

Care for Loved Ones...And Yourself

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
— Matthew 11:28

As she visited in my office, she wiped tears out of her eyes. This sweet woman in her mid 70's shared the story of her husband, to whom she had been married over 50 years, and the diagnosis that he had received two years ago—Alzheimer's type dementia. Five years ago she had noticed a few changes in his behavior along with memory lapses. Initially she made excuses for these changes, but when her adult children observed the same changes, she followed up with a physician to confirm her fears.

Currently her emotions vacillated from pity for him, to anger at his constant repetitive demands, to self pity (this is not how the "golden years" were supposed to be spent!) Then she came full circle to guilt for even having these emotions; after all a "good Christian" is supposed to be able to handle all of this, right?

This dear lady shares the same emotions with numerous spouses, adult children, and relatives who are caregivers of a loved one. In my office we discussed resources in the community and options available for assistance to the patient *and* the caregiver. Caregivers need to take care of their health to be able to handle the stressful daily demands. To do this the caregiver needs time away from the demands of caregiving to re-group and energize.

The option that I offered this wife was adult day care—a place for her to bring her sweet husband during the day so that she can run errands, meet her friends for lunch, or simply go home to prop her feet up (a treat that she has not had the



Lottie Causey (center), enjoying a day at the Baptist Adult Day Health Service with Dixie Myrick and Jimmie Girdle.

opportunity to do for a long while due to constant demands.)

We discussed our staff at Baptist Adult Day Health Service (RN, activity director and program assistants), all of whom have a sincere love for the geriatric population and a

compassionate heart. I explained the full calendar of therapeutic activities that we offer, nursing supervision, socialization and just plain fun. We also discussed financial assistance that might be available for these services.

This precious lady seemed to have a lighter heart as she departed with plans to discuss this option with her children. She was relieved to find a respite for her demanding schedule and a safe place for her husband. This would allow her to keep her husband of these many years at home rather than placement in a long-term care facility for now...and take care of herself as well. ∞

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