

Ask the Pastor

Pastor, my family will not lift a finger to help me caring for an aging parent, what can I do?

If there is one guarantee in life, it is this. At some time in our lives we will become a caregiver to aged relative, either full or part time, or we will have responsibility for an aged relative in some shape or form. With the average nursing rehab center costing over \$80-90,000 for a year care, it is the only alternative for many families.

That being said, much like end-of-life type of decisions, many families by and large do not really plan or talk about who takes care of mom and dad in situation X, until such a situation happens, and then different siblings or family members are at a loss how to respond. What happens many times is in a family, an “assumption” is made who will take lead in mom and dad’s care, all without any family discussion on the matter, and the person whom much is assumed sort of is blindsided by the scope and cost of care for an older relative. Those who do take the lead, either by default or plan, then gets very angry at the other siblings for what they may do and not do in care of an older relative, and again, people suffer in silence and sort of stew in their own unresolved emotions.

If one attempts or tries to get other family members involved in the care of an aged parent with no luck or response, one does not need to carry the load alone. In each county in Pa or NJ, there are county and state level offices on aging and elder concerns. Attached to many hospitals and elder care centers there are social workers that can assist in matters of day-care, respite care, in-home nurse visitation programs and alike. Further, on both sides of the river there are lawyers who specialized in elder law issues that can assist in wills, powers of attorney, and estate planning and alike.

If you are a full-time care give to an older person in your life it can be a very lonely road, a very isolating experience, and at times feel that the weight of the world is upon your shoulders. We all have limits, either in physical or emotional energy that we can give to any situation. You need to realize what those limits are and seek aid and assistance. In my professional experience, I have seen far too many families fracture and fall-apart due to the stress, unresolved issues, and financial complications of caring for an older parent or relative. May God bless you and give you the strength, patience, and ability to see yourself through this very difficult situation.

Pastor Gregory