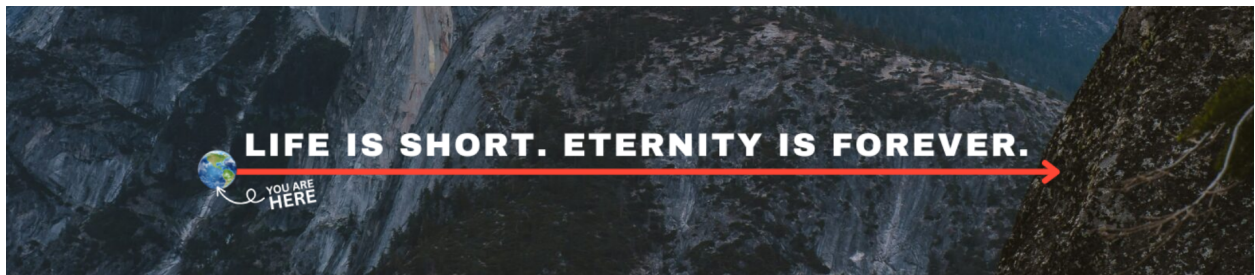


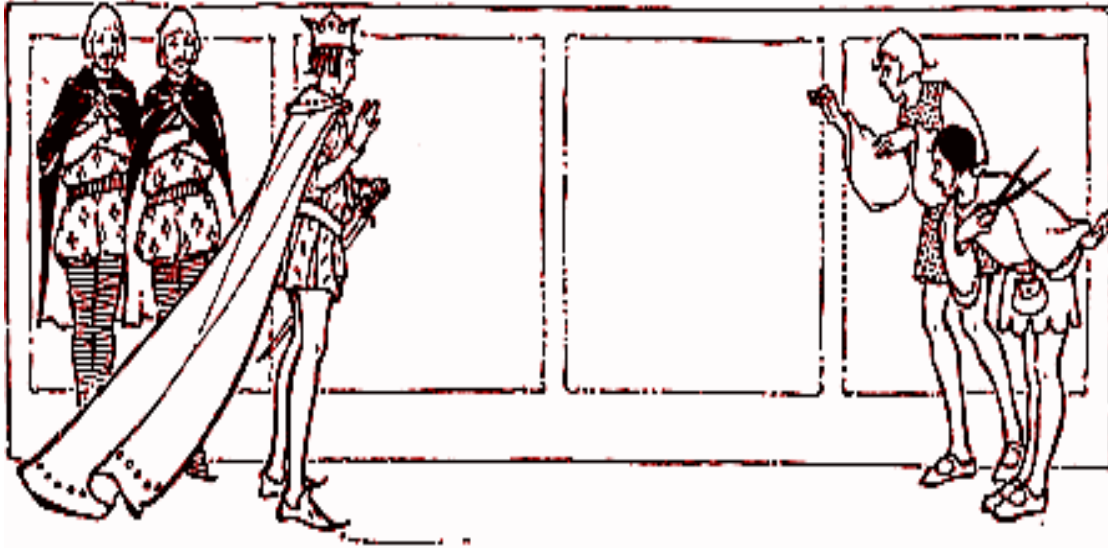
THINK ABOVE THE BOX
Bible Study Guide for
The Emperor's New Clothes
By Hans Christian Anderson*



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens



2 Corinthians 4:18 TLB So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven which we have not yet seen. The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever.



THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Many years ago there was an emperor who was so fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on them. He did not give himself any concern about his army; he cared nothing about the theater or for driving about in the woods, except for the sake of showing himself off in new clothes. He had a costume for every hour in the day, and just as they say of a king or emperor, "He is in his council chamber," they said of him, "The emperor is in his dressing room."

Life was merry and happy in the town where the emperor lived, and numbers of strangers came to it every day. Among them there came one day two rascals, who gave themselves out as weavers and said that they knew how to weave the most exquisite fabric imaginable. Not only were the colors and patterns uncommonly beautiful, but the clothes that were made of the stuff had the peculiar property of becoming invisible to every person who was unfit for the office he held or who was exceptionally stupid.

"Those must be valuable clothes," thought the emperor. "By wearing them I should be able to discover which of the men in my empire are not fit for their posts. I should distinguish wise men from fools. Yes, I must order some of the material to be woven for me directly." And he paid the swindlers a handsome sum of money in advance, as they required.

As for them, they put up two looms and pretended to be weaving, though there was nothing whatever on their shuttles. They called for a quantity of the finest silks and of the purest gold thread, all of which went into their own bags, while they worked at their empty looms till late into the night.

"I should like to know how those weavers are getting on with the stuff," thought the emperor. But he felt a little odd when he reflected that those who were stupid or unfit for their office would not be able to see the material. He believed, indeed, that he had nothing to fear for himself, but still he thought it better to send someone else first, to see how the work was coming on. All the people in the town had heard of the peculiar property of the material and every one was curious to see how stupid his neighbor might be.

"I will send my faithful old prime minister to the weavers," thought the emperor. "He will be best capable of judging this work, for he is a man of sense and nobody is more fit for his office than he."

So the worthy old minister went into the room where the two swindlers sat working the empty looms. "Heaven save us!" thought the old man, opening his eyes wide. "Why, I can't see anything at all!" But he took care not to say so aloud.

Both the rogues begged him to step a little nearer and asked him if he did not think the patterns very pretty and the coloring fine. They pointed to the empty loom as they did so, and the poor old minister kept staring as hard as he could—but without being able to see anything on it, for of course there was nothing there to see.

"Heaven save us!" thought the old man. "Is it possible that I am a fool? I have never thought it, and nobody must know it. Is it true that I am not fit for my office? It will never do for me to say that I cannot see the fabric."

"Well, sir, do you say nothing about the cloth?" asked the one who was pretending to go on with his work.

"Oh, it is most elegant, most beautiful!" said the dazed old man, as he peered again through his spectacles. "What a fine pattern, and what fine colors! I will certainly tell the emperor how pleased I am with this."

"We are glad of that," said both the weavers; and then they named the colors and pointed out the special features of the pattern. To all of this the minister paid great attention, so that he might be able to repeat it to the emperor when he went back to him.

And now the cheats called for more money, more silk, and more gold thread, to be able to proceed with the weaving, but they put it all into their own pockets, and not a thread went into the cloth, though they went on as before, weaving at the empty looms.

After a little time the emperor sent another honest statesman to see how the weaving was progressing, and if the outfit would soon be ready. The same thing happened with him as with the minister. He gazed and gazed, but as there was nothing but empty looms, he could see nothing else.

"Is this not an exquisite piece of clothing?" asked the weavers, pointing to one of the looms and explaining the beautiful pattern and the colors which were not there to be seen.

"I am not stupid, I know I am not!" thought the man, "so it must be that I am not fit for my good office. It is very strange, but I must not let it be noticed." So he praised the cloth he did not see and assured the weavers of his delight in the lovely colors and the exquisite pattern. "It is perfectly charming," he reported to the emperor. Everybody in the town was talking of the splendid cloth. The emperor thought he should like to see it himself while it was still on the loom. With a company of carefully selected men, among whom were the two worthy officials who had been there before, he went to visit the crafty impostors, who were working as hard as ever at the empty looms.

"Is it not magnificent?" said both the honest statesmen. "See, your Majesty, what splendid colors, and what a pattern!" And they pointed to the looms, for they believed that others, no doubt, could see what they did not.

"What!" thought the emperor. "I see nothing at all. This is terrible! Am I a fool? Am I not fit to be emperor? Why nothing more dreadful could happen to me!"

"Oh, it is very pretty! it has my highest approval," the emperor said aloud. He nodded with satisfaction as he gazed at the empty looms, for he would not betray that he could see nothing.

His whole suite gazed and gazed, each seeing no more than the others; but, like the emperor, they all exclaimed, "Oh, it is beautiful!" They even suggested to the emperor that he wear the splendid new clothes for the first time on the occasion of a great procession which was soon to take place.

"Splendid! Gorgeous! Magnificent!" went from mouth to mouth. All were equally delighted with the weavers' workmanship. The emperor gave each of the impostors an order of knighthood to be worn in their buttonholes, and the title *Gentleman Weaver of the Imperial Court*.

Before the day on which the procession was to take place, the weavers sat up the whole night, burning sixteen candles, so that people might see how anxious they were to get the emperor's new clothes ready. They pretended to take the stuff from the loom, they cut it out in the air with huge scissors, and they stitched away with needles which had no thread in them. At last they said, "Now the clothes are finished."

The emperor came to them himself with his grandest courtiers, and each of the rogues lifted his arm as if he held something, saying, "See! Here are the trousers! Here is the coat! Here is the cloak," and so on. "It is as light as a spider's web. One would almost feel as if one had nothing on, but that is the beauty of it!"

"Yes," said all the courtiers, but they saw nothing, for there was nothing to see.

"Will your Majesty be graciously pleased to take off your clothes so that we may put on the new clothes here, before the great mirror?"

The emperor took off his clothes, and the rogues pretended to put on first one garment and then another of the new ones they had pretended to make. They pretended to fasten something around his waist and to tie on something. This they said was the train, and the emperor turned round and round before the mirror.

"How well his Majesty looks in the new clothes! How becoming they are!" cried all the courtiers in turn. "That is a splendid costume!"

"The canopy that is to be carried over your Majesty in the procession is waiting outside," said the master of ceremonies.

"Well, I am ready," replied the emperor. "Don't the clothes look well?" and he turned round and round again before the mirror, to appear as if he were admiring his new costume.

The chamberlains, who were to carry the train, stooped and put their hands near the floor as if they were lifting it; then they pretended to be holding something in the air. They would not let it be noticed that they could see and feel nothing.

So the emperor went along in the procession, under the splendid canopy, and every one in the streets said: "How beautiful the emperor's new clothes are! What a splendid train! And how well they fit!"

No one wanted to let it appear that he could see nothing, for that would prove him not fit for his post. None of the emperor's clothes had been so great a success before.

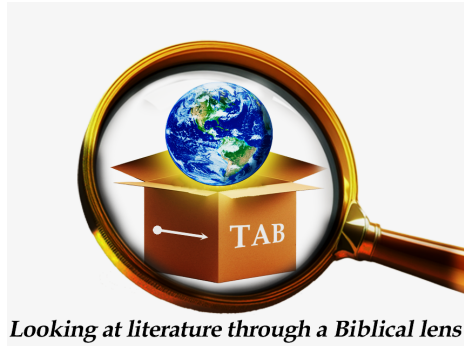
"But he has nothing on!" said a little child.

"Just listen to the innocent," said its father; and one person whispered to another what the child had said. "He has nothing on; a child says he has nothing on!"

"But he has nothing on," cried all the people. The emperor was startled by this, for he had a suspicion that they were right. But he thought, "I must face this out to the end and go on with the procession." So he held himself more stiffly than ever, and the chamberlains held up the train that was not there at all.

The End

*Project Gutenberg. (n.d.). Retrieved 02/01/25 from [Project Gutenberg](#). Title: Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales. Second Series . Author: H. C. Andersen. 1837. Editor: J. H. Stickney. Illustrator: Edna F. Hart Release date: May 28, 2010. Other information and formats: [Gutenberg e-book 32572](#) Credits: Produced by Sharon Joiner, Emmy and the Online Distributed. Proofreading Team at [Distributed Proofreaders](#). This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive/American Libraries.) **NOTE:** Views expressed on the hyperlinks to various content providers are those of the content provider's author or agents thereof, and not TAB, nor is TAB responsible for this content. Hyperlinks and their content may change or become unavailable. See [Think Above the Box/connect](#) for further disclaimers. *Minor changes to the text were made for today's audience.*



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

1. The emperor seems quite impressed with the wearing of fine clothing, making it his main goal in life to be in beautiful outfits several times each day. He seems more fit for the fashion runway than ruling over a country! God has a different opinion on what our adornments should be:

1 Peter 3:3-4 AMP Your adornment must not be *merely* external—with interweaving *and* elaborate knotting of the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or [being superficially preoccupied with] dressing in *expensive* clothes; but let it be [the inner beauty of] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality *and* unfading charm of a gentle and peaceful spirit, [one that is calm and self-controlled, not overanxious, but serene and spiritually mature] which is very precious in the sight of God.

*“When vanity enters our personal lives, it brings with it **pride, jealousy, envy, strife, haughtiness**, and many other negative things. Vanity devalues what’s important and puffs up what is trivial. Vanity peppers the mind with nervous questions: “How do I look?” “What will people think of me?” “Why wasn’t I honored instead of him?” **Proverbs 16:18** warns that “pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall,” but vanity rarely listens to warnings.”*

*- **Got Questions***

What does the Bible say about vanity? | GotQuestions.org

The emperor may seem more super self-absorbed than the average guy, but let’s take a look into how vanity can affect *our* lives:

“Vanity can be about how you see yourself, or it can be about what you are pursuing. The influence of vanity can be subtle and other times it can be obvious. Because of its destructive nature, it is critical to know what the Bible has to say about vanity.” - Clarence L. Haynes Jr.

What Does the Bible Say about the Dangers of Vanity?



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

Think Above the Box: Can you think of a famous person who resembles the emperor? Does their lifestyle seem like one you would like to have? Now imagine them fifty years from now. Is it still a good look? Is God pleased with this sort of lifestyle? Why or why not? How can someone ask God to help them with their self-absorption?

2. Looking *fabulous* took up all of the emperor's time which led him to neglecting very important duties for a head of state such as military preparedness, which could result in disastrous consequences for his country. This is a lot more serious than neglecting to clean your room or turn in homework, but it applies to all of us.

Ezekiel 16:49 ESV Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.

Matthew 6:24 AMP "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money, possessions, fame, status, or whatever is valued more than the Lord].

Luke 16:15 EXB He said to them, "You make yourselves look good [justify yourselves] in front of people, but God knows what is really in your hearts. What is important to [exalted/esteemed by] people is hateful [detestable; an abomination] in God's sight."

"The Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21): In this parable, a rich man neglects his responsibility to use his wealth wisely and for the benefit of others. Instead, he hoards it for himself, only to die suddenly. Jesus concludes, 'This is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God.'" (Luke 12:21).

- [Bible Hub](#)

Topical Bible: The Consequences of Neglecting Responsibilities

"The sin of not doing anything [inaction] or the sin of omission may be more dangerous than the sin of commission [action.] ... Sins of neglect require us to step up, step out and do something."

-Boyd Bailey

Five Sins of Neglect - Wisdom Hunters

Here's a tune that really strikes a chord! Check out these lyrics and tell me it doesn't hit home...

*"Well, I just couldn't bear the thought of people living in poverty, children sold into slavery. The thought disgusted me, so I shook my fist at Heaven, said, "God, why don't You do something?" He said, "I did, yeah, I created **you**."*

- Matthew West



▶ Matthew West - Do Something

EXTRA CREDIT: The Emperor thought that he was going to get a beautiful outfit *and* find out who he could fire all in the power of the magical fabric. But sometimes the shortcut ends up as the long cut!

"If someone offered you a pill that would instantly get you in shape, make you happier, and increase your job performance, would you take it? Before answering, you need to know that there's one major side effect. For as long as you take the pill, your moral character will not grow. You will not grow in virtue or Christlikeness. You will remain morally stagnant."

- Casey McCall

The Allure of the Quick Fix

3. The emperor was so vain that he was *"ripe for the picking"* by two lying swindlers. They took a gamble by saying that their woven fabric had the ability to be invisible only to fools, the stupid and those unfit for government work. A big part of a con game is to offer the person something that they really desire. What more could a ruler want?

God warns us not to have anything to do with such people:

1 Corinthians 5:11 ESV But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or **swindler**—not even to eat with such a one.

*"The Bible's stance against swindling is rooted in the broader biblical principles of justice and righteousness. Swindling is a violation of the commandment against stealing (**Exodus 20:15**) and is contrary to the call to love one's neighbor as oneself (**Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39**). It reflects a heart that prioritizes personal gain over the well-being of others, which is antithetical to the selfless love exemplified by Christ."*

- **Bible Hub**

Topical Bible: Swindler

Did you know that there was quite the swindler in the Bible who ended up being the father of the nation of Israel? Check out this link and due to its length, go ahead and give yourself some **EXTRA CREDIT!**

*"Jacob is one of the **dirtiest rottenest scoundrels** in the whole Bible. His given name certainly proved to be his destiny. He bamboozled his brother, manipulated with his mother, took advantage of his father, swindled his uncle, and fathered thirteen children with four different women. And yet, God was faithful to him! God stayed with him! God kept his promises to him! God blessed Him!"*

- Pastor Jason R. McConnell

Jacob: A Dirty Rotten Blessed Scoundrel Genesis 25:19-34; 27-35

So there's hope even for our two hustling tailors, isn't there? And also all of us, for that matter!



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

Think Above the Box: Can you name some famous hoaxes that people have fallen for? Have you ever been tricked by someone? Can you see how God's Word is here to help us when we are tempted by hustlers?

4. The emperor's vanity increased his lack of discernment:

"Those must be valuable clothes," thought the emperor. "By wearing them I should be able to discover which of the men in my empire are not fit for their posts... And he paid the swindlers a handsome sum of money in advance, as they required."

Hmmm. The phrase "A fool and his money are soon parted" comes to mind regarding our hapless emperor. Have you ever wondered where that phrase comes from? Sounds so *Proverb-like*. Link to the following to get enlightened.

*"A foolish person is rarely a good steward of their money. Lacking financial wisdom, discipline, and **discernment**, they will spend on things they do not need, fail to save or invest in long-term*

gains, and be easily duped or manipulated by unscrupulous salesmen, lenders, or thieves. As a result, a fool will often see his money disappear, hence the saying, "A fool and his money are soon parted."

- Joel Ryan

Is 'A Fool and His Money Are Soon Parted' in the Bible?

5. Our fearless leader grew curious about how the "tailors" were doing with his new clothes, but he chickened out and sent his old prime minister.

"He will be best capable of judging of this stuff, for he is a man of sense and nobody is more fit for his office than he."

After this man, another statesman was sent. Then the emperor himself and his whole staff, each one raving more than the last! Amazingly, they all were smart enough to see that nothing was there, but fearful of being thought to be stupid fools, each one played along with the lie and praised the beauty and workmanship of the imposters, which even earned them both knighthoods and the pompous title of *Gentleman Weaver of the Imperial Court*. What a sham!

It is said that *"honesty is the best policy."* If the Emperor and his staff had been honest about what they saw, regardless of the consequences of being thought a fool and losing their positions, a whole lot of embarrassment and loss of confidence in the government would have been avoided.

What do you think the repercussions were for the Emperor and his men?

As you listen to the following song, think about what was going through the minds of the Emperor and all of the people.

"Truth is harder than a lie. / The dark seems safer than the light, / And everyone has a heart that loves to hide ... Don't pretend to be something that you're not, / living life, afraid of getting caught. / There is freedom found when we lay our secrets down at the cross, / At the cross ..."

- Francesca Battistelli



Francesca Battistelli - If We're Honest (Live)



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

Think Above the Box: *"No one wanted to let it appear that he could see nothing, for that would prove him not fit for his post. None of the emperor's clothes had been so great a success before.*

'But he has nothing on!' said a little child.

'Just listen to the innocent,' said its father; and one person whispered to another what the child had said. 'He has nothing on; a child says he has nothing on!'"

Sometimes in life, we know in our hearts that something is sinful, illegal, wrong, etc. but we don't say anything about it, on the one hand, for any negative repercussions that may fall on *us* personally, such as the fear of getting canceled on social media or worse and on the other hand, for fear of the *other person* getting embarrassed, angry, annoyed, indignant, enraged, etc! What does God have to say about this subject?

"The Bible says that being silent about evil is usually not wise. We should only be silent if we can't speak about an evil situation carefully at a certain time. But we should be willing to respond faithfully whenever God calls us to speak out against evil. Neglecting to do so is like giving evil permission to continue. While standing up against evil can be challenging, we can rely on God to help us do so in all circumstances when we trust him for help. God will give us important opportunities to join him in his redemptive work. By doing so, we can become part of the miracle of good overcoming evil in our world."

- Whitney Hopler

Being Silent about Evil - What Does the Bible Say?

Can you think of a time in history when people knew of evil happening but didn't speak out? If they had, how might the outcome have been affected?

REAL LIFE: Sometimes the smallest of actions for the Lord can result in amazing change! What would you say to someone like Logan below?

"Logan exhaled sharply, as if releasing something pent up. 'I've made a mess of everything. Lost my job, my wife left me, and I can't seem to do anything right. I don't even know why I'm here.'"

- Tim Burt

The Bench in the Park: An Inspirational Storyline | Timothy Burt

APOLO-GET-ITS: One of the most contentious arguments in our culture today revolves around the theory of Evolution versus Biblical Creation. As Christians, we need to be prepared to defend our beliefs:

1 Peter 3:15 AMP But in your hearts set Christ apart [as holy—acknowledging Him, giving Him first place in your lives] as Lord. Always be ready to give a [logical] defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope *and* confident assurance [elicited by faith] that is within you, yet [do it] with gentleness and respect.

Dan Moran's article below touches on that very thing and actually references our tale of The Emperor's New Clothes! In fact, the following evolutionist's quote sounds like it could have been spoken by one of the hucksters in our story:

"After all, as the high priest of evolution Richard Dawkins has said, 'It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked,) but I'd rather not consider that.'"

Some more snippets of wisdom from Dan:

"If evolution is true, human life has no greater value than that of an earthworm, a fish, cattle or maple tree. According to the theory of evolution all living things are the result of rare molecular events which accumulated over eons of time to form a self replicating entity of some sort. Many more random events of this kind occurred, some of which were favored by environmental selection resulting in the diversity of life forms on Earth; whether preserved in the fossil record or living today. If this is the true history of life's origin then beings like ourselves have only the appearance of something designed; a fortunate chemical accident existing and genetically related to every living being with no truly moral, ethical or unique value independent of that which we invent. Truth is relative, not real".

Do go on...

"This author does not believe that evolution is a fact. It has no basis in science, and is indeed only a poor philosophy; a fairytale for adults. It has no empirical evidence to support it let alone prove it did happen, or is happening or could ever happen for that matter. Our best hard sciences like mathematics and statistics, biochemistry, molecular biology, biotechnology, ecology, geology, oceanography, astronomy, botany, cosmology, physiology, information science, paleontology, and engineering and many more do not support evolution as a fact. They do not support it as a theory or even as a feeble hypothesis."

- Dan Moran

Intrigued? Please link below and give yourself **EXTRA CREDIT!**

A Case of the Emperor's New Clothes

How about some examples?

“Emperor ‘Evolution’ is similarly dressed up with continual promotion from the media and educational authorities. Some of this emperor’s followers seem to imply that anyone who can’t see the evidence is so ill-informed that they’re not entitled to an opinion.”

- Ralph Matthews

Answers in Genesis - Reflections on the Emperor's New Clothes

And now for the eye candy portion of our program: click below for a beautiful visual on the Genesis story of creation. Hat tip: to read the actual verses, hit the captions button!

▶ Genesis 1 — In the Beginning, God Created



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

Think Above the Box: Have you ever been attacked for your beliefs on Biblical creation and the sovereignty of Jesus Christ? What resources could you use to be prepared to make a defense of Christianity?

“Atheists resist God’s authority. God’s existence is clear through creation, but many choose to reject Him to avoid surrendering their lives. Many claim Christianity is forced on them, but in reality, they resist it because they don’t want to be accountable to God.”

- Tim Burt

Being Christian in a world that hates Christianity / Tim Burt.org

LOVE TO LINK!

The depth of content offered in the Think Above the Box Study Guides would not have been possible without the many talents and Spirit-inspired links that are included for each book. Isn't it great that while you use the study guides you can click on a link and go to these great sites without searching for them?

We would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to all the Bible publishers, pastors, bloggers, filmmakers, musicians and Christian media websites for the vast amount of information they provide online. Your efforts are truly a blessing to all who access your sites!

TAB highly encourages students to explore each of the links at their leisure as it is like going down a holy rabbit hole!

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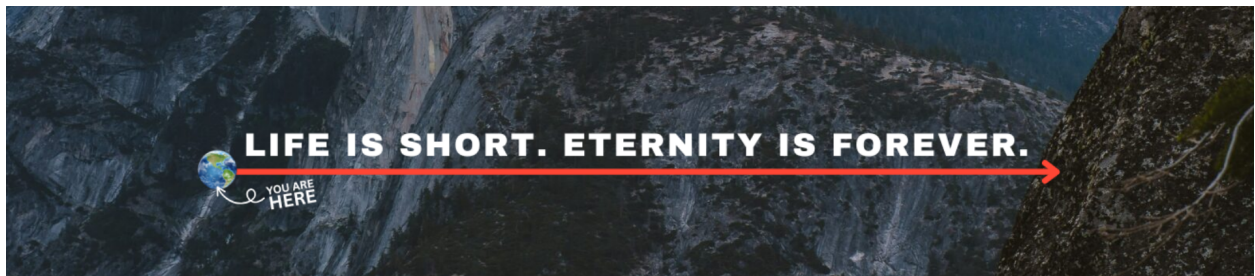
Afterword

Please check out www.thinkabovethebox.com for more study guides, blogs, and links to thought-provoking material.

*And please leave us a note on our site about your experience!
We would love to hear your comments!*



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens



2 Corinthians 4:18 TLB So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven which we have not yet seen. The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever.

