

When the Best Seat is the Worst Seat

Guest post by Jeff Caudill, Executive Pastor at [Cofer's Chapel](#).

Best seat available. When purchasing seats to the theater, a sporting event, etc. we often are given the option to choose the best seat available. We want to be up close. We want to have the best view of the movie. We want to see the actors and hear the dialogue. We hope to get close to the action. (None of these apply to being at church, but that is a subject for another time.)

However, no one wants the front seat at a funeral. If you are in the front seat at a funeral, it typically means you are closest relationally to the person who has died. I recently sat in that seat. My dad fell down the stairs at home. He never recovered from his injuries. On July 6, 2018 he made his transition from this life to the next and is now in the presence of Jesus.

Sitting in that seat you have the best view of the deceased in the casket. You can see and hear the soloist best. From that seat, you can see the emotion of the speaker very clearly. Everyone who attends the funeral shares condolences with those seated in the front seat.

My mom sat in that seat throughout the visitation and funeral for my Dad. I sat next to her along with my siblings for the funeral. While sitting there and in the days since I have made some observations:

1. You are never really prepared to sit in that seat.

It is still like a nightmare hoping to wake up from. I was not

ready for my Dad to go. His eternity in heaven was/is secure. He left us a tremendous heritage. We will live in those truths from now on. But, I was not ready for him to go. A few months prior to his accident he had sent me information about his life insurance, pension, etc. I barely looked at it. I barely looked at it, that is, until the day he passed. I guess my point is life is precious and fragile. We know this but sitting in that seat reminded me of this very fact. This is a reminder to us all. Keep eternity in view and enjoy the life and family God has given you here and now.

2. People seated in the front seat at a funeral can handle more than they may think.

I would never have guessed we would have had to endure what we did following my Dad's accident. We had long days and nights in the hospital. We had to discuss things and make decisions no family should have to discuss or decide. We had to do things while caring for Dad once he came home, under hospice care, I would not wish anyone would have to do for a family member. The physical and emotional stress of it all was deeply draining. We were only able to handle it with God's help. He helped us do things and have conversations we would not have been able to do on our own. As a believer, when you sit in that seat, He sits there with you.

3. Those seated in the front seat at a funeral can grow closer to each other.

This was true for us. Some families fight and have major issues during times of loss. Our family did none of those things. We worked together as we made our way through difficult decisions, funeral planning, going through Dad's things, etc. I know our Christian faith played a major role in us getting along and coming together in the most difficult of times. Family is so important. Love your family now and allow

God to bring you even closer through difficult times. Don't allow your own selfishness or bitterness to make an already difficult situation worse.

4. Your family, friends, and church are such a tremendous support and help to those who sit in that front seat.

The prayers along with the tangible gifts of money, gift cards, and food were invaluable. God sustained us through the prayers of His people. I witnessed this to be true! He also used family and friends to meet our needs during those difficult days. I was and am still amazed at everything people did and provided for us. Allow God to use you to help hurting people. Be proactive. You might be amazed at what \$20 or a Kroger gift card will do to help someone in a difficult time during the death of a loved one.

5. The ones seated in that front seat hear many kind words about the one who passed.

So many people came by to tell us what a great man Dad was. People talked about how he impacted their lives. They mentioned his godly life, his teaching of the Word, the heritage he left behind, his love for God, His church, the Word, and his support of the pastor. We were so proud to hear all those things. We knew them all to be true. He, however, did not always feel his life made an impact. Like anything, we can take this too far, but I think it is important to also let people know they are making an impact while they are alive. Go ahead and provide genuine compliments when they are deserved. Let people know how much they have impacted your life. Even to those who may struggle to receive compliments, give them anyway. Everyone needs to know their lives and ministries matter. Sure, we should not do what we do for the "applause of men." However, knowing you made a difference is such an encouragement.

I want the best available seat at an event. I love sitting close to the action. However, I hope it is a long time before I have to sit in the front seat at a funeral again. Sooner or later it happens to us all. We need God's help in those extreme times. He was there for our family. He wants to be there for yours as well.