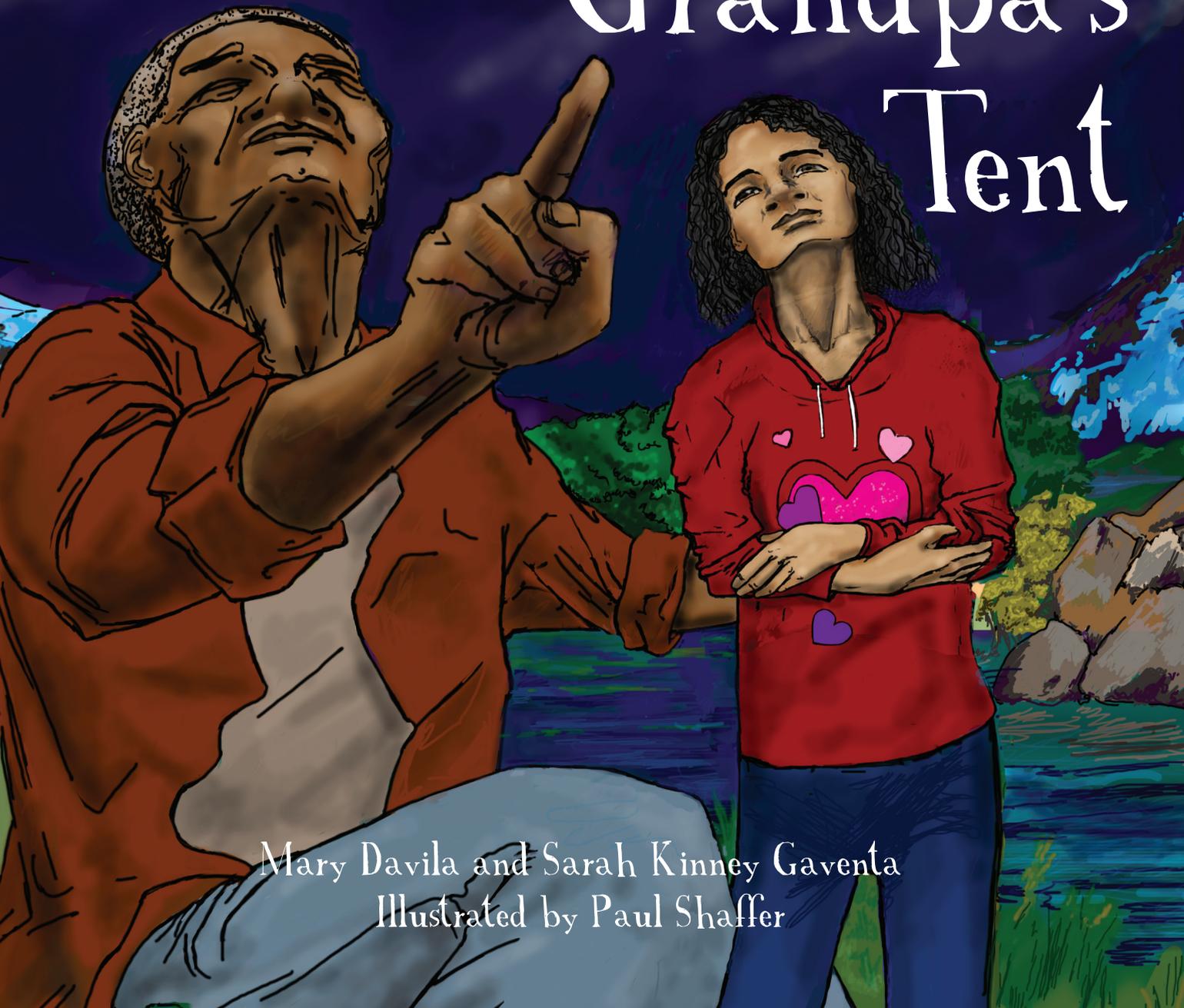


Grandpa's Tent



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Illustrated by Paul Shaffer





Families have different summer traditions. Some families go to the beach. Some families go to big cities. Some families travel to visit relatives.

Hannah's family went camping in the mountains. While her parents parked the car, Hannah and Grandpa walked to the campsite to select a perfect place for their tent. Grandpa liked to wake up to see the sun sparkling on the water. Hannah liked the sound of birds and frogs cooing her to sleep.





A few weeks later, Hannah's parents were waiting at the school bus stop for Hannah. They walked home together, and when they came inside the house, her father knelt down and held Hannah's shoulders. "Hannah, I am so sorry to tell you this, but Grandpa died this afternoon. His heart stopped beating, and his lungs stopped breathing."

Hannah's mother told her that Grandpa had left a special gift for her and gave her a big, beautiful box. Inside was the tent that they used for camping. Hannah started to cry. Her mother hugged her and reminded her about how much Grandpa enjoyed camping with her. The tent was a gift to help her remember those special times.

That night, Hannah prayed: "Dear God, I know Grandpa will be okay because you will take very good care of him. But I am going to miss him so much, and I wish we could go camping again! Please, if you could, give him a hug for me."



Note to Parents

Talking with children about the death of a loved one can feel like a difficult task. In the past, children were often sheltered from knowledge or discussions of death. Children who have lost a loved one cope better throughout their lives if they have been given a chance to work through their feelings of grief. We hope this book will be a helpful tool for children and those who love them to talk about death and grief.

As pastors, we are often asked questions about talking with children about death and funerals. Listed below are some talking points and rituals we have found to be helpful.

Before the Funeral

Children often ask poignant, heartfelt, direct questions about death and heaven. It's okay not to have all of the answers—no one does! We encourage families to continue the conversation and to speak honestly. It's helpful to use direct language such as “death” instead of “pass away” and to avoid language that speaks of death as “resting.” That can be confusing for a child.

Cremation is becoming a more commonly used form of burial. Children may have questions about cremation. We can remind them that just as God created humans from the dust, so do our bodies return to the dust when we die.

During the Funeral

You may wonder whether it is appropriate to bring your children to the funeral service. Again, you know your children best, but being present for the funeral and burial can help children understand the concrete nature of death. The same rituals that are important for adults are important for children as well. You can also choose to have your child attend only a portion of the funeral, if you are afraid the length may be too much for him or her. You might also ask older children whether they would like to attend.

Art and writing can be helpful ways for children to express emotions. Perhaps children's art can be displayed in the reception area, or the child can journal privately about his or her questions and memories of the deceased. Children can write letters to the deceased to be placed on top of the casket. Some people also have a tradition of placing flowers or earth on top of the casket. Children can be included in this ritual.

