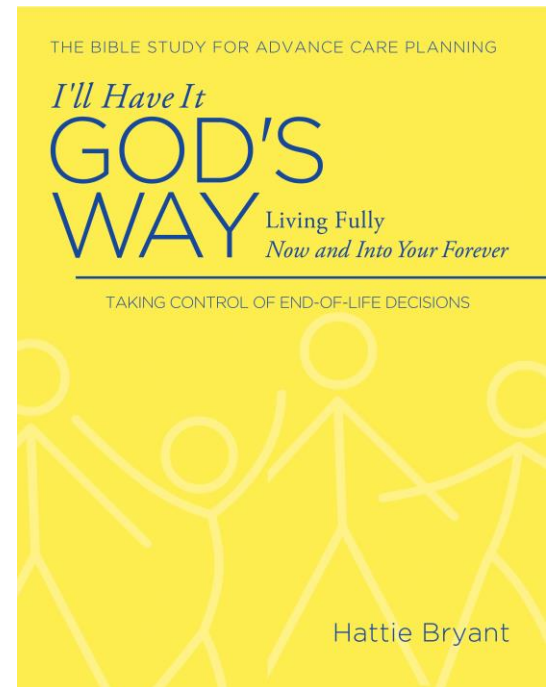


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I'LL HAVE IT GOD'S WAY

LIVING FULLY NOW AND INTO YOUR FOREVER

HATTIE BRYANT



Living fully all the way to heaven might be harder than you think.

Our complex modern healthcare system, fear of death, and lack of planning push us into a default end-of-life approach, instead of one that fits our values and desires. As a result, while 70–80% of people say they want to die peacefully and pain-free at home, surrounded by friends and family, fewer than 30% end up doing so. Christians are included in these statistics. It has become clear that modern medicine cannot give us all we need to live with meaning until the moment God calls us home.

This study equips you with the biblical truth, healthcare facts, and practical steps you need to act on now, while you're still healthy, to prepare you to live fully all the way to heaven. In *I'll Have It God's Way*, you'll be guided gently through the necessary steps to take you from a vague idea of what you want to an applicable plan to make it happen.

By the time you complete the study, you will have decided on a medical proxy, created an advance care directive, and even created a video to give to those in your circle of care. Your family, friends, clergy, and physicians will have the information they need to understand and honor your wishes in your final days. You'll have put all the tools in place to make your intentions a reality, one manageable step at a time.

I'll Have It God's Way is designed for small groups to work through together, but it is equally helpful for individuals who wish to go through it themselves or with their families. Videos and discussion questions guide learning and discussion in six sessions, while additional reading and homework assignments provide more opportunities to internalize and personalize each step between sessions. Helpful worksheets, URLs for the online videos, and a template for an advance care directive are included.

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About the Author

HATTIE BRYANT



Hattie Bryant has been talking for a living since 1979. When she turned 60 in 2010, she thought back to her mother's difficult death and decided she needed to figure out how to get herself a peaceful one. This research sent her to the USC Graduate School of Gerontology and into the confidence of America's healthcare professionals and thought leaders. In 2015, she released *I'll Have It My Way: Taking Control of End-of-Life Decisions*, which led to a lecture that airs on public television stations. Now, she has combined her research about end-of-life care with her lifelong faith to create a resource that will help Christians "live fully now and into their forever."

Hattie made a career of educating adults long before *I'll Have It My Way*. She has trained business owners and employees through the development of educational materials, lectures in classrooms and conventions, and the long-running, made-for-PBS show *Small Business School*, which she created with her husband, Bruce Camber. She holds a bachelor's in journalism from Oklahoma Baptist University.

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What Others Are Saying About
I'll Have it God's Way

I'll Have It God's Way—Living Fully Now and Into Your Forever is a much-needed book. It is also a brave book, one that I will be recommending to many. Hattie Bryant writes with compassion and insight about the importance of facing the truth that we are not God and we will all die. While we don't like to think about death, it is good stewardship on our part to make advanced directives for our own comfort and peace of mind. Planning also is a kindness to our loved ones.

How empowering it is to know that we can be armed with knowledge of the process and make wise decisions for our medical choices, making sure there will be someone to see that our wishes are carried out. This book is written for Christians and is designed to be used as a group and includes video as well. What an excellent resource for all of us. Thank you, Hattie, for writing this wise yet down-to-earth and biblical guide to inspire us to “live fully, all the way to Heaven!”

— **Nancie Carmichael, author of *The Unexpected Power of Home* plus many other books**

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Suggested Interview Questions

For Hattie Bryant, author of

I'll Have it God's Way

Living Fully Now and Into Your Forever

Q: Why did end-of-life healthcare and decision-making become such a passion for you?

A: When I turned 60 in 2010 I realized that I had spent more of my life than I had left. This got me to thinking deeply about my mom's death that had happened in 1990. As I went over and over in my mind the details of her illness and death it was clear to me that she barely escaped a horrible death.

This caused me to ask myself:

Who will do for me what I did for my mom?

Why didn't anyone see her living will?

Why didn't my dad advocate for her which was his job as he was her stated proxy?

Why do doctors do what they do?

What's the difference between medical well-being and total well-being?

The first thing I did was attend a seminar on end-of-life offered by a local hospital. There I met Dr. Jack McNulty, the sponsor of the event. When he realized how serious I was about getting the answers to my questions, he opened the door for me to meet and interview some of America's leading thought leaders on this topic.

The more I learned the more I realized a sweet, peaceful death will not come out of the natural flow of our lives in our 21st century America. This is what made me passionate, or angry, or upset, or whatever you want to label my energy about this. I realized that I am not the only person who needs the insight I was gaining and this propelled me to write the book and to talk about it to anyone who will listen.

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The timing was right for me, too. I was working on re-inventing myself after completing work I had been doing for nearly two decades.

Q: Many people first came to know you through your PBS Special, "I'll Have It My Way with Hattie Bryant"- how did that come about?

A: My husband and I created the made-for-PBS-station series, *Small Business School*. We raised the money for and produced 300 30-minute episodes that aired on most PBS stations from 1994 until around 2007. We spent a lot of time in and around PBS content creators and also understand that the PBS audience skews to the audience who would want to know what is in my book, *I'll Have It My Way*. We funded the production and gave it away to stations. It is aired or not aired on a station-by-station basis and it will be around for use until the Summer of 2019.

This presentation is worked into the videos that those in the Bible study will view. I am very happy to see this content extend beyond television and to make all of the video content free from one page on the *I'll Have It God's Way* website.

Q: *I'll Have It God's Way* is based on your first book on this topic, *I'll Have It My Way*. Why a Bible study for Christians?

Because I am one and my fellow Christians are acting like they don't believe the book they say they believe in. Writing to my own cohort was my interest in the first place but it was physicians and nurses who helped me with my first book who convinced me to write *I'll Have It My Way* as a faith-neutral guide.

It baffles me that Christians don't deal with serious illness and frailty any differently that do non-Christians. It's as if we forget about God when we get sick. We say we pray and ask for guidance but our behavior is just like that of non-Christians. We opt in for the medicalization of every aspect of our lives.

The root problem is denial and denial is just another word for fear. It makes sense to me that people who have lived their lives ignoring God are afraid to die. While

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some fear of the unknown is normal, the Bible is clear that we, God's precious children, are not to fear death.

I say that a spiritually mature person is the only person who will get a sweet, peaceful passing in our post-Christian wealthy culture. It is spiritual maturity that gives us the wisdom and the ability to discern what is presented to us.

I also find that the elderly, or the older old, are much more willing to "let go and let God" than the people around them are willing to let them.

Not only do we have to be spiritually mature to live joyfully with serious illness and frailty, we have to be strong enough to overcome the loud voices that might say, "Keep my momma alive!"

For example, a man I know well through friends was ready to let go of aggressive treatment for brain cancer. However, his wife refused to let him have what he was asking for and these are in-church-every-week Christians. He could have had a sweet, gentle leaving. Instead for two years he endured everything modern medicine had to offer and he ended up during those two years never being able to go home as his wife couldn't take care of him there. She put him in a facility and went to visit him on the days when he wasn't undergoing some treatment.

This is an example of a family caregiver who is sicker than the husband with brain cancer. We also know that many family caregivers die before the person they are caring for dies.

Staying in denial does extraordinary emotional damage to everyone who loves us. It turns you, the sick or frail one, into the center of attention and that is the opposite of what the data say which is we do not want to be a burden. Denial drains energy from family caregivers, drains saving accounts and can even take a family into bankruptcy.

Q: *I'll Have It God's Way*, is a "how-to" instructional for a topic people don't want to discuss...

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A: Right. Since 1979 I have made a living talking and now I am talking about the topic nobody wants to talk about. The general population, including seniors and the seriously ill, don't want to talk about death, doctors don't want to talk about it and shockingly, the clergy ignores the topic also. This means that most Americans are not getting the kind of death they say they want.

Churches are perfectly positioned to take the lead on this huge American problem. Too bad there's not more interest! One mega church has a pastor to seniors who is a retired physician. He told me that he has tried to introduce this topic but has faced so much resistance that he has given up.

We all need an advance care plan if we hope to get from modern medicine what we want rather than what it wants to give us. What is the book we all turn to for how to live out our call? The Bible! This study takes the learner step-by-step through a process that results in a no-fail plan for dying well. And I always say, you're not really ready to live fully until you're ready to die.

While most churches are focusing on living well, too many of us are not dying well. For decades I have sat in church, attended Sunday School and small group studies. I am not aware of any teaching materials that present a systematic way to think about how we as Christians can work with modern medicine to be the best that we can be while we are seriously ill, frail and dying.

Managing our healthcare in the age of modern medicine for our good and God's glory should be our goal and this is nearly impossible since death in America is not allowed. It means failure in this culture. Laypeople—even the very old and very sick—won't talk about it, doctors won't talk about it and chaplains avoid it. Nurses and social workers come the closest to being honest about death but in our healthcare system the doctors call the shots and stymie other clinicians.

This all means that we cannot depend upon others to lead, we have to take the lead. To take the lead we have to learn how and that's what the study is about.

Q: Is there such a thing as a good death?

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A: Yes. Death can be a worship experience for those of us who are willing to let go of our false sense of being in charge! Just as walking with the Lord in life requires us to let go and let God have his way, same thing for the dying process.

The default death today happens in the ICU. Being hooked up to machines means there's something other than our creator God being worshiped.

Q: You don't see end-of-life decision-making as a sad or depressing topic, do you?

A: Not at all. I have always been interested in learning about the best way to get things done. Guess I've been a "how-to" junkie all of my life. Since this started as a personal journey for myself I was simply doing what I've always done on a subject that was a mystery to me. After five years of research all the mystery was gone. It's not depressing to learn, it's invigorating!

People are afraid to die. I am teaching that if we simply get ready for it, we can forget about it happening as when it does approach, we'll get what we want rather than what others want for us. I believe that once we're ready to die we really ready to live! A little preparation is a huge insurance policy against what everyone fears and that is a long, slow decline being dependent on others.

I am trying to convince people to see that once they do a little thinking, writing and talking to family, friends, physicians, clergy and neighbors, they can go have fun with the rest of their lives.

Q: Who needs this book?

A: Due to the Patient Self-Determination Act that was passed into law in 1990, everyone over 18 needs this book. I won't hedge on that at all. This is because the law makes each of us personally responsible for our care. Doctors cannot do anything to any person over 18 years of age without getting what is called "informed consent" from the patient. Parents have to give consent for children under 18.

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First, I am personally interested in the adults in America today who have elderly parents as they can use the book to clarify what it is their parents want. These are the people who used to be called the Sandwich Generation as they were taking care of their children and their parents.

Second, anyone in or nearing the Medicare age needs the book for themselves to communicate to their children how they want the last few years, months, weeks and days of their lives to unfold.

The aging population will tell you that their greatest fear is to be a burden on others. By using filling in the blanks and answering the questions in the study, anyone can mitigate the potential of being a burden to the people who mean the most to them. You create the best gift you could ever give them.

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