

MasterClass #15
Playing the Long Game

Word

Scripture Reference

Matthew 25:31-46

Discussion Questions

1. Share some examples of when you separate clean from dirty, fresh from spoiled, or good from bad.
2. People often play the long and short games as a way of living. The short game seems easy and fun and have immediate benefits. The long game, however, means paying the price today to make tomorrow easier. It seems boring and more difficult to play the long game, but this eventually produce better results. Share examples of long and short games that people play in life. Discuss how people play them. What are the consequences if you play the short game? How about the long game?
3. The principle of the long game is actually biblical. Colossians 3:2 says, “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” There will come a day of reckoning when God will assess how you lived your life. The day of judgment will be both for those who put their trust in Jesus for salvation and for those who rejected Him as their Savior. Read Matthew 25:31-46. This parable teaches about the separation of the “sheep” from the “goats” when the Lord comes back the second time (v. 31). This will happen after the Great Tribulation and is preceded by the Millennial Kingdom. The believers who survived the tribulation period and came to know the Lord during that time (“sheep”) will be moved to the right. Those who remained unbelievers (“goats”) will be moved to the left. This parable describes a few aspects of how the day of reckoning will look like so that you can prepare yourself to play the spiritual long game:

- a. **Reminder #1: In every judgment of God, there is separation/dividing (v. 31-33).** At the end, not everyone will get the same thing. All believers will go to heaven, but will not get the same rewards. Every unbeliever will go to hell, but will get different degrees of suffering. Christians will be separated according to their faithfulness to what God called them to do. On the other hand, the Great White Throne judgment which takes place after the 1000-years reign of Jesus Christ, is for unbelievers of all ages—an eternal separation from God because they are thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15). God sees your heart and knows very well how to separate the sheep from the goats. What does it tell you about the fairness of God? Can God be manipulated to allow you to live a hypocritical life as a Christian? How should His judgment determine how you live your life now?
- b. **Reminder #2: A criteria in the assessment of inward faith is the outward expressions of Christian hospitality in action (v. 34-36).** Although even an iota of your good works will not save you from your sins—your faith in Christ alone will do that, Christians will be judged in the Judgment Seat of Christ for their rewards based on the outward expression of their inward faith. What kind of outward action did the parable specifically mention in this passage? Why would the sheep be blessed? Discuss how people determine if they would be nice to someone or not. How would your attitude be different if you treat someone in need as if that person were Jesus?
- c. **Reminder #3: Caring for others is the means by which we serve God and thank Him. (v. 37-40).** When you show care and concern for others, you do it for the Lord. He doesn't really need you to do things for Him; caring for others is a way to thank and honor Him for everything He does. What basis will Christ use to judge people (v. 40)? Name some of those who are needy around you. What act of kindness and mercy toward them can you do in Jesus' name?
- d. **Reminder #4: What is at stake in the final judgment is eternity, and is eternal (v. 41-46).** The “goats” on Jesus' left are heading to hell because they refused to believe in the

Lord. As unbelievers, they also did not care for those who needed their help. Take note of the word *eternal fire* in verse 41 and *eternal punishment* in verse 46. The decisions you make in this life will determine your eternity. Discuss the Think about the choices and decisions you make. Have you already given thought to their eternal consequences? Discuss. As a Christian, what rewards do you think you would have in heaven? Have you considered working for those rewards now?

Walk

In the game of life, are you playing the short game or the long game? One of these days, there will be celebration and separation. Remember that the long game is for eternity, and eternal validation lasts forever. When the separation happens on the day of reckoning, on which side will you be placed? Would you be in Jesus' right side where the sheep will be, or in His left side where the goats will be?

Worship & Prayer

Heavenly Father, it is indeed a sobering thought that the decisions I make in this life will determine my life in eternity. I must admit that there are times that I am prone to play the short game in the way I live my life because of its immediate results. Thank you for helping me realize that it is not a safe game because of the eternal consequences that I may suffer in eternity. Please help me to live a life that is true to a Christian, life that lives out the inner faith through outward expressions. Help me to be useful and faithful in the work of the Lord for the rewards that You graciously promised to those who are faithful. Help me to treat others with real kindness. Help me to have real compassion for the spiritually lost because without You, they'll forever be lost. In Jesus' name. Amen.