

DEATH AND DYING

by Frank Zolvinski

PURPOSE

To examine the stages of death and dying, to relate to someone who has recently lost a loved one through death and to try to establish a Christian response to death.

PREPARATION

Make copies of the handouts: Things to Know (in the "Meat" of the Meeting) and On Death (in the Closing).

Contact a speaker who is knowledgeable on the subject of death. Possible contacts are a local hospital, hospice, ministerial alliance or psychologists. Also, you can contact your chamber of commerce for groups specifically to aid those experiencing death, such as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Gather pencils and paper for the entire group.

OPENING

Give pencils and paper to the youth and ask them to write any questions they have on death and dying.

THE "MEAT" OF THE MEETING

Introduce the speaker and encourage the youth to write questions or comments concerning the presentation.

After the speaker is finished, lead a question and answer period.

Distribute and discuss the following handout:¹

Things to Know

Five Stages of Dying

A person might not go through all these stages. These steps might not be experienced in any order or sequence.

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

What to Say to a Dying Person

- Is there anything you would like to talk about?
- Is there anything I can do for you?
- I've been praying for you.
- I'll baby-sit your children.
- I'll bring you something to eat.
- I'll drive you to the doctor.
- I'll keep you company so your spouse can go somewhere.

What to Say or Do at a Funeral

- Ask if there's anything you can do for the family.
- Listen to the family members and respond.
- A hug or touch can say more than words.
- Talk briefly about the deceased.
- Console the family.
- Experts think it is questionable to say, "It was God's will."

● Don't forget the family after the burial. Keep in touch, particularly several weeks after the death and during holidays or anniversaries.

RESPONSE (OR CLOSING)

Read the On Death prayer handout, with half the youth taking side one and the others side two.

Ask the youth if they agree or disagree with the statements in

this handout. Which ones? Do they know anyone who recently has lost a loved one? How can the youth use this lesson to comfort the bereaved?

Read John 11:1-44 for a concluding prayer and thank God for his power over death and his promise of eternal life.

¹Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, **On Death and Dying** (New York: MacMillan, 1970).

On Death

by Marie Gertrude Mlodzik

Side 1: I believe in death.

I believe death is a part of life, a part of every life.

Side 2: I believe that we were born to die. . . to die that we may live more fully. Born to die a little each day to selfishness, to pretense, to sin.

Side 1: I believe that every time we pass from one stage of life to another, something in us dies: The innocence and spontaneity of childhood dies to the daring of youth, to the reasoning of maturity.

Side 2: I believe that death is the way of nature in a flower that fades, a leaf that falls, a raindrop that evaporates, a breeze that passes by.

Side 1: I believe that I taste

death in moments of loneliness, of unlove, sorrow, and disappointment, when I am afraid, lose courage and give up, see my broken dreams, and every time I say goodbye.

Side 2: I believe that I am dying before my time when I live in bitterness, hatred and isolation.

Side 1: I believe that I create my own death by the way I live.

Side 2: I believe that life and death are one: that in the one same moment I can say that I am living and I am dying.

All: I believe that Jesus walked toward his death out of love and that he invites me to do the same.

Amen. So may it be.