

The Dying Well Small Group Study – a free resource developed by the FMCIC

What does it mean to die well? What is the church's role in death and dying? Where is God in our grief? These are some of the silent questions we ask ourselves as we face the reality of loss and grief.

The Free Methodist Church in Canada has partnered with the Lorne Park Foundation to create a 5-session small group study on what it means to die well. You will hear from experts including palliative care physicians, pastors and therapists who speak about a variety of topics: grief, caring for others and ourselves, medical assistance in dying (MAiD), funerals, and the role of the church in death and dying.

This small group study has been designed with the goal that anyone can participate in and lead it. There are detailed leader and participant guides and video sessions available as a free resource for your church and ministry use. Your group will walk through each session equipped to engage in deep and meaningful conversation. Below are two testimonies from two group leaders who have recently led the Dying Well series at their church.

“Our group was made up of a variety of ages from young adults to seniors. As we watched the videos together and went through the workbooks, we found ourselves deep in conversation as people shared their stories and experiences. No matter the age of the participants they had all suffered in some way. This study is like nothing we had done before or heard discussed in Christian circles. The sessions answered a lot of questions we had about death and dying as believers. When I first prayed about leading this series, I felt wholly underqualified. All I had was my personal experience of loss and a love for Jesus – was that enough? As I prayed, God reminded me that as a young mother who had lost her child to a rare disease, this study would have been a blessing to help me understand and process my grief. I am so glad I had the opportunity to lead this study. Even though the subject was hard, we found ourselves not wanting the study to end. We became closer as a church family and are equipped to show up for one another and ourselves when trials come.” – Starla

“I must admit, that when we announced that we would like to finish our Spring session with the “Dying Well” series, it wasn’t for everyone. Death is never an easy subject to discuss, especially when some members of our group had experienced recent personal loss. Praying for wisdom and sensitivity, we watched the first video on, *“Is Grief Normal?”* and found that the questions on *“What would constitute a good grief,”* and

“What can help us navigate grief,” opened our hearts and minds and facilitated a great open conversation about feelings and experiences. It fundamentally changed our resistance to talking about the issues surrounding death throughout the rest of the series. What became especially impactful was our growing understanding that the question, *“What is a good death?”* carries a surprisingly positive perspective: *“To live well.”*

In retrospect, Session 4 on *“Financial considerations for end-of-life planning”* generated the liveliest conversation and the most questions. As a retired financial planner, this topic was very comfortable for me to respond to, and we had a great time of sharing information. People were amazed that statistics indicate that 50-60% of Canadians do not have a will, with a further 10-13% having a will that is outdated. As a Christian, I loved the quote from the Advisors with Purpose website that *“Estate Planning is the single most significant act of stewardship we will ever undertake!”* Great wake-up call that this is a critical part of the goal of *“living well!”*

In summary, the general consensus of our group was that throughout, there were different nuggets of truth and awakening for us all, and that it had been an extremely valuable experience that opened our minds to look at death in a more positive light. I highly recommended this resource for all stages of life, not just seniors!” – John

To learn more about this study or to access the materials please visit:
<https://fmcic.ca/dyingwell/>