

Chuck Smith Jr. Says Family Lawsuit ‘Groundless, Deplorable’

Chuck Smith Jr. is speaking out on a lawsuit that has led to news headlines about a family feud over his megachurch pastor father's death.

Smith's daughter filed suit alleging elder abuse and neglect in connection with the pioneering pastor's last days. Smith went on to glory after a hard-fought cancer battle in October 2013.

Smith, who initiated the rise of Calvary Chapel movement of "Jesus People" that was featured in *Time* magazine in the 1960s, started pastoring Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa in 1965 and was known for his less formal and contemporary approach to worship and church services.

Smith's son offered this response to the suit:

"A year ago today I invited my brother and sisters into my home to meet with a mediator. My concern was that we agree to set aside our differences and commit ourselves to Dad's comfort and well-being in light of his declining health. After four hours of airing our feelings and grievances, everyone was on board. Sadly, we did not realize how short a time we would have to hold it together before Dad would leave us for heaven's brighter shore.

"The following evening I spent the night with Dad in the hospital and was there the next morning when his caregiver arrived and one by one his doctors came to tell him they had exhausted all their resources and were going to send him home to begin hospice care.

“For the record, I want it to be known that I do not support the lawsuit my sister Janette and brother Jeff have filed against Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa. In my opinion it is groundless, deplorable, dishonoring to our father (and to his work, not to mention the people to whom he dedicated his life). It is another sad stain on the representation of Christianity. The only motivation I can see for the suit is malice and greed. Any pretense to honor my father’s name or provide adequate care and support for my mother is nonsense.

“I do not know the woman who was interviewed by ABC outside of Calvary Chapel, but almost every word she spoke was false. She was not present when my father passed; I was. She did not speak with the paramedics that night; I did—and also to the police officer who took the report. I can guess where she got her information and I do not blame her, because I am well aware of what convincing stories her sources can tell.

“There were two registered nurses in my parents’ home the night of my dad’s death. Once everyone who was there has been interviewed it will be evident how ludicrous is the claim that his caregiver or anyone else put off calling for emergency help that might have saved his life. Dad had been sent home to die. One doctor told him (in my presence) that the cancer was too out of control and spreading too rapidly for them to do anything else for him.

“Also, contrary to one specific allegation, as incredible as it seemed to me (and I queried him several times in the hospital), Dad was not in pain or distress in the days and hours prior to his death. Several family members were in his home that day who can corroborate this fact. As for his passing, I posted last year how peacefully sublime was his transition from here to heaven.

“After Dad died, his caregiver called to notify the hospice nurse who was to come in later that morning. The hospice nurse instructed her to inform the police so that the coroner could

confirm the time of death. It was the hospice nurse who advised us NOT TO CALL 911. She said that paramedics rushing as if responding to an emergency could be very disturbing for my mom. The caregiver explained this to the rest of us and one person present volunteered to make the call. For some reason, he chose to dial 911 (later that day, he attempted to raise my dad from the dead). After the paramedics hurried in with all their gear, they were not asking us why they weren't called sooner, but why they were called at all. It is not their job to tend to the 'deceased.'

"No one on this planet loved my father more or had greater respect for him and his ministry than his caregiver—who was at all times in Dad's employ and never my brother-in-law's. Her years of loyal service while living in my parent's home is evident in her presence with him in every doctor's appointment and the three-inch-thick volume of notes and medical reports that she maintained regarding both Mom and Dad. What is troubling to me is the way she was summarily dismissed. She also regularly medicated and dressed sores on my dad's feet and legs that were not healing properly and spoke up for him in doctor's visits or with nurses in the hospital when he failed to mention certain symptoms or health issues.

"I doubt the lawsuit will make it to a courtroom. Once the review of financial reports and bank statements has begun and depositions are taken, I suspect that the suit will quickly disintegrate. My heart goes out to anyone who out of love for my dad donates money to support what is in my eyes a scam that is being perpetrated mostly by my brother and surviving uncle.

"Some years ago I chose to live at a distance from Calvary Chapel for various personal reasons. Unfortunately, it is impossible to create the same distance from the antics of family members. I do not intend to sound off again on this ugly drama or provide running commentary. In time, the facts will speak for themselves. I suppose I'm old school in thinking that family matters are to be resolved within the

family, and its dirty laundry is supposed to be left in the hamper or laundry room until washed and made presentable. I wish that none of the squabbles had been taken public, because now that there's a breach in the dam, I fear a flood of ugliness will follow. After all, who knows our flaws and failures better than family?

"I do hope that anyone who has made it to the end of this post will take heart. The man who had been 'Papa Chuck' to thousands of young people, consistently taught through the Bible year after year, led many people to the Christian faith, and sustained them in the love of God, was like everyone of us 'all too human.' His hope is the same hope we all share; namely, that when all is said and done, God's grace will have the last word."