

Restart. Refresh. Restart again.

Recently I've been tested to my limits by being a caregiver to "Bob with 1 o". Even though Bob still is only moderately affected by dementia, I see big changes. It's the repetitiveness of his behavior that really pushes my buttons. Bob asks questions that I answer only to have him ask me again within a few minutes and then again a few minutes later. It's watching him forget the name of longtime friends, our relatives, and our neighbors. It's having him say things that he never would have said before (no filter run amok) or telling stories that aren't even close to being truthful (like how he saved my dad's life in the Korean War!). I can't tell you how many times a day I just stare at him in amazement.

Outwardly I may respond patiently and kindly but internally, my mind is not so kind. I'm angry, frustrated, disappointed, worried, and on and on and on. I then start feeling guilty and hate my behavior even if Bob isn't aware of my mean-spirited thoughts.

I can tell myself over and over that Bob has no control over his conduct and that he is not intentionally doing any of the weird behaviors that he exhibits. It is 100% out of Bob's control and being angry with him or expecting him to change is ridiculous. Being kind, accepting, and patient is the only way that I should be treating him. Oh how I wish that were the case.

At the local Alzheimer's Support Group, we are told that there is no guilt in this disease. We can only do the best we can as a caregiver and we need to cut ourselves some slack. It's challenging and we are not expected to be this perfect caregiver in this imperfect situation. I like that and breathe better when I'm reminded of this. Still, I feel that more is

expected of me. It's hard to explain but I just don't want to be a loving caregiver on the outside. I want to be a loving caregiver on the inside too.

Will I be able to do that? Not today. Maybe tomorrow. It's such a rich blessing to be able to start each day with a clean slate. Sometimes it only takes minutes to be mad and I'll be cussing him out in my head—like when he woke me at 4:30 AM because he thought I slept too long or when he wouldn't shower because he is worried someone was in our house. Within minutes of starting a new fresh day, my mind is already filled with negative thoughts. It's hard to clear the brain and start over.

I want my words, both spoken **AND UNSPOKEN**, to be acceptable and pleasing to God.

My desire is to have the words that I use be encouragement and comfort to Bob and that my silent thoughts mirror my spoken words. I want to be able to cleanse my mind of all negative thoughts and be able to have a heart and mind filled only with praise for God.

This has become my constant prayer:

May these
Words
of my mouth
and this
Meditation
of my
Heart be pleasing
in your sight.

Lord,
my **Rock &**
my **Redeemer**

PSALM 19:14

