

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

Death is Only Sleep

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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.

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

What are you most afraid of? Is it spiders? Thunderstorms? Scary things happening on the news? Getting a shot at the doctor's office? Are you afraid of the dark? Do you have a fear of heights?

There is one more fear we need to talk about: the fear of death. We may fear our own death or the death of someone we love.

Death can be an uncomfortable topic. It is not something we enjoy talking or thinking about. Thankfully, God knows that this is something we often have fears and worries about! He wants to take away our fear. That's why in today's Bible verse God compares death to something that doesn't show up any list of fears young people have. Did you catch what God compared death to?

If you answered, "Sleep," you are right! Is going to sleep at night something that you fear? Sleep is typically not something we would ever fear! Rather than being afraid of sleep, we often look forward to lying down, closing our eyes, and resting after a long and busy day.

As a believer in Jesus, thanks be to God that death is just like sleep. It is not something we have to fear! Because Jesus died and woke again to life on Easter, death lost its sting! It's as harmless as closing our eyes and going to bed! Just like we look forward to our comfortable bed, pajamas, and blankets at night because we are tired, we can look forward with eagerness to our eternal home in heaven. There in heaven we will have an eternal rest from all the challenges, fears, and disappointments that sin brings to our lives in this world.

When a fellow believer in Jesus whom we love dies, there certainly will be sadness. We will miss them and be sad that they are no longer with us. However, we don't have to be sad like people who have no hope or see that as the final ending. We look forward to the day where we will be together with our loved ones again in heaven forever! In heaven death will never be able to separate us from our loved ones again!

On judgment day, Jesus will bring all believers, those still living and those who have fallen asleep to be with him forever in heaven. How we long for that day when Jesus comes back again!

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 Younger Children

- What makes you afraid? How does Jesus help you with your fear?
- What are you looking forward to most about heaven?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- List your top five fears in life. How does Jesus help us with each of them?
- Do you think death is something we should talk about more? Why or why not?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- What things do you see in the world around you that show people are afraid of getting older and dying? Why are people so afraid of death?
- Imagine a friend just lost a loved one who was a believer in Jesus. What from today's devotion would you use to comfort your friend?

Closing Prayer:

Risen Lord, thank you for defeating sin and death on our behalf! Help us to view death as just sleep and as the day you will bring us home to our eternal home in heaven. Help us to look forward to our eternal home in heaven where we will live with you forever! Amen.

Hymn: CW 376:5,6 – Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness

When from the dust of death I rise
To claim my mansion in the skies,
E'en then this shall be all my plea:
Jesus has lived and died for me.

Jesus, be worshiped endlessly!
Your boundless mercy has for me,
For me and all your hands have made,
An everlasting ransom paid.