

## Living the Dream

### In Living Color, Part 10

#### *Selected Scripture*

### Discussion Guide

#### **Main Idea:**

Our glorified bodies and life in Heaven will be more than we ever imagined. We will have glorified bodies but still have emotions. We will make new friends and enjoy the familiarity of our old ones. Those who have endured the loss of a baby will finally meet him or her. There will be some continuity between our lives now and in Heaven. God sovereignly ordains each moment of our lives. We will remember the loss and pain we had here on earth, but it will be from a mature perspective and with the true joy of Jesus.

#### **Discussion Points:**

In our glorified bodies, we will have perfect relationships.

- Are there relationships in your life right now that could be better?
- Does our culture encourage healthy relationships?
- Do Christians (overall) have relationships that are strong witnesses to Christ?

With our perfect relationships, bitterness and an unwillingness to forgive will be no more.

- What does Scripture tell us about forgiving others?
- In what ways does our culture encourage or not encourage being forgiving?
- What does it look like to truly forgive someone?

One day, we will stand before the Lord to give account of how we served Him here on earth.

- How do you serve the Lord each day?
- We live in a culture that is all about self. Serving others and serving God is a foreign concept to some. How can Christians respond to this false thinking?
- Each moment we have is ordained by the Lord. How do you make the most of each moment you are given?

## **Discussion Guide Cont.**

### **Gospel Connection:**

Right now, we are in the time of waiting for Christ's return. Each day is a new day to serve our Risen King. We are on this journey of chasing after Jesus until, one day, we finally see Him face to face. Because of the Gospel, we are able to be on this journey and to serve Him in the here and now, while we wait. The Gospel made a way for us to be one with Christ and to live expectantly in the hope that we have in Him.

### **Practical Implications:**

**Think:** What will it be like to have our glorified bodies? What will perfect relationships look like?

**Pray:** Ask God to help you serve him with your whole heart today. Ask Him for the perseverance to continue on this journey of chasing after Jesus.

**Do:** Do all you can for the Lord today. Serve Him and wait expectantly for His return.

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## In Living Color, Part 10

### *Selected Scripture*

If you've ever wanted to tell the Lord, "Lord, I wish you'd told me more about Heaven . . . I wish you'd given me more information about my new body and the function and role of my new life . . . what it's going to be like there and what we're going to be like . . . I wish you'd given me more to go on."

The truth is, the information has been divinely limited and reserved. After Paul was given a tour of Heaven, he writes in 2 Corinthians 12:4 that he heard inexpressible words, which he had not been permitted to repeat.

When John the Apostle was being given his grand tour of Heaven, which he records for us in Revelation, at one point he's given an incredibly extensive display of future events and as he's preparing to write it down, he is commanded to seal it up and not write it down (Revelation 10:4).

The Lord essentially says to the Bible student, "I know you want more, but I decided long before not to give you everything you *want* to know, but I have given you everything you *need* to know."

So what exactly have we been told? For one thing – we've been told enough to know we haven't seen anything yet! This world around us – as beautiful and colorful as it is, is a mere shadow of the living color to come.

We've learned that our own bodies will one day shine with the brilliance of the sun, as shining immortals.

What else have we been told? Let's ask and answer a few more questions.

### **Will my new body have emotions and feelings?**

We ended our last discussion by noting that we're told by the Lord that we will leap for joy

in Heaven (**Luke 6:23**) – a statement that not only involves great emotion, but it also implies a return to youthful strength and vitality – the older you get, the idea of leaping for anything doesn't cross your mind.

We're given the promise by our Lord that one day our ***mourning will turn into laughter*** (**Luke 6:21**). Maybe you've wondered if you'd ever really laugh again. Well in this new world, crying sad tears is out . . . laughing for joy is in. Jesus said in **Matthew 25:23** that His servants will one day be invited to ***come and share in their Master's happiness***.

One of the misconceptions of Heaven is that we're going to turn into a host of stoics with no feelings, no merriment, no laughter . . . and even, no tears. The promise of **Revelation 21:4** which says our tears will be wiped away, has been misinterpreted for most of my lifetime. The context informs us that tears will be wiped away as they relate to the context of death and separation and pain.

Have you ever thought about the fact that there are times when you cry, but they are tears of joy? A beautiful sunset; a beautiful piece of music . . . your kids moving out of the house – those are tears of joy!

God crafted you with unique emotion – your responses to reunions and relationships and music and a beautiful sunset and stunning scenery and even a funny story are all going to elicit from you an emotional feeling and response.

Some of you laughed when I said you cried tears of joy when your kids finally moved out of the house. Why? Because you thought it was funny – that's how God wired you. And some of you didn't think it was funny – why? Because you don't have a sense of humor. No, the thought actually made you sad.

In Heaven you will still be uniquely you – laughing or shedding tears of joy over different things differently.  
Beloved, we’re going to be living the dream! In fact, far greater than we could ever dream!

Here’s another question: **Will I enjoy friendships and family in Heaven?**

The answer is, yes. Now again, a verse like *Psalm 73:25* where Asaph writes, *Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.*” (*Psalm 73:25*). And that verse is taken to mean that we’ll not have anything to do with anyone in Heaven but God.

But if we compare scripture with scripture – and go back to the original creation, we find the Triune God saying, Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.

Genesis 1:26

And the Triune God knows everything about the community of fellowship between God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit.

In fact, it’s interesting that the first time God said that something about creation *wasn’t* good, was when He spoke about Adam being without another human being to converse with and share life with. Genesis 2:18 records God saying, It is *not* good for the man to be alone.

Genesis 2:18

Which is fascinating, because Adam wasn’t alone . . . he had God. And God said, “No, Adam is, in a unique way, alone.”

The truth is, God designed us for fellowship and community and companionship and friendship. His greatest commandments, Jesus reminded us, are to *love God with all our heart and soul and mind and . . . what else? . . . to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39)*.

Don’t stop with loving God – love each other too. You’re not going to spend eternity in Heaven with God alone, but with each other.

So don’t minimize human relationships in Heaven – expect to see them magnified – and

perfected – without any sinful or self-serving cliques, competition, comparisons, or conflicts.

Get this picture from what Jesus promises in *Matthew chapter 8*; I say to you that many will come from the east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 8:11

How enjoyable is that going to be? Imagine that entertaining conversation!

By the way, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are still Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven; and they have bodies and their bodies still recline and there are still tables to recline at and there’s evidently food on that table where we will recline and talk and laugh and enjoy each other and make new friends in the Kingdom of Heaven.

You used to come home from school and your mother asked you if you made any new friends. You probably made some new enemies. Imagine one day in heaven making new friends – and they happen to be Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

One author wrote, we will experience the best of human relationships, with none of the worst . . . we will be free of what displeases God and damages relationships.<sup>i</sup>

Peter preached in Acts 17 that God orchestrated much more of our lives than we often consider. He said, From one man God made ever nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.

Acts 17:26

God determined the time and exact place where you would live. In other words, imagine this, it wasn’t an accident that you lived in that neighborhood, attended that school, sat next to those kids, had those teachers, attended that church and made those friends in the youth group or ladies Bible study or men’s small group.

My son who’s planting a church in Charlotte got on the elevator not too long ago and there

was a young man dressed out to play soccer – Benjamin struck up a conversation with him – they just so happened to compete against each other in collegiate soccer matches. It was a divine appointment. I told him – man, just think – you’re not only in the right city; in the right apartment complex, but you’re in the right elevator at the right time!

Even your relationships were appointed by God; and those relationships among believers will continue in Heaven, perfected and redeemed in every aspect.

Imagine all the *new* friendships to be discovered and enjoyed throughout eternity. Have you ever thought about the fact that you haven’t even met some of your closest friends yet?

Maybe you’re disappointed that you’ve never had the friendships you’ve longed for. And God will answer that prayer – not on this old earth, but in the new earth and throughout eternity.<sup>ii</sup>

Maybe God has your assigned seat at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, next to someone you haven’t yet met, but who will become your closest friend for the next 10 million years.<sup>iii</sup>

And what about your family? I’m going to talk more about memory in a moment, but let me insert here that you will indeed remember your family. In Heaven you won’t need to be reintroduced to your believing family members. In fact, your family relationships are going to be healed where healing is needed; mended where mending is needed; forgiven where forgiveness is needed.

Just as Abraham will not need reintroducing to Isaac his son; and Jacob won’t have to remind Isaac that Isaac is his father, so you will remember your wife or husband or children and mother and father and siblings and extended family. You won’t be obligated to them or remain married to your spouse – but you will share in the memories of God’s grace and you will rejoice in the redeeming of those relationships – rejoicing in all that your parents or children or spouses or family members have become!

Jonathan Edwards, the church leader and theologian of the great awakening in the 1700’s wrote, In Heaven, the Christian father, and mother, and wife and child and friend, with whom we shall renew the holy fellowship of the saints which was interrupted by death here, but shall be commenced again in [Heaven] and shall never end.<sup>iv</sup>

Jonathan Edwards—1703-1758

Which raises another question – **Will babies who die go to Heaven?**

In short – absolutely yes. In **2 Samuel 12**, David experiences the loss of his infant son, but then announces in faith that he will eventually go to him. He doesn’t say he will go to the grave, but that he will go to him.

David stops fasting after his baby dies – why? Because he knows that they will one day be reunited – so he sorrows, yet not as those who have no hope (**1 Thessalonians 4:13**). You may remember that another one of David’s sons dies, however, by the name of Absalom – and David never does stop grieving – and that’s because, among other reasons, David knows he will never see him again. But David declares a coming reunion with his deceased infant son.

The grace of God, built upon the foundation and merits of Jesus Christ’s atoning work, not only redeems those who *will* believe, but those who *cannot* believe – those who are *unable* to believe – they’re not old enough or mentally capable to defy God and join in the rebellion of unbelievers who perceive the truth of the work of creation and yet deny the Creator – which makes them without excuse (Romans 1).

So there will be this vast multitude of worshippers in Heaven which will include untold millions of still-born babies; newly born babies; aborted babies; miscarried babies; little children; mentally handicapped young and old.

Which is one of the ways, I believe, that God is going to fulfill His promise that worshippers will be in Heaven representing every clan, every people group, every dialect and every nation (**Revelation 7**).

Now let me go to another question. **Will I have any memories of my life on earth?**

Your first thought might be, I hope I never remember my life on earth. But the truth is, there is a continuity between your life now and the glorified life to come. You are who you are because of all that God appointed for your life; you are made up of emotion and memory and history.

I agree with one author who wrote that memory is basic to personality . . . who we are is a result of what we've done and enjoyed and suffered and failed and endured and survived.

Joseph will never forget he was sold into slavery and languished in prison. But here's the difference with his memory and ours – his perspective matured over time – he acknowledged to his brothers later in life – ***you meant it for evil, but God was behind it all, working it all out for good (Genesis 50:20).***

Jesus didn't forget that He'd been crucified after He resurrected in His glorified state. In fact, he kept some of the scars, as we discussed in our last study – and why? To remind Him that he was crucified? No, to remind us.

Seeing His scars will be a reminder that our sin compelled Him to endure the cross and we will love Him all the more.

When you get to Heaven, you won't have to be reminded that you had a baby die – or an illness to suffer through; no, you will remember that with even greater clarity than ever before; but in your new and perfected mind and body and perspective, you will be able to experience unique and deep joy to what had been for you a unique and deep valley.

Recalling earthly troubles and sorrows will not depress us in Heaven, they will deepen our joy in heaven . . . as we come to understand God's wisdom.

You're not going to forget your family members – or the fact that you had family members, once you've died.

Now many misinterpret yet another verse of scripture – this one from ***Isaiah 65:17*** which

reads; For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.

Isaiah 65:17

This seems to indicate that none of us will remember anything – certainly not troubling things – from our past lives on earth. Again, the context of this passage makes it clear that this isn't even talking about us – it's talking about God. God is choosing not to remember our past sins. In fact, the previous verse – ***verse 16 says;*** The former troubles are forgotten, because they are hidden from My sight.

Isaiah 65:16

This is God speaking about His own memory. He is choosing not to dwell on our sins or hold them against us. Jeremiah quotes God as saying, I will remember their sins no more.

Jeremiah 31:34

In other words, God will never deal with us on the basis of our sin but on the basis of His Son's atoning death on our behalf.

And what about the memories of our past? We're told that we will one day stand before our Lord and give an account for our lives of service – that sounds like remembering to me (Romans 14:12).

We're encouraged that every good thing we've done for Christ – not in order to get into Heaven, but because we were living in light of going to Heaven – that our righteous acts will be given some kind of personalization and then interwoven into our wedding garments (***Revelation 19:8***).

God wants us to remember those deeds forever – so much so that He'll weave them into our heavenly regalia.

If you've been to a graduation ceremony you get a hint of this picture. The regalia, the symbols, the colors, the robes, the chords, the insignia.

We cannot imagine, the regalia of the redeemed which will include insignia and chords and colors depicting some office, some

deed, some sacrifice, some ministry, some act of service to someone else. In fact, we're told that God is anxious to reward us for everything possible that we have done in His name (**Hebrews 6:10**).

We have the idea that God can't wait to see us one day so He can get onto us. The Bible reveals that God can't wait to see us, so to speak, so that He can reward us.

The joy of Heaven is not dependent upon an erased memory, but a renewed mind – and a perfected perspective of what God was doing in our lives on earth.<sup>v</sup>

I've got enough time for two more questions – quickly. **Will animals be in Heaven?**

Absolutely. Remember, Heaven includes a new earth. The Heavenly City – the Father's House of gold – will rest upon a newly reformed earth where God is going to reverse the curse and restore a new earth and a new universe. And this new earth won't be complete without animals.

What God created in the first 6 days of creation will be recrafted, reconstituted and immortalized. In fact, God is going to give the immortalized animal kingdom the ability to praise Him with elevated awareness and expression. The Psalmist David refers to all of creation rendering praise to God in their own unique voices of praise (Psalm 148).<sup>vi</sup>

And here's this scene in Heaven where all of creation is praising God – it's easy to miss – John records the scene where all the redeemed believers are singing; then he records all the angels lending their voices and singing – and then you come to **Revelation chapter 5 and verse 13**; And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things in them, I heard saying/singing – To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.

Revelation 5:13

If you go back up to the words – every created thing – it's one Greek word – zwon

(ζῶον) from which we get our transliterated word, zoo.

It's the normal word in the Greek language, used by Jude, Peter and the writer of Hebrews to refer to animals.

We can't even imagine the implications of this text, which is why the translators probably chose to translate zwon as a *created thing*, because it seems so far-fetched to translate it according to its normal usage – animals.

But there's no reason to cover it up. And every *animal* which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea – which means there are animals everywhere . . . crawling, running, galloping, flying, swimming . . . this is the Garden of Eden and so much more!

All of creation is singing praise to their Creator God. All of creation is living the dream . . . a dream that was lost . . . but a dream that has been redeemed and recreated and

Last question. **Will my pet be in Heaven?**

That depends. Some animal are going to have to really be converted . . . or they're going to ruin heaven for us all. I'm not going to mention any names, but you probably have an idea.

In fact, somebody copied me on a funny story going around – I thought it summed the whole question up perfectly.

Three animals were there before God's glorious golden throne of splendor – a German shepherd, a Doberman pincher and a cat. God said to the German shepherd – what do *you* believe? And the German shepherd said, I believe in discipline and order. And God said to the Doberman pincher, what do *you* believe? And the Doberman said, I believe in protection and loyalty. And God said to the cat, what do *you* believe? And the cat said, "I *believe* you're in my seat." That just sums it up.

Okay, seriously . . . will some of your pets end up in the new heaven? We're not told. But authors like C.S. Lewis and John Piper and back to the days of John Wesley and other church leaders before him, all thought it was a very real possibility.

And they argued along the lines that it would only be fitting for God to create entirely new animals in the new earth; but also to bring back to life animals that suffered and groaned for the day of redemption (*Romans 8*).

In other words, they speculated, why not allow some animals to enjoy the culmination of God's redemptive plan; and the animals that once belonged to believers would be the perfect candidates to see and experience the curse reversed which had so affected them as well – so that they will be among those animals John saw in Heaven – those living creatures – who sing praise to their Creator God.

I close with this. Many of you have heard of Helen Keller, the blind and deaf woman who learned to communicate through the help of Anne Sullivan – who would become her lifelong friend. Anne Sullivan took this restless and angry, frustrated child and patiently began to teach her by spelling words into the palm of her hand. Eventually, Helen came to understand the connection between letters drawn on her hand with the objects around her.

The untold story is that when Anne finally taught Helen enough words to communicate, Anne sent for a local pastor to come and deliver

the gospel, through Anne's interpretation, to this 7 year old girl. As the truth of God's word and the work of Jesus Christ was communicated to Helen, she believed the gospel and was saved. Helen told Anne this remarkable statement – she signed to Anne that knew there was a God, but now she knew His name.

Late in life, Helen would write these words; For three things I thank God every day of my life; thanks that He has communicated to me knowledge of His works; deep thanks that He has set in my darkness the lamp of faith; and deep, deepest thanks that I have another life to look forward to – a life of joy with light and flowers and heavenly song.<sup>vii</sup>

Beloved, this will be that moment when we all – and all of nature with us – begin to live the dream . . . a dream that will *become* reality. Where we will live happily ever after . . . and happily ever after will last forever and ever and ever.

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i Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (2004), p. 353

ii Adapted from Alcorn, p. 343

iii Ibid

iv Ibid, p. 329

v Ibid

vi Ron Rhodes, *The Little Book About Heaven* (Harvest House, 2013), p. 41

vii Adapted from Alcorn, p. 425