

GROWTHguide

FOR THE WEEK OF APRIL 3, 2016

"IF I SHOULD DIE BEFORE I WAKE"



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

1 Corinthians 15:50-57, Psalm 90:5-6, Luke 23:42-43, John 14:1-6, Isaiah 26:19

REFLECTION AND STUDY

DAY 1

Every religion has a different concept of the afterlife, or whether an afterlife exists at all. Even within Christianity we have different ideas of what the afterlife will be. It's impossible for us to know, until we cross that great divide, what waits for us on the other side. What do you think life after death means? What do you picture when you think about heaven? Pearly gates? A host of angels? A warm, bright light?

- Do you fear death? Why or why not?
- Do you truly believe God in Jesus has the power to raise you from the dead?

Pray and ask God to take your fear from you and strengthen you in the knowledge of life eternal.

DAY 2

The fear of death comes from the fear of the unknown. It also comes out of the sense of sin. If we felt we could easily meet God, then dying would be something to look forward to. The sense of sin comes from seeing God as the judge of our sin, but we must see more. God in Jesus came to tell us that God is not law, but love, that the center of God's being is not legalism, but grace. We go out, not to a judge, but to a Father who awaits his children to come home.

- Imagine dying as going home to a loving, forgiving Father. How does this make you feel?

Pray and thank God for His grace and forgiveness.

DAY 3

When Paul talks about the resurrection of the body, he never says that we would rise with the body in which we died. He insisted we would have a spiritual body. This is likely why the disciples and some of those who met with Jesus after the resurrection didn't recognize him. He was no longer in the flesh; Jesus was in a spiritual body. Everything of the body and of the soul that is necessary to make us a person will survive, but, at the same time, all things will be new. Body and spirit alike will be very different from earthly things, for they will both be divine.

- How can we retain the essence of who we are, yet be made new?

Pray and thank God for His power to make all things new.

DAY 4

Paul's writing tells us that, as we are, we are not fit to inherit the Kingdom of God. We may be well enough to get on with the life of this world, but for the life of the world to come we will not do. A man may be able to run enough to catch the bus, but that same man may not be able to run in the Olympic Games. We must be changed to enter into a higher grade of life; and Paul says before we can enter the Kingdom of God, we too must be changed.

- What do you think are the things that must be changed within us to allow us to enter the Kingdom of God?
- Can you begin to change any of those things here on earth?

Pray and ask God to help you begin to change here on earth, to become more like the person He intends you to be for eternity.

DAY 5

Read John 14: 1-6. Jesus told the disciples, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."* When the disciples told Jesus they didn't know the way, he answered, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

- What is Jesus telling us about how to reach the Kingdom of God?

Pray and thank God for showing us the way to reach His kingdom through His son, Jesus Christ.

DAY 6

The prophet Isaiah reminds us that as believers we will live again, rising from the ashes. Death is transformed from a monster to a minister. What at first seems to trap us actually frees us to go to God. Death is referred to as a departure when actually for believers; it is an "arrival." Only death can give us the gift of eternity. Only those who are prepared to die are actually prepared to live. The uncertainty is not in the dying; the uncertainty comes in the preparation.

- How are you preparing for the next life?
- Are you living as if you are prepared to die?

Pray and ask God to help you live in the certainty of life after death.

DAY 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.