**The Story of God With Morgan Freeman**

**Episode: Beyond Death**

1. The episode opens as Morgan Freeman is walking over a wooden bridge in Greenwood, Mississippi. He reflects on the fact that he first faced someone’s death as a boy there. As an infant, he had been left in the care of his grandmother, who died when he was six years old. His older brother also died when Freeman was young. What was your own first experience with death? How did it affect you? Did you have family or caretakers to help you deal with it or did you handle it on your own?

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2. David Bennett believes that he drowned when he was a young man, but his body was recovered and he was resuscitated. How does he describe the experience of death? How is his experience similar to that of others who have had near-death experiences? How could such an occurrence be explained? How do you think such an experience might change a person? Has your personal understanding of near death experience changed after seeing this episode?

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3. Egyptologist Salima Ikram leads Morgan Freeman into a pyramid in the funerary complex of Djoser in Egypt, which serves as the tomb of a pharaoh who lived almost 4,400 years ago. After walking a remarkably well-preserved pathway and bending almost double to come through another passage, he finds himself in a room covered with inscriptions for another pharaoh, Unas. What do the inscriptions say? What did they indicate about how the Egyptians viewed the afterlife? Why was the king’s afterlife important to the Egyptian people?

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4. Although the pyramid at Saqqara is an ancient and detailed testimonial of belief in the afterlife, there is evidence that humans may have believed in some sort of life after death even before the Egyptians developed their elaborate theory of the afterlife. What does this evidence consist of?

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5. The Mexican Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos), celebrated primarily in southern Mexico, had its roots in indigenous celebrations held in early summer. Since the Spanish conquest, the festival takes place on November 1 and 2, coinciding with the Catholic Church holy days of All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day. How do Mexican families celebrate the Day of the Dead? Why is it considered a happy rather than sad time? What does it say about practitioners’ belief in the afterlife?

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6. The Aztec Empire shocked the Spanish conquistadors with its use of ritual human sacrifice. The Maya also had human sacrifice, although not to the extent that the Aztecs practiced it. Why did these societies sacrifice humans? What did they hope to accomplish by this practice?

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7. In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, on the site where Christians believe that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again, Morgan Freeman learns about ancient Jewish burial customs. Describe the nature of the Jewish cemetery shown in the film. How was Christian belief in the afterlife different from the Jewish vision of what happens after death? Do you think this is the reason that Christianity spread so rapidly?

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