



The Vine

Guidance for Life's Journey

Jesus said:

"I am the vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated from me, you can't produce a thing.

John 15:5, [The Message](#)

Teaching Children about Death

The last article discussed how to teach children about death, and how to comfort them in a time of loss. This article will serve as a follow-up, with some additional helpful hints and suggestions on talking and teaching about such a difficult subject.

Remember, first and foremost, that it is important to talk to your children. This may sound simple, but it is imperative to include children in the grieving process, so that they are able to deal with the death of a loved one. Adults sometimes feel that the children cannot understand the emotions or the depth of grief that they experience when a death occurs, and consequently, they leave children out of discussions or out of view when tears flow. It is *so* important to let your children see you cry, to let them hear you talk about the loved one who has died. Children need to see that you feel deeply so that they understand that it is appropriate for them to feel what they feel...and to express it. Let yourself be vulnerable in front of your children. This may be the greatest gift you can give them in a time of loss. Showing them your vulnerability is a way of showing them the love you have in your heart.

When telling a child that a loved one has died, language is important. Have you noticed that adults use phrases like "passed away" or "passed on" or "gone home" when they talk about someone who has died? These are primarily used because, if we are honest, it is hard to use a word such as "died" because it sounds so final, and so many of us have a great fear of death. We use other phrases so we can avoid the discomfort of talking about death. When talking to a child about someone who has "passed on," simply say that the person has died. They will not understand all the symbolic phrases adults use, and it may confuse them as to the truth. Up to a certain age children cannot understand abstract symbolism, so they may have no idea what you are trying to tell them if you say something

like, a loved one has "passed on to their eternal home." They will wonder why that home is different from their regular one, and may even want to go and visit. A more difficult situation is created because the word "death" was not used in the first place. So remember, children will not have an issue with the word or the concept of death...it's usually the adults.

Make sure that after a loved one dies, you continue to talk about that person, especially if it was someone with whom your child had a close relationship. Help your child to remember that person, so it is not as if their death has erased them from memory. It can be hard for adults to talk about memories, but we need to do it for our own sake as well as the child's. Remembering is part of healing.

It is our job as adults to teach children that death is a part of life. And as Christians we believe that death is not the end. There is eternal life awaiting those who claim Jesus as Savior and Lord. Teach your children about death, but also teach them about heaven. Teach them that death, while a part of the human process, is a step into eternity. Death is not something to be feared. If children learn this early in life, they will grow up with a solid understanding and a healthy way of coping when a death occurs at any point in their lives. Remember that, for better or worse, the lessons we give our children will last a lifetime. Make your lessons are positive, healthy and worthwhile.