



I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:20-21

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PREFACE

On December 4, 2013, our tearful daughter Debbie loved on her Mom by sliding beside Kay in her hospital bed in our Colorado Springs living room. Debbie's older sister Sonia knelt on the floor on the other side of the bed, stroking her Mom's hair, tearfully telling her how much she loved her. Hours later, at 4:50 in the afternoon, Kay stopped breathing and entered the glorious presence of the Savior she so loved and whom she served so well.

Kay was born to missionary parents in Swaziland on the continent of Africa. At the age of three, and then again at sixteen, she experienced Rheumatic Fever. It's conceivable in her case, this affected her heart, causing Atrial Fibrillation, which resulted in blood clots reaching her brain. This led to a number of small strokes in her 60s. It was not clear what contributed to her dementia but by the age of 71, she was suffering from mental disorientation, which steadily progressed until her death eight years later.

Preparing for the end of a loved one's life can be traumatic, but it can also be healing and can develop deeper bonding with family and friends. So much is determined by our attitude of serving, compassion, and unity. My wife Kay described this as "self-giving love," which characterizes God who *is* love. I pray what is shared here will make your preparations more freeing and less burdensome.

Through the process of walking through this with my beloved Kay as her primary caregiver for some eight years, seeing her finish her mission on earth, and then thinking through how to best honor her life and her service to the Lord, people encouraged me to write something that would help others through the same process. I consider this a work in progress and welcome any suggested improvements. Obviously not everything here will apply to everyone. Pick and choose what is appropriate for your situation.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Psalm 23:4-6

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 15:4

TWO IMPORTANT EARLY LESSONS

Kay's dementia issues came to a head when we were living near Debbie's family in Spokane, Washington. While making the frequent rounds of doctors and undergoing tests, it became abundantly clear I could not care for Kay alone. One of the first major questions we had to ask was, "Where is our strongest support system?" We both agreed it was Colorado Springs, where we had family, friends, people in my organization, The Navigators, and church. With the help of friends, we moved back here.

Another early lesson I learned was to encourage engaged couples to take a close look at their medical history and share it with their prospective family doctor. This could prepare them for events to come as well as help them discover ways to either overcome or better manage difficult health issues.

PLANNING AHEAD

Thanks to some advice from mentors, we took some steps long before discovering Kay's illness.

1. When you are still in good health, arrange your important papers, documents, and wishes in one place like a file drawer or accessible computer files. This will help the surviving spouse or children know where to find them.
2. Decide together whether to be buried or cremated.
3. Have the executors of your will come to your house and see where you have stored your important papers or electronic files and discuss any important matters together.
4. Send any revisions of these files to the executors so they always have the most updated version.
5. If you have been the sole handler of all your finances, teach your spouse your system so they can take over this role if necessary. Unfortunately, far too many surviving spouses are left without a clue.
6. Make sure you have a will and an advance directive for medical or surgical treatment. You can get this from your hospital, doctor, lawyer, or Hospice.

*You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.
Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.
Isaiah 26:3-4*

JOURNALING

I am not the natural journaling type. I have to work at it. I am so grateful for the journaling I did do during Kay's illness and am sorry for what I didn't do. The quotations I have from Kay are priceless. During a period at rehabilitation after a bout with pneumonia, she would sit at a meal table with a lady who was quite helpless and never said a word. At one point Kay said, "I feel so sorry for that lady. I don't think anyone has told her that she is loved." Kay expressed this heart of compassion while she herself was in a state of dementia.

On another occasion when she was confused about our children, she asked, "Who is Debbie's Dad?" I replied "I am." Surprised, she responded, "Oh. How did that happen?"

Do write things down even if they are not very organized. I dated mine. The family will be ever grateful.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- **Plan through prayer** and rest in the fact that the Lord will guide the whole process and make up for things you overlook.
- **Trust God** to provide the needed resources of people and funds.
- **Plan ahead.** In the midst of immediate grief after a loved one dies, emotions are highly charged, making it hard to think objectively. Make as many decisions as you can ahead of time, and write them down.
- **Take your time** planning the memorial service, especially if people are going to fly in from distant places. Some have waited from two weeks to three months to hold the memorial service. For others, it works better to do it within a week or so.
- **The more details you plan ahead** of time, the smoother the event goes. Below you will find a list of many of these details. Give yourself the time you need. (Because each family will have its **own style and level of attention to detail**, add to or ignore this list as needed.)
- It makes a big difference when **immediate family members work together harmoniously** with compassion and tenderness toward each other. Remember that each one will grieve differently and at their own pace. There should be freedom for differing opinions, but not in a spirit of argument or insisting on one's own way. Ask the Lord for His peace to prevail among you.
- As you read these notes, decide which of **your children are mature enough** to be included in this process.

*He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.
Psalm 147:3*

APPROACHING THE END OF LIFE

We found ourselves so thankful for resources like Medicare, Medicaid, insurance policies, and friends who would say, "You take a couple days off. I'll take care of Kay." Another one did Kay's hair every Friday. One couple corrected my misinformation about hospice. I thought they only came on the scene at the very end of life. In fact, Kay's condition met Medicare qualifications for hospice care four months before her death. I interviewed two hospice organizations and chose one because the head nurse was so competent and caring. I cannot be thankful enough for their palliative care in our lives.

- If at all possible, allow the dying person to be at home rather than in a nursing home, which is often understaffed and therefore more inattentive than you desire. Hospice makes all the arrangements, such as bringing a hospital bed and oxygen to your home.
- If you are home alone when death occurs call 911.
- Often when the body is shutting down, the mind can be quite clear. Bible readings, singing hymns and spiritual songs, and sharing words about what your loved one means to you are a great source of comfort to the dying as well as those saying goodbye.

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Funerals serve the purpose of saying goodbye. Memorial services celebrate the person's life and legacy. Usually the funeral is held first. The funeral home you choose will help you with many of the following decisions.

- Decide between burial and cremation. If you choose burial, do you have a cemetery plot? Funeral homes help with this as well as choosing a casket. (While she was still lucid, Kay and I talked about whether we preferred burial or cremation. We chose cremation mainly because of cost, stewardship of the earth and less stress. This is clearly an individual choice, but it is helpful to have agreement in advance. One of our daughters would have preferred burial but graciously deferred to us.)
- If you don't have a plot yet, what funeral home do you want to use? Churches or experienced friends can help with recommendations.
- If possible, pay for these services as far ahead of time as possible as costs go up with time.
- People often have a funeral service at the cemetery for a limited number of relatives and invited close friends.

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Matthew 5:4*

- Plan what the content and tenor of the service will be like. Pastors and funeral homes are very helpful. Whom do you want to conduct the funeral service? It is customary to give a donation to that person.
- Request 7-10 original death certificates from the funeral home as copies are often not accepted. You will need these for making changes to legal documents, bank accounts.
- Make plans with the funeral home for a plaque or headstone for the burial plot.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

My daughters and I chose to have Kay's memorial service seven weeks after her death on December 4. We wanted to allow some space around Christmas and end-of-year activities. We also knew we would have several people from out of state, so we wanted to give them time and the potential of getting lower air fares. But our biggest reason for delaying was because Kay's life was so special to us that we wanted to do our best to honor her and glorify her Lord. Given our personalities, styles, and the way we dealt with grieving and new life situations, we needed plenty of time to prepare. We are so glad we did.

AIM OF THE SERVICE

- Decide your objectives for the service. We decided that ours were to honor Kay, glorify God, and portray the Savior as irresistible.
- Decide how to bring out the themes of the person's life in the service.

VENUE/RESERVATIONS

- Although most services are held in churches, be creative in choosing a location that will uniquely honor your loved one. I went to a friend's memorial service in a building at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. The service and reception were held in the same room with people seated at roundtables exquisitely decorated because the one being remembered was very artistic and given to hospitality.
- Coordinate with your church or other venue on the best day and time for the memorial service. Ask if they charge for the use of the facility.
- It is much simpler to have the reception at the same place as the service.
- Consult your pastor or hospice chaplain. They can save you time and money and keep you from making mistakes.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

COMMUNICATION

- Who will be involved in the planning? Decide on when to meet together to share ideas and finalize plans.
- Decide on who in your planning group will take which responsibility. Create a timeline of who will do what by when. Keep each other informed of items completed.
- Discuss all the details of the service and use of facilities—including any media needs you'll have—with a church representative. Do this as much ahead of time as possible. Write up your notes and give them a copy.
- Who will compile the invitation list and send it out? Ask for RSVPs if that will help you plan the service and reception. It helps to have an email distribution list made up ahead of time to make communication quicker and easier.
- Consider including in the invitation "In lieu of flowers send donations to ..." (whatever charities or ministries you choose).
- In the invitation, include hotel suggestions or other arrangements for out-of-town people.
- For better coordination, plan the event with all those taking part in the program as well as those hosting the event like the church staff or other location of the reception.
- Will you send a notification to the local newspaper? They can help you word it.
- Assuming you will have some music, who will contact the musicians?
- Who will be responsible for the printed program to hand out at the service?
- An hour or two ahead of the service, check with the audio/video people to ensure all the sound, microphones, lighting, videos, power points, recordings, etc., are ready to go.
- Select someone to handle the ordering, receiving and placing of flowers for the service.

DISPLAY TABLE

There is much people won't know about the life of the one being celebrated. A couple who loved Kay dearly and often cared for her set up our display table in the foyer of the church. It included pictures, school yearbooks, her Bibles in which she had copious notes, research papers for a book she was writing, poems she wrote and African artifacts

What is special about the life of the one you are celebrating? Did he or she write any books, produce any CDs, DVDs, paintings, inventions, or receive any awards? These are good items for the display table.

- Who will be in charge of putting up the display table and taking it down and return the items back to the family?

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will
find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.
Matthew 11:28-30*

CONTENT OF THE SERVICE

Since she was very musical, I had asked Kay what hymns or songs she wanted at her memorial service. Sonia, Debbie, and I had two conference calls after I sent them a draft proposal. We made the changes we desired and experienced beautiful bonding and harmony as we worked together. We included content that would give people a taste of Kay's background in Africa, the way she raised her daughters, the way her life affected people of different nationalities, and how God used her to bless people even in her state of dementia.

Possible features of the memorial service

- Singing – have lyrics in PowerPoint as it saves on printing
- Special music
- Tributes
- Poems
- Photos—either framed prints or a revolving slide show before and after the service. Get pictures into digital form if you are going to do a slide show. Coordinate timing with the media people.
- Speakers
- Will you have the casket present or have burial before the memorial service?
- Who will be the Master of Ceremonies: a pastor, family member, or family friend?
- Will you use any videos? (We used "I Will Rise.")
- Encourage those who will be speaking to keep to the limits of their time, without being too rigid, as this is the only public opportunity you have to honor the departed.
- The timing can go anywhere from 60 to 90 minutes. I have been to a 2 ½ hour service that did not feel too long.
- Have a tissue box and some water at the podium in case it is needed.

If it would be helpful to view Kay's memorial service for ideas, use the following link:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y83wnNTc_NU&feature=youtu.be

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.
John 14:27*

PRINTED PROGRAM

How will they be printed, and how many copies will you need?

Possible things to include:

- Photo
- Poem
- Life history
- Events of the service with names and titles (daughter, nephew, etc.)
- Hymns or songs to be sung. Lyrics can be projected on a screen by the media people, saving space in the printed program.
- Be sure at least three people proofread the program before printing it.

RECEPTION

My home group from church decided to put on the reception so I would not need to think about it. They asked how many people to expect. I said maximum 200. Then 320 showed up! Still, there was food left over. Better to overestimate.

- Who will be in charge of the reception after the memorial service?
- Who will decide what food or snacks and drinks will be served?
- Who will pay for it? Agree on an approximate budget amount with family planners.
- What will the seating arrangements be—head table, round tables, no tables?
- Will you have any program at the reception or will it be free flowing?
- Consider having an open mic for people to share what the departed meant to them. Have the Master of Ceremonies stand next to them so they don't go on and on.
- Are there any family traditions or ethnic customs you want to include?

MEDIA

These people at our church made all the difference in conducting our service smoothly, beautifully, and with dignity. Taking the time to go over the order of service, the need for equipment, where microphones would be placed, how the service would begin and end, was worth taking the time and effort.

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

- Lighting. Sometimes churches have bright lighting on the speaker, making it hard for that person to see the audience. Test the lighting ahead of time.
- Sound. Test the microphones (lapel, cheek, hand held, or stand up). Make sure musicians have enough mics. Be adaptable if you can't get all the equipment you desire.
- Encourage people who speak to hold the mic close to their mouths.
- Coordinate any PowerPoint presentations with the media people.
- Will you have a videographer and/or photographer? Who will communicate with them? The video our son-in-law made has been a great inspiration for our friends who could not come to the memorial service.
- Decide what will be a distraction in the service and don't allow for it.

PROGRAM, GUEST BOOK & CARDS

- Arrange for people to hand out the programs as they welcome them.
- Who will obtain the guest book?
- Decide on location of guest book and plan for someone to host it.
- Ask the person hosting the guest book to also have a basket to receive sympathy cards.
- Have the same person collect the cards and give them to the family.

USHERING AND SEATING

- Who will do the ushering, especially to seat those who arrive late?
- Make arrangements for where select people will sit: immediate family, extended family, special guests, and those taking part in the service. Make sure these people know where to find their seats.
- Where will you place tissue boxes?

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

1 John 3:2

POSSIBLE BUDGET ITEMS

If you have not set money aside for your loved one's end of life, it can become another stress factor. Trust the God of all comfort, the God of peace, and the God who promised to supply all our needs, and watch Him provide. Expenses will include:

- Cemetery plot
- Plaque or headstone
- Casket or cremation, including urn
- Copies of death certificate
- Printing memorial service programs
- Rental of church or other facility for memorial service and reception
- Honorariums for pastor, musicians, media people
- Flowers for the front of the church and reception
- Guest book
- Reception (food, drinks, cups, plates, plastic ware)
- Covering air fare for special guests who can't afford the tickets.

Check your insurance policies to see about any funds that become available after the death of a family member. Your financial counselor will be very helpful at a time like this.

AFTER IT'S ALL OVER, IT'S NOT OVER

When the guests have all gone home and everyone else returns to life as usual, you can be left with feelings of loss, emptiness, loneliness, anger, numbness, bewilderment, or mental overload. I recommend the ministry of Grief Share, a 13-week series described as "a friendly, caring group of people who will walk alongside you through one of life's most difficult experiences. You don't have to go through the grieving process alone."

www.griefshare.org

Stephen Ministries has a series of four helpful booklets called *Journeying through Grief*.

www.stephenministries.org

I had no idea how comforting more than 260 sympathy cards we received would be, not to mention countless emails. It made me go out and buy three boxes of cards for other people.

A more thorough organizer I have come across is called:

Because I Love you: Christian Legal Organizer

www.LegacyOrganizer.com

May the God of all comfort become more real to you as you experience Him undergirding you throughout this process. He will also use you to encourage, comfort and strengthen others.