

CITATION:

John Piper 1994-DECEMBER 25 © Desiring God. Website: <desiringGod.org>

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Notes- Adam Lenskyj listened to Major Shane-Gruer-Caulfield give his sermon on the topic of the "Nine Stages of Eternal Life" in the new Harbour Light Community Church.

Major Shane outlined the nine stages below while giving his own interpretations and anecdotal experiences.

I abstracted the below copy from John Piper. The highlighting is mine...

----- *Beginning-of-abstracted-copy* -----

So what I am going to do is walk us through the stages of eternal life. You will need to ask where are you in these stages? What is your experience of eternal life?

I believe the promise of [John 3:16](#) that whoever believes on Christ will not perish but have eternal life. ...(And) receive your gift of eternal life.

Stage 1: In Christ

Eternal life is in Christ.

[John 1:4](#), "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." Or in [John 14:6](#) Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Eternal life is first and foremost the life of the Son of God. It is God's life.

Therefore it is supernatural. It is not something we have by nature. If we get it, [we get it as a gift](#) (cf. 17:2; 10:28) and as a supernatural act above what we can manufacture. Eternal life is Christ's life. "In him was life, and that life was the light of men."

Stage 2: Through the Word of Christ

Eternal life comes to us through the Word of Christ.

In [John 6:68](#) Peter says to Jesus, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (cf. 5:24). The life of Christ is mediated to the world through his words. He himself is called the Word of God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" ([John 1:1, 14](#)).

And when he was with us on the earth, he spoke the words of life. And he taught his disciples to go and teach the way he taught. And he said that others would come to believe on him through their word (17:20). So eternal life is extended from Christ to others through his Word.

Stage 3: God Draws People to Christ

In the [hearing](#) of the words of eternal life, God draws people to Christ.

In [John 6:44](#) Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him." Christ is where eternal life is received. We must come to him if we will have it (5:40). The words of life offer it and describe it and tell how to have it and beckon us to it.

But [John 3:20](#) describes how by nature we hate the light of life. We don't want to come because we are laid bare and exposed by the light of life. Our only hope is the merciful "drawing" of God. He

overcomes our hatred for the light and opens our eyes to start seeing Christ for who he really is.

If eternal life is going to come into our lives, we have to start seeing Jesus, and that is what God's drawing us does. It opens our eyes to start seeing the Jesus we already see in the Word.

Is this the stage of eternal life where you are?

Stage 4: Believing in Christ

We receive eternal life through believing in Christ.

When we hear the words of life, and yield to the drawing power of God, and believe in Jesus, we receive him into our lives and with him we receive eternal life, because he is eternal life ([John 14:6](#)).

In [John 15:5](#) Jesus says, "I am the vine you are the branches." In other words by believing in Christ, we are united to him the way a branch is united to a vine—so that the life of the vine flows into the branch. His eternal life flows into us and we now have eternal life.

Stage 5: We Have Eternal Life *Now*

In believing we have eternal life **NOW, not just in the future.**

In [John 5:24](#) Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life [not "will have" but "has"—now!], and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." In other words eternal life is not something you wait for after death. It is something you have NOW if you are believing in Jesus.

Believing is the link that unites us with the life of God in Christ now. If we have Christ, we have his life now. And his life is eternal.

Stage 6: A Personal Relationship with God

This eternal life is a personal relationship with God the Father and God the Son.

In [John 17:3](#) Jesus defined eternal life like this. He was praying to his Father in heaven, and said: "This is eternal life, **that they know you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Eternal life is a personal, intimate knowing of God. It **is not like an inoculation against the disease of death**, that works unconsciously like a spiritual antibiotic. It is a conscious experience of knowing and relating to God.

To see why this is so, connect this with [John 1:4](#) that we already saw under stage one: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." The life is the light. What does that mean? It means, I believe, that when the eternal life of Christ comes into your life through faith, it sheds light on God and on Christ so you can know them personally. You now can see them far more clearly than you ever could before. You saw them as through a fog before faith. Then God enabled you to see enough to draw you into faith. Now in faith the life comes and with it the lights start to go on everywhere, and the personal reality of God is so powerful that you can know him and relate to him and fellowship with him.

"This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Eternal life brings the light of personal knowledge into the heart, and we know him and live with him and commune with him, NOW.

Stage 7: Not Interrupted at Death

Eternal life is not interrupted at death.

In [John 11:25–26](#) Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die." I think what he means is this: Everyone who has eternal life by faith will never have that life stripped away from him; even if he dies, he will live. Physical death will not turn eternal life into temporary life.

Eternal life is not interrupted by death.

Stage 8: Made Complete at the Resurrection

Eternal life will be made complete when our bodies are raised from the dead and reunited with our spirits.

In [John 6:40](#) Jesus said, "This is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." He is not only the life, as he said (11:25–26), he is the resurrection.

Eternal life encompasses body and soul.

Stage 9: Lasting Forever and Ever

Eternal life will last forever and ever.

How long is forever? Does it make you tremble? That so much rides on your spiritual awakening in this life? How long is it? I once heard Jerry Healy in a Bethel Chapel describe it like this: if a little bird should fly from the coast of the sea to a great plain and deposit a grain of sand once every thousand years, when the mound of sand is the height of Mount Everest eternity will have just begun.

Why Does Eternity Exist?

It exists because it will take that long for us to know the inexhaustible glories of God. Two-hundred-fifty years ago [Jonathan Edwards](#) preached a sermon on what it would be like to experience eternal life to—see and know God for eternity. He ponders whether that would grow dull and boring.

Where Are You in the Stages of Eternal Life?

Where are you in the stages of eternal life?

What if you believe this morning? ... the promise of [John 3:16](#) that whoever believes on Christ will not perish but have eternal life. (And) receive your gift of eternal life.

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