

SHADOWS // Darkness

WK3: November 6th

THE BIG IDEA:

Death doesn't have to be a mystery.

WHAT WE WANT KIDS TO KNOW:

What is death?

How do we cope with death?

What happens when we die?

WHAT WE WANT KIDS TO DO:

Choose now how they will live later.

KEY VERSES:

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted;
he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

Psalm 34:18

For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away
and will not listen anymore.

Isaiah 59:2

Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!

Psalm 116:2

You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You
have recorded each one in your book.

Psalm 56:2

¹⁹ Jesus said, "There was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed in purple and fine linen and who lived each day in luxury. ²⁰ At his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus who was covered with sores. ²¹ As Lazarus lay there longing for scraps from the rich man's table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores.

²² "Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to sit beside Abraham at the heavenly banquet.^[e] The rich man also died and was buried, ²³ and he went to the place

of the dead.¹³ There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side.

²⁴“The rich man shouted, ‘Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames.’

²⁵“But Abraham said to him, ‘Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish. ²⁶And besides, there is a great chasm separating us. No one can cross over to you from here, and no one can cross over to us from there.’

Luke 16:19-25

INTRO

(Have a white board on stage and utilize as directed!)

Welcome back everyone!

My name is _____ and we are in the 3rd week of this series called Shadows!

Over the last few weeks we have discussed some pretty heavy topics. In fact, when you think about some of these topics it can rattle us a bit. Yet they are also a harsh reality we can relate to ourselves or sympathize with those around us. And today will be no different.

To wrap up this great series we are getting a topic we all have several questions about –Death. Although it is real, it is one of the most devastating things we are forced to deal with. It causes us to question. It causes us to doubt. It causes us to be skeptics and pessimistic. And it can be so confusing and hurtful, that many of us stuff the emotions of it down into the deepest parts of our hearts.

But if we look at death in the Bible, death doesn’t represent something awful, rather as something that is **inevitable (write on the board)** and something to look forward to. The concept of death can be a great mystery but it is our hope today that we walk out with a clearer understanding of what death is, how to cope with it in the event of a tragic loss, why death happens, and where we go when we die. We can’t promise you all the answers. However, with what we have discovered, perhaps you can take a healthy approach as you deal with this reality in your everyday lives .

Would you pray with me?

ME

As crazy as this sounds, death is a subject I have always been intrigued about. From dreams to nightmares about this topic, I have always been curious about it. How will I die? When will I die? Where will I die? What *actually* happens when I die because I don't really understand how it all works.

I can replay these questions over and over but one thing is for sure – death is inevitable. In fact, the book of Hebrews tells us this is one appointment we will not be late for. Its inescapable.

And when it happens to people I love or hearing about because a friend experienced this loss, it drives me nuts. It's the frustrating.

The loss.
The pain.
The why.

My brain just goes there. But it leads me to want to know more rather than push me away.

It has been almost 10 years since a close friend of mine passed away. His name was Dillon. (***show picture***)

He was a leader at the last church I worked at who was at the wrong place at the wrong time. I got the news while we were at camp and it was devastating!

Why him?
Why now?

He was so young. So full of life. He loved God. He loved people. He was the real deal. And to this day I miss him.

When he initially passed – I thought I was fine. I cried maybe once or twice. I got to speak at his memorial service. I really thought I was good.

Then, about 6 months later, another buddy of mine passed away. And when I heard of this second death, it triggered all these emotions about Dillon. Although I was sad about my other friend, the loss of Dillon was something I couldn't shake.

I knew I needed help, and about week later (I forget the timeline) I found myself sitting in front of a counselor. That was one of the best decisions of my life because it gave a clearer understanding of the reality of death.

WE

But what about you? Have you experienced the loss of someone you really love? I mean it is one thing to hear about someone on television or a celebrity and all that. But have you ever lost someone you really love and know?

Have you ever lost someone unexpectedly?

Have you ever questioned why they had to die?

Have you ever questioned what the point of death was?

Have you ever been angry and just didn't know what to do because of your loss?

I think we all have on some level right!?!?

But here is what I have discovered over the years. My curiosity has allowed me to unpack so much more than I could ever imagine. And in the midst of all the questioning, searching, pain, and anger, I haven't found all the answers but I feel like God is constantly giving me insight to a deeper understanding of this tough subject.

We all have these questions...to some degree. So - for the remainder of our time, we are going to get at a few of them in regards to this heavy topic. We all talk about it - so why not talk about it today...with one another...through the eyes of God.

GOD

Let's start with this:

(on screen)

What is Death?

(write on the board)

There is a lot of speculation, right?

Is death reincarnation – coming back as something else?

Is death purgatory – an in between destiny that helps us get right?

Is death annihilation – when we cease to exist? It is over! No more consciousness?

Speculation is one thing, but revelation is another. And God has revealed what death actually is.

In the Bible, **death means a separation (write it on board)**. And the reason death or separation became a part of life because of sin. This sin led to a few kinds of deaths -
One that was spiritual and one that was physical.

Physically speaking – check out this verse.

(on screen)

For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

(write it on board)

There was death of our physical being. With sin came this separation of body and soul. Your body is merely a vessel for your soul but your soul is who you really are. When God created Adam, Genesis tells us he gave him the breath of life, a soul. His body was only a holding tank.

And the same can be said for us. Our minds, conscious, and personality make are all wrapped within our soul. It is why a person can look good until you get to know them. So, we when say a physical death took place because of sin, this death is a separation of our soul from our bodies.

Spiritually speaking – take a look.

(On screen)

It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.

Isaiah 59:2

With a spiritual death, there is a separation of community and relationship with God. God was with Adam and Eve as perfect beings yet when they didn't listen to his instructions, sin entered the world. Consequently, God couldn't live in Sin because God cannot be around sin, therefore leading to a spiritual separation/death from God. And the chasm of this separation was too big for anyone to overcome, until God's Son, Jesus Christ, stepped down from heaven into time. His life, death and resurrection gave each of us a chance to actually have a relationship with God.

With that is established – let's keep going!

This is where it gets kind of tough.

Death is uncertain and unknown, yet inescapable and inevitable.

(write it on board).

But how do we deal with it? What should we do when someone we love passes on? If this is a part of life how should we deal with it?

(on screen)

How do we cope with the loss of a loved one?

(write it on board).

If you have ever experienced death in this way, it is devastating! Although I am not expert, here is what I can say:

FIRST - This stinks! And I hate that we have to go through it but as we just saw, it simply a part of life. So, let's start with acknowledging that.

(write it on board).

SECOND – A piece of advice a trusted friend once told me was this - "LEAN IN" **(write it on board)**. In other words, be vulnerable! It is okay to feel the way you feel. If you are mad; if you want to cry; if you want to scream and yell – DO IT! This stuff hurts and it is hard.

You are allowed to feel this way. There isn't anything wrong with you. Sometimes you will be a mess. Sometimes you will be quiet and more reserved. Sometimes you may even laugh and just reflect about your memories with that individual. This is normal!

These are healthy things to do in the midst of crazy moments. But the important thing is to lean in and let it out. Don't ever stuff those feelings away as if they don't exist. Although you may want to naturally give in and say things like "I am OK" or "I have to be strong because my family needs me", etc. Get your feelings out and let someone know how you are feeling. When we stuff the hurt in, this is what leads to a dark place.

It is important to note however, that not every copes the same. We each respond in our own unique way.

In fact, authors Elisabeth Kubler Ross and David Kessler describe 5 stages **(write it on board)**

of Grief when you lose a loved one. (Describe them as you see fit - <https://grief.com/the-five-stages-of-grief/>)

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

These five stages are a part of the framework that makes up our learning to live with the one we lost. They are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling. But they are not stops on some linear timeline in grief. Not everyone goes through all of them or in a prescribed order. There can be more along the way but these are the typical stages and they are unique to each individual.

When you look at scripture – even Jesus dealt with a loved one passing away. His cousin John died and one of his closest friends named Lazarus died too. What makes this so significant is that we read that when Lazarus died, Jesus...wept! Yes, the son of God, this perfect man who "had it all together" even cried!

If this was Jesus and he was the greatest man to ever live, what does that say for us! If we go through something this crazy and traumatic – I think God wants us to be ourselves and face the emotions within our hearts. And what we see in scripture is that God wraps his arms around us because he wants to comfort us during these kinds of moments. Our pain brings him pain.

Look at these 2 verses –

(on screen – same slide)

Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!

Psalm 116:2

(write it on board).

You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.

Psalm 56:2

(write it on board).

Love this passage. It reads that God bends down to listen and he also collects our tears. It is as if he literally saying in these verses, I got you. Just let it go. If you want to talk, let's talk. If you need yell, yell. If you need to cry, cry. Listen – it is even okay to tell God if you are angry at him for what has gone. Our God can handle that.

So, as you grieve and process with God, you will realize that God wants to be included and is telling us – “I am right here and you have my undivided attention. And although it may not seem like it now, you are going to be OK. I am right here!”

Losing someone you love is hard. Sometimes unbearable – but it is inevitable and we are not alone in the process.

FINALLY – if you are in a spot right now in which you need some help or want to talk to someone, we want to encourage you to chat with your leader or one of our staff members. We don't have all the answer's but vocalizing your thoughts will serve you well!

We want you to know you are not alone and there is a place for you If you need help.

Looking back at how I have dealt with death in the past, I started to do it in a healthier way because I also started to understand more about what happens after we physically die.

And I think that is what gives us the most pause. They are here today, gone the next
Where did they go?

Is it really over?

Those questions are real so let's talk about that aspect of death.

(on screen)

What happens when you die or where do you go when you die?

(write it on board)

Ok – great question and here is what we know.

As we discussed earlier, in death, our souls are separated from our bodies right? From there, our soul immediately goes to one of two places. To be With God or to be without God. To clarify – this is about heaven or hell.

Now I won't get too much detail about the why and how of heaven and hell but I want to be clear about where our souls go when we pass on.

Let's look a story in scripture to help us answer this question.

It reads...

(on screen)

¹⁹ Jesus said, "There was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed in purple and fine linen and who lived each day in luxury. ²⁰ At his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus who was covered with sores. ²¹ As Lazarus lay there longing for scraps from the rich man's table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores.

²² "Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to sit beside Abraham at the heavenly banquet.^[e] The rich man also died and was buried, ²³ and he went to the place of the dead.^[f] There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side.

²⁴ "The rich man shouted, 'Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames.'

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and you are in anguish. ²⁶And besides, there is a great chasm separating us. No one can cross over to you from here, and no one can cross over to us from there.'

Luke 16:19-25

This is a lot but it brings clarity to our question.

FIRST, notice that both men died but their lives continued on. It says the rich man died *and...* It also says the poor man died *and...* We see here that their lives continued but continued to different destinations. Simply put – our lives continue to somewhere but what and where are those places?

There are only 2 locations given:

(Heaven - (write it on board))

Location One was beside Abraham at the heavenly banquet. He was in heaven.

Another translation is bosom. Simply stated, when a child rests their head on their mother's bosom, it indicates a safe place. A place of rest. A place of relaxation. And that is how heaven is described here.

(Hell (write it on board))

Location Two was a place of the dead and torment. And when the rich man realized where he was, he begged Abraham to have pity on him.

We see here that this man is fully aware of his whereabouts. He feels it. He knows it. And he understands, he isn't in a good place. The conversation continues with Abraham and he tells the rich man that the separation is far too great. In fact, it is so great that no one can cross over from one side to the next.

Now think about that for a moment. This man can see and has a full understanding of what he is missing out on. He can see Lazarus and Abraham yet they cannot relieve him of his torment. But imagine that. In this place of torment, he is so close, yet so far from a greater eternity.

However, now that his soul is here, we learn he doesn't have a chance to EVER get to heaven. He will be in this state of torment forever!

But look again at the poor man! Doesn't Location one seem better – into the presence of God which we call heaven. And heaven is the eternal resting place for those who

have made Jesus their Lord and Savior. Heaven is the uninterrupted knowledge of God in which only perfection exist. This place called heaven is for Christians and Christians alone. And when we choose Jesus, our souls will spend an eternity, or forever, in this place. It is awesome!

When you look at the way the Bible describes heaven, - it is majestic, it is beautiful, it is other, it is place that will take our breathe away. Paul, one of the writers in the Bible, was one of the only 3 people to ever see heaven and he tells his audience that he saw things there that he couldn't put words to. He was awestruck. There were no words to describe the astonishment of this beautiful place. And he couldn't wait to get back! He couldn't wait to die!

The Bible also describes heaven as a place without sin or darkness. It is perfect in every way. There isn't crying. No more pain. No more sorrow. We will simply enjoy perfect beauty. The Book of Revelation describes the capital city of heaven and it is fascinating. And there are several other places that describe what heaven will look and feel like in human terms but to be honest, we don't really get just how good it will be.

So – where do we go when we die? Here's the thing – although heaven is for real, heaven will not be for everyone. It is a harsh reality but God gives us a clear choice. And if we choose him, when we die or when our loved ones die, our souls immediately go to a place of rest – a place of perfection. And it will be a marvelous day.

As I have studied death more and more over the years, it is this hope that gives me a sense of peace and satisfaction when I hear of Christians dying. Am I said they are gone – yes, but to know where they are – wow! They aren't worried about a thing because they are literally in the presence of God and what a day that will be for us all if we choose him.

Knowing this gives the confidence and peace to simply move forward. And you can too! Death is a difficult thing to grasp and it stinks because of our love for that person. Yet when that person knows Jesus and has chosen to follow him – I know they are in good hands, the best of hands, their creator's hands!

That is why when we celebrate a Christian's life we call it a memorial service rather than a funeral. In doing so, we are saying good bye, but rather a see you later! And that see you later idea is a promise written throughout God's word!

YOU

Now – what does this all mean for you?

Let's quickly review...

(on screen – give a slight recap of the message. Point students toward next steps)

1. Death is a known concept in the Bible!
2. Death can be a devastating experience!
3. Face death “head on”, knowing it is okay to feel the way you feel.
4. Learn to be vulnerable, talk it out, and ask for help! (God, Family, Leader, Friends)
5. You choose your eternal destination.

You see number 5. This is important and the main thing we should address before we leave!

I want to say this with the utmost sensitivity so here me out –

YOU CHOOSE where you end up!
(write it on board).

There is a common misunderstanding that God sends people to one of these places and that God is out to punish us. That couldn't be more inaccurate.

In this life, if we choose to reject God and say we don't need him now, this place of torment is place where we will go to continue our lives. This isn't a place you are sent but rather a place you will continue to exist because the afterlife is really the extension and continuation of our existing life.

However – if we choose Jesus in this life and we know Jesus lives in heaven – in death we continue to live with Jesus in heaven. There is a direct correlation. No one is sending anyone anywhere. We get the choice. We live now with him and continue to live with him or we live without him now and will continue to live without him once we pass on.

Death isn't meant to be defeating. Death is something that as Christians we should always look forward to because it brings us in to the forever presence of our God.

Listen -

We know this can be a lot so if you have any other questions, let us know. We want you to chat with your leader or a staff member.

Again – we don't have all the answers but we will try our best to give you biblically sound information to help you take the next steps with this heavy topic.

Let's Pray...