

Social Issues and Action Newsletter March 2018

God and Dementia



I don't think we can pick up a newspaper or magazine these days without seeing some story relating to dementia. It seems so tragic to read of a once powerful strong person having succumbed to this disease. Even in last Saturday's Weekend magazine there was an article about a relatively young woman (in her forties) living with dementia. Her resilience in the face of her life being changed was very moving. She is determined to do all she can to make the most of the time she has to 'live' and not retreat from her family and friends and the world.

We probably all have stories of friends and family members who have been diagnosed with some form of dementia or alzheimer's and the devastating effect it has not only the patient but all those close to them. What will happen to me? What will the future be like? How can we cope? How can we help?

Dementia and alzheimer's are similar but not exactly the same. Watching someone live with either is devastating.

What are we to think at times like this?

- * God has not forgotten our husband, wife, mother, sister, brother and dear friend. Jesus said, 'Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matthew 28:20) His words assure us that no matter what circumstance in life we encounter he is with us. And 'even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death' the Lord is our Shepherd, caring for us and those who are his precious sheep.
- * We are still made in the image of God. God has created us all men and women in his image (Genesis 1: 26,27) no matter the state of our mind or any disability we might have. We are greater than the animals and are to have dominion over them. He is our Father and we are his children always.
- * Life is uncertain. It can change so quickly. I remember when my eldest daughter told me she was pregnant and we were so excited at the forthcoming birth of our eldest grandchild. But in only a few weeks at the first ultrasound we were to learn that he wouldn't live due to a polycystic kidney disease. Our joy turned to sorrow so quickly. But even in that moment we knew we were not alone.
- * I am not in charge of the world. The fragility of life certainly reminds us of this. Illness, disability along with earthquakes and cyclones are reminders that we can't control the world. We live in a fallen world where tragedies occur. But nothing separates us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39)
- * All our days are numbered. The Psalmist reminds us in Psalm 90:12 to number our days as this life is not all there is. We are awaiting our heavenly home, eternity, being forever with the Lord. Only in heaven will there be no more pain or crying or death and every tear will be wiped away.' Revelation 21:4
- * We need to care and love those who are in difficult situations. The primary caregivers of those struggling with dementia need all our love and support. They are often struggling with providing all the care of their dear ones with this disease. Not only can we love them as a church or MU branch by providing meals but in numerous ways other ways such as shopping,

doing the laundry, sitting with them, giving them 'time out' to have coffee with a friend, or go shopping or even to just go for a walk.

Above all we need to be assured that our faith and trust in the Lord is not diminished by dementia. Often the prayers and hymns learnt as a child remain when all else seems to have gone. The hope we have in Jesus never fails even though our memory has. We will be forever with the Lord, in his everlasting arms.

References

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