

# **grief\_meaningful\_10603**

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## **What makes a funeral meaningful?**

**By Ken Camp**

*Texas Baptist Communications*

DALLAS—A meaningful funeral helps bereaved family and friends begin healing, according to Doug Manning, former Baptist pastor and author of several widely distributed books about grief.

But what makes a funeral meaningful? Manning offered several observations.



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♦ It provides a safe place to grieve. “People need permission to grieve. A funeral is the last place on earth where it's OK to grieve publicly. And too often, we try to hide it, to sanitize it, to get through it without anybody crying,” he said.

♦ It underscores the reality of the loss. “I believe it is best for the family to view the body, whether anybody else does or not,” he said. “It's not real until you see it. That which we leave to the imagination comes back to haunt us.”

♦ It establishes significance, both of the life that has ended and of the loss to those who survive. Funerals provide the bereaved a chance to “inventory their loss,” Manning explained. By talking about the deceased

and hearing others talk about that person's contributions, family and friends can establish the significance of the loss and begin to “move on.”

- ◆ It offers bereaved survivors a specific time and place to recall where a deceased family member or friend was honored. It provides “roots” and “connection” to the one whose life has ended, he said. “There needs to be a place where the loved one is remembered.”

- ◆ It provides a place where the ministry of presence is practiced. Bereaved people need companionship, Manning emphasized. “It's not what we say. It's where we are. Folks just need somebody to be there with them.”

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