Week of October 25, 2026

Small Group Study Guide

THE BRANCH CHURCH

STUDY

1. When you heard the story of Shay Bradley arranging to have his voice play from the coffin, a) what was your first reaction? b) What does that story tell you about how people tend to cope with the reality of death? c) After the sermon this weekend, are you more or less comfortable with the idea of a sermon about death and why?

2. **Solomon observed that both the wise and the fool face the same fate, and that neither will be remembered for long.** a) How does that land with you? b) Does it feel discouraging, freeing, or something else entirely?

3. **Chris described how the weeks following 9/11 produced a kind of national "house of mourning" — and with it, a noticeable shift in how people treated one another and thought about their lives.** What do you think it is about grief and loss that produces that kind of perspective and why does it tend to fade?

4. **Bronnie Ware identified four common regrets among her dying patients.** Which of the four resonates most with you personally, and why?
   - Wishing they had lived true to themselves rather than meeting others expectations
   - Wishing they had not worked so hard
   - Wishing they had expressed their feelings more honestly
   - Wishing they had stayed in touch with friends

5. **The sermon made a distinction between acknowledging death and being enslaved to the fear of it.** What do you think keeps people — even people of faith — in a kind of slavery to that fear?

6. **Hebrews 2:14-15 describes Jesus sharing in our humanity specifically so that He could break the power of the fear of death.** What does it mean to you personally that Jesus experienced death from the inside? How does that change the way you relate to Him?

7. **Chris suggested that one of the deep roots of the fear of death is a sense that we will face some kind of accounting before God.** a) How does the gospel — specifically the work of Christ on the cross — address that fear? b) Where are you in your own confidence about where you stand with God?

8. **Chris introduced the idea of 'expirement living' — living with an awareness that your days are numbered and letting that awareness shape how you spend them.** What would change in your daily life if you genuinely internalized that your days are limited?

9. **Solomon repeatedly commends the enjoyment of ordinary life — meals, work, relationships — as gifts from God. The sermon named two things that can steal our enjoyment of the present moment: *nostalgia and waiting for perfect conditions*.** Which of those two is a bigger obstacle for you? What would it look like to push back against it?

10. **The monks at Christ in the Desert walk past an open grave every day on the way to their meals. That is an extreme practice, but the idea behind it is that a daily reminder of mortality shapes how you live.** What is a realistic, practical way you could build that kind of reminder into your own rhythm of life?

PRAY

Read Psalm 90:12 together — the prayer that asks God to teach us to number our days so that we might gain a heart of wisdom. Sit quietly with it for a moment and pray for:

- the gift of the days He has given
- the freedom from the fear of death that Jesus makes possible
- the grace to be present and alive to the life in front of us