WHEN THE GAME IS OVER
IT ALL GOES BACK IN THE BOX

JOHN ORTBERG
Bestselling Author
SESSION 1

WHEN THE GAME IS OVER, IT ALL GOES BACK IN THE BOX

Life, no matter how we play it, will not go on forever. When the game is over it’s all going to end up in the same place. As an ancient Italian proverb put it: “Pawn and king alike, they all go back in the bag.”

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Let’s Think About It (3 minutes)

Imagine for a moment that life is like a game.

What, then, is our goal or objective — what is it that we want to “win” in the game of life?

What do you think is the most important secret to learn in order to play the game of life well?

DVD Observations (20 minutes)

As you watch this session’s teaching segment, feel free to use the following outline as a guide for taking notes.

Learning to play the game
When the Game Is Over, It All Goes Back in the Box

When the game is over

Learning to number our days

Learning to be rich toward God

**DVD Discussion** (5 minutes)

1. What is the great lesson of life that John learned through playing Monopoly®, and why is it such an important lesson to learn?
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When have you wished, as John did when he finally beat his grandmother at Monopoly, that your accomplishments could remain as a permanent memorial of your greatness? What did you learn as a result of that unmet desire?

2. Which attitudes and actions often become evident in our lives when we lose sight of the everything-goes-back-in-the-box truth?

Which of your personal experiences or observations of other people and their experiences stand out in your mind as reminders of the truth that everything goes back in the box?
3. How would you define what it means to be “rich toward God”? What might a life that is rich toward God look like?

**Bible Exploration** (18 minutes)

1. Read Luke 12:13–21 (Jesus’ story of the rich fool), then discuss which images stand out to you—and why.

What are some ways in which people today demonstrate the attitudes and actions of the brothers or the rich fool in Jesus’ story?
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How does Jesus’ response to the man’s question about sharing in his brother’s inheritance cause you to want to reorder your life priorities?

2. The Bible has much to say about the nature and meaning of life and how to live it well. Let’s consider a few representative passages to see how its perspective differs from ours.

a. What is the source of everything we are and everything we have in life? (See Deuteronomy 8:17–18; Psalm 24:1; James 1:17.) In what ways does this contradict our human-centered perspective?
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b. Although we may want our accomplishments to last forever, what does the Bible say happens to them when our life is over? (See Job 1:21; Ecclesiastes 2:18–23; 1 John 2:15–17.)

c. In contrast to the belief that achievement brings contentment, what is the “secret” to being truly content in life? (See Matthew 6:19–20; 1 Timothy 6:6–8; Hebrews 13:5.) What are some ways we can put the biblical principles of contentment into practice in our daily lives?
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Just a Reminder …

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>What lasts forever?</th>
<th>What goes back in the box?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>Possessions, money, and pleasures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other people</td>
<td>My résumé, titles, and positions</td>
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<td>My soul</td>
<td>My body, physical attractiveness, youth, and health</td>
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<td>Deeds of love</td>
<td>Power and security</td>
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<td></td>
<td>People’s opinions of me</td>
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DVD Wrap-up (3 minutes)

As you watch this final DVD clip, feel free to jot down notes or questions.
When the Game Is Over, It All Goes Back in the Box

Personal Journey: To Do Now (5 minutes)

All of us have hopes and dreams for life. We long to play the game to win, but often the life we want seems to slip from our grasp. We lose sight of what is truly important and expend our energy on things that merely go back in the box when the game is over. That's why the message of Psalm 90:12 is so important for us to take to heart: “Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

1. As you consider your life—where you have been, where you are today, where you'd like to be (and what you'd like to do) tomorrow—what is it you are trying to “win” and which strategy are you using in the game?

   Do you think your goal and strategy will truly satisfy you? Why or why not?

2. What impact has this session had on your perspective of what is temporary and eternal?
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Which perspective, the temporal or the eternal, has most influenced your everyday decisions in the past? If you need to develop a more eternal perspective, how might you go about doing that?

3. To what extent have you been seeking to live a life that is rich in God’s eyes? How might you want this to change in the future?

4. Throughout the Bible, God makes it clear that he desires to be in relationship with the people he has created—to “be their God” and to “dwell among them” (Exodus 29:45–46).

So, if we want to live a life that is rich toward God, the most important thing is to give him the full devotion of our hearts. Perhaps this desire is best expressed in a conversation that took place between Jesus and Peter in John 21:15–17:

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”
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Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?”
He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”
Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”
Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”
Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

The devotion that Jesus was asking of Peter was the devotion of loving God with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength and then loving people as he loved himself. It’s an opportunity God still offers to people today: “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23). How will you respond?
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I can’t make myself love God, but I can come to know him better. I can choose to be with him. I learn to see his goodness in creation and beauty. I take time to ask for his help as we work together. I see him in the people with whom I meet. I hear his voice in what I read. I ask his forgiveness for the many times I mess up. I thank him at the end of the day for his presence in it. I can spend this day loving God. And tomorrow I can seek to love him a little more.

This is a life “rich toward God.”

John Ortberg

Personal Journey: To Do on Your Own

Despite all of the materialistic influences surrounding us, we can learn to focus more on the eternal than the temporary. In fact, there’s no better time than right now to begin living out the truth that “it all goes back in the box.”

1. During the next few days, think about how much time and energy you devote to things in your life that are temporary and how much time and energy you devote to things that are eternal. Then write down any changes you want to make in light of what you discover.
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Which specific changes will you make during the next week, the next two weeks, the next month to increasingly build your life around what is eternal rather than what is temporary?

2. In Luke 12:21, Jesus urged people to be “rich toward God.” But how do we go about doing this in everyday life? The verses listed on page 20 will give you some direction in how to be rich toward God. It is up to you to identify and start taking the steps that will focus your life around eternal things that really matter. After reading each passage, identify the appropriate general principle for being rich toward God, then write down a specific, practical step you will take to start living out that principle in your life. Then start taking those steps!
# Ways I can choose to be rich toward God

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways I can choose to be rich toward God</th>
<th>Specific steps I will take to build a life that is rich toward God</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deuteronomy 10:12</td>
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<td>Nehemiah 9:5b – 6</td>
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<td>Psalm 25:4 – 5; 119:111</td>
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<td>Psalm 82:3 – 4</td>
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<td>John 10:27</td>
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<td>John 13:34 – 35</td>
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<td>1 Timothy 6:18</td>
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<td>1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:3 – 6</td>
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What It Means to Be Rich toward God

In his book, *When the Game Is Over, It All Goes Back in the Box*, John Ortberg wrote:

- Being rich toward God means growing a soul that is increasingly healthy and good.
- Being rich toward God means loving and enjoying the people around you.
- Being rich toward God means learning about your gifts and passions and doing good work to help improve the world.
- Being rich toward God means becoming generous with your stuff.
- Being rich toward God means that which is *temporary* becomes the servant of that which is *eternal*.
- Being rich toward God means savoring every roll of the dice and every trip around the board.

Read these maxims every day, and determine which of them you are willing to apply. Then start doing it.