



Mom and “Little Girl”

by Becky Cornelius

I want to start this story by mentioning that I found “**homecare by wesley**” by reading a church bulletin from a local church – online! I sent a desperate email asking for help, advice, whatever could be given to me. I had a response within hours...and our relationship with Wesley and Melecia began.

Alzheimer’s is a cruel disease. I do not hate much in my life – but Alzheimer’s is the one thing, without question that I hate completely. I question the purpose of it almost daily. My dad died 11 years ago from complications of the disease. Mom now has it – what stage is she in? That is the question I am most asked – it depends on the day, the hour or the minute. I know she is worse than she was 2 years ago. But she will have one bad day and then we receive the gift of three good days.

My sister Judy and I have been taking care of mom for five years now, it became apparent last year – mom could no longer care for herself or be by herself for any length of time. We applied for services, and God sent Melecia. Melecia literally spent days watching mom, getting to know habits, such as which pair of glasses worked the best and would put up the others, noticed her favorite shoes, favorite foods, noticed the hiding places mom would stash her purse, you name it – she picked up on it. She remembered every detail.

In this business of taking care of people it is a hard balance – remaining professional – but being personal. It is a personal, intimate job. No other way around it. Melecia balances both the professional (paperwork, company loyalty, policy, dress, attitude) well and the personal (affection, manicures, bathing, cooking, baking brownies, hair styling, hand holding, hugging, encouraging, and the list could go on) beautifully.

Melecia takes care of mom during the day, I rarely get to see or hear her in “action,” but recently I was home and I had that privilege. I just listened and boy did I learn. I must admit right now – bathing is my least favorite activity – I am worn out after giving mom a bath. I listened as Melecia did this for mom – with no fuss or muss... she asked mom to find the towel – and the towel mom would bring, followed by washcloth, soap, shampoo, undergarments, pants, etc – all placed in the bathroom. And then Melecia said “Well, look at you, getting all your things ready for a bath – okay, I’m ready!” Where it literally takes me an hour for bath time – Melecia was done in 15 minutes. I was floored – how did she do that? Awesome, awesome, awesome. Afterward, she dries and curls her hair. Again, no fuss or muss.

Conversations with Alzheimer patients can be challenging. Melecia will ask mom, “Are you ready for some cookies and milk?” Mom responds, “No, I need to clean my room.” Melecia will say, you are right, let’s clean your room – and then we will have cookies and milk.” And then she will engage mom into conversation at every turn – going with the flow, the subject changing as quickly as the cookies disappear. They will laugh, giggle like two little girls. Mom, sounding young and carefree. Are there frustrating moments for mom and Melecia? Of course there are – you have two people – one very sick, albeit in a way you may not notice. Melecia never loses it – she keeps going, never gives up and always smiles. She finds joy in the moment.

Naturally, Alzheimer patients cannot remember names. They may know faces. They definitely know love; they love and feel when they are loved. Mom loves Melecia – she cannot recall her name – but she has her own name for Melecia...“Little Girl.” She will ask about “Little Girl” at night or on the weekends. She misses her when she is off. And I have to admit I do too, because she knows how up and down a day can be, and understands the frustration and sadness that hits you.

I say it all the time – if we applied a day earlier or a day later – Melecia and Wesley would not be part of our lives. We are genuinely blessed. God certainly provided in so many ways. Judy and I wish we could turn back time and find the care mom has for our dad.

If you provide care, if it is your career – not job – but career, whether in someone’s home or in a care facility – you have to know you are special. You have a rare gift – never doubt for one moment you are not appreciated or valued. Keep smiling; stay positive, honor God as you work...God will honor your work!