

# Mission: Rescue Souls – Week 3 – The Great Equalizer – Bible Study Helps

**Title: The Great Equalizer:** Death, Judgment, and the Gospel

## Sermon Summary:

This evangelism-focused sermon emphasizes that effective gospel witness must begin with confronting two unavoidable realities: death and judgment. Just as someone wouldn't appreciate a parachute unless they knew the plane was crashing, people won't truly appreciate the gospel unless they understand why they need saving. The message challenges believers to follow Jesus' example of bringing people face-to-face with reality before revealing Himself as the answer. The sermon stresses that before people appreciate the cure, they must understand the disease; before they run to the Savior, they must understand they need saving. Using Hebrews 9:27 as the foundation, the message equips believers to start gospel conversations by discussing the certainty of death and the coming judgment, preparing hearts to receive Christ as the only escape from eternal condemnation.

## Key Points:

- Death and judgment are the essential starting points for gospel conversations, not optional topics to avoid
- Hebrews 9:27 provides a complete framework: everyone has an appointment with death, followed by judgment
- People won't value Jesus as Savior until they understand what they need saving from
- The Holy Spirit's message to the world is sin, righteousness, and judgment to come
- Modern evangelism often fails by preaching grace without accountability to God
- Death is the great equalizer—it doesn't respect wealth, age, status, or religious affiliation
- Felix trembled not when hearing about God's love, but when confronted with judgment to come
- Paul commanded repentance because judgment day is appointed, not merely because God loves people
- Questions are effective tools for opening gospel conversations about eternal matters
- We must speak truth with Holy Spirit-enabled compassion, not in fleshly harshness
- The Great White Throne Judgment will be thorough, holy, and final with no appeals
- Christians must overcome fear and flesh to faithfully warn people of coming judgment

## Scripture References:

- Hebrews 9:27 (primary foundation verse)

## Mission: Rescue Souls – Week 3 – The Great Equalizer – Bible Study Helps

- Luke 5:27-32 (Jesus calling sinners to repentance)
- Luke 12:13-21 (parable of the rich fool)
- Isaiah 38:1-3 (Hezekiah's confrontation with death)
- Luke 16:19-31 (rich man and Lazarus)
- Acts 17:24-31 (Paul preaching judgment in Athens)
- Acts 24:22-25 (Paul reasoning with Felix about judgment)
- Daniel 5:1-6 (Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall)
- Revelation 20:11-15 (Great White Throne Judgment)
- John 3 (Nicodemus and being born again)
- John 4 (woman at the well)

### Stories:

- Parachute illustration: A stranger won't put on a parachute unless told the plane is crashing, illustrating context matters
- The pastor's courtroom experience being questioned about emails, demonstrating the intimidation of earthly courts compared to standing before God
- A near-accident with a deer on the highway, showing how quickly life can change
- The rich fool planning for retirement but dying that night (Luke 12)
- Hezekiah turning his face to the wall when told to prepare to die
- The rich man and Lazarus both dying regardless of their earthly status
- Felix trembling when Paul spoke of judgment to come
- Belshazzar's terrified reaction to God's handwriting on the wall during his feast
- Witnessing encounter at Summit Mall with a man waiting for his wife, showing how God prepares hearts
- Woman at the well conversation where Jesus revealed her life before offering salvation
- A witnessing experience with gospel tracts and the internal battle to actually hand them out

## Mission: Rescue Souls – Week 3 – The Great Equalizer – Bible Study Helps

### Discussion Questions

Why do you think people, including Christians, tend to avoid conversations about death even though it's a universal reality that affects everyone?

How does understanding God's coming judgment change the urgency with which we share the gospel, and are we truly living with that urgency?

The sermon compares handing someone a parachute without context to sharing the gospel without explaining sin and judgment. What are practical ways we can help people understand why they need Jesus before presenting the solution?

Felix trembled when Paul spoke about righteousness and judgment to come, not when hearing about God's love. What does this tell us about the necessary components of effective gospel preaching?

How can we balance speaking truth about death and judgment with genuine compassion and love for lost souls, avoiding both harshness and compromise?

Many people spend more time planning for retirement than preparing for eternity. What areas of your own life reflect misplaced priorities, and how can you reorient them toward eternal matters?

When Jesus engaged people like Nicodemus and the woman at the well, He asked questions and addressed their spiritual condition directly. How can we follow His example in our own evangelistic conversations?

What fears or excuses keep you from initiating spiritual conversations with strangers or acquaintances, and how does Scripture address those fears?

The sermon emphasizes that death is the great equalizer affecting rich and poor, young and old alike. How should this reality shape the way we view and interact with every person we encounter?

Hebrews 9:27 states that it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment. How can we memorize and use this verse as a starting point for gospel conversations this week?

# Small Group Guide: The Great Equalizer

## Mission Rescue Souls Series - Luke 5

---

### Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

**Icebreaker Question:** Have you ever had to give someone directions to an important location? How did you make sure they could find their way?

*(This connects to the sermon's analogy about giving directions to heaven)*

---

## Part 1: Understanding Death - The First Stop (20 minutes)

### Key Scripture

**Hebrews 9:27** - "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

### Discussion Questions

1. **The Reality Check:** The sermon stated that "10 out of 10 people die." Why do you think people avoid thinking and talking about death, even though it's a guaranteed reality?
  2. **The Parachute Illustration:** How does understanding the context (the plane is crashing) change whether someone would accept a parachute? How does this apply to sharing the gospel?
  3. **Personal Reflection:** When was the last time you had a conversation about death with someone outside your church community? What made it difficult or easy?
  4. **Biblical Examples:** Review Luke 12:16-21 (the rich fool). What was his mistake? How do people today make similar mistakes about preparing for retirement versus preparing for eternity?
- 

## Part 2: Understanding Judgment - The Second Stop (20 minutes)

### Key Scriptures

- **Hebrews 9:27** - "But after this the judgment"
- **Acts 17:30-31** - God commands all people everywhere to repent

## Mission: Rescue Souls – Week 3 – The Great Equalizer – Bible Study Helps

- **Revelation 20:11-15** - The Great White Throne Judgment

### Discussion Questions

1. **The Missing Message:** Why do you think judgment is rarely mentioned in evangelism today? What happens when we preach grace without accountability?
  2. **Felix's Response:** Read Acts 24:24-25. Felix trembled when Paul spoke about "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." Why didn't he tremble at hearing about God's love? What does this teach us about effective evangelism?
  3. **The Courtroom Analogy:** The pastor shared his experience in an earthly courtroom. How does that intensity compare to standing before the Judge of all the earth? How should this reality affect our urgency in witnessing?
  4. **Holy Spirit's Work:** According to the sermon, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of "sin, righteousness, and judgment to come." How should our message align with what the Holy Spirit is already doing?
- 

## Part 3: Practical Application - Opening Gospel Conversations (25 minutes)

### Conversation Starters from the Sermon

The sermon provided several questions to open gospel conversations:

1. "Have you ever thought about what happens after death?"
2. "If you were to die tonight, are you 100% sure you'd be in heaven?"
3. "The Bible says after death is judgment. How do you think God will judge you?"
4. "Have you ever been in a courtroom? What was that like?"

### Group Exercise

#### Pair up and practice:

- Person A: Role-play as someone who hasn't thought much about spiritual things
- Person B: Use one of the conversation starters above
- Switch roles
- Debrief: What felt natural? What felt uncomfortable? What did you learn?

### Discussion Questions

1. **Fear Factor:** What specific fears hold you back from starting spiritual conversations? Are these fears based on reality or imagination?

## Mission: Rescue Souls – Week 3 – The Great Equalizer – Bible Study Helps

2. **The Smartphone Illustration:** The pastor mentioned how young people don't worry about their phone dying until it's at 1%. How do people treat their spiritual life the same way? How can we help them see the urgency?
  3. **Compassion vs. Condemnation:** How can we speak about death and judgment with genuine compassion rather than appearing judgmental or harsh? What role does the Holy Spirit play in this?
  4. **Missed Opportunities:** Can you think of a time when you had an opportunity to witness but didn't take it? What held you back? What would you do differently now?
- 

## Key Takeaways

**Write these down and commit to memory:**

1. **Before people appreciate the cure, they must understand the disease.**
    - People need to understand WHY they need Jesus before they'll want Him.
  2. **Death and judgment are not optional topics in evangelism.**
    - These are the "first stops on the road to the cross."
  3. **Jesus often brought people face-to-face with reality before revealing Himself as the answer.**
    - Follow Jesus' example in evangelism.
  4. **Memorize Hebrews 9:27** as a conversation bridge.
    - This verse covers both death and judgment in one statement.
  5. **People are more willing to talk about these things than we think.**
    - Our fear of rejection is often worse than the actual response.
- 

## This Week's Challenge

**Choose ONE of the following commitments:**

**Level 1 - Preparation:**

- Memorize Hebrews 9:27 and practice saying it naturally
- Write out your personal testimony including how you came to understand your need for salvation
- Carry gospel tracts with you everywhere this week

**Level 2 - Engagement:**

- Pray daily for three specific lost people by name
- Ask at least one person this week: "If you were to die tonight, are you 100% sure you'd be in heaven?"

## Mission: Rescue Souls – Week 3 – The Great Equalizer – Bible Study Helps

- Have a spiritual conversation with a family member or coworker

### Level 3 - Bold Witness:

- Share the complete gospel with at least one person this week
- Visit a public place (mall, park, coffee shop) specifically to witness
- Follow up with someone you've previously shared with

### Accountability

- Share your commitment choice with one other group member
  - Exchange contact information to check in mid-week
  - Be prepared to share your experience at next week's meeting
- 

## Closing Reflection (10 minutes)

### Personal Inventory Questions:

1. In the last week, how many times have I spoken about God's judgment to someone outside the church?
  2. Do I truly believe that my lost friends, family, and coworkers will stand before God and give an account of their lives?
  3. If I really believed this, how would my conversations change?
  4. What is one specific thing God is calling me to do differently this week?
- 

## Prayer Time (10 minutes)

### Pray together for:

1. **Boldness** - That God would remove fear and give us courage to speak truth in love
  2. **Compassion** - That God would break our hearts for lost souls the way His heart breaks
  3. **Opportunities** - That God would orchestrate divine appointments this week
  4. **Specific People** - Each person share one name of someone they want to reach, and pray for that person
  5. **Wisdom** - That the Holy Spirit would give us the right words at the right time
- 

## Memory Verse for the Week

## Mission: Rescue Souls – Week 3 – The Great Equalizer – Bible Study Helps

**Hebrews 9:27** - "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

**Bonus verse: Acts 17:30-31** - "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

---

### Before Next Week

- Complete your chosen challenge
  - Be ready to share one testimony of a spiritual conversation
  - Continue praying for the lost people on your list
  - Review the conversation starters and be prepared to discuss what worked and what didn't
- 

*Remember: We are not responsible for saving people - that's God's work. We are responsible for being faithful witnesses and speaking the truth in love. Trust the Holy Spirit to do His work of conviction while you do your work of proclamation.*

# 5-Day Devotional: Preparing Hearts for Eternity

## Day 1: The Appointment We Cannot Avoid

**Reading:** Hebrews 9:24-28

**Devotional:** "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." This sobering truth is not meant to frighten us into faith, but to awaken us to reality. Every person you encounter today has a divine appointment they cannot reschedule. The businessman at the coffee shop, the cashier at the grocery store, your neighbor trimming his lawn—all have this same appointment. Yet how many live as though death is for everyone else but them? As believers, we possess the answer to humanity's greatest crisis. Like someone holding a parachute while the plane descends, we have what people desperately need, even if they don't yet realize it. Today, ask God to give you eyes to see people through the lens of eternity. Who in your life needs to hear that while death is certain, hope in Christ is available?

**Reflection Question:** When was the last time you had a conversation about eternity with someone who doesn't know Christ?

---

## Day 2: The Great Equalizer

**Reading:** Luke 12:13-21

**Devotional:** The rich man in Jesus' parable had everything figured out—bigger barns, abundant goods, years of ease ahead. Yet God called him a fool, for that very night his soul would be required of him. Death is the great equalizer. It doesn't care about your bank account, social status, education, or achievements. The cemetery holds both rich and poor, young and old, religious and atheist. What separates people eternally is not their earthly success but their relationship with Jesus Christ. The American dream promises that if you work hard enough, you can retire and enjoy life. But what profit is there in gaining the whole world yet forfeiting your soul? Today, examine your own priorities. Are you laying up treasure for yourself while neglecting to be rich toward God? More importantly, are you helping others prepare for the appointment that awaits us all?

**Reflection Question:** What would change in your life if you knew you had only one month to live?

---

## Day 3: Trembling Before the Judge

## Mission: Rescue Souls – Week 3 – The Great Equalizer – Bible Study Helps

**Reading:** Acts 24:22-27

**Devotional:** When Paul reasoned with Felix about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled. Notice what made him tremble—not a message about God's love, but the reality of standing before a holy Judge. Felix represents countless people today who defer their decision about Christ, always planning to deal with it at a "more convenient time." That convenient time never comes. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. When we witness, we must align our message with what God is already doing. People need to understand why they need a Savior before they'll appreciate the salvation He offers. A parachute seems unnecessary until you realize the plane is going down. Today, pray for courage to speak uncomfortable truths in love. Ask God to help you reason with others about the judgment that awaits all who reject Christ.

**Reflection Question:** Why do you think modern evangelism often avoids discussing judgment?

---

### Day 4: The Great White Throne

**Reading:** Revelation 20:11-15

**Devotional:** Picture this scene: the dead, small and great, standing before God. Books are opened. Every thought, word, deed, text message, internet search—everything laid bare before perfect holiness. No lawyers, no appeals, no excuses. Just holy, righteous judgment. And for those whose names are not written in the Book of Life, the verdict is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. This is not meant to be sensational; this is biblical reality. When we truly grasp what awaits the lost, how can we remain silent? Imagine looking into the eyes of your coworker, neighbor, or family member and knowing this is their destiny without Christ. Let this vision break your heart as it breaks God's heart. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." We are His ambassadors, carrying the message of reconciliation. The urgency is real. The stakes are eternal.

**Reflection Question:** Who do you know who is heading toward this judgment without Christ?

---

### Day 5: Opening Gospel Conversations

**Reading:** John 4:1-26

**Devotional:** Jesus masterfully engaged the Samaritan woman in conversation, moving from natural thirst to spiritual need, from her current husband to her spiritual condition. He asked questions. He listened. He spoke truth with compassion. Notice that He didn't avoid uncomfortable topics—He addressed her sin directly yet lovingly. We can learn from His approach. Simple questions open doors: "Have you ever thought about what happens after

## Mission: Rescue Souls – Week 3 – The Great Equalizer – Bible Study Helps

death?" "If you died tonight, would you be 100 percent certain you'd go to heaven?" "The Bible says after death comes judgment—how do you think God will judge you?" These aren't threatening questions; they're caring inquiries from someone who possesses life-saving truth. This week, carry gospel tracts. Pray for divine appointments. Ask God for one conversation about eternal matters. You don't have to have all the answers—you just need to care enough to ask the questions. God is already at work; He simply invites you to join Him in rescuing souls.

**Reflection Question:** What fears hold you back from starting spiritual conversations, and how can you surrender those fears to God?

---

**Weekly Challenge:** This week, intentionally engage one person in a conversation about eternity. Start with a simple question. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide you. Remember: you're not forcing a parachute on someone who doesn't need it—you're offering life to someone heading toward death.