

# Death & Dying:

## Using the Period of Grief to Fortify the Bereft

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# Purpose of the Study

- The purpose of this study is to provide support and encouragement that helps the bereft transition through grief and develop capacity to approach the inevitability of their mortality with confidence and assurance in the merits of Christ.

# Significance of the Study

- Knowing that the first death is largely inescapable, it can be viewed as an opportunity to remind us to focus our existence so that at our end, we can say: “I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7, NASB); “I brought glory to [Jesus] here on earth by completing the work [He] gave me to do” (John 17:4, NLT).

# Some Reflective Questions

1. Where do you want to spend eternity?
2. How would you describe your life?
3. What is the true object/purpose of your life?
4. What does the heavenly ledger record about your life?
5. Are you making an investment in the New Jerusalem?
6. Did you RSVP for a seat at the marriage supper of the Lamb?
7. Did you confirm your reservation for the New Jerusalem?

# Short Time to Live This Life

- “Mortals born of woman are of **few days**... (Job 14:1, NIV). “[God has] decided the length of our lives. [He] knows how many months we will live, and we are not given a minute longer” (Job 14:5, NLT).  
“The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10, NKJV).

# Fragile & Temporary Existence

- “...God formed **man** [from] the **dust** of the ground...” (Gen 2:7). “...We are **dust!**  
...[Our] **days are as grass**, ...as a **flower of the field**.... The wind [goes] over it, it is gone and the place... shall know it no more” (Pss 103:14-16). “...You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (Jam 4:14, NASB).

# Choice: Eternal Life or Eternal Death

- “If a man dies, shall he live again...”  
(Job 14:14)?
- It depends! Depends on what?
- “Blessed and holy is s/he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power...” (Rev 20:6, NKJV).

# Plan Ahead for Your Future Abode

- “The living at least knows they will die, but the dead knows nothing...” (Ecclesiastes 9:5, NLT). Hence, “it is utter **folly to defer** to make a **preparation for the future** life until nearly the **last hour of the present life**” (Counsels on Stewardship {CS}, 325.1). So contemplate what you need to do to secure eternity with Christ Jesus.

# A Living Will is a Daily Business

- A living will has instructions specifying actions to be taken on behalf of another who is unable to make decisions ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living\\_will](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living_will)). This is an excellent protocol for health care. But if you want to “store your treasures in heaven...” (Matt 6:20, NLT), “the servants of God should be **making their wills every day in good works and liberal offerings to God; [remembering that]** ...Jesus... for [our] sakes became poor, that through His poverty [we] might be made rich" (2 Cor 8:9 in CS, 326.2). Give the recording angels substance to write in the heavenly ledger about your life (Rev 20:12, NKJV).

# Make a Living Will Daily

- “[Jesus] deserves the whole heart, the property, [and] all that [we] have and are” (CS, 326.2). “We must all be **rich in good works in this life**, if we would secure the future, immortal life” (CS 327.2). See that no one deceives you in this matter because Christ himself says: “Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds” (Rev 22:12, NLT). We are servants of Christ and He will settle accounts with us (Matt 25:19, TNIV), whether we are slothful (Matt 25:26) or diligent (Matt 25:21); so be a good and faithful/diligent servant.

# Make Timely Life-Course Corrections

- Judgment has begun (Dan 7:10) and it started “...at the house of God...” (1 Pet 4:17). A decision on **every case will be made**. “Many names... on... church [rolls]... have robbery recorded against them [in heaven].... ...Unless these [souls] **repent** and **work for the Master**... they will... share in the doom of the unfaithful steward” (Matt 25:30 in CS 327.2). Church attendance is good, but it is not enough to go to church. You must take an inventory of your life, assess your life’s purpose and direction, and make life course corrections, if indicated, for you must know whether you are investing for eternal life or eternal damnation (Mark 3:29; Prov 1:22-26).

# No Gift is Insignificant with Christ

- “...The one with the smallest gift left... [it] unimproved, [‘...I was afraid, ...and hid {my} talent in the ground...’ (Matt 25:25, NASB); therefore, ] ...a warning [goes] to all who feel that the smallness of their endowments excuses them from **service for Christ**” (Christ Object Lesson {COL} 355.3). “Whoever is faithful with little is also faithful with much...” (Luke 16:10, Common English Bible). Put your talents to use for Christ.

# Saved to Serve not Merely to Attend Church

- “...You have been bought with a price (1 Cor 6:20); **all that you have and are** is to be **used to the glory of God and the good of [humanity]**. Christ died... to save the world.... He asks your co-operation in this work. [‘Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with skin diseases and throw out demons...’ (Matt 10:8, Common English Bible, CEB). God expects us to ‘...strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strays {and} seek out the lost...’ (Eze 34:4, CEB)]. ...With... unwearrying effort [we] are to seek to save the lost” (Christian Service, {ChS} 109.3).

# Seal Your Connection with Christ

- “...**The true object of life is ministry.** Christ Himself was a worker (Acts 10:38) and **to all His followers** He gives the **law of service:** service to God and to their fellowmen. ...**By living to minister for others man is brought into connection with Christ**” (Mind, Character and Personality, {2MCP} 566.1). So do your best to avoid this question: “...Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you” (Matt 25:44, NLT)?

# Advance Christ's Kingdom on Earth

- “[We] should be constantly at work using the talents entrusted [to us]... for building... the Lord's cause. [God] does not propose to sustain His work by miracles” (CS 329.1). “Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over and poured into your lap. The amount you give determine the amount you get back” (Luke 6:38, NLT).

# Advance Christ's Kingdom on Earth

- “Not one in a hundred among us is doing anything beyond engaging in common, worldly enterprises (Luke 8:14). **We are not half awake to the worth of the souls for whom Christ died**” (ChS 81.5). How can this condition describe the soldiers of Christ?

# Advance Christ's Kingdom on Earth

- If the followers of Christ were awake to duty, there would be thousands where there is one today, proclaiming the gospel in heathen lands, [or] sustaining it with their means, sympathy and prayers (Steps to Christ, p. 86 in ChS 81.6). “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead and Christ will give you light” (Eph 5:14, NKJV). We ought to be alive because “...when we were dead in trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ” (Eph 2:5, NKJV), who “...was raised from the dead...” (2 Tim 2:8) “...and seated... at His right hand [of God] in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:20, NKJV).

# Advance Christ's Kingdom on Earth

- “Make Christ's work your example [Luke 4:18-19 & 6:17]. **Constantly He went about doing good**: feeding the hungry and healing the sick. [On one occasion, He told the disciples: ‘My nourishment comes from doing the will of God... and from finishing His work’ (John 4:34, NLT)]. ...The commander of the heavenly courts, [Php 2:6 & Acts 5:31], ‘...was made flesh and dwelt among us...’ (John 1:14 & Php 2:7), and His lifework is an example of the work we are to do (Welfare Ministry, {WM} 53.1).

# Advance Christ's Kingdom on Earth

- “Would you enjoy your substance [Prov 3:9]? Then... bless... the suffering (CS 329.2). Loose... bands of wickedness, ...undo heavy burdens, ...[free] the oppressed..., ...break every yoke (Isa 58:6), deal thy bread to the hungry, bring the poor that are cast out to thy house and [clothe] the naked” (Isa 58:7). Service is important because people are judged “...by the things which were written in the books” (Rev 20:12, NKJV). Don't argue with religious types who are lazy. Emulate Christ's example and labor for the well-being of others and Christ will strengthen and honor you.

# Investment in Eternity Begins Now

- “Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God” (WM 52.2). “...Work... while it is day; the night [comes] when no [person] can work” (John 9:4).

# The Grave is a Temporary Abode

- When probation expires at death, whatever the status of our work, we sleep the first death (John 11:11 & Luke 8:52) from which none, but Christ can deliver (Pss 89:48). “...Blessed are the dead, [who] die in the Lord...” (Rev 14:13), “...[whose names] are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Rev 21:27, NKJV). “...God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus (1 Thes 4:14, NKJV); unlike the second death, “...in the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone...” (Rev 21:8, NKJV) from which there is no recovery. “...Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15, NKJV).

# The Grave is a Temporary Abode

- Those who have died in Christ leave consolations for surviving family members. “People are laid to rest and do not rise again. Until the heavens are no more, they will not wake up nor be aroused from their sleep (Job 14:12, NLT). But “...we who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet [Christ] ahead of those who have died” (1 Thes 4:15, NLT) “for... Christ died, and rose, and lived again that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living” (Rom 14:9, NKJV) and “...judge [of] the living and the dead...” (2 Tim 4:1, NKJV).

# Our Sorrows at Death is Tempered

- “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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3, NKJV). Therefore, be comforted by this assurance: “...The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thes 4:16, NKJV).

# Living for Christ Pays Well

- “Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. For them the second death holds no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him a [1,000] years” (Rev 20:6, NLT), participating in the executive judgment (Rev 20:4, NKJV), which follows the investigative judgment (Dan 7:10 & 1 Pet 4:17). In contrast, “...the rest of the dead lived not again until the [1,000] years were finished...” (Rev 20:5), at which time Satan is loosed from being bound (Rev 20: 2-3 & 7), just in time to see “...the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2, NKJV). Did you RSVP a seat at the dinner table?

# Transformation is Available to All

- “...What gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when He returns” (1 Thes 2:19, NLT)? Glorification is on the horizon when Christ returns to “gather [His] saints..., that have made a covenant with [Him] by sacrifice” (Pss 50:5). “[...The] angel coming... from the east, carrying the seal of... God... [is placing it] on the foreheads of His servants” (Rev 7:2-3, NLT). “The people of God are nearing the borders of the eternal world...” (ChS, p. 236.6). “...In the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown, ...those who have died [in Christ] will... [rise] to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed... [having] bodies that will NEVER die” (1 Cor 15:52 & 54, NLT).

# Convocation of All Ages

- “**The righteous** dead will come forth from their graves.... They will hear the voice of Jesus... saying..., ‘Your warfare is accomplished. Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’” (Matthew 25:34 in The Acts of the Apostles, {AA} 34.1). “...What can be of more importance... [now] than... [being] loyal to the God of heaven” (ChS, p. 236.6)?

# The Reward is Worth the Effort

- “[God help us to accomplish two goals]:
  1. ...Attain to... the righteousness which is of [and] by faith” (Rom 9:30 & Philippians 3:9), and
  2. ...Submit to the righteousness of God, [who is Christ]” (Rom 10:3 & 1 Cor 1:30).
- “Whoever pursues righteousness and unflinching love WILL find life, righteousness and honor” (Prov 21:21, NLT).

# Where Do We Go From Here?

- Death is a sobering experience; it brings emotional pain in its train. But we can learn to triumph by using the energy of our pain as fuel for transformation and hope. Embrace the death experience by taking inventory of your life and answering the reflective questions that follow.

# Some Reflective Questions

1. What is my life?
2. What is the true object/purpose of my life?
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# Act Now

- ❑ Procrastination is a thief time. Make haste, delay not; you have not a moment to waste. Close the deal with Christ by entering into covenant relationship with Him. If you have not already repented and baptized, then take care of that and go forth, living for Jesus Christ all the days of your life. That is what really matters; anything less is a betrayal of your worth and a positive waste of your life. The stakes are high, so live for Christ.