



He Walks with Me

*Devotions for
Your Caregiving Journey with God*



OUR DAILY BREAD

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Your Caregiving Journey with God*



Our Daily Bread
Ministries®

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Introduction

Caring for someone is one of the most difficult responsibilities a person can take on. Much is expected from you, including the ability to play multiple roles: parent, nurse, counsellor, provider, and helper. You are expected to play these roles all the time. And you are expected to sacrifice yourself and everything you have—your time, your hobbies, your own family, your dreams, and your happiness—for someone else.

What makes it harder is the fact that most of the time, caregiving is not something we can prepare or plan for. It can be a shock to discover just how stressful, exhausting, and frustrating it gets. As you spend most of your days giving—and never receiving—you may find yourself exhausted physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Worse, you may feel trapped in the role, knowing that you cannot leave until the person you are caring for is completely healed or has passed on. This can fill you with resentment, especially when others don't seem willing to sacrifice their time—but expect you to give up yours. No one seems to understand that you, the caregiver, can suffer as much as the person you're caring for.

Yet, deep inside, you might want to do it differently. Many caregivers, while knowing they cannot drop their responsibilities, seek to “zoom out” of their situation. Amid the daily grind, they ask: Where can I find more strength? How can I continue to have compassion and patience when I'm feeling so drained? Is there any other way of looking at my role as a caregiver?

These are some of the questions we hope to explore in this book, which has been designed with your busy schedule in mind. Each “chapter” has been kept short, and will hopefully leave you with something useful—a provoking thought to reflect on, a fresh insight to ponder, or a practical tip or two on dealing with the various issues of caregiving. Each entry also comes with a Bible verse, prayer, and key thought, so you can read this resource either as a book or a devotional of sorts.

In between, we have included a couple of testimonies by fellow caregivers who are walking the same road and struggling with the same tasks and responsibilities of caring while trying to adopt the mind and heart of Christ. Finally, we will also look at the example of Christ the caregiver.

Ultimately, we hope that this resource will help you see caregiving from a new perspective—not just as a task, but as a journey.

Yes, caregiving is a long, arduous walk. But it is one that you can take together with God, having the full assurance that He is walking beside you all the time. It is a journey that can grow your relationship with God, transform you, and change your relationships with others. As you walk with Him, you will find strength and refreshment in His truth and promises. You will discover a living stream that will quench your thirst, nourish your mind and body, and comfort your soul.

On this journey, you will also come to realise that you are not a prisoner of your circumstances. You are not bound by duty, but freed for service. God has called you to walk a path of challenge and change. That’s why the chapters in this book focus on the three parties

you relate to as a caregiver: God, yourself, and others. Notice that “others” comes last!

We pray that as you read this book, God will give you the strength, courage, and openness to consider new approaches to your role of caregiving, so that you will grow in your walk with God and emerge a stronger, more faithful disciple of Jesus Christ, learning to love and care as He does.

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I. JOURNEYING WITH GOD

*Caregiving gives you a glimpse into God's heart to care and love,
and an opportunity to build your relationship with Him.*

A divine appointment

Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

—Isaiah 40:31

The call to be a caregiver is a call to sacrifice. We are expected to be totally selfless and put aside our personal priorities as we adapt to a life of caring for an ailing spouse, an aged parent, or a special needs child. We are called to give, give, and give. And if someone suggests that the experience will ultimately benefit us, we would probably be dismissive. “What is there,” we may retort, “to gain from being a caregiver?”

Consider, however, this idea: caregiving is a divine appointment with God.

How so? Two things come to mind. First, as we adapt to our role as caregivers, we will find ourselves evaluating our priorities, values, and feelings as we try to balance personal needs

against those of the people we are caring for. In the process, we will discover more about ourselves, our relationship with God, and about God himself.

The demands of caregiving can strip us down to the basics, such that we begin to see our true motives, passions, agendas, and priorities. At the same time, the experience can show us what it truly means to live like Jesus—selflessly and passionately pouring out our lives for others, just as He did.

Second, as we deal with the overwhelming feelings of frustration, resentment, anger, and helplessness, we will learn to turn to God for strength to keep on going. There will be moments, of course, when we will feel so burdened that even crying out to God becomes difficult. And there

will be times when we will feel like throwing in the towel and giving up altogether.

But it is precisely at these times, when we are at our weakest, that we encounter God in a deep, personal way (2 Corinthians 12:9). In Luke 15:3–6, the Lord describes how a shepherd joyfully shoulders his lost sheep and returns home. How comforting! Imagine being carried up by God the loving Shepherd when you are at your weakest, and taken home in His loving hands.

No wonder Isaiah could speak of finding strength in God this way:

*But those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.*

*They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.
(Isaiah 40:31)*

Oh Lord, You have promised me that Your grace is sufficient for me, for Your power is made perfect in my weakness. Give me the faith to keep looking to You for strength, for I know You will carry me in my weakest moments. Give me new eyes to see my journey as a caregiver in a new light, as a divine encounter with You. And give me a new understanding of Your grace.

Caregiving is a divine appointment with God.

Reflecting Christ

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

— *Colossians 3:17*

Do you feel like you have failed to be a good caregiver? Perhaps the person under your charge complains that you aren't meeting their needs sufficiently. Perhaps relatives and friends are critical about your "performance" as a caregiver. Perhaps they feel that you could do better in balancing your task of caregiving with competing priorities, such as being a parent, child, spouse, or employee.

If you feel you have failed, take heart: God does not view caregiving the way others do. He does not assess your service based on how well you meet the needs of those you care for, or how efficiently you carry out your role and responsibilities. Rather, He is interested in only one thing: how well we reflect Christ. The

instruction in Colossians 3:17 to "do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus" applies to caregiving as much as it does to other forms of Christian service.

Caregiving is a glorious call to be conformed to the image of Christ. It offers us an opportunity to live out our commitment to care for others as Jesus did, to love those whom God has created, and to demonstrate the redemptive power of Christ. Through our actions, attitudes, and words, we will reflect how God ministers grace and mercy as we learn to be Jesus' channel of compassion, redemption, and love.

It will be hard, of course. To love as Christ loves, we will have to put aside our time, our job, our personal commitments, our friends, and even our own health. We will be asked to lay

down our expectations of fairness at the altar before crawling onto it ourselves, submitting to God's desire to mould us into the character of His Son. And we will have to be willing—and prepared—to search our hearts and focus the light of God's Word on ourselves, our speech, our actions, and our motives.

So don't let the world—or even yourself—judge your quality of caregiving by the level of service you provide. Instead, focus your heart, your actions, your words, and your thoughts on being like Christ. That's all God sees.

Father, teach me to see beyond this task of simply giving care, and understand that You have called me on a journey into Your very own heart. Teach me to see people through Your eyes, to care for them with Your hands, and to love them with Your heart. For You love every one of us—me, the person I'm caring for, and all those around me. Show me how to be a channel of Your compassion and Your grace.

Caregiving is a journey into Jesus' heart.

An endless resource

Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed.
— Isaiah 54:10

At some point in our caregiving journey, we will feel spent. We will find ourselves running on empty, tired of caring and perhaps even wishing we could just give up. While our physical and emotional resources are limited, our tasks of caring aren't.

To keep going, many of us will try to draw strength from a variety of sources. We may motivate ourselves with the appreciation of those we care for, the praise of friends and family, our sense of compassion and duty, or the ministry of friends, sermons, and devotionals.

Though precious, these sources of strength will never be sufficient. Only God can truly sustain us on the journey of caregiving. He is the only source of strength that never runs dry.

His love for us is unfailing (Isaiah 54:10), and only an intimate relationship with Him can provide us with the strength to care for others as He does.

When you are running dry, remember this: God longs to know you intimately, to hear your needs and worries. He wants you to run to Him for strength, and He wants to listen to you. Nothing pleases Him as much as you depending on Him constantly and sharing your heart with Him.

Of course, you may find it challenging to spend time with God each day. But don't blame yourself if you can't spend as much time with Him as you feel you should.

In *Different Dream Parenting*, writer Jolene Philo encourages parents of special needs

children to trust God to create opportunities for them to seek Him, and to let Him give them the creativity to find pockets of time to pray and read His Word.

“He’s not keeping score,” she says of God. “He is not in competition with your child. He charged you with the care of your child as surely as He called you into relationship with Him. So you can trust Him to provide ways for you to foster your relationship with Him and your child . . . You can trust Him to

create those opportunities because He’s committed to growing a relationship with you.”

Father, stir in me a longing to know you deeply and intimately. May my thirst for you grow stronger each day, and may I learn what it means to live in intimate communication with you as I walk through each day in prayer.

Creative ways to spend time with God

- **Listen** to audio versions of the Bible, devotions, or sermons while driving or doing chores.
- **Read** large-print editions of the Bible during repetitive tasks that allow you to look elsewhere.
- **Memorise** Bible verses in the morning and recite them during the day.
- **Read** devotions online or on your mobile phone when you’re taking public transport.

Source: Different Dream Parenting

Tap an endless resource—God.

Loving God first

*You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.
I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.
Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you. —Psalm 63:1–3*

We all know caregiving is about love. But sometimes it's just

impossible. How are we to love those we care for wholeheartedly when the relationships we have with them are so strained? How are we to love others selflessly when we ourselves are angry, frustrated, and tired?

Let's see what Jesus says about love. The greatest commandment, our Lord says, is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all

your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). Then comes the second: "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

This is the "double-love" command, on which our entire caregiving journey should be based. The order of the two commands indicates that our love for others must be the natural outflow of our love for God. Only by committing ourselves to our loving God are we then able to serve, love, forgive, and care for others.

What does it mean to love God? It means knowing Him, worshipping and praising Him, putting Him first in everything we do, desiring His presence in our lives, and obeying Him. In practical terms, it means spending time in His Word and in prayer; making Him the first priority and centre of our lives; submitting our will, desires, and passions to Him; and obeying His commands.

King David, the man whom God himself called “a man after his own heart”, described his love for God as a “thirst” for his Lord’s presence. God’s love, he wrote, was “better than life” itself, for it satisfied him more than the “richest of foods” (Psalm 63:1–5).

So let love for God overwhelm your heart. Let it engulf your soul. Let it captivate you so much that it possesses your emotions, your mind, and your actions. When this happens, you will find yourself taking on

the nature of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, and pouring out your life in service to others. Your love for Him will shape the way you see His children—whether they are lovely or not.

As you learn to love God, you will become the person God intends you to be: fully loving those whom God entrusts into your care, and becoming the true caregiver He intends you to be.

Lord Jesus, sometimes I struggle to love those I care for. But I know You are the God of love, and You desire that I love You. Fill me, I ask today, with love for You. Overwhelm me with a desire for Your presence in my heart, for I know that out of this love will flow a love for others.

***How can we learn to love others?
By learning to love God first.***

Ask God!

Be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. —Habakkuk 1:5

When Grace's mother suffered a brain injury after a fall, Grace and her family kept asking God, "Why did You let this happen? Why didn't You intervene?"

Some things in life just don't seem to make sense. It can be hard to believe in God's goodness when someone we love lives with chronic pain or illness. Why doesn't God cure our loved ones? Why are we saddled with the responsibility of caregiving when others can't be bothered? Why are we being burdened beyond what we feel we can bear? Why is God allowing such suffering?

Many of us dare not ask these questions out loud simply because we have been taught not to question God. We have been told to restrain our resentment,

trust in His sovereignty, and not doubt Him, because that would be tantamount to challenging His authority.

But here's something to consider: Our God is big enough to handle all these questions! He is never surprised nor insulted by them.

There is a difference between challenging God's authority, as if He was accountable to us, and humbly seeking answers from Him, saying, "Lord, I don't understand what's going on. Why is this happening? Show me how to keep trusting You." The difference is in the posture of our hearts behind the questions: God welcomes our deepest and darkest questions, asked in humility.

The Bible contains numerous examples of people questioning God when things were going

badly. Hit by crisis after crisis, Job didn't hesitate to ask God: "If I have sinned, what have I done to you, you who see everything we do? Why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you? Why do you not pardon my offences and forgive my sins?" (Job 7:20–21)

The prophet Habakkuk also challenged God over the injustice he saw around him. "Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?" (Habakkuk 1:13)

What is significant about all these people's earnest questioning is that it led them back to God, not away from Him. Grace says her honest questioning brought her closer to God and gave her a deeper understanding of what it means to trust Him even when things didn't make sense.

When we take our struggles to God honestly and humbly, it builds our relationship with Him. We will learn to trust Him and understand that even when we don't get the answers we seek, we have the assurance that He is in full control of our situation, and will deal with it in His time and way. Above all, we will have the comfort of His presence, knowing that He accompanies us on our journey of caregiving.

Lord, thank You for being merciful and patient with me, and allowing me to ask You all these difficult questions. Teach me to accept Your answers, even when I don't understand them fully and when they don't fit in with my human understanding. Help me to grow closer to You as I learn to trust You more and more each day.

***Don't be afraid to question God;
He's big enough to take it.***

When there are no answers

*I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
I will sing the LORD's praise,
for he has been good to me. —Psalm 13:5–6*

Remember the story of Joseph? What Jacob's favourite son had to endure offered little visible evidence that God was working out things "for his good", at least at the time.

Kidnapped by his own brothers and sold off as a slave, Joseph was stripped of his freedom, reputation, and the comforts of home. Then he was falsely accused of rape and imprisoned.

Anyone in Joseph's position would have found it hard to hold on to God's promises. It wouldn't be too surprising if he asked God, "Why is all this happening?"

The answer, however, didn't come till many years later, when Joseph saw how God was using

him to deliver the people of Israel from famine (Genesis 45:4–7).

While God welcomes our honest questions, we need to be prepared for the possibility that we won't get the answers we seek. Our hearts may cry out for answers we can understand, but the truth is, because we're humans, there are limits to our comprehension; we're not God. Our only hope is to trust a God who is sovereign over all things to use them for our good—even our sufferings.

All men of great faith, from Joseph to David, have at one point or other questioned God when things went wrong. And they all came to the same conclusion: they bowed down to God's ultimate goodness and

sovereignty, for that was the only answer. That's how David was able to keep singing the Lord's praise in the midst of trouble (Psalm 13:5–6).

This truth is just as real now as it was in biblical times. Philana Lai went through periods of doubting God's love after her prayers for help and healing for her ailing parents went unanswered. She takes care of a father who has dementia and has also suffered a stroke, as well as a mother with kidney failure. As she continued to ask questions, however, she began to find that she could accept not getting answers to her questions.

"It's a journey," she says. "Sometimes I really don't know what to do, but I continue to go to God. I tell him: 'I can't, but You can.' I learn to trust in His sovereignty and power, and trust that He knows and understands."

Are you struggling to trust Him today? Are you afraid to trust Him with someone you love or a circumstance beyond your control? Know that you stand with Joseph and David in your struggle. And may your desire be to respond as they all did—in submission and faith, and to trust in the sovereign God who loves you.

Dear Father, You know that I struggle to understand why You don't put a stop to my suffering. Help me to submit to Your will, knowing Your goodness brings justice and purpose to things that seem irreconcilable in my eyes. Help me to understand that You alone are the measure of truth and justice. Help me to trust You even when I cannot feel Your presence.

***Let your faith rest on the character of
a trustworthy God.***

Nothing too small

*You will feed and be carried on her arm
and dandled on her knees.*

*As a mother comforts her child,
so will I comfort you. —Isaiah 66:12–13*

Sometimes we're reluctant to pray about the small things because we think that God has bigger problems to take care of. But the Bible tells us that God cares even about the minutiae. The laws He gave Moses in the book of Exodus include details about lost teeth, fire damage, property boundaries, missing clothes, and unpaid loans. Jesus also reminds us, "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30).

God cares about the details of your life. You can go to Him freely and express your concerns, no matter how insignificant. He delights in hearing your smallest prayers.

Whenever you're tired, frustrated, drained, or lonely, close your eyes and remember

that God is listening. Talk to Him, cry for Him, and pour out your troubles to Him. Ask Him to calm your spirit and open your eyes and heart to His presence. Then wait for Him, patiently and expectantly.

King David had no qualms about turning to God whenever he was afraid or discouraged. Even when he felt abandoned, he did not hesitate to question God:

How long, LORD?

Will you forget me for ever?

*How long will you hide your face
from me?*

*How long must I wrestle with my
thoughts and day after day have sorrow
in my heart?*

(Psalm 13:1–2)

Such "psalms of lament" express our deepest fears and

heartfelt pleas to God for protection, deliverance, and plain answers. They show how we are free to express our sorrow and pain to Him.

We're never asked to deny the hurt we're experiencing. Lament offers us the freedom to express our pain and appeal for relief. It is the only safe place to confess our hurt, sin, or anger, knowing that our pleas are heard by a God of mercy.

God cares about our sorrows. He longs for us to go to Him with our broken hearts and disappointments. He hears the deepest cries of our souls and will send hope, help, and healing, just like a mother comforting and assuring her child:

*You will feed and
be carried on her arm
and dandled on her knees.
As a mother comforts her child,
so will I comfort you.
(Isaiah 66:12–13)*

Lord, thank You for being a loving God who is not only mercifully patient in hearing my cries and complaints, but who is also loving enough to want to hear about the smallest details of my life. Thank You for being my Shepherd.

***Bring your troubles to God.
He's always listening.***

Finding true joy

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. —1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

As Christians, we're often reminded that we should experience joy in the midst of our trials. We are expected to feel good—and show a smile or two—when life is painful.

But let's be honest. It's hard to feel happy about the burden you carry as a caregiver. When you're stretched to your limits, exhausted by your schedule, and frustrated by the demands all around you, it's hard to even smile, never mind feel joyful.

But that's not what joy is about. Joy isn't feeling happy artificially, or putting a brave smile on your tired face and saying everything's okay.

Joy is trusting God and His great and glorious plan, knowing that it surpasses your understanding. Joy is the innate

confidence that God is in control. It is the assurance that after you've done all you can, you can rest because God is responsible for the outcome.

Such trust cannot be created by our own strength; rather, it is something we choose. On our caregiving journey, we need to choose joy.

But how can we do this? How can we choose joy such that it flows freely into and through our lives?

By abiding in Christ. By staying in constant contact and connection with Jesus daily, so that we build a close, intimate relationship with Him. First Thessalonians 5:16–18 puts it practically: “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Focusing on who Jesus is, His character, work, and promises, allows us to draw on His strength and see life through His eyes. Over time, it will change our mind-set and perspective on our trials (James 1:2–4), and we will understand that the final outcome will be greater than anything we suffer now.

As 1 Peter 1:6–9 says, we will be able to rejoice knowing that our faith has been proven, knowing that this will result in praise, glory, and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed: “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

Father, I sometimes expect joy to come as an emotion. Help me to see it as a choice. Today, I choose joy in my circumstances. You have chosen and redeemed me, crowned me with love and compassion, and I can do nothing less than overflow with joy at Your great love for me, for those I love, and for a broken world.

Finding joy

- **Stay** close to Jesus in prayer.
- **Look** for reasons to praise God.
- **Give** thanks for His blessings.
- **Focus** on who Jesus is: His character, His work, and His promises.

Joy is a choice, not a feeling.

The fruit of trials

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

—James 1:2–4

We've seen how joy is a choice, not a feeling, and how we can make this choice by abiding in Christ, spending time in God's Word, and focusing on His goodness and promises. Another way to choose joy is by holding on to this important truth: there is a spiritual payoff to going through the trials and tribulations of life.

James 1:2–4 says: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

Likewise, Romans 5:3–4 says: “We also glory in our sufferings,

because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Both James and Paul were highlighting the fact that trials are the means to an end, the ultimate goal of God's redemption: being conformed to the image of His son Jesus. It is through the challenge of trials that we develop the fruit of the spirit—love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23).

Keeping this promise of spiritual maturity in sight will change our attitude towards trials. We will no longer see them as things to be avoided at all costs, but as things to be embraced, knowing that God works all things

for our good (Romans 8:28). Notice that this promise comes after an honest depiction of our present suffering, including “groans” (Romans 8:22–23) that the Holy Spirit understands all too well.

Over time, understanding the purpose and outcome of our trials will enable us to take on the attitude of an athlete who looks forward to each training session. Even though he knows it will be painful and exhausting, he is motivated by the knowledge that ultimately, the training will prepare him for the final race—and a medal.

It is this promise that leads Paul to write this encouraging conclusion in Romans 8:18: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

Dear God, there are times when I do not feel joy. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed. But I know I can trust in Your Word and I can trust in You. I know You have a plan and a purpose, even for my current burden. And no matter how I feel, I choose to trust You.

***Joy is holding on to this truth:
God is refining you through your trial.***



Grace's story: Through the storm

After she suffered traumatic brain injury following a fall, Grace's mother needed full-time care. She was unable to move, eat, or bathe without help, and could communicate only through blinking and limited eye and hand movements. Grace, her brother, and father decided not to send her to a nursing home, and have put their lives on hold to care for her.

At first, I kept asking, "Why?" I wrestled constantly with God for three years, asking questions like, "Why did this

have to happen? Why didn't You intervene?"

Whenever I saw mothers and daughters going out together, I would ask God, "Why can't I have the same? Mum is a loving, godly Christian. She loves You, she loves her family, and has brought us up in the fear and knowledge of the Lord. Why is she suffering?"

After three years or so, however, I slowly began to accept the situation. I hadn't received any answers to my questions, but that didn't seem to matter anymore. I started to see how God had been with us all this while. "Perhaps He is teaching



us to rely on Him,” I told my brother and father.

As we continued to grapple with the accident that changed our lives, we decided that we would not blame God nor allow ourselves to become bitter.

Today, we continue to tell God that even if Mum does not survive, we will worship and honour Him, simply because He is God. He deserves our worship, not because of anything He can do or has done for us, but simply because He is God.

The journey has taken a toll on our family. Two years ago, my dad had to undergo surgery twice to replace the valves in his heart. Dad was in hospital for two weeks, so at one point, my brother and I had to take care of both parents.

There are times when I wonder, “How long can we keep this up?” Sometimes, I keep my frustrations to myself. I feel that nobody understands what I’m

going through, and I don’t want to burden friends with the same issues. But God will always send someone to ask me how I am. My cell group members in church have given me much support.

Dad has also been worried for our careers. I’ve always wanted to enter the travel industry, but now I avoid travelling as much as possible. I’ve also had to take frequent no-pay leave to care for Mum.

Sometimes, I worry about my future, but I want to honour my mother first. My brother and I could have taken better-paying jobs, but that would have required us to work longer hours. We both felt that we should take care of Mum while she is still with us—after all, she took care of us when we were growing up. We wouldn’t have it any other way.

I have wrestled with this issue, and wondered if I should be putting my life on hold. What’s next after she’s gone? I



believe that God will provide, as He has always done. It's a journey of faith.

Indeed, we've seen God provide us with so much in so many ways. For example, Mum's medical bills are subsidised because she used to be a teacher. We've also had competent, compassionate, and godly full-time helpers. We prayed for good ones, and God provided beyond our expectations. They are loving and treat her like their own mothers, even taking care of her on their days off.

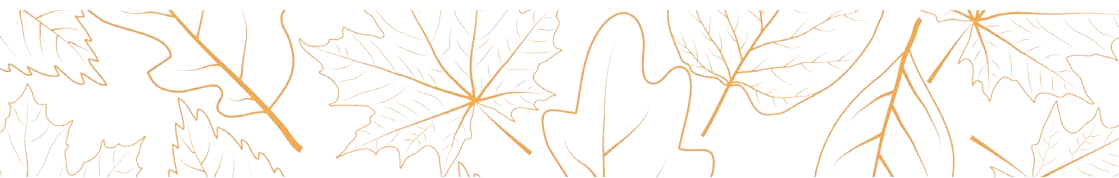
We also thank God for the improvement in Mum's condition. The doctors had told us that she would never get better, but we see improvements in small things. She responds more quickly, and her cognitive ability is still strong. Now she can use her right hand to point, give us hand signals—thumbs up or down—and squeeze my hand. She can blink in response—twice

for yes and once for no, for example. She can see, listen, think, and respond. She can even appreciate our jokes.

God has also given us much joy and peace. Every time we come home, we are so happy to see Mum. Taking care of Mum is tiring and draining, but we are joyful to see her. Perhaps that's how our heavenly Father sees us.

Someone asked me once if we had ever thought that God had forsaken us. I said, if we started thinking this way, bitterness would set in, and we would give up on God altogether.

I am reminded of what happened when Lazarus died (John 11). Jesus had heard he was sick, but took His time to get to Bethany. When He arrived, Lazarus had died. Mary and Martha must have asked Jesus why He didn't come sooner, but Jesus said that it was for His glory that it happened. We too believe that it is for God's glory that this happened.



I have learnt to see God as our first and last resort. Every time anything happens, we go to Him first. Without God, life would be depressing and hopeless. I'm very honest with God, very candid. I wrestle with Him, and I believe He treasures the process.

I have also learnt that prayer is about courage and faith—courage to ask God for the impossible, and faith to trust in His timing. We do hope that Mum will be healed one day—maybe on earth or maybe not, but certainly in heaven. God has spoken to me through Psalm 71, which tells us that He is our rock and refuge that we can always go to.

*Though you have made me see troubles,
many and bitter,
you will restore my life again;
from the depths of the earth
you will again bring me up.
You will increase my honour
and comfort me once more.
I will praise you with the harp
for your faithfulness, my God;
I will sing praise to you with the lyre,
Holy One of Israel.
(Psalm 71:20–22)*

And, finally, I have learnt to praise God through the storms. I know He will calm the seas, and eventually make things right.



II. JOURNEYING WITH YOURSELF

*The caregiving journey gives God the chance to work on your heart,
and to deal with your personal feelings and issues.*

A transformation of self

Whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant.

—Exodus 34:34–35

Each time Moses went up Mount Sinai to meet God, he came away a changed man. His face shone so brightly that the Israelites could not even bear to see it, and he had to put on a veil. An encounter with God always leads to transformation.

It is the same with caregiving. If we see it not just as a task, but a divine encounter and journey, it will transform us in ways we could never have expected. We may feel uncertain about what might happen or is already happening, but if we hang in there and keep trusting God, we will see the transformation that He brings in our lives. Through the experience and process of caregiving, God gives us the opportunity to change as we journey with Him and witness what He reveals to us.

This journey may reveal much about ourselves too. What might we see? Will we be throwing tantrums in a clash of wills with those we love? Will we see ourselves as martyrs and bask in self-pity? Will we indulge a sense of entitlement and focus on what we think is “fair”? Or will we become judgmental of those we care for, and those we feel should be doing more to help us?

These are all common struggles for caregivers. But God can use them to mature us spiritually as He transforms us into the people He meant us to be. As we learn to rely completely on His strength and surrender our will to His, we will develop new attitudes towards those we care for. We will start to see them as God sees them—people created in His image—and begin to love

them as Jesus loves us, selflessly and sacrificially.

If our hearts are open to this transformation, the process of learning to care and give will teach us to see what is precious and valuable in life. It will show us what it means to live out our commitment, and give us the opportunity to love someone better. And above all, it will allow us to see for ourselves that God's grace is always sufficient for us (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Father, thank You for blessing me as I learn to give of myself on this caregiving journey. Help me to be open to being transformed by Your grace, and teach me to be willing to search my heart, my thoughts, and my motivations. Help me to submit to the work of the Holy Spirit, so that I will be conformed to the image of Your loving, perfect Son. Thank you for Your unfathomable love.

Caregiving can transform us.

Keeping a godly focus

Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did. —1 John 2:6

How does transformation on the caregiving journey work in practice? What can we do in our daily routines to abide in Christ and allow God to change us, so that we “live as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6)?

Here’s one useful way to remember some practical things you can do to give your caregiving a godly focus: the MARIE principle.

Magnify God. Practise the power of praise. Focus your tongue and thoughts on God’s goodness, who He is, and all that He has done. When we grumble, what we’re really saying is that God is not good and has given us a raw deal. When we magnify Him, we acknowledge His sovereign lordship and affirm that no matter what happens, we can trust in a good and loving heavenly Father.

Appreciate others. Learn to see the blessings poured out around you every day. Too often we choose to see the negative, but we can learn to see the positive and express appreciation to others. Ask God to open your eyes to His blessings.

Reinforce biblical truth. We need to make the Word of God the standard for our thinking and actions, and not our own personality, opinions, preferences, or comfort. This means learning to think, speak, walk, and care biblically. It means submitting our thinking, our will, and all we have to Him. And it may mean having to lay down what we imagine are our rights.

Intercept negativity. As a caregiver, it’s easy to slip into negative patterns and speech. We want to vent our frustration

and resentment. We want to hear others affirm our opinions and feelings, and say, “Yes, so-and-so shouldn’t have done this to you.” But this can lead us into sin. There is a fine line between sharing important information—like how your mum refused to take her medicine—and details that serve only to inflame. We need to keep asking ourselves: What is my true motive for sharing this information?

Evaluate motives. While all of us truly desire to be selfless in serving and caring for others, it is easy for our motives to become skewed in the process. If we are not careful, we can allow greed, self-service, martyrdom, self-protection, and pride to slip into our hearts.

Gracious Father,

please convict me if I am following any false motives or twisted thinking. Help me to see any form of greed, self-service, martyrdom, self-protection, or pride that exists in me. May your Holy Spirit shine the light of truth into my heart and reveal the attitudes that I’ve hidden from myself. I long for a renewed heart and a renewed spirit.

MARIE: Keeping your eyes on God

- **Magnify God**
- **Appreciate others**
- **Reinforce biblical truth**
- **Intercept negativity**
- **Evaluate motives**

*A renewed heart and spirit cares for people
with God’s heart and spirit.*

The dangers of resentment

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

—James 1:19–20

Perhaps one of the hardest struggles we have is our battle with resentment—towards parents who demand much of us, towards siblings who make excuses, or towards friends who no longer seem to listen to our woes.

Why do we feel resentment? It could be because we believe that we're being asked to do what others won't. Or we feel we're being taken advantage of. Or we think that we're missing out on something. Perhaps our resentment runs even deeper: maybe it stems from a belief that we're entitled to something better, and God isn't being fair to us.

These are some of the hidden roots of resentment, and we need to be honest with ourselves—and with God—as

we question our own thoughts and feelings. If we can spot the presence of resentment in our lives, we can take steps to prevent it from taking root and leading to a deeper bitterness in us.

Take some time to reflect on your own thoughts and feelings today, and be brutally honest as you ask yourself: Do I think God has given me more than I can handle? Do I think that people owe me gratitude and support? Take your answers to God in prayer: He welcomes an open, candid conversation with you.

Am I a martyr? Martyrs try to get others to affirm their suffering on behalf of everyone else. They try to attract attention to their misery, so that everyone can recognise how bad their lives are. Deep inside, we might be

seeking to show the world that God isn't good, because He's given us a raw deal.

Am I refusing to forgive?

Bitterness and resentment can be an obstacle to forgiveness. Are we ready to acknowledge our own sin and pride, and lay our bitterness and anger at the foot of the cross? Are we prepared to see those who have hurt us through Jesus' eyes?

Am I justifying my actions?

Rational thinking can keep us from being subject to the whims of our emotions or others' demands. But when we wallow in resentment, we may begin to justify unrighteous choices, manipulative actions, and selfish behaviour. We may believe that people owe us something because of our sacrifices.

Am I rationalising? Some caregivers choose to "opt out" of their circumstances. They no longer care what happens,

do the absolute minimum, and withdraw their hearts and compassion from their tasks. We may rationalise such behaviour by telling ourselves that we're entitled to bail because God has given us more than we can bear. Resignation is perhaps Satan's most insidious weapon, because it attacks our hearts, passion, and commitment to love God and others.

Dear Father, I recognise that I often try to put myself at the centre of everything. May your Spirit expose the lies in my thinking and the deception that blinds me to my victim mentality. May Your work teach me to trust, and may I be willing to conform my thinking to Your Word as I grow in gratitude and grace.

***Resentment is really saying that
God has given us a raw deal.***

Dealing with resentment

Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps . . . When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

—1 Peter 2:21–23

Resentment can arise when we feel that we're not getting a good deal in life. But why do we often expect more from life—and from God?

The reality is, all of us struggle with personal motives, desires, and goals. We may want to achieve a lifelong dream, be recognised, or be treated in a certain way. Many of these motives are not wrong in themselves, but we may not even be aware of them until they are exposed and tested by the stress of caregiving.

When the duty and burden of caring for others make it hard for us to achieve these personal desires and goals, a victim mindset can result. Victims blame other people for their plight and

feel that they deserve better. Such a mentality fuels resentment and can lead to a deep-seated bitterness that ultimately affects our faith and walk with God.

How can you free yourself from this mentality?

Learn to see your heart as God does. Our brokenness was the starting place for the Holy Spirit to begin the work of transformation. Learn to see life from a new perspective—a biblical one. For example, Scripture teaches us to take responsibility for our lives and stop blaming God and others for family problems, bumpy friendships, and job hassles (see James 1:13–19).

Trust the Bible on what it says about you. Don't hang your identity on something as

unpredictable as other people's opinions or your own works. God accepted us as we are, so we don't have to prove anything.

Learn to thank God. Thank God for accepting you as you are, warts and all; for redeeming you so that He can transform you to be like His Son; and for extending boundless grace to you. Gratitude helps to switch our focus from ourselves to others. It frees us to serve, and not to prove ourselves or earn the approval of others or God.

Learn to give grace. In moments of irritation or anger, choose to make a place for grace. When a parent blames you for not doing more or a sibling slips out of an agreement to care for mum, choose kind words—or simply smile, stay silent, and lift up a prayer to God. Like Jesus, you can lay down your right to retaliate and refute.

We can try to hide our resentment behind good works and a patient face; we can begin to justify our bitterness and blame everyone else for our woes; and we can seek to stand in the centre of the universe and scream, “What about me?!”

Or, we can lay down our rights at the foot of the cross, remembering that the call to caregiving is a call to a divine appointment with God—an appointment that will ultimately transform us and redeem others.

Father, give me the power to forgive those who have offended me, and help me to relinquish any expectation that they must perform to my standards in return for my forgiveness.

Resentful? Turn your eyes from self to God.

Guilt: True or false?

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. —Romans 8:1–2

As caregivers, we feel responsible for making our loved ones happy, or ensuring that their needs are met—all the while balancing the demands of our own families, spiritual lives, jobs, and social interactions. Saddled with so many competing priorities and demands, we are likely to fail in some of our responsibilities.

The result? A deep sense of guilt for letting our loved ones down, or inadequacy for failing as a parent, child, or sibling. We feel guilty when we don't seem capable of giving our loved ones the quality of care they need; when we are accused of putting our personal needs first; when we have to make difficult decisions against the wishes of an aged parent; and when we end up neglecting our own spouses and children.

But what you are feeling may be false guilt—possibly the biggest struggle that caregivers face. What's the difference?

True guilt arises from wrongdoing. It comes with a sense of culpability or responsibility for a wrong action. It comes from something we did (or didn't do). If we are truly responsible, then we must confess our sin (1 John 1:9) and seek restoration (Matthew 18:15–17). True guilt is God's way of signalling that something is wrong and needs to be made right.

False guilt, on the other hand, comes from expectations that are placed on us by others. They come from those we care for or from our families—or even ourselves. Often unrealistic, these expectations aren't based on moral choices of right or wrong,

but on the demand for us to live up to someone else's standards (or our own).

False guilt does not mean that we've done something wrong; rather, it signals that we're just attempting to measure up to someone else's expectations.

If you're plagued by guilt for not meeting other people's standards, remember this: God is not a perfectionist nor a taskmaster. He doesn't intend for us to do everything. Rather, He is a loving parent who came to take away our guilt and shame so that we could walk in freedom.

Remember also that what other people think isn't our responsibility. Ultimately, God is the only standard of perfection that we need to look at. Don't forget: He came not to judge us, but to free us from judgment.

In your battle with guilt, ask God to show you the truth

behind what you are feeling. Consult Him in prayer and through His Word, talk to someone you trust, and see what God reveals.

Have you disobeyed Him or sinned against your neighbour? Or are you being burdened by unfair expectations? Let the truth of God's Word free you from such false guilt, and ask Him for the courage to refute it.

Lord, You know the guilt I sometimes feel as a caregiver, and my fear that I have not done enough to care for those I love. Show me whether this guilt is true or false. May Your Holy Spirit convict me if I have sinned against You, and free me if I have been burdened by the weight of expectations that You have not placed on me.

***God is the only standard of perfection
that we need to meet.***

Dealing with false guilt

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

—Isaiah 6:6–7

If Satan, the great accuser, can burden us with guilt for serving and loving others, he will find a way to do it. So we need to learn to recognise whether we’re dealing with true guilt stemming from an offence, or false guilt from self-condemnation or the weight of other people’s expectations.

When you feel guilt pressing in, take your feelings to God in prayer, consult His Word, and be honest—and fair—to yourself. Ask yourself:

- Does my guilt come from a sinful action or attitude?
- Have I violated a principle or command of Scripture?
- Am I trying to meet an unrealistic expectation?
- Am I trying to be perfect?

- Is the guilt coming from the condemning attitude of others or myself?
- Am I relying on my works and service to gain approval?
- Am I willing to rest in the knowledge that my sufficiency comes from God?

If your honest assessment uncovers sources of true guilt, it is a signal to confess, repent, and seek reconciliation. But if you discover that your guilt is false, then consider building boundaries to protect yourself from the unnecessary burden of unrealistic expectations.

You can start by establishing healthy, God-honouring priorities. Your first priority should be your spiritual life: seek God in prayer and through His

Word constantly, live out His Word, and remain in the body of believers. Then take time to think through other priorities and sort out the “have-to’s” and “want-to’s” with your family.

Ultimately, when you are better able to identify and understand your duties as a caregiver, you will be able to focus more on the duties that you can fulfil—and leave those that you cannot to God.

Father, help me to silence the voice of false guilt with the truth of Your Word. Teach me to establish priorities that honour You and to lay my false guilt at Your feet, knowing that it is not from You. Thank you for giving me Your empowering love and the grace to walk in freedom.

Fighting false guilt: Do's and don'ts

- Do take a step back and think of what advice you would give a friend in your situation.
- Do cut yourself some slack.
- Do humble yourself and ask for help.
- Don't be harder on yourself than you would be on others.
- Don't expect perfection from yourself or others.
- Don't think you can do everything alone.

Source: Different Dream Parenting

***Rely on God for the things you can do,
and trust Him for the things you can't.***

Sorting out your roles

You . . . only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.
—Exodus 18:18

Moses was a caring leader who, apart from leading the Israelites in spiritual matters, also tried to sort out their daily disputes. From morning till evening, he would attend to disputes and issues requiring the application of God's laws and instructions (Exodus 18:13). This obviously took up a lot of his time and tired him out, but Moses probably believed no one else could do the job.

His father-in-law, Jethro, pointed out how unsustainable this approach was. "You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out," he told his son-in-law frankly. "The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone" (Exodus 18:18).

Jethro wisely suggested that Moses delegate the work of

judging small cases to officials he could trust, and take on only the most difficult ones. What wise advice!

One of the ways to deal with expectations that produce false guilt is to identify and determine the key roles that you play in your life. This will help you distinguish between the roles that God has given you and those that come from elsewhere; between those that only you can do and those that you can delegate to others.

Start by listing the roles you currently play. Don't think in terms of tasks that you carry out; rather, think in terms of relationships that you have in your life. For example, you would be a son or daughter to God, a child to a living parent, and maybe a spouse, a parent to your child, a sibling, or a cousin. You

would be a close friend to one person, a casual friend to another, and an acquaintance to a third.

Think also of the roles you play at home, at work, in church, or at any organisations you are involved in. For example: a housekeeper at home; a manager at work; a Sunday school teacher or usher at church; a mentor; a volunteer at a local charity; or a member of your apartment block management committee.

(We've provided some space for you to do this in the next two pages.)

You don't have to come up with this list in one sitting; spend some time thinking about what you do and who you are to people in your life. As you do, keep going to God in prayer and ask Him to guide your efforts. After you've come up with your list, we'll take a closer look at it and see how we can apply Jethro's advice.

Lord, help me to be honest with myself and with You in assessing the many roles I play. Help me not to think of myself as indispensable, but show me the roles that You have divinely appointed me to play, and those that I can learn to delegate.

What roles do you play?

Write down your roles in each category. Think in terms of your responsibilities and relationships with others, rather than in terms of tasks you carry out.

Faith: *(e.g. daughter of God)*

Family: *(e.g. husband, mother, father-in-law, daughter, brother)*

Friends: *(e.g. close friend, old friend, acquaintance)*

Work: *(e.g. manager, housekeeper, salesman, businessman)*

Church: *(e.g. Sunday school teacher, small group leader, usher, choir member)*

Other organisations: *(e.g. volunteer at charity, apartment block management committee, country club board member)*

Source: Different Dream Parenting

***God gives us the strength to fulfil the roles
He gives us.***

Doing what only you can do

That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you.

—Exodus 18:22

In advising Moses on how to avoid a burnout, Jethro did two things. First, he laid out Moses' main role, which was to be the people's representative before God and teach them His statutes (Exodus 18:19–20). This was a role that only Moses could fill.

Then, he showed Moses that his other role of being their judge could be delegated. Appoint others to judge the simpler cases, he said, and take only the most difficult ones.

“That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you,” he pointed out. “If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied” (Exodus 18:22–23).

By discerning between the roles that only he, Moses, could play, and those that others could take over, Moses could avoid over-burdening himself without compromising his service to the people.

How can we do the same thing today? Earlier, you listed down the roles that you currently play. Now, take a good look at your list and start marking out those roles that you alone can fill.

(You can mark your list on Pages 48 and 49, or write down the roles in the next two pages.)

For example, no one but you can be God's daughter, your parent's son, your husband's wife, or your son's father. You'll find that most of these roles, if not all, involve your relationships with God and your family.

Think hard before marking each role: you might find that some are not “unique” to you. While you may be good at them and people rely heavily on you, it doesn’t mean you’re the only person who can fulfil them. Ask yourself:

- Who can take my place if I’m not available?
- Would the role be left vacant forever, or would someone eventually take over?

The roles you’ve marked are your top priorities: they are roles God created you to fill, for which He divinely placed you in these people’s lives. As for the other roles, you can pass them on to someone else, or ask others to help you.

Learning to say no or ask for help can be challenging, both for yourself and for those who depend on you. You may need to put your pride aside, too. But you need to remind yourself and others that these roles are not

your top priority; you have more important roles that God has given to you—one of which is being a caregiver.

Think also about how you can get help in some of the roles you have not marked as unique to you. For example, you can ask friends, relatives and church mates to buy your meals and groceries, or to help with some household duties. Specific requests can make it easier for them to help.

Father, give me the strength to faithfully fulfil the roles You have given me, and the courage and boldness to delegate those roles that are not mine to keep. Give me the humility to see that I am not indispensable, and the faith to trust You to take care of others in my life.

What roles must you do?

Take a good look at the roles that you listed down on Page 48–49. Now start marking out or writing down those roles that only you can fill; those that you can get help with; and those you can pass on to others and put on hold.

Think carefully! While you may be good at some of these roles and others may rely heavily on you to carry out these roles, it doesn't necessarily mean that you're the only one who can do them. Ask yourself: What would happen if I'm not around? Would someone eventually take over, or would it be left vacant? Can I get help to carry out these roles?

What only I can do:

(e.g. daughter of God, husband, mother, son, close friend, manager, mentor)

What I can get help with:

(e.g. housekeeper, businessman, Sunday school teacher, small group leader)

What I can pass to others or put on hold:

(e.g. choir member, usher, volunteer at charity, member of apartment block management committee)

God does not give us work to handle alone.

Self-care is the best care

“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

—Mark 6:31

During His ministry, Jesus faced endless requests for help and healing. It was difficult for Him to escape the crowds wherever He went, and even when He sought respite, people would literally run to Him for His healing touch.

But Jesus didn't let His infinite compassion exhaust His finite strength—or that of His disciples. Seeing that they didn't even have a chance to eat, He told them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31).

Jesus knew His disciples were in for the long haul. After He went to the cross, they would have to continue His ministry. Aware of their physical and emotional limits, He wanted them to pace themselves.

Caregiving is a marathon, not a sprint. Our role as a caregiver could last many years if we're taking care of an elderly parent, or a lifetime if it's a child. Our days may also be long if our daily routines revolve around people who need constant care and attention. Like the disciples, we too need to pace ourselves.

First, consider this truth: the best gift you can offer in caregiving is your own health. When you take good care of yourself, you will be more able to take care of others.

So don't get burnt out. Learn to recognise your own physical and emotional limits, and avoid stretching yourself to breaking point. Some practical things you can do:

- Make sure you get enough rest and respite.

The “P’s” of self-care

- **Prayer.** Keep turning to God, the ultimate source of strength.
- **Pause.** Take a break. Remember that while you’re pausing, God is still working on your loved one.
- **Plan.** Anticipate problems and scenarios where possible, so that you will be better prepared should they arise.
- **Play.** Do something you enjoy. It’s okay to have fun.
- **Physical activity.** Keep fit and stay healthy. Physical exercise produces chemicals in the body called endorphins, which improve your mood and help to counter depression.
- **Problem solve.** When problems arise, focus on solving them. Don’t waste your time or energy on assigning blame, it’ll just make you more upset.
- **Praise.** Find reasons to keep thanking God for His provision, such as your home, your family, or your job. Nurture a thankful heart.
- **Perseverance.** Pace yourself. And thank God for the opportunity to look after your loved ones; they are moments to be cherished.

- Pay attention to your own medical needs.
- Eat a healthy diet and get sufficient exercise.

- Take regular breaks, like a few hours off each day or week, to do something you enjoy.

- Keep up relationships with your friends.
- Consider joining support groups; they can provide you with much-needed encouragement.
- Tap respite care services or ask a friend or relative to take over watching your charge for a few hours each week.
- Ask for help as you find creative ways to expand your support network.

One of the hardest things for a caregiver to recognise is that we are not indispensable. Many of us fall into the trap of thinking that we're the only ones who can care for our loved ones. This can in turn raise their expectations for us to be there for them all the time. We need to ask ourselves: If we're the only one caring for them, what would happen to them if something happens to us?

Veteran gerontologist Dr Helen Ko urges caregivers to avoid setting unreasonable standards for themselves. "Good enough is good enough," she says. "God does not expect us to be perfect caregivers. He only expects us to be faithful caregivers."

Lord, teach me how to let go of my own standards and other people's expectations as I learn to care for myself. Grant me the creativity to find ways to recharge and relax, and the wisdom to take care of this holy temple that You have given me. I pray for Your divine strength to uplift me physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

You are a living sacrifice, not a burnt-out offering.



Amanda's story:

Trusting in God's sovereignty

Amanda and her husband Richie have been caring for a daughter who suffers from brain damage and a mother with dementia.

Dara was born normal. But when she was 14 months old, she had herpes encephalitis, which put her into a coma for several months. Coming out of it, she lost everything she knew. Like a brand-new baby, she had to re-learn every skill—how to swallow, chew, drink, roll over, sit, walk, use her hands, understand language, and speak.

The encephalitis also caused brain damage, and doctors said

she would most likely end up in a vegetative state. When she recovered, they called Dara the “miracle baby”.

Since then, Dara has gone through many intervention programmes and therapies. They have helped get her to where she is now—functioning to a large extent, but not independent. She's almost 18, but still lacks the ability to care for herself. She can't read words and can hardly recognise “1” to “10”. She remembers her teacher's instructions about going to camp, but can't pack her bag. She knows the sequence for taking a shower, but can't get herself clean. She can almost dress herself, but clothes still get



put on the wrong way round or inside out occasionally. She still can't figure out how to tie her shoelaces.

When we're outside, we have to keep her in sight at all times, because she could go missing. She is also very strong, which means you can only take her somewhere with her consent. She loves school and church, but getting her to leave home punctually is a daily challenge: time is an abstract thing to her.

We also have to deal with Dara's sensory issues. In the early months and years, she could not cope with certain types of noises and sounds, like those from a construction site or a loose door panel on the train. Even now, we try not to use the vacuum cleaner when she is home.

She can tell when someone is angry, and gets upset when we are angry with each other at home. Sometimes, when she senses an argument or criticism going on, she will object by throwing a tantrum.

She also throws a tantrum when she is told to go somewhere or is prevented from doing something she likes. She cries, screams, hits her head with her fists, or throws herself onto the floor. It is hard enough at home, but in public—that's when it is hardest. I have learnt to be very thick-skinned when this happens outside, and people can make it worse by watching or offering help.

It became even tougher when Richie's mother came to live with us after his father passed away. Diagnosed with dementia, she grew increasingly unable to take care of herself. Initially, we took her to a day care centre, and I had to help to shower her and manage her toilet visits. After she fell down at home several times, we realised that she needed 24-hour monitoring.

That was when we had to consider placing Mum in a nursing home. It was a difficult choice. If it was just a matter of looking after Mum alone, we



probably could have carried on. But with the need to look after Dara at the same time, we had to choose between the two.

We realised that Mum would need to be looked after more and more as time passed, while Dara still had a lot of growing up to do. If we didn't train her now, she would become a burden to her sister and the rest of the family in due time. As long as there was still hope that she could be trained for a vocation and to take care of herself, we would continue to work towards that end.

The struggle was an emotional one—guilt, a sense of being unfilial, and the knowledge that Mum would prefer to stay with us. Her cheerful demeanour and partial mobility made us feel that we were abandoning her. Yet, for all practical purposes, she is getting the attention she needs to keep her safe.

With Dara, sometimes I just feel that I'm at the end of my tether. Like when we cannot get her to understand and comply

with our instructions. Like when she repeats, over and over, something she wants to get or do. We struggle to be kind, patient, and understanding. It can also be very frustrating when we have to get moving and Dara just stands her ground—sometimes literally.

We understand that God is sovereign, that He loves Dara, and that He has the best plan for her in mind. But this does not diminish the pain of seeing her try so hard to process simple, everyday things. Of seeing her peers not accepting her and thinking she's weird. Of watching strangers stare.

We've asked ourselves and God many questions. How can we hold on to our faith and hope? Was Dara not healed because we lacked faith? Was it sin on our part? What do we need to do for God to heal her? Is God using her to teach us something? What is her future going to be like? What is going to happen to her when we are gone?



Since day one, we have prayed and prayed for Dara's healing. The days became months, then years. There have been times when there was a glimmer of hope, of something extraordinary happening. But mostly, it has been Dara learning bit by bit. In retrospect, we realise that she has overcome and achieved so much more than we expected.

I often use stories about Dara to illustrate our relationship with God. For example, we think like Dara when we ask God for something. While waiting for His answer, we fret and worry that He cannot hear us or will not answer us. But that's only because we are not able to process time as God measures it.

It's the same for Dara: next week seems like an eternity to her. Because we cannot see the danger that lurks behind our desire, and because we can only understand so much, we fail to see that God's way is better. Dara has taught us so much.

We have also been blessed by the many angels God sent our way: people who have prayed with us, people who have shown much understanding and grace, and therapists and teachers who cared about Dara—believers and non-believers alike. We know that Dara is loved by many people.

God has shown us that although our family's journey has been fraught with uncertainty and difficulty, we have never been alone. He has brought us back to His Word, which speaks truth and peace to our situation. God is always there.



What Amanda has learnt from caregiving

- **Trust God.** No matter what happens, God remains sovereign. When you feel helpless or overwhelmed by your circumstances, know that He is in control and you need not fear the future. God is able to help you if you allow Him to.
- **Give grace.** The people you care for may not actually want to have to depend on others; it is humbling to have to depend on another person for your personal needs. So offer help with grace; we could be in the same situation ourselves one day.
- **Know your limits.** As caregivers, we tend to stretch ourselves physically and mentally. Recognise your own limitations, and be willing to seek and receive help, both physical and mental.
- **Seek support.** Talk to friends to share your problems and frustrations, and to get an objective viewpoint about your feelings. Find friends who can give you emotional and prayer support, who can listen to you without judgment, and who might be able to help you in practical ways. Don't try to do it alone, and don't be afraid to ask for help.



III. JOURNEYING WITH OTHERS

*Learning to care for others in a Christlike manner
can transform the way you relate to others.*

When lives converge

And who knows but that you have come . . . for such a time as this?

—*Esther 4:14*

When Jesus asked the Samaritan woman at the well for a drink (John 4:4–26), His goal wasn't to be served by her. Rather, He was orchestrating a meeting that would change the course of her life forever.

Through His words and actions, He showed that He knew her story, that He empathised with her, and that He cared about her heart and her life. As a result, she would walk away from the encounter changed forever—all because Jesus walked into her story with a commitment to rewrite the ending.

Likewise, when Jesus healed the lame, the lepers, and the blind, His goal wasn't simply to restore physical wellness. When He fed the 5,000, His purpose

wasn't just to meet a physical need.

All these meetings were more than mere incidents of caregiving—they were moments of convergence. As Jesus met them in their time of need, it gave Him the opportunity to share His compassion, intimacy, and the revelation of who He was and who His Father was. These moments would eventually lead to redemption in their lives, as they caught a glimpse of God's love and mercy, realised their own sinfulness, and understood their need for His salvation. In His role as a caregiver, as in all things, Jesus was a redeemer.

And that may be exactly what is happening in your life today. In your caregiving journey, God may be using you to reach out and redeem others through

the convergence of your life with theirs. Redemption begins when lives converge, as they did when Jesus reached out to the woman at the well.

As we interact with the people we care for, we will start to see that we are all the same—broken and inadequate, in need of forgiveness and grace. When we care for others, we enter their lives and help to make God’s story of redemption real to them. And, in the process, our own hearts will be touched as well.

As caregivers, we often view our roles as doers, performing acts of service for those we minister to. But that is only an entry point for our journey. As we provide care for others, our lives will converge, allowing us to share intimacy, empathy, and compassion. True caregiving is perhaps the most redemptive work we will ever do.

Dear Father, thank You for this opportunity to pour Your grace into the life of another. You have given me the joy of joining You in your plan of redemption; You have chosen me as Your partner in touching lives. Help me to see my work as a rich gift that will change the life of Your loved one. Give me the grace, wisdom, and provision that I need each day to carry out the tasks that lie ahead.

When lives converge, God’s work begins.

Giving grace

Love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins . . . use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

—1 Peter 4:8, 10

You've probably faced scenarios like these: a demanding mother throwing a tantrum because you won't stay with her through the night. An ungrateful father dissatisfied with what you and your brother give him. A sister accusing you of not caring enough for Mum.

These are times when you've done everything you could. You've drawn clear boundaries, establishing what you will or will not do, and made clear how you are to be treated and respected. Yet someone insists on breaking the "rules" and behaving unreasonably. What can you do?

The answer: give grace.

Grace is what we received from God when He sent His Son to die for us. Grace is unmerited favour and kindness. It is not

being judged by our words or actions. Grace sees past faults and goes beyond the surface of who we are, to whom God intends us to be. Our salvation by grace, says Ephesians 2:8, "is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God".

Many of us, however, tend to hoard grace. Having received grace, we keep it to ourselves. We find it hard to forgive others, like the unforgiving servant in the parable of Matthew 18:21–35. We find it easier to judge others by their failings, forgetting that God has overlooked our own.

But we can be grace givers instead. We can pass on God's gift as faithful stewards of His boundless grace (1 Peter 4:10). We can look beyond people's faults, forgive, bless, and love. We can lay down our rights and serve in humble submission to God, just

as Jesus did in humility. We can love others deeply with a love that is able to see beyond “a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

We can do all this because we have a secure knowledge of who we are in Christ. We can look to the cross, where the ultimate gift of grace was poured out on all mankind, and tell others, “I know who I am, so I’m empowered to see who God intended you to be, to freely give and to forgive you.”

Just as we are reconciled to God by His grace through Christ’s death and resurrection, grace will also reconcile us to others. It is a balm of healing on wounds and scars, and it has the power to change lives.

And even when actual reconciliation doesn’t take place between people, and the grace offered is not accepted, the giver is still changed by the act.

Indeed, one of the most amazing things about being a conduit of God’s grace is that we get something in return: freedom and maturity. We begin to step out of the centre and see others as God sees them. And we begin to live in true freedom—not at the whim of others—independent of their actions, words, and approval.

Father God, thank You for Your grace, forgiveness, and abundant blessing. May I be a conduit of this grace in the lives of others. May I have a heart to pass on the same love and forgiveness that I’ve received. Give me wisdom and discernment to speak words of grace, or to show grace in my actions.

Freely we have received, freely we give.

Why we need to forgive

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

—Matthew 6:12

As a caregiver, you are likely to feel wronged or unappreciated at some point. A brother or sister blames you for Dad's illness and insists that taking care of him is your job. A spouse asks why you don't pay him more attention, even though you are exhausted from caring for your child. The very person you are taking care of berates you for her troubles.

How do you deal with the anger and bitterness that you feel? How do you cope with the overwhelming sense of injustice and unfairness? How do you release the grudge that grips your heart—even though you know you are supposed to forgive?

Now, this may be a challenging thing to do, but we need to start by remembering

that we're not entitled to a self-righteous attitude, even as caregivers who have been more than willing to give. Why? Because we're all rebellious sinners, broken by bitterness and perverted by pride. It was only by God's grace and mercy, poured out at the cross, that we were forgiven. And as recipients of that grace, we are compelled to forgive out of gratitude.

Jesus made this link when He taught His disciples how to pray about forgiveness: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). The parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21–35) emphasises this point: we forgive because we were first forgiven.

Let us draw on this truth—that we ourselves have received abundant forgiveness

and mercy—to give ourselves the power to forgive. Forgiveness will then become a conscious, deliberate decision, as well as a daily process. Just as we grant others the grace we have so freely received, we forgive them as we have been so freely forgiven.

What does forgiveness look like in practical terms? We will look at some helpful ideas later, but essentially, forgiveness means giving up our rights—our right to seek payback and to hurt someone in retaliation. It means trusting God to ensure that justice is done. It means giving up our desire to control the people who hurt us, and to release them from our judgment.

Ultimately, as we learn to forgive, we will discover that it will transform our very selves. When we make a decision to forgive, it will shape our attitude and what we think, say, and do—ultimately shaping our relationship with God.

Dear Father, make me sensitive to the moving of Your Holy Spirit in my heart, stirring in me an awareness of my wounds and hurts, my bitterness and pride, and my resentment and rigidity. As these things are revealed to me, I confess them to You as sin and renounce them. Thank You for the amazing gift of forgiveness poured out in my life that makes it possible for me to forgive others.

We forgive much because we have been forgiven much.

The art of forgiveness

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

—Ephesians 4:31–32

In Ephesians 4:22–32, Paul describes what it means to live a Christ-like life as a child of God. We are to “put off” our old selves, which have been put to death with Christ’s sacrifice, and “put on” our new selves. This idea applies to the art of forgiveness.

Verses 31 to 32 lay out the steps to forgiveness: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

What does this mean in practical terms? It means avoiding talk that fuels bitterness and resisting the temptation to harbour thoughts of revenge.

For example, we need to stop criticising siblings who are unwilling to help care for Mum, or thinking about how we can do less for Dad because he has not been grateful for our caregiving so far. In their place, we are to find kindness and gentleness. We are to forgive each other as Christ has forgiven us.

Ultimately, forgiveness means having to examine and control our own actions and character. It means learning to lay down our martyrdom, bitterness and anger at the foot of the cross, so that we can don our new clothes from Christ—compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love. Consider the roots of forgiveness:

Compassion, which comes from knowing who we

are—heirs with Christ—and not from judging how others treat or regard us. As we forgive, we take on God’s perspective and character. Our hearts will then be stirred by concern for others as we begin to view them through the eyes of Jesus.

Kindness in the way we treat everyone—and not because we like them. As we do so, we will find ourselves liking others more. We will start to perform acts of kindness with joy, motivated by the desire to serve out of love and glorify God.

Humility, which comes from time spent in prayer and service to others. When we are humble, we will be content to let God be responsible for changing others, and not try to force change ourselves. We will give out of the abundance of what God has given us, not simply because He requires us to.

Gentleness in our tone, as we communicate affirmation

through our body language and attitude.

Patience, as we learn to truly listen and give of ourselves, even when it’s painful and costs us something.

Love, because we see ourselves standing among the worst of sinners at the foot of the cross, in need of the same forgiveness. Only then will we be able to pour out our love freely, expecting nothing in return.

Father, thank You for showing me the roots of forgiveness. Help me to humbly remember that I cannot forgive out of my own strength; I need Your divine transformation of my self, my character, and my life, so that I can learn to practise the same mercy and forgiveness that You have shown me.

***Forgiveness is a transformation
as well as an action.***

Practising forgiveness

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

—Colossians 3:12–14

Forgiveness is not something that takes place immediately; it is a process that needs time. Just like clothes, the qualities of forgiveness—compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love—need to be donned every day, deliberately and purposefully (Colossians 3:12–14). Over time, with practice, they will become a part of us.

Ultimately, forgiveness is a lifestyle. It is a conscious decision to be kind or gentle, and it cannot depend on whether we like the other person or not. Rather, it is only after being kind to others that we will begin to like them.

But what does this decision look like in our daily lives and routines? What practical steps can we take in our efforts to forgive? Here's some things you can do:

Seek freedom. Forgiveness is the only path to freedom from bondage to the person you've been unable to forgive.

Remember that you were first forgiven. The foundation of forgiveness is gratitude for God's abundant mercy. Make a commitment to a lifestyle of confession and repentance as you put off sinful attitudes, worldly rationalisation, self-centred desires, and distorted motives every day.

Lay down your rights.

Forgiveness means laying down what someone else might owe you—and never picking it up again.

Keep your boundaries.

Forgiveness does not mean abandoning healthy, biblical boundaries or allowing people to abuse you. Instead, it allows you to make healthy, responsible choices in your relationships with others.

Don't deny your pain.

Forgiveness does not mean denying wrong actions against you or giving up the opportunity to grieve over what has hurt you. Acknowledge your pain and hurt to God, and tell Him how you feel. Be prepared for the hurt to last a long time—but be assured that when you gain God's perspective, your own perspective will change.

Release judgment.

Make a choice to forgive every aspect of whatever offence God brings to your mind, leaving the issue of judgment to Him.

Don't protect.

Forgiveness does not mean attempting to divert the consequences of sin. These may be God's spiritual training for those who have made bad choices.

Remember, forgiveness takes practice. It is a daily experience, a lifestyle.

Dear Father, give me the power to forgive those who have offended me. Help me to release any expectations of them meeting my standards in return for my forgiveness. And give me discernment in drawing healthy, responsible boundaries in my relationships with them.

***Forgiveness takes practice;
it is a habit that will transform us.***

Why we need boundaries

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ . . . Each one should carry their own load. —Galatians 6:2, 5

It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking we are not doing enough. As we have seen, this can lead to false guilt, as we feel pressured to live up to other people's expectations. How can we avoid this trap? By setting boundaries.

Boundaries are essentially agreed rules and principles that establish clearly what should or shouldn't be done, or draw lines where each person's responsibility begins and ends. It also involves understanding the consequences of personal actions and choices.

For example, if you're sharing space at home with the person you're caring for, boundaries determine who is the head of your home, what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and how privacy is to be respected.

Without boundaries in our physical, emotional, and relational lives, we would live at the whim and fancy of others. Boundaries tell others how far they can go and how far we are willing to go. They help us to understand our right and responsibility to steward the time, talents, and emotional, material, physical, and spiritual gifts that God has given us.

There is a biblical basis for setting boundaries. We can see them in God's rules for mankind's role in creation, His expectations for our conduct, and His instructions on relationships between governments and citizens in a country, spouses in a marriage, relatives in a family, and residents in a community.

Boundaries bless and protect by ensuring that we can

live in the way and manner God has determined for us. In Galatians 6:5–7, Paul reminds us that while we are to help carry other people’s burdens, each person is also accountable for his or her own actions: “Carry each other’s burdens . . . Each one should carry their own load.”

Of course, it can be challenging to set healthy, God-honouring boundaries, especially in Asian cultures that emphasise filial piety and community at the expense of self. Many of us enter the caregiving role weighed down by social and cultural expectations. Many of us are still children, always fearing that we will never measure up to our parents’ expectations.

Setting boundaries therefore requires us to deal with old fears and insecurities, and traditional expectations resulting from our

cultural background. It may require us to persuade those we love to change old patterns of thought, and learn to accept that we cannot do everything.

Remember, it is healthy to establish boundaries around our God-given desires and responsibilities. It is okay to say no to people; being Christ-like doesn’t mean that we must always comply with their wishes.

Father, thank You for the boundaries that protect me in my life. I pray for discernment when drawing healthy boundaries in relationships with those I love and care for. Teach me how to set boundaries that challenge me to be all I can be in You and that stir others to godliness motivated by love.

Boundaries bless and protect.

Setting boundaries

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.
—1 Peter 3:8

While boundaries aim to protect, they must be based on love.

The key principles must come from the double-love command to love God and one another, and be rooted in a commitment to pursue the best for those we love, with nothing but the purest motives in our hearts (1 Peter 3:8). As you work out boundaries with those you care for and your family, keep these principles in mind:

Give autonomy. God gave Adam and Eve the freedom of choice—and the responsibility of facing the consequences. You may need to assess whether your loved ones have reached or are reaching the end of their capacity to make healthy decisions for themselves. If they are still mentally alert, you need to respect their right to make these decisions—and accept

that they will have to bear the responsibility for these choices. But if these decisions affect other people's lives, then you need to negotiate with them.

Negotiate. Setting boundaries doesn't mean drawing up strict rules and insisting that others heed them. Boundaries need to be discussed and negotiated in a loving manner and with pure motives. This way, all parties are more likely to adhere to them voluntarily.

Try to get all the facts where possible (for instance, a brother may find difficulty chipping in for Mum's hospital bills because he is also caring for his father-in-law) and explore all options. Try to understand and respect others' interests, concerns, and limitations. Remind them that your relationship with them is

as important as your role as a caregiver.

Respect. Negotiate with a heart of respect, love, compassion, and humility. Seek harmony, but remember that respect doesn't mean giving in just to make peace.

Respect is a commitment to others' best interests. It means searching for common ground, and identifying places where you can give others freedom.

Listen. Listen not just to what is spoken, but also to what is left unspoken. As others express their fears and concerns, try to rephrase or restate their feelings. This shows that you are really acknowledging their concerns. Show empathy, not just sympathy, and avoid being judgmental.

Seek first to understand, then to be understood, and check your own motives as you listen. Are you mentally preparing an answer or rebuttal? Are you really

listening, or just giving the illusion of doing so?

Establish expectations and consequences. We may want to protect loved ones from the consequences of their wrongful actions. But God's Word makes it clear that sin produces consequences. All family members should be responsible for adhering to the same core values and practices, and prepared to bear the consequences if they don't.

Dear Father, teach me to listen selflessly and negotiate wisely as I seek to lay down boundaries with my family members. May I remember that these boundaries are to build up and protect those I love, not shelter them from the consequences of their actions. Help me see boundaries as an impetus to change and growth.

Boundaries are based on love.

Relating to the elderly

You who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another. —1 Peter 5:5

If you're caring for an elderly parent or person raised in a traditional culture, you may face this added challenge in caregiving: convincing him that you're not challenging his seniority and "ordering" him around.

The Bible makes it clear that we are to honour our parents and respect our elders (1 Peter 5:5). Asian society also expects younger people to "give face" to elders.

So, what can we do when responsibility for our parents' welfare requires us to override their preferences or decisions? How can we care for them in the best way possible, while still showing respect for them?

For a start, it helps to recognise that many Asian elders do not like to be confronted directly. Rephrasing an instruction as a suggestion can thus give an

elder person "face" and let him retain the dignity of making the decision to comply. Try saying, "I would appreciate it if . . ." or "It would really help me if . . ."

Instead of raising a sensitive issue directly, you may also find it more effective to go through a favourite child or a close aunt. When it comes to important matters, many Asian parents prefer to speak through a favourite sibling or trusted relative. "My late mum would go through my sister to tell me something," says veteran gerontologist Dr Helen Ko. "Or tell me to tell my sister."

You can also externalise the problem. Instead of putting a parent at the centre and saying, "You need to move to Sis' home", reframe the issue as a concern for all parties to address together: "My new job requires me to travel

over the weekend. What do you think we should do?”

Communication with an uncooperative parent will always be challenging. But we can draw strength from the biblical truth that honouring our parents—no matter what they are like—is not only right, but also pleases God.

Lord, thank You for the reminder to obey and honour my parents and elders. Teach me how to keep honouring and respecting them even as I learn to engage them on this caregiving journey.

6 “E’s” of communication

- **Engage.** Build up a relationship of trust by spending time not just as a caregiver, but also a child or friend. This will enable better and more effective communication in the long term.
- **Empathise.** Try to understand their situation and put yourself in their shoes to see the problem from their eyes.
- **Explore.** Find out the real cause of a problem or concern. Is a parent reluctant to take his medicine because of the cost? Or is it really because it’s hard to swallow?
- **Enlist.** Address sensitive issues together, such as by showing them that they are helping you to help them.
- **Educate.** Explain how the solution will help them, such as how the same medicine has benefited others.
- **Empower.** Build confidence by letting the person make decisions where possible. Help them recognise the possibility of success, and remind them of past successes.

Source: Counselling Older Adults

Care with compassion, speak with respect.

Letting go

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.

—John 14:1–4

Many caregivers of older people find that they have to treat their loved ones like children. They make decisions on their behalf, or stop them from doing things on their own in case they hurt themselves. It's understandable, as some older people need the same attention and care that young children do.

But this can be frustrating for them. Some may feel offended at having their choices constantly disregarded. Others may feel discouraged, lose confidence in themselves, and become even more dependent on their caregivers.

Perhaps we need to ask ourselves: are our aged parents still mentally capable of making

informed decisions? If so, we need to acknowledge their autonomy and respect their freedom to choose, even if their decisions may have consequences that are less than desirable. If these decisions are likely to harm others, we should try negotiation or discussion first.

According them this respect is not only important, but biblical as well. The Bible instructs us to obey our parents and respect our elders (Exodus 20:12; 1 Peter 5:5). It also stresses that each of us is accountable for our own actions (Matthew 12:36–37; Romans 14:12).

We need to learn to “let go” of our parents and let them make their own decisions—and

if possible, to do some things on their own. They may be more resilient than we think!

Remember, many of the older generation have a strong sense of self-preservation and self-reliance from having lived through deprivation and trials. You don't have to be there for them every single minute; they may be fine on their own or with someone else while you're having a well-deserved break.

The ultimate act of letting go—and possibly the hardest of them all—is allowing them to make the final journey into eternity.

Some older people are not afraid to die. But they worry for their families, who are naturally reluctant for them to give up on life. Are we prepared to release them from our care into the loving arms of God? Are we ready to say, “Don't worry about us, Mum, we'll be fine. We'll see you again”?

When Jesus' disciples mourned over His coming death, He reminded them that they would be reunited in His Father's house (John 14:1–4).

Learning to let go of our parents can challenge our faith and perspective on mortality and death. We will surely grieve their loss. But with Jesus' assurance, we can take heart in the comforting truth that we will be together again one day.

Father, may I learn the art of letting go and trusting You to be with the people I care for, knowing that they are in Your powerful, loving hands. Remind me, Lord, that their eternity is in Your hands, so that I do not hang on to my parents for my own sake, but learn to release them from my care.

Letting go takes both love and courage.



Jesus the caregiver

When Jesus Christ came to earth, He came not only as a redeemer, but also as a caregiver. He tended to people with illnesses, and consoled them in their suffering. He healed bodies and souls alike, and the touch of His hands extended beyond the temporal to the eternal. What can we learn from our Lord, the ultimate example of caregiving?

He drew strength from the knowledge of who He was. Jesus was as susceptible to exhaustion, weariness, discouragement, and frustration as we are (Mark 6:31). He too felt the weight of crushing responsibilities—and the desire

to flee them. But He also knew that as God's son, He had the inexhaustible resources of God at His disposal (John 6:35–38). So He drew strength from this relationship, living in constant communion with His heavenly Father through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This gave Him sufficiency as well as an intimacy with God that shaped every action, thought, conversation, and motive.

We, too, need to base our role and tasks of caregiving on our identity as God's children. Then we can draw on His inexhaustible riches of strength, trusting that God not only knows our deepest needs and longings, but is also always ready to meet them.



He put His confidence in God. When Satan tempted Him, Jesus responded with quiet confidence. He was able to do this because He knew who He was, as well as the source of His power (Matthew 4:1–10). When Pontius Pilate questioned Him, Jesus was able to handle his questions with authority—again because of whom He trusted (John 18:33–37).

Whenever crisis came, Jesus didn't panic, manipulate, or try to shift the blame. Instead, He stood confidently in His identity as the Son of God and spoke the truth.

A lot of us tend to live in panic, speaking and behaving as if God is losing His grip on this world. But Isaiah 32:17 reminds us that God's righteousness will produce everlasting peace, quietness, and confidence.

He spent time in prayer. No matter how busy He was, Jesus always took time to draw aside from His work to pray (Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12). He knew that staying in communion with

His Father would refresh His spirit and give Him strength and courage to face rejection in His ministry. His private prayer life powered His public ministry.

In our times of struggle, we too need to spend time with God. We need to lean deeply on His strength and cry out to Him for wisdom. When was the last time you were alone with God? When was the last time you took time out for much-needed rest—to sleep, to watch a sunset, or to lay your head on God's heart and pour out your sorrows?

He prayed with His closest friends. For Jesus, prayer was not just a time of communion with the Father, but also a time of intimacy with closest friends. He could have kept His prayer a private time of seclusion, but He chose to invite others to join Him (Luke 11:1–4).

We too need the communion and accountability of friends and loved ones. Just knowing that they understand our struggles can feed our souls.



He publicly gave thanks and reflected glory back to God. After long, wearying days tending to the crowds, Jesus didn't immediately retreat into His private sanctuary. Instead, He publicly gave thanks and praise to God, drawing people's attention to His Father's goodness and provision (Matthew 14:19). He did the same whenever He encountered doubt, trouble, and criticism. Instead of grumbling or blaming God, He turned them into opportunities to glorify God.

As we talk about our own circumstances, we too can choose to reflect truth in our conversations with others. Instead of complaining and implying that God has given us a raw deal, thus drawing attention to ourselves, we can choose to give glory to God and speak of our confidence in Him.

He delegated to others. While Jesus had the power to perform any kind of miracle, He didn't always do everything. Sometimes He chose to delegate

work and responsibility to His disciples. When feeding the five thousand, for example, He got His disciples to distribute the five loaves and two fish—even though He could easily have made the food appear in every person's hands (Mark 6:30–44). We can assume that He did this because the disciples had something to learn from the experience—perhaps the opportunity to be involved in a miracle, so that they could see God's blessing for themselves.

Your friends may want to be involved because they care for you. If you insist on doing everything yourself, it may suggest that you don't value or trust them. Allow them to help. Show how your friendship means that you are willing to accept their help.

He grieved the loss of those He loved with an eternal perspective. When He heard that John the Baptist had been killed, Jesus went away to grieve privately (Matthew 14:13). When told that Lazarus had died,



He mourned with Mary and Martha, even though He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:32–35).

Jesus knows how we feel. He recognises the depth of our grief and understands the loss and suffering we feel when caring for others. Yet our grief is not without hope; it has an eternal perspective. We grieve with the glorious knowledge that God has written an end to our stories—one that promises redemption and a future beyond what we can see now.

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