

# Where families can go for answers

Why have a funeral?

What makes a funeral meaningful?

What is the role of the funeral home?



# Your guide to planning a meaningful funeral experience

The thought of planning a funeral can be overwhelming. Dozens of decisions have to be made when a death occurs, and because of the infrequency of our involvement, most people are simply not aware of what they need to do, the significance of each decision or the many options available to them.

This brochure is designed to help families understand the funeral planning process and choices available to them. Developed by Batesville, in conjunction with Dr. Alan Wolfelt, this brochure provides the information and insights that will help you create a meaningful funeral experience that honors the unique life of your loved one and starts you on the path to healing. It is our privilege to have him share his knowledge with you.



Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

*The funeral service is a statement by the family that says, “Someone precious to us has died. We are grieving and invite you to join us in remembering this special life and supporting each other.”*

~ Dr. Alan Wolfelt

## Helping you answer three important questions

### Why have a funeral?

A funeral acknowledges death and gives friends and relatives an opportunity to express the love and respect they feel for someone who was important to them.

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### What makes a funeral meaningful?

A meaningful funeral expresses and celebrates the unique story of a person’s life, creating a memorable and moving experience for all who attend.

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### What is the role of the funeral home?

The funeral home supports families before, during and after the service, making sure the family and the deceased are treated with the utmost care and respect.

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# Why have a funeral?

For thousands of years, funerals have been a means of expressing our beliefs, thoughts and feelings about death. When we experience the death of a loved one, the funeral fills several important needs. First, it provides for the dignified and respectful care of the deceased and a special tribute to their life. It encourages us to share memories and activates support during this naturally difficult time.

Equally important, the funeral service helps survivors face the reality of death. This is the first big step in taking grief from the inside and allowing us to express it outwardly through mourning. The funeral provides a safe place to affirm the worth of our relationship with the person who died and express our feelings of loss. Often, just seeing how much others care can be a tremendous help to a family in adjusting to their loss.

## Why do I need to plan a funeral for my loved one?

The remembering, reflecting and choices that take place in the planning and carrying out of the funeral service are often an important part of the process of grief and mourning. And ultimately, this process of contemplation and discovery creates a memorable and moving funeral experience for all who attend.



## THE FUNERAL CEREMONY:

- Helps us acknowledge that someone we love has died
- Allows us to say goodbye
- Provides a support system for us, friends, family members and our community
- Allows us to reflect on the meaning of life and death
- Offers continuity and hope for the living



## What makes a funeral meaningful?

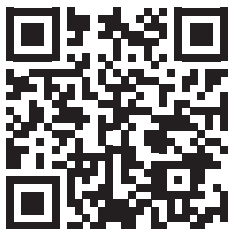
Funerals are most meaningful when they're personalized. As you're planning, think about the qualities that made the person special and what he or she meant to others. Consider passions, hobbies, pastimes, likes, dislikes. Work together with your family, friends, funeral director and the person who'll lead the service to find ways to capture this unique life in the visitation, funeral, memorial service or graveside committal.



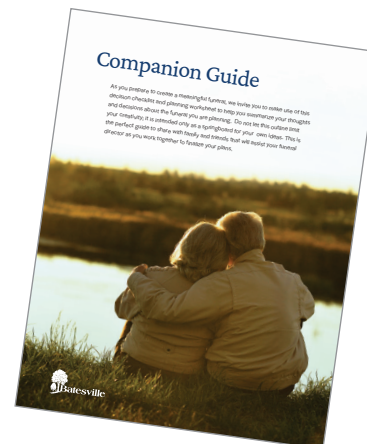
## Elements of a meaningful funeral

Meaningful funerals are made up of different parts that, when combined, create an incredibly meaningful experience for you, your family and friends. Even among different faiths and cultures, funeral ceremonies throughout North America often include many of the same elements. Your faith or culture may have its own variations and you should follow them as you see fit. No matter what kind of funeral ceremony you're planning, it helps to understand what makes a meaningful funeral. Visit **[Batesville.com/For-Families](https://www.batesville.com/For-Families)** for more resources and information.

## Companion guide



Scan the QR code to download our Companion Guide, a decision checklist and planning worksheet to help you summarize your thoughts about the funeral service. This planning guide can be printed and shared with family, friends and your funeral director as you finalize your plans.



By understanding ‘why’ we do what we do, you can get the most from your funeral experience.

The funeral is an important ritual that's been around since the beginning of human history. Like weddings, christenings, graduations, and other significant events, our traditions and attitudes are shaped by our family, our personal and spiritual beliefs and our own experiences. However, unlike these happier occasions, we don't talk about death, so there's a mystery surrounding the funeral. You simply don't know what you don't know.

***Batesville.com/For-Families*** is a great resource to learn more about the ‘whys’ of funerals from one of the leading grief experts, Dr. Alan Wolfelt. Dr. Wolfelt presents workshops around the world to grieving families, funeral home staffs and other caregivers.

*“Meaningful funerals are rites of passage that help us move from life before a death to life after a death. They help families and friends support one another, embrace their feelings and embark on the journey to healing.”*

~ Dr. Alan Wolfelt



- Music

One of the purposes of music is to help us access our feelings, both happy and sad.

- Readings

Readings are a way to convey the unique life and philosophies of the person who died.

- Visitation/Reception

Receiving friends through a visitation activates your support system and allows others to express their love and concern for you.

- Eulogy/Remembrance

Often the eulogy is the most remembered and meaningful element of a funeral ceremony.

- Symbols

When words are inadequate, the presence of symbols like flowers, food and candles help us express our thoughts and feelings.

- Procession

The procession is a symbol of mutual support and public honoring of the death.

- Committal Service or Scattering

Accompanying a body to its final resting place and saying a few last words brings a necessary feeling of finality to the funeral process.

- Gathering

This informal time allows family and friends to share memories, to laugh, cry and show support for one another.

- Memories

Through memories, those who have died continue to live on in us.

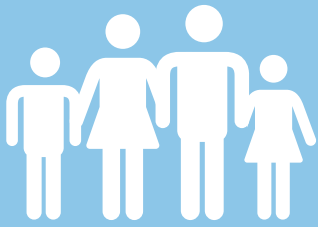
# What is the role of the funeral home?



A funeral home and its staff play a critical role in planning and carrying out a meaningful funeral or memorial service. Their professional advice, caring compassion, attention to detail and willingness to personalize the ceremony greatly influence the funeral experience.

Funeral professionals have the knowledge and experience to help you understand the different burial and cremation options available, to explain the value of different offerings and to help create highly personalized, meaningful tributes. Behind the scenes, the funeral home adds value in numerous ways before and after the service – arranging for removal of the body, obtaining required legal documents, preparing a loved one for viewing, planning the service, arranging for final disposition, providing facilities for the visitation and funeral service, and transporting the deceased and mourners to the final resting place. They’ve been trained to help guide families through the grief process and can do so in an environment that is conducive to healing.

*In the US & Canada, about 3.2 million\* people die each year, or a little less than 1% of the population. Most are honored with some sort of ceremony that is arranged with the help of a funeral professional.*



Most funerals are followed by a gathering of friends and family.

This is an informal time of release after the more formal elements of the funeral service, where people can share memories about their experiences with the person who died, laugh and cry together and offer support to one another. The gathering is also a transition, a rite of passage back to the living again. It demonstrates the continuity of life, even in the face of death.



## Funeral Procession

The purpose of a funeral procession is to slow down traffic to allow the community at large to demonstrate mutual support and public honoring of the death. As mourners accompany one another to the final resting place of the person who died, often even strangers take pause and are respectful because they know someone in your family has died.

# Funeral misconceptions

There are a number of misconceived thoughts that negatively influence people’s opinions about funerals. Here are a few that should be considered when planning a funeral.

**Funerals make us too sad.**

When someone we love dies, we need to be sad. Funerals provide a safe place for us to embrace our pain.

**Funerals are inconvenient.**

Taking time to acknowledge your love and respect for a family member or friend who passed and your support for survivors is not an inconvenience, but a privilege.

**Funerals are just for burials.**

Visitation services and funerals are conducted in conjunction with burials and cremation.

**Funerals are only for religious people.**

Many funerals include spiritual elements, but secular services are also appropriate and healing.

**Funerals are meaningless.**

They needn’t be. With forethought and planning, funerals can and should be personalized rituals reflecting the uniqueness of the person who died.

Just as grief has many dimensions and is experienced in various ways, funerals are also unique. There’s no such thing as a ‘standard’ funeral. A funeral should match the spirit, personality and beliefs of the person who died and the family and friends left behind. Religious or non-religious, there are no rigid rules that have to be followed, but your funeral director can provide suggestions if you’re unsure how to proceed.



***Batesville.com/For-Families*** was created through a collaboration between Batesville and Dr. Alan Wolfelt to provide the information and insights necessary to help families create meaningful funeral experiences that both honor the lives of their loved ones and start them on the path to healing from their losses. Central to accomplishing these goals is to understand the important role a funeral home plays in this process and how to work with your chosen funeral professional to create a funeral that honors the wishes and attends to the needs of your family during this most difficult time.



The website is a starting place, designed to provide you with accurate and timely information to plan and carry out a funeral that is meaningful to you and your family, friends and relatives.



For over one hundred years, Batesville has been dedicated to *helping families honor the lives of those they love*®. Families who choose Batesville burial and cremation products can be sure they're getting the highest quality products from the leader in funeral service. Batesville products are available only through licensed funeral homes in North America.

***[www.batesville.com](http://www.batesville.com)***



Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., is an international author and educator on the topic of grief. Dr. Wolfelt teaches training courses for bereavement caregivers at the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado, where he serves as Director. He is on the faculty of the University of Colorado Medical School's Department of Family Medicine.

***[www.centerforloss.com](http://www.centerforloss.com)***