

Joyce Meyer's Bodyguard Sentenced to Life

Jurors informally decided on a death sentence for Christopher Coleman, one said Monday, before the convicted killer cast his fate to a judge instead and received three life terms without possibility of parole.

The decision to waive a penalty decision from the jury that convicted him of first-degree murder was a surprise Monday morning that pushed his trial in court here to an early end on its 11th day.

Coleman, 34, found guilty last week of strangling his wife and two sons in their home in Columbia, Ill., ultimately would have ended up with a life sentence in any event.

Prosecutors persisted in seeking a death sentence even after the Legislature abolished capital punishment, effective July 1. Gov. Pat Quinn has pledged to commute all earlier death sentences issued before then to life terms.

Prosecutors said the murder was the culmination of a plot to leave his wife, Sheri Coleman, to marry her onetime best friend, Tara Lintz, and avoid exposing adultery that could have threatened his job as bodyguard for televangelist Joyce Meyer.

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