

Prayers for *Dementia*

FAY SAMPSON



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TWENTY-THIRD
PUBLICATIONS

twentythirdpublications.com

© 2018 Novalis Publishing Inc.

Published in Canada by Novalis
Publishing Office
10 Lower Spadina Avenue, Suite 400
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5V 2Z2

Head Office
4475 Frontenac Street
Montréal, Québec, Canada
H2H 2S2

www.novalis.ca

Cover design and layout: Audrey Wells
Cover image: iStockphoto

Cataloguing in Publication is available from Library and Archives Canada.
ISBN: 978-2-89688-442-1
We acknowledge the support of the Government of Canada.
Printed in Canada.

Published in the United States by
TWENTY-THIRD PUBLICATIONS
One Montauk Avenue, Suite 200
New London, CT 06320
(860) 437-3012 or (800) 321-0411
www.twentythirdpublications.com
ISBN: 978-1-62785-400-9

Originally published in the UK by
Darton, Longman and Todd
140-142 Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 4JJ
ISBN: 978-0-232-53297-5

Cover design: Jeff McCall
Cover image: ©Shutterstock.com

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Table of Contents

About This Book	4
Part A: For the Use of, or on Behalf of, Those with Dementia	5
Part B: For the Use of, or on Behalf of, Caregivers	9
• Seeking Help	10
• The Word “Dementia”	12
• Understanding Dementia	14
• Memory	17
• Preparing for the Future	19
• Rapid-onset Dementia.....	22
• Community.....	24
• Aggression	27
• Moving On	29
• Visiting	31
Part C: For the Use of Family, Friends and the Wider Community	34
• Family	35
• The Other Parent.....	37
• Friends.....	40
• Questions	43
• The Church	45

About This Book

Better health care means that many of us are living longer. This carries with it an increased probability that more of us will develop dementia, or will know someone who has.

The prayers in this book are divided into three groups. The first group is for the use of those with dementia. The second is for caregivers. And the final prayers are for the use of family, friends and the wider community. But you can use any of them with, or on behalf of, someone else.

You may wish to insert *him* or *her* or a personal name, in place of a more general term like the one I love or the one living with dementia.

The prayers are accompanied by information about dementia and the best way to handle its symptoms. It has not been possible to cover every aspect of this large subject. You may wish to add prayers of your own which relate to your particular experience. You may also wish to add notes about other resources you have found helpful to hand on to others.

And remember that normal life doesn't come to a standstill when someone is diagnosed with dementia. Make the most of the time you have.

PART A

For the use of,
or on behalf of,
those with dementia



“And you know the way to the place where I am going.”
Thomas said to him, “Lord,
we do not know where you are going.
How can we know the way?”
Jesus said to him, “I am the way,
and the truth, and the life.”

John 14.4-6

Lord Jesus, hold my hand.

They tell me I have dementia, but that can't be true. All right, my memory is not what it used to be, but I'm as sane as anyone else. I'm not demented.

I've seen people with dementia. I'm not like that. Most of the time, I function perfectly well.

But the test results are in, and they say that's what I have.

I'm frightened, Lord. It's not something I ever imagined happening to me. I fear the loss of my identity. I dread the falling away of what I know and can do. Put your arm around me as I journey into the unknown.

If it is true, then I am going to need help. Give me people around me who understand my anxiety about the path I must tread. May the light in your smile assure me of my continued worth in your eyes, just as you loved and valued me when I was a helpless baby. Affirm me in all that I am and have been, even if others see only my decline.

“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?
Yet not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight.
But even the hairs of your head are all counted.
Do not be afraid; you are of more value
than many sparrows.”

Luke 12.6-7

Shepherd of my path,

so I have dementia. Give me grace to accept this as part of the pattern of my life and that of many others. May I enjoy the present moment and all the life I have yet to live.

Grant me the humility to accept the assistance I will need. I give you gratitude for all those I am finding who so readily offer that help.

Lord, you walked an unwelcome path you feared into a dark unknown. It took a greater courage than mine to do that willingly. In my darkening path, take me by the hand and share your courage with me.

Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show
no compassion for the child of her womb?
Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

Isaiah 49.15

Faithful God,

my memory is not what it used to be. I forget things.
I forget people. But they do not forget me.

I give you heartfelt thanks that I have people around
me who love me and care for me. They understand what
is happening to me.

Always I have you beside me.

You show me that it does not really matter if I forget
things. I'm allowed to.

Give me the grace to see that the present is enough
for me. I still have the sunrise on a frosty garden. I still
enjoy my favourite food. I have not lost the gift of laugh-
ter. I have someone to guide me where I need to go.

And I have my memories of the past, which seem to
grow more vivid day by day.

Let me meet the days ahead with trust and serenity.
Bless all those who walk beside me.

Hold my hand.

PART B

For the use of,
or on behalf of,
caregivers



Seeking Help

You notice that someone close to you is becoming increasingly forgetful. At first, you put it down to advancing years. Then gradually you realize that these lapses of memory can no longer be laughed off as 'senior moments.' A more serious change is happening to the one you love.

If this is dementia, then you know this change is going to be irreversible. The two of you are embarking on a journey that may be sad, bewildering, even scary. You would rather close your mind to it.

But take courage. You are not alone. A host of people are waiting to help you along this way. The sooner you and your loved one entrust yourselves to them, the better the outcome will be for both of you. There may be medication which can help. There is advice on living well with dementia. Don't miss this opportunity.

You will need to take the initiative. Encourage the one you are concerned for to report these memory problems to their doctor. Accompany them to reassure them.

You are likely to be referred to a specialist clinic. There will probably be a period of memory tests and possibly a brain scan before you get a firm diagnosis. This is precious time. Value each moment.