Next, the pastor is preaching to the "LIVING" at that point – not the "DEAD," and the "WORD of GOD," should be the focus, not the individual in the coffin.

The funeral service, just too long!

Bishop Moultry:

After reading the last two Bishop Speaks columns on the long Funeral Service you attended, I had to write you. My husband says that it will maybe help me to deal with the grief I'm still going through after losing my mother to cancer three weeks ago.

I'm very angry at my mother's pastor who did not grant the family wishes to let my mother's coffin stay open during the entire Funeral Service. Yes, her body was viewed the entire day before her services. She had an hour wake at the church before her Funeral Services started, but at the last minute my brother, me and my two other sisters asked the deacon to ask the pastor if the coffin could remain open for the entire service, and the deacon came back with the pastor's answer, "Not Possible."

When he came down from the pulpit to assist us to view our mother for the last time, I lost it, Bishop, begging him not to close it as I was taken out to the lobby of the church by the ushers. Once I got myself together, I quickly went back in to view my mother and the coffin was closed. I sat down and don't remember anything else. I was just in another world, bishop. I could not tell

you what the pastor preached about or what the choir even sang.

Bishop, how can a pastor do this, going against the wishes of the family's request to keep the coffin closed?

My husband said that if that casket stayed opened till the end of the service, we would have never made it to the Cemetery on time. I totally disagree with him, but will respect your answer because I know you'll keep it real and tell me that my mother's pastor was wrong for not honoring the family wishes to keep her coffin opened.

Signed,

Hurting

Dear Hurting:

First, I'm sorry to hear about the passing of your mother and will offer my services to sit and talk to you and hopefully encourage you to stay strong. I can also offer to you, if you call the church, support groups for individuals like you, and even your other family members who are also grieving. I have so many Scripture passages I can give you that will give you so much strength at this much needed time in your life right now, so, once again, please call the church (216) 761-7100.

In regards to your mother's pastor, not allowing the coffin to remain open was the right thing and best thing to do for so many reasons. At the last minute the family members changed the plans that were already in place, I'm sure which was to close the coffin as most pastors orders are, this should happen at the end of the WAKE. Like many families losing a love one, it gets very emotional at the closing of the coffin, and the lid going down on their loved one, so it's better to do it at the end of the WAKE or the beginning of the Homegoing Celebration.

Next, the pastor is preaching to the "LIVING" at that point – not the "DEAD," and the "WORD of GOD," should be the focus, not the individual in the coffin. The pastor I'm sure reflected on your mother and her life, spirit, love she had for her church and most importantly her love for God. Every Funeral Service at which I'm in charge to preach, it's a known fact—the family knows the coffin will be closed at the end of the Wake Service.

I had a family member tell me, pointing in my face, that the father's casket was not going to be closed until the end of the Funeral. After pointing her and the family out the door, they quickly called me back after hearing the same thing from seven other different pastors who agreed with me. Many pastors want to follow family wishes at this emotional time, but NEVER should a family member TELL a PASTOR, or tell "ME" what I better do, and then point a finger in my face. The point I want to make is, closing the casket at the end of the Wake Service does not mean you love your mother less, and letting it stay open does not mean you love her more. But closing the coffin before the Homegoing Celebration starts means the message will be the strength you need to endure your loss of that loved one, being your mother, and not looking at her in that coffin so that you can't hear the WORD.

I hope I helped and I'm here if you need me.

You can e-mail the Bishop at bishopspeaks@aol.com . Write him at 969 E. 140th St. Cleveland, Ohio 44110 or look him up on Facebook under Bishop Prince J. Moultry. Check out the church website at www.intouchforchrist.com and visit the bishop each Sunday morning at the 11a.m. Praise and Worship Service in the heart of the Collinwood Community off 140th St.and St. Clair directly across the street from the Job Corp's Campus.