

EXCERPT



Lay Me in God's Good Earth A Christian Approach to Death and Burial

August 20, 2024 | \$20, 224 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0760-0

Current burial practices in the West fail to confront us with the reality of death and make it harder to grieve properly. Burreson and Hoeltke argue that natural burial offers a more accurate picture of Christian hope and resurrection. This immensely practical guide is also an application of the hope of the resurrection to those grieving.

Preparing for the Last Journey to Eternal Life

Life is not a horizontal line. Instead, it is full of opposites, ups and downs, sorrows and joys. Life is also short, and because of the culture's deception to and of death, death has become a part of the cycle of life. We experience it with our loved ones, our friends, and our neighbors. Unless Christ returns first, we will all experience death.

Death can invade our lives in the blink of an eye. We want you to be prepared to talk about death, hopefully before it arrives at your doorstep, but we also want to help you learn how to care for those facing death or who are walking toward it. We'd like to provide you the necessary tools to plan for your own death, burial, and funeral well in advance of it happening.

People die every day, and many of us are simply ill prepared for death. Not just physically, but without any plans for our family, our loved ones, and our church on how to care for our body after death has taken place, let alone our funeral and burial. Since this conversation hasn't taken place, those we love are left trying to figure things out while physically numb, dealing with the effects of your death. This should not be the case.

Take for example the case of a husband who dies unexpectedly. His wife has no idea what kind of funeral or burial he would have wanted because they never discussed it. This is a huge burden to any family, but it also opens the door for funeral homes to "tell you" what your loved one would have wanted. At the weakest point in your life, you are left making huge personal and financial decisions. The best gift anyone can give their family and loved ones is a conversation about death and a burial plan prior to your dying. With this book, we hope you will consider the route of natural burial, which can provide intimate care of your body both before and after death.

Discussing death openly does not hasten its arrival, but it does inform you of the wishes of those we love and those we know and care about, and it allows us to discern our own wishes. If you are a Christian, it also provides the church with a guide concerning the what, where, how, and why of your death and burial. This book will take us on a journey, one that starts at our baptism and courses all the way through death when you are in the presence of our Lord Jesus, and into the promise of the resurrection. Just as our lives are a journey, so, too, will this book take you on a sacred journey of preparation for your own death or the death of a loved one.

As we begin this journey, we invite you to walk alongside us, and by the end, we hope you will be willing to lead another on this same path. Life is a journey. We might not be able to know how long it will last or how and when we will die, but this short journey will help you prepare for your last journey into eternal life.

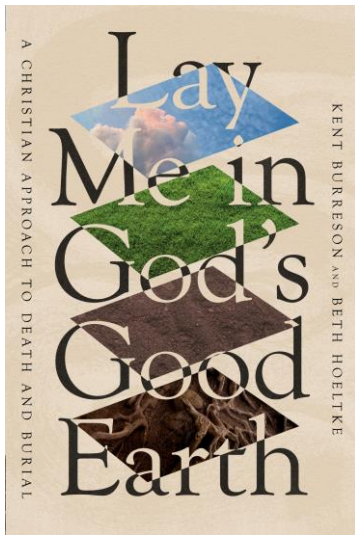


Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



EXCERPT



Lay Me in God's Good Earth A Christian Approach to Death and Burial

August 20, 2024 | \$20, 224 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0760-0

"Firmly rooted in the creedal affirmation of 'the resurrection of the body and life everlasting,' this readable study examines traditional (including cremation) and newer more ecologically sensitive manners of burial in affirming and nonjudgmental ways. I highly recommend this book."

Maxwell E. Johnson, emeritus professor of liturgy, University of Notre Dame

Our book is about dying and the journey we take from life into death, but it's also a journey of love, hope, promise, and compassion. It's a journey through good times and bad, through trials and tribulations. For those who walk alongside the dying, this journey could take weeks, months, or even years. When we journey with our dead, both before, during, and after, we begin to acknowledge that death will happen. Only in this way can we finally know how to participate in the burying of our dead from a more holistic point of view. But in the end, it's a journey that speaks God's truth of Jesus and his resurrection into new life in his new creation.

When we are finally ready to let go and release control of our lives, we can more easily grasp the hand of our loved one and journey with them as they leave this world and transition fully into the life of Christ.

Over its long history, the Christian church has journeyed with their dead, taught the art of dying, provided care during the death process, buried their dead with a renewed hope, and comforted the mourners. But today the church has largely lost its ability to teach the art or theology of dying. We hope the publication of this book will help the church begin to take center stage again in the *Ars Moriendi*, the art of dying, for the Christian and for all as all will die.

As we each walk through the valley of death, either with a loved one or on our own, we do it all with the hope that only Jesus can bring. He is the only one who has conquered death. Because Jesus has been raised from the dead, we, too, will one day be raised from the dead to be with him, with our loved ones that have gone before us, and with all the renewed creation. But for now, let us care for, love, nurture, and journey with our dead, holding on tightly to that promise of the resurrection of our bodies. *Resurgam!* We will rise again!

—adaptated from the introduction

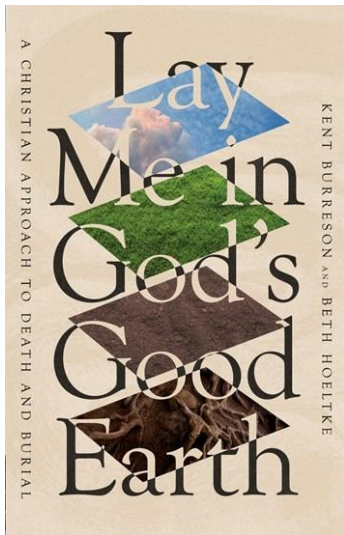


Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



Q & A



Lay Me in God's Good Earth *A Christian Approach to Death and Burial*

August 20, 2024 | \$20, 224, paperback | 978-1-5140-0760-0

Current burial practices in the West fail to confront us with the reality of death and make it harder to grieve properly. Burreson and Hoeltke argue that natural burial offers a more accurate picture of Christian hope and resurrection. This immensely practical guide is also an application of the hope of the resurrection to those grieving.

Have You Thought About How You Want to Be Buried?

Natural burial may be an unfamiliar idea to many people. Can you briefly describe it?

Kent Burreson and Beth Hoeltke: *Lay Me in God's Good Earth* focuses on the core practices of natural burial, and advocates for how these practices align with the Christian story and care for the good earth God has given us. We concentrate on the diverse options for natural burial, at the center of which are eliminating embalming, burying in biodegradable containers directly in the earth without vaults or vault liners, and burying in cemeteries that promote healthy ecological practices.

As you point out, natural burial is something that has deep spiritual and environmental meaning. What led you two to write this book introducing people to natural burial?

Kent and Beth: Our passion for this book was multifaceted. We consider present-day burial practices in North America both impersonal and death denying. We believe they show a disrespect for the human body and disregard for the environment and its resources, and they betray a self-preserving attitude about the dead body. We authored this book to help people realize that death, although biblically not natural, will happen to all. We need to prepare for our deaths, funerals, and burials. There is a spiritual dimension to death. All people would benefit from being attentive to that dimension in their own lives, both in connection with those they love and in preparation for their own dying.

What do you mean when you say that present-day burial practices are impersonal and death denying?

Beth and Kent: We'll start with the last one, death denying. The modern "American way of death" is death denying because it aims to minimize death and guard the living from the experience of death. As soon as someone dies, their body is whisked off to the funeral home. Usually in current practice, the body "reappears" to the mourners after it has been embalmed and prepared to appear as though it really isn't dead. Yet, with the increase in cremations, today the body often doesn't even reappear. It is never seen again. In this way, our modern burial practices are death denying and not oriented toward the gift of human life. Likewise, they are impersonal because they don't treat our dead with honor and respect as creatures of God. We still should have a relationship with the bodies of our dead even after they die. We want to encourage people to move toward practices that are more personal. These practices also attend to modern needs and issues such as building community support with those who mourn, attending to the best stewardship of the earth in our burial practices, and honoring God in a way that is most faithful to the Christian confession of faith.

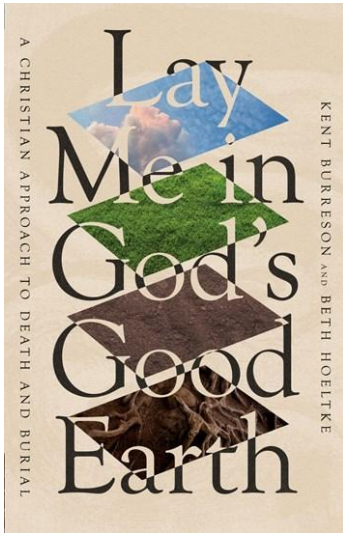


Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



Q & A



Lay Me in God's Good Earth *A Christian Approach to Death and Burial*

August 20, 2024 | \$20, 224, paperback | 978-1-5140-0760-0

Whether someone is twenty-five or ninety-five, why is this an important topic for someone to think through?

Kent and Beth: Everyone dies. Even though we try to distance ourselves from death in modern Western society, death is still all around us. There is certainly truth to Benjamin Franklin's famous quip that the only things you can be certain of are death and taxes. Because death can come upon anyone unexpectedly like a thief in the night, at any age, we must prepare for our deaths. So whether twenty-five to ninety-five, we should be preparing one another for our deaths, funerals, and burials; our rest in the grave; and our resurrection from our deadly resting place.

Why is the practice of natural burial important for the church?

Beth and Kent: Resurrection promise! It is only in the church that human beings can prepare for death with hope in the resurrection. The church formerly was the "expert" where people turned when death took place. Today, the church needs to reclaim its cultural and theological roots regarding its burial practices and how we care for the dying and the dead. We are convinced this book will help the church to do just that. The loving, hands-on practices of natural burial bring a more cathartic experience of death, an expression of mutual love within the Christian community, and a deeper peace, through the resurrection promise. Through natural burial practices, the Christian community can personally attend to the bodies of our dead, engage ancient practices that also resolve modern concerns, and take death seriously, always with our attention focused on the promise of the resurrection in Christ Jesus the Risen One.

What do you hope readers take away from *Lay Me in God's Good Earth*?

Kent and Beth:

- Living in the hope of the resurrection even when confronting the death of those we love
- Consideration for natural burial and what it looks like as a regular practice of the Christian faith
- Walking along with the dying as they encounter death and journeying with the body following death
- Encouraging conversation about death as an event wrapped into God's story in Jesus' death and resurrection, and in light of that story how best to care for our dead
- Teaching Christians how to die with hope and bear witness to that hope, and how to teach one another to do so

How does natural burial offer hope to both families and those facing death?

Beth and Kent: The only hope that we have is the hope of Jesus, who said, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Likewise, Peter says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). Just as Jesus was naturally placed in the tomb and God the Father raised him from the dead, when our bodies are placed into the ground, we rest in that living hope that the Creator of all will raise our bodies just as the Father raised Jesus' body. Natural burial offers the hope that the One who created us by his Word will raise and renew us through that same Word that is our Lord Jesus Christ.

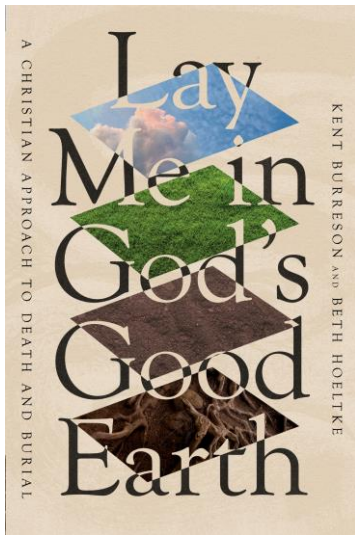


Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



BIO



Lay Me in God's Good Earth A Christian Approach to Death and Burial

August 20, 2024 | \$20, 224 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0760-0

"In this well-researched and compellingly written book, Kent Burreson and Beth Hoeltke thoughtfully address important, and sometimes difficult, end-of-life questions. They guide the reader well through the many options for caring faithfully for the bodies of the dead, and they make a compelling case for natural burial."

—Thomas G. Long, author of *Accompany Them with Singing: The Christian Funeral*

From the Authors of *Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation*

"Lay Me in God's Good Earth is a much-needed guide to equip the church to teach the theology and art of dying. Sound, pastoral, sensitive, and practical, this book empowers honest conversation about our common journey of death and God's intention to raise us and all creation. Burreson and Hoeltke advocate thoroughly and convincingly for natural burial as a witness to and participation in God's purpose of restoring us and all creation. Rich in biblical words and images, this decidedly Christian book inspires meaningful conversation in home and church. Its practical wisdom also supports and guides any who must respond to the death of a loved one or prepare a loved one for their own death."

—Craig Alan Satterlee, teacher of preaching and worship and bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA

Kent J. Burreson (PhD, University of Notre Dame) is professor of systematic theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Together with Beth Hoeltke, he is the author of *Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation*.

Beth Hoeltke (PhD, Concordia Seminary) is the retired director of the graduate school at Concordia Seminary and an adjunct instructor at Jefferson College in Hillsboro, Missouri. Together with Kent Burreson, she is the author of *Death, Heaven, Resurrection, and the New Creation*.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media