

Defining Beliefs

Exercise 1:

These statements were adapted from the CaringBridge website where people respond to the life-threatening illness of a friend. These statements are from Christians responding to Christians.

Objective: To assist you in articulating what you believe about how God is involved in your life and the lives of others.

Mark “yes” to the statements that you would use in responding to another person *in their time* of uncertainty such as a life-threatening illness. Mark “no” to the statements that you would *not find helpful* if said to you in *your time* of uncertainty. There are no incorrect answers.

Yes No

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. God gives you strength daily. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 16. God will have some answering to do (in not answering our prayers). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Where is God to allow this to happen? | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 17. I wanted to tell you my mom’s story in the hope your “cancer story” may be like hers! |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 3. We pray that the blood counts will get back to normal. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 18. I am grateful that God is giving you peace. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4. We pray you can rest in the knowledge of God’s love. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 19. During those times of fear and anxiety, I am confident the Spirit will meet you in those places. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Let God be in control. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 20. May you feel God’s love washing over you, bringing you healing and hope. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 6. I lift you up to God for healing and hope. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 21. I am also crying—so very, very sad—devastated. I can’t imagine how this is for you. I just want to make it all better for you and I can’t. Collect my hug and know you are loved. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Just remember, God is faithful all the time. He loves you more than any of us can. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 22. I will light a candle for you today, holding you in the light of God’s healing love. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 8. God supplies what we need when we need it. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 23. We praise God for skilled physicians, for caregivers who know just what we need, for medicine that makes bodies better, and for the power to survive. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Keeping you in our thoughts and prayers. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 24. At adoration this evening, I will hold you in the light. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Jesus is watching over you and will carry you. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Of course, we are praying for your complete healing! | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 12. I feel God is answering our prayers!!! | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 13. I hope you can feel my love and daily prayers. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 14. We know who is in control. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 15. I’m sure there will be some tough times ahead, but God will be with you every step. | |

After you have completed the preceding exercise, I suggest you schedule a time to sit down with your family or church group, using the answers as a basis for discussion. Why did you respond the way you did? How do you experience God’s involvement in the details of your daily life? In these discussions, remember that *there are no incorrect answers*. Recognize the vulnerability of each person and hear their comments respectfully and without criticism.

How is God involved in my daily life?

Exercise 2:

Objective: To help you articulate what you believe about how God relates to you.

The table below asks for a response about how God is involved in the everyday affairs of your life.

In the quiet of your own space or in discussion with others, consider the following three questions. Again, there are no incorrect answers. Respect for one another will allow openness and honesty that builds trust among the participants.

- Does God exist?
- Does God care about me?
- Can and will God intervene for me, even against the laws of nature?

What I believe about how God is involved in my life					
Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
God has a plan for my life and I need to work to fulfill that plan.					
God is in control and I will die only when it is the time for me to die.					
I look to science to provide the ability to heal. I do not pray for miracles.					
God has the power to heal when I turn to God in faith.					
Using the gifts I was born with, it is up to me to make the most of the good and the bad that come my way.					
Nothing in my experience suggests there is a God.					
Why some people survive and others don't in a similar situation is a mystery (not knowable by humans).					
If I am not healed when I pray for healing, it is because I lack faith.					
Because of Jesus, we know that God is with us as we suffer and will bring us to new life before and after death.					
I need to look for the good that may come out of suffering for me and for others.					
God's love is with me through every circumstance, even when I fail.					

Is there life after this life?

Exercise 3:

Objective: To help you verbalize your beliefs about life after death—the afterlife.

Indicating your agreement or disagreement with the statements below will help you define what you believe about the existence (or not) of an afterlife.

What I believe about death and the afterlife					
Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I believe there is life after death.					
I believe that after death we cease to exist in any form.					
I believe that death is a transition to a better place.					
I believe that suffering will end in the afterlife.					
I believe there is a place of suffering and torment in the afterlife.					
I agree with the statement "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).					

How do beliefs about the afterlife affect end-of-life decisions?

Exercise 4:

Objective: To help you define the extent and limits of your end-of-life healthcare.

In the table below, you are asked to identify your desires for end-of-life medical care **taking into account what you believe about how God is involved in your life and the afterlife.**

Many persons have found these exercises useful in articulating what they believe, and they have led to meaningful discussions with their family or church-related groups. Families have used these exercises to open conversation across generations that will provide the framework for decisions about end-of-life care. These exercises will prepare you to have the conversation with family members about advance directives where you express your wishes for life-support measures at the end of life.

At some point you will likely be faced with a real-life situation. Then, theories and platitudes no longer suffice. Decisions must be made. See Role-Plays on pages 153-156 for real-life scenarios where end-of-life healthcare decisions are required.

What I want for medical care when I am dying					
Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I want everything done to extend my life, for where there is life there is hope.					
If I am confused, unaware, and unable to relate to others, I don't want life support measures that would extend my life.					
Personal dignity is important to me and I don't want that compromised even though it may shorten my life.					
When further treatment for my condition is considered futile, I want only the care necessary to keep me comfortable.					
I don't want the expenses of my dying to create a financial burden for my family.					
I prefer to die in my own home.					
I prefer to die in a hospital or nursing home.					
If I am dying, I want the consideration of any treatment to include its cost.					

Living Thoughtfully, DYING WELL

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. As you review the responses in this book as to why the author survived, which statements resonate with you? Which ones don't?
2. What has happened recently in your life or that of others that may push you toward end-of-life planning?
3. Complete Exercises 1 and 2, and then verbalize (in writing or orally to another person) what you believe about the following:
 - Does God exist?
 - Does God care about me?
 - Can and will God intervene for me, even against the laws of nature?
4. Complete Exercise 3. Should your beliefs about how God is involved in your life, and about life after death, influence the extent of life-extending medical measures at the end of life?
5. After completing Exercise 4, try to become comfortable thinking about these issues and then consider discussing your thoughts and feelings with your family, a church group, and your PAHCD.