

Heaven

Lesson #8: Preparing For Our Trip to Heaven

Although it is the sincere hope of most Christians that we will be raptured and meet the “Lord in the air” (1 Thes. 4:13-18), we do need to prepare for death and our “trip to heaven.”

This step by step planning guide is meant to assist both in the practical preparation for the funeral and internment and to help focus the living on how they want to be remembered. This pre-planning can have a dramatic impact on how we live our lives between now and when “we go home.”

STEP 1 Recognize that unless the Lord returns and we are raptured, we will all die someday.

Heb. 9:27 *“And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment,”*

Ecc. 3:2 *“A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest.”*

STEP 2 Think through why you want there to be a service of some kind. It is a time to pay last respects. It is a time to celebrate the life of a loved one. It is a time to grieve with others. Specifically, why do you want to have a service?

STEP 3 Write down your wishes

Who should get a copy of your plan? _____

A. Choose the type of memorial service you would like.

Viewing. This is an opportunity for family and friends to view or sit with your body. A viewing is commonly held at a funeral home or mortuary, but you are free to choose another place – for example, your home, a community hall or a church.

Wake. Traditionally, a wake is a gathering to celebrate and remember the life of the person who has died. Often characterized by both sadness and gaiety, this gathering can be an important part of the grieving process, allowing family and friends the opportunity to come together and comfort each other. A wake is often held at a family home or mortuary that offers wake services.

Funeral. A funeral is a traditional memorial ceremony, usually held in a funeral home or church. The body is often present, in either an open or closed casket. Beyond that, there are no absolutes or requirements for planning a funeral.

Memorial ceremony. A memorial ceremony is a less formal ceremony held to remember the life of someone who has died. It often takes place some time after the burial or cremation, so the body is not usually present. Memorial ceremonies may be held anywhere – for example, a mortuary, religious building, home, outdoors, or even a favorite restaurant.

(Thanks to www.nolo.com/legal)

B. Who do you want to attend?

What are the names of the pallbearers? _____

C. Where would you like the service?

Funeral Home:

Church:

Auditorium:

Other:

D. Who would you like to speak?

Pastor or Officiant:

Speakers:

Singers:

E. What kind of music would you like?

Background (as people come in):

During the service:

After the service:

Specific songs:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

F. Open casket or closed casket? _____

G. Would you like there to be flowers sent or memorial contribution?

Where would you like those gifts to go?

H. Would you like any pictures of yourself to be shown?

Would you like a PowerPoint shown?

I. Any specific wishes regarding the clothing you would like to be buried in? Jewelry? Glasses?

J. Would you like there to be food or drink available? If so, what would you like?

STEP 4 Consider the disposition of your body. Make some decisions....

Burial

Cemetery plot

Mausoleum

What cemetery?

Special instructions (i.e. near a family plot, etc.)

Cremation

To be buried, where? _____

Ashes to be distributed:

By: _____

Location: _____


Timing: _____

A word about what the Bible has to say about burials and cremation.

- I. Some thoughts regarding burial and cremation
 - a. The Bible is clear about the mortality of the body (Gen. 3:19)
 - b. Burial (of any kind) seems to be a low priority for Christ (Luke 9:59-60)
 - c. A body burned or buried is not the body that will ultimately be with the Lord (1 Cor. 15:35, 37, 42-44)
 - d. Some might argue that fire symbolizes good to Jews and Christians (Ex. 24:19 and Isa. 30:27-28). Others argue that fire is most often associated with warning and judgment (Lev. 10:1-2).
 - e. There are a few examples in the scriptures of a dead body being cremated.
 1. 1 Sam. 31:12-13 A respectful treatment of Saul's mutilated body
 2. Amos 2:1-3 Moab's action is considered sinful
 3. Lev. 20:14, 21:9 Cremation is representing severe judgment, however it is never commanded, encouraged or for that matter blatantly condoned in the scripture.
- II. The case for cremation
 - a. It is cheaper
 - b. It provided a more definitive "end": "for those prone to ponder the lasting appearance, the process of cremation offers a quick purifying process."
 - c. Paul seems to allow for the choice (1 Cor. 13:3)
- III. The case for burial
 - a. It follows the example of Christ (Matt. 27:57-61, John 19:38-42)
 - b. Burial is an essential element to the good news of the gospel (death, burial, resurrection) (1 Cor. 15:4-26)
 - c. Old Testament early Christian practices support burial (Gen. 49:29-33, Acts 5:6, 10, 8:1-2)
- IV. Bottom Line: The scripture does not define the mode of disposal.

STEP 5 What do you want said or written?

A. Tombstone



B. Obituary

- a. This may be a good time to make some obituary notes for your survivors. Consider writing down:
 - 1. Your date and place of birth
 - 2. Place of residence
 - 3. Family information, including the names of your spouse, children, grandchildren, parents and siblings
 - 4. Memberships in organizations, churches, etc.
 - 5. Hobbies, interests, passions, achievements, disappointments
- b. You may also want to select a photograph to include or describe the newspapers or magazines where you would like your obituary published.

- c. Write out what you would like to be remembered for. Start with three words that might sum up your life.

Select Bible passages that are meaningful to you.

STEP 6 Update your will and advanced health directory.

Identify the executor of your estate: _____

Identify the guardian(s) for your children: _____

STEP 7 Write / record messages for your loved ones.

Letters for: _____

Audio/visual recording for: _____

STEP 8 Consider the costs:

_____	Funeral home expenses (the service, casket, cremation, business services, etc.)
_____	Internment (plot, tombstone, mausoleum)
_____	The service (clergy, music, pictures, food and drink)
_____	Other
_____	Total

- Consider prepaying for the expenses
- Indicate if there is a specific insurance policy in place to cover these expenses
- Identify funds for these expenses

STEP 9 Make sure all your important documents are carefully stored in a safe place.

My documents are stored: _____

Access codes/passwords: _____

STEP 10 Plan a life, not a funeral

Write out your "Bucket List."

BUCKET LIST:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Write out your major prayer list:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Some additional resources:

Get It Together: Organize Your Records So Your Family Doesn't Have To by Melanie Culler

www.planningafuneral.com

www.funeralwise.com

www.funeralplan.com