**Getting Out of God’s Way**

**(Post is 652 words)**

Our great God never wastes anything. No struggle is fruitless. No pain futile. No challenge in vain. God can work in and through every situation He allows into our lives - even the worst of circumstances - to bring about our good and His glory.

My caregiving journey was still fairly new when I realized God wanted to use the experience to do something in me. If I would cooperate, my relationship with my father-in-law would be a tool in His hand to shape my character and refine my faith.

When Wayne’s dad first moved in with us, he was fairly independent. But as time passed, he needed us more and more. With Wayne commuting a long distance to work, much of the responsibility logically fell to me. But Pappaw’s growing dependence exposed the rough places in my character and areas of spiritual immaturity.

So many things bubbled to the surface – like selfishness, impatience, and shallowness. Every day seemed to reveal another layer of my sinful flesh. Irritation quickly rose up when a last-minute doctor’s appointment meant I had to cancel a lunch date. And instead of responding to his occasional harsh words with gentleness and grace, I sometimes uttered sharp words of frustration.

The demands and pressures of parenting my father-in-law did not cause these sinful attitudes and actions. The relationship merely jostled my heart, causing what was already there to spill out (Matthew 12:34).

My friend Stephanie had the same experience caring for her mother-in-law Louise. “I know this journey isn’t just about Louise. It’s also about me. God wants to draw me closer to Himself. He’s using these trials of caregiving to chisel off attitudes and behaviors not in line with His will.”

In our human weakness, we ache for our struggles to end. We long for the hardness of life – for ourselves and our parents – to ease. Yet God wants much more for us than an easy life in this world. He wants to make us like His Son (Romans 8:28-30). He wants our lives to bring Him glory and point others to Jesus.

God will use every possible means to rid our lives of sin and shape us into the likeness of Christ. One of His primary shaping tools is trials (1 Peter 1:6-7). In God’s skillful hands, the challenge of caring for our parents performs like a chisel on our hearts and souls, shaving off sinful rough spots, cutting notches, creating gentle curves, and forming smooth bevels.

Yet, sometimes, I’m my own worst enemy. Rather than submitting myself to the Master Craftsman and trusting His refining process, I fight God’s purposeful work. I doubt God’s goodness and faithfulness. I complain that He isn’t working. That He doesn’t care. That surely, He doesn’t see our plight.

Do you ever feel the same way? Too often, God’s children walk through our days near-sighted. We only see the struggles, challenges, and trials at hand, forgetting that the eternal glory awaiting us far outshines these light and momentary troubles (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Oh believer, be assured, God knows your every physical need and struggle as you care for your parent. He sees your sleepless nights, your tired muscles, and your frayed emotions. He hears your groans, your sighs, and your prayers. He is keenly aware that you are often overworked, overstressed, and overlooked. He not only knows it all, He cares. He cares that you hurt and grieve for yourself and your parents.

This temporary struggle – no matter how difficult – cannot compare to God’s eternal purposes for you and your parent. Keep your eyes on the prize of God’s glorious salvation (1 Peter 1:9). Rest in the assurance that God will not waste a single tear. And embrace the joy of Christ. It’s yours today.

*Can you see God working in the midst of your trials? In what ways have you fought God’s refining process?*

*Kathy Howard calls herself a “confused southerner.” Raised in Louisiana, she moved with her engineer husband around the U.S. and Canada. She says “pop” instead of “Coke” and “you guys” as often as “y’all.” But she’s still a southern girl at heart! Kathy encourages women to live an unshakeable faith by standing firm on our rock-solid God no matter life’s circumstances. Kathy, the author of eight books, including the new daily devotional* [*“30 Days of Hope When Caring for Aging Parents,*](http://www.kathyhoward.org/books/30-days-of-hope-when-caring-for-aging-parents/)*” has a Master’s in Christian Education. She is passionate about Bible study and discipleship and loves sharing at women’s events and retreats. Kathy is also a regular contributor to Crosswalk.com, Hello Mornings, Arise Daily, and more. Kathy and her “mostly retired” husband live in the Dallas/Ft Worth area near family. They have three married children, four grandsons, and three dogs – one of them on purpose. She provides free discipleship resources and blogs regularly at* [*www.KathyHoward.org*](http://www.KathyHoward.org)*. Kathy also connects with women at* [*Facebook*](https://www.facebook.com/KathyHowardUnshakeableFaith/)*,* [*Pinterest*](https://www.pinterest.com/kathyhhoward/)*, and* [*Instagram*](https://www.instagram.com/mkathoward/)*.*

***30 Days of Hope When Caring for Aging Parents***

Struggling to navigate the parent/child role reversal? Kathy Howard’s new book, *30 Days of Hope When Caring for Aging Parents*,explores God’s Word to find hope and encouragement for the wide range of physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual challenges the adult child caregiver may experience. Each of the 30 devotions – which can also serve as a guide for a daily quiet time – includes a Scripture passage, a real-life illustration, biblical commentary/application, and questions for reflection.

**(Alternate bio)**

*A former “cultural Christian,” Bible teacher Kathy Howard now lives an unshakeable faith for life and encourages other women to embrace real, authentic faith. Kathy is the author of 8 books, including* [*“30 Days of Hope When Caring for Aging Parents”*](http://www.kathyhoward.org/books/30-days-of-hope-when-caring-for-aging-parents/)*. Find spiritual encouragement and free discipleship helps on* [*her website*](http://www.kathyhoward.org/)*.*