

# LIVE IT UP

## ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE



**BIG IDEA:** What does it mean to “live in light of eternity” or “live with an eternal mindset?” What is the perspective that we as Christians should have as we seek to invest our lives in pursuits that are really lasting?

In Psalm 39, the psalmist reflects on the vanity of life. He also comments on the relative shortness of man’s life span in relation to God and His everlasting nature. If our lives are like “vapors” and “handbreadths”, if our days are like “shadows”, and if we walk about as “phantoms”, then we have a responsibility to make our lives count for the short time that we are on the Earth.

This study will help you and your group members explore what it means to have an eternal perspective or mindset. NOTE: A future INTERACTA study will deal more in-depth with what should characterize the lifestyle of a person who lives with an eternal mindset, and will explore the implications that has on a person’s career choices and major life decisions.



**DESIRED LIFE CHANGE:** As a result of this study, your group should be able to gain perspective on the relative shortness of their lives (in relation to eternity) and why they should begin to take steps today to start living with an eternal mindset.



**AUDIENCE:** This lesson is designed for students who are seeking an understanding of the importance in having an eternal mindset.



**LEADER'S PREPARATION:** Read background information on Psalm 39, noting the meanings of key phrases and words the psalmist utilizes. Be familiar with the other passages of Scripture that are referenced as well. Be prepared to share your story related to this topic. Let your group see how these truths have changed your life.



### AT A GLANCE

As your group interacts in this study, they will observe . . .

This is my **WORLD:** My culture contains many images and messages that affect my pursuits, desires, and mindset.

This is my **NEED:** I need to base my pursuits and desires on what God says are lasting pursuits.

This is my **ANSWER:** Because my life on Earth is short (in relation to eternity), I will choose to cultivate an eternal mindset.

This is the **DIFFERENCE:** As I live my life with an eternal perspective, I will bring glory to God and thus, live a life of significance.

This is what I'll **DO:** I will choose to invest my life in what God says are lasting and eternal pursuits because, to do so, would be the wisest investment of my time and energy.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION - WHY IS THIS STUDY IMPORTANT?



Every day, the individuals in your group are confronted with the lure of pursuits that promise happiness, success, and lasting fulfillment. Many college students today live their lives with the sole purpose of their pursuit being “getting what they want out of life.” Little thought, if any, is given to the lasting significance of such pursuits.

Christian students are not immune to the traps and perils of our culture. They, too, can easily get “sucked-in” by a number of pursuits (i.e., wealth, comfort, leisure, status, prestige, possessions, etc.) that cause them to live and make choices based on what our culture says is important, either to attain or obtain.

Perhaps author Terry Hershey summed this thought up best:

“We live in a world where more is never enough. Coping mechanisms and consequences are evident. We cannot

be content, so we fantasize about those who do ‘arrive’ by reading about lifestyles of rich and famous people; we sacrifice the values of our ‘ordinary life’ of relationships, family, and personal solitude to pursue the ecstasy that will let us ‘be somebody’”.

In light of this, it is crucial that the individuals in your group cultivate a proper understanding of: 1) the shortness of life, and 2) how that understanding should affect their mindset/perspective in how they live, their pursuits, and the choices they make.

When your group members understand the importance of having an eternal perspective, they will begin to recognize: 1) what pursuits are a worthy investment of their time and 2) why they should avoid getting caught up in things that interfere with having an eternal perspective. They will begin to understand the importance and significance of “living for the line” rather than “living for the dot.”

**interActa**  
life applications

VERSION 1.1

## LIVE IT UP

It doesn't get any better than this—or does it?

**TOOLBOX**  
 —THINK  
 —OBSERVE  
 —CLOSE-UP  
 —WRITE  
 —DISCUSS  
 —FEELINGS  
 —BRAINSTORM  
 —REFERENCE  
 —PASSAGE  
 —ARTICLE  
 —BIG IDEA  
 —CROSSROAD

**1 READ**

**2 STATE:** Let's look at what 2 people want in life.

**3 READ**

**4 ASK:** What do these quotes reveal about the goals of their lives?

**5 ASK, LIST, DISCUSS:** What are some things you want out of life either personally or professionally?  
**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** fulfilling job; good family life; success; status; prestige; comfortable standard of living; security; make a difference; help others; health; ...

**6 STATE:** Let's contrast the first two quotes with another view of the meaning of life.

**7 READ**

**8 ASK:** What is meant by this perspective?

**9 READ**

**10 STATE:** Let's get life into perspective.

**SURVEY SAYS**

If your goal in life was to be featured on a TV show, which would it be?

- Late Night with David Letterman 35.3%
- Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous 27.0%
- This week with David Brinkley 18.2%
- Entertainment Tonight 10.7%
- Monday Night Football 6.9%

—from *Esquire* magazine's student survey (April 1992)

**I WANT . . .**

"What I'm looking for in life is a great marriage, great kids, a BMW, a Dalmatian, and a \$100,000-a-year job in a helping profession."  
 —a sorority woman at the Univ. of Oregon

**I HAVE, I WANT**

"I have a pretty wife, a Jaguar, a Mercedes, a beautiful home, and a yacht. I want a Ferrari, a bigger house, and a bigger boat."  
 —Robert Jacoby, former president of Sunrise Savings and Loan, now insolvent

**WHAT I WANT**

THINK  
WRITE

**MEANING OF LIFE**

"Men lust, but they know not what for; They wander, and lose track of the goal; They fight and compete, but they forget the prize; They spread seed, but spurn the seasons of growth; They chase power and glory, and miss the meaning of life."  
 —George Gilder

**DEFINE**

**PERSPECTIVE:** The capacity to see things in their relative importance

Psalm 39

**CONTEXT**

In a moving way the author draws us into the reality of life with its vexing problems and the unresolved quest for meaning. The psalm is in the form of an individual lament...The structure has two parallel movements from a vow of silence to an expression of hope:

- A. Silence Before the Lord (v.1-3)
- B. Prayer for Divine Illumination (v.4-6)
- C. Prayer for Deliverance (v. 7-8)
- A1. Silence Before the Lord (v.9)
- B1. Prayer for Divine Illumination (v.10-11)
- C1. Prayer for Deliverance (v.12-13)

**1 READ**

**2 READ**

**3 ASK:** Why would David ask God to show him his life's end?  
**ANSWER:** David does not ask to know all that will happen, but only the purpose of life.  
 How would you live your life differently if you knew you had a short time to live?

**4 ASK:** What does the word **fleeting** mean?  
 Moving or passing quickly, very brief, often implied to what passes more swiftly than one would wish.  
 What has given you an awareness that your life is fleeting?

**5 ASK:** Why do you think people want to accumulate wealth?  
 What do they think it will bring?  
**POSSIBLE ANSWERS:** security; status; possessions

**6 ASK:** What does it mean to bustle about?  
 To hurry about busily, energetically; commotion  
 What things or pursuits do people invest their time or energy in in vain?  
**OPTIONAL FOLLOW-UP:**  
 Contrast "bustling about" with "be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

**FLEETING**

**SHOW ME**

**Psalm 39:4-6**

4 **"Show me,** O Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how **fleeting** is my life.

5 You have made my days a mere *handbreadth*; the span of my years is nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath.

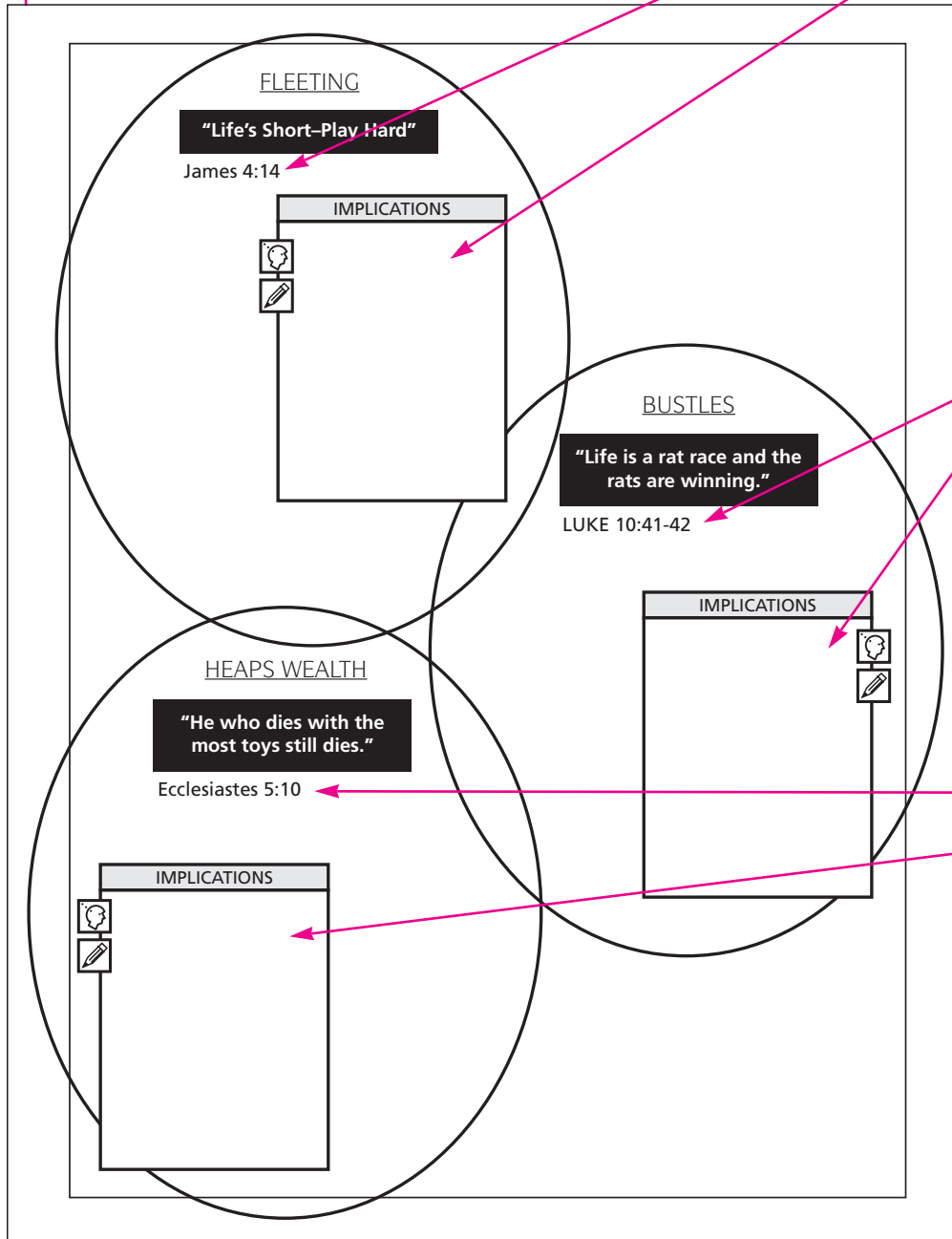
6 Man is a mere *phantom* as he goes to and fro; He **bustles** about, but only in vain; he **heaps up wealth**, not knowing who will get it. emphasis added

"Handbreadth"  
 One of the smallest units of measurements in ancient Israel. It is equivalent to a couple of inches. Thus, the psalmist reminds himself that life is short.

**BUSTLES**

"Phantom"  
 Man's importance is dwarfed in comparison with God. As a "phantom", man's future and existence are filled with uncertainties.

**WEALTH**

**1 LOOK-UP & READ**

**2 ASK & DISCUSS:** How would a proper understanding of shortness of life affect your mindset/perspective in how you live and the choices you make?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: I would live my life with a sense of urgency related to sharing Christ with others; I would choose to invest my life in things where I can have the most influence for Christ; I would do things that mattered.

**3 LOOK-UP & READ**

**4 ASK & DISCUSS:** How does bustling about affect your mindset?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: I don't think rightly; I can be very near sighted; my mind never settles down to think; I can get things totally out of perspective and think whatever I have going on today is the most important thing in my life.

**5 LOOK-UP & READ**

**6 ASK & DISCUSS:**

What are the pitfalls of having a goal in life to "heap wealth"?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: it never satisfies; you never have enough; you can't take it with you; money can wreck relationships; greed; pride.

How can you avoid those pitfalls?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: Have a right perspective; realize that everything comes from God and he owns it all anyway; be generous and a good steward.

**JOURNAL**

...too often, people get wrapped up in life and its ways. We forget who put us here. We forget to trust, to worship, praise and follow God's command to reach the world for Christ. This happened to me, but I am so glad and praise the Lord for trials and errors that make me come to my knees for Him. Life is so short and we need to be about His business, to reach others. I'm glad I am now on the correct path to eternal life."  
 —Rory Jordan

**APPLICATION**

Fifty years from now, when you look back on your life, what do you want to have lived for?

What ramifications does living with an eternal perspective have on the major decisions you will make?

**START NOW**

How can you start living like that today?

"Life is not just a few years to spend on self-indulgence and career advancement. It is a privilege, a responsibility, a stewardship to be lived according to a much higher calling."  
 —Elizabeth Dole, former Secretary of Transportation.

"A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you, and were helped by you, will remember you. So carve your name on hearts, and not on marble."  
 —C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) The most beloved British preacher of his time.

"For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."  
 —2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the *New International Version*, ©1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Published by Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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- 1 **TRANSITION:** Now let's look at a journal entry of someone who had an eternal perspective.
- 2 **READ: NOTE:** It's important to read the journal entry before disclosing the identity of Rory Jordan and the nature of his death.
- 3 **STATE:** This was taken from the journal of Rory Jordan, a Campus Crusade staff member with Athletes In Action. It was written just 2 days before he dove into a lake, hitting some rocks, breaking his neck and dying instantly.
- 4 **STATE:** Our lives are short. Comparing the length of our lives to eternity is like this dot is to this line. The line goes on forever, and our 60-80 years, or in Rory's case, 21 years, is just a little dot.
- 5 **ASK:** Are you living for the dot, or for the line? Are you living for the here and now, the dot, or for the there and later?
- 6 **ASK**
- 7 **ASK**
- 8 **READ**

## L E A D E R ' S   R E S O U R C E



### BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

*Fireseeds of Spiritual Awakening* – Dan Hayes  
(Thomas Nelson Publishers)



### TOPIC CONNECTIONS

Related *InterACTA* small group studies: *Mega Choices; Satisfaction Guaranteed; Don't Just Say No.*

### ADDITIONAL PREPARATION

OPTIONAL EXERCISE: Have your group members do this as time allows at the end of your group or on their own. Feel free to fill in the chart below with your group's responses.

- 1) Brainstorm and list as many things as you can that are eternal and lasting.
- 2) Brainstorm and list as many things you can that are temporary and fleeting.
- 3) Find scripture passages that deal with each of the above.

Examples:

<u>ETERNAL</u>	<u>TEMPORAL</u>	<u>SCRIPTURE</u>
God's Word		Isaiah 40:8 1 Peter 1:24, 25
	the "world"	1 John 2:15-17
God the Father		Isaiah 9:6
God the King		1 Timothy 1:17

- 4) Discuss how a proper understanding of each of these scriptural truths would affect how you live-out an eternal perspective in your life.

Possible responses: "If I truly believed the eternal nature and power of God's Word, I would spend quality time in studying it and applying it to my life" or "If I realized that the world is passing away, then I would choose to limit the influence it has in my life."

## O V E R V I E W   O F   M E E T I N G   T I M E



**Planning  
your  
group  
session**

	INTERACTION AS A GROUP	INTERACTION WITH THE STUDY & WORD	INTERACTION WITH GOD	UPCOMING INFORMATION	OTHER IDEAS
	Ice breaker? Refreshments?	Provided. Add personal story?	Worship / Praise / Prayer time?	Next meeting? Special event?	Music / Video?
<b>Allocating your time</b>	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.

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