



## What is Eternal Life?

This is a great question from one of our confirmation students. It's a great question, because it's a question that we are tempted to answer, "Well, that's easy. It's a life that lasts forever." But there's a lot more to the answer than just the "everlasting" part.

Listen to how Jesus actually defined eternal life in the first three verses of John chapter 17. (Notice He doesn't even mention the "forever" part.)

*After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:*

*"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

First, we see something that's really good to be reminded of:

Eternal life is a gift. It is not something earned. Jesus "purchased" that gift for us when He took the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross. Of course, as with any gift, this one does you no good unless you open it. Trust in Jesus is how we open that gift!

In Luke 10:25 we also read:

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

That religious scholar compared eternal life to an inheritance. An inheritance is something given to you - a gift.

Did you notice that Jesus didn't define "eternal life" as a quantity of time the life lasts? Rather, He defined it in terms of the quality of that life. Eternal life is a life that possesses the quality of knowing God and His Son Jesus.

But this "knowing" isn't like you "know," for example, George Washington. You "know" facts and biographical details about George, but you don't really know him. You've never spent any time with him. In fact, you can never really know him, because he's not alive any longer. The best you can hope for is to know some things about him.

The "knowing" Jesus refers to in John 17 is comparable to how you would "know" a best friend or a close family member. You "know" them, because you have a close relationship with them. You spend time with them. You know what they like. You know what they are like. You know what they believe. You know their plans and dreams. You know what they think of you. You know them!

This shows us something important about "eternal life." You don't have to wait until you die in order to be given it! Your eternal life begins when you "know" God and His Son Jesus. In other words, when you have a loving, trusting relationship with them. And, unlike George Washington, you are able to get to know God the Father and Jesus, because they aren't dead in a grave somewhere. They are alive!!!

By the way, that eternal life does last forever. It's just that the forever part isn't the most important part. Knowing God is.

Thanks for asking,  
Pastor David

**Send your questions to [pastor@livingwordlutheran.net](mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net)**