

of death, for we have eternal life. Have you discovered this great hope that we can cherish in our darkest moments? If you have never accepted Jesus as your Saviour, will you do it just now?

God and Father of the living and the dead: I am grateful for Your justice and mercy in dealing with very weak, mortal human beings. I love You, and I long for the day, when by Your grace, I will receive immortality with all Your children. Help me to trust You completely and to believe the Bible with all my heart. Hasten the day when I will be united with my loved ones in the great resurrection morning. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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DISCOVER

WHEN A PERSON DIES... WHAT THEN?



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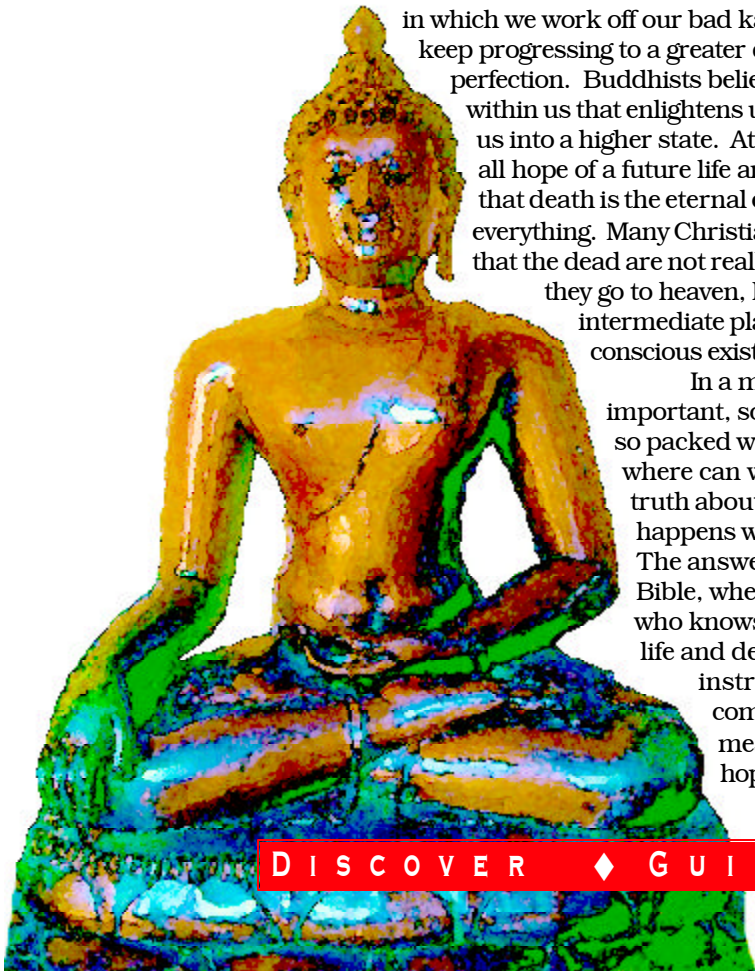
e cringe when a child first asks, "What does it mean to die?" We shrink from talking about or even thinking about death. We not only fear dying, but we also rebel at the thought of someone we love dying. Death is the common enemy of people everywhere.

So what are the answers to the hard questions about

death? Are people born only to die? Is death the end of the story? Or is there life after death? What is the experience of those in the grave? Can we help them? Can we talk with them? Will we ever see our dead loved ones again? Just where are the dead?

Conflicting voices clamor to give us the answers. New Age channelers teach that the spirits who channel messages to them are dead beings who have evolved to a higher state. Hindus teach reincarnation into a whole series of lifetimes in which we work off our bad karma and keep progressing to a greater degree of perfection. Buddhists believe in the god within us that enlightens us and moves us into a higher state. Atheists deny all hope of a future life and declare that death is the eternal end of everything. Many Christians believe that the dead are not really dead—that they go to heaven, hell, or some intermediate place of conscious existence.

In a matter so important, so universal, so packed with emotion, where can we learn the truth about what happens when we die? The answer is in the Bible, where the God who knows all about life and death will instruct us with comforting messages of hope.



Jesus also makes it possible for us to cope with the tragedy of losing a loved one. Jesus walked through “the valley of the shadow of death”; He knows about the dark nights we go through. He died and rose from the grave to give us an unshakable hope.

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that BY HIS DEATH he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and FREE THOSE WHO ALL THEIR LIVES WERE HELD IN SLAVERY BY THEIR FEAR OF DEATH.”—Hebrews 2:14, 15.

Dr. James Simpson, the great physician who developed anesthesia, experienced a terrible loss when his eldest child died. He grieved deeply as any parent would. But then he found his way to hope. On his beloved child’s grave he erected a small obelisk pointing like a spire toward the heavens. And on it he carved these three words Jesus spoke concerning His resurrection: “Nevertheless, I live.”

That says it all. Personal tragedy may seem to blot out the sky sometimes; nevertheless, Jesus lives! Our hearts may be breaking; nevertheless, Jesus lives!

In Christ we have hope of life after death. He is “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), and He promises, “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19). When Christ comes again He gives us immortality. We will never again live under the shadow



God is planning some wonderful reunions. Children will be returned to their ecstatic parents. Husbands and wives will melt into each other's arms. All of life's cruel separations will be swallowed up in a crescendo of reunions rising into the sky. Truly, "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54).

8. FACING DEATH UNAFRAID

There's no doubt about it, death is an enemy—it robs us of almost everything. But the one thing it can't take from us is Christ, and Christ can put everything back together again. Death will not always reign in this world. The devil, the wicked, death, and the grave will perish in "the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death" (Revelation 20:14).

In the meantime here are four simple suggestions for facing death unafraid:

1. Live a life of hopeful trust in Christ, and you will be prepared for death at any moment.
2. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, be obedient to Christ's commandments, and you will be prepared for a second life in which you will never die.
3. Think of death as a short sleep from which Jesus' voice will awaken you when He comes a second time.
4. Cherish the assurance Jesus gives us of a heavenly home with Him for all eternity.

Bible truth releases a person from the fear of death because it reveals Jesus, the One whom even death could not conquer. When Jesus comes into our lives, He floods our hearts with peace:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. . . . Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."—John 14:27.

1. FACING DEATH UNAFRAID

All of us at certain moments, perhaps right after the passing of a friend or loved one, have felt that emptiness in the pit of our stomachs, that lonely feeling that sweeps over us, as we catch a glimpse of the end of life. But fortunately, part of Christ's mission on earth was to "free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Hebrews 2:15). (*Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].*)

In the Bible, Jesus answers clearly all our questions about death, resurrection, and a future life. To understand from the Word of God the real truth about death, let's start at the beginning and see how our Creator made us.

2. HOW GOD MADE US

"The LORD God formed the man [adam, Hebrew] from the dust of the ground [adamah, Hebrew]."—Genesis 2:7.

The Creator could have made the first man from some celestial or supernatural substance, but He didn't. He fashioned Adam from "the dust of the ground." After God had combined the desired elements of earth to form Adam's brain, bones, and body, His creative energy gave life to the inert form. It took something more to transform that perfect body into a living soul—and that something more was "the breath of life."

"The LORD God formed the man from the DUST OF THE GROUND and breathed into his nostrils THE BREATH OF

LIFE, and the man became A LIVING BEING [SOUL].—Genesis 2:7.

As God breathed into Adam, life began to flow from God through the complex network of his nervous system. His muscles expanded and contracted; his heart and lungs moved in rhythm. The combination of the body and “the breath of life” made man “a living being,” “a living soul” (KJV).

Note that the Bible does not say Adam received a soul—rather it says that “man became a living soul.”

So we might write the human equation like this:

“Dust of Ground” + “Breath of Life” = “A Living Soul”
Lifeless Body + Breath from God = A Living Being

Each of us has a body, intelligence, memory, a reasoning mind, a conscience, and a will. We have one personality and one character. So we’re one whole entity, not two or more distinct parts thrown together. Just as long as we continue to breathe, we will be a living human being, a living soul.

3. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A PERSON DIES?

At death the reverse of the creative process described in Genesis 2:7 takes place:

“And the DUST returns to the ground it came from, and the SPIRIT [BREATH OF LIFE] returns to God who gave it.”—Ecclesiastes 12:7.

The Bible often uses the Hebrew words for “breath” and “spirit” interchangeably. When people die, their body becomes “dust” and the “spirit” or “breath of life” returns to God, its source. But what happens to the soul?

overwhelming, and we all have to go through a grieving process. Some feel the separation from a loved one so keenly that they try to make contact with their dead loved ones. They can fall under the influence of spiritist mediums or New Age channelers who claim they can communicate with the dead.

But the Bible specifically warns us against trying to ease the pain of death in this way:

“When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?”—Isaiah 8:19.

“Consult the Message and the Counsel of God!”—Verse 20, Moffatt.

The real solution to the anguish caused by separation from a loved one is the comfort that only Christ gives. After all, it’s Christ, not some medium, who holds our loved one in the palm of His hand. It’s Christ the Creator who holds the blueprint for that individual.

Spending time communicating with Christ is the healthiest way to grow through the grieving process. Slowly His perspective sinks into our minds; His promises shine on our gloomy thoughts. Remember that your loved one is asleep, and a night’s sleep seems like just a few moments to the sleeper. The next conscious impression that comes to those who sleep in Christ will be the sounds of the second coming.

Your loved ones who rest in Jesus will rise in the “resurrection of life” when Jesus returns once more. On that glorious day, loved ones and friends who are believers will all be caught up together to meet Christ in the air.



“Our Savior, Christ JESUS, who HAS DESTROYED DEATH and HAS BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT through the gospel.”—2 Timothy 1:10.

The teaching that we are now immortal lies behind the belief in an eternally burning hell. Both the immortality of the soul and an eternally burning hell are ideas derived from Satan’s lie to Eve in Eden, when he promised, “You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). God’s perspective on human destiny is clear: eternal death for those who reject Christ and cling to their sins, or immortality as a gift when Jesus comes for those who have accepted Him as Saviour.

7. FACING THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

The fears that we naturally struggle with in the face of death become especially acute when a loved one dies. The loneliness and sense of loss can be

“As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, . . . every LIVING SOUL belongs to me. . . . THE SOUL WHO SINS IS THE ONE WHO WILL DIE.”—Ezekiel 18:3-4.

The soul dies! It is not now immortal—it can perish.

The previous two scriptures show that the equation derived from Genesis 2:7, when God made us, reverses itself at death.

**“Dust of Earth” — “Breath of Life” = “A Dead Soul”
Lifeless Body — Breath from God = A Dead Being**
(Think of the — as an equivalent to “without.”)

Death is the cessation of life, a blackout of spirit, soul, and body. The body disintegrates to dust, and the breath, or spirit, goes back to God. We are living beings in life, a living soul, but in death only a corpse, a dead soul. When God takes back the breath of life He gave to us, our soul dies.

But thank God, the story doesn’t end here. With Christ there is hope. But before entering into a discussion of that hope, let’s first examine the question:

4. HOW MUCH DOES A DEAD PERSON KNOW?

After death the brain disintegrates; it can’t know, comprehend, or remember anything.

“No one remembers you [Lord] when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave?”—Psalm 6:5.

All human emotions cease at death.

“Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never

again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.”—Ecclesiastes 9:6.

The dead are not aware of anything that takes place. They have absolutely no contact with the living:

“For the living know that they will die, but THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. . . . Enjoy life. . . for IN THE GRAVE, where you are going, THERE IS NEITHER WORKING NOR PLANNING NOR KNOWLEDGE NOR WISDOM.”—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 9, 10.

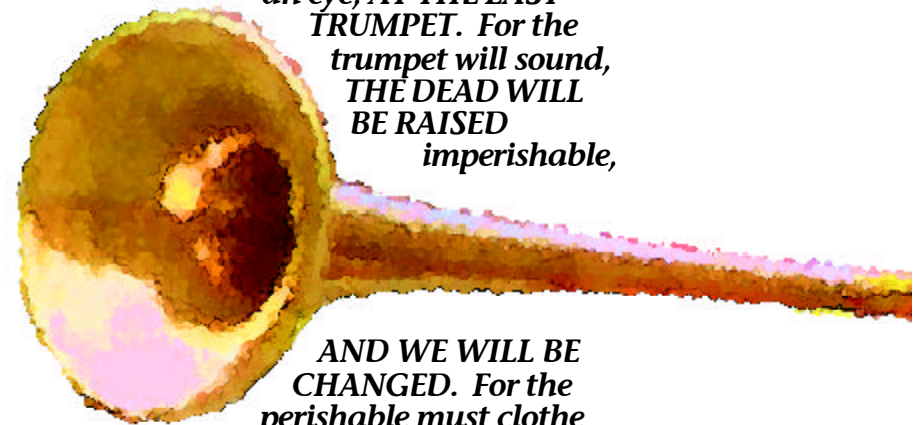
Death is like a dreamless sleep—in fact, 54 times the Bible calls death a “sleep.” The psalmist said, “I will sleep in death” (Psalm 13:3). Jesus also taught that death is like a sleep. He said to His disciples:

“Our friend LAZARUS HAS FALLEN ASLEEP; but I am going there to wake him up.’ His disciples replied, ‘Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.’ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, ‘LAZARUS IS DEAD.’”—John 11:11-14.



are mortal: subject to death. But when Jesus returns, our nature will undergo a radical change.

“Listen, I tell you a mystery: WE WILL NOT ALL SLEEP, but WE WILL ALL BE CHANGED—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, AT THE LAST TRUMPET. For the trumpet will sound, THE DEAD WILL BE RAISED imperishable,



AND WE WILL BE CHANGED. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and THE MORTAL WITH IMMORTALITY. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘DEATH HAS BEEN SWALLOWED UP in victory.’”—1 Corinthians 15:51-54.

As human beings, we are not now immortal. But by faith in Jesus we can now claim the promise of immortality. The Christian’s assurance is that he or she will gain immortality when Jesus comes again a second time.

The certainty of the promise of immortality was demonstrated when Jesus burst open His tomb.

Those who love God don't have to fear death. Beyond it lies an eternity of real, physical, joyful, fulfilling life with God. Jesus holds "the keys of death" (Revelation 1:18). Without Christ, death would be a one-way street ending in oblivion, the abyss that lies at the end of the road of sin. But Christ can unlock the grave. With Christ there is hope: a bright, radiant hope.

6. ARE WE IMMORTAL NOW?

The Bible never once describes the soul as *immortal*—that is, *not subject to death*. In the beginning, Adam's heritage as a created son of God was not death, but eternal life. Had Adam remained obedient to the will of God, he would never have died. But when Adam and Eve sinned, they forfeited their right to life, and by disobedience became subject to death. Their sin infected the entire human race (Romans 5:12). Since "the soul who sins is the one who will die" (Ezekiel 18:4), people are now all *mortal*—*subject to death*.

The Hebrew and Greek words for "soul," "spirit," and "breath" occur in the Bible 1,700 times, and not once is the human soul, spirit, or breath referred to as now being immortal. Nor is there any hint in the Bible that humans have any conscious existence apart from the body.

At the present time God alone possesses immortality.

***"God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, WHO ALONE IS IMMORTAL."*—1 Timothy 6:15, 16.**

Scripture makes it clear that people in this life

Lazarus was in the early stages of decay, having been dead for four days before Jesus arrived. But when the Son of God came to the tomb, He proved that it is as easy for God to raise the dead as for us to awaken a sleeping companion.

It's a great comfort to know that our deceased loved ones are "asleep," resting peacefully in Jesus. The tunnel of death, which we ourselves may someday pass through, is a quiet, peaceful sleep.

God's way is the best way. Suppose that a godly mother were to go to heaven at death. According to some popular teachings she would be obliged to look down from heaven to this earth. If she had a wayward son, she might see him as a hopeless alcoholic, or as an addict dying of AIDS. Or, suppose that her husband had preceded her in death. As is commonly believed, if her husband had been a wicked man, she could look over into hell and see him tormented in the everlasting flames. Salvation in such circumstances might offer more pain than joy. Thank God that death is like a sound, tranquil sleep.



5. DOES GOD FORGET THOSE WHO SLEEP IN DEATH?

The sleep of death is not the end of the story. At the tomb of His friend Lazarus, Jesus said to Martha:

“I AM THE RESURRECTION and the life. HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE, even though he dies.”—John 11:25.

Those who die in Christ sleep in the grave—but they still have a bright future beyond it. Our infinitely skillful Creator preserves the complete picture, the DNA pattern if you please, of every individual He has made. The One who counts every hair on our heads and holds us in the palm of His hand will not forget.

Job had confidence in God’s unerring memory. He expressed the hope of living again:

“If only you would HIDE ME IN THE GRAVE! . . . If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service I WILL WAIT FOR MY RENEWAL TO COME. YOU WILL CALL AND I WILL ANSWER YOU; you will long for the creature your hands have made.”—Job 14:13-15.

A “renewal” is coming for those who rest in the grave. God will never lose track of a single one of His children. We may die and return to the dust, but the record of our individuality remains clear in the mind of God. Our “life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3), and He will raise us from death as surely and completely as He did Lazarus.

“When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”—Colossians 3:4.

The righteous dead will awaken from their sleep when Jesus comes.

“We do not want you to be ignorant about THOSE WHO FALL ASLEEP, OR TO GRIEVE LIKE THE REST OF MEN, WHO HAVE NO HOPE. . . . For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST. After that, WE WHO ARE STILL ALIVE and are left WILL BE CAUGHT UP TOGETHER WITH THEM in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. THEREFORE ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER WITH THESE WORDS.”—

1 Thessalonians 4:13, 16-18.

On resurrection day, the tunnel of death will seem like a brief rest. The dead are not aware of time passing. Those who have accepted Christ as their Saviour, will be awakened from sleep by His wonderful voice coming down to earth.

The hope of resurrection has a companion: the hope of a heavenly home, “the hope that is stored up for you in heaven” (Colossians 1:5). The Bible is full of advertisements for that perfect home in the Father’s house. Its inhabitants cheerfully “obey God’s commandments,” and “remain faithful to Jesus” (Revelation 12:17, 14:12). God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4).