

Funeral Service

By Rev. David J. Bauer
(*Pastoral Instruction*)

Try to arrive at the chapel the night before the funeral. The funeral director will prepare a card with the basic information on it of date of birth, death, near relatives, military record, etc. Check in with him first. Come to the chapel early on the day of the wake so you can meet and talk with the family before it gets crowded. Ask about hobbies, religious affiliation, occupation, military service, membership in clubs, relationships to friends or family, or anything which may be a help in preparing a biographical sketch. Talk to the next of kin, or especially ask the funeral director's office who is paying for the funeral. You will want to talk especially to this one. Ask if the family would want you to pray with them there at the chapel. Read Scripture briefly and pray for comfort. Be brief, unless you know the family or the deceased personally.

The Funeral

Be sure to arrive at the chapel or church early (about ½ hour). Check with the director and the family. If there is a musician, you will want to touch base with him/her.

Introduction:

Start with general information – person's name, date of birth and the day they entered into the eternal presence of the Lord.

Spouse and children listed along with married children's spouses, number of grandkids, etc. Give your biographical sketch of the deceased. If anyone in the family has some words to speak (preferably if they have planned ahead), allow them the floor at this time.

End this section with a prayer of comfort you basically have prepared ahead of time.

Musical Solo (optional)

Scripture Reading:

A selection you have prepared ahead of time, read clearly and slowly. End this section with "The Lord's Prayer" prayed by all present (optional).

Musical Solo (optional)

Sermon:

Give a gospel message. You should prepare a selection of biblical messages for various types of people, in various walks of life. Harder ones are children and suicides. The message should be 15-20 minutes long usually. Longer messages are for church people and church funerals. Close with a prayer, including elements of salvation: "...*Comfort us as we sorrow, and cause our sorrow to be not as others who have no hope. Forgive us of our sins, and we lean upon Jesus our Savior, we trust in Him and His death for us alone. Give us eternal life according to Your promise because we believe our Savior lives. Amen.*"

Visit casket briefly directly after prayer. Shake hands briefly (greet) close relatives in front row. Step to the right (or left?) allowing funeral director to direct the people past the casket. Shake

hands with them after they file past the casket. Optional: you could give each person a gospel tract as they file past you.

Stay with the casket after all family members are ushered out. Take a seat in the front or second row. Allow funeral director and helpers to finish their business of shutting the casket. When they are ready to move the casket get up and precede the casket as it is wheeled down the hall toward the door. As pallbearers walk casket out, stand at attention at the back of the hearse, until casket is firmly locked into its place.

Go to your car, which should be placed somewhere near the front of the line of cars in the procession.

Grave Side or Chapel Service:

After all cars have arrived at the cemetery, get out and stand at attention at the back of the hearse until all pallbearers have received instructions and lifted the casket. Precede the casket and bearers up to the graveside, where you stand at attention until the funeral director gives you a sign to proceed. Graveside or chapel service should be short (3-5 minutes).

“Friends, we sorrow today, but not as others who have no hope. For we are assured that there will one day be a resurrection of the dead and a reunion of God’s people. That is why we come here today, and plant the body of our dear beloved here in God’s acre, just as one would plant a seed in the ground. In fact our Savoir used this very same analogy in John 12... and He said in another place: “I am the resurrection and the life...”

“Saint Paul talks about the resurrection in this Scripture reading”: (read from 1 Cor. 15:50-58 or 1 Thess. 4:16-18)

“Inasmuch then as God in His sovereign wisdom has called the soul of NAME OF DECEASED to Himself, we now commit his/her body to the earth from which it came. Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust.”

“Let us pray”: (Prayer for comfort and hope) followed by committal prayer: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all to the end and in the end, Amen.”

Greet family members and pass out gospel literature. Go to dinner with them if you have time. If opportunity presents itself (with their permission), call on them 1-2 weeks later.

Funeral and Comfort Resources

Allen, R. Earl Funeral Source Book, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 1964

Bayly, Joseph The Last Thing We Talk About, Cook Publishing Company, Elgin, IL, 1973

Blackwood, Andrew Watterson The Funeral, Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1942

Filkins, Kenn Comfort Those Who Mourn, College Press, Joplin, MO 1992

Filkins, Kenn A Comforting Word, College Press, Joplin, MO 1994

Ford, W. Herschel Simple Sermons for Funeral Services, Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1962

Morrow, Ord L. Poems for Sunshine and Shadow, Back to the Bible, Lincoln, Nebraska 1983

Wiersby, Warren W. and David W. Comforting the Bereaved, Moody Press, Chicago 1985



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