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Lest We Forget

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FAMILY TIES

Lest We Forget

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. —Psalm 103:2

Fortunate me! I spent most of my childhood years with my great-grandmother in my life! She was warm and cheerful. She taught me many things, and I knew she loved me. When I was in the eighth grade, we moved. I didn't see my great grandmother for nearly a year. The event that brought us together was my grandfather's funeral.

I was excited to see her, but she didn't seem the same to me. I later heard someone say she had asked, upon seeing me in the room, "Who is that dark-haired girl?"

We hadn't even heard of Alzheimer's back in the late '50s, but I came to understand she had developed a mild form of dementia. In a way, I lost her, but I have never forgotten her! I continue to remember the joy she brought into my childhood. I must admit that when I think about it, I'm still a bit sad she didn't know who that "dark-haired girl" was many years ago.

Our fears surrounding Alzheimer's and dementia are that we will forget those we love, or suffer from their loss of remembering us. But sometimes we just forget that, although perplexing, it doesn't mean life as we've known it is over.

Recently, I read about Dorothy who made news in a British newspaper. The article began, "Heartfelt commiseration to Dorothy Naylor of Plymouth, whose recent daytrip to Bridgewater was spoiled when her husband, Oliver, left her on the forecourt of a garage ... and drove seventeen miles before noticing his wife was not in the car."

"I couldn't believe he had gone without me!" she reported.

In their seventies, the couple had pulled into a filling station to change a flat tire. After replacing the tire, Mr. Naylor drove off, and didn't notice Dorothy's absence until he arrived in another town. After stopping, he asked Dorothy a question.



When she didn't answer, he turned around and discovered he had left her behind. You may be thinking, *How could he do that?* Well, one reason may be that she had been sitting in the back seat where it was more comfortable; and, since they just hadn't chatted for those 17 miles, he didn't realize he had left her.

Along with aging comes some memory loss, and some memory loss is normal. However, if you find yourself (or someone you love) having trouble thinking things through, retracing your steps, being at a loss for words, or losing a sense of place and time (going for a walk and being confused as to how to get home), it's never a bad idea to discuss this with a physician. The following can be factors in memory loss as well: stress, depression, metabolic diseases (thyroid, kidney failure, diabetes), vitamin B-12 deficiency, and effects of prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

May we, like David, be quick to remember the good things the Lord does for us, and thank him. May we be quick to remember the good things others do for us, and remember to thank them as well.

And, remember, check to see if your spouse and kids are all in the car — no matter your age!

Susan E. Murray is professor emerita of behavioral sciences at Andrews University, certified family life educator, and licensed marriage and family therapist.