

From Here to Eternity

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Date: 17 October 2010

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- [0 : 00] anything. Well, good morning and thank you for coming. I know that some of the women had a really busy day yesterday and I, you're the survivors, right? The ones that are here.
- I titled this From Here to Eternity. It has nothing to do with the movie, those of you who are old enough to remember the movie. But you know, we talk very blibly in the faith community about eternity, about life forevermore, about immortality, about all those imponderable words.
- It works here. It doesn't work in Starbucks necessarily. But I wonder how many of us really have a coherent concept of this state in our minds. Think about it. If you had to describe eternity as if you really understood it, what words would you use? It stretches through infinite time, we are told, has no beginning and no end. Wow, that's pretty hard to imagine. It's equated with immortal life. Immortal life. Well, that's reassuring. Maybe we wouldn't have to give up everything we know about mortal life. But no clocks, of course. No 35-hour week. No labor day.
- No 10 o'clock news. No bedtime. You know, try to think of life without those little pegs. It's hard, isn't it, to pin eternity down. When I was small, I used to think it was very boring.
- I think my view had been actually encouraged by seeing artist pictures and so on of afterlife. And there were harps and clouds and winged beings all sitting around, praising God, of course. But no meaningful work to do, if you know what I mean. I couldn't imagine what that would be like, even before I had a job.
- [2 : 21] We are really driven very much by the moral agenda. Nowadays, it is actually fairly easy to encounter people who do not believe in any kind of eternity.
- I knew a man like that. He was happy in that belief. I only knew him for a couple of weeks, because I met him when he was dying of cancer of the lung.
- And he was very weak. Weakness, not pain, was his biggest problem. He had been a former airline executive. He picked up the phone and 200 people responded.
- He had many friends to enjoy his gourmet cooking. He was well-traveled, educated, cultured, and happy. And he told me that he was just a candle to be snuffed out.
- Nothing of himself would live on, and that was okay with him. Well, I was a little shocked to hear this from somebody who had about a week to live. I mean, just, oh, you know.
- [3 : 24] Because there are lots of people that fantasize about eternity, and you may not agree with their fantasy, and yours might be quite different. But the idea that I'm a candle to be snuffed out, that's it, was coming from a man who was standing there facing eternity on the brink of, did rather shake me.
- And I guess some of this was betrayed in my facial expression, because he said, you're not very comfortable with that, are you? He's right. And I said, no, I'm not, actually.
- Dead silence. I said, can I tell you why I'm not comfortable with it? And he said, okay, go ahead. And I said, well, you have such a lot of friends.

They're all over this room during visiting hours. Your sister is on her way from Nanaimo to see you. You've had some really very wonderful relationships in your life. But you've missed the best one of all.

You've missed the relationship with Jesus. And he said, well, that's a point of view, I guess. You know, I was getting no encouragement.

[4 : 33] And I thought, Lord, I can't do it from here on. But I've at least told him this much. And maybe that was good enough to plant a seed of some kind. Now, that man could not be described as typical in terms of our civilization, or it seems of most others.

Because for millennia, mankind has speculated about, dreamed of, or believed in, and designed the great something that comes after this life.

In short, there is really a universal reaching out toward what happens next. Skeptics would dismiss this as wishful thinking.

One such man was Dr. Ernest Becker, a professor at Simon Fraser University, who wrote a book called *The Denial of Death*, for which he won a Pulitzer Prize, posthumously, because he was dying when he wrote the book, and he did not live to enjoy his award.

And it really is. He taught in the PSA department there, which combines psychology, sociology, and anthropology. And I think, despite the fact that he knew heaps about psychoanalytic psychology, that he was perhaps a cultural anthropologist.

[5 : 54] A very erudite man, and he did a massive and really wonderful job of synthesizing that stuff in his book about death. But Becker said, man cannot conceptualize his own state of non-being.

You would say that's self-evident, but try to do it. I mean, the part of me that produces what a mind does, and is able to develop concepts and ideas, will have been eaten by worms.

So, how do you get to that knowledge? This idea must have contributed to man's desire to speculate about, to describe, and ultimately to believe in an eternity that gives comfort and hope to the present.

But it also helps to shape and define this mortal life. And that's what we're going to be exploring today, because God's word tells us that he has put eternity into our hearts.

It's not something we have dreamed up. But I think first we should pray. Father God, you who rule time and eternity, we bless you for being that constant in our lives as we continue to search out where we fit in that timeless dimension.

[7 : 24] Let us always lean on you for understanding and guide us now by your spirit, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I'm going to tee off with this passage from Ecclesiastes.

We all know it. I memorized it when I was little. I belong to a church where gold stars for memorization, you know. We memorized all kinds of things. Some we understood, some we did not.

But I never really took Ecclesiastes seriously until this last summer. I mean, I read it, yes, but I thought, oh gosh, this guy is depressed. Everything ends with vanity, vanity, all his vanities.

And yes, maybe he was. We don't actually know who wrote it, but I think Solomon is a front runner in the guessing game. And this was popularized in the 60s, and most of us are old enough to remember the 60s, not all of us, right?

It was made into a song, was it? Pete Seeger? Was it? Thanks. And so lots of people enjoyed the song without ever knowing where it came from.

[8 : 31] But this is it. For everything, there is a season. And a time for every matter under heaven. A time to be born. And a time to die.

A time to plant. And a time to pluck up what is planted. A time to kill. And a time to heal. A time to break down. And a time to build up.

A time to weep. And a time to laugh. A time to mourn. A time to dance. A time to cast away stones. And a time to gather stones together.

A time to embrace. And a time to refrain from embracing. A time to seek. And a time to lose. A time to keep. And a time to cast away.

A time to tear. And a time to sow. A time to keep silence. And a time to speak. a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

[9 : 33] And he goes through, it's a fairly comprehensive list, you know, it's as inclusive as he could make it. And then there is this phrase that I find a little awkward.

He has made everything beautiful in his time. Someday I'm going to ask the writer of this, how you make war beautiful. But I think maybe, and I don't know any Hebrew at all, that reading the list over, I would have said appropriate or suitable or reasonable, that all of those things are reasonable.

But he says, God has made everything beautiful in his time. And then he sticks this absolutely tantalizing little sentence in, I don't know if you can see it at the back.

He has made everything beautiful in his time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart. Even though he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

One translation I read sort of said we won't understand it, even though it happened. So there it is. He's put eternity in our hearts. It's almost as if, well, you've got this.

[10 : 52] And look for the sequel, you know. And actually, finding the sequel does happen in the New Testament. But it is a very comprehensive list.

And at the end of all this, he's put in as much of life as he can. He's put in seasons of the year. He's put in stages of life. Everything. Then this throwaway remark.

And he's put eternity in our hearts. In contrast to this reassuring thought, we have Dr. Becker telling us that man is the only animal that knows he will die.

And he doesn't believe it. Right. Man is the only animal that knows he will die. And he doesn't believe it.

Well, we'll examine a different aspect of this statement later. But first, a few examples of what man thinks will happen to him. These are not at all comprehensive. When I first thought about this, I thought, with not much encouragement, those of you who know me well, I could go off on the tangent of comparative religion at this point.

[12 : 02] But I'm not going to. That's a whole big study of its own. And you can read some other people for that if you want. Joseph Campbell might be a good one. So I've just picked a few things to illustrate the points that I want.

Most people would agree that belief in eternity is non-verifiable. Do not try to experiment with it. Do not try to subject it to the scientific method.

It ain't going to work. They would also agree that it is beyond experiential knowledge. Now, here we differ. Because there are scientists that think there is one right way to discover truth.

And those people would not accept experiential knowledge. Of those who claim experiential knowledge, their proofs fall into four categories.

The first is those who have had a near-death experience. Now, there used to be a lot of books written, I would say, in the late, in the 90s, something like that, about people who had been declared dead by the person legally mandated to do this, a registered physician.

[13 : 11] No brain activity, no brain activity, no brain activity, and not breathing. Dead. And they write down the time. And the body is sent to the hospital morgue. Where, some hours later, a few people have kicked off the covers and said, Where am I?

Or words to that effect. They have actually left that body, as far as we know, and come back or been sent back to it from the account.

So, there's category number one. That's temporary. Okay? Category two. Those who have had an out-of-body experience. The body stays put.

The spirit goes a-wandering. And again, the spirit does return to the body. A temporary experience. And the body never went anywhere. Then this one.

And I find this hard to believe. Those who have the gift of remembering a before-life experience. There is a movie star who has written books about going off into something in the 17th century or 18th century.

[14 : 16] And experiences somebody else's life there. But I really find that quite fanciful myself. And lastly, those who have had a revelatory vision.

And I would put St. John into that category. Scientists would likely discard that category. But we who do not believe that there is only one road to knowledge would not.

For those who believe in an afterlife, the various conceptions differ in their answers to important questions. But it doesn't take a cultural anthropologist to see that there are certain themes that emerge.

Many religions supported the idea that man will journey to another place. And that he will need worldly goods for the journey or when he gets there. In other words, it's not an event.

It's a process, getting there. The tomb of Egyptian pharaohs are perhaps the most elaborate expression of this idea. The grave goods that come out of these tombs tell us that the person buried there is going to need everything he needed in his mortal life.

[15 : 27] He's going to need food. He's going to need things to cook it in. He's going to need money. He's going to need clothes. He may take along a slave or two. He may need his chariot because the pharaoh was going to become a god and travel with the sun around the world each day.

We still had this earth center of the universe idea. And that idea persisted for a very long time. But where they are still digging up tombs in Egypt and graves that belong to much humbler people, they still find grave goods.

It might just be a knife. It might just be the pot that the food was in and the food has been eaten by something else. But it was important to have something to take with you.

Also, Egyptians wanted to take or felt they needed, in order to be resurrected at some point, to take their whole body with them, including the internal organs, which were all taken out, carefully preserved in, I don't know, formaldehyde or something.

And they would need those. Those people who didn't have that done would not be resurrected. They would die, and that was the end. No afterlife for you. That's pretty elaborate.

[16 : 43] And considering that the Egyptian civilization lasted for about 2,500 years, virtually unchanged, believe that, this idea persisted and also had implications for others.

Just as a sidebar here, you know, there was a monotheistic pharaoh. He was a man who tried to bring Egypt away from pantheism.

And he destroyed the temples and discharged the clergy, and that did not make him popular with a huge chunk of the population. He changed his name. If you want to look him up, his original name, under which he was crowned, is Amenhotep IV.

And he changed his... You know him. He changed his name to Akhenaten, because the name of the god that he was worshipping, he called Aten.

And he was monotheistic. I think he lasted three or four years, and then he was poisoned. I mean, naturally, a man like this, who said, off with that old religion, that is not the true one.

[17 : 51] But wouldn't it be interesting to speculate about what kind of place Egypt would be now, if actually that idea had caught on? Anyway, I've just derailed my train of thought here.

Elaborate Viking ship burials might be another indication of what people needed or wanted. And this, of course, was not available to everybody. You had to be a great warrior in order to have this kind of ceremony.

But the ship was packed with everything you would need, food and so on. You could take your favorite dog. You could have your favorite slave girl along. And your weapons, of course, the badges of your greatness.

The person buried in this fashion would be expecting to be welcomed into a hall of heroes. Very common idea. Heroes go to a special place.

Like Valhalla and the Teutonic people, the Vikings had a hall for heroes. Valhalla was Teutonic.

[18 : 58] The Vikings had one called Asgard. I got that right? Asgard. Just ask our resident Vikings. If they had a strong connection to one particular god, and they had choices, they had a pantheon of gods, we know five of these people from the days or weeks that are named after them.

If they had a strong connection to one particular god in the pantheon, they would likely be expecting to be welcomed into the lodge of that particular deity. So the idea of gods having a particular place in Asgard was part of that.

Now, in contrast to these highly structured religious concepts are the native peoples of North America, whom I mention because of their emphasis on the spirit world.

These natives did not worship idols. They worshipped the great creator spirit. Well, you know what? So do we. So do we.

That must have been something, that idea must have been something of a boon, I think, to some of the early Jesuit and other missionaries that came to this country, that they could look at tribal customs and the faith of those people and say, we have come with great knowledge of your creator God, your creator spirit.

[20 : 22] The spirit world was very important to natives, still is. We have them banging drums, dancing, singing their songs at some of our ceremonies.

Do you ever wonder what they're singing about? Sometimes they are invoking the spirits to come and help them celebrate. And they also believe that when young men went through a rite of passage to manhood, that they had a spirit guide because they often left the tribe and went on a journey and came back with experiences that they had when they had to survive by themselves.

The spirit world was very important to them, and they actually believed that the spirits traveled, I want to call it in a parallel world.

Maybe it's not a parallel world. Maybe it's just this one. But these spirits of their ancestors and others would continue to have an interest in them and might give occasional help, and would help them rejoice at ceremonial situations.

Now, of course, when it comes to eternity, not everyone was going to the same place. Dividing eternity into different spheres supported the idea that one's destiny was influenced by the merit that one had accrued during the mortal life.

[21 : 52] Hence, the ancient Greeks identified three or four states of eternity. They had the Elysian Fields, the Champs Elysées, but not the Paris one, was their Hall of Heroes.

So, if you did great deeds, you got a chance to go there. Hades, which is not an equivalent of hell, even though we use those terms almost interchangeably.

It was a place of shades. It sounds terribly boring. And some people did not stay there forever. They would stay there while it was decided whether their life had merit or not.

And if you were partly good and partly not so good, you might go to the Grove of Asphodel. And if you were really, really evil, you went to Tartarus, which was the Greek equivalent of hell.

It's actually mentioned by St. Peter. Somewhere in the Bible, it might be 2 Peter. The idea of being rewarded by what you had done in this life certainly is true of many, many of these other religions, these earlier religions.

[23 : 03] But moving on to something a little more current, those states that have a common Abrahamic background also believe that we are not all going to spend eternity together. Although they would say, Jews and Muslims, would say we all believe in the same God.

And that may be partly true. But then when it comes to the Trinity and accepting Jesus as God, they have problems with that. They want to say we have multiple gods, which we know is not true.

But helping people to understand the Trinity is also a very difficult job, right? Maybe we need to have a learner's exchange on that. Study of these faiths is also complicated by the fact that there are multiple interpretations within Judaism, within Islam, and within Christianity.

So you almost need to qualify any statement you make. And I am actually not going to do that today. I don't want to get bogged down in this kind of detail. But without going into a lot of detail, we can say that each believes in an eternity.

Jews refer to this as the world to come. And I think we know this expression from the Bible. Where one would go after a period spent reviewing life, and acquiring both knowledge and insight into what your life had been about.

[24 : 25] Jews tell me that this period is thought to be about a year. But then there aren't going to be any years in eternity. So I guess we don't exactly know. So they would go to this kind of place.

Non-Jews could be included, if they were righteous, in the world to come. The place of punishment was reserved for thoroughly evil Jews. Evil non-Jews were thought to have no afterlife.

Just like the Egyptians. The soul eaten by the demons of the lord of the underworld. The apocryphal book of Enoch, which we don't have in our Bible, but it is not just important in the Catholic Bible.

It is a very important study in the Talmud. And where they still discuss it, of course. It describes Sheol, the Jewish afterlife, as having four compartments for the dead.

One for faithful saints who await resurrection in paradise. And there are lots of Jews that don't believe in resurrection. So this is not characteristic of the entire faith.

[25 : 37] The merely virtuous who await their reward. Second chamber. Third chamber, the wicked who await their punishment. And the fourth is the wicked who have already been punished. That's an interesting category.

You know, just as a sidebar here, since I mentioned Jews and resurrection. You know, Oak Street is filled with Jewish synagogues, no two of whom believe exactly the same things.

And they aren't the only ones we have in Vancouver. But I had a number of Jewish people working on my staff over a period of 20 years. When I was in social work, social work is a very popular profession with Jewish people.

Because really, in the Western world, it has been based on the Judeo-Christian principle of social responsibility. I am my brother's keeper.

And that is something that the Eastern world doesn't have. So there are lots of them ahead for this. And over the 20 years that I worked in this hospital, a Catholic hospital, incidentally, I had staff that would sometimes ask them, well, you know, do you believe in an afterlife?

[26 : 49] And what about resurrection? And so I'm interested to know. And one of them finally got sort of a bit angry about this and pounded her desk and said, No, no, no, Jews do not believe in the resurrection.

And why does that bother Christians so much? And I don't know what the answer to that was. But I thought, isn't this interesting? It's been pushed that far in a conversation.

There are Jews that believe in an afterlife who don't believe in resurrection. I think the Sadducees were like that, weren't they? Are you speaking loud enough?

Sorry. I don't think they believed in any sort of afterlife. Any sort of afterlife. Okay. That's why they were at odds with Jesus. Okay. In contrast to this, we note that Maimonides, very famous and revered person in Jewish history, lived in the 9th century, 10th century, about then.

We have a high school named after him. Very famous medieval physician and Jewish philosopher and very Orthodox. He was the doctor of the Pharaoh of Egypt at the time of his life.

[28 : 04] A Sephardic Jew, North African, spent some time in Spain. And he ate nothing and drank nothing all the time he was in the palace because it wasn't kosher. If it was a lengthy illness, he would be losing weight, of course.

But he is a very fine Jewish philosopher in the scholastic mode. And he writes that there is an afterlife. And this continues, for the soul of every human being, a soul now separated from the body in which it was housed during its earthly existence.

And you know, when I read that, I thought that there were echoes of St. Paul in this because he talks about this is an impermanent house and the permanent one comes later. I think in one of the, that's in Corinthians I'm thinking of there, but in one of his letters he makes a reference to something that I think David Short translated as a tent, that this is a tent and we're going to have a permanent dwelling.

While Judaism is not strong on punishment as a feature of eternity, Islam is. Paradise and hell are both described as places the dead will experience after Judgment Day, when they will be resurrected.

Now there is this mean time. Their comfort, their level of comfort while in the grave, depends on their belief in God and his teachings, and also their deeds during their life.

[29 : 34] I've never thought about comfort in the grave, and I don't know what discomfort would feel like if my nervous system is not there. Life on earth is considered to be a test for man to determine whether reward or punishment will be his eternal state.

Well, I don't think in a group like this that I need to review Christian teaching on this subject, except to point out that none of the religions, those being practiced or those not being practiced, that I have mentioned contain the idea of forgiveness, or that it is possible to escape eternal punishment if you are judged to have been very naughty indeed.

The theme of being judged on earthly merits, of having to achieve or earn a place in eternity, is very strong. Very strong. And there is no rescuer.

There is no savior. You're very much on your own. What a frightening thought that is. You will have noticed that all of these illustrations support Dr. Becker's statement that man does not believe he will die.

It's just a transition. One door closes and another opens. Have you heard this? What did I hear coming to church this morning? Chuck Davis, a fairly well-respected journalist in this city, has the cancer that he's been fighting for quite a long time, is finally catching up with him, and he talks quite freely about dying.

[31 : 08] And he's written several books about Vancouver, about the history of Vancouver and places in Vancouver. And he's being given an award for a life award that has to do with his body of writing, not one specific thing.

And they have moved the date up because he is, the end for him is coming, and he can actually joke about this. He said, you know, it's true that people's paintings and people's writings are rewarded by a higher price, by a higher value after they're dead.

So, as my dad used to say, think of it as a career move. Well, think of it as a career move.

Yeah, well, maybe. But Dr. Becker says, we don't believe we will die. And he might as well have said, therefore, man has invented ways of getting around the ugly truth of death.

But Ecclesiastes mentions a time to die and says that it is beautiful. Clearly, that is not a universal belief. Becker writes that death is the enemy we are fighting for the whole of our lives.

[32 : 29] Death, the major motivator of man, is to be fought against, outwitted, and outmaneuvered at all costs. Think about it.

When did you last have your cholesterol checked? Why? Why did you have it checked? Are you taking pills to prevent a heart attack?

Why? Is it to stave off death? Have you changed your diet to reflect a healthier lifestyle or to live longer? Self-preservation is really at the top of our agendas.

We do live as if we don't want to die. Now, that is exactly the kind of attitude that he would call a denial of death. You know, I'll just do this one more thing and I'll live longer.

Well, if I lost 20 pounds, you know, would that enhance my chances of a longer life? Coupled with the fear of death, and this comes from psychoanalytic psychology, is the anger that man feels about his mortality.

[33 : 35] He shouldn't have the same vulnerability as the other animals, the same fate as his dog or cat. He is Superman among the animals.

He developed language. He created tools. He wrote symphonies. He carved David. He built the Brooklyn Bridge. He rescued 32 people from entombment in Chile.

He put a man into space where he could see quite a lot of creation. Man has a symbolic identity that makes him stand out from nature in so many ways.

He is a creature with a name and a life history. He is a creator with a mind that soars out to speculate about atoms and infinity.

Yet at the same time, he is food fit for worms. Odd, isn't that? It's a paradox. He is out of nature, but he is hopelessly a part of it.

[34 : 36] He is dual. Up in the stars and yet housed in a heart-thumping, breath-gasping body. Dr. Becker says that he is split in two.

He has an awareness of his own splendid uniqueness in that he sticks out of nature with a towering majesty and yet he goes back into the ground to rot and disappear forever.

It's a terrifying dilemma to be in and to have to live with. Is it any wonder that the instinct of self-preservation is based on fear which drives us to maintain life and to master the dangers that threaten us?

A thousand shall die at my right hand and ten thousand at my left, but it shall not come nigh me. We live so much of our lives thinking it's the guy next to me that's going to be hit by the bullet or it's somebody else on this bus that will survive, that will not survive.

Something inside of man shouts, it's not fair, I'm better than that. I am the creator's finest work. I intend for something better. Psychologists call this the ache of cosmic specialness.

[35 : 51] Try and work that into a conversation sometime. Man continually feels a need to justify himself as an object of primary value in the universe.

It isn't enough just to be here. We have to prove a right to be here as well as proving a right to be there. And when you think of the number of people who are driven by the Olympic Games, winning a Nobel Prize, discovering a new atom or penicillin or something like that, achieving more than we have achieved, very big thought that drives us.

Well, I believe that we are special and also that we are special to God. And that is because we were created for a destiny far greater than the specialness that is reflected in any of our achievements.

We were created for fellowship with God. The Garden of Eden story suggests to me that the idea of eternity really started there. God had created a place that would go on forever, where he could enjoy his creation in company with man, his greatest achievement.

We know that this relationship was spoiled by our ancestors' disobedience of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat or thou shalt surely die.

[37 : 24] But then the evil one came into the picture saying, surely he didn't mean that. I mean, look at you, your head and shoulders above the rest of his creation. You think he's going to kill you?

You ain't. You're still here. Putting God's command into the context of mortal life was a very clever ploy. I think there are people that would still read the story of the Garden of Eden that way.

Because the much greater loss was the loss of immortal life. Immortal life. And that may not have been very apparent to Adam and Eve at the time that somebody was closing the gate behind them as they had to leave Eden.

But Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden and the perfect place where God intended to enjoy fellowship when man was lost. The Old Testament is mostly a gloomy and discouraging tale, I think, of our struggle to find our way back to Eden.

except for this little verse, this tantalizing little verse. He has put eternity in our hearts even though we don't know how it fits into God's plan.

[38 : 39] And there it has stayed, buried in the collective consciousness of mankind. Isn't that something that those other religions are teaching us? The hope, the expectation that this is not the end, it's there.

it's that little idea that something else will follow and that God intends that something else will follow. He has put eternity in our hearts even though we don't know how it fits into God's plan.

Well, we do know how it fits in God's plan. I feel very sorry for the writer of Ecclesiastes that he didn't know the end of this story. It doesn't seem fair that a person that had this sort of gift and could draw attention to so many of our foibles and weaknesses that he never got to hear the end of the story.

We had to wait several centuries to hear the end of the story which St. John described so beautifully. God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

So, now, we now know that we do not get from here to eternity by preserving our soft organs in canopic jars.

- [40 : 01] We do not get there by ferry across the river Styx and have to pay for the journey. We do not get there carried by Valkyries. We do not get there in a Viking longboat.
- We get there by claiming the forgiveness that our Savior's sacrifice ensures. God wants us back so that we can dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
- Thank you. Thank you. Well, they're all speechless.
- How did this happen? Janet, you're muttering. Can you make it louder? Very encouraging.
- Oh, thank you. In what way? God wants us back. Yes, he does. Yes, he does. You know, you were saying about traveling to the other parts of wherever.
- [41 : 14] And coming back? Yeah. Yeah. Okay, right. And that people, you know, they're afraid of dying and what's going to happen to them afterwards.
- And you mentioned the word wormwood. It brought back to my memory. I had a granddaughter that died suddenly.
- And I'm a Christian. My family, my sons and my ex-husband in this way, they're not Christian but they understand where I'm coming from and they respect that.
- And the other side, it was my son's daughter, okay, so the other grandparents and they're not Christian at all.
- and when we were trying to, trying to pick out the casket, it was strange to me because their family wanted to pick out a casket that preserved this little baby.
- [42 : 26] Lead-lined. Lead-lined. Yeah. Yeah. And it was very hard to me because I have read the Bible a few times.
- I have taken in what God is telling me, you know. I have the faith that it's a horrible thing to say she's my granddaughter but it was just the body in there.
- It wasn't the soul. And I tried to explain this to them and they were really angry, you know, and I thought, what's the point?
- You know what I mean? Yes. You know, to put a baby in a casket that, and they used the words so that she'll, so the body will last longer.
- Yes. What for? What for? Yes, exactly. Yes. Well, it is a sad thing when some of the people we love do not share our faith.
- [43 : 29] I had an uncle who gave up believing in God when he gave up believing in Santa Claus and my mother used to say of her favorite brother, if George isn't going to heaven, I don't want to be there.
- It wouldn't be heaven without him. And I said, Mother, you've made your choice and he's made his. We can't really change that. Only the Holy Spirit can work with that and I think that we continue to carry a burden for those of our family members that don't share our faith and we continue to pray that something will change that.
- But we really don't know the end of their story at all and we do have to leave that with God, don't we? But as long as we keep praying, that's the important thing.
- Yes. I rather liked Maimonides' idea. I know that there are people like N.T. Wright who has written a lot about resurrection and you'll notice that I didn't take it that far.
- That places a bigger importance on body than I do. I expect to be cremated. I hope that I won't be taking up room on this earth after I'm dead. I would rather fertilize the roses or something because I won't care about this impermanent tent at all.
- [44 : 49] But the idea of the spirit world I find rather appealing and I hope you will forgive me for this but about four years ago I decided I would like to know more about my ancestors and I got involved with ancestry and I found reasons to go back and do research in England and it became an excuse to go.

And I thought I'm going to be an ancestor soon myself and I would kind of like to get to know these people a little bit not just their birthdays and where they were born I'd like to know something about them because I would like to feel that maybe my spirit would meet their spirit out there.

Crazy probably but I did think this and it is if all you've got is a sepia photograph with somebody looking stern of your great grandmother as I did I once asked one of my English cousins did you know her and he said yes when I was in my teens I used to ride my bike from Harrow over to Richmond and I said well tell me something about her he said oh let's see well she liked gardening she liked gardening and she liked a joke she liked to tell a joke and she liked to listen to them and suddenly the sepia photograph had a little bit of life to it and that kind of remark you know has passed from one generation to another but we lose the personhood of the ancestor and I would really like to be able to plug into that I don't know whether I'll get the chance or not but it's a warm thought for me in the meantime no more comments yeah yes courage and it's hard to put my words in or my thoughts in the words but this has been very good on any given day at work you described a number of people who I meet when I go door to door delivering letters in the west side

Dunbar area and I've got many brilliant people and even their little children four or five years old are brilliant and I come along delivering their mail and I know a little bit about them from what mail they receive but that's all confidential and it would be inappropriate to strike up a conversation but 11 months ago I started delivering mail to a new route and that was November 16th and a few weeks later I had a little gift parcel on the exterior box and it was kind of heavy and I had a gift bag and I carefully put it in my satchel and dropped it off at the New Year's mailbox where I could pick it up later and when I opened it up a few hours later it was a handmade pottery dish and with a little reading for Christmas and saying that this was made by the woman's name and anyways there was it was a beautiful bowl with little frogs four frogs around the edge and I immediately thought of my nephew and his family who my nephew got the nickname

Totus he was a little guy I think because he sat on the rock squatting on the rock by the river where they lived and eat fish and anyways it was something that I could remember my family back east anyways what wakes me up in the morning is a comment that Oz Guinness said what wakes you up in the morning and for him it's how to reach educated people so that's been kind of an incentive and motivation for me that maybe in my own illiquid way I can reach these people that would make an interesting subject for Learners Exchange sometime Kurt you've hit on a great title how to reach educated people and we have I mean look at you you're all here you can all have an opinion about that there was another question from somebody next to you or a comment was it no she's changed her mind you

[49 : 21] I think you're very brave to approach this subject we're all facing our mortality many different ways even though we're all common believers in this group but we're still individual and you did a beautiful job oh thank you my goodness yes our visitor Howard speak up oh thank you I'm thinking about the relationship between Tommy and thank you I'm think let me look at what to do