



Episode 4-24: Dementia

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Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Welcome back. This is Janet once again with my cohost, Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hey, friends.



Janet: And today I am so excited that you get to hear from someone who is special to us on a number of levels. Keri Allen is here today and she is in many ways the reason this podcast got out to the masses.

Jocelyn: Yes. Cause she knows Instagram.

Janet: Yes, she has figured out marketing. She has gotten us out of the love of her heart to a lot of places. But in addition to that, we've watched Keri handle a situation of caring for a family member with dementia in a way that was gracious and loving and biblical and

Jocelyn: very self sacrificial.

Janet: Yes. And we've asked her to come and tell a little bit about that. So thank you, Keri, for being willing to share that with us.

Keri: Well, you're making me cry before we even start, Janet. Come on. Oh, man. Well, I am so thankful to be here. I think it's safe to say I've known both of you for the majority of my life.

Janet: I'm not sure what that says about our age, but we'll say, yeah, we were all in junior high together. Right?

Keri: Sure. That's what we'll say. But I am so excited to have gotten the privilege to serve with you both on the JJP team. And I am thrilled to be here today to talk about a topic that has become very personal for me.

Janet: Yes, it is.

Keri: In an unexpected way. And I've come to realize a lot of other people are affected by it as well, even more than I expected before we encountered this ourselves. So,

Janet: so give us a little bit of background about you. And why you are now talking with us about dementia.

Keri: Yeah. So usually when I've talked about dementia in the past, it's just been to share my personal story, usually in an advocacy setting because my family has been affected by a lesser known form of early onset dementia. But as we come to talk about today, I'm really excited to get to share this time what the Lord has taught me about comfort and hope in this type of suffering. So my goal, of course, is to hear. Wisdom from the both of you as you have it to share, but also to hopefully offer up as 2 Corinthians 1:4 says the same comfort to others that we ourselves have received in our own sufferings from our precious Lord Jesus. So before we dive in, I just wanted to say that I am by no means an expert on dementia. I'm just sharing as someone who has thought a lot about this because of my experiences as a dementia caregiver to my dad. And I know I've made a myriad of mistakes and sinful choices along the way, but the Lord has been



credibly faithful to me and my family through it all. And I do cherish the opportunity to bring whatever might bring some hope and light to someone else's journey from the truth of God's word. So a bit about my personal story before we get started. Just so your listeners know a bit about me, I was born and raised here in the same church family where Janet and Jocelyn are so deeply involved in ministry and has started Faith Bible Seminary. I studied for my degree in special education at Purdue and I attended Purdue Bible Fellowship when Janet's husband, Brent, was the college pastor.

Janet: Yes! She was one of our college girls.

Keri: Yes! So through that ministry, I met and married my husband and I taught in special education for a few years and had almost finished my ACBC certification before my life became staying home with three sweet children. So, but right about the time our first son was about a year old is when we started to realize that my dad was going to need a lot more intensive care than we had previously expected. And we were plunged headfirst into the world of dementia care. So when I was 27 and my dad was 57, My brother and I began caring for him while he lived independently for a while, and then his disease progressed to the point where he couldn't safely live independently. I was granted legal guardianship of him, and we eventually had to make the difficult choice to move him into a dementia care home to help us care for him for the remainder of his life. It's been about six years now since we started that journey. And it's actually kind of interesting. You know, my dad's form of dementia is very early onset and slow progressing. So when I originally, sat down about a year ago to begin drafting this episode, I had written, you know, my expectation that I would be caring for my dad through his dementia for at least another decade or more before the disease ended his life. But in God's providence, I had to go back and rewrite my notes because in February of this year, quite unexpectedly, due to a completely unrelated medical issue. My father died quite suddenly and much sooner than we had all been anticipating. So it's just interesting how the Lord has changed and shaped my story, even literally as I was writing it. But yes, I was his primary caregiver for about six years, five of which I was also his legal guardian. And the Lord is just so kind. I am so thankful that a lot of my training in special education actually translated quite well into caregiving.

Jocelyn: That's so interesting. I never thought about that.

Keri: It was so interesting how the Lord, amazing how the Lord worked that out to prepare me for something that I never would have anticipated.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: So when we say dementia, what exactly is that? What are you talking about?

Keri: Yes. I know how you guys love your definitions.



Jocelyn: Yes, They're helpful.

Janet: Define your terms, young lady!

Keri: So let's talk practically first. Literally, the word dementia means out of one's mind..It's actually not any one specific disease. Most people understandably jump straight to Alzheimer's disease. It's probably the most well known form of it. But dementia is actually an umbrella term for a group of diseases that affect the brain and our ability to think and reason.

Jocelyn: Wow, I did not know that.

Keri: There you go. I didn't either. I've learned a lot. The NIH, the National Institute of Aging, defines dementia as the loss of cognitive functioning, thinking, remembering, and reasoning to an extent that it interferes with a person's daily life and activities. And it's also important to note, this is not normal aging or senior moments we're talking about here. Increasing forgetfulness is normal as we age. But a helpful illustration I've heard used is if you start forgetting where your car keys are. Probably likely normal aging.

Keri: But if you start holding your keys in your hand and forgetting what your car keys are. That's probably more of a time to be concerned.

Janet: Interesting.

Keri: So, and even sometimes you have to be careful because there is a phenomenon called delirium where certain illnesses, especially even common ones like a bad UTI or certain vitamin deficiencies can temporarily inhibit one's ability to think or reason properly. And in that case, the confusion is reversible because you can treat the underlying cause. But with dementia, it's different. It's a brain disease. with progressive deterioration that as of right now we have no way to treat or cure. Dementia diseases can look a lot of different ways with a variety of symptoms depending on the type and area of the brain that's affected first. But usually dementia symptoms include things like midterm, short term memory loss, difficulty making decisions, irrationality, hallucinations or delusions, difficulty speaking or understanding language, personality changes, and emotional blunting, which is where you get these extremes of either very strong emotions. or not really having appropriate emotions at all. The Alzheimer's Association estimates that about one third of people who live to the age of 80 will develop some sort of dementia disease that will affect their ability to think.

Jocelyn: Wow. That list of symptoms is a little overwhelming because every single one of the list is like super bad.

Keri: Right. And usually it's some combination. It's not usually all of them at once. Sometimes it is, but usually one of those symptoms will come out stronger than the other depending on which, again, which specific disease we're talking about.



Jocelyn: It's such a sad reality of the curse of sin that your ability to think and reason can be stolen from you just because of the presence of, you know, illness and our cells not working properly.. It's just, that makes me so sad.

Janet: and it's so, I think, important that we talk about it because I know a lot of people who are terrified of getting it. Like it's one thing to say, what if I can't walk one day? It's another thing to say, what if I'm not thinking right one day? And I think for us to think biblically, you know, this isn't the end.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: So.

Jocelyn: we have a hope that no one else has. That's right. Believers cannot possibly have hope in this situation. and even, believers who love the Lord face dementia, right? And it's not a testimony to their love for the Lord. It's just It's the reality of living in a sin cursed world.

Keri: Yeah. Yes. I think so far I've talked just about the practical definition of dementia, but there's also a theological aspect as well, right? Which is what you guys are saying in that we are made in the image of God, created by God who loved us. But when humans sinned and rejected God's rule over them, our bodies and our minds were corrupted and broken to the point where our minds and bodies now get sick and die. And our hearts are now desperately wicked as Jeremiah 17:9 says, you know, who can know it? And Ecclesiastes 9:3 says the hearts of men are full of evil and madness is in their hearts while they live. And after that, they go to the dead. So we know that dementia is the result of living in a sin cursed world with broken bodies and broken minds that don't work as they were originally intended to in Deuteronomy 28. God goes even so far as to say that sometimes he uses madness or confusion of the mind as a consequence for disobedience and failure to follow his ways. So Is dementia, as you're saying, Jocelyn, is dementia a direct consequence of personal sin? Perhaps sometimes it could be. Maybe. But I think we do have to remember Jesus's words about the man born blind in John 9, where the disciples asked, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? And Jesus answered, Neither. Right. And it was neither that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. So on the one hand, we know dementia exists because of sin, but on the other, especially for believers, we know that God allows dementia for his glory to display his character and his power to work in spite of our brokenness.

Jocelyn: I think that's one thing that's comforted me because this is actually one of the things that I most fear in my future. Like, what if I lose my mind and my ability to think and my husband has to take care of me and I'm a shell of my previous self, like literally the only thing I have going for me in my life is my ability to think like, I'm a counselor. I'm an author. Like everything is very thinking oriented. And so it's been comforting for me to think about this in that light, like, you know, God knows what he's doing. And if he decides that my future will



include dementia, he will decide that my husband's ability to care for me. We'll be provided by him.

Janet: Yeah. so and it will be a way for God to be glorified in your husband caring for you

Jocelyn: and also my husband to be like grown Yeah His capacity to love and care a person who can't think anymore But it's scary to think about

Keri: and Amy Baker in her episode on aging. She mentioned If God entrusts that suffering to me, his grace will meet me there, but his grace is not big enough for my imagination. He does not promise grace for my imagination. He promises me the grace that I need for today. So we do not need to live in fear of this because God's grace will meet us there when and if we are entrusted with it.

Janet: Love it.

Keri: We also know from scripture that for the believer, all suffering, including dementia is temporary.

Jocelyn: That's joy.

Janet: Praise God.

Keri: Paul calls light in the face of eternity. He says, For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared to the glory that is going to be revealed to us Romans 8:18. Those who follow Christ will one day have every tear wiped away from our eyes. No more death No more mourning or crying or pain these first things will pass away and it's not such a beautiful truth. For all of us as we seek to honor the Lord and whatever suffering he entrusts to us.

Janet: Absolutely. Yeah so you've shared what dementia is, you've talked a little bit about how as believers we can think about it. Why do you think it's so important that we have a biblical understanding of dementia?

Keri: This is actually an interesting question for me because quite honestly, before my family was affected by dementia, I didn't really think much about it at all. Sure. So, but I do think there are some unique ways that understanding dementia can help us as we seek to understand God's character and his ways more fully and also walk compassionately alongside others who have suffered in this way. One reason I think understanding dementia from a biblical perspective is important is 2nd Timothy 2:4 which says be prepared in season and out of season to give a reason for the hope that is in you. Dementia can be a really amazing direct line to the gospel to point both unbelievers and believers to the hope that we have that is outside of ourselves, even our ability to think clearly.



Janet: Wow. I've never seen dementia in that way.

Keri: Well, our hope is truly, truly in Christ. And I think dementia displays that in a way that is fairly unique.

Jocelyn: And it's interesting because when you think about like my concern, like my ability to think and reason is very me oriented and even my ability to think right now is a gift of grace from God. So that is a great reminder.

Keri: Secondly, I also think dementia can raise some really complex questions about our ability to reflect God's image with our sanctification and our choices. It raises some really interesting questions about the depravity of man and the common grace gift of our brains that help us control our behavior and emotions. You know it's, kind of hard to think about that grandma who has loved the Lord and lived such a godly life for so many years. But now in dementia is either withdrawn or, you know, reacts in irrational anger, confusion. Those are hard questions. Dementia kind of strikes at some of the things that we, especially in Western culture, most idolize and value: youth, wit, intelligence, autonomy, the ability to make decisions for ourselves or feel like we can self manage our own lives. Dementia and cognitive diseases often threaten what we're tempted to think of as our very personhood.

Janet: And it's so fascinating that you would say, especially in our culture. Because initially as you say that, I think, well, that's just the way it is. That is your personhood, but you're absolutely right. That's what our culture values. It's not what God says. It's what our culture values and dementia threatens it.

Keri: Dementia really demands that we find our identity in something outside ourselves. And I think that's really hard.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Yeah. I was thinking about what you said, Janet, like Americans value autonomy so much and anything that threatens autonomy is just obviously evil.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And I think that's what makes it hard for me. Like I would have to depend on someone else. I would be completely at the mercy of someone else's care. that's a scary thought.

Janet: Yeah.

Keri: it can be. And as believers, we want to make sure that our theology of suffering is robust enough for questions like that.



Janet: Yeah.

Keri: How is God still good when I or someone I love can't control our behavior anymore? We want to make sure our view of God is big enough to handle that, whether it's for ourselves or for someone we love. I love how, again, Amy Baker in her episode on biblical aging, probably going to mention it several times because it was so good.

Janet: It was so good.

Keri: You should go back and listen. But she did talk about dementia for a little bit as a type of suffering that may or may not be entrusted to us as we age. A third and final reason that I think this is important is we want to love well on those who have already been entrusted with this type of suffering. Being aware and informed can really help us as we seek to offer biblical hope and practical support to those who are walking this particular road of suffering.

Janet: Well, and if it's true that up to a third of us could experience that if we live long enough, then there are a lot of people we need to be able to love well.

Keri: Exactly, exactly.

Jocelyn: I mean, very practically too.

Keri: Yeah. And as our lifespans tend

Jocelyn: Tend to get longer

Keri: like lifespans right now tend to be a little longer. We're going to see more. You know, you'll see headlines that say dementia is getting more common, but some of it might be, we're just living longer and so we're seeing aging diseases more often. So I think it's even more important than ever that we be prepared for what might come our way as we age.

Jocelyn: So what makes dementia so difficult, both for those who are suffering from it and those who care for them?

Keri: I think the primary reason we find dementia so difficult is again that threat to our perceived autonomy and the limit it sometimes brings to our ability to showcase the image of God. You know God is God of communication of relationship of speech and all those things become much more difficult when you have a cognitive disease like dementia.

Jocelyn: Yeah, totally

Keri: It can also be very distressing to see a person experiencing these dementia induced personality changes. They often become more childlike, less empathetic, more irrational, repeating themselves or questioning other people's intentions. And seeing stuff like that in



someone you love can bring a lot of grief as a person's ability to communicate declines and you progressively lose the relationship that you had previously with that person. Another thing I think that can make dementia difficult is the lifestyle changes that are needed to address a lot of safety issues that come with dementia, like wandering or agitation, especially at night. Sometimes it can involve a move for either the person who's affected or for their caregiver in order to provide a safe environment. Dementia is also progressive. So there's this changeable nature of what's life going to look like today. Is it going to look like it did yesterday? Are we going to be different? Often dementia involves cutting short someone's retirement dreams often with their spouse and often dementia can also involve intense loneliness, both for the person who's affected, whose mind is struggling to connect with others and reality, and for the loved one who is caring for them, which data tells us is most often a spouse. Especially as the disease progresses, it can become hard for a person with dementia to be left alone safely. Which means, unless you have hired help or other family members coming in, a caregiver is with their loved one 24/7.

Jocelyn: Which is a huge lifestyle shift. Yeah.

Keri: You can't go out, you can't do the usual social things that you would do for friendships or church life. Dementia also involves a lot of difficulty sleeping, which is something I wasn't prepared for. So sleeplessness can be a real issue both for the person affected and also for the caregiver. If they're the only one providing nighttime care themselves, there's a lot of sleep deprivation that can go into it. Something I also hadn't thought about before I entered this journey myself was I hadn't realized the financial pressure that can come from caring for someone with dementia, whether it's from that person being taken advantage of because they don't have all their judgment in place. Sometimes a caregiver has to give up their job in order to stay home and care for the loved one. And then there's the cost of the actual nursing care, you know, median costs for nursing care in the United States are over \$9,000 for a private room per month.

Janet: Yeah, it's not even feasible for many.

Keri: Exactly. And honestly, in home care is only slightly behind that.

Janet: Really? I thought in home would be a lot cheaper.

Jocelyn: You still have to spend thousands.

Keri: Median numbers around six or seven nurses and-- nurses and specialized equipment. I mean, sometimes you have to have locks on the doors and,

Jocelyn: and respite care

Keri: and meals, special meals.



Jocelyn: You have to go to the store from time.

Keri: Yeah, you have to, you have to be able to leave your house. And you often can't take your loved one with you. And even if you go through something like Medicare or Medicaid to get these services, that can significantly decrease the cost, but it also severely limits your time. Choices. And it can involve a lot of legal paperwork that frankly is exhausting because you have to do it and redo it and have it re evaluated and if all this sounds a little overwhelming, it's because it can definitely feel that way.

Janet: Well, I remember watching you walk through it and thinking, I can't even believe how much paperwork there is. Anything that you'd want to do to help.

Jocelyn: It was like your full time job to do paperwork.

Keri: Oh, it was. It was. It was a full time job. Especially if you are trying to manage care, humanly speaking, on your own, which, again, if you look at the numbers, statistics often tell us that one third of all dementia caregivers are the only person providing care for their loved one.

Jocelyn: And if it's their spouse, they're most often similar in age to that aged person.

Keri: Yes.

Jocelyn: It's like another 80 year old trying to figure out how to do forms online.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: That's crazy.

Keri: It is just so incredibly hard, especially if you are a spouse who is also aging, trying to care for, it involves a lot of really difficult situations oftentimes.

Janet: So that's depressing. Thank you.

Keri: Aren't you so glad you invited me?

Janet: So is there any hope for people who are affected with dementia or for those who are trying to take care of them?

Keri: Of course, so really

Janet: I felt like there would

Keri: this is the Joyful Journey Podcast.

Janet: That's right.



Keri: So really the initial answer is simple Our hope in dementia can be found in the same place we find hope in any other type of suffering. In the unchanging, all loving character of the God who remembers even when we do not.

Janet: Amen.

Keri: It is in who He is, who He says we are, and in the comfort He has given us in His Word. Amy Baker, yet again, in her episode on aging, mentioned

Janet: Which we will be linking in the show notes.

Keri: I know, I was like, sorry, you're just going to have to start there.

Janet: No, do it.

Keri: But she mentioned Dr. Benjamin Mast's book, *Second Forgetting*. It is the best book I have read on dementia care. It is incredibly helpful. And in that book, Dr. Mast discusses Isaiah 49: 15, which says, can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget. But I will not forget you.

Janet: That is beautiful.

Jocelyn: That is beautiful. So beautiful.

Keri: Oh, I cannot read that verse without crying. But I find such hope in that.

Janet: Yes.

Keri: My husband and his men's Bible study at our church just finished studying the book of Zechariah and Zechariah means the Lord remembers.

Jocelyn: Oh. Wow.

Keri: Our God does not forget. He does not change. And for the believer, nothing, not even dementia can take us out of his hand.

Janet: Amen.

Keri: My hope is not in remembering who I am or even in remembering who God is. My hope is not in me at all, but in my God who will never forget me and will always remember his love and faithfulness, not just to me, but also to those who may care for me, if that time comes. I can also find hope in who God has said I am. He says that I am made in his image. And for the believer, though my body is wasting away, my life is hidden with Christ. I don't have to live in a spirit of fear should dementia become part of my story. I know that I belong to the good shepherd who



loves me and he knows me and is intimately acquainted with all my ways, even when I don't understand them myself.

Janet: Yes.

Keri: We also find hope as we study God's word and discover He really has given us everything we need for life and godliness to the point that we can be equipped to handle every good work, including the good work of suffering through dementia well.

Janet: I love that. I think that's just Beautiful. Things like dementia or even talking about it, surface the counterfeit things that we find hope in and don't even know it,

Keri: Exactly.

Janet: You know, I'm like, do I want to get to where I forget God? No. Do I want to be, no, but my hope is not in my remembering him. My hope is in him. And I think about that as a parent, if I had a child who forgot me, would I stop caring about them?

Keri: Of course not.

Janet: You know, like, well, duh. So of course it's in a better place. But I think things like dementia rock our world and help us recognize some places we've been putting our hope that seemed okay, or we didn't even realize we were doing it until it gets rocked.

Keri: It is an idol revealer, for sure. You know, watching my dad go through his frontotemporal dementia really blew my mind in terms of how God can provide resources for everything to bring him glory. Even when my dad wasn't fully there, cognitively, the Lord was still using him. Even when dad wasn't aware he was doing it. We saw fruit in others who were observing his journey. We saw growth in our own marriage as my husband and I cared for him. And it just blew our mind how God can make such beautiful, good things occur through someone who's losing their intellect. It just showcased us the lavishness of his grace and power.

Jocelyn: That's really beautiful.

Janet: And think about that. When you know, knowing your dad before all of this, way before, if he thought that anything about this would bless his children and they would look more like Jesus because of it, I think he'd have thought it was a privilege.

Keri: I think he would have. I think he would have said, whatever I need to suffer in order to bring my children

Janet: Closer to you.

Keri: My children's closeness to Jesus is more important.



Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So, what specific encouragements would you give to someone who is or may one day be affected by dementia or to the people who care for them?

Keri: Great. So let's start with those who are or may be affected, which really, if we think about it, is all of us.

Janet: That's most of us.

Keri: All of us may have this in our life at one point or other. So it's important for all of us to think about. But a few thoughts. Number one, seek Christ now. Cultivate godly character and godly habits now. Build a robust theology of suffering and practice growing in humility and reasonableness and self control now. Because None of us ever really know how long we will live or maintain our ability to think or reason. So we must steward the blessing of whatever level of function we currently possess. We want to use that so that when and if God entrusts this type of suffering that comes with dementia, we will be much more ready to face it with godliness and Christlikeness intact.

Janet: I remember Early on, as you were thinking through a lot of these things and we were all sobered by it, we didn't see it coming. And thinking about that in at least some types of dementia, I'm not the expert, you know a whole lot more about it, Keri, than I do. I'm sorry to say you've had to. But in some of them, your brain will obsess on one or two things. And thinking through that, it was like, okay, if my brain had to pick one or two things to obsess on in the future, what have I been feeding it so that there's at least a more likelihood, I understand it may or may not happen.

Keri: Yes.

Janet: That doesn't mean, Oh, that person must've been sinful if they're doing that now. I get that, but am I feeding something so that if I obsessed, maybe I would obsess on loving people. Maybe I would obsess on isn't Jesus amazing.

Jocelyn: Scripture. Yeah.

Janet: Maybe I would obsess on a hymn or a song. Or would I obsess on, I can't believe I didn't get what I wanted again. Like, what would come out if, depending on what I've been meditating

Jocelyn: Investing.

Janet: That's a good word, Jocelyn. Investing in now.



Jocelyn: I was actually thinking, because you and I had talked about this several years ago, like, what you invest in all of your life is what will come in at the end.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And so, it was very sobering for me to think about, I want to make sure I'm investing in, in my years of youth what I hope will come out, I can't control my thoughts.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: And so you're really investing what you choose to think about now is an investment on what you'll be most likely to think about later on.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Obviously God can make it turn out however he wants.

Janet: Absolutely.

Keri: But you want to stack the deck.

Jocelyn: Yeah, yeah.

Janet: That's exactly. Cause I think if it's my husband or my kids taking care of me, I want to be the sweet one who can't remember anything, but just says thank you to everything instead of the one who's mad about everything. And God can do whatever. I know that it'll be whatever's best for my kids. But even another way to love God and love my kids is to try to prepare for that now.

Jocelyn: When we have spoken previously about end of life thoughts

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: You also reminded me to be really careful about the sin that I allow to sneak into my life in my young years, because I'm building habits of sin one way or another,

Janet: Even if I can hide them now.

Jocelyn: And if I can hide them now, but when I don't have control of my faculties, it might be more easy for those sins to be more plainly seen. And so I took that conversation really seriously and said, like, I'm not going to allow sneaky sin in my life right now because I can hide it right now and get away with it. Because I'm investing in what my thought life and my actions will be in the future. So, you know, we're investing in something now. We're investing in our thoughts. We're also investing in our purity.



Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And so we have the opportunity to take sin seriously now. We should take it seriously.

Janet: Yeah.

Keri: Yeah, dementia does have a way of stripping away our ability to hide hidden sins.

Janet: Yeah.

Keri: Dementia diseases really eat away at our physical ability to control our impulses and emotions. But often like you were saying, Jocelyn, one thing that remains the longest is procedural memory, meaning the things that we do over and over again. Like you guys were saying,

Jocelyn: Oh my word, I'm going to have a great procedural laundry.

Keri: It's a medical fact. There you go. Doing laundry.

Janet: Jocelyn will be doing laundry for everybody.

Jocelyn: I will do the laundry for everyone. Washing dishes.

Keri: But yes, those things that we do over and over again. Even in dementia, those tend to stick with us the longest,

Janet: Interesting.

Keri: Even after the disease starts to affect our mind.

Jocelyn: Wow, that's super interesting. It makes me think like, what procedures am I investing in?

Keri: It's like God designed it that way for us to have some motivation.

Janet: Right, because like, do I spend so much time in the word that it's such a habit that when there's nothing much left, that's what I'm going to do?

Jocelyn: That's, I was exactly thinking, am I building the procedure of devotions? Like this is what you do every day. You get up and talk to Jesus.

Keri: It is so true. My husband's grandfather at the end of his life was wrestling with just a little bit of those dementia tendencies. I don't know if it was full blown,

Janet: Sure.



Keri: But he was in his nineties. And it is interesting that you would go into his room and every morning he'd have that Bible right there open right beside him. Cause it's just what he did. You know.

Jocelyn: That's cool. That's neat.

Janet: What a legacy.

Keri: Yes, exactly. And I want that to be the case for me, whether my mind is affected or not.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: I hope my electronic Bible still works when I'm. 90 years old.

Janet: We won't know how to work it.

Jocelyn: I'll be like, what is this for?

Keri: Hebrews 2: 1 says, for this reason, we must pay close attention to what we have heard so that we will not drift away from it. We must make it not our remembering, but his remembering the desire of our souls. We want remembering him to be what is most important while we do have

Janet: yes, while we can

Keri: our mental faculties. One of the things my husband and I often went back and forth on as we watched my dad's disease play out was, were the behaviors we were seeing from his sinfulness or were they from his sickness? And I think it's wise, Janet, the counsel that you and Brent gave us back when all of this started and you said, It might be his sin. It might be a sickness. It might be both. But really, that's not our job to draw that line.

Jocelyn: I think that's a very helpful thing to know and to remember.

Keri: It's just our job to choose grace and to love him, to love his soul and to honor him regardless of whether he's capable of recognizing it as honor. So that was really helpful for me as I cared for him through some of the difficult behaviors. I think that's really important because we, especially in a biblical community, we know that communicating and solving problems is of the Lord. Unity doesn't come from a lack of problems. It comes from solving them. So we know that we're trained that way. And so then when we see our loved one doing or saying something that wouldn't be best, We would typically solve the problem. But if they can't cognitively understand, and so there's that battle of, do I need to, do I not, and so I do think it's helpful to realize I'm not the judge.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Keri: And it's not kind to expect someone to do things that they are physically incapable of doing. And sometimes if you don't know whether or not they're capable, sometimes it's wiser to just draw that line a little further back, just say, you know what, I don't know if this person is able to control this or not, but you know what, I can still deal with the situation with kindness and with love.

Janet: Yes. I can model Jesus.

Keri: And God. Yes, exactly. And God, God will deal with it because he knows their heart.

Janet: That's right.

Keri: And I don't really need to.

Jocelyn: And I think that's especially important because dementia is often slow progressing and you wonder like, what exactly is going on right now?

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: And you could just jump down someone's throat every time something weird happens and it looks like sin. And I think it's just so hard when dementia progresses slowly, because you spend a long time not knowing exactly what's happening. And if you have to be judged in any way, you would want to be judged to be gracious, not overly harsh.

Keri: Which is what Jesus says, right? By the standard of measurement, you judge others. You yourself will be judged. So I want people to be gracious with me if I ever am in the position where I'm losing my reasoning. So I want to extend that same grace to my loved ones.

Janet: I think that's great.

Jocelyn: And it's just incredibly hard and there needs to be a lot of prayer and grace for the caregiver who's journeying through that unknown territory.

Janet: Which is one of the privileges of your church community.

Keri: Exactly.

Janet: Being able to be a place that you can call and say, what in the world? Yeah, I think, no, this is right. Let me, yeah.

Jocelyn: And seeking lots of counsel.

Janet: Support and help.



Jocelyn: Yeah, yeah.

Janet: Because it's a lot.

Jocelyn: It's confusing too.

Keri: It's very confusing.

Jocelyn: Very confusing.

Keri: A second thing I would say is cry out to the Lord in biblical lament often. You've had Mark Vrogrop on a previous episode to talk about this in detail, and I love that episode because this practice of honestly stating and confronting my pain and then turning and taking that pain to the Lord in prayer and trusting in his character and goodness, that practice has just been life changing for me and giving me strength to handle all sorts of suffering and hardship, but especially in dementia, I think that's really important. A third thing I would say is memorize scripture and rehearse God's goodness. One of the things that Ben and I found absolutely amazing was that even in my dad's moderately advanced stage in dementia, you know, he couldn't name a lot of household objects. He couldn't remember my name half the time, but even in his final days. He could remember a lot of the hymns he grew up singing and he could still quote an impressive amount of scripture. Honestly, way more than I can quote

Jocelyn: Wow. That's amazing.

Keri: With my full mental capacity. So, one time I took him to have his blood drawn and he was very nervous about it. So to calm him down, I just asked him if he could start quoting John three to me because I knew that was a chapter that he loved. And he just took off Like not just one verse but the entire chapter just came

Jocelyn: Wow. That's unreal.

Keri: Rolling off his tongue with words I hadn't heard from him in years Like it was no big deal. And you know what the Lord used that. He used it to calm my dad. He used it to calm me. But also with the researchers who were in the room who heard that interchange and got to hear the gospel right there in the research room.

Jocelyn: Wow, that's amazing.

Keri: One of them even came up to me afterwards and she knew my dad and was familiar with his level of deterioration at that point. And she said, you know, I've never really been in church much. I'm not really religious. But it's amazing to me how the Bible just rolls off your dad's tongue so automatically whenever you ask. And I was able to present my elevator gospel speech right there in the hospital, you know, because my dad, when he was in his right mind, had really



prioritized the memorization of scripture, especially when he was a young man as a high schooler and a young adult. So the more treasures from God's word we can hide in our heart now, the longer we will have that treasure trove to pull from, even as our ability to remember gets weaker.

Jocelyn: Wow. That's amazing.

Janet: That's beautiful. Yeah.

Keri: I also think it's wise to make an intentional habit of training our minds to rehearse God's goodness and see his love and care even in difficult circumstances. In his book, *Redeeming Memory*, Matt Rare talks about being a Joseph and not a Jacob. In Genesis 47, Jacob, when he's called before the pagan king of Egypt, Pharaoh, Pharaoh asks him, How old are you? And here's this great opportunity, right? For Joseph to tell Pharaoh the goodness of Yahweh, to introduce his God to him, you know, right then and there, and God's goodness in restoring his lost son. But instead, all Jacob says is, The years of my pilgrimage are 130. Few and troubled or difficult and evil have been the days of my life and they don't equal the years of the pilgrimage of my father's. And it's such a dark pronouncement as he looks back over his life after God's just restored his son.

Janet: Yeah. Right.

Keri: But in contrast, we have Joseph, his son, who in just a few chapters later in Genesis 50, declares to his brothers, who sold him into slavery, he says, As for you, you meant it for evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order that he might bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. You know, Joseph had had a much more difficult life than his father, earthly speaking. He had been nearly murdered by his brothers. He'd been sold into slavery, imprisoned for crimes he didn't commit, separated for most of his life from his entire family. And yet he looks back and says, God meant this for my good. And we know that as Jesus says, from the abundance of our heart, our mouth speaks. So we get to see that Joseph has been storing up in his heart, rehearsing the goodness and mercy of the Lord, so that when he does have an opportunity to speak, out comes praise and honor for the Lord. And I want to be like that for as long as I can. I want to use my strength to do that. To think that way now, so that even if one day my reason starts to leave me, it will take me longer to leave those well trodden paths of believing and trusting in the faithfulness of God.

Janet: Oh, that's beautiful.

Keri: A few practical matters I would add is practice godly stewardship of your finances and prepare your legal affairs now.

Jocelyn: That's great advice. That's really good advice.



Keri: It's easy to say, harder to do, right? We don't like thinking about these things a lot of times, but having things like advanced directives, insurance for disability, long term care, an estate and elder law attorney you trust, a plan for when you can no longer handle making your own decisions, preparing those things ahead of time, can really help avoid placing additional pressure on you and your family when you're in the midst of a trial like this later on.

Janet: It's a gift to your family.

Keri: It really is. And to yourself, honestly, because they're going to be able to care for you better.

Janet: Yes, yes.

Keri: If they're not worried about that.

Jocelyn: It's so funny. Back in the olden days, Pastor Viars on the very last Sunday of the year, every year would talk to us about how to keep your affairs in order. And he talked to us about the importance of a death file.

Keri: The heaven file.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Like you're prepared. Like you have all of your accounts written down. And somebody could pick that file up and organize how to take your affairs and close them down. I took his advice and did it. It was such a great sermon every single year.

Janet: It makes me laugh because we have done a lot of that and we have it, in a, um, lockbox. So when we travel together, sometimes Brent's emailing the kids, don't forget, this is where the key is. And this is what's happened. I'm like, wow, that's kind of a depressing thing. We're leaving.

Jocelyn: Bye.

Janet: In case you never see us again. Remember the go into heaven thing is locked in that--.

Jocelyn: Don't you? I find that that's helpful, though. Like, I was actually just thinking the other day, I wonder if I just keeled over dead, if my husband would know how to, alert my boss, you know, like, did they have contact info

Keri: Because that's what would be most important if you keeled over dead.

Jocelyn: Well, like contact information and things. It does matter.

Keri: Yes, true.



Jocelyn: They would need to know.

Janet: Or they could fire you I suppose.

Jocelyn: He just never showed up again.

Keri: Finally, from a practical standpoint, I would also mention something. Our dear mutual friend, Karen Helmer I was talking to her. She's actually caring for both of her parents right now in the thick of their dementias. And she said, you know, reconcile with your loved ones now while you have the opportunity.

Jocelyn: Oh, that is great advice.

Keri: She said, there are just some things I wish I would have said. There are things I wish we could have handled before now that frankly, we just can't anymore because of how their minds aren't working properly anymore. So make those extra efforts to reconcile and be at peace with your loved ones because you never know how long God is going to give you that opportunity.

Janet: Yeah, and it's so important. And we know we should anyway, right? Don't let the sun go down. But we think we can always do it later or I'll hold on to it just a little longer.

Keri: Or do I really need to say that? You know, I don't know.

Janet: Yeah. And some things I can't make both of us be reconciled, but I can know that I've done all I can and I can know I've gone the extra mile to let them know I love them or whatever. So there's no regrets.

Keri: All that's in your power.

Jocelyn: I also think it would be helpful to consider what you think about your end of life care when you're not at the end of life.

Keri: Exactly.

Jocelyn: Like have conversations with your spouse earlier on where you say like, Am I willing to go into a nursing home or here's how I would love it If you could treat me and just there's just a lot of difficult conversations that happen when you're thinking about a dementia patient needing to go into long term care, that if you don't have those good conversations a couple years ago, it makes that really, really hard.

Keri: Especially in the moment when the emotions are high and everybody's already tired and sad.



Jocelyn: And especially if there's children involved, like not little kids, but like the grownup children of this couple

Keri: who may not all have the same opinion.

Jocelyn: That's what I would say. Everybody has a different opinion about how far along the progression is and can we really not care for him at home? And if those conversations had been said several years earlier, it would have led to a lot more unity in the family.

Janet: Yeah. And I think as you're having those to be thinking, because then it can become like we had a family member who said, I just, I want to stay home. I want to stay home. I want to stay home, which I think is a burden you put on your family if they can't.

Jocelyn: Yeah. I agree.

Janet: So what a gift you give your family to say at that point, whatever is going to be best because in the end I'm going to be with Jesus and it's going to be awesome. And in the meantime, whatever, you know, it just takes some of that pressure off of them that whatever it is you need to do is going to be okay.

Jocelyn: And if you can get to that place, that would be really helpful because when you have adamant statements like, don't ever put me in a nursing home. It just places pressure on the spouse and the children that are left behind to do things that are above their capacity to handle. And also in that it's not like going to a nursing home is the only answer either because that's also really financially unsustainable for some people.

Janet: Right. But whatever it is, giving them the freedom.

Jocelyn: Be flexible, have the freedom to make best decisions without needing it to go a certain way.

Keri: Exactly. There can be a lot of pressure put on caregivers to provide a very high level of care and to provide that level of care at home,

Janet: Alone.

Keri: without assistance.

Janet: Yes.

Keri: You know, so as a side note, parents, as you're talking to your adult children, just be aware not to put unrealistic expectations on them for your care. A lot of people do have a lot of fear around, especially moving to a nursing home. And there are a lot of considerations that need to go into that decision. But sometimes having professionals handle those constant medical and



physical needs of daily living can be the best and most loving place for a person with dementia care needs. I actually was talking earlier this week with a very faithful godly woman in our church who has cared for her father in law in his dementia. And recently she had to make the change of putting him into a dementia care home, even though that's not really what she would have preferred. But she told me contrary to all of her fears, Her father in law is much more peaceful, receiving much better care than she could have provided at home. And he's able to socialize. He's able to explore and re explore and re explore.

Janet: It's new every day.

Keri: It's new every day to him. And he's happier, you know,

Janet: praise the Lord. What a gift to her.

Jocelyn: And it frees her up to just be his daughter in law, not his nurse and his caregiver.

Keri: Exactly. She and her husband are finally able to sleep through the night again without tending to his needs, you know, especially all through the night and she's able to just be his daughter and that is a gift that she can give him as well to free herself up to meet his emotional needs because she has outsourced the meeting of his physical needs.

Janet: Love it.

Keri: So that segues really well into, let's talk about caregivers, right? And yeah, the first thing I had was to learn to live within your God given limitations. Janet, you're going to be very familiar with that phrase

Janet: I've heard it before.

Keri: Because you taught it to me. I think, I think in caregiving, we often get pulled to one of two extremes, either growing incredibly weary that we want to give up, not really be involved in the care anymore, or the more common one that I've seen is trying to live outside of those God given limitations,

Janet: Yeah. Do more.

Keri: Perhaps thinking things like I'm the only one who can, you know, I can or I should, or I have to do this alone.

Jocelyn: And that seems like that would lead to incredibly bitter. Oh, for me, anyways.

Keri: Oh, all sorts of Ugly things. Yeah, I, Janet can attest. For me, I really battled this one. My tendency was to not really even try to get help. I really sincerely thought I was the best or only person that could take care of all of the needs of my dad. I thought that that was loving him. And



I When I noticed the toll that it was taking on my physical and spiritual health, I would think, Oh, I just got to stick through it. I just got to bear, I just got to be better, you know?

Janet: Yes, yes.

Keri: But once I took a moment to kind of sit back and think more clearly and listen to my husband I discovered that there were really a lot of resources at my disposal to use. Once I had humbled myself a little and realized, man, I cannot keep going at this pace. I realize sometimes people are looking for help. And for whatever reason, it's just not available. But one regret I do have looking back is that I wasn't more creative or open minded earlier on in the journey as to all the places that help was available, if I had asked or applied for it.

Janet: You got there.

Keri: I did get there eventually, but I do wish that I had done it earlier because honestly, the earlier you ask for help, the better prepared you are to handle as things get more and more difficult as someone deteriorates. And when we make caregiving mistakes, not if, mind you,

Janet: Yes, yes.

Keri: When we make mistakes, we can know that we are not going to be able to mess up God's plan for us or our loved one. His grace is greater than all of our shortcomings and failures. And God will use our weaknesses, not just to refine us, but also those we love and care for as well. So we can trust God with that. My second thing for caregivers is, Janet, I loved the episode you taught on loving their soul because we have to consider what biblical love and honor looks like in our specific caregiving situation. My goal is not to do what I can to appease my loved ones so they're not mad at me or even to appease the rest of my family so they think I'm doing a good enough job. My goal is what would it look like to put my loved one in a position where it is easiest for them to look like Jesus for as long as they possibly can? My third thing for caregivers would be to seek out biblical wisdom. Dementia can involve a lot of instability and gray areas and uncertainty. And you're going to need the wisdom of Solomon at times to know how to handle certain situations. And because we have God's word, we know where wisdom is to be found in fearing and seeking the Lord. and also a multitude of counselors. So seek out others in your church and Christian circles who have walked these roads before. Find a close friend or family member who's close enough to your situation to understand the challenges and help you evaluate your caregiving decisions to ensure you're thinking clearly because frequently they may be able to see things from just a little further outside that we haven't considered. In God's grace, my husband and I were able to sit down with some godly older couples who knew enough about our situation to know the difficulties we were facing, and they were able to offer helpful, gentle opinions on what they thought would be wise next steps.



Jocelyn: I think it's really interesting to think about that in the context of your local church, because what I have seen as I've gotten older is that there is a lot more dementia in our church than I realized, but most people don't talk about it. They're just gently taking care of their loved ones at home. And you never know.

Keri: Behind the scenes.

Jocelyn: But there are people out there that are ahead of you in the walk that could be valuable resources.

Keri: Exactly. Yeah. Very true. And even if you don't have relationships like that, even just starting with reading biblically rich books can be a great place to start. I already mentioned Dr. Mass, second forgetting, but in the show notes, I'll include a whole list of books and resources that we've been able to glean from both practically and spiritually.

Janet: Oh, good. That will be a benefit.

Jocelyn: So Keri has been a guest on several other podcasts. Probably not biblical, more secular podcasts?

Keri: Yeah. That are advocacy based.

Jocelyn: Advocacy based on dementia and dementia care. And so, we're going to link those in the show notes as well. If you'd like to have a just a more complete look at what it's looked like for their family to love someone with dementia.

Keri: A couple of purely practical considerations for caregivers: I would say, remember that this is going to be a marathon and not a sprint. For most people, dementia is not a week long or a month long or even a year long trial. So you have to think through what is a sustainable new normal that you can endure for as long as that stage of caregiving lasts.

Janet: That's wise.

Jocelyn: Very wise.

Keri: And the second practical thing I would say is something that personally took me several years to embrace that I wish I had learned sooner, live in their reality as much as possible. For a long time, I would try to correct my dad's confusion and I would say, Oh dad, that's not actually what's happening or Nope, dad, that's, you got the wrong name. That's so and so. And I had to learn to choose my battles a little more wisely and realize Because of how his brain is malfunctioning, there's pretty much no way I'm going to be able to convince him with any lasting success of how his perception was different from reality, at least at that point in his dementia progression. So most of the time, especially when he hit those moderate stages where he really



was not thinking clearly, the most loving thing I could do was to let him live in whatever his reality was. But remind him of God's love and kindness to him and just try to distract him when and if those dementia induced delusions did cause distress.

Jocelyn: So how would you live in their reality without you embracing lying or participating in lying or in any way violating your conscience?

Keri: Yes, you want to be very careful not to lie to the person, but I think there are ways for you to phrase things and really, I think there are ways for you to figure out what the person is wanting or what they're really afraid of or the desire that's behind the confusion.

Jocelyn: Okay.

Keri: So a lot of times my dad would be very confused when the nurses came in to provide care and he would say things like, they're trying to poison me. And rather than saying, Dad, the nurses are not trying to poison you, you know, you can say things like, I know it's a little scary, I know that you don't really understand why this medicine is necessary, but you know what, these nurses love you, and they have been taking good care of you, and this is to help you feel better, and if you take this, it'll help you feel better. So I think if you can really get past the actual delusion to what they're wanting. A lot of times people with dementia, all they want to do is go home. I just want to go home. I just want to go home. Can I go home tomorrow? And rather than saying, yeah, sure. You can go home tomorrow. You can just say, I know you want to go home. I know, but you know what? You're safe.

Jocelyn: And that's been such a hard thing for me to sort through is like, how can you not argue with them, but also not be a liar.

Keri: Just acknowledge the need, I think, and acknowledge the emotion and the desire behind what they're saying. And you can find ways, especially like there was one situation where my dad was really convinced that one of his relatives was alive and he just missed her. And so. When he would bring that person up, I would say, Oh, I know you miss that person. I know that you love that person and wasn't it great? And then I would switch, I would distract and say, Oh, wasn't it? Wasn't that a great time? Do you remember when this happened? And that was such a wonderful time.

Jocelyn: You could reminisce with them about that.

Keri: And don't ask them to remember. You know, don't say, do you remember when, but I volunteered what I remembered. And a lot of times that's enough to calm down the person out of the delusion. If you acknowledge what they're afraid of or acknowledge what they're wanting, you don't actually have to say, things that are untrue to them.

Jocelyn: That's helpful.



Janet: That is helpful. And I think it's very gracious because we're thinking, you know, he wants to be heard. He wants someone to understand, and you're saying, I understand what's behind that.

Keri: That you're afraid, or --

Janet: Instead of, no, that's not true.

Jocelyn: You're validating the emotion. Like,

Keri: yeah, exactly.

Jocelyn: He's communicating emotion to you.

Keri: Exactly. The same as you would do honestly with a child.

Jocelyn: With a child. Yeah. That's what I was thinking.

Keri: Like that's what you do when a child is afraid of something irrational. You don't say, don't be afraid.

Janet: That's so stupid.

Keri: Think, think a little. You know, you don't do that to a child. You say, honey, I know, I know you're afraid of the dark. I know it's dark in here, but you know what? Jesus is with you. And I think you can do the same thing when people start to lose their ability to think clearly.

Janet: So what would you share with the church? For families seeking to love well those with dementia and their caregivers? How do we come alongside?

Keri: Oh, I love this question because don't we all want to learn how to better be the hands and feet of Jesus to those who are suffering?

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: Yes.

Keri: So first of all, I would say, recognize dementia as a cause of grief and treat the sufferers accordingly. If you haven't had a chance yet, another episode I'm going to rep is Gail McGinty's episode on loving the grieving. Because, oh my word, she did such an amazing job of explaining how to love others well when a tragedy strikes. And dementia is a form of tragedy. And we want to avoid adding additional sorrow to those who are already heavy laden. To whatever extent they're able, a person facing dementia may be battling intense fear and anger, or grief over the loss of the life they had before and the confusing reality they're facing now. Families of those diagnosed with dementia often experience what we call ambiguous grief, which is where no



death has occurred, the person you're grieving is still physically alive, but the person they were before the disease has changed so much and our relationship with them has changed so much that emotionally it feels as if they are already gone.

Janet: You've lost the relationship you had.

Keri: Exactly. Even

Jocelyn: And the person you had.

Keri: Yeah. Even if the physical death is still months or even years away, honestly, for me, that was one of the hardest parts of the dementia journey was continuing to see my dad's face, hear his same voice, but having him be such a completely different person from the dad I knew and loved. And he didn't, he didn't know me anymore. And experiencing that every time I saw him, especially when I was needing to provide difficult care was hard for me emotionally. And actually at his funeral, the grief felt very strange because it was almost as if I had already been grieving him for so many years, and his actual physical death just kind of brought that out in the open, so to speak. And I don't think that's unusual for people who have been caring for a loved one with dementia.

Jocelyn: I agree.

Keri: So just be aware that this kind of grief is likely something they are dealing with and treat them gently as you choose to love them well. Secondly, I would also echo Gail's admonition from her episode to be present. Again, this will look different for different families depending on their exact situation. But these are some things that were helpful for me that helped me feel less alone. People asked how my dad was doing or how I was doing. And it wasn't the only thing they asked about. You know, they also asked about my kids and my husband's job. They didn't reduce my life down to just caregiving for my dad. I started a caring bridge blog some years back as a way to keep people updated in one place. And let me tell you, just seeing people visit that site or comment or heart or text me after I had posted, that helped me so much in feeling like our friends and family hadn't forgotten us, that we were remembered and we were loved. We actually had several people ask if it would be a blessing if they visited with dad or took him on outings, even after his behaviors had reached a point where, frankly, it was a little tricky to interact with him, Janet, you and Brent actually did this where you said, you know, we'd love to visit him if it would be a blessing to you or to him, but if it wouldn't, we trust your judgment and we won't. And that felt so kind and so loving that you asked, that you cared. And sometimes I would say yes to people when they ask those things. And sometimes I would say no, you know, for whatever reason, but just the fact that they asked, I felt so loved that they wanted to be there. And without exception, people who asked that honored my requests either to visit or to hold off. And that was just so loving. One dear couple regularly sent both me and my dad homemade cards with scripture and biblical encouragement. They offered to come with me to dad's medical



appointments and gave me expert advice on how to navigate his specialist doctor's appointments. At one point, the wife even came with me when I had to figure out some legal roadblocks and just having another set of ears in the room to hear what I was hearing,

Janet: That's huge.

Keri: Provide that common sense wisdom was just such a blessing. We had one man who faithfully took my dad to church. Another would regularly volunteer to take him out to lunch, or come with me to medical appointments when my brother or my husband couldn't be there with me. Several ladies provided meals for us, or regular child care when emergencies would pop up. I mean, I wish I could just sit here and list all of the ways that we were loved so well, but my point is this. We had people who didn't just say, Call me if you need anything, or let me know if you need help. I mean, a lot of times when people say those things, it's coming from a heart where they care about you.

Janet: They don't know what else to do.

Keri: And they don't know what else to do. So I understand that. But it was such a deeper blessing to have people specifically offer up their time, their expertise, or their wisdom in areas I needed, and that they asked how best they could use their resources to bless me and my dad. And I think that's what biblical Christlike love really looks like in action.

Janet: I love it. Well, thank you, Keri, for being willing to come and share. And I think there are many people, as we've said, it's a quiet road if you're the caregiver, but there are many people walking that road. And for them to have hope, we pray that this will be a small part of providing that for them.

Keri: Amen.

Janet: And we've mentioned a bunch of resources. We will have all the links, everything in the show notes for you if you need some additional information or want some additional help or hope.

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