

What's In Your Future? Sermon Discussion Leader's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To discuss how Jesus gives us perspective to see our difficult circumstances as assignments rather than accidents.

Sermon Refresher: Because Jesus is who he says he is, we can allow Jesus to re-narrate (give us perspective) in our present and trust him with our future.

Icebreaker: In his sermon, Dave shared a movie clip from *Shawshank Redemption*. Think of another movie clip where perspective kept someone going in the face of adversity.

Transition: Andy, in the movie *Shawshank Redemption*, had the perspective that if he could just make it through 500 yards of liquefied poop, freedom would be on the other side. When we are struggling with our circumstances, Jesus gives us the perspective we need to preserve in face of trials and difficulties.

Discussion:

1. List out the different messages our culture offers us as perspective to help us persevere through hard times and difficulties.
2. Read through Revelation 2:8-11 and list out the ways that Jesus offers perspective. Compare and contrast this list with your answers from question one.

Revelation 2:8–11 NIV

⁸ "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. ⁹ I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

THE **crossing** **small groups**

¹⁰ Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

¹¹ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

3. Read the verses below. Dave described Jesus as someone who is always re-narrating our life by narrating our future. What qualifies Jesus to be the one with whom we trust our present and future?

Isaiah 44:6 NIV

This is what the LORD says ... "I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God."

Revelation 1:17–18 NIV

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death...."

Revelation 22:13 NIV

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

4. Dave shared the story of Ben Jennings putting his arm around him after hitting Ben's car and saying, "Now why do you think God had this in mind for you and me today?" Think of a recent difficulty where you lacked perspective and re-imagine it through the eyes of Ben Jennings. How would this perspective change the way you think and feel about that difficulty?

5. Read Revelation 2:10. When you go through difficulties, have you ever felt like Satan was more powerful than God? How did that affect the perspective you had during that hard time? What would have changed if you saw God as the One in control rather than Satan?

Revelation 2:10

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test (*tempt*) you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

Sharing and Prayer:

6. Dave stated in his sermon, "You know you are living more and more with the perspective of the real narrative in your life when, regardless of the direct cause, you begin to see Jesus' loving hand behind what would otherwise seem to be simply random, accidental, unfortunate, and pointless events and circumstances happening in your life. Our hardships are NEVER accidents—they are ALWAYS assignments to test us for just "ten days" compared to the LIFE Jesus gives forever."

Share a current situation in your life that is God's "assignment," rather than an "accident" (even if it may seem random and unfair)? Spend time praying for each other.