

BEING WITH GOD



A Bible and prayer guide
for people with dementia

WORDS OF FAITH



‘For any Christian who has sat alongside a person with dementia ... this collection of resources will be a great gift...’

Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

Includes
complimentary
CD of specially
compiled hymns
and songs

Also in the **Being with God** series: *Words of hope, Words of peace.*

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 Scripture Union is an international Christian charity working with churches in more than 130 countries providing resources to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to children, young people and families and to encourage them to develop spiritually through the Bible and prayer. As well as coordinating a network of volunteers, staff and associates who run holidays, church-based events and school Christian groups, Scripture Union produces a wide range of publications and supports those who use their resources through training programmes.

‘DRAW NIGH TO GOD,
AND HE WILL
DRAW NIGH TO YOU.’

James 4:8, KJV

FOR RON AND JUDY

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	05
WELCOME AND THANKS	06
INTRODUCTION	
A word for carers	07
How to use this guide	08
DAILY BIBLE READINGS	10
BIBLE AND PRAYER GUIDE	
Jesus – words...	11
...and stories	25
God's heroes – faithful lives	33
FURTHER RESOURCES	45
Useful contact details	46
CD: WORDS OF FAITH	
Hymns and songs, with track numbers	48
Acknowledgements	48

FOREWORD

Dementia is a cruel robber. It robs people of their memory, their personality, their ability to recognise and react normally even with partners and family they've loved for years. In short, it robs them of themselves and the life they've known. Confusion and strangeness replace the familiar and safe. They have a whole lifetime of experience and knowledge behind them – yet that knowledge is tantalisingly beyond their mind's grasp.

The knowledge which escapes them may well include a lifelong faith in God and a love of his word in the Bible which has been a constant source of strength and reassurance during challenging times in the past. However, with the onset of dementia, that comfort is lost to them as much-loved biblical stories, prayers and hymns are frustratingly hard to remember.

With its carefully chosen mix of familiar words and evocative music, this imaginative and practical resource is nothing less than a Godsend – a nudge to the memory which at its most obvious level is a delightful way to aid conversation and recall, but at its deepest, opens, for the person with dementia, a real connection to faith and the God who has never stopped loving them.

Pam Rhodes

Presenter of BBC's Songs of Praise,
Patron of Methodist Homes for the Aged

WELCOME AND THANKS

We hope that you will find this Bible and prayer guide brings you God's blessing and comfort – whether you are the person with dementia or you are a 'carer'.

This resource has been developed specifically for people with dementia, but older people who are struggling with memory loss may also find it helpful.

We are so grateful for the help and encouragement of many in the creation of this resource. **Margaret Goodall**, Chaplaincy Advisor for **MHA**, has given constant encouragement as our expert consultant. We've also much appreciated help and advice from **Christian Council on Ageing** and **Alzheimer's Society**. Individuals facing the challenges of dementia have given invaluable feedback on the content. We are especially grateful for the support and encouragement of **Pam Rhodes**, presenter of BBC's **Songs of Praise**, Patron of MHA.

Our thanks too to all those who have given towards the development of these resources – including: MHA, Christian Council on Ageing and Social Interface Ltd – whose generosity has helped enormously in the creation of this resource.

Words of faith: the CD

With its familiar hymns and evocative performances, this CD has been specially produced and compiled for inclusion in this guide. It would not have been possible without the generous support of Gordon Lorenz, music producer, and of the professional and highly gifted performers he has brought together. Our thanks to all of those who been involved in these recordings, and for their great creativity and sensitivity in bringing us this music.

Our prayer is that – as you use this guide – you will know that God is close to you, as you draw near to him.

'Tricia Williams

Editor

INTRODUCTION

A WORD FOR CARERS

Some older people, either because they are living with dementia or because of age, are no longer able to join in public worship. The following pages offer a way to help them reconnect with the Christian faith and story.

People with dementia are sometimes thought of as no longer being able to worship. But even when people have not spoken for a while – as those involved in their care will know – they are still able to join in with familiar prayers and hymns. We need to offer clues as to what is going on, a context for worship, and cues in the words that are so familiar, in order to help them join in.

As the effects of dementia increase, it is more difficult to interact with others and to be understood. But while thoughts and words may be confused, feelings and emotions experienced are still real. So if we can meet people on an emotional or ‘feeling’ level instead of the rational or thinking level, then we meet people who are like us but who need help to be part of the world around them.

I hope that by using this Bible and prayer guide, people who could be isolated by dementia, will be helped to feel once again part of the Christian community, and be reminded that God loves and accepts them as they are – something we all need reminding of.

We believe in a God who can reach beyond our reasoning and understanding of words to touch us again with his love.

Margaret Goodall
Chaplaincy Advisor, MHA

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

SETTING THE SCENE

In order to use this Bible and prayer guide to best effect it will be important to 'set the scene' so that the person with dementia can recognise what is going to happen. Imagine what it's like to wake up in a strange place. For a moment all is odd and 'wrong'. For those with dementia it is always like this. So, as carers, we need to do all we can to help them focus.

Using the same setting each time we use this guide can help provide a way of 'cueing in' and be a reminder of what is about to take place. For example, a small table, with a white cloth and a Bible, cross or prayer book could make any room into the place where we regularly take time to 'be with God'. If possible, use the same Bible each time.

The same words used to introduce the session could become a familiar part of this time and again provide a cue into worship. The words need to be simple and easy to remember, affirming God's presence. For example:

God is here
God is always here

God is with us
God is always with us

EACH DAY'S DEVOTIONAL

Each day's devotional follows a regular format which it is hoped, for some, may become a familiar prompt for this special time with God. We understand that each person with dementia (or elderly person struggling with memory loss) is an individual and will be at different stages in facing the challenges of dementia or age. For this reason, the devotionals aren't intended to be scripts. Feel free to take the suggestions here and use what is helpful or let them act as springboards to ideas and words which will help you 'come near to God' in your particular situation. Each day's outline includes:

Prayer

The prayer at the beginning picks up on one of the themes in the Bible verses. If thanks or prayer needs are mentioned, you might like to add specific things which are known to you and relevant to your particular situation. If helpful, encourage the person you are with to join in saying the 'Amen' at the end of the prayer.

Read

Try to use the same Bible every time you use these devotionals. If possible, choose one that the person with dementia is familiar with. It's hoped that the Bible and this booklet will be helpful cues for this time.

You might choose to use the whole Bible passage given or just the verse selection printed – whichever is easiest or most appropriate for your situation.

Talk about...

This section aims to start you thinking and talking about the Bible verses. It picks up words and ideas from the Bible passage to prompt thinking about the themes in ways which might help bring a sense of God's presence. Choose ideas that are appropriate and helpful in your situation.

Pray

You may like to say the Lord's Prayer each time you use one of these daily devotionals. It will probably have been familiar to many people and they may enjoy saying it aloud. It might be useful to use a traditional form of the prayer, for example:

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and
the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn or song

You might like to sing together a favourite hymn of your own choice, or listen to the suggested track from the CD – created especially for this resource – included at the back of this volume.

The CD with its wide range of music – choral, brass band, children's choirs, a gospel group and soloists – has a hymn or song (or even a chorus from Sunday school days!) which links in with the theme of each day's Bible verses. You could sing along, or invite others to come and sing with you. However you choose to use it, we hope that these evocative recordings will bring God's comfort to those using this material.

Cues and clues box

The various suggestions are intended to act as cues and clues to the ideas and themes of the Bible verses. You might like to look at a picture, hold an object, listen to music or even paint in response to the day's devotional. Choose or adapt as most appropriate to the person with dementia, or older person, using this Bible and prayer guide.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

JESUS – WORDS...

- 1 The Beatitudes
Matthew 5:3–10
- 2 You are the light of the world
Matthew 5:14–16
- 3 The Lord's Prayer
Matthew 6:9–13
- 4 Do not worry
Matthew 6:25–27
- 5 See how the lilies of the field grow
Matthew 6:28–34
- 6 Ask, seek, knock
Matthew 7:7,8
- 7 The house on the rock
Matthew 7:24–27
- 8 Rest for the weary
Matthew 11:28–30
- 9 I am with you
Matthew 28:19,20
- 10 I am the Bread of Life
John 6:35
- 11 I am the Good Shepherd
John 10:14,15
- 12 Do not let your hearts be troubled
John 14:1–4
- 13 My peace I give you
John 14:25–27

...AND STORIES

- 14 The sower
Luke 8:4–8
- 15 The mustard seed
Mark 4:30–32

- 16 Hidden treasure
Matthew 13:44–46
- 17 The Good Samaritan
Luke 10:30–37
- 18 The lost sheep
Luke 15:3–7
- 19 The lost coin
Luke 15:8–10
- 20 The prodigal son
Luke 15:11–24

GOD'S HEROES – FAITHFUL LIVES

- 21 Noah and the ark
Genesis 6:9–22
- 22 Noah and the rainbow
Genesis 8:1,15–19;9:1,14–16
- 23 The call of Abram
Genesis 12:1–9
- 24 Joseph and his dreams
Genesis 37:1–11
- 25 Moses in the bulrushes
Exodus 2:1–10
- 26 Moses and the burning bush
Exodus 3:1–12
- 27 Moses and the Red Sea
Exodus 14:10,13,21,22,26–31
- 28 The call of Samuel
1 Samuel 3:1–10
- 29 David and Goliath
1 Samuel 17:34–40,45–50
- 30 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego
Daniel 3:13–28
- 31 Daniel in the lions' den
Daniel 6:10–16,19–23

THE BEATITUDES

CUES AND CLUES

Some of the following might help as you read today's verses from the Bible and pray.

Pictures

Photos of happy times; being held close by a parent.

Objects

A scarf or hot-water bottle (or something else to help you think about comfort).

To do

Extend a comforting gesture if appropriate (eg an arm around their shoulders).

PRAYER

Thank you, Father God, for your comfort and blessing. *Amen.*

READING Matthew 5:3–10

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Matthew 5:3,4

TALK ABOUT...

- Not having much money
- Happy things and the good things in your life
- Examples of being comforted (eg someone you've seen crying)
- Times of being comforted (eg someone hugging you)
- God, like a parent, comforts us

PRAY

'Our Father, which art in heaven...'

HYMN OR SONG

'Praise God from whom all blessings flow'
(CD, *Words of faith*, track 1)

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

CUES AND CLUES

Some of the following might help as you read today's verses from the Bible and pray.

Pictures

Photos of people doing good for others (eg parents; people serving others in some way; charity workers; nurses etc).

Objects

A torch or candle.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, help us to share your light with others today. *Amen.*

READING Matthew 5:14–16

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:14–16

TALK ABOUT...

- Light, torches, candles
- Memories of being in the dark (eg at night, in wartime blackouts, in a cave)
- Good deeds – your own or others' for you
- Bringing God's light to others (eg a smile, good deeds you've done for others)
- Thankfulness to God for his light that we see in others

PRAY

'Our Father, which art in heaven...'

HYMN OR SONG

'Jesus wants me for a sunbeam'
(CD, *Words of faith*, track 2)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CUES AND CLUES

Some of the following might help as you read today's verses from the Bible and pray.

Pictures

School assembly; your own church service; a picture of praying hands (eg *Praying Hands* by Albrecht Dürer).

Objects

A fresh loaf of bread.

To do

Tear and share the bread.

PRAYER

Father God, thank you that you hear us when we pray, the prayers we say aloud and the unspoken prayers of our hearts. Amen.

READING Matthew 6:9–13

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

Matthew 6:9–13

TALK ABOUT...

- Bread, other food
- Places you've heard the Lord's Prayer being said regularly (eg at school assembly, in church, in your family)
- What you pray about; how God has answered your prayers
- Thankfulness to God

PRAY

'Our Father, which art in heaven...'

HYMN OR SONG

'Father, hear the prayer we offer'
(CD, *Words of faith*, track 3)

DO NOT WORRY

CUES AND CLUES

Some of the following might help as you read today's verses from the Bible and pray.

Pictures

Birds; fashion pictures; barns full of hay or straw.

Objects

A cross to hold as you sing or listen to the song; fashion and consumer magazines.

To do

You could put some food on a bird table, hang up seeds or even go out and feed ducks on a local pond.

PRAYER

Lord God, we bring all our worries and anxieties to you now. Help us to leave them with you. *Amen.*

READING Matthew 6:25–27

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Matthew 6:25,26

TALK ABOUT...

- Birds (especially if this is a particular interest)
- Clothes, fashion
- What you worry about
- God gives us all we need
- Thankfulness to God

PRAY

'Our Father, which art in heaven...'

HYMN OR SONG

'All your anxiety'

(CD, *Words of faith*, track 4)

SEE HOW THE LILIES OF THE FIELD GROW

CUES AND CLUES

Some of the following might help as you read today's verses from the Bible and pray.

Pictures

Flowers and gardens; beautiful scenes from nature.

Objects

Flowers, especially those you know are favourites – if possible with scent.

To do

Read these Bible verses and pray outside where you can see flowers; hold and smell sweet-scented flowers.

PRAYER

Father God, thank you for the beauty of your creation. Thank you for providing all that we need today. Amen.

READING Matthew 6:28–34

See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field ... will he not much more clothe you ...? So do not worry ... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
Matthew 6:28–31,33

TALK ABOUT...

- Flowers; gardens; creation
- Today – what's happening now
- God being with us today
- Don't worry – God knows about all our needs

PRAY

'Our Father, which art in heaven...'

HYMN OR SONG

'All things bright and beautiful'
(CD, *Words of faith*, track 5)

BEING WITH GOD

WORDS OF FAITH

A Bible and prayer guide for people with dementia ...
and those struggling with memory loss.

- 31 daily devotionals. Themes include:

Jesus – words and stories

God's heroes – faithful lives

- 'Cues and clues' box to help engagement with the day's theme.
- Inspirational CD with a hymn or song for every day.
- 'Expert' introduction and 'How to use...' section.

Expert consultant: Margaret Goodall, MHA, Christian Council on Ageing.

Foreword by Pam Rhodes Presenter of BBC TV's 'Songs of Praise',

Patron of Methodist Homes for the Aged.



'With its carefully chosen mix of familiar words and evocative music, this imaginative and practical resource is nothing less than a Godsend.'

Pam Rhodes



'Any Christian who has sat alongside a person with dementia – especially someone deeply loved – will know ... the anguish of wondering how to share the Good News, to speak out of a faith that is both confident and sensitive. This collection of resources will be a great gift in such circumstances and I am very grateful to those who have prepared it.'

Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

Other titles in this series: *Words of Faith, Words of Peace*

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