

Upon My Death

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My Desires & Wishes

Providing guidance in planning the funeral events upon one's death

"I experienced a tremendous sense of relief once I wrote down my final desires and wishes."

"The conversation regarding my final desires and wishes with my family brought a surprise gift of reconciliation to some family members who had been at odds with each other for decades."

"By far one of the greatest gifts my wife and I have given one another and our children."

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It is a gift.***

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Grady Mosley is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church and has pastored in the North Georgia Conference for 37 years. He and his wife Deborah live in Madison, Georgia.

Upon My Death

Rev. Grady Mosley

Prologue

In reading the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13), the question that I ask myself is, "How do I know if I have been a good sower?" I have found the answer is not based upon sowing the seed in good soil but rather in having an empty sack. Therefore, I share these instructions/guidelines gathered over my years of ministry with anyone and everyone so that they might share it with anyone and everyone.

As a pastor for 37 years, too numerous are the extremely painful, difficult, and sometimes bitter conversations that take place regarding "making arrangements" upon someone's death. Without question, those families and individuals who have had healthy discussions and have had some type of documentation regarding their loved one's "final wishes" more readily move to healing and wholeness having a sense of peaceful contentment with themselves and one another.

I have many friends who are single, do not have children, or who only have occasional visits with relatives; they, too, are extremely thankful for these criteria. Please join me in sharing a hidden treasure in "Upon My Death."

Grace and Peace,
Grady Mosley
2 Peter 3:18

Introduction

The prophet Isaiah said to King Hezekiah, "This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover." Best said, preparation for death should be handled as we have time to take care of it.

Most people do not necessarily need others' advice or opinions, but they greatly appreciate *guidance* especially when it comes to inherent responsibilities such as planning the events upon a loved one's death. One such guidance is the importance of having personal, vital information at the fingertips of those who will care for our needs.

"Upon My Death" is a simple guideline for discerning and recording information to help others as we approach life eternal. Once the conversation occurs and the information is recorded, there will be additional opportunities to follow up on the conversation. Most often these occasions arise upon the untimely death of a person near to us. Think of updating every four years; the presidential election is an easy timeline.

"Upon My Death" will be a tremendous gift to your family; as an added benefit, it will save time and money. ***This guide is solely for conversations regarding the arrangements for one's body upon death.*** Other matters, such as Wills and Power of Attorney, should be given equally proper attention. Once you complete this simple

task, it may seem that what you have done is inadequate; I promise, there is a hidden treasure that your family will deeply appreciate in this gift you give them.

One added caveat: If you have adult children (over 18) who are single, ask them to sign a durable power of attorney and a health care proxy to keep in your possession. You can find these documents in a website search. If there is no such documentation prior to the event, it is extremely costly and troublesome in the untimely death or debilitating accident of your adult child to make decisions on the child's behalf. <https://eforms.com/power-of-attorney/durable/>

Why give this gift of my wishes upon my death?

First, it is very difficult and awkward to think about preparing for one's death. That is the main reason we avoid discussing this topic with loved ones. The fact is, someone must deal with it. Those you leave behind will need specific information so they might carry out your wishes and needs.

Second, if an accident or sudden illness occurs, a relative or close friend will know where to go quickly to find the pertinent information regarding your wishes.

Let the talks begin

These simple questions are presented to help you walk through the thought process; when you have done so, you will have at the least a relatively clear and concise wish list to pass on. This need not be a complicated matter but rather simple guidelines for others to use on your behalf.

There are three timely conversations to be had regarding your wishes:

- a) When in good health and young age (under 70)
- b) In regressive health, mobility, and aging
- c) Premature death of your child

Who should be involved this conversation?

Independently give thought to the questions and then plan a time to converse with your spouse or significant other regarding your personal affairs. After this is done, have a corporate or joint meeting with siblings, children, and notable relatives and friends. Having a brief time of sharing information need not be an extremely emotional event but rather a casual conversation. A suggestion is having the first-time conversation in the middle of a holiday weekend (Thanksgiving) or family vacation or outing. This gives some time to get over the shock of doing a "new work" and provides communal time to process the appreciated importance of the conversation.

A beneficial recommendation is to complete multiple conversations at the same time. For example, if you are talking with an older parent about their wishes, ask

such questions as, “Do you wish to be buried or cremated?” Follow up with, “My wish is to be cremated. Bill, what is your wish?” Then, record it.

Having a conversation that includes older children and teenagers is not morbid. It is revealing and valuable should accidental death occur. You may be surprised how introspective they are regarding this and their own personal wishes for their bodies.

It is simple, but it is not easy.

Answering these questions will guide you in determining your course of action in communicating your wishes and desires.

***Have you communicated with these people?**

Do you wish your body (or others for whom you are POA) to be donated for medical research? If so, have you secured the proper documentation from the medical facility?

Upon your (or others) death:

- Do you wish to have your organs harvested for others in need of transplant?
- Will this disqualify your body from being given for medical research?

Do you desire to be buried?

- Have you purchased funeral plots (for self and others)?
- Do you have a policy to cover funeral costs? How will the funeral be paid for?
- Have you met with a funeral director and picked out a casket?

Do you wish to be cremated?

- Have you met with the funeral director?
- Have you set aside funds/policy to cover these costs?
- Have you a vessel (urn or box) you desire to hold the ashes?
- Do you wish to have your ashes scattered, joined with another, or buried?

Do you wish to have only a graveside service?

Do you wish to have a funeral/memorial service?

- Do you wish for it to be in a church, funeral home, or specific location?
- Do you desire the format to be a traditional litany or casual gathering?
- Do you wish for visitation for the family to be held the same day of or prior to the service?
- Do you wish for the body to be “viewed” for visitation?
- Do you wish for your casket/ashes to be present in the service?
- Do you have certain clergy* you would like to preside over the service?
- Are there individuals* you would desire to speak at the service?
- Are there individuals you would request NOT to speak?
- If you desire music, are there certain songs or hymns you desire to be incorporated in the service? Would you like certain individuals* to perform them?
- Do you wish to have the interment prior to or following the service?
- Do you wish for the interment to be a private/family event or open to all?

- In lieu of flowers, how would you like gifts to be made in your memory?

Preceding any type of service,

- Do you desire a fellowship event to take place?
- Do you wish the fellowship event to be corporate or just immediate family?
- Is there a specific place you would like for this to be held?
- Will this be coordinated through the church or family members?
- Will there be specific items you desire be served at this event?

If you have served in the military or as a first responder, is there a ceremony you wish to include? (Take steps to obtain those details.)

A few tips for achievement and success

Ask a couple of friends to do this task with you in the same season. This will create a momentum to complete this task.

Share this resource with other people on a regular basis. This will motivate you to keep your desires and wishes current.

The most constant feedback received is the great sense of relief people experience when they write down their final wishes, even if it is very thin in content.

People will cherish you for sharing your final wishes with them and guiding them to tangibly record and to communicate their final wishes.

Appendix

Body Donation: there are strict requirements for bodies to be accepted and not rejected. Be aware of these ahead of time.

Contact information for MCG, Emory, Mayo:

<http://cellbio.emory.edu/research/body-donor-program.html>

<https://www.augusta.edu/mcg/cba/bodydonation/>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/body-donation/making-donation>

The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) estimates the median cost of a funeral and burial at about \$9,250. *This price does not include the burial plot, headstone flowers, musicians, vocalists, or honorariums.*

The average cost of a funeral with cremation at about \$6,000. Cremation services can range from \$1,000 – \$3,000 on the low end of the spectrum but can cost as much as \$6,000 – \$8,000 depending on what options you select.

State and local laws differ regarding **the scattering of ashes**; therefore, you should consult the city and state regulations where the scattering will take place.

According to the 2018 NFDA Cremation & Burial Report, the 2018 cremation rate is projected to be 53% and is projected to reach 70% by 2030. As more consumers choose cremation, prices will continue to increase.

The average cost of a single burial plot in a private cemetery is \$2,000 to \$5,000, depending on where the cemetery is located, the cemetery's amenities, and whether the plot is in a more desirable section within the cemetery. The average cost of a *headstone* is \$1500-\$2000.

The average cost of a burial insurance policy is approximately \$50 per month, and the most common face amount purchased is \$10,000.

The median cost of a funeral (unofficial)

Cost	Item
\$2,400	Funeral home's basic service fee (non-declinable)
\$300	Transporting remains to funeral home
\$900	Embalming
\$250	Preparing the body (makeup and hair styling)
\$750	Facilities and staff to manage a viewing
\$900	Facilities and staff to manage a funeral ceremony
\$300	Hearse
\$150	Service Car
\$170	Basic memorial printed package
\$2500	Metal/Poplar casket
\$900	Opening/closing Grave
\$9520	Median cost of funeral with viewing and burial
\$1500	Vault
\$500	Vault setup of burial equipment (tent/chairs)
\$11,520	Cost with Vault
\$7-8%	Sales tax on material purchased items

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My Desires and Wishes

Name: _____ Date: _____

After having given some thought, here are “My Final Wishes” that I need to share with those who will make some important decisions on my behalf:

Non-wishes

And after having given thought to all that may be involved in making decisions, here are my concerns, non-wishes and desires I choose to communicate:

Once completed: A Most Important Step

Along with a printed copy to be kept with important documents in a folder at your home, inform certain important people of the whereabouts of this document or, better yet, place a copy in their possession. Send this document electronically to several people so at a moment's notice they may be able to retrieve it from their personal files. [If you are not a computer person, a friend or family member could easily create or scan this document for you.](#)

Name _____	email _____	Text
Name _____	email _____	
Name _____	email _____	
Name _____	email _____	