

# Coffee with Mom

## Reflection Questions & Thoughts

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### ► Chapter 1 – Putting On Your Oxygen Mask

- I know it sounds counter intuitive, but the best thing you can do for your patient is take care of yourself. What are those non-negotiables needed for your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health? Once you've listed those, put them on your calendar. Now. There won't be time later.
- Journaling has always been therapeutic for me, and I highly recommend it. It creates an outlet to express your emotions, questions, concerns, but keeping a journal also allows you to daily monitor any behavioral or health changes in your loved one. Learn to write down your feelings, thoughts and the daily behavior of your patient. Things happen too fast and too often for anyone to try and remember everything.

### ► Chapter 2 – Meet My Mom

- When you lose your memory, you lose your stories. When you lose your stories, you lose yourself. What stories define your patient? If you had one story to tell the world of who your loved one was, what story would you tell? Remember those stories. Tell them often – especially to yourself and your loved one.
- Don't take the good times for granted. The moments you make right now will be the stories you tell later. Whatever you have to do today to create a memory...do it.

### ► Chapter 3 – Don't Mess with John

- Life is about relationships. What relationships defined your loved one? Who were they and what can they tell you about your loved one?
- What are those stories that define your relationship with your patient?

### ► Chapter 4 – Something's Wrong with Mom

- If your loved one had any other symptoms – a rash, a fever – you wouldn't ignore them. What are/were the obvious things about your loved one's behavior that you just refused to see?
- What kept you from acting? What keeps you from acting now?
- Like my mom, your loved one is counting on you to do what's best for them. What's best – not what feels good – but what's best for your loved one now?

### ► Chapter 5 – Taking the Car Keys

- Sooner or later, you'll have to take the car from your loved one. They will see your action as a disrespectful power play, but the safety of everyone will demand the keys be taken. There are a lot of things you'll need to do to make sure your loved one is safe. What are those things you need to do to insure your loved one's safety?
- Taking the car keys will mean loss of mobility and potential isolation for your patient. What can you do to make sure your loved one still remains connected to their community?

### ► Chapter 6 – Trusting Me to Do the Best I Can

- As the disease begins to take over, more and more decisions will become yours to make. How do you know you are making the correct choices? If you have close family, seek their input, but remember, the choice is yours to make. You know your loved one better than anyone. Use that knowledge to make the choice that is best for them.
- Remember to give yourself some grace. There will be times you feel like you aren't doing it right or question your decisions. Are you doing what you feel is in your loved one's best interest? Then you are doing ok.



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### ► Chapter 7 – Finding a Place for Mom

- One of the hardest decisions along the journey with an Alzheimer's patient is the permanent move to an assisted living home. To help you better prepare, begin researching and asking questions. Are there facilities that families in similar situations recommend? Which facility would better care for your loved one in their specific stage of life? Is there a home that would be easiest on you as the caretaker? A lot of your friends have had to go through this. Talk to them. It's always better if you can do this before you have to make the choice.
- You will experience push back from your loved one on "move in" day and in the days following. Is there an Alzheimer's/dementia caregiver group in your area you can meet with that will provide you support as you begin this new stage of the journey? Find other families who understand what you are experiencing and can walk alongside you.

### ► Chapter 8 – The Confrontation

- There will be days when you are face to face with someone who looks like your loved one, but doesn't act, speak or think like your loved one. These will be hard, trying and emotionally draining days. The first time you experience it, you will be left confused. This is the disease, not your loved one. What can you do to make sure you know the difference?
- While everyone's story is different, everyone's is the same. You will have predictable moments of crisis and unexpected pain. Who in your life knows what you're going through? Who can you talk with?
- When has your loved one made you feel as if you were the one with the illness?

### ► Chapter 9 – I Don't Want to Remember

- Life isn't always pleasant. Sometimes it's hard and the memories aren't pleasant. Do you know the stories your loved one doesn't want to talk about anymore?
- Memories jog other memories. What stories can you tell that will inspire your loved one to remember other stories on their own?
- Your loved one won't always want to talk. Sitting there in silence is perfectly OK. Can you just sit there?

### ► Chapter 10 – This is All Your Fault

- You're going to be blamed for everything. This is the reason you have to know your "why." Why are you doing what you're doing? Why are you making the decisions you are making? If you know your why, you'll be fine. Take some time and think through your "why" for caring for your loved one.
- As you know by now, either through this book or your own personal story, agitation is a behavioral change associated with Alzheimer's and dementia. If you have yet to experience that in your journey, it's coming! Keep in mind that you can't control the outbursts, as you will most likely receive resistance from your loved one. How can you prepare yourself for when these moments come?



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### ► Chapter 11 – What Kind of Son Am I?

- There will be days when you not only don't recognize your loved one, but you also don't recognize yourself. There will be days when it all becomes too hard and you'll want to give up. Don't. This illness affects you and your loved one. Take some time and think through how you're being affected. How are you dealing with this?
- None of your decisions will be easy. They'll all be hard and sometimes, there won't be a right answer. There'll only be the best you can do. Think about those last decisions. Were they the best you could do given the circumstances?

### ► Chapter 12 – When My Mom Cussed Me Out

- As Alzheimer's continues to progress, filters are slowly lost. You are talking with someone who will say anything about anyone, at any time. Sometimes, these remarks will be funny. Sometimes they'll be hurtful, but they will always be surprising. Can you tell the difference between your loved one and the disease in these conversations?
- There will be days when everything seems normal. Your loved one looks normal, remembers moments from the past, and expresses their feelings as they would have in the past...but in an instant, everything changes. Have you learned to be elastic in those moments?

### ► Chapter 13 – Mom Prays When She Plays

- I loved listening to my mom play the piano and watching her as she worshiped Jesus. Those are times spent with Mom that I will treasure for a lifetime. What gift or talent does your loved one have that brings them joy? That makes them forget about their life changes, their confusion, their anger? Take them to that place – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.
- No matter the day, the stage of Alzheimer's or dementia, the confusion or memory loss – Jesus never leaves us. When we can't remember Him, He won't forget us. And He won't forget you either.

### ► Chapter 14 – I Can't Be Dad

- If your story parallels mine in any way, you may be the primary caretaker for your loved one because their spouse died first. While you know you are making the best decisions regarding their care, there will be times that you wonder if your other parent would be making those same decisions. What would they do differently? Would they approve of this or that? Yet, their spouse would only want to know one thing. "Are you loving them the best way you know how?"
- You will be tempted to fill in the gaps in your loved one's life. You can't do that. It's impossible. You can't make up for lost friends, spouses, or health. Are you trying to do that? How can you rethink this in your own life?

### ► Chapter 15 – You Have No Right

- How prepared are you for the moment when you are required to begin making all decisions for your loved one? Is the will in place? Who will become Power of Attorney? Talk with your loved one now to have that paper work finalized. By the way, go ahead and do this for your own family.
- You will experience many emotions ranging from anger to confusion to sadness to loss. You're grieving every day. Remember, you not only have the right to make the decisions about your loved one's care, you have the responsibility. Love always has a cost. Are you willing to pay it?



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### ► Chapter 16 – Take Me Home

- Your patient will always want to go “home.” That’s the one place you can’t take them, but what can you do to make where they are a little more like home?
- One of the difficult parts of change for Mom was losing everything that was “her” - her kitchen, her sewing room, etc. What can you do to help find moments that remind them of themselves? (Getting an ice cream cone always helped my mom).

### ► Chapter 17 – The Only Man Who’ll Need Two Votes to Get to Heaven

- If you are at the stage where you can, sit down with your loved one to get their final wishes in order. Do they want to be buried? If so, where? Are there specific songs, scriptures that have special meaning to them? If so, write those down. These details you can do now will help reduce stress when your loved one passes.
- Each situation is unique. Your journey and decisions may not look like your friend’s journey, and it may not look like mine with my mom. Our end results are the same. Sooner or later, it will just be you. Do what you have to do now to live with yourself then.

### ► Chapter 18 – Until I Can’t Say Goodbye Anymore

- Although this disease can bring the hard and frustrating days with it, always try to remember that each day is a gift. Pray Christ will grant you the grace to cherish every moment – even the hard ones.
- If you are reading this book and are not a caretaker of someone with Alzheimer’s or dementia, chances are you know someone who is. While you may not fully understand or have the answers, that’s ok. You can be a friend. Who are these people in your life? Take time to write an encouraging note to let them know you’re thinking of and praying for their family. Could they use a night with no responsibilities? Bring them a meal. These may seem like little things, but trust me, they’ll make a difference.

### ► Chapter 19 – Things No One Will Tell You (But You Need to Hear Anyway)

- You will have good days and bad days, and some days that are worse than you could be prepared for. Find time following painful moments to grieve, think and regroup.
- There will be days you need someone to talk to, someone who can just listen. You will need a day to cry, a day to be frustrated and a day to celebrate. Do you have a good, trustworthy friend to talk to in your life?

### ► Chapter 20 – Loving Your Parents When You Really Don’t Like Them

- As Christ-followers, we are commanded to honor our parents. Notice, the commandment doesn’t say our parents have to be honorable, only that we have to honor them. Are you being obedient to Christ in this commandment? What do you need to do to honor your parents? Pray Christ will give you the courage to do so.
- Rebuilding a relationship or friendship with your parent will come in small steps. What does that look like for you? In what ways can you make that first step?