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## Day 1

### *The Words of God*

*The rain and snow come down from the heavens  
and stay on the ground to water the earth.*

*They cause the grain to grow,  
producing seed for the farmer  
and bread for the hungry.*

*It is the same with my word.*

*I send it out, and it always produces fruit.*

*It will accomplish all I want it to,  
and it will prosper everywhere I send it.*

ISAIAH 55:10–11

**T**he days of our lives are like fingerprints: no two are exactly alike.

Each day unfolds in its own unique way. Every day, the things around us change. Today's weather, news stories, and to-do lists will be different than yesterday's. We are constantly changing too. Emotionally, physically, and spiritually, we are not the same today as we

were yesterday or last week or a decade ago. Some days we wake refreshed; other days, unrested. Some days the glass may seem half-full; other days, half-empty. Friends, family members, and others weave in and out of our lives as the months and years go by.

For us, nothing stays exactly the same as each day turns into another. It's the opposite with God. He is always exactly the same—yesterday, today, tomorrow, and forever.<sup>1</sup> God's complete knowledge of us never changes either. He knows exactly “where we are coming from” today, just as He knows what our attitudes and concerns will be tomorrow.

As you embark on this 60-day devotional journey, you can both rest in and rejoice in God's perfect knowledge of you and of every unique day of your life. While the daily commentaries are just human thoughts and reflections upon the words of God, the *Word of God*—the Scripture verses themselves—can make happen in your life the things that God wants for you. The words of God do not return to Him void.

What might God want His words to accomplish in your life? As you meet with Him daily, you can do so with a sense of anticipation—because God promises that His words “will accomplish all I want it to.”

*What might God want His words  
to accomplish in your life?*

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**REFLECTIONS ON *THE WORDS OF GOD***

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According to Isaiah 55:10–11, how powerful are the words of God?

How do you think these verses apply to you while you are on the caregiving journey?

*My journal . . .*

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## Day 2

### *The Unexpected Journey*

*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

HEBREWS 11:8 (ESV)

**A**re you surprised to find yourself in a caregiving role at this stage of your life? Did you have other plans in mind? Of course you did! Yet, here you are, on the unexpected journey, perhaps still chafing at the assignment the Lord has given you, and full of questions.

Lettie Burd Cowman likely once felt as you do right now. She and her husband were pioneer missionaries in Japan from 1901 until 1917. When Lettie's husband, Charles, became ill they reluctantly returned to California. For the next six years Lettie was Charles's devoted care partner.

Disappointed, heartbroken, and seeking encouragement for herself and Charles, Lettie began to cobble together a book consisting of sermon excerpts, poems, and writings by the Christian leaders of her time. Inter-

perspersed among this compilation are paragraphs presumably written by Lettie herself. Following commentary about Abraham, who embarked on a journey without knowing his destination, Lettie wrote:

*It is by no means enough to set out cheerfully with your God on any venture of faith. Tear into the smallest pieces any itinerary for the journey which your imagination may have drawn up.*

*Nothing will fall out as you expect.*

*Your guide will keep to no beaten path. He will lead you by a way such as you have never dreamed your eyes would look upon. He knows no fear, and He expects you to fear nothing while He is with you.<sup>1</sup>*

Although Lettie's words were written more than a hundred years ago, they remain an apt description of any unexpected journey of faith—such as the caregiving journey upon which you have already embarked. Like Abraham, caregivers step into the future with no itinerary and no map for the journey ahead.

Abraham trusted God and was spectacularly rewarded for his faith: God called him His friend.<sup>2</sup> As a believing caregiver, it is your privilege to now fully rely upon Jesus, the “friend who sticks closer than a brother.”<sup>3</sup> He walks this unexpected journey of faith with you.

*Like Abraham, caregivers step into the future with no itinerary and no map for the journey ahead.*

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## **REFLECTIONS ON *THE UNEXPECTED JOURNEY***

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Circle the emotions below that you have experienced on your unexpected journey so far.\*

SHOCK	NUMBNESS	DENIAL
DISBELIEF	DISORGANIZATION	CONFUSION
SEARCHING	YEARNING	GOING CRAZY
ANXIETY	PANIC	FEAR
ANGER	HATE	BLAME (SELF, OTHERS)
TERROR	RESENTMENT	RAGE
JEALOUSY	GUILT	REGRET
SADNESS	DEPRESSION	LONELINESS
EMPTINESS	HELPLESS	FRUSTRATION
LOW SELF-ESTEEM	OUT OF CONTROL	MISSING HIM/HER
RELIEF	DESPAIR	BITTERNESS
EMBARRASSMENT	IRRITABILITY	ENVY

\* List excerpted from unpublished caregiver support group curriculum by Edward G. Shaw, MD, MA.

As you were reading Lettie Cowman’s description of a “faith venture” in the light of your own caregiving journey, did you feel more anticipation or more apprehension?

Express your anticipation or apprehension, along with the emotions you circled in the chart, to God in prayer, either spoken or written below.

*My journal . . .*

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## Day 3

# Caregiver School

*Behold, God is exalted in his power;  
who is a teacher like him?*

JOB 36:22 (ESV)

**A**t first glance, it seems that caregiving is all about meeting the needs of the person with dementia. In fact, there is a purpose for you, the care partner, during this time too. In the providence of God, you have been enrolled, perhaps reluctantly, in God's school of character development. In this school, the entire curriculum is designed to achieve one main goal: Christlikeness. This curriculum often becomes more difficult for caregivers as time goes on, but this is because God is preparing His students for great things.

The development of Christlike character can only take place in the laboratory of real-life experiences known as "adversity." No one wants to go through hard times, but as you may already have discovered, challenges are part of the caregiving journey. If you are wishing you could drop out of school, consider two things. First, you did

not enroll yourself in God's "caregiver school"; God Himself enrolled you. He chooses His students and He alone knows how best to teach them. Second, throughout history, God has prepared people to fulfill His call on their lives by first sending them to His school. In the Bible, the lives of Joseph, Jacob, Moses, Ruth, Job, Paul, Peter, and others testify to this. In the modern era, D. L. Moody, Charles Colson, Fanny Crosby, Hudson Taylor, Beth Moore, and countless others experienced some humbling or painful adversity before they could fully embrace God's great purpose for their lives.

God's ways are not our ways. That's why He asks us to walk by faith, not by sight, human wisdom, or human logic. His will for us is often counterintuitive (contrary to what we reason or expect), and we sometimes learn more of God in the shadows than when our path is brightly lit. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "the prince of preachers," put it this way: "When my schoolroom is darkened, I see the most."

Is your caregiver schoolroom darker than you would like? Even secular wisdom acknowledges that "when the student is ready, the teacher will appear." Be attentive. Your most important lessons may be about to begin!

*When my schoolroom is darkened, I see the most.*  
—CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

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## REFLECTIONS ON CAREGIVER SCHOOL

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If you did not aspire or choose to become a dementia caregiver, how do you feel about being enrolled in “God’s school of character development”?

“When my schoolroom is darkened, I see the most.”  
Do you think this statement by Charles Spurgeon is true?  
Why or why not?

*My journal . . .*

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## Day 4

### Why?

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.*

PROVERBS 3:5 (ESV)

**I**t had been a surprising new beginning for Mary Ellen. After surviving the heartbreak of divorce in her forties, she had resigned herself to the fact that she would live the rest of her life as a single woman. In her wildest dreams, she never expected to find love again. But a few years later, she met Dave. They began dating, and in just a few short months, Mary Ellen knew that she had been given the wonderful gift of a second chance at love.

She and Dave had been happily married for only three years when Dave was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease. Bitterly disappointed, Mary Ellen began to slowly let go of her dreams about how she and Dave would spend the rest of their lives together. She didn't hesitate to pour out her anger and confusion to God. "Why, Lord?" she stormed. "Why would you bring Dave into my life and then let this awful disease spoil our fu-

ture? Why would You do this to me? I don't understand!"

Do you share Mary Ellen's confusion and anger? Is "Why, Lord?" your most impassioned prayer? No matter how heartfelt or sincere, your *why* questions may remain unanswered on this side of heaven. This presents a challenge: can you believe that God is worthy of your trust even when the *why* eludes you?

Whenever we do not understand God's purposes or methods, we are challenged to deepen our confidence in the character and heart of God.

### **Whate'er It Be**

I take my portion from Thy hand,  
And do not seek to understand;  
For I am blind, while Thou dost see,  
Thy will is mine, whate'er it be.

Thus calmly do I face my lot,  
Accept it, Lord, and doubt Thee not;  
Lo! All things work for good to me;  
Thy will is mine, whate'er it be.<sup>1</sup>

*Can you believe that God is worthy of your trust even  
when the why eludes you?*

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## REFLECTIONS ON WHY

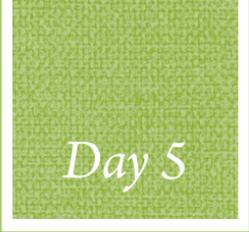
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What is your response to the song lyrics below?

Thus calmly do I face my lot,  
Accept it, Lord, and doubt Thee not;  
Lo! All things work for good to me;  
Thy will is mine, whate'er it be.

Have you been able to “doubt Thee not” despite your unanswered *why* questions? If not, speak or write a prayer below expressing your struggle to release your unanswered questions to Him.





## Day 5

### *Stay Where You Are*

*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

JOHN 15:5 (ESV)

**A**ndrew, a man with a debilitating chronic illness, said that since he has become housebound due to his disease, “God has felt more absent than perhaps any other time in my life.” During this most difficult time of his life, he says, God has seemed the most silent.

Perhaps you can relate. As a caregiver, especially if you are housebound along with the person who has dementia, you too may feel distant from God or feel that He has gone silent. Some of the Old Testament writers felt this way. Psalmists David and Asaph implored God not to be silent:

“God of my praise, do not be silent.”—David, Psalm 109:1 (CSB)

“God, do not keep silent. Do not be deaf, God; do not be quiet.” —Asaph, Psalm 83:1 (CSB)

Isaiah observed, “Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior.” —Isaiah 45:15 (ESV)

Today we have an advantage that David, Asaph, and Isaiah did not have: God dwells within us in the person of the Holy Spirit. What’s more, we know that God is both immutable (incapable of change) and omnipresent (perpetually present everywhere at once). So, since God lives within us, and has not moved and does not change, why do we still sometimes feel distant from Him?

You’ve probably heard someone say, “If you don’t feel close to God, guess who moved?” At first, this modern-day proverb seems to ring true: if God hasn’t moved, then any lack of closeness can only be the fault of the person, right? But what if you haven’t moved? What if you are earnestly seeking God, reading His Word and praying every day, and you still don’t feel close to Him? Maybe blogger Addie Zierman has it exactly right. She wrote,

*If you feel far away from God, maybe it's possible that no one moved. Not God, of course. But maybe not you either. Maybe this is just a normal part of the long work of faith. Maybe the silence of God is not a*

*punishment but an invitation to a new kind of trust . . . We've forgotten that God has a habit of going quiet with his people. If you don't feel God right now, if you don't hear him and you desperately want to, be still. It's possible that you're exactly where you're supposed to be. Rest in the quiet certainty of your own Belovedness. Stay where you are.<sup>1</sup>*

Jesus gave us a word that means “stay where you are.” The word is *abide*. It's the verb form of *abode*, which means “dwelling place.” Jesus, who dwells in us, invites us to also dwell in Him: “Abide in me, and I in you . . . As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.”<sup>2,3</sup>

Don't worry about *feeling* close to God; feelings come and go. Just abide.

*Maybe the silence of God is an invitation  
to a new kind of trust.*

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## REFLECTIONS ON STAY WHERE YOU ARE

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What do you think about Addie Zierman's blog post?

