

How to Talk to Our Kids About Death, Heaven, and Hell

How do you talk to your kids about difficult or heavy subjects?

Vanessa 10.23.2024

Parenting is hard

Here are some ground rules...

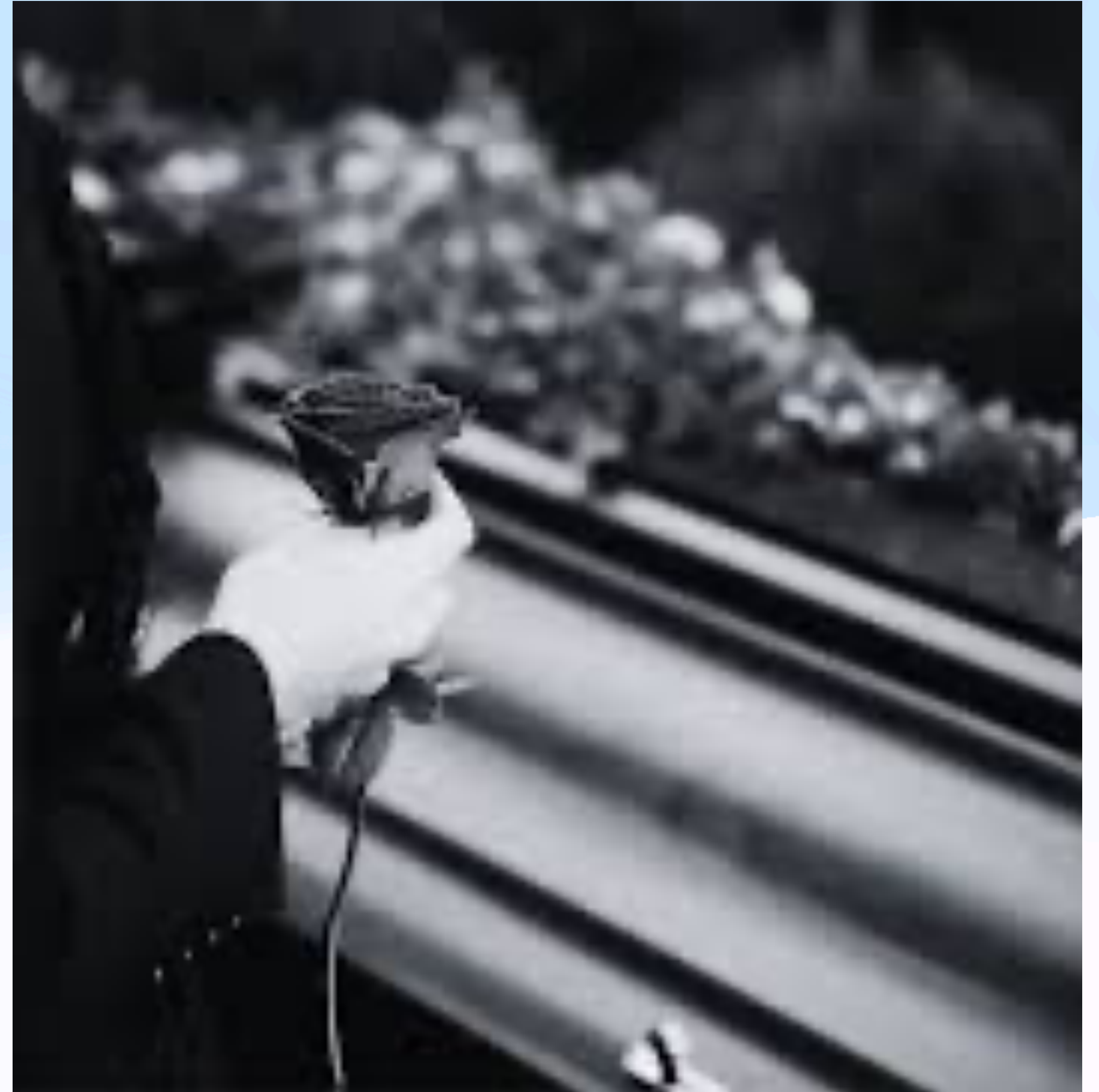
- This is a safe space to be wrong, it's not possible for us to always be right
- We don't know what we don't know
- Of course we try our best, but our kids don't need our perfection, they need to see us try, mess up, and try again
- Being a parent means endless chances to try again
- One of the most important things we can teach our kids is how to be wrong
 - challenging ourselves, accepting it, embracing it, admitting it
 - "I'm open to being wrong..."
 - "I'm open to changing my mind..."
- "I never thought of it that way"
- "I don't know, let's look it up"
- "I feel like the answer is... but I could be wrong, let me confirm and get back to you"
- "I thought this...but learned/read/heard... and that changed my mind"
- "That's a good question, what do you think?"
- Developmentally, kids' brains are very literal, very black and white so we need to guide them:
 - Embracing the gray area
 - ...and... vs ...but...
- Have the hard conversations
- We have no control, all we can do is prepare

Suffering and Punishment

- Kids' biggest question is usually why does God punish people and allow them to suffer
- God does not punish us. Ever.
 - Old Testament vs. New Testament
- God created us out of love and only has love for us, it is unconditional; nothing we do can change how God feels about us
- And God gave us Free Will
- These are incorrect:
 - “That makes Jesus mad or sad”
 - “God is mad at them”
 - “This is happening because they did something bad and God is punishing them”
- God does not want us to suffer AND suffering is part of the human condition
- We suffer as a result of our own actions or the actions of others
- God did not create suffering and death, humans did
- And while God can bring grace and good things from suffering and pain, God does not want suffering and pain just to get those good things
- Suffering is such a part of being human that Jesus, who is both God and man, suffered and endured tremendous pain

Death

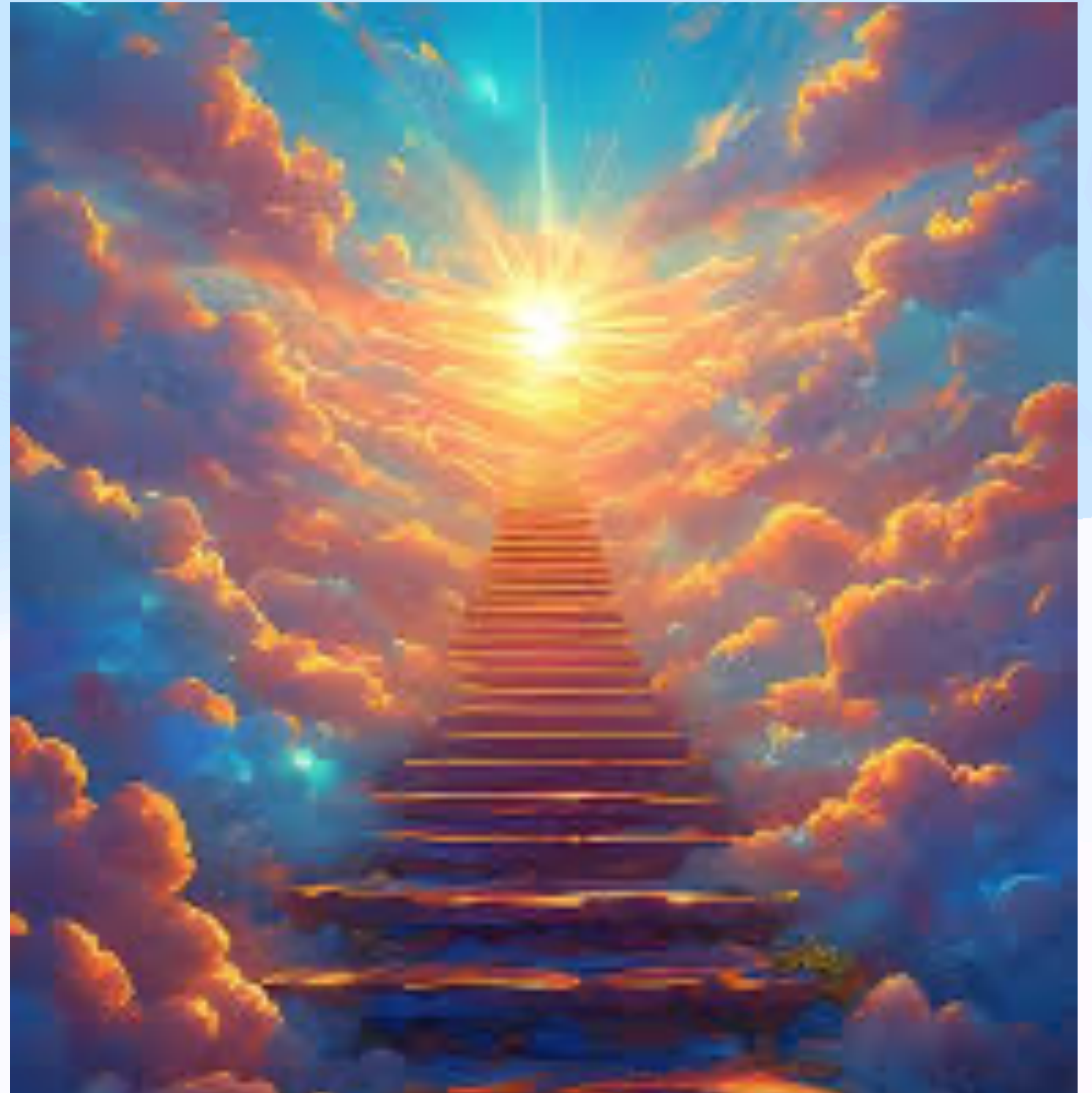
- Because Jesus sacrificed Himself, we are able to return to God
- We can turn away from God, but God never leaves us
- God always loves, forever
- God's love is what holds everything in being
- God does not force us to do anything
- God does not force us to choose God when we die. Free will gives us the power to not choose God/Heaven when we die
- In that final moment when we see the face of God, who knows what people choose
- Does this mean that our life on Earth is unimportant and that our bad deeds don't matter?
- We spend our life trying to continually turn back to God so that we recognize God at this moment and accept His mercy
- It's not like 'The Good Place' where some cosmic being is keeping a tally of all our faults



Heaven and Purgatory

- “Death puts an end to human life as a time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ”
- “Those who die in God’s grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live forever with Christ”
- “All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation.”

-CCC



“It is not easy to entrust oneself to God’s mercy, because it is an abyss beyond our comprehension. But we must! ‘Oh, I am a great sinner!’ All the better! Go to Jesus; He likes you to tell him these things! He forgets, He has a very special capacity for forgetting. He forgets, He kisses you, He embraces you, and He simply says to you, “Neither do I condemn you; go, sin no more.””

Pope Francis

**“You cannot conceive, nor can I,
the appalling strangeness of the
mercy of God”**

Graham Greene

Hell

- “We cannot be united with God unless we choose to freely love Him.”
- “To die in mortal sin without repenting or accepting God’s merciful love means remaining separated from Him forever by our own free choice.”
- “The state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called ‘hell.’”



