 **CALLED TO CAREGIVING**

## **Prayer**

*O God, out of your love, care, and concern for all of creation, I believe you are active in the world. Help me to align my activity in the world with your activity in the world.*

*Amen.*

## **Called to Caregiving**

At certain times in your life you may have carried the assumption that God calls you *once*, for just one purpose. Don’t miss the call, or you might spend the remainder of your days in meaningless mediocrity. In reality, it is safe to say that God calls us many times throughout the seasons of our lives, and each call challenges us to stretch further than we might have anticipated or imagined.

Are you called to be a caregiver? You likely have a bit of anxiety, and a whole lot of wonderment for how this is going to go. One thing is certain. As you respond to this call, you will discover an aspect of God that you have not seen or experienced before. Place your trust in God, say ‘yes’ to the call as best you can, and give it your all.

## **Challenges of Caregiving**

Those who find themselves in the role of caregiver face unique challenges. As you reflect on this challenge (and invitation!), it’s quite logical to seek deeper meaning from it. It’s also normal to experience angst.

***Reflect/Write/Discuss***

*Take a few moments to reflect on these questions. Jot down your response and then discuss them with your group.*

* What does this challenge mean for me?
* How does it change my outlook on life?
* What is my relationship with the one for whom I am giving care?
* How does it affect my relationship with others?
* Who is my role model?
* What is God doing in my life?

## **Managing the Losses**

This call likely means a change in your life. In his book, *Managing Transitions*, William Bridges writes that transitions always start with an ending. Seems odd, yes, but he maintains that the first step toward a life change is identifying what you are losing and learning how to manage the losses.

***View***

*A Day in the Life of a Caregiver* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bs_7jWqSeIM>).

Every day, more than forty million Americans wake up and care for loved ones.

***Reflect/Write/Discuss***

*Take a few moments to reflect on these questions. Jot down your response and then discuss them with your group.*

In what ways do you see yourself in this video? In what ways is your caregiving situation unique?

As you embrace this role, and respond to the call to give care . . .

* What are you losing?
* What must come to an end?
* What part of your life must you give up in order to take on this role?

**Dealing with Resentment**

Caregivers may feel some resentment over these losses. Normal. And they might direct some of that resentment toward the one for whom they are caring. Also normal. And then they might feel guilty for carrying resentment. Yep, that’s normal too. It’s part of the change process. But of course, you cannot carry resentment and guilt for very long before it becomes destructive. So, what to do? It’s important to openly acknowledge the losses, grieve over them, and mark the endings as needed. God is present in these moments and in these feelings.

***View***

*The Struggle of Being a Caregiver* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6gRejq8qHo>).

Caregivers are surely stretched to their limits physically, mentally, and emotionally.

***Reflect/Write/Discuss***

*Take a few moments to reflect on these questions. Jot down your response and then discuss them with your group.*

Being a caregiver to a loved one can be exhausting and stressful.

* In what ways do you relate to this video? In what ways is your situation different?
* Have you ever felt depressed and on the verge of burnout in your role as caregiver?

**Embracing the Call of Caregiving**

Now we seek to turn the corner and fully embrace the call as caregiver. We seek to develop fruitful patterns of behavior and action that can sustain us for the long haul.

***View***

*The Joy of Now: A Caregiver’s Tale* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHTh9C9qviw>). Caregiving can at times take over every part of your life. Phyllis shares her experience of caregiving for the five members in her family's older generation.

***Reflect/Write/Discuss***

*Take a few moments to reflect on these questions. Jot down your response and then discuss them with your group.*

* How does Phyllis’s story resonate with your own as caregiver?
* How can you embrace the joy of ‘now’ amidst the challenges and demands of your calling?
* What practices have you employed that sustain you as a caregiver?

## **Helpful Links**

“Family Caregiver Toolbox” (<https://caregiveraction.org/family-caregiver-toolbox>) from Caregiver Action Network.

“Ten Tips for Family Caregivers” (<https://caregiveraction.org/resources/10-tips-family-caregivers>) from Caregiver Action Network.

Caregiver Stories (<https://caregiveraction.org/resources/caregiver-stories>) from Caregiver Action Network. Here you can share your story and read other family caregiver stories.

Caregiver Videos (<https://caregiveraction.org/resources/videos>) from Caregiver Action Network. Find comfort in knowing that you are not alone by listening to the experiences of your fellow caregivers.

Caregiver Coping Strategies (<https://www.brainline.org/article/caregiver-coping-strategies>) from CORE Health Care.

“Avoiding Blame and Guilt” (<https://www.brainline.org/article/avoiding-guilt-and-blame>) by Laura Taylor and Jeff Kreutzer, The National Resource Center for Traumatic Brain Injury.

“Coping with Depression and Anxiety” (<https://www.brainline.org/article/caring-caregiver>) from CORE Health Care.

“Preventing Caregiver Burnout” (<https://www.care.com/c/stories/5582/caregiver-burnout-coping-strategies/>) from Care.com, dedicated to helping people find their ideal care solutions.

“Taking Care of You” (<https://www.caregiver.org/taking-care-you-self-care-family-caregivers>) from the Family Caregiver Alliance of the National Center on Caregiving.

“Tips for Caregivers” (<https://www.seniorliving.org/caregiving/tips-for-caregivers/>) from SeniorLiving.org.

**Scripture Reflections**

*Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John 13:34-35)

*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? . . . I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me* (Psalm 13:1-2, 5-6).

*I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning* (Psalm 130:5-6).

*Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer* (Psalm 4)!

*Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. . . . Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me. . . . I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. . . . For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners* (Psalm 69:1, 16, 30, 33).

*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul . . . who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live* (Psalm 103:1-2, 4-5).

*I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together! I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears* (Psalm 34:1-4)).

*Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised* (Psalm 96:1-4).

*Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations (*Psalm 100:3, 5).

*I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life* (Deuteronomy 30:19).

## **Blessing for Caregivers**

L: Loving God, we thank you for the caregivers in our lives. Their care is Your care.

 Their touch is Tour touch. Their embrace is your embrace. We ask You to bless

 them with Your Mercy and keep them in Your care. Through Christ our Lord.

**R: Amen**

L: As they embrace the call to give care, may they also experience the blessing of inner

 growth and understanding.

**R: Amen**

L: As they encounter struggles and confusion in this call, may they be open to the

 Spirit’s guidance as you do everything for the Glory of God.

**R: Amen**

L: As they minister to God’s people whose needs are immediate, demanding, and

 constant, may they be blessed with good health and sustained energy.

All: Amen.

**R: Amen**

L: May God be a refuge to them on this demanding journey, shade in the heat, shelter

 in the storm, rest in weariness, protection in trouble, and a strong staff in challenging

 times.

**R: Amen**

L: May they always serve God’s people with compassion and humility.

**R: Amen**

L: May God bless them with every heavenly blessing, and keep them safe and strong.

 Through Christ our Lord.

**R: Amen**