

“*Unfailing Love* offers a rich, embodied theology of dementia care rooted in the unwavering presence of God. This collection of devotions doesn’t shy away from the hard realities of dementia; instead, it meets them head-on, interweaving honest expressions of lament with unshakeable hope. Each reflection creates a sacred space where caregivers are invited to find themselves held within God’s steadfast love. This is more than a devotional—it’s a compassionate companion, embracing the complexity of dementia with theological depth and pastoral gentleness. *Unfailing Love* honours the dignity of all involved, reaffirming that even amid dementia’s fragmentation, the God who knows us fully remains present, steadfast and loving.”

Rev. Professor John Swinton, Professor in Practical
Theology and Pastoral Care, University of Aberdeen;
Author, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God*

“I’m delighted to commend these Bible meditations and, at times, heart-rending personal testimonies, not least because my dear father suffered an accident which vastly accelerated the decline of his mind. I watched first-hand as my family and a number of other carers sought to look after him in the midst of dementia. Strikingly, the two best carers he had were sustained by a radiant Christian faith, and it really did make a huge difference in the long hours of caring for my father. So it’s a privilege to recommend this book, which helps to sustain those who are undertaking this incredibly challenging calling.”

Rico Tice, Founder, Christianity Explored Ministries

“This poignant book offers a lifeline of hope and comfort to dementia caregivers. Through its tapestry of bite-sized biblical reflections interwoven with real-life stories, it provides much-needed solace and reminds caregivers that they are not alone.”

Tina English, Founder and Trustee, Embracing Age

“*Unfailing Love* combines a deep, personal grasp of the experience of dementia with a wonderful sense of what Scripture has to say about it. Powerful stories and reflections bring to life emotional challenges and spiritual questions with which readers will readily identify. These devotions show readers that they are not alone, that lament and questioning are themes of Scripture and that God’s promises are true and dependable.”

Julia Burton-Jones, Training and Development Lead,
Anna Chaplaincy, BRF Ministries

“I wish this book had been available as I watched my mother become so helpless through her aggressive form of Alzheimer’s (followed by my father’s gentler dementia). It has given me a renewed capacity to engage and empathise with those experiencing dementia, through the range of stories Robin presents. His beautiful simplicity makes this devotional so readable and engaging—a labour of love that will help us love those we care for.”

Rev. Dr Jem Hovil, Executive Trustee, BUILD Partners

“These 30 devotions, which draw on real-life stories and experiences from dementia caregivers, have been beautifully written. Many of these reflections have moved me to tears, and I can’t recommend *Unfailing Love* highly enough for anyone that supports and cares for a loved one who is suffering with dementia.”

Pippa Cramer MBE, Pastoral Care and Seniors Minister,
Holy Trinity Church, Claygate

“I’ve learned in my own mother’s Alzheimer’s journey that dementia is (as the author of Ecclesiastes described) a crooked line that can’t be made straight. If you’re exhausted by the failure to problem-solve, wearied by the toll of caregiving, and looking for God in this valley of the shadow of death, take up this book. It will comfort you to remember God carries us as we care.”

Jen Pollock Michel, Author, *In Good Time*

Robin Thomson

Unfailing Love

The logo features a stylized, curved line above the text, resembling an open book or a wing.
thegoodbook
COMPANY

Unfailing Love

© Robin Thomson, 2025

Published by:
The Good Book Company



thegoodbook.com | thegoodbook.co.uk
thegoodbook.com.au | thegoodbook.co.nz

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Emphasis added is the author's own.

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher.

Robin Thomson has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as author of this work.

Cover design by Drew McCall

ISBN: 9781802543001 | JOB-008067 | Printed in India

Contents

Introduction	9
Part I: We Have a Heavenly Father Who is Both Loving and Powerful	
1. Knowing God as Father	14
2. Knowing God's Character	17
3. God's Wise and Fatherly Purpose	21
4. The Lord is Good	25
5. Receiving from Him Daily	28
6. Have You Not Heard?	33
7. Lamenting and Believing go Together	38
Part II: We Are Persons Made in God's Image	
8. Personal Knowledge	46
9. Person-Centred Care	51
10. I Am Called By Your Name	56
11. To Grey Hairs I Will Carry You	60
12. Love Wins	63

Part III: When We Suffer, God Is With Us

13. How Long?	70
14. Where Are You, God?	75
15. Wake Up, God	80
16. Why Me? Why Not Me?	85
17. With the Three in the Fiery Furnace	88
18. Death's Bite Remains	93

Part IV: We Have a Hope Beyond This Life

19. Going Home	98
<i>Should We Pray for Healing for Those Living With Dementia?</i>	101
20. I Shall See Your Face	105
21. The Weight of Glory	108
22. Not As She Will Be	113
<i>Which Person Will We See in the Resurrection Life?</i>	116

Part V: We Are Part of a Loving Community

23. You Did it to Me	120
24. Clay Pots	123

25. We Need Friends	126
26. All Things in Common	130
27. When One Member Suffers...	135
28. The Lord Will Keep You	140
29. Love as I Have Loved	145
30. The Last Word	150
Appendix: Responding to Dementia: Helpful Books and Resources	153
Endnotes	167

Introduction

Caring for someone you love through a chronic illness like dementia is a huge privilege but a heavy load too. You do it gladly but find it draining and sometimes overwhelming. You might be facing your experience with courage and hope, or you may have reached a stage where you feel you have little or no respite. You may have good days, but perhaps that is all they are, in the context of long months and years. What does the gospel say to us in this situation?

Here are 30 short reflections on simple gospel truths. At the heart of them all is the assurance of God's unfailing, steadfast love.

But I trust in your unfailing love. (Psalm 13:5, NIV)

God's love is promised to us, and it will never change. We will explore what that means in the context of dementia.

These devotions arise from reflecting on God's word during my own experience when my wife, Shoko, was living with Alzheimer's and I cared for her over a period of nearly seven years. I have written our full story elsewhere,¹ so here I have simply drawn on our experience in some of

the reflections, along with the experiences of many others. Shoko died of heart failure in 2018.

How Dementia Affects Us

Dementia has many patterns; there are many kinds of dementia.² And our brains are so wonderfully complex that disease affects them in almost infinite ways. Everybody's experience is different, though there are common themes. It's fundamental to remember that people living with dementia are still persons, with abilities, feelings and emotional capacities that persist beyond the limitations in their cognitive or physical ability. A diagnosis of dementia is not the end. There is still much to live for and experience. You will read accounts of joy and opportunity, as well as loss, in the stories here.

In all of this, caregivers—generally family or friends—have a vital place. Caregiving is an amazing role and, for many, a privilege. But it is also demanding, and in a recent survey 54% of caregivers said they were stressed most of the time.³ None of us would have chosen this role though we carry it out with love and commitment.

It's important to remember that not all those living with dementia need, or want, somebody to care for them. They want to continue being independent and doing what they can for as long as they can. Caring doesn't mean doing everything for the other person. It does mean being available to serve in whatever way is best for them.

These devotions are mostly from the perspective of those who are primary carers for somebody living with dementia. But they are not limited to them. Dementia's effects begin with the person living with dementia but, as when a stone drops into a pool, they ripple out to their family and friends

and all their networks. Some talk very openly together about their situation. Others don't or can't. While attitudes are changing in our societies, there is still fear, incomprehension and a preference not to get involved.

Sharing Stories

I am very grateful to those who have shared the stories which you will find interspersed in this book. You may find some of the stories hard to read. All of them come from people whose faith in God is strong and has kept them going. But they have described their situations as they were, sometimes expressing their faith, sometimes simply expressing their pain. They are like the Old Testament psalmists who described their feelings so graphically. Sometimes they saw God's intervention or received his comfort; sometimes not at that time. We agreed not to identify anybody, so all the names have been changed (except for my wife, Shoko).

This book is not intended to replace the many resources that are available for help with dementia (see the appendix for links to a few). My only real advice is to encourage you to build your support network, and perhaps this book may help towards that.

The truths of the gospel that we will look at may well be familiar to you. Believing in these promises gives a sure foundation for our lives. But they will be severely tested through our experiences of caring and of chronic illness. I hope you will find God's strength as you read and reflect on your experience with dementia. You can read these devotions at your own pace and in any order. After each one there are questions for reflection, and you may find it helpful to write your own thoughts in response.

Part I

We Have a Heavenly
Father Who Is Both
Loving and Powerful

Day 1

Knowing God as Father

When you pray, say: “Father...”

Luke 11:2

Luke’s version of the Lord’s Prayer begins so simply. To call God “Father” expresses faith in somebody who is connected to us, who cares for us and who has power to intervene in our lives.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus taught the same prayer in a different context and added the words “in heaven” (Matthew 6:9), reminding us of the Father’s authority. That gives us two sides of the truth about God—he is a loving and dependable Father who is also all-powerful. Whatever happens is under his control, even when we don’t understand how. That is a very secure framework for our lives. For me, and perhaps for you too, it’s the framework I grew up with, learning it from my parents.

But what happens when that framework is shaken? When

things seem out of control? What if God is all powerful but doesn't love? Or if God is very loving but doesn't really have control?

In the early days of my wife's Alzheimer's, there were times when her behaviour was very strange. She became paranoid about things being stolen and suspicious of people for no good reason (as far as I could see). It led to huge tensions, arguments between us, and embarrassing and painful exchanges with others. At one point the police even became involved.

I didn't understand that this was part of the disease, and I became more and more frustrated, not knowing how to respond. I felt angry and helpless at the same time. I remember days when I literally didn't want to get out of bed in the morning. I was so confused about what was happening to Shoko, and so disturbed.

Often I just lay there and said, "Father". I was putting it all into my heavenly Father's hands. I was saying, "I don't know what to do, but I trust you. You have to help us now."

The Lord's Prayer begins by reminding us of who it is that we are praying to—our Father in heaven. Then we pray that all will acknowledge his greatness ("hallowed be your name"), accept his rule ("Your kingdom come") and fulfil his will ("your will be done"). When we pray like this, we are reminded of who God is, and we align our wills and desires with his will and purpose. The pressures and stress that we are facing fall into a greater perspective.

Some of us may have had a difficult relationship with our own fathers, which makes it harder to understand this kind of relationship with God. In that case, the best place to start is with Jesus' words about the Father as our

reference, rather than our own experience. Matthew 6, which contains the Lord's Prayer, is full of references to the Father. He knows all about us, as we see in verses 1, 4, 6 and 18. And this knowledge is not impersonal, like a CCTV camera recording our movements or an algorithm controlling them. It's very personal:

Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

(v 8)

We don't need to remind him about our needs, but he invites us to speak with him, and he loves to have us ask.

Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

(v 32)

He knows that we need food and clothes, and he provides them, just as he feeds the birds and puts flowers in the fields (v 26-33). We can trust him. He is the heavenly Father, who does love me and who is in control.

Reflect

As you face your experience with dementia, what help are you looking for from your heavenly Father? Do you have questions you want to ask him? Or are you just longing for him to do something about your situation?

Write down your needs—remembering that he already knows them. And tell him honestly your current questions, doubts, and pressures.

Then say, "Father".

