

HEAVEN

What is it like? Is it worth it?

Prepared for the Brentwood Ladies Enrichment Weekend

Theme: That He May Lift You Up (1 Peter 5:6, 7)

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O.K. ladies; we're ready to get started and today, we're planning a trip. First, we need to get some travel brochures and get the description of our destination in front of us and then we'll decide how high the price, the amenities that are offered and if it's worth it to go there.

First of all, what do you consider to be the most beautiful piece of God's creation you've ever seen? The prettiest scenery you've ever seen? Hawaii? Grand Canyon? A national forest? Gatlinburg? A sunset in your own back yard? A rainbow on your dream vacation? Or the beauty of changing leaves in the fall?

What is your most memorable experience? The day you were married? The birth of your first child? The baptism of a friend or loved one? Perhaps even a trip with a friend. The best times in our lives are probably not the times when we've had a riotously good time and laughed our heads off at some silliness – even though those times are cleansing and memorable, but the times when we could connect with the beauty of God's creation and feel the companionship and camaraderie of being close to God.

It may even be in the quiet of your own home in your own private study of God's Word, when some truth has suddenly become more clear in your mind. Those times are memorable. Usually, our happiest moments involve friends, family and God. If God isn't there, happiness will soon become dull and temporary and we will want to keep re-creating a situation in hopes that it will come to us again.

During the different stages in your life, when have you physically felt the best? During teen years? As a mother? After the kids left home? After menopause?

Take any of these good things, magnify them thousands - billions of times (if we can even think in those terms) and then know that at our destination, there is no end to beauty or happiness or strength. On this trip there is no end to joy – no aging – no pain – no illnesses or diseases – we'll never be lonely – never be afraid – never have doubts – never be uncomfortable in any way – there will never again be the loss of a loved ones - and there is no end to it; never a time that it will be taken away. Wouldn't we all want to go there? Where do we sign up?? Of course, we're talking about heaven.

To even conceive of that scenario is just beyond our ability. Life is a see-saw, it has ups and downs, but the travel brochure – our Bible - promises to take us to levels we have never before experienced.

O.K. We're all ready to investigate this place a little further.

Even though our travel brochure steers us away from the love of *material* possessions, heaven, our destination, is described in material terms, so we can understand: jasper walls; pearly gates; jeweled foundations; semi-precious stones that are translucent so light can pass through them, radiating color that is magnificent, brilliant and dazzling.

The majesty of it has just never occurred to us. There are not enough words in our language to describe it adequately. In fact, when Paul was writing to Christians in Rome, he said, "*the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us,*" Romans 8:18. His words are even more interesting, of course, when we remember he was in prison at the time.

Destination Heaven is described in our travel brochure in figurative terms that we may not fully understand but it does give us a little insight into its glory.

John begins describing heaven's beauty in Revelation 21 as a city with walls; great and high walls with twelve gates, and at the gates, twelve angels. The name of each of the twelve tribes of Israel was written on each gate; three gates on each side; east, north, south and west. Gates signify protection and we can understand that, as many gated communities as we have.

The foundation stones of the wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone, and the wall itself was of jasper. The city was pure gold, like clear glass. The stones that we would most likely identify with are jasper; sapphire; emerald; topaz; and amethyst but there are many others. Each of the twelve gates was a single pearl. We, as women, usually put an important significance on diamonds and pearls. They're precious to us, but no matter how big and perfect and valuable your diamond is, it will just be a speck compared to the beauty of the stones in heaven. The street of the city was pure gold, also like transparent glass. It doesn't need the sun or the moon to shine on it because the light will be the glory of God. The only lamp is the Lamb of God.

In verse 24 of Rev. 21, it goes on to say, "*The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever*

come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

For some reason, that Scripture gives me the mental image of the opening ceremony for the Olympic Games, as all the nations are coming into the Olympic stadium. Can you imagine the majesty of each country passing by in heaven with a banner that says, the African Christians; the Romanian Christians; the Chinese Christians, and these Christians are from the USA! Well, maybe that's a little over the top, but it will be a thing of majesty and beauty. Hard to imagine, isn't it? So hold that thought while we explore a little more.

We know this is going to be a wonderful trip, but where is it? Where is heaven?

In John 14 Jesus comforts and assures His disciples about a future dwelling place: *"...for I go to prepare a place for you."* This is no afterthought. It was already in the plan. Hebrews 13:14 tells us *"...we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come."* As far as being able to pinpoint heaven on a map, we can't really do that, 'cause we don't really know *where* heaven is, but in 2 Corinthians 12:2-3, Paul refers to a third heaven – a paradise – where a man heard inexpressible words. It indicates that heaven may exist beyond our visible universe. The first heaven refers to earth's atmosphere and the second heaven involves the stars. He also speaks of the Lord's having *"ascended higher than all the heavens,"* Ephesians 4:10. The contrast to that is the lower parts of the earth which indicate torment. I'm not really concerned with the location – just the fact that it is being provided and it's possible to go there.

And...that God is there. The early patriarchs understood where God was when the writer of Deuteronomy wrote, *"Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel..."*, Deuteronomy 26:15.

And in Matthew - *"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven,"* Matthew 10:32, 33. For sure, God is there.

To further describe our destination, heaven is a place where tears are wiped away

We always put lots of time and energy, as well as money, into a wedding, so we can certainly understand the description in Rev 21:2-4. John relates that he saw *"the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."* That had to be pretty amazing.

v.3 - And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "*Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.*" We have learned the significance of the tabernacle early on in our Bible studies. It's where God dwells among His people. It was with God's people in the wilderness and during the period of the Kings, Solomon built a temple as the dwelling place for God. How appropriate that we find this in heaven. Verse 4 continues... "*and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.*" Actually, I have very little conception of how there can be no tears. Anyone who knows me well, has most likely seen a few tears. I can't imagine being in the presence of God without just melting in a puddle of grateful tears.

Worship itself brings about emotion, or at least it should. God is among us there! If we're involving ourselves in worship, the intensity of some of the songs we use often brings a tear. This thought is also in chapter 7 of Revelation and verse 17 says, "*The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*"

We'll come back to that in a little bit, but we want to investigate the question of whether *we will recognize one another in heaven*. This may influence our thinking regarding the tears.

Will we recognize one another in heaven?

This question usually arises and many ask, how will we recognize one another if we have a different form? We know we'll have a different form, because (asking audience) what part of us is made in the likeness of God? Our spirit or our soul. Our spirit is the only thing that doesn't change when we die, it just makes a transition.

Let's look at a few passages. (Assign scriptures to be read – All from the NKJV.)

Isaac – Gen. 35:29 – "*Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people...*"

Jacob – Gen. 49:33 – "*When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.*"

Moses – Deut. 32:50 – "*Then die on the mountain where you ascend, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people.*"

Josiah – 2 Kings 22:20 – "*Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, neither shall your eyes see all the evil which I will bring on this place.*"

The sequence in all these passages is: Death; being gathered to his people; and burial. It indicates the transition - of his soul being gathered

unto the souls of his people; his family. The New Testament in Luke 16, speaks of the beggar, Lazarus, being carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. It too, seems to indicate that there will be recognition. We know from this account that death does not abolish memories. When both had died and were in their respective places – Lazarus in Abraham's bosom and the rich man in torment, the rich man saw and recognized Lazarus.

When King David was grief stricken over the loss of his son, he said, *"Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him but he shall not return to me,"* 2 Samuel 12:15-23. The understanding was that they would be reunited.

At the transfiguration, even though they had already died, Peter recognized Moses and Elijah when they appeared, Matthew 17:1-3.

Somehow, we're going to recognize each other. If we cannot recognize our relatives, how could we have any confidence that we could be joined with them, as David suggested. If spirits can not recognize one another, how will we (as a spirit) know God (as a spirit)? It would make no sense.

So, with this established, it also stands to reason that we will realize when some friend or loved one is not there and doing that may bring about a momentary sadness. (I think it was Homer Hailey that said if you teach in Revelation, you don't have to worry about questions, because none of us know anything about it!) My thinking is this and I don't know the exact time frame for all of this but if, upon our arrival, we realize some loved one is not there and it brings sadness, that to me, is the time when God will wipe away all tears. The tears that we have shed here; tears of sadness, tears of joy, tears of anger, tears of disappointment or repentance - whatever tears there were, God will wipe them away and then there will be no more tears. How can you have no more tears and God wiping away all tears at the same time? I really don't know. Guess we'll have to wait and see. Most commentaries did the Passover on these verses (meaning they just passed over it without commenting!) Just last week, I asked that question to a visiting preacher, and he said, "I don't think anyone has ever asked me that before!"

It's hard for our feeble minds to process how we could possibly be happy knowing someone is not there? First of all it will be on heavenly terms that we may not understand now, but let's look at that in terms we can understand and make a comparison. Don't know if you've ever had a dream vacation or not, but when you're away on a vacation, or involved in an activity which you really enjoy, are you spending every waking moment worrying about what is going on at home? Of course not. That's why you wanted to take a vacation in the first place! To get away from all the worries of home.

A couple of years ago, we were privileged to go to the Grand Canyon. We've traveled, but we haven't *vacationed* in order to sight-see very often and this was a sight to behold. It's my personal choice, but I try not to use the word *awesome* in describing things unless it can be attributed to God. The Grand Canyon is a truly *awesome* wonder of God's creation and I was NOT thinking about home on that trip.

Some people say, "well, I just couldn't be happy, knowing Aunt Susie is not there." Where is the base of our happiness? Is it in Aunt Susie? Or is it in Jesus? If our happiness here is built upon Jesus, and we are looking to Him, there will be no problem.

Revelation 7:14-17, makes it a little more clear. Speaking of those who have overcome tribulation, John says, "*They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.*"

It gives me the impression that when the saved are shepherded into heaven by Jesus; if there is recognition of a loved one not there, God will wipe away those tears and heaven will be enjoyed with no more crying.

I believe our destination will be so far above anything we can begin to imagine, that our thoughts will not dwell on who is there and who is not. We'll be so totally focused on that great beauty and peace that can only be found in the presence of God. But if, for whatever reason, there are tears, God will wipe them away.

To help further describe the beauty of heaven...

I want you to take out your Bible or something you can hold. Use two hands if you wish, but hold it out in front of you. Keep holding it out in front of you and I'll get back to you on that in just a minute. Don't put it down.

Remember the story of Hannah? She was one of two wives; the other was named Peninnah. Peninnah had children but Hannah didn't. Elkinah, her husband loved Hannah enough to give her double portions of what he had sacrificed but her womb remained closed – Scripture says Jehovah had shut up her womb. Her rival, Peninnah, provoked her to no end, making her fret, because Jehovah had shut her womb. (You can just imagine how that went "*Nah, Nah, I can have children and you can't – Elkanah loves me more than he does you.*") I'm sorry, ladies, but we do know how to be bitter and cutting at times. Year by year it happened and Hannah would weep and not eat. Elkanah asked her why she wept and wouldn't eat, not understanding why he, the good husband that he tried to be, wasn't good enough. He said, "*Why is thy heart grieved? Am I not better than ten sons?*" So Hannah went on, day by day, with bitterness in her soul, praying and crying to God.

She vowed a vow and said, "*O Jehovah of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thy handmaid, but wilt give unto thy handmaid a man-child, then I will give him to Jehovah all the days of his life, and there shall be no razor come upon his head.*" When Eli, the priest, saw her lips moving but didn't hear her voice, he thought she was drunk. He asked her about it, but she told him she was a woman of sorrowful spirit and was pouring her heart out before Jehovah. Eli told her to go in peace; God would grant her petition. She went on her way and her countenance was no longer sad.

Why did she feel better? Was it because Eli had comforted her? Maybe that played a small part in it, but it was because she had placed herself and her troubles in God's hands. Do we do that today? Well, yes, in especially hard times like: * 9:11 * War * Personal tragedies

Why not on the little things? (Hannah's burden wasn't little to her.)

- Do we not trust God enough?
- Do we think He's too great to be bothered with little things?
- Are we in denial that we all have *little* problems in life?

These little things can weigh us down! "*Come to me, all ye who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest.*" How heavy are your burdens? It might not be measured in the size of the problem, but just like Hannah, how long you have carried it.

How light was that book when you picked it up? How heavy is it now? You can now put the book down now. In heaven, we'll lose any burdens. We'll be able to lay any burdens down. Our burdens may vary from person to person, but they're still burdens.

O.K. No more tears, no more burdens. This trip is shaping up. Do the perks sound appealing?

You know how much joy it gives us to come here. We'll have such a joyful time of praise together in heaven with all who have loved our Lord throughout the ages. It will be exceeding joy; Jude describes it as such, in verse 24. Luke 10:20 says joy would come when our names are written in heaven. Hopefully, we haven't forgotten that joy; the relief we felt when at our baptism, our sins were forgiven. Praise God for that wonderful gift.

Revelation 4 speaks of living creatures who continually praise God, saying, "*HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME.*" They're saying words of praise that we know – someone turned those words into a song. Holy, Holy, Holy is in our songbooks – and look at verse 11.

"Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created." Remind you of anything?

"Worthy of praise is Christ our Redeemer, worthy of glory, honor and power." If you're lacking words of praise, just read through our songbooks. They'll usually list the Scripture upon which the song is based. We'll sing that in a little bit.

Ever been on a trip where you had some coupons and you felt you had really gotten a good deal? When Frank and I lived in Florida, we took a couple of days to sight-see in Ocala. We had laughed about the fact that we had a coupon for Red Lobster, we had a coupon for the hotel and we had a coupon for Silver Springs. After seeing those things, we headed towards Orlando and as we came down the exit ramp, there was a sign that said, "Divorces - \$35." I said, "*Honey – if we're ever going to get one, we need to do it now, 'cause, we'll never get a deal like that again!*"

We can get a deal when we go on this trip, because...

Heaven is a place where we will be rewarded.

Through the ages, the concept of reward is familiar to us. How many times have we offered our children a certain reward for doing their chores, their homework, etc. Do this thing and you'll get this as a reward. We even have reward points on our credit cards.

In the beatitudes, Matt 5, Jesus says in verse 11, "*Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*" Jesus gave them a reason that would help them endure when the going got rough; when they were discouraged because of the way they were being treated. He gave them a reason for hope.

Luke 6 records the same thought, using different adjectives.
v. 22 "*Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23 Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.*"

Hebrews 12:2 tells us to look "*unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross...*" If He can endure the cross for the joy that was to come, can we endure for the joy that is set before us?

And our theme? He shall lift you up! He's provided the means to lift us up while here on earth, and even more so in heaven.

Jesus knew His Word would not be accepted by some. Most of the apostles were not used to such treatment. Perhaps the tax collector had

experienced some rudeness; nobody likes tax collectors! Our own reward is not without cost. If it didn't include some hardship, why would it be called a reward? You don't get a reward for doing nothing.

In order to be rewarded, among other things, we need to spend time *seeking* God. We probably all desire to be more in tune with God but too many times, we want God on our own terms – for what He can do for us, instead of recognizing His goodness and serving Him because of it.

Gary Henry has a lot to say about seeking God and drawing near to Him. I'm enjoying his daily devotional, Word Points, that comes daily in my e-mail. Those of you who have internet access can sign up – just search Gary Henry Word Points. He also has a book out - "Diligently Seeking God." Some of his posts are entitled: Longing for God, Awakening to God, Joyful Strength and Worthy to be Praised. Here is part of his post on Prayerful Living and I am including this because it is one of my personal difficulties.

Do we have difficulty keeping our minds peacefully focused on God while we are praying? If so, a part of the reason may be that we have not cultivated the habit of thinking about God throughout the day. Minds that do not normally think of God at other times will find it hard to stay focused on Him during occasional periods of prayer...There is such a thing as a prayerful state of mind even when we're not actually praying. We can think about God as we fulfill the routine of our daily activities. We can be mindful of Him in a general sort of way. Historically, those who have tried to take the spiritual life seriously have always reported that they found it beneficial to live consciously in the presence of God, being aware of His reality at each moment. Doing this is hard at first, simply because our minds are undisciplined. They are used to wandering wherever they wish: here, there, and everywhere. But with serious intent and with the discipline that is acquired in living the spiritual life, we can learn to live in a constant state of mindfulness about God. He can become our preoccupation.

Many times, we just fail in asking God's help for everyday problems – we're good at praying during a crisis - but not really expecting Him to care about our daily needs. Some years ago, I remember hearing an illustration that went something like this.

I died and went to heaven. Arriving at the pearly gates, I asked Peter for a tour. It was somewhat like the tour of homes of the stars because as we were walking along, he said, "Moses lives in the mansion on the left, and Elijah to the right..." While on the tour, I saw a large warehouse in the distance. I pointed to it and asked Peter about that building. He said it was a warehouse, and then added, "we will not be visiting the warehouse on the tour." "Why not?" I asked. Peter answered, "Trust me. You do not want to know. You will be much happier in heaven if you don't know what's inside." He insisted that I forget about the warehouse and continued the tour. I couldn't stop thinking about the warehouse and eventually curiosity got the

best of me and I ran toward it. I opened the door and entered. Inside, there were hundreds of shelves lining the warehouse from wall to wall and floor to ceiling. Each shelf was loaded with beautifully wrapped gifts of all shapes and sizes. I approached one shelf and found that each of the gifts on that shelf had my name on it. I went to another and another! By this time, Peter had caught up with me. I asked, "Why do all these gifts have my name on them?" Peter hesitated and then reluctantly said, "These are all the gifts and blessings for which you never thought to ask." OUCH!

The very goodness of God wants us to have many blessings. We tend to use God for fire insurance! If we draw near to Him in order to truly know Him, and not just know about Him; draw near to Him simply because He is God and is to be honored, He'll in turn, bless us with unimaginable gifts. David said, "*Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in Him,*" Psalm 34:8.

A friend's web blog says, "May God richly bless you as you draw closer to Him. More importantly, may you richly bless God."

HEAVEN Is it worth it?

So now we realize that this will be a good trip. Our Bible brochure outlines what we need; the accommodations are unlike anything we've ever experienced, but in order to take this trip, we're going to have some hardships; we're going to need some preparation – so - the question is – is it worth it?

The thing that is really exciting is the HOPE involved. The planning – the daily living – the self-motivation – plus being with others who have that common goal, can make the excitement build with the possibility of turning that hope into a reality. I really want to go there! Have you seen the Disney commercial of the excited family ready to leave on vacation the next day? The little guy is laying on his back in the bed and says, "I'm too excited to sleep!" Well, we ought to be excited about making this trip. It IS the chance of our lifetime.

Revelation 2:10: "*Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.*" Faith gives us a glimpse of the possibilities and because of that, we have hope for that crown of life.

Concerning the cost, perhaps we could consult the apostles or those who are mentioned in the hall of fame of faith in Hebrews 11.

What was the cost for **Abel**? All he did was offer a sacrifice according to his faith and lost his life because of it. Was it worth it?

We can easily see the benefits for **Enoch**. He was **so** pleasing to God that his actions kept him from experiencing death and was taken straight to heaven. I'm sure he would say it was worth it.

Noah was rewarded for being the only righteous man on earth. The favor he found with God surely took a large chunk out of his lifestyle; you don't win any popularity contests by building an ark and telling people to repent. He endured their ridicule for 120 years. Was it worth it?

God told **Abraham** to pack without giving him a destination. Can you imagine that scene as he told Sarah? Sarah, God says we need to pack. Where are we going, honey? Dunno – He just said to pack. We will go wherever He tells us. Hmm. Could you do that? No googling a map or contacting AAA. I've had to pack a few times and go to strange places, but the location was always part of the plan! I thought my foreign mission work was in Cordele, Georgia! I grew up in Virginia and they say they're the heart of the south, but Georgia is SOUTH. Things are different in the south. We hate to be separated from family and friends and get to the point where we're pretty *comfortable* with things the way they are.

But **Abraham** lived as a stranger in a foreign land, dwelling in a tent. And we've got to hand it to **Sarah**. She didn't balk and didn't stand in his way. She honored Abraham and because of that, she too was blessed. We see more of their faith as Abraham took Isaac to the altar to be sacrificed. God didn't want the life of Isaac – He wanted to be sure of commitment from Abraham! He was the beginning of the promise. God gave it because He knew Abraham would faithfully teach his children. See a lesson in that? God is not obligated to explain everything to our satisfaction; He has His own plan. To Abraham, I'm sure it was worth it.

Follow the lives of **Isaac, Jacob** and **Joseph**, and we see not only the strength of their father, Abraham, but also the strength of their Father God. Gary Henry also said, "Abraham had enough confidence in the person of God that he required little in the way of information about the plans of God."

That's convicting. These patriarchs died without ever seeing the fulfillment of God's promises, but still had the faith to obey Him.

Do you think they enjoyed life? I think so. They never forgot that they were sojourners and pilgrims in a foreign land, but even with its difficulties, God intends for life to be enjoyed. I can just imagine that Abraham called to Sarah once in a while to come enjoy a beautiful sunrise or a striking sunset. Their holiness was not measured by how miserable they were! We must not long for the past OR for the future to the point that it interrupts our purpose here.

And then there's **Moses**. He's a story unto himself with all the pleasures of life that he gave up. They were camping out for 40 years, but

being a leader of that group was no picnic. Christians are leaders and here too, we probably all have our stories of difficult times that have come about because of this leadership but they probably pale in comparison to these leaders in faith.

Joshua, Rahab, Gideon and all the others mentioned in Hebrews 11; all these witnesses, as chapter 12 calls them, are our examples and we're told to lay aside any encumbrance and fix our eyes on Jesus.

How do we think we'll fare when it's all we can do to attend services once a week and we rarely open our Bibles? How do you think we'll compare when we drag our feet about taking on teaching responsibilities? Or when we fail to teach our children? Or fail to visit and help one another? Won't our enjoyment of heaven depend a lot on how we enjoy our place in the Kingdom now? If you're not very comfortable around brethren now, you'll probably be pretty miserable in heaven.

But if Jesus is in your life now, you have a quality of life that others do not. *"He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder..."* The reward is there for us. We have an enjoyment that puzzles many around us. We value our homes and families and even though we are all vastly different, we have a common goal and a love for truth. *"Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life,"* Revelation 2:10. And when death comes, we can go home. We know what it's like to want to go home. The word home paints its own mental picture. It's security, safety, comfort, and protection all rolled into one, but even if you never had that peace and comfort as you grew up, or in your home now, you'll surely have it in the eternal one.

Jesus said, *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it,"* Matthew 16:25.

When we enter into this eternal time with God, we'll be able to join every saint from every age. I don't know what all we'll be doing, but whatever the activities in Heaven, we'll be in a communion and fellowship and love like we've never before experienced. All the positive blessings will be there without all the imperfections we deal with in this life!

Paul was willing to lose so that he might gain. *"What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ,"* Philippians 3:7.

Jesus said, *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it,"* Matthew 16:25. The key word here is lose.

I've caught a few episodes of the biggest loser competition now and then, and regardless of how corney you think it is, it is a valiant struggle to reach a goal. Their goal is weight loss and better health. It's not for quitters

and takes a lot of planning and determination. Their reward is whatever they make it to be. Some finish the course and some don't.

Our reward? It, too, takes planning and determination and here's where being the biggest loser takes on a whole new definition!

We lose this world to gain heaven. We lose possessions to gain a spiritual wealth. I wish we had time to talk about possessions for a bit, for sometimes, I think the possessing of things is our downfall.

John 14:2-6

2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." Wow. And in verse 6 - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

So, is it doable? Can you make the trip? Is it in your plans? You may have to lose some things in order to do it but the perks are "out of this world!"

Close with this song:

Worthy Art Thou! By Tillet S. Teddlie

3 verses first – then the chorus.

1) Worthy of praise is Christ our Redeemer, Worthy of glory, honor and pow'r! Worthy of all our souls adoration, Worthy Art Thou, Worthy Art Thou.

2) Lift up the voice in praise and devotion, Saints of all earth before Him should bow; Angels in heaven worship Him saying, Worthy art Thou! Worthy art Thou!

3) Lord, may we come before Thee with singing, Filled with Thy spirit, wisdom and pow'r; May we ascribe Thee glory and honor, Worthy art Thou! Worthy art Thou!

Chorus: Worthy of riches, blessings and honor, Worthy of wisdom, glory and pow'r! Worthy of earth and heaven's thanksgiving Worthy art Thou! Worthy art Thou!