

Death and Dying

(Revised)



The gods conceal from men the happiness of death,
that they may endure life.

(Lucan)



Life is going forth, death is returning home.

(Lao-tzu)



Death is the bright side of life.

(Alfred, Lord Tennyson)

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The Five Stages of Grief

(Elisabeth Kübler-Ross)

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross stated that these stages are not meant to be complete or chronological. Her hypothesis also holds that not everyone feels all five of the responses nor will everyone who does experience them do so in any particular order.

1. Denial — "I feel fine."; "This can't be happening, not to me."

Denial is usually only a temporary defense for the individual. This feeling is generally replaced with heightened awareness of possessions and individuals that will be left behind after death. Denial can be conscious or unconscious refusal to accept facts, information, or the reality of the situation. Denial is a defense mechanism and some people can become locked in this stage.

2. Anger — "Why me? It's not fair!"; "How can this happen to me?"; "Who is to blame?"

Once in the second stage, the individual recognizes that denial cannot continue. Because of anger, the person is very difficult to care for due to misplaced feelings of rage and envy. Anger can manifest itself in different ways. People can be angry with themselves, or with others, and especially those who are close to them. It is important to remain detached and nonjudgmental when dealing with a person experiencing anger from grief.

3. Bargaining — "I'll do anything for a few more years."; "I will give my life savings if..."

The third stage involves the hope that the individual can somehow postpone or delay death. Usually, the negotiation for an extended life is made with a higher power in exchange for a reformed lifestyle. Psychologically, the individual is saying, "I understand I will die, but if I could just do something to buy more time..."

4. Depression — "I'm so sad, why bother with anything?"; "I'm going to die soon so what's the point?"; "I miss my loved one, why go on?"

During the fourth stage, the dying person begins to understand the certainty of death. Because of this, the individual may become silent, refuse visitors and spend much of the time crying and grieving. This process allows the dying

person to disconnect from things of love and affection. It is not recommended to attempt to cheer up an individual who is in this stage. It is an important time for grieving that must be processed. Depression could be referred to as the dress rehearsal for the 'aftermath'. It is a kind of acceptance with emotional attachment. It's natural to feel sadness, regret, fear, and uncertainty when going through this stage. Feeling those emotions shows that the person has begun to accept the situation.

5. Acceptance — "It's going to be okay."; "I can't fight it, I may as well prepare for it."

In this last stage, individuals begin to come to terms with their mortality. This stage varies according to the person's situation. People dying can enter this stage a long time before the people they leave behind, who must pass through their own individual stages of dealing with the grief.



I have never met a person whose greatest need was anything other than real, unconditional love. You can find it in a simple act of kindness toward someone who needs help. There is no mistaking love. You feel it in your heart. It is the common fiber of life, the flame that heals our soul, energizes our spirit and supplies passion to our lives. It is our connection to God and to each other.

(Elisabeth Kübler-Ross)



Stages to the Moment of Death (Elisabeth Kübler-Ross)

The death of the human body is identical to what happens when the butterfly emerges from its cocoon. The cocoon can be compared to the human body, but it is not identical with your real self for it is only a house to live in for a while. Dying is only moving from one house into a more beautiful one.

As soon as the cocoon is in an irreparable condition it will release the butterfly, your soul so to speak. At this stage, symbolically speaking, after the butterfly leaves its material body, you will experience some important things which you simply ought to know in order not to be afraid of death anymore.

As soon as your soul leaves the body, you will immediately realize that you can perceive everything happening at the place of dying, be it in a hospital room, at the site of an accident, or wherever you left your body. You do not register these events with your earthly consciousness, but rather with a new awareness.

In this stage, the “dead” one will realize that he is whole again. People who couldn’t hear or speak can hear and speak again. There are thousands in wheelchairs who during this second stage could finally dance again.

You understand now that this out-of-body experience is an enjoyable and blessed happening.

We did a scientific project with blind people. Our condition was that we would involve only blind people who had not had any light perception for at least the last ten years. Those who had an out-of-body experience and came back can tell you in detail what colors and jewelry you were wearing if you were present. They can tell you the color and pattern of your sweater, or of your tie, and so on. You understand that these statements refer to facts which one cannot invent.

In this stage you will also notice that nobody will die alone. When you leave the physical body, you are in an existence where there is no time. In the same way, one can no longer speak of space and distance in the usual sense because those are earthly phenomena.

This phenomenon was experienced by many people when they realized that somebody who lived far away suddenly appeared in front of them. A day later, a telephone call or a telegram reached them telling of the passing of the one seen,

who lived hundreds or thousands of miles away. These people are by nature very intuitive, for normally one doesn't notice this kind of visitor.

On this level you realize as well that nobody can die alone because the deceased one is able to visit anyone he likes. There are people awaiting you who died before you, who loved and treasured you a lot. And since time doesn't exist on this level, someone who lost a child when he was twenty years of age could, after his passing at the age of ninety-nine, still meet his child as a child. For those on the other side, one minute could be equal to one hundred years of our earth time.

In general, the people who are waiting for us on the other side are the ones who loved us the most. You always meet those people first.



In this stage, after you have perceived that your body is whole again and you have encountered your loved ones, you will realize that dying is only a transition to a different form of life. The earthly physical forms you leave behind because you have no need for them anymore. But before you step out of your physical body, you pass through a phase which is totally imprinted with items of the physical world. It could be that you float through a tunnel, pass through a gate, or cross a bridge.

After you have passed this tunnel you are at its end embraced by Light. This Light is whiter than white. It is extremely bright, and the more you approach this Light the more you are embraced by the greatest indescribable, unconditional love you could ever imagine. There are no words for it.



If someone is having a near-death experience, he is allowed to see this Light only for a short moment. After this he must return. But when you die, I mean really die, the connection between the cocoon and the butterfly (the silver cord) will be severed. After this, it is not possible to return to the earthly body. But you wouldn't want to return to it anyway, for after seeing the Light nobody wants to go back.

In this Light, you will experience for the first time what man could have been. Here there is understanding without judging, and here you experience unconditional love.



In this presence, which many people compare with Christ, or God, or a spiritual deity to which one was devoted, with love or Light, you will come to know that all your life on earth was nothing but a school that you had to go through in order to pass certain tests and learn special lessons.



In this Light, in the presence of this Divine-Being, you have to look back on your entire life from the first day until the last.

With this viewing of your life you have reached another stage. You are now in possession of knowledge. You know in minute detail every thought you had at any time during your life on earth. You will remember every deed, and know every word that you ever spoke. This recapitulation is only a very small part of your knowing because at this moment you know all consequences resulting from your thoughts and from every one of your words and deeds.

God is unconditional love. During this review of your earthly life you will not blame God for your fate, but you will know that you yourself were your own worst enemy since you are now accusing yourself of having neglected so many opportunities to grow.

Now you know that long ago when your house burned down, when your child died, when your husband hurt himself, or when you yourself suffered a heart attack, all fatal blows were merely some of the many possibilities for you to grow: to grow in understanding, to grow in love, to grow in all those things which we still have to learn.

All the hardships that you face in life, all the trials and tribulations, all the nightmares and all the losses, most people view as a curse, as a punishment, as something negative. If you would only realize that nothing that comes to you is negative. I mean nothing. All the trials and tribulations, the greatest losses are gifts to you. It is an opportunity that you are given to grow. This is the sole purpose of existence on this planet earth.

You will not grow if you sit in a beautiful flower garden and somebody brings you gorgeous food on a silver platter. But you will grow if you are sick, if you are in pain, if you experience losses, and if you do not put your head in the sand but take the pain and learn to accept it not as a curse or a punishment but as a gift to you with a very specific purpose designed to facilitate your spiritual growth.



The Moment of Death

The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying
(Sogyal Rinpoche)

At the moment of death, there are two things that count: whatever we have done in our lives, and what state of mind we are in at that moment. Even if we have accumulated a lot of negative karma, if we are able really to make a change of heart at the moment of death, it can decisively influence our future and transform our karma, for the moment of death is an exceptionally powerful opportunity for purifying karma.

Remember that all the habits and tendencies that are stored in the ground of our ordinary mind are lying ready to be activated by any influence. Even now we know how it only takes the slightest provocation to prompt our instinctive, habitual reactions to surface. This is especially true at the moment of death.

Therefore, our state of mind at death is all-important...The last thought and emotion that we have before we die has an extremely powerful determining effect on our immediate future.

At the moment of death our minds are totally vulnerable and exposed to whatever thoughts then preoccupy us. The last thought or emotion we have can be magnified out of all proportion and flood our whole perception.

This is why the masters stress that the quality of the atmosphere around us when we die is crucial. With our friends and relatives, we should do all we can to inspire positive emotions and sacred feelings, like love, compassion, and devotion, and all we can to help them to “let go of grasping, yearning, and attachment.”

If possible, it is best if friends and relatives do not show excessive grief at the moment of death, because the consciousness of the dying person is at that moment exceptionally vulnerable.

To create the most positive possible imprint on the mind-stream before death is essential. The most effective practice of all to achieve this is a simple practice of Guru Yoga, where the dying person merges his or her mind with the wisdom mind of the Master, or Buddha, or any enlightened being. Even if you cannot visualize your Master at this moment, try at least to remember Him, think of Him in your heart, and die in a state of devotion. When your consciousness awakens again after death, this imprint of the Master's presence will awaken with you, and you will be liberated. If you die remembering the Master, then the possibilities of His or Her grace are limitless.



The Importance of the Dying Person's Final Thoughts

Your mind state at the time you draw your last breath is crucial, for upon this hinges the subsequent direction and embodiment of the life force. Only with a disciplined and spiritually prepared mind can you hope to resist the pull of old patterns of craving and clinging as your final energies are slipping away. The impulses of thought, feeling, and perception all gather together in this last breath with great potency and can thwart the attainment of a higher level of consciousness and even enlightenment itself. (*The Wheel of Life and Death*, Roshi Philip Kapleau)

Of extreme importance is one's last thought at the time of death... It is impossible to live a life full of fear, anger, and pain-producing actions and then, at the moment of death, escape from karmic retribution by having a "good" thought. Although a person might be afraid of rebirth and try to suppress the desire for another body, it is not possible to do so, because the habit forces of many lifetimes are still operating at the moment of death. The last thought of a dying person has an initial impact on the rebirth, but the cumulative effect of the events of his or her life exerts a tremendous additional influence.

(*The Wheel of Life and Death*, Roshi Philip Kapleau)



The direction that the vital air takes is determined by the final thoughts a person has at the time of death. Our last moments of thought create the impetus and circumstances of our rebirth. The final thought, however, cannot simply be the result of a controlled act of will, or a whim.

The Buddha compared the last moments of thought to a herd of cows in a barn. When the barn door is opened, the strongest will go out first. If no one cow is particularly strong, then the habitual leader will go out first. If no such cow exists, the one nearest the door will go out first. In the absence of any of these, they will all try to get out at once.

Perhaps the last thoughts that are most widely remembered are those of the great being Mahatma Gandhi. When the assassin's bullet hit him, Gandhi immediately invoked the name of his beloved deity with the exclamation, "Sri Ram, Sri Ram, Sri Ram!"

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna reveals to Arjuna that one may be liberated from rebirth by concentrating completely, by keeping the mind and heart united, by deeply surrendering to the Lord, and by uttering the mantra "Om" while dying. Yet even the first of these tasks is impossible without engaging in some sort of spiritual practice while we are alive. (Sushila Blackman, *Graceful Exits*)



Moreover, whatever state of being he remembers when he gives up the body at the end, he goes respectively to that state of being, Arjuna, transformed into that state of being.

(*The Bhagavad Gita*)

If you die in that sweet remembrance of the Master you are not to return to the world. (Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/dont-forget.htm)



Wherever our desire is, we shall go there. That is why a person's thought should be on God at the time of death. (Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/serpent.htm)



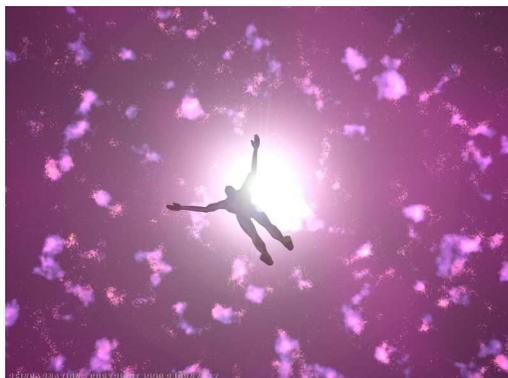
Whatever your ruling passion is at the end of your life, you'll be driven there, that's the law. (Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/comeback.htm)



If you have been accustomed to one thought, a ruling passion in your life, then naturally that will be the last thought with you. Anything which has been ruling your mind will come up. (Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/protection.htm)



At the time of death the same scenes appear before us which we have been fixing in our mind during our lifetime. These very scenes or thoughts, as they are connected with this world, bring us back to this world after death and are the cause of our rebirth. (Baba Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*, Letter 198)



A Spiritual Death

The afterlife is not a place like the world you know around you now. What survives is the inner you. If you are spiritually advanced, you may immediately become aware of the Divine Light of God. Many Eastern religions believe that the last thoughts and words of the dying person will determine the level of spiritual attainment in the next life.

The spiritual person will think of God at their passing moments. As the assassin's bullets tore through Mahatma Gandhi's body, his final cry was "He Rama" (Oh, God). Clearly Gandhi was a man of exceptional spirituality and, according to Hinduism, these final words would have enabled him to merge with the godhead. Remembrance of God at the time of death leads to the attainment of this state of being.

The Tibetan Buddhist will read to the dying from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* to help them attain a fortuitous future state. By keeping the mind on God at the end of life, we draw closer to the Absolute.

I'm sure that spiritual thoughts at the end of life will help the journey. However, saying the name of God on your last breath will not wipe the karmic slate clean, nor will a last-minute confession of your sins. The sum total of your life is what matters. The last thoughts and words do, however, reveal what your primary drive has been in life. You will carry these with you to the threshold and as you pass into the afterlife states.

Someone who has habitually developed spirituality and often thinks about God is more likely to be drawn instantly to God consciousness than someone whose life has been spent on lesser things. The Eastern teachings say that a person who has followed a true sacred path in life will have greater freedom of action at the time of death. However, nothing can be done for the evil man at his dying moment, for he has no independence and is drawn forward by the weight of his past deeds. (psychics.co.uk/spirituality/spiritworld/final-words-before-death.html)



The Spiritual Needs of the Dying: A Buddhist Perspective (Compiled by: Ven. Pende Hawter)

Death, Intermediate State and Rebirth:

At the time of death, the body and mind go through a process of dissolution, where the twenty-five psycho-physical constituents that we are comprised of gradually absorb and lose their ability to function. This process of dissolution is associated with external and internal signs. This process continues even after the breathing ceases, for up to three days.

During this process the mind becomes more and more subtle and clear until it eventually reaches the point of the “clear light of death”, where it is said to be approximately nine times more clear than in the normal waking state. At this point the mind separates from the body, taking with it all of the subtle imprints from that life and previous ones.

This very subtle mind or consciousness and the very subtle wind upon which it rides then arises into an intermediate state being which has a subtle (non-physical) body that can move through solid objects, travel anywhere just by thinking of that place, and so on. The intermediate state being stays in that state for up to seven weeks, by which time a suitable place of rebirth is usually found. This place of rebirth is determined by the force of karma, whereby the intermediate state being dies and the consciousness is propelled without control towards the place of rebirth. The consciousness enters the fertilized egg at or near the moment of conception and the new life begins.

Crucial in this whole process is the state of mind at the time of death, because it is this that determines the situation a person will be reborn into. If the mind is calm and peaceful and imbued with positive thoughts at the time of death, this will augur well for a happy rebirth. However, if the mind is in a state of anger or has strong desire or is fearful etc., this will predispose to an unhappy or lower type of rebirth.

The mind that arises at the time of death is usually the one that the person is most habituated to. People tend to die in character, although this is not always so. So in the Buddhist tradition it is emphasized strongly that the time to prepare for death is now, because if we develop and gain control over our mind now and create many positive causes we will have a calm and controlled mind at the time

of death and be free of fear. In effect, our whole life is a preparation for death and it is said that the mark of a spiritual practitioner is to have no regrets at the time of death.

The Spiritual Needs of the Dying:

When considering the spiritual needs of the dying, the basic principle is to do whatever you can do to help the person die with a calm and peaceful mind, with spiritual/positive thoughts uppermost. This is because it is believed that the state of mind at the time of death is vitally important and plays an important role in determining what will happen to the person after death.

Within this basic principle, there are several ways we can categorize people which will help to determine the type of spiritual support that they need, namely:

- * Is the person conscious or unconscious?
- * If the person is conscious, you can do the practices with them or get them to do them.
- * If the person is unconscious, you have to do the practices for them.
- * Does the person have specific religious beliefs or not?
- * If the person is religious, remind them of their religious practices.
- * If the person is not religious, encourage them to have positive thoughts, or remind them of positive things they have done.

For a person with a spiritual faith it is beneficial to have spiritual objects around them such as an altar, a rosary, photos of their spiritual teacher, or to play spiritual music, or to burn incense, and so on – whatever reminds them of their spiritual practice. It is good also to talk to them about their spiritual practices, recite prayers with them and so forth. For an unconscious person it is said to be good to recite prayers, mantras etc. into their ear.

If a person does not have a spiritual faith, it is helpful to remind them of positive things they have done in their life, or of positive qualities such as love and compassion and kindness.

It is important to avoid religious activities that are inappropriate or unwanted by the dying person. Someone standing at the end of the bed reciting prayers may be an annoyance, and I have seen a case of an attempted deathbed salvation which greatly angered the dying person.

The basic aim is to avoid any objects or people that generate strong attachment or anger in the mind of the dying person. From the spiritual viewpoint it is desirable to avoid loud shows of emotion in the presence of the dying person. We have to remind ourselves that the dying process is of great spiritual importance and we don't want to disturb the mind of the dying person, which is in an increasingly clear and subtle state. We have to do whatever we can to allow the person to die in a calm, happy, peaceful state of mind.

For both a religious and a non-religious person a white light 'healing' meditation can bring a lot of comfort and benefit. The person visualizes a brilliant ball of white light above their head, with the light streaming down through their bodies, removing sickness, pain, fear, anxiety and filling the body with blissful healing light energy. Depending on the person's belief system, they can see the light as being in the nature of Jesus, or Buddha or some other spiritual figure, or they can just visualize it as a source of universal healing energy.

When a person is close to death they can also be encouraged to let go into the light, into the heart of Jesus or Buddha seated above their head, whatever is appropriate for that person.

The use of guided imagery or gentle music can also be soothing and relaxing and help the person to have a calm and peaceful mind as they approach death.

Conclusion

The aim of all these methods is to help the dying person die with a calm, happy and positive mind. Anything that we can do to achieve this will benefit the person, whether that be good nursing care and pain relief, massage, the presence of a loving family, or whatever. It is said that the best thing we can bring to a dying person is our own quiet and peaceful mind.

In this way we will help the dying person make the transition from this life to the next as smooth and as meaningful as possible, recognizing the vital spiritual importance of this transition.



Administering Heavy Narcotics to the Terminally Ill

Question to Sant Kirpal Singh: His mother has cancer and there is very much suffering and he asks, if there is no other help, can the suffering be lessened by using morphine?

Sant Kirpal Singh: I think it is better to let her die consciously. It's better. Otherwise her consciousness will be morbid and that will affect her soul. Why not tell her to put all her attention here (at the eye center) and the suffering will be lessened. I think that is the best morphine you can have. Write her. Let her turn her attention here and pray. She'll get help. The suffering will be less.

So tell her to put her whole attention here, back of the eyes and pray. I hope the suffering will be less. To give morphine is not good. She'll go into a swoon; die while in a swoon... Sometimes doctors give morphine which induces swoon. The best remedy is just to have her put her attention here. Doctors do at times, give patients morphine. But to die consciously is always better.

Question: In the West, many people die unconsciously, as it is very common that they are given morphine. What is the difference between dying consciously and not consciously, in the Beyond, I mean.

Sant Kirpal Singh: The consciousness will be morbid, even after leaving the body. If he is not conscious when leaving the body that does have an effect. To die consciously is all right. To be able to say, "I am going now..." is best.
(<http://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/protection.htm>)



If you are suffering intense pain, it is well to ask your doctor or nurse to ease it with drugs that do not render you unconscious or semiconscious. Those who are not used to taking drugs and are sensitive to them should beware of heavy drugs – especially painkillers, most of which contain narcotics. Such drugs can induce a respiratory arrest or affect one's mental condition... It is common knowledge that in most American hospitals the experience of death is clouded by drugs. When drugs are necessary to relieve pain, there is no alternative, but heavy sedatives, tranquilizers, and painkilling drugs are also used for purposes of patient management. Therefore, make every effort to avoid them.
(Roshi Philip Kapleau)

Chuang-tzu and Death

Chuang-tzu, the Chinese Taoist sage of the fourth century B.C., was visited after the death of his wife by his friend Hui-tzu, who came to express his condolences. The latter arrived to find the master sitting on the ground with his legs spread wide apart. The widower was singing away and whacking out a tune on the back of a wooden bowl. Hui-tzu said to him, “You’ve lived all these years with your loving wife and watched your eldest boy grow to manhood. For you not to shed a tear over her remains would have been bad enough. But singing and drumming away on a bowl – this is just too much!”

“Not so,” the master replied. “I am a normal man and grieved when she died. But then I remembered that she had existed before this birth. At that time she was without a body. Eventually, matter was added to that spirit and, taking form, she was born. It is clear to me that the same process of change which brought my wife to birth eventually brought her to death, in a way as natural as the progression of the seasons. Winter follows autumn. Summer follows spring. To wail and groan while my wife is sleeping peacefully in the great chamber between heaven and earth would be to deny these natural laws, of which I cannot claim ignorance. So I refrain.”



The ancient masters slept without dreams and woke up without worries. Their food was plain. Their breath came from deep inside them. They didn’t cling to life, weren’t anxious about death. They emerged without desire and reentered without resistance. They came easily; they went easily. They didn’t forget where they were from; they didn’t ask where they were going. They took everything as it came, gladly, and walked into death without fear. They accepted life as a gift, and they handed it back gratefully.



Look upon life as a swelling tumor, a protruding goiter, and upon death as the draining of a sore or the bursting of a boil.



As Chuang-tzu approached death, his disciples wanted to give him a large and expensive funeral. But Chuang-tzu said, “The heavens and the earth will serve me as a coffin and a coffin shell. The sun and moon and stars will decorate my bier. All creation will be at hand to witness the event. What more need I than these?”

His disciples gasped, “We’re afraid that carrion kites and crows will eat the body of our master!”

Chuang-tzu replied, “Above the ground my flesh will feed the crows and kites; below the ground, the ants and cricket-moles. Why rob one to feed the other?” And then he smiled. “I shall have Heaven and Earth for my coffin,” he said. “The sun and moon will be the jade symbols hanging by my side. All the planets and constellations will shine as jewels around me. All beings will be present as mourners at the wake. What more could I need? Everything has been taken care of.”



Chuang-tzu describes the death of Yu, a Taoist who went before him. When Yu fell ill, another sage named Szu went to visit him and asked how he fared. Yu said, “Wonderful. The way of the master is deforming me!”

“My back is as crooked as a hunchback’s and my organs are all topsy-turvy. My chin sticks in my navel, my shoulders rise up above my head and my pigtail points to the sky. The elements of nature must be all confused.”

His heart was calm and his manner carefree. He limped to the well, looked at his reflection in the water and said, “My, my! How the Maker of Things is deforming me!”

Szu asked, “Does this upset you?” “Why would it?” said Yu. “I was born when it was time to be born, and I shall die when it is time to die. If we are in peace with time and follow the order of things, neither sorrow nor joy will move us. The ancients called this ‘freedom from bondage.’ Those who are entangled with the appearance of things cannot free themselves. But nothing can overcome the order of nature. Why should I be upset?”

There Are No “Accidental” Deaths

Each man has to cast off the mortal raiment in a manner predestined and preordained by past karmas – by disease or accident. Death cannot befall any one before it is due. (Sant Kirpal Singh, *Spiritual Elixir*, 284)



Repeatedly Sants have warned man that in this Kali Yuga (iron age) man has been allotted a limited number of breaths in one lifetime. He has been given roughly 26,000 breaths a day - the amount varies from person to person and is determined by the prarabdh or fate karma. (Sant Kirpal Singh, [ruhanisatsangusa.org/sant.htm](http://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/sant.htm))



The day our allotted number of breaths expire, this body will fade away like a bubble of dew. And that time might arrive any minute...(Sant Kirpal Singh, <http://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/dieb4death.htm>)



There is no such thing as premature death. (Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*, letter 188)



When a baby is born into this world, the number of breaths he is to breathe, till his death, is already fixed, and nobody can increase or decrease it. (Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*, letter 70)



The Existence of Heaven and Hell

Question: What are the teachings of the Masters regarding hell and purgatory?

Sant Kirpal Singh: The Masters do not contradict the scriptures which describe these places meant for the reformation of human souls in accordance with the Law of Karma. (*Spiritual Elixir*, 40)



Question: What are heaven and hell?

Heaven and hell are not actual places somewhere in the universe, but really our inner conditions or the condition of the spirit resulting from our deeds. Heaven and hell begin in this life within a person's heart. The feelings of bliss and contentment at doing good is the heaven in one's heart. And the guilt, shame and greed felt by an evil doer is the hell of the heart. After death, the heaven or hell that developed in the heart is unfolded before us and becomes the world in which we live, and we live in it not with the physical body of this life but the “spiritual” body made from our deeds. (muslim.org/islam/int-is35.htm)

A Samurai's Lesson

A big, tough samurai once went to see a little monk. "Monk," he said, in a voice accustomed to instant obedience, "teach me about heaven and hell!"

The monk looked up at this mighty warrior and replied with utter disdain, "Teach you about heaven and hell? I couldn't teach you about anything. You're dirty. You smell. Your blade is rusty. You're a disgrace, an embarrassment to the samurai class. Get out of my sight. I can't stand you."

The samurai was furious. He shook, got all red in the face and was speechless with rage. He pulled out his sword and raised it above him, preparing to slay the monk.

"That's hell," said the monk softly.

The samurai was overwhelmed with the compassion and surrender of this little man who had offered his life to give this teaching to show him hell! He slowly put down his sword, filled with gratitude, and suddenly peaceful.

"And that's heaven," said the monk softly.



Hazur Baba Sawan Singh: The Death of a Loving Disciple

We are to leave this world one day, and if we are loving, obedient disciples, and have made proper preparations in this lifetime, we do not have the transition which we call death. While others weep, the spiritually developed soul departs happy – happier than a bridegroom on his wedding day.

The time of death is a critical one in our experience, when our friends and relatives are helpless to render any assistance; but for the followers of Sant Mat, it is the happiest time of all. The Master appears and takes the departing soul with Him, and puts it in its upward journey at the place for which it is fit.

There is no rendering of accounts with Kal (the Lord of Judgment), provided there have been love for and obedience to the Master. The departed soul is happier than it has ever been before. There is absolutely no fear of death. The Master's presence within breaks all worldly connections, and the mind is free to continue the upward journey. (*Spiritual Gems*, letter 164)



Every soul, according to his karmas, is given another birth in some other place. The body into which he has to be put is ready. The body into which he has to be born and the interval between death and rebirth, both depend upon his karmas. (*Spiritual Gems*, letter 6)



Throughout the human life we see the daily advent of birth and death. Some people die young, some in youth, and some in old age. At death, some writhe in agony and torment, and others leave in joy and peace. So what is it all about? They say that at the event of any birth the world rejoices, and the newcomer cries - but brothers, you should live such a life that at departure you yourself rejoice, and the whole world cries. This would mean that you had won the gamble of life. (Sant Kirpal Singh, <http://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/death.htm>)



Karma and Rebirth

According to the law of karma, all beings experience the consequences of their actions – both mental and physical. The myriad desires of each lifetime compel us to keep returning to earthly life to experience the fruits of our previous actions, whether bitter or sweet. Just as we bring the impressions from our waking life into our dreams, so the residual impressions of our actions in this lifetime accompany us to the next. The kind of life we come back into is determined by how we live our present life and by the storehouse of karma that we have accumulated from all our previous lives.

Belief in reincarnation and the cycle of rebirth is not unique to the Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs. The Bible suggests that Jesus believed in reincarnation. In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ reveals his divine form to his three closest disciples, and then tells them that his precursor, John the Baptist, is actually an incarnation of the prophet Elijah.

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist. (Matthew 17: 1-13)

Origen, a prominent patriarch of the early Christian church, described rebirth as follows:

The soul has neither beginning nor end... Every soul comes to this world strengthened by the victories or weakened by the defeats of its previous life. Its place in this world as a vessel appointed to honor or dishonor is determined by its previous merits.

Thus the early Christians, like Jesus, most likely accepted reincarnation, but the concept was suppressed by the Emperor Justinian's Council of Constantinople in 538 AD. (Sushila Blackman)



The soul is immortal and clothed in many bodies successively.
(Plato)

Death is nothing but a gateway to birth.
Nothing that lives ever dies, it only changes form.
When a man's body is weary the soul leaves the body
to receive newer and fresher garments.
And so on goes this great play of God –
from eternity to eternity.
(Guru Nanak)



Death, the awe-inspiring and heart-rending death,
is to me a harbinger of joyous life, and I welcome it fully.
(Kabir)



In nature death follows life and life proceeds from death. Death as a cessation
of life in one form is but a prelude to re-living in another, and generally at a
higher level of existence than before, and in better and more congenial environs.
(Sant Kirpal Singh)



Jalaluddin Rumi



1207 – 73

A refugee himself as a child,
Rumi's spirituality is suffused by
a sense of cosmic homelessness
and separation from God.

Founded the Sufi order
commonly known in the West as
the "whirling dervishes"

"I knocked and the door opened,
but I found that I'd been
knocking from the inside."

If I die, don't say that he died.
Say he was dead, became alive, and was taken by the Beloved.



Do not cry, "Alas, you are gone!" at my graveside: for me, this is a time of joyful meeting! Do not bid me farewell when I am lowered into my grave: I have passed through the curtain to eternal grace!

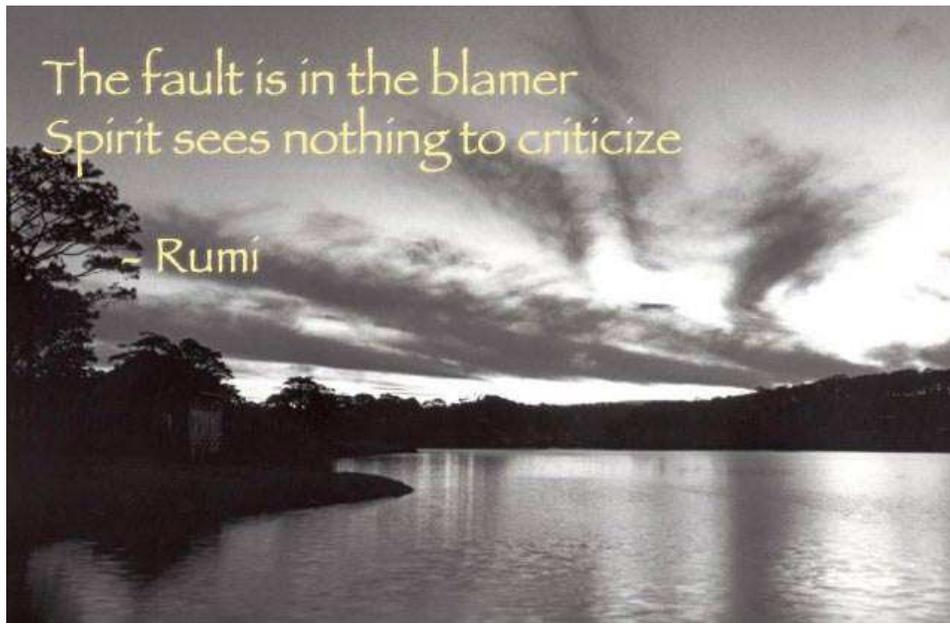


When I die and you wish to visit me, do not come to my grave without a drum,
for at God's banquet mourners have no place.



The body, like a mother, is pregnant with the spirit-child: death is the labor of birth. All the spirits who have passed over are waiting to see how that proud spirit shall be born.

Death is in reality spiritual birth, the release of the spirit from the prison of the senses into the freedom of God, just as physical birth is the release of the baby from the prison of the womb into the freedom of the world. While childbirth causes pain and suffering to the mother, for the baby it brings liberation.



Die happily and look forward to taking up a new and better form.
Like the sun, only when you set in the west can you rise in the east.



Those to whom death seems as sweet as sugar, how can their sight be dazzled by the temptations of this earthly realm? Physical death holds no bitterness for them; they see it as a blessed refuge from a prison cell into a glorious garden. It will deliver them from a world of torment: No one weeps for the loss of such nothingness!



Our death is our wedding with eternity.



When Great Beings Die

Jalaluddin Rumi

When Rumi's time of death drew near, he cautioned his disciples to have no fear or anxiety on his account. He told them to remember him "so that I may show myself to you, in whatever form that may be, and ever be shedding in your breasts the light of heavenly inspiration."

As he lay in extreme sickness, severe earthquakes took place for seven days and nights. On the seventh day, in response to the alarm of his disciples, he calmly remarked, "Poor earth! It is eager for a fat morsel! It shall have one!"

After his death, Rumi's body was laid on his bier and washed by a loving disciple. Every drop of this ablution water was caught and drunk with reverence by his disciples as the holiest of water. As the washer folded Rumi's arms over his breast, a tremor appeared to pass over the inert body and the washer fell with his face on the lifeless breast, weeping. Upon feeling his ear pulled by the dead saint's hand, as an admonition, he passed into a swoon.

In this state he heard a cry from heaven, which said to him, "The saints of the Lord have nothing to fear, neither from one habitation to another abode."

The funeral procession was attended by mourners of all creeds – Turks, Christians, Jews, Romans, and Arabs. Each group recited sacred scriptures according to their own traditions. Rumi belonged to everyone.



Yesterday I was clever, so I
wanted to change the world.
Today I am wise, so I
am changing myself.
-Rumi

Sant Kirpal Singh

During Sant Kirpal Singh's final illness, a devotee said to Him, "Master, why don't you heal yourself? You are all-powerful."

Sant Kirpal pondered the question and replied, "Why don't you heal yourself? If anybody whom you love gives you something, would you refuse it? Tell me. What does he hope to do? He would gladly accept it."



On the evening of August 20th, 1974, just after arrival at the hospital, Master was suffering terribly, His blessed body tossing in the bed. Later He graciously allowed these symptoms to be lifted, and rested in perfect peace. The following morning a devotee asked Him if He wanted water. He said, "This is not the time for water, this is the time for tea." Tea was at once prepared and offered to Him, but He said so sweetly, "No; this is for you people, you take your breakfast"-- so at Master's contrivance, all the attendants, nurses, etc., enjoyed a tea break that morning - the last morning of Master's earth life.

A devotee asked Him if His Master, Baba Sawan Singh, had come; He replied, "When has He not been here?" Then He was asked who would take care of the Sangat after He left; He said, "I am leaving it in His hands."

During the last hours, Master remarked that He would be taking twice as much care of the Satsangis from now on.

Just before He left, His eyes moved back and forth across the room, as though in acknowledgment and greeting. He was again asked if Sawan Singh had come, and Master replied, "Everyone has come!"

His last known words, in response to a question about His welfare, were, "Very good!"



Death is no bugbear; it is the name given to a change which comes when one leaves the coarse atmosphere of the earth and enters a finer one of Light. Something like the sun setting in one place and rising in another.

Guru Nanak

When news spread that Guru Nanak was ready to embark on his last journey, the disciples began to descend upon Kartarpur, on the banks of the Ravi River, to see him. While seated under an acacia tree, his wife, disciples, and successor – Guru Angad – all began to cry; He pacified them, saying they shouldn't weep. He then uttered a long hymn and the assembly began to chant. Then Guru Nanak went into a trance and recited a poem that describes the intense longing of the soul for union with the Lord.

During the last moments of his life, the Muslims were saying, "We shall bury him" while the Hindus said, "We shall cremate him." The guru responded to this saying, "Put ye flowers on both sides – those of the Hindus on the right and of the Muslims on the left. They whose flowers remain fresh will have the choice."

He then asked the congregation to recite God's praises. As the epilogue to the hymn was being read, Guru Nanak pulled the sheet over himself and lay down. The assembly paid obeisance. When the sheet was lifted, there was nothing but flowers. The Hindus and Muslims, equally astonished, took their respective flower offerings and the entire assembly fell to their knees. The date was September 7, 1539.

Shivapuri Baba

Shivapuri Baba, a remarkable Indian yogi, is said to have been born with a smile on his lips. He lived for 137 years, living twenty-three years in solitude, and spending nearly another half century traversing the globe on foot.

His last words, which were given in a total conscious and lucid state, were, "Live right life, worship God. That is all. Nothing more."

At 6:15 AM he got up, sat on his bed, asked for a drink, and said "I'm gone." He then laid himself down on his right side, resting his head on the palm of his right hand, and left his body.

Jetsunla

After having spent twenty-nine fruitful years in a cave in strict retreat, the Tibetan nun Jetsunla was known to some as the wish-fulfilling gem. In 1959 she had to break her retreat and leave Tibet.

Her cousin built her a small mud and grass hut, large enough to hold Jetsunla and two visitors. Revered as the highest lama of the area, she would receive devotees the first nine days of each month and meditate the rest of the time.

A few months before she passed away she said, “Now I have accomplished what I had to do and achieved everything that I need to. Now I don’t have to live any longer. I am very happy if I can go soon, but before I go I must see His Holiness the Dalai Lama, because I have a few words to say to him.”

About a month later His Holiness visited Orissa and conferred privately with her for over an hour. She came out from this meeting very happy and said, “Now my last wish is fulfilled, now I am free to go.”

Soon after, Jetsunla became slightly ill and, while remaining in meditation posture, she passed away.

Another Tibetan nun related that when Jetsunla died, the air was filled with a sweet scent, and the sounds of cymbals could be heard. And at the time of her cremation, the sky was filled with rainbows.

Shunryu Suzuki

Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki (*Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*) called his students together as he lay dying of cancer and said, “If when I die, the moment I’m dying, if I suffer that is all right, you know; that is suffering Buddha. No confusion in it. Maybe everyone will struggle because of the physical agony or spiritual agony, too. But that is all right, that is not a problem. We should be grateful to have a limited body – like mine, like yours. If you had a limitless life it would be a real problem for you.”

Ryoen Genseki

When Zen Master Ryoen Genseki was told he had cancer and was given a life expectancy of several months, he set off alone on a long pilgrimage. Ryoen lived for two more years.

For nearly two weeks before his death, in critical condition, every morning he crawled from his room to the main hall of the temple to invoke the names of the masters of his lineage. He needed to rest frequently throughout both his crawling and invocation.

When he died, he was found sitting in the zazen (meditation) position.

Paramahansa Yogananda

On March 6, 1952, Paramahansa Yogananda told his disciples laughingly, “I have a big day tomorrow. Wish me luck.”

The next day he attended a banquet at Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel for the new Indian ambassador. He did not gaze about with his usual heart-warming smile. After eating modestly, the guru rose to make a speech about spiritual India. He spoke more slowly and in a more measured cadence than usual. As he finished, Yogananda lifted his eyes, turned slightly to the right and slid to the floor.

Officials who conducted the embalming of the body reported an unusual phenomenon – no physical disintegration was visible, even twenty days after death. Yogananda’s body was apparently devoid of impurities. They reported this case as being unique in their experience.



Death is only an experience through which
you are meant to learn a great lesson:
you cannot die.
(Yogananda)

Socrates

In ancient Greece the customary form of execution was to have the condemned man drink, on the appointed day, a glass of poison. Socrates was surrounded by his friends when his time came in 399 BCE. Before drinking the poison he bathed to avoid “giving the women trouble of washing me when I am dead.”

He then asked that the poison be brought to him. His friend, Crito, reminded him, “...that in other cases people have dinner and enjoy their wine, and sometimes the company of those whom they love...and only drink the poison quite late at night. No need to hurry; there is still plenty of time.”

Socrates answered his friend, “I believe that I should gain nothing by drinking the poison a little later – I should only make myself ridiculous in my own eyes if I cling to life and hugged it when it had no more to offer. Come, do as I say and don’t make difficulties.”

The poison was brought and Socrates drank it in one draught with no sign of revulsion. His friends began to cry and he reprimanded them, “Calm yourselves and be brave.”

When he began to feel numb he lay down and the coldness spread from his legs upward. When it reached his heart, he’d been told, he would die. He covered himself in a sheet from head to toe. Just before the end he pulled the sheet from his face and said, “Crito, we ought to offer a cock to Asclepius. See to it and don’t forget.” Asclepius was the god of healing. The offering was Socrates’ gesture of thanks for being cured of life.



To fear death is nothing other than to think oneself wise when one is not; for it is to think one knows what one does not know. No man knows whether death may not even turn out to be the greatest of blessings for a human being; and yet people fear it as if they knew for certain that it is the greatest of evils.



Be of good cheer about death and know this as a truth –
that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death.

Ninakawa

As Ninakawa lay dying Zen Master Ikkyu visited him. “Shall I lead you on?” Ikkyu asked.

Ninakawa replied, “I came here alone and I go alone. What help could you be to me?”

Ikkyu answered, “If you think you really come and go, that is your delusion. Let me show you the path on which there is no coming and going.”

With his words, Ikkyu had revealed the path so clearly that Ninakawa smiled and passed away.

Tung-Shan

When Zen Master Tung-Shan felt it was time for him to go, he had his head shaved, took a bath, put on his robe, rang the bell to bid farewell to the community, and sat up till he breathed no more. To all appearances he had died.

Thereupon the whole community burst out crying grievously as little children do at the death of their mother.

Suddenly, the master opened his eyes and said to the weeping monks, “We monks are supposed to be detached from all things transitory. In this consists true spiritual life. To live is to work, to die is to rest. What is the use of groaning and moaning?”

He then ordered a “stupidity-purifying” meal for the whole community. After the meal he said to them, “Please make no fuss over me! Be calm as befits a family of monks! Generally speaking, when anyone is at the point of going, he has no use for noise and commotion.”

Thereupon he returned to the Abbot’s room, where he sat in meditation until he passed away.

Meher Baba

The last years of Meher Baba's life were spent mainly in seclusion. From 1925 until his death in 1969 he maintained an unbroken silence, communicating initially with a writing board and later by signs. He emerged from his final seclusion in July 1968.

In December he began to suffer from muscular spasms of the limbs and spine, and he told his close companions, "The time is very near." The following month he comforted a devotee who was worried about his health by saying, "All will be well by the end of this month." On December 30, several persons were needed to hold onto his legs as intense spasms shook his body. That evening, although the pain was intense, he told a follower "I am not this body."

Just after noon the following day Baba was seized with a severe spasm and his breathing stopped. Attempts to revive him were unsuccessful.

One of his sayings offered some solace to his devotees, "When I drop my body, I will remain in all who love me. I can never die. Love me, obey me and you will find me."



Life is a series of experiences which need innumerable forms.
Death is an interval in that one long life.



Neither seek death nor fear it, and when death comes to you
it is converted into a stepping stone to the higher life.



Milarepa

Milarepa, considered by many to be Tibet's greatest saint, is said to have knowingly drunk a glass of poison given to him by a jealous false admirer. This act of compassion resulted in the culprit totally repenting his action and becoming a disciple.

When it was evident that Milarepa was not long for this world, a disciple wanted to intercede with the Powers on his behalf. Milarepa replied that illness in a yogi should be a spur to drive him on and prayers should not be offered for his recovery; he should use his illness to progress spiritually and ever be ready for suffering and even death. He went on, "The time has come when the body that is mind-evolved only must become merged into the Realm of Light and no rites are necessary for this."

When asked by his disciples about funeral instructions, Milarepa replied, "Instead of erecting stupas, cultivate a loving devotion to all parts of the Dharma and set up the Banner of Love, and in place of memorials let there be daily prayers...Life is short, the moment of death unknown to you, so apply yourselves to meditation."

Milarepa then took up residence at Chubar and his illness increased. When two of his leading disciples asked him to what realm he was going and where they should direct their prayers to him, he responded, "Direct your prayers wherever you feel it best; wherever you pray, as long as you are sincere and in earnest, I shall be there with you. So pray earnestly and unwaveringly. I am going to the realm of happiness first of all."

Then Milarepa sang his two disciples a song, after which he seemed to sink into a trance from which he never awoke. He died at age eighty-four in the year 1135.



When you are strong and healthy, you never think of sickness coming, but it descends with sudden force like a stroke of lightning. When involved in worldly things, you never think of death's approach; quick it comes like thunder crashing round your head.

Siddhārtha Gautama Buddha

The Buddha died at eighty years of age on about 483 BCE. He continued as a teacher for many years, gathering a group of followers. On the day of his death – most likely due to a serious digestive tract disorder - he gave them his final teaching. The precise English translation of these final words is open to interpretation as it was spoken in Pali and passed on orally, not being written down for some centuries after Buddha's death. One such interpretation is:

"Behold, O monks, this is my advice to you. All component things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work hard to gain your own salvation."



Death is the temporary end of a temporary phenomenon.



Even death is not to be feared by one who has lived wisely.



Remember that this body will soon lie in the earth without life,
without value, useless as a burned log.



Yellow leaves hang on your tree of life. The messengers of death are waiting.
You are going to travel far away. Have you any provision for the journey?



Jesus Christ

A number of theories that attempt to explain the circumstances of the death of Jesus on the cross via medical knowledge of the 19th and 20th centuries have been proposed by a range of people, including physicians, historians and mystics.

Most theories proposed by trained physicians (with specialties ranging from forensic medicine to ophthalmology) conclude that Jesus endured tremendous amounts of pain and suffering on the cross before his death.

The cardiovascular collapse theory is a prevalent modern explanation and suggests that Jesus died of profound shock. According to this theory, the scourging, the beatings, and the fixing to the cross would have left Jesus dehydrated, weak, and critically ill and that the stage was set for a complex interplay of simultaneous physiological insults: dehydration, massive trauma and soft tissue injury (especially from the prior scourging), inadequate respiration, and strenuous physical exertion, leading to cardiovascular collapse.

The gospel writers record seven statements uttered by Jesus while he was on the cross:

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.

Woman, behold, your son!

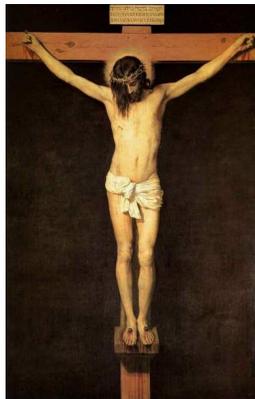
My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

I thirst.

It is finished.

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!

(wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus)



Saint Augustine

Saint Augustine died on August 28, 430. He spent his final days in prayer and repentance, requesting that the Psalms of David be hung on his walls so that he could read them. He directed that the library of the church in Hippo and all the books therein should be carefully preserved.

Shortly after his death the Vandals lifted the siege of Hippo, but they returned not long thereafter and burned the city. They destroyed all of it but Augustine's cathedral and library, which they left untouched.



Psalm 23 - A Psalm of David

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Saint Teresa of Avila

Saint Teresa died on October 4, 1582, at the age of 67. A fellow sister describes the hours just before her death:

She remained in this position in prayer full of deep peace and great repose. Occasionally she gave some outward sign of surprise or amazement. But everything proceeded in great repose. It seemed as if she were hearing a voice which she answered. Her facial expression was so wondrously changed that it looked like a celestial body to us. Thus immersed in prayer, happy and smiling, she went out of this world into eternal life.

Saint Francis of Assisi

On the eve of his death, the saint, in imitation of his Divine Master, had bread brought to him and broken. This he distributed among those present, blessing Bernard of Quintaville, his first companion, Elias, his vicar, and all the others in order. "I have done my part," he said next, "may Christ teach you to do yours."

Then wishing to give a last token of detachment and to show he no longer had anything in common with the world, Francis removed his poor habit and lay down on the bare ground, covered with a borrowed cloth, rejoicing that he was able to keep faith with his Lady Poverty to the end. After a while he asked to have read to him the Passion according to St. John, and then in faltering tones he himself intoned Psalm 142.7. At the concluding verse, "Bring my soul out of prison", Francis was led away from earth by "Sister Death", in whose praise he had shortly before added a new strophe to his "Canticle of the Sun". It was Saturday evening, October 3, 1226, Francis being then in the forty-fifth year of his life, and the twentieth from his perfect conversion to Christ.



Psalm 142

I cry out to the Lord; I plead for the Lord's mercy.

I pour out my complaints before Him and tell Him all my troubles.

When I am overwhelmed, you alone know the way I should turn. Wherever I go, my enemies have set traps for me.

I look for someone to come and help me, but no one gives me a passing thought! No one will help me; no one cares a bit what happens to me.

Then I pray to you, O Lord. I say, "You are my place of refuge. You are all I really want in life.

Hear my cry, for I am very low. Rescue me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me.

Bring my soul out of prison so I can thank you. The godly will crowd around me, for you are good to me.

Stories

The Biggest Fool

One day a court jester said something so foolish that the king, handing him a staff, said to him, "Take this and keep it until you find a bigger fool than yourself."

Some years later the king was very ill and lay on his deathbed. The king, addressing those gathered around his bed, said, "I am about to leave you. I am going on a very long journey, and I shall not return to this place; so I have called you to say goodbye."

Then the jester stepped forward and addressed the king, saying, "Your majesty, may I ask you a question? When you journeyed abroad visiting your people, staying with your nobles, or paying diplomatic visits to other kings, your heralds and servants always went before you making preparations for you. May I ask what preparations your majesty has made for this journey you are about to take?"

"Alas," he said, "I have made no preparations."

"Then," said the jester, "take this staff with you, for now I have found a bigger fool than myself."

Only a Visitor

In the last century, a tourist from the States visited the famous Polish rabbi Hafez Hayyim. He was astonished to see that the rabbi's home was only a simple room filled with books. The only furniture was a table and a bench.

"Rabbi, where is your furniture?" asked the tourist.

"Where is yours?" replied Hafez.

"Mine? But I'm only a visitor here."

"So am I," said the rabbi.

Final Goodbye

A much loved holy man of Petrograd lay dying. In another room were members of his family and friends, none of whom the sage would allow to enter for a few last words.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door and who should be admitted but the notorious Bergdorf, a liar, cheat and scandal-monger. "I came to pay my final respects," he declared.

When the mortally ill holy man heard who had come to see him he immediately demanded that the visitor be permitted to approach his bedside.

"Sir", murmured Bergdorf in surprise, "I am at a loss to understand why you allowed me to enter your room when your family and close friends are kept outside."

"Dear Bergdorf", replied the sage weakly, "they have lived in accordance with the teachings of the Torah and I will soon meet them again in paradise. But as for you," he concluded, extending a withered hand, "I want to say goodbye for the last time."

No Mustard Seeds for Buddha

During the Buddha's lifetime, five centuries before Christ, a grief stricken mother came to Buddha. She was wailing and lamenting over the death of her baby, whose corpse she carried in her arms. All the compassionate monks reached out to her with their prayers, and she requested an audience with the Buddha himself.

The compassionate Buddha received her with peaceful, smiling eyes, gazing upon the infant's corpse. The Buddha's indescribable kindness and warmth instantly enveloped her, for no grief is greater than that of losing one's own child.

The woman said to the Buddha, "Lord, my son has died, and I am inconsolable. Can you bring him back to life for me? He was the light of our entire household. We waited many years for his birth, and now he has been stolen away by a sudden incurable illness. You who know all things, who have transcended life and death – please restore life to his little eyes. It is not fair that he should be taken from us so soon!" Thus, in her grief, she beseeched him.

The Buddha did not answer quickly. Gazing upon the infant, he gently touched his cold brow. Then he said, "Faithful woman, go from house to house in this town and collect a mustard seed from each household in which no one has died. When you have those seeds, bring them to me – we shall see what can be done."

The woman was overjoyed. She prostrated to the Buddha and reverently touched his feet. The Buddha placed his hands on her head as a benediction. Then she went on her way, carrying the dead baby in her arms.

All day long she went from door to door, from house to house, seeking mustard seeds from those who had not lost a household member. However, as she proceeded - telling her woeful tale wherever she went - she failed to find even one home that death had not visited.

Undaunted, she persisted in her quest, hoping that those magic mustard seeds would, through the Buddha's unfathomable blessings, bring her baby back to life.

As the day waned, still she had not collected even a single mustard seed, for death is indeed ubiquitous. People were willing to give mustard seeds, whether or not they had lost relatives, but the woman was adamant. Only those from a house that death had not entered would do!

When at dusk she was still without a single mustard seed to reward her efforts, understanding finally began to dawn in her weary mind. "Is this not the way of all living things?" she thought to herself. "All things that are born must eventually die. This is the basic fact of life, the truth of Dharma, that Lord Buddha has introduced to me." Then she bowed reverently in the direction of his abode.

At nightfall, with the baby still in her arms, she returned to the Buddha's temporary dwelling place. Although the woman had no mustard seeds, she did not return empty-handed; she carried her understanding like a blazing torch within her.

As she approached the Buddha, bowing each step of the way, she laid her dead son before him and said, "O Enlightened Compassionate One, I see now that there is no bringing the dead back to life. You asked me to bring a mustard seed from each household where death has never visited, and I could not find even one. Now I understand, and the light of truth has awakened within me.

“Please cremate this poor child, and pray for him. You have given me a gift as great as life. I trust your prayers will deliver this little one’s stream of being into higher rebirths and ultimately to freedom and enlightenment.”

The omniscient Buddha simply smiled his acceptance.

A Child’s Lesson in Love

Greater love has no one than this,
that he lay down his life for his friends.
(Jesus Christ; Gospel of John 15:13)

It happened just a few years ago to two young children in a family from Illinois. The eight year old daughter became ill and was diagnosed with a life-threatening blood disease. A search went out to find a donor of blood compatible with her own. As she weakened, they looked and no donor could be found.

Then it was discovered that her six year old brother shared her rare blood type. The mother and their minister and doctor sat down with the boy to ask if he would be willing to donate his blood to save the life of his sister.

Much to their surprise he did not answer right away. He wanted some time to think about it. Six year olds can be quite thoughtful at times. After a few days he went to his mother and said, “Yes, I’ll do it.”

The following day the doctor brought both children to his clinic and placed them on cots next to each other. He wanted them to see how one was helping the other. First he drew a half pint of blood from the young boy’s arm. Then he moved it over to his sister’s cot and inserted the needle so her brother could see the effect. In a few minutes color began to pour back into her cheeks.

Then the boy motioned for the doctor to come over. He wanted to ask a question, very quietly.

“Will I start to die right away?” he asked.

You see, when he had been asked to donate his blood to save the life of his sister, his six year old mind understood the process literally. That’s why he needed a few days to think about it.

And then he simply gave what is in the heart of every human being to give when we are truly connected.

Make the End Glorious

A wise old woman happened to be a pianist who had taught many students over the years. When she prepared her pupils for recitals, she would have them practice the conclusions over and over again. Invariably the students would begin to grumble because of the constant repetition of the last few measures of music. When students would voice their complaints, the wise teacher would always answer, “You can make mistakes in the beginning or you can make a mistake in the middle. The people will forget it if you make the ending glorious.”



The fact is, it seems, that the most you can hope is to be a little less, in the end, the creature you were in the beginning, and the middle.
(Samuel Beckett: 1906-1989 Irish author, won Nobel Prize for literature)

Love One Another

John the Evangelist lived to a great age and became so feeble that he had to be carried to the meetings of the faithful. There, because of his weakness, he was unable to deliver a long discourse; so at each gathering he simply repeated the words, “Little children, love one another.”

The disciples, weary of hearing the same words over and over, asked him why he never said anything else.

In response, John gave this answer – “Do this alone and it is enough.”



If anyone says, “I love God” and hates his brother,
he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen
cannot love God whom he has not seen.
(Bible, 1 John 4: 20)



If I Had My Life To Live Over

(Nadine Stair - Age 85)

If I had my life to live over again, I'd dare to make more mistakes next time. I'd relax. I would limber up. I would be sillier than I have been this trip.

I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would take more trips. I would climb more mountains, swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and less beans.

I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones.

You see, I'm one of those people who live seriously and sanely, hour after hour, day after day.

Oh, I've had my moments. And if I had it to do over again, I'd have more of them.

In fact, I'd try to have nothing else, just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day.

I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat and a parachute. If I had it to do again, I would travel lighter than I have.

If I had to live my life over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall.

I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies.

Quotes

Awareness of death is the very bedrock of the Path. Until you have developed this awareness, all other practices are obstructed. (Dalai Lama: 1935-present, spiritual and political leader of Tibet)



The first sign of love of God is not to be afraid of death, and to be always waiting for it. For death unites the friend to his Friend - the seeker to the object which he seeks. (Al Ghazzali: 1058-1111, Iran, Sufi mystic, philosopher, theologian)



Death is a release from the impressions of sense, and from impulses that make us their puppets, from the vagaries of the mind, and the hard service of the flesh. (Marcus Aurelius: 121-180, Roman Emperor, Stoic philosopher)



Despise not death, but welcome it, for nature wills it like all else. (Marcus Aurelius)



Just as the womb takes in and gives forth again, so the grave takes in and will give forth again. Death is very good because it takes man to a sinless world, where the battle with his impulses is ended. The mystics conceived of the body as an encumbering garment which falls away at death and leaves the true man free to rise into the Light of the heavenly life. (Bereshit Rabbah: a religious text from Judaism's classical period)



It is not hard to die. It is harder, a thousand times harder, to live. (Henry W. Beecher: 1813-1887, American clergyman, social reformer)

Never is the undying Self born nor does it die; never did it come to be nor will it come not to be: Unborn, eternal, everlasting is the primordial Self. It is not slain when the body is slain. (Bhagavad Gita: One of the greatest of the Hindu scriptures. Composed in the 1st or 2nd century)



For certain is death for the born and certain is birth for the dead; therefore over the inevitable thou should not grieve. (Bhagavad Gita)



Death -- a friend that alone can bring the peace his treasures cannot purchase, and remove the pain his physicians cannot cure. (Mortimer Collins: 1827-1876, English author)



Just as a well spent day brings happy sleep, so a life well used brings happy death. (Leonardo da Vinci: 1452-1519, Italian artist)



Now he has departed from this strange world a little ahead of me. That signifies nothing. For us believing physicists the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion. (Albert Einstein: 1879-1955, physicist)



Our fear of death is like our fear that summer will be short, but when we have had our swing of pleasures, our fill of fruit, and our swelter of heat, we say we have had our day. (Ralph Waldo Emerson: 1803-1882, American, founder of the school of thought known as Transcendentalism)



Never say about anything, “I have lost it,” but only “I have given it back.” Is your child dead? It has been given back. Is your wife dead? She has been returned. (Epictetus: 50-135, Greek philosopher)



Who knows but that this life is really death, and whether death is not what men call life? (Euripides: 480-406 BCE, Greek playwright)



Perhaps the gods are kind to us, by making life more disagreeable as we grow older. In the end, death seems less intolerable than the manifold burdens we carry. (Sigmund Freud: 1856-1939, Austria, founder of psychoanalysis)



I'm not afraid of death. It's the stake one puts up in order to play the game of life. (Jean Giraudoux: 1882-1944, French playwright)



Birth is not the beginning of life - only of an individual awareness. Change into another state is not death - only the ending of this awareness. Most people are ignorant of the Truth, and therefore afraid of death, believing it to be the greatest of all evils. But death is only the dissolution of a worn out body. Our term of service as guardians of the world is ended when we are freed from the bonds of this mortal frame and restored, cleansed and purified, to the primal condition of our higher nature. (Hermes Trismegistus: Hermes is a legendary figure, who may have represented three different teachers. His writings looms large in the Western esoteric tradition. Born from the fusion of the Greek and Egyptian spiritual traditions, the writings attributed to this great sage had a decisive effect on the Renaissance)



Death is like an arrow that is already in flight, and your life lasts only until it reaches you. (Hermes Trismegistus)

The call of death is a call of love. Death can be sweet if we answer in the affirmative, if we accept it as one of the great eternal forms of life and transformation. (Hermann Hesse: 1877-1962, German author, wrote Siddhartha)



To the psychotherapist an old man who cannot bid farewell to life appears as feeble and sickly as a young man who is unable to embrace it. (Carl Jung: 1875-1961, Swiss psychiatrist, founder of analytical psychology)



The body is nothing but a covering over our soul, and when it is gone we are not dead; just as we do not think that we are dead when our coat is worn out, or if someone tears our shirt. The moment when a person dies is the only moment when he feels he is dead. The impression of this dying condition, the hopelessness of the doctor, the sorrow and grief of the family cause this impression. After death, as he recovers from this, he gradually finds himself alive...for the great burden has been removed. (Hazrat Inayat Khan: 1882-1927, Sufi mystic and teacher)



Thou, divine death, to which everything returns and disappears, receive thy children into thy star-studded bosom; free us from time, number, space; give us back the peace that life interrupted. (Leconte de Lisle: 1818-1894, French poet)



The death of someone we know always reminds us that we are still alive - perhaps for some purpose which we ought to re-examine. (Mignon McLaughlin: 1913-1983, American author)



We should weep for men at their birth, not at their death. (Baron de Montesquieu: 1689-1755, French political philosopher)

Death, when we consider it closely, is the true goal of our existence. I have formed during the last few years such close relations with this best and truest friend of mankind, that this image is not only no longer terrifying to me, but is indeed very soothing and consoling! And I thank my God for graciously granting me the opportunity of learning that death is the key which unlocks the door to our true happiness. (Wolfgang Mozart: 1756-1791, Austrian composer)



No university will teach you how to live so that when the time of dying comes, you can say: "I lived well, I do not need to live again." (Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj)



The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways - I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows. (Plato: 428-347 BC, Greek philosopher, student of Socrates, teacher of Aristotle)



Not by lamentations and mournful chants ought we to celebrate the funeral of a good man, but by hymns, for in ceasing to be numbered to mortals, he enters upon the heritage of a diviner life. (Plutarch: 46-120, Greek historian, biographer)



Each departed friend is a magnet that attracts us to the next world. (Jean Paul Richter: 1763-1825, German novelist)



Even if death were to fall upon you today like lightning, you must be ready to die without sadness and regret, without any residue of clinging for what is left behind. Remaining in the recognition of the absolute view, you should leave this life like an eagle soaring up into the blue sky. (Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche: 1910-1991, Tibetan Buddhism master, teacher)

When we finally know we are dying, and all other sentient beings are dying with us, we start to have a burning, almost heartbreaking sense of the fragility and preciousness of each moment and each being, and from this can grow a deep, clear, limitless compassion for all beings. (Sogyal Rinpoche)



Death is not a deplorable event; it is the journey's end, the owner getting out of the car when the time is up and the goal is reached. It is a consummation, a happy conclusion, or at least it ought to be, if only all are wise enough to treat it as such and be prepared for it. (Sathya Sai Baba:1926-2011, Hindu guru)



I believe that when death closes our eyes we shall awaken to a light, of which our sunlight is but the shadow. (Arthur Schopenhauer: 1788-1860, German philosopher)



Seeing death as the end of life is like seeing the horizon as the end of the ocean. (David Searls: Contemporary author)



Your brother has not lost the light of day, but has obtained a more enduring Light. He has not left us, but has gone before us. (Seneca)



Death is a punishment to some, to some a gift, and to many a favor. (Seneca)



Nothing can be accomplished after death in the way of spiritual liberation unless it is at least begun during this life. (Santon ki Shiksha: another name for the yoga of the celestial sound current)

A man of discrimination and wisdom is not afraid of death. He knows that death is the gate of life. Death to him is no longer a skeleton bearing a sword to cut the thread of life, but rather an angel who has a golden key to unlock for him the door to a wider, fuller and happier existence. (Swami Sivananda: 1887-1963, Hindu guru)



I shall be dead in a few months. But it hasn't given me the slightest anxiety or worry. I always knew I was going to die. (B.F. Skinner: 1904-1990, one of the 20th century's most famous psychologists, known especially for his emphasis on behaviorism)



The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone. (Harriet Beecher Stowe: 1811-1896, American reformer and writer, author of Uncle Tom's Cabin)



Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the lamp because dawn has come. (Rabindranath Tagore: 1861-1941, India, poet, philosopher, social reformer, was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature)



Birth and death are like ships: why do we rejoice over a ship setting out on a journey when we know not what she may encounter on the seas? We should rejoice when the ship returns safely to the port. (Midrash Tanhuma: Jewish text)



While we are mourning the loss of our friend, others are rejoicing to meet him behind the veil. (John Taylor: 1808-1887, was the third president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)



The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time. (Mark Twain: 1835-1910, American author)

All say “How hard it is that we have to die” - a strange complaint to come from the mouths of people who have had to live. (Mark Twain)



Death plucks my ear and says, “Live - I am coming.” (Virgil: 70 BC-19 BC, most famous poet of ancient Rome)



I see clearly that there are two deaths: to cease loving and being loved is unbearable. But to cease to live is of no consequence. (Voltaire: 1694-1778, French poet, historian, and philosopher)



You live on earth for a few short years which you call an incarnation, and then you leave your body as an outworn dress and go for refreshment to your true home in the spirit. (White Eagle: 19th century Native American spiritual teacher)



Come lovely and soothing death, undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving, in the day, in the night, to all, to each, sooner or later, delicate death. (Walt Whitman: 1819-1892, American poet)



Nothing can happen more beautiful than death. (Walt Whitman)



Do you suspect death? If I were to suspect death, I should die now. Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well-suited toward annihilation? Pleasantly and well-suited I walk, whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good, the whole universe indicates that it is good, the past and the present indicate that it is good. (Walt Whitman)





May your soul be happy;
journey joyfully.
(Rumi)

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