



Give Thanks. Give Life.

Religious Resources

This section contains sample sermons, biblical passages, hymns, and inspirational poems. Their purpose is to assist faith leaders in preparation for donor events and memorial ceremonies.

SERMON OUTLINE (PROTESTANT)

John 3:16

- I. The theme throughout the Bible is God giving of His life.
- II. The principle theme of the New Testament is Jesus giving of His life so we can live.
 - A. Jesus gave His life.
 1. No greater love demonstrated than this.
 2. No greater reward than giving so others can live.
 - B. Jesus gave His body that we may be whole.
 - C. Jesus gave His blood so we need not struggle for our own cleansing.

Luke 10:25-37

- III. It is understood that we love ourselves enough to know we are worthy to give of ourselves.
 - A. The command is to love one another as ourselves.
 - B. We would certainly want others to give of their material possessions, talents, and time to improve our life.
 - C. We should do unto others as we would have them do unto us.
- IV. Many are uncomfortable about what others think if we were to give to those in need.
 - A. But the Samaritan who had every cultural reason in the world not to help, did help.
 - B. Could we not/should we not be available to give to those in need of lifesaving procedures and gifts such as organs, tissues, and blood?

- C. We do feel uncomfortable about giving, but reality points out we shouldn't be.
 - 1. Many people throughout history have cremated their bodies, as they saw no more need for the body.
 - 2. We need to remember, as the Moravians did, that death is the great equalizer.
 - a. We may be rich or poor materially, but at death we are all equal because we don't take it with us.
 - b. We should give that which will only be left behind to decay.
- D. We should always be reminded that we go to God with only a rich or poor soul.

In Acts 3:1-10, Peter comes across a man crippled since birth sitting at the gate called Beautiful. Peter wasn't bothered by the man's plea for alms. Instead, Peter associated with this man (supposedly unclean because of impairment). Peter didn't have gold or silver, but instead he gave the man something more precious—a new life through new legs. This nearly cost Peter his life (Acts 5), but Peter courageously gave the man the power to be whole so he could walk through the gate called Beautiful.

The gift of giving life is an eternal heritage left behind by the donor. Jesus, Peter, and many others are known for their life-giving gifts. Today places such as Lynchburg General Hospital, Lynchburg, Va., have planted a tree in remembrance of their organ donors.

We all have the opportunity to help our suffering neighbors live improved lives.. We may not even know our "neighbor's" name, but it is apparent that the giving of ourselves to help someone else certainly pleases Christ and God. It doesn't matter if we are rich or poor materially, we can all give our organs, tissues, and blood so that others can go through the gate called Beautiful.

Adapted from "Giving for Life: Organ and Tissue Donation" memorial service
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SERMON IDEAS

Clergy have their own unique way of sermon preparation and delivery. With that understanding and appreciation, the following suggestions are given as ideas. The following Scripture references are available as starting points and ideas.

*John 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life."
I Corinthians 15:35-58: The spiritual body*

These verses could be used to teach about the resurrection, emphasizing that in the resurrection the physical body is transformed into a spiritual body. Therefore, the gift of organs and tissues does not affect the ability of one to be resurrected.

Luke 6:31-38: Give to others and God will give to you

This verse could be explored as to the command to give to others and various ways that we can give, including the giving of our bodies.

Romans 8:28-29: Seeking the good

This verse could be used to show how, in the midst of tragic circumstances of sudden death, God is seeking with us to find good. Donation may be one sign of good in an otherwise senseless death.

John 3:16-17: God gave His Son

God gave His son to us so that we might live in eternal life. Can we not give of our organs and tissues when we no longer have need of them so that others may live in this temporary world?

Luke 14:12-14: Giving without reward

In this verse we are told to give to those who are in need without thought of reward from them. The need for organ and tissue donation is great.

Genesis 2:26-31: Responsible power

In the moment of our creation we were given power over all things. Responsible use of this power would include using our own bodies to give life.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES SUPPORTING DONATION

Organ and tissue donation is not specifically mentioned in the Bible. However, the timeless content of the scriptures speaks to donation in principle. The following Scriptures can guide our thinking and actions on organ donation:

Genesis 2:20-30	The first transplant: a rib taken from Adam to create Eve.
Ezekiel 37	The Valley of Dry Bones, "These bones shall live."
Matthew 5:7	Blessed are the merciful.
Matthew 7:7	Ask ... seek ... knock.
Matthew 7:12	"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them."
Matthew 10:8	"Heal the sick, ... freely ye have received, freely give."
Leviticus 1:7	"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."
Mark 9:47	We can enter heaven without having every part of our bodies present.
Luke 6:37-38	Give and it shall be given unto you.
John 3:16-17	God so loved the world that he gave ...
John 10:10	Give life that others may live more abundantly.
John 15:12-13	Greater love has no man ...
I John 4:11	"If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."
Revelation 21:4-5	In eternity we will not need our earthly bodies: "Former things will pass away, all things will be made new."

Suggested Hymns

The following list of hymns is a start in your efforts to locate appropriate hymns from your own religious tradition that bring the message of hope and giving that organ and tissue donation and transplantation provide.

- "I'll Praise My Maker While I've Breath"
- "Amazing Grace"
- "Bless Me Now"
- "Come, Sinners, To the Gospel Feast"
- "Jesus, Lover of My Soul"
- "Have Thine Own Way, Lord"

Prayer

Here is a sample prayer that clergy members may like to incorporate in a service on the donor recognition program. It can also be included as a written prayer in a weekly bulletin.

O God,

We thank Thee for the gift of life. May we always cherish this gift and protect it in the cradle of responsibility.

May we understand that our bodies are the houses of Thy infinite spirit.

The mortal house is a temporary abode, but within is the brilliant light of eternity.

Every chamber is a repository of vitality. Each is a place of life. Together, they form a temple of God.

Amen.

Benediction

Here is a sample benediction a clergy member may like to include at the end of a donor recognition program.

As we go from this House of Worship, may we take with us the words and the spirit that our faith offers us.

Here, we learn of and sing praises for the gift of life. We declare that while we live, our bodily form is the vessel that receives God's light. May we be worthy bearers of that light in bodies which are strong and healthy.

From our eyes, may the light shine brightly so that in the darkness we may see the needs of others.

Through our ears, may we hear beyond the noise of self-interest to the calls for help from those in need.

May our hearts beat with compassion and our arms be strong in reaching out to lift up those who stumble.

And after life has gone from us, may we still remain the messengers of Thy light. May the sparks housed within us, because of our offering of love, become the flame of life for others.

Amen.

INSPIRATIONAL WRITINGS

To Remember Me

The day will come when my body will lie upon a white sheet neatly tucked under four corners of a mattress located in a hospital busily occupied with the living and the dying. At a certain moment a doctor will determine that my brain has ceased to function and that, for all intents and purposes, my life has stopped.

When that happens, do not attempt to instill artificial life into my body by the use of a machine. And don't call this my deathbed. Let it be called the Bed of Life, and let my body be taken from it to help others lead fuller lives.

Give my sight to the man who has never seen a sunrise, a baby's face or love in the eyes of a woman.

Give my heart to a person whose own heart has caused nothing but endless days of pain.

Give my blood to the teenager who was pulled from the wreckage of his car, so that he might live to see his grandchildren play.

Give my kidneys to one who depends on a machine to exist from week to week.

Take my bones, every muscle, every fiber and nerve in my body and find a way to make a crippled child walk.

Explore every corner of my brain. Take my cells, if necessary, and let them grow so that, someday, a speechless body will shout at the crack of a bat and a deaf girl will hear the sound of rain against her window.

Burn what is left of me and scatter the ashes to the winds to help the flowers grow.

If you must bury something, let it be my faults, my weaknesses and all prejudice against my fellow man.

Give my sins to the devil.

Give my soul to God.

If, by chance, you wish to remember me, do it with a kind deed or word to someone who needs you.

If you do all I have asked, I will live forever.

Robert N. Test

Bequest

So white.
Now I lay me down upon a sheet so white.

No more.
My brain can hear your voice no more.

But wait.
These eyes,
This heart,
This kidney,
These bones, skin, blood, nerve
Still can serve.
As Christ gave His body and His blood for me,
Now let me give this gift to thee.
Take these eyes and let them see.
Let this skin feel again and be.
Accept this organ to make her whole,
This blood to speed him on his way,
Then Blessed Lord, receive my soul.

Herbert Nelson