Houses, Cars and…Funerals?

By: Evette Massey

Dark splotches litter the red, gold, yellow, brown and orange leaves that are scattered all along the wooded ground. Marylyn Beemish is thinking about him again as she takes her daily stroll through the woods behind her house. Excruciating pain radiates from her ankle as she decides to sit and take a break; she’s only been off the crutches for a few days now. More dark splotches land on the leaves below her and on her sunshine bright jacket as water leaks from her eyes again. She yearns for him like a homesick child yearns for her mom. Her heart feels like it’s been cut out of her with the Jaws of Life. Now if only those same Jaws of Life could of cut her husband from the wreckage that claimed his life. Marylyn stands back up; she’s tired of resting. With her head hung, she drags herself back down the wooded path to a once happy place.

Marylyn faced the funeral director, alone, just three days ago. There were so many numbers thrown around that she doesn’t even remember what price she’s paying just to see her husband one last time. But she doesn’t even care anymore; it’s the least she can do for her husband who gave her the world.

Today, many Americans fall into the same trap Marylyn fell into. They are lured into believing a funeral is the last thing they can do and they want to do the very best, so they spend money like it’s going out of style (Cobbey, Some protections in place, 2 of 3). The funeral industry charges an obscene amount of money for one last viewing of your loved one.

Caskets are the most expensive cost in funeral services today. People are paying at least twice as much as they need to. They ought to be paying no more than $2,200 (Cobbey, Why the steep price, 2 of 4). According to the Roman Catholic priest, most of the cost of funerals is the casket, which he says is frequently marked up 300 to 500 percent. He publishes a list of caskets with wholesale prices and color pictures to give customers some type of bargaining power (Cobbey, Why the steep price, 2 of 4).

The Rev. Henry Wasielewski of Phoenix, founder of the Interfaith Funeral Information Committee, is convinced that U.S. mortuaries charge high prices “because there are five to 10 times too many of them.” According to Wasielewski, the 23,000 U.S. mortuaries arrange 100 funerals per year (Cobbey, Why the steep price, 2 of 4). In most industries, that kind of competition would usually keep prices low or even force some owners out of business. But that’s not the case in the funeral industry. Funeral directors inflate prices to cover costs because they know grieving families won’t be comparison shopping (Cobbey, Why the steep price, 2 of 4). There are family traditions of going to your local funeral director and not asking any questions, and that is a huge problem because people are getting screwed out of gobs of money.
But, if you look at this situation from the funeral industry’s perspective, they may see their prices as far beyond justifiable. They may need to charge high prices to help employ their staff, to pay their taxes and quite to possibly pay other fees that are associated. But then again, how much is the most they should charge for their services?

According to Nan Cobbey, “a fair price for a funeral is between $1,400 and $2,200. You should hold services in your church instead of using the funeral parlor. Don’t buy protective seal caskets, and don’t buy a pre-paid plan” (*Some protections in place, 3 of 3*). In England, a funeral costs $1,650 and in France, it costs roughly $2,200 (Cobbey, *Why the steep price*, 1 of 4). The cost of a funeral is so ridiculously priced; it is the third-largest expenditure in the life of an ordinary American family, which is after a house and car, of course (Cobbey, *Final acts*, 2 of 3).

It again goes back to families not asking questions about why they are being charged for certain things. They just assume the cost of a funeral naturally has to be expensive, when in reality it doesn’t. There are many organizations out there that want to help families spend the least amount possible on a funeral and it still be a nice ceremony. More than 120 funeral and memorial societies exist the country, who offer information and referrals to the most responsible and lowest-cost mortuaries in their region (Cobbey, *Some protections in place*, 2 of 3). People’s Memorial Association in Seattle, provides standard funeral services at low costs (Cobbey, *Final acts*, 2 of 3).

After her husband’s service, Marylyn realized that what she thought was the last thing she could do for her husband, wasn’t at all the last thing she could do for him. She didn’t need to spend that fortune she just paid to show her husband the love she has and always will have for him. She realized that the last thing she can do for him is to commit him to the Father of all, God.
Works Cited

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