

Caregivers in Action

Health care for health crises, disabilities and aging is a complex, much deeper and broader in scope and that many Americans believe, especially if they are under the age of 50 and have not had to be a care provider. Our society is not prepared for the aging and health care crises once care receivers/patients realize their abilities, functionality, and mental capabilities begin to deteriorate. The care receiver as well as the family finds their intellectual and emotional competence is tested and there is a need to acquire education and information in preparation for this season of life.

As I look at local nursing homes, institutions, church and social services that focus on the special needs children, disabled veterans, cancer patients and survivors, the elderly and those with chronic and terminal illnesses, I can see that we as a society are not prepared for the baby boomer, both in the generation of the boomers, their parents as well as their next generation heirs. To have three, four and possibly five generations impacted in one family, our culture does not have the answers. The need to return to the scriptures and a renewed focus on the biblical teachings will prepare the Christian to approach aging with grace, with purpose and with compassion.

As loneliness, emptiness and loss upon loss mount for the care receiver and care giver, there needs to be a ministry of hope provided so that all ages can proactively support, encourage and embrace the aging and health crises population. The church as in early times, needs to assert itself more strongly so they can minister to their people and families first, then the individuals and families who have no one to support them. As more and more services become governmentalized, the need to return to the church and Christ for the answers and solutions becomes imperative.

God has a purpose for the aged and He will be glorified and His name magnified and His kingdom advanced if the church and ministries can revisit their priorities and create cross-generational programs to prepare and educate people for their golden years. Simply look at three references from the bible that gives us a glimpse of aging.

LEV 19:32 "Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD."

JOB 12:12 Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

PR 17:6 Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.

James 5:13-17 Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praises. Is anyone among you ill? He should summon the elders of the church, and they should pray for him and anoint him with oil in the name

of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up—and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness.

Matthew 4:23 [Jesus Heals the Sick] Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Luke 10:9 Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’

Psalms 119:50 My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.

Romans 5:2-4 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Creating the Caregiver Strategy

A. Understanding through active listening:

1. Identifying Needs and Fears (problems, issues, and challenges)
2. Acknowledging Acute or Chronic Anxiety (stress, and stress-related conditions)
3. Hope (Wants, Desires, Dreams)
4. Assumptions and Expectations
5. Hidden Agenda Items
6. Blind Spot Opportunities
7. Unanticipated Resolutions
8. Available Network Resources
9. Commitment to Take Action

B. Prioritizing what is most important (spiritual beliefs, values & principles)

C. Determining and Evaluating the alternatives

D. Solution Planning

E. Decision-Making

F. Plan, Design & Implementation

G. Monitoring progress, changes and results

Caregiver Coaching Steps

- A. Actively Listen
- B. Assess without making assumptions or expectations
- C. Gain Balance and normalize daily routines with purpose.
- D. Reassure the care receiver that they aren't alone
- E. Instruct those interested to pray and apply the scriptures.
- F. Take Action and resolve issues and fears
- G. Focus on the facts

Thoughts When Initiating Caregiving

- a. Determine what issues in the person's life need to be attended to immediately and what issues can be postponed until later.
- b. Establish good communication channels and focus on clarity.
- c. Determine if the caregiver, a professional, or other family member will be in a directive role or facilitative role.
- d. Help them achieve some limited goal so they can get focused.
- e. Seek information from the person and also address their fears and concerns.
- f. Foster positive expectations and bring them faith and hope. Let them know that "this too shall pass" but do not minimize the situation.
- g. Create an adequate support system so people know they have a safety net, either by calling or meeting.

- h. Expand the person's support system as well so they have others they can rely on. The principle of "other messengers" provides the person a greater sense of confidence that things will get better and people want to help them.
- i. Don't overwhelm them with too many people or immature behavior.

Techniques to Help the Care Receiver Gain Hope.

- a. Focus on Problem Solving
 - 1. Problem solving is critical in help the person regain balance and stability and confidence that they can endure the trauma.
 - 2. Help them set goals or standards for solutions.
 - 3. Be aware of their values and beliefs.
 - 4. Set a course of action.
 - 5. Face the problem.
 - 6. Monitor feelings.
- b. Understand and Assess Self-Image of:
 - 1. The Care Receiver
 - 2. You, the Caregiver
 - a. Assess and understand the person's self-image.
 - b. Discover how the crisis affect their/your self-image and what you do affects it as well.
 - c. Protect and enhance their self-image.
 - d. Avoid labeling.
- c. Instill Self Reliance
 - 1. The major focus is to develop the person's self-confidence and focus by helping them assess and plan for the future.
 - 2. Do nothing for the person that they can do on their own so they accept responsibility.
 - 3. Your entire approach should be for the care receiver to be striving for their self-sufficiency.
- d. Take Action
 - 1. First prioritize the family needs, make preparations, counsel the family members and protect the parents from the media glare.
 - 2. Having established a series of counseling meetings and visitations, the caregiver, chaplain and the pastor work together to ensure the community and the church were working with one intention, sharing their love and support and normalizing the family's lives in a reasonable amount of time.
 - 3. The caregiver must remain involved purely from a communications standpoint to assist where needed when prayer support and comfort are needed. d. Foster Hope and Positive Expectations
- e. Detail the reasons for the successful outcome.
 - 1. The love of Christ was lived out by the caregiver, family, chaplain, pastor and congregation.
 - 2. The caregiver created a spiritual family as an anchor to cling to.
 - 3. There was a process in place which everyone in a lay or professional capacity respected. Although the process isn't a prescribed model ready for

implementation, create a combination of expertise and experience involved that created a stabilizing and supportive surrounding.

4. As ambassadors of Christ, focus the spiritual family and church on the immediate family must provide their emotional, physical and spiritual needs in a way that takes a crisis and turns it into an opportunity for the care receiver's family to see the glory of Christ.