



www.armyofcompassion.me online soldiership lessons

LESSON 9: Forever is a LONG, LONG TIME

Doctrine 11

We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body;
In the general judgment at the end of the world;
in the eternal happiness of the righteous;
and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

Ready:

Read before you meet for Lesson 9: CLICK on this link: FOREVER is a long, long time! *You may also choose to download and PRINT hard copies of the reading- Lesson 9-Reading Handout

Have your POWERPOINT PRESENTATION / WEBSITE UP AND READY.

OPTIONAL: REVIEW the Doctrines VIDEO– Go to DOCTRINE tab– and look at the Doctrines PowerPoint and Presentation for options.



Set:

Group Activity: Understanding the theological concept of eternity and how followers of Christ fit into “forever with Him in heaven” is crucial for us as Christians. There are so many versions of what “forever” might look like. The entertainment world offers us their creative versions of the afterlife; and you’ll see everything from the supernatural and wishful to the occult and horrifying. We are shown Zombies and angels, demons, werewolves, vampires; the desolate nothingness of the soul, and the ever popular reincarnation. Consumers can’t get enough. Immortality fascinates us.

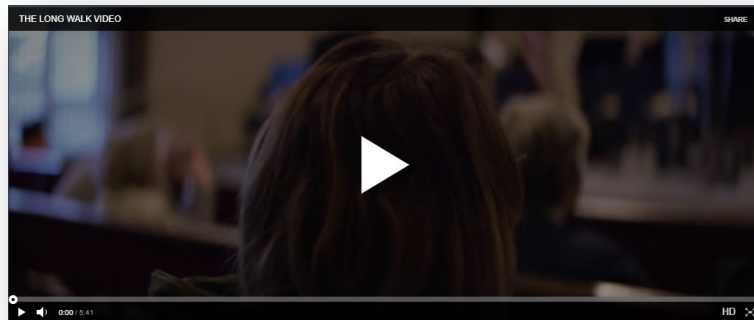
- Can you think of a movie, book, or series in popular culture which has a supernatural character or element that compels its audience to believe in more than we can see with our own eyes?
- What questions do you think Culture might be asking that is being answered by the portrayal of the supernatural?

Why might people be fascinated with the unseen? Your theory?

Action:

While there is death and loss all around us...there's a God that never leaves you. He is a God that actually combats death. We are created for eternity. We are created for so much more. We belong to Him. We are loved with an everlasting love. We do not see our lives from the perspective of eternity, nor do we understand that even the most difficult circumstances are teachable moments. We are both led by our loving Father, and comforted by the Holy Spirit.

SAVN has produced a short story video (5 min) to illustrate a testimony of God's leading towards what He has for his children.



Go!

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Because we live with degrees of pain and loss in our lives we understand what it is to reach out to find truth beyond our own knowing. It is exactly this human condition that causes us to look beyond the years of life we have been given, to ask "Is there more than this?" It would be safe to say that we are all living with unanswered questions and searching for answers. People around us will die. They will leave this world and step into the next. Each of us will experience the death of those close to us, whether that is from tragedy, old age or illness that takes them from us one bit at a time. Loss hurts deeply.

In a very real way, loss is what causes us to look beyond the temporal into what God is doing in the world and in the hearts of his people. It forces us to look authentically at our lives and to reach back to him in faith. Loss also causes us to look out at our world in empathy, ready to make a difference where we can.

Our own history, as Salvationists, is one of looking at our world and seeing what is broken, extending our hand and the love of God to those in need. You and I have a hope that doesn't rescue us from death's reality, but allows us to see the big picture where we can never be separated from God (Psalm 116:15; Romans 8:38, 39). Death is not the end. Jesus conquered death (I Corinthians: 20-26), and we have been rescued from the "wages of sin" which is ultimate death for those who reject God. This is where we find the miracle that gives us hope.

Eternity has been described as a rope that goes on and on forever. Imagine that this rope is a timeline of your life and only the first few inches painted in neon yellow, are your life here on earth. We have got it SO wrong. We hold this end painted neon yellow in our hands-We hold on for dear "earthly" life, literally. The funny thing is that we are all so consumed with what goes on in these few neon yellow inches of rope that we can't see beyond their end, and because we can't see the end we grip and must be forced to let go. The number of inches we have are different, and this uncertainty adds to the frenzy. "I'm going to make the most out of every moment of my inches of earthly life," we tell ourselves. It seems so crazy that we would choose these few years seeking what makes us most comfortable, pampered, happy, fulfilled... forgetting that we have infinite inches

– to miles of rope before us. Eternity. This is the true forever...the rest of the rope we so easily forget. We get all caught up in a deception that we've become accustomed to.

The Apostle Paul says that we must follow his example, straining to see what has been set before us...for this eternal perspective is the truth. And this truth should change how we view our world and our own lives as we step forward into all of the tomorrows that lie ahead. We have the opportunity to ask ourselves how today might be lived differently. The time is at hand. Every day has been given to us. This allows us to let go of fear and act, knowing that our days are in His hands. We were made for more than this.

Phillip Talon illustrates this truth (literally) for us in the following video,

"The Absolute Basics of Christian Faith: Question 16:

<https://armyofcompassion.me/2014/12/20/lesson-9-forever-is-a-long-long-time/>
VIDEO is uploaded to armyofcompassion.me



Some Verses to help understand this doctrine:

- Our eternal life begins now. It is a life following Christ, becoming like him, which goes on and on. Mark 10:17-22; John 3:16; 10:27-30; 11:25; 17:1-2.
- The world, as we know it, will not always be as it is today. What kind of place will this be? Isaiah 11:6-9; Isaiah 65:17-25.
- Jesus has promised that he will come again, setting these events into motion. Acts 1:11;
- Hebrews 9:28; Matthew 24: 39.
- Death is not the end. Our soul is immortal, and this word describes who we are-based on who He is, the Creator who will bring us into eternity. Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 2:5-11; I Corinthians 15:50-54 and I Timothy 6:13-16.
- All will be judged, the living and the dead. Matthew 25:32
- To grapple with the reality of judgment is difficult. To reject grace is to separate oneself from God's will of a rescue for all (Matthew 13:24-30; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).
- Tears will be wiped from our eyes. "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away". Revelation 21:21:4 The age of loss, of pain, dying, poverty, abuse and sins against one another will not be the way of eternity. There is something better. Somewhere better: A home that we've always longed for, but never could quite grasp.

There is a new project for deployed soldiers, headed up by Air Wick. The goal of the project is to remind these soldiers of "home" and "family", bringing them hope. The idea behind the project is that our senses are so powerful, and smell-in particular, that we can be transported to places where we have been, giving glimpses at moments in our lives or of people who have been a part of our journeys with a simple scent.

Kearon has been absent from his wife and family, for over 11 months. Three candles in jars were sent to this military dad with scents taken from his home halfway around the world....over 7000 miles away. His wife (who he calls his hero) had lit a fire in their home as they had done so many

times together. She baked an apple pie from scratch with their 6 children. His oldest son took his prized possession and passed his dad's baseball mitt on to his younger brother. The 3 scents chosen by his wife were of a fire in the fireplace, the homemade apple pie, and the baseball mitt. When Kearon opened his beautiful care package he reached for each candle and unscrewed the lids, one at a time. You could see joy in his face and tears in his eyes as these smells transported him to the living room where the fire was brightly burning; to tasting that warm apple pie waiting for him on the counter, and to that spot where he could wrap his arms around his sons as they held the baseball glove. If interested, you can view the project at this site:



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VIDEO is uploaded to this site.

As you consider Soldiership, may you do so in awareness of, and understanding the doctrines of The Salvation Army? May your relationship with Christ be passionate and growing. May your commitment to God be expressed through the authentic living out of your faith. Join with your brothers and sisters in this worldwide Army as they continue reaching out compassionately to those What a beautiful illustration of our eternal home. In a very real way, God has given us a care package with the "scent", and a "glimpse" of what forever will look like. He set everything in motion for the moment of our arrival-before the dawn of time. In His Word He has given us reminders of what it will look like, feel like, sound like...very real, and sure and solid. All of a sudden, we are with Him in this place where our Father, knowing us intimately, has prepared a place for us. We've read about it. We've dreamed about it being true, with all that we are. Truly our problem is that we have lived this side of eternity for so long, and our spiritual eyes can hardly imagine such a place. In this doctrine we have learned that we have been designed for eternity. It's a huge theological concept. We understand that Christ's atonement and grace is offered to all; but just as he offers us a hope for every day we are given on Earth- extending into a Kingdom reality, there will still be those that reject him. We acknowledge this as heartbreaking, and also having eternal consequences.

Questions:

- How does the reality of eternity give urgency and focus to your view of evangelism?
- How might it affect your actions or speech?

Would you be able to share your view of eternity with someone in language they could understand? That "language" might be the compassion and relationship that you extend.

He loves..." for it is His will that none should perish."

Geoff Moore and the Distance wrote music & lyrics to "Heart to God, Hand to Man", Reminding us of our identity and mission.

VIDEO link:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1YfWZg8zWY



Boots on the Ground:

An opportunity to put your faith into action

- ◆ Partnered Prayer: Those who have been prayer partners, for the duration of these Soldiership lessons: divide into your groups and pray specifically for those requests and concerns that you have shared over your weeks together.
- ◆ ·Leader: to close tonight's meeting, pray aloud for each person present; in particular for the commitment they are considering making to be enrolled as soldiers. Pray a blessing over each individual, for strength and courage and grace. Pray for their awareness of, and ministry to the world around them which seeks for answers midst culture-and human condition.