



WHEN KIDS ASK...



“What happens to my pet after death?”

Why kids might ask:

Pets can be important companions for kids. When a pet becomes sick or dies, kids may feel very sad and also worried. Since they are no longer caring for the pet, kids may wonder who takes care of the pet now or what happens to the pet's body. If a kid was closely attached to the pet, the kid may want to know if it is possible to be with that pet again. Even kids who did not like the pet may still wonder whether animals have an afterlife like humans do. Some kids may feel unsettled if they had a negative interaction with a pet before it died and may be looking for a sense of peace or closure. Kids raised in faith traditions may ask this question because they are curious about how God treats animals and whether animals are treated differently from people.



...➤ 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 kids 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 you could discuss:



With preschool ages: "Our pet was special to us. God made our pet, and God called our pet good. God loved our pet even more than we did. Death is sad, and God promises us to make everything new, which includes our pet. We can trust our pet to God. No matter what happens, nothing can separate us or our pet from the love of God."

With school ages: "It is fine to be sad about our pet. Pets are special and good. The Bible doesn't tell us everything about what happens to animals after they die, but it does tell us that God cares deeply for all living things. It also tells us that God promises to make everything new one day. That means we can trust our pet to God. God is kind, fair, and loving, and He takes good care of what He makes. We can thank God for the joy our pet gave us, and we can trust that our pet is safe with God."

...➤ What you could do:



Create a keepsake: Consider making a memorial or artwork that honors the pet. It can be as simple as a letter to the pet or photo page about the pet. The memento could be kept in a space that is special to the kid or a place that the animal loved as a memorial marker.

Find a comfort item: Sometimes cuddling a new toy can be soothing for a kid. A stuffed animal can help. Consider if a stuffed animal that resembles the pet might be beneficial for your kid.

Contribute to animals in need: Look into serving at an animal shelter or donating to an animal care organization. Helping can be a great way to honor a pet.

...➤ 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

