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# DEATH AND THE CHILD

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## A Christian View of Death, Part III

### INTRODUCTION

In some ways we may feel that death and children are incompatible. Whether we are discussing death with a child or dealing with the death of a child, both can be difficult situations. We may think it senseless to burden young minds with morbid thoughts about death. And we may struggle more with the death of a child than we do with the death of an older person. Yet, death and children are inseparable. Children sometimes die. Children have questions about death. And children need to know the facts of death. Let's look at the matter of death and the child.

### EXPLAINING DEATH TO A CHILD

The way a person explains death to a child will depend on the child's age and maturity. Yet there are some important concepts about death we need to convey to children of all ages.

**READ** the following passages. Apply them to the manner in which one explains death to a child.

- **Ephesians 4:15**
- **1 Corinthians 9:19-22**

**READ** the following passages. What important teachings do they contain? How would you explain them to a child?

- **Romans 6:23**
- **Romans 5:12**
- **John 14:2,3**

### FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. Some statistics point out that by the age of 14 the average child has witnessed 18,000 murders on TV. What false view of death does this give?
2. Evaluate the following situation: Sarah is six years old. Recently a classmate at school died of an illness. When Sarah asked about the child's death, her mother said, "God loved your friend so much he took her to be with him in heaven."
3. In a letter to his young son, Hans, Martin Luther described heaven as "a beautiful and cheerful garden where there are many children wearing little golden coats. They pick up fine apples, pears and cherries and yellow and blue plums under trees. They also have ponies with golden reins and silver saddles."<sup>10</sup> Comment on this description.

## PREPARING A CHILD FOR DEATH

God is no respecter of persons. This is especially true when it comes to death. His statement that “the length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength” (Psalm 90:10) is not intended as a promise. Some never live to a ripe old age. Some die in the prime of life. Others barely see the light of day. Because our times are in the Lord’s hands, it’s important to be prepared for death at all times. And it’s important to help our children prepare for death so they, too, can live in the hope of heaven.

### **READ Ecclesiastes 11:7–12:8.**

What warning does Solomon give young people?

**READ** the following passages. How does one prepare a child for death?

- **Mark 10:13-16**
- **Matthew 28:19,20**

## DEALING WITH THE DEATH OF A CHILD

Medical science has made great progress in the past few decades. Some diseases that once took their toll of young lives have been virtually eliminated. Years ago it was common for parents to lose a child at a young age. Today it is relatively rare. For this reason the death of a child may catch parents off guard and leave them shocked.

### **READ Psalm 127:3.**

Why is it often harder to deal with the death of a child than with the death of an older relative (parent, grandparent)?

### **READ 2 Samuel 12:13-23.**

Why did David’s child die?

What purpose did the child’s death serve? See 2 Samuel 12:14.

How do you explain David’s actions?

What comfort did David have when the child died? See 2 Samuel 12:23.

### **COMPARE Job 1:1-3 with Job 42:10,12,13.**

If God promised to double Job’s family, why did he still have only seven sons and three daughters?

Apply this to parents who have lost a child.

### **READ Ephesians 6:2,3.**

Does this passage say that a child who dies was disobedient to his parents? Explain.