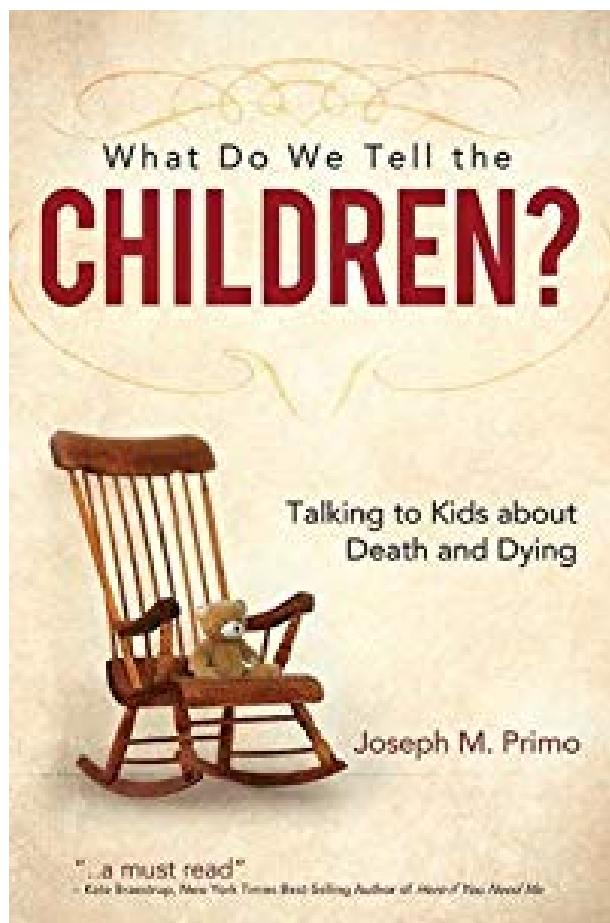


What Do We Tell the Children?: Talking to Kids About Death and Dying



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One out of seven children will lose a parent before they are 20. The statistics are sobering, but they are also a call for preparedness. However, pastors and counselors of all types are often at a loss when dealing with a grieving child. Talking to adults about death and grief is difficult; it's all the more challenging to talk to children and teens. The stakes are high: grieving children are high-risk for substance abuse, promiscuity, depression, isolation, and suicide. Yet, despite this, most of these kids grow-up to be normal or exceptional adults. But their chance to become healthy adults increases with the support of a loving community. Supporting grieving children requires intentionality, open-communication, and patience. Rather than avoid all conversations on death or pretend like it never happened, normalizing grief and offering support requires us to be in-tune with kids through dialogue as they grapple with questions of "how" and "why." When listening to children in grief, we often have to embrace the mystery, offer love and compassion, and stick with the basics. The author says, "We don't have to answer the why and how for them, but we can assure our children that God is with us as we suffer. We can do so by doing good for others and pointing out all of those moments when someone has done something good for us. I believe that most of the time that's as far as we will get, and that is okay."