

**Life and Death Decisions**  
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*March 2007*

This is not a political column. The Foundation does not endorse political candidates. But I gotta tell you, I really admire Elizabeth Edwards.

She and her presidential candidate husband announced this week that her breast cancer, first diagnosed at the end of the 2004 presidential campaign and thought to be in remission, had returned as stage four cancer and had spread to other parts of her body. The cancer is inoperable and incurable (there is no stage five), and will be managed by treatment. "Managed." Now there's an interesting word. What does it mean to "manage" a devastating illness? The word seems totally inadequate, sterile and clinical. But I can suggest nothing better.

No one wants to hear news like that. Both my sister Ann and sister-in-law Mary are breast cancer survivors, and their courage and relentless love of life and family have been an inspiration to many people. I know how hard it is for families to cope with this particular illness. And I know the joy of hearing your loved one is cancer-free. We all can only ache for the Edwards family and many others who hear similar news from their doctors.

I admire Elizabeth Edwards because she, like Ann and Mary, has decided to press on, to live the life to which God has called her, to pour herself and her energy into something she thinks is important. And she's doing it with others, not just her family but with countless well-wishers from all sides of the political spectrum. You've got to admire that.

None of us knows *when* we're going to die, but all of us know that we *are* going to die. That self-awareness, that knowledge of our finite lifespan on this earth, is part of what makes us human and what separates us from the rest of God's creation.

In the face of dying, Elizabeth Edwards has chosen to live fully. We have the same choice. In the face of his own death, Jesus chose to have dinner with his friends, and share something that would always be remembered, every time we come to the communion table, a sacramental legacy.

What legacy can we leave to our children, grandchildren, friends, our church? Facing the reality of our own deaths, each of us can leave a legacy. One of many ways to do that is to remember your church in your will or estate plan. In addition to your regular giving to support your church's mission and ministry, please prayerfully consider a bequest from your will that will help your church reach future generations.

I once heard my good friend Brice Harris, a retired pastor from the Florida Conference, ask, "Do you want your church to die when you do?" If your answer is "no," then do something about it. Keep on living, and giving, in the face of death, and life beyond death.

There's no better legacy.

As the stewardship voice of the Florida Conference, the Foundation is ready to help you, your family and your church with anything related to comprehensive Christian stewardship. For more information please call, click or write us at 1-866-363-9673 toll-free; [www.fumf.org](http://www.fumf.org); or PO Box 3549, Lakeland, FL 33802.