

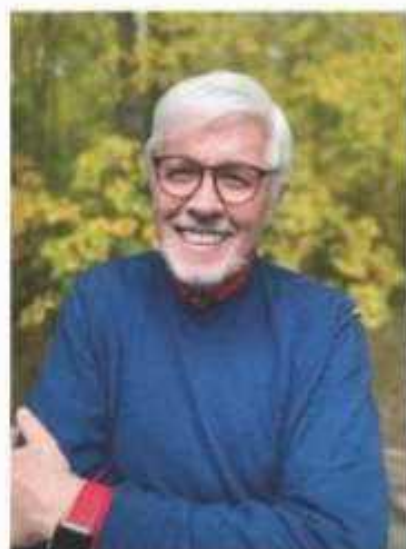
Warwick Cooper

My Turn to Care

*Effective caregiving
for those you love*



This book is meant to be a resource and discussion guide for all who are wanting to be better caregivers to family members, neighbours, friends and the “stranger among us” who needs a listening ear, a comforting voice, and a caring hand as they navigate the “life once lived”!



Dr. Warwick Cooper has an undergraduate degree in Theology from Northwest Baptist College in Vancouver, BC, an MA from Providence Seminary in Manitoba and a DMin from Andersonville Baptist Seminary in Atlanta. He has been a Pastor and a Marriage and Family Counselor since 1985. Warwick most recently worked as the Pastor of Counselling and Family Ministries at The Peoples Church in Toronto from 2001 to 2019. He managed eight other Counsellors and 11 ministries working in the community in the area of divorce recovery, family counselling, parenting classes, grief, addictions and sexual identity issues. In 2020 he moved to Kingsville, Ontario. Warwick was born in England and spent his childhood in Nigeria, West Africa, where his father ran a Plantation for Lever Brothers. His mother is French Canadian. Warwick moved to Canada with his family and attended school in Ottawa, Calgary, & Edmonton. He served ten years with Operation Mobilization in the Middle East and India before returning to Canada to become a Pastor. He has pastored in Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg and Windsor.



Regan Thomson (nee Cooper) is a Graphic Artist living in Harrow. She spends most of her time as a homeschooling mother of nine. She stays involved in the arts through her community. Regan is one of five children of Annette & Warwick Cooper.

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MY TURN TO CARE

**Effective Caring
For Those You Love**

Warwick Cooper

**This book is intended to be a discussion
tool for family and pastoral
conversations.**

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Unless otherwise noted, most of the Scriptural references are taken from the NRSV version of the Bible.

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REVIEWS:

I have known Warwick Cooper for over 20 years, and I expected this book to be wise, compassionate, practical, experiential and humorous - and it is all of these and more. A great guide to personal relationships as well as to more formal caregiving.

Charles Price, Former Lead Pastor, Peoples Church, Toronto, Canada

I am a Parish Nurse/Faith-based Community Nurse (retired) who fully endorses this Caregiver course. This course will be of benefit to anyone, yes anyone who is in contact with people. Isn't that all of us? It is easy to understand and combines a compassionate heart with facts about the essential role of the caregiver. It will give you a deep sense of fulfilment and gratitude.

Joanne M. Jasper M.A., B.Sc.N.

Warwick Cooper is a joyful Doctor of the Soul. He brings to the table a lifetime of experience from the mission field to the pastorate to building one of the largest church-based soul care clinics in North America. He has a wonderful sense of humour that punctuates his deep caring and understanding sensibility. With a depth of practical and Biblical answers to life's most perplexing challenges, Dr. Cooper has now brought his wealth of expertise to an even wider audience with this delightful book, *My Turn To Care*. Read it for yourself. Read it for those you love. Read it to provide yourself with the tools you need to be even more helpful to the people you meet.

David Brickner, the Executive Chairman of Jews for Jesus International

After watching and supporting my wife for over 15+ years of caregiving for her parents, I would say that your book is a very comprehensive, holistic and thoughtful approach to supporting the caregiver. The scripture references are invaluable during those extremely trying and challenging times. This book will be an incredibly useful tool to increase awareness and assist and support caregivers during their caregiving journey.

Thank you for investing in the lives of these unsung heroes as you call them.

Chris Kotsopoulos, Managing Director, CPK Consulting

"I believe 'My Turn To Care' is an essential read for anyone seeking to cultivate a deeper sense of empathy and purpose. Warwick Cooper masterfully weaves together insights, personal stories, and practical advice, creating a tapestry that is both inspiring and instructive. It is particularly poignant for families and pastoral leaders who find themselves navigating the complexities of care in their communities. This book serves not only as a discussion tool but as a roadmap for those aspiring to lead with love and wisdom."

Rev. Dr. Carson Pue, *best-selling author of Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Character, Calling and Competency.*

This book was waiting to be written and Dr. Warwick Cooper is the perfect person to write it. Warwick skillfully combines over 40 years of global missionary service with his experience as a Pastor and Counsellor.

Written in an easy-to-read narrative style, each chapter reveals principles, Scriptures, anecdotes, and helpful materials, and chapters may be studied as stand-alone. Warwick tells us that he saw the need for a discussion tool that would cover the landscape, and he truly delivers as promised.

This is more than a book. It is a compendium of resources, not only for caregivers and care-receivers, but it is also valuable for couples, parents, pastors, mentors and those seeking to be more effective in sharing their faith. Warwick drives these principles home with memorable anecdotes from Annette's and his own life experiences, and Scripture.

Readers will want to keep "My Turn To Care" close-at-hand for inspiration, counsel and references.

**Richard G. Schmelzle, BA, DC. Founder, C.S. Lewis Institute
Toronto**

Dedication

To my son Russell for what he taught me throughout his life
and even through his passing.



Thanks:

I appreciate the help and assistance of my friends Baha Habashy and Tomaz Harold in putting this work together.

I am also very grateful for the work of my daughter Regen Thomson in the beautiful artwork she has done for this book, the support of my wife, Annette, the use of my daughter Renee Skidmore's home in Wasaga Beach to begin the writing, and many other friends who have been very inspiring.

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Introduction:

Whether it is the worst or the best of times, it is the only time we have to live and make changes in our world. We see evidence of disruption, pain, and misunderstandings everywhere we turn. Disagreements and social pressures are tearing families apart. We are not far removed from how things were in the days when the Bible was written.

The artwork on the front of this book is a painting by my daughter, Regan Thomson. She did it from a photograph of three generations of hands: Grandfather, Son (mine), and Grandson. The three of us had a great connection. Sadly, both the youngest and the oldest are no longer with us. My father-in-law (Ray de la Haye) went to be with the Lord he served as a missionary in Africa for some 60 years. He is sadly missed. My son (Russell), after battling with depression, chose to take his own life at the age of 36. He is also sadly missed.

I have pastored in five churches in Canada for the past 50 years. I have experienced the Grace of God in so many ways. I have been most impressed by how the body of Christ comes alongside hurting folks. We are all “uneven performers” at best, in many ways, in caring for others.

This book results from a felt need to help people like you who are caring for others. Perhaps you have had a great life and now find yourself the chief caregiver for an elderly parent who is experiencing the first signs of dementia or Alzheimer's. You never saw yourself in that role before, and you need some help if you are going to survive the road ahead.

I have written this book with you in mind. It covers the landscape; not all will apply to your current situation. I hope you will find the writing easy to grasp and helpful in dealing with some of the questions you and others might be having.

THE ART OF LISTENING

TUNED IN, MASTERING THE SKILL OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING



1. THE ART OF LISTENING

OVERVIEW

This chapter recounts a counselling experience with an elderly couple seeking divorce after 50 years due to communication issues. The husband's hearing impairment suggests hearing aids before discussing divorce. A month later, the couple reports improvement after addressing the hearing issue. The chapter emphasizes the importance of effective listening in relationships, both physical and emotional. It discusses techniques such as creating a conducive setting, understanding non-verbal cues, and using open-ended questions. It underscores the importance of reflecting on spiritual and emotional concerns, emphasizing trust and relationship-building in caregiving. The reflective process helps caregivers better know and empathize with care receivers, promoting a healthier caregiving approach.

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UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE AND ROLE OF LISTENING

They seemed like they were the perfect couple. You would see them sitting in the church's front pew every Sunday. Both were in their early eighties and when they told me they had recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, I wondered why they had made an appointment to come and see me as a Marriage Therapist. After some pleasant exchanges, they came out with the presenting problem – they wanted to discuss getting a divorce. Well, the reason for their visit was not landing well with me. “Divorce?” I said. ‘After 50 years you want a divorce? But why? ‘

The lady (looking more like my grandmother than anyone else) said, “He doesn’t listen to a thing I say.” “Is that True? “I questioned. “Is what true?” he said. “Your wife just said you didn’t listen to what she says. And when I asked you if that was true, you told me you hadn’t heard what she had just said. How can that be?”

I looked at them both. They both looked at me. The three of us sat looking at each other. What do I say now, I thought. This makes no sense at all. Neither of them was ready to say anything more. They looked at each other and shrugged. They looked at me and settled back in their chairs, hoping I could rescue this 50-year journey they had been on before they both jumped off a cliff. It was a hard decision they made to come to a counsellor. They had always believed that Christians shouldn’t have to go to professional counsellors. That’s what their Faith was for. They had been followers of Jesus for over 60 years, and they never thought they would end up in a counsellor's office.

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I have no idea where the following thought came from. I wish I could attribute it to my training and superior thinking. But it wasn't. "I bet you do much of your talking to each other in bed at night. Is that right?" I queried.

"Oh yes, I used to love telling him everything that happened that day. But when the next day came, he couldn't remember what I said." Her voice cracked every so slightly.

I turned to the man and said, "What side of the bed do you sleep on? "

"She's on my right. Fifty years, it's been that way. Couldn't change that now." He stated clearly. "

"And how is your hearing out of your right ear? I spoke."

"Oh, I haven't been able to hear out of this ear for years," he said, unsure what that had to do with anything. She looked puzzled. I looked at them both, and I still remember what I said. I have never said this to anyone before or since.

"I have an idea. Why don't you make an appointment with the Hearing Centre and see if they can fit you with some Hearing aids? When you get them, come back, and we can talk more about a divorce. We can't talk about the divorce until that happens. OK?"

They both thought that would be a good idea, but I am unsure why. But they agreed and left my office after a few more pleasant exchanges. He helped her gently and lovingly to the car. She waved at me as they drove off together.

A month later, I heard their voice on the phone confirming they would like to come in and talk again. They arrived and

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took their places in the same chairs they sat in a month ago.

“So, how is the marriage?” I said.

“Oh, we took your advice, and things are ever so much better,” she stated emphatically. “He got measured for hearing aids, and that is the last thing he takes out of his ears before he drifts off to sleep. It is ever so better. He listens to everything I say now. What a wonder it was that you would suggest Hearing aids. I had no idea he couldn’t hear me.’

I didn’t charge them my standard fee. It didn’t seem right. What advice had I given them? He stopped listening to her, not because he wanted to. He had no idea she was even talking to him. Hearing aids were all he needed. Their marriage was back on track. They had accepted their life as a married couple for as long as possible. But finally, one day, she said she could do it no longer. Why wasn’t he listening to me?

You may be tempted to think I just made this story up, but it happened. I have counselled hundreds of people over the years. I certainly don’t remember them all, but I remember this couple. I asked if I could share their story. They said I could if I didn’t use their names. I understand why. They had a good relationship. It seemed perfectly understandable that they thought of throwing in the towel with the relationship because they were no longer listening.

The first step in helping others is to listen to what they are saying to us.

It seems an extreme story, but it is being repeated every day nationwide. Getting fitted for hearing aids is one way of dealing with the problem. But I see many more people in a

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relationship where the problem isn't physical. It's emotional, spiritual, or even moral.

Let me explain. You probably purchased this book because you are asking for help dealing with a loved one who has become ill and needs help they have never required earlier. You may be the only caregiver in their lives, and you are unsure you can continue. You do not even have a clear idea of what is wrong, but the care receiver you are dealing with is upset with you and is not helping the situation for reasons unknown.

The first step in helping others is to listen to what they are saying to us. It is too easy to jump to a conclusion and act on that without confirming that what you are seeing is happening. To a hammer, everything is a nail. To an insecure person, everyone needs some affirmation. You are working out your issues and not paying attention to what is happening with the other person.

This often happens in families. You remember your brother or sister as they were when you were all living together with Mom and Dad. You ignore the last 30 years that have passed and still see them as the 'brat or bully' they appeared to you back then. Forget that a lot of time has passed, and they have undergone significant changes in their thinking.

Listening takes work. Professional Therapists are trained to listen to the words and to listen beyond the words. But you don't have to be an experienced therapist to teach yourself to listen. It will take hard work. Jesus constantly demonstrated the relationship between caring and listening.

When Christ healed the blind man (Mark 10:51), he asked him what he wanted him to do. He listened to his reply and then

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healed him. Why did he ask him? He was God. Indeed, he knew what was wrong with him. He wanted to have a relationship with the man first.

A lot of people were healed during the earthly ministry of Jesus, but there were still sick, wounded, traumatized people around when Jesus finished his earthly ministry. Not everyone

A discerning, listening heart will help you. Either way, we need to listen to people if we want to bring healing, encouragement, and health into their lives

wants to be healed. But that's a different topic for another time.

Perhaps God will call you to come alongside a loved one who doesn't want to be healed. They rather like the attention their sense of helplessness appears to give them over their life and the lives of others. A discerning, listening heart will help you. Either way, we need to listen to people if we want to bring healing, encouragement, and health into their lives.

IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE LISTENING TECHNIQUES

- **The Physical Setting for Listening:** "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen." Matthew 6:6

I still remember the sheer horror I experienced in driving a VW Van down the hairpin turns of a mountain pass amid a raging storm in Eastern Turkey when I was in my late 20s. The young people in the van were having a great time, singing, shouting, and cracking jokes with each other. I drove the van from

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Europe to Kuwait to meet the Ship Logos in the '60s. We had all signed up for a year of mission work in Asia and had to get to the Ship to begin our time.

My world flashed before my eyes as I put my foot on the brake when I came to the first sharp turn in the road. The brake went to the floor without affecting any change. Panic set in. I was thankful it was a stick shift and knew how to use it. I immediately geared down and silently cried to God, "Help me. We're all going to die!"

I looked ahead and down the side of the mountain. The zig-zag pattern of the road lay before me. Should I tell everyone that we are going to die around the next curve, or should I let them find out for themselves as the van careened over the next escarpment? I decided to keep it to myself. Everyone was having a great time, and I didn't want to start a dialogue with frightened people who couldn't do anything about it anyway.

We came to the next curve, and I geared down again. I yelled to God in my inside voice. "Help me, Lord. I don't want to die just yet". There must have been a half dozen corners we were able to navigate. I didn't see them all. The rain was pouring down in black sheets. Thankfully, it was night, and no other cars were on the road.

We made it down, and I pulled the car over to the side of the road, got out of the vehicle and quietly vomited. Then, my attentive passengers noticed I was doing something out of character and asked me what was happening. I looked at them and said, "Prayer really works, guys. Let me tell you how I know."

All during that time, while the others in the van were having a great experience, I was in my own world. It was only God and me having this experience together. I felt that He was listening

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to me as I spoke plainly to him. It was an intimate moment between God and me. And God came through for me in a big way. I needed that moment. My relationship with God was the most important thing for me, and even as I look back on it, I can see how God works. But he needs to get my attention first. Often, it is the first thing God does for us when we go through experiences that are too big for us to handle – like sickness, trauma, disappointment, etc. We need to get alone. This is true for us and our care receiver as well. God wants to get alone with them and speak into their life.

I always believed prayer works. I never needed it more than at that moment. It was then I realized that it wasn't really a prayer that worked. It was God who worked and got us all down the mountain pass safely. God was committed to each of us, and it was not our time to finish the race. Most of us in that van were just starting the race. I was probably the only one that night that learned that lesson. The others, although in the same van, weren't on the same page. They thought they were on Mr. Toad's Wild Ride and I was Mr. Toad. I felt like my life was about to end in a tragic traffic accident in Eastern Turkey,

**The truth is that
God is up to
something in all our
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us to learn this from
Him.**

where our bodies would be discovered by some Archeologist 100 years later. The truth is that God is up to something in all our lives, and he wants us to learn this from Him.

One of our roles as Christian Caregivers is to pray with people. Most of our prayers are prayed in

silence between us and God. Sometimes, our prayers are emergency flares lighting up the sky on a storm-ridden night.

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Sometimes, the setting is under our control. Sometimes it is not.

When the setting for prayer is under our control, it is helpful when we do all we can to reduce distractions. If you want to pray with someone and there is a lot of noise in the air, ask if there is a place you could move to spend some quiet time before the Lord.

When visiting with someone in their house, the TV might be on. Some people have the TV on as a constant background in their homes. I have often asked if the TV could be turned off so we can pray. Not so God can hear us. But so, we can listen to ourselves and form cogent thoughts. It also sets apart the time. Folks may not remember what you said, but they will remember what you prayed.

We all struggle with the task of listening well. I sometimes tell people I don't want to talk about politics today. Why? I don't want to hear any more things about the mess we are in. I would rather listen to some crazy YouTube video that takes my mind off the world's problems. Committing to listening to your caregiver is a considerable step we all need to take. This is why James, the first Pastor of the Church in Jerusalem, said, "...be quick to listen, slow to speak." (James 1:19)

Visiting a hospital room has its challenges. There are many things you have no control over. So, notice the things that you do have control over. If the noise level is too distracting, ask if you can close the door, draw the curtain around the bed, etc. It's not a good idea to sit on their bed or stand in front of the window where the sunlight shining behind you makes it hard for them to see you. Please move to the other side of their bed. Ask if you can place their hand in yours while you pray for

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them. That will help them to maintain contact during the prayer.

- **Listening to More Than Just Words:** "Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance." Proverbs 1:5,

We live in a world of words. Words surround us. Someone tells us something. We assume we understand what they are saying. But it turns out that what we take away from the conversation may be the opposite of what they said.

Words like 'abuse, trigger warnings, equality, freedom, responsibilities" etc., etc., are interpreted in many ways. This means that we must look beyond the mere words. Other things are happening when people are speaking. A good listener wants to understand what the speaker is saying.

Other things are happening when people are speaking. A good listener wants to understand what the speaker is saying.

We need to read between the lines of what people are saying. Kenneth Haugk is the Founder and Director of Stephen Ministries in St. Louis. He has trained hundreds of thousands of volunteer Caregivers to read between the lines of one another's communications and observe the other person's body language.

Haugk says: "Pay attention to voice tremors, gestures, rate, and type of breathing (rapid and shallow, slow and deep, such as sighs), colour (flushed or pale), muscle tension (such as clenched fist), posture (rigid, comfortable, or slouched), and choice of clothing. Consider facial expressions and what the

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care receiver's eyes tell you (tearful, focused away from you during conversation, closed). Ask yourself: "Is this person's non-verbal behaviour consistent with the verbal statements he or she is making?" For example, an inappropriate laugh or smile usually is a good indication of anxiety."

- Understanding and emphasizing the role of active listening

Active listeners are sensitive to 'tone'. One week, your care receiver may be very excited about their work and go on for a long time saying how much they like their job and the people they work with. You are thrilled with their happiness. But next week, they have an entirely different take on their employment. They are even thinking of quitting. They have no friends at work, and their boss is failing in many ways. This should raise your curiosity; it is an excellent time to observe. "Last week, you seemed so happy about your work. This week, it seems you have nothing good to say about it. What happened at work that would result in such a sea change in attitude?" The words they used expressed their thoughts, but a lot was missing. What happened to result in such a change? You begin to see a pattern in their lives.

Active listeners keep track of changes in moods or attitudes. One week, your care receiver has a lot of friends and seems to be getting along with everyone. This week, they have no friends, and no one understands or cares about them.

- Active listening strategies

Why do professional caregivers feel exhausted at the end of their day? This is a normal feeling for Nurses, Doctors, Counselors, Therapists, and Social Workers. Why? Because

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active listening (an essential part of their job) can be exhausting. If you aren't somewhat exhausted at the end of the day, you probably haven't been listening. You have already reached your conclusions about your client, friend, or patient and no longer need to spend any energy to discern if things have changed or if you need to change your approach.

**If you aren't
somewhat exhausted
at the end of the day,
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been listening.**

Active listening is miles away from passive or casual listening. Have you ever been talking with a loved one, spouse, etc., and they asked if you could speak to them about..... (a particular subject)? And you say, "I 'm

not ready to talk about that right now." Or..." Could we talk about that tomorrow or the weekend?" Why did you put them off? Because likely you didn't feel you had the energy to enter the conversation right now. So, you want to move on to another topic that doesn't require much effort.

When I taught the Stephen Ministry Program at The Peoples Church in Toronto for many years, my favourite role play exercise was when I divided the class into groups of three people.

I asked one person to share their favourite vacation and another person to be the official listener". But they were instructed not to listen; they were encouraged to look away, twiddle their thumbs, act bored, etc. At the end of the exercise, the third person was to share their observations.

The next exercise consisted of a person sharing what they liked about life the most. And this time, the listener was to pay close

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attention to the speaker. The Observer was then to share their observations. The whole point of the exercise was to demonstrate how de-motivating it is when we feel no one is paying attention to us.

When no one listens to our needs, we want to give up. Life is too short and too crazy to go through it without anyone caring about me as a person.

When no one listens to our needs, we want to give up. Life is too short and too crazy to go through it without anyone caring about me as a person.

Why are there so many Seniors in Retirement Homes sitting around all day – no discussions, no family members visiting them, no personal involvement with what is happening in the world, living on medication that makes them tired so they can get through the day? Very sad. I see the occasional person feeling called by God to visit retirement homes to talk and be a companion with lonely people. They are heroes in my mind. They love doing it for the sheer enjoyment it brings to the lives of others.

- **Closed and Open-Ended Questions:** "The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out." Proverbs 20:5

The role of a caregiver isn't just to meet the physical needs of a care receiver. That is part of it, but not the entire part. I have a theory of old age. I have not made a concerted effort to prove this theory. It comes from many years of observing what happens when people get old. Let me run it by you and see if you see what I see.

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Most people generally spend the last few days, weeks, months, and sometimes years in a state of increasing physical loss. It is not uncommon that people get sick and are confined to their rooms and beds for a period before they finally ‘shuffle off this mortal coil.’ If bedridden, they spend all their days on their back looking at the ceiling. If they are not bedridden, their life is diminished to a great degree, and they are not able to do all the things they used to love to do.

So, why is this? I mean, is there any purpose in people going through these debilitating years? Wouldn't it be better if we all lived our lives and then, one day, we just stopped living?

It may come as a shock to you. But even when people are sick for years and death seems imminent, death comes as a shock. Well, here is my theory – God has designed life to give us time at the end to reflect and review what happened. We are left with our memories, our heartaches, our achievements etc.

Perhaps it would be good to reflect on our life before leaving it. Are there some people we should reconnect with and ask for their forgiveness, speak into their lives, or alter the direction of some of our past accomplishments?

Perhaps it would be good to reflect on our life before leaving it. Are there some people we should reconnect with and ask for their forgiveness, speak into their lives, or alter the direction of some of our past accomplishments? Use that time well. So, when it is time for you to leave, you can go with a clean slate.

I mustn't get ahead of myself here. Not every sickness is unto death. However, a wise caregiver can use some time to give some honest reflection on

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the life of their care receiver. You are called to come alongside your care receiver more intimately than ever. You are not there to judge them. You may even see that one of the reasons they are so discouraged is that they are judging themselves much more than is healthy for them. Self-condemnation is a hard nut to crack. It acts as a straight jacket around a person's soul. I remember a chorus I learned in Sunday School when I was a small boy:

He did not come to judge the world.
He did not come to blame.
He did not only come to Seek.
It was to save he came.
And when we call Him Jesus
We call Him by His name.

How can we help our care receivers reflect and become more self-aware about themselves? By asking open-ended questions. A close-ended question can be answered with a Yes or No. It takes a paragraph, or sometimes an essay, to answer an open-ended question. Deliberately asking open-ended questions may seem awkward at first. You are inviting your care receiver to be self-reflective in your presence. That can feel not very safe. But it can also help your care receiver to deal with past pain and trauma.

I remember taking Trauma Training after 9/11. I went to New York and took a course to join the many therapists and counsellors who helped deal with the trauma of the destruction of the Twin Towers. That event produced so much pain in the lives of thousands. It was a three-day course taught by a fantastic lady with much experience in that arena. She taught us a system of dealing with trauma that, she claimed, would work every time if we followed the formula exactly.

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We were initially skeptical, but as we took the course, we realized she was not overstating the claim. She said she didn't believe it until she deliberately tried to test the claim.

According to the theory she was teaching, the experience of trauma has no cutoff date. Unless you deal with trauma, it will

Unless you deal with trauma, it will stay with you for a lifetime. You can deal with the trauma a few days after the event, a few months, or many years. The time lag makes no difference.

stay with you for a lifetime. You can deal with the trauma a few days after the event, a few months, or many years. The time lag makes no difference.

She arranged to apply the method to a Veterans Hospital in the US to prove her theory. She centred her activity on an entire floor of the hospital. It

took several months to get the permissions and to get everyone off their medications. Finally, the day came. She spent a few days with the men and felt it was well received. Most of the patients were men who were traumatized in WW2. That trauma was a long time ago.

She returned to the Hospital a year later to find that all the men had been discharged. They were all off their medications and back with their families and community. The entire class responded with a cheer for her. She stopped us, and what she said sent a chill up our spines. "And I was forbidden ever to enter a Veterans Hospital again," she said. Veteran's hospitals are paid according to how many beds they use."

The point of this story is to convince you that pain and trauma can be dealt with. Part of the trauma therapy is allowing the patient to re-tell the events that so troubled them. It involves reflection and insight with someone who can guide you to

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reframe the event in the light of the present moment. There is power in reflection and re-telling of the story. Open-ended questions draw out the traumatized person.

I remember using the method with a group of schoolchildren who had survived an over-turned bus. It was a traumatic situation for all of them, but the session I had with them helped each one deal with it in a healthy way. There was one young girl who wasn't able to attend the class. Months later, she was still dealing with her trauma. All the other kids had moved on to a healthy life.

We have all experienced some trauma in our lives. No one is trauma-free. When I worked in a Federal Prison in Manitoba, I talked to many young men who were facing a lifetime in prison for a horrible thing they did years ago. I remember thinking that if I had experienced some of the events these young men had experienced, I would probably be where they are today. That doesn't make me any better than they are. I don't understand how or why God has shown me so much mercy in my life. He has kept me from making some terrible decisions. Why didn't he protect some of these guys like he protected me?

- The difference between closed and open-ended questions

The only reason we ask people questions is so we can figure out what is going on with them. There are only three types of questions we can ask.

Questions that reflect content – We need to know a little about them. Where were they born? How big was their family? What was their job? Your care receiver might be your father or

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grandmother. I can almost guarantee that you don't know everything about their life. You were always too busy growing up that you didn't ask many questions about what they did during the war, etc. Well, now would be a good time to do that. It will help them recount some of their life's good things.

Questions that reflect feelings. Why are they so angry about that? What did they feel when their mom passed? Why don't they feel like talking about their first marriage? These are all questions that are looking for reflective answers. Some of those feelings are just under the surface of their lives. They think it is better not to talk about them, but that postpones the inevitable. It eats them up from the inside.

Questions that reflect spiritual concerns. These are the most challenging questions to answer, and because of that, they are usually only asked if a trust relationship has been established. Some people feel they can only share the answers to questions like this with the professional clergy because they have sworn to keep things confidential. That means they can talk about stuff they don't want anyone to know. But that creates an impossible situation. What if you never meet a clergy member who asks you those questions? Can you trust someone else to hear your story without fear of exposure? Wouldn't it be better to deal with the pain and get it out of your soul so you can truly move on to a healthier lifestyle without it?

- When and how to ask each type of question

The progression of the questions seems to follow in this order naturally. The questions that reflect content are the less risky to ask. Emotional answers are more dangerous, and questions asking for spiritual insight are the riskiest of all. They may not

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always come in this order, though. This is not a science. It has to do with trust and relationship building.

We don't ask questions to solve the problem or give the correct advice. We are asking the questions so we can better know our care receiver. So, we can better walk with them and experience their pain to the best degree possible. It calls us to be true to ourselves as well.

I remember one of my first visits to the hospital as a young Seminarian right of Seminary. I was visiting a pregnant mother who was about to deliver her baby in a couple of weeks. To identify with her and show her that I cared, I said something I have never repeated to any other pregnant mother. She was complaining about the pain she was experiencing in this labour.

She had other children, but this pregnancy brought her more pain than any other. So, I said, "I am sorry that you are experiencing so much pain. I know how you feel." She looked at me and said very clearly, "Young man, you have NO idea how I feel!" She was correct. What was I even thinking? How could I be so stupid?

I have witnessed the birth of my children, and I am always amazed at what mothers must go through to bring a child into the world. My wife, Annette, is my hero! But I caution you – never speak untruths to convince people you care. It lacks integrity. Enough said!

THE ART OF LISTENING

APPLYING AND REFLECTING ON LEARNED LISTENING SKILLS

- **Reflecting on What the Care Receiver Says** ("To answer before listening - that is folly and shame." Proverbs 18:13)

Some Caregiver Ministries use the **SOLAR** diagram to illustrate how we need to be physical to show the other person that we want to listen to them:

- Sit slightly forward.
- Maintain an **O**pen, relaxed posture.
- Look into the other person's eyes.
- Pay such strict **A**ttention to what the other person is saying so that you can...
- Reflect on what the other person says.

We must convey to the person that we care for them. Don't presume you know everything about them, even if they are your parent, especially your parent. Some people never get to know their parents until the very end of their life. Why? Perhaps it is because they are too busy 'making a living.'

- The importance of reflecting accurately on what the care receiver says.

Are you prepared to risk being misunderstood? Is that keeping you from reflecting with your care receiver what you are thinking? Get over it. Risk being misunderstood. Admit to your care receiver that you may have misheard what they just said. It is better to state your thoughts and have the chance to clear them up than to say nothing and operate on that misinformation for the next few months.

Saying such things as, "Did I understand you correctly when you said you don't think your dad ever loved you? How did

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that make you feel? How did you deal with that as a kid and young adult? I never knew that about you. I thought you and your dad had a good relationship. What do you think went wrong? What would you say to your dad if he were alive today and could talk to you right now?” You may find out that he didn’t say that at all. You ‘miss heard.’ And now you have a chance to clear things up. And in the process, something else may come up.

IT'S YOUR TURN, APPLY IT.

At the end of each chapter, I would like to insert a few questions or tasks to help the reader apply some of the material they have just read. Take the time to answer the questions honestly; it will help you become a better caregiver.

Here are three passages from the Bible. Read each one carefully and answer the question given:

- **Psalm 4:6 - What content is God sharing?**
- **Isaiah 40:25-31 – What feelings is God sharing?**
- **Matthew 6:25-34 – What spiritual concerns is God sharing?**

THE PERSON OF THE CAREGIVER

YOUR SERVANT'S HEART: LIVING CHRIST'S LOVE IN CAREGIVING



2. THE PERSON OF THE CAREGIVER

OVERVIEW

In this chapter, we discuss the role and qualities of a Christian caregiver, exemplifying it with the life of Francis Xavier, a Jesuit missionary. The emphasis is on selfless service, often unnoticed acts, and the importance of humility in caregiving. The chapter further explores nurturing spiritual growth in caregivers through spiritual disciplines, including prayer, meditation, and reading Scripture, underscoring the role of church attendance in protecting marriages, limiting the state's power, and safeguarding families against delusional thinking in a morally rebellious culture. The chapter highlights the benefits of spiritual direction, such as growing spiritual attentiveness, promoting self-awareness, enhancing discernment, and addressing essential life questions. Additionally, we deal with integrating spirituality into the caregiving process, specifically through journaling and its impact on self-reflection and intentional living.

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THE ROLE AND QUALITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN CAREGIVER

- Why is this important?

I love reading about the lives of people who have impacted their world. Why do we have people who go over and above the call of duty? And why do some excel in their time but are largely forgotten by family, friends, and history?

Francis Xavier (1506-1552) lived only 46 years, but he impacted his world at a time when world travel was highly precarious and challenging. He began his ministry in the Portuguese colony of Goa on the west coast of India. I remember visiting the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, where his body was buried some 85 years after he died in China. He rested in a glass container encased in a silver casket.

There were 32 silver plates on all four sides of the casket, depicting different episodes from his life. His right forearm, which Xavier used to bless and baptize his converts, was detached and shipped to be displayed in a silver reliquary at the main Jesuit church in Rome. Another of his arm bones was brought to Macau. A relic from his right hand is on display at St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. Everyone wanted a piece of this guy, it would seem.

When you read what this Saint had achieved in his brief 46 years, one is amazed at what he is remembered for. Some of the achievements on the silver plates include:

- Francis kisses a patient's ulcer in a Venetian hospital.
- He lifted a sick man who died after receiving communion but was freed from fever.
- He took money from his empty pockets and gave it to a Portuguese at Mayapur.
- He converted a Portuguese soldier.

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- Francis knelt and restored a child to health.
- He prayed on the ship during a storm.
- He helped the dying Vicar of Malacca.

Most of these actions were done quietly and witnessed only by a few. He was a man possessed with a mission to evangelize the world. The Jesuits have a long tradition of being the edge of the spear for the Roman Catholic Church down through the centuries. For all its challenges, the Roman Catholic church has done a remarkable job remembering the sacrifice and achievements of its leaders and followers. They recognize their leaders for the miracles and the humble actions and attitudes of their priests and co-workers.

We could just as quickly list here the achievements of the 12 apostles. I have chosen not to do so because we often dismiss them as living in a different age and, therefore, find it hard to relate to them. But history is full of the self-sacrificing care of God's people. Most of whom are unsung heroes.

But history is full of the self-sacrificing care of God's people. Most of whom are unsung heroes.

The New Testament is filled with the activities of the 12 Apostles. Still, we are told nothing about the activity and ministry of three of them – James (Son of Alphaeus), Thaddeus (also called Judas, son of James), and Simon the Zealot. Can we assume they did nothing praiseworthy? I doubt that very much. You can't follow Jesus around for three years and not be transformed by his life in word or deed.

The point of all this is to say that God is still looking for people through whom He can minister healing and health. It does not matter if you are remembered 500 years from now with a glass

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coffin. Why did everyone want a “piece” of Francis centuries after his life ended? Because he gave pieces of himself to people worldwide at the time, it was never about ‘him.’ Being a ‘successful’ caregiver must never be about us.

- Understanding the importance of the Christian caregiver's role in providing support. “Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you” 1 Peter 5:7

If you come fresh to this caregiving ministry, you may feel inadequate to accomplish anything of value for your care receiver. After all, you say, I have never done this sort of thing before. I have no idea what I should be doing. I have never even read a book about caregiving in my life. I am certainly no Francis Xavier! If that is what you are saying, I commend you. That is where we all should be.

God is not looking so much for our ability as he is looking for our availability

God is not looking so much for our ability as he is looking for our availability. I like how CS Lewis, an English Prof in England, impacted the world with his writings (and continues to do so long after his death). He once wrote these words.

“One has to act as if everything depended on one’s own exertions and then, as soon as the moment of action is over, ‘cast all your care’ upon God and realize that in some deeper sense, you don’t matter in the least and it is only for your sake He uses you to do what he could do very much more easily himself.” (from a letter to Mary Van Deusen, April 22, 1954, from CS Lewis)

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- Identifying the unique challenges and privileges of serving as a Christian caregiver. “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the laws of Christ.” Galatians 6:2

Galatians 6 can be pretty confusing. Verse 2 tells us to bear one another’s burdens. But verse 5 said that we must all carry our own burdens. Seems like an apparent contradiction here. So, we need to go a little deeper. There are some burdens we must all carry, and there are some that we need help with.

When the Bible speaks of bearing one another’s burdens, it emphasizes the importance of showing compassion, empathy, and support to struggling people. It encourages folks to come alongside others, offering help, encouragement, and prayer in times of difficulty.

On the other hand, when the Bible mentions carrying our own burdens, it primarily refers to our individual responsibilities and accountability. In this context, the apparent contradiction can be resolved by understanding the distinction between burdens and loads.

Burdens refer to the overwhelming challenges and trials that may be too heavy for one person to bear alone. In such cases, the Bible encourages believers to support and assist one

Burdens refer to the overwhelming challenges and trials that may be too heavy for one person to bear alone.

another in carrying those burdens. However, loads refer to the personal responsibilities, obligations, and consequences that everyone must carry. These loads cannot be shifted to others.

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- The Person of the Christian Caregiver
- “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.” Colossians 3:12

Richard Foster is a theologian, author, and speaker known for his teachings on Christian Spirituality and the practice of the Christian disciplines. He founded Renovare, a Christian non-profit organization that seeks to help individuals grow in their relationship with God. In his most well-known book, “Celebration of the Disciplines,” he explores the effects of various Christian disciplines and how they guide us in our spiritual walk.

He speaks of three types of Spiritual Disciplines:

1. Inward Disciplines (meditation, prayer, fasting, and study)
2. Outward disciplines (simplicity, solitude, submission, and service)
3. Corporate Disciplines (Confession, worship, guidance, and celebration)

Being a caregiver can be very exhausting at times. It depletes our energy. Some of us are particularly conscientious and committed to doing things the right way, the most efficient way, or the most practical way. We are consumed with meeting the expectations of our care receiver and our own expectations. We become driven perfectionists who are exhausted before the day ends, wondering how to continue the pace our life calls us.

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That is where we must explore how we are doing around the Spiritual disciplines. Just as any world-class athlete must learn to balance their life with food intake, supplements, regular exercise, proper sleep, etc., caregivers must also live balanced lives. If you ignore this area, you will serve out of duty or necessity. And you will lack the joy that needs to accompany you on the journey. Even Jesus had to take time off, go to a quiet place, and spend time in prayer. And He was perfect.

- Understanding the importance of being an instrument of Christ's love and mercy. "God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Ephesians 5:1-2

Living in love is not something Christians do on the side. It is not one of many things that a Christian does. It is the whole of Christianity. It needs to occupy our lives 100% of the time.

Living in love is not something Christians do on the side. It is not one of many things that a Christian does. It is the whole of Christianity.

I love the Air Fresheners on the market today. They offer a vast selection of aromas for our pleasure. But have you noticed that you must also keep the little glass balls you plug into your sockets filled with the liquids they provide? If you don't refill them, the electricity still goes through the device, but nothing comes out to fill the room with fragrance.

It reminds me of a lot of folks I know. They are committed Christians, but I don't smell the fragrance. They seem to be no different than everyone else in the world. Pessimistic, defeated, discouraged, tempered. No fragrance coming

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through their speech, their lives, their conversation. Why is that? Perhaps they haven't spent much time reading their Bibles? You don't have to read your Bible to be a Christian. But you must read your Bible if you want to grow as a Christian.

"But' you say, "the early Christians didn't have individual Bibles. No one had individual Bibles until 1439 when Johannes Gutenberg invented the Printing Press. Before that, single Bibles were usually chained to the pulpit of the foremost cathedrals.

People in the first century only circulated letters written by the early apostles and others. They valued the reading on Sunday and spent much time memorizing the texts. Wherever the church is planted, the distribution of God's word is always

We need a daily reading and digesting of God's Word to see the fragrance of Christ permeate our souls and watch it diffuse into all our relationships.

emphasized. We need a daily reading and digesting of God's Word to see the fragrance of Christ permeate our souls and watch it diffuse into all our relationships.

The best thing you can do for your care receiver regularly is to pay attention to Christ living in you daily. The best way to do that is to read his Word constantly. It will transform your thoughts and actions.

- Christ as the Source of Ministry

My life was never the same again after I attended a series of talks by Major Ian Thomas in Vancouver, BC, in the late 60's. He spoke about the exchanged life of Christ. He talked about

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Christ living in me. He spoke about a personal relationship with Christ in a way I had never heard before.

The ministry he was involved in founding (Torchbearers) continues today. He had a God-given vision born out of the devastation of World War II when he returned from war, determined with his wife Joan to open their hearts and doors to European young people. Providing them with lodging and food in a holiday setting, Thomas also gave insightful teachings from the Bible, and soon, those guests began to discover the adventure of knowing Jesus Christ personally.

The dynamic reality of the Christian life as a relationship with the indwelling Christ began to rekindle the lives of hundreds from all over Europe as Bible Schools sprang up first in Germany and then in Austria. Torchbearers have centers throughout the world dedicated to teaching and preaching the saving, indwelling, and transforming life of Christ in the believer.

As Christian Caregivers, we need to remain firm in this theology. Christ is living in us. We can't rely on our own resources or energy level. We will be exhausted. We must free ourselves to let the Spirit of God use us as instruments of His peace.

- Understanding how Christ's example and teachings guide caregivers. "For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them." John 13:16.

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We have biblical authority for believing it is “more blessed to give than to receive.” But we must remember that it is much harder to receive than to give. We often feel that we must

But we must remember that it is much harder to receive than to give.

provide ourselves and come up with the answer, the solution. We are not tuned into the truth that God wants to work through us.

He wants to fill us with his spirit, equip us with his

wisdom, etc., so we can serve others in his strength and not our own. Perhaps that is why we give up too soon. We have come to the end of our hoarded resources.

The Apostle John talked about Jesus as someone who would not entrust himself to others because he ‘knew all people’, for he “knew what was in everyone.” (John 2:24,25) He knows we can’t live the Christian life by ourselves, using our own resources. That is why He doesn’t ask us to. He wants us to use his resources, his life flowing through us. Christ is living in me! Mediate on this before you read further. This isn’t an ‘interesting point’. It’s the MAIN point. We cannot succeed as a Christian Caregiver without opening our lives up to the filling of His Spirit in our lives. It changes everything.

- Identifying strategies for caregivers to develop a personal relationship with Christ. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

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I had just finished seven great years in a Pastorate in Winnipeg. I was exhausted and decided to complete an MA in Counselling at Providence Seminary until God opened another opportunity for ministry. One of the requirements for the course was that I had to undergo many hours of counselling myself.

I remember going to the Dean and telling him that I had been pastoring for 20 years already and could I write a paper instead. I didn't feel I needed to undergo those hours of counselling. He looked at me and said, "Because you have been a Pastor for 20 years, you need that counselling." He was right, but I wouldn't say I liked how he smiled at me as I left his office...

As it turned out, it was the best thing that happened to me. I sat with my counsellor for hours as he questioned everything in my life. It was a great opportunity to reflect on my walk with God. People assume that pastors have a walk with God. But no one holds pastors accountable. It seemed to me that no one held anyone accountable. We assume if a person shows up to church, they must be OK. If they weren't, they wouldn't show up for church, would they?

This is why 80% of Christians testify that they are not where they should be in their Christian faith. They have been attending church for decades and have not experienced a transformed life.

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I read a recent survey that compared Christians who attended church every Sunday of the year with Christians who attended church only two or three times a year. According to this survey, there was no difference in their Christian life. They all called themselves Christians and marked their spirituality to the same percentage of success. The only thing they had in common, which explained why they were still walking with the Lord, was that they all had a habit of personal Bible study at least three times a week. Church attendance meant nothing as far as their Christian life was concerned. The main thing that

fed their spirituality was their regular Bible study and prayer attendance.

As a caregiver, you need to attend to the spiritual discipline of Bible study to maintain the vitality of your faith, or you will soon run out of energy.

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NURTURING SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN CAREGIVERS

- Spiritual Disciplines for Christian Caregivers
- Understanding the importance of prayer, meditation, and reading Scripture. “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7

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How can we be spiritual people through whom God's divine counsellor and guide can manifest? If we want to be living instruments of God's grace, the Word of God must be engraved in our hearts; it must become our flesh and blood. That means much more than intellectual reflection. It means meditating and ruminating on God's word – chewing on it day and night. In this way, the word of God can slowly descend from our minds into our hearts and fill us with the life-giving Spirit.

“This meditation on God's word is indispensable if we want to be reminders of God and not ourselves if we want to radiate hope and not despair, joy and not sadness, life and not death. Since the greatest news is that the Word has become flesh, our greatest vocation and obligation is to continue this divine incarnation through daily meditation on the Word.”

(Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Living Reminder: Service and Prayer in Memory of Jesus Christ*. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), pp. 68-69

Through meditation, we can become aware of the presence of His Grace in our lives. Remember, it was to the Apostle Paul, who was going through significant conflict and struggles in sharing the Gospel in the Roman world, that God said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. I will gladly glory in my weaknesses so the power of Christ may rest on me. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

God wasn't talking about past Grace or future Grace. He was referring to present Grace. Available grace is only available in the present moment when we need it. It is often a struggle to live in the present moment. Our minds always take us to the past, where we get discouraged, or the future, where we get

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anxious. We can't change the past or the future. The present moment is where we live. That's where we need the Grace.

Let's make this very practical. Perhaps you are anticipating a time with your care receiver tonight. You are anxious because you believe you need to discuss something with them, and you are sure it isn't going to go well. It is about an issue you have tried to discuss many times before, but it has consistently been rebuffed, and they change the subject, so you can't talk about it. But events make it necessary to talk about the topic tonight. Your anxiety is screaming at you with all sorts of negative thoughts. You are thinking things to yourself that surprise you. "Maybe I should stop being their caregiver. Someone else should do this. I don't have time for this. I didn't sign up for this. Why aren't they grateful for all I am doing for them?" Etc. Etc.

God didn't promise to give you the grace you will need for tonight right now. When will he give it to you? He will give it to you when 'tonight' becomes 'right now.' That's when you will need it. You don't need it now. So, you will have to wait to receive that Grace. And waiting is the hardest of all things to do in our lives. We want to be moving, doing.... not waiting.

Psalms 46:10 says, "Be still, and know that I am God!" Like many Bible verses, this verse is often ripped out of context and translated as "Relax. I've got it covered." While that is true and is taught in other passages (like John 16:33: "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.") This verse isn't a promise to Christians, but a warning to those nations warring against Israel. This command is a declaration of sovereignty to anyone opposing His rule.

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The verse starts with, “He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shield with fire.” It ends with, “I am exalted among the nations; I am exalted in the earth.”

So, where do we go with this verse? We get a different perspective on our world.

God is in charge. God has not left us so that he can work on another end of the Galaxy.

He is aware of what is happening on a grand scale and a small scale. He knows what He is doing and doesn't have to explain things to me.

I know He is God and will

give me Grace when needed. I need to trust Him with my situation. Leave tonight's battle with the Lord right now. Enjoy the moment. He is talking to you right now. When you speak with your care receiver, you will experience God's Grace tonight. Don't refuse to take it. Humble yourself. He will tell you what to do tonight.

God has not left us so that he can work on another end of the Galaxy. He is aware of what is happening on a grand scale and a small scale.

Bangladesh became an independent country in 1971, breaking away from Pakistan after fighting a war in which over a million people died. I was there during the crisis. My job was arranging a gigantic Book Exhibition at the University of Dacca. I made an appointment with the chancellor to get permission to hold the event. He asked one question: “Have you talked to Abdul?”

Abdul was the Student Body President, and nothing happened on the campus without his permission. The university Chancellor was afraid of doing anything Abdul would disapprove of. That fear permeated the campus, I discovered.

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The entire country was traumatized by fear. Early the following day, I walked to Abdul's campus office. There was a long line of students waiting to talk with him. I was the only foreigner, so they let me jump the line. I was ushered into a room crowded with students whispering with each other.

Within minutes, Abdul entered his office. Everyone stopped talking. They fixed their eyes on this tall, good-looking student as he made his way to his desk. He looked at me and asked me what I wanted. I was told minutes before he arrived that he had a couple of students killed the week before. Everyone feared him and acted accordingly. I wondered what I was getting myself into.

As he asked his question, any trace of fear or apprehension left my heart. I smiled and told him I was there to help the students gain access to some of the great books in the world. If he gave permission, I would fill the school Gym with thousands of great books that would benefit him and his country for years. He smiled and gave me the written permission I needed. I left, to the surprise of many of the students who stood around me. I was not afraid to talk to the most important man on campus in such a lighthearted manner.

I look back and tell that story to illustrate that if God calls you to do something, He can also take away the fear that may naturally appear. That is God's Grace in action. And He gives it in full provision whenever we trust Him.

- Identifying different approaches to spiritual disciplines for caregivers: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

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In what way is the Bible a light and a lamp? Let's look at the ways this is shown.

Guidance – Just as a lamp illuminates the immediate area, the Bible provides guidance for making decisions and navigating life's challenges. It offers principles, teachings, and examples to help you discern right from wrong and choose the right path. The Bible can speak to any situation if we seek it attentively.

Wisdom – The Bible contains a wealth of wisdom and knowledge, covering various aspects of life, including relationships, ethics, morality, and personal growth. It offers insights and principles to help you make the right choices, avoid pitfalls, and live a fulfilling life. Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing not to put it into a fruit salad.

Clarity – In times of confusion or uncertainty, the Bible can bring clarity to your situation. It sheds light on God's character, purposes, and promises, helping you understand who you are, your purpose in life, and the values you should uphold. If you have a cataract in your eye. Your lens has become cloudy. It is like looking through a foggy or dusty car windshield. Aging is the most common cause. This is when normal proteins start to break down. We can find various ways to adjust to this physical problem. But we also experience fuzziness and blurriness in other areas of life. We need clarity of thinking. This is where our faith comes in. The Lord wants us to think clearly.

Illumination -Just as a light helps you see obstacles on a path, the Bible illuminates the spiritual realities and exposes falsehoods. It reveals God's truth, His redemptive plan, and the nature of the human condition, enabling you to discern false

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teachings, ideologies, and deceptive influences. There are so many answers available for the public today. They can't all be correct, as many of the answers we see online are contradictions. They can't all be true.

Transformation -The Bible can transform your heart, mind, and character. It serves as a light that exposes the areas of your life that need change and encourages spiritual growth.

The Bible can transform your heart, mind, and character. It serves as a light that exposes the areas of your life that need change and encourages spiritual growth.

Through its teachings, you can experience personal transformation, aligning your life with God's will and becoming more like Christ.

By studying, meditating, and applying the teachings of the Bible, you can experience the practical and spiritual benefits of its guidance and

illumination. It becomes a source of truth and direction, helping you navigate the complexities of life and drawing you closer to God.

Understanding the value of regular worship and community prayer for spiritual nourishment. "And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25

Recently, Steve Bateman with the Gospel Coalition wrote an article in their publication offering nine benefits of faithful church attendance. They are:

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1. Church attendance pleases and glorifies God

When we gather, sing, ponder scripture, and pray, our attention to God is most sharply focused. This is the purpose of our existence. We were made to worship. Our worship-worthy God knows what is best for us, so in love, he calls us to “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together” (Heb.10:24-25)

2. Church attendance is an act of love to your neighbour

We’re not saved because we attend church; we attend church because we are saved. At church, we engage in the means of grace, which God uses to increase our love and make us more like Jesus. In our culture of anger, Christlike virtues of love, patience, and kindness are in great demand but in short supply. To paraphrase Martin Luther, God doesn’t need you to attend church, but your neighbours do.

3. Church attendance can make you smarter

God reveals himself in a book and commands us to love Him with our minds (“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Matt 22:37). Reading the Bible for comprehension requires a working knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, history, and geography. The Lord gives us understanding, but he expects us to do the hard work of thinking (“Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.” 2 Tim 2:7). Reading can increase intelligence in children and protect cognitive function in adults, reducing the risk of cognitive decline as we age. Is there a better way to train the brain than studying the Bible with other believers?

4. Church attendance can make you healthier

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This is stewardship theology, not prosperity theology. If we believe our bodies belong to God, we'll manage our health for His glory. A faithful church equips us to live wisely, practice self-control, pursue habits of holiness, and abstain from self-destructive activities that threaten good health. Further, engaging in meaningful fellowship can reduce stress and mortality risk by 55 percent among middle-aged adults. Faithful church attendance is an "underappreciated resource" that most physicians never think to explore with their patients.

5. Church attendance can make you happier

Desiring happiness is the normal instinct of a creature made in the image of a happy God. God delights in our holy happiness and commands us to 'rejoice in hope' (Romans 12:12). While the most desperate sorrow rises out of hopelessness, worshipers of the risen Lord have solid reasons to hope. Harvard researchers concluded weekly church attendance effectively improved millions of Americans' physical and mental health and reduced mortalities by 20 to 30 percent over 15 years. Other studies assert faithful church attendance helps prevent the despair that leads to early deaths by suicide and alcohol abuse. Weekly interaction with hopeful people is good for your mental health.

6. Church attendance can make you more generous

Only at church will you hear that you own nothing and God owns everything. He entrusts his money to us, and someday, we'll give him an account for our management. Therefore, faithful churches teach their members 'to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.' (I Tim 6:18). Even after giving generously to their church, notes Erika Anderson, "someone who attends church weekly has an 81

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percent likelihood of donating to secular causes, while someone who doesn't only has a 60 percent likelihood of donating to any cause.

7. Church attendance can protect your marriage.

As earnest believers hear sermons encouraging husbands and wives to love one another, keep their vows, forgive one another, and reflect God's grace in their marriage, the Holy Spirit does his sanctifying work. In the faith community, God draws husbands and wives closer to Himself and each other. Countless influences pull spouses apart, but faithful church attendance 'together reduces a couple's risk of divorce by a remarkable 47 percent.'

8. Church attendance can limit the power of the state.

In 1840, Alexis de Tocqueville marvelled at how Americans voluntarily and "constantly form associations." Tocqueville viewed the church in America as the most potent voluntary association – a mediating institution guarding against tyranny. Faithful churches lead members to love God, each other, their communities, and their enemies. The cumulative effect of countless acts of self-denying love reduces crime, divorce, drug and alcohol abuse, racism, poverty, injustice, recidivism, ignorance, hunger, homelessness, lawsuits, abortions, fatherlessness, the adverse effects of natural disasters, and other problems the government is expected to address.

9. Church attendance can protect your family against delusional thinking.

As the 'pillar and buttress of the truth' (1Tim 3:15), the church holds up reality to a deceived world. When a culture reaches a certain level of moral rebellion, God's wrath comes in the form

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of delusional thinking as he gives them up “to a debased mind” (Rom 1:28). It’s a detachment from historical, anatomical, hormonal, genetic, logical, etymological, and sociological reality to say a man can marry a man, a man can be a woman, or a woman can be a man. This is delusional thinking. If that assessment sounds odd or offensive, it's because our generation has been conditioned to believe things that aren't true. A faithful church is one of the only mediating institutions left in America that will clearly say so. When parents don't faithfully attend church with their children, they're leaving them to be influenced by a world that has lost its moral sense.

- Spiritual Direction and Mentorship
- Examining the role of spiritual direction in caregiving. “Where there is no guidance, a nation falls, but in an abundance of counsellors there is safety.” Proverbs 11:14

Over the last few years, the practice and teaching of “Spiritual Direction” has become emphasized in evangelical protestant circles. The Roman Catholics have been using this as a discipline for centuries. Many Seminaries are even developing Master’s level courses on this practice. It would benefit us as caregivers to explore this area for ourselves. We will serve as spiritual directors for our caregivers in many ways and cases. They will ask us spiritual questions the more they trust us.

What is Spiritual Direction? How does it work?

Spiritual direction is a once-a-month meeting with a trained listener who will accompany you on your spiritual journey, helping you notice God’s presence and activity and how you react and respond. Hospitable, confidential, and grounded in

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Biblical truth, spiritual direction is a ministry that helps you grow in prayer and live into your calling as a follower of Christ. If you have never considered the ministry of spiritual direction for your life, let me share some benefits of spiritual direction.

Spiritual direction is a once-a-month meeting with a trained listener who will accompany you on your spiritual journey, helping you notice God's presence and activity and how you react and respond.

Spiritual direction grows our spiritual attentiveness.

It is rare for God to change us without telling us what needs to change. God seeks our cooperation in transformation. Sadly, it is easy to miss what God invites us to see. Many of us have an underdeveloped spiritual perception. We don't naturally, as Ignatius of Loyola suggests, "see God in all things." We need to grow our propensity to look for God in the circumstances of our lives.

Spiritual direction promotes spiritual attentiveness. *The most asked questions from spiritual directors to their directors are versions of the following:*

- "What do you think God is doing in that circumstance?"
- "Where do you see God at work in your life?"
- "What do you think God's invitation is for you in this place?"

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Spiritual direction grows our awareness of how we get in our way. As stated above, God seeks our cooperation in transformation. He doesn't override our wills. He wants us to respond in love and to welcome His will for our lives. But our hearts and histories can be complicated. It is not always easy for us to recognize how we respond or resist God's work in our lives, much less understand why we react in specific ways to what God is doing.

Having someone encourage us to reflect on our reactions to God's movements can be helpful. But it can also be scary. Evaluating our response to God in a safe, nonjudgmental relationship is a great gift.

At the core of spiritual formation is the development of a dependent, willing heart to follow Jesus.

Spiritual direction grows our discernment. At the core of spiritual formation is the development of a dependent, willing heart to follow Jesus. But we often cannot discern where Jesus is inviting, directing, or calling us to

action. How can we grow to recognize the "voice" of Jesus—to distinguish His desires and promptings from the voices that play in our minds from our thoughts and histories? How do we interpret our spiritual experiences instead of Scripture and God's revealed nature?

As God reveals Himself, we grow in our ability to recognize the way He invites, the feeling in our hearts when He communicates, and the affirmation of our spirits when we "see" Him. We also begin to identify the presence of our will

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when it conflicts with or welcomes His will. There are few opportunities in the church to develop skills of spiritual discernment, which makes spiritual direction a great place to grow in this area.

Spiritual direction identifies and gives room for the most critical questions in our lives. While Jesus was on earth, He was a master of asking pertinent questions. He asked the blind man what he wanted Jesus to do for him. He asked the disciples, among other things, who they said He was, why they were afraid, why they doubted, and how many loaves they possessed to feed the crowd. He asked the Father why He was forsaking Him. Questions seem to be part of being in a relationship with Jesus. He would often answer questions by asking a question. He encouraged ordinary people to think through their lives and problems.

Questions seem to be part of being in a relationship with Jesus. He would often answer questions by asking a question. He encouraged ordinary people to think through their lives and problems.

Yet, we often avoid exploring the more profound questions in our hearts. Church is not always a safe place to vocalize our questions about God or wrestle with the questions that Jesus may be asking us. Spiritual direction, however, is a place where questions are asked, reflected on, processed, refined, and brought into God's presence.

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These qualities of spiritual direction give you a glimpse into the benefits of this vital ministry and how it supports the Holy Spirit's work of spiritual formation.

I am grateful for the writings of Debbie Swindoll, who is the source of much of my information on Spiritual Directors. She has been a Spiritual Director since 2004 and encourages the church to get more involved in this growing field of study.

- Identifying the benefits of seeking spiritual guidance and finding a trusted mentor: "Let the wise also hear and gain in learning, and the discerning acquire skill."
Proverbs 1:5

I don't believe we can over-emphasize the importance of working together with others in the spiritual life. God does not intend us to treat our life as a 'journey of One.' Do you have a friend, mentor, co-worker, etc., that can walk with you closer in your role as caregiver? Someone to talk things over with?

One of the first things Jesus did at the start of his public ministry was to build a team around him, men who would live with him for three years. He poured his life into them. If He needed a team to work with, indeed, we may need a team as well.

The fact that you are reading this book is a sign that you are open to learning something more. Leaders of all types need to keep reading if they intend to keep on leading. We must challenge ourselves, engage with those we disagree with, learn more about ourselves and the human condition, and grow in our faith.

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INTEGRATING SPIRITUALITY INTO THE CAREGIVING PROCESS

- Journaling as a Spiritual Practice
- Understanding how journaling aids self-reflection and spiritual growth: “The unfolding of your Word gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.” Psalm 119:130

I have 40 years of Journals sitting on my bookshelves in my home office. I switched to an iPad to make notes in the last ten years. Occasionally, I pick up one of my journals and read what I was thinking 30 years ago on this day. I am often surprised that I complain about the same things or rejoice over the same things. On the other hand, since I decided to write honestly as though the only ones to read my journal would be God and me, I am encouraged that I have changed my thinking in many vital areas. That has helped me be intentional in how I live my life. I have certainly come a long way since my early days in seminary.

If you came to me for counselling back then, I would be happy to spend an hour with you. If you suggested that we meet again, I would ask you why. I had already given you all the verses I could think of. I had nothing more to say on the matter. Well, that has changed significantly. Meeting with someone for only an hour is insufficient to show meaningful care or deal with appropriate future actions that will result in life transformation.

Journalling has taught me more about myself than any other tool.

Journalling has taught me more about myself than any other tool. I recommend it if you haven't developed the journalling habit. Make it personal. Learn to speak the truth to

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yourself. There is something about writing stuff down that helps crystalize our thinking.

IT'S YOUR TURN, APPLY IT.

- Which of the three types of Spiritual Disciplines (Inward, Outward, and Corporate) do you need to give more attention to in your life?
- This chapter discussed how the Bible is used in the life of those who follow Jesus. Have you recently applied the Bible to your life in guidance, wisdom, clarity, illumination or transformation? In which area is God speaking to you about right now?

Do you have a Spiritual Director? Have you thought of becoming a Spiritual Director for someone else? What steps would you need to take to become one?

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NAVIGATING YOUR EMOTIONS

THE HEART'S COMPASS: NAVIGATING YOUR EMOTIONS WITH WISDOM



3. NAVIGATING YOUR EMOTIONS

OVERVIEW

Understanding and acknowledging one's feelings, particularly in caregiving, is essential. Practical strategies for maintaining well-being, setting boundaries, seeking support, and fostering positive relationships are discussed. Additionally, the chapter addresses common myths and misconceptions about emotions. It explores the influence of culture on emotional expression, emphasizing the diverse ways in which different cultures shape emotional experiences and understanding. The chapter concludes by stressing the importance of taking ownership of one's feelings and actions, providing strategies for self-reflection, mindfulness, emotional expression, and behavioural change, ultimately aiming for personal growth and authenticity. The overarching message is grounded in the pursuit of emotional well-being and resilience, resonating with the Biblical theme of finding peace in Christ.

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR FEELINGS: ACKNOWLEDGE AND DEFINE

"The LORD is near the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18,

Understanding our feelings in caregiving is crucial for several reasons. It plays a significant role in providing effective and compassionate care. Here are some key reasons why understanding our feelings is essential in caregiving:

Enhanced Empathy:

Understanding our own emotions allows us to better

Understanding our own emotions allows us to better empathize with the feelings of those we are caring for.

empathize with the feelings of those we are caring for. This empathetic connection can enhance the quality of care by making it more personalized and responsive to the emotional needs of the care recipient.

Preventing Burnout:

Caregiving can be emotionally demanding, and caregivers often face stress, exhaustion, and burnout. Recognizing and understanding one's own emotions is essential for self-care. It enables caregivers to identify signs of burnout early, take necessary breaks, and seek support when needed.

Recent statistics from the world of Social Workers tell us that the average Social Worker burns out in less than five years. It is not through a lack of empathy that this happens. We must

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train our social workers to listen to their emotions better and participate more in self-care.

Effective Communication:

Emotional intelligence is crucial in caregiving.

Understanding our feelings

helps us communicate more effectively with care recipients, their families, and other healthcare team members. Clear and compassionate communication fosters trust and cooperation.

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions and recognize, understand, and influence the feelings of others. It involves emotional and social skills that affect how we perceive and express ourselves, develop and maintain social relationships, cope with challenges, and use emotional information effectively and meaningfully.

Developing emotional intelligence involves self-reflection, empathy-building exercises, and learning to recognize and manage emotions in oneself and others.

Building Resilience:

Caregiving often involves facing challenging situations and emotional stressors. Understanding and processing our emotions can contribute to emotional resilience. It helps caregivers cope with difficulties, adapt to changing circumstances, and bounce back from setbacks.

Recent statistics from the world of Social Workers tell us that the average Social Worker burns out in less than five years

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Building resilience in caring for others is crucial for maintaining well-being and effectively navigating the challenges of caregiving. It is essential to work with a person with a chronic illness. How can we maintain resilience? Here are some suggestions:

1. Acknowledging and understanding your emotions:

Recognize and accept the range of emotions that come with caregiving, such as stress, frustration, and sadness

Recognize and accept the range of emotions that come with caregiving, such as stress, frustration, and sadness. Understand that these emotions are normal reactions to the challenges of the situation.

2. Seek Social Support:

Build a network of friends, family, or support groups who can provide emotional support, understanding, and encouragement. Sharing experiences with others who are going through similar situations can be empowering.

3. Set Realistic Expectations:

Establish achievable goals and expectations for you and the person you care for. Recognize that caregiving is demanding, and setting realistic boundaries is essential to avoid burnout.

4. Self-Care Practices:

Prioritize self-care activities to maintain physical and emotional well-being. This might include regular exercise, sufficient sleep, and joy and relaxation activities. Some folks

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are so wrapped up in caring for a chronically ill family member that they take no time to care for themselves. This is disastrous in the long run. If you don't care for your car (oil changes, etc.), your car will one day break down. Your body is no different. You need to take care of your body, soul, and spirit.

5. Cultivate Mindfulness and Coping Strategies:

Practice mindfulness techniques like meditation or deep breathing to stay present and manage stress. Develop healthy coping strategies, such as positive reframing or finding humour in challenging situations.

6. Educating Yourself:

Take the time to learn about the specific condition or illness of the person you care for. Knowledge empowers caregivers and helps them anticipate and address potential challenges.

7. Set Boundaries and Ask for Help:

Recognize when you need a break, and don't hesitate to ask for help. Establish clear boundaries to ensure you are not overwhelmed, and seek assistance from other family members, friends, or professional caregivers.

Boundaries aren't only established to keep things out of your life. Proper Boundary setting also involves ensuring you have some stuff inside the walls of your personal space.

Boundaries aren't only established to keep things out of your life. Proper Boundary setting also involves ensuring you have some stuff inside the walls of your personal space. You will need time for personal

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growth and reflection. That will take some intentionality on your part. How are you taking care of your own needs?

8. Focus on the Positive:

Acknowledge and celebrate small victories and joyous moments in the caregiving journey. Cultivate a mindset that emphasizes gratitude and resilience in the face of adversity. Steve is my son-in-law. He always has the same answer for a person who asks, “How are you?” Most of us stretch the truth and say, “Fine.” We may not be “fine” at all. He answers, “I’m Grateful.” He uses that to remind himself and the hearer that a well-lived life is filled with gratitude. Are you grateful for the one you are caring for, even though it may often take you out of your normal area of comfort? Are you thankful for all you have in your life? If not, why not? I am grateful to my son-in-law for reminding me of this truth.

9. Adapt to Change:

Be flexible and open to adapting your caregiving approach as circumstances change. Resilience involves adjusting to new situations and finding practical solutions to emerging challenges.

10. Get Professional Support:

Engage with healthcare professionals, counsellors, or therapists specializing in caregiving issues. Seeking professional guidance can provide additional coping strategies and emotional support.

The goal is to create a sustainable caregiving framework that fosters resilience and enhances the overall quality of care.

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11. Promote Healthy Relationships:

Awareness of our emotions is essential for maintaining healthy relationships with the individuals receiving care. It allows caregivers to navigate conflicts, build trust, and provide emotional support, fostering a positive and nurturing caregiving environment.

12. Cultivate Compassion:

Understanding our feelings fosters a sense of compassion for ourselves and those we care for. This compassion forms the foundation for a caregiving approach that goes beyond the physical aspects of care and encompasses the emotional and psychological well-being of the care recipient.

13. Facilitate Decision-Making:

Caregivers often face complex and emotionally charged decisions. Being in touch with one's feelings can provide valuable insights and help caregivers make decisions that align with their values and the best interests of the care recipient.

- **What Feelings Are** “As water reflects the face, so one’s life reflects the heart.” Proverbs 27:19

I grew up in a home where feelings weren’t given much attention, unlike my wife’s upbringing, where emotions were expressed regularly. In her house, hugs, kisses, and “I love you” were routinely practiced throughout the day. If you are familiar with the British mindset, you will understand. A handshake was more than enough bodily contact for my family and me. It's not that we didn't have emotions. It is that we didn't feel the need to express our feelings.

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When a person consistently avoids or suppresses the expression of their emotions, it can have various effects on their mental, emotional, and even physical well-being. Here are some potential consequences of not expressing emotions:

Increased Stress:

Suppressing emotions can lead to chronic stress. When emotions are not acknowledged or expressed, the body's stress response may remain activated, contributing to a range of physical and mental health issues.

Psychological Distress:

Unexpressed emotions can build up over time, leading to psychological distress. This may manifest as anxiety, depression, or a general sense of unease.

Impact on Relationships:

The inability to express emotions can strain relationships. Communication is a vital aspect of healthy relationships, and when one avoids sharing their feelings, it can lead to misunderstandings, distance, or a lack of emotional connection.

An old saint was once asked whether loving God was easy or hard. He replied: It is easy for those who do it.”.

An old saint was once asked whether loving God was easy or hard. He replied: It is easy for those who do it.”. If this is an area you need to improve, now would be a good time to do something about it. Reach

out to someone today who is good at that. Ask questions to

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see if they can help you. You won't regret it; it will make you a better caregiver.

Physical Health Issues:

There is evidence that chronic emotional suppression can contribute to physical health problems. This may include an increased risk of cardiovascular issues, weakened immune function, and other stress-related ailments.

Behavioural Changes:

Unexpressed emotions may find alternative outlets through behaviour. This could manifest as irritability, outbursts of anger, or engaging in risky behaviours to cope with underlying emotional turmoil.

Loss of Self-Awareness:

Expressing emotions is a critical component of self-awareness. When emotions are consistently ignored or suppressed, individuals may become disconnected from their feelings, making it difficult to understand their needs and desires. If you were to have asked me as a young man growing up how I was feeling, I would always say that I was 'fine'. Don't expect me to go any deeper. I was virtually unaware that I had feelings. Except when I got angry. I would tell you I was furious but not much else. The word "anger" is a word we use to express so many other emotions. It's like people who use the same swear word all the time. It stands for all kinds of emotions, but they aren't differentiated.

Are you angry when you say you are angry, or do you mean something else? Such as, I am irritated. I am furious. I am enraged. I feel Indignation. I am Hostile. I am filled with wrath.

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I am frustrated. I am annoyed. I am outraged. I am vexed. I am mad. I am ill-tempered. I am experiencing displeasure. I am resentful. I am fuming. I am chagrined. I am Infuriated. Each word has a slightly different connotation. So why do we only use the word 'anger'? It would help everyone if we could learn to tease out the meaning of our emotionally charged moments.

Difficulty Coping with Change:

Emotions are a natural response to change, helping individuals adapt and navigate life's challenges. When emotions are not expressed, coping and adapting to new situations may become challenging. Suppose you grew up in an environment where you were taught that emotions had to be continuously controlled. In that case, you have developed a lifestyle where you have taught yourself to ignore your emotions altogether. You have taught yourself to push your emotions down. For example, you have learned to distrust them to 'keep the peace.' Can't we all get along? And you have paid a high price because of this learned behaviour.

Impact on Decision-Making:

Emotional awareness and expression play a role in effective decision-making. When emotions are suppressed, decision-making may become more complex, as emotions often provide valuable information about personal values, preferences, and concerns.

What Feelings Are Not "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick; who can understand it?" Jeremiah 17:9

Misunderstandings about feelings and emotions are common, and these myths can affect how individuals perceive and

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manage their emotional experiences. Here are some common myths and misconceptions about feelings:

Myth: Emotions are Weaknesses:

One prevalent misconception is that expressing emotions is a sign of weakness.

Acknowledging and expressing emotions is a healthy and essential aspect of being human. It takes strength to confront and understand one's feelings.

Acknowledging and expressing emotions is a healthy and essential aspect of being human. It takes strength to confront and understand one's feelings.

We have often learned from life that “real men don’t have feelings.” Only women have feelings. Well, I have never been a woman, but I can tell you without any hesitation that men do have feelings. They may even have more feelings than women. I am not sure of that. But men are taught not to express their feelings. Real men don’t cry, after all. Women don’t mind talking about their feelings. They have more words than we do, it would seem. And as a result, men have paid a high price for not talking about their feelings.

Myth: Positive Emotions Are Always Good, Negative Emotions Are Always Bad:

This myth oversimplifies the complexity of emotions. While positive emotions are generally desirable, negative emotions can provide valuable information and are a natural part of the human experience. They can signal unmet needs, potential threats, or areas for personal growth.

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Myth: Emotional Intelligence Equals Suppressing Emotions:

Emotional intelligence involves understanding, managing, and effectively using emotions. It doesn't mean suppressing or denying emotions. Accurate emotional intelligence consists of acknowledging and appropriately expressing one's feelings.

Misconception: You Can Choose How You Feel:

While individuals have some control over their reactions to emotions, the initial emotional response is often automatic and beyond immediate control. It's more realistic to focus on how to manage and respond to emotions constructively. What does envy feel like? How does that emotion differ from frustration? So, use the word angry and move on. Those two words are worlds apart in meaning. They need to be dealt with differently.

Myth: Ignoring Emotions Makes Them Go Away:

Ignoring or suppressing emotions doesn't make them disappear. It can lead to emotional buildup, contributing to stress and mental health issues. Addressing emotions and finding healthy outlets for expression is a more practical approach.

If you feel your partner is constantly putting you down or always criticizing you and you don't deal with it, time will deal you a significant blow when some trauma comes into your life. You have built up an account of unpaid bills, and one day, it will feel impossible, so you resign yourself or develop unhealthy patterns to deal with ignored emotions.

Myth: Emotions Are Irrational and Should Be Ignored:

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Emotions are not always irrational. They often provide valuable insights into one's experiences and can guide decision-making. Ignoring emotions entirely may lead to missed opportunities for personal growth and understanding. If you fall into a mud puddle, you will get wet. That would be an expected outcome. If you feel something deeply, you are expected to express it.

Misconception: Emotional Expression Always Leads to Confrontation:

Expressing emotions doesn't necessarily mean confrontation. Constructive communication involves expressing feelings to foster understanding and resolution rather than escalating conflict.

Constructive communication involves expressing feelings to foster understanding and resolution rather than escalating conflict.

Myth: Strong People Don't Need Support:

Everyone, regardless of strength, benefits from emotional support. Seeking help when needed is a sign of self-awareness and resilience, not weakness.

Misconception: Emotions Should Be Rational and Logical:

Emotions are not always rational or logical, and that's okay. They are complex and often influenced by personal experiences, thoughts, and biological factors. In some ways, they serve the same way as the flashing red light on your car's dashboard telling you to get your vehicle serviced. There is something wrong with the engine, and you can't afford to ignore it. If you ignore it, you will pay a greater price later. My first reaction when I see that flashing light was, "There is

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something wrong with the flashing light. I should get that light checked out.”

Myth: Children Shouldn't Experience Negative Emotions:

Children, like adults, experience a range of emotions. It's essential to validate and help them understand their feelings rather than dismissing or suppressing them. Children cry, but there is always a reason why they cry. It is sometimes difficult for a small child to explain what is wrong. As they mature, they can better navigate their feelings and deal with what is causing the pain. Perhaps they misunderstand something. Or maybe they are hurting physically in some area.

Challenging these myths and misconceptions can contribute to a healthier and more nuanced understanding of emotions, fostering emotional well-being and improved interpersonal relationships.

- Understanding how our culture and upbringing can impact our understanding of emotions.

Culture significantly influences how individuals understand, express, and manage their emotions. My wife and I have travelled and lived in over 40 countries during our married life and early upbringing. Here are several ways in which culture plays a role in shaping our emotional experiences:

Emotional Expression:

Different cultures have varying norms regarding the expression of emotions. In some cultures, there may be an emphasis on open and expressive displays of emotion, while in others, there may be a preference for more restrained or controlled expressions.

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I lived in Amman, Jordan, in my late 20s. I was studying Arabic. One Sunday after church, I walked home with the leader of the youth Group. He walked me to the front door of the house I was living in. Before he left and after he said the customary Arabic greeting for goodbye, He moved closer and kissed me. In a flash, he was off down the street. I remember walking through the door and leaning on the inside wall as the lady of the house noticed I was acting strangely. She had seen me walking with Mohamed and said he was a fine young man. I asked her ever so cautiously, "Is he a Christian?" She seemed puzzled. I told her what had just happened. I had never had a guy kiss me before. She told me I would get used to it. Everyone does that here. She then walked out of the room, and life returned to normal.

I was living in a different culture and had to adapt to it. Guys could hold hands walking down the street. Guys and gals couldn't. Culture makes a difference. Don't read your culture into someone else's.

Cultural Display Rules:

Cultures often have specific display rules that dictate which emotions are acceptable in certain situations. For example, some cultures may encourage the open expression of joy during celebrations, while others may expect individuals to maintain composure.

If you ever get to attend a funeral Service with the Greek Orthodox church, you will see people mourn like you have never seen before. My first Greek Orthodox funeral was for the father of a friend. I had never met or talked to the man. By the time the funeral service was over, I was in tears, along with so many others. Amazing!

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Emotional Suppression or Amplification:

Cultural expectations can influence whether individuals are encouraged to suppress or amplify their emotions. Some cultures may emphasize the importance of maintaining emotional restraint, while others may promote expressing feelings, even if they are intense.

Interpersonal Relationships:

Cultural norms shape how emotions are expressed within interpersonal relationships. For instance, some cultures may strongly emphasize collectivism and communal well-being, while others may prioritize individual expression and autonomy.

Emotional Understanding:

Cultural context contributes to how individuals understand and interpret emotions. The same emotional expression may be interpreted differently in distinct cultural settings, affecting communication and social interactions.

Cultural Models of Self:

Cultural variations in the concept of self can influence how individuals experience and express emotions. Individualistic cultures may focus on personal emotional experiences, while collectivist cultures prioritize shared emotional experiences within a community or family.

We took our adopted baby girl to church the first Sunday she was out of hospital. Her parents were Japanese/Italian, and she looked Asian. We took her to the Nursery, and one of the ladies looked at her and asked us, "How will you be able to

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“speak to her when she gets older?” A holy hush fell on the nursery. All eyes and ears were on us for our reply. I told the lady that my wife and I were taking Japanese lessons at the University at night so we could speak to her when she grew up. She thought that was an excellent idea. “It’s so much better when you can speak to your kids as they age.” She left the Nursery, and the place erupted with laughter.

Most of us understand clearly that we aren’t born with a specific language copied to the hard disk of our minds. We all must learn a language one word at a time. That’s what culture is all about.

Emotional Language:

The availability and richness of emotional vocabulary can vary across cultures. Some cultures may have specific words or phrases for nuanced emotional experiences that may not exist in other linguistic or cultural contexts.

This significantly influences how individuals understand, express, and manage their emotions. There are several ways in which culture plays a role in shaping our emotional experiences:

You may have heard that ‘Eskimos’ have 50 words for ‘snow.’ You may also know that Eskimo is an outsider word and doesn’t exist alongside one cultural group. Other names are more accurate: Aleut, Inuvialuit, Inupiat, Kalaallit, Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, and Yupik are just some of them.

Sanskrit has 96 words for love; Persian has 80; Greek has three; and English has only one. This indicates the poverty of awareness we give to that tremendously important realm of feeling. People who live in the north have so many words for

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snow because it is a life-and-death matter to them to have exact information about that element they live with so intimately.

If we had a vocabulary of 50 words for love, we would probably be more prosperous and intelligent in this human element close to our hearts.

If we had a vocabulary of 50 words for love, we would probably be more prosperous and intelligent in this human element close to our hearts. An Inuit probably would die of clumsiness if he had only one word for snow; we are close to dying of loneliness because we

have only one word for love. English may be the most lacking regarding the feelings of all the western languages.

Emotional Expression:

Different cultures may have varying norms regarding the expression of emotions. In some cultures, there may be an emphasis on open and expressive displays of emotion, while in others, there may be a preference for more restrained or controlled expressions.

Cultural Display Rules:

I remember joking with my father (who was very British!) about the influence of the British Empire. It was once said that the sun never set on the British Empire. I told my dad that the sun never set because God could never trust the British in the dark. I thought the joke was funny. He didn't.

Emotional Suppression or Amplification:

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Interpersonal Relationships:

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Emotional Understanding:

Cultural context contributes to how individuals understand and interpret emotions. The same emotional expression may be interpreted differently in distinct cultural settings, affecting communication and social interactions.

Cultural Variations in Coping Mechanisms:

How individuals cope with and manage emotions can be influenced by cultural norms. Some cultures may encourage seeking social support, while others emphasize individual resilience.

The Jewish custom of “shiva,” which refers to the seven days of formalized mourning by the immediate family of the deceased, comes from the practice originating before the flood where Rabbis taught that seven days after the flood, Noah mourned the death of Methuselah, the oldest man that ever lived.

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NAVIGATING YOUR FEELINGS: EXPLORING AND EXPRESSING

- **Dependence on Personal Perspective:** "Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy." Proverbs 14:1

How you interpret and respond to events is heavily influenced by your past experiences, forming the foundation of your emotional responses.

Your own experiences play a crucial role in shaping your emotions. How you interpret and respond to events is heavily influenced by your past experiences, forming the foundation of your emotional responses. Here are several ways in which personal

experiences impact your emotions:

Memory and Recall:

Past experiences contribute to the formation of memories, and these memories can influence how you perceive and respond to similar situations in the present. Positive or negative experiences can colour your emotional responses to new events.

My early years were spent on a Palm Oil Plantation in Nigeria, West Africa. My father ran the Plantation. I had an older sister, and we lived in this vast manor house with no neighbourhood children for miles around. We ate separately from our parents. We were brought into the family room to say good night to our parents before we were escorted to our bedrooms on the upper floor of the mansion. Life lacked much interaction, but the plantation was alive with activity and wonder. I loved the

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solitary life where my imagination could soar, and I could read or play alone for as long as my heart desired.

So, the Solitary life has been a staple for me. My early years were lived in sharp contrast to my later years. At the age of 13 in Edmonton, Alberta, I met Jesus Christ, and my life was never to be the same again. Everything about me changed.

At that same time, I felt a calling to be a “Pastor.” I initially thought it was for a position like Lawyer, Teacher, Carpenter, etc. It took me half a lifetime to figure out God was not calling me to a particular job. He was calling me to a role.

From then on, I wanted to come alongside others to ‘shepherd’ them. I am never happier than when I am shepherding, pastoring, mentoring, and influencing individuals, groups, and churches to draw near to God and trust Him. That’s who I am. I don’t have to be a Pastor with a church paying me a salary, etc., to do this. It is the single most crucial metaphor in my life.

I have been privileged to Pastor 5 churches in my life, but the job of Pastor has never been my calling. It is the actual pastoring and shepherding that excites me the most.

I have met many people who would never think of accepting the job position of a pastor, but they have a pastor/shepherd's heart. They always walk alongside people, encouraging them spiritually and caring for them in many ways. They don’t see themselves as a schoolteacher or an accountant. They see themselves as an individual who feels called to get involved in the lives of others to encourage them and pray for them as they walk through valleys of pain or discouragement. It is the most rewarding part of their lives.

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What metaphor describes your life and keeps you going today? Do you have one, or are you just living 24/7 in a never-ending series of encounters and opportunities, going nowhere?

Cognitive Appraisal:

Your past experiences shape the cognitive frameworks through which you appraise and interpret situations. Your history of similar encounters influences how you assess threatening, rewarding, or neutral events.

Some people have had such a traumatic childhood that it takes them years to develop another narrative they can live with. Because of their background, they believe they will never be able to walk a better road. Since they didn't have anyone in their early years who believed in them and loved them without conditions, they have always felt negatively about what they could do or be.

They live with the echoes of defeating and limiting dialogues swirling through their mind daily. Some find a way out by meeting a good friend, a future spouse, an organization, or a church that comes alongside and helps lift them out of the quicksand and helps set their feet in a healthier direction. And they begin to soar to heights they never knew existed when they were younger.

But it all began with a sober evaluation and decision to head in another direction with the help of others. Seldom is a person able to do this entirely on their own. That is where the Christian Caregiver comes in. You have a valuable role to play in your care receiver's life.

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Learning and Conditioning:

Your experiences contribute to the conditioning of emotional responses. If you've had positive experiences associated with a particular stimulus, encountering that stimulus in the future may trigger positive emotions.

Suppose you have had a healthy church experience growing up. When you move into adulthood, you will search out another church if you have been positively affected by a growing group of people who love each other and care for one another healthily.

If you had a foul or abusive church experience, you might put church attendance way down on your priority scale until you experience other things in your life that make you ready to jump into a church again.

We all need a group of people around us to help us to become healthy adults. We are significantly influenced by the people we call friends. As one leader said, "Show me your five best friends, and I will show you what you will be like ten years from now."

We all need a group of people around us to help us to become healthy adults. We are significantly influenced by the people we call friends.

Trauma and Resilience:

Traumatic experiences can have a profound and lasting impact on emotional responses. They may lead to heightened emotional reactions, anxiety, or avoidance behaviours. Conversely, experiences of overcoming challenges contribute

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to emotional resilience. The good news is that we can move on from traumatic past experiences if we want to. We don't have to stay stuck in them. But we need others to help us.

The world is filled with many different approaches to past trauma. Several good organizations come together to provide support for those who have gone through trauma in their past life. If you are working with one of them and it doesn't seem to be working, you can stop and look for another group. There are plenty around. Some are better than others.

This may seem obvious. But the one constant that troubled people deal with is the philosophy that 'this might work for you, but I'm different. The human condition is not that individualistic. We share a lot of typical desires, inhibitions, fears, loves, etc.

Attachment and Relationships:

Early attachment experiences with care receivers can influence their emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships. Positive and secure attachments contribute to emotional security, while negative experiences can lead to emotional challenges.

The English Novel is an integral part of English literature. Historically, the English novel has generally been seen as beginning with Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719). But Chaucer wrote "Canterbury Tales in 1400. The early churchmen took a dim view of novels. Most authors write and create a world in which they can get into the characters' minds, and they control the storyline and responses to the villains and heroes. It was felt that they were usurping the

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place of God, the supreme author of history and interpreter of events.

But the novel has an unmovable place in the development of modern society. We can all identify ourselves in these fictitious

characters. At least we have all met people who remind us of some of them. It is as though the author is reading my mind and explaining why I think the way I think. We have a common humanity, and novels help us to understand ourselves as we live in a community with the world around us.

But the novel has an unmovable place in the development of modern society. We can all identify ourselves in these fictitious characters

The role that a caregiver and care receiver have together is part of God's tool to shepherd us at particularly vulnerable times in our lives. Consider these roles as divine appointments meant to encourage us through a difficult passage in life.

Self-Concept and Identity:

Your self-concept, or how you perceive yourself, is influenced by your life experiences. Positive experiences may contribute to a positive self-image, fostering positive emotions, while negative experiences can impact self-esteem and emotional well-being. Getting over a negative life experience is a process that takes time, self-reflection, and intentional effort. Here are some strategies that may help:

1. Allow Yourself to Feel:

Permit yourself to feel the emotions associated with the negative experience. It's okay to feel sadness, anger, or

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disappointment. Acknowledging and processing these emotions is a crucial step in healing.

2. Seek Support:

Reach out to friends, family, or a trusted support system. Talking about your feelings with others can provide emotional support and different perspectives. Professional support from a counsellor or therapist can also be beneficial.

3. Practice Self-Compassion:

Be kind to yourself during challenging times. Avoid self-blame and negative self-talk. Treat yourself with the compassion you would offer a friend facing a difficult situation.

4. Set Boundaries:

Establish clear boundaries to protect yourself from further harm or stress related to the negative experience. This may involve limiting contact with specific individuals, creating a safe physical or emotional space, or setting realistic expectations for yourself.

5. Develop Healthy Coping Strategies:

Identify and cultivate healthy coping mechanisms to deal with stress. This might include mindfulness practices, journaling, creative expression, or engaging in hobbies that provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Getting involved in regular Bible study or involvement in a local church can be of great comfort and benefit to you now.

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6. Set Realistic Goals:

Break down the process of overcoming the negative experience into small, manageable goals. Celebrate small victories along the way and recognize that healing is a gradual process.

Celebrate small victories along the way and recognize that healing is a gradual process.

7. Learn from the Experience:

Reflect on the negative experience and consider what you can learn from it. Understanding the lessons or insights gained can contribute to personal growth and resilience.

8. Focus on the Present and Future:

While it's important to acknowledge and process the past, try to shift your focus toward the present and future. Set new goals, explore new interests, and envision a positive and fulfilling future for yourself.

9. Practice Mindfulness and Acceptance:

Mindfulness techniques, such as meditation and deep breathing, can help you stay present and reduce anxiety about the past or future. Acceptance of what has happened is a crucial step in moving forward.

10. Cultivate Positivity:

Surround yourself with positivity. Engage in activities and spend time with people who uplift and inspire you. Cultivating

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a positive environment can contribute to a more optimistic outlook.

Everyone's healing process is unique; taking the necessary time is okay. If the negative experience continues to impact your life significantly, seeking professional support can be valuable in facilitating the healing process.

Personal Values and Beliefs:

Your values and beliefs, often shaped by personal experiences, guide your emotional responses to situations that align or conflict with those values.

Your values and beliefs, often shaped by personal experiences, guide your emotional responses to situations that align or conflict with those values.

How will events aligned with your core beliefs influence your emotional reactions. You may have been a Christian all your life. Church has always been a part of your life. But now you feel distant or removed from its teachings.

Perhaps this is the one time you are seriously questioning if the whole thing is true. You don't feel the warmth as you once did. Don't give up. You have been heading for this destination for years. It is finally here. This is the challenge you have before you. You have never needed the presence of God in your life like you need Him now.

Christianity is either true or it is not. You are facing the test. Can you trust God even in this situation, or should you turn your back on the whole thing?

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You are in a place millions of others have been, and I want to encourage you to keep walking. God seldom takes us around our problems. He takes us through them. That is where you meet Him.

God took David through the valley of the shadow of death in Psalm 23. It was there that he discovered that the shadows couldn't hurt him. They were just shadows. The shadow of a bus can't run you over. It's just a shadow. God welcomes the test. He doesn't get angry with us for expressing our fears and doubts. He walks with us through the pain. He prepares a feast before us in the presence of all that is hurting and harmful. We are nourished, not by our pain, but by His grace, which is 'sufficient' for us when we need it the most. God can be trusted.

Coping Strategies:

Your past experiences contribute to the development of coping strategies. Positive coping mechanisms learned from successful experiences can enhance emotional resilience, while ineffective strategies may contribute to emotional challenges.

For example, some people find that the enjoyment of eating helps them cope with some of their pain. But they end up overeating, and their added weight creates problems in a whole other direction. Not all coping patterns are good for us, even though they may offer some short-term distraction.

Not all coping patterns are good for us, even though they may offer some short-term distraction.

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Recognizing the impact of personal experiences on emotions is essential for understanding yourself and developing emotional intelligence. It provides insights into the roots of specific emotional patterns, helping you navigate future experiences with greater self-awareness and adaptability. Additionally, seeking support and engaging in activities that foster positive experiences can contribute to emotional well-being and growth.

Feelings Need to Be Expressed

"Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control." Proverbs 25:28

We should understand the importance of expressing our feelings and the role of communication in emotional health. Our language helps us to communicate our needs to others and ourselves.

Have you noticed that if three people at different stages in life ask us a personal question, we may give three separate answers to them? To the young person, we will answer one way. We will add a few other elements of our life situation to one of our peers. To a mentor or trusted Senior with whom we have had a long and good relationship, we may be tempted to share something that we would never think of sharing with the first two. Why is that?

The influence of others in our lives draws different aspects of the truth out into the open. Talking to that trusted friend, we say something that may even surprise us. We wouldn't go into the same detail if it were a much younger person. We feel they wouldn't understand anyway.

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OWNING YOUR FEELINGS: RESPONSIBILITY AND CHANGE

- **People Are Responsible for What They Do With Their Feelings**, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23

Ownership of your feelings and actions is essential to personal responsibility and self-awareness. Here are some strategies to help you take ownership of your emotions and behaviours:

Ownership of your feelings and actions is essential to personal responsibility and self-awareness.

Take Ownership of Your Feelings:

Self-Reflection:

Regularly engage in self-reflection to understand your emotions. Identify the root causes of your feelings and explore how past experiences may influence your current emotional state.

Mindfulness Practices:

Practice mindfulness techniques to stay present and aware of your emotions without judgment. Mindfulness can help you observe your feelings without getting overwhelmed by them. Mindfulness is a mental state and practice characterized by heightened awareness, attention, and focus on the present moment without judgment. It involves intentionally directing attention to the sensations, thoughts, and emotions occurring

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in the present, observing them without getting caught up in them or reacting impulsively.

Labeling Emotions:

Develop a vocabulary to label and express your emotions accurately. Identifying your feelings can be a first step in taking ownership of those feelings. The ten most common emotions are happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, disgust, contempt, love, jealousy, and guilt.

Journaling:

Keep a journal to document your emotions, experiences, and thoughts. Writing can help you gain clarity and insight into your feelings, making it easier to take ownership of them.

Avoiding Blame:

Resist the urge to blame others for your emotions. Acknowledge that your feelings are your responses to situations, and taking ownership involves recognizing your role in shaping those emotions.

Resist the urge to blame others for your emotions.

Acknowledge that your feelings are your responses to situations, and taking ownership involves recognizing your role in shaping those emotions. “You are making me angry” is never true. “I am choosing to be angry at something you said or did. My

anger is my choice. I need to choose something else.”

Expressing Emotions Appropriately:

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Find healthy ways to express emotions rather than bottling them up or lashing out. This might include talking to a friend, practicing art, or engaging in physical activities.

Setting Boundaries:

Identify and communicate your emotional boundaries to others. Taking ownership involves recognizing when you must establish limits to protect your emotional well-being.

Take Ownership of Your Actions:

Accountability:

Acknowledge and accept responsibility for your actions. Avoid making excuses or blaming external factors. Instead, focus on what you can control and how you can make amends if necessary.

Learn from your Mistakes:

View mistakes as opportunities for growth. Instead of dwelling on guilt or shame, ask yourself what you can learn from the situation and how to make better choices.

Apologize When Necessary:

If your actions have hurt others, offer a sincere apology. Taking ownership means acknowledging the impact of your behaviour on others and expressing a genuine desire to make amends.

Set and Uphold Personal Standards:

Clearly define your values and personal standards. Taking ownership involves aligning your actions with these standards and holding yourself accountable when you fall short.

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Communication:

Communicate openly and honestly with others. If you have made a mistake or if your actions have consequences for others, be transparent about it. Open communication is critical to taking ownership.

Behavioural Changes:

Actively work on changing behaviours that are not aligned with your values. This may involve seeking support, developing new habits, or engaging in personal development activities.

Own Your Choices:

Recognize that you have a choice in how you respond to situations. Taking ownership means acknowledging that your actions result from your options and that you can make different choices in the future.

Seek Feedback:

Solicit feedback from others, especially those you trust. Understanding how your actions impact others can provide valuable insights and contribute to personal growth.

Taking ownership of your feelings and actions is an ongoing process that requires self-awareness, reflection, and a commitment to personal growth. It empowers you to live authentically and take control of your emotional and behavioural responses to life's challenges.

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Conclusion:

"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7

IT'S YOUR TURN, APPLY IT.

- **Who can you trust with your emotions?**
Make a list of people you can connect with to share your feelings, struggles, and challenges.
- **What did you do this past week to care for your emotional, physical or relaxation needs?**
- **What books are you reading to help you gain better insights into the needs of your care receiver?**

DISTINCTIVELY CHRISTIAN CAREGIVING

**LOVE IN ACTION: A JOURNEY INTO CHRISTIAN CARING
AND COMFORT**



4. DISTINCTIVELY CHRISTIAN CAREGIVING

OVERVIEW

In this chapter, we explore the historical foundations of hospitals, tracing their origins to ancient civilizations with religious and charitable motivations. The focus then shifts to the unique aspects of Christian caregiving, emphasizing the central role of love and citing numerous Biblical "one another" commands as guidelines for caring behaviour. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the responsible and effective use of the Bible in caregiving, encouraging respectful and meaningful engagement with scripture while cautioning against potential misuse, such as manipulation, abuse, judgment, exclusion, and selective interpretation.

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FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN CARING

- “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you all should love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have a love for one another.” John 13:34-35

The concept of a hospital, as an institution dedicated to caring for the sick and injured, has ancient origins. The earliest known institutions that served a similar purpose to modern hospitals can be traced back to ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. These early hospitals were often associated with temples and religious institutions, and they provided care for the sick and injured, pilgrims and travellers.

The first actual hospital in the Western world is the Hospital of St. Sampson in Constantinople, founded in the 4th century. This hospital was established to provide care for the sick and the poor, and it became a model for later Christian charitable institutions.

The primary motivations for establishing these early hospitals were often religious or charitable. They were founded to provide care for the sick and the needy and express the spiritual and moral values of the societies in which they were built.

As our society becomes more and more secular, the spiritual aspect of caregiving often takes a back seat as far as emphasis is concerned. Many faith-based hospitals are giving control of their institutions to secular powers.

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The imperative to love one another has been taught wherever the Gospel has been preached. Many people have had trouble with the command to love one another. Some people are difficult to love, and we struggle with going against our feelings in dealing with the so-called 'unlovable.' I like what CS Lewis said in "Mere Christianity":

"Do not waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbour; act as if you did. We find one of the greatest secrets as soon as we do this. You will come to love him when you behave like you love someone. If you injure someone you dislike, you will dislike him more. You will dislike him less if you do him a good turn."

The Christian Gospel has always included caring for others as a central means of living out one's faith in the world. A simple study of the commands of scripture lists the ways that we can care for others. Look at this list of "one another's" in the Bible for a start:

**The Christian Gospel
has always included
caring for others as a
central means of living
out one's faith in the
world**

The "One Another's" of Scripture - POSITIVE COMMANDS (how to treat others)

- Love one another (John 13:34 - This command occurs at least 16 times)
- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)
- Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Build up one another (Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)

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- Be likeminded towards one another (Romans 15:5)
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- Admonish one another (Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16)
- Greet one another (Romans 16:16)
- Care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
- Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:2, 32; Colossians 3:13)
- Be patient with one another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)
- Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 25)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19). Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:5)
- Consider others better than yourselves (Philippians 2:3)
- Look to the interests of one another (Philippians 2:4)
- Bear with one another (Colossians 3:13)
- Teach one another (Colossians 3:16)
- Comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Exhort one another (Hebrews 3:13)
- Stir up [provoke, stimulate] one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24)
- Show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)
- Employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another (1 Peter 4:10)
- Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another (1 Peter 5:5)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Confess your faults to one another (James 5:16)

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The “One Another’s” of Scripture NEGATIVE COMMANDS (how not to treat others)

- Do not lie to one another (Colossians 3:9)
- Stop passing judgment on one another (Romans 14:13)
- If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you'll be destroyed by each other (Galatians 5:15)
- Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other (Galatians 5:26). Do not slander one another (James 4:11)
- Don't grumble against each other (James 5:9)

This is a tall order. But it will serve as a guide as to how we can care for one another. CS Lewis wrote a letter to one of his friends (Mrs. Johnson) on March 2, 1955. He was talking about how we should care for each other. He said, “...the time for **saying** comes seldom; the time for **being** is always here. What we practice, not (save at rare intervals) what we preach, is usually our great contribution to the conversion of others.”

“...the time for *saying* comes seldom; the time for *being* is always here.

Christians are not the only people who know how to care for others. Many folks from a different faith or without faith know how to care for others.

But the Christian faith comes with an added truth. We have access to the living faith of Jesus Christ living within to guide and direct our care and concern for others. Christian caregiving is something all Christians should be doing because we serve a God who has an infinite resource of love for us and the world he created.

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So, we must ask ourselves how Christian Caregiving differs from non-Christian caregiving. Is it, in fact, different? So, let's explore this together.

SECTION 2: APPLYING BIBLICAL RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE CARING

“For in Him every one of God’s promises is a “Yes” 2 Corinthians 1:20

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by Him, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15.

Christian caregivers have a resource we can use in helping others. This is perhaps the most obvious difference as a Christian caregiver. Sharing Bible verses is a great way to reach out to others and express how much we care. Here are some tips on how to share Bible verses in a good way:

Give a copy of the Bible as a gift: Sharing a copy of the Bible with someone can be a meaningful and thoughtful gesture. My suggestion is that we always choose a modern translation. It makes it easier for the reader. I grew up with a ‘King James’ version, but we no longer talk in that sort of English.

Write verses in correspondence: Including a Bible verse in a letter or email can be a great way to encourage someone and share the Word of God—no need to apologize when you share a verse of Scripture. The Holy Spirit inspires the Word of God and can make an inroad into hearts that will produce fruit years later.

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Share on social media: Social media platforms can be a great way to share Bible verses with friends and family. We live in a world of memes on Facebook. So, this is not a new practice.

The Holy Spirit inspires the Word of God and can make an inroad into hearts that will produce fruit years later.

Lead a Bible study group: Starting a Bible study group can be a great way to share the Word of God with others and encourage discussion. If you are visiting with someone in a retirement facility, you may even volunteer to come in regularly and lead a Bible Study for those interested.

Share relevant scripture: Sharing a Bible verse appropriate to someone's situation can be a great way to encourage them and show that you care. Even writing it out on a card and leaving it with them to discuss on your next visit is a great idea. It needn't be long. It may be a sentence or a Psalm to leave with your Care Receiver.

Invite people to church services: Inviting someone to church services can be a great way to share the Word of God and encourage fellowship. Offer to pick them up next Sunday if they are interested. If they say no, accept that and don't push. They may not be ready just now.

Share other resources: Sharing other resources such as books, devotionals, or podcasts can be a great way to encourage someone and help them grow in their faith. There are so many great books available. If eyesight is a problem, you could try to interest them in downloading an "Audible" app where they can get hundreds of great books to read to them.

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Carefully consider how you use the Bible: It's important to respect others and use the Bible in a way that is appropriate for the situation.

Regularly memorize scripture: Memorizing scripture can be a great way to share the Word of God with others and encourage discussion. That way, you can include Scripture in your conversation quickly. Ask the Lord to open the right opportunity to share.

Familiarize yourself with topical verses: Familiarizing yourself with topical verses can be a great way to share the Word of God with others and encourage discussion.

Pray when reading the Bible: This can be a great way to connect with God and seek guidance.

The Bible provides numerous resources and guidance on caring for others, emphasizing compassion, kindness, and love. Here are some key biblical passages and themes that can serve as resources for those seeking to care for others:

1. The Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40):

- Jesus summarizes the commandments, emphasizing love for God and love for others as the greatest commandments.

2. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37):

- This parable teaches the importance of showing compassion and mercy to those in need, regardless of cultural or social differences.

3. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7):

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- Jesus provides a comprehensive guide to righteous living, including teachings on humility, forgiveness, and caring for others.
4. **Galatians 6:2 (Bear one another's burdens):**
 - Encourages believers to support and help each other in times of difficulty.
 5. **Philippians 2:3-4 (Consider others more significant than yourselves):**
 - Encourages humility and a focus on the needs of others.
 6. **1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (The qualities of love):**
 - Describes the characteristics of love, which include patience, kindness, and selflessness.
 7. **Proverbs 19:17 (Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord):**
 - Highlights the importance of generosity and caring for the less fortunate.
 8. **James 1:27 (Religion that is pure and undefiled):**
 - Stresses the importance of caring for widows and orphans, representing those in vulnerable positions.
 9. **Colossians 3:12-14 (Put on then, as God's chosen ones):**
 - Encourages believers to clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.
 - 10.1 **John 3:17-18 (If anyone has the world's goods):**

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- Challenges believers to not just talk about love but to actively demonstrate it through actions, especially in meeting the needs of others.

11. **Matthew 25:35-40 (The Judgment of the Nations):**

- Jesus speaks about serving Him by caring for the needy, emphasizing that when you care for others, you are caring for Him.

12. **Ephesians 4:32 (Be kind to one another, tender-hearted):**

- Encourages believers to be compassionate and forgiving towards one another.

In addition to these passages, many biblical stories and characters exemplify caring for others, such as the examples of Ruth and Boaz, the ministry of Jesus, and the acts of the early Christian community as described in the Book of Acts. These resources can provide a solid foundation for those caring for others biblically.

Misusing the Bible can be harmful and disrespectful to others. Here are some ways in which the Bible can be misused:

Manipulation: Some people misuse the Bible to manipulate others into doing things or believing things that are not true. This can be done by twisting the meaning of the text or taking it out of context.

One example of taking the Bible out of context and misusing it to manipulate others is when people use the Bible to justify their incorrect behaviour and disobedience. For instance, the Hebrew midwives lied to save the Hebrew male babies' lives. - This is an example of how the Bible can be taken out of context to justify actions not in line with God's teachings. Because they

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lied, we can also. The passage does not explicitly say that God approved of the midwives' lie; instead, it emphasizes God's blessing upon the midwives for their fear of God and refusal to carry out Pharaoh's orders.

Abuse: The Bible should never be used to justify abuse or mistreatment of others. The Bible teaches us to love and respect others, and any use of the Bible to justify abusive behaviour is a misuse of the text. Teachings that justify discrimination against individuals or groups based on factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics should not be encouraged.

Twisting biblical narratives to justify or promote violence, aggression, or abuse toward others should be avoided at all costs. Sometimes, people use the Bible to make false prophecies, promote extremist beliefs, or exploit individuals for personal gain. This can occur in the context of cults or extremist religious movements that distort biblical teaching for manipulative purposes.

Judgment: The Bible teaches us to love our neighbours as ourselves and to treat others with kindness and compassion. When taken out of context, the verse “Judge not, that ye be not judged can be used to suggest that all forms of judgment, including constructive criticism, discernment of right and wrong, and accountability, are inherently evil. This can lead to disregarding ethical discernment and the pursuit of justice.

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It can be wrongly applied to discourage holding others responsible for their conduct or dismiss the need for ethical evaluation. When examined in context, the passage from Matthew 7:1-5 addresses the importance of self-examination, avoiding hypocrisy, and the proper manner of offering criticism and judgement. It does not universally prohibit discernment and accountability but cautions against hypocritical and self-righteous judgment.

Exclusion: The Bible should not be used to exclude or discriminate against others. The Bible teaches us that all people are created equal and that we should treat others respectfully and with dignity. The Bible should not be used to judge or condemn others.

The Bible teaches that how other people are treated is essential. Showing a positive attitude towards people from various races and faith backgrounds presents a challenge to Christians today and an opportunity to follow the teaching and example of Jesus.

Selective interpretation: The Bible is a complex text that requires careful study and understanding. For the past 40 years, I have been teaching “Walk Thru the Bible” Seminars all over North America. These are three-hour seminars in which we teach the entire Old Testament or New Testament Storyline to people of all ages. Seeing people sit down and get an overall view of Scripture is exciting. I usually begin the Old Testament Seminar with the statement, “The Old Testament is ancient, ambiguous, and diverse, and we will learn the storyline today. So hold on to your seats...The Bible is given to us to transform our lives, and the time we spend reading it is well spent.

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Section 3: Christian Caring in Practice

- ‘Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:

Many support groups meet nationwide to help people deal with their long-term issues.

www.stephenministries.org - Stephen Ministries is a not-for-profit Christian education organization founded in 1975 that produces training and resources known for their excellence, practicality, psychological integrity, and theological depth. These resources cover caring ministry, assertiveness, spiritual gifts, grief support, spiritual growth, and more. Their staff is based in St. Louis, Missouri.

Some other groups are listed here.:

1. **Freedom Sessions** – A biblically based adaption of the traditional 12-step program that seeks to transform lives with an encounter with Jesus Christ.
www.freedomsession.com also offers the possibility of getting into a small group for accountability online.
2. **Celebrate Recovery:** A Christ-centered recovery program for individuals struggling with various hurts, habits, and hang-ups.
3. **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA):** Many local AA and NA groups incorporate a spiritual aspect and can be particularly supportive of Christians seeking recovery. The origins of these groups were in the church. That is not a significant part of their program today.

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4. **Divorce Care:** A support group for individuals going through separation or divorce, providing biblical perspectives on healing. www.divorcecare.org
5. **GriefShare:** A group for those who have experienced the loss of a loved one, offering support and encouragement based on Christian principles. www.griefshare.org
6. **Mental Health Support Groups:** Some churches or Christian organizations may host mental health support groups focusing on anxiety, depression, or other mental health challenges from a faith perspective.
7. **Single Parent Support Groups:** Churches or community organizations may offer support groups for single parents, addressing both practical and spiritual aspects of single parenting.
8. **Chronic Illness Support Groups:** Some Christian organizations provide support groups for those dealing with chronic illnesses, emphasizing faith and coping strategies.
9. **Addiction Recovery Ministries:** Some churches have specific ministries that support individuals and families dealing with addiction, offering spiritual and practical assistance.
10. **Caregiver Support Groups:** For those caring for loved ones, some groups focus on the unique challenges of caregiving from a Christian perspective. www.caregiversnetwork.ca is a not-for-profit network of caregivers. They collaborate with like-minded organizations to encourage the training and support of

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informal caregivers and Christian care mentors. They are mainly geared to help people become better caregivers.

The Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation operates www.ccef.org. Their goal is to 'restore Christ to counselling and counselling to the church. They are a fantastic organization with much to offer individual caregivers and the church.

11. **Men's and Women's Ministries:** Many churches have gender-specific groups that provide support, fellowship, and encouragement tailored to the unique challenges faced by men and women.
12. **Financial Peace University:** While not a support group in the traditional sense, this program by Dave Ramsey is often hosted by churches and provides biblically based financial advice and support. www.ramseysolutions.com
13. **CAPS Canada:** Christians Against Poverty is a support group for people who need assistance getting out of debt and help build a workable budget that helps them stay out of future debt. www.capcanada.org
14. **Pornography Addiction Support:** Some churches offer support groups for individuals struggling with pornography addiction, providing a safe and confidential environment. www.covenanteyes.org and www.xxxchurch.com are two web-based organizations that empower sexual integrity and accountability for those struggling with porn addictions.

To find specific groups, consider checking with local churches and Christian counselling centers or using online platforms that connect people with faith-based support groups. Additionally,

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Christian therapists and counsellors may offer individualized support for specific issues. Always remember to reach out to qualified professionals and seek guidance from pastors or church leaders when needed.

This might be a good time to discuss the difference between a Christian Counselor and a Therapist. Christian counsellors and therapists have different responsibilities and duties.

Counsellors are trained to provide counselling services from a Christian perspective. In contrast, therapists are trained to provide counselling services from a secular perspective, although more and more therapists use scriptures in their therapy as they come from a Christian point of view. Christian counsellors may also work in a church or ministry setting, while therapists typically work in a clinical or hospital setting.

IT'S YOUR TURN, APPLY IT.

- **Do you agree with the statement: “Every Christian should give counsel and receive counsel.” Discuss with a friend over coffee some evening.**
- **Is the life you are living closer to servitude or servanthood? We will discuss this concept more fully in Chapter 7 when we talk about establishing boundaries. But it would be good to start thinking about it now. How can you change?**

The church seems to have given up the ‘care of souls’ to the secular marketplace. Or has it? What is your observation?

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ASSERTIVENESS: RELATING GENTLY AND FIRMLY

**ASSERTIVE YET LOVING:
HOW TO MASTER THE ART OF GENTLE FIRMNESS**



5. ASSERTIVENESS: RELATING GENTLY AND FIRMLY

. OVERVIEW

This chapter examines the importance of understanding and applying assertive communication in various interpersonal situations.

Assertiveness is distinguished from passivity, aggression, and passive aggression, emphasizing expressing thoughts, feelings, and needs directly and respectfully. The chapter discusses the benefits of assertiveness, including effective communication, healthy relationships, increased self-confidence, conflict resolution, and improved emotional well-being. We address the application of assertiveness in emotional situations, providing Biblical references and practical tips. The chapter concludes by offering guidance on dealing with manipulative individuals, emphasizing the importance of staying calm, setting boundaries, documenting interactions, effective communication, and seeking support.

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UNDERSTANDING ASSERTIVENESS AND ITS IMPORTANCE

- A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1)
- Understanding the difference between assertiveness, passivity, aggression, and passive aggression. “Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil.” Ephesians 4:26-27

How we respond to life and life’s challenges is a lifelong process of trial and error. Realizing that we have all learned different ways of responding to outside events, knowing how to deal with vulnerable people is essential. Their style of relating may differ from my style. As people age, they respond differently to an event than they did years ago. Understanding how we react and how we can help others respond healthily is worth giving some attention to.

Assertiveness, passivity, aggression, and passive aggression are distinct communication styles that individuals demonstrate in their interactions. Here's an overview of each:

Assertiveness involves expressing one's thoughts, feelings and needs directly, honestly, and respectfully. Assertive individuals can communicate their desires without being overly passive or aggressive. They stand up for themselves while also considering the rights and feelings of others. Assertiveness fosters effective communication, builds self-confidence, and maintains healthy relationships. This style is the best way to respond to life’s situations.

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For example, Jordan is a guy who confidently expresses his opinions and actively listens to others' viewpoints. When faced with a disagreement, Jordan remains calm and rational, addressing the issue directly without becoming defensive or resorting to personal attacks. For example, suppose Jordan disagrees with a proposed approach. He might say, "I understand your perspective, but based on my experience, I believe we should consider an alternative strategy for these reasons."

Passivity is characterized by a lack of self-expression and an unwillingness to stand up for one's rights and needs. Passive individuals often avoid conflict at the expense of their desires, leading to unmet needs and potential resentment. They have difficulty saying "no" and following others' wishes, even if it goes against their preferences. Passivity can result in feelings of frustration, powerlessness, and low self-esteem.

Now, consider another colleague, Sarah, who avoids conflict and often remains silent even when she disagrees with a decision. During performance reviews, she struggles to express her concerns about her workload and nods when her manager assigns her additional tasks despite feeling overwhelmed. Sarah might also apologize excessively to avoid confrontation, even when not at fault.

Aggression involves expressing one's thoughts, feelings, and needs in a forceful and hostile manner, often at the expense of others. Aggressive individuals may disregard the rights and feelings of others, seeking to dominate or control situations. This communication style can lead to conflicts, damaged relationships, and a negative impact on one's well-being and the well-being of others.

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Imagine a co-worker named Alex, who frequently raises his voice and interrupts others during team meetings. He becomes defensive and domineering when his ideas are challenged, often using personal attacks to assert his authority. For instance, if a team member suggests an alternative approach to a project, Alex might respond with, "That's the most ridiculous idea I've ever heard. Why would we waste time on something so foolish?"

Passive Aggression is a form of indirect expression of hostility or anger. Instead of openly addressing issues, passive-aggressive individuals may express their discontent through subtle behaviours, sarcasm, or intentional inefficiency. Passive aggression can be confusing and detrimental to relationships because the hostility is not openly acknowledged. It often involves a combination of passive behaviours and underlying aggressive feelings.

Let's say a team member named Chris frequently agrees to take on tasks but then deliberately procrastinates and misses deadlines. When confronted about the delays, Chris tends to make sarcastic comments and subtle jabs, such as saying, "Oh, I didn't realize this was such an urgent priority for you. I'll be sure to drop everything and work on it right away," while rolling his eyes. He doesn't act aggressively, but it results in the same conclusion. He is committed to doing it his way and won't take responsibility for his lack of action.

In summary, assertiveness is a balanced and effective communication style that involves expressing oneself directly and respectfully. Passivity involves avoiding conflict at the expense of personal needs. Aggression is forceful and hostile communication that can damage relationships. Passive aggression combines indirect behaviours with underlying

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hostility, making it a more subtle and often damaging form of communication.

Each style has its consequences and impacts on personal and interpersonal dynamics. Developing assertiveness skills is generally considered a positive goal for effective communication and healthy relationships.

What is Assertiveness?

If assertiveness is expressing oneself directly and respectfully, it is the best way to practice effective communication.

A characteristic of assertive behaviour would be: “But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love. “Ephesians 4:15. This is how we should all communicate and relate to each other – expressing the truth about how you are feeling in a manner that isn’t aggressive or passive.

The Benefits of Assertiveness “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, you must also forgive.” Colossians 3:12.

Most of us must learn how to be assertive. It’s not something that comes naturally. So, let me convince you that it is a skill that pays off big time if you are willing to put the work in. Here are some critical advantages of assertiveness:

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Effective Communication:

Assertive individuals express their thoughts, feelings, and needs clearly and directly. This promotes effective communication and reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings. Can you think of friends that relate to you like this? They speak the truth honestly and directly. You can always count on their honest opinion the first time.

Assertive people:

Have healthy Relationships:

Assertiveness fosters the development of healthy relationships. By expressing oneself openly and respectfully, individuals can build trust and understanding with others. They stand in sharp contrast to other friends who give you what they think you want to hear rather than share what they honestly think.

Most of us must learn how to be assertive. It's not something that comes naturally.

Have increased self-confidence:

Assertiveness helps individuals recognize and communicate their worth and needs. This, in turn, contributes to increased self-esteem and self-confidence. They cherish integrity and don't make up opinions if they haven't thought them through before.

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Resolve Conflict:

Assertive communication is a valuable tool in resolving conflicts. Assertive individuals can address issues directly, seeking fair and mutually beneficial solutions. They are always on the lookout to find better ways to express themselves.

1. Set Boundaries:

Assertiveness allows individuals to establish and maintain personal boundaries.

This helps prevent exploitation or manipulation by others and contributes to a healthier sense of self. I remember attending a gathering of Pastors and Christian workers who came

Assertiveness helps individuals recognize and communicate their worth and needs.

together to hear Dr. J.I Packer, a well-known and beloved Theologian, give a talk and take questions. One of the Seminary students asked a question that had nothing to do with the topic, and Dr. Packer lovingly told the group that he had no idea what to think about that question. He could have made something up that would have impressed us all, but he didn't. He had apparent boundaries in his life. We were all very impressed.

2. Reduce stress:

Assertive communication reduces the stress associated with unexpressed feelings or unmet needs. Expressing oneself can lead to a greater sense of control and well-being. This generally comes as we age. We learn to express ourselves better. One of the results of assertive communication is that

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we have less stress in our lives because we can be pretty clear about our expectations in relationships.

You can see the value of this in families that have parents or children who haven't spoken in years because they don't know how to communicate with each other anymore. So they remain estranged for years until one or the other takes the risk to move towards the other again.

3. Make good decisions:

Assertive individuals are more likely to express their opinions and preferences, contributing to better decision-making processes in group settings. We all know people who are excellent communicators at work, but when they come home, they become entirely different. Their work life is a success. Their personal life isn't. What would happen if they transferred some work skills to their home environment? Some churches are excellent at teaching this by encouraging honesty in communication in every church ministry. It can compensate for a lack of training many people have experienced in their homes.

4. Have improved emotional well-being:

Assertiveness allows individuals to express both positive and negative emotions constructively. This contributes to overall emotional well-being and can prevent the buildup of resentment or frustration. It's not such a hard thing to share good news with someone. But what if you must share negative ideas? You leave yourself wide open for misunderstanding or resentment. It will take some skill to do it positively. This is where we can learn from observing others. People committed to communicating accurately without bias or emotion can teach us to master this skill.

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5. Earn respect from others:

People generally appreciate and respect individuals who can express themselves assertively. Assertiveness often leads to more positive and respectful interactions with others.

Professional comedians are the only people in the West who can talk about anything they want to. They do so to find the humour in life. But they can also speak the truth into everyday life in a way that most others can't.

Christian Speakers who are well respected can do the same – talk on essential life topics easily, even if the subject is complex. They are committed to speaking the truth in love, not to boost their ego or get a laugh. They do it because they want to help people navigate life in a God honouring way. The better they do it, the more they are respected.

Developing assertiveness is a skill that can be learned and practiced over time. It involves finding a balance between expressing one's own needs and considering the needs of others. Overall, the benefits of assertiveness contribute to more fulfilling personal and professional relationships and a greater sense of self-worth.

Developing assertiveness is a skill that can be learned and practiced over time. It involves finding a balance between expressing one's own needs and considering the needs of others.

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APPLYING ASSERTIVENESS IN EMOTIONAL SITUATIONS

How do we deal with anger and other emotional problems we may be having? How can we be assertive in a positive way when we are angered?

James 1:19-21 says: “You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness. Therefore, rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that can save your souls.”

Proverbs 14:29 says: “Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly.”

Here are some strategies to help you become more assertive:

Self-awareness:

Understand your feelings, needs, and priorities. Being self-aware is the first step in expressing yourself assertively. If you are not aware, you cannot change. Of the five types mentioned, which are you in your communication skills? Watching a video of your last speech is a good idea if you want to develop your public speaking skills. The first time I did that, it sent me spiralling into a mild depression. “Did I sound like that? Why didn’t people walk out?” it was devastating. And it was eye-opening!

Clarify your values:

Identify your core values and beliefs. This clarity can guide your communication and help you express yourself

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authentically. Is it necessary for you to express yourself clearly to others? What is hindering you from doing so?

The Greek philosopher Socrates (470-399 BC) famously said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." It is still true today. We are too distracted today to pay much attention to this truth.

Practice active listening:

Develop good listening skills to understand others better. This will also help you respond appropriately and assertively. Practice listening to someone and saying, "Let me see if I heard you correctly. You are saying that Is that right? Did I get it right?" If you don't, they will tell you. If they tell you that you misunderstood, ask them to review it again to help you understand better what they are saying.

Don't blame the other person. Take responsibility for the misunderstanding yourself. Or perhaps they didn't do an excellent job expressing themselves, and a second try at it will benefit everyone.

Use "I" statements:

Frame your thoughts and feelings using "I" statements. For example, say "I feel" or "I need" to express your emotions and requirements without sounding accusatory. It is better to frame the conversation from the point of view that you need to understand rather than accuse the other of not speaking clearly.

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Express yourself clearly:

Be clear and specific in your communication. Avoid vague language and clearly articulate your thoughts and needs. When my wife and I first got married, we would learn a new word every week just for fun. We arbitrarily picked a word from the dictionary and committed to using it ten times weekly in everyday conversation. I can't remember when we stopped. But I do remember how much fun it was to learn together. Time spent learning how to communicate is not time wasted. Communication is all about words.

Set boundaries:

Establish and communicate your boundaries. Let others know what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable to you. For example, tell them you can't be reached by phone after 7 pm. Tell them you take Mondays off, so they won't be able to get you on that day. If they desperately need you, they can leave a voice mail, etc.

Learn to say "no":

Practice saying "no" when necessary. It's okay to decline requests or invitations that don't align with your priorities or values.

As a child, you were probably encouraged to 'do as you are told'. Don't argue. But your parents would never ask you to do something they knew you couldn't, which would be inappropriate for you in your age bracket. They are there to train and encourage.

But you are not a kid now. No one is doing the filtering for you. It's up to you. You can't fulfill everyone's expectations.

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Knowing when to say “NO” indicates you are healthy. You can’t possibly do everything everyone wants you to do.

"When President Richard Nixon asked Gold Meir, the Prime Minister of Israel, how such a small nation (Israel) could help the United States, she replied: 'You are the President of 150 million Americans. I am the Prime Minister of six million prime ministers.'" Leaders can't say yes to everyone. They must be able to say NO!

Use positive body language:

Maintain eye contact, stand or sit with an open posture, and use appropriate gestures. Positive body language reinforces assertiveness. This seems to be an ‘old-fashioned’ thing to say. We have accepted slouching, slang expressions, and politically correct ideas to govern much of our speech today. In many relationship circles, we are shy about appearing too aggressive or well-spoken.

Practice assertive communication:

Role-play scenarios or practice assertive responses with a friend or in front of a mirror. The more you practice, the more comfortable you will become. Pygmalion (a.k.a. “My Fair Lady”) was one of the greatest plays written by George Bernard Shaw in 1912. It is the classic story of how Professor Henry Higgins trains a poor flower girl, Eliza Dolittle, to become part of British High Society. Well, she did it. She learned how to adapt and speak the language of a group of people far removed from her birthright. It serves to give us all hope. We can adjust our style of relating to others if we are willing to put the work into it.

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Manage emotions:

Learn to manage your emotions effectively. Take a moment to breathe and gather your thoughts before responding, especially in emotionally charged situations. Our emotions are a gift from God. But they can also bring disaster into our lives if we don't learn how to manage them. Don't let your emotions control you. Control your emotions.

**Don't let your
emotions control you.
Control your emotions.**

I remember giving one of my counselling clients an elastic band to put on his wrist. He had a problem with losing his temper quickly. I instructed him that the next time he felt

he was getting angry, he should reach for the elastic band around his wrist, pull it out, and let it flick against the soft flesh of his wrist. It would sting, but it wouldn't draw blood. But what it did was to distract his thoughts sufficiently in a different direction. The pain on his wrist needed his attention so he could momentarily forget the anger of his thoughts. This won't work for everyone, but it certainly helped him. He just needed to do something to help him re-think his rage.

Build self-confidence:

Work on building your self-confidence. Recognize and celebrate your strengths and achievements. Do you have individuals who encourage you and tell you how well you are doing? If you don't, look for someone you can promote. Finding ways to praise another and 'catch them doing something praiseworthy' will help you better appreciate how you are doing. It will also create a better environment among

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friends and family. It is easy to tear down. Much harder to build up.

Learn from assertive role models:

Observe assertive individuals around you. Identify behaviours and communication styles that you find compelling and incorporate them into your approach. It's important to note that while assertiveness can be an effective communication style, different individuals can also perceive it differently. President Trump's assertiveness has been a subject of support and criticism, with opinions varying widely based on political perspectives and personal preferences in leadership styles.

Seek feedback:

Ask friends, family, or colleagues for feedback about your communication style. Use constructive feedback to make improvements. You may be hesitant to ask for input as you might expect some negativity, and you aren't sure you can take it if you are honest. If this is the case, ask your friend to give two positive items for each negative item they observe. That will permit them to look for both. It is best to ask at least two individuals to give feedback so you get some balance in this exercise.

Take small steps:

Gradually challenge yourself to be more assertive in various situations. Start with less challenging scenarios and progressively work your way up. Personal growth takes time. We are tempted to give up too early.

Author Malcolm Gladwell stated that anyone can master a musical instrument if willing to put in 10,000 hours of practice.

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It's too easy to give up early in learning anything. This saying has been questioned as detractors remind us that the teacher's competence is another massive factor in mastering a skill. Stay with the training, and you will likely master your desires.

Remember that becoming more assertive is a process, and taking small steps is okay. Be patient with yourself and acknowledge your progress along the way. Consistent practice and self-reflection will help you develop and refine assertive communication skills.

“You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend what you get on your pleasures.” James 4:2,3

This might be an excellent place to deal with one of the common problems in caring for others. Long-term caregivers often feel their care receivers are manipulating them. This causes stress points to develop in their relationship, breaking trust down over time.

Much emotional energy is put into ‘keeping the peace’ to avoid emotional upset on either side. Is there anything we can do to reduce manipulation in some of our relationships?

Working with manipulative people can be challenging, but there are strategies you can employ to navigate these situations effectively. Here are some tips:

Stay Calm and Objective:

Keep your emotions in check. Stay calm and objective when dealing with manipulative individuals. Emotional reactions may feed into their manipulative tactics. Remember, you oversee

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your feelings. You may say that you can't change your emotions that easily. Try it.

If you are in a movie theatre watching a show and someone barges onto the stage shouting "fire!" you will see a change in your emotions. You were feeling great pleasure enjoying the movie. Now, you are feeling fear, and you run into the lobby. In the lobby, you see the chap who yelled "fire." Only now he is laughing at everyone. He thinks it is funny that he got everyone out of the theatre. Now, you are filled with anger at the culprit. So, you changed your emotions three times in as many minutes. What happened to change those feelings? The facts changed. Well, maybe not the facts altogether.

Remember, there was no fire. But you believed there was a fire, and you responded appropriately. Reality didn't change, but your perception of reality changed. Our feelings follow our perception of reality.

Our feelings follow our perception of reality.

Apply that to your caregiving. What do you believe about your situation that causes you grief? She doesn't care I am putting in all this work. I am being taken advantage of. Don't they know I am doing this as a volunteer? Why do I feel like an unpaid servant? Examine your reality. Maybe you are believing a lie or an exaggerated truth.

Identify Manipulative Tactics:

Be aware of common manipulative tactics, such as **guilt-tripping** (a manipulative technique in which someone intentionally induces feelings of guilt or remorse in another person to influence their behaviour or decisions), **gaslighting**

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(a form of psychological manipulation that seeks to make a person doubt their perceptions, memories, or sanity through subtle and persistent tactics aimed at distorting reality), ***playing the victim*** (adopting a mindset or behaviour that portrays oneself as a target of adversity, often to garner sympathy, avoid responsibility, or manipulate others in various situations), or ***using charm to deceive*** (employing charismatic or likable traits to manipulate or mislead others for personal gain or to achieve a hidden agenda). Recognizing these behaviours is the first step in dealing with them.

Set Boundaries:

Clearly define your boundaries and make them known.

Manipulative individuals push limits, so it's crucial to establish and enforce boundaries in your interactions. Do you need to visit your care receiver every day or twice every day? When can you schedule time for yourself? Can you enlist others to see when you are not able to visit?

Manipulative individuals push limits, so it's crucial to establish and enforce boundaries in your interactions

Notice that Jesus set boundaries in his work as well. Mark's Gospel talks about Jesus getting up in the early morning while it was still dark (Mark 1:35) and going into a desert place to pray. His disciples searched for him. When they found him, they told him that 'everyone is searching for you'. What was Jesus' response? "Let us go to the neighbouring towns so that I may proclaim the message there also, for that is what I came out to do." (Mark 1:39). He turned his back on the crowd waiting for him and went elsewhere. He didn't seem to care about the criticism he would have received from those looking

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for him in that town. If Jesus sets boundaries in his life and ministry, we should also.

Document Interactions:

Keep a record of your interactions with the manipulative person. Document instances of manipulation, including dates, times, and specific behaviours. This documentation can be helpful if you need to address the issue formally.

Communicate Effectively:

Practice assertive communication. Clearly express your thoughts, feelings, and needs while maintaining a respectful tone. Be firm but calm in your communication. Watch how others in your

When faced with manipulative behaviour, ask open-ended and clarifying questions.

immediate circle communicate. Take some lessons or seek help from others who appear to have this as a strength.

Ask Questions:

When faced with manipulative behaviour, ask open-ended and clarifying questions. This can help expose inconsistencies or manipulation attempts and may discourage further manipulative tactics. For example: "Can you help me understand why you think this approach is necessary?" or "What led you to make that decision?" Use open-ended questions to seek clarification about their intentions or statements. This can help uncover hidden motives. For instance: "I'm curious about what you meant by that. Can you elaborate a bit more?"

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Limit Personal Information:

Be cautious about sharing personal information with manipulative individuals. They may use personal details against you or twist them to suit their agenda. Don't confuse honest communication with more communication. Sometimes we share too much. We share things about our failings that we wish we hadn't shared. Some things are best left unsaid. Why are you telling your care receiver about your temptations in life? Is it to help them, or is it to help you feel better compared to them?

Seek Support:

Talk to colleagues, friends, or a mentor about your experiences. Seeking support can provide you with different perspectives and advice on handling the situation. You can share situations you find yourself in without breaking confidences.

Stick to facts and avoid getting drawn into emotional manipulation.

Focus on Facts:

Stick to facts and avoid getting drawn into emotional manipulation. Responding based on evidence and facts can help maintain credibility and prevent manipulation from affecting your decisions. Don't rely on 'hear-say' evidence.

A prominent Youth Pastor once told me that he had a mother come to him very upset that her male babysitter had drawn a satanic pentagram for her young children and was frightened to confront his family. He asked her to show him the diagram the babysitter had drawn. It was a 'star of David,' not a satanic

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pentagram. Her child had called it that, and she didn't know the difference. She saved herself a lot of pain by seeking advice before she moved into action. She was greatly relieved, and life continued. Lesson learned. Check the facts before you act!

Know When to Escalate:

Consider escalating the issue if the manipulative behaviour affects your work or creates a hostile environment. Consult with a supervisor, family member or another appropriate authority. The one thing you must not do is to ignore the situation. You can deal with it now, or you can deal with it next month. The longer you wait to deal with the event or issue, the larger it will grow and the harder it will be.

Educate Yourself:

Learn more about manipulation and manipulation tactics. Understanding these behaviours can empower you to respond more effectively. Knowing that there are such things as personality disorders can help you normalize what you are going through. There are a lot of reasons why people do what they do. It is not because of you that this is happening. Your care receiver has some issues they have not dealt with, which are coming out now.

Be Prepared to Say "No":

Manipulative individuals often rely on the compliance of others. Practice saying "no" when necessary and be firm in your decisions. If you have problems saying 'no,' you must deeply dive into that. Why is this so? Sometimes 'no' isn't really 'no'. Let me illustrate.

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When my kids became older teenagers, I asked them if there was anything they would have changed in their growing-up years about how I, as their dad, treated them. They said, “You always said ‘no’ whenever we asked you anything. I said, “No, I didn’t.” They said, “See, you are doing it again.”

I then asked them how they dealt with that. They complained to their mother, who told them I would always say ‘no’ when I first heard of something new. But they were to return in 10 minutes and ask again, and I would say ‘yes’ without question. They confirmed that this is what they always did. This was all new to me.

But as I think back on it, I understand why I did it. I needed a few minutes to process new information. So, I would always say ‘no,’ giving me time to think about things. When you say no, nothing changes. When you say yes, everything changes. My wife didn’t need 10 minutes to change her mind. Her thought processes took less time.

Some of you may have just the opposite problem. You can’t say ‘no’ because you feel you have no right to take another position. There may be a hundred other reasons. Find out what you need from others when you communicate or when they have needs.

Trust Your Instincts:

If something feels manipulative, trust your instincts. Please pay attention to your gut feelings and take them seriously.

Consider Professional Help:

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Sometimes, a mediator, counsellor, or HR professional may be necessary to help address and resolve the issues with a manipulative colleague.

Remember that working with manipulative individuals can be draining, so it's essential to prioritize your well-being. If the situation becomes unmanageable, consider seeking guidance from others or consulting with a professional counsellor or therapist.

Remember that working with manipulative individuals can be draining, so it's essential to prioritize your well-being.

EMPHASIZING AND CONCLUDING ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

“One who spares words is knowledgeable; one who is cool in spirit has understanding. Even fools who keep silent are considered wise; when they close their lips, they are deemed intelligent.” Proverbs 17:27

“Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.” Ephesians 4:29

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IT'S YOUR TURN, APPLY IT.

- Of the four communication styles (passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive), which style do you use more than all others?
- Who in your circle of friends has best illustrated assertiveness in relating to others? Can they help you become more assertive?

What one thing can you change today that will make you a better communicator and less of a manipulator? (Apart from guilt tripping, gaslighting, playing the victim, and using charm to deceive)

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CRISIS THEORY:

DANGER VS OPPORTUNITY

**EMERGING STRONGER: THE HIDDEN OPPORTUNITIES IN
CRISIS**



6. CRISIS THEORY: DANGER VS OPPORTUNITY

OVERVIEW

This chapter delves into crisis theory, emphasizing distinguishing danger from opportunity, assessing immediate threats, finding opportunities within challenges, focusing on solutions, adaptability, and long-term vision. It introduces the Chinese word for crisis, "危机" (wēijī), highlighting its dual nature of danger and opportunity. We explore existential or spiritual crises, often triggered by profound internal struggles or external events like natural disasters. The chapter also addresses crises like accidents and life-changing stresses, offering general advice and emphasizing the importance of seeking support and professional guidance. Additionally, the text introduces crisis theory and practice, highlighting the role of crisis intervention in providing immediate support during acute distress.

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UNDERSTANDING CRISES AND THEIR CAUSES

Once upon a time, in the quaint town of Harmonyville, there lived a young and vibrant couple named Janice and James. They were the epitome of happiness, having just tied the knot in a grand ceremony surrounded by family and friends. Both hailed from prosperous families, and they embarked on their new life together with every possible advantage.

The first few years of their marriage were filled with joy, laughter, and the promise of a successful future. James worked in a reputable law firm while Janice pursued her passion for art. Their love was strong, and it seemed like nothing could shatter the perfect life they were building.

However, life, as it often does, had other plans.

One day, James received news that the law firm he worked for was facing financial difficulties and had to downsize. The stability they had taken for granted was suddenly in jeopardy. The once comfortable life started to crumble, and uncertainty loomed over their heads.

As the financial stress mounted, cracks began to appear in the foundation of their marriage. Arguments over money became more frequent, and the dreams they had envisioned together started to slip away. It was a testing time that threatened their financial security and their love for each other.

Amidst the turmoil, Janice and James turned to their faith in Jesus Christ, finding solace in prayer and seeking guidance from their church community. They attended counselling

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sessions and opened up to their pastor, who provided spiritual support and practical advice on navigating their challenges.

In their darkest moments, the couple also discovered the strength of true friendship. Close friends rallied around them, offering emotional support, financial assistance, and a listening ear. The community they had built over the years became a lifeline, helping them weather the storm.

Together, Janice and James learned to communicate more openly and honestly, sharing their fears and vulnerabilities. They made sacrifices, adjusted their expectations, and worked as a team to find solutions to their financial woes. Through faith and the support of their community, they discovered resilience they never knew they had.

Slowly but steadily, their situation began to improve. James found a new job, and Janice's art started gaining recognition. The crisis that once threatened to destroy them became a turning point in their marriage. It was a testament to the power of faith, love, and the importance of a robust support system.

As the sun set on their challenging chapter, Janice and James stood hand in hand, grateful for the lessons learned and the unwavering support that had carried them through. Their love, tested and refined, emerged more vital than ever, proving that faith and community could be powerful anchors for marriage even in adversity.

It would be great to report that everyone who goes through a crisis ends similarly. Unfortunately, they do not.

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We need to begin this discussion by asking how to define best what we are discussing.

- What is a crisis?

A crisis is a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger. It often refers to a critical or decisive moment during an event, situation, or sequence of events during which a significant and frequently unpredictable outcome is expected.

Crises can manifest in various forms, including personal, social, economic, or political challenges that require urgent attention and resolution. The term "crisis" implies a state of emergency or a turning point that demands immediate action or decision-making to address and navigate the difficulties.

“My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its full effect so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4

- Distinguish danger from opportunity in a crisis: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

We must learn to distinguish danger from opportunity in handling a crisis. When do you phone the ambulance? Distinguishing danger from opportunity in a crisis involves a mindset that assesses the situation from multiple perspectives. Here are some considerations:

Assess the Immediate Threats:

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Identify and evaluate any immediate dangers or threats posed by the crisis. This involves understanding the risks and potential negative consequences. If you are going to make a mistake, it is better to err on the side of safety. It is better to call the ambulance than not call. The Paramedics can make a better assessment when they come.

Look for Opportunities within Challenges:

Despite the challenges, crises often present opportunities for growth, innovation, and positive change. Consider how the situation might open doors for new ideas, collaborations, or improvements. You are not the first person to go through this challenge. Talking to others who have gone through similar situations can encourage you.

**Despite the challenges,
crises often present
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change**

Focus on Solutions:

Rather than dwelling solely on the problems, shift focus toward finding solutions. A crisis can catalyze problem-solving and innovation. There are so many possible solutions to most problems. You will have to settle on the best option for your situation.

Adaptability and Resilience:

Evaluate the adaptability and resilience of individuals or organizations facing the crisis. The ability to adjust to changing circumstances can reveal opportunities for improvement and growth.

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For example, getting aged parents into a care facility in Ontario, Canada, can vary based on factors such as the level of care needed, the specific type of facility, and the availability of spaces. The first step typically involves an assessment of your parent's care needs.

This assessment may be conducted by a healthcare professional or through a local health authority. Different care facilities cater to varying levels of care, from retirement homes for more independent living to long-term care homes for individuals with more complex health needs. The appropriate facility depends on your parents' health and care requirements.

Many facilities, especially long-term care homes, may have waitlists due to high demand. It's advisable to plan and get on waitlists as early as possible. The process will test your adaptability and resilience in ways you could never have imagined. But you will get through the process with a patient commitment.

Learn from the Experience:

Crises provide valuable lessons. Look for opportunities to learn from the experience, whether improving processes, strengthening relationships, or enhancing preparedness for future challenges.

Collaboration and Networking:

Crises often require collective efforts to address. Explore opportunities for collaboration and networking with others who may bring different perspectives, skills, or resources.

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Long-Term Vision:

Consider the long-term implications of the crisis. While immediate dangers may need urgent attention, it's essential to maintain a broader perspective and think about the future. As the population grows older, people's needs change.

Explore opportunities for collaboration and networking with others who may bring different perspectives, skills, or resources.

One of Canada's most significant challenges in coping with an aging population is the increasing demand for healthcare and social services, particularly in the context of the associated demographic shift. Here are some key challenges:

As individuals age, they often require more healthcare services, and the cost of providing comprehensive healthcare for seniors can be substantial. This includes medical treatments, long-term care, and support services.

The aging population places a strain on the healthcare workforce. There may be shortages of healthcare professionals, including nurses, personal support workers, and specialists, leading to challenges in providing adequate care.

Many seniors rely on family members or informal caregivers for support. The responsibility of caregiving can lead to caregiver burnout, affecting the well-being of both the caregiver and the elderly person receiving care.

Chronic diseases become more prevalent with age, and managing these conditions poses a challenge for the

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healthcare system. There is a need for effective chronic disease management strategies and resources.

Innovation and Creativity:

Crises can spark innovation and creativity. Consider how the situation might lead to new ways of doing things or developing novel solutions.

Mindset and Attitude:

Our most significant concern when we find ourselves amid a crisis is the mindset and attitude with which we approach the situation. A positive and proactive mindset can help individuals see opportunities amid challenges.

A positive and proactive mindset can help individuals see opportunities amid challenges.

Distinguishing danger from opportunity in a crisis involves a balanced and strategic approach. While acknowledging and addressing immediate threats, individuals can also cultivate a mindset

that seeks possibilities for positive change, growth, and improvement.

Chinese Wisdom

The Chinese word for Crisis provides an essential insight for us. In Chinese, the word for "crisis" is (wēijī). 危机 is a combination of two terms. 危 (wēi), which means "danger" or "critical," and 机 (jī), which means "opportunity" or "moment."

Together, the compound term "危机" is often translated as "crisis" and is composed of characters that represent both

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danger and opportunity, emphasizing the dual nature of a crisis as a situation with risks and opportunities.

Understand the importance of interpreting crises as opportunities for growth: “We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” Romans 5:3-5

The Tipped Over Triangle

Here is another illustration that might help us in dealing with a crisis. Imagine a triangle resting on one of its three sides. It is at rest. On one side, write the word “Brokenness”.

On the other side, write the word “Wholeness”.

Life rests between brokenness and

wholeness. But then a crisis happens. It threatens instability. When you go through a crisis, everything changes. Now, you see the triangle precariously balanced on one of its points. You are out of balance, wondering where you will come down. You can’t stay in this crisis too long. You seek stability desperately.



As a caregiver, you help your care receiver achieve that equilibrium again, even if everything around them has changed. You want them to regain a sense of wholeness despite the crisis that has spun them on edge. They need help.

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \text{危} & + & \text{机} & = & \text{危机} \\ \text{Danger} & & \text{Opportunity} & & \text{Crisis} \end{array}$$

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They have never been here before, perhaps. It isn't very comforting in every way.

- Understand the three components of a crisis: precipitating event, perception, and coping skills. “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.” 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

The three components of a crisis—precipitating events, perception, and coping skills—are interconnected elements that help define and understand the nature of a crisis. Here's an explanation of each component:

Precipitating Events are specific incidents, situations, or occurrences that trigger a crisis. These events are typically unexpected and disruptive and may challenge an individual's or a community's ability to cope effectively. Precipitating events can vary widely, including natural disasters, accidents, sudden loss, financial setbacks, or interpersonal conflicts. These events catalyze the crisis, creating a sense of urgency and requiring a response.

I have been involved in Marriage Counselling for many years. Most couples decide to see a marriage counsellor years after they should visit one. The horse has long ago left the barn. It would have been more helpful and led to greater success if they had visited a therapist when they noticed the hinges were off the doors. It would only be a matter of time before the horses would escape. When the doors were in good condition, the horses were secure. It often takes years for the precipitating event to work itself out.

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Perception in a crisis involves how individuals or groups interpret and make sense of the precipitating events. It's not only about the objective reality of the crisis but also about the subjective experience and understanding of the situation. People may perceive the same event differently based on their background, beliefs, values, and personal experiences. Perception plays a crucial role in shaping emotional responses, decision-making, and the overall impact of the crisis on an individual's mental and emotional well-being.

A couple may feel their marriage is doing well and tell people so. A month later, they filed for divorce. How is this possible? Could both have reduced their expectations of the other so much that “barely breathing” is the new ‘normal.’ Their perceptions of the state of their marriage are sadly ignored. They live one day at a time, not wanting to ‘rock the boat.’

Coping Skills refer to the strategies and resources that individuals or communities employ to manage and navigate the challenges presented by a crisis. These skills can be psychological, emotional, social, or practical in nature. Effective coping skills can help individuals regain control, reduce stress, and work towards resolution or adaptation.

Coping skills may include problem-solving, seeking social support, resilience, emotional regulation, and utilizing available resources. Personal resilience, social support networks, and access to resources influence the ability to cope. Let me tell you the good news for those who lack coping skills. You can learn new coping skills if you want to.

Many Seniors dread the move into a Full Care facility. They feel it is just a fancy way of saying ‘prison’. But once they are in, they are shocked at how much extra time they have, and they

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are thankful for the care they receive, which frees them up to do other things more appropriate to their place and position in life. It turns out to be a great blessing – for everybody!

Understanding these components helps mental health professionals, crisis intervention teams, and individuals develop crisis prevention, intervention, and recovery strategies. It emphasizes the importance of addressing the external factors (precipitating events) and acknowledging and supporting the internal processes (perception and coping skills) that contribute to an individual's response to a crisis.

- Examine how these components interact to determine the crisis outcome. “In this, you rejoice, even if now for a little while you had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith – being more precious than gold, though perishable, is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed,” 1 Peter 1:6-7
- What Causes Crises
- “A mortal born of woman, few of days and full of trouble, comes up like a flower and withers, flees like a shadow and does not last.” Job 14:1

Various factors can trigger crises in life, and the specific triggers can vary widely from person to person. Here are some common factors that can contribute to triggering a crisis:

Major Life Transitions, such as marriage, divorce, childbirth, retirement, or relocation, can be stressors that trigger a crisis. Even positive events can bring about challenges and

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adjustments. The younger we are, the more resilient we are to coping with significant changes.

Major Life Transitions, such as marriage, divorce, childbirth, retirement, or relocation, can be stressors that trigger a crisis

Moving from England to Africa to Canada to India wasn't a significant stress in my life. I was younger and had a deep sense of adventure. If someone offered me a great job in a far-off country today, I am not entirely sure I would react positively. Even though I still feel I have a sense of adventure, age does tend to influence one's resilience to change.

Loss and Grief: experiencing the loss of a loved one, whether through death, separation, or the end of a significant relationship, can trigger a crisis. Grieving is a complex process that affects individuals differently.

When my 36-year-old son committed suicide some years ago, the entire family had to process the effects of that loss. Someone asked me recently if I had 'gotten over' the death of my son. My reaction was immediate. I stated to that person that I don't think I will ever 'get over' that death. There are some things you never 'get over.' I believe the death of a spouse is in the same light. You have lived with them for decades. How can you not continue to think of them? That doesn't mean you can't continue to grow and learn new things and walk with a sense of wholeness and healthiness. It's just that you will always miss them.

Financial Challenges, sudden financial setbacks, job loss, bankruptcy, or economic instability can lead to crises, impacting individuals and families. Men often take job loss

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harder than women. This is because, as men, we too frequently get a sense of who we are from our role or position at work. It means a lot to us. Perhaps more than it should. We get our sense of belonging from our status as opposed to relationships.

Health Issues, such as sickness or the health crisis of a loved one, can be emotionally and physically challenging. Chronic illnesses, sudden injuries, or life-threatening conditions can trigger crises. These are inevitable.

During the Covid Crisis, I worked as a Chaplain in a great long-term care facility in Windsor, Ontario. The staff struggled with the many restrictions the Government placed on all such facilities to “curb the spread of Covid 19.” But it kept family and friends from visiting, hugging, and caring. There was a high inter-personal price to pay with everyone in masks and isolated from one another. We all learned to appreciate the importance of relationships during that time.

Mental Health Challenges, such as depression, anxiety, or other psychiatric disorders, can contribute to crises. Sudden onset or exacerbation of mental health symptoms may require immediate intervention.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression is a leading cause of disability worldwide. It contributes to the global disease burden and affects people of all ages from all walks of life. The prevalence of depression varies across regions and populations.

Estimates indicate that over 300 million people of all ages suffer from depression globally.

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Estimates indicate that over 300 million people of all ages suffer from depression globally.

Relationship Issues: A poem written by an anonymous author state:

“To dwell above with those we love, oh that will be glory. To dwell below with those we know, well, that's a different story!”

Conflict, separation, or betrayal in personal relationships, whether romantic, familial, or friendships, can lead to emotional distress and crises.

Trauma and Violence: exposure to traumatic events, including physical or emotional violence, accidents, or natural disasters, can trigger crises with lasting effects. Until you deal with the traumatic event, it stays with you in your mind and soul.

Prescription Drug Abuse, opioids, benzodiazepines, and stimulants remain a significant concern. Non-medical use of prescription drugs can lead to addiction and other health issues.

The opioid crisis has been a significant focus in North America, particularly in the United States. Opioid abuse, including the misuse of prescription opioids and the use of illicit opioids like heroin and fentanyl, has led to a substantial increase in opioid-related overdoses and deaths.

Cannabis use has been a topic of discussion, especially with changing regulations surrounding its legalization for recreational and medicinal purposes in certain jurisdictions. While legalizing cannabis has reduced legal consequences,

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concerns persist about its potential impact on mental health and dependence.

The abuse of stimulant drugs, such as cocaine and methamphetamine, also poses challenges in various regions. These substances can have serious health consequences and contribute to social issues.

Alcohol abuse remains a prevalent issue in North America. Excessive alcohol consumption can lead to various health problems, including addiction, liver disease, and an increased risk of accidents.

Legal Issues, such as arrests, lawsuits, or disputes, can create significant stress and contribute to a crisis. For a few years, I served as an Assistant to the Chaplain of a Federal Penitentiary in Manitoba.

At one point, I led a discussion with men in their mid-20s and early 30s. Apart from their prison uniforms, they looked like any group of guys in any church group or Bible study group I had ever led. They participated, joked, spoke up, fought back, etc. It's standard for guys their age. I realized then that if I had experienced some of the things these guys had experienced in their early years, I would probably be incarcerated with them, too. I was not abused, brutalized, or alienated by family and friends. This is not to excuse their action. Federal Prisons are reserved for severe crimes. It just explains why they are there. Their lives continue, and they have all learned to make their lives work despite their limitations.

Work-related Stress, job loss, burnout, or workplace conflicts can trigger crises that affect an individual's mental and emotional well-being. Living in a multiethnic community, as we

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do in Canada, only serves to accentuate the stress in the workplace. I regularly notice that there often is only one ethnic group represented in a particular store. People want to work with people who most closely resemble themselves. We can preach that we are all one people. Living that out is more challenging to do than we ever hoped. And that is only one factor contributing to the stress in many workplaces nationwide today.

Existential or Spiritual Crisis, often triggered by existential questions or a spiritual awakening, can lead to profound internal struggles.

A Pew Research Center report from 2012 indicated that around 16% of the global population identified as religiously unaffiliated, including atheists and agnostics. Subsequent reports have suggested that the percentage of the unaffiliated may have increased in the years following. But most people in our world have some spiritual/religious belief system that helps them explain the world, themselves, pain, love, etc.

Brown bears don't meet for Bible Studies, Tigers don't have debates on faith, and cockatoos don't have Conventions in Florida to help them fly better. Humanity is shaped differently. We have desires that the animal kingdom can never experience. We are spiritual beings, made in the image of God with eternity in our hearts.

**We are spiritual
beings, made in the image
of God with eternity in
our hearts.**

Natural Disasters like earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, or wildfires can trigger a crisis due to sudden disruption and loss.

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I remember visiting the Philippines during a time of significant flooding in Manila. The house I lived in was flooded by 3 feet of water rushing through the living room and onto the streets. The rains and floods affected every home in the neighbourhood. Cars couldn't be used. Buses had stopped.

We just left with whatever we could carry and waded through the streets, hoping the army would see us and take us to higher ground. The occasional dead body would float by. It looked like the end of the world. The skies were darkened in the middle of the day. The waters poured down without any sign of stopping. I felt like I was on a movie set. I couldn't believe what I was looking at.

We all react differently to natural disasters. Most people were panicking and running. I strolled, looking around, trying to make sense of everything. I would rather sit on the roof of a dry house than try to navigate the swift-moving river at my feet. You will be surprised to hear this, but I didn't die. I got wet, but that was about it. But I am dry now. I didn't own anything then, so I lost nothing. That wasn't true for the people who had lost homes and loved ones. To me, it was an experience. To the people who lived there, it was a game changer. They lost things that could not be replaced. Disasters do that.

It's important to note that these factors are not exhaustive, and combining these triggers can influence individual responses to crises. Additionally, what one person perceives as a crisis might not be experienced in the same way by another. Identifying potential triggers and building coping skills can be essential for resilience in life's challenges.

MY TURN TO CARE

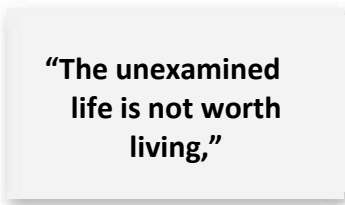
- “Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.” Ephesians 6:13

Anticipating and preparing for potential crises involves proactive planning, resilience-building, and adopting a mindset that acknowledges the uncertainties of life. Here are some practical steps to help you anticipate and prepare for potential crises:

Risk Assessment:

Identify potential risks and challenges that could affect various aspects of your life. Consider personal, financial, health, and environmental factors. Understanding potential risks is the first step in preparing for them.

The famous quote, "The unexamined life is not worth living," is attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates. This statement is found in Plato's "Apology," a dialogue that presents Socrates' defence during his trial in Athens. The context of the quote is Socrates' explanation of his philosophical approach and his assertion that a life without self-reflection and inquiry into one's beliefs and values lack true meaning and purpose.



**"The unexamined
life is not worth
living,"**

You don't have to enroll in a university course on Philosophy to learn how to be more self-reflective. So many podcasts and books are available today to aid in this endeavour. Examining yourself and examining the risks you are facing are related.

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Emergency Fund:

Build and maintain an emergency fund to cover unforeseen expenses. Financial reserves can provide a buffer in times of crisis, helping you manage unexpected challenges without relying heavily on credit or loans. For further information on building budgets and establishing good financial habits, I encourage you to visit <http://capcanada.org>. This Canadian organization, originating in Great Britain, helps people get out of debt and manage their finances by developing realistic budgets.

Insurance Coverage:

Review and ensure that you have appropriate insurance coverage. This may include health insurance, property insurance, life insurance, and other relevant policies. Understanding your coverage can be crucial in times of need.

Health and Wellness:

Prioritize your physical and mental well-being. Adopt a healthy lifestyle, stay active, manage stress, and seek regular healthcare check-ups. Maintaining good health can enhance your resilience in the face of challenges.

Network and Support System:

Cultivate a strong support network of friends, family, and community. Building connections with others provides emotional and practical support during difficult times. This is harder to do in larger cities. It's harder to do in communities where both marriage partners work because the family can't make it financially with only one salary coming in. It is harder to do when there are teenagers in the home.

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Demands increase. Needs increase. Stresses increase. But time spent building up networks of friends and making special times to spend with extended family is all part of what it takes to get through all of life healthily.

Skills Development:

Acquire and enhance skills that can be valuable in a crisis. This may include first aid training, basic survival skills, financial management, or other skills relevant to your potential challenges. We have never had a time when we have so much information. Data is one click away or one Voice Command away if you need to know something. Take advantage of that.

Communication Plan:

Establish communication plans with family members and loved ones. Ensure that everyone knows how to stay in contact during emergencies. This can be especially important in situations where communication networks may be disrupted. And can we put a plug in here to take some time and write out your will?

Legal and Financial Planning:

Create or update legal documents, such as wills, power of attorney, and advance healthcare directives. Consider seeking professional advice for estate planning and other legal matters.

When an individual dies in Canada without a formal will, their estate is subject to intestacy laws. Intestacy is when a person passes away without a valid will in place. In such cases, the distribution of the deceased person's assets is determined by the provincial or territorial succession laws.

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Without a will, the probate court will appoint an executor or administrator to handle the estate distribution. This person is typically a close family member, and the court may appoint a neutral third party if there is no eligible family member.

Continuity Planning:

For businesses or individuals with critical responsibilities, develop continuity plans. Identify essential functions and processes that must continue during a crisis and create strategies to ensure their ongoing operation.

Please take a moment to ensure all your passwords are written down and your spouse or family member knows where they are. This would also be an excellent time to ensure the surviving spouse can access your checking accounts. Perhaps your accounts should be in both your names for easier access after death.

Stay Informed:

Stay informed about potential risks and crises affecting your region or community. Be aware of weather conditions, public health advisories, and other factors impacting your safety and well-being.

Regular Review:

Periodically review and update your preparedness plans. Life circumstances, risks, and resources may change over time, and regular reviews ensure that your preparations remain relevant and practical.

These proactive steps can enhance your ability to anticipate, respond to, and recover from potential crises.

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COPING WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF CRISES

- Accidental Crises
- “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1

I can provide general advice on responding to accidents, but it's important to note that specific actions depend on the nature and severity of the accident. In any emergency, the safety of the individuals involved is the top priority. Here are some general guidelines:

Ensure Safety for yourself and others. If you are involved in a traffic accident, move to a safe location and turn on the hazard lights. In other situations, ensure everyone is secure and away from further harm.

Assess Injuries among those involved. Call for emergency medical assistance if needed. Please do not attempt to move seriously injured individuals unless there is an immediate threat to their safety.

Call Emergency Services (such as 911 in North America) to report the accident and provide information about the situation. Follow the operator's instructions and give details on injuries, the location, and other relevant information.

Some years ago, a lady smashed into the front of my car as she was turning left onto her street without noticing I was driving across the intersection. She was visibly upset when she got out of her car. I asked if I could pray with her as she seemed so emotional. She said I could, so we both bowed our heads in the middle of the intersection, and I prayed that the Lord would give her peace of mind.

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When the police arrived, one officer said, “Did I see you praying with that lady?” “Yes,” I said. “You know she caused the accident, don’t you?” he replied. “Yes, I know she did, but she seemed so much more upset than I was, and I thought it was the least I could do,” I said. “Well, that’s a first for me. Never seen the victim pray for the other guy like that,” he said. We laughed, and the scene soon returned to normal, except my car was a write-off!

Cooperate with Authorities if law enforcement or emergency services respond to the accident, cooperate fully. Provide accurate information about the incident and follow any instructions from authorities.

I was stopped for speeding one Sunday on the way to church in Winnipeg. As the officer took my information, he said he liked guessing what people did for a living as he wrote out the tickets. He asked what my job was. I told him I didn’t think he wanted to know. He assured me he did. So, I told him I was a Pastor on the way to my church, where I would pray for all the police officers, including the traffic cops in our city. He laughed heartily and tore up the ticket. “Have a nice day, Pastor,” he said. “God bless you,” I responded. I wound up the window and went to church with the feeling that all was right with the world...that was the only time that ever happened to me, BTW.

Exchange Information If it's a traffic accident, exchange information with the other party involved. This includes names, addresses, phone numbers, insurance details, and vehicle information. Do not admit fault or discuss blame at the scene.

Document the Scene if it's safe, and take photos of the accident scene, including vehicle damage, the surrounding

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area, and any relevant details. This documentation can be helpful for insurance claims and investigations.

Seek Medical Attention even if injuries seem minor. It's advisable to seek medical attention promptly. Some injuries may not be immediately apparent; a medical evaluation can identify and address hidden issues.

Notify Loved Ones if you are involved in an accident, and let your loved ones know about the situation. Please provide them with information about your well-being and whereabouts.

Follow Up after the immediate response with any necessary steps, such as contacting insurance companies, seeking legal advice, and attending medical appointments for ongoing care.

Remember that specific situations may require different actions; these general guidelines are not exhaustive. Using your judgment and adapting your response based on the circumstances is crucial. If you're unsure about what to do in a specific situation, seek guidance from emergency services, law enforcement, or medical professionals.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your insight. In all your ways, acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths.” Prov 3:5-6

- Life Changing Stresses
- Examine crises caused by significant life changes like death, divorce, or unemployment. “Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will

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find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

Responding to life-changing crises such as divorce, death, or unemployment can be emotionally challenging, and each situation requires a unique approach. Here are some general guidelines that may help you navigate these difficult circumstances:

1. Acknowledge and Accept Your Emotions:

Divorce or relationship ending will allow you to feel a range of emotions, including sadness, anger, and grief. Seek support from friends, family, or a therapist to express and process your feelings.

Death of a Loved One. Grieving is a natural response to loss. Give yourself the time and space to mourn. Share your feelings with supportive individuals, or consider joining a grief support group.

Unemployment can be distressing. Allow yourself to feel the emotions associated with it. Seek support from loved ones and consider professional guidance for career transitions.

2. Reach Out for Support:

Divorce or Relationship Ending will force you to connect with friends, family, or a support group. Professional counselling can also be beneficial in navigating the emotional aspects of divorce.

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Death of a Loved One will encourage you to lean on your support network. Friends and family can provide emotional support during the grieving process.

Unemployment: Seek support from friends, family, or career counsellors. Share your situation with people you trust and explore networking opportunities.

3. Take Care of Your Physical and Mental Health:

Divorce or Relationship Ending: Prioritize self-care, including exercise, healthy eating, and sufficient rest. Physical well-being contributes to emotional resilience.

Death of a Loved One: Grieving can take a toll on physical health. Ensure you eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep to support your overall well-being.

Unemployment: Maintain healthy routines. Exercise, eat balanced meals, and get enough sleep to support your mental and physical health during a job search.

4. Seek Professional Guidance:

Divorce or Relationship Ending: Consider seeking legal advice for divorce proceedings. Professional counselling can help you navigate the emotional aspects of the separation. Ask around to your friends and family members for a good Therapist/Counselor to see. It is hard to find one through advertising alone. Word of Mouth is generally reliable.

Death of a Loved One: If needed, consult with a grief counsellor or therapist who specializes in bereavement to help you cope with the loss. Or go to a trusted friend who is willing to spend time listening.

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Unemployment: Contact career counsellors or employment services for guidance on job searches, resume building, and career transition. "Every successful person has been fired at least three times in their career" is a statement attributed to media mogul and philanthropist Oprah Winfrey. While the

"Every successful person has been fired at least three times in their career"

specific origin of the quote may not be traceable to a single instance, Oprah Winfrey has been known to speak about facing challenges and setbacks in her career, including being fired from a television news reporting job early in her career.

It's worth noting that the idea expressed in the quote aligns with the notion that setbacks and failures are a natural part of the journey to success. Many successful individuals have faced obstacles, including job losses, before achieving their goals. Learning from failures, adapting, and persevering are critical to long-term success.

5. Set Realistic Goals and Prioritize:

Divorce or Relationship Ending: Set realistic goals for moving forward. Prioritize self-improvement and focus on rebuilding your life.

Death of a Loved One: Take things one step at a time. Establish realistic expectations for yourself as you navigate the grieving process.

Unemployment: Break down the job search process into manageable steps. Set realistic goals and celebrate small achievements along the way.

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6. Create a Supportive Environment:

Divorce or Relationship Ending: Surround yourself with positive influences and people who support your well-being.

Death of a Loved One: Foster a supportive environment by maintaining connections with friends and family who understand your grief.

Unemployment: Connect with others who are going through similar experiences. Share resources and encouragement in job-seeking communities.

7. Embrace Change and Focus on Personal Growth:

Divorce or Relationship Ending: View the end of a relationship as an opportunity for personal growth and self-discovery. Embrace the chance to redefine yourself.

Death of a Loved One: Honor your loved one's memory and legacy. Consider ways to channel your grief into positive actions or initiatives.

Unemployment: Use the period of unemployment as an opportunity for self-reflection and skill development. Consider pursuing further education or training.

8. Financial Planning:

Divorce or Relationship Ending: Work on financial planning for your new circumstances. Seek professional advice if needed.

Death of a Loved One: Review and adjust financial plans as necessary. Consult with a financial advisor if required.

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Unemployment: Create a budget and assess your financial situation. Explore ways to manage expenses during the period of unemployment.

9. Stay Positive and Cultivate Resilience:

Divorce or Relationship Ending: Focus on the positive aspects of your life and relationships. Cultivate resilience by adapting to change.

Death of a Loved One: Cherish the positive memories and the impact your loved one had on your life. Cultivate resilience by finding meaning in the grieving process.

Unemployment: Stay positive and persistent in your job search. Cultivate resilience by learning from setbacks and adapting your approach.

10. Legal and Practical Considerations:

Divorce or Relationship Ending: Address legal considerations promptly. Consult with an attorney to understand your rights and responsibilities.

Death of a Loved One: Attend to legal matters, such as estate administration and inheritance issues. Seek professional guidance if necessary.

Unemployment: Understand your rights and obligations related to unemployment benefits. Familiarize yourself with relevant labour laws and regulations.

It's essential to recognize that everyone's experience is unique, and the strategies for coping with these life-changing events

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may vary. We are seeking professional guidance when needed, whether from counsellors or trusted friends.

- “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7

The Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale, commonly known as the Life Change Stress Test, was first developed by psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe in 1967. The primary purpose of creating the scale was to investigate whether there was a correlation between stressful life events and illness. They conducted a study interviewing over 5,000 medical patients and asked them to provide details about the significant life events they had experienced in the past year.

Holmes and Rahe assigned numerical values to each life event based on its perceived amount of stress. The idea was that significant life changes, whether positive or negative, could contribute to anxiety and potentially impact an individual's health. The scale aimed to quantify these stressors and provide a tool for researchers to study the relationship between life events and health outcomes. Here's a simplified version of the scale:

1. Death of a spouse -100
2. Divorce -73
3. Marital separation -65
4. Imprisonment -63
5. Death of a close family member -63
6. Personal injury or illness - 53
7. Marriage 50

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8. Dismissal from work - 47
9. Marital reconciliation - 45
10. Retirement -45
11. Change in health of a family member 44
12. Pregnancy - 40
13. Sexual difficulties - 39
14. Gain a new family member - 39
15. Business readjustment - 39
16. Change in the financial state - 38
17. Death of a close friend 37
18. Change to a different line of work - 36
19. Change in frequency of arguments with spouse - 35
20. Major mortgage - 32
21. Foreclosure of mortgage or loan - 30
22. Change in responsibilities at work -29
23. Son or daughter leaving home - 29
24. Trouble with in-laws - 29
25. Outstanding personal achievement - 28
26. Spouse begins or stops work - 26
27. Begin or end school - 26
28. Change in living conditions - 25
29. Revision of personal habits - 24
30. Trouble with boss - 23
31. Change in working hours or conditions - 20
32. Change in residence - 20
33. Change in schools –20
34. Change in recreation - 19
35. Change in church activities - 19
36. Change in social activities - 18
37. Minor mortgage or loan - 17
38. Change in sleeping habits - 16
39. Change in number of family reunions - 15
40. Change in eating habits - 15

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- 41. Vacation - 13
- 42. Christmas alone - 12
- 43. Minor violation of the law - 11

To use this scale, you would identify the events you have experienced in the past year, assign the corresponding LCU values, and then add up your total score. The higher your score, the more stress you may be experiencing. Remember that stress's impact varies from person to person, and individual coping mechanisms play a significant role in how stress affects someone. If you're dealing with high levels of stress, consider seeking support from friends, family, or a mental health professional.

APPLYING CRISIS THEORY AND PERCEIVING CRISES AS OPPORTUNITIES

- The Role of Crisis Theory and Practice

“No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing, he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13

In psychology, crisis theory is related to crisis intervention, which involves providing immediate and short-term support to individuals facing acute psychological or emotional distress.

Crisis intervention aims to help individuals cope with and overcome the immediate impact of a crisis, such as a traumatic event, loss, or sudden life change. Mental health professionals use crisis theory to guide their interventions during acute distress.

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“Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” James 1:12

- Danger vs. Opportunity

The perception of a crisis as either a danger or an opportunity often depends on one's mindset, perspective, and ability to adapt.

Here's how a crisis can be perceived as either danger or opportunity:

Crisis as Danger:

Threat to Stability:

A crisis may initially be seen as a threat to stability, whether on a personal, organizational, or societal level.

Uncertainty and Disruption:

Crises often bring uncertainty and disruption, leading to feelings of fear, anxiety, and a sense of loss of control.

Negative Impact on Well-being:

Crises can adversely affect mental health, physical well-being, and overall quality of life.

Challenges and Setbacks:

Perceiving a crisis as a danger may emphasize its challenges and setbacks, making it difficult to see beyond immediate difficulties.

Focus on Losses:

People may focus on what is being lost or threatened rather than on potential gains or opportunities.

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Crisis as Opportunity:

Forced Adaptation and Growth:

Crises can force individuals or organizations to adapt, innovate, and grow in ways they might not have considered in a stable environment.

Re-evaluation of Priorities:

A crisis can prompt a re-evaluation of priorities, leading to a shift in focus toward what truly matters.

Learning and Resilience:

Overcoming a crisis often involves learning from challenges, building resilience, and developing new skills.

Innovation and Creativity:

Necessity is the mother of invention. Crises can stimulate innovation and creativity as individuals and organizations find new solutions to problems.

Opportunities for Change:

Crises can create opportunities for positive change, whether in personal habits, organizational structures, or societal systems.

Building Stronger Connections:

Facing a crisis together can strengthen bonds among individuals and communities, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose.

Balancing Perspectives:

Dual Awareness:

Recognizing the dangers and opportunities in a crisis allows for a more balanced perspective.

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Strategic Decision-Making:

Viewing a crisis with caution and strategic thinking enables individuals and organizations to make informed decisions.

Adaptive Mindset:

Cultivating an adaptive mindset involves acknowledging the dangers while actively seeking opportunities for growth and positive change.

While a crisis's challenges are accurate, how it is perceived and approached can significantly influence the outcomes.

Individuals and organizations that navigate crises with resilience, flexibility, and a willingness to adapt are often better positioned to discover opportunities amid adversity.

“Even though you intended to harm me, God intended it for good to preserve numerous people, as he is doing today.”

Genesis 50:20

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IT'S YOUR TURN, APPLY IT.

- If you care for a parent or elderly person, start making a list of care homes in the city that accept new clients.
- In the three components of a crisis (precipitating event, perception, and coping skills), which element do you struggle with the most? How can you become better equipped to deal with that area?

Is someone in your circle of friends or community experiencing a crisis right now? How can you be of help to them?

MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES IN CAREGIVING

**CARING WITH BOUNDARIES: UNLEASHING THE POWER OF
RESPECTFUL CAREGIVING**



7. MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES IN CAREGIVING

. OVERVIEW

Boundaries Respect Autonomy and Dignity: By establishing and maintaining boundaries, caregivers uphold the autonomy and dignity of care recipients. This involves respecting personal space, privacy, and individual choices, fostering well-being and independence. Recognizing and respecting boundaries in caregiving is fundamental for maintaining ethical, professional, and compassionate care. This chapter emphasizes the importance of maintaining boundaries in caregiving, highlighting the significance of emotional, intellectual, and spiritual boundaries. The chapter provides practical guidance for caregivers to set and enforce boundaries, identifies common challenges faced, and offers biblical verses to support the principles of healthy caregiving. Ultimately, the message is summed up in the biblical call to love one another and clothe oneself with love for a harmonious and compassionate caregiving relationship.

MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES IN CAREGIVING

UNDERSTANDING BOUNDARIES IN CAREGIVING

- “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” Proverbs 4:23

Understanding boundaries in caregiving is crucial for many reasons:

Boundaries Respect Autonomy and Dignity: Boundaries help uphold the autonomy and dignity of the care recipient.

Respecting personal space, privacy, and individual choices is essential in promoting the well-being and independence of the care recipient. This can be seen in Retirement Homes, where the management is deeply committed to maintaining the dignity of their residents in the way they administer and care for their physical, social and spiritual needs.

Boundaries help uphold the autonomy and dignity of the care recipient.

Boundaries Prevent Exploitation and Abuse: Clearly defined boundaries help prevent situations where the caregiver might exploit or abuse their position of trust and authority. This is particularly important when caring for vulnerable populations, such as children, elderly individuals, or those with disabilities.

Boundaries Avoid Burnout: Caregivers often face emotionally challenging situations, and maintaining appropriate boundaries is crucial for preventing burnout. Setting limits on emotional involvement and knowing when to seek support are important aspects of self-care for caregivers.

Boundaries Enhance Communication: Understanding and respecting boundaries contribute to effective communication

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between caregivers, care recipients, and other healthcare professionals. It ensures everyone involved is on the same page regarding the nature and extent of care provided.

Boundaries Promote a Healthy Caregiver-Care Recipient

Relationship: Establishing and respecting boundaries fosters a healthy and balanced relationship between the caregiver and the care recipient. It allows for a level of emotional closeness while still maintaining a professional distance.

Boundaries Protect

Confidentiality: Caregivers often have access to sensitive and private information about the individuals they care for.

Maintaining strict boundaries helps protect the confidentiality of this information and builds trust between the caregiver and care recipient.

Establishing and respecting boundaries fosters a healthy and balanced relationship between the caregiver and the care recipient

Legal and Ethical Considerations: In healthcare, understanding and adhering to professional boundaries is often a legal and ethical requirement. Violating these boundaries may lead to legal consequences and damage the reputation of the caregiver and healthcare organizations' reputations.

Recognizing and respecting boundaries in caregiving is fundamental for maintaining ethical, professional, and compassionate care. It protects the rights and well-being of both the caregiver and the care recipient, contributing to a positive and effective caregiving relationship.

- Defining boundaries and their significance in maintaining healthy relationships (“Bear one another’s burdens, and

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in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2

- “All must test their work; then that work, rather than their neighbour’s work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.” Galatians 6: 4,5

These two verses from the Bible seem to contradict each other. In the first verse we are told to bear each others’ burdens. In the other verse, we are told that everyone must carry their own load. Is this an apparent contradiction?

At first glance, it may appear that way. But if you reread it, it may become evident. Setting the proper boundaries around our relationships will help us understand that there are some things we can help each other with and there are other issues we must carry out individually. That is how we are formed.

Let’s begin with a good definition of what a boundary is.

Boundaries in human relationships refers to the emotional, physical, and psychological limits and guidelines that individuals establish to define and protect their personal space, autonomy, and well-being within interactions with others.

Boundaries in human relationships refer to the emotional, physical, and psychological limits and guidelines that individuals establish to define and protect their personal space, autonomy, and well-being within interactions with others. These limits help establish a framework for healthy and respectful

connections by delineating acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, communication, and interaction.

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Boundaries can be explicit and implicit, from verbal communication of personal needs and limits to non-verbal cues that signal comfort or discomfort. Healthy boundaries enable individuals to express their identity, make autonomous decisions, and maintain a sense of individuality within relationships. They also contribute to mutual respect, trust, and the well-being of those involved in the relationship.

Effective boundaries involve a balance between closeness and separateness, allowing for intimacy without compromising one's sense of self. Boundaries can vary across cultures, individuals, and types of relationships. Still, a common thread is the understanding that everyone has a right to establish and communicate their limits, and others should respect them.

“Boundaries define who we are. They define what is me and what is not me. A boundary shows me where I end, and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership.”
(Henry Cloud and John Townsend, Boundaries Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992, p.29)

“A boundary or limit is how far we can go with comfort in a relationship. It delineates where I and my physical and psychological space end and where you and yours begin.”
(Charles L. Whitfield, Boundaries and relationships: Knowing, Protecting and Enjoying the Self (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc., 1993, p.1

My wife and I travelled to the subcontinent of India for the first three years of our married life. We were both Ventriloquists and spent most of our time speaking in School Assemblies. English is spoken all over India, and most schools

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teach in English. We visited so many different schools in those years. It was a great experience.

I remember visiting one school. I was walking down a long hallway with several elementary school kids and was met by the headmaster walking toward us. We introduced ourselves, and one of the schoolchildren at my side blurted out, “We call him Mr. Stinky!”. With that, the kids ran off, leaving me alone with the headmaster.

He made a dismissive comment along the lines of “Kids today!” That scene stood out in stark contrast to every other school I had been in. Most Indian Schools teach respect and politeness far more than the average school in the West. This school was different. That child had crossed an appropriate boundary, and nothing happened. I learned later that the headmaster had taken an early retirement. I felt I understood why. Healthy boundaries help everyone. Mutual respect is essential to help us relate to one another.

We need to treat each other with respect. It is the oil that keeps the wheels running smoothly.

You may be helping someone who is struggling physically. But their minds are still sharp, and their hearts are tender. We need to treat each other with respect. It is the oil that keeps the wheels running smoothly.

- Kinds of Boundaries Encountered
- “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you knows how to control your own body in holiness and honour, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not

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know God; that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things.”¹ Thessalonians 4:4

In Christian caregiving, boundaries are essential to ensure a respectful and ethical approach to providing support. Here are examples of emotional, intellectual, and spiritual boundaries in the context of Christian caregiving:

Emotional Boundaries:

Caregivers can empathize with the emotional struggles of those they are caring for. Still, it's essential not to absorb or take on the emotional burdens to the point of personal distress. Maintaining a compassionate distance helps caregivers provide support without compromising their emotional well-being.

If you see someone stuck in a pit of quicksand, you may have a strong desire to get them out. But you can't jump into the pit yourself, or both of you will be stuck. It would be best to stay on the side of the pit with a firm hand on a nearby tree or holding a rope attached to it. That way, you can reach down and help your friend to safety.

Trained Counselors often emphasize the importance of confidentiality and respecting the privacy of individuals. Caregivers should avoid prying into personal matters that are not directly related to the caregiving role unless it is necessary for the person's well-being.

Draw on your faith to provide emotional support, but balancing empathy with a humble demeanour is essential. This ensures that you remain practical and objective in your role.

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Getting involved in a theological debate with your loved one often brings a lot of conflict into the relationship. This isn't helpful in the long run.

Intellectual Boundaries:

Respect Intellectual Autonomy: Individuals may have diverse beliefs and perspectives, even within a Christian caregiving

Caregivers must respect the intellectual autonomy of those they care for, acknowledging and accepting differences in opinions or interpretations of faith

context. Caregivers must respect the intellectual autonomy of those they care for, acknowledging and accepting differences in opinions or interpretations of faith.

Avoid imposing beliefs:

While faith may be a source of strength for many, Christian caregivers should avoid imposing their religious beliefs on care recipients. Instead, offer spiritual support if it aligns with the care recipient's beliefs.

Remain open to diversity: Christian caregiving should be inclusive and open to individuals from diverse backgrounds and belief systems. Intellectual boundaries involve recognizing and appreciating the diversity of thought and understanding that not everyone may share the same worldview.

Spiritual Boundaries:

Offer spiritual support with sensitivity: Christian caregivers offer spiritual support in alignment with the care recipient's beliefs. This might involve prayer, sharing scripture, or facilitating access to spiritual resources. However, it's crucial to

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do so with sensitivity, ensuring the support is welcomed and respectful of the care recipient's faith journey.

Recognize and respect different spiritual paths: Christian caregivers should acknowledge and respect that individuals may follow other spiritual paths or may not adhere to any specific faith. Respecting these differences is essential for fostering an inclusive and non-judgmental caregiving environment.

While sharing one's faith is a part of Christian caregiving, caregivers should be cautious not to engage in aggressive proselytizing. It's essential to prioritize the care recipient's well-being and comfort, respecting their autonomy in matters of faith.

In summary, maintaining emotional, intellectual, and spiritual boundaries in Christian caregiving involves a delicate balance between providing support rooted in one's faith and respecting the autonomy and diverse perspectives of those receiving care.

- How to set healthy boundaries in these areas (“But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ.” Ephesians 4:15)

So, this begs the question. Knowing about boundaries is one thing. Establishing them in my relationships is an entirely different concept. How do I set boundaries in these three areas? Let's look at them individually.

Setting appropriate emotional, intellectual, and spiritual boundaries in Christian caregiving involves a thoughtful and intentional approach to ensure the well-being and autonomy

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of both the caregiver and the care recipient. Here are some guidelines for each aspect:

Emotional Boundaries:

Self-Awareness: Be aware of your emotions and recognize when you might become too emotionally involved. Regular self-reflection can help identify signs of emotional stress or burnout. Feeling deeply about a person doesn't mean you must also mirror their pain in your emotions. There needs to be a healthy distance in how you receive their emotional mindset.

Clear Communication: Communicate the expectations and limits of your relationship. This includes discussing the emotional support that can be provided and establishing boundaries to prevent emotional enmeshment. You can't help someone who is emotionally unbalanced at the moment if you also are emotionally unbalanced. You can be empathetic without falling into the same depth of despair as your care receiver.

Communicate the expectations and limits of your relationship.

Professional supervision and support: Seek professional supervision and support to discuss challenging emotional situations if necessary. Supervision provides a space for caregivers to process their emotions, gain insights, and receive guidance on maintaining healthy boundaries.

Self-Care: Prioritize your self-care to recharge emotionally. This might include setting aside personal time, engaging in joyful activities, and seeking support from friends, family, or a spiritual community.

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Intellectual Boundaries:

Respect for diversity: Recognize and respect the intellectual diversity of care recipients. Avoid making assumptions about their beliefs and be open to learning from their perspectives. You can't compete to win an argument.

Avoiding imposition: While sharing your faith or providing intellectual guidance may be appropriate, avoid imposing personal beliefs on others. Encourage open dialogue and be willing to learn from the care recipient's experiences and beliefs.

Cultural competence: Develop cultural competence to understand your care recipients' intellectual and cultural backgrounds. This includes being sensitive to different ways of thinking and diverse belief systems.

Balanced sharing: When sharing intellectual or spiritual insights, do so in a balanced manner. Ensure the information shared is relevant to the care recipient's needs and preferences.

Spiritual Boundaries:

Respecting faith journeys: Acknowledge and appreciate the unique spiritual journey of each individual. Avoid making assumptions about the role of faith in their lives and be open to discussing and supporting their spiritual beliefs.

Acknowledge and respect the unique spiritual journey of each individual.

Sensitive spiritual support: Offer spiritual support with sensitivity. Ask

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about and respect the care recipient's preferences regarding prayer, scripture, or other spiritual practices. Offering books to your care receiver is one way to enter an ongoing dialogue. There are so many faith-filled books available today. Ask your pastor or friend to recommend one if you can't think of one.

Open communication: Establish open communication about spiritual matters. Encourage care recipients to express their spiritual needs and preferences and be receptive to their input. This might be a challenge, primarily if you have known your care receiver all your life and you don't usually have spiritual discussions together. Everything changes when you become the caregiver. Meaningful dialogue with each other can be one of those things that you both find helpful.

Setting appropriate boundaries requires ongoing reflection, communication, and a commitment to the well-being of the caregiver and the care recipient. It's important to tailor these guidelines to the specific needs and preferences of the individuals involved while upholding the principles of Christian caregiving, including love, compassion, and respect for autonomy.

- How do boundaries protect both the caregiver and the care receiver? "The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life." He will keep you going out, and you're coming in from this time on and forevermore." Psalm 121:7-8

Establishing and maintaining boundaries in caregiving is essential for the protection and well-being of both the caregiver and the care receiver. Here's how boundaries serve to protect both parties:

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For the Caregiver:

Prevention of Burnout:

Emotional boundaries: By maintaining emotional boundaries, caregivers can empathize with the care receiver without becoming overwhelmed by their emotions. This prevents emotional burnout and exhaustion.

Intellectual boundaries: Respecting intellectual boundaries ensures that caregivers do not take on the intellectual or philosophical burdens of those they care for, preventing cognitive fatigue and burnout.

Spiritual boundaries: Setting spiritual boundaries helps caregivers avoid feeling responsible for the care receiver's spiritual journey, preventing burnout related to spiritual and existential concerns. Making prayer a part of your caregiving experience may help a great deal.

Avoidance of exploitation:

Emotional Boundaries:

Clearly defined emotional boundaries prevent the caregiver from becoming overly dependent on the care receiver for validation, emotional support, or a sense of purpose.

Clearly defined emotional boundaries prevent the caregiver from becoming overly dependent on the care receiver for validation, emotional support, or a sense of purpose.

Intellectual boundaries: Maintaining intellectual boundaries ensures that caregivers do not exploit their position to

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influence or manipulate the care receiver's thoughts or decisions.

Spiritual boundaries: Setting spiritual boundaries prevents the caregiver from using their position to proselytize or coerce the care receiver into adopting specific religious beliefs.

For the Care Receiver:

Respect for Autonomy and Dignity:

Emotional boundaries: Emotional boundaries allow you to express your feelings without feeling judged or overwhelmed, preserving your emotional autonomy and dignity.

Intellectual boundaries: Respecting intellectual boundaries ensures that your beliefs and opinions are acknowledged and valued, fostering a sense of intellectual autonomy and dignity.

Spiritual boundaries: Setting spiritual boundaries allows you to navigate your spiritual journey without feeling pressured or judged, preserving your autonomy and dignity in matters of faith.

Prevention of Dependency:

Emotional boundaries: Maintaining emotional boundaries prevents the Care receiver from becoming overly dependent on the caregiver for emotional support, encouraging them to seek various sources for well-being.

Intellectual boundaries: Respecting intellectual boundaries allows the care receiver to make decisions based on their beliefs and values rather than feeling pressured to conform to the caregiver's intellectual perspectives.

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Spiritual boundaries: Setting spiritual boundaries prevents the care receiver from feeling compelled to adopt the caregiver's religious beliefs, preserving their autonomy in spiritual matters.

Protection from Exploitation:

Emotional boundaries: Clear emotional boundaries protect the care receiver from being exploited for the caregiver's emotional needs, ensuring that the caregiving relationship remains focused on the care receiver's well-being.

Clear emotional boundaries protect the care receiver from being exploited for the caregiver's emotional needs

Intellectual boundaries: Respecting intellectual boundaries prevents the care receiver from being influenced or manipulated into adopting the caregiver's beliefs, protecting their intellectual autonomy.

Spiritual boundaries: Setting spiritual boundaries protects the care receiver from feeling coerced into embracing specific religious beliefs, preserving their freedom to explore and practice their faith.

In summary, boundaries safeguard the caregiving relationship, promoting a healthy balance between support and autonomy for the caregiver and the care receiver. They contribute to creating a respectful, professional, and compassionate caregiving environment.

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CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES

Problems with Boundaries

In Christian caregiving, as in any form, maintaining proper boundaries is crucial to ensure ethical and practical support. When boundaries are not respected or established, several issues can arise.

Without clear boundaries, caregivers and care recipients may develop unhealthy dependencies or attachments. This can hinder the individual's personal growth and autonomy, as well as create an unhealthy dynamic in the relationship.

Caregivers who do not establish boundaries may be overburdened and susceptible to burnout. Taking on too much responsibility, emotionally or physically, without proper self-care can lead to exhaustion and compromised well-being.

In a Christian caregiving context, there's a risk of using spirituality in a manipulative way if boundaries are not respected. Caregivers may try to impose their beliefs or use religious influence to control the care recipient, which can be harmful and unethical.

Respecting personal space and confidentiality is crucial for maintaining trust and promoting a healthy caregiving relationship.

Without clear boundaries, there is a risk of invading the privacy of the care recipient. Respecting personal space and confidentiality is crucial for maintaining trust and promoting a healthy caregiving relationship.

Christian caregivers may face ethical challenges if they do not establish proper boundaries. This includes

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respecting the autonomy and choices of the care recipient, even if those choices differ from the caregiver's religious belief.

Lack of boundaries can lead to confusion about roles and responsibilities. Caregivers may overstep their roles or fail to provide necessary care due to unclear expectations. Unhealthy boundaries can strain relationships between caregivers and care recipients and among family members involved in caregiving. Conflict and tension may arise, negatively impacting the overall support system.

Caregivers may be emotionally drained if they do not establish boundaries to protect their emotional well-being. Caregivers need to have a support system and engage in self-care. Without limits, caregivers may struggle to maintain objectivity and make decisions in the best interest of the care recipient. This can lead to poor judgment and potential harm.

In summary, maintaining proper boundaries in Christian caregiving is essential for promoting a healthy, respectful, and effective caregiving relationship. Clear boundaries help ensure that care is provided ethically, respecting the autonomy and well-being of both the caregiver and the care recipient.

- Common boundary challenges faced by caregivers (“Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others,” Philippians 2:4)

Caregivers often encounter various challenges related to maintaining boundaries. Three common boundary challenges faced by caregivers include:

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Emotional boundaries: Caregivers may struggle with setting and maintaining emotional boundaries, especially when there is a strong emotional connection with the care recipient. This can manifest as becoming overly invested in the care recipient's emotional well-being, feeling responsible for their happiness, or experiencing emotional burnout due to the intense nature of caregiving. Emotional boundaries are crucial for caregivers to protect their mental health, prevent burnout, and maintain a balanced perspective.

Role boundaries: Defining and maintaining clear role boundaries can be challenging for caregivers. This involves understanding and communicating about the specific responsibilities and limitations of the caregiving role. Caregivers may face difficulties when trying to balance their role as a caregiver with other roles, such as being a spouse, child, or friend. Establishing clear role boundaries can lead to role confusion, strained relationships, and unrealistic expectations.

Self-Care boundaries: Caregivers often neglect their needs and well-being, putting the care recipient's needs above their own. This can result in physical and emotional exhaustion. Establishing self-care boundaries is challenging but essential for preventing burnout. Caregivers need to prioritize their health, engage in activities that bring them joy and relaxation, and seek support from others. Failure to set and maintain self-care boundaries can negatively affect both the caregiver and the care recipient.

Addressing these challenges requires self-awareness, communication, and a proactive approach to maintaining healthy boundaries. Caregivers should recognize the importance of self-care, seek support when needed, and be

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mindful of the emotional and role boundaries to ensure a sustainable and practical caregiving experience.

Caregivers should recognize the importance of self-care, and seek support when need.

- “For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and love and of self-discipline.”² Timothy 1:7
- “I have chosen you and not cast you off; do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. “Isaiah 41:9,10)

Setting and enforcing healthy boundaries can be challenging for various reasons, and individuals may experience fears that hinder their ability to establish and maintain these boundaries. Three common fears include:

Fear of rejection or abandonment: Many people fear that setting boundaries will lead to rejection or abandonment by others. They may worry that saying "no" or asserting their needs will result in strained relationships or that others will withdraw their support. This fear can be extreme in individuals who seek external validation and approval. As a result, they may prioritize others' needs over their own, sacrificing their well-being to avoid potential rejection.

There is a common fallacy here that people talk about. Boundaries are not just excluding things from your life. It may also result in you deliberately including things in your life. That is just as important.

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Fear of conflict or disapproval: The fear of conflict or disapproval can prevent individuals from setting and enforcing boundaries. They may worry that asserting themselves will lead to confrontation or adverse reactions from others. This fear of conflict can be rooted in a desire to maintain harmony and avoid tension, but it often comes at the expense of personal well-being. Individuals may sacrifice their needs and compromise their boundaries to prevent uncomfortable situations.

Fear of Guilt or Selfishness: Some individuals fear that setting boundaries is selfish or will make them feel guilty. They may struggle with the idea of prioritizing their own needs over the needs of others, especially if they have been socialized to be selfless or to prioritize the well-being of others. This fear of appearing selfish can lead to a reluctance to establish clear boundaries, even when necessary for maintaining personal health and balance.

Overcoming these fears involves building self-awareness, recognizing the importance of boundaries for well-being, and developing practical communication skills. Seeking support from friends, family, or professionals can help you navigate these fears and establish healthy boundaries in various relationships.

- Servanthood vs. Servitude

Understanding the difference between being a servant and being a slave

“For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence,

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but through love become slaves to one another.” Galatians 5:13

It would be helpful if we could get a clear understanding of a definition of both terms "servitude" and "servanthood" within a Christian context:

Servitude typically refers to being a servant or being in a condition of servile dependence. In some contexts, it may carry a negative connotation, suggesting a condition of subjugation or involuntary servitude. It can imply a lack of freedom or agency and may not align with the idea of voluntary, loving service emphasized in Christian teachings.

Servitude
typically refers to
being a servant or
being in a condition
of servile
dependence

One sees this occasionally in families where one of the children ends up caring for their vulnerable parent while the other family members stay uninvolved. This can drive a wedge between all the family as the principal caregiver feels they have been taken advantage of and are only doing it because no one else will help. It generally takes years to walk through the divisions that occur when the primary caregiver begrudges the role and feels victimized by the rest of the family.

Servanthood, on the other hand, is a term often used in Christian theology to describe the concept of serving others willingly and selflessly. In Christian teachings, servanthood is modelled after the example of Jesus Christ, often called the "Servant King." It emphasizes humility, putting others' needs before oneself, and acting out of love and compassion. Servanthood, as understood in Christianity, is a voluntary

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Servanthood, on the other hand, is a term often used in Christian theology to describe the concept of serving others willingly and selflessly.

choice to serve and care for others, reflecting the principles of love, compassion, and selflessness.

- Avoiding the trap of sacrificing personal boundaries in caregiving. “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

Avoiding the trap of sacrificing personal boundaries in Christian caregiving requires intentional self-awareness, setting clear priorities, and practicing healthy communication. Here are some practical steps to help you maintain personal boundaries while engaging in Christian caregiving.

Recognize that setting and maintaining boundaries is acceptable and crucial for effective and sustainable caregiving. Understand that respecting your boundaries contributes to your well-being and enables you to provide better care to others.

Reflect on your Christian values and principles. Clarify your priorities and recognize that taking care of yourself is consistent with the biblical idea of stewardship, including caring for the temple of the Holy Spirit (your own body and well-being).

Communicate your boundaries with those you are caring for and other involved parties. Be honest and assertive about what you can and cannot do. Healthy communication helps set expectations and prevents misunderstandings. Saying “no” is a valuable skill. It doesn't mean you lack compassion; rather, it

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indicates that you understand your limitations and are committed to maintaining balance. Practice saying "no" kindly but firmly when necessary.

Establish realistic expectations for yourself and others. Understand that you cannot meet every need or fulfill every request. Setting realistic expectations helps prevent feelings of guilt when you need to enforce your boundaries.

Integrate self-care practices into your routine. This includes taking breaks, maintaining hobbies, spending time with loved ones, and seeking spiritual nourishment. Prioritizing self-care is not selfish but essential for sustaining your ability to provide care.

Build a support network that understands and encourages your need for boundaries. Discuss your caregiving experiences with friends, family, or fellow Christians who can support and hold you accountable for maintaining healthy boundaries. Periodically assess your limits and adjust them as needed. Changes in circumstances or your capacity may require adjustments. Regular self-reflection lets you stay attuned to your needs and make necessary changes.

Seek spiritual guidance if you struggle to balance caregiving and maintaining boundaries. This may involve consulting with a pastor or spiritual mentor or engaging in prayer and reflection to discern a biblically grounded approach to caregiving. If caregiving responsibilities become overwhelming or impact your mental health, seek

Seek spiritual guidance if you struggle to balance caregiving and maintaining boundaries.

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professional help. A counsellor or therapist can provide guidance and support in navigating complex emotions and maintaining healthy boundaries.

Remember that effective caregiving involves balancing providing support for others and caring for yourself. By intentionally setting and maintaining personal boundaries, you can engage in Christian caregiving sustainably and compassionately aligned with biblical principles.

IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO BOUNDARY PROBLEMS

- Signs of Trouble with Boundaries
- “The clever see danger and hide, but the simple go on and suffer for it.” Proverbs 22:3

Are there some common signs I can look at that show I may be having trouble keeping proper boundaries in my caregiving relationships? Here are three common signs to watch for:

1. **Feeling Overwhelmed or Burned Out:** If you consistently feel overwhelmed, exhausted, or burned out, it may indicate that you are taking on too much and not setting appropriate boundaries. Caregivers who neglect their well-being in favour of constantly helping others are at risk of burnout. If you find it challenging to step back, take breaks, or engage in self-care, it may be a sign that your boundaries need adjustment.
2. **Difficulty Saying "No" or Setting Limits:** A difficulty in saying "no" or setting limits indicates that boundary issues may exist. Suppose you find yourself agreeing to every request. In that case, even when it strains your

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time, energy, or emotional well-being, you might lack assertiveness in establishing and maintaining boundaries. Overcommitting can lead to feelings of resentment and increased stress.

- 3. Neglecting Personal Needs and Relationships:** When caregiving precedes your personal needs, relationships, and self-care, it may indicate a boundary problem. If you consistently neglect your own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being to meet the needs of others, it can lead to imbalances in your life. Pay attention to signs of neglect in your personal life, such as neglecting friendships, hobbies, or regular self-care practices.

If you notice these signs, taking proactive steps to address boundary challenges is essential. Take some time for self-reflection to understand why you may be struggling with boundaries. Consider your motivations, fears, and beliefs about caregiving.

Talk to friends, family, or a mentor about your experiences. They can provide valuable perspectives, support, and encouragement. Identify your priorities and set realistic expectations for what you can reasonably accomplish.

Learn to say "no" when necessary to protect your well-being. Implement self-care routines and establish a balance between caregiving responsibilities and personal needs. Regularly check in on your own well-being.

If boundary challenges persist, consider seeking guidance from a counsellor or therapist. A mental health professional can help you explore and address underlying issues contributing to difficulties in setting and maintaining boundaries.

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Recognizing and addressing boundary challenges is a positive step toward creating a healthier caregiving dynamic, benefiting you and those you assist.

- We can sum this all up in two verses from the Bible:
- “Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, you must also forgive. Above all, clothe yourself with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Colossians 3:13
- “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22:39

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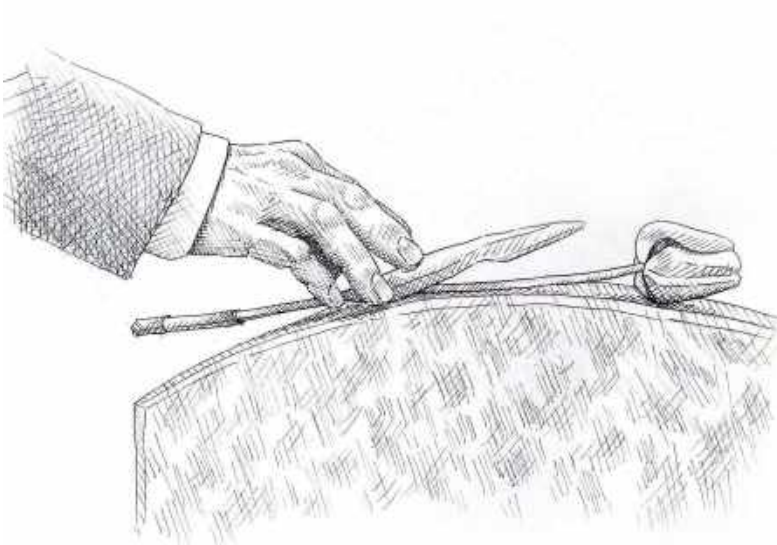
IT'S YOUR TURN, APPLY IT.

- What boundaries do you need to establish in your caregiving relationship that do not exist now? How can you go about to establish them?
- Boundaries aren't only established to exclude things from your life. They may also involve adding things to your life. Can you think of something you must include in your life, such as habits, people, activities, etc?

How did the difference between servitude and servanthood impact you? How did your ideas change from the brief reference to this concept in chapter 4?

MINISTERING TO THOSE EXPERIENCING GRIEF

HEALING HEARTS: SUPPORTING THOSE IN GRIEF



8. MINISTERING TO THOSE EXPERIENCING GRIEF

OVERVIEW

In this chapter, the focus is on ministering to individuals experiencing grief. The chapter emphasizes the importance of seeking support and open communication during times of grief. It

explores the complexity of grief, detailing emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and physical aspects, citing quotes from individuals like C.S. Lewis, Corrie Ten Boom, Billy Graham, and Elisabeth Elliot. The Kübler-Ross model's five

stages of grief are explained: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, with a reminder that individuals may not follow these stages linearly. The chapter also addresses challenges in societal expectations and provides strategies for navigating them, such as education, support systems, counselling, and therapy. Finally, the chapter underscores the importance of allowing oneself to fully experience grief for healing, emphasizing that there is no universal timeline for the grieving process.

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UNDERSTANDING GRIEF AND ITS IMPACT

- "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we are comforted by God." 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Meet Lois and Taylor, a young couple in their mid-20s who recently experienced the loss of Taylor's younger sibling, Jordan, in a car accident. Jordan was just 19, and the sudden tragedy devastated Lois and Taylor.

Instead of seeking support from each other and their friends and family, Lois and Taylor cope with their grief in ways that strain their relationship. Lois, overwhelmed by the pain, throws herself into work, avoiding any discussion about Jordan's death. On the other hand, Taylor, struggling with anger and guilt, isolates himself, turning to substance use to numb the pain.

The couple's communication breaks down, with each partner unable to express their emotions or provide the support the other needs. They become increasingly distant, leading to a cycle of misunderstanding and frustration. Instead of facing their grief together, they unintentionally create a barrier between them, making it difficult to find solace in their relationship.

This example highlights how the inability to deal with grief effectively can strain a relationship, emphasizing the importance of seeking support and communicating openly

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during challenging times. Professional counselling, support groups, and open conversations with friends and family could be crucial for Lois and Taylor to navigate their grief and strengthen their bond.

Grief is a complex and multifaceted emotional response to loss. It is not limited to the death of a loved one; it can also be triggered by various life events, such as the end of a significant relationship, the loss of a job, or a significant life change. Grief encompasses a range of emotions, thoughts, and behaviours as individuals adapt to life without what or whom they have lost.

Grief is a complex and multifaceted emotional response to loss.

Here's a breakdown of some key aspects of grief:

Emotional Response: Grief involves a broad spectrum of emotions, including sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety, confusion, and relief. These emotions may come and go in waves, and individuals may experience them differently over time.

In his book "A Grief Observed," C.S. Lewis wrote poignant reflections on grief: "No one ever told me that grief felt like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid—the same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing. At other times, it feels like being mildly drunk or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me."

"No one ever told me that grief felt like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid—"

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Cognitive Impact: Grief often brings about changes in thought patterns. Individuals might struggle with feelings of disbelief, preoccupation with memories of the lost person or thing, or difficulty concentrating. The cognitive impact of grief can vary widely among individuals.

Behavioural Changes: Grief can manifest in behavioural changes, such as sleep patterns, appetite, and energy levels. Some individuals may withdraw socially, while others might seek more social interaction to cope.

Corrie ten Boom (1892–1983) was a Dutch Christian woman and author best known for her experiences during World War II. Along with her family, Corrie ten Boom helped many Jews escape the Nazis by hiding them in a secret compartment in their home in the Netherlands. She once said: "When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer."

Physical Symptoms: Grief can have physical manifestations, including fatigue, headaches, muscle tension, and weight changes. The mind-body connection is significant in the grieving process.

Duration and Intensity: The duration and intensity of grief vary widely among individuals. Factors such as the nature of the loss, the individual's coping mechanisms, and the availability of support can influence how grief is experienced.

Billy Graham (1918–2018) was an American evangelical Christian evangelist and one of the most influential religious figures of the 20th century. He gained international prominence for his powerful preaching and his role in spreading the message of Christianity around the world. He

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once wrote, "Grief and grace are not opposites. Grief is not the absence of grace but the conduit through which grace is poured. God gives grace to all who are experiencing grief."

Grief is not the absence of grace but the conduit through which grace is poured. God gives grace to all who are experiencing grief.

Cultural and Individual

Differences: Cultural and individual differences affect how people express and cope with grief. Cultural norms and personal beliefs can shape the rituals and expressions associated with mourning.

Elisabeth Elliot (1926–2015) was an American Christian author, speaker, and missionary. She became well-known for her inspirational writing and speaking on topics related to the Christian faith, particularly in love, forgiveness, and the role of women in the church. She and her first husband, Jim Elliot, were missionaries in Ecuador. Jim Elliot, along with four other missionaries, was killed by members of the Waodani tribe in 1956 while attempting to evangelize them.

Despite this tragedy, Elisabeth continued to work with the same tribe, eventually establishing a relationship with them and sharing the Christian message. She once said this: "Grief never ends, but it changes. It's a passage, not a place to stay. Grief is not a sign of weakness or a lack of faith. It is the price of love."

It's crucial to recognize that there is no "right" or "wrong" way to grieve, and the process is highly individualized. People may move

Grief never ends, but it changes. It's a passage, not a place to stay.

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through stages of grief in different sequences, and the intensity of emotions can ebb and flow over time. The support of friends, family, or mental health professionals can be invaluable in helping individuals navigate the challenging terrain of grief.

The five stages of grief, often referred to as the Kübler-Ross model, were introduced by psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book "On Death and Dying." It's important to note that these stages are not meant to be a rigid framework everyone follows linearly. Individuals may experience these stages in different orders, and some may not go through all the stages. Additionally, people may revisit certain stages multiple times. The five stages are:

1. **Denial:** In the initial stage, individuals may struggle to accept the reality of the loss. This can serve as a protective mechanism, allowing them to process the overwhelming emotions gradually. It might involve thoughts like "This can't be happening" or "It's a mistake."
2. **Anger:** Anger may surface as the denial begins to fade. Individuals may direct their anger toward themselves, others, or even the situation or higher power they perceive as responsible for the loss. Feelings of frustration, resentment, and injustice can mark this stage.

I once visited a lady in a hospital who was diagnosed with cancer. She was a very active and likable woman. I commented that she must be angry against God for letting this happen to her. She responded, "Oh, I could never be angry with God." "Sure, you can," I replied.

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“King David often expressed his anger towards God. God can take our anger. He invites our honesty.”

A week later, I met her husband, who thanked me for my visit.” You gave my wife permission to be angry with God,’ he said.” She has never been the same since you told her that. She is doing so much better now.”

3. **Bargaining:** In this stage, individuals may attempt to make deals or bargains to reverse or alleviate the loss. They may think, "If only I had done this differently," or "If I can just have more time." This stage involves a struggle to regain control or find meaning in the face of the loss.
4. **Depression:** The reality of the loss fully sets in during the depression stage. Feelings of profound sadness, hopelessness, and despair may emerge as individuals confront the magnitude of the changes brought about by the loss. It's important to note that depression in this context is not necessarily clinical depression but rather a natural response to grief. I believe many folks in Long-term care facilities are overwhelmed with a ‘free-floating’ sense of depression. They feel victimized by life. The administrators and caregivers in many well-managed homes work diligently to encourage their charges and help them deal with things they cannot change easily.
5. **Acceptance:** In the final stage, individuals begin to come to terms with the reality of the loss. This doesn't necessarily mean they are "okay" with it, but they find a way to move forward with life. Acceptance involves

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adapting to a new routine and integrating the loss into one's life story.

While these stages provide a framework for understanding the grieving process, it's crucial to recognize that grief is a highly individual experience. Not everyone will go through all these stages, which may not occur linearly. Some individuals may experience stages simultaneously, and the intensity and duration of each stage can vary widely.

The impact of these stages on an average person can vary based on factors such as the nature of the loss, the individual's coping mechanisms, support system, and overall mental health. Grieving is a unique and personal journey, and individuals should be allowed the space and time to navigate it in their way. Seeking support from friends, family, or mental health professionals can be valuable during this challenging process.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." Romans 12:15

Ministering to people experiencing grief requires a sensitive approach. Here are some practical ways to incorporate empathy and compassion into your ministry:

Active Listening: Create a Safe Space. Foster an environment where individuals feel comfortable expressing their emotions without judgment. Ensure that they know you are there to listen and support them. Repeat back what they've shared to show understanding. Phrases like "It sounds like you're feeling..." can help convey empathy.

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Be Present: Attend funerals, memorial services, or visitations to show your support. Offer a comforting presence without pressuring them to talk if they're not ready. If physical presence is not possible, reach out through phone calls, video chats, or messages to let them know you are thinking of them.

Express Empathy: Use Compassionate Language. Express your condolences using gentle and empathetic language. Phrases like "I'm so sorry for your loss" or "I can't imagine how difficult this is for you" convey empathy and support.

Validate Emotions: Let them know that their feelings are valid and that it's okay to grieve. Avoid minimizing their pain or offering quick fixes. This is often a challenge. We think people need to fix their situation and are looking for some good tips to help them. We live in a 'quick fix' culture and value solutions; the simpler, the better. It is better to spend time understanding and feeling your emotions.

Offer Practical Support: Assist with Practical Tasks. Grieving individuals may be overwhelmed with day-to-day responsibilities. Offer specific help, such as cooking meals, running errands, or providing childcare. Be Specific in offers. Instead of generic offers like "Let me know if you need anything," suggest specific ways to help, such as, "I'd like to bring dinner over on Thursday. Would that be helpful for you?"

Respect Their Grieving Process: Recognize Uniqueness. Understand that each person's grief is unique, and there is no "right" way to grieve. Respect their process and timeline. Avoid Comparisons. Refrain from comparing their grief to your own experiences or that of others. Every grief journey is personal.

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Follow-up: Grieving is a long process, and support is often needed beyond the immediate aftermath of a loss. Check in regularly to see how they are doing and offer ongoing support. Having friends and family at your loved one's funeral can be a great encouragement. But where is everybody a week later, a month later, when the house seems empty of life and laughter? That is the best time to make a call or a visit.

Educate Yourself: Learn about the various stages of grief and typical reactions. This knowledge can help you be more understanding and supportive. Respect Cultural Differences. Be aware of and respect cultural or religious practices related to grief. Different cultures have unique ways of mourning and expressing grief.

Remember, the key is approaching the individual with genuine care, acknowledging their pain, and offering practical assistance. Each person's grief journey is unique, so adapting your approach based on their needs and preferences is crucial.

NAVIGATING THE GRIEVING PROCESS

"The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18

- "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Matthew 5:4

Grieving is a highly individual and complex process, and individuals may face various challenges, both internal and external, during their grief journey. One common challenge is the societal pressure to "move on" quickly. Here are some aspects of this challenge:

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Social Expectations: Society often imposes unrealistic timelines on the grieving process. People may feel pressured to appear "normal" or return to their routines sooner than they are emotionally ready. People sometimes ask if we have

Society often imposes unrealistic timelines on the grieving process.

"gotten over" the death of our loved one, for example. There are some things you will never 'get over' – the death of a spouse or a child. Nothing wrong with that. You won't feel the pain as intensely as when the death first occurred, but there will always be that sense of loss that time doesn't erase.

Misunderstanding Grief: Some individuals may not fully understand the depth and duration of grief. Well-intentioned friends, family, or colleagues might encourage the grieving person to move on, thinking it is in their best interest. They mean well, but they don't fully understand how we deal with grief.

Avoidance of Discomfort: People in the surrounding community may be uncomfortable with others' pain and grief. This discomfort can lead to expecting the grieving individual to quickly resume a more typical, less emotionally charged state.

Cultural Influences: Cultural norms and expectations can significantly impact how grief is perceived. In some cultures, there may be an emphasis on stoicism or a belief that expressing grief openly is a sign of weakness. The exact opposite is demonstrated in a traditional Greek Orthodox funeral, where there is a deliberate encouragement for family and friends to express their grief.

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Comparisons with Others Grieving individuals may face comparisons with others who have seemingly moved on quickly. This can create internal pressure to conform to a perceived standard. You can often see this in the same family, where different family members show their grief differently.

Personal Expectations: Individuals may internalize societal expectations and set unrealistic goals for their own grief process. This self-imposed pressure can hinder the natural and necessary progression of mourning.

Fear of Isolation: The fear of being alone and isolated or abandoned may drive some individuals to mask their grief or prematurely present a facade of coping well.

Emotional Bottling. External pressure to move on quickly may lead some individuals to suppress their emotions, which can have negative consequences for mental health in the long run.

So, how do we address this challenge? These moments of our lives tend to serve as ‘hinge moments.’ They will determine how we will live the remainder of our lives. Too often, the word “bitter” and ‘elderly’ go together to describe what is happening. Or perhaps they are not bitter; they lack the sense of joy and peace they once exhibited to the world. Can we help people move from these maladaptive patterns of relating to a healthier place? I believe we can. We must. Let’s look at some ways this can happen.

Education and Advocacy: Advocate for a better understanding of grief as a unique and individual process. Encourage education about the diverse ways people cope with loss. Many groups offer seminars in dealing with grief: Hospice Organizations, Grief Support Groups, Funeral Homes,

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Counseling and Mental Health Organizations, Churches, synagogues, mosques, Educational Institutions, National Grief Support Organizations, and other Nonprofit Organizations:

Support Systems: Encourage the development of supportive communities, both online and offline, where individuals can share their experiences without fear of judgment and normalize the grieving processes. Highlight diverse stories of grief and resilience to showcase that there is no one-size-fits-all timeline for healing.

Counselling and Therapy: Recommend counselling or therapy to individuals struggling with societal pressure to move on quickly. Mental health professionals can provide guidance and a safe space for expression.

By addressing societal expectations and fostering a more empathetic and understanding environment, we can better support individuals on their grief journeys and alleviate the pressure to conform to arbitrary timelines for healing.

HEALING AND SUPPORTING OTHERS IN GRIEF

- "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:4
- "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28-30

Allowing oneself to experience grief fully is considered a crucial aspect of the healing process. Grief is a natural response to loss, encompassing a range of emotions, thoughts, and

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behaviours. While the intensity and duration of grief vary from person to person, acknowledging and allowing oneself to feel these emotions is an integral part of the healing journey.

There are several reasons why allowing oneself to experience grief fully is essential for healing. Grief forces individuals to

Grief forces individuals to confront the reality of the loss.

confront the reality of the loss. Avoiding or suppressing these emotions can hinder the process of coming to terms with the new reality and adapting to life without the person or thing that was lost.

Grieving allows individuals to

express and release the intense emotions associated with loss. This emotional expression is a natural and healthy way for individuals to cope with the pain, sadness, anger, and other emotions accompanying grief.

Unacknowledged or suppressed grief can lead to complicated grief, a condition where the mourning process becomes prolonged and more challenging. Allowing oneself to experience grief early on fully can help prevent the development of complications in the future.

Fully experiencing grief allows individuals to integrate the loss into their narrative. This process is essential for finding meaning, understanding the impact of the loss, and ultimately incorporating it into their life story. Acknowledging grief enables individuals to develop healthy coping mechanisms. This might include seeking support from friends, family, or professionals, engaging in self-care activities, and finding ways to express emotions constructively.

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Embracing the grieving process contributes to the development of emotional resilience. It involves navigating and adapting to life's challenges and fostering personal growth in adversity.

Allowing oneself to grieve acknowledges the validity of one's feelings. Society, culture, or well-meaning individuals may have expectations about how grief should be expressed, but the individual's unique experience and emotions are valid and deserve acknowledgment.

**Allowing oneself
to grieve
acknowledges the
validity of one's
feelings**

While it's essential to experience grief fully, it's equally crucial to recognize that the grieving process is individualized, and there is no universal timeline for healing. Seeking support from friends, family, or mental health professionals can be valuable during this challenging journey. Ultimately, the goal is not to "get over" the loss but to learn to live with it and find a renewed sense of purpose and meaning in life.

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as, in fact, you are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:1

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10

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IT'S YOUR TURN, APPLY IT.

- How helpful do you feel the five stages of grief are? (Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance)
- What one thing did you learn about grief in reading this chapter?

To learn more about grief, visit www.grief-books.org or call Stephen Ministries at (314)428-2600. They publish many resources to help people dealing with grief.

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PROVIDING SPIRITUAL CARE

CHANNELS OF GRACE: TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH SPIRITUAL CARE



9. PROVIDING SPIRITUAL CARE

OVERVIEW

This chapter emphasizes the connection between faith and caregiving, starting with biblical passages on prayer and God's grace. It explores seven signs of God's grace, including awareness of God's presence, faith, community engagement, gratitude, and repentance. The significance of integrating faith into caregiving practices is highlighted, emphasizing the role of community support. The chapter addresses spiritual obstacles, such as misconceptions and fear, hindering individuals from receiving God's grace. It concludes by empowering caregivers with active listening, serving, bearing burdens, and continuous prayer for effective spiritual care.

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UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL CARE AND SIGNS OF GOD'S GRACE

“Are any among you sick? They should call for the church elders and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up, and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.” James 5:14-15

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7

- Seven Signs of God's Grace in a Person's Life

“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness,” 2 Corinthians 12:9

The promises from the Bible relating to health and well-being are many. The early church, particularly Jesus's ministry on earth, was filled with examples of healing and deliverance. The early disciples were given power and authority over demonic and natural sicknesses. The church today is not together on the effectiveness of calls on divine healing by the church's elders. It is as though we have delegated the healing ministry and caregiving to secular professionals. We want to talk about spiritual things. Is it possible that these truths are linked together?

Let us examine the **seven signs of God's grace in a person's life**. It is understanding how these signs can indicate spiritual growth and well-being.

1. Awareness of God's presence:

The awareness of God's presence can profoundly impact individuals, influencing their values, attitudes, and behaviours.

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For caregivers, a strong sense of God's presence can provide a foundation for compassionate and ethical care. Here are several ways in which the awareness of God's presence can contribute to being a good caregiver:

The awareness of God's presence often fosters compassion and empathy. Recognizing the inherent dignity of everyone as a creation of God can lead caregivers to approach their work with a deep sense of caring and understanding.

Recognizing the inherent dignity of everyone as a creation of God can lead caregivers to approach their work with a deep sense of caring and understanding.

A belief in God's presence may provide a moral and ethical framework for decision-making.

Caregivers may turn to their religious or spiritual values to prioritize the well-being and dignity of those they care for.

The awareness of a divine presence can offer comfort and strength in challenging times. Caregivers, facing the difficulties inherent in their roles, may find resilience and patience through their faith, enabling them to endure with grace and perseverance.

Many religious traditions emphasize the value of selfless service to others. Caregivers who are aware of God's presence may view their work as a form of service to a higher purpose, motivating them to act with generosity and humility.

The awareness of God's forgiveness and grace may influence caregivers to approach their role with a spirit of forgiveness

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and understanding. This can be particularly important in dealing with challenging behaviours or difficult situations.

The belief in God's presence may inspire caregivers to create an environment of love, respect, and positivity. This can contribute to the overall well-being of those receiving care. It can encourage caregivers to be present in the moment, fostering mindfulness. This attentiveness can lead to more meaningful connections with those cared for and a deeper understanding of their needs.

2. Faith:

Your Christian faith can serve as a guiding force and a source of strength as you undertake caregiving responsibilities.

Drawing on the teachings of Jesus, you can approach caregiving with a selfless and compassionate heart, seeking to care for others as an expression of God's love.

Christianity emphasizes the importance of love and compassion. Drawing on the teachings of Jesus, you can approach caregiving with a selfless and compassionate heart, seeking to care for others as an expression of God's love.

The Bible offers guidance on how to live a righteous and compassionate life. Reading and reflecting on relevant passages can provide wisdom and insight as you navigate the challenges of caregiving. Prayer can be a powerful tool for seeking strength, patience, and knowledge in your role as a caregiver. Turning to God in prayer can provide comfort and a connection to a higher power.

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Christianity emphasizes the concepts of forgiveness and grace. As a caregiver, you may encounter challenging situations or problematic behaviours. Your faith can inspire you to approach these situations with forgiveness and understanding. Jesus' life and teachings highlight the importance of serving others and viewing caregiving as a service aligns with Christian values and can give purpose and meaning to your role.

3. Engaging with your Christian community

The Christian community can provide valuable support, whether it's your church or other groups. Sharing your experiences, seeking guidance, and receiving prayer support can strengthen your caregiving journey. Recognizing the spiritual dimension of individuals under your care is essential. Your Christian faith can guide you in providing spiritual care, which may include prayer, scripture reading, or facilitating opportunities for worship.

Remember that being a caregiver is demanding, and seeking support from your faith community, friends, and family is okay.

Your Christian faith can guide you in providing spiritual care, which may include prayer, scripture reading, or facilitating opportunities for worship.

Integrating your Christian faith into your caregiving practice can enhance your effectiveness and bring a sense of purpose and fulfillment to your work.

4. Gratitude and openness to God's grace:

The Bible contains numerous teachings about gratitude, emphasizing the importance of being thankful and expressing

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gratitude toward God and others. Here are some key passages and themes related to gratitude in the Bible:

Psalms 100:4 (NIV):

"Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV):

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV):

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Colossians 3:15-17 (NIV):

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since you were called to peace as members of one body. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 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."

Ephesians 5:20 (NIV):

"Always giving thanks to God, the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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Psalm 136:1 (NIV):

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever."

Colossians 4:2 (NIV):

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."

Psalm 107:1 (NIV):

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."

These verses highlight the biblical emphasis on gratitude as a way of life, regardless of circumstances. Gratitude is not limited to expressing thanks for positive experiences but is encouraged to face challenges.

Giving thanks is integral to a relationship with God and a response to His goodness and love. This is especially important for those of us who are struggling within a caregiving relationship. We need to have the mind of Christ filling our thoughts and strengthening us daily. Without this, we have little to offer those hurting or frustrated with their lives.

Additionally, the Bible teaches that gratitude should extend to others, and believers are encouraged to express thankfulness in their interactions with fellow human beings. Gratitude is portrayed as a disposition of the heart that reflects a recognition of God's sovereignty, faithfulness, and grace in all aspects of life.

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5. Repentance and humility are central themes in Christian teachings, and incorporating these qualities into your life can enhance your effectiveness as a Christian caregiver.

Recognizing your imperfections and limitations is a

As a caregiver, acknowledging that you don't have all the answers or may make mistakes allows you to approach your role with a humble heart.

fundamental aspect of humility. As a caregiver, acknowledging that you don't have all the answers or may make mistakes allows you to approach your role with a humble heart. Repentance involves acknowledging and turning away from wrongdoing. When you recognize errors or shortcomings

in your caregiving, repentance allows you to learn from those experiences and strive for improvement.

A humble heart is often more open to understanding the needs and perspectives of others. Humility can foster compassion and empathy, essential qualities for effective caregiving. Learning from past mistakes and expressing remorse, when necessary, can deepen your understanding of the challenges those under your care face. This understanding contributes to a more empathetic approach.

Humility is a crucial characteristic of servant leadership—a leadership style modelled by Jesus Christ. Adopting a servant-leader mindset as a caregiver involves putting the needs of those you care for above your own and approaching your role with a humble attitude. If you recognize instances where your actions or decisions were not aligned with a servant-leader mentality, repentance allows you to redirect your efforts and intentions toward serving others.

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Patience is also linked with humility. A humble caregiver recognizes that people have different needs, and patience is required to understand and address those needs. Repentance can be associated with patience in the sense that it involves a process of continuous growth and learning. Being patient with yourself as you strive for improvement is part of the repentance journey.

Humility fosters an environment of trust. Being humble allows you to build genuine and trusting relationships with those under your care, as they sense that you approach your role with a genuine desire to serve. Humility recognizes the dependence on God and the acknowledgment that all good things come from Him. This perspective can provide a spiritual grounding that shapes your approach to caregiving.

In summary, repentance and humility contribute to a Christian caregiver's effectiveness by fostering a compassionate and empathetic approach, promoting servant leadership, building trust, and providing a spiritual foundation for the caregiving journey. These qualities not only benefit those under your care but also contribute to your personal and spiritual growth as a Christian caregiver.

6. Community

Nelson Mandela (1918–2013) was a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary, political leader, and philanthropist who served as President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. He was the country's first black head of state and the first elected in a fully representative democratic election. Mandela's presidency marked the end of decades of institutionalized racial discrimination and paved the way for a more inclusive and democratic South Africa.

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"A community is strengthened not by uniformity, but by embracing the richness of its diversity. In understanding, respect, and unity, we find the foundation for a society that thrives on the strengths of all its members."

One of his strong beliefs was that "A community is strengthened not by uniformity, but by embracing the richness of its diversity. In understanding, respect, and unity, we find the foundation for a society that thrives on the strengths of all its members." One of the great things caregivers can do is help the care receiver rebuild their sense of community. Life is not meant to be lived alone. We need each other. As we age, our friends leave through death and sickness. Rather than sorrowing

over events that cannot be changed, why not spend some effort establishing another community of people in your life?

7. Love:

Mother Teresa (1910 – 1997) was a Catholic nun and missionary known for her humanitarian work among the poorest of the poor in Kolkata (Calcutta), India. In 1950, she founded the Missionaries of Charity, a Roman Catholic religious congregation.

The mission of the order was to care for "the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, the lepers, all those people who feel unwanted, unloved throughout society, people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone."

Mother Teresa gained international recognition for her selfless service and received numerous awards, including the Nobel

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Peace Prize in 1979. However, she remained humble and committed to her mission.

Mother Teresa's life and legacy continue to inspire people worldwide, and she is remembered for her unwavering commitment to serving the most vulnerable members of society. I had a fantastic visit with her and her ministry in Calcutta when I was there.

She was once asked to speak to a leading group of Westerners on her calling, considering the world where she lived. She stated: "The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but love is the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness. Many are dying for a piece of bread, but many more are dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is different—it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also spirituality. There's a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God."

She spoke the truth, the same truth illustrated in the Bible. The best example of love we can ever find is taught in the Scriptures, especially in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." Real love, as demonstrated by a God who became flesh and lived among his creation to show them how to live, is what the world needs today. This love is what is required to be lived out by caregivers as they go about their role of caring for others.

PROVIDING SPIRITUAL CARE

CONNECTING WITH DIVINE PRESENCE AND OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL OBSTACLES

- Conduits of Grace

“From his fulness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” John 1:16

Grace, in Christian understanding, is the unmerited and undeserved favour, love, and assistance given by God to humanity.

In Christian theology, "conduits of grace" refers to how God's grace is conveyed to individuals. Grace, in Christian understanding, is the unmerited and undeserved favour, love, and assistance given by God to humanity. Conduits of grace serve as channels or instruments through which individuals can experience and connect with the

divine presence. Here are some standard conduits of grace in Christianity:

Sacraments (Ordinances) are considered powerful conduits of God's grace. Baptism, the Eucharist (Communion), confirmation, reconciliation, anointing of the sick, and marriage are seen as outward signs instituted by Christ to convey God's grace to believers.

Prayer is a direct means by which individuals can connect with the divine. Through prayer, Christians seek communion with God, express gratitude, seek guidance, and open themselves to receiving God's grace.

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Scripture is considered a conduit of God's revelation and grace. Reading and meditating on the Scriptures are ways in which Christians can encounter the divine presence and receive guidance and inspiration for their lives. The Bible is a source of spiritual guidance for believers, offering wisdom, comfort, and encouragement. It addresses fundamental questions about the purpose of life, suffering, and the nature of God.

Christian Community, often called the Body of Christ, is seen as a conduit of God's grace. Believers come together to worship, support one another, and participate in acts of service, creating an environment where the grace of God is experienced collectively.

Acts of Mercy and Charity are seen as a way of participating in God's grace. Helping those in need and showing love to others are expressions of divine grace working through individuals.

Spiritual Disciplines or practices are activities or exercises that aim to deepen one's relationship with God, foster spiritual growth, and cultivate a life of faith. Some of the primary classic Christian disciplines:

1. **Prayer:** Regular communication with God, including adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.
2. **Bible Study (Lectio Divina):** Deliberate and thoughtful reading, meditation, and reflection on the Scriptures to gain spiritual insight and understanding. There is a delightful app at www.pray-as-you-go.org that you can download for free, and it will give you a bible reading for each day of the week combined with great music and

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questions to help you attend to the presence of God in your life.

3. **Fasting:** Intentional abstention from food or other activities for a specified period, often done for spiritual focus, self-discipline, and dependence on God.
4. **Worship:** Engaging in corporate or personal worship, including praise, singing, and adoration of God. One of the significant challenges in contemporary worship is that the worship team at the front of the church engages in worship while most people in the church stand in silence, looking at them and singing songs that no one knows.
5. **Meditation:** Reflecting deeply on biblical truths, God's character, and spiritual principles to foster spiritual growth and understanding.
6. **Service (Ministry):** Acts of kindness, charity, and serving others as a reflection of Christian love and obedience to Christ's teachings.
7. **Silence and Solitude:** Creating intentional moments of quietness and separation from external distractions to listen for God's voice and cultivate inner peace.
8. **Simplicity (Frugality):** Choosing a lifestyle characterized by simplicity, contentment, and focusing on spiritual values over material possessions.
9. **Confession:** Acknowledging and repenting of sins, both privately and, in some traditions, through the sacrament of confession.

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10. **Guidance (Spiritual Direction):** Seeking guidance and mentorship from experienced individuals or spiritual directors to navigate the spiritual journey.
11. **Community (Fellowship):** Engaging in Christian community, participating in fellowship, and supporting and being supported by fellow believers.
12. **Stewardship:** Responsibly managing and using God-given resources, including time, talents, and material possessions.
13. **Sabbath Rest:** Observing regular periods of rest and renewal, setting aside time for worship and relaxation by the biblical principle of Sabbath.

Richard Foster (1942 -) is a Christian author, theologian, and speaker known for his writings on Christian spirituality and the practice of spiritual disciplines. One of his most well-known works is the book "Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth," first published in 1978.

Foster is also the founder of Renovaré, an organization focused on Christian spiritual renewal and formation. Renovaré seeks to encourage individuals and churches to engage in spiritual disciplines and practices that lead to a more vibrant and authentic Christian life.

What can block hearing and believing in God's grace?

While God's Grace is available to everyone, not everyone receives it. Why is this so? Many factors hinder us from receiving God's Grace into our lives and pouring it out into the hearts of others. Let's take a brief look at some of them.

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God's Grace is available to everyone, but not everyone receives it.

Lack of Awareness: Some individuals may not have been exposed to the concept of God's grace or may lack awareness of its significance in Christian theology. It is an entirely new concept, sadly.

Misunderstanding of Grace: Misconceptions about the nature of God's grace can be a barrier. If someone sees God as primarily judgmental or punitive, grasping the idea of unmerited favour and unconditional love may be challenging.

Fear and Anxiety: A perception of God primarily as a judge may lead to fear and anxiety about divine punishment. Individuals might constantly worry about falling short of God's standards and facing judgment.

Legalism and Rigidity: Focusing on a judgmental God can foster a legalistic approach to faith, where individuals rigidly adhere to rules and regulations out of fear rather than embracing a relationship based on love and grace.

Lack of Joy and Freedom: If God is primarily seen as a judge, there may be a lack of joy and freedom in one's faith. The understanding of God's grace, which brings joy and freedom in Christ, may be overshadowed.

Difficulty Accepting Grace: Seeing God predominantly as a judge may make it challenging for individuals to accept and internalize the concept of God's grace — the idea that God's love is freely given and not based on one's performance.

Strained Relationship with God: A one-sided view of God as judgmental may result in a distant or strained relationship. Individuals may hesitate to pray to God or seek intimacy with Him if they perceive Him as primarily stern and punitive.

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Judgment of Others: A belief in a judgmental God may lead to a judgmental attitude toward others. Individuals might focus on condemning the actions of others rather than extending love and understanding.

Incomplete Understanding of God's Character: The Bible presents a multifaceted view of God, including attributes such as love, mercy, and grace. Seeing only one aspect, such as judgment, results in an incomplete understanding of God's character.

Guilt and Shame: Feelings of guilt or shame can hinder someone from accepting the grace of God. If individuals struggle with forgiving themselves or believe they are unworthy of God's love, they may find it challenging to receive grace.

Religious Upbringing: Some people may have had a religious upbringing that emphasized rules and judgment more than the concept of grace. Breaking free from such a framework can be challenging.

Intellectual Doubts: Intellectual doubts or questions about God's existence or the Bible's reliability can hinder belief in God's grace.

Pain and Suffering: Experiencing hardship or suffering may lead some individuals to question God's grace, wondering why they are going through difficult times if God is gracious.

Closed-mindedness: A closed-minded approach or resistance to exploring spiritual concepts can be a significant obstacle.

“Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.”
Matthew 21:22

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EMPOWERING CAREGIVERS AND TECHNIQUES FOR SPIRITUAL CARE

- Being Caregivers Who Hear and Believe

“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.” 1 Peter 4:10

“Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2

“You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness.” James 1:19

“To make an apt answer is a joy to anyone and a word in season; how good it is!” Proverbs 15:23

“Pray without ceasing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17

“For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do.” Hebrews 6:10)

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IT'S YOUR TURN, APPLY IT.

- How can you better create an environment in your caregiving that encourages the spiritual dimension of your life?
- In listing the conduits of grace (ordinances, prayer, scripture, community, acts of mercy, spiritual disciplines), which has God used in your life more than the others? Is there one you need to be exploring more?
- Is there an individual who encourages you in your spiritual walk with God? Do you have a relationship with another person in which you encourage them to grow spiritually?

DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

EMERGING FROM SHADOWS: A GUIDE TO CONFRONTING DEPRESSION



10. DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

OVERVIEW

Depression is described as a mental health disorder with persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and loss of interest. Different types are outlined, including Major Depressive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, and Seasonal Affective Disorder.

The complex nature of depression is explored, including personal losses, anniversaries, holidays, pent-up anger, feelings of guilt, burnout, unresolved conflicts, crises, physical causes, and brain chemistry imbalances. Coping strategies are discussed based on the severity of depression. For mild depression, self-care practices, social support, engaging in hobbies, and mindfulness techniques are recommended. Moderate and severe depression symptoms are outlined, emphasizing the need for professional intervention, therapy, and sometimes medication. Strategies include maintaining a healthy lifestyle, prioritizing sleep, managing stress, building a support system, setting realistic goals, and seeking professional help.

DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

UNDERSTANDING AND IDENTIFYING DEPRESSION

Depression is a mental health disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a lack of interest or pleasure in daily activities

“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.” Psalm 42:11)

Depression is a mental health disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a

lack of interest or pleasure in daily activities. It can affect thoughts, feelings, and physical well-being.

Various types of depression include:

1. Major Depressive Disorder (MDD): Characterized by severe and persistent low mood, impacting daily life.
2. Persistent Depressive Disorder (Dysthymia): Chronic, long-term depression lasting for at least two years.
3. Bipolar Disorder: Involves episodes of both depression and mania/hypomania.
4. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD): Occurs seasonally, often during winter, with symptoms linked to reduced sunlight exposure.
5. Psychotic Depression: Depression accompanied by psychosis, such as hallucinations or delusions.

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6. Postpartum Depression: Affects new mothers, typically within the first year after childbirth.
7. Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD): Severe depression related to the menstrual cycle.
8. Situational Depression: A response to specific stressors or life events.
9. Atypical Depression: Involves mood reactivity, increased appetite, and excessive sleep.

It's important to note that everyone's experience with depression is unique, and these categories may overlap or present in different ways. If you or someone you know is struggling with depression, seeking professional help is often crucial.

Depression is considered a significant contributor to the global burden of disease

Depression is considered a significant contributor to the global burden of disease, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include a target to promote mental health and well-being. Efforts are made to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and improve access to mental health services worldwide. Mental health, including depression, is integral to achieving the goal of ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages.

- Causes of Depression

Depression is a complex condition influenced by a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors. Here's a brief examination of various causes:

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1. **Personal Losses:** Grief and loss, such as the death of a loved one, divorce, or the end of a significant relationship, can trigger depressive episodes.
2. **Anniversaries:** Dates associated with traumatic events or losses can evoke powerful memories and emotions, contributing to depression.
3. **Holidays:** While holidays can be joyful for many, they may exacerbate feelings of loneliness, isolation, or stress for others, contributing to depression.
4. **Pent-up Anger:** Suppressed anger or resentment can negatively impact mental health and contribute to the development or exacerbation of depression.
5. **Feelings of Guilt:** Unresolved guilt or shame can be a significant emotional burden and contribute to depressive symptoms.
6. **Burnout:** Prolonged stress, especially in the workplace, can lead to burnout, exhaustion, and an increased vulnerability to depression.
7. **Unresolved Conflicts or Ambivalence:** Persistent conflicts or uncertainty in personal relationships can contribute to chronic stress and depressive symptoms.
8. **Crises:** Sudden, intense life events, such as financial crises, natural disasters, or accidents, can trigger depressive episodes.
9. **Physical Causes:** Certain medical conditions, chronic illnesses, or hormonal imbalances can contribute to depressive symptoms.

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10. **Brain Chemistry:** Imbalances in neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and dopamine, play a role in the development of depression. Antidepressant medications often target this biological aspect.

Identifying Personal Patterns:

Understanding one's triggers involves self-reflection and awareness. Individuals may notice a pattern of depression in response to specific events, stressors, or recurring life circumstances. Keeping a journal, seeking therapy, or talking to a mental health professional can help individuals identify and manage their unique depression triggers.

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It's important to note that depression is a multifaceted condition, and the interplay of various factors contributes to its development. Treatment often involves a holistic approach, addressing both the underlying causes and symptoms of depression.

I want to take a little detour here and talk specifically about the depression I see affecting many of our Seniors. Men, in particular, who have been very successful in their careers, spend their remaining years struggling with depression. They don't plan on it. It often takes them by surprise. They feel badly about their situation and are unsure what to do about it.

There is a great book written by Arthur C. Brooks titled, From Strength to Strength". In this book, he talks about the two

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types of intelligence that people possess. The first is ***fluid intelligence***, the ability to reason, think flexibly, and solve novel problems. We commonly call this ‘raw smarts’. It is usually observed as high in early adulthood and diminishes rapidly in one’s thirties and forties. But that’s not the end of the story.

There is another type of intelligence called ***crystallized intelligence***. This type of intelligence is defined as the ability to use a stock of knowledge learned in the past. This type of intelligence is found later in life and is often called ‘wisdom.’ When you are young, you have raw smarts; when you are old, you have wisdom. That wisdom can be accessed often to the very end. The challenge comes in how we incorporate this truth into our lives.

We can do some things better later than when we began our careers. Some older men never make that transition. They spend much time regretting they can no longer do what they excelled at. Helping some of these former leaders’ transition can save them a lot of agony later in life.

MANAGING DEPRESSION THROUGH COPING STRATEGIES AND SELF-CARE

“He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.”
Psalm 147:3

- Coping strategies for depression can vary based on the severity of the condition. Here are some general coping strategies for mild, moderate, and severe depression:

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Mild Depression:

Self-Care Practices:

It is vital, if you are feeling mild depression that you learn to establish a routine for daily activities. Often, folk who are mildly depressive want to give up everyday routines. That serves to add to their depression. Make every effort to get adequate sleep and maintain a regular sleep schedule. Regular physical exercise, even if it's just a short walk. That is even better if you can get out of the house or apartment for a walk in the fresh air.

Social Support:

It would be best to stay connected with friends and family. You don't have to feel obligated to talk to the whole family about your depression, but it is a good idea to share your feelings with someone you trust. That person may be a member of your family or a trusted friend.

Hobbies and Activities:

Pursue activities that bring joy or a sense of accomplishment. The internet, public libraries, and church gatherings are all a source of ideas. This is when you must be involved in areas you may have never considered. This will get you out of your automatic thinking and pull you towards energy-producing events over time. Set small, achievable goals. Don't volunteer to be super involved when starting a new activity. Be kind to yourself. Live on a slower track until you feel more comfortable giving more attention to your new hobby or activity.

Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques:

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Be more attentive to your physical needs and thoughts. If you are a Christian, ask the Lord to show Himself. There are a lot of activities in our society around meditation. Buddhist meditation views the self as impermanent and devoid of inherent existence (Anatta).

Christian meditation, on the other hand, is grounded in Christian theology and scripture. It involves contemplation of the divine, prayer, and seeking a deeper connection with God. Christian meditation aims to foster a closer relationship with

Christian meditation aims to fill oneself with the life and presence of God.

God, cultivate virtues, and align one's life with Christian teachings. In contrast to Buddhist meditation, Christian meditation aims to fill oneself with the life and presence of God. It is not centred on breaking the cycle of reincarnation as Buddhism does.

Techniques:

Standard Christian meditation practices include contemplative prayer, Lectio Divina (divine reading), and the repetition of sacred words or phrases. The focus is on engaging with scripture and seeking a personal encounter with God.

Moderate Depression:

The transition from mild depression to moderate depression may involve an escalation of symptoms and a noticeable impact on various aspects of a person's life. While these signs can vary among individuals, here are some common indicators that someone may be moving from mild to moderate depression:

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Increased Severity of Low Mood: The person may experience a more prolonged and intense low mood, with feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or emptiness becoming more pronounced.

Changes in Sleep Patterns: Insomnia or hypersomnia may become more apparent, and disruptions to sleep patterns may worsen.

Energy and Fatigue: A noticeable decrease in energy levels may occur, leading to increased fatigue and lethargy.

Appetite and Weight Changes: Changes in appetite, leading to significant weight gain or loss, may become more evident.

Difficulty Concentrating: Concentration and focus may further decline, making completing tasks or engaging in previously manageable activities challenging.

Social Withdrawal: People may withdraw more from social interactions, isolating themselves from friends, family, or activities they once enjoyed.

Negative Thought Patterns: Negative thought patterns, self-critical thoughts, or feelings of worthlessness may become more persistent and intrusive.

Physical Symptoms: Increased physical complaints such as headaches, muscle aches, or digestive issues may manifest and contribute to overall discomfort.

Decreased Interest or Pleasure: Reduced ability to experience pleasure or interest in activities may intensify, leading to further disengagement from once-enjoyable pursuits.

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Hopelessness and Pessimism: The person may exhibit a more pronounced sense of hopelessness about the future and a pervasive pessimistic outlook.

If any of these symptoms show themselves, caregivers often seek therapy or counselling to explore and address underlying issues. Doctors will frequently suggest medication. Try to create a daily schedule that balances activities and rest. Break tasks into smaller, manageable steps.

Participate in social activities, even if on a smaller scale. Join support groups to connect with others facing similar challenges. Caregivers can gently challenge negative thought patterns. Learn and practice cognitive-behavioural techniques with a therapist.

Severe Depression:

Severe depression, also known as major depressive disorder (MDD), is a serious mental health condition that significantly

Recognizing the signs of severe depression is crucial for prompt intervention and support.

impacts a person's daily life and functioning. Recognizing the signs of severe depression is crucial for prompt intervention and support. Here are some apparent signs.

Intense and Pervasive Low Mood:

People who experience MDD show persistent and profound feelings of sadness, despair, or emptiness that last most of the day, nearly every day. There is a marked decrease or complete loss of interest and pleasure in

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activities that were once enjoyable, including hobbies and social interactions.

Significant Weight Changes:

Drastic changes in appetite and weight, leading to either significant weight loss or gain, can be seen.

Sleep Disturbances:

Insomnia (inability to sleep) or hypersomnia (excessive sleep), both of which contribute to fatigue and a sense of exhaustion.

Fatigue and Loss of Energy:

Profound and persistent fatigue, even after minimal physical or mental exertion.

Difficulty Concentrating:

Impaired ability to concentrate, make decisions, or think clearly, affecting daily tasks and responsibilities.

Feelings of Worthlessness or Excessive Guilt:

Ongoing feelings of worthlessness, guilt, and self-blame, often without a rational basis.

Psychomotor Changes:

Observable changes in psychomotor activity, such as slowed movements, speech, or significant restlessness and agitation

Suicidal Thoughts or Behaviors:

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Thoughts of death, dying, or suicide may be present, and the person may engage in self-harming behaviours or express a desire to end their life.

Physical Symptoms:

Physical symptoms such as headaches, digestive issues, or chronic pain may intensify and contribute to overall distress.

Social Isolation:

Withdrawal from social activities, friends, and family, with a strong desire for solitude.

Hopelessness:

A pervasive sense of hopelessness about the future, believing that circumstances will not improve.

It's crucial to understand that severe depression is a medical condition that requires professional intervention. If someone is exhibiting signs of severe depression, it is essential to encourage them to seek immediate help from a mental health professional, such as a psychiatrist, psychologist, or counsellor. In cases where there is a risk of harm to oneself or others, emergency assistance should be sought.

You may want to seek an urgent psychiatric evaluation. Consider hospitalization if safety is a concern. Work closely with a psychiatrist to find an appropriate medication regimen if your Dr. so advises. Monitor and adjust medications as needed. Enlist the help of a support system for daily tasks and emotional support.

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Communicate openly with loved ones about your needs. Develop a safety plan in collaboration with mental health professionals. Identify emergency contacts and crisis hotlines.

It's crucial to note that these coping strategies are general recommendations, and individual responses may vary. Professional guidance is essential for developing a personalized approach to coping with depression. If you or someone you know is struggling with depression, seeking help from a mental health professional is strongly advised.

SEEKING PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORTING OTHERS

“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11)

It is essential to know that there is professional help for those dealing with depression.

Before we leave this topic, we should perhaps spend a moment and think about preventing depression in the life of the caregiver. It is not an uncommon event that the caregiver can also get very discouraged and even depressed while dealing with another significant person in their life who is adjusting to their situation in an unhealthy manner. While it's not always possible to completely prevent depression, there are several lifestyle choices and practices that can contribute to mental well-being and reduce the risk of developing depression. Here are some strategies to consider:

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Engage in regular physical activity, as it has been shown to affect mood and overall mental health positively.

Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle:

Engage in regular physical activity, as it has been shown to positively affect mood and overall mental health. Eat a nutritious diet focusing on whole foods, as certain nutrients can impact brain function and mood.

Prioritize Sleep:

Ensure you get enough quality sleep each night. Establish a consistent sleep routine and address any sleep-related issues.

Manage Stress:

Practice stress-reduction techniques such as mindfulness, meditation, or deep breathing exercises.

Build a Support System:

Cultivate positive social connections with friends, family, or support groups. A robust support system can provide emotional assistance during challenging times.

Set Realistic Goals:

Break larger goals into smaller, achievable tasks. Celebrate small victories, and don't be too hard on yourself.

Seek Professional Help:

If you notice persistent feelings of sadness or changes in your mental health, seek help from a mental health professional. Early intervention can be crucial.

Limit Substance Use:

Avoid excessive alcohol or drug use, as these substances can negatively impact mental health.

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Establish Healthy Habits:

Create and maintain a routine with enjoyable activities, fostering a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

Practice Self-Compassion:

Be kind to yourself, acknowledging that everyone faces challenges. Avoid self-criticism and negative self-talk.

Stay Connected:

Foster and maintain meaningful relationships. Regular social interactions can provide emotional support and reduce feelings of isolation.

Learn Stress Management Techniques:

Develop healthy coping mechanisms for dealing with stress, such as problem-solving, time management, and setting boundaries.

Monitor and Address Negative Thought Patterns:

Be aware of negative thought patterns and work on challenging and reframing them. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques can be helpful. Here are three fundamental principles often associated with CBT:

1. **Cognitive Restructuring:** CBT emphasizes identifying and restructuring negative thought patterns. The idea is that our thoughts influence our emotions and behaviours. Individuals can change their emotional responses and behaviours by becoming aware of and challenging irrational or negative thoughts.

Our thoughts influence our emotions and behaviours.

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2. **Behavioral Activation:** CBT often includes strategies to modify behaviour and increase engagement in positive activities. This involves setting and working towards specific, achievable goals. Behavioural activation aims to break the cycle of avoidance and withdrawal, promoting a more active and fulfilling life.
3. **Mindfulness and Acceptance:** While not exclusive to CBT, mindfulness and acceptance-based techniques are often integrated into CBT interventions. These techniques encourage individuals to observe their thoughts and feelings without judgment, fostering self-awareness and helping them respond more effectively to challenging situations.

Engage in Activities That Bring Joy:

Set aside time for hobbies and activities you enjoy. Doing things that bring joy can positively impact your mood.

Remember that mental health is a holistic concept, and addressing physical and emotional well-being is essential. If you ever feel overwhelmed or notice persistent changes in your mood or behaviour, seeking professional help is a proactive and critical step. Mental health professionals can provide guidance, support, and effective interventions tailored to your needs.

In 1938, researchers at the Harvard Medical School started a study to determine what characteristics enable people to live happy lives. I am thankful to the writings of Arthur Brooks, who discusses this study in his book, "From Strength to Strength."

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They began with a group of 268 men. They would question their lifestyles, habits, relationships, work, and happiness yearly. This study was paired with another survey of 456 disadvantaged youth that started at about the same time. Together, this group was studied over 80 years. Fewer than 60 of the original participants are alive today.

The results of this study were beneficial in determining what is most likely to lead to happiness in later life. The researchers found that some of the predictors of happiness were controllable, while others weren't. Among the uncontrollable factors are the social class of parents, having a happy childhood, having long-lived ancestors, and avoiding clinical depression.

They found seven significant predictors of happiness in later life that were under the control of the individuals. I will list them here, hoping they might be a practical encouragement in caring for others. There are some things we can do to make our lives better. We don't have to give in to the cynicism and negativity that often flows around us in society today. Let's look at these factors.

1. **Smoking.** Don't smoke; at least quit early. It's not worth it.
2. **Drinking.** Alcohol abuse is one of the most prominent factors leading to unhappy lives. If there is any indication of a problem drinking in your life, get help.
3. **Healthy body weight.** Maintaining your body weight in the normal range and eating in moderation is a significant factor in long-term health.
4. **Exercise.** The single best exercise you can do regularly is walking. Most of the daily routine in ancient Israel revolved

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around walking. The more affluent people could ride horses or donkeys. But most everyone else had to walk. Only in the modern age have we relied on vehicles to take us everywhere. We have paid a high price for this in our health.

5. Adaptive coping style. That means confronting problems, appraising them honestly, and dealing with them directly without excessive rumination, unhealthy emotional reactions, or avoidance behaviour.

6. Education. More education leads to more active minds later, meaning a longer, happier life. Lifelong learning and lots of reading can positively influence your life.

7. Stable, long-term relationships. This is a steady marriage for most, but other relationships can fit here. The important thing is to have meaningful relationships with others so you don't feel you have to do life alone. It's one thing to learn from your own mistakes, but a much better thing would be to learn from the mistakes of others.

Julian of Norwich was a medieval mystic and Christian theologian who lived in the 14th and 15th centuries. She is best known for her work "Revelations of Divine Love," which is believed to be the first book written by a woman in the English language. Julian of Norwich spent much of her life as an anchorite, a religious hermit living in a small cell attached to a church.

She is often known for her statement: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." It is one of the most famous lines from Julian's writings. It reflects the core of her mystical experiences and theological reflections. Julian claimed to have received visions from God, known as

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"showings" or "revelations," during a severe illness when she was around 30 years old. These mystical experiences became the foundation of her teachings.

In the context of Julian's theology, the phrase expresses her deep conviction in the ultimate goodness of God and the belief that, despite the suffering and challenges present in the world, everything will ultimately be reconciled and redeemed through divine love. Her optimism is rooted in a profound understanding of God's love and the idea that God's plan for creation is ultimately one of mercy, forgiveness, and salvation.

So, it is fitting that I close this book on caregiving with her statement. As a caregiver, you are entering into one of the most significant roles you could ever have. It will bring with it many frustrations, testing, and challenges. But the reward will be un-measurable. The role of a caregiver most closely resembles what God does in our lives. It is close to his heart. God cares for us. God cares for me. When I reach out and care for others, I follow in Jesus's footsteps as he demonstrated his care in those brief 33 years he spent on earth. Even now, he cares for us from his place beside the father. And one day, we shall see him and hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:23)

**"All shall be well,
and all shall be well,
and all manner of
things shall be well."**

Some day, you will be strong and healthy forever!

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IT'S YOUR TURN, APPLY IT.

- When you read about the two ‘types of intelligence’ found in men and women (fluid and crystalized), are you aware of where you fit in this continuum?
- Why not get a group of friends together and read the section on coping strategies for mild, moderate, and severe depression and ask for honest feedback and application?

How would you rate yourself in the seven significant predictors of happiness listed in this chapter? What area do you need to work on the most?