My Healthcare Directive in Essay Form or as a Letter to My Circle of Care

Found in I’ll Have It God’s Way

Dear Darling Ones, August 2021

There is no better time than now—with me in my 69th year—to make clear to all of you how I want to spend the last few years, months, weeks and days of my life on this earth. Many of you will receive a copy of this letter and not just family but friends, neighbors, clinicians and pastors will receive this as well. This way about 100 of you will have this important message from me. It might surprise you to receive this now as you know I’m not sick and nearly never sick but we all know what it says in Psalm 90:10.

When I am no longer able to do any of the things that are important to me such as breathe on my own, know that I am hungry, chew and swallow food, toilet myself, carry on a conversation, recognize people I know, read, etc., (unless I am healing from what is considered to be a short-term issue where full recovery is anticipated), I direct that hospital-based medical care be withheld or withdrawn and that I be permitted to die naturally with only the administration of pain medications and other symptom-control medications to keep me comfortable.

Let nature take its course is my theme.

If the time comes that I can no longer speak for myself and I am in any of the conditions I describe above my proxies will execute the following:

Ask my physician to order Hospice. If I have some sort of calamity in public, I realize that 911 could be called, CPR will get done to me if needed to keep me alive and I will get taken to an ER. Hopefully, very quickly after that, my healthcare proxies, Falyn Curtis or Dr. Pat Gary, will be contacted and they will implement this plan. If I have a calamity at home, do not call 911. No healthcare provider, including EMTs, is allowed to touch me without consultation with Ms. Curtis or Dr. Gary. Dr. Gary said she would not let me die on the floor, so I guess someone is allowed to pick me up off the floor and put me on a bed or sofa.

I forbid and choose to forego CPR, surgery, chemotherapy, dialysis, tests, ventilation,

feeding tubes (no tube down my nose and no percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy

tube), blood transfusions, antibiotics or IV hydration. I do not choose to die in a

hospital or any other institution. The exception would be a Hospice in-patient facility

due to the need for its pain and symptom management capabilities.

I authorize the withholding of artificially provided food, intravenous fluids, and

other nourishments. If I cannot give directions regarding my medical care I intend for

my family and physicians to honor this declaration as the final expression of my right

to refuse medical care, food and water and I accept the consequences of that refusal.

No family member—my husband, my siblings, my nieces and nephews—may

override this directive and no family member is in charge of my death and dying. I am in charge per these directives even if I have lost my mind (cognitive functioning), or

my ability to communicate. My advocates agree they will follow this directive.

A few more details to be very clear . . .

If I cannot feed myself, swallow, enjoy food, prepare simple meals, toilet myself,

walk to my mailbox, (in healthcare-speak, these are called the activities of daily living

or ADL) recognize my family and friends, carry on a lively conversation, read, write emails, and search the Internet, I want no more doctor’s offices, no more hospitals, I will

stop taking any medication (except to mitigate unpleasant symptoms such as pain,

nausea, shortness of breath or agitation) and will not call 911. This means: DNH, do not

hospitalize. It means keep me comfortable and let nature take its course.

This means, I may stop eating and drinking and do not want to be forced to eat or

take water. I want hospice care with Falyn Curtis and/or Dr. Gary (who both have my

durable power of attorney for healthcare) making sure that everyone sticks to this plan.

This means I should die within 7–10 days if I am a textbook case, however, experience

teaches and experts say that it could take longer. It could take much longer as no one

of us is in control. Don’t worry about this because hospice clinicians will be on the

scene and you will not be alone. They have seen it all and will be a comfort to you.

If, in the dying process, I say I am changing my mind about all of this: Do not listen,

and stick to this written plan. If I cannot speak for myself or if my mind—cognitive

functioning—is gone, I forbid anyone to alter this directive and I repeat, do not force

me to take in food or water. I have learned from palliative care nurses that feeding

some people is painful to them so don’t imagine that feeding me is loving me.

Feeding me is not loving me.

Not feeding me is not you killing me.

Not feeding me is letting nature takes its course.

Not feeding me is putting me fully, wholly and kindly into the hands of my God.

Please recall the words of Jesus, “He who eats me shall live by me, and shall

live forever” (John 6:51). This dying process is not physical, it is not medical, it is

transcendent; and comfort only comes from God bringing me to himself. Read page

199 of Dallas Willard’s book *The Divine Conspiracy*, and you will understand better

what I am saying.

I am ready to go back to God. I am ready to go home. You can hang up a sign that

says, “SHE’S GOING HOME.” Then when I die, you can flip over the sign and it should

read, “SHE’S GONE HOME.” I am not afraid and I don’t want you to be afraid for me or for yourselves.

Please realize that these instructions will be followed not based upon treatments

starting or stopping; these instructions will be followed based upon how I choose to

live out my last days. These instructions apply if I have dementia. This is a complicated problem and I want you to know that I do not want to be given any medical treatments or food or water when I reach the point I have described at the top of this page. Only provide palliative care with the help of hospice professionals. Again, if I get an infection or pneumonia, I want no antibiotics. Antibiotics will keep me from enjoying what has been called, “the old man’s friend.”

If Bruce is still living and he doesn’t want me to die in our bed or in our house, I

understand that and I suppose a hospice service has a bed for me somewhere.

I do hope you’ll come and visit if you like but never feel that you have to and don’t

come because you feel guilty. Only come if you want to see how it is all working and

if you have something to read to me or tell me.

Please play music . . . hymns, praise and worship songs, opera arias (no Wagner

and only the big famous songs, never the whole opera), all the famous symphonic

works (no Mendelssohn and no Mozart, as they bore me and I love the Russians). Play

Bach any time you don’t know what else to play. Or, play any Yo-Yo Ma recording. No

TV. Play Casting Crowns, Selah, David Phelps, Larnelle Harris, Wintley Phipps. At least once a day, play my favorite song, “Give Me Jesus” performed by Fernando Ortega or Jason Crabb or Vince Gill or Danny Gokey.

Have some fun! You can read the Psalms out loud but not the laments or the ones

about being chased by enemies.

Thank you, sweet ones. I am singing in my head, “Swing Down Chariot, Come and

Let Me Ride” and “Angel Band.” You’ll find these songs in my stack of CDs if you want

to sing along.

My latest sun is sinking fast, my race is nearly run

My strongest trials now are past, my triumph is begun

I know I’m nearing holy ranks of friends and kindred dear

I brush the dew of Jordan’s banks, the crossing must be near

I’ve almost gained my heav’nly home, my spirit loudly sings

The holy ones behold they come; I hear the noise of wings

O come, angel band come and around me stand

O bear me away on your snowy wings to my immortal home

O bear me away on your snowy wings to my immortal home

With joy I have you in my heart,

Hattie

Ephesians 1:16