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# Encouragement for CAREGIVERS

Caring for a loved one like an elderly parent or chronically ill spouse demands constant sacrifice. It's costly, yet it's also valuable, because as you give to the person you're caring for, God will give to you. The gift you'll get from God is something of eternal value:

*grace*



# Character

## SEE CAREGIVING AS JOURNEY INTO THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

Your experiences as a caregiver can change you in profound ways, helping you grow to become more like Christ by developing a strong character. Caregiving will reveal your motives, passions, agendas, and priorities while challenging you to live more like Jesus. As a caregiver, you'll learn how to depend on Jesus for strength and discover how He will meet each of your needs. Recognize that, while caregiving is difficult, it's also an incredible opportunity to be transformed into a better person.



# HERE'S HOW YOU CAN FIND GRACE AS YOU CARE FOR YOUR LOVED ONE:

## *Grace*

Thank God for giving you grace every day by extending grace to others whenever you can. Ask God to help you see past people's faults to the people God intends them to be. Forgive people when they hurt or offend you. Encourage them however you can. Affirm them

instead of judging them. Speak positive words that communicate hope. Be especially graceful to the loved one you're caring for, as he or she especially needs encouragement to deal with health challenges.



# Confidence

## PLACE YOUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Your experiences as a caregiver can change you in profound ways, helping you grow to become more like Christ by developing a strong character. Caregiving will reveal your motives, passions, agendas, and priorities while challenging you to live more like Jesus. As a caregiver, you'll learn how to depend on Jesus for strength and discover how He will meet each of your needs. Recognize that, while caregiving is difficult, it's also an incredible opportunity to be transformed into a better person.





# Connect

## CONNECT YOUR STORY TO GOD'S GREATER STORY

Your life tells the story of your own experiences. As you interact with the loved one you're caring for, find points of connection between your story and his or hers. Then pray about how the two of you each play a part in the greater story God is writing for the world. Let your lives converge in moments of shared compassion, intimacy, and

revelation. As you care for your loved one, realize that your work has the power to redeem your loved one's story – changing it for the better in ways that will matter for eternity. Recognize the significance of the times you share with your loved one. When you both enter each other's stories, you can make connections that will matter forever in the universal story. Even your most mundane work (like changing your loved one's bed or driving him or her to the doctor) isn't just physical; it's spiritual.

# DEAL WITH GUILT

## Discernment

Ask God to help you discern whether the guilt you feel as a caregiver is true or false guilt. True guilt stems from an offense that you're responsible for and gives you an urge to confess and repent of the sin that caused the offense. False guilt stems from self-condemnation or the weight of trying to live up to other people's expectations. Fight false guilt by asking God to help you see yourself

as He sees you and break free from a sense of condemnation. Also, make sure that you're taking care of your own health while you care for your loved one. Get enough rest, respite, medical attention, sleep, exercise, time in prayer and Bible reading, and time with friends. Eat a healthy diet. Set your priorities in ways that protect the time you need to nurture yourself as you nurture your loved one.



# BUILD BOUNDARIES

## *Boundaries*

Setting boundaries in your relationships with others will protect you and foster a healthy sense of respect in your relationships. Negotiate clearly what you can and cannot do as a caregiver. Don't feel guilty about protecting your own needs; you can't take good care of your loved one if you don't first take good care of yourself. If your loved one is still mentally alert and capable of making wise decisions for himself or herself, be sure to give your loved one as much autonomy as possible. If your loved one is hurting himself, herself, or others by making unhealthy decisions, however, it's your responsibility to work out better decisions. Negotiate with your loved one to arbitrate difficult circumstances. Prepare, pray, get the facts, seek godly counsel, and look for options. Show concern and respect for your

loved one in the process. Try to understand your loved one's concerns, desires, needs, limitations, and fears. Search for creative solutions together through prayer and by evaluating options objectively and reasonably. Seek the best interests of your loved one and do all you can to build a relationship of mutual respect. Listen carefully to the thoughts and feelings your loved one expresses, ask questions, avoid judgments, and show empathy, and take your loved one's concerns seriously. Be honest, speaking the truth in loving ways and doing what's right in every caregiving situation you encounter. Establish clear expectations within your family so everyone will know how they should act and what consequences will occur if they overstep boundaries.



# GIVE GRACE TO OTHERS

Thank God for giving you grace every day by extending grace to others whenever you can. Ask God to help you see past people's faults to the people God intends them to be. Forgive people when they hurt or offend you. Encourage them however you can. Affirm them instead of judging them. Speak positive words that communicate hope. Be especially graceful to the loved one you're caring for, as he or she especially needs encouragement to deal with health challenges.

# Grace





# YOU CAN FIND JOY

You can find joy – the spiritual confidence that all will be well, even in the midst of your caregiving challenges – by trusting in God’s promise to work all things out for a good purpose in your life. Remember that God is always with you, even in the middle of the toughest circumstances. Let your sorrow lead you to joy by helping you discover God’s sufficiency in deeper and more meaningful ways.





# Strength

Learn from the ways Jesus handled His own caregiving responsibilities while on Earth: He frequently spent time alone in prayer. He often prayed with His closest friends. He publicly thanked God the Father for what God had provided. He faced each crisis with calm assurance because He had placed His confidence in God. He delegated work to other people. He grieved the losses of those He loved with a sense of hope, because He had an eternal perspective. Look to Jesus as your ultimate model of a healthy caregiver, and follow His example in your own caregiving work.

FIND  
STRENGTH  
FOR THE  
LONG HAUL