

Caring For Your Own Older Family Members – Part 2

Ministering to the Uncooperative

Intro. When I'm an old lady, I'll live with each kid,
And bring so much happiness...just as they did!
I want to pay back all the joy they provided,
Returning each deed...Oh, they'll be excited!
When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.
 I'll write on the walls with reds, whites, and blues,
And I'll bounce on the furniture, wearing my shoes.
 I'll drink from the carton and then leave it out.
 I'll stuff all the toilets and oh, how they'll shout!
 When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.
When they're on the phone and just out of reach,
I'll get into things like sugar and bleach.
Oh, they'll snap their fingers and then shake their head,
So I'll pour them on the floor and leave the room instead,
When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.
 When they cook dinner and call me to eat,
 I'll not eat my green beans or salad or meat.
 I'll gag on my okra, spill milk on the table,
 And when they get angry, I'll run, if I'm able!
 When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.
I'll sit close to the TV, through the channels I'll click,
I'll cross both my eyes just to see if they stick.
I'll take off my socks and throw one away,
And play in the mud until the end of the day.
When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.
 And later, in bed, I'll lay back and sigh,
 I'll thank God in prayer and then close my eyes.
 My kids will look down with a smile slowly creeping,
 And say with a groan, "She's so sweet when she's sleeping!"
 When I'm an old lady and live with my kids.

Trying to care for a loved one can be difficult for anyone but doing so for a family member who is resistant to your care and uncooperative with your efforts can be very frustrating and draining. We fully recognize that we may never get to the point where no challenges exist to our caring and when all is going perfectly well. However, what follows are some suggestions and Biblical principles which might help us in this important ministry.

I. Preparation for the Caregiver

- A. Expect some difficult uncooperative treatment and plan for it. Even plan some of your responses ahead of time. (Prov. 22:3; I Peter 4:12-19)
- B. Deepen your own personal relationship with God. Be growing spiritually. Pray fervently and specifically for yourself and for the one for whom you are caring. (Acts 20:28; James 5:16; II Tim. 3:16-17; I Timothy 4:12-16)
- C. Be part of a supportive, caring circle of friends with whom you share your struggles and needs and who will be an active help to you. Don't try to do all this caring alone. (I Cor. 12:12-26)
- D. Take care of yourself physically, by eating properly and getting adequate rest and exercise. (I Tim. 4:8; I Cor. 9:24-27)

II. Process of Caregiving

- A. Be expressive of your love and commitment to them in varied ways – frequent contact, visits, calls, notes, smiles, touch, and kind, loving words. (I John 3:11, 16-18) Be proactive and initiating with this, not reactive.
- B. Serve the family member by eagerly handling a variety of chores and details that can touch their lives graciously (Phil. 2:1-8). Surround them with loving service.
- C. Share Scripture and prayer with them often (Rom. 15:1-6) to gain patience, comfort, and hope. Read devotionals; discuss Scripture.
- D. Be quick to listen and slow to speak. (James 1:19-20) Ask good questions, then listen well. Get them to share their stories. Ask advice.
- E. Don't take the negative things they may say too personally, esp. if the person's mental or emotional state is not what it should be. Exhibit tolerance, forbearance, and patience. (Eph. 4:1-3; 4:31-32; Col. 3:12-17) Don't fight or argue. Ignore much. Don't choose to fight on every hill.
- F. Be forgiving of your loved one – even to “seventy-times-seven”. Let your love for them cover a multitude of sins (I Cor. 13:4-8a; I Peter 4:8-9; Prov. 10:12; Eph. 4:31-32; Matt. 18:21-35)
- G. Very deliberately, return good for evil. Overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:17-21) When they are nasty or mean to you, immediately smile and say or do something kind and loving to them.
- H. If the situation is really bad, be willing to graciously, but firmly confront (“carefront”) the individual directly about their sinful attitudes or actions. Call it sin and remind them of how sin destroys, even close family relationships, etc. and let them know how it is hurting you and the family. Urge them to change and to be more kind, cooperative, etc. (Matt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1-2). Remind them that you have a responsibility to care for them and that you and the family are doing their best to do so.
- I. If resistance continues, call on other family members to confront the person with you, and then have a church member friend or pastor get involved, if necessary. (Matt. 18:15-17)
- J. Recognize that not every problem will be solved; the responsibility to care for a family member is difficult, but that God will even use these trials to bring you closer to Him and to build His character in you. (James 1:2-5; Romans 5:3-5). So thank Him for the troubles and trust His grace to sustain and encourage you in this ministry opportunity.
- K. If the person is unsaved, continual, gracious evangelism and much prayer may result in salvation and a changed life. (Heb. 4:12; II Cor. 5:17)
- L. Realize that there may come a time when you can no longer care for the family member in your home. Other resources may be needed. (Nursing homes, assisted living facilities, HospiceCare, etc.)