

CARING FOR ELDERLY PARENTS FAR AND NEAR

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“As I see it, during every phase of life, we are either being cared for by someone, or we are caring for someone.”

~Valeri Miller

Physical Effects of Aging

Skin-

Musculoskeletal-

Gastrointestinal-

Heart and Lungs-

Bladder-

Feet-

Hearing-

Vision-

Brain-

Dementia or Neurocognitive Disorder

Medically defined by three characteristics:

1. Two or more areas of intellectual ability are impaired to such a degree that daily functioning is interfered with.
2. The symptoms begin in adulthood.
3. The person is awake and alert. ~Mace and Rabins, 296

God's Perspective

- 1 Timothy 5:4 But if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.
- 1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
- Exodus 20:12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. (Quoted in Eph. 6:2-3)
- Leviticus 29:32 You shall rise up before the grayheaded and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.
- Proverbs 23:22 Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.
- James 1:27 says, Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.
- John 19:26-27 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.
- Matthew 22:37-39 And He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'
- Romans 12:6a, 8b Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly . . . he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

“Such appointments are not obstacles or inconveniences but equally God’s appointment for us. Parents or siblings or children who require our care become the Lord’s tools to shape our character, to sculpt in us a likeness to Christ, to reorient our personal ambitions and even our service. All rests on our *submission* to the providences of God in the lives of those around us as well as in our own lives. It is easy to resent these appointments as obstructions to a ‘higher’ calling, interruptions to our efforts to serve the Lord. My mother *is* God’s will for us right now; she is our service, our ministry, our calling. If God calls you to that kind of situation, it is not a setback to fulfilling God’s will; it is the means to living out God’s will for you and in you. God arranges such circumstances because His primary purpose is not for us to accomplish great things for Him, but for Him to accomplish great things in us and through us.”

~Layton Talbert, *Beyond Suffering*

“The purpose of caregiving: showing love to everyone else, while giving **God** the work of changing **my** heart.”

~Valeri Miller

God’s Working in the Life of the Caregiver

I. Being willing to be a caregiver is part of being a Kingdom citizen.

Kingdom of Man	Kingdom of God	References
What is highly esteemed among men...	Detestable in the sight of God.	Luke 16:15
He who loves his life—he’ll lose it.	He hates his life in this world—he’ll keep it to life eternal.	John 12:25
Whoever wishes to save his life—he’ll lose it.	Whoever loses his life for Christ’s sake—he’ll save it.	Luke 9:24
Some who are last...	Will be first.	Matthew 19:30, 20:16; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30
Some who are First...	Will be last.	Matthew 19:30, 20:16; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30
Everyone who exalts himself –humbled.	He who humbles himself – be exalted.	Matthew 23:12 Luke 14:11; 18:14
He who is least...	He is the greatest.	Luke 9:48
He who is greatest...	Must become like the youngest, and a servant.	Matthew 20:26, 27; 23:11 Luke 22:26
He who is a leader...	Must become like the servant.	Luke 22:26
He who wishes to be first...	Shall be your slave.	Matthew 20:27

II. Caregiving is what God uses to grow us.

A. Selflessness

Matthew 7:12 “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the law and the prophets.”

B. Patience

Proverbs 10:19 “When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.”

C. Endurance

Romans 5:3-5 tells us that tribulation brings about perseverance, and perseverance, proven character, and proven character hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the *love of God* has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

D. Faith

Legal Matters

- Durable Power of Attorney (Not the same as Power of Attorney!)
- Healthcare Power of Attorney (Can mark your wishes and/or leave decisions to discretion of chosen loved one.)
- Will

Long Distance Care

- Be as involved as possible.
- Make your visits working visits.
- Be available for respite care.
- Contribute financially if needed.

“Your support of the person who provides the daily care is probably the single most important contribution you can make to the family member with dementia.” ~Mace and Rabins, 205

Caregiving in Your Home

- Physical Space
- Financial Resources
- Support Systems
- Caregiver’s physical, emotional, spiritual health
- Benefits
- Tips

Assisted Living and Nursing Homes

- Ask to see the most recent inspection report.
- Ask, “Is there anything I have failed to ask that I should know?”~Fagans, 86
- Medicare.gov can provide you a checklist to print out and help you evaluate the nursing home. (Search for medicare.gov nursing home checklist)
- Medicare.gov/care-compare
- Look at staff to resident ratio. Know staff cannot give the individualized care you would give at home.
- Best way to ensure good care is to visit often and to keep in close touch with the staff.

Guarding Against Burnout

- Alone time with the Lord
- Schedule breaks.
- Ask for and accept help.
- Have someone to talk to.
- Permission to laugh and to cry.
- Get enough sleep.
- Don't isolate yourself.
- Adult Day Care Centers and Respite Centers

Impact on Your Family

- Guard against self-pity.
- Children are resilient.

“For a person in need, having a good caregiver is the key to their quality of life. To have someone familiar to depend on makes all the difference in the world.” ~Jo Bradley, *GreerNow* magazine, Oct. 2006.

Resources

- “No Wrong Door”- organization designed to streamline services and resources available for long-term care.
- alz.org
- nia.nih.gov
- caregiver.org
- eldercare.acl.gov
- nadsa.org- National Adult Day Services Association
- Meals on Wheels- if person is truly home-bound.
- Medicaid will pay for many services such as adult day care, respite care, in-home care, even medical supplies.

References

- *Who Cares? God’s Path for the Caregiver*, Valeri Miller, 2013
- *Helping Your Aging Parents*, John Fagan (MD) and Jeanine Fagan (MBA), 2023
- *The 36-Hour Day: A Family Guide to Caring for People Who Have Alzheimer Disease and Other Dementias*, Nancy L. Mace, (MA) and Peter V. Rabins (MD, MPH), Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021