



WHEN KIDS ASK...

“What happens to a person’s soul after death?”

Why kids might ask:

Seeing a dead body can be confusing and spark curiosity. Kids often notice how different the body looks when someone has died, even though parts may seem unchanged in many ways. They may wonder: If the body is still intact but no longer alive, where did the person go? What kept the person alive, and what caused death? Some kids may be asking out of curiosity, while others might be concerned about their own deaths and what happens after death. Some may have heard that some parts of humans outlast death, but some may be skeptical since they can't see anything except the dead body of someone who used to move and interact.

...➤ What the Bible says:



The word “soul” refers to what makes someone alive. Since signs of life include mental activity, heartbeats, and breathing, the term soul has been connected with mind, the heart, and lungs, all of which stop working when death occurs. The Bible indicates that a soul includes body and breath together. The breath or spirit is needed for life since air in the lungs is what animates the body. Without breath in a body, there is no living person – no soul. So, according to the Bible, a soul exists when the body and spirit are together in a living person. When God formed the first human from the dirt, the body was not alive and it was not a soul until God breathed life into the human, and this breath—this spirit—is what enables our bodies to live. The Bible consistently connects life with the bodily act of breathing, which happens through the throat and mouth. In fact the Biblical words for life come from the words for throat and mouth. Without this breath, our organs in our bodies, like the heart and brain, could not function. At death, the breath or spirit returns to God, leaving behind a lifeless body, and thus no soul.

Recognizing that humans die when they stop breathing has led to two main theories about what happens at death. One theory suggests that an invisible part of the person leaves the body and continues to exist, somewhere good, somewhere bad, or somewhere temporary. Another theory is that death means the person ceases to exist and only lives in the memories of others or through reincarnation. These theories can be found in various cultures and religions. However, the Bible describes death as “sleep” and teaches that after humans fall unconscious in death, they can only live again in the moment that God restores the breath to their bodies.

In the Bible, there is a story about a prophet who sees the dry bones of dead soldiers. God asks if these bones can live again, and the prophet declares that only God knows the answer to that question. The prophet watches as God reconnects the muscles, ligaments, internal organs, and skin to the bones. However they are not living souls until God’s Spirit breathes life into the bodies and they come back to life. The Bible teaches that, at the end of time, those who have died will be

resurrected in the same way, but with bodies that are not just filled with breath, but immersed in God's spirit, never to die again. In resurrection, body and spirit come back together as a soul that can live forever.

...➤ What you could discuss:

With preschool ages: "When God created people, He made our bodies, which let us do things like talk, eat, and play. He also put His breath into us. Our bodies and breaths make each of us special and unique. Breathing keeps us alive and also makes us all different. When people die, their bodies stop working, and they stop breathing. Even though that means that they can't see or talk to us anymore, God takes care of people who die, including the parts of them that make them who they are. God promises that everyone who believes in Him will be resurrected to be with Him someday."

With school ages: "When God created people, He put His breath into their bodies. By doing that God provided people with souls, which can enable us to connect with God. When people die, their bodies stop working, and they stop breathing. When people are not breathing, they look different, and it might feel like a part of them is gone, even if you are in the same place as their body. The Bible tells us that when we die, our breath or spirit goes back to God. That part of us is no longer there even when our bodies are there. We can feel sad about that, and we can know that God takes care of people who die. Also God promises to bring us back to life so that we will always be with Him. God promises to give us back the breath and resurrect our bodies to a new life that is eternal. God promises eternal souls where our resurrected bodies and breaths are joined together forever."

...➤ What you could do:

Practice breath prayers: Breathing can be calming, especially when we sync our breath with prayer. Breath prayers involve slowly breathing in and out while thinking or whispering a short phrase. For example,

