

Are You Preparing for Eternal Life? **- Ron Stullenbarger -**

According to a survey just published by Time magazine, seventy-seven percent of Americans want to live to 100. That's not shocking news, but this is. According to the lead researcher, *"The surprise in this survey is not that people want to live to 100, but it is how little they have done to prepare for this eventuality."* He explains: *"Americans admit to having overweight bodies and underweight financial strength in preparing for a long life."* Among those who want to be centenarians, only forty-two percent are making a serious effort to get there.

There is nothing wrong in preparing to live longer. Here's an even more important fact: We should also prepare to live eternally. Yet many people spend little if any time thinking about death and the afterlife. Why?

One: Death is not real for many people.

We see violent death caricatured on television and in movies and video games. We are anesthetized to actual death by sterile hospital settings and hospice care. Most of us rarely witness death personally, so we're seldom forced to confront our own morality. Death is one of those things many do not want to think about.

Two: Many believe the lie that *"all good people are going to heaven."*

Sixty-five percent of Americans claim that many religions can lead to eternal life. Sixty-six percent of Americans believe hell exists, but only two percent of those who believe in hell expect to go there.

The Atlantic once asked atheists what they think of death. One response was representative: *"I think that when I die I'll cease to exist. . . . I'm still glad, in principle, that some day life will cease, and my burdens will dissolve with my joys. I don't want to live forever."*

The most dangerous lie in our culture is the belief that our opinion changes eternal reality. Many people believe that hell doesn't exist, but their belief cannot possibly change hell's existence. They are wagering their eternal destiny on their personal opinion.

Apply such reasoning to other realms of life. When we lived in Cuba I met many people who had never left their island. As a result, they had never witnessed snow. Does this mean snow doesn't exist? I once saw a bumper sticker that proclaimed, *"I don't believe in atheists, so atheists don't exist."*

Paul testified, *"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Philippians 1:21). Randy Alcorn agrees: *"He who lays up treasures on earth spends his life backing away from his treasures. To him, death is loss. He who lays up treasures in heaven looks forward to eternity; he's moving daily toward his treasures. To him, death is gain."*

Which is true for you?