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# Hope and Guidance

by Jonathan Lange

Until recently, advance directives or living wills were rare. But now we are compelled to consider them with every visit to the doctor. These documents convey our wishes to caregivers when we no longer can. They can either designate durable power of attorney for someone to make our treatment decisions or they specify treatment options, like “Do Not Resuscitate” (DNR), whether or not to enter hospice treatment and the like.

Does faith in a gracious God who creates, redeems and sanctifies human life make our approach to these things different from the world’s? Yes, as different as heaven and earth.

We believe that every day we breathe is God’s gift. The Small Catechism reminds us: “I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses and still takes care of them.”

The unbelieving world is afraid that medical miracles might keep their bodies alive long after their souls have become useless. But Christians have no such fear. We know that the miracle of life is for body and soul together. When you are in God’s hands, there is never any danger that He might keep our bodies alive longer He Himself

wants to. And we are always in God’s hands. “Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” (ROM. 14:8). We need not fear either living too long or dying too soon. The real danger is not what might happen to our bodies, but what is happening to our souls.

Jesus’ human life began with His conception and continued right on through His burial. So also our own. At His crucifixion, He remained true man, not a vegetable. He was loved and served to the very end. Then, in faith until His dying breath, He commended His soul into God’s hands.

Advance directives can and should help the people whom God has given you to love and serve you. For this reason, you may wish to grant a durable power of attorney in order to ensure that they remain able to serve you. Guided by the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, they can see to it that God’s will is done.

We pray, “Thy will be done” while we have full use of our faculties. This remains our only wish especially when our capacity to confess it is gone. LW

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**When it comes to advance directives:**

1. Don’t be pressured. No one is required to have a living will. U.S. law prohibits healthcare providers from discriminating against those who do not.  
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2. Study *A Small Catechism on Human Life* by the Rev. John Pless. This is an excellent scriptural resource.  
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3. Confess your fears to your pastor and Christian family. They can help you quiet them by encouragement from the Word of God.

