

4 Faith-Filled Facts for Caregivers to Cling To

Bob came to the office wanting to schedule a routine colonoscopy on Christmas Eve. He handed me a brown paper sack. "Merry Christmas," he whispered.

I opened the crumpled sack. Inside were holiday goodies: pecans covered in white chocolate. "Thanks, Bob. Pecans are my favorite."

I sat down, shared a few pecans with Bob and asked him the obvious question. "Is there any reason why we can't wait until next week? We try to shut things down before Christmas, but we can get it done before New Year's."

Bob lowered his head and mumbled. "Christmas is tough. Myra died the week of Christmas three years ago. Sometimes I feel like I didn't do enough."

Myra had also been my patient. Four years previously, she came to the hospital with a colon cancer blocking her intestines. Although her surgery was a success, the cancer had spread to her liver and her lungs.

Bob and I prayed for Myra's healing and a complete recovery. And God answered. But His answer wasn't what we expected. Myra received perfect healing, the kind only experienced in heaven.

The year between her surgery and her healing, Myra modeled faith, courage and hope. Her sickness provided opportunities to share Christ, encourage others and model endurance in suffering.

While Myra fought the good fight, finishing her race, Bob carried the burdens. He became Myra's nurse, chauffeur, scheduler, bill payer, chef, butler, confidant, prayer warrior

and cheerleader. Bob poured everything into providing for his wife. Now, three year later, Bob was still struggling, trying to make sense of it all.

A Caregiver's Burdens

Caregivers face a unique set of challenges. Those who serve the sick may suffer more than those afflicted with illness. Their energy is fully focused on meeting their loved one's needs. They sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others.

Bob never asked for the burden of caring for a wife with cancer. Yet he willingly joined the fight. Like the Lord, who washed His disciples' feet, Bob served his wife. Jesus reminds those who follow in His footsteps of the blessing received by serving:

"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:17, MEV).

Caregivers who serve their loved ones receive a unique blessing—a special measure of grace helping them face their challenges. Encouragement. Strength. Patience. Love. Whatever we need has already been provided. These blessings are supplied in greater measure for those who give of themselves.

Often, feelings of loneliness, inadequacy and fear overwhelm those who pick up the towel and serve others. When faced with these emotions, we must remind ourselves of the facts:

4 Faith-Filled Facts for Caregivers to Remember

—In Christ, we are never alone.

Caregivers often feel alone and forgotten for many reasons. Often, people's attention focuses on the sick—not those serving the sick. Caregivers no longer have time to maintain healthy relationships with friends. And, in Bob's case, when the ill person dies, the isolation increases.

When feelings of loneliness surface, let's remember—we are never alone.

Jesus promised never to leave or forsake us (Heb. 13.5). He fulfilled this promise by giving us His Spirit. If we know Christ, the Comforter indwells us. We can enjoy the fellowship of the Spirit—moment by moment. We can commune with the divine power that abides in us, sharing our burdens with Him, asking for strength, drawing on His abundant supply, walking in step with the Spirit and finding grace in our time of need. For believers, help is not on the way. The helper is already here.

—In Christ, we are adequate.

Most caregivers aren't trained to meet the tasks placed on them. Whatever circumstances serving brings, we must remember Christ has supplied everything we need.

In our own strength and skill, we are insufficient, weak and powerless. But as we empty ourselves in service, God pours in the blessing Christ promised: We can do all things through Christ (Phil. 4:13). When we give, we find the adequacy to help others.

If God delivers us from our challenges or if He chooses to leave us in the battle—come what may—He will provide for our needs. God is all-powerful. Whatever we face, He can do more than we can ask or think.

—In Christ, we need not fear.

We need not fear an uncertain future or the obstacles that lie ahead. God is already there, preparing the way for us. Although we don't know the future, we know who holds the future. God, being all-wise, knows us better than we know ourselves. He brings us into situations that are for our benefit—as well as the needs of others.

Let's remember God's promise: Perfect love casts out all fear

(see 1 John 4:18). When we give love and care for others, our fear of the future diminishes. We know our future holds God's plan to perfect us into His image. And in the end, we win, because Christ won the battle.

—Our blessings outweigh our burdens.

Christmas can be tough for caregivers and those grieving the loss of a loved one. Bob, like many others this time of year, was overwhelmed with feelings. He needed a reminder that day in the office: God's blessings are greater than burdens we face.

God invites us to share our burdens with Him and draw on His gracious supply. When we do, our burdens become easier to bear. Let's remember these facts. The blessings we have received in Christ outweigh our burdens.

When we focus on the facts instead of our feelings and appropriate our faith, God's grace steps in. He blesses us by doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. In this season, let's keep this in mind: We are not alone, we have everything we need and our future is certain. {eo}

Dr. Charles W. Page is known as "the best guy to see on the worst day of your life." A surgeon, author and storyteller, Dr. Page has authored several children's books, a book exploring sleep from a Christian perspective and a new series of books titled A Spoonful of Courage. Find him at .