

Ministering to families when they lose a child

**A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK
FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTERS**

Pastor Shane Cooke

MINISTERING TO FAMILIES WHEN THEY LOSE A CHILD

There is no greater joy than ministering to Children. It is a privilege and honour bestowed upon us which comes with endless rewards. From that moment we see these little treasures being dedicated or consecrated to the Lord by parents before the church congregation or that first day in our kids Ministry rooms, the shy little smile as they look for an assuring face amongst the crowd ready to begin their faith journey amongst their peers and friends. There are many of these rewarding moments that bring us great joy. There are countless interactions we have with the children and their parents throughout the years as we partner with parents to inculcate Biblical truths along the faith journey.

Thank God there are more of these days than those individual terrible days where we are called upon to walk the journey of heart breaking loss as a family tries to make sense and come to terms with the grief of losing a child.

What do you do as a Children's Minister? Where do you start on this journey with the family?

My hope is that this practical hands on manual will be of help to you when those days arise.

Over the thirty years of been involved in Full time Children's Ministry, I have had to walk this path on more than one occasion. It never gets any easier. Every occasion is a gut wrenching experience that you always walk out of hoping never again.

The prompting for this idea of a practical manual arose from a recent funeral I was called upon to do where a family had to say farewell to their beautiful daughter. In the same week I was contacted by the Funeral home to ask if I could do a funeral for a young family who had lost their four month old little child.

I do not claim originality of thought for everything that is written in this manual. Some has been gleaned over the years; others have shared ideas and their thoughts.

This manual will be an open ended resource that can be added to. I trust you will benefit from it

Blessings

Shane Cooke

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THE FIRST CONTACT

There are different stages or scenarios where you may be contacted by a family member. For some it may come after a long illness borne by the child in which case you would have probably had multiple contacts with the family. In other cases it could come suddenly as in the case of:

- Accident
- Miscarriage
- Infant loss
- Stillbirth
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Loss of a toddler or young children
- Death of a teenager or young adult
- Loss of an adult child

The most heart breaking event any person can be called to attend is that of the death of their child. It matters not whether the families are Christian or not. There is still that raw stark reality that they will not be seeing their child again this side of heaven / Eternity.

The hardest sermons you will ever preach are at the funerals of children. Your message will be a road map for the loved ones to help navigate the next season of their lives without their child.

This is why it is so important that you craft your message with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the great *parakletos*, the Comforter and Counsellor.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to take these mere words we speak and cause them to become the balm of Gilead as He pours in the 'oil and the wine' the kind that restores.

We need to remember that there is a wider sphere of family also grieving. The immediate family is at the core which also includes the siblings of the child who has died. We can tend to forget these other children in the process. The extended family you will face include the Grandparents, cousins, uncles & aunts etc. Each of these family members will be grieving, some to a greater or lesser degree depending on the relationship to the child who has died.

Grandparents experience what is known as "Dual Loss"

They grieve for the loss of their grandchild as well as for their adult child's suffering.

Our task is to provide a source of comfort and strength to the loved ones.

WHAT YOU SHOULD SAY

Heart Felt Sympathy

If you are on staff at your church, you are always dealing with the congregation families on behalf of your senior minister. It is important that you

convey sympathy / Condolences on their behalf if he / she have not already visited the family.

It's not easy to find the right words to express your sadness to a family who has lost their child, but your condolences can mean the world to them. You may be afraid to bring up the child's death for fear of upsetting the parents, but you shouldn't have anything to worry about if you choose your words wisely. There are many things you can say to offer some comfort on this sad occasion.

Condolence Suggestions

While nearly everyone has experienced the loss of a loved one at one time or another, losing a child is would be considered one of the most difficult losses of all. The best thing you can do in a situation like this is keep your remarks simple and genuine.

Here are some condolences that can be used when speaking to the child's family or when sending a bereavement card or letter:

I'm so sorry for your loss.

What can I do to help?

Tell me about your child.

You and (child's name) are in my thoughts and prayers.

Do you want to talk about (child's name)?

I will call you. (And really mean it)

Take all the time you need.

Please be patient with yourself.

It's okay to cry.

I don't know what to say. (Be honest)

I can't imagine what you must be going through.

You can lean on me if you need to.

We all loved (child's name) so much.

It was really a blessing for us to have known (child's name).

Insensitive Remarks You Should Avoid

Sometimes people mean well, yet their condolences are actually a little thoughtless or even insensitive. At the very least, they don't bring the grieving parents any comfort. Here are a few things you should definitely avoid saying. It's better that it happened now than when (the child) is older.

Now you have an angel in heaven.

At least you weren't too attached to him or her.

I understand.

I know what you are feeling because I've lost (fill in the blank).

You're young, you can have more children.

Everything happens for a reason.

God doesn't give you more than you can handle.

Are you feeling better yet?

Nonverbal Condolences

Condolences don't always have to come through spoken words.

Offer a sympathetic ear and just listen.

Give family members a hug; no words are needed.

Just hold the parents' hands and allow them to cry or talk about their child.

Speak from the Heart

Make sure that whatever you say really comes from your heart and is not an overused cliché or platitude. The grieving parents will appreciate your sincerity, and knowing that you truly care can give them some small measure of comfort during this extremely difficult time.

THE GRIEVING PROCESS

Grief is a word that we loathe to hear because we know it entails sadness of some sort, yet it is spoken of many times in the Scriptures.

John 16:20 “I tell you the truth; you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.”

Psalm 119: 28 TLB “I weep with grief; my heart is heavy with sorrow; encourage and cheer me with your words.”

“When a person moves into the world of grief, they enter a world of unpredictability, chaos and pain.” H. Norman Wright

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Some cultures are more expressive in the grieving while others are less expressive.

No matter how a person grieves, there are some common threads attached to all who grieve.

Words, symptoms and expressions that describe grief

- The bottom falls out of your world
- Grief takes colour out of your world
- Your solid footing has gone
- Grief is like a wave
- Emptiness
- Apathy
- Guilt
- Sadness
- Fear
- Self-Pity
- Helplessness
- Confusion
- Disruption
- Distorted thinking patterns
- Out of control emotions
- Change in sensory perceptions (Sight, Sound, Smell)
- Increased irritability
- Lack of concentration
- Losing track of time
- Night mares
- Physical illness
- Decrease in appetite
- Shame
- Regret
- Anxiety
- Despair
- Dread

Add your own thoughts, expressions, words that you may have heard

It can be said that grief has no schedule; it comes unannounced bringing disruption of one's entire life schedule.

Life can almost be pictured as two segments: Life before the death and life after the death.

To help explain the grieving process

There are several models of grief that can provide a framework for what to expect and can help us "move on". One of the most well-known models of is "The 5 Stages of Grief," originally developed by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. Other models have 7 stages. I have combined one or two and added the extra stages mentioned by others.

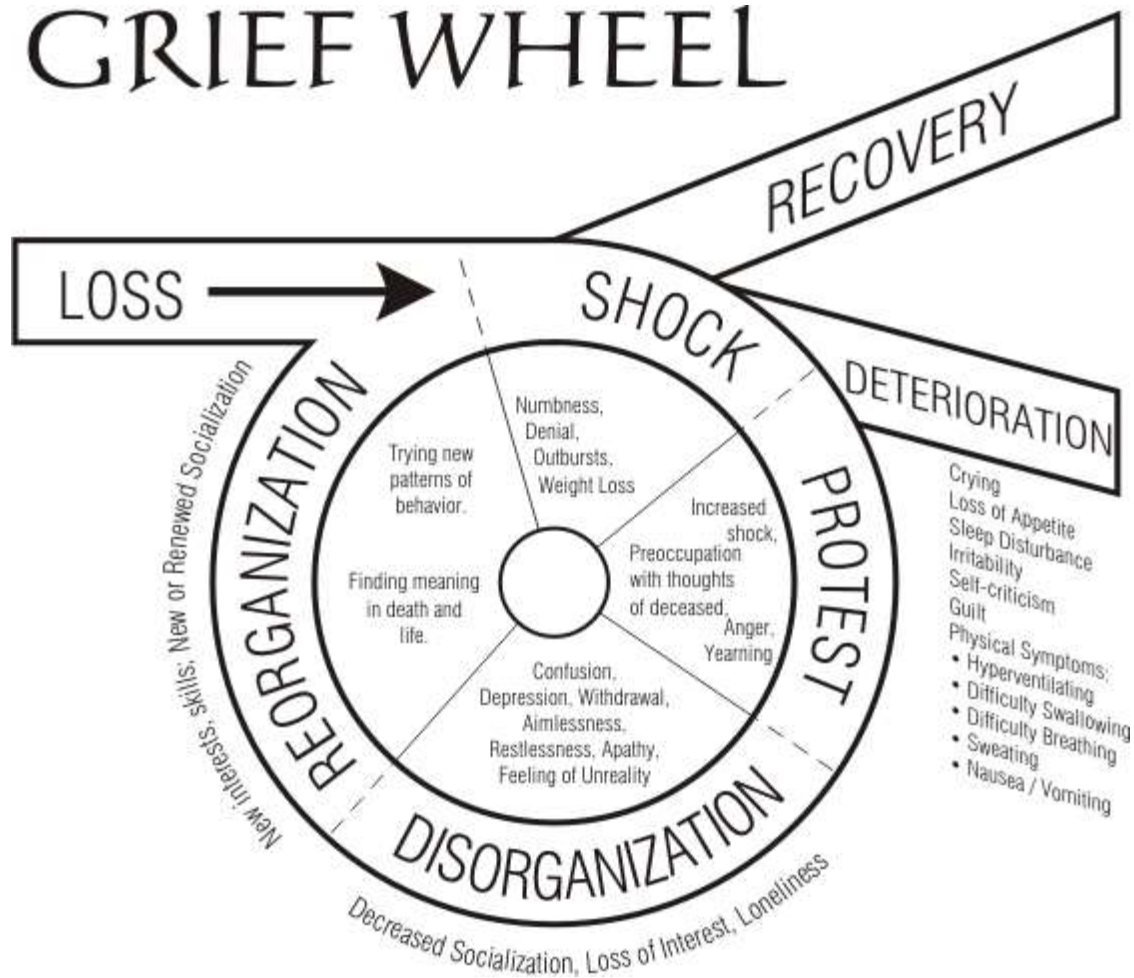
The above words, symptoms and expressions will help you give a clearer understanding to the grieving family members.

The 5 Stages are:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

The Grief wheel below uses other words to describe the stages but they all cover the same journey.

GRIEF WHEEL



These 5 Stages of Grief are not intended to be worked through and “checked off,” like a list. Rather, they should be seen as guideposts, helping us identify and understand what the grieving family may be feeling. Not everyone will experience every stage, and many people will go through the stages in a different order. In general, however, grief will include these 5 phases.

Grief is a multifaceted response to loss, particularly to the loss of someone close to you. Although we focus primarily on the emotional response to loss, grief also has physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, spiritual, and philosophical dimensions. While the terms are often used interchangeably, **bereavement refers to the state of loss, and grief is the reaction to loss.** Grief is a natural response to loss. It is the emotional suffering one feels when someone the individual loves is taken away. Every step of the process is natural and healthy. It is only when a person gets stuck in one step for a long period of time that the grieving can become unhealthy, destructive and even dangerous. Going through the grieving process is not the same for everyone, but everyone does have a common goal; the acceptance of the loss and to keep moving forward.

The stages of mourning and grief are universal and are experienced by people from all walks of life. Mourning occurs in response to an individual's own terminal illness, the loss of a close relationship, or to the death of a valued being, human or animal.

In our bereavement, we spend different lengths of time working through each step and express each stage with different levels of intensity. We often move between stages before achieving a more peaceful acceptance of death.

The death of a loved one might inspire you to evaluate your own feelings of mortality. Throughout each stage, a common thread of hope emerges: *As long as there is life, there is hope. As long as there is hope, there is life.*

The key to understanding the stages is **not** to feel like you must go through every one of them, in precise order. Instead, it's more helpful to look at them as guides in the grieving process — it helps you understand and put into context where you are.

1. Denial and Shock

Shock is the initial reaction to loss. Shock is the person's emotional protection from being too suddenly overwhelmed by the loss. The person may not yet be willing or able to believe what their mind knows to be true. It is a defense mechanism that buffers the immediate shock. We block out the words and hide from the facts. This is a temporary response that carries us through the first wave of pain.

Some emotions the person may exhibit

- Numbed
- Disorientated
- Overwhelmed
- Sad
- Anger
- Discouraged
- Bitter
- Resentment
- Despair
- Disappointed
- Shame

2. Anger

As the masking effects of denial and isolation begin to wear, reality and its pain re-emerge. We are not ready. The intense emotion is deflected from our vulnerable core, redirected and expressed instead as anger. The anger may be aimed at inanimate objects, complete strangers, friends or family. Anger may be directed at our dying or deceased loved one. Rationally, we know the person is not to be blamed. Emotionally, however, we may resent the person

for causing us pain or for leaving us. We feel guilty for being angry, and this makes us more angry.

Words that may be expressed:

“It is not right”; I can’t get my head around this; It won’t register”

3. Bargaining

With bargaining, there’s a sense that we just want life back to the way it used to be. We wish we could go back in time, catch the illness sooner, see something we didn’t see. We may also feel guilty, focusing on “If only...”. Bargaining can begin before the loss occurs or after. If the death or loss was anticipated, such as in the case of illness, bargaining may have been going on for a while—we bargain with God to please “spare” our loved one; we say we’ll “do anything” to keep them here. If the death or loss was sudden, we may wish we could bring them back or go back in time and change things. Bargaining keeps us focused on the past so we don’t have to feel the emotions of the present. But bargaining can be helpful too. Once we accept that our loved one is dying, we can use bargaining to ease our minds and theirs, praying for a “peaceful passing.” Or once they have passed, bargaining can help us focus on the future as we pray to “be reunited with them someday.”

Some “If Only’s”

- If only we had sought medical attention sooner...
- If only we got a second opinion from another doctor...
- If only we had tried to be a better person toward them...

Secretly, some may make a deal with God in an attempt to postpone the inevitable.

Remember, grieving is a personal process that has no time limit, nor one “right” way to do it.

The doctor who diagnosed the illness and was unable to cure the disease might become a convenient target. Health professionals deal with death and dying every day. That does not make them immune to the suffering of their patients or to those who grieve for them.

4. Depression and Despair

Two types of depression are associated with mourning. The first one is a reaction to practical implications relating to the loss. Sadness and regret predominate this type of depression. We worry about the costs and burial. We

worry that, in our grief, we have spent less time with others that depend on us. This phase may be eased by simple clarification and reassurance. We may need a bit of helpful cooperation and a few kind words. The second type of depression is more subtle and, in a sense, perhaps more private. It is our quiet preparation to separate and to bid our loved one farewell. Sometimes all we really need is a hug.

Despair and depression is a long period of grief, the most painful and protracted stage for the griever (during which the person gradually comes to terms with the reality of the loss). The process typically involves a wide range of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. Many behaviors may be irrational. Depression can include feelings of anger, guilt, sadness and anxiety.

Intense Concern

Intense concern often manifests by being unable to think of anything else. Even during daily tasks, thoughts of the loss keep coming to mind. Conversations with one at this stage always turn to the loss as well. This period may last from six months to a year.

5. Acceptance and Recovery

Reaching this stage of mourning is a gift not afforded to everyone. Death may be sudden and unexpected or we may never see beyond our anger or denial. It is not necessarily a mark of bravery to resist the inevitable and to deny ourselves the opportunity to make our peace. This phase is marked by withdrawal and calm.

Coping with loss is a ultimately a deeply personal and singular experience — nobody can help you go through it more easily or understand all the emotions that you're going through. But others can be there for you and help comfort you through this process. The best thing you can do is to allow yourself to feel the grief as it comes over you. Resisting it only will prolong the natural process of healing

Recovery

The goal of grieving is not the elimination of all the pain or the memories of the loss. In this stage, one shows a new interest in daily activities and begins to function normally day to day. The goal is to reorganize one's life, so the loss is an important part of life rather than its centre.

There is not a right or a wrong way to grieve. Everyone grieves differently. As believers, we turn to God's Word to find strength and comfort while we grieve.

The BIG Question "WHY?"

It is the natural question that arises particularly with the death of a child. Why did God allow this? Every parent expects their children to bury them, NEVER the reverse. It is an unnatural cycle for a parent to bury their children.

If not addressed properly, this can cause one to falter in their faith, struggling to comprehend why would God 'do' this.

How should Christian parents handle the death of a child?"

For any parent there is no more traumatic and heart wrenching journey than losing a child. All parents naturally expect their children to outlive them. Such a loss is an extraordinary, out-of-order event that brings with it an overwhelming sense of pain and lingering grief. It is a life-altering experience that presents unique challenges to parents as they seek to rebuild their lives without their child.

It would be disrespectful for anyone to tell parents how to handle the death of their child.

First, we should note that each person handles grief differently. Emotions vary widely in their intensity. These emotions are normal and natural. Second, no parent ever “gets over” or “moves on” from the loss of a child. It’s not like an illness from which we recover. Most counselors liken it to a life-changing physical injury. However, we should also know that, though we may always feel the loss, its intensity does diminish with time. Some people will wear their emotions on their sleeve and be outwardly emotional. Others will experience their grief more internally, and may not cry. You should try and not judge *how* a person experiences their grief, as each person will experience it differently.

AGES AND DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF GRIEVING CHILDREN AND TEENS

Many times we focus on the grieving parents which is correct BUT we often forget the siblings and other children connected to the child who has died. They too are grieving.

Every child is different and their grief journey is unique. Each child responds to loss cognitively, emotionally, spiritually and physically in their own way. Below is a general guide to help you understand the way children of different ages grieve.

INFANTS:

Infants can sense when something is disrupted in their world. Having a grief stricken caretaker or having people around him or her who are grieving can be enough to affect them. Although they can't verbalize their grief, they often react by refusing to nap, increased night waking, not eating well, irritability, excessive crying, increased need to be held and comforted, increased separation anxiety and an overall change in their behavior. Always rule out any possible illness with the doctor, but if the baby has a clean bill of health, it may be safe to assume that he or she is reacting to grief.

What helps?

Giving the infant extra comfort, by holding him or her more, perhaps in a baby sling or a front pack or back pack, even around the house. Rocking a baby can help to calm him, as well as playing calming music softly in the background. Try to feed him in a quiet place and not have too many distractions. Remember that he or she needs to feel secure and safe more now than ever. Talking in a softer voice is also helpful. The best thing is to

take care of the caretaker and help the caretaker to feel supported and attended to so he or she can care for the infant.

AGES: 2-4:

Children of this age are egocentric / self centred naturally. They don't have the cognitive / reasoning ability to understand death. They think death is reversible, not permanent. "I know Daddy died. Will he be at my birthday party next weekend?" A 3 year old at a wake seeing his grandpa in a casket told him to "wake up now, that is enough sleep."

They may ask a lot of questions over and over again. Be patient and give factual information. No need for too many details. These children may regress, change their eating and sleeping patterns, wet their bed, become irritable and confused.

What helps? They need: short, honest interactions, comfort, reassurance, nurturing and consistent routine.

4-7 YEARS OLD:

This age group are beginning to expand their language skills, fantasy thinking and wishing. Concerns about guilt at this age. Death still seen as reversible by many. Feel responsible because of wishes and thoughts. "It's my fault she died. I was mad at her and wished she would go away". They may ask questions about how and why. They may act as if nothing happened. There may be general distress and confusion.

What helps? Provide them with terms for some of their feelings such as numb, grief, sadness. Death play is normal and helps children integrate the reality of the death. You can join in the play and offer guidance.

AGES 7-11:

Self-confidence develops. Developing cognitive ability and logical thinking begins. Death is seen as a punishment. Fear of bodily harm and mutilation. Beginning to see death as final. They may ask specific questions. They want detail. Want to know the "right" way to respond. Starting to have the ability to mourn and understand mourning. Express grief through play. May "hang back" socially and scholastically. May see acting out, sleep and appetite disturbance. Concern with body. May have desire to "join" the one who died.

What helps?: Encourage expression of feelings. Answer questions. Explain options and allow for choices. Be available but allow alone time. Give physical outlets. TALK ABOUT IT! Children need permission to concentrate on mourning before they can be expected to forge ahead with the rest of their lives. Give them time. Offer "venting" alternatives. Support groups helpful.

ADOLESCENTS (12 AND UP):

They understand death cognitively, but are only beginning to grapple with it spiritually. May protest the loss by acting out and/or withdrawing. May feel life has been unfair to them, and act angry. May act out a search for meaning. May test own mortality. Problem solving and abstract thinking period. "Adult" approach. Work at making sense of teachings. Depression, regression common. More often willing to talk to people outside of family and

seek peer support. Depression and anger common. Anger toward parents. Non-compliance. Rejection of former teaching. Role confusion, acting out.

What helps?: Encourage verbalization. Do not take control! Encourage self-motivation. Listen! Be available. Do not attempt to take their grief away. Tolerate some acting out behaviors as long as teen or other isn't being hurt. Withdrawal is normal, in the short term (Long term withdrawal is a sign he/she may need extra help). A teen's normal egocentrism can cause him to focus exclusively on the effect the death had on him and his future. After he has had time to explore this, encourage him to consider the death's impact on the larger social group: family, friends, etc. Teens begin to really explore "why" questions about life and death. Encourage search for meaning unless it may harm the teen or others.

PRE DEATH

Should children visit their dying loved one in hospital?

If they are to visit a dying person (or attend a funeral,) children should be prepared in advance for what they will see and hear. Every child is an individual and you will know your child best, but remember that 'good-byes' are important to all of us. Never underestimate a child's ability to cope with difficult situations if they are well prepared and surrounded by those they love and trust. Equipment which makes adults anxious often holds no fears for little children. They won't understand it and may find it all very curious, but not alarming. It is usually much less upsetting for them to see what is going on than to be made to feel left out, or to be worried that 'the hospital' is a place where awful things happen to people and they never come home. Fear of the mysterious and unknown is often far worse than the reality.

PREPARING FOR THE FUNERAL

1. Planning the funeral is itself an opportunity to enable the whole family (include the children) to begin assimilating the reality of the death of their family member. The objective is to enable them to put into words their ideas, feelings and memories of the deceased.

Basically, to do this is to let the pain sink in and sting.

2. The funeral itself is a time of mourning and a time of celebration of the life of the deceased. More than that, a funeral is a time to worship God in Jesus Christ as thanks-giving for the ever-present help of God in the valley of the shadow of death. Although the primary purpose is designed for the comfort of the family and to show the support of the community, it is not a time for admonitions about the need of persons to "straighten up and fly right" or to convert them with the threat of death.

3. Eliciting the family story of the death. At the time of the planning of the funeral, set a time a month ahead for another family gathering to give more comfort and guidance after "the crowd has thinned out". Encourage them to talk freely about what people have said to them and how they felt.

In some way, this is like a "debrief" session after the funeral.

4. Developing "the Story" of a Death. Here the pastor is to be an active listener to enable family member to share about how the person died, details about the circumstances of the death, the survivors' experience at the death and when and how each member learned of the death.

This is particularly important for those who were absent at the event of death and funeral, as they need to know "the death story" in order to give an account for their grief. This is also important for children as when they grow up they would naturally want to ask and know about the story so to find the missing puzzle in the family picture. Even when the deceased is abusive and violent, "death story" still needs to be constructed for proper acknowledgment and forgiveness for the deceased. As denial of their opportunity to grieve would only hinder their growth in future relationships.

5. Follow-up: the most neglected ritual in the care of the bereaved is the follow-up over the ensuing months after the loss. The first Christmas, Easter, birthday of the deceased are all focal times for follow-up, especially important is the first anniversary of the deceased. A visit, a phone call or a letter would mean much to the survivors in their work of grief.

Furthermore, we need to take note of the difference between ministering to the believing family and the non-believers. To the former, the hope of resurrection is at the core of Christian faith, which we can draw upon for peace and comfort (I Thes. 4:13-14). To the latter, communication become more challenging as the framework of understanding is more limited. Although

there must be a concern for salvation of the bereaved, sympathy or concern for the immediate grief should also apply. In doing so, the relationship with the bereaved would be built, thus the groundwork for an encounter with God is laid.

4. Children and Grief

The miracle of life starts at the time of conception, proceeds onto childhood, adolescence and gradually as a full-grown adult. Being at the beginning stage of life, childhood is often seen as so far away from any painful losses, especially death - the very loss of life itself. However, in many cases, death is not all that strange to children. Some children do die and some experience death through the loss of a parent, a sibling, a friend or a pet. It is only in the last decade or so that people start to have an increased awareness in the area of children and grief. Some issues will be studied as below.

4.1 Do Children Really Grieve?

Yes. According to Jackson, although a young child is incapable of having a concept of death as adults, because neither time and space nor language facility ideas have been developed yet, all the more the child focuses himself on the feelings. This feelings of need and relationship is the center of his life. When this central needs are dislocated, there can be very strong feelings. This is why a child can have a tremendous sense of grief without having any "idea" of death.

How they respond to grief, would vary from person to person. It depends on their concepts of death at the appropriate developmental level, their relationship with the person who died, the circumstances surrounding the death, and the ability of caregivers to communicate with and emotionally support them.

There is a variety of emotions manifest in the grief of children. For example, denial, guilt, anger, depression, sadness and even panic. In most cases, the feeling of guilt is quite prevalent. As children are more likely to feel guilt than adults. For them, bad things happen when they are naughty. The "desertion" of a loved one is often seen as a retribution for wrongdoing. Hence many children feel responsible for "causing" the death of their loved one. "It is my fault. I should have been nicer, then my sister/grandma/daddy/Pussy will not die". This feeling of guilt can leave scares for years if not handled properly.

4.2 To Tell or Not To Tell In the past, people have chosen not to tell the children regarding their lost ones, believing this act is to be protective, to shield them from pain and harm. "They are still so young, they won't understand. If I don't tell, then they will not know". Or simply, people choose to tell half-truth as if this would blunt the sharpness of that painful loss. "Mummy has gone away to a long trip.", or "Papa has fallen asleep" or "Kitty Cat got lost in the mall this morning". Because of this choice of not telling the truth, children are also denied the opportunity of attending funerals.

But are these things really shielding children away from the pain of loss ? It is often recognized by adults that the unknown is the most difficult to deal with. The unknown frightens us as we have no idea of what it is, thus what to do with it. Yet when it comes to children, we assume that truth is bad for them, and they prefer half-truths or even white lies. Although it is possible to confuse children with this kind of misinformation, but "children have built-in lie detectors and can sense when they are being deceived. They will quickly lose confidence in those dishonest persons to whom they must nevertheless turn for guidance and understanding".

They question the statements made up for them. "If mummy has gone away, why didn't she even say good-bye ? How could she just leave like that?" Or "if Papa has fallen asleep, then when is he going to wake up?" The deception is further compounded as children see others mourn: "Why is everyone so said just because she has gone onto a trip/Papa is sleeping ?" If not handled with care, even theological explanations could cause children harm. Told that "God took Mummy because he needed her in heaven", a child could develop anger and a deep resentment against God who seems so "selfish" that He robbed the child of his loved one. God then becomes "an enemy".

With all these half-truths and white lies, children are denied the opportunity to grieve and to attend the funeral (in a simplistic way, a ritual of saying good-bye). Since they could not deal with the loss honestly, can't express their grief verbally , they often do so through actions. Numerous studies revealed behavioral problems in children and youth who had experienced the death of a parent when they were younger.

It is in the light of all these potential harms and dangers, that "to tell the truth" is very important to children. Use simple but clear words, always accompanied by sympathy and support. With openness and honesty, children no longer need to fear death as a "mystery", but start to see a wholesome picture of death as part of life. Try to understand their developmental level thus to establish an effective communication. Allow them the opportunity to re-visit the subject as they grow up as they will need to come to terms with the loss in their own way and at their own pace. This is a process of learning and it may take weeks, months even years to do.

Children should also be allowed to attend the funeral and no age is too young to go. Jackson comments that if a child refuses to go, it means that already the child has picked up anxiety about death. Equally important it is to tell without delay, preferably by a parent or someone close to them. Otherwise there may be the possibility that children will be told by the wrong person, at the wrong time, and in the wrong way.

Grief work is not easy. As it is said, "it(grief) is so high that you can't get over it, so low that you can't get under it, so wide that you can't get around it. The only way to do it is to go through it". Not only does it apply to adults, but also children whom are often denied of grief under the guise of protection. Counselors and pastors can be vital facilitators in the process of the grief. Rather being impaired by all sorts of unhealthy responses towards grief, the

bereaved can be helped to have new growth by acknowledging the loss, then to choose to live again by seeing the hope of new doors open in one's life. Our God is the Lord of hope, who leads us out of darkness into light, and brings life out of death.

PRIOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

The following pages will help you give guidance to the family with various aspects of the planning process. The following list of information is provided to help you plan a funeral. Organization is the key to planning in the midst of grief and sadness.

Print it out and keep it in a convenient place

Decide on the type of service

Is it a funeral service, followed by burial or cremation

Is it a funeral service, followed by a graveside service or a service at the crematory, followed by burial or cremation

Is it only a graveside service or a service at the crematory, followed by burial or cremation

Will there be a memorial service after the burial or cremation

Which funeral director / home is being used?

Funeral Home: _____

Phone Number: _____

Contact Person: _____

Type of Funeral:

Burial

Which Cemetery?

Plot Number: _____

Memorial

Cremation

Planning the Funeral Service

Date of Funeral: _____

Place of Funeral: _____

You will need to check with the office of your church if the church building /chapel is available on this day if this is the option of the family.

Time of Funeral: _____

Time the building / church will be opened? _____

Any Special arrangements?

Special Ceremonies

There may be special groups that the family want to participate in the funeral service ie: school choir or club members. The family would be able to give you information on these if they will be involved.

Name of group

Order of Service

Below are a number of sample outlines of Funeral services that you could suggest to the family.

Will there be a Prior viewing of the body? _____

Where will this take place? _____

If this is at the church, we normally have the mother's room set aside for viewing of the body.

The other option is to have the casket opened at the front of the church. This is normally 30 minutes before the service commences.

Music playing as family and friends entering?

Which songs? _____

How are these songs played?

() Live Musicians

() C.D. playing

Is there a CD player? _____

Who is bringing the CD of songs? _____

Which Track is it? _____

() DVD showing

Is there a Video projector? _____

Who is operating it? _____

Who is bringing the DVD? _____

Which Track is it? _____

If live Musicians, Who are they?

Name: _____ Phone # _____

Name: _____ Phone # _____

Name: _____ Phone # _____

Name: _____ Phone # _____

Order of Service

A good way to personalize the funeral is to personalize the common elements of funeral ceremonies:

The visitation

The eulogy

The music

The readings

The message from the pastor

The procession

The committal service

The gathering or reception
Welcome on behalf of the family and friends
Pass on condolences of the Senior Pastor / Minister if the person was a partner / member of your church.

Song / Hymn # 1 _____

Song / Hymn # 2 _____

Song/ Hymn # 3 _____

Scripture Reading: _____

Scripture Reading # 2 _____

The Eulogies (Who will give them?)

The Pall Bearers (Up to Six people)

Music playing as family and friends Leaving / the procession?

Which songs? _____

How are these songs played?

() Live Musicians

() C.D. playing

Which Track is it? _____

() DVD showing

Who is bringing the DVD? _____

Which Track is it? _____

The Committal

Music playing as family and friends at the Committal?

Which songs? _____

How are these songs played?

Live Musicians

C.D. playing

Which Track is it? _____

DVD showing

Who is bringing the DVD? _____

Which Track is it?

Song / Hymn # 1 _____

Song / Hymn # 2 _____

Scripture Reading #1 _____

Scripture Reading # 2 _____

Final Planning

Other items cannot be pre-arranged, but must be taken care of following a loved one's death:

Ambulance transfer from place of death

Death certificate

Burial permit

Time and date for the service

Embalming and body preparation

Submit obituary

Notifications

Create a contact list including names, addresses and phone numbers of those who should be notified in a medical emergency or death..

Make notes of things you would like included in an obituary. Also, include where the obituary should appear.

Identify personal touches you'd like at the service

Where will the funeral or memorial service be held:

location: _____. If this location is not available, my second choice is _____.

The person I would like to officiate at the funeral or memorial service is _____. If this person is not available, my second choice is _____.

I would like the following people to serve as pallbearers:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

I would like the following people to deliver eulogies / Tributes

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I would like the following people to deliver prayers, poems, or other readings:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The readings I would like them to deliver are:

Title	Author/Source
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

The Bible readings I would like to have read:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I would like the following songs, hymns, or pieces of music to be played:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Honouring _____ memory by making a donation to one of the charity organizations:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The following groups, organizations, and clubs will be notified of and invited to the funeral or memorial service (such as veterans' groups, alumni associations, sports or hobby clubs, etc.):

Name of Group/Primary Contact	Contact Info
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

The following people, whom my family may not know, will be notified of and invited to my funeral or memorial service:

Name	Contact Info
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____

Some suggestions to ADD:

- Light candles during the service,
- Watch a video of your child,
- Listen to readings/memories/songs
- Read from their school/college friends or siblings,
- Release doves/balloons / butterflies after the service or by the graveside.
- There may be some special songs the child loved or a poem.

Other suggestions

Once the order of the service has been finalised you can either **print your own service sheets**, or if you know someone who will do it for you, otherwise the funeral directors will be able to assist in creating and printing these for the family.

Again think about the words you want on the front of the sheet "A Celebration of the life of.....", "In Loving Memory of....." or just their name and dates.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

About the Service

Personalize the Service

I have attended funeral services where there seems to be disconnection between the minister and the person who has died. Services can lack meaning and not offer comfort when the minister appears to be going through

an order of service, giving readings and speaking without directing remarks to the family and friends or without mentioning the deceased person's name.

The most meaningful funeral services are those that are personal to the child and the family.

The service is personalised when the minister uses the name of the child as much as possible throughout the service. When offering comfort to the family, the minister should direct their remarks to the family, also using their names.

A photo or other meaningful article belonging to the child placed on top of the coffin will also personalise the service.

Meeting the needs of children who attend the funeral.

If there are a number of children attending the funeral, remember to include them in your address, they need to be specifically welcomed and where appropriate, some of the scriptures and comments in the sermon, be directed to them.

The more child friendly you make the service for the children, the more they are also able to receive comfort and strength. Helping children understand abstract concepts and Biblical terms in their language will be very meaningful to the children attending.

For example, using an object lesson to highlight a spiritual truth gives greater clarity than merely offering words.

OUTLINE OF A FUNERAL SERVICE

Use the checklist at the end of this manual to help you formulate the funeral service.

Each service will be tailored to the request of the grieving family. As the minister you can help guide them in their decisions to create the best possible expressions that would honour the child who has died.

Some families are very specific in what they are wanting while others flounder and struggle to know what to do.

There is no right or wrong way to conduct the service. I always say this is the family's day, I want them to feel that they have had sufficient input to create a family memory that they will live with that has no regrets.

Even though each funeral is unique, there are some common components that make up a funeral service.

Only the parents can decide and choose what is right for them and their family on the day, these personal touches will make it special for the family as they **celebrate the life** of their child who has died.

Be open to suggestions and helpful. This help will be more than just the service itself. Make it easy for the grieving family by guiding them through the prior arrangements that need to happen before the actual day of the service.

Remember families are not expert at funerals, they don't plan these every other day. Your loving helpful hints and suggestions will help take the pressure off an already stressed and grieving family.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

Example #1

Church Service

- Introductory comments, welcome the close family, then friends and all others
- Offer condolences
- Prayer
- Hymn / Song or solo
- Scripture Verse
- Eulogies / Tributes
- Message
- Prayer
- 2nd Hymn / Song or solo
- Call for the Pallbearers
- Benediction or Blessing

Burial or Committal

This follows the church service at the grave side or Funeral chapel.

- Introductory Comments
- Scripture
- Prayer
- Scripture
- Committal - see examples under "Committal"
- Benediction or Blessing

Example # 2

Burial/Committal

When a service is held at the graveside or crematorium, without a church service.

- Introductory Comments , **welcome the close family, then friends and all others**
- Prayer
- Hymn/Song/Solo
- Scripture
- Eulogies / Tributes
- Message
- Prayer
- Hymn/Song/Solo

- Committal
- Benediction

Example #3

Memorial Service

Order of Service

- Entrance music (Prelude)
- Welcome
- Introduction and Opening Remarks
- Funeral poem
- Eulogy
- Personal Tributes (open invite for speakers or planned speakers)
- Song (Live music or CD track)
- Additional Reading (inspirational) or Poem
- Video Montage (with music)
- Final thoughts
- Reception Invitation
- Concluding Remarks
- Exit music (Postlude)

WHAT DOES THE FUNERAL SERVICE LOOK LIKE?

The coffin/casket may be received at the door by the minister and led into the church, or it may be in place before the congregation arrives.

It is a good thing for the minister to be at the door, welcoming guests and family.

Sentences of Scripture may be used.

See the list under Bible Verses to share when grieving

General Welcome

Welcome the people, mentioning the children present.

Specific Welcome

Welcomes the family members by name and offers support and comfort.

Introduce the service.

Acknowledgement can be made to special people who helped the child in the last days of their life (e.g. nursing or medical staff, school staff, church friends, etc.).

One or more readings from the Bible.

See the list under Bible Verses to share when grieving

Prayer for the family and grieving friends.

Song, hymn and/or item

Eulogy and tributes

Sermon

Sermon should not be too long. It may be appropriate to use an analogy to help children understand death.

Prayer:

Giving thanks for the child's life.

Prayer for those who grieve

Prayer for readiness to live in the light of eternity

Announcements

Details of the burial and/or refreshments that are usually offered.

Commendation and farewell

The child is commended to God in a prayer.

The Committal at either the church, crematorium or the grave.

The child's body is committed to its resting place. See below.

The Dismissal

The service may end with a blessing or benediction. See under "Committal"

It is usual for the minister to lead the procession out of the building. After the service or burial, do not rush the people away. Take time to talk to the family members.

PREPARING a EULOGY

A child's funeral is going to be a very emotional occasion for all involved, that goes without saying; so when thinking about a eulogy try not to make it overly dramatic to add to the emotion. Try and focus on the child, what they enjoyed to do, share happy memories and things that would have made them laugh and try to paint a picture of them for those who may not have known them that well. If the child said anything that seems profound now that they have died, those words would be an appropriate inclusion in the eulogy as well. There are some things that are implied and universally understood when it comes to the death of a child, such as no parent should have to bury their child and how unfair it all seems. **It is not necessary to include such wording in the eulogy.**

It is not easy to write a eulogy for a child. But use the opportunity to remember a few of the beautiful moments that the child had during their short time on earth. Remind everyone how loved the child was, and how much the child loved his or her family.

Advice to Parents

Parents may have strong feelings about reading the eulogy themselves. Either way do not worry if you feel you can't, nobody will be expecting you to do so. If the parent are not able to read the Eulogy, as the minister / pastor let them know you would be more than happy to read on their behalf. But for those who feel they want to do it themselves, encourage them to read what they have written out loud several times before at home. This way they become used to the words and they will have a little less impact than reading it for the first time at the funeral.

EXPLAINING DEATH TO CHILDREN

Death can be explained to children the same way we explain other important milestones: Offer the facts in a simple, honest, straightforward, non-threatening, caring way.

Be honest, and keep it simple. Children know when adults are shading the truth.

First find out what the child already knows or thinks s/he knows about death. Validate feelings and encourage children to share their thoughts, fears and observations about what is happening.

Explain that in the circle of life all living things will die someday, and that death causes changes in a living thing.

Avoid euphemisms such as, "passed away," "sleeping," and "lost."

Explain what *dead* means: “_____ died. Her heart stopped beating and she doesn’t breathe in and out anymore. She doesn’t need to eat or go to the bathroom. She cannot see, hear or move, and she cannot feel pain. Being dead is not the same as sleeping. All your body parts work when you are sleeping. When a person dies, her body has stopped working. The part of Grandma that was alive is gone. All that’s left is her body – like an egg shell without the egg.”

Explain how we might feel when someone dies: sad, mad, or confused – and we may cry sometimes.

Don’t hide your own feelings. Feeling, showing and verbalizing one’s own pain gives children an example to follow, while holding back implies that feelings are to be suppressed. Let your children know that grief is a family affair.

Death is not easily navigated at any age and yet it is a reality that must be faced in this life after The Fall. Let us prepare our children well to celebrate life, grasp Hope, and acknowledge that though death is real, it cannot and will not hold us in the grave

How do we explain death? Death is concrete and our bodies, also physical and concrete, will cease working. The experts* suggest, “Honesty is the best policy,” with children. If we define death **clearly and kindly** we eliminate confusion. As Christian parents or grandparents, we also hold the hope of the Resurrection and eternal life. For the youngest, explaining this can prove complicated, but a kind pastor recently explained it like this:

We’re all like an egg. When we reach for an egg, we identify it as a hard, white or brown oval-shaped object. Then we crack it over a bowl, and instantly, the sticky, white and yellow glob inside the bowl is the egg and the white or brown oval is just the shell that contained the egg. Our bodies are simply the shell, that when cracked and broken ceases to be the egg, and it’s discarded or buried. But, the inside of the egg is its substance; it IS the egg. Just like us, our spirit is who we are; it’s our substance and continues to be us without bodily form until Jesus returns when He’ll change our bodies into heavenly ones, like His, that will never die.

CHILDREN’S UNDERSTANDING OF DEATH

There are four important components to adult understanding of death that a child needs to understand in order to fully grasp the concept of death. It is unlikely that a child under the age of eight will have a full understanding of these.

Irreversibility: Once a living thing dies, it cannot be made alive again. A child who has not yet grasped this concept will think that, for instance, a deceased relative or parent will return as if from a trip. This may interfere with the process of emotional separation required for the normal grieving process.

Finality: All life defining functions cease completely at death. The child may have concern for the deceased feeling hungry or cold in the grave. The child may feel afraid that the person being cremated may feel pain.

Universality: All living things die.

The child may confer immortality on people who are significant to them, such as parents. In such circumstances, death may be viewed by the child as punishment for wrongdoings.

Causality: A realistic understanding of the causes of death.

The child may entertain irrational explanations for the cause of death, which may be associated with personal guilt. For example, a child may blame his own naughty behaviour for the death of a parent.

HOW DO WE HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH DEATH?

Be there. Listen to their thoughts and offer comfort and a hug when needed.

Pray together. Acknowledge their sadness and pray for peace and comfort.

Tape Scriptures on their wall. Some children may become fearful. Tape scripture near their bedside that speaks of God's unfailing love, peace, protection, and eternal life so that they can read them when they need reassurance.

Share memories and celebrate life of their deceased loved one.

Draw pictures of their loved one. You encourage. They draw.

Write a letter to the loved one. Encourage the child to do this independently or you can offer to be their scribe and write their thoughts in their own words *exactly* as they dictate them to you. Hearing and reading their own words serve as a healing tool.

Give them a memento of their loved one like a framed photo of them together or a piece of jewelry, or trinket, etc.

Involve them in the funeral. Let them read a poem, letter, or Scripture, sing or play a song. A child's maturity level and relationship to the deceased needs consideration, but attending a funeral allows the child to celebrate the life of their loved one while feeling supported, loved and comforted.

EXPLAINING THE FUNERAL TO A CHILD

Explaining The Funeral / Memorial Service to Your Children

If this is your family's first experience with death, you may be wondering how and even whether to include your children in the rituals of grief and mourning for the person who has died. You may have many questions about how best to meet your children's needs at such a sad and difficult time. This article is intended to help you answer some of those questions.

Quite simply, what your children need most from you is honesty. They need accurate, factual information, and freedom to ask their questions and express their feelings. Whenever possible, they need to be included in decisions, discussions and family commemorative rituals. They need stable, consistent attention from their caretakers. And like the adults around them, they need time to explore and come to terms with the meaning of their loss.

At what age should children attend a funeral?

When deciding whether your child should attend a funeral or memorial service, age is not the most important consideration. Your child is part of the family, and children who are old enough to love are old enough to grieve. No child is too young to attend a funeral, provided that the child is prepared for what will happen and what they will see at the funeral home, and is lovingly guided through the process. Shutting children out makes them feel alone, and conveys the idea that death and grief are too horrible to be faced. Children need to learn that special, loved people do die – but also that there will always be somebody to take care of them.

How young is too young to be told about death?

Children told they are 'too young to understand' feel left out in the cold. Explanations need to be brief and simple. For young children it may be more appropriate to discuss the absence of familiar life functions for example when people die they do not breathe, eat, talk, think, or feel any more. They may need to ask the same questions over and over so be patient. Young children learn by repetition.

The funeral and afterwards

Children who have been encouraged to hold funerals for their dead pets have at the same time been prepared for family funerals. They will know that the body is in the coffin. This time, they will have been told, the coffin is to be brought into church for a special farewell to the person who has died and a special thank you to God that he or she had ever lived. The coffin and the body inside it will then be put right away as they are now no use to anyone. If the coffin is left at the crematorium before a service in church, children will need to say 'Good-bye' in a different way.

If young children come to the service and then to any refreshments which follow, death will not be seen as a cause only for solemnity or only for celebration. At both gatherings, the presence of children is a reminder to their elders that life goes on and there are still others left to live for.

Explaining burial and cremation

However well prepared they are for the purpose of the service, young children can find it very confusing that someone is with Jesus in heaven but at the same time is going to be buried in the ground or burnt. Not until an average child is about eight years old will a dead body be understood not only to be unresponsive but also unable to feel discomfort.

Anything that may be familiar to a child which in nature leaves an empty shell (as a snail does) or which changes from one form to another (such as a chicken from an eggshell, a frog from a tadpole or a butterfly from a chrysalis) provides a helpful comparison. The one to have moved out has finished with the old shelter for ever, so it can safely be disposed of - there is no fear of the chicken being trapped inside whilst its old shell is buried. It is something like that with a death. We of course feel sad to be left behind, but it is better for the one who has gone away to be with Jesus. One day, he will give all who believe in him a new body.

Life goes on

Old photographs can stir memories of happier days. It will also help to think of

the dear one enjoying a new life in the company of the Lord Jesus. “We don’t know whether Daddy can still see us, but we do still love each other.” To sit on his chair and think how Daddy used to sit there, or to look in their own garden at growing things which Mummy helped them to plant, could help bereft children and also to their adult companions.

Practical Advice

Communication is easier when the child feels they have permission to talk about the subject. Listen attentively, respect their views and answer questions honestly.

It is not always easy to ‘hear’ exactly what the child is asking. Don’t be afraid to answer a question with another question so that you can answer the child’s concern.

After a death in the family, keep routines as normal as possible. Reassure the child that you will be back if you have to leave the house. Reassure them that you will still be there when they wake in the morning.

Children often feel angry when someone close to them dies. Reassure them that they are loved and cared for. Be on the look out for any obvious signs of disturbance. Don’t ignore it for it may pass but it may need some action now. If it is buried without being addressed, it may cause pain later in life.

Children should be informed of a death in the family simply and honestly, without big words or lengthy explanations. The ‘kind’ lies of well-meaning adults only serve to shut down natural curiosity and delay the development of healthy coping skills.

Grief has to be faced. There may be a spiritual sense in which it is accepted that God has allowed the death to happen. There can be joy for the person who has gone, but still deep sorrow may remain for those left behind.

Emotions must be experienced, acknowledged and allowed to recover before, deep down, mind and heart can reach a measure of ease again.

Teach spiritual truths in response to children’s questions

Why do people die?

Children need to know that death is a sad part of life and that everyone dies. For Christians, death opens the way to a new relationship with Christ in heaven. Death is not something to be afraid of. God does not want us to be afraid.

Bible verses such as the following are useful to refer to: Psalm 46:1; Psalm 56:3; Psalm 73:23; John 14:27; Hebrews 13:6; 1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6,7; 2 Corinthians 1: 3,4; Romans 12:21; Proverbs 25:21-22

It is also true that we do not know exactly who does and does not have a relationship with God, so we cannot say for certain if someone is going to be separated from God for eternity. Most parents would be reluctant to talk about hell with their young children and place greater emphasis on the fact that those who do know Christ, will be with him forever.

Basic questions about life and death, God and suffering may arise.

Do your best to answer what you can. You can definitely provide a faith-filled response to your children’s fears or concerns. Reassure children that nothing can separate us from God’s love (Rom 8:38). The wonder of Jesus’ death and

resurrection is worth reflecting on together. Feelings of confusion, sorrow and at times, anger can be moulded into a positive acknowledgement that a time is coming for those who know him when 'he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.' (Rev 21:4)

God isn't a God of love who just looks at how we're suffering. He has been there too.

Sometimes we just don't know the answer to the question! Suffering is part of life and Christians are not exempt from it. Alister McGrath in his book *Suffering* comments, 'One of the chief glories of the Christian faith is the way in which it links love and suffering. When is the love of God shown? Supremely, through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.' When we feel torn apart God knows what it is like, for he has been there, too.

How should I explain death to my children?

If your child is willing, let him/her help whenever possible with activities such as:

Picking out the casket.

Placing a note, drawing, special object or memento in the casket.

Selecting clothing, jewelry for the deceased to wear.

Selecting songs, music, readings.

How can I prepare my child for the visitation / viewing / funeral / wake?

Children need to know *who* will be there, *what* will happen, *where* the service will take place and *when*, and *why* you are doing this.

If possible, you can take your children to visit the mortuary, funeral home or church ahead of time. Show them where to find the restroom, drinking fountain and play area, and remind them that they don't have to stay there the whole time if they don't want to – explain that they can go outside with an adult to play or go for a walk.

Explain the *purpose* of these events: a coming together of families and friends – a reunion, so to speak, in order to:

Say *thank you, I love you, and goodbye* to the special person who has died.

Celebrate the life of the person who died.

Honour, affirm, remember and pay our last respects to the person.

Receive comfort and support and be with people who care.

Share stories, laughter and tears with others who knew our special person.

Help children anticipate seeing others expressing a wide variety of feelings, including laughter as well as tears, and let them know that any and all of these feelings are okay.

You can request a special viewing for children. If your funeral director provides such a service, he or she may be willing to meet with the children to explain what happens before and after a funeral. In any event, you'll want to be sure that your children understand:

What happens to the body after the person has died?

The *funeral director* carefully goes to the hospital or home to pick up the body.

That the body is taken to the *funeral home* to be kept until it is buried or

cremated.

How *embalming* is like a blood exchange, only using special chemicals. How the body is made ready for *viewing* (bathed, dressed, hair combed, makeup applied).

What the coffin / casket is, and how it looks: “A special box that holds the body, made of wood or metal, with carrying handles and a top that can be opened and closed. The inside looks a little like a bed with a pillow.”
How the person’s body is placed in the casket, usually with the top part of the lid open, with the person’s legs just underneath the lower part of the lid.
What’s in the viewing room and what the children will see.
That the *viewing* is a time when people can come to see the body of the person who has died and share their sadness with one another.
Where the funeral service will be held (funeral home, Church or at the grave-site) and that it may include hymns / songs, scripture readings, a short sermon, prayers of comfort and strength, and *eulogies* (speeches) about the person’s life.

If there will be a burial, how the casket is taken to the cemetery in a *hearse* (a special car that carries the casket with the dead body).
How everyone follows in a *funeral procession* (a quiet parade of cars) to the *cemetery* (where dead people are buried).
How everyone gathers around the *grave* (a special hole that’s already been dug in the ground) and words and prayers are spoken. Sometimes the casket is lowered into the grave and family members will gently toss handfuls of dirt onto the top; other times the cemetery workers cover the coffin with dirt after the people have left.

That later a ***monument or Grave Stone*** (a stone or marker) is placed at the grave to mark the place where the body is buried: “It tells the name, birthday, date of death, and maybe a special saying or poem of loving memory. Later when we visit the cemetery, we can go to the grave to remember and feel close because the love we have for each other continues to live on, even after our special person has died.”

That ***after the service***, everyone will gather at the family home or some other location for more expressions of sympathy.
After the question-and-answer time, you can arrange for your children to have their own time to spend with their parents and the person who died to:
Touch the person or the casket if they want to.
Draw a picture.
Visit with guests.
Share memories of the person who has died.

What if it’s a closed casket?

If viewing the body isn’t possible or culturally appropriate, you can still explain death to your child (see above).

What if the body is cremated?

Explain the process of *cremation*: “There is a special building called a *crematorium*. In this building is a room with a special fire – not like any room in our house, and not like the fire in our fireplace. Because _____ is dead, they will not feel anything at all during cremation. A body without life cannot feel heat or pain. This special fire is very, very hot – hot enough to melt the body and turn it into very fine, very soft ash. What is left of a dead body is called *cremains*. The cremains may be put into a small container called an *urn*. The urn may be buried in the ground or placed in a special building, or the cremains may be scattered in a beautiful place, such as over a lake or on a mountain.”

What if the person’s body or body parts will be donated?

Explain that some families choose to have the person’s body or body parts *donated*: “_____ gave permission to the doctor to use part(s) of her body. It was her wish to give this very special gift to someone else.”

What if my child doesn’t want to attend?

It’s been said that families who love together grieve together. Encourage your children to go to the funeral or memorial service. Explain that you are a family and this is an important family event. Let them know that you expect them to go with you. Say that it is important to you to have them there with you. Ask them to attend for your sake.

If a child absolutely refuses to go, don’t force the issue. Instead, you can Make sure the child isn’t made to feel guilty for not attending.

Take pictures and make them available whenever the child wants to see them.

Make a video or tape recording of the proceedings.

Write an account of the service: who was there, what happened, who said what.

Tell the child you are available to talk about it whenever s/he is ready.

What if I’m the one who doesn’t want to go?

It’s understandable that you may want to avoid altogether looking at the person who died and at what happened, that you may be afraid of how you are feeling, or that you may fear “falling apart” in front of others. In that case it may help to think of the funeral or memorial service as an opportunity for remembering and celebrating your loved one’s life rather than her death.

What if I’m too upset myself to be there for my children?

Tell the children exactly how you’re feeling. Explain that they can count on someone else to be there for them in addition to yourself. Plan ahead of time to:

Ask a family member or close friend who knows your children to sit with you and care for your children at times, as needed.

Ask if someone at the funeral home can stay near the children and answer their questions.

Assign someone to sit in back or near the end of your row, so they can leave the service unobtrusively and step outside with your children if they become too restless.

What if others criticize my decision to include my children in the service?

As a parent, it is your job to teach your children how to cope with the realities of life. Keep in mind that you are the one who knows your children best, and it is you who must deal with their feelings later on.

To shut your children out of such a rich and valuable life lesson is to deprive them of an opportunity to grow. Letting them participate in the family rituals of grief and mourning shapes how they will cope with future losses and ultimately with their own mortality as well.

No doubt there will be some friends and family members who'll say they cannot bear to see your little ones suffer; they may tell you your children are too young, they won't understand, they'll be afraid or they'll be a disturbance. Usually people feel this way because it is they themselves who are so upset. Know that protecting children from death is a mistake. It is up to all of us to remove the dark shroud of fear from death, and help our children see it as a sad but natural part of living.

My child is crying one minute and laughing the next. Is that normal?

Children experience grief in small doses, and moving in and out of grief is natural for them. Let your children know that crying, laughing and playing are okay, and that you respect their need to be children at this sad and difficult time.

If your child's behavior is disturbing others, explain to the older children that there are acceptable ways to behave at funerals and that you expect them to be considerate of the feelings of other mourners. If your child is too young to understand that concept, activate the plan you've already put in place, and ask the person you've assigned to remove your child from the situation.

I know what I want to tell my children, but how can I control what others say to them?

Listen to what others may be telling your children. Comments such as "Be brave" or "Be strong" are telling a child how to feel. Statements such as "Don't cry," "Be extra nice to your mother now," "You're the man of the family now," or "Your daddy wouldn't want you to be sad" are telling a child how to act.

Sometimes children are given conflicting statements: one person may tell the child, "Don't cry" while someone else may say, "It's okay to cry; it means we're sad, we miss _____ and we love her very much."

Most people mean well, but sometimes they are simply misguided or uninformed. Help your child understand why different people feel differently about such matters; explain that what they learned and what they were taught as youngsters may be different from what you are teaching them now.

Acknowledge, too, that sometimes we simply don't know how we feel, and sometimes we don't feel anything at all. Our feelings may come later, and that's okay, too.

How can I get at what my children may be thinking and feeling?

Offer physical closeness, comfort and reassurance.

Look through photograph albums together.

Talk about special memories and their relationship with the deceased.

Read some of the wonderful and readily available children's books on grief which are mentioned in the Resource section in this manual.
Acknowledge and normalize whatever your child may be feeling.
Talk about your family's faith in God, about life, death and the afterlife.
Be patient with repetitious questioning and be available to listen.
It's all right if you don't have all the answers. Sometimes there just aren't any satisfactory answers, but it's still important to discuss the questions. Children need parents to puzzle *with* them about such matters.

HOW DO I FIND COMFORT AND PEACE WHEN I HAVE LOST A LOVED ONE TO DEATH?"

Losing a loved one to death is a painful experience. Jesus understood the pain of losing someone close to His heart. In the Book of John (11:1-44), we learn that Jesus lost a friend named Lazarus. Jesus was deeply moved and wept at the loss of His friend. This story, however, doesn't end in tears. Jesus knew He possessed the power needed to raise Lazarus from the dead. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25). Jesus overcame death through His resurrection. It is comforting to know that death is not the end for those who believe. Those who know Jesus as Savior will have eternal life (John 10:28). God has prepared a new home for us where there will be no more death, tears or pain (Revelation 21:1-4).

While you are healing from the loss of a loved one, God will comfort you (2 Corinthians 7:6). The Bible tells us that God is the father of mercies and that He will comfort us in all our tribulations (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Be assured that God loves you and that He understands how much you are hurting. God promises you in Isaiah 43:2 that when you go through deep waters and great trouble, He will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. Run to the shelter of the Most High where you will find rest (Psalm 91:1-2).

WHAT SHOULD BE THE FOCUS OF A CHRISTIAN FUNERAL?"

There should be a vast difference between a Christian funeral and that of a non-believer. A Believers funeral is a farewell of hope. It is a celebration of a home going.

A Christian funeral should, first and foremost, reflect the words of the Paul: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Paul uses the term "fall asleep" to refer to those who have died in Christ. Perhaps no other event in life brings us as close to the reality of eternity as death. One moment our loved one is here—breathing, communicating, heart beating—and the next moment they are gone. Even though the body remains, anyone who has been present at the moment of death knows that body is empty and the person who once inhabited it has left. Knowing the person was a Child of God, gives us the hope incredible hope. That hope should be the focus of a Christian funeral. The message of that hope should be clearly proclaimed, whether by formal preaching of the gospel of Christ or by

memorials by those who knew the deceased and can testify that he/she lived in the light of the hope of eternal life available in Christ. If music is to be part of the funeral, it too should reflect the joy and hope being experienced at that very moment by the departed soul.

Above all, a Christian funeral should provide a **glimpse into that brighter world, a world where all Christians will be reunited**, where the bonds of love shall be made stronger than they were here, never again to be severed. It is only this hope that can soothe the pains of grief at parting. It is only when we can look forward to a better world, knowing we will see our loved ones again, love them again, and enjoy worshipping God with them forever that our tears are made dry. A Christian funeral should be a celebration of the joy of these glorious truths.

When you are preparing your message for the life celebration, keep these thoughts in mind.

SERMON SEEDS

It has been said that you milk many cows but produce your own butter. Over the past 30 years I have attended hundreds of funerals, heard messages, read books, listened to....., gleaned the internet for ideas etc.

The following are Sermon seeds to help you craft your message for the funeral. Sometimes you can mix and match thoughts from different messages to create a new message. If you are in a church or minister to the same group of people for a long period of time, it will not be uncommon to have the same people attend multiple funerals that you conduct. You definitely do not want to preach the same message every time. You want your message to be hopeful and helpful. These are not all of my sermons BUT I found them to be very encouraging. The Sermon seeds are incredible.

It is the Christian's faith in a loving and ever-faithful God that enables us to endure and recover from the loss of a child, sometimes in ways that others find remarkable.

SERMON SEED # 1

This is the Sermon I preached at Vanessa's funeral. We called it a Life Celebration rather than a funeral. There were over 600 children – the entire school of friends and teaching staff in attendance. I wanted to help these children from ages 6 years right through to last year high school understand the concepts of Heaven and dying. I have given you the entire service and sermon. All the other sermon seeds will be simple outlines that you can flesh out with your own stories and details.

Vanessa's Life Celebration

9:45am: Vanessa's body will arrive

Teachers will be the pall bearers at this time – 6 required who will walk up the guard of honour created by the children of the school

Music: We will need to have some music playing as this happens

Welcome

On behalf of the family we want to say THANK YOU for all the kindness you have poured out on the Martinez family – the cards, flowers, phone calls, encouragement, prayer – they have been surrounded by your love and care.

To the family member: _____

On behalf of our Senior Ministers: Pastors _____ - we express our condolences to each of you at this time. We have prayed for you and continue to pray for you.

Today we have come together to celebrate the **short BUT FULL life of Vanessa.**

In amongst the tears and sorrow, we rejoice in hope.
May you be comforted and strengthened during this time and the days ahead.

Open in Prayer:

Song # 1

Scripture Reading: _____

John 14:2

1 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many Mansions / dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also....

Eulogies / Tributes

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

Message

The great Faith chapter

Hebrews 11 Amplified Bible (AMP)

11 Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, ^[a]the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see *and* the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].

² For by [faith—^[b]trust and holy fervor born of faith] the men of old had divine testimony borne to them *and* obtained a good report.

³ By faith we understand that the worlds [during the successive ages] were framed (fashioned, put in order, and equipped for their intended purpose) by the word of God, so that what we see was not made out of things which are visible.

⁴ [**Prompted, actuated**] by faith Abel brought God a better and more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, because of which it was testified of him that he was righteous [that he was upright and in right standing with God], and God bore witness by accepting *and* acknowledging his gifts. And though he died, yet [through the incident] he is still speaking.

⁵ **Because of faith Enoch** was caught up *and* transferred to heaven, so that he did not have a glimpse of death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For even before he was taken to heaven, he received testimony [still on record] that he had pleased *and* been satisfactory to God.

⁶ But **without faith it is impossible** to please *and* be satisfactory to Him. For whoever would come near to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He is the rewarder of those who earnestly *and* diligently seek Him [out].

⁸ **[Urged on] by faith Abraham**, when he was called, obeyed and went forth to a place which he was destined to receive as an inheritance; and he went, although he did not know *or* trouble his mind about where he was to go.

⁹ [Prompted] by faith he dwelt as a temporary resident in the land which was designated in the promise [of God, though he was like a stranger] in a strange country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs with him of the same promise.

¹⁰ For he was [waiting expectantly and confidently] looking forward to the city which has fixed *and* firm foundations, whose Architect *and* Builder is God.

¹¹ Because of faith also Sarah herself received physical power to conceive a child, even when she was long past the age for it, because she considered [God] Who had given her the promise to be reliable *and* trustworthy *and* true to His word.

¹² So from one man, though he was physically as good as dead, there have sprung descendants whose number is as the stars of heaven and as countless as the innumerable sands on the seashore.

¹³ **These people all died controlled *and* sustained by their faith, but not having received the tangible fulfillment of [God's] promises, only having seen it *and* greeted it from a great distance by faith**, and all the while acknowledging *and* confessing that they were strangers *and* temporary residents *and* exiles upon the earth.

¹⁴ Now those people who talk as they did show plainly that they are in search of a fatherland (their own country).

¹⁵ If they had been thinking with [homesick] remembrance of that country from which they were emigrants, they would have found constant opportunity to return to it.

¹⁶ But the truth is that they were yearning for *and* aspiring to a better *and* more desirable country, that is, a heavenly [one]. For that reason God is not ashamed to be called their God [even to be surnamed their God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob], for He has prepared a city for them.

¹⁷ **By faith Abraham**, when he was put to the test [while the testing of his faith was ^[d]still in progress], ^[e]had already brought Isaac for an offering; he who had gladly received *and*welcomed [God's] promises was ready to sacrifice his only son,

¹⁸ Of whom it was said, Through Isaac shall your descendants be reckoned.

¹⁹ For he reasoned that God was able to raise [him] up even from among the dead. Indeed in the sense that Isaac was figuratively dead [potentially sacrificed], he did [actually] receive him back from the dead.

²⁰ [With eyes of] faith Isaac, looking far into the future, invoked blessings upon Jacob and Esau.

²¹ [Prompted] by faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and bowed in prayer over the top of his staff.

²² [Actuated] by faith Joseph, when nearing the end of his life, referred to [the promise of God for] the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his own bones.

²³ [Prompted] by faith Moses, after his birth, was kept concealed for three months by his parents, because they saw how comely the child was; and they were not overawed *and*terrified by the king's decree.

²⁴ [Aroused] by faith Moses, when he had grown to maturity *and* ^[f]become great, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

²⁵ Because he preferred to share the oppression [suffer the hardships] *and* bear the shame of the people of God rather than to have the fleeting enjoyment of a sinful life.

²⁶ He considered the contempt *and* abuse *and* shame [borne for] the Christ (the Messiah Who was to come) to be greater wealth than all the treasures of Egypt, for he looked forward *and* away to the reward (recompense).

²⁷ [Motivated] by faith he left Egypt behind him, being unawed *and* undismayed by the wrath of the king; for he never flinched *but* held staunchly to his purpose *and* endured steadfastly as one who gazed on Him Who is invisible.

²⁸ By faith (simple trust and confidence in God) he instituted *and* carried out the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood [on the doorposts], so that the destroyer of the firstborn (the angel) might not touch those [of the children of Israel].

²⁹ **[Urged on] by faith** the people crossed the Red Sea as [though] on dry land, but when the Egyptians tried to do the same thing they were swallowed up [by the sea].

³⁰ Because of faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encompassed for seven days [by the Israelites].

³¹ [Prompted] by faith Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed along with those who refused to believe *and* obey, because she had received the spies in peace [without enmity].

³² And what shall I say further? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,

³³ **Who by [the help of] faith** subdued kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promised blessings, closed the mouths of lions,

³⁴ Extinguished the power of raging fire, escaped the devourings of the sword, out of frailty *and* weakness won strength *and* became stalwart, even mighty *and* resistless in battle, routing alien hosts.

³⁵ [Some] women received again their dead by a resurrection. Others were tortured ^[9]to death with clubs, refusing to accept release [offered on the terms of denying their faith], so that they might be resurrected to a better life.

³⁶ Others had to suffer the trial of mocking and scourging and even chains and imprisonment.

³⁷ They were stoned to death; they were lured with tempting offers [to renounce their faith]; they were sawn asunder; they were slaughtered by the sword; [while they were alive] they had to go about wrapped in the skins of sheep and goats, utterly destitute, oppressed, cruelly treated—

³⁸ **[Men] of whom the world was not worthy—roaming over the desolate places and the mountains, and [living] in caves *and* caverns and holes of the earth.**

They were hungry and sick and ill-treated—too good for this world.

³⁹ **And all of these, though they won divine approval by [means of] their faith, did not receive the fulfillment of what was promised, Luke 24:13-35 Amplified Bible (AMP)**

¹³ And behold, that very day **two of [the disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus,** [which is] about seven miles from Jerusalem.

¹⁴ And they were **talking with each other about all these things that had occurred.**

¹⁵ **And while they were conversing and discussing together, Jesus Himself caught up with them and was already accompanying them.**

¹⁶ **But their eyes were held, so that they did not recognize Him.**

¹⁷ And He said to them, What is this discussion that you are exchanging (^[a]throwing back and forth) between yourselves as you walk along? And they stood still, looking sad *and* downcast.

¹⁹ And He said to them, What [kind of] things? And they said to Him, **About Jesus of Nazareth, Who was a Prophet mighty in work and word before God and all the people—**

²⁰ And how our chief priests and rulers gave Him up to be sentenced to death, and crucified Him.

²¹ **But we were hoping** that it was He Who would redeem *and* set Israel free.

Yes, and **besides all this, it is now the third day since** these things occurred.

²² And **moreover**, some women of our company astounded us **and** ^[b]drove us out of our senses. They were at the tomb early [in the morning]

²³ But did not find His body; and they returned saying that they had [even] seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive!

²⁴ So some of those [who were] with us went to the tomb and they found it just as the women had said, but Him they did not see.

²⁵ And [Jesus] said to them, O foolish ones [sluggish in mind, dull of perception] and slow of heart to believe (adhere to and trust in and rely on) everything that the prophets have spoken!

²⁶ Was it not necessary **and** ^[c]essentially fitting that the Christ (the Messiah) should suffer all these things before entering into His glory (His majesty and splendor)?

²⁷ **Then beginning with Moses and [throughout] all the Prophets, He went on explaining **and** interpreting to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning **and** referring to Himself.**

²⁸ Then they drew near the village to which they were going, and He acted as if He would go further.

²⁹ But they urged **and** insisted, saying to Him, Remain with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent. So He went in to stay with them.

³⁰ ***And it occurred that as He reclined at table with them, He took [a loaf of] bread and praised [God] and gave thanks and asked a blessing, and then broke it and was giving it to them***

³¹ When their eyes were [instantly] opened and they [clearly] recognized Him, and He vanished (^[d]departed invisibly).

John 14:2

1"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2"In My Father's house are many Mansions / dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also....

There are some thoughts I want to share around these three Bible verses that I pray will be of comfort to you today

SHANE'S NOTES: I WANTED TO HIGHLIGHT 3 TRUTHS IN THIS MESSAGE:

From Hebrews 11 – the great faith chapter it mentions all those who did incredible things by faith. You will note the different words highlighted in yellow that are mentioned in the Message Bible.

Vs 35 tells us that some received their loved ones back from the dead while others did not.

³⁹ And all of these, though they won divine approval by [means of] their faith, did not receive the fulfillment of what was promised, They won Divine approval – God saw their Faith and it had His approval BUT they did not receive the fulfillment of what was promised.

I used the 3 balloons to highlight the three positions that we have

ALWAYS

NEVER

Sovereign God

This was used to explain the above passage.

From the second Bible verse

Luke 24:13-35 Amplified Bible (AMP)

I used the Dark Glasses to highlight the Disciples reaction to Jesus death.

They were so wrapped up in their own

¹⁶ But their eyes were held, so that they did not recognize Him. They did not recognize that Jesus had appeared.

I used this to highlight the fact that we could get so caught up in our views of NEVER, ALWAYS & Sovereign God that:

We can get to focused on the balloons (Never, Always, Sovereign God) that we miss Vanessa

Object Lesson # 3 (Thin see through Veil)

She fell asleep

Object Lesson # 1 Have 3 balloons filled with helium

3 balloons represent **3 views**

- **NEVER** – God NEVER heals, never raises the dead, never does any miracles
- **ALWAYS** – God heals, raises the dead,
- **Sovereignty (Authority, Dominion, Power) of God**
 - God heals
 - God raises the dead
 - God does miracles, signs and wonders

We believe, we trust **BUT GOD Will have the last word**

And so **we fight for our position on what we believe,**

Object Lesson #2

In Luke 2

¹⁶ **But their eyes were held, so that they did not recognize Him.**

It is like they had a pair of Dark glasses on – couldn't see properly

Pair of dark Glasses

- **Disappointed**
- **Grieving**
- **Sadness**
- **But we thought...**

Look at the words used in the passage:

²¹ **But we were hoping** that it was He Who would redeem *and* set Israel free.

Yes, and **besides all this, it is now the third day since** these things occurred.

²² And **moreover**, some women of our company astounded us **and** ^{1b}drove us out of our senses. They were at the tomb early [in the morning]

Disciples couldn't see Jesus because of

As he began to share - it was like a **pantomime** (Gestures without words) – as he went through each scripture – it's me can't you see it's me but they kept on looking through

We can get to focused on the balloons (Never, Always, Sovereign God) that we miss Vanessa

Object Lesson # 3 (Thin see through Veil)

She fell asleep

As she fell asleep – **Jesus always used the term - fallen asleep when he talked about someone dying.** If you love Jesus – it is like falling asleep in one room and waking up in another

My Daughter – as a little girl would fall asleep in the lounge or our bedroom. I would simply pick her up and take her to her own bedroom.

She fell asleep in one room and awoke in another room

Vanessa fell asleep in this world – body full of cancer, sick, - she stepped through **the thin veil** into that wonderful place called heaven. (Stand on one side – Heavens side of the veil looking over to the casket on the other side of the veil)

Shane's note: You are wanting to convey how quickly the transition takes – close eyes one side (on Earth)– open eyes on the other side (Heaven)

How quickly did it happen?

Absent from the body – present with the Lord

Closed her eyes here – opened her eyes there

She is saying HEY – LOOK I'm in Heaven - **let me tell you about this place**

- Did you notice, I am healed – no more cancer, no more sickness. No more treatment
- We have always talked about going to heaven – **I'm here**

When someone young dies, we all struggle with the purpose and will of God.

Every person has a purpose in the divine design. Everyone is given something to do to show who God is – 1 Corinthian 12

Marshall Shelley and his wife lost a child shortly after birth. In writing about that brief life and their grief, he said, "Why did God create a child to live two minutes? He didn't. He did not create Vanessa to live 14 years. God created each of us for eternity.

Hey, Vanessa – what's heaven like?

Have you ever wondered what Heaven is like?

Maybe someone you love, you have been told, **"They're in Heaven now"** . . .

But, what does that mean?!

Will I ever see them again?

What will Heaven be like?

What will we do?

And **How** do we get there?

When We Get To Heaven

What Will We Be like? Will We Become Angels?

Will We Eat In Heaven?

The cartoonist Gary Larson once illustrated a familiar view of heaven: **A man with angel wings and a halo sits alone on a cloud. He has the expression of someone stuck on a deserted island, lonely and bored. "Wish I'd brought a magazine," the caption reads.**

What Is Heaven?

Heaven is a real place! Jesus spoke about heaven as a real place.

John 14: 2

"In My Father's house are many mansions . . .

I go to prepare a place for you."

He is talking about Heaven and it tells us that there are "many Mansions", or "Rooms" that Jesus is going to prepare for us.

- Streets of Gold
- Walls of Jasper
- The gates to the city are made from one solid pearl.
- River of life
- Tree of Life

This will be a place more beautiful than we can ever imagine

If earth has some incredibly beautiful places and things – that cause us to go WOW –

The grand canyons, the magnificent beauty of Sunrises and sunsets

These are only a **small taste of what is in store for us.**

How much more the place where God lives?

When God created the earth - each time He said – it is good. It is perfect.

Why would heaven be a second rate place when God who is creator makes it His home?

What makes Heaven wonderful – it's God's home

It is our forever home

There is no sickness, no disease, no sorrow, no tears

All the things that bring sadness and sorrow, tears are not there.

It's the place where Jesus lives

The Bible says – **Eye has not seen, ear has not heard nor has it even entered into the hearts of man the things that God has in store for them**

Will We Eat In Heaven?

The Bible talks many times about meals we will share together in heaven. It also talks about fruit trees and Rivers. **Isaiah 25:6** talks about God's Angels setting a table for everyone to eat with the Finest Food and Drinks!

"Marriage Supper of the Lamb", that's one of the many meals the Bible says that we will all share together when we get to Heaven.

After His resurrection, Jesus asked His disciples for some food and ate a piece of fish in front of them (Luke 24:41-43). **He proved that resurrected people can and do eat real food.**

Will we have bodies in Heaven, or will we be ghosts, floating in the clouds or Will we become angels?

The Bible says, "We know that when He appears we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He is" (**1 John 3:2**).

Jesus in His resurrected body proclaimed that he was not a ghost but that He had actual "flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39).

The resurrected Jesus did not become someone else; He remained who He was before His resurrection. When John was fishing with some of the other disciples, he saw Jesus on the seashore and said, "It is the Lord!" (John 21:7). So you will still recognize friends and family, and they will recognize you, too.

Heaven won't be boring

Our desire for pleasure and joy come directly from God. He made our taste buds, adrenaline, the nerve endings that convey pleasure to our

brains. Surely we aren't so arrogant as to think that human beings came up with the idea of having fun.

Here's the question: "If you could spend an evening with any person, who would you choose?"

Most of us would probably love to spend the evening with **a great author, musician, artist or head of state.**

Think about that for a moment – **Voices that we love to hear here** – singers whom we could listen to for hours, we rush to their concerts, download their song tracks. What amazing voices

These voices have the stain of sin on them, the fallen nature.

How will voices sound in a place where there is no more sin – just voices in their purest form.

God is the master artist who created our world, the **inventor of music**, the **author and main character of the unfolding drama of redemption.**

He's King of the universe.

Surely spending time with Him will be anything but dull!

After all, **the positive qualities we admire in others are true of God.**

He is the source of all those qualities!

**It's the place we will see Jesus
I've got so many questions for him
Hey Jesus – how did you feed the thousands with just a few loaves and fishes – yes it was a miracle – but tell me how you did it.**

What kind of questions would you like to ask Jesus?

God, why did you give the elephant such a long nose – trunk?

Will there be animals in heaven?

**The bible also says,
"The wolf and the lamb will live together;
The leopard will lie down with the baby goat.
The calf and the yearling
Will be safe with the lion,**

Isaiah 11:6

**And Also,
“The wolf and the lamb will feed together.
The lion will eat hay like a cow.
But the snakes will eat dust.
In those days no one will be hurt or destroyed”.
Isaiah 65:25**

We are looking forward to all these things BUT Vanessa is already enjoying all this and more.

Don't miss heaven for anything.

When I think of Vanessa – her legacy / life – a short BUT FULL LIFE

Vanessa

- **Worshipper -**
- **Warrior – fighter – never complained – I have fought the fight and won**
- **Word Girl -loved the word of God**
- **Witness – her short but full life has impacted multitudes**

Video presentation of Vanessa

Committal: Vanessa – we lay aside this body, just the house that you lived in Vanessa

We take hope in God's Word – Absent from the body – present with the Lord

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are a sleep, that you sorrow not even as those with no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will god bring with him.

Last Song: The Creed – Hillsong playing as Guard of Honour is formed

**Guard of honour: Family members to take Vanessa out of the building
As children form the guard of honour**

Release of balloons outside by school children

Final committal at cemetery with immediate family

SERMON SEEDS # 2

Lessons from David's Life when he lost his infant child

2 Samuel 12: 18-23

David in the loss of his child who died seven days after birth (2 Samuel 12:18–19). There are **several valuable lessons** we can learn from this passage of Scripture that can help grieving parents to face the future with hope.

Lesson One is that **David prayed fervently for his child's life** (2 Samuel 12:16). There is no doubt that as parents, this would have been the case. If it was a prolonged sickness, there would have been many hours of agony as the parents prayed, even begged God to save their child. It is a **Reminder We Can Be Recalled**. Life, when it is brief, is a reminder that all of us can be recalled at any time. Life is transitory. "Each man's life is but a breath" Psalms 39:5.

Respond in Grief Until We Find Relief

The illness and death of David's child teaches us how to respond in grief until we find relief. He did not try to bury his feelings. Grief is a felt response. It must not be smothered. David made a mistake in his grief. He tried to grieve alone. A grief shared is a burden divided. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" Romans 12:15

Lesson Two we learn from **David is in his reaction to his child's death.**

Upon learning that the infant child had died, there was an **acceptance signified by his actions when he "arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped.** Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate" (2 Samuel 12:20).

David not only accepted the death of his child, but he **gave it all over to God in worship.** The ability to worship and honour God in a time of trial or crisis is a powerful demonstration of spiritual confidence in God. By doing this, it helped David process and accept the reality of the loss of his child.

Lesson Three It is confidence in the knowledge that children who die go to heaven. David's response to those questioning his reaction to the death of his child is a great source of comfort to believing parents who have lost infants and young children. "But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? **I will go to him, but he will not return to me**" (2 Samuel 12:23). David was fully confident that he would meet his son in heaven. This passage is a powerful indication that babies and young children who pass from this world will go to heaven.

David recognized there was a distinctive line between this world and the next. The child would not come back, but he would go to the child.

SERMON SEED # 3 "FALLING ASLEEP"

John 11: 1 – 44

Vs11"He said these things, and after this he said to them: "Lazarus our friend has gone to rest, but I am journeying there to **awaken him from sleep.**"

12 Therefore the disciples said to him: "Lord, if he has gone to rest, he will get well." 13 Jesus had spoken, however, about his death. But they imagined he was speaking about taking rest in sleep. 14 At that time, therefore, Jesus said to them outspokenly: "Lazarus has died."

He fell asleep

Jesus always used the term - falling asleep when he talked about someone dying. Jesus never talked about death as dying for the Child of God. He called it 'falling asleep'

We see this pattern throughout the New Testament where the term 'fallen asleep' is used.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 *"Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words."*

If you love Jesus – it is like falling asleep in one room and waking up in another

When my daughter was very young she would often fall asleep in the lounge or our bedroom. As a loving Dad, I would simply pick her up and take her to her own bedroom.

She fell asleep in one room and awoke in another room.

This is the concept that the Bible uses when describing 'falling asleep' in Jesus

We fall asleep in this world, step through the thin veil into that wonderful place called heaven.

We fall asleep in 'this room' and awaken in 'another room'

How quickly did it happen?

Absent from the body – present with the Lord

We Close our eyes here – open our eyes there

Everyone goes to sleep at night fully expecting to awake the next morning. There is no fear in going to sleep because we expect to awake.

Jesus Wept

This is the shortest verse in the Bible. It simply says “Jesus wept”. Even though He is the son of God, even though He knew He would raise Lazarus from the dead, He wept.

Tears are a language that God understands.

Jesus wept because it was a very close friend that had died. The Bible tells us that Lazarus house was Jesus stop off place in the town. He knew the family very well, Mary and Martha. Lazarus death touched Jesus deeply.

God hates the tombs and graves just like we do.

Mary and Martha voiced the words that many families express when their child or loved one dies. “If you had just got here earlier” “Don’t you care – He was your friend”

SERMON SEED # 4 SUDDEN STORMS and JESUS

Mark 4:35-41

³⁵ As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.”³⁶ So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed).³⁷ But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.

³⁸ Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re going to drown?”

³⁹ When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Silence! Be still!” Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm.⁴⁰ Then he asked them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

⁴¹ The disciples were absolutely terrified. “Who is this man?” they asked each other. “Even the wind and waves obey him!”

- 1. Even with Jesus in the boat, there is no guarantee that you will not face a storm.**
 - a. Life has many storms that face both Christian and those who are not Christians. Death is one of them.
- 2. It was a SUDDEN Storm.**
 - a. Death can be a sudden storm that comes un-expectantly.
- 3. Jesus had promised them they would go over to the other side.**
 - a. Storms will not stop God from keeping His promises.
 - b. It may appear that God isn’t doing anything – He is asleep in the midst of your Sudden storm, your greatest storm
 - c. The Disciples asked Him – Don’t you care?
- 4. Other Boats also followed.**
 - a. There is no mention what happened to these other boats.

- b. The only boat that got to the other side was the one with Jesus in it.

5. Jesus spoke to the Storm

- a. Peace – Be Still
- b. May you experience His Peace in your storm as He speaks to the winds, the waves, the storm itself
- c. Storms don't last forever - One minister said his favorite text was, "It shall come to pass" (Acts 2:17 KJV). So, too, will the turbulence through which we presently walk. The pain will linger, but its power will be softened.

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" (Isa. 43:1–3).

SERMON SEED # 5

"REFLECTIONS ON THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE"

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The loss of loved one is a difficult burden to bear...
- 2 The Lord understands and knows our grief...
 - a. He wept when as He saw those weeping over the loss of a loved one. **John 11:33-35**
 - b. He sought to prepare His own disciples for when they would lose Him - **John 14:1-3**
- 3 God wants to be your source of comfort...
 - a. In the here and now - cf. **2 Corinthians 1:3-5**
 - b. In the hereafter - cf. **Revelation 21:4**

SOURCES OF COMFORT DEFINED

- 1 **HOPE IN CHRIST...** As Christians, we grieve, but not as those with no hope - **1 Thessalonians 4:13**
2. In Christ, we have the hope of resurrection and reunion – **1 Thessalonians 4:14-17**
3. This hope is a wonderful source of comfort - **1Thessalonians 4:18**
We are comforted that _____ knew Jesus as Lord and Saviour

B. PRECIOUS MEMORIES...

1. Memories can be a source of comfort - e.g., **Philippians 1:3**
2. Especially when they involve one's faithful service to Christ - **Philippians 1:4-5**
3. Such memories add to the confidence of our hope – **Philippians 1:6**

We are comforted to know that _____ who was faithful in Serving God

C. LOVE OF FAMILY, BELIEVERS AND FRIENDS...

1. One way that God comforts us is through other people
2. Who comfort us with comfort they have received from God –
2 Corinthians 1:4
3. In times of loss and suffering, it often brings out the best in people

We are comforted by many expressions of love and kindness from others

D. THE WORD OF GOD...

1. The Word of God is a source of peace and strength - **Psalm 119: 165; 1:1-3**
2. If such was true of the Law, how much more the words of Jesus

We are comforted by God's words of peace, love and hope

E. PRAYER...

1. Prayer is likewise a source of peace and strength **Philippians 4:6-7**
2. It is an avenue in which to find grace and help in time of need
- **Hebrews 4:14-16**
3. Many people wrote to tell me that I was in their prayers

We are comforted by both personal and public prayers, offered by so many

F. SONGS...

1. Songs of joy, faith, and hope are sung at the funeral
2. With hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs, singing both praises
God and edifies one another – **Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16**

We are comforted by songs of hope and faith that we have in Christ

II. SOURCES OF COMFORT DEVELOPED

A. HOPE IN CHRIST...

1. Our wonderful hope is for those who are faithful to Christ till death - **Revelation 2:10**
2. If we desire to have this hope, and to leave it as a legacy for those left behind, we must be faithful servants of Christ
-- **Do not wait until it is too late; you will only add to the grief of your loved ones**

B. PRECIOUS MEMORIES...

1. Now is the time to be making memories
2. Especially memories of your faithful service to God, your kindness to others, etc.
-- **What kind of memories have you been creating lately?**

C. LOVE OF FAMILY, BELIEVERS AND FRIENDS...

1. Loving relationships take time to develop
 2. Don't think only of family, you might outlive all of yours; remember brethren and friends
- **What kind of relationships with people are you developing now?**

D. THE WORD OF GOD...

1. It also takes time to become familiar with the Word of God
 2. To learn where to turn to find comfort, peace, and strength
- **Are you familiarizing yourself with the Bible so it can help you in your grief?**

E. PRAYER...

1. Prayer is of value only if we are right relationship with God
- **1Peter 3:12**
 2. Prayer is comforting only if we are already close to God
- **Are you drawing closer to God by frequently talking to Him in prayer?**

F. SONGS...

1. Like the Word of God, songs comfort us when they are familiar to us
 2. When we've had time to reflect, to understand what we are singing about
- **Do you sing spiritual songs enough to find comfort in them now?**

CONCLUSION

1. The death of a loved one has been made easier to bear because of God's grace...
 - a. Jesus died to deliver us from the fear of death - **Hebrews 2:14-15**
 - b. The death of a righteous person is precious in God's sight - **Psalms 116:15**
 - c. The loved one has finally gone home; if we remain faithful, the separation will be temporary
2. The blessings that God affords His children in time of death are so many...
 - a. But they must be received and acted upon
 - b. We must act now to benefit from them in the future

Are you preparing for the reality of death? Are you doing things today that will make the "death-day" of your loved ones (and your own) easier to bear, even a cause for celebration...?

SERMON SEED # 6

Death is Not the End of Our Story

2 Corinthians 5:1-5

Of all the fears that plague the heart of man, none is greater than the fear of death. It is our greatest fear, the sum of all other fears.

We are afraid to die.

We are afraid of what happens when we die.

Death is the fundamental human problem.

Several years ago a friend sent me an email containing these lines from a poem called "Gray's Elegy" written in a country churchyard in England:

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave

Awaits alike the inevitable hour

The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Life is short and so uncertain. **"What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes"** (James 4:14b). Moses said to the Lord in Psalm 90:5-6, **"You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning-though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered."** It is sometimes said that nothing is certain in life except death and taxes. But that is not wholly true. A clever man with a good lawyer can find a way around most if not all of his taxes, but no one escapes death. As George Bernard Shaw remarked,

"The statistics on death have not changed. One out of one person dies." Worldwide, there are approximately 56,600,000 deaths each year. That works out to 4.7 million per month, 155,000 per day, 6,500 per hour, 107 per minute, and 1.8 per second. The Greek playwright Sophocles said it this way: "Of all the great wonders, none is greater than man. Only for death can he find no cure."

Does death win in the end? **On this side of the grave it's hard to tell.** Left to our observations, we don't know much beyond the familiar words of Ecclesiastes. There is **"a time to be born and a time to die"** (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Visit any cemetery and you can't really tell much difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. Oh, you can intuit something by reading the markers, but the dead lie buried side by side, six feet underground. There they are, all grouped together, young and old, male and female, rich and poor, famous and infamous, churchgoers and nonbelievers.

Does death win in the end? On this side of the grave it's hard to tell. Or so it seems.

Does death win in the end? On this side of the grave it's hard to tell.

Or so it seems.

Death is not the end of the story for those who know the Lord. The Bible tells us what lies ahead for those who know Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5, we discover wonderful truths that give us hope as we face death with all its dark fears.

Paul tells us in very picturesque language that we have nothing to fear, that no matter how we die or when or where, and no matter what may be our physical condition at the moment of death, we have a promise from God that death itself cannot break.

I. The Certainty of the Resurrection Body

“Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands” (verse 1).

Surely the most important part of this verse comes in the first three words.

“Now we know.” Death itself confronts us with many mysteries. No one who reads these words can say with certainty how much longer they will live. *Every single breath we take is a gift from God* I am not guaranteed another day, much less another year.

As to what happens after we die, science has nothing useful to tell us. The great researchers have no certain knowledge about what happens a minute after we die. We will not get the answer from philosophy or from history. If you visit a vast cemetery, all you know for certain is it is full of dead people who once were alive. Try as you might, you cannot divine from studying the dead what happens when we die.

As to what happens after we die, science has nothing useful to tell us.

There is speculation, and then there is revelation. Paul says there are some things we can know with certainty.

1. We live in a tent.

Our bodies are like tents. They wear out, they sag, they expand, they wrinkle, the joints get creaky, the arteries harden, gravity pulls everything downward, the heart slows down, the eyes grow dim, the teeth fall out, the back is stooped, and the arms grow weary. Our bones break, our muscles weaken. The body bulges in the wrong places. We brag about our strength but a tiny microbe can kill us. Sooner or later we grow old and our bodies begin to break down. Eventually they stop working altogether. No amount of Vitamin C or Siberian Ginseng can change that fact. At best, we can only slow down the aging process; we cannot delay it forever.

As we age, we pay more attention to things like diet and exercise. Fitness is in. We've got Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig and Curves, and we've got runners and bikers and marathoners and people who lift weights four times a week. You can do the P90X workout or the “Insanity” workout or you can do Tae Bo with Billy Blanks. You can go to Bally's or Gold's Gym or to one of those 24-hour gyms where you can exercise at three in the morning if you want to.

You're falling apart even while you read this sermon.

Now all of that is good. Exercise is good and good nutrition is even better, and it would help all of us to get in shape and stay in shape. But I have a bit of news for you. *Your body won't last forever.* You can eat all the low-carb ice cream you want, but your body will still fall apart in the end. Did you know your body disintegrates all the time? *The cells of your body are actually programmed to die.* The scientific term for this is apoptosis. And each day the average adult loses 50-70 billion cells. That's not a misprint. Before the sun goes down today, between 50 and 70 billion of your cells will die. That's 350 billion cells a week. No wonder you need to lie down and take a nap. You're falling apart even while you read this sermon.

2. We will one day trade in our tent for a building.

Think about the difference between a tent and a building. Tents are temporary and flimsy, easily torn, and meant to be replaced. A building is strong, built on a foundation, and not meant to be moved.

Someday we will give up our tent and replace it with a building made by God himself. That one fact tells us something important about death.

Death is not the end.

Death is not reincarnation.

Death is not evaporation.

Death is not annihilation.

Death is a trade-in.

One day we will trade in our broken down bodies for a new body. Look what Paul says about that new body.

It is from God.

It is not made with hands.

It is eternal.

It is heavenly, not earthly.

Death is a trade-in.

That's what Paul means when he says, "We know." Lots of things we don't know about the future, but this much is certain. *We won't have to live in tents forever.* Someday our "tent" will be replaced with a "building" made by God.

II. The Nature of the Resurrection Body.

"Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (vv. 2-4).

What will the coming day of resurrection be like? We can find three answers in these verses.

1. It is like putting on an overcoat.

When Paul says we long to be clothed, he uses an unusual Greek verb that means something like "to be clothed upon." It has the idea of putting on an overcoat, which is literally a coat put over (or upon) the body. Paul looks forward to the day when Christ returns and thinks to himself, "I can't wait for that day to come because I will put on my new resurrection body like I put on an overcoat."

2. It is the answer to our groaning.

We groan because of a job we hate. We groan because of unfulfilled dreams. We groan because our bodies break down. We groan because our marriages break up. We groan because our children go astray. We groan because our friends disappoint us.

We groan because we live in a fallen, mixed-up, messed-up, broken-down world, and we ourselves are broken down. So we look for a better day and a better place, and we dream of a better world where there is . . .

No more cancer.

No more abuse.

No more hatred.

No more hurricanes.

No more crime.

No more sadness.

No more night.

No more sickness.

No more death.

3. It removes our deepest fears.

Among all the fears associated with death, one of the greatest must be that we will die alone and forgotten. As sad as death seems, how much worse it must be to die in some distant place with no one around to give you comfort. How blessed we are if we can die with our loved ones gathered by our side. Oftentimes that is not possible because death comes unbidden to our door. We may end up dying in some lonely place despite our best plans.

We don't have to worry about our loved ones who died in Christ.

What is the current condition of believers who die before Jesus returns? *The clearest thing we can say is that they are "with Christ" and "with the Lord" in heaven.* Paul says as much in verses 6-8. We don't have to worry about our loved ones who died in Christ. They have passed into the presence of the Lord Jesus himself. That, I think, is all we can know for certain, but it is enough. *When we die, we will not die alone because we will be with Jesus forever.* And if we should live to see Christ return, we will receive our resurrection body at that very moment. Either way, we have a hope that death cannot shake.

One question remains. Paul, how can you be so sure?

III. The Guarantee of the Resurrection Body.

"Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (v. 5).

1. We were made for something better than this.

Sometimes we look at the world around us and wonder, "Is that all there is?" To which Paul answers a resounding, "No!" We were made for something better than the sadness we see in this world.

We will have a new body - not the same as before.

We will have a new body - not just renovated or reconstructed.

We will have a new body - but our identity will not change.

When we die, we will not die alone because we will be with Jesus forever.

We are made for a new life and a new body and a new existence with the Lord. God himself has made us for this very purpose. Our future does not hang on our own desires but on the eternal purpose of God who called us to be his children. *We are saved by an eternal love that will not let us go.* Not even death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. God has guaranteed our future resurrection.

Here, then, is a hopeful thought for anyone who has buried a loved one who died in the Lord. How do we know that we will see them again? *The answer is, it all depends on where we look.* You can go to a cemetery, take a lawn chair with you, and sit there with some sweet tea and a ham sandwich. Go and wait as long as you want. You'll see lots of death because that's what cemeteries are all about. Lots of people being buried; not many being raised from the dead. In fact, the last resurrection took place 2000 years ago.

We are saved by an eternal love that will not let us go.

So how do we know there is a coming day of resurrection? There are two solid answers to that question.

A. He raised his own Son.

The first answer is that God raised his own Son from the dead. *This is the objective ground of our faith in the coming day of resurrection.* If God would

not leave his Son in the grave, he will not abandon those who trusted in his Son. Death cannot win in the end because our Lord conquered the grave.

B. He gave us the Spirit as a sacred deposit.

Paul mentions the second answer in verse 5. God gave us the Spirit as a “deposit.” Some translations say “down payment” or “earnest.” When you buy a house, you put down a sum of money called “earnest money.” It’s a small amount that legally binds you to pay the full amount later. That’s what God has done through His Holy Spirit. The Spirit who indwells us is God’s “down payment” on our future resurrection.

God signed on the dotted line and said, “I will raise from the dead all who have trusted in my Son.” And then he made the down payment through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It’s as good as done.

It’s going to happen.

You can take it to the bank.

God signed on the dotted line and said, “I will raise from the dead all who have trusted in my Son.”

What should this truth do for us today? *I think primarily it changes the way we look at death.* We have it all wrong.

We think we’re going from the land of the living to the land of the dying.

But that is not true.

We’re going from the land of the dying to the land of the living.

By the way, what is required for a resurrection? You’ve got to die first! No death, no resurrection. And unless the Lord comes very soon, that will be the way most of us will end our earthly journey.

Someway, somehow, someday we’ll die. And whoever is around at that moment will take us to the mortuary where the undertaker will do what he does to prepare us for our burial. We’ll be dressed up and cleaned up and made up to look semi-natural, but we’ll still be dead. Then they will take us in for the funeral service where someone will say some (hopefully) nice words, people will remark on how they miss us, they will sing a bit, say some prayers, and then the box will close and we’ll be placed in the ground.

I say that not to alarm anyone but to state the simple fact. *We’re all going to do some “box time” eventually.* The man who wrote this wonderful passage in 2 Corinthians 5 returned to the dust of the earth a few years later. Every Christian who has ever lived has died eventually. So far that’s the report from the cemetery.

We’re going from the land of the dying to the land of the living.

But, thank God, it’s not the last word. If you have a loved one who died in Christ, you should go out to the grave and have a little talk. Maybe it’s your grandfather who loved the Lord and is now buried in the grave. Just go out there and say this with confidence, “Grandpa, I miss you, and I’m glad you are with the Lord right now. But I want you to know that God is not finished with you yet. He’s got some more work to do.”

Then maybe you can read this passage out loud just to remind yourself of what Christians really believe.

Bright and Cloudless Morning

I quoted a verse from one of the well known hymns:

On that bright and cloudless morning when the dead in Christ shall rise,
And the glory of his resurrection share;

When his chosen ones shall gather to their home beyond the skies,
And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.
That is our ultimate hope. We're not looking for some hazy view of heaven
where we float around on clouds all day. We're looking and waiting and
longing for that "bright and cloudless morning" when the Lord returns and the
dead in Christ shall rise.
It's going to happen.
You can bet your life on it.
God has promised it.

It is not soul salvation that we believe in but whole salvation.

When Christ saves you, he saves all of you. Every part of you is saved and
every part of you will be delivered from sin. **It is not soul salvation that we
believe in but whole salvation.** The resurrection of the body is the final step
in our salvation:

Step #1: We are saved from the penalty of sin.

Step #2: We are saved from the power of sin.

Step #3: We are saved from the presence of sin.

I ran across a wonderful phrase from the *Pulpit Commentary* that lifts my heart
every time I read it. *There will be "victory on the last battlefield."*

Life is a series of battles for all of us ,and we all "take it on the chin" sooner or
later. But in the last battle, the struggle with death, there is victory for the
children of God.

"Death, be not proud," wrote John Donne. *God will not let death win.* Henry
Wadsworth Longfellow expressed the same truth in his poem "God's Acre."

Here are the first and last stanzas:

I like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls
The burial-ground God's-Acre! It is just;
It consecrates each grave within its walls,
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.
With thy rude ploughshare, Death, turn up the sod,
And spread the furrow for the seed we sow;
This is the field and Acre of our God,
This is the place where human harvests grow.

Oh! How precious is the dust of a believer!

What an image that is: "the place where human harvests grow." Go to any
graveyard where Christians are buried and there you will find "God's acre."
Take off your shoes. It is holy ground. *Human harvests are growing there.*
Death will not have the last word for Jesus has conquered the grave. Because
he rose, we too shall rise. In that faith we take courage to live for Christ with
reckless abandon because death is not the end of our story.

SERMON SEED # 7

What a wonderful testimony _____ has left of his life for us to remember. I am so glad I can stand here today and know that there was a day when _____ said yes to Jesus.

Matthew 11:28 - Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

He did come to Jesus.

HE CAME HUMBLY

I visited him in the hospital and I asked him a question.

“What if you were to die and found yourself at the gate of Heaven, and God asked you ‘Why should I let you in?’ I believe that He answered that he didn’t know.

I then explained to him that nobody deserved to go to heaven, including him.

Romans 3:10 - As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

I further explained that God in His love sent Jesus to die for our sins and rose from the dead.

2 Corinthians 5:21 - For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 - For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; [4] And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

I explained to him that he could not earn his way to Heaven, but he could put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.

He came to Jesus humbly. He prayed by faith to receive Jesus as his Savior.

HE CAME HUMBLY HE LIVED HOPEFULLY

When a person truly puts their faith in Christ, change takes place. They have a new hope for the future, knowing that they are going to Heaven. Others can see their hope by the change that takes place in their lives.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

What was new about him?

**HE CAME HUMBLY
HE LIVED HOPEFULLY
HE WENT HOME**

Early Friday evening God welcomed him into his presence. **He had come humbly and lived hopefully. Now he is home.**

Psalm 116:15 - Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

2 Corinthians 5:8-9 - We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. [9] Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

He is at rest as Jesus promised.

And if God did ask him, "Why should I let you into Heaven?" His answer would have been something like this, "Father, I don't deserve to come into Heaven. I'm a sinner. But I trusted your Son as my way to Heaven. He died for me. My faith is in Him. Based on a sincere testimony like that, God would receive him.

Matthew 11:28 - Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Now what about you? If you are in spiritual turmoil or lack spiritual rest or if you are unsure what will happen to you after you die what should you do?

COME HUMBLY

Acknowledge before God that you are not good enough to earn your way into Heaven. The Bible says that it is ...not of works lest any man should boast,

Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who died for you, and that he paid for your sins in full.

Receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior.

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

LIVE HOPEFULLY

- If you truly trust Jesus for eternal life, you will begin to experience spiritual rest.
- You will have a desire to learn more about the Lord Jesus, to obey Him, and to serve Him.
- You will have a desire to attend church in order to worship God and be with God's people

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:

old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

COME HUMBLY
LIVE HOPEFULLY
GO HOME

Having trusted Jesus and having lived a changed life through the power of God, you will be ushered into the presence of God.

COME HUMBLY
LIVE HOPEFULLY
GO HOME

SERMON SEED # 8

ALL THAT SHE (HE) HAD – A FUNERAL MESSAGE FOR A BORN AGAIN
CHRISTIAN
BASED ON THE “I AM’S” IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

All that she (he) had of real importance in this life can be summed up in four words: THE LORD JESUS CHRIST!

JESUS WAS HER (HIS) BREAD OF LIFE

John 6:47-48 - Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. [48] I am that bread of life.

JESUS WAS HER (HIS) LIGHT

John 8:12 - ...I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

JESUS WAS HER (HIS) DOOR

John 10:9 - I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

JESUS WAS HER (HIS) SHEPHERD

John 10:11 - I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

John 10:14 - I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

JESUS WAS HER (HIS) WAY, TRUTH AND LIFE

John 14:6 - Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

JESUS IS HER (HIS) RESURRECTION

John 11:25-26 - Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: [26] And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

SERMON SEED # 9

Psalm 16:11 - Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

This verse will help you enjoy life now and forever.
Three words help us explain this verse.

PATH
PRESENCE
PLEASURES

PATH - Thou wilt show me the path of life.

Almost everyone wants to go to Heaven. They want eternal life.

There is a hindrance to eternal life. It is called "sin". Sin is disobedience to God.

Romans 3:23 - For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death...

So people are looking for a way to forgiveness and everlasting life.

Some people think that there are many paths to Heaven.
There is only one.

Matthew 7:13-14 - Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: [14] Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

John 14:6 - Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

My friend, Jesus the sinless Son of God died for your sins. He did for you what you could not do.

2 Corinthians 5:21 - For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

How does one get on the path of life? It is simply a matter of trust.

John 1:12 - But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Put your total faith in Christ and get on the path of life.

PRESENCE – ...In thy presence of fullness of joy...

Jesus wants this life to be a life of joy for those who trust Him.

John 15:11 - These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

John 15:4-5 - Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. [5] I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

John 15:7 - If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

As we practice the presence of Jesus in our lives through prayer, reading of His Word and the guidance of His Holy Spirit we will have fullness of joy.

PLEASURES - at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

As we said the path of life is eternal life. That means that there are pleasures in the physical presence with Jesus that will last forever.

Revelation 22:1-5 - And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. [2] In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. [3] And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: [4] And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. [5] And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

SERMON SEED # 10

DON'T WAIT A FUNERAL MESSAGE

NOTE – This message was given at the funeral of a man I led to the Lord the day before he died. You may use the same outline for someone who was saved for a long time or even unsaved, just adjust your introduction accordingly.

When you love someone, you tell them the truth.
And because I love you, I'm going to tell you the truth.
_____ was no boy scout. He had his faults and yes his sins.

God was very gracious to _____. He came to know Christ as his Savior in what we might call, "the eleventh hour" or "the last minute". In my 31 years of doing funerals, and I've done a lot of them, I can only remember one other person besides _____ who made his decision for Christ at the last minute.

So my message to you this morning is "Don't Wait".

DON'T WAIT – YOU MAY NOT GET ANOTHER CHANCE

2 Corinthians 6:2 - ...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Psalm 90:10 - The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

DON'T WAIT – YOU'LL MISS GOD'S BEST

John 10:10 - The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

DON'T WAIT – YOU MIGHT BE FOOLING YOURSELF.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Matthew 7:21 - Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Summarize the Gospel
Give Invitation
Pray

SERMON SEED # 11

SO WHAT HAPPENED?

_____ was a believer.

He believed that he was a sinner.

He believed that Jesus died for his sins, was buried and rose again.

He believed that Jesus was the only way to Heaven, and at a specific moment in time, trusted Jesus as His Savior.

So what happens to a believer when he dies?

PASSAGE THROUGH THE VALLEY

Psalm 23:4 - Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

PEACEFUL HOME GOING

Psalm 116:15 - Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints

PROMOTION TO HEAVENLY HOME

John 14:2-3 - In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

PERMANENT GAIN

Psalm 16:11 - Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Psalm 23:6 - Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

SERMON SEED # 12

Psalm 27:1

When someone as well loved as _____ passes away, there is sorrow, and anxiety, and worry and fear. When we face times of uncertainty such as this one, it is comforting to know that there is help and encouragement in these times of sorrow.

Psalm 27:1 - The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

V FOR TIMES OF DARKNESS THE LORD GIVES LIGHT

V FOR TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY THE LORD GIVES SALVATION
V FOR TIMES OF WEAKNESS THE LORD GIVES STRENGTH

SERMON SEED # 13

PEACE

If I could bestow on you one gift this morning, it would be the gift of peace. People lack peace not only at funerals but as they go through their everyday activities. There is a universal lack of peace in this world. God wants each of us, including you, to have peace.

PEACE IS NEEDED

Why do we lack peace? Why is there such much turmoil in our lives, the lives of those we know, and in the world in general?

There is no peace, because we are all sinners.

Isaiah 64:6 - But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

When we are involved in sin, God does not give us His peace.
Isaiah 48:22 - There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.

Isaiah 59:2 - But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

And to make matters worse, this lack of peace leads to eternal separation from God.

Ezekiel 18:4 - ...the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Romans 6:23 - The wages of sin is death...

So, peace is needed. We don't have peace because God hates sin. That's the bad news. Now for the good news!

PEACE IS NEAR

Peace is near because of the Lord Jesus, God's Son

Isaiah 53:3-6 - He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes

we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."
2 Corinthians 5:21 - For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 - For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

PEACE IS NOW!

There are two kinds of peace that you need. And you must have the first kind of peace in order to have the second kind of peace.

1. Peace with God:

Romans 5:1 - Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Quote John 3:16 - Quote

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PEACE WITH GOD COMES WHEN SOMEONE TRUSTS CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND IS BORN AGAIN!

PEACE WITH GOD IS AVAILABLE NOW!

2. Peace of God:

The peace of God is only found by those who first make peace with God.

John 14:27 - Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Isaiah 26:3-4 - Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

Philippians 4:6-7 - Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

**PEACE IS NEEDED
PEACE IS NEAR
PEACE IS NOW!**

SERMON SEED # 14

1 Timothy 4:7
FAITHFUL

A Funeral Message for a Christian (I used this outline for my Father's eulogy)

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

**HE WAS COMMITTED TO HIS FAMILY
HE WAS COMMITTED TO HIS FRIENDS
HE WAS COMMITTED TO HIS FAITH**

SERMON SEED # 15

Genesis 23
ABOUT DEATH

In this chapter Abraham deals with the death of his beloved wife, Sarah. Some things about death have not changed since the days of Abraham.

DEATH IS A TIME OF SORROW - Vss. 1-2

DEATH IS A TIME OF SUPPORT - Vss. 3-6

Dealing with the death of a loved is easier when there are those there to support you.

In Abraham's case, the Sons of Heath were supportive, offering to him a place of burial of his choice.

Praise God for those Christians who "...weep with them that weep." (Romans 12:15)

DEATH IS A TIME OF SPENDING - Vss. 7-16

Abraham purchased a field with a cave in order to bury Sarah. We can't escape expenses when someone dies. However, I personally feel that we can spend too much. Although a casket is necessary, I don't think it needs to be the most expensive. After all, the body is only a shell that God will raise again.

DEATH IS A TIME OF SEPARATION - Vss. 8, 17-20

A dead person is placed out of sight. - Vs. 8

The dead person is gone.

The dead person is separated from the land of the living and his loved ones and friends.

For the Christian however, this separation is temporary. 2 Corinthians 5:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Job 19:25-27

LIFE!

Those of us who know Christ as Savior realize that we have life beyond the

grave.

That's because we have:

A LIVING REDEEMER - Job 19:25a - "For I know that my redeemer liveth..."
Isaiah 53

A LIVING REIGN - Job 19:25b - Job 19:25 "...and that he shall stand at the
latter day upon the earth:" Psalm 2, Isaiah 11

A LIVING REALITY - Job 19:26-27 - "And though after my skin worms destroy
this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and
mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within
me." 1 John 3:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18

SERMON SEED # 16

Psalm 116:15

THE DEATH OF HIS SAINTS (A Funeral Message)

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

The death of a saint (born again Christian) is precious because of:

1. THE PERSON WHO DIED - A CHILD OF GOD - John 1:12,
Romans 8:15-16
2. THE PRICE THAT WAS PAID - THE SHED BLOOD OF CHRIST -
1 Peter 1:18-19
3. THE PLACE THAT HE HAS GONE - HOME - Philipians 1:21, 2
Corinthians 5:6-8, Revelation 21:1-4
4. THE PROMISE OF RESURRECTION - RAPTURE -
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

SERMON SEED # 17

John 14:1-6

BE AT PEACE

INTRODUCTION - Vs. 1 - "Let not your heart be troubled..."

A PREPARED PLACE - Vs. 2 - "I go to prepare a place for you..."

Jesus is preparing a place for us in Heaven.

But, in a real sense He already prepared a place for us by dying for our sins
on the cross. Without the cross there would be no forgiveness. Without
forgiveness there would be no place in Heaven. 2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans
5:6-9

A PROMISED RETURN - Vss 3-4 - "I will come again..."

Jesus will return for the resurrection of all believers. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
But when a believer dies, his spirit enters into Heaven. Therefore, in a sense,

Jesus has already come for that individual. Philippians 1:21, 2 Corinthians 5:8

A PERSONAL WAY - John 14:5-6 - "I am the way..."

Jesus is personally the way to Heaven.

Each person must personally trust Christ as his Savior. John 3:36

John 14:1-6

HE'S (SHE'S) DEAD BUT...

HE'S DEAD BUT JESUS CAN BE TRUSTED – Vs. 1

The dead Christian has trusted Jesus as Savior

HE'S DEAD BUT JESUS PREPARED FOR HIS ARRIVAL IN HEAVEN – Vs. 2-3

HE'S DEAD BUT JESUS CAME AGAIN FOR HIM – Vs. 3

HE'S DEAD BUT JESUS IS SUFFICIENT – Vss. 4-6

SERMON SEED # 18

Four "W's"

Worshipper

Warrior

Word Person

Witness

OBJECT LESSONS

We see in the Bible that God used many Object Lessons to explain a Spiritual Truth. When dealing with Children and Adults for that matter, using an object lesson as part of the service will help you bring the truth across more effectively.

Children are literal thinkers; many of the terms we use can be very abstract. Using Object lessons will help you unveil the truth for children to understand.

THE WRIGGLY INSECTS¹

"One time there were some wriggly insects living at the bottom of a pond. One of them noticed that sometimes one of the insects would crawl up one of the reeds and that they would never see him again. So he said to the others "Next time any of us feel the urge to climb up the reed - they are to make sure that they come back and tell the others what happened.

Sure enough, one day one of the insects got the urge to climb up the reed. Once he reach the top he rested for a bit and then he found that he could spread out his wings and fly up into the sky.

He was having such a wonderful time when he remembered that he promised to go back and tell the others how beautiful it was. So he flew down but when he hit the water he found he couldn't get back. At first, he was sad but then he thought that even though he couldn't get back to the others that maybe that they would be able to look and see him flying with his beautiful wings. And he knew that one day that they would make the climb too and be able to join him."

We are all going to die some day and we will be unable to go back as much as we would like to, to the people that we love. But, one day if we believe in God, they will able to join us there and be comforted by the fact that we are with Him.

KINDER SURPRISE

Kinder Surprise is a name given to a chocolate egg that contains a surprise. The egg is wrapped in an attractive coloured foil. Inside the egg, there is a plastic capsule. Hidden inside the capsule there is a surprise kitset toy that children love to make up.

The Kinder Surprise can help children understand what happens to someone when they die.

The wrapping represents how we present our bodies, to look as attractive as we can. However the foil is not who we really are.

¹ Source unknown. This was heard at a funeral service of a young girl who died after a long illness and sent to me by Laurie Nash, QLD.

The chocolate represents our body. Everyone loves chocolate. We love our bodies. They help us live, give us fun, help us do lots of exciting things. But the body is not the permanent part of us.

The surprise inside is like the real person. It is permanent and cannot come together until the outer layer (our body) is finished with.

Psalm 139:13-14

You are the one
who put me together
inside my mother's body,
and I praise you because of
the wonderful way
you created me.
Everything you do is marvellous!
Of this I have no doubt. 2

The time came for _____ to be finished with their outer body. God has now received them with the same joy and excitement we see when a child discovers the toy inside a Kinder Surprise.

CATERPILLAR BECOMES A BUTTERFLY³

Adapt this story to suit.

Cornelius (or Cornelia) was a caterpillar. Not a very extraordinary caterpillar. But a very every day, common caterpillar. He lived in a cabbage.

Cornelius thought his cabbage was really big. Actually, he thought the cabbage was the whole world because he had never been anywhere beyond this cabbage.

He was born in the cabbage, grew up in the cabbage and he ate the cabbage. His cabbage was everything to him

Cornelius had a friend who was much wiser than he was. He told Cornelius this incredible story about how caterpillars do not stay caterpillars but one day they change into something much more beautiful and that they fly away

Cornelius thought this was just science fiction because that was something he did believe in. Once he had seen a UFO. It had flown out of the sky and almost landed on the cabbage. Cornelius had never forgotten that experience. The UFO had big wings that flapped and flapped. At the front, it had a beak that looked ever so sharp. The UFO had made a big hole in the Cabbage and if Cornelius had not crawled away quickly, he was sure he would have been snapped up by the UFO and taken away to another planet.

3. Cornelius is a visual object lesson that you can show the children changing from a caterpillar to a butterfly is available for purchase from Kidsreach.

That experience left Cornelius very shaken.

If only what that other caterpillar had said was right, he thought to himself. He would have liked to believe that there was more to life than this cabbage.

One day Cornelius started to feel tired. So he crawled into his cabbage and fell into a deep sleep. He slept for a long time and when he woke he was a beautiful butterfly.

FROM TENT TO BUILDING

John 1:14 He dwelt amongst us – literally means he pitched his tent amongst us.

The body we see lying here today in the casket / coffin is the house / the tent that _____ lived in.

It was the temporary tent / house he lived in.

Tents are not meant to be things we live in forever. They are temporarily until we move into a permanent place

That is what Jesus was saying when he said “I go to prepare for you a place” it is something that is permanent

Abraham looked for the city whose builder and maker was God Scripture:

Open up by talking about things that seem to take a long time and things that seem to take a short time. For example, you might talk about how the school holidays that seemed so long are over very quickly, but math class seems to take a long time.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-3 and John 14:1-4, which talk about the home Jesus has prepared in heaven. Explain that "perishable" means that your body will die and that "imperishable" means you will receive a new body that will never die. Tell your child that death isn't forever, but heaven is.

You may want to use a few “Perishable” tins of food as an example.

A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO HEAVEN

Pick up some travel brochures of amusement parks, zoos and other kid-friendly attractions. Show them to your kids. Ask them which places they would like to go and why. Explain that all of these places are great, but no one gets to go to any of them forever. Describe heaven for the kids based on Revelation 21-22; read through it first and pick out details that are appropriate for your age group. Focus on the idea that those who go to heaven get to stay there forever.

Then, have the kids make travel brochures for heaven with a folded sheet of paper and crayons or markers.

FROM NATURE WE LEARN

Anything that may be familiar to a child which in nature leaves an empty shell (as a snail does) or which changes from one form to another (such as a chicken from an eggshell, a frog from a tadpole or a butterfly from a chrysalis) provides a helpful comparison. The one to have moved out has finished with

the old shelter for ever, so it can safely be disposed of - there is no fear of the chicken being trapped inside whilst its old shell is buried. It is something like that with a death. We of course feel sad to be left behind, but it is better for the one who has gone away to be with Jesus. One day, he will give all who believe in him a new body.

Often times euphemisms replace the words DEAD and DIED, with passed away, Grandpa is sleeping, or we lost Grandma. These softened explanations can cause fears in a young child that they too may get lost or go down for a nap and never wake up. Or worse yet, as 4 year old once asked asked, "What if I go to sleep and wake up in a casket like my Grandpa?"

Children see the evidence that living things die in many areas of their lives. They see and hear about it on the television, in movies— even cartoons, and on an ordinary walk in the park or to school, (ie: a dead bird, a squirrel or other small animal). They notice the change of the seasons as plants and trees appear to wither and die. They may have experienced the death of a pet. It is hard not to notice the difference between a live goldfish and one floating motionless on the top of the fish bowl. Death causes changes in a living thing. Very young children may not be able to fully comprehend the complexities, but they are aware that death looks and feels different.

THE ETERNITY TIMELINE

Have an extra-long piece of string and place one small bead on the line. The small bead represents our lives and the place we take up compared to eternity – it is a very small.

The Truths to share:

We live and build our lives on earth like this is our forever home but it is such a small piece of our lives. We came from eternity and we are going back to eternity which is without end.

ANOTHER WAY OF SHARING THE TIME LINE IDEA OF ETERNITY:

Take a very long long rope / string.

Have a very small piece of coloured tape placed at the one end.

Explanation: Imagine this rope represents your whole life here and into eternity. The little red coloured tape at the one end represents your life on earth, the rest is your life in eternity. See how small this time here on earth is compared to the rest of your life.

The Bible says “Eternity is in our hearts”

We are eternal beings living in a human body.

Once your little coloured tape life is ended, you have all the rest of eternity to live

The sad part is we work and live like this is all our life is. We work nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of this earth life and say, I will enjoy the rest of my life as if that were all your life was.

What we do in this little red part determines what and where we will exist for the rest of eternity –

Our mission is to use this little ‘red’ earth life preparing for where we will spend the rest of our forever life (Eternity)

EGG

We're all like an egg. When we reach for an egg, we identify it as a hard, white or brown oval-shaped object. Then we crack it over a bowl, and instantly, the sticky, white and yellow glob inside the bowl is the egg and the white or brown oval is just the shell that contained the egg. Our bodies are simply the shell, that when cracked and broken ceases to be the egg, and it's discarded or buried. But, the inside of the egg is its substance; it IS the egg. Just like us, our spirit is who we are; it's our substance and continues to be us without bodily form until Jesus returns when He'll change our bodies into heavenly ones, like His, that will never die.

EXPLAINING WORDS

Eternal / Eternity means having no beginning and no end. God is eternal

AFGAN BANDS - no beginning and no end – an endless circle. The explanation below uses different aspects of this object lesson. **The one we want to focus on here regarding Eternity is Diagram 2 and Diagram 5**

What you Need: 3 strips of newspaper (Length of the paper 6cms wide X 100 cm length) or you can use Till Roll which are used for cash registers.

Magic Transparent Tape

What to Do:

Diagram 1: The Three (3) Strips of paper / till roll you have cut.

First Strip of paper: Simply join the two ends to make an unending circle with a piece of the Magic Transparent Tape. (I have not shown a Diagram for this one)

Diagram 2: Take the second (2nd) strip of paper and do the same as you did for the first strip BUT this time you will TWIST the Paper ONCE before joining the the two ends with a piece of the Magic Tape.

Diagram 3: Take the third (3rd) strip of paper and do the same as you did for the first strip BUT this time you will TWIST the Paper TWICE before joining the the two ends with a piece of the Magic Tape.

Bible Verse: 2 Corinthians 5:21 “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God IN Him.”

Diagram 4: When you cut the FIRST Strip of paper down the middle and continue cutting until you have cut through the entire length of the strip – you will end up with TWO SEPARATE Rings / Circles

Diagram 5: When you cut the SECOND Strip of paper which has the ONE TWIST down the middle and continue cutting until you have cut through the entire length of the strip – you will end up with ONE CONTINUEOUS CIRCLE / RING.

Diagram 6: When you cut the THIRD Strip of paper which has the TWO TWISTS down the middle and continue cutting until you have cut through the entire length of the strip – you will end up with TWO RINGS / CIRCLES JOINED TOGETHER

You are now ready to do your lesson

Diagram 4: Some people think that when we have finished living here on earth – our earth life, we simply come to an end, we are cut off and there is no more existence. As you are sharing this truth, keep cutting down the centre of the strip. The strip will divide into two separate circles.

Diagram 2: Take the second (2nd) strip of paper. Begin slowly cutting through the middle of the strip as you did in the First strip.

The Bible tells us that we are made for eternity – to live forever. We are born with eternity in our hearts. This part of our life – the earth life we live, as we live it, it will seem like it comes to an end BUT the Bible says we live forever.

As you keep talking - keep cutting until the last snip. THERE I TOLD YOU God doesn't love you – snip through the last piece and you will have what is seen in Diagram 5.

This CONTINUEOUS Circle seen in **Diagram 5** reminds us that we live forever.

AFGHAN BANDS GOD & man



DIAGRAM 1



DIAGRAM 2



DIAGRAM 3



DIAGRAM 4

AFGHAN BANDS GOD & man



DIAGRAM 5



DIAGRAM 6



SONGS

- Steven Curtis Chapman: Heaven Is The Face
- **Music** (opens a new window at You Tube)
- **Angel Baby Lullabies**
- **Meditative Music for Healing**
- I Want You Here – Plumb (parent to baby)
- I Know Who You Are – JJ Heller (bereaved or infertile parent to God)
- Holy Darkness (parent to God)
- Glory Baby-Mandy Mercer (mom to baby)
- Heaven is the Face-Steven Curtis Chapman (parent to God)
- Stronger-Mandisa (singer to the mom)
- Selah-I Will Carry You (mom to baby)
- Natalie Grant-Our Hope Endures (particularly for multiple pregnancy loss)
- Barlow Girl-Never Alone (mom to God)
- Kerrie Roberts-No Matter What (mom to God)
- Natalie Grant-Held (mom to others)
- Amy Grant-Better Than A Hallelujah (singer to mom)
- Laura Story-Blessings (mom to God)
- Mercy Me-Bring the Rain (parents to God)
- Your Hands-JJ Heller (mom to God)
- Mark Shultz-What it Means to Be Loved (parents to baby, adverse diagnosis)
- Gone Too Soon (dad to baby)
- Skillet-Lucy (parents to baby, particularly after feelings of guilt)
- Beautiful Boy - John Lennon
- Carry You Home - James Blunt
- Fly - Celine Dion
- Gone Too Soon - Michael Jackson
- Lullaby - Billy Joel

COMMITTALS

"This child belongs to God. Today we release his hands as God has grasped them over there, and he will never let them go. "The key to your child's casket is not in the hands of the keeper of the cemetery. But the key is in the hands of the Son of God, and he will come some morning and use it."

"I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty'" Revelation 1:8

BIBLE VERSES FOR THOSE WHO GRIEVE

It is important to focus the family's attention on the Word of God. This is our source of strength and comfort. I have categorized the Bible verses according to the need. The verses that would be helpful to a parent who has lost a child at birth (still born) would be different to those whose child died at say 10 or 11 years of age. One child would have begun a history which could be focused on while the other child literally died at birth. Many verses would be helpful to all groups.

Our goal in ministering to the bereaved families is to highlight the **Blessed Hope we have in Jesus Christ**. As a believing family this can be very comforting to know.

Comfort: Assurance & Hope

Job 19:25-25 *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God*

Ecclesiastes 7:1 *A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth.*

Matthew 5:4 *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted..." (Jesus' words)*

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 *For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.*

Comfort Because He Cares for Us

Psalms 61:1-2 *Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer; from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I*

Psalms 94:19 *When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.*

Romans 8:31 *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our*

affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

God Has a Great Plan for All

Psalms 119:50 *This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 *For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted*

Romans 14:7-9 *For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.*

Philippians 1:21-23 *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.*

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."*

Isaiah 41:10 *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."*

Isaiah 43:2 *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."*

Psalms 18:28 *"You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light."*

Psalms 46:1-2 *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea."*

Revelation 21:4 *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

Psalms 119:50 *"My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life."*

Romans 8:18 *“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”*

2 Corinthians 7:10 *“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”*

Psalms 18:2 *“The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”*

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 *“Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”*

1 Peter 5:6-7 *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”*

Psalms 23:4 *“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”*

Psalms 73:26 *“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”*

Psalms 22:24 *“For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.”*

Psalms 27:4-5 *“One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.”*

Psalms 30:5 *“For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.”*

Psalms 34:18 *“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”*

Matthew 11:28 *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*

Lamentations 3:31-33 *“For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone.”*

Romans 8:31-39 *“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

1 Corinthians 15:52-57 *“in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Peter 1:3-9 *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”*

John 14:1-4 *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God¹; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”*

The Bible offers many specific words of comfort for those in pain.

Lamentations 3:31-32 - For the Lord will not cast off forever, but. . . he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.

Isaiah 49:13 - For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

Psalms 9:9 - The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

Psalms 30:2 - O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.

Psalms 46:1 - God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Psalms 62:1 - My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him.

Psalms 147:3 - He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Luke 6:21 - Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

John 16:22 - So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 - Blessed be the God and Father. . .who comforts us in all our affliction. . .

God's Love

A reminder of God's love can help someone who is grieving.

Genesis 28:15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. . . I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Psalms 48:14 - For this God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.

Psalms 136:26 - Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Matthew 6:8 - For your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

1 Peter 5:7 - Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Grace and Compassion

Remembering and experiencing God's grace can bring great comfort.

Isaiah 58:11 - The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs. . .

You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

Psalms 109:21-22 - But you, O Sovereign Lord, deal well with me for your name's sake; out of the goodness of your love, deliver me. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.

Psalms 116:5-6 - The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the simple-hearted; when I was in great need, he saved me.

1 Peter 5:10 - And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Hebrews 4:16 - Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Psalms 57:1-2 - Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. I cry out to God Most High, to God, who vindicates me.

Sorrow

The Bible has much to say about sorrow, which can provide comfort after loss. Psalms 34:18 - The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Psalms 72:12 - For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.

Psalms 73:26 - My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Psalms 119:50 - My comfort in my suffering is this: your promise preserves my life.

Psalms 139:12 - Even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

Matthew 5:4 - Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Matthew 11:28-30 - Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. . . My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

John 14:27 - Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Revelation 21:4 - He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

Reassurance

The Bible offers many words of reassurance.

Deuteronomy 31:8 - The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Isaiah 41:10 - Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 58:9 - Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

Psalms 23:4 - Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Psalms 126:5-6 - Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

Romans 8:28 - All things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

2 Thessalonians 3:16 - Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way.

Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

POEMS

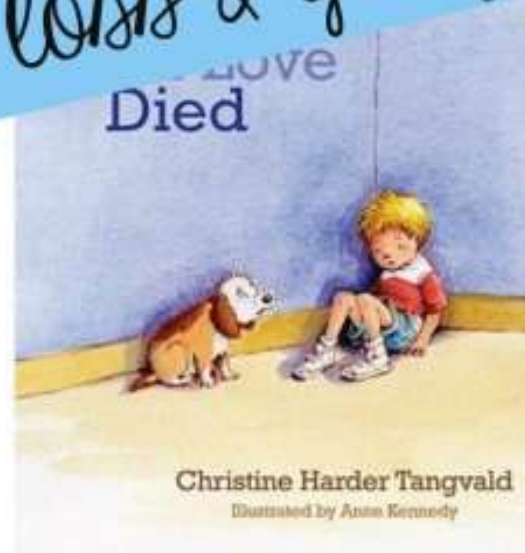
The Unfinished

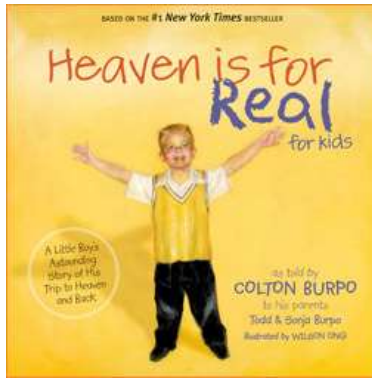
We cannot judge a biography by its length,
Nor by the number of pages in it.
We must Judge it by the richness of its contents
Sometimes those unfinished are among the most poignant.
We cannot judge a song by it's duration
Nor by the number of it's notes
We must Judge it by the way it touches and lifts our souls
Sometimes those unfinished are among the most beautiful.
And when something has enriched your life
And when it's melody lingers on in your heart
Is it unfinished?
Or is it endless

CHILDREN'S BOOKS THAT DEAL WITH DEATH, LOSS AND GRIEF



5 Books for Kids
on death, loss & grief

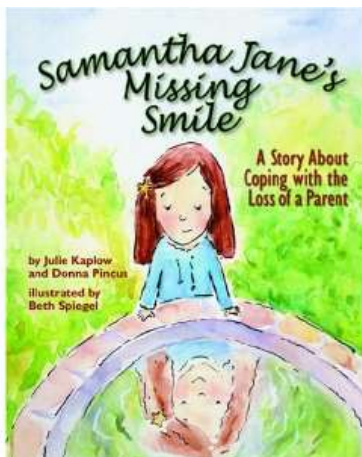




Heaven is for Real for Kids as told by Colton Burpo

If your child has ever asked, “What is Heaven like?” then this is the book for you! I read the original Heaven is for Real about 6 months ago and I found it to be so comforting and encouraging in my faith. If you are unfamiliar with this book, it is the story of Colton Burpo—a three-year old who claims he went to Heaven during his emergency

appendectomy surgery. The details that he shares with his parents are incredibly accurate to the scriptures that talk about Heaven in the Bible. The picture book for children is filled with **beautiful** illustrations. It is written in first-person as though Colton is sitting in the chair next to you, sharing details from a vacation. Every page also has an additional scripture reference that validates Colton’s message. I will definitely be buying this book to keep in our home library because I feel that it paints a beautiful picture of Heaven that kids can understand while also being extremely compatible with what we know about Heaven from Scripture.



Samantha Jane's Missing Smile by Julie Kaplow and Donna Pincus

This is the story of a young girl named Samantha Jane (Sammy Jane) who lost her smile after her dad died. She doesn’t want to do anything that she used to do, because everything brings back memories of her dad and makes her want to cry. A wise neighbor, who has known Sammy Jane since she was a baby, encourages her by saying, “Crying can be a very good way to wash some of your sad feelings out, so there’s more room for happy

feelings to get in.” This sweet woman also helps Sammy Jane to realize that even though she can’t see or feel her Daddy, that he will always be a part of her life through the memories that she carries of him. Everywhere she looks around her, she can see things that remind her of her dad. This book also addresses the guilt that children (and adults) can sometimes have if they smile, laugh, or have fun after their loved one has died and dismisses the idea that a child shouldn’t talk about their loved one with other family members for fear of making them sad. There is also a very helpful note to parents at the end that provides lots of relevant information to help a child cope with the death of a loved one (written by two clinical Psychologists).



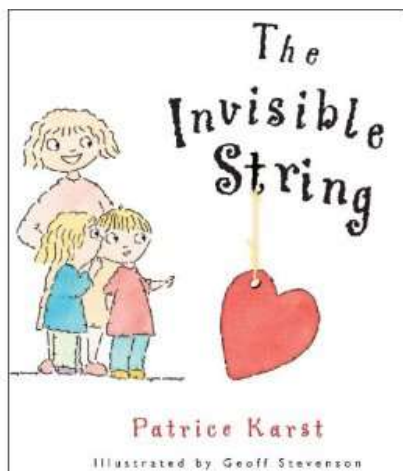
What is Heaven Like? by Beverly Lewis

Two siblings sit in a tree house, missing their grandpa and reflecting on something he told them before he died: “Don’t be too sad. We’ll see each other again someday.” The two children want to find out more and set out to discover what Heaven is like. They decide to ask everyone around them: the mail carrier, a teacher, the librarian, the ice cream truck man, the dentist, a

zookeeper, and a neighbor. Finally, the little boy goes to his mom and tells her about his interviews. She helps clarify some things and encourages him to talk to both her and their father. Later, the children’s Grandma answers an important question: “How do I know if I will go to heaven when I die?” This is the only book of the five I read that tackles this tough question. Here is a quote directly from the book:

“God’s only son, the Lord Jesus, came to our world as a tiny baby. Then, when Jesus grew to be a man—when it was just the right time—He died to take away our sins...God wants us to love Him back, but the choice is ours. We can either obey Him or go our own way. If you believe in Jesus—and trust Him to forgive your sins—you can be sure you are going to Heaven.”

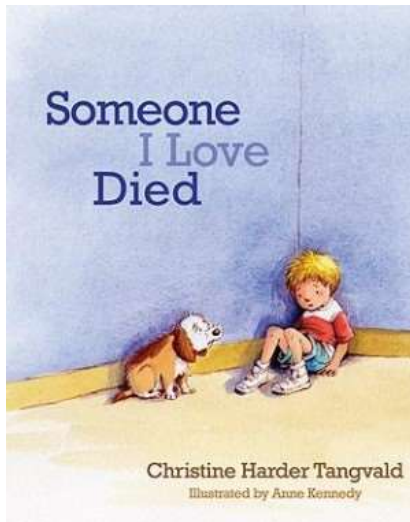
Although I think there were some liberties taken that aren’t necessarily true in scripture (getting to eat whatever you want and do whatever you want, for example), overall this book paints a comforting picture of Heaven in a way that a child can understand.



The Invisible String by Patrice Karst

This book is appropriate in any situation where a child is separated from a loved one (death, a deployment, school separation, children being shuttled back and forth to divorced parents, etc.). The premise of this book is, “People who love each other are always connected by a very special String made of love.” The string can reach anyone, anywhere...even loved ones in Heaven! The String can’t go away, even when you’re angry or upset. I really enjoyed this book and think it can be used in a

variety of different situations. It is short and interesting enough to capture the attention of children.

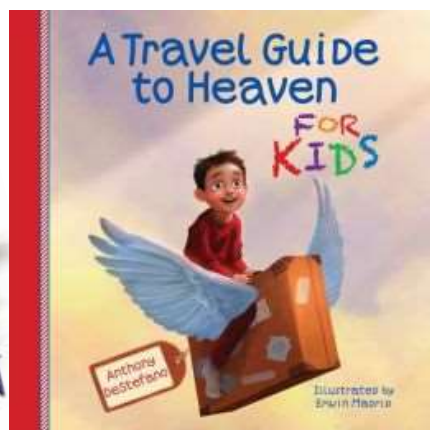


Someone I Love Died by Christine Harder Tangvald

This is a book I recently picked up at our local Christian bookstore. One thing I really like about this book is it can be personalized. There are places for a child to draw pictures of how they are feeling, what they look like they are sad, etc. as well as places to fill in the blanks of the name of the person who died and other information as well. This book goes into a lot of detail about death, including details about how the soul continues to live but

the body is like an empty house. It was explained extremely well (and is Biblically-based), but it might be a book best read to the child by someone who isn't super-close to the deceased as I would imagine it to be quite difficult to read without getting totally choked up. This book also talks about Heaven and how Jesus opens the door to Heaven when we accept him as our Savior. It doesn't go into great detail about Heaven, saying: "We don't know exactly where Heaven is or what it is like. But we don't have to know, because *God knows*. But we do know Heaven is wonderful. It is not a sad or scary place to be. It is a happy place, a fun place, a terrific place. In fact, Heaven is better than the very best place you can think of."

OTHER BOOKS



CLOSING HELPS

- Recognize that you are not alone. You have God. You have your brothers and sisters in Christ. You have close friends and family. Lean on them. They are there to help you.
- Don't put time limits on your recovery. Don't expect a day to pass without thinking about your child, nor should you want to.
- Talk about your child. It's important that you share the story of your child with others.
- Take care of yourself and your other children. They, too, are suffering. They grieve the loss of a sibling and have the additional discomfort of seeing their parents in grief.
- Try not to make any major decisions at least for the first year.
- Expect that getting through the many "firsts" following the death of a young child—first birthday, first Christmas, etc.—will be painful.

ADVICE FROM THOSE WHO HAVE TRAVELLED THE ROAD OF GRIEF

Unless you have been down this Road Journey of grief yourself, it is really impossible to empathize with the grieving family. The following stories are real life true experiences and the advice they share is very practical.

Some dear friends of mine **Lawerence and Jen Twigg** from South Africa have had to walk this journey. They have generously shared some practical advice for parents.

Losing a child – thoughts of a heartbroken parent

These are the (personal) do's and don'ts experienced by our family. It may certainly not apply to everyone as families and people have different ways of dealing with grief.

Do:

Talk about it – as much as you want to. Often loved ones prefer not to talk about their loss in case it brings up painful memories or because they don't want to be heard boring other people.

That child may be dead but they are never lost to you. So honor their memory and talk to them and about them as often as one can. It is therapeutic and it keeps the memories and love alive.

Grieve for as long as you wish. There is no time limit to losing a child or a brother/sister. People who may suggest “are you over it yet?” are idiots and should be treated as such.

Cry whenever you want to and do not be embarrassed to show how much you miss and love your lost child.

Write. I personally have found writing to be very therapeutic and almost a release valve. I often cry when I am writing because I am putting down in words what I often do not verbalize.

If there are other children – the survivors – envelope them in love and attention. They too have lost a brother or a sister and they are hurting unbelievably.

Accept that people who you were friendly with before may not be friends in the future. Some people are unable to relate and cut themselves off from you.

Find yourself other people who have also lost a child. A support group. My wife belongs to an “angel moms” group and it has helped her so much. They meet once a week and they are rocks for each other.

If spiraling – seek help. Your pastor, a psychologist, a friend, whoever.

Take whatever medication it takes – anti depressants etc – if it helps then do so (with doctors permission)

Be kind to yourself. You have suffered the worst possible loss anyone can imagine. The loss of a child is WAY MORE stressful than losing a parent, a sibling or a close friend.

Accept that you will never be the same person you were.

Don't:

Talk about your lost child at the expense of the survivor/s. We have friends who lost a daughter and they are forever saying “ if Jane was here she would....” Or “ Jane was SOOO GOOOOOD at....” And they do it in front of Melissa – the survivor. It is cruel and unnecessary.

Don't isolate yourself. It leads to depression and anger and more hurt. Reach out to people – especially your immediate family. Share the pain and the hurt. It helps everyone.

Don't do ANYTHING that you do not wish to do. You have a right to feel differently about how you see the universe.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Local Hospitals: _____

Local Emergency Numbers

Ambulance: _____

Police: _____

Local Funeral Directors / companies:

Other:

SECTIONS STILL TO DO:

What is heaven really like

Breaking the news to siblings

Helping children grieve

The death of a parent when you are young

Specific Funerals

- Funeral for a miscarriage
- Funeral for a Still Born
- Funeral for a child ages 1 day until 5 years
- Funeral for a child ages 6 years until 12 years
- Funeral for older children (Teenagers)

Internet resources

- Websites
- Songs
-
- ???
- ???