



WHEN KIDS ASK...



“Why do we visit
a grave?”

Why kids might ask:

After a death, many communities will have a ceremony at a grave site or burial vault. These ceremonies can spark curiosity in children. Some may wonder why people would choose to visit gravesites, and some may feel hesitant or even fearful about visiting. Scary images of gravesites can fuel the fear. Kids may ask why a body is buried, cremated, or taken far away, and what happens to the person after death. Children may also wonder how often graves are visited and whether those who died might still be “there” in some way. There might be questions about how to engage, remember, or honor the graves of those who died. Kids may even have questions about the expectations for visiting the burial site and how a location might be chosen for a grave.



...> What the Bible says:



The Bible mentions many types of graves, and they were used similarly to how many use graves today. These include a burial plot (qeber), a place where the dead reside (sheol), and even the bottom of a pit or container (shahat). Frequently it depended upon the size of the city whether a burial plot would be acquired or whether a body might be put into a holding period so that the bones could be relocated at a later time. The Bible teaches that human bodies were made from the dust of the earth and will return to dust after death. Burying a body in the ground, placing it in water, or cremating it are all respectful ways of caring for the bodies of the dead. These methods—using earth, fire, water, or containers—can also help contain disease and eliminate odor while bodies go through natural decomposition.

Health reasons, however, are not the only purposes for burial sites. In the Bible, families often chose burial places so that loved ones could be buried together. Burial locations were sometimes chosen as an expression of trust in God's promises—promises that go beyond a person's lifetime. Gravesites also serve as memorials, helping people remember the life of the person and the promises God gave to or through them. Visiting a grave can prompt reflection on the person's life, on one's own life and death, or on the broader realities of life and death. Gravesites can also be places of mourning and comfort. Some will leave flowers, gifts, or other items at the graves, which can bring peace or support to future visitors. Visiting can help people feel closer to those who have died. In this way, visiting graves can offer reflection, remembrance, mourning, comfort, and a sense of connection.

The Bible also presents graves as places where new life can begin. It teaches that God has power over life and death. There are passages in which people who were buried are brought back to life, at least for a time. The Bible does tell of one person—Jesus—who rose from the grave with a resurrected body and will never die again. These passages point to God's promise and power to raise the dead, bringing resurrection and new life. The Bible describes a future moment when all graves will release the bodies placed there, and the dead will rise with new, resurrected bodies. Because of this, visiting a gravesite can also inspire hope and reflection on the coming resurrection. Gravesites can

bring rejoicing and thankfulness. Even still, the choice to visit a gravesite can be difficult, and it is fine for someone to decline to visit. The Bible reminds us that whether we go to a grave or the highest mountain, God is there.

...➤ What you could discuss:



With preschool ages: “Visiting a grave can help us to remember the person who died. We might talk about the person at the gravesite, talk to the person, or pray to God. We can sing or read from the Bible, or leave things that make us think about the person. We can remember that death is not the end. We can remember that God takes care of the people who died. You can choose to go with us, but it is okay if you don’t want to go.”

With school ages: “Sometimes we may not feel like visiting a gravesite, and that’s okay. But there are also good reasons why someone might choose to go. Visiting a grave can help us express how we’re feeling—whether we’re sad, thankful, angry, or scared. It gives us a chance to remember who died, how the person lived, and what the person meant to us. We can talk to God, pray silently, or share memories with others. Reading a Bible passage, a favorite poem, or lyrics from a meaningful song can bring comfort. Leaving something special at the grave—like a letter, drawing, flowers, or small item—can be a way of showing love. Most importantly, we can remember that death is not the end. The Bible says that God God takes care of the people who died.”

...➤ What you could do:



Consider memorials together: It can be scary to visit a place with lots of monuments, stones, or names of people who died. Invite your kid to design a memorial with you. Ask your kid what your kid would want the memorial to say or look like.

Leave a memento: Before visiting, ask if your kid would like to take something to the gravesite. Consider if there might be something temporary or permanent to bring with you. Ask if your kid would like an activity to be done at the gravesite with the memento. Another option is to ask others that you know if they have any mementos that you could take to the gravesite for them.

...➤ Where you could look for more information:

- ✎ **Stories of people who visited gravesites:** Genesis 25 and 50 • Judges 16 • 1 Samuel 10 and 31 • 2 Samuel 3 • 1 Kings 14 • 2 Kings 23 • 2 Chronicles 32 and 35 • Matthew 28 • Luke 24 • John 11 and 20 • Acts 2
- ✎ **Stories of people who acquired gravesites:** Genesis 23 and 33 • Deuteronomy 34 • Joshua 24 • 2 Samuel 19 • 1 Kings 13 • Isaiah 22 and 53 • Ezekiel 32 • Matthew 27
- ✎ **Stories of people who made memorials or left mementos:** Genesis 35 • 2 Chronicles 16 • Isaiah 65 • Acts 2
- ✎ **Stories of people coming back to life at gravesites:** 1 Kings 17 • 2 Kings 4 and 13 • Ezekiel 37 • Matthew 9 and 27 • Luke 7-8 • John 11 • Acts 9, 14, 20
- ✎ **Passages about not decaying in the grave:** Psalm 16, 30, 49, • Proverbs 15 and 23 • Hosea 13 • Jonah 2 • Daniel 12 • John 20-21 • Acts 2 and 13 • 1 Corinthians 15 • 1 Thessalonians 4 • Revelation 1 and 20