

Forever – Why You Can't Live Without It. By Paul David Tripp

Chapter 9 Forever and Your Relationships

Preparatory Thoughts: Amber “didn’t really have a bad marriage. ... Her marriage to Jake simply hadn’t turned out to be what she thought it would be.” p. 127 / Paul “wanted something more than golf buddies, and he waited for his friends to want more, but they never showed much interest.” p. 124 / Elisha “was determined to find people she could relate to who didn’t have problems.” p. 124. Have you ever felt like Amber, Paul, or Elisha in your relationships? What did you do about it?

1. *“Rather than being a container for our happiness, these relationships are a workroom for the Redeemer to do what he alone can do: change us so we are progressively readier for what is to come.” p. 125* Read the following passages about friendship. What do they tell you about the kind of friend YOU should be (try not to look at these passages for the kind of people your friends should be)?
 - a. Prov 17:17, 18:24
 - b. Prov 27:5, 6, 9, 17, Gal 6:1
 - c. John 15:12,13
 - d. Eph 4:32
 - e. Phil 2:3,4
 - f. 1 Thess 5:11
2. *“We need to face the reality that we will not enjoy perfectly happy, regular, predictable, and problem-free relationships.” p. 127* This can sound like a pretty pessimistic view of life. In what way(s) can this statement be an encouragement to you rather than a discouragement?
3. How can you tell the difference between a bad relationship and a relationship that has problems? Is there a time when the right thing to do is to pull out of the relationship? (use scripture to support your answer).
4. *“The problem in most relationships is that we end up settling for less than is our potential as God’s children. ... We develop the skill of living around our problems rather than solving them. ... We convince ourselves that the way we relate to one another is okay when it’s not okay. ... If you are not working to change what needs to change in your relationships, then you are somehow learning to live with the dysfunction.” p. 132* Compare Prov 27:5 and Luke 17:3 with Prov 17:9 and 1 Peter 4:8. How do you reconcile these passages? Are you ever tempted to use “covering in love” as an excuse to “learn to live with dysfunction”? Explain.
5. From p. 135-7, what are the 3 things the author says that love does? Which of these do you find easiest? Which of these do you find hardest?

Challenge Question: Do you look at relationships for what you can **get from them** or for what you can **bring to them**? How would your relationships look different if your relationships’ goal was [your] personal transformation rather than [your] personal happiness?

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Chapter 10 Forever and Parenting

Preparatory thoughts: "Many parents have reduced parenting to a neat system designed to get their kids to do stuff." p.138. If parenting isn't just getting your kids to "obey" or "be good kids", what is it? How would you, in your own words, define godly parenting (both in its goal and its application)?

1. "Forever reminds us that our children were created for something vastly bigger than their happiness or ours." p. 141. Why is personal happiness not a big enough goal? What goal are we aiming for in the lives of our children? (feel free to use quotes from p. 141-144 especially)
2. According to the author (on p. 145), what is your child's deepest need?
What is their most dangerous delusion?
Find some scripture verses to support those ideas.
3. *"In love he will put their struggles in our faces so that we will work to rescue them from danger and point them to him. ... And in those moments, we will either respond to our children out of hearts that are irritated or hearts that are thankful."* p. 146 How can a "forever mentality" help you be thankful when your children disobey or challenge your authority or fail a test, rather than being irritated, angry, despondent, or frustrated?
4. "Every event in our life has meaning and purpose, but no event is ultimate." p. 148 How does this truth give you encouragement as a parent (or help you offer encouragement to the parents you know)?
5. "Forever calls you to think of life as a carefully administered process overseen by a God who is wise, loving, and good." p. 148. How does/should the idea of "process parenting" effect the way you parent?

Challenge Question: *"In anger I stormed upstairs and blurted out to my wife, "Guess where our son is this weekend?" and I told her the story of his deception. Luella could feel my anger, and she said, "I think you need to pray." I said, "I don't think I can pray for him right now." She said, "I didn't mean for you to pray for him; I think you need to pray for you."* p. 152 How much of your prayers for your children include prayers for yourself in repentance and for grace to grow and mature in patience and wisdom as you seek to raise and counsel them?

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Chapter 11 Forever and Your Job

Preparatory thoughts: "Your work is not the final word on who you are, and it surely should not define what your life is all about. ... your work is your calling, but it is not your life; ... work gives you dignity, but it is not your hope." p. 157 What kind of work do you do currently? Are you currently employed? an employer? Self-employed? Is your job primarily focused in the home? Are you retired? If so, what does "work" look like for you?

1. "Both Chad and Samantha are in a frantic search for life: real, satisfying, fulfilling, heart-engaging life. ... But the tragedy is that both of them are looking for life where it can't be found." As you think about your work, are you tempted toward dissatisfaction as you look for it to give you "real, satisfying, fulfilling, heart-engaging life"? How can the concepts in this chapter help you be more content and joyful in your work?

2. How would you counsel yourself or a friend with the following complaints about their work?
 - a. They keep piling on more responsibility, but never mention better pay.
 - b. They don't appreciate or see all that I do for this place.
 - c. I feel like I'm doing the same thing over and over again and never going anywhere.
 - d. It's just so boring.
 - e. How is this menial task "working for the kingdom of God"?
 - f. I'm responsible for the lives of all these employees. How could I not spend all my time here?

3. "Work is not so much a consequence of sin as it is an aspect of our humanity. Therefore, in eternity we will work forever." p. 162 Did this statement surprise you? Have you really thought about working FOREVER? Does this change the way you look at retirement?

4. There are several things the author says he helped Chad to see (p. 167)
 - a. "*The beauty of work*" – how is work beautiful?
 - b. "*the natural gifts that were expressed as he worked*" – what natural gifts do you use in your work?
 - c. "*the character that faithful work builds*" – what are character building lessons you can learn as you work faithfully in a job?
 - d. "*the dependency on God that endurance in work encourages*" – How does your endurance in work teach you your dependency on God?
 - e. "*the longing for forever that work in the fallen world creates*" – How does working in this fallen world give you a deeper longing for forever?

Personal Challenge: "He has to begin to believe that work was not God's punishment of him, but God's plan for him" p. 167, "Forever reminds us that work is part of God's eternal plan for us but that it was not designed to deliver the satisfaction of heart that only God can." p. 168 How has the study of this chapter changed the way you look at your work (as discussed in the preparatory thoughts)? Take time as you begin each day to thank God for the blessing of work and the specific calling He has placed on you at this time and place.

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Chapter 12 Forever and Your God

Preparatory thoughts: "Over these difficult months, their restful faith in God had morphed into a restless doubt of God. Hope in God had dissolved into fear of what he would do next." Have you ever felt this way?

1. *"The Bible does much more than comfort us with the reality that we are not alone in our struggle. It unfolds for us God's agenda by letting us read the last chapter of God's story while we are still living in the middle of the plot." p. 173* From page 174, all of history marches toward what 2 moments?

2. From page 175, what are some of the things the author mentions that we want?

What are some of the things he mentions that we don't want?

What does God want for us? (see top of p. 175)

3. *"Although he never rests, he works with slow and patient grace to remake us into the likeness of his Son. ... And how does God transform us? Well, he has chosen to keep us for a while in this terribly broken world, where he patiently uses surprise, hardship, disappointment, and trial to prepare us for the perfection that is to come." p. 177.* According to the rest of this paragraph, what are some things God knows about us?

And for what purpose does he use difficulty, hardship, and suffering in our lives?

Challenge Question:

1. *"at the very moment when we are crying out for grace, we are getting grace, but we don't recognize the grace we are being given because it is not the grace we anticipated. Because we are more focused on personal ease than personal transformation ...we hope for the grace of release. ... but what we actually need ... is the grace of transformation." p. 179.* How much of your prayer life is focused on release from trial rather than on transformation through trial?

2. *"You cannot properly weigh your experiences on the scale of the here and now. If you do that, you will always end up questioning the goodness and faithfulness of God. Using the scale of eternity is the only proper way to weigh our experiences." p. 181.* What experiences in your life do you need to put on the scale of eternity that you have been tempted to put on the scale of the here and now? Look up and copy 2 Cor 4:16-18

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Chapter 13 My Forever Story

The author mentions that *"eternity began to deliver my heart from fear and to empower it to live in a peace that I had never known."* Below are 6 conclusions that forever has taught him about the present.

1. The future grace of eternity guarantees me present grace. *"Today I can face life with courage, not because I am able, but because I know I will always have the grace I need to do what God has called me to do."*
2. The guaranteed end of the story secures control over my story in the present. *"Understanding that I was not responsible for writing my own story nor able to do so was a relief. ... I came to rest in the fact that even when I don't understand my past, present, and future, my life is secure because I am held in the hollow of the hand of the one who controls all three."*
3. Final peace guarantees the presence, power, and provision of the Prince of Peace in the here and now. *"He could never guarantee me eternal peace if he abandoned me along the way. I came to realize that the lasting inner peace I had lacked for so long was not the result of the ease of circumstances or the love of people, but was mine because the Prince of Peace had invaded my life, and I could rest in his care even in moments when I didn't have a clue what was going on."*
4. Eternal hope gives me reason for present hope. *"The surety of eternity redefined hope for me. Rather than being some dreamy wish for future good, hope became a confident expectation of a guaranteed result. ... I stopped putting my hope in things and began to rest in God."*
5. God's work of change, which will culminate in an eternity where all things are new, assures me that real change is possible in the here and now. *"He will stay on task until we have been completely re-formed into his image and his world has been completely re-created by his power. In the here and now, I am not called to sit around and wait for big changes in the future. I am welcome to participate in God's ongoing work of change."*
6. *The final restoration of all things guarantees me the help I need until they are restored. "The biblical story is a restoration story that ends with all things returned to where the Creator intended them to be. God acts, speaks, and comes because the broken world and the people who inhabit it are not able to restore themselves. ... Restoration means I am not left to myself, that there is help for me."*

Are any of the above 6 conclusions about the present especially meaningful to you today?

Challenge Question: *Have you seen the story of forever begin to enable you to face things you didn't fully understand and over which you had no control? Are you able now, not only to face them, but to do so with peace, hope, and courage? Do you know where your story is going? Do you know that you are not alone, that God will help you? Do you know change is possible? Is God using all of these new recognitions to re-form you, and continuing the process today?*

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Chapter 14 The Joy of Forever, Right Here, Right Now

“Faux joy makes you smile for a moment but leaves you empty and searching again before very long.” p. 195

“True joy is not just a feeling; it is a lifestyle.” p. 200

“Joy is an inner peace and rest, based on what you know to be true, that results in a life of thankfulness and expectancy.” p. 200

1. In which of the following 6 ways to fight for joy do you see yourself needing most to focus on? What can you do to help you in this “fight”?

- a. *Guard your mind.*
- b. *Look for reasons to be joyful.*
- c. *Require yourself to remember what you have been given.*
- d. *Refuse to live for momentary joy.*
- e. *Fight addiction to material joy.*
- f. *Take your struggling heart to Jesus.*

Challenge Question: Look through the window of forever and see the following:

- a. *God exists and has a plan.*
- b. *The world is broken and needs restoration.*
- c. *Your biggest problem in life lives inside of you, not outside of you.*
- d. *You must rely on and rest in God's forgiving and transforming grace.*
- e. *Life is moving toward a conclusion. Forever is real and is coming.*

In what ways have these truths begun to transform your life?

Please bring these questions to our zoom call at 7pm on June 3rd.

If you can spend some time answering these for yourself before our meeting, you will get the most benefit out of our discussion.

Coming soon: Dates & information on our next book, Becoming Elizabeth Elliott by Ellen Vaughn.