



We Shall All Be Changed (Together)

A Leader's Guide





A note from the author:

Thank you for picking up *We Shall All Be Changed: How Facing Death with Loved Ones Transforms Us*. I pray the pages of this book would be deeply encouraging to you, whether you are walking through the hard aftermath of a loss or preparing for the hardships that, in life as we know it, are sure to come.

I want to commend you for doing the hard work of facing and growing your theology of suffering. I trust it will bear rich fruit in your life, making you a better caregiver and co-sufferer and bringing you face-to-face with the Savior who faces death for us and with us.

I wrote these questions to spur discussion around each chapter of the book. These could be conversation starters with a neighbor for weekly walk-and-talks or the focus of a group gathering at your church. You could use these questions to discuss the book at a grief group you attend or simply to help you apply to your own life the stories and Scripture found in the book's pages.

I wish I could be in the room as you think through these questions or sit down to discuss this book with others. When we do the work of not only reading and learning but also applying it to our very real lives, *that is where the real transformation takes root.*

In Christ's finished work,

Whitney K. Pipkin

Introduction

1. What comes to mind when you think of death? Is there anything you're afraid of?

2. Have you ever witnessed death up close? How did it affect you?

3. J. I. Packer writes that “only when you know how to die can you know how to live” (p. 15). Do you agree? Why or why not?

4. Why do you think our broader American culture avoids discussing death? Do you think your church culture or community is better at it, or worse?

5. Have you considered your own end-of-life decisions? What's one step you could take soon to live in light of the end?

Chapter 1: On Learning in the Dry Land of Loss

1. What was the first funeral you remember attending? What impression did it leave on you?

2. How has your relationship with your parents changed as they've grown older or died? What has been hard for you about that process?

3. Read Psalm 90 together. How does numbering our days help us gain wisdom?

4. How does knowing God's presence is promised in the valley of the shadow of death change your perspective of it?

5. How can you practically draw near to the aging or sick in your current circumstances? Is there anyone you regularly interact with that you've been avoiding but could instead engage?

Chapter 2: Where the Boundary Lines Fall

1. Have you ever had a moment when you suddenly had to face your loved one's mortality, or your own? What was that like?

2. How does facing death sharpen our vision of what truly matters?

3. What did you lose during the pandemic (an event that was cancelled, a loved one, time with faraway family)? What was your takeaway from that time, if any?

4. Use the search function in your Bible app or the concordance in the back of your physical Bible to look up the word "die" or "death." Read the first occurrence in Genesis, one in the Psalms and one in the New Testament. What jumps out at you?

5. Consider the “story of death in Scripture,” summarized on pgs. 44-50 of the book. Which of these areas of the metanarrative (creation, fall, redemption, consummation) offered something you hadn’t thought much about before? Discuss.

Chapter 3: From the Sidelines

1. Have you ever been the one in the waiting room, feeling like you have to be strong for someone else? What was that like for you?

2. Do you ever try to talk yourself out of suffering (“It’s not as bad as what she’s going through...”)? How does remembering that suffering isn’t relative or that God isn’t limited to managing one trial at a time change your perspective?

3. What does it mean to you to “grieve with hope?” How have you seen this phrase misapplied?

4. Why is it good for Christians to be prepared for death—whether their own or others’?

5. How do we image God by drawing near to the hurting, grieving and sick—to those our culture and human nature tends to avoid?

Chapter 4: Fight or Flight

1. Has there been a situation in your life where “victory” has been elusive, where the trial becomes “a series of semicolons” instead of having a tidy conclusion? What has been hard about that?

2. How would you answer the question this chapter asks on p. 68: “Is it wrong for a Christian to ask for more time, to fight for it by any means necessary? Can it cause us to look for victory in a place where it isn’t promised?”

3. Why do you think Scripture relays Jesus’ conversation with his Father in the garden of Gethsemane in Luke 22:39-44? What can we learn from His prayer?

4. Why is it important for us to get to an “even if” moment in our own prayers, specifically our prayers for healing?

5. What is your relationship with the fear of death? How does knowing our Savior faced death too and faces it with us change the dynamic? (Consider Heb. 2:14-15 NIV and Phil. 2:8.)

6. Have you ever prayed or hoped for someone’s healing only to have the prayer go unanswered? What can we still hope in when our hopes for earthly healing are dashed?

7. This chapter talks about living in the tension between God’s goodness and our hard circumstances. Which are you more prone to focus on? Read Rom. 5:3-5. How can learning to hold both shape you?

Chapter 5: Our Fading Frames

1. “Our bodies carry in them reminders we will not live forever” and they “often tell us stories we’d rather not hear.” What story is your body telling you lately? What needs your attention?

2. Read Heb. 12:3-4 on p. 87. Why does it matter that Christ took on a body? What hope does that give you as you live and endure in yours?

3. When it comes to the fading and frailty of your body or a loved one’s, are you more likely to think too much of it (hypochondria googling, anti-aging obsessing, etc.) or to think too little of it (avoiding doctors because, “What you don’t know can’t hurt you!”)? How can you grow in this area?

4. What can bodily suffering accomplish in us spiritually (pgs. 92-94)?

Chapter 6: On Birth and Death

1. Have you ever thought about the correlation between birth and death? What surprised you from this chapter?

2. Have you ever been in a situation where you experienced not your own strength but God's? Tell us about it.

3. Consider the poem on p. 101. How have seasons of waiting changed you?

4. There is often a feeling of restlessness before big transitions, especially endings and beginnings. In what areas of your life are you feeling some restlessness? What could that be preparing you for?



5. What circumstances are you needing to “receive”? What difference does the finished work of Christ make in what you’re currently facing?

Chapter 7: Letting Go, Coming Alive

1. Have you ever had a medical scare or close call that you never really took the time to grieve? What would it look like to process that?

2. What are the things that are hard for you to let go of in this season or will be hard in the one coming up? What are the good things coming that you might need work to rehearse and remember?

3. Have you ever had someone struggle to let go *of you*? How did you learn to navigate that?

4. Read footnote #7 on p. 114. What are the relationships in your life or past that are difficult? How can naming what's hard also allow you to see, pray and hope for healing?

5. How is baptism a picture of dying to self with Christ and being raised to something better? What have you had to or do you need to let go of to reach for this hope?

Chapter 8: Coming Home, Caregiving

1. Can you think of a moment when you realized, "This is the beginning of the end..."? How did you deal with anticipatory grief?

2. What are the caregiving roles you've filled? What have been some of the hardest parts and some of the surprising joys of those roles?

3. Why do you think our culture doesn't seem to value or see the work of caregiving?

4. What are some of the invitations around you now to see and care? A neighbor? A coworker?

5. What does the story of Jesus in John 11 (pgs. 132-135) tell us about him?

6. Have you ever thought, "Lord, if you had been here..." Can you look back and see how he perhaps was at work anyway?

Chapter 9: The Enemy That Remains

1. What limitations of the season of life you're in or of an aging body have you had to receive? What does it look like to abide in Christ in the midst of that difficulty?

2. Have you ever had to arm wrestle with a loved one over his or her independence? How does it help to remember that the fight is not with you so much as it is with the change itself?

3. "Even for those who trust in Christ at death's door, death's sting has been removed, but its bite remains." Respond to this quote from theologian Michael S. Horton. Does it ring true to your experiences?

4. Does your church or family context tend to brush past death or do you feel like you have the freedom to truly grieve it, to say, "This is hard"?

5. Have you ever thought of David and Goliath as another iteration of the seed and the serpent fight from Gen. 3:15? How does that change the way we approach death, knowing we don't have to face it perfectly ourselves to run in the wake of Christ's victory?

Chapter 10: Glory Hidden Within

1. Have you ever dredged up the courage to hope and pray for a good ending for a loved one—perhaps for their salvation or for a certain conversation? How did it go?

2. What are we to do with our unanswered prayers around healing, salvation or the way a death occurs?

3. Jesus asked the Father to “let this cup pass” from Him, but His request was not granted. How does that comfort us in our own unanswered prayers or hopes (p. 162)?

4. Why is it important to rehearse the ways we *have* seen God show up, even in the circumstances surrounding death?

5. What are the experiences, if any, that have left you saying, “Everything we believe is true?”

Chapter 11: The After Times

1. In your own experience or imagination of grief, what are the immediate after-loss days like?

2. How have you experienced grief in *your body*? How can you come to see these outward signals as an invitation to internally draw near to the One who made you, who took on a body like yours to save you?

3. What aspect of the author's journey with grief (brain fog, exhaustion, decision fatigue) resonates most with your own experience?

4. What can we learn from the way God ministers to Elijah in his grief in 1 Kings 19 (pgs. 177-178)?

5. How does knowing Christ drank the cup we remember Him with at communion give us strength to drink the cups of suffering we receive?

6. After reading so far in this book, how would you describe what it looks like to “grieve with hope?” What does it not necessarily need to look like?

Chapter 12: This Is Not the End

1. Have you ever had a moment that reminds you this world is not all there is, when the thread that connects you to the next gets thrummed and resonates with something deep in your soul?

2. How does facing loss and death somehow *prepare* us for the splendor of glory (p. 189)?

3. What are some not-so-helpful things you've heard said in the wake of loss? Brainstorm together some better things to say.

4. How does the homesickness we feel—for people or places or periods of time, in the wake of loss remind us of the eternal home for which we intuitively long?

5. Let me ask of you the question posed near the bottom of p. 195: “What do we do when God’s presence is hardest to imagine, when it feels impossible to believe?” How can the evidence we find in Scripture and in one another’s lives encourage us even here?

Afterword: “For I Could Wish...”

1. As you read this story of walking beside a believing loved one through death, did you think of someone whom you love—or perhaps it’s you—who does not appear to be trusting in Christ?

2. What hope does this Afterword section give you?

3. How is facing death changing you?
