

FAQs

Notes on 1 Thess 4.13-18

- In this passage, Paul deals with perhaps the biggest question of all – what happens when we die? In the time of the Thessalonians, 50 per cent of children died before they reached the age of 10. Girls had babies from around the age of 12, and many died in childbirth. People lived with death as a constant presence. It was into this context that Paul reminds the Thessalonians of the good news that Jesus rose again, and so will we.

- To encourage the Thessalonians, Paul draws on Jewish apocalyptic imagery and the belief that the dead will already be with Christ. The imagery and detail of his words help bring certainty to the hope of eternal life. In verse 18, Paul appeals to the Thessalonians to keep on encouraging each other with these hopeful words and images.

- For us today, questions of life and death are just as relevant. People still question, grieve and wonder – this year in particular – and Paul's message of there being a hope in our grief is as valid as ever.

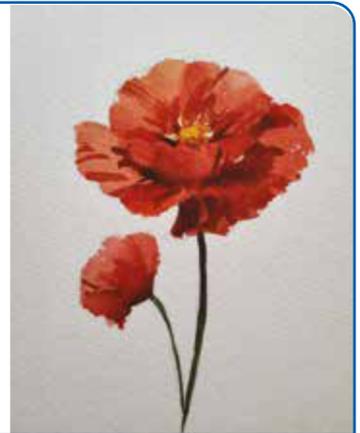
Hope and encouragement

Using squares of colourful paper and tissue paper, scissors, crayons, pens, and sticky tape or pegs, make a Mexican-style 'day of the dead' garland (do an internet search for examples). Cut out skull or banner shapes, and use pens and tissue paper to produce creative, colourful images. Leave room on each piece to write words of hope and encouragement.

FREE [worship at home](#) resources, including up-to-the-minute reflection on this week's Bible reading, available at: www.rootsontheweb.com

Questions for reflection

- ▶ What does this symbol mean to you?
- ▶ What is your hope for the future?
- ▶ How might you help others in a time of grief?



A prayer of praise

*God, your wisdom draws us in.
It is the bright sun in the morning, and the soft moon of night.
Your wisdom is the dawn and the dusk,
the kind opening and gentle closing.
We praise you for all your wisdom gives:
strength for continuation; hope for consolation;
courage for perseverance; joy for the journey, and love for all time.
Amen.*

A prayer for others

*Today, God, we pray for those in grief. Someone was living who is now not living, and our hearts mourn in the wake of their lives and their presence in our lives. May we have hope. Not saccharine, not silly, not soppy. We pray for hope. Hope that we may live in the light of their great lives, and in the hope of seeing them again, in the kindness of heaven.
Amen.*

A personal prayer

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. And I lift up my story, too. My story that has known comfort, my story that has also known separation, and sadness. I lift up my heart, that has sometimes loved well, and sometimes failed. In my own days, I have known the goodness of community and the questions that isolate. And in all these, I lift up my eyes to you, who always keeps me in your gaze. Let me find kindness and wisdom in all stages of life, both easy and trying. Amen.

Live your faith

At this time of remembrance, send a card or write a letter to encourage someone who needs it – e.g. someone who is bereaved or struggling to be hopeful in the current circumstances.