

Pursuing God—A Seeker's Guide

Chapter Four *If I Should Die Before I Wake*

1. This chapter is about dying. Have you lost a friend or family member to death? If so, please tell us about it, that is, tell us how that person's death affected you?
2. Name five things you do to keep from dying.
3. Read the chapter aloud, along with the introduction to the chapter on page 20.
4. What do you think the Bible means when it calls death an enemy? Do you think of it like that?
5. Look at that verse in the middle of page 22. It is from Hebrews 2:15, and says that Christ came to "release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." In your opinion, what is the bondage that the writer of Hebrews speaks of? What is "release" from bondage?
6. I said that people who are not yet believers in Christ (and therefore not true Christians) have a lot of reason to worry about death. I went on to say that people who say otherwise "are only bluffing themselves. They either believe themselves to be invincible or they think that merely *saying* they are not afraid alters the facts. Both thoughts are deceptions." Actually, I could add a third: they may not believe there is anything following death.

So, either—

- a. you are a true Christian,
- b. you don't believe there is anything beyond death,
- c. you think you are invincible, or
- d. you somehow believe that *saying* you have no fear alters the facts about what follows death.

Do you see any other alternatives? If so, what are they? Which category of thinking best describes most people you know?

7. Christ came, then, to release us from the fear of death! God provided for our freedom from fear by sending Jesus to die for sinful people like us. He provides a pardon for sin and a promise of eternal life in heaven after death for everyone who believes in Him. We may not love the dying process, but we do not have to be fearful about what follows. If a believer is thinking well and is aware of his benefits as a believer, he should die well. Of course, some true believers do have a weaker faith than others, but you should see a difference. Often people who die are drugged heavily, so you may not learn what you should from their

experience. Have you ever known anyone in the dying process who expressed confidence in God about the future? Or someone who was very old who was confident about going to heaven? Or, have you known someone who had no confidence about the future and expressed it in some way, verbally or otherwise? Please relate that to the group.

8. I once met an old man who was dying. As I attempted to tell him about what Christ had done and how he could become a child of God, he seemed quite willing to listen. I asked him specifically if he believed in hell. He said that he did. Yet when I urged him to avoid hell and go to heaven by believing in Christ, he said that he did not wish to do so at that time. I said that I did not think he was telling me the truth. I did not believe that he thought hell was real. Do you think he believed in hell? Why or why not?

9. I quoted this statement from Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die . . ." (John 11:25-26).

Can you explain what this means? Discuss these verses, trying to unlock Jesus' exact meaning.

10. I have often seen people wearing this saying on their clothing, "No fear." Do you think they do have fear, don't have fear, should have fear, or should not have fear?

11. Tell the group why you would agree or disagree with these statements:

- a. "If you are unconverted to Christ, not having fear is a deception."
- b. "Fear of death for the true Christian means that the Christian is being deceived."

10. Any more questions?

For next week: Please read chapter five.