

Facing Death: From Dust to Dust

A resource for bible study groups



Pastoral note for leaders

This resource is designed to help your group think about and discuss death. Together, you will explore what the Bible says about death and share some of your own experiences. Obviously, this topic is a difficult one. As the group leader, please consider *who* is in your group. People who have experienced recent or particularly traumatic bereavements may find this resource difficult. Similarly, if you have anyone in your group who wrestles with depression or suicidal tendencies, proceed with caution. For these reasons, this resource may not be appropriate for every group or context. If you decide to go ahead, be sure to inform your group members about the nature of this content. You may need to have one-to-one conversations with certain group members, before you decide whether to proceed. Allow your group members the opportunity to take a break at any point in the study.

Further, it is important that you and your group have access to the right pastoral, and if necessary psychological, support. Speak to the leadership of your church before using this resource. Ascertain what pastoral care or counseling is available through your church, and provide this information to your group.

Although this subject is difficult, we believe it is worth talking about. Death is a reality — and the Gospel changes how we understand it. It is our prayer that this resource is a blessing to your group.

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To begin, here is a quote from a book called *Horseradish*, by Lemony Snicket.




“It is a curious thing, the death of a loved one. We all know that our time in this world is limited, (. . .) and yet it is always a surprise when it happens to someone we know. It is like walking up the stairs to your bedroom in the dark, and thinking there is one more stair than there is. Your foot falls down, through the air, and there is a sickly moment of dark surprise as you try and readjust the way you thought of things.”




What do you think about this quote? Does it match your experiences or not?

The Bible has a lot to say about death. And, it tells a very different story to what we hear elsewhere. If we are to face death well, we should listen to this story closely. This resource is designed to be used for bible study or fellowship groups, ministry teams and in one-to-one contexts. It aims to foster honest conversations about death — our grief, fears and hope. It also aims to help you grow in your theological understanding of death and equip you with spiritual and pastoral wisdom. This resource is not a ‘solution’ to death or grief. Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can offer that. However, by guiding you through God’s Word and encouraging you to share vulnerably with God’s people, this resource can be a helpful tool.

1) What does the Bible say about death?

The Bible presents a complex picture of death. Below, we have listed a range of Bible passages that address death. As you read through them, look for attitudes toward death or propositions made about death. Feel free to split into smaller groups, then share your findings with the whole group. We’ve included a wide range of passages, because the Bible presents a complex view of death. You won’t be able to get through them all now. Focus on the starred passages, and you may like to revisit the others in your own time.

Genesis 3:8-24 	Psalms 88	1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18	1 Corinthians 15 
Romans 1:19-2:16	1 Samuel 31	Psalms 16 	Matthew 10:28
Psalms 103	Revelation 21:4	Acts 13:36	Luke 22: 39-46

John 12:24-26	Jonah 4:1-11	Romans 8:38-39 	Philippians 1:20-21
Matthew 26:36-44 	Job 3:20-22	Ecclesiastes 4:2-3 	Romans 6:23

As you read these passages, consider . . .

a. What does the author feel about death?

b. What is God's relationship to death?

c. Does the attitude toward death in this passage comfort you or make you feel uncomfortable? Why do you think that is?

2) Grieving with Hope

As we've seen, the Bible depicts a number of responses to death. Death is seen as a fearful enemy, an inevitable reality, a defeated power, an outrage, and a welcome future for the believer. This plurality should comfort us. We are not expected to be stoic in the face of death. Our fear, distress and anger are no surprise to God. And yet, 1 Thessalonians 4:13 tells us not to 'grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope'.

So, what does it mean to grieve with hope? Let's explore that together now.

a. Why do all humans face death?

Refer to the passages you read earlier, or turn to Genesis 2:16-17, Genesis 3:17-19 and Romans 5:12-14.

- b. 1 Thessalonians 4:14 explains why we have reason for hope. Why does Jesus' resurrection change how we understand death?*
- c. What might 'grieving with hope' mean for a Christian community, family or individual? Unpack that together.*
- d. What about feelings of fear, anger or grief? What place do these have in the Christian response to death?*
- e. What have you noticed or experienced when it comes to facing death as a Christian? If you're comfortable, this might be a good opportunity to share stories and questions.*

3) Conclusion

In this sin-scarred world, death leaves its mark on us all. Thank you for being courageous enough to explore this issue from a biblical perspective, and share your experiences with each other. If this session has been distressing in any way, it's important that you tell your group leader or a friend. However you're feeling, you are not alone. There is support available.

As we close, let's remember the hope we have in Christ, our great advocate in the face of death. Read Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17:6-26. In response, pray for each other and submit yourselves — in life and death — to God.

Further resources

We hope this bible study has been thought provoking. As you continue to think and pray about this topic, here are a few resources which might help.

- Tim Keller's book, [On Death](#).
- SALT [Podcast interview](#) with Richard Hibbert
- Dave McDonald's book, [Hope Beyond Cure](#).