FIVE MINUTES AFTER I DIED

Eternity reveals what life conceals



A GRAPHIC STORY · LUKE 16:19–31

by Rick Melick

Before you read

Jesus told this story. It comes at the end of a series of parables in Luke 15 and 16 (a lost sheep, a lost coin, a lost son, a dishonest manager), told to religious leaders who loved money and the approval of people. (Luke 16:14–15)

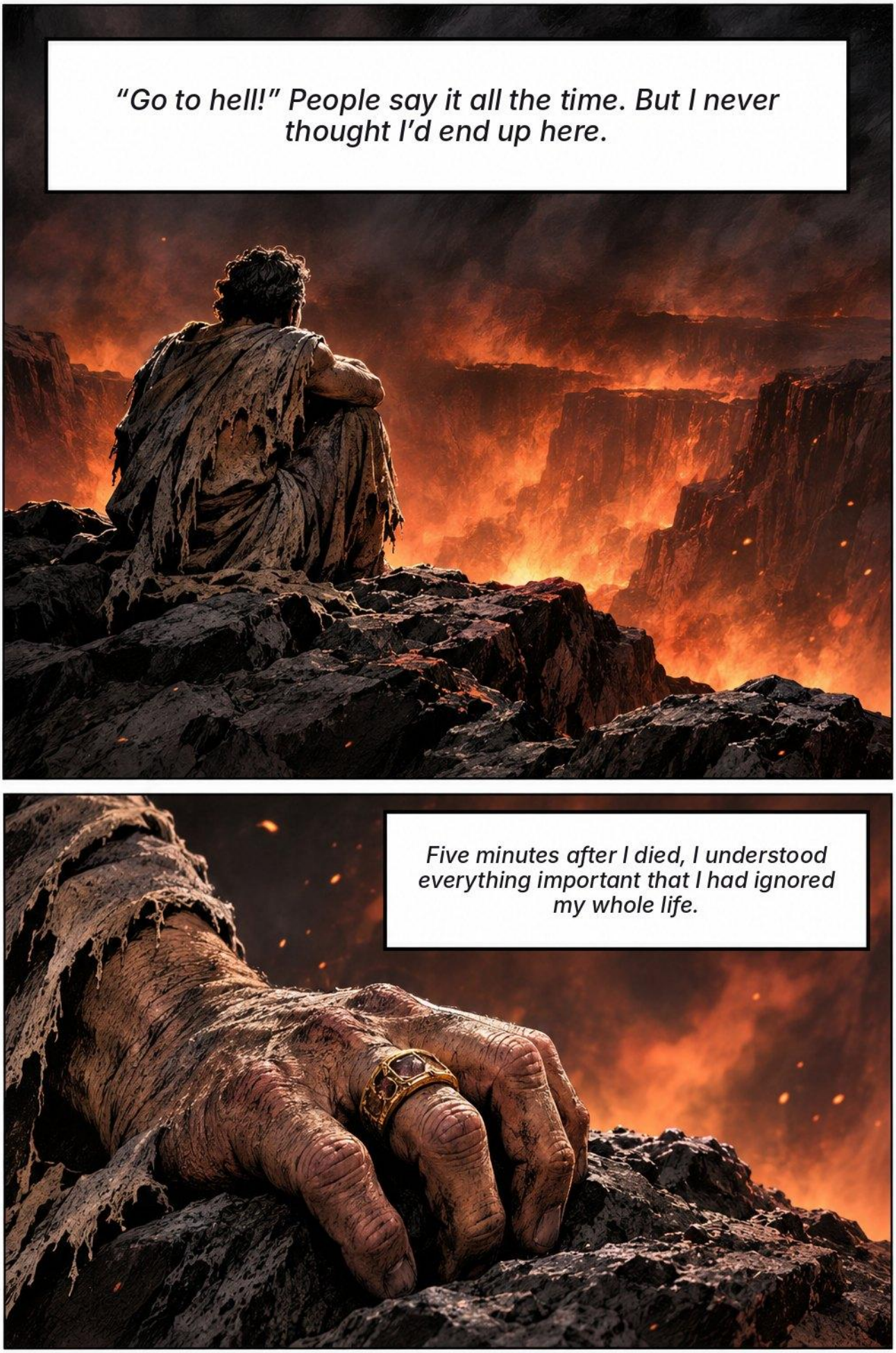
It is the only one that takes us to the other side, beyond death, into eternity.

Jesus told it so we would know that eternity reveals what life conceals.

And because he wants to see us on the other side.

> *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* **John 3:16**

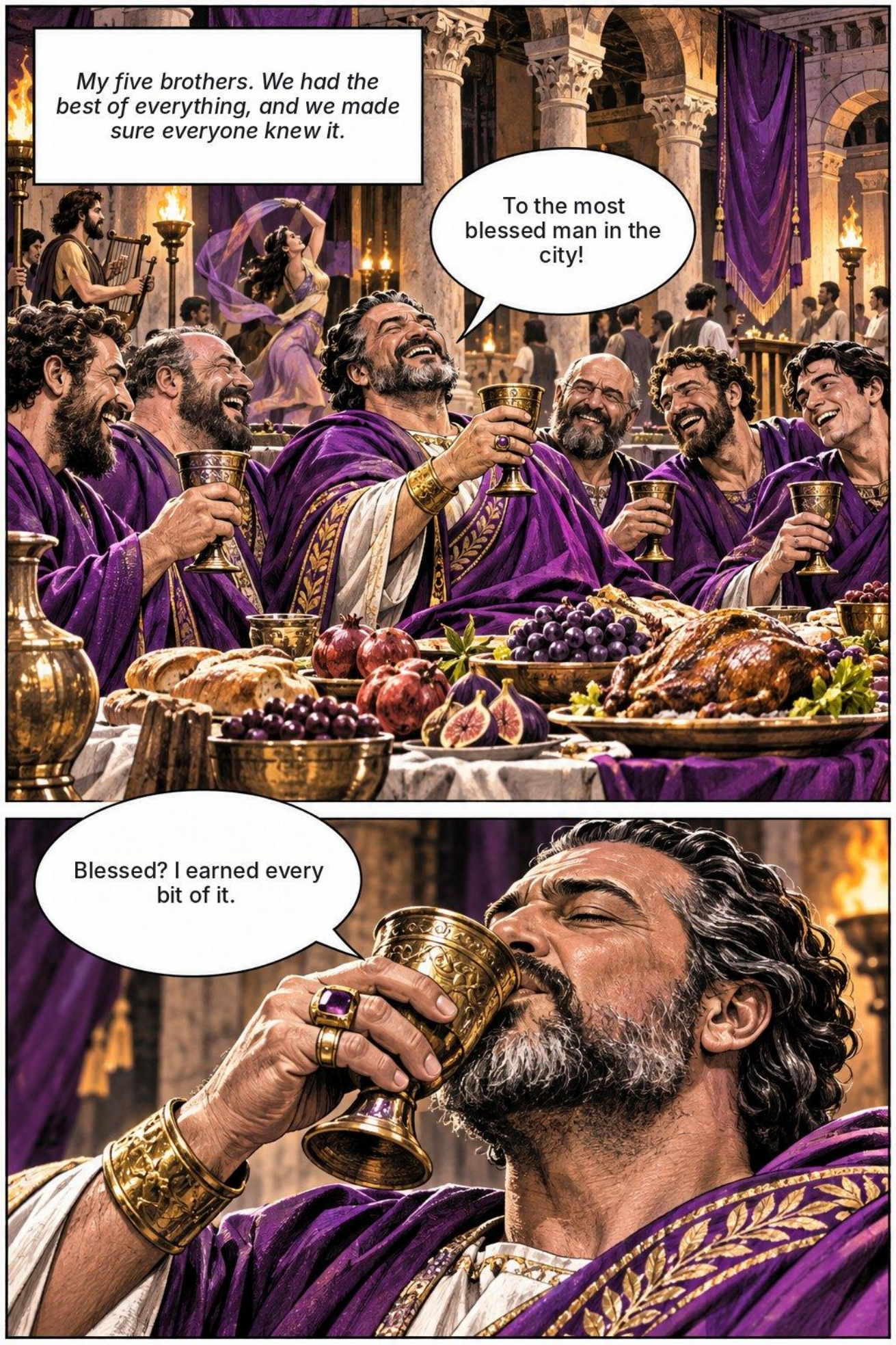
Based on "Eternity Reveals What Life Conceals," Week 4 of Pastor Rick Melick's series *See You on the Other Side* (Luke 16:19–31).
Watch the message › · **Read the chapter ›**


"Go to hell!" People say it all the time. But I never thought I'd end up here.
Five minutes after I died, I understood everything important that I had ignored my whole life.


Down here, I remember everything. My house. My clothes. My parties.
Funny thing. Nobody remembers my name. Everybody remembers his: Lazarus.


There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. (Luke 16:19)
Not that robe. Everyone's already seen me in it. Bring me a new one.


Purple dye came from crushed sea snails. One robe cost more than most people earned in a year.
Purple. Always purple.
I wore it every day. That was the point.
I wanted people to see me. I wanted them to be jealous of my life.


My five brothers. We had the best of everything, and we made sure everyone knew it.
To the most blessed man in the city!
Blessed? I earned every bit of it.


In those days, rich people ate with their hands and wiped them clean on pieces of bread.
Then we threw the bread on the floor.
So many hungry people would have given anything for it.


Leave him here. Rich street. Somebody will help.
Someone cared enough to carry him to my gate. A beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores. (Luke 16:20)
That was more than I ever did.


His name was Lazarus. It means "God helps."
He was covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. (Luke 16:20–21)


Master, there's a man at your gate.
Then have someone get rid of it.
I walked past him every day.
I never learned his name.


All he wanted were the scraps that fell from our table. We wouldn't even give him our trash. (Luke 16:21)


Even the dogs came and licked his sores. (Luke 16:21)
Not pets. Street dogs. Waiting for him to die.
Lazarus prayed every night. I never heard him.


Life is good, brothers. Life is very good.
Me at the top. Him at the bottom.
Everybody was sure they knew which one of us God had blessed.

TALK IT OVER · PART ONE

The Gate

Read it: Luke 16:19–21

You can hide behind your image, but it won't last forever.

REAL LIFE

Everybody posts the highlight reel: the trip, the fit, the night out. The rich man had the original highlight reel, dressed in purple every day. What he missed was lying right in front of him, literally at his front door. Who's outside your front door? It might be the person who always eats alone, the friend who stopped texting back, or the guy who sleeps outside the store you walk past. God knew Lazarus by name. The rich man never bothered to learn it.

TALK IT OVER

1. What's the one thing you'd hate for people to find out about you?
2. Who's outside your front door: someone you see all the time but never really see?
3. Are there people in your life you see all the time, but you don't even know their name?

> *"People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."* **1 Samuel 16:7**

TRY IT THIS WEEK

Pick one person you walk past every week without really noticing. Learn their name. Then use it the next time you see them, and ask how they're doing.

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The time came when the beggar died... (Luke 16:22)
No funeral. No flowers. Nobody on our street even noticed he was gone.

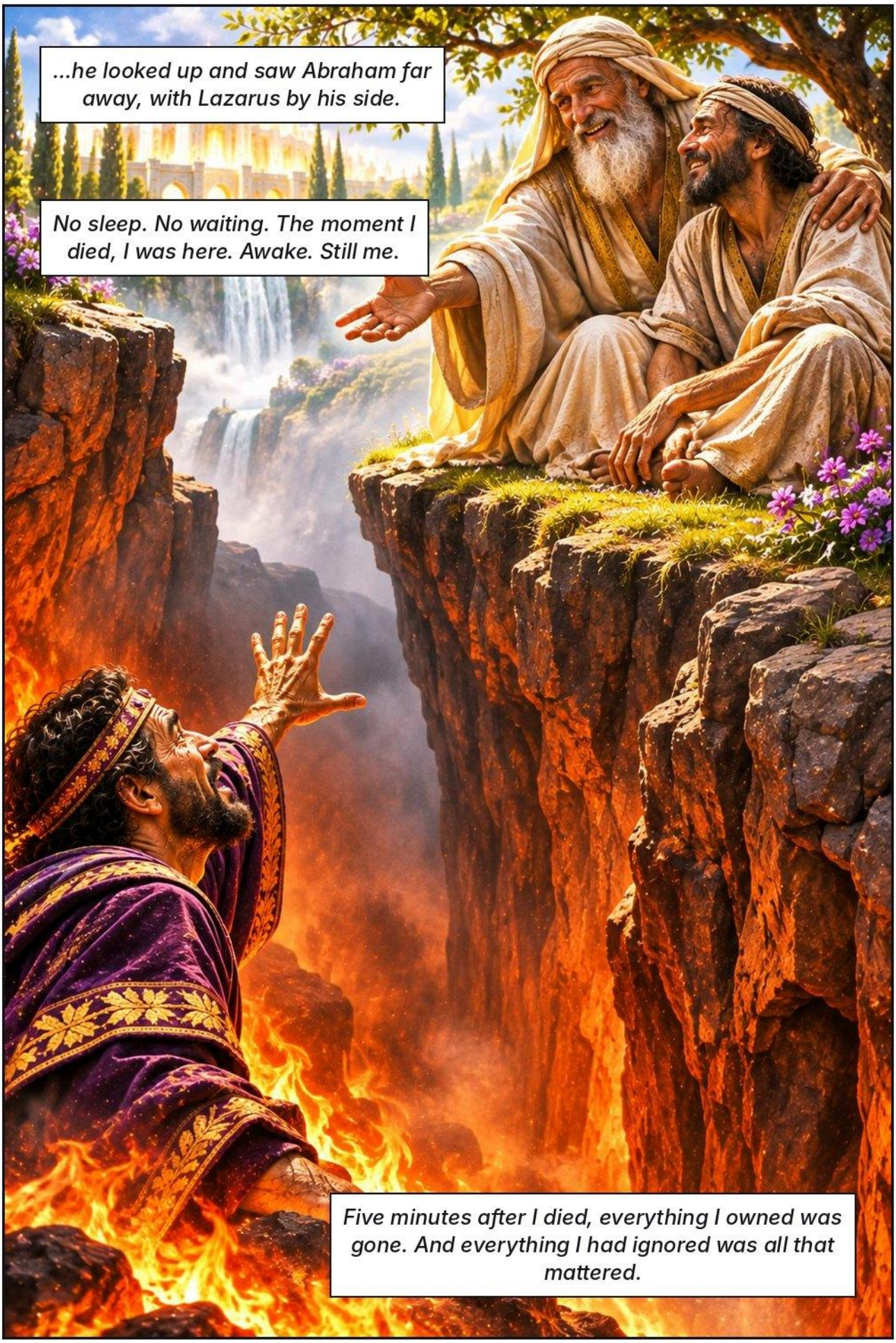

...and the angels carried him to Abraham's side, to heaven. (Luke 16:22)
Our servants threw his body in the valley where the city burned its trash. Nobody on earth cared where he ended up.

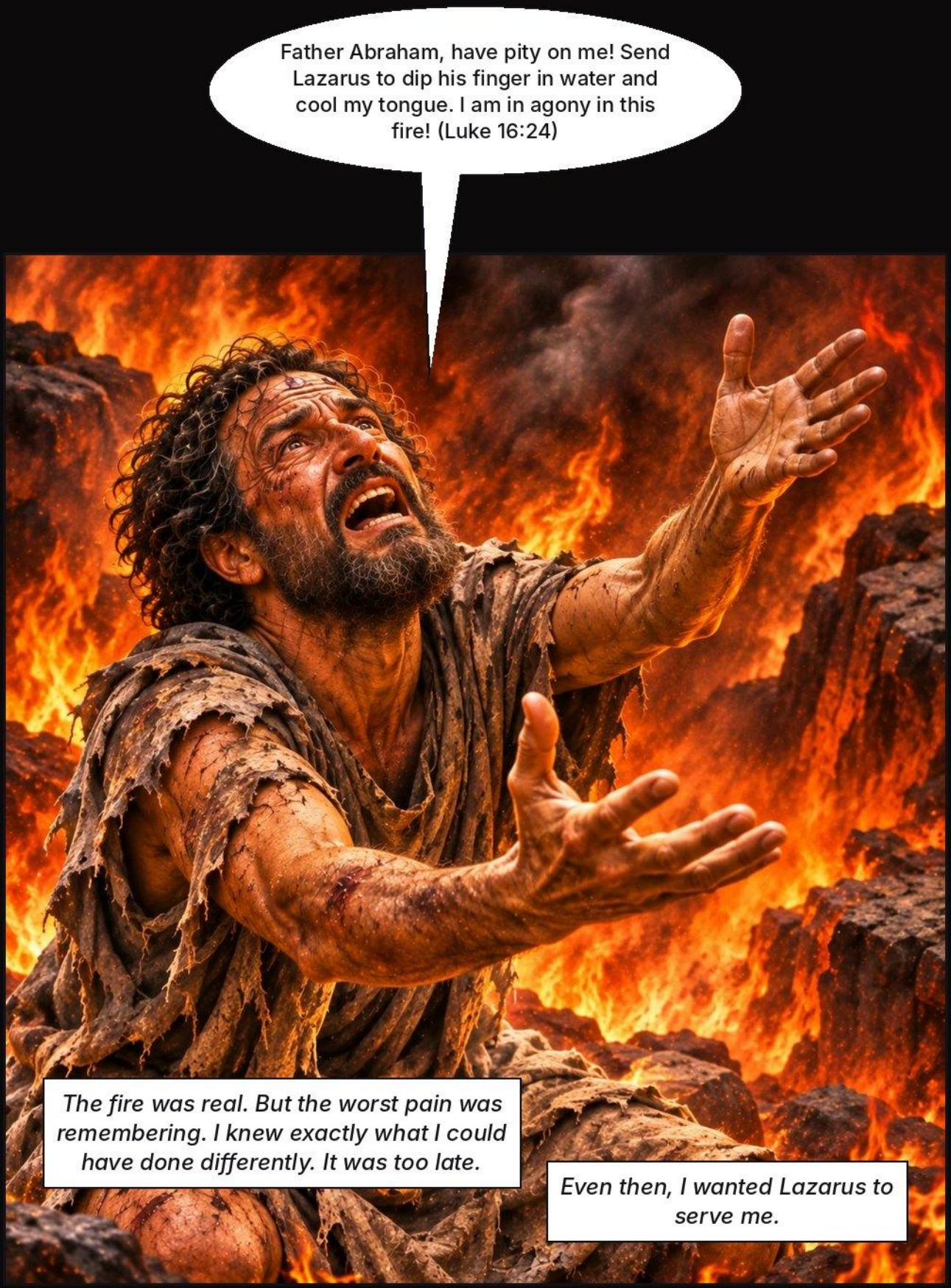

Welcome home, son.
Abraham, the father of the faith, with his arm around the man nobody would touch.

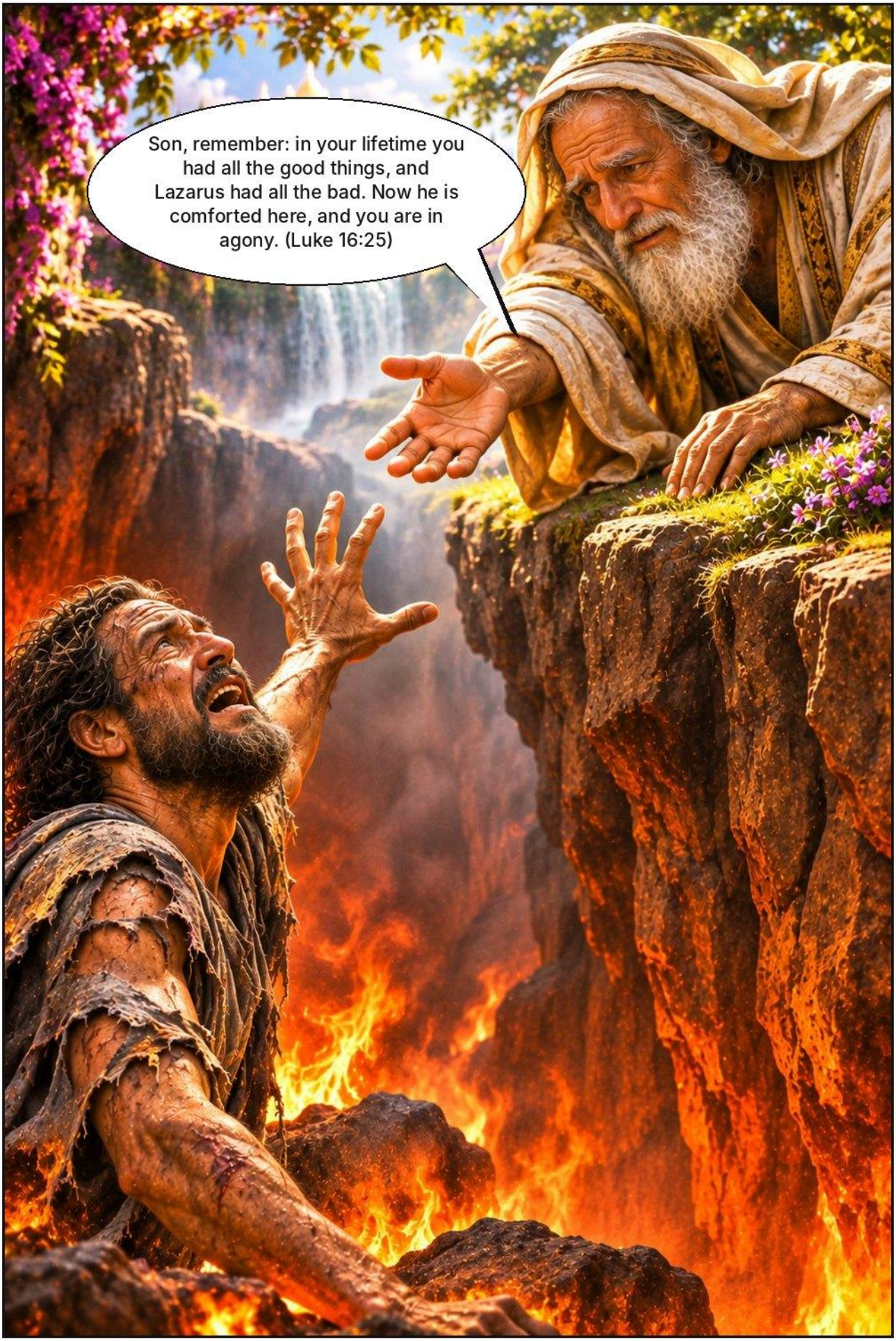

"To another year of—"
The rich man also died...

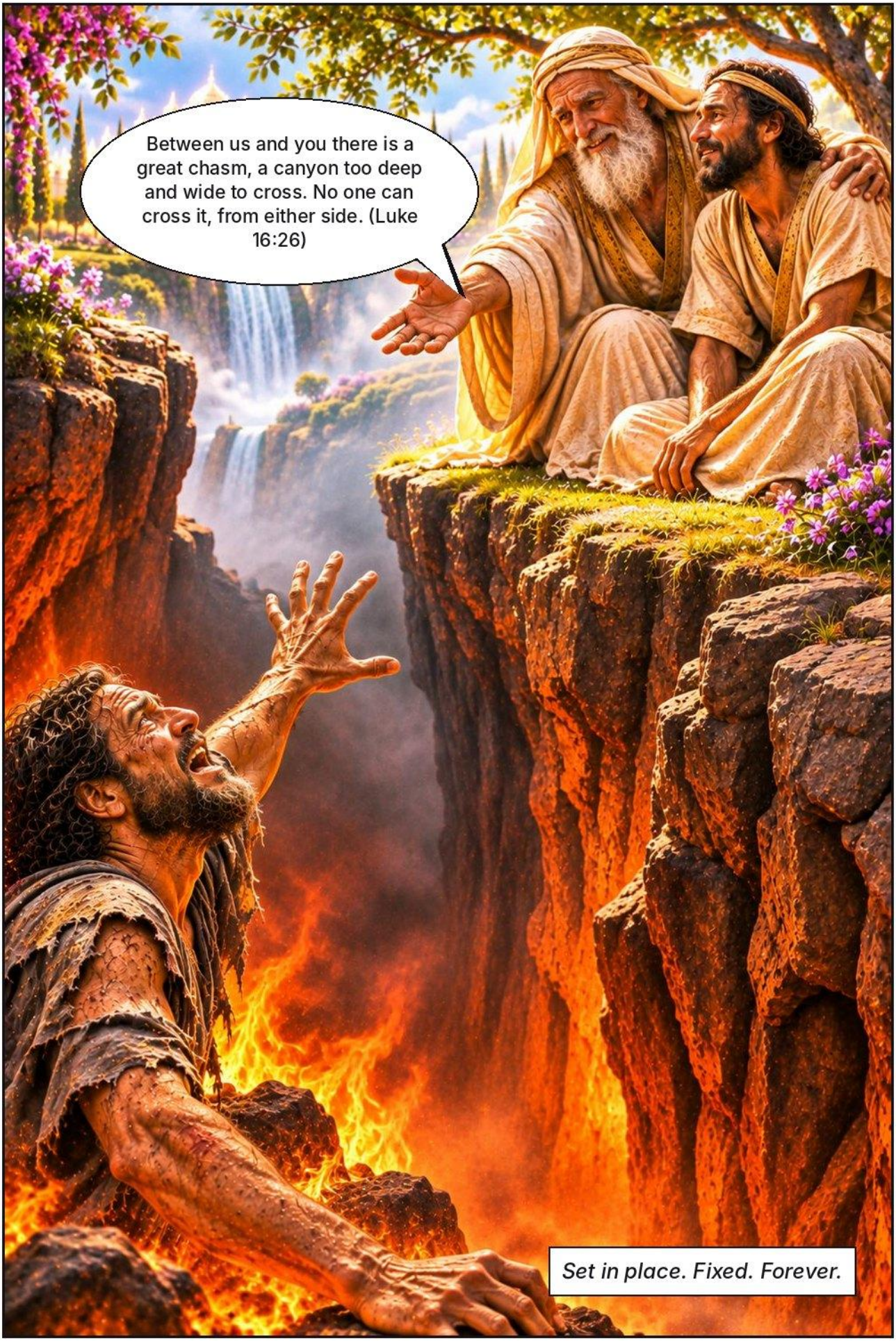

...and was buried. (Luke 16:22)
My funeral was magnificent. I'm told.
He was a good man. A blessed man. If anyone is with God today, it's him.


In Hades, the place of the dead, where he was in torment... (Luke 16:23)


...he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.
No sleep. No waiting. The moment I died, I was here. Awake. Still me.
Five minutes after I died, everything I owned was gone. And everything I had ignored was all that mattered.


Father Abraham, have pity on me! Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in agony in this fire! (Luke 16:24)
The fire was real. But the worst pain was remembering. I knew exactly what I could have done differently. It was too late.
Even then, I wanted Lazarus to serve me.


Son, remember: in your lifetime you had all the good things, and Lazarus had all the bad. Now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. (Luke 16:25)


Between us and you there is a great chasm, a canyon too deep and wide to cross. No one can cross it, from either side. (Luke 16:26)
Set in place. Fixed. Forever.


On earth, Lazarus lay just a few steps from my door, every day, for years. I never once walked over to him.
The gate I would not cross became the chasm I could not cross.

TALK IT OVER · PART TWO

The Crossing

Read it: Luke 16:22–26

Death is real, it is final, and being "a good person" isn't what decides where you spend eternity.

REAL LIFE

People die young too: car wrecks, overdoses, sickness. At almost every funeral someone says, "He's in a better place," no matter who it was. The rich man's brothers probably said it too. Jesus told this story so nobody would have to guess. After death there's no waiting room and no second chance. But Jesus also tells us how to be ready.

TALK IT OVER

1. What do some of your friends assume happens when you die? Where did that idea come from?
2. In the story, the rich man can still see, remember and feel. Does that change how you think about eternity?
3. If you died today, where would you spend eternity? How do you know?

> *"Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,"* **Hebrews 9:27**

TRY IT THIS WEEK

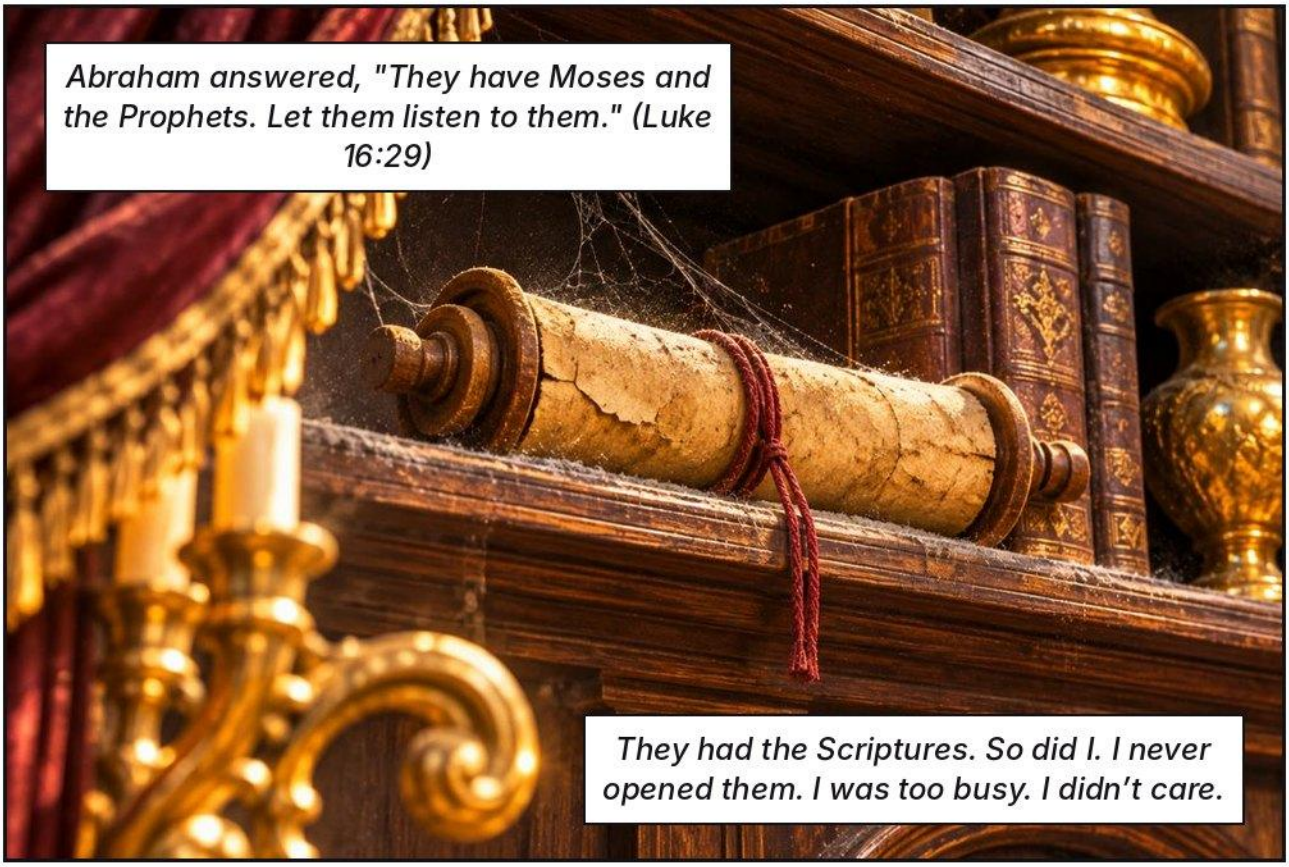
Read Luke 16:19–31 on your own. Write down one honest question and ask someone you trust.

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Then please, father, send Lazarus to my family. I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so they don't end up in this place of torment too. (Luke 16:27–28)
It was too late for me. So for the first time in my life, I thought about someone besides myself.


My brothers. Still laughing. Still at my table.


Abraham answered, "They have Moses and the Prophets. Let them listen to them." (Luke 16:29)
They had the Scriptures. So did I. I never opened them. I was too busy. I didn't care.


Someone new lies at the gate now. Same spot. They walk past him too.
I taught them how to live. I never taught them how to die.


No, father Abraham! But if someone comes back from the dead and warns them, they will turn from their sins! (Luke 16:30)

Abraham said to him,

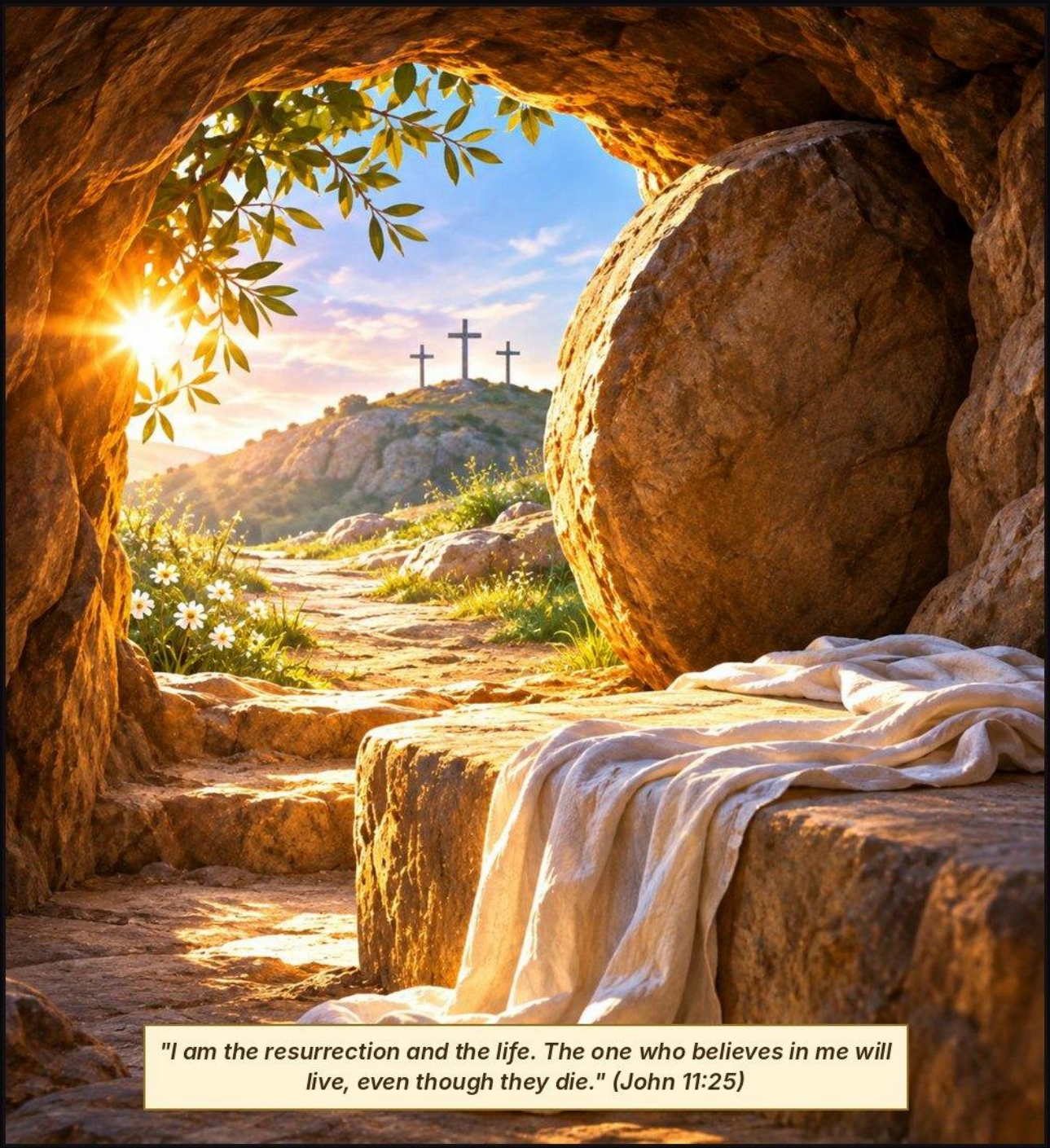
"If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

Luke 16:31


Eternity reveals what life conceals.

Abraham was right. One day, someone did come back from the dead.

Jesus died on a cross and rose again three days later. He is the one who came back. (Luke 24:6–7)



"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die." (John 11:25)

The rich man's story is over. Yours isn't. Heaven and hell are real, and both last forever. It's not a small decision, and everyone makes it for themselves: what will you believe about Jesus?


His brothers still had something he didn't.
Time.
Who's at your gate?



His five brothers still had time. So do you.



Five minutes after you die, where will you be?

And will the people you love be with you?

Ready to follow Jesus? Turn to How to Follow Jesus, page 38.

TALK IT OVER · PARTS THREE AND FOUR

The Five

Read it: Luke 16:27–31

Five minutes after you die, you will care about two things. First, where you will spend eternity. And second, where the people you love will spend it.

REAL LIFE

The rich man's first unselfish thought came too late to help his brothers. You still have time. Talking about Jesus with people you love can feel awkward. You don't want to sound preachy. You're afraid they'll ask something you can't answer. You're scared it'll make things weird. Start small and honest: "Can we talk about Jesus sometime? For real." Jesus already rose from the dead. Your job is just to point to him.

TALK IT OVER

1. Who are the people closest to you who may not know Jesus?
2. What's the real reason you haven't talked to them about it?
3. Jesus rose from the dead. If that's true, what changes for you this week?

> *"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?"*
> **Romans 10:14**

TRY IT THIS WEEK

Write down the names of the people closest to you who may not know Jesus. Pray for each one by name every day this week. Start one real conversation. Ask God to show you ways you might nudge them toward faith.

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THE GOOD NEWS

How to follow Jesus

Plainly, from the Bible

1. God made you and loves you.
He is also holy and just. He will not pretend sin doesn't matter.

2. Everyone has sinned.
"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Being a good person can't fix it. *"The wages of sin is death."* (Romans 6:23)

3. Jesus paid for it.
Jesus, God's Son, died on the cross for your sin, was buried, and rose again on the third day. (1 Corinthians 15:3–4) God's justice required a penalty. His love provided a Savior.

4. He is the only way.
"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

5. Decide to follow Jesus.
Confess your sin to God and ask him to forgive you. Believe that Jesus died for you and rose again. Then decide to follow him as your Lord, starting today. *"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* (Romans 10:9) *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins."* (1 John 1:9)

A PRAYER YOU CAN PRAY, IN YOUR OWN WORDS

A prayer is as simple as a thought, spoken out loud or thought toward God.

Jesus, I know I've sinned, and I can't fix it myself. I believe you died for me and rose again. Please forgive me. I turn from my sin and trust you. Be my Lord, and help me follow you. Amen.

What's next: tell someone you trust, get a Bible and start with the Gospel of Luke, find a church, and think about who you need to tell.

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ABOUT THE STORY

Who's who

Say it like this

The rich man: Jesus never gives his name. He tells the story.

Lazarus *(LAZ-uh-rus)*: the beggar at the gate. His name means "God helps." He is not the Lazarus of Bethany whom Jesus raised in John 11.

Abraham *(AY-bruh-ham)*: the father of the Jewish people and a picture of welcome for everyone who trusts God.

The five brothers: still alive, still at the table, still walking past the gate.

Hades *(HAY-deez)*: the place of the dead where the rich man is in torment.

A note on the story. Jesus told this story in Luke 16:19–31 to teach what is true about life, death and eternity. The rich man telling the story, the faces, the feast, the funeral, and the modern ending are storytelling choices. Every word in quotation marks with a Bible reference comes straight from Scripture (NIV).

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FOR GROUP LEADERS

Using this story with a group

One session or three

TWO WAYS TO USE IT

1. **One session:** read the whole story together (about 15 minutes), then use Talk It Over: The Five.
2. **Three sessions:** one part per week with the three Talk It Over pages.

TALKING ABOUT HELL

Be honest about what Jesus said. Don't water it down, and don't use it to scare people. Jesus told this story because he loved the people listening and wanted to warn them. Even in Hades, Abraham still calls the rich man "son." Hell is real, it is painful, and it lasts forever. Be just as clear about the good news: Jesus came to save us from it. (John 3:17)

WHEN SOMEONE WANTS TO FOLLOW JESUS

Slow down. Walk through How to Follow Jesus together and pray with them. Then help them take a next step: tell someone close to them, talk with a pastor, and get connected to a church.

WHEN SOMEONE IS GRIEVING

Some people in your group have lost someone. The decision a person makes about Jesus is the only decision that matters after we die, but only Jesus knows our hearts. Be sure to point them toward a relationship with Jesus.

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GO DEEPER

The message behind the story

From a sermon series by Pastor Rick Melick

Watch the message

"Eternity Reveals What Life Conceals," Week 4 of See You on the Other Side

youtube.com › Week 4 ›

Read the chapter

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