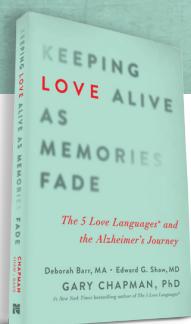


# KEEPING LOVE ALIVE AS MEMORIES FADE

*7 - DAY DEVOTIONAL*

BY DEBORAH BARR, MA

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This devotional is derived from  
*Keeping Love Alive As Memories Fade*,  
*The 5 Love Languages® and the Alzheimer's Journey*  
Written by #1 New York Times bestselling author,  
Dr. Gary Chapman, Deborah Barr, and Dr. Ed Shaw.

As featured on the  
YouVersion Bible App.

## DAY 1 HE KNEW

I laughed along with the rest of the class when the teacher said, "There has never been a time when God has said, 'Wow, I never saw that coming!'" We laughed because we understood the impossibility of such a moment: God alone is all-knowing (omniscient). Nothing has ever escaped His notice. Nothing ever will. He alone "sees it coming"—down to the smallest detail. Nothing ever catches Him by surprise.

Unlike God, we cannot see what lies ahead. As the years of our lives unfold, we encounter one surprise after another. Sometimes the surprises are pleasant: the realization that the winning raffle ticket is the one in your hand, or the first glimpse

of snowflakes falling on Christmas morning. Other times, the surprises are extraordinarily painful, stabbing at our hearts and making us cry. Though perplexing and inexplicable from our human perspective, God writes both kinds of surprises into the story of every life.

**Your heavenly Father has always known this time in your life would arrive. Before you were even born, He foresaw your days as a caregiver.**

A loved one's diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or another dementia is always the unwelcome, heart-rending kind of surprise. No one ever sees it coming. The news is always a shock, not only for the person with the disease, but also for the loved ones unwittingly thrust into a role they never planned to fill: caregiver.

Allow yourself to marvel at this, caregiving Child of God: your heavenly Father has always known this time in your life would arrive. Before you were even born, He foresaw your days as a caregiver. You are part of His plan for your loved one; your loved one is part of His plan for you. Take His hand and let Him quell your fears as you walk each new day on the shepherding path before you. ●

## Today's Verse

**Your eyes saw me when I was still an unborn child. Every day of my life was recorded in your book before one of them had taken place.**

— Psalm 139:16 (GWT)

*Your insights...*

## DAY 2 FORGOTTEN

For Alex, the dreaded moment had finally arrived. The love of his life, his bride of nearly 50 years, looked at him with pleading eyes and asked, "Who are you?" For a few seconds, Alex could not breathe. As the meaning of her question sank into his heart, he did not even try to hold back the hot tears that sprang to his eyes. He struggled to grasp the unthinkable: Holly, the only woman he had ever loved, no longer remembered who he was.

Meredith and Macy, the couple's grown daughters, were equally devastated when it became clear that their mother no longer recognized them either. Each daughter felt that prior to Alzheimer's disease, Holly had truly been her lifelong best friend.

**Take comfort, child of God, in the absolute certainty that you can never be forgotten by your heavenly Father.**

Now the daughters grieved and marveled that the mother who had given birth to them, nourished them from her own body, and lovingly nurtured them to adulthood now considered them strangers.

Like Alex and his daughters, many people recall the day that their loved

one forgot them as one of the most painful days of their lives. When dementia erases the identity of one person from the mind of another, the forgotten person may experience a flood of emotions. Even when they know that the disease, not their loved one, is responsible, they may still suddenly feel alone or abandoned, rejected, angry, grieved, or many other things.

Have you been forgotten by a person with dementia? Take comfort, child of God, in the absolute certainty that you can never be forgotten by your heavenly Father. The sovereign God of the universe is incapable of forgetting, and you, His precious child, are always in His sight. His promise to the people of ancient Jerusalem is ours as well. You are, as they were, tattooed onto the very palms of His hands. He will never take His eyes off you, and He will never forget you. ●

### Today's Verse

...the Lord says, "Can a woman forget her baby? Can she forget the child who came from her body? Even if she can forget her children, I cannot forget you. I drew a picture of you on my hand. You are always before my eyes."

- Isaiah 49:15-16

### Your insights...

## DAY 3 JARS OF CLAY

Caring for a person with dementia can be stressful. When stress is unrelenting, it can take a serious toll on the care partner's health. Margaret, Connie, Camille, and Sam all know this first hand.

Margaret said, "There is no question that the stress of this disease has been problematic. My health is horrible." Similarly, Connie said, "Because I worry and take care of my husband, I forget myself." Newly diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, Connie lamented, "It has taken a physical toll on me."

Camille said, "I am in good health, so that's great. But I have always been a walker and I am too depressed to walk. Walking would help the depression, but at the end of the day, I am just spent."

**Caring for your own body, mind, and soul isn't selfish. Rather, it is a vital stewardship entrusted to you by the God who loves you.**

After Sam's wife, Alison, became less mobile due to her Alzheimer's disease, he spent a lot of time "just sitting with her and loving on her, but not doing a lot of physical activity." As

a result, he admits, "I was getting to be a tubby fellow."

Health problems, depression, and weight gain are common among stressed-out dementia care partners. Fortunately, Margaret, Connie, Camille, and Sam all wisely recognized the need to take better care of themselves. The women each sought both medical care and counseling. Sam decided he "had to start exercising!" and he successfully brought his weight under control. Sam also saw a counselor, and all four also joined a caregiver support group.

The Apostle Paul described Christians as "jars of clay" that house the precious, eternal treasures of God. Because human "clay" is mortal and fragile, it can be irreparably damaged by the stress and exhaustion of caregiving. Wise caregivers realize that in order to provide good care for their loved one, they must take care of their own physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

Caring for your own body, mind, and soul isn't selfish. Rather, it is a vital stewardship entrusted to you by the God who loves you. Is there an aspect of your self-care that you have neglected? ●

## Today's Verse

**Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in every way and [that your body] may keep well, even as [I know] your soul keeps well and prospers.**

– 3 John 1:2 (Amplified Version)

*Your insights...*

## DAY 4 IMMANUEL

When Alzheimer's disease or another dementia begins to take hold of a person, loved ones may at first only sense that something is now "different." Relationships gradually grow distant as dementia relentlessly unravels the bonds that connect human beings to one another. Eventually, the person with the disease loses the ability to hold up his or her side of the relationship. As a relationship that was once emotionally equal becomes more and more one-sided, care partners become *caregivers* and their journey often becomes very lonely.

If you are a Christ follower, however, while you may indeed feel lonely, it is certain that you are never *alone*. The very name of your Lord Jesus is Immanuel, which means "God is with us."

**Though the gulf between you  
and the person for whom you  
provide care is certain to widen,  
Immanuel will remain close,  
present with you in each moment  
of the caregiving journey**

human form. He walked and talked, ate, slept, and wept just as those He created did then and do now. Just before He was crucified Jesus told His followers that He would not leave them as orphans, but would ask the Father to send them a Comforter to take His place. He was talking about the Holy Spirit, and He promised them something astonishing. He told them that the Holy Spirit would not only be *with* them, but would live *in* them.

Just as Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit did come, and He did make His home in the hearts of those who loved him. This promise has held true through the centuries. The Holy Spirit actually, literally resides within all who are truly His, including you if Jesus is your Lord. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the ultimate expression of Immanuel, God with us.

Immanuel longs to be your best friend and your constant and closest companion. Through the supernatural indwelling of His Spirit, this is possible. Though the gulf between you and the person for whom you provide care is certain to widen, Immanuel will remain close, present with you in each moment of the caregiving journey. You can continually rely upon, rest in, and be guided by His loving, faithful presence *within* you.

How amazing and truly wonderful is that? ●

## Today's Verses

**...they shall call His name  
Immanuel, which translated  
means, "God with us."**

– Matthew 1:23

**"I will ask the Father, and He will  
give you another Helper, that He  
may be with you forever; that is  
the Spirit of truth, whom the world  
cannot receive, because it does  
not see Him or know Him, but you  
know Him because He abides with  
you and will be in you."**

– John 14:16-17

**...the Holy Spirit who dwells in us...**

– 2 Timothy 1:14 (NASB)

## Your insights...

## DAY 5 WHY?

It had been a surprising new beginning for Mary Ellen. After surviving the heartbreak of divorce in her mid-40's, 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 in the providence of God, she met Dave at a birthday dinner for a mutual friend. 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 their

retirement years. 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 future? Why would You do this to me? I don't understand!"

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

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:

God is too wise to be mistaken  
God is too good to be unkind  
So when you don't understand  
When don't see His plan  
When you can't trace His hand  
Trust His Heart

(from *Trust His Heart*, sung by Babbie Mason (Warner/Chappell Music, Inc.) ●

## Today's Verse

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

— Proverbs 3:5

*Your insights...*

DAY 6

## ELOHIM

When my friend Eileen prays, both privately and aloud with others, she sometimes speaks to God using one of His many Old Testament names. Once, when I told her I had begun a new writing project, she offered to pray for me, saying she would be “calling upon Elohim to guide” me. She said this because writing is a creative endeavor, and God’s “Creator” name is Elohim. This Hebrew name for God is used in Genesis 1:1, the first verse of the Bible: “In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth.”

The opening chapter of Genesis also describes another of Elohim’s amazing first creations: light. It mentions the sun, moon, and stars, citing the creation of

physical light as the way to set day apart from night. After the book of Genesis, light is mentioned in many places throughout the Bible, but now physical light takes on additional meaning. In both the Old and New Testaments, light and darkness serve as a metaphor that helps us understand spiritual truths.

If life seems steeped in  
hues of gray, let the eyes  
of your heart be drawn  
to Elohim, the majestic  
Creator of light.

In the physical world, the color of an object comes from the way it reflects the light that falls on it. Under white light, colors are natural and vibrant. As filters are applied, objects reflect less and less light, making colors look darker than they really are. In the world of dementia caregiving, a similar thing can happen. The Apostle Paul said, “There’s no room for play; there’s no room for joy...so much of the color has gone out of my life.” For Paul, the daily grind of caring for his loved one has become a filter that casts a darkening shadow over his life.

Has caregiving faded the colors of your life?

If life seems steeped in hues of gray, let the eyes of your heart be drawn to Elohim, the majestic Creator of light. Let your inner gaze rest intently on Him until you can say with the psalmist, “My Elohim turns my darkness into light.” ●

## Today's Verses

...My Elohim turns my darkness into light.

– Psalm 18:28

In the beginning Elohim created heaven and earth.

– Genesis 1:1

Then Elohim said, Let there be light! So there was light. Elohim saw the light was good. So Elohim spreated the light from the darkness. Elohim named the light day, and darkness he named night. There was evening, then morning –the first day.

– Genesis 1:3-5  
(Names of God Bible)

Your insights...

## DAY 7 PRAY

Listen to the song: <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/789>

In 1845, a 25-year-old Irish man, Joseph Scriven, stood on the bank of the River Bann, watching as his fiancée crossed a bridge on horseback, making her way toward him. Tragically, before she could reach the place where Joseph stood, she fell from her horse and drowned. It was the day before their wedding.

Not long after, the grief-stricken young man made the long voyage across the Atlantic to Canada. Starting over in this new country, Joseph worked as a tutor and a lay preacher. Years later, at age 39, he fell in love again. The bride-

to-be was the lovely Miss Eliza Catherine Roche, just 22 years old. Unbelievably, before they could marry, Eliza died of pneumonia.

Joseph Scriven never married. He devoted the rest of his life to tutoring, preaching, and performing acts of Christian charity. After his death in 1886, the city of Port Hope, Ontario,

Canada, erected a monument to his life.

Scriven is best known for a poem he wrote in 1855 to comfort his mother who was seriously ill in Ireland. Perhaps drawing deeply from his own journey through grief, he titled the poem, *Pray Without Ceasing*. Today we know these words as the lyrics of the beloved hymn, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*. These lyrics are especially applicable to dementia care partners, providing as much comfort and encouragement today as when Mrs. Scriven received them from her son more than a century and-a-half ago.

What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,  
Oh, what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer!

(Note: this hymn is in the public domain per hymnal.net: "A public domain hymn is a hymn that predates copyright laws, and whose copyright has expired. Materials dated 1922 or earlier are usually in the public domain.") ●

## Today's Verse

...pray without ceasing...

- 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (ESV)

Your insights...



### DEBORAH BARR, MA

This devotional was written by Deborah Barr — a versatile writer, speaker, and health educator. A master certified health education specialist (MCCHES), she also has a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in health education and promotion. An experienced wellness writer and speaker, Deborah volunteers as a community educator for the Western Carolina chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. ●

## HAS THIS READING PLAN HELPED YOU IN ANY WAY?

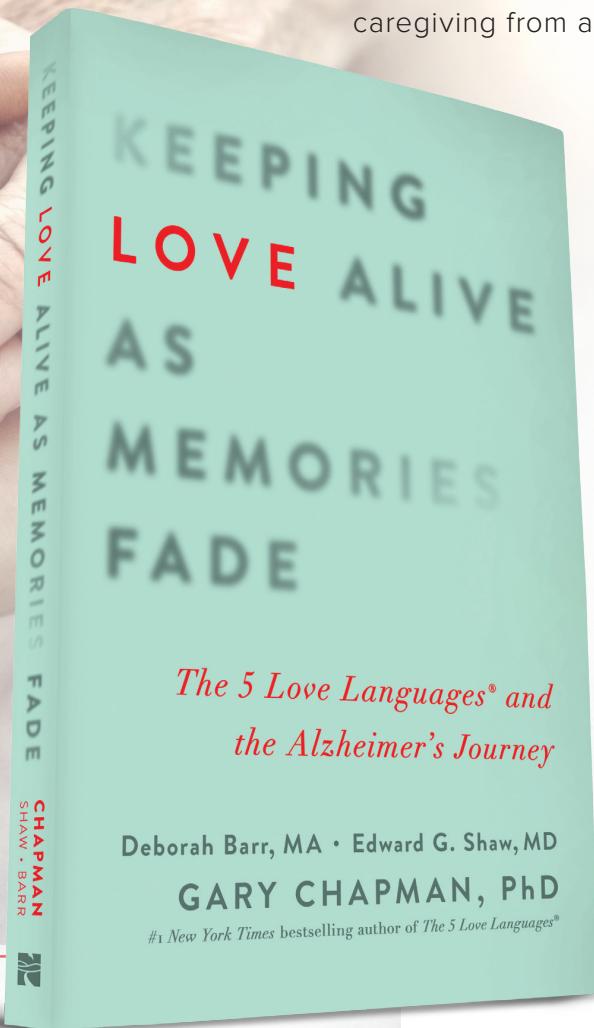
If so, we want to invite you to check out *Keeping Love Alive as Memories Fade* by Dr. Gary Chapman, bestselling author of *The 5 Love Languages*®, Deborah Barr, and Dr. Edward Shaw.

[WWW.5LOVELANGUAGES.COM/KEEPINGLOVEALIVE](http://WWW.5LOVELANGUAGES.COM/KEEPINGLOVEALIVE)



## The 5 Love Languages® and the Alzheimer's Journey

Caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia can be emotionally, physically, and spiritually exhausting. Caregiving can create a "perfect storm" for weakening one's faith—or, paradoxically, for strengthening it. *Keeping Love Alive As Memories Fade* encourages care providers to lean on God and approach the difficulties of caregiving from an empowered, Christ-focused perspective. ●



"It offers **powerful testimony** to the lasting nature and immense power of human relationships."

**Peter V. Rabins, MD, MPH**  
Co-author, *The 36-Hour Day*

"This book reminds families that although they don't have to do it all, meaningful connections can **make a difference** in the quality of family life despite progressive cognitive decline."

**Lisa P. Gwyther, MSW, LCSW**  
Director, Duke (Alzheimer's) Family Support Program  
Duke Health

"Whether you simply wish to know more . . . [or] already dealing with their losses and challenges in yourself or a loved one, *Keeping Love Alive as Memories Fade* **should be required reading.**"

**William R. Hazzard MD**  
Professor of Internal Medicine,  
Section on Gerontology & Geriatric Medicine  
Wake Forest School of Medicine  
Wake Forest Baptist Health



From Dr. Gary Chapman, author of the #1 *New York Times* bestselling book *The 5 Love Languages®*.

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