

# Eternal Life

1 John 5:10–12

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Happy Mother's Day. Today, I'm going to share some stories about my Grandmother Hazel. I'm also going to talk about her daughter and my mom, Hope. We'll also talk about hell and about heaven. Both my grandmother and my mother are in heaven because of their faith in Jesus. But the many people who don't trust in Jesus are in hell. This is straight forward and simple. Life is complicated, eternity is simple.

***All who believe in the Son of God know in their hearts that this testimony is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about his Son. And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. 1 John 5:10–12 (NLT)***

**Eternity is for everyone, but only believers in Jesus will be in Heaven.** Hazel Duncan Snow was born in 1900. She was the daughter of an alcoholic, gambling, coal miner in central Pennsylvania. Hazel and her mother would race to the paymaster on payday. They needed to arrive there before her dad. If he got there first the money would be gone. He would drink and gamble it away. Then the family would struggle, going further in debt. Some weeks they got their first, some weeks they didn't.

This lifestyle influenced Hazel dramatically. As poor, young, Christian woman she knew this wrong. She struggled to change the world. She cautioned people about drinking and gambling. Even though she was persuasive, there were many people who wouldn't listen.

As a mother she raised her two sons and one daughter about the evils of drinking and gambling. She wouldn't allow any form of gambling in her home. There were no card games, board games, or anything that resembled gambling or involved chance or resembled unusual risk.

Let's go in a different direction for just a minute. Grandma Hazel played the accordion. Her husband Doyle played the trombone. Her sons played the trumpet and French Horn. My mother played the tuba. That became a joke when I got to High School. I played the tuba in the marching band.

Grandpa was a preacher. He was born in 1902. Together they formed a family band. They traveled to various churches during the Great Depression. They would play concerts to supplement the family income.

Grandma Hazel was a very serious woman. She was demanding all of her children. As my mother shared the family stories it was obvious my mother didn't handle these high expectations. I'll come back to that in a moment.

Hazel had beautiful brown hair. That is until it turned gray, silver almost. Her hair was long, most of the way down her back. She would somehow roll it and wrap around her head making a bun on top. I remember her beautiful gray, silver hair. I think it was one of her most wonderful, physical characteristics.

Hazel and Doyle moved numerous times from one church to the next. But in my childhood they had a small house. Hazel was very much into pink and green. It was one of her quirks. She had a set of green, cut glass bowls and jars. She kept in one of the jars filled with pink mint candies. I called them Pepto-Bismal candy. "Joey, don't eat to many you'll get sick." I did eat to many, but never got sick, just hyper.

Until her death in 1977 Hazel was vocal about drinking and gambling. She believed they were the cause of many people spending eternity in hell. So, for Hazel Jesus was the only answer. Using all of her persuasive arguments she sought to bring people to Jesus.

I haven't shared these stories about Grandma Hazel to brag about her. She is my illustration that her tireless and almost annoying attempts to bring people to Jesus, that it doesn't always result in changed lives.

Everyone will live forever, for eternity. Some will live in heaven because they chose Jesus. Some will live in hell because they rejected Jesus.

*All who believe in the Son of God know in their hearts that this testimony is true. 1 John 5:10 (NLT)*

**Nearly everybody wants an eternity of healthy, hope, and peace.** Vada Hope Sanders was born in 1929. Hope and Hazel had a love hate relationship. That's a strong word hate. I know that she didn't hate her mother. But love and you drive me crazy sometimes is a mouthful. I can remember Hazel and Doyle showing up at our house and my mother becoming tense, agitated, aggravated, and then angry after they left. It was a strange relationship. But, when Hazel died I remember my mother being sad and relieved. I was only eighteen at time, so I may not know what I'm talking about.

Hope was the mother of two daughters and two sons. I'm the youngest. There was no family band. There were board games and card games in our house. Occasionally my dad would have a beer. He even apologized for having two beers in the same night. He genuinely regretted it. My dad would play penny poker, and gin rummy with his mom. That's another story. My mom never played, never drank any alcohol.

In our home dad was in charge. He was designed to be in charge. He was an authoritarian and when he spoke he expected to be followed. He knew how to use a belt for things other than holding up his pants. My mother was not an authoritarian in any form. I can remember her trying. I have more memories of broken yard sticks than I care to recall. Rarely was it effective. But what was effective were the words wait until your father comes home.

As an adult people would say to me and to my siblings that our mother was one of the most gentle and kind individuals they had ever met. We would get the dumb look, and quickly say oh yes. She was not born to be the authoritarian. She was the gentle, kind person that people met. I know that sons and especially the youngest is supposed to say that about their mothers. I know that many people would just naturally share those words about their mothers.

My mom ran a summer Vacation Bible School in her backyard. When my siblings were young, she would have them bring all their friends to the house. Mom would tell Bible stories, teach them songs, make crafts, and pray with them to love Jesus. She taught children's and adult Sunday School over the years. She was active in community mission work. She was in the position of rotating president of the American Baptist Women's Ministries in her church. She attended association and region ministry meetings.

In retirement she worked with physically disabled children at summer camps. She help elementary students learn to read as a grandparent volunteer tutor. She loved Jesus. She let her life reflect her love for Jesus.

Again, I didn't spend this time talking about my mother because she was the greatest mother ever. Clearly, she had some good qualities. But she was only perfect through her faith in Jesus. I'm using her life as a witness that some folks want good health, hope, and peace but they aren't willing to trust Jesus to get it. As a result they won't be in heaven. They will spend eternity in the most unhealthy, hopeless, and peace forsaken place: hell.

*And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 1 John 5:11*

**When we believe that people need Jesus, we want to keep them out of hell.** So, I've talked about Hazel and Hope. But, I what we really need to understand is that people need to be in heaven and not hell forever. Maybe part of the problem is eternity and forever. I can't comprehend eternity. I can barely make it from one commercial to the next without looking at my phone. I exaggerate.

So, let's try to comprehend hell. It's torture. Think of your worst experiences in life. Now magnify that. Then magnify it again. Then do that again. Keep doing it. That's eternity.

Scripture tells us that hell is pit of burning sulfur. Yuck. Scripture tells us that hell is a lake of burning fire. Yuck. Scripture tells us that hell is complete isolation from God. In hell, believe it or not, there is pain and suffering. Every part of your body, soul, spirit, and mind will be in pain. There is no relief for even a second. In hell death can't take away the suffering, because it is a living death. In hell there is unceasing mourning and grief. Regret and guilt and shame are constant and continuous. There are no thoughts of hope, but only despair. There is no peace, only depression. There is no end to the weeping, only a flood of tears. I don't want people in hell.

We like the idea of hell for rapist, molesters, abusers, murderers, and kidnappers. Hell seems like the perfect place for drug dealers, corrupt leaders, thieving lawyers, and accountants. Hell is the place for all them and, sorry to say, so many more. Hell will be occupied by people who look and talk like you and me. Hell will include our neighbors, co-workers, and even our family members.

When a was a kid my Grandpa Bud died. This is my paternal grandfather. There were no signs in his life of Jesus. There were no signs of faith or trust in Jesus. He was a hard working man. He cared for my grandmother. He was a great cook. In World War II he was an army chef at every major battle location. He swore a lot. He was a racist. He drank a lot of beer.

When Grandpa Bud died there was an unusual sadness upon my mother. We're all sad when a loved on dies. All of us cry. Mourn the dead. My mother was especially sad. So sad that a little boy could notice. When I asked she told she thought we would never see Grandpa Bud again, because he might be in hell. This made me sad.

*Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. 1 John 5:12 (NLT)*

**Believe that people will go to hell without a relationship with Jesus.** It's possible that I have been lulled into thinking something different about heaven and hell. If I've been lulled into this thinking then maybe you have been also.

Heaven is for real. It is for eternity. There will be no death, sorry, sickness, disease, pain or suffering. There will be blessings, peace, and hope in every moment. Jesus will be there. We will be with Jesus if we believe in Him. Anyone who doesn't believe in Jesus will be in hell. It is that simple. Life is complicated, but eternity is simple.

People – men, women, and children – can believe in Jesus or they can ignore and reject Him. For every person who ignores or rejects Jesus, hell is their eternity. Those of us who believe in Jesus, need to believe that hell is worse than can ever be imagined. We need to Believe with a capital B. Anything less is like taking a nap in the middle of a war. Satan wants us to take a nap.

We are the voice of Jesus about Jesus to people who don't know Jesus. Pray that you would believe the people around could be going to hell because they don't have Jesus. Pray for the words to speak. Pray for the words to say. Pray for the opportunities to speak about Jesus.

Are you ignoring Jesus? Are you pretending to believe in Jesus? Are you sure that you are going to heaven? Stop ignoring Jesus and call out His name. Stop pretending and call out His name. Start believing. Today, make a choice to be in heaven for eternity. Today, decided to trust Jesus as the one who died to save you from your sins.

Every person that is breathing is a sinner. We have disobeyed Jesus, ignored Jesus, and rejected Jesus. Jesus knows your sins. Jesus loves you even though you have ignored Him and rejected. Jesus knew that a price would need to be paid to rescue every sinner from hell.

So, Jesus paid the price. The price was His broken body, His shed blood, His death. In paying the price Jesus overpowered and defeated death by rising again.

If you need Jesus as your Savior and Lord then pray with me. "Jesus, we need your grace to forgive our sins. We give our lives to you."