

Close to Home Study Guide

Dealing with Dementia

1. Opening (1 minute)*

As we begin this time of sharing together, let's remember our God, who creates each person and knows all about us. Read and reflect on Psalm 139:1-6.

2. Storytelling (8 minutes)

Read Roger's story (pp. 2-3).

- With what parts of the author and Roger's experience can you identify?
- Which aspects of dementia puzzle you the most?

3. Review of pamphlet (6 minutes)

Read silently "The problem of dementia" (pp. 4-5).

- What is new or helpful information?

4. Reading of Scripture text (15 minutes)

Read John 21:18-19 and the first three paragraphs under "Dementia, the Bible, and the Christian story" (p. 6).

- How does the author's application of the losses experienced because of dementia sound to you?

Read paragraphs 4 and 5 of the same section, about how God remembers us and keeps our memories.

- What comfort does this give or what challenges does it raise?

Read Isaiah 49:15 (p. 7).

- What encouragement does this promise offer to you?

* The suggested time frames are for a 45-minute session. With more discussion and storytelling, you will need to adjust upward, and possibly extend to a second session.

5. Steps toward healing (14 minutes)

Read “For the caregiver” (p. 11).

Ask the caregivers in the group to share the aspects of caregiving that are frustrating or lifegiving to them.

- What are your next steps?
- What would be helpful to you on this journey?

Review “Steps toward healing” (pp. 8-9). Discuss these questions.

- If you are developing symptoms of dementia, which steps have you tried?
- What are your next steps?
- What would be helpful to you on this journey?

6. Closing (1 minute)

Pray these words from Psalm 139:7-10 (NRSV).

O God,

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

Invite the group to add their prayers for each other, in light of the personal experiences they have shared.



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This study guide is written by Sharon Williams, editor of *Adult Bible Study* (MennoMedia) and minister of worship with Nueva Vida Norristown New Life Mennonite Church, Norristown, Pennsylvania. It is one of a series of free downloadable study guides for the Close to Home pamphlets, which can be ordered from MennoMedia (see www.MennoMedia.org/closetohome) or the Mennonite Brethren Kindred Productions (www.kindredproductions.com/closetohome).