

THE JOURNEY
Basic Discipleship

05 REVEALED

STEP FIVE

DEATH



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

We are so glad you're here! As you step into this journey of discipleship, know that you are entering a path designed to deepen your relationship with God and build a firm biblical foundation. This material is meant to guide you, no matter where you are on your faith journey. The tools and lessons you'll find here are adaptable to many settings—whether you're meeting one-on-one, gathering with a small group, or sharing in a larger community. It can be simplified to nurture the hearts of youth and children or enriched to challenge and inspire mature believers to grow even further.

Discipleship is a journey, not a race.

Our prayer is that this journey will help you engage with Scripture, build meaningful relationships, and discover how God is working in and through your life. Let's take this next step together with faith and intentionality as we grow closer to Him. Trust the process of growth and transformation that occurs over time as you walk with God.



05 DEATH

I. DEATH ENTERS

PHYSICAL DEATH

The Bible describes death as an enemy of humans, not as a friend or a natural part of life. While all living things die, physical human death is unique: our soul separates from our body. This separation was never part of God's original

design. Humans were created to live forever in fellowship with Him, with their bodies and spirits united. Physical death for humans entered the world as part of the curse in Genesis 3, following Adam and Eve's rebellion. Death is not only the result of Adam's individual sin, but now is also a consequence of the resulting corruption of all creation. Death was not originally meant to be natural or normal for human beings, no matter how often the world tries to say otherwise.

Yet for those who are in Christ, there is hope. Jesus has broken the curse of sin. Death remains an enemy, but it is a defeated enemy. Jesus broke the power of death through His own death and resurrection.



GENESIS 2:17 | *“but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”*

ROMANS 6:23 | *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

GENESIS 3:19

ROMANS 5:12

HEBREWS 2:14-15

REVELATION 1:17-18

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why is death unnatural for human beings according to the Bible?
2. How do you respond to the Bible's description of death as an enemy, especially in contrast to modern views that see it as natural?

SPIRITUAL DEATH

The Bible also speaks of another kind of death. Whereas physical death is the separation of body and soul, spiritual death is the state of the soul apart from the saving work of Jesus. Spiritual death describes the condition of every person who understands right from wrong but has not yet received salvation in Christ.

In this state, we are cut off from God, spiritually lifeless, and unable to please Him by our own efforts. Even though our bodies are alive, our spirits are far from God, who is the source of all life. Without Christ, we're not spiritually neutral; instead, we are living in opposition to God, even if we don't realize it. Simply being a 'good' person isn't enough, because our good deeds can't fix our separation from God. Our spiritual understanding is clouded, and our hearts are hardened.

But this spiritual death isn't the end of the story. When someone responds to the Gospel and becomes a Christian, God brings them spiritually to life in Christ, restoring their relationship with Him and beginning a new life through the Spirit.

EPHESIANS 2:1 | *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...”*

COLOSSIANS 2:13 | *“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins...”*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

ISAIAH 59:2
ROMANS 8:6
1 CORINTHIANS 2:14
EPHESIANS 4:18
1 TIMOTHY 5:6

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How is physical human death different from spiritual death?
2. How does understanding spiritual death help you better appreciate what it means to be “made alive with Christ”?

Note: There is a final kind of death the Bible talks about: eternal death. This will be discussed in the seventh step of this series.

II. LIFE BETWEEN

PHYSICAL DEATH IS NOT THE END

The Bible is clear: physical death is not the end of our existence. When a person dies, their body ceases to function, but their spirit continues. However, we do not immediately arrive at our final eternal destination. Instead, there is an intermediate state: a temporary condition in which the spirit remains alive and conscious, awaiting Christ’s return, the resurrection of the body, and final judgment.

Scripture sometimes uses the word ‘sleep’ as a metaphor for physical death, but this imagery should not be misunderstood: the soul is neither unconscious nor dormant. In fact, the Bible gives several examples showing that people remain aware and responsive after death.

According to Scripture, they can remember, speak, hope, fear, and worship.

Importantly, both the righteous and the unrighteous continue in this conscious state, though their experiences differ dramatically. This intermediate period is not a vague waiting room. Instead, it is a meaningful chapter in God’s redemptive story, pointing toward Christ’s return and final judgment.

PHILIPPIANS 1:23 | *"I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;"*

REVELATION 6:9-10 | *"They called out in a loud voice, 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?'"*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

MATTHEW 17:1-8

LUKE 16:19-31

LUKE 23:42-43

ACTS 7:59

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does the Bible's teaching about a conscious intermediate state reveal about the nature of the human soul?
2. In what ways does knowing that the soul continues after death challenge or reinforce your current thoughts on death?

UNDERSTANDING THE TERMS

In the Bible, the word Sheol, and its New Testament counterpart Hades, are important to understand. These words can have multiple meanings depending on the context:

The "grave" (or physical death that all experience)

The realm of the dead (only unsaved souls go here)

A personified image of death as a fearsome enemy

Sheol and Hades are not the same as Hell or the final judgment.

Scripture also uses directional metaphors to describe spiritual realities. Heaven (or where God is) is often described as being "up," while Sheol or Hades is described as "down." These aren't geographic directions but moral and theological ones.

"Up" reflects nearness to God and glory, while "down" signifies judgment, separation, and loss.

REVELATION 1:18 | *“I hold the keys of death and Hades.”*

PSALM 18:5 | *“The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.”*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

GENESIS 37:35

PROVERBS 5:5

ISAIAH 28:15

REVELATION 6:8

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What are the various meanings of Sheol/Hades in the Bible and how are they used?
2. Prior to understanding the Biblical uses, what associations did you have with Hades?

WHERE DO WE GO?

It's a natural and important question: where do people go after they die?

FOR UNBELIEVERS:

The soul enters Sheol or Hades. This is a spiritual realm of separation from God, awaiting final judgment.

FOR BELIEVERS:

The Bible uses very different language. While believers' bodies enter the grave, in the New Testament their souls are never said to go to Sheol or Hades. Instead, they immediately enter the presence of God. They are still awaiting their glorified bodies, yet are already secure in His care. Scripture refers to this place by various names such as Paradise (Luke 23:43), Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22), under the heavenly altar (Revelation 6:9), and home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8)

LUKE 16:23 | *“In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.”*

PROVERBS 15:24 | *“The path of life leads upward for the prudent to keep them from going down to the realm of the dead.”*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

1 SAMUEL 2:6

JOB 24:19

PSALM 9:17

PSALM 18:5

REVELATION 1:18

REVELATION 6:8-10

REVELATION 20:13-14

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Is it confusing to you that the Bible describes Sheol/Hades as both the “grave” that all experience AND the place where unsaved souls go immediately after death?
2. What does it mean to be already secure in His care even before Jesus’ return?

WHAT HAPPENS THERE?

After death, every person’s body returns to the grave, yet the soul remains conscious. The experience that follows varies greatly depending on one’s relationship with Christ.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE SAVED,

The soul enters a state of bliss. They are in the Lord’s presence in paradise and enjoy perfect delight, a reality far surpassing our current earthly existence.

Even so, this period carries a sense of “nakedness,” as the soul awaits its resurrection body and has not yet completed the journey to full glorification.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT SAVED,

The intermediate state is one of torment in the realm of Hades. Their consciousness persists amid ongoing agony, depicted as a prison-like environment where suffering continues until final judgment.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:8 | “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

LUKE 23:43 | “Jesus answered him, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.’”

*Additional
Scripture
References*

LUKE 16:22-24

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-5

2 PETER 2:9

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Growing up, where did you think souls went after death and why?
2. How does what happens after the death of believers influence the way you view sickness, aging, or the death of a loved one?

NOT FOREVER

The Bible clearly teaches that the time between physical death and resurrection is not permanent. Those who have died will not remain disembodied spirits forever. This period comes to an end at the return of Jesus. Although Scripture does not specify how long this period lasts, it consistently teaches that the disembodied state is temporary.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:16 | *“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.”*

JOHN 5:28-29 | *“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.”*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

ROMANS 8:23

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-53

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-4

PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Growing up, did you know the Bible says there was a temporary place we go to first?
2. In what ways can knowing that the “in-between” ends with Christ’s return bring you peace or renewed purpose today?

II. COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS

PURGATORY

In Roman Catholic teaching, purgatory is described as a temporary state after physical death where the souls of believers undergo purification before entering the presence of God. According to this view, those who are saved must be purified from the lingering effects of sin before entering heaven fully sanctified.

However, the idea of purgatory finds no support in the inspired Scriptures of our Bible. Instead, the New Testament teaches the opposite: that the souls of those in Christ go directly to be with the Lord in Paradise, not to a place of further cleansing or suffering.

Finally, the teaching of purgatory undermines the finished work of Christ. The Bible repeatedly states that Jesus paid for our sins in full on the cross. When one becomes a Christian, all sins of our past, present, and future are fully forgiven. Believers have no remaining debt requiring further suffering or purification.

PHILIPPIANS 1:23 | *“I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;”*

ROMANS 8:1 | *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

JOHN 5:24

2 CORINTHIANS 5:8

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

HEBREWS 10:14

HEBREWS 12:23

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does Scripture teach about Christ’s sacrifice being a full payment for our sins?
2. Are there ways in which you still feel the need to “earn” God’s forgiveness, even after trusting in Christ?





FEARING DEATH

While death is an enemy of all humankind, physical death is no longer something believers need to fear. Nor should death consume our thoughts, as if prolonging earthly life were our highest aim. Death is defeated! Though believers still experience physical death, we no longer face it with dread.

Although the world often calls death “the great unknown,” it is not unknown to us. Scripture gives a clear and hopeful vision of what lies ahead. For the believer, death is not a fearful end but a passage to anticipate with trust in the promises of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:55 | “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

MATTHEW 10:28 | “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul...”

*Additional
Scripture
References*

JOHN 11:25-26

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10

PHILIPPIANS 1:21-23

HEBREWS 2:14-15

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why does Scripture describe death as both an enemy and something no longer to be feared?
2. Are there ways that fear of death affects your thinking or choices? Explain.



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