

The Purpose of Caregiving



Whenever people think of caregiving, many will think about the enormous sacrifices one has to make to cater to the person in need. This perception can lead to overly high expectations on oneself, leading to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness while struggling to care for a loved one. The task of caregiving then becomes so daunting that many will feel unable to cope with the stress of caregiving.

If you are feeling the same way, you are not alone. I have counselled many caregivers over the years and many of them have shared similar experiences. What kept me hopeful throughout these years was a journey with my ex-client, James (not his real name).

James was a caregiver to his wife, who was suffering from moderate dementia. His wife displayed eccentric behaviours and could not remember him. James struggled with caregiving daily and would often ask himself a list of “why me” questions. He would also frequently contemplate giving up but his strong catholic faith discouraged him from doing so.

Through counselling, we explored his faith about marriage and how it had helped him overcome the caregiving challenges he faced. This helped James to better understand his purpose of caring for his wife at a deeper level.

He shared that people tend to think negatively of the word ‘suffering’, which resulted in us being blinded by the negative emotions and thoughts, and prevented us from seeing hope. If we allow ourselves to see suffering differently, we will feel very much at peace and will tend to cope better. Each ‘suffering’ symbolises a purpose. It is a journey for us to discover what is important to us.

To James, his caregiving purpose is to have a second go at the missed opportunities of love, time and relationship during their younger days. Instead of seeing his wife as his responsibility or burden, he chose to see her as his life companion.

James’s revelation taught me about how ‘sacrifices’ stems from love, ‘suffering’ can be purposeful, and ‘caregiving’ is about loving with purpose.



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