

ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE • ERIC SILVERMAN

There it was: \$5,000. A real check for \$5,000 in my hands. It looked innocent enough. The credit card company was giving this to me as an instant loan. I hadn't actually asked for this, but the letter said that they realized that there must be something I could use \$5,000 for: a better car, a vacation, just to take the pressure off my everyday tight finances. It was tempting. If I used the money, would it make me happy long term? I looked at the fine print. I would have to pay back about \$250 a month for nearly 3 years. In the end, I would pay nearly \$8,000 "tomorrow" for the \$5,000 today. I took one last look at the check before I ripped it in half.

Why is it so hard to think ahead? To really consider how decisions we make today will effect us 1 year, 5 years, 50 years from now? If we are honest, most of us would have to admit that we make most of our decisions with only short-term concerns in mind. We live in a world of instant gratification. Some of us would even have to admit that we think microwave ovens cook too slowly. The really bad news is that we need to think in a much bigger time frame than even the next 50 years, we need to live with eternity in mind.

"Begin with the End in Mind." This principle was even discussed in the best selling book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. What is the end goal of our lives? To make the most money? To maximize pleasure and minimize pain? To seek status, possession or....? In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroys and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasure in heaven...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." There at least two reasons we should make the goal of our lives to store up as much treasure in heaven as possible. First, earthly possessions are temporary: cars break, the stock market plunges, dot-com businesses go out of business, and computers crash. Anything that we accumulate on earth can slip away from us at any time. Second, wherever our treasure is, our heart is. If we spend our 70 earthly years gathering earthly treasure, much will slip away from us during that seventy years, and at the end of it, we will be permanently separated from all that we treasure. What a waste of a life. What a tragedy. If we spend our life gathering treasures in heaven, we will get to spend eternity with all that we treasure.

Picture how you would live your life if you knew you only had a month to live. You would probably live that month quite differently than you are living right now. You would live with a much longer term perspective, an eternal perspective. You would put a higher priority on relationships, love, forgiveness, evangelism, etc. When we read the New Testament, we see men and women living each day to the fullest glory of God. One great advantage they had over us was the very real possibility of losing their lives for their faith. That has a way of realigning priorities. In our culture, we don't have such a "clear and present" danger to our lives, so it is easy for our priorities to drift to less significant temporal things.

Each of us needs to examine our hearts before God on this issue. We need to look at the way we spend our time, our money, our talents. Are we gathering up treasure in heaven or on earth?