

Letter to Parents/Guardians

“Anyone old enough to love is old enough to grieve.”

DR. ALAN WOLFELT, GRIEF COUNSELOR

The death of a loved one is arguably life’s most painful experience. You wish you could spare your child that pain, but when a beloved family member, friend, or pet dies, it is inevitable. There are, however, ways to accompany your child in the grief process so that not only is it less traumatic but becomes a beautiful and strengthening journey for both of you.

Children grieve in different ways. *Time to Say Goodbye* assures you and your child that his or her reactions to death are normal. Don’t be surprised if your child is angry, frustrated, irritable, clingy, or complains of headaches or stomachaches. He or she may regress and begin thumb-sucking and bed-wetting. Although your child may appear not to care about the death, he or she is still grieving internally. If your child exhibits prolonged reactions, such as panic, depression, withdrawal from friends, or pretending as though nothing happened, don’t hesitate to get professional help. Your child may also find it helpful to speak with other children who have suffered a similar loss. Keeping to a normal routine as much as possible at home will give your child a sense of security when his or her world has been turned upside down. Remember to alert school personnel, other instructors, and club leaders that your child is grieving.

THIS BOOK

This book presents the mystery of death and our rituals surrounding it honestly and in a way children can grasp. Read and work the pages with your child, choosing the activities that fit your situation. Parent Spots offer suggestions for helping your child grow through healthy grief. May you be a model and guide for your child in this important life experience, as you are in other ones.

HELPFUL CHILDREN’S BOOKS

You might find these books useful in helping your child cope with death.

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf
by Leo Buscaglia

Always and Forever
by Alan Durant

The Sad Dragon
by Steve Herman

Badger’s Parting Gifts
by Susan Varley

The Dead Bird
by Margaret Wise Brown

I Miss You
by Pat Thomas

**Nana Upstairs
and Nana Downstairs**
by Tomie De Paola

Everett Anderson’s Goodbye
by Lucille Clifton

Remembering Crystal
by Sebastian Loth

The Memory Box
by Joanna Rowland

When I’m with Jesus
by Kimberly Rae

Rudi’s Pond
by Eve Bunting

Letter to the Child

Sarah loved Fluffy, her pet bunny. One morning when Sarah went to the cage, she found Fluffy lying on the bottom of it, not moving or breathing. Fluffy was dead. Sarah cried all morning. Crying was a sign of Sarah's grief. We grieve, or feel bad, whenever we lose something or someone dear to us. Our heart aches.

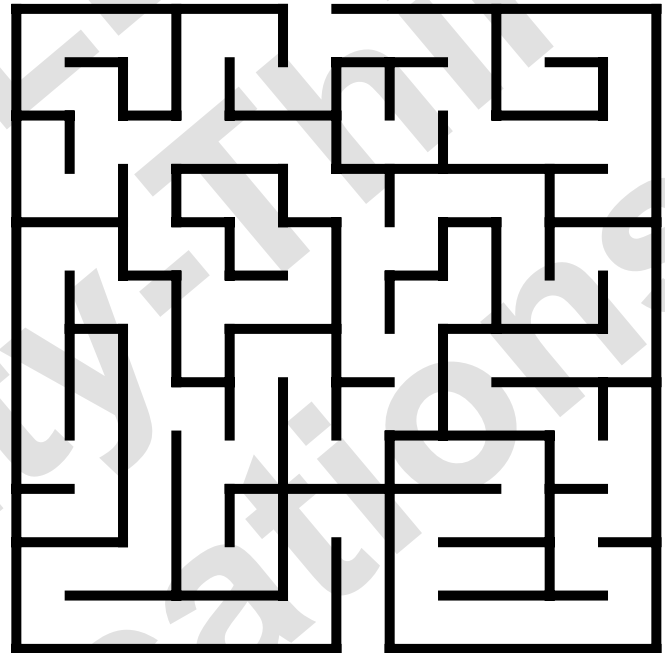
You may be grieving for someone or a pet you loved. If so, you might wonder what is happening to you. This book will help you understand death and grieving. It will give you ways to get through your grief. One way is to talk about it. So use this book with your parent or another caring adult, and share your thoughts and feelings. Ask questions.

Death is part of life. All living things die. Even Jesus died, and his mother and friends grieved. But by dying, Jesus changed death for all of us. He won everlasting life for us. Now death is only the door to a new life. We are sad when people die because we will miss them. They, though, are happy as they begin life without end with God.

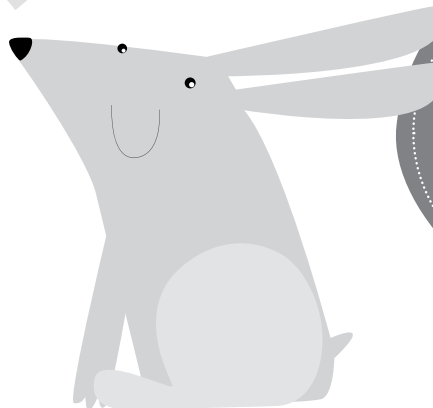
TO DO

You might think you will never feel better. But in time you will. Find your way through the maze of grief.

Start →



Joy * Peace



Parent Spot

If your own grief prevents you from fully helping your child cope, ask another caring adult to assist you.

Death Is a Fact of Life

Flowers die, pets die, and people die. Their life on earth is ended. Some people die young. Some people die from accidents, sickness, or disasters. Most people die when they are old and their bodies are worn out. Death is not a monster. It's just something that happens.

What is death like? Did you ever fall asleep in the car or the living room and wake up in your bedroom because your father or mother carried you to bed? When we die, our heavenly Father takes us home. But death is not the same as sleep. After sleep we wake up. Death is permanent.

When people die, their heart and brain stop and their spirit, or soul, leaves their body. They don't breathe, move, think, or feel. Their body is cold. After people die in movies, we see the actors alive in other shows. In real life, people who die never come to life again on earth.

Jesus promised that we will live forever. So we needn't be afraid of death. After it we begin a whole new life. When you were inside your mother, you had a comfortable life. But then you came out into this beautiful world. Dying is like that. We leave this world and go out into a wonderful new way of being with Jesus and Mary.

We are like a seed. It has to die as a seed before it becomes a flower. We have to die to become what God has planned for us in the next life.

1 REMEMBER that grief is good. It means that you have loved and have been loved.

2 RECALL the goodness and joy that came into your life because of the one who died.

3 REFLECT on these words from Helen Keller: "What we have once enjoyed we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us."

Parent Spot

Avoid using "sleeping," "passing away," "left," "lost," or "gone on a long trip" in speaking about death. These words suggest to the child that the loved one will return. To prevent your child from fearing God, do not say "God took" the deceased one. Also, do not comment that the loved one is now an angel, which is not true.

TO DO

Draw a beautiful flower coming out of the seed to show the new life your loved one will enjoy.



Jesus Gives Us New Life

One day when Jesus was teaching, a man named Jairus came to him. Jairus begged, "My little girl is very sick. Please come and heal her." His daughter was twelve years old. Jesus went with Jairus to his home. On the way, servants of Jairus came and said, "It's too late. Your daughter has died." Jesus went anyway.

At Jairus's house people were crying. Jesus entered the house and went to the girl. He took her by the hand and said, "Little girl, get up." The daughter of Jairus came to life. She opened her eyes and saw the face of Jesus looking at her with love. Jesus said to her parents, "Give her something to eat."

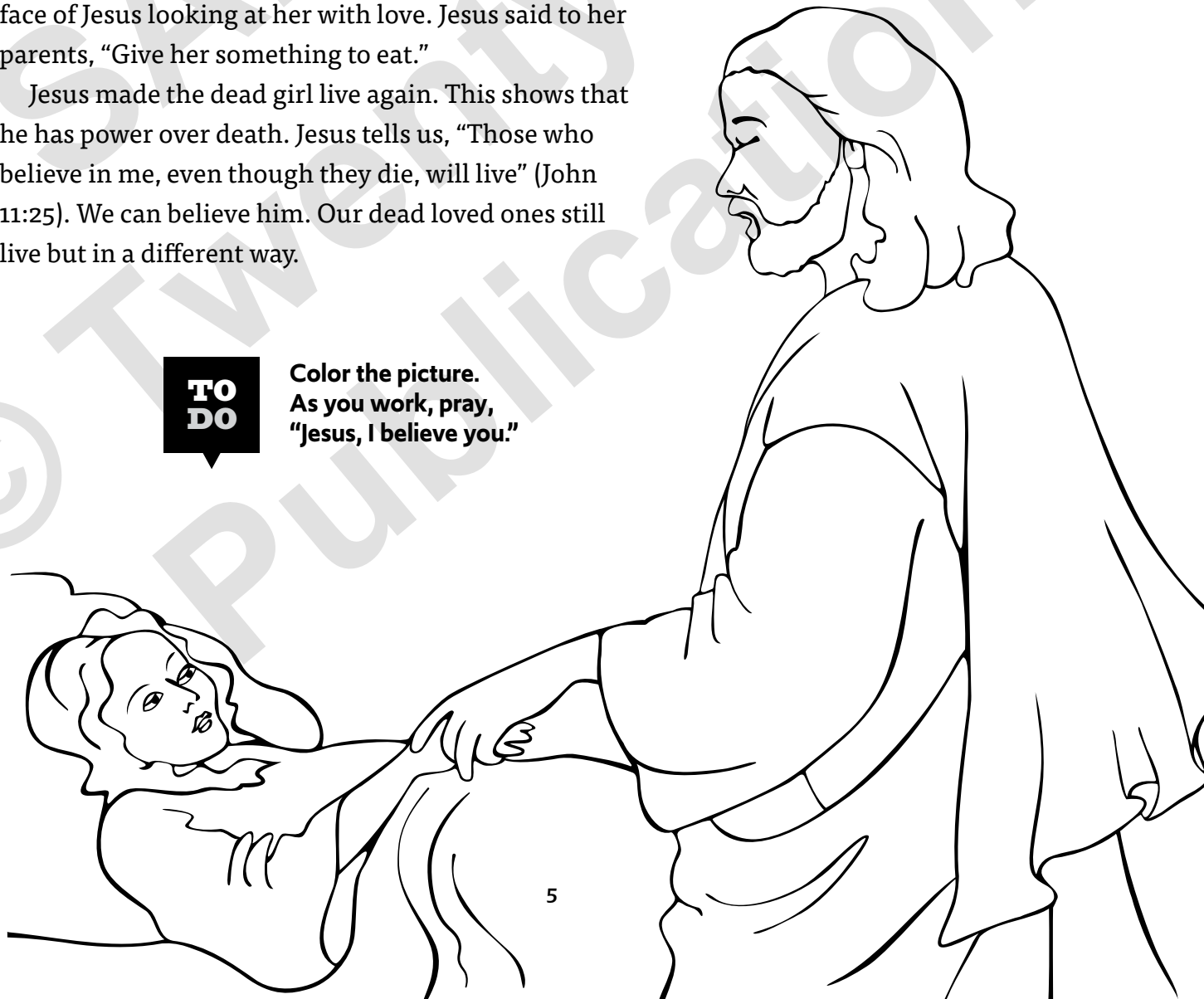
Jesus made the dead girl live again. This shows that he has power over death. Jesus tells us, "Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live" (John 11:25). We can believe him. Our dead loved ones still live but in a different way.

Parent Spot

Don't be afraid to let your child see you crying. This assures him or her that grief is normal. But avoid having your child witness extreme emotions, which would cause anxiety and insecurity.

TO DO

Color the picture.
As you work, pray,
"Jesus, I believe you."



A Promise of Jesus



Jesus told us what we all hope for is true: We will live forever. Jesus died and was buried on Good Friday. But three days later, on Easter Sunday, he was alive again with a new, special life. People saw him and talked with him. We call this wonderful event the resurrection of Jesus. We celebrate it each year during the Easter season. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we know we will rise someday. Your loved one will rise with a new body. And so will you. You will always be you!

Jesus also said these comforting words:

“My Father’s house in heaven has many rooms. I have prepared a room for you.”

JOHN 14:2

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

JOHN 14:6

“I am the resurrection and the life.” JOHN 11:25



Write the letter that comes after the given one in the alphabet to see what Jesus said in John 10:10.

“I have come that you may have

e t k k m d r r n e k h e d.”

Parent Spot

Invite your child to ask questions. Give simple, honest answers. Be patient if you have to repeat things. To some questions you might say, “I don’t know.”



Add the names of some deceased people who are welcoming your loved one:



Loved Ones Are with God

Leaves and flowers that die turn into soil. Like them, bodies crumble into soil. We bury or burn people's bodies. Their spirit is what makes them who they are and gives them power to think, choose, and love. This spirit lives on. Your loved one's spirit is waiting for the time when God will have all people rise from the dead. On that day our souls will be joined with our bodies again. But our bodies will be new and glorious.

People who haven't loved God and other people enough are not ready to live with God as soon as they die. They must be made ready in purgatory. We call these people who are waiting "holy souls" or "poor souls." We can pray for them so they do not have to wait long.

On November 2, the whole Church prays for the poor souls. People who died know about us and can pray for us too. We can talk to our loved ones who have died, but we don't hear them talk back. In the frame is a prayer we pray for them. "Eternal" means without end, and "perpetual light" means God's glory.

TO DO

Learn this prayer by heart. Pray it for your deceased loved ones. In the frame draw flowers or designs to make it pretty.

Eternal rest grant
unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light
shine upon them.
May they rest in peace.
May their souls
and the souls
of all the faithful
departed
through the mercy
of God rest in peace.



Parent Spot

Mention the deceased person's name. Speak freely about him or her. Invite your child to talk to their loved one, perhaps before going to bed. Pray for the person together.

