

The Heavenly Anticipation Most Christians Miss

The countdown is on! No spaceships will be blasting off, and a number way above 10 started the ignition sequence. I am taking a mission trip to Europe in the fall, and I know exactly how many days it will be until the plane takes off into the wild blue yonder. Between now and Day Zero, my time will be filled with excitement as I learn as much as I can about my destination.

We are all waiting for something. If that something is something good, then we engage in anticipation, eagerly awaiting an occurrence that we know is going to happen. Perhaps it is the birth of a child, a relaxing vacation or a work promotion. Whatever that event is, we think of it regularly, daydreaming about how wonderful life will be when that point arrives.

Songwriter and singer Carly Simon captured the feeling of anticipation in a pop song. One of her biggest hits, "Anticipation," described her state of mind as she waited to go on a date with singer Cat Stevens. Her waiting was accentuated by the way she drew out the word as she sang, "An-ti-ci-pa-a-tion." This song was later used in a ketchup commercial as an upturned bottle of ketchup slowly released its much-desired contents to top a waiting burger and fries, a visual representation of anticipation.

Why do we Christians eagerly anticipate ordinary human events, but then fail to anticipate a heavenly one? Hebrews 11:13 tells us we are merely strangers here on earth. One day we will be home for good in our heavenly home; Jesus has gone ahead to prepare a place for us in his Father's house (John 14:2). We have a future date to be forever in heaven with our heavenly Father. Shouldn't we be anticipating this upcoming

happy event above all else?

Non-Christians scoff at thoughts of heaven as being fictional pie in the sky by and by. But the fact that heaven is real and waiting for us should give Christians comfort, peace and anticipation now. We can live our finite lives here on earth with the awareness that an eternal life awaits us. That anticipation puts our pre-heaven heartaches and problems into perspective.

My scheduled mission trip illustrates how anticipation can help one get through a current situation. For example, some days may be absolute drudgery at work, but thinking about the adventure ahead for me in the near future makes my work day more bearable. I might have to consume leftovers for lunch at work, but that makes the upcoming opportunity to try some new and delicious foreign cuisine on my trip abroad all the more appealing and desired.

The application to Christian life is apparent. Jesus minced no words when He advised that we will have trouble in this world (John 16:33). That's a given. We will face pain, suffering, loss and death. But another given is that He has overcome this world so our earthly life is only temporary. Our real home and eternal life are in heaven. Anticipating where we will ultimately be helps us to hang on during the inevitable hard times here on earth. When we run out of tissues from crying, we can thankfully say, "I'm so glad I'll never need to use these in heaven."

And what a glorious life ultimately awaits us in heaven. There will be no death, darkness or impure things there; crying and pain are non-existent. (Rev. 21:4, 27). Don't worry about running out of lightbulbs because God's glory provides light to all (Rev. 22:5). The Lord and the Lamb are present, and we will be face to face with our heavenly Father. Of course, we cannot know all the details about heaven because no one has ever returned from there. But then, who would want to? The

general description of the place indicates that it will only get better as we learn more about it. A glimpse of heaven has been revealed to us so that we could anticipate it.

The lyrics to Carly Simon's "Anticipation" provide guidance for a Christian's focus. As she insightfully wrote, "We can never know about the days ahead, but we think about them anyway."

Carly Simon did not know what would happen on her date with Cat Stevens, but she still thought about it and eagerly anticipated it. We cannot know all about heaven, but we do know that our forever-home will be heavenly. Thus, in the here and now, we can and should anticipate being there.

I'm anticipating an eternal date with my heavenly Father in heaven. How about you? {eoa}

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