



Midweek Study

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In the Footsteps of

FAITH

Genesis 12-36



Honoring Our Loved Ones

(Genesis 23:1-20)

In this chapter Abraham deals with the death of his beloved wife, Sarah. Some things about experiencing the death of our loved ones have not changed since the days of Abraham.

1. The Sorrow We Face (23:1-2)

- “I do not know why some people, Christians particularly, regard tears for a deceased loved one as improper. Tears are supposed to betray a lack of faith or a lack of submission to the “good, pleasing and perfect” will of God (Rom. 12:2). According to such persons, death is to be treated stoically and tears are to be held in. ... [T]his passage alone would teach us differently.”¹ Abraham was a man of faith, submitted to the will of God, yet he wept.
- When our loved ones have made an impact on us in a positive way, it is right to mourn and grieve. We feel great loss.
- This is the first time in the Bible tears are mentioned. See Revelation 7:17; 21:4
- **When a Christian Dies:** “When a Christian dies, we should also be filled with rejoicing. Truly, for the Christian, **‘to live is Christ, and to die is gain’** (Philippians 1:21). As a believer in Christ departs from this life they are immediately in a far better place (Philippians 1:23). They are with Christ! They have finished the race and kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7); and that faith has become sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). They no longer see in a mirror dimly but see Him face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). The object of their love, affection, and joy is before and with them forevermore.”²

2. The Support We Receive (23:3-6)

- “Abraham’s desire for a resting place for the body of his wife is a simple but striking testimony to the innate feelings about the care of the body. The possessive pronouns **“his dead”** (v.3), **“my**

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 711.

² Kevin DeYoung, “Christian Death: Mourn or Celebrate?”, www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/christian-death-mourn-or-celebrate/.

dead" (v.4), "thy dead" (v.6), are very noteworthy in this connection. The body of his beloved wife was precious to him and was regarded by him and by others as his own property of which he was about to take special and loving care."³

- Dealing with the death of a loved is easier when there are those there to support you. In Abraham's case, the sons of Heath were supportive, offering to him a place of burial of his choice.
- Praise God for those Christians who "...weep with them that weep." (Romans 12:15). Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18 KJV).

3. The **Sacrifices** We Make (23:7-16)

- Abraham purchased a field with a cave in order to bury Sarah. The sons were willing to give the land to Abraham, but **Abraham wanted to pay for this completely**. Though others may help, we want to do something that is a sacrifice for us because it helps us honor our loved one.
- God had promised this land to Abraham, but here he is paying for some of this land. The promise has still not come to pass. Abraham buries Sarah here (instead of her hometown of Ur) as another sign of his faith – God WILL give us this land.

4. The **Separation** We Endure (23:8, 17-20)

- Our loved one is separated from the land of the living and his family and friends. Our loved one is now out of sight. - Vs. 8
- Abraham laid Sarah's body to rest "in sure and certain hope" of a joyful resurrection (Heb. 11:14).⁴
- For the Christian however, this separation is temporary. 2 Corinthians 5:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- 2 Samuel 12:23 – We can have confidence that we will see them again!

How to Cope with Grief⁵:

- 1) Accept the reality of the loss.
- 2) Experience the pain of grief.
- 3) Adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing.
- 4) Take the emotional energy you would have spent on the one who died and reinvest it in another relationship.

³ W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953), 202.

⁴ Thomas, 204.

⁵ Focus on the Family, "Moving Forward: Dealing with Grief", www.focusonthefamily.com/get-help/moving-forward-dealing-with-grief/