

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Encourage Each Other

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

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. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What a sad day! Everyone was crying when they heard the news—Kase had finally died. Kase was a young boy in preschool who had brain cancer. Many hoped and prayed that he would be cured of his cancer. But finally the day came when Kase's body couldn't take it anymore. Kase passed away. Students were sad. Teachers were sad. Parents were sad. How awful to lose this wonderful young boy in their lives!

Many of the parents of Kase's classmates were extra sad. It was heartbreaking that their children had lost a friend. It hurt them to think about how sad it would be if their own child died. But then, one of Kase's classmates helped change everyone's thinking. A young boy named Cruz saw his parents crying and said, "Dad . . . Mom, why are you so sad? Kase is in heaven!" For Cruz the whole situation was very simple. Kase was now in heaven, and that is a reason to rejoice!

The Bible verses for day remind us why we can have an attitude like Cruz when fellow believers pass away. Sure, we will be sad. It always hurts to lose someone we are close to because we love them so much. But the apostle Paul says this, "You do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope." To grieve means to be really sad about something. Paul reminds us that we aren't really sad about death like unbelievers who have no hope of ever seeing loved ones again. Yes, we have tears of sadness, but we also have tears of joy. Why? Because we have hope through Jesus Christ!

Paul goes on to explain that 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." What amazing comfort! Because Jesus died and rose again to life, we can know with absolute certainty that "those who fall asleep in him"—those who die in faith—will rise to life with Jesus in heaven. It's just like Jesus himself said, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19).

Those who knew Kase were so sad when he died. But they also cried tears of joy knowing of hope through Jesus. Because of our Savior, the family and friends of Kase will see him again in heaven. The same is true for all believers who die in faith. Jesus died and rose again to life, and

so will we. Death is not the end, it's only the start as we go on to live with Jesus and all believers forever in heaven. And so, Christian friends, do what the apostle Paul says and, "encourage each other with these words."

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What causes people to be sad when someone dies?
- What causes believers to be happy when a believer dies?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What does the word *hope* mean?
- What is the hope that Christians have?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Explain this statement: Jesus rising from the dead is the single most important fact of all time.
- Discuss how the hope that Christians have is different than the kind of hope other people talk about (for example, "I hope my team wins," or, "I hope it doesn't rain.").

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, Lord of life and death, thank you for giving us hope. We know that because you died and rose again, all believers will also rise to life with you when they die. Comfort us in times of sadness and death with this good news. Amen.