resisted in his heart to the point of a seared conscience. He is beyond reach. It's one thing to hold firm to a belief in your intellect, that can be changed; but it is quite another thing to completely harden your heart. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* gives this definition: "In Scripture the 'fool' primarily is the person who casts off the fear of God and thinks and acts as if he could safely disregard the eternal principles of God's righteousness."³

A fool can actually acknowledge God mentally, but he denies His existence in his heart, which is reflected by how he lives. The fear of God is what keeps our heart within reach of the Holy Spirit; if lost, there is no hope left for us. Paul said, "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who *fear God*, to you the word of this salvation has been sent" (Acts 13:26, emphasis mine). Only those who fear God are capable of hearing the Words of eternal life.

ETERNITY DEFINED

Eternity has been planted in our hearts, even though it's impossible to comprehend with our minds. So in defining it, I ask you to listen with your heart; in fact, the same is necessary to benefit from this entire book. How do you do this? First of all, acknowledge your need for the Holy Spirit to help you and ask for His assistance, which we have already done (see Introduction). He will commune with your innermost man, not head. Second, stop to ponder and meditate when your heart is stirred or gripped by a statement of truth. Don't race through this book; if you do, the benefit to you will be limited. To receive the full impact of God's eternal word to

you, apply these two steps and you will be changed forever. David says, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Ps. 119:11). Don’t just read for a mental understanding, which can be easily forgotten or lost, but let His Word be hidden in your heart through contemplation and prayer.

Eternity is everlasting; there is no end. However, it’s not just a matter of ceaseless time, as it is not subject to time. Eternity transcends time. To speak of eternity in terms of merely perpetual duration is to miss the full picture. To capture the best view of eternity, we must look at God Himself. He is not limited in power, knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and all glory, just to name a few. He is self-existent; forever was and forever will be God. He is called the “Everlasting Father” (Isa. 9:6). Young’s literal translation reads, “Father of Eternity.”⁴ He is called the “King of eternity” (1 Tim. 1:17, AMP). All that is eternal is found in Him; in fact, eternity itself is found in Him. All that is outside of Him is temporal and will change. No matter how good, noble, powerful, or enduring it may seem, it will eventually cease. Even the earth and universe will change, but He will not:

Lord, in the beginning you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. Even they will perish, but you remain forever. They will wear out like old clothing. You will roll them up like an old coat. They will fade away like old clothing. But you are always the same; you will never grow old.

HEBREWS 1:10-12, NLT

Not only will He never cease, but He remains eternally the same. Scripture declares:

“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

1 PETER 1:24-25

He is eternal; therefore, what He speaks is eternal. He cannot lie, nor can what He says be broken. If it weren't so, then all would collapse into utter darkness, for He is light and upholds all things by His Word. There can never be a change to what He says, or else He would no longer be eternal. That is a sure foundation upon which we can build our lives.

ETERNAL JUDGMENTS

Many today are not building their lives on the eternal—God's Word—but rather cultural thinking, tradition, assumptions, and emotional feelings about who God is. This doesn't just apply to people who are not Christians, but to many believers as well. It's a scary thing to believe something temporal as being the eternal truth. If this is done, your foundation is faulty and setting you up for a sure fall. You'll believe a lie and are in a deceived state.

I am amazed at how many people I meet who base their lives on what's not eternal. Some will tell me of God and their belief in His Son, but whom they declare just isn't the One revealed in His Word. The deception runs deep. How can they believe what they have simply imagined within their own minds, shaped by a society that has already been declared contrary to God's nature? Jesus said:

He who . . . does not receive My words, has that which judges him—*the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day*. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.

JOHN 12:48-49
(EMPHASIS MINE)

There is a Judgment Day, which has been appointed from the foundation of the world (Acts 17:31). That day will not bring new revelations of truth; rather, it will measure all things by what has already been spoken. His Word, which we currently possess, will judge us in that last day. It is

eternal. It is final. There are no exceptions, alterations, or revisions. Wouldn't it benefit us to know and live by what He says, rather than assume what He said?

The judgments made in that day are called *eternal* (Heb. 6:2). In other words, the decisions made that day, which will be based on how we lined our lives up with His eternal Word, will determine how we spend the rest of eternity! There will never be any changes to those decisions, for they are called *eternal judgments*.

So many, both believers and nonbelievers, are ignorantly allowing the appointed judgment to hasten toward them without cause for investigation. They've taken a false hope in concepts that are not found in the Bible. Some think God will take into account all the good they've done and if it outweighs the bad, they will find favor. Others who profess a new birth experience have thought that they will not stand before Jesus as Judge because He is their Savior. They believe they are exempt from any form of judgment. They will be most surprised. Then there are some who think everything will just pan out. They are trusting in an unscriptural mercy.

None of these concepts are what the New Testament reveals and teaches. These notions and many others that people have devised in their own imaginations are temporal, not eternal, and will not stand in that day. There will be stunned men and women, and I personally think there will be more professing Christians than unbelievers who are shocked on Judgment Day.

CONFIDENCE AT THE JUDGMENT

We don't have to go into judgment with fear, but we can go with confidence:

And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world.

1 JOHN 4:17, NLT

Notice the words “as we live in God, our love grows more perfect.” The key that will give us confidence on Judgment Day is the love of God being made perfect (or matured) in us. Now here is where many in the church falter. They see the love of God in the light of the temporal, not the eternal. There is love and goodness, which are admired by society and many in the church but determined by human measures, and are contrary to the love of God. Let me illustrate a few that are common.

“We love each other so much and are planning to get married.” This is often stated when two people are having sex outside of marriage. Not only is this sin even if they do follow through and get married, but many times I’ve witnessed those who make such statements end up not getting married. They’ve forgotten the clear exhortation, “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Heb 13:4, NIV). Notice He does not say, “The adulterer and sexually immoral who don’t attend church.” No, it is all who practice this lifestyle.

“I know it wasn’t quite the truth, but it will help close the deal and we will make sure that they get fair treatment.” Businesspeople often say this when they want to secure a sale that they really believe is good for the people but they need to twist the facts a little to get the customer to move forward. Not only is this the sin of lying, but almost always the deal is very good for the one making the statement. Have they forgotten the warning that states, “All liars (those who knowingly convey untruth by word or deed)—[all of these shall have] their part in the lake that blazes with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8, AMP).

“What I said about him is the truth.” This is often said when people are talking in a negative light (gossip or slander) about a fellow worker, friend, boss, etc. They may act as if they love or are concerned, but in fact it is still slander. The fact is, you can be 100 percent right and still be wrong according to eternal standards. If you recall, Noah’s youngest son, Ham, reported accurately to his brothers his father’s nakedness and drunken state. However, a curse came on his lineage and lasted generations as a result of his dishonoring his father. Have those who gossip and slander forgotten the exhortation to believers that states, “Don’t grumble about each other, my brothers and sisters, or God will judge you. For look! The great Judge is coming. He is standing at the door!” (James 5:9, NLT).

The examples are endless, but the common denominator is that they are contrary to God's eternal will. The scary fact is that many who live in this manner and make such seemingly harmless statements may attend church, be very kind in their mannerisms, and be looked upon as model citizens. But how do they measure up to the eternal? John gave the answer on how to perfect (mature) the love of God earlier in his letter:

Whoever says, I know Him [I perceive, recognize, understand, and am acquainted with Him (*Jesus Christ*)] but fails to keep and obey His commandments (teachings) is a liar, and the Truth [of the Gospel] is not in him. But he who keeps (treasures) His Word [who bears in mind His precepts, who observes His message in its entirety], truly in him has the love of and for God been perfected.

1 JOHN 2:4-5, AMP
(EMPHASIS MINE)

Recall that it is the perfected (matured) love of God that gives us confidence to stand before our Judge. John makes it clear that the love of God is perfected in keeping His commandments, not in behaving in a way that is good in society's eyes. Keep in mind that Eve was not drawn to the *evil* side of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, rather the *good* side! "The woman saw how *beautiful* the tree was and how *good* its fruit would be to eat" (Gen. 3:6, TEV, emphasis mine). There is a *beautiful* and *good* to the eyes and human reasoning that are contrary to the eternal love of God. It is not eternal and will not endure.

Scripture also states that we cannot observe a percentage of God's commands and believe that we will have confidence on Judgment Day. It is when we carefully observe all of His word, in its entirety, that the love of God is matured. This is why God gives us grace; it empowers us to be able to obey His Word completely, in a way that is acceptable to Him. "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably" (Heb. 12:28).

The key is to know what the King desires and looks for, not what seems good to society or human reasoning. For this reason God tells us, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will

of God” (Rom. 12:2). What may seem good to our culture may be an affront to God’s desires—the eternal.

Allow me to illustrate. I’m currently sitting in a hotel in Singapore, where I’ll be preaching to close to twenty thousand people this weekend. I’ve been to this great nation many times. I’ve also preached the gospel in the Netherlands a few times. In the Netherlands, it is not against the law to have in your possession or smoke marijuana. The people there can smoke it legally and not fear penalty. However, in Singapore if you are caught with a certain amount of drugs (and it is a small amount), you will be arrested and severely punished. If caught with certain drugs, the punishment is death by hanging! When you fly into Singapore, it is written right on the entry card, “Death to Drug Traffickers under Singapore law.”

Now can you just imagine a young Dutchman who regularly smokes marijuana travels to Singapore and shares his pot with Singaporeans? He gladly states to these newly found friends, “Hey, guys, this stuff is great. It calms you, gives you an enjoyable buzz, and takes your frustrations away. Would you like some? I’d love to share it with you.”

He is immediately arrested. He’s in shock. “Why are you arresting me?” is the first question out of his mouth to the officers.

Judgment day arrives; he stands in the court before the judge believing with all his heart this is some kind of fluke. The judge pronounces his guilt and punishment.

The man in shock says, “Your honor, where I come from it’s fine to share marijuana with your friends.”

The judge then says, “You’re not in Holland, you’re in Singapore, and in this nation it is against the law!”

The Dutchman’s confidence is gone; he has nothing to stand on. There can be no recourse as he is standing before the highest court of the land, doomed with no defense.

While I was in Singapore several years back, there was a young American who was arrested for vandalizing an automobile. He was arrested, judged guilty, and sentenced to several strokes of Rotan. This is a punishment that inflicts permanent physical damage whipping a person on the hind side with a type of bamboo plant treated with chemicals. Even President Clinton tried to get the young man’s sentence lightened. However, he had no success. The young man broke the laws of Singapore and had to serve his sentence.

All of us will stand before the highest court of the universe. This court's decision will be *eternally* final. There will be many who will be shocked, but they don't have to be. Are you ready? According to the Word of God, we can go before the Judge of the universe with confidence. This book is designed to help you prepare. If that young Dutchman would have taken time to learn and prepare to enter Singapore, he would have avoided severe penalty. How much more important for us, for the decision which is made at the Judgment Seat will be forever.

REWARDS

There will be more than one judgment; there will be one for unbelievers, another for believers, and even one for angels. The decisions made will vary. There will be loss and punishment; there will be rewards. We'll go into this in depth in upcoming chapters, but let me point out again that the decisions made will be eternal; this cannot be overemphasized (try again to mentally grasp never ending). It is God's will that we know this in advance and that we labor for the rewards. Paul says,

Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? *So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours.* Now every athlete who goes into training conducts himself temperately and restricts himself in all things. They do it to win a wreath that will soon wither, but we [do it to receive a crown of *eternal* blessedness] that cannot wither. Therefore I do not run uncertainly (without definite aim). I do not box like one beating the air and striking without an adversary. But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27, AMP

He clearly says, "I do not run uncertainly (without definite aim)." Another version says it like this, "So I run straight to the goal with purpose