

Caring for those in Crisis: Facing Ethical Dilemma with Patients and Families

by Kenneth P. Mottram. Bazo Press, Grand Rapids, Mich. 2007. Pb. 190 pp.

Life and death decisions are faced by families daily in our hospitals and medical centres. Physicians often give family members a variety of personal preferences and concerns that can overwhelm those just seeking to cope with and understand a sudden accident or illness. You can't make decisions for them, but you can help them think through the maze of choices, all of which may seem too hard to face. And in such a time, the church must be there for them as they wait for the outcome of a critical medical intervention in the life of a loved one!

For most patients, who are wheeled into the hospital emergency room, the setting is usually intimidating, and frightening. Unprepared and distraught they are faced with a physician they have never seen, who is an expert, so they think, in matters of life and death. In their time of crisis, they hear unfamiliar terminology and, at times, conflicting opinions. To have spiritual support nearby as an advocate, is a gift from God in these circumstances. And in our age of biotechnology combined with a secular ethical vacuum, some of the most common dilemmas that will be encountered by Christian leaders surround the issue of withholding or withdrawing life support. It is so important, therefore, that church leaders educate themselves in basic medical ethics and hospital spiritual support.

Dr. Mottram's book is a must read for hospital chaplains, pastors, seminarians, elders and deacons. The author is a healthcare chaplain, and a Baptist minister with over twenty-five years of ministry experience as a congregational pastor and hospital chaplain. Writing from a Reformed/Evangelical perspective, he offers Biblical, informed counsel illustrated by case studies for the use of the chaplain or pastor in the complicated area of medical ethics. He prepares his readers to deal with a health crisis, when and if it comes, in ways that give dignity to their Christian faith perspective and the considerations of life and death under the aspects of eternity.

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