

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

A Guide for Widows



TIMBERCHASE
FINANCIAL

Comprehensive Wealth Management

Letter from Bryan Hancock

Many people like you are facing difficult choices after the death of a spouse. There are few times in your life that you will need clear direction more than you do now. At the same time, many women are woefully unprepared for the process of gaining command of their financial resources based on a new set of priorities.

Being educated and informed about your situation will help you achieve a better result. It will also give you confidence in your decisions and, we feel, help with your emotional recovery.

The content of this paper is based on interviews with those who have experienced what you are going through. As a result of these interviews, we describe in this paper a systematic approach to gaining command of what you have.

Timberchase Financial, LLC is pleased to present *What Do I Do Now? A Guide for Widows*. We hope it will help you develop an informed approach to making smart decisions about your money.

Sincerely,



Bryan Hancock
President
Timberchase Financial, LLC
205-980-7118
bryan@timberchase.net

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What Do I Do Now? A Guide for Widows

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Timberchase Financial, LLC
1211 Edenton Street
Birmingham, AL 35242
Phone: (205) 980-7118 • Toll Free: (800) 908-1933
info@timberchase.net
www.timberchase.net

Special Thanks

A special “thank you” is due to the women who shared their experiences for this article. Their willingness to talk about their loss is greatly appreciated. For confidentiality reasons, their names are not listed here.

The perspective of those professionals who support those who have lost a spouse added greatly to the content of this paper. We thank the following people for sharing their time and perspective:

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Introduction

IF YOU HAVE RECENTLY EXPERIENCED THE DEATH OF A SPOUSE, this is written for you. As most surviving spouses are women, we focus on widows, although widowers may find value in the information, as well. The research on which this paper is based is focused on women who, through

whatever source, have significant or complex financial resources that are to be directed toward their financial security.

When you lose a spouse, you may find yourself thrust into an administrative role at a time when you feel least capable of taking it on. Ideally, you should be able to grieve in your own time and in your own way, without the pressure of becoming a probate, tax, legal, and financial expert. While you may have the ability to perform these functions, it may be that you would rather not. And if, as in many marriages, your husband took the lead role financially, you may not be fully up to speed on all the financial, investment, tax, insurance, and estate planning issues ahead of you.

This may be the time in your life when you experience the greatest need,

the least capacity to address your needs, the most vulnerability, and the competing requirement to be both trusting and guarded at the same time. You may have more to do than you ever imagined. It may be difficult for you to know what to do, what not to do, how to decide what is important and how to decide what is not. It may be just as difficult to know what tasks to delegate, whom to ask for help, and whom to trust. Trying to make decisions may be like looking through cloudy goggles because of your emotional strain and the sheer volume of tasks that lie ahead. It may be difficult to see clearly for a very long period of time.

Our goal here is to help you develop an effective approach to managing the tasks ahead, to navigating the landscape of opinions and advice

you'll receive, and to making smart decisions about your money. It is not to provide you with a comprehensive list of the legal and financial tasks you will need to complete. Many resources are available to help you catalog these things. Rather, we deal with the *process* you will need to have in place to gain command of your financial resources, which, we believe, will support your emotional recovery.

During 2009 and 2010, we asked surviving spouses and those who support them about the challenges they faced. We conducted these interviews to get a complete and deep understanding of the path you will need to travel to gain command of your financial resources, to head toward emotional recovery, and to build the life you wish to lead.

A word about *you* compared to the "average" widow. While a number of common themes emerged in our interviews, it was clear that there are no averages, no right or wrong ways to come to terms with the death of a loved one and the administrative work that lies

ahead, and no schedule that can be applied to your situation. Consequently, there are no set formulas for addressing your challenges. You may have heard the saying that if you put one foot into a bucket of hot coals and your other foot into a bucket of ice, you are, on average, comfortable. In other words, it is not wise to compare yourself to the "average." While we will address common problems and solutions that have proven helpful to others in similar situations, remember that your situation is unique.

And a thought about the word "widow." We are reluctant to use the word at all. Many women we spoke with told us they were uncomfortable being called widows, the connotation being that widows are helpless little old ladies. You may not think of yourself as a widow. We use the term literally, understanding that you may be much too young and have too much to offer to consider yourself a "widow."

The Challenge – Priorities of Widows

ACCORDING TO THOSE WE INTERVIEWED, SURVIVING spouses have a distinct set of priorities and financial challenges. While these differ greatly from person to person, a clear pattern does emerge. How each challenge is handled can have a

significant impact on your emotional recovery and the time it takes you to migrate toward a new life. Following are the short-term and long-term priorities of widows as told to us by those we interviewed.

Short-Term Priorities

The first set of priorities includes tasks to be handled during the initial shock and confusion following your loss, when you may be engulfed in grief and fatigue:

- Get the help I need
- Arrange the funeral
- Make sure I have the cash I need to get through today
- Not get “taken”
- Hire an attorney to open my husband’s estate

- Notify the appropriate people about the death
- Acknowledge those who provide help and express condolences after the death
- Not feel so out of control
- Connect, guide, and grieve with my children

Long-Term Priorities

The second set of priorities becomes important soon after, as the reality of your situation sets in, after some rest and reflection, and as those around you migrate back to their own routines:

- Understand what my financial assets are and where they are
- Close the estate and have enough understanding of probate and tax to

effectively utilize professional relationships (attorney, accountant, financial advisor)

- Take command of the conflicting advice, fear, confusion and un-coordinated advice I receive from friends, family, and professionals
- Establish professional relationships I will need
- Preserve what I have and make sure it will last the rest of my life
- Minimize taxes
- Make sure my children and/or grandchildren are taken care of
- Keep peace among my family members now and after I die (especially in blended families)
- Have a meaningful charitable impact to whatever extent possible

Finding a Financial Advisor You Can Trust

In almost every interview we conducted, one of the most important priorities for widows was to find a trusted financial advisor who could coordinate the many pieces of the puzzle required to move from what she and her husband had to a comprehensive wealth management plan for one person based on new and different priorities. Widows are looking for a qualified, trusted, comprehensive resource to manage the entire process without the pressure of product sales.

According to a recent survey by Boston Consulting Group¹, women want four things from a financial advisor:

- **Household administration** – Help me with the day-to-day handling of my wealth.
- **Financial Education** – Teach me what I need to know to gain command of what I have to support my new life.
- **Financial Advice** – Give me your professional view of how I need to manage my financial resources.
- **Children’s Solutions** – Provide ideas and direction for how I can train, provide for, educate, and spend time with my children and grandchildren.

According to many women we interviewed, the process of finding the right advisor, especially during an emotionally grueling time, can be daunting. Later, we will provide some suggestions to help you approach this decision with confidence.

¹ “Women Want More (In Financial Services)”, Boston Consulting Group, 2009

“I Need Your Help” Part 1 – Assembling Your Support Network

A CHURCH PASTOR GAVE US HIS PERSPECTIVE. HIS VIEW WAS THAT his church takes seriously the scripture to “take care of the widows.”

He said that if his church is doing its job, the widows in his church would have many of their needs met. He recognized that when a woman loses

her husband, she must lean heavily on those around her more than at any other time in her life.

The pastor explained that the first group of people around the widow are her family and close friends. Around them is the church family or other small community. In many situations, this proactive support falls into place seamlessly. Many churches and community organizations have a team of volunteers ready to go into action when a death occurs. Volunteers are sometimes those who have experienced a loss themselves

and know just what kind of support is needed.

But you may need to build your own support network. Based on our interviews, we suggest you surround yourself with a group of people who agree to care for you and support you while you get your bearings. We learned that a successful way to build a support network was for the surviving spouse to simplify the process by delegating the task of gathering support to one person with a “gift of administration.” This person, your Chief of Support, will find people who agree to care for you and support you

during this time. He or she will identify volunteers and assign specific duties based on each individual's gifts and experience.

If you need to build a support network, find a motivated friend or relative who will find others to lead these functions:

- **Funeral** – someone to navigate arrangement, negotiation, and payment
- **Repairs** – someone to guide you regarding home, business, or auto repairs so that you will not get “taken,” if you don't have prior experience in these areas
- **Legal** – someone to assist you in the immediate legal issues regarding the death
- **Hospitality** – Someone to record gifts, support, and condolences so you may respond at a later time and to “manage” your kitchen, mail, and incoming phone calls
- **Announcements** – Someone to notify the appropriate people about the death
- **Grieving** – Someone to listen to you, gently guide you, and help you guide your children
- **Health** – Someone to make sure you are not neglecting your health, to go to medical appointments with you, or simply to go for a walk with you every day

It has been said that the four most powerful words in the English language are “I need your help.” This season of life is the perfect time to ask those around you to lend their energy, expertise, and perspective. One of the participants in our interviews expressed that she heard “a thousand times” after her husband died the kind offer, “If you ever need anything, you just let me know.” If you are fortunate enough to be surrounded by those who care about you and are willing to help, this is the time to ask and the time people are the most eager to help. The process of asking and then managing those requests can sometimes be more taxing than just doing things yourself. But you need help—so ask boldly.

“I Need Your Help” Part 2 – Assembling Your Professional Network

IF YOUR LIST OF THINGS TO DO IS LONG AND YOUR EMOTIONAL energy or knowledge of how to do them is short, it is important to surround yourself with people who can help you. It may seem like a formidable task to find the help you need from experts you can trust, who will

act in your best interest, who will take a comprehensive view, and who will work with all your advisors in a coordinated way. For people of means, there will be the need for probate administration, tax compliance, and the coordination of your wealth so that it is supporting your short- and long-term goals. If you have never been through this experience, or if your spouse handled the majority of your financial affairs, this may be a frightening experience.

You may be fortunate enough to have an effective support system in place. Most people in your situation have the

first two layers of support mentioned in the previous section, but developing a network of technical experts, including professional advisors, on short notice, can be a daunting task. Even if you have the time, interest, or knowledge to handle your affairs, you still may need to align yourself with a team of professionals.

If you need to conduct a selection process for professional advisors, we suggest, as in the previous section, that you delegate the initial search process to a friend or loved one who can be inquisitive on your behalf. This process,

suggested in one of our interviews, will help you identify potential advisors more quickly. Your advocate should begin compiling a list of names or firms by asking for recommendations from your existing attorney, accountant, pastor, and church or community contacts. After compiling a short list of prospects, we suggest your helper call them and ask the following questions (this list is geared toward financial advisors but can be modified for accountants and attorneys as well):

Advisor Questions:

- What is the focus of your practice? With what types of people do you work? With what types do you usually not work?
- What is your professional and/or technical expertise?
- How are you compensated? Other than paying you, what additional costs does a client incur (either directly or indirectly)?
- Are you compensated in any way by an investment or insurance company (mutual funds, annuities, insurance products)?
- Are you legally obligated to place client interests ahead of your own and to act only in their best interest (this is called a “fiduciary”)?
- Do you know your client’s other advisors (CPA, attorney, financial advisor)? How do you coordinate your work with other professionals?
- How many clients do you have? How many clients do you have who are in this situation? Please tell me about the solutions you have applied to their situations.
- Does your process take into account all the components of a financial situation (including estate planning, asset protection and insurance, cash flow and debt, investments, income taxes, estate taxes)?
- How long have you been in this field at your current level?
- What degrees and professional certifications do you have?
- Do you work with an independent, third party custodian or do you have custody of client assets?
- Is your firm a “registered investment adviser” (this is a form of regulation which is more advantageous to the client)?
- I am looking for professionals who will help coordinate long-term priorities. What questions should I have asked that I haven’t that would help me understand whether your practice is the right one for this situation?

Next, ask your helper to pare down the list based on his or her observations. Following is a list of questions you may want to ask yourself about each advisor you interview. This is far from an exhaustive process and will not guarantee selection of the right advisor, but it will help you form opinions of those you have called. It has been our experience that very few people ask advisors good questions before engaging their services. You should not engage their services without a thorough evaluation process. Be an informed consumer.

Your Observations of the Advisor:

- What questions did they ask you? People often judge character by the quality of the questions asked.
- Did they suggest solutions or products without knowing your entire financial situation? Was their solution a product on which they would receive a commission?
- Do you know anyone who knows the advisor? What have they told you about the firm / service / individual?
- Would they have any conflict of interest if they work with you (for example, are they paid if you invest in a particular product)?
- Were they professional in their communication and demeanor?
- Did they provide any form of a guarantee (regarding investment returns), or was there any insistence that you meet a deadline or hurry in your decision-making process (with the exception of tax and probate deadlines). You are grieving. Take your time making a decision.



- Do they have the professional experience to handle the complexities of your financial situation?
- Have they been there before with existing clients?
- Did you get a sense of the professional's "moral compass"? Would his or her values support your own?
- Would you be personally comfortable working with this person?
- Did they say you "don't pay a thing" and that you don't have to worry about fees?

- Were they cryptic in their answers?
- Did they clearly have a solution that may work for your situation?

Once you have narrowed down your list of advisors, find out whether they offer a free initial consultation. If so, meet with them and ask them to show you what they do. Then listen carefully to how they would approach your situation and to the questions they ask you.

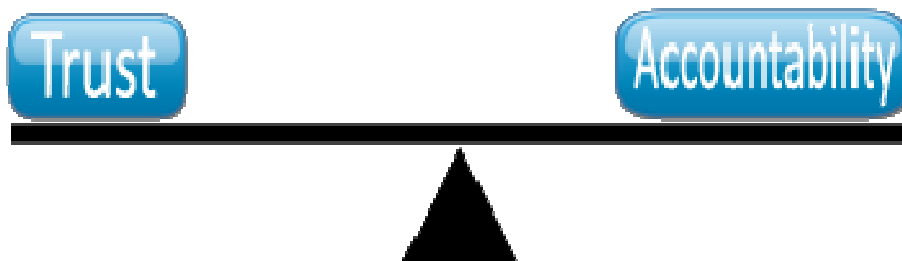
Ask for professional references (professionals in other disciplines with whom they work for their existing clients). Then ask those references these questions:

- Is this person qualified to work with me to accomplish my goals?
- Do you know any of his/her clients? What has their experience been?
- Is there anything I should ask about this person that would give me a complete view of their ability to successfully work with me?
- Are there other professionals you know who would be better suited for my needs?

Completing the support system, for a woman of means, should be a team of professional advisors who are serving her needs in the context of her family and community relationships and in support of her rapidly changing life.

A word about financial advisor compensation: we are biased toward fee-only financial advisors (which is *not* the same as “fee based”) because we believe that an advisor will be loyal to his or her source of compensation. If you are working with a financial advisor who *cannot* accept compensation from any source other than the client, you are more likely to get a result that is free of conflicts of interest.

You should work with advisors you trust. But how you determine trust should be based not only on how you feel, but also on the level of accountability there is in the relationship. If there is no accountability, there should be no trust. Keep your guard up.



A Case Study

HAZEL, AGE 62, WAS SHOCKED WHEN HER HUSBAND, HARVEY, died. But at the same time, she wasn't completely surprised. How she felt one day was completely different from how she felt the next. She always knew she *could* be a widow at a young age. And she had prepared

herself in some ways, as her husband's health had changed. But his death still came as a shock.

In the days following Harvey's death, she received advice from many friends and relatives - some who had been through this before and some who had not, but cared for her well-being. Often the advice was conflicting about how she *would* feel, how she *should* feel, when she would feel better, what she should do next, and what she should *not* do. The advice sometimes came at a bad time for her. What Hazel did know is that, even among so many people who all wanted to help in so many ways, she suddenly felt very alone.

Hazel and Harvey had married 35 years earlier and had been through the best of times and the worst of times. They had been financially strained, then

financially comfortable, then financially successful, especially in the last 15 years. While they never thought of themselves as needing or wanting much, they had accumulated nice things and were even a little embarrassed at their own good fortune. At the same time, while their wealth had increased, they had not become self-focused. They were generous givers to their church and to other charities important to them. Giving more effectively was something they talked about from time to time, but they had not pursued this. Their children were on their own and responsible (for the most part), and while Hazel and Harvey had helped their children from time to time, they wanted to share more with them, especially to make sure their young grandchildren had all the educational opportunities possible. Harvey and Hazel had each become comfortable in their

respective roles in managing their money, although Hazel had been uncomfortable at times with what Harvey was doing with their investments. However, he was so confident about his strategy, and the questions she asked seemed so inadequate, that she trusted him to do his part while she did her part. They found themselves in traditional roles regarding their money even though both were capable of filling in for the other should the need arise. But now, Hazel needed to gain command of her entire financial picture. She thought she knew what they had, but she wasn't sure what that meant to her now. And while she certainly had the interest in managing everything, she just didn't have the energy. After all, there were now the matters of probate administration and what to do with a large sum of money from the life insurance policies, and, it seemed, a new matter arose every day. And everyone had an opinion.

In the weeks following the funeral, the fog began to clear. There were so many things Hazel did not remember, and she was sure she could not have made it through without her sister, Jill. As soon as Jill had realized that Harvey's death might be imminent, she and Hazel had a brief conversation about letting Jill step into an administrative role. Jill had never done

this before, but Hazel had a sense of comfort after that conversation because Jill was smart, organized, connected, and inquisitive. Jill called a handful of people to be ready to volunteer so that Hazel could be with Harvey and their children and then have space to grieve.

“But now, Hazel needed to gain command of her entire financial picture. She thought she knew what they had, but she wasn't sure what that meant to her.”

Jill contacted the attorney who had completed Harvey's will (the attorney had left the firm, but a younger partner could take care of things for now), called a friend who had formerly worked for a funeral home to advise them about a funeral, and asked her brother-in-law to be on call to coordinate yard maintenance and to have a leak repaired for Hazel.

The afternoon of Harvey's death, Jill asked a neighbor to begin calling friends about the death and asked another friend (who had lost her husband a year earlier) to “manage” Hazel's kitchen, the gifts of meals, the mail, and the incoming phone calls. Jill notified the new attorney and

called one of the ministers in Hazel's church to help coordinate the funeral service.

Hazel couldn't help thinking, somewhere along the way, that it was such hard work for someone to die. And if Jill had not been there to direct all the traffic, she would not have known what to do.

As the weeks passed, it became time for Hazel to turn her attention toward other matters. Since the funeral, Hazel had heard from many people who gave advice without understanding all her needs. Some had good intentions and some did not. She knew she was vulnerable so she needed to evaluate all the suggestions carefully. She heard from their stock broker about having a meeting about investments, the life insurance agent who needed to know what payout options to choose on one of the life insurance policies, a banker who called about an annuity after she deposited the proceeds from a small life insurance policy into her checking account, a roofer who suggested she needed repairs, a friend who suggested a reverse mortgage, the human resources representative at Harvey's employer calling about beneficiary paperwork, another neighbor who suggested a meeting with her brother the financial advisor, and the

mailman who brought statements from accounts about which Hazel had no knowledge. Hazel knew she needed to make some decisions. But every decision added more moving parts to her new financial structure, and she was now overwhelmed...and drained.

“The interview process was easier than Hazel thought it was going to be.”

Hazel knew she needed help and decided she needed help finding help. She had met their CPA a few years ago, but Harvey usually handled their taxes. They had worked with a financial planner about the same time, but she was sure the firm had been bought and did not know the new name. She knew she needed a financial advisor of some type, but with all the different types and formats and philosophies, she was overwhelmed at the thought of navigating the complex financial industry to find the right one. And the attorney she had used at first was so young, and his office was so far away.

It was time again to enlist Jill to find advisors to manage her financial affairs. Jill set out to make a list of potential advisors who could work with Hazel.

Hazel and Jill would then spend a day interviewing these professionals and then make a decision. They needed to identify an accountant, an attorney, and some sort of financial or investment advisor. Jill started by making a list of potential advisors for Hazel. She asked the following people for recommendations:

- The CPA who handled the tax returns
- The existing attorney
- Neighbors
- Her pastor
- Community leaders
- Members of her church
- The National Association of Personal Financial Advisors website (an association of fee-only financial advisors at www.napfa.org).

Once the initial list was complete, Jill had fifteen names. After a quick internet search, she crossed off three names because of location or a focus on areas other than Hazel's needs. In one afternoon, Jill called each of the twelve remaining advisors and asked a series of brief questions to help identify firms who could effectively work with Hazel. She

talked to six that afternoon and left messages for six of them. By the next day, four calls had been returned. Two were crossed off the list by the third day, as they had not returned the initial call. Jill's intuition left her with six people to interview: two attorneys, two accountants, and two financial advisors. Jill scheduled appointments with them all the next week so that she and Hazel could interview them.

The interview process was easier than Hazel thought it was going to be. Hazel felt comfortable with three advisors (one from each profession) and found that they knew each other and had worked together before. Hazel didn't feel it was necessary to check references, but Jill insisted and found that the references were consistent with Hazel's "hunch" about each of them.

They celebrated with a dinner out, Hazel slept on her initial decisions, and then, the following Monday, she notified the three advisors to get started. She immediately felt relieved that she was starting the process of gaining command of what she had.

A Wealth Management Model for Widows

AT THIS POINT IN YOUR LIFE, YOU MAY HAVE A GREATER NEED FOR financial advice than you have ever had. At the same time, you may be more vulnerable than ever, and you may have less time, interest, or energy to focus your resources on your new priorities and the realities of your new life.

At Timberchase Financial, our wealth management model for widows is designed to provide you with a useful, valuable, and cost-effective way to craft financial solutions for your unique situation and help you make smart decisions about your money. Even as there are common themes among women who are in your situation, no two financial situations are alike, and this requires that the management of your wealth avoid a cookie cutter approach.

Wealth management is a comprehensive approach to turning all that you have into resources that will support your new life. The term is often used by firms whose sole focus is stock

selection or the sale of financial products. Our use of the term is as follows: Wealth management is the process of investment consulting and management, estate and transfer planning, tax planning, asset protection and insurance, cash flow and debt planning, planning for charitable giving, and management of the network of professional experts needed to effectively maximize your financial situation in the context of your chosen goals. Studies show that very few firms who use the term “wealth management” are defining it in this way. Our process is much like deciding to work with a family chief financial officer (CFO).

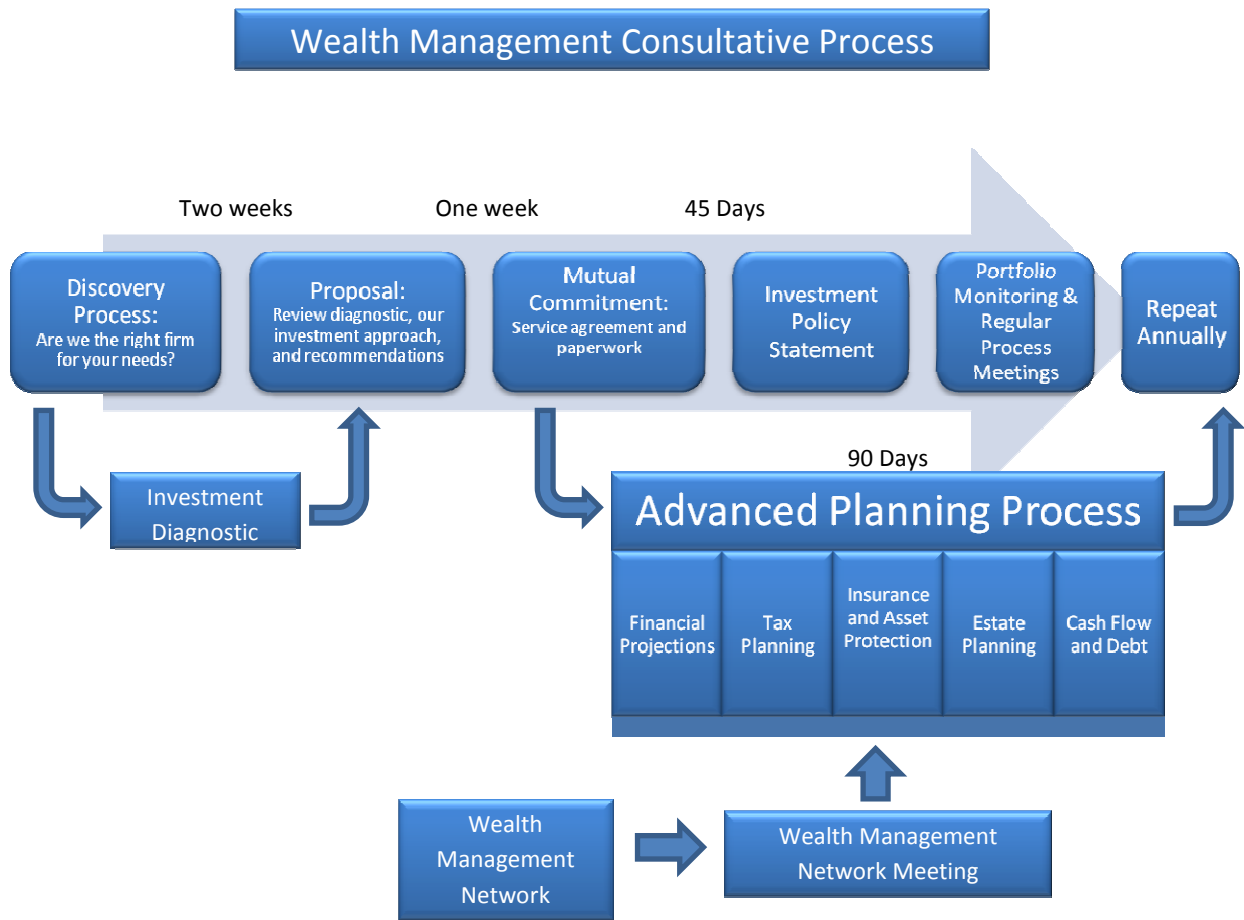
There are four major components to the process in the first year:

- **Discovery Process: Are we the right firm for you?** We begin our consultative process with a “discovery meeting” to determine if what we do is the best solution for your needs. During the meeting, we will discuss your values, goals, assets, advisors, how you would like to manage your affairs, and your interests. We have decided to limit our practice to only a small number of families so we can add substantial value to each situation. If, during the discovery process, we determine with you that we are not the best fit for you, we will help you locate a firm that will better serve your needs.
- **Investment Diagnostic** If we both feel there could be value to a working relationship, we will provide an investment diagnostic based on where you are now and where you think you should be. We will then provide you a framework for how we can work together.
- **Mutual Commitment** After our discussions, we will meet for a third time to discuss if we should work

together, address any open issues, and, if appropriate, make a mutual commitment to work together.

- **Advanced Planning Process** Once we have made a mutual commitment, we begin the detailed process of designing an investment plan (investment policy statement, selection and placement of assets) for you while we are developing your advanced plan in tandem with your existing advisors (estate planning attorney, accountant, insurance agent). If you do not have an existing professional relationship that you need, we will bring in one of the professional advisors from our network of experts.

Following is an illustration of the process:



While this process is detailed, we know that your personal circumstances, values, and goals may change. That is why we evaluate the major components of your wealth management plan every year, and we continuously monitor and adjust your investments in light of your plan and your individual circumstances. (For a detailed view of our investment philosophy, see “The Informed Investor: Five Key Concepts for Financial Success” at www.timberchase.net.)

A Final Word – Taking Care of Yourself

FOR MOST OF OUR LIVES, MANY OF US ARE TAUGHT TO THINK OF others first, not to be self-focused, and to treat others as more important than ourselves. This is a time in your life when you can defer that teaching to another time.

You may have spent much of your life taking care of others (your husband, your children, your grandchildren, your church, your community). Nurturing others may be second nature to you. But right now you need to, at least temporarily, take care of yourself first.

You may have taken a trip in recent years and traveled by airplane. As you sat in your seat before take off, the

flight attendant provided instructions on what to do in the event of an emergency. You may remember being told that oxygen masks would drop from the ceiling. Then you may recall the instruction that if you are sitting next to a child to put the mask on yourself first and then help the child. The same goes for you during this time. Take care of yourself first, and then, after a period of time, you may be ready to help others again.

Further Reading:

Armstrong, Alexandra. *On Your Own: A Widow's Passage to Emotional & Financial Well-Being*. Armstrong, Fleming, & Moore, Inc. 2006.

Who We Are

Timberchase Financial is an independent, fee-only wealth management firm dedicated to helping you gain command of your significant financial resources to be able to follow your passion or calling in life. The firm is led and was founded by Bryan Hancock, MBA, ChFC, CFP®.

Bryan has a B.S. in Business from Samford University, an MBA from the University of Alabama-Birmingham, holds the Chartered Financial Consultant designation, and is a Certified Financial Planner® certificant. He is a graduate of the Financial Planning Association's Residency Program at DePaul University in Chicago, a member of the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors (an association of fee-only professionals), and a member of the Estate Planning Council of Birmingham.

Bryan grew up in Alabama and South Korea and, as a "third culture kid," has an understanding of the unique cultural benefits and complexities of living overseas. He is married, has four children, and lives in Hoover, Alabama. He is a member of Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church and supports two local charities by serving on their boards of directors. He considers it an honor to develop deep working relationships with high net worth families and to guide them toward resolution of complex issues in support of their financial goals and charitable interests.

What We Do

Timberchase Financial offers wealth management, which includes investment management, tax mitigation, asset protection, and charitable giving using a consultative process with you and our team of experts. Our practice is limited to only a few clients so we can provide a significant amount of value to each situation. This allows you to focus on your calling in life and to fully enjoy relationships with those you love without worrying about your financial security or the complex process of managing your resources.

We are committed to excellence. Our investment advice is academically grounded and not based on our predictions of the future. We believe in asset class investing, a methodical approach grounded in academic research with an eye on tax efficiency and low investment expenses. Our estate planning advice is given in collaboration with your estate planning attorney or one of the attorneys on our panel of experts. Our tax planning considers your long-term needs in conjunction with your accounting firm or a firm with which we have a close relationship. We coordinate an insurance plan in conjunction with outside agents so you get only what you need for the least cost. Because we do not accept commissions, you can be assured that our product recommendations are based only on your needs.

Our experience is that the families with whom we work hold the preservation of wealth as their first financial priority, but also desire to minimize taxes, plan for the transfer of their wealth on their terms, and want to make an impact on others through charitable giving. Our clients also want to educate and empower those they love to be wise stewards of what they have. We assist in these efforts so your wealth can serve a greater purpose. As a completely independent firm, all our efforts are focused on your goals. As a fiduciary, we act on your behalf. Being a fee-only firm creates a pristine relationship with you that is free of conflicts of interest.

TIMBERCHASE FINANCIAL, LLC

Main Office

1211 Edenton Street
Birmingham, Alabama, 35242
P (205) 980-7118
F (866) 634-4907

Visiting Office

8650 Minnie Brown Rd., Suite 101A
Montgomery, Alabama 36117
P (334) 578-0611
F (866) 634-4907