

## THE FIVE GREATEST FACTS OF LIFE

James 4:13-16

### I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** We all live life at such a “break neck,” whirlwind pace (work, school, family, mail, bills, phone messages, house, yard, vehicles, recreation, etc.).
2. Under these circumstances it’s easy to be totally consumed with the everyday business of living. Sometimes I wish there were 36 hours in a day, but I’m sure even this would not be enough.
3. We become so engaged in the process of living our lives and trying to take care of things it’s easy to forget about the basics of life; the things of real value, the things truly essential.
4. **\*\***Perhaps we should remember the words of Dwight Eisenhower. He once said: *“I have found that the most urgent things in life are rarely important and that the most important things in life are rarely urgent.”*
5. **3** Relax, sit back and thoughtfully consider what I call the “*The Five Greatest Facts of Life.*”
  - A. An understanding and appreciation of these five great facts from a Biblical perspective should help us prioritize our lives.
  - B. Recognizing these five greatest facts guard us against allowing the truly important and essential elements of life to “slip through the cracks.”

### II. DISCUSSION:

#### **One great fact of life is...**

1. **4** Life is brief: **Jas. 4:14**: “whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.”
  - A. Even if we live 90, 100, or even 500 years our life would still be brief (**Job 7:6**: “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle,”).
  - B. Please consider **Psa. 90:10**: “The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”
  - C. Ask nearly any elderly person if they feel their life has been short. Where are most of their contemporaries? As Sherry’s dad used to say, “they are in the bone yard.”
  - D. Since our life here on earth is so short, we need to take advantage of the time we have.

**Psa. 90:12**: “So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

**Rom. 13:11-14**: “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

**Eph. 5:14-16**: “Therefore He says: ‘Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.’ 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

**Acts 24:25**: “Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’”

**Job 14:1-2**: “Man who is born of woman Is of few days and full of trouble. 2 He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue.”).

- E. Do you take time from your busy life to consider how short life is, and what ramifications that fact has on how you should be living your life?
- F. If you do you will never take one minute of life for granted (Jas. 4:13-16) and you will strive to live a life in harmony with God's will (**Matt. 16:26**: *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"*).

### Another great fact of life is...

#### 2. **5** Death is certain:

"But in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." —Benjamin Franklin

"Nothing in the world is as certain as death." —Jean Froissart

"And come he slow, or come he fast, It is but death who comes at last." —Sir Walter Scott

A. Much of us, most of the time, tend to live our lives as if we will live forever.

- (1) I knew an 85 year-old man that tried to borrow money on a 30-year note!
- (2) We laugh, but most of us travel through life "whistling in the graveyard" trying to ignore the inevitable.
- 6** "Death is a friend of ours; and he that is not ready to entertain him is not at home." —Sir Francis Bacon
- (3) The brevity of life and certainty of death are prominent Bible subjects: Jas. 4:14; Heb. 9:27; **Ecc. 7:2**: *"Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to heart."*

#### B. **7** Death is the great equalizer.

"As men, we are all equal in the presence of death." —Publilius Syrus

- (1) **\*\***Death doesn't respect: wealth, fame, education, or social standing.
  - (2) Death is the sure and certain fate of all men.
- C. What are your chances of being struck by lightning? Of your house burning down? Of being involved in a severe car wreck? Of being the victim of an airplane crash? What do all four of these events have in common? They are less probable than our death! Heb. 9:27

### Another great fact of life is...

#### 3. **8** Judgment is sure:

##### A. All will be at the judgment:

**Matt. 25:31-32**: *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats."*

**Rev. 20:12-13**: *"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works."*

- B. Judgment is sure and personal: It is one appointment that all of us will keep (Heb. 9:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; **Rom. 14:11-12**: *"For it is written: 'As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.' 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God."*).
- C. Judgment will be just:

**2 Tim. 4:7-8:** “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the **righteous Judge**, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”; **Rom. 2:5b-10**

D. Judgment will be by God’s word:

**Jn. 12:48:** “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”

**Rom. 2:16:** “in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”

**Rom. 1:16-17:** “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”).

E. Judgment will be final:

**2 Thess. 1:7-9:** “...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”

**Matt. 25:41, 46:** “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 46 “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”).

F. **9** How will we deal with this great fact of life? **Eccl. 12:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:10-11a:** “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;”

**Another great fact of life is...**

4. **10** Eternity is long:

A. Did you ever stop to contemplate how long eternity will be?

(1) We often use the concept of “eternity” in very flippant ways:

(a) “I had to wait in the check-out line for an eternity.”

(b) “There’s an eternity left in this game.”

(2) **\*\***Even Webster has trouble defining eternity: “infinite time” (an oxymoron)!

(3) Maybe we can begin to appreciate eternity by taking a journey through time and space. In the book *The Universe and Beyond* (Dickinson, T. 1992 Camden House, Buffalo, NY) we find these words of reflection that may help us appreciate the vastness of our universe, not only in terms of space, but also in terms of time:

**11** “The spring evening is crisp and cool and pitch black. Stars fill the sky in a glittering tapestry that goes unnoticed by the occupants of a car speeding down the rural highway, far from the city lights and traffic. Dimly at first, the headlights reveal a steep hill ahead. Without losing speed, the automobile hurtles upward and reaches the crest, and for an instant, the headlamps shine into the blackness like two ghostly fingers. **12** That instant marks the freedom for at least one photon of light which avoids bumping into dust motes or absorbing molecules of air on its way up from the Earth’s surface. Less than two seconds later, it passes the moon. One

minute after that, Earth and moon diminish to star-like points. **13** Within an hour, they fade into the starry backdrop. One month away from Earth, the photon of light is so remote that all the planets are invisible and the sun dwindles to a star, though still far brighter than any other. In two years, the sun is reduced to a bright but not extraordinary star. Several other stars are similarly luminous.

**14** Over the next 50 years, the sun slowly fades until it is dimmer than the faintest stars visible to the unaided eye. Yet the sky still appears basically as it does from Earth and has the same general proportion of bright and dim stars. But by the hundredth year of travel, a distinct thinning of the stars becomes apparent ahead. The photon is moving out of the *Milky Way* galaxy.

**15** After cruising in its arrow-straight trajectory for 2,000 years ( $6 \times 10^{12}$  miles; 6 trillion miles), the photon is completely outside and well above the spiral arm of the galaxy where our solar system resides. From this vantage point, only a handful of stars speckle the sky. But the view back toward the galaxy reveals an impressive panorama: the sweeping curves of the spiral arms and, beyond them, the bulging galactic nucleus. Continuing its voyage for another 22,000 years, the photon nears a mammoth swarm of stars, the *Hercules Cluster*, a million suns congregated in a rough sphere about 75 light-years across. This is one of approximately 150 globular clusters that orbit the *Milky Way* galaxy like satellites.

**16** The photon races onward, but the scenery becomes less inspiring with each millennium as the *Milky Way* fades to a mere puff in the blackness. Only one additional galaxy, *Andromeda*, is easily visible; other galaxies appear as mere smudges. After 10 million years, both the *Milky Way* and *Andromeda* are lost to view. Millions more years will pass before chance encounters with other galaxies break the monotony of the void. And the journey has just begun.” (page 11).

**17** “As each tiny spear of starlight enters the eyes, it ends a journey that began decades or centuries ago. Five of the seven stars in the *Big Dipper*, for example, are members of a nearby star cluster roughly 75 light-years away. Their light takes a human lifetime to reach Earth. Nestled between the constellations *Perseus* and *Cassiopeia* lies a twin cluster of stars—the *Double Cluster*. Their light travels for 7,000 years before it reaches us from the next spiral arm beyond the one that we occupy in the *Milky Way* galaxy.” (page 14)

**18** “The unaided eye can bridge even greater gulfs. Overhead, on late-autumn evenings, we can see the *Andromeda* galaxy, a small, oval, hazy patch that is, in reality, a colossal platter-shaped stellar metropolis larger than our own *Milky Way* and populated by perhaps a trillion stars. The combined light of those stars is dimmed by its enormous distance from Earth: two million light years.

When the light from the *Andromeda* galaxy meets a human retina and registers as an image in the brain, that particular bundle of photons terminates an uninterrupted voyage of two million years.” (pages 14-15)

**19** “The *Andromeda* galaxy is just the nearest of billions of galaxies similar to the *Milky Way*. The most powerful telescopes on *Earth* can detect galaxies eight billion light-years away.” (pages 15-16)

- (4) I cannot even be to fathom the vastness of the universe. Light from the galaxy of *Andromeda*, the galaxy nearest our own galaxy (*Milky Way*) traveling at 186,000 miles per second takes two million years to travel to Earth! And this galaxy, so close to our own, is but one of many billions of galaxies in the universe!

- ☛ **\*\*Speed of light is 186,000 miles/sec (1.29 sec from earth to moon!)**
- ☛ 11,160,000 miles/min
- ☛ 669,600,000 miles/hr (~670 million mph)
- ☛ 16,070,400,000 miles/day (~16 billion miles/day)
- ☛ 5,869,713,600,000 miles/year (~6 trillion miles/year)
- ☛ 46,957,708,800,000,000,000,000 miles (almost 50 septillion) in 8-billion light years (over 2 B times larger than the national debt!)

(5) **20** Just think of the vastness of eternity: two million years is not even a snap of the finger, it is not even one tick of the clock!

- (a) After the passage of two million years, two billion years, or a million, billion years; there are no less days to spend in eternity than when we started! (*Amazing Grace*)
- (b) Ladies and gentleman, if such things do not stir your thoughts, if it does not cause your heart to at least slightly tremble I feel sorry for you.

B. **21** Did you ever stop to contemplate that everyone is going to live forever?

**Jn. 5:28-29:** *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”*

**Matt. 25:31-46:** wicked to “go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

**1 Cor. 15:22:** *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” 35-38: “But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ 36 Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. 37 And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain — perhaps wheat or some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.”*

- (1) Here on earth we are prisoners of time (clocks, calendar, date book), but eternal punishment and eternal life are FOREVER! No clocks, no calendars, no date books; only the sure and the absolute certainty of FOREVER!
- (2) **22** Eternity is “timelessness.” In eternity we never cease to exist that is why Jesus emphasized the importance of contemplating it (Mk. 9:43-48; **Matt. 10:28:** *“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*; 16:26).

C. **23** Are you ready to be ushered into eternity when you die? The question is not will it happen, but are you ready! Eccl. 12:13-14 (Heb. 10:25)

### ***The fifth great fact of life is...***

5. **24** Preparation is necessary:

A. Everything we strive to achieve in this life requires preparation.

- (1) Prepare for good job by getting a good education.
- (2) Prepare to harvest a crop by preparing soil (tilling, fertilizing, spraying weeds, planting seed, etc.).
- (3) Prepare to build a house by making a blueprint, list of materials, pull permits, assemble the materials, workers and tools.

- B. Few saved: But, when it comes to eternity most believe everyone goes to heaven regardless of whether they've prepared for it or not! How many funerals have you ever attended where it was said, "At least \_\_\_\_\_ is now in a better place."

**Matt. 7:13-14**: *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*

- C. "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people."

(1) Grace through faith: We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 11:6).

(2) Obedient faith: AND: "God prepared beforehand that we should walk in" is required (Jas. 2:14-26); obedience is required (Heb. 5:9); will be judged by our "deeds" (Rom. 2:5-9).

(3) Preparation is individual: No one can do it for you!

**2 Cor. 5:10**: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."*; Phil. 2:12

(4) Prepare now: There is only one time to prepare...NOW! **\*\*2 Cor. 6:2**: *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*

### III. CONCLUSION: 25

1. Do you understand the five great facts of life?

- ❶ Life is brief,
- ❷ Death is certain,
- ❸ Judgment is sure,
- ❹ Eternity is long,
- ❺ Preparation is necessary.

2. Do you appreciate the five great facts of life? Are you dealing with them or ignoring them?

3. If you are not a Christian it is imperative that you become one:

- |                          |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| ✓ Hear (Rom. 10:17)      | ✓ Repent (Acts 17:30)      |
| ✓ Believe (Heb. 11:6)    | ✓ Baptized (Gal. 3:27)     |
| ✓ Confess (Rom. 10:9-10) | ✓ Faithfulness (Rev. 2:10) |

4. If you are a Christian and wandered from the fold of safety you also need to change! Acts 8:22

5. Be saved by obeying right now! **\*\*2 Cor. 6:2**: *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*