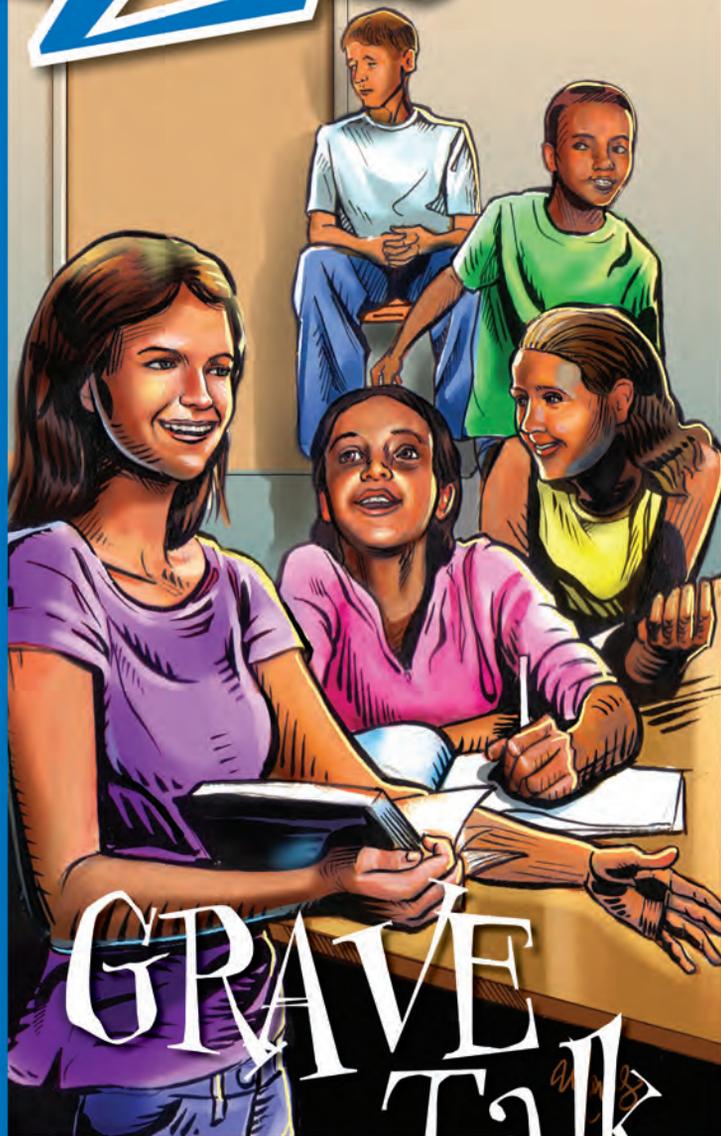


KidZone

Guide 12



GRAVE Talk

Nobody wanted to be in Youth Church that morning.

The students were as hyper as hummingbirds while the teacher tried to engage them in conversation.

“Our lesson this week explores what happens when someone dies,” Mr. Cruz said. “Have any of you ever been to a funeral?”

A discussion with myself would have been more interactive, Mr. Cruz thought. *No one is paying attention.*

Then Damon, a visitor, spoke.

“Soon I’ll be going to my mom’s funeral.”

“Huh?”

Silence swallowed the room. The twitching kids froze like statues in shock.

“Uh . . . I . . . um . . .” the teacher stammered, “how long does the doctor give her to live?”

“Less than three months.”

“I am so sorry,” Mr. Cruz offered.

Damon stared at his Reeboks. “She knows Jesus, so we believe that she will go to heaven when Jesus comes, but it’s real hard right now.”

Then Damon asked the same question Mr. Cruz had





posed earlier—but with much different results. “So what will happen when my mom dies?” When Damon asked it, everyone participated in discussing the answer. Together they turned to John 11 and explored the story of Jesus and Lazarus.

If you have ever wondered what happens when someone dies, then check out the story for

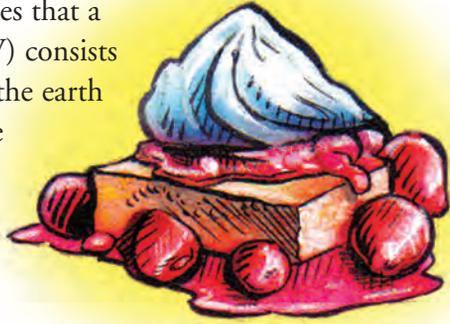
yourself. Let’s take a look at what the youth group came up with that morning.

1. The presence of death doesn't mean that God is absent

Martha was upset! She blamed her brother’s death on Jesus. “Lord,” she complained, “if You had been here, my brother would not have died” (verse 21). Later Mary echoed the same idea (see verse 32).

Why are we often tempted to think that if someone dies, then God has forgotten us? Like Martha, we tend to think that if a person is following Jesus, then he or she shouldn’t die. It’s true that Jesus taught that believers would never die (see verse 26). What He was talking about is living with Him forever—not merely our death on this earth. Death in this world is more like a temporary separation between strawberries and shortcake. Hmmm, maybe that needs some explanation. . . .

You see, the Bible teaches that a living being (“soul” in KJV) consists of two things: the dust of the earth and the breath of God (see Genesis 2:7). Take away one of the two elements, and by definition you no longer have a living being. Or think of strawberry shortcake. By definition, you need two things for this dessert: strawberries and shortcake. Take away the fruit, and all you have is cake. Take away the cake, and all you have is fruit. Similarly, when someone dies, the dust returns to the ground, and the breath (spirit) returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Take one without the other, and you don’t have a living being.



1. Fill in this diagram based on Genesis 2:7.

a. + = living being
("soul" in KJV)

Death is a temporary state for those who believe in Jesus; it lasts only until Jesus comes back. That’s what Jesus explained to Martha in John 11:25. What did Jesus say will happen to those who die believing in Him?

b.

If someone you love dies, don’t think that Jesus doesn’t care. Jesus cares deeply. In fact, we are told that when He arrived at the tomb of Lazarus, He cried. When you hurt, Jesus cries with you. And someday He will restore to life everyone who believes in Him.

2. Death is only a nap

Another way to think about death is to imagine a long nap. Let's look at the story of Jesus and Lazarus again. Jesus said to the disciples, " 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.' Then His disciples said, 'Lord, if he sleeps he will get well' " (John 11:11, 12).

2. Read verse 13. What was Jesus actually talking about when He said Lazarus was sleeping?

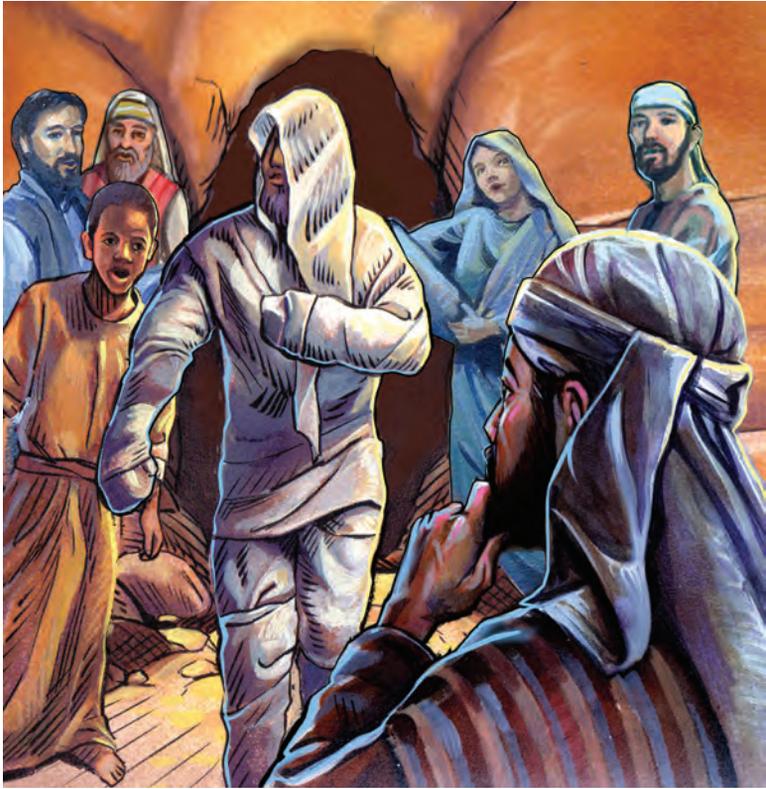
According to Jesus, death is just a peaceful pause before He returns back to this Earth. We don't need to worry that dead people are watching us from heaven or haunting us as ghosts. They are resting in their graves, not aware of anything that is going on around them (see Ecclesiastes 9:5).



3. Jesus has power over the grave

The story of Lazarus shows that Jesus has power over death. Jesus stood at the burial cave and called Lazarus to come out. Jesus shouted, and Lazarus woke up. Bandaged eyes blinked. Stiff fingers wiggled. And a mummy arose. Listen to the story as it's told in Scripture:

"It was a simple cave in the hillside with a slab of



stone laid against it. Jesus said, 'Remove the stone.'

"The sister of the dead man, Martha, said, 'Master, by this time there's a stench. He's been dead four days!'

"Jesus looked her in the eye. 'Didn't I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' . . . Then he shouted, 'Lazarus, come out!' And he came out, a living being, wrapped from head to toe, and with a kerchief over his face.

"Jesus told them, 'Unwrap him and let him loose' " (John 11:38-44, *The Message*).

This is a good story to remember when death stings your circle of family or friends. In the end, Jesus has power over the grave.

(continued on p. 8)

HOPE at a Funeral

Light through the stained glass spills rust and red and orange on my grandpa's bald head. As the organ plays "It Is Well With My Soul," the preacher organizes his notes. Our family sits in the front pew, consumed with memories of Grandpa.

Karl, we do not want you to be ignorant about your grandpa who has fallen asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.

They are good memories. I remember the explosion of laughter when Grandpa triumphantly slammed down "the birdie" in a Rook game. I remember A&W root beer floats. And darebase. And groaning as I completed one more pull-up with Grandpa's encouragement.

We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will resurrect your grandpa who has fallen asleep in Him.

Grandpa planted a big garden, broke up fights, pulled the grandkids in his wagon, chuckled at jokes, and sparkled when the topic of conversation drifted to rock hunting.

According to the Lord's own word, we tell you, Karl, that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede your grandpa who has fallen asleep.

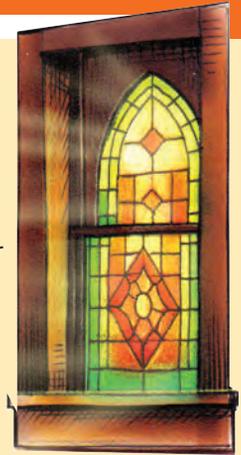
He comes to mind when I smell Old Spice cologne and when I taste a really sour pickle. When I hear a squealing hearing aid, I can still hear him grumbling about those "lousy things."

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 your grandpa will rise first.

Grandpa's fire (life) has gone out. But we who believe hold firmly to God's promise that Grandpa will live again.

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with your grandpa in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, Karl, encourage others with these words. (Adapted from 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, NIV.)

– Pastor Karl



3. Discover what the apostle Paul says about the exciting day when Jesus brings the dead people who loved Him back to life. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and write down when this will happen.

In Youth Church that morning, the group encouraged Damon with the words of Scripture. “God is with you, Damon,” Mr. Cruz said, “especially when your mom dies. She won’t be dead forever, but will sleep until Jesus comes again. And when He comes again, she will burst out of the grave, for Jesus is stronger than death!”

“That’s good to know.” Damon managed a slight smile.

Talking to God

*Dear God, thank You
for the hope that I can
have in You—even in
death. In Jesus’ name,
Amen.*



kidZone

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Editors: Kurt Johnson, Russell Holt, Rachel Whitaker

Writer: Karl Haffner

Illustrations: Marcus Mashburn

Design: Michelle C. Petz

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