



Brown Community Group Discussion Guide

“Death, Glorification, Unification: What happens to our Body, Soul and Spirit?

Lesson 2 – How Should We Think of Our Own Death and Others?

February 19, 2017

I. **Lesson Starters:**

How do people usually view death? Is it mostly very negative, something to be dreaded and the last thing anyone desires? How should Christians view their own death, death of Christians and the death of non-Christians?

II. **Our Own Death**

As a born again Christian, the New Testament encourages us to view our Own Death not with fear, but with joy at the prospect of going to be with Christ. To help our Christian thinking and train our spiritual mindset, let us take our cue from Paul who said:

- “We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8)

Also while in prison, he said:

Philippians 1:21-23

21 For to me to live in Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I 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.

Also from John in Revelations:

Revelations 14:13

13 Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth Blessed indeed, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors for their deeds follow them.

Believers need to have no fear of death. Scripture reassures us that not even “death” will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 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.

Hebrews 2:14-15

14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

- This reminds us that a clear testimony to our lack of fear of death will provide a strong witness for Christians in an age that tries to avoid talking about death and has no answer for it.

III. **The Death of Christian Friends and Relatives**

While with our own death we should look forward to the joyful expectation of being in Christ’s presence, we will most likely have a different attitude about the death of Christian friends or relatives. We naturally feel great sorrow and longing, but it will be mixed with joy that they have left to be the Lord.

It is ***perfectly ok and natural to experience real sorrow and great loss*** at the death of a Christian.

Sometimes we might think this shows a lack of faith if we mourn deeply, but scripture does not support this position:

- Let's look at Stephen when he was stoned to death and as they buried him:
 - ***“Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentations over him (Acts 8:2)***
 - As Stephen died, he had the following to say during his final breaths:
 - “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56)
 - “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59)
 - There was no lack of faith or questioning on anyone's part that Stephen after his death was experiencing great joy in the presence of the Lord

Their sorrow showed a genuine grief at the loss of a good friend and fellowship, not a lack of faith. Even Jesus himself wept at the tomb of Lazarus upon seeing the great grief of his sisters and others. Other examples of Christians mourning and being sorrowful from a Christian's death:

- Paul had “sorrow upon sorrow” (Philippians 2:27)
- King David had great sorrow when he learned that Saul and Jonathon had died (2 Sam 1:11-27)

One other very important scripture about the death of Christians is from Paul:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

13 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. 14 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.

Paul does not tell the Thessalonians not to grieve about the death of Christians, but that they should grieve in a certain way:

- Not with bitter despair and total hopelessness
- But with a clear hope and joy for our loved ones being united with Christ in spirit. Our mourning should be mixed with a spirit of worship of God and thanksgiving for their life
- Two of our examples of this are David in 2 Samuel 12:20 and Job in Job 1:20-21, where both men upon learning of their children's death, prepared themselves and then worshipped God.

Another important point about the death of believers:

1 Thessalonians 5:10-11

10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

- Did you catch the key point? In death we are still not apart from the Lord!!
- In contrast to this scripture, as part of next week's lesson, we will look at the idea of Purgatory or soul sleep and what the bible has to say

IV. The Death of Unbelievers

With the death of an unbeliever, the sorrow we feel is not mixed with joy and assurance that they have gone to be with the Lord. This can feel totally hopeless and lost for the soul of that person or loved one. Let's look at an example from Paul:

Romans 9:1-3

3 I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel.

- We often do not know about whether a person was saved
- The certainty of one's impending death can bring about genuine soul and heart searching
- It would be wrong and misleading to go about trying to give assurances that the person has gone to be in heaven to try and create a false sense of hope or comfort to others

- Focus on the sorrow of the loss on the life of that person
- Speak with genuine thankfulness about whatever good qualities we noticed and had been part of to encourage our own life.

Since we talked a little about the souls of the believer, this is a precursor to next week lesson concerning the souls of the unbelievers:

- Scripture does not say that people will have a second chance to trust in Christ after death; the exact opposite is true; Unbelievers souls go straight to eternal punishment

V. Group Questions:

1. Be honest with yourself and the group, do you have a fear of your own death? Can you describe it for the group?
2. While we may have a glimpse of Paul's feeling about his own death, can you really grasp his attitude of almost seemingly wanting to die quickly?
3. What have you found to help you cope with the death of a beloved Christian friend or family member?
4. Have you yourself or a loved one ever had a "near death experience" where they could see or experience something similar to Stephen at his stoning where he says that he can see heaven and god as he is dying?
5. How should the pain and sorrow of the death of an unbeliever affect us and our actions?

Study material is primarily taken from Systematic Theology by Wayne Gruden, Chapter 41-436; The Broadman Bible Commentary by the Southern Baptist Convention and Unger's Bible Dictionary.