

GOING FURTHER - RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM THE FAITH @ HOME CENTER

Complete Guide to Caring for Aging Loved Ones (from Focus on the Family) offers very practical advice to those trying to navigate the many decisions and issues associated with caring for an aging spouse, parent or other loved one.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

www.CarePages.com is a free online tool used to give status updates to friends and family when a loved one is facing a sickness or injury. Those across the country can go to the site and get updates day or night without interrupting the loved one's rest or adding to the caregivers "call me" list. It can also be used to inform local friends and family of current needs.

GOING FURTHER - CHURCH SUPPORT

Life Group Ministry: Authentic Christian community and mentoring is available through Riverview's Life Group ministry. Contact our Life Groups pastor Michael Beene at Michael@rbclake.org for more info.

Faith @ Home Mentoring: Mentors who can offer biblical advice and support are available. Talk with a faith @ home team-member at the faith @ home center to learn more.

Pastoral Counseling: Pastors are available to counsel those who would like more Godly wisdom on this issue. Please call the church office for more info: 573-348-3515

CARING FOR AN AGING LOVED ONE

faith @
HOME



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CARING FOR AN AGING LOVED ONE

All of us know that our parents, spouse, and other family members will eventually grow old and face the inevitable health challenges. We even understand that sickness and death are part of living in a fallen world. But we are never quite ready for these realities to hit our own loved ones – especially when a debilitating disease gradually robs them of a once active life or seeps away their memories.

REALIZE YOUR SEASON OF LIFE & SEEK BALANCE

For many people, it becomes necessary to back out of almost every other extra-curricular activity in order to fulfill their primary calling to "be Jesus" to a loved one during his or her final days. If you find yourself feeling like you are against a wall with all of your commitments, consider which commitments you can back out of temporarily. Some seasons of life are more demanding than others, and this may be one of those for you. In the same breath, it's important to realize that you are entering a season of grief. It is crucial that you not isolate yourself from your church family and close friends who can pray for you and encourage you during this difficult time. Whether with a parent, a spouse, or another loved one, you can take steps to become proactive by understanding some of what this season will bring.

ALLOW YOURSELF TO GRIEVE WHILE HOPING IN THE GOSPEL

Long before an aging spouse or parent takes their final breath you will experience an underlying grief as you observe their loss of vitality, strength, mental faculties, and other traits that make them the person you love. Mixed with the physical and emotional exhaustion this season can bring, you may feel overwhelmed at times. Seek help to avoid allowing these feelings to overtake you, but recognize that such emotions are normal and testify to just how valuable the person you are losing has been.

In addition, remember that God can use even these ugly moments to help us long for the day that we will be restored and receive our heavenly bodies. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 says, "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we

look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

PRAY FOR SPECIAL GRACE

The most common duties caregivers handle are transportation, grocery shopping, household chores, help with medications, and assistance with bathing and dressing. Despite the humble nature of such activities, the majority of caregivers use words like "rewarding" and "happy" to describe the care giving process. The key is not to neglect your own time with the Lord in the midst of your newfound busyness.

Psalm 34:18-19 says, "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all." God is faithful. Pray for Him to be near to you, and He will. Psalm 145:18 says, "The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."

EMBRACE CHANGING ROLES

The care giving child gradually becomes the parent. The care giving spouse is no longer able to rely on her husband's strength or wife's support. Primary caregivers can also encounter strained relationships with other members of the family who may expect input on or question difficult decisions. In one way or another, expect these relationships to change as a loved one's health deteriorates. God neither wastes our days, experiences, or relationships. Great wisdom is needed to understand how to adjust to these roles with truth and grace. Seek wisdom from God as your roles and relationships change. See Ephesians 5:15-17.

EXPECT NEW LEVELS OF FAMILY STRESS

For those who are married and raising their own children, caring for an aging loved one can add tremendous stress to the family dynamic. There is less time, less marital energy, less patience with childhood irresponsibility, and less ability to give everyone the attention they need. That's why it is important to involve the whole family in the care giving experience. (Even young children can hold a hand or give a hug!) Everyone will need God's special grace, so be intentional about giving them opportunities to participate in what can be described as the ultimate family service project.

If you are in the midst of this season, our prayer is that God will give you the strength and grace needed to face the prolonged grief and quiet sacrifices required.