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## “God’s love is perfected in us”

### The challenge of giving and caring

We are all so different. For some, caring for others seems to flow naturally from a loving and affectionate nature – words and actions just spill over. For others it’s a little more difficult. This doesn’t mean a lack of care. Sleepless nights, grief filled prayers for our brothers and sisters still manifest from a heart that is truly touched, but the ease of giving and caring practically is challenging.

We all love those exuberant people that bring joy and light into a room, they have all the right words, the gentle or bracing touch and the confidence to give freely without any self-doubt. But giving and receiving is a complex thing. There is a two-way co-operation and respect required. Understanding and respecting the specific needs and wants of the person is imperative.

### Severe stress

In 2020 my father passed away when the seriousness of the Covid pandemic was starting to become apparent. The borders closed – I couldn’t attend his funeral or see him before he passed and his house and all my parents belongings were left ‘as is’, put on hold until travel could open up again. Two months later I was diagnosed with an aggressive breast cancer and started treatment immediately. It required chemotherapy, radiation, surgery and a year of targeted therapy. It was a difficult year, the treatment was tough with numerous side effects, allergic reactions to the drugs required day long infusions, mind blowing fatigue and pain over this entire period. All this time, the frustration of being unable to organise my parent’s belongings also weighed on me.

### Give in to God – totally!

I had coasted along for years in a fairly unproblematic Christian life. But 2020/2021 brought me to my knees literally, in emotional pain and complete dependence – it opened my faith up to raw inspection and challenge. I had to just give in to God totally. I was finally able to say “I love You’ to God. It was the best thing that ever happened to me!

During this time, I pulled back into myself, both from a physical need and a mental need. I couldn’t cope with people, with talk or opinions. I communicated with my God and fiercely focussed on my relationship with Him and getting on with healing. I was also on the receiving end of accepting care from my brothers and sisters. There certainly is an element of grace and humility involved in accepting help.

### The need and value of personal support

Personally, the knowledge that people were praying for me was the most heart-warming, encouraging and important thing of all. It was all the help I could ever ask for. However, there were some wonderful home-made meals, numerous cards and texts, flowers, fruit boxes, presents, all of which was so wonderful and so uplifting for my mind and soul. I began to understand the many different options for care, which I personally have struggled with in the past. One sister texted me every week with a Bible verse attached to beautiful picture. I loved it. My brothers and sisters respected my need for space but still showered me with love and hope. During all this my wonderful husband worked full time, kept the house running along with my

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children, cooked all the meals, looked after me in every way, took me to every appointment and was there through it all.

This experience taught me so many things. It brought me so much closer to God, showed how much I loved and needed my brothers and sisters, highlighted my major deficiencies, and showed me the multi-faceted manifestation of care. We can each demonstrate care in our own way, no matter what personality we may have. It can be done with our own 'touch' – one size doesn't fit all.

But most of all, I realise that my precious relationship with God and my love for Him, can only be true and complete by loving and caring for His children. *Without that care for my brothers and sisters, I can't truly say I love Him.*

*"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God ... if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us."*

*1 John 4:7&12*

Anne Twine

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