

Depending on others can be sign of strength

I am no boater. I do best when I am hiking a trail rather than out on the water.

Summer is boat time. So I have been out in several boats on lakes and great lakes. My son's whole summer is being spent on a freighter in some of the most dangerous ocean waters. I marvel at his courage. I am no boater.

I remember one evening out beyond Puget Sound. My brother and I had been sailing and dark came upon us. The wind came up and rain hit us. We began the return to an unfamiliar dock in the dark and the rain. Great logs were floating out with the tide. We were being hit by the logs. We were coming out. My brother sent me up to the prow to look for logs which, if they were to hit us head on, would break through the hull. Through the dark and the rain I could see little.

We hit something! The boat was motionless, dead in the water. We had caught on a great long gill net strung hundreds of yards across our path. My brother said, "Hold this rope tied around my waist. I'm going overboard. I'll dive down and push the net off our keel." He disappeared into the black water.

I knew I depended entirely upon him to get us safely back. I knew nothing about the boat, the area we were in or the way to a safe return. I never forgot that night or the moment we set foot upon the dock.

We rightly depend upon God for our safe passage through this life. We are tempted to rely upon everything else: the physician, the psychologist, the lawyer, the investment counselor, the preacher. Our world is full of people who will give us advice or help us.

A moment of terror or uncertainty



moral perspectives

Rev. David Strong

reminds us that God is still God and we are vulnerable creatures. For a moment the crack has opened. It is a moment in which we can yield to the thought that support for our life must truly come from without.

This moment, when our manageable life has come loose from our grasp, this can be a most creative and freeing time. We are reminded that we are truly in God's hands. We yield our trust to God, because this is the only decision which is true to our experience.

As I realized that I must depend upon my brother to bring us back to land, so when we realize the gap between what we manage and what we experience in life, we acknowledge "our life is in your hands."

Our dependence upon God is best mixed with trust and thanksgiving. We trust God to help us through our difficulties. We trust God in life and beyond life in death because we have lived in a spirit of thanksgiving in good times. I have met many per-

sons who, though gravely sick, say, "Thank God, I am not as bad off as that other person."

Admission of a health dependence upon God is difficult. It runs contrary to science, which suggests that eventually all life can be managed. To affirm dependency upon God seems like giving up one's self-sufficiency. It sounds like someone who has given up the desire to win the game of life. Dependence sounds like admitting defeat.

Images of dependence and submission to God need to be replaced by images of persons who desire to

open their lives to God as a greater source of power and direction. Just as terminals connect with computers, so we plug in, we connect with, the one source of energy, power and direction which is available.

We are connected, we are in your hands. God is the one source by which we make the journey. A Biblical image which is consistent with a healthy dependence reads: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."

Abuse of elderly coming to light

Dear Joe:

Would you please address the subject of elderly abuse in your column. It is a problem that has been around for a long time but is finally coming to light.

Ms. L.D.

Dear Ms. D.:

Elderly abuse is a major concern in today's society particularly among health care professionals. To answer your question on this sorrowful subject, I will address: What elderly abuse is, who is abused, who are the abusers, what causes abuse, and lastly, how to recognize abuse.

Elderly abuse is any action that causes harm to, or neglect of, an older person. It can be physical, mental, financial or it can result from neglect.

The victims are usually frail and are suffering from some chronic physical or mental illness. Most often they are socially isolated and have few friends in whom to confide. They are, in most cases, dependent on their caregivers for all their needs.

UNFORTUNATELY, abusers are frequently the abused persons' caregivers and are generally close relatives. The caregivers are usually

middle aged or elderly themselves and are at their limit when it comes to controlling their feelings of anger and frustration.

Although there is no single cause of abuse, there are some patterns that lead to abusive situations — such as caregivers experiencing stress from financial problems, poor housing, or their own chronic health problems. They may also have other responsibilities with teenage children, spouses or career pressures and just cannot cope with more.

Elderly abuse is difficult to recognize. It is common for those who are abused to hide the problem so they will not lose their caregivers. They feel powerless, and have no idea of what to do or where to go.

Physical injury may be an indicator of abuse, or it may be apparent in the older person's appearance and behavior. The abused may appear pale, tired, listless, weak and thin; they may look frightened and uneasy; they do not wish to talk or answer questions; they refuse medical treatment; and are seldom seen outside their home.

I AGREE it's time this problem be brought to light. Sometimes, though, I feel that it is being sensationalized

by the media for its shock effect.

In my experience (30 years in clinical nursing practice), I have come across this problem on several occasions. But on the whole I have observed a hundred-fold more of caregivers giving excellent care to their older family members.

Therefore, I think that there should be more relief services available for these caregivers who are having major problems with coping with the many stresses in their lives and perhaps life will be easier for all concerned.

gerontology



A. Jolayne Farrell

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