

GOING FURTHER

VALLEYDALE SUPPORT

Life Groups

Valleydale offers a variety of Adult Life Groups that offer support. For more information go to www.valleydale.org/lifegroups and click on the “Find a Life Group” link or stop by the Next Steps Desk in the lobby to learn which group might be a fit for you.

Counseling

Valleydale provides onsite, Christ-centered professional counseling. Both male and female counselors are available. Counseling is offered for adults, teens and children. All counseling is confidential. For more information, visit www.valleydale.org/counseling or call 205.991.5282.

Stephen Ministry

This ministry is intended to match you with someone who has a similar life experience but is a little further along for the purpose of perspective, understanding and hope. You will be matched with a carefully selected church member who is supervised by the church and works in strict confidence. To learn more about this ministry, contact the ministry coordinator for a confidential conversation at 205.991.5282.

For more
resources, visit
valleydale.org/family
OR
visit our resource
center in the
lobby

Caring for an

AGING LOVED ONE



CARING FOR AN AGING LOVED ONE

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

Forty percent of caregivers are also raising young children, living with the stress and heartache this family season can bring. It may become necessary to back out of other things in order to fulfill the primary calling to "be Jesus" by serving an aging loved one during their final days.

Whether with a parent or a spouse, you can take steps to become proactive by understanding some of what this season will bring, including...

Lingering Grief

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

Special Grace

The most common duties handled by caregivers are transportation, grocery shopping, household chores, help with medications, and assistance with bathing and dressing. Despite the humble nature of such activities, the majority of caregivers use words like "rewarding" and "happy" to describe the caregiving process. Clearly, God gives a special grace to those who humble themselves to serve the aging and ailing.

Changing Roles

The care giving child gradually becomes the parent. The caregiving spouse is no longer able to rely on her husband's strength or wife's support. Primary caregivers can also encounter strained relationships with other members of the family who may expect input on or question difficult decisions. In one way or another, expect these relationships to change as a loved one's health deteriorates requiring mutual grace as you communicate the best you can under the circumstances.

Family Stress

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

Dear Lord - please come alongside those of us called to care for an aging or dying loved one. Help us to "be Jesus" like we've never been before! Amen.

GOING FURTHER

RESOURCES

***Complete Guide to Caring for Aging Loved Ones** by Focus on the Family
Practical advice for the decisions and issues of caring for an aging loved one.*

***The Caregiving Season: Finding Grace to Honor Your Aging Parents** by
Jane Daly
Practical advice to honor your aging parents well.*

***30 Days of Hope When Caring for Aging Parents** by Kathy Howard
Encouragement as you care for your parents with honor, respect & dignity.*

Agingcare.com

Information, support and decision making for the caregiver.