

IF YOU'VE WONDERED...

“What happens to my pet after death?”

Pets are often more than animals. Pets can be companions, friends, or even part of the family. When a pet gets sick or dies, you may feel deep sadness, confusion, or even guilt. You may have been upset with the pet or may be angry because you didn't get to say goodbye. Questions can arise about what happens to the pet now or whether a pet exists somewhere else or whether you will see your pet again. Does God treat animals the same way as people? These questions are normal and healthy. Asking them is part of learning how to grieve and how to trust God with what you love.

.....> What the Bible says:

The Bible actually mentions that animals were created before humans. When God made the creatures of the sea and sky, God called them good. God also called the land animals good. In fact God created animals as living “beings,” which is the same word used for humans and is frequently translated as “souls”. Just as God blessed humans, God also blessed the animals and told them to be fruitful and multiply. The first human was invited to name the animals, like people name pets. God asked humans to care for the animals and warned against harming them. God gave laws to protect animals, and in many Bible passages the caregivers of pets refuse to leave without them. At times, God even removes harmful people so that the animals can continue to live and thrive. There are stories, like the donkey in Numbers 22, where God intervenes to protect animals. At times God has enabled animals to talk with humans and give important messages.

When it comes to life after death, the Bible does not clearly say that animals will be raised in the same way humans will be. However, the Bible does mention living creatures and animals in the throne-room of God. When speaking about resurrection, the Bible mentions that the dead, both small and great (which could include animals), will be raised. Also, the One on the throne declared, “I am making all things new.” Many view this as including plants and animals, especially since plants are explicitly mentioned as being on the new earth and the preferred title for Jesus in the last book of the Bible is that of an animal – the lamb. In many places God shares that God’s character is like certain animals. God gave humans the care of animals, plants, and the world at creation, and there is no reason that we should not believe that God will do the same in the new creation. What we can say with confidence is that God is good, loving, and cares about everything God has created, including the animals we love.

.....> **What you could explore:**

Famous animals: Do some reading about famous animals who made significant differences in history. Can you find one that is similar to your pet?

Animal care organizations: Look into serving at an animal shelter or donating to an animal care organization. Helping can be a great way to honor a pet.

.....> **What you could do:**

Create a keepsake: Consider making a memorial or artwork that honors the pet. The memento could be kept in a space that is special to you or a place that the animal loved as a memorial marker.

Find a new hobby: Sometimes finding something else to focus attention can be helpful during times of adjustment. Consider if a new activity or hobby might be beneficial for you as you manage emotions around your pet's death.

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

- ✦ **Passages where animals are protected:** Exodus 10 and 21 • Numbers 22 • 1 Samuel 17 • Job 31 • Proverbs 12:10 • Zephaniah 2 • Matthew 10 and 12 • Luke 12, 13, and 14 • John 10 • Hebrews 13 • 1 Peter 2
- ✦ **Chapters where animals are treated as part of the household:** Genesis 30 • Judges 6 • 2 Samuel 12 • John 10
- ✦ **Passages about animals communicating to humans:** Numbers 22 • Job 12 • Romans 8
- ✦ **Passages about humans and animals having the same breath/life:** Genesis 2 • Ecclesiastes 3 • Isaiah 40 • Revelation 5
- ✦ **Verses where God is compared to animals:** Exodus 19:4 • Deuteronomy 32:11 • Isaiah 31:4 • Hosea 11:10 and 13:8 • Amos 3:8 • Psalms 17:8, 36:7, and 91:4 • Matthew 23:37 • Luke 13:34 • John 1:29 • 1 Peter 1:19 • Revelation 5:6, 7:17, and 13:8
- ✦ **Chapters where animals inherit the land:** Isaiah 13, 17, 23, 32, 34, and 35 • Jeremiah 9, 12, 50, and 51 • Ezekiel 5, 14, 29, and 33 • Hosea 2 and 4 • Zephaniah 2 • Psalms 79 and 104