

The Final Doorway . . .

*“O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?”
(1 Corinthians 15:55)*

Remember being in elementary school and “living” for the day when you would be in high school? Then in high school, you yearned in your heart for the freedom and independence of college life, a full-time job, or the day when you would be master of your own home. Whatever your situation is in life, a cloud of discontent may always seem to hang over the present, a cloud that prevents attainment of your deepest desires. Actually, such an experience is universal, for God has made us with the capacity to find lasting contentment only in a personal relationship with Him. We can begin the process now, but death is that final doorway to our eternal destination, and only in heaven will that longing in your heart be fulfilled.

*“He has made everything beautiful in its time.
Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart,
yet so that he cannot find out what God
has done from the beginning to the end.”
(Ecclesiastes 3:11)*

Q: “My husband died this past year, and the closer it gets to the anniversary of his death, the more overwhelmed I feel. Is there anything I can do to keep from being consumed with sorrow?”

The anniversary of the death of a loved one will be a tender time for you, but there are ways you can remember him without feeling like you are drowning in a sea of sorrow. Plan ahead what you will do around the time of the anniversary and how you will honor his memory.

- Plan an evening or an outing with a special friend around the time of the anniversary.
- Go to a Christian seminar or workshop to help keep your focus on the Lord and on His healing Word.
- Attend a social event so that you will not be alone.
- Invite close family members or friends for a special meal together where you share light-hearted and loving memories.
- Give loved ones a special little remembrance in your husband’s honor (a poem, a picture, or a possession that belonged to him).
- Initiate a project in honor of his life.

*“I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!’”
(Revelation 14:13)*

The Needs of a Dying Person¹

To have complete faith and confidence in your personal physician and in the hospital staff who care for you

To know that the ones who matter most to you still love and care for you even though you are in the process of leaving them

To rest assured that those dependent on you will have their needs met when you are gone

To understand your own emotional needs as you face death

To apply the resources of your genuine moral and spiritual life—your faith

To die with dignity

Know the Rights of the Dying³

When dying, you need . . .

- to be told that you have a terminal condition—that you are dying
- to die your own death with dignity—allowing a dying, decayed body to run its natural course
- to decide how you will live out your final days—what you will do and who you will see
- to be alone and to be with family, but also to prepare to sever your ties with this life—to say your goodbyes
- to honestly express your feelings and desires—to make final arrangements with loved ones for your funeral or memorial service

*“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”
(Matthew 10:39)*

Questions People Ask When Facing Death

- Does anyone really care?
- Will I be abandoned?
- What is going to happen to me?
- What will happen to me after death?

*“The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.”
(Nahum 1:7)*

Know What the Dying Need to Know about God

God is there . . .

- listening to the cry of your heart
- exercising sovereign control over your life
- remembering your frailties
- working out His purposes in your circumstances
- giving you the faith to live (and to die)
- enabling you to walk with hind’s feet—having sure footing²

How to First Respond When a Death Has Occurred

Acknowledge the person’s loss immediately (a call or personal visit).

Pray for family and friends (publicly and privately).

Be affectionate (a warm hug or handshake).

Adapt to the communication needs of the person (listen, laugh, cry, affirm feelings).

Be genuine. (Don’t use pat responses.)

Come ready to help with details.

- Call family attorney.
- Locate existing will.
- Apply for death certificate.
(Time varies, but it takes about six weeks to receive.)
- Call insurance companies.
- Locate all insurance policies and bank accounts.
- Check existing retirement funds.
- Contact Social Security office.

Key Verse to Memorize

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.’”
(John 11:25)

Key Passage to Read and Reread

1 Corinthians chapter 15

The Five Stages of Sorrow⁴

1. Denial . . . *avoiding the pain of reality* (Job 8:20)
“The test results are probably wrong. I’ll go to another doctor.”
2. Anger . . . *opening up honest emotions* (Job 10:1)
“God is not fair.”
3. Bargaining⁵ . . . *attempting to change reality* (Job 13:20–21)
“If I have enough faith, God will miraculously heal me.”
4. Depression . . . *feeling despair over the grief and loss* (Job 7:16)
“My life is over. I don’t want to live.”
5. Acceptance . . . *gaining a positive outlook on life* (Job 42:5)
Acceptance (not resignation) embraces God’s grace on a daily basis. This kind of acceptance allows you to move from being a “victim” of the illness to being a victorious, shining testimony to God’s sufficiency in a world that does not know Him.

Related Topics . . .

- Caregiving:
A Privilege, Not a Prison
- Euthanasia:
The Myth of Mercy Killing
- Evil & Suffering . . . Why?
Is God Fair?
- Grief Recovery:
Living at Peace with Loss
- Terminal Illness:
How Can I Ever Let Go?
- Widowhood:
Wisdom in a Wilderness

HOPE FOR THE HEART’s *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today’s problems.

For more comprehensive help, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys . . .*

Death:

The Doorway to Your Eternal Destiny.

If you would like more information, call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit www.hopefortheheart.org.

For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).

1. R. Earl Allen, *For Those Who Grieve* (Nashville: Broadman, 1978), 13–14.
2. Kay Arthur, Lord, *Where Are You When Bad Things Happen* (Sisters, OR: Questar, 1992), 5.
3. Robert W. Bailey, *Ministering to the Grieving* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 40–41.
4. For this section see Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, rev. ed. (Dallas: Word, 1988), 331–35; Ruth Kopp and Stephen Sorenson, *When Someone You Love Is Dying: A Handbook for Counselors and Those Who Care* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources, 1980), 167–89.
5. See Kopp and Sorenson, *When Someone You Love is Dying*, 190–97.



*Together . . . Changing Minds.
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