

What Happens When We Die?

Teacher Pep Talk: Sometimes it becomes necessary for us to teach a child about "What Happens When We Die." This may bring to us all sorts of feelings of angst. But be reassured; generally the young child is not afraid of death, nor even overly concerned with it. At this tender age, death is usually still an abstract concept to them. At most they may have known a loved one (a grandparent, etc) who has passed away, or they may have experienced the death of a family pet.

As you are teaching, keep in mind that Jesus conquered death when He rose from the dead and that He is the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus said *"He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."*

You will need: A tent, if you have access to one that can be put up in the room (or outside somewhere, if the children may have access to it safely.) Or drape a sheet or blanket over a table in your room. Or mark the edges of a pretend tent on the floor with masking tape. Copies of the activity sheet, if desired, for Memorial Day.

Major Points: Sometimes people die
Our body may die, but our soul/spirit lives on
When we die, if we believe in Jesus, we go to be with Him
One day we will have a heavenly body

Scripture Ref. 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 (Our Heavenly Dwelling)
John 11:25-26 (Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life)
Luke 23:32-43 (The Thief on the Cross)
1 Corinthians 15:40 (The Resurrection Body)

Memory Verse: *Away from the body... at home with the Lord...* 2 Corinthians 5:8

Lesson: **Introduction...**

- How many of you have ever been camping or slept in a tent? (*Wait for answers.*) Do you know what a tent is? (*Wait for answers.*)
 - Yes! It's a little house-like thing that you sleep in overnight, maybe while you are camping.
 - It may be made of different types of fabric or materials.
 - They may all look different.
 - Different people may sleep in them for different amounts of time... different numbers of days...
 - But one thing is the same about all tents: They are a temporary dwelling. That means we only use them for a little while. (They are not permanent.) They go up when we need them, and they come down when we are done with them.
 - Good! Now, you know all about tents!

Sometimes People Die

- God made us and He made our bodies too.
- The Bible says that our bodies are like little tents (that God gave us) for us to live in while we are here on earth.
- All of our tents are different. Some are bigger, some are smaller, some are stronger, and some are weaker.
- But all of them are the same in one way... They are all temporary... That means that they are not our permanent homes.
- After we have lived in them a long, long time... sometimes they begin to get old and can even begin to wear out. Sometimes we even begin to get tired of them, because they are beginning to be difficult to live in.
- Different people live in them for different amounts of time, but one thing is the same for everybody... Eventually we will leave our little tent.
- Sometimes people die. Have you ever known someone who died? *(Wait for answers. There may be lots of them. Let several children speak. Let all of them speak if possible. The children may tell you about relatives who died or even about family pets which died. Listen attentively. Be kind and considerate of each other during this time.)*
- Yes, sometimes people die. And it can make us feel very sad. Mostly because we are sad that we cannot see the person anymore for now.
- But... I have some very good news!

Our Body May Die, But our Soul/Spirit Lives On

- Even though our body may die, our soul and spirit live on. These are the parts of us that make us... us!
- We are the same! We will still know everyone and they will know us. We will know the things we know now, and we will know new stuff too!
- After all, even though we may go in and out of a tent, we are still us!
- And... there is more good news!

When We Die, if We Know Jesus, We Go to Be with Him

- When we die, if we know Jesus (have trusted Him as our Savior,) we go to be with Him in a place called Paradise!
- We know this because one day Jesus died on a cross for all of our sins
- While He was on the cross, there was a thief on one of the crosses next to Him.
- The thief knew that he had done lots of bad (wrong) things in his life.
- But the thief knew also knew that Jesus was good and had never, ever done anything bad (wrong)
- The thief trusted in Jesus as the One who could save him
- Even though he saw Jesus dying on the cross, he said to Him, *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”*
- Amazing... Here is Jesus dying on the cross next to him, and the man still believed that Jesus would one day rule in His own kingdom!
- That’s when Jesus told the man something wonderful.

- Jesus said, “*I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.*”
 - Today... not tomorrow... not next week... not sometime in the future a long way off... Today you will be with me in paradise.
- Both Jesus and the thief died that day, and the thief went to be in Paradise with Jesus, because he trusted in Him as his Savior.
- Later a man named Paul, who also knew and trusted Jesus, said “... as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.” And then he said, “We... would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord” meaning that (as Christians) when we die we go to be with Jesus.

One Day We will Have a Heavenly Body

- Jesus is so good that He plans to give us new bodies to live in forever!
 - The Bible calls them incorruptible, which means that they will never grow old or wear out!
 - I think we will like them a lot!
 - I’m looking forward to having mine!

Let’s pray and thank God that when we die we can go to be with Jesus.

Prayer: Dear God,
Thank you that you made us.
Thank you that you gave us our bodies!
Thank you that when we die, we can go to be with Jesus in Paradise!
Thank you for loving us!
We love you back!
Amen

Suggested Activities: *(Choose two or three that work well for your group.)*

Visit a Tent In this activity, the children will visit a tent and go in and out of it.

Before Class: Locate a small tent which can be pitched in your classroom, or in an outside area which the children may visit safely after the lesson. Have the tent set up when the children arrive. No tent available? A sheet or blanket draped over a table makes a wonderful tent. *You may choose to have your snack in the tent today.*

During Class: Remind the children that the Bible tells us that our body is like a tent that God has given us to live in while we are here on the earth. When we are done with it, we leave it to go to be with Him and to have our new bodies, which will last forever.

Visit the tent that has been set up earlier. (Slip off your shoes, as you are not usually supposed to go in a tent with your shoes on. You may wear your socks!) Take turns going in and out of the tent a few times. “See, you are the same when you go in and when you come out. When we die, our spirit/soul leaves our body; just like we leave the tent. It goes on to be with Jesus in Paradise, if we have trusted Him as our Savior.”

Memorize the Bible Verse The children will learn 2 Corinthians 5:8: “Away from the body... Together with the Lord.” You may use the tent for this activity, if you like.

No tent? Use masking tape to mark off a square on the floor. Pretend it is the tent. OR drape a sheet or a blanket over a table for a tent-like effect.

Have everyone stand outside the tent. Tell the children that just for this exercise one of you will pretend to be Jesus. Have the children go in the tent one at a time. Have them come to the door of the tent and say “Away from the body...” as they exit the tent. Then have them run to you and the others as you all say “Together with the Lord...” The children may want to get creative about how they leave the tent: they may hop out, jump out, crawl out, etc, but each time they come to the group say: “Together with the Lord.”

Making Trail Mix The children will learn to make trail mix and then eat it during class.
Before Class: Obtain a recipe you like for trail mix. Easy things to use include: dry cereals, M&M candies (or semi-sweet chocolate morsels), dried cranberries or raisins, and tiny pretzels. You will also need a mixing bowl and tiny plastic bags that close. Provide water for the children. Display a canteen or a water bottle for them to see.

NOTE: Nuts are traditionally used – But **NO NUTS** in your trail mix because of choking hazards and nut allergies! (Mostly because of choking hazards!)

During Class: Explain to the children that we live a long time in our bodies and that we go a long way in them. It is important to help keep them healthy and strong. A good way to do this is by walking and hiking. Today we will learn about snacks that are fun to take on a long walk or hike. Discuss different types of snacks. Discuss trail mix. Show how to combine the various ingredients together to make a tasty snack. Good trail mix has a mixture of carbohydrates, sugar, and at least one thing with a little salt: These help replace the things in your body that you lose or use up as you walk along on a long hike. Mix up your trail mix. Let each child place some trail mix in their bag for a snack. Take a hike to the tent. Sit in or around the tent and have your snack.

Snacks in the Tent The children will enjoy their snack time in the tent.

Before Class: If you are using someone else’s tent, be sure to check if snacks may be eaten in their tent. Sometimes folks don’t want this because the crumbs may draw bugs such as ants. If you do have snacks in the tent, make sure it is thoroughly clean and dry before taking down the tent. Good tent snacks are crackers/ trail mix, and water.

During Class: Remind the children that while we are here on earth we live in our bodies all the time. We eat, sleep, and play every day in these little houses or tents that God has given us to live in. Today we will have a little snack in the tent. Bring out snacks and distribute them among the children. Sit in the tent (you may have to take turns) and eat part of your snack. You may pretend to take a nap in the tent. Sing a song in or around the tent, etc.

Draw Yourself The children will draw self-portraits.

Before Class: Obtain pieces of paper for each child, along with pencils, colors and markers. Consider providing various shades of yarn for hair, along with scissors and glue. You may want to provide mirrors for the children to look at themselves.

During Class: Remind the children that God made each of us unique and special. Ask them to draw themselves. Ask them to put in as much detail as they can. (Younger children will probably be able to draw eyes, ears, nose, and a mouth. Older children will most likely be able to include eyebrows, eyelashes, teeth, hair style, etc.) Ask the children to color the picture. Look in the mirror. What color eyes do you have? What color hair do you have? You may use yarn to make the hair.

Getting the BIG Picture The children will draw life-size outlines of themselves.

Before Class: Obtain large pieces of butcher paper for the children to outline themselves. Obtain pencils or markers. Clear space in one part of the room.

During Class: Cut off large sections of white paper. Allow the children to lie down on the paper. Have a helper (adult or child) outline the edges of the child. You don't have to get really close, just more or less the idea of around the legs and arms, etc. Display the pictures on the wall of the room. Talk about how God gives us our bodies to live in while we are here on earth. One day we will have new bodies that will last forever!

Memorial Day Activity The children will learn of Memorial Day in the US.

Before Class: Make copies of the activity sheet for the children. Obtain colors or markers. Consider bringing a bouquet of flowers with you to class.

During Class: Discuss with the children that when people die, their bodies are usually placed in graves at the cemetery. On Memorial Day, in the United States, we often go and visit the graves of those in our families who have died (or "gone on before us.") Sometimes we take flowers and leave them on the grave. (*Show the flowers you brought with you.*) Sometimes we say a prayer at the graveside. We must remember that even though the person's body is in the grave that their spirit/soul is not there. Those who believe in Jesus are with Him in Paradise. Remind the children that on Memorial Day in the US we give special remembrance to those who died fighting in our armed forces, in the cause of freedom.

Say a little prayer thanking God for those who have gone on before us to be with Him.

Draw some flowers in the little vase on the activity sheet, and display it at home.

Remembering Those Who have Gone on Before Us

