

Churches can minister to Alzheimer's caregivers, family_111504

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SAN ANTONIO—The Gospels record Jesus' promise never to leave or forsake those who follow him—and that includes people with Alzheimer's disease, said Wesley Wells, administrator of Sagecrest Alzheimer's Care Center in San Angelo

Wells led a workshop titled “Alzheimer's Disease: How to Understand and Endure the Arduous Journey” during the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual session.

Focusing on the compassionate acceptance of individuals who suffer from Alzheimer's, Wells outlined practical steps for living with these loved ones.

“Alzheimer's is known as 'the long goodbye,' so it's important to plan for a long race and to plan for pain,” he said. Comparing the journey to a marathon, Wells encouraged caregivers to read all they can, get a team so they won't be alone, find other people who are in similar circumstances,

consult medical experts, pray with and without a prayer partner, and journal honest feelings.

He also suggested taking breaks by letting others take care of the loved one, having an emergency plan, changing the environment at home to make it safer, learning to communicate on the loved one's level (redirect, reminisce, validate and never argue), sharing activities, and building self esteem by thanking them for doing things.

Wells observed that few churches are doing very much to address the needs of Alzheimer's patients and those who love them. He listed educational seminars, support groups, respite providers and prayer support as potential starting places to meet this looming epidemic.

For more information about Alzheimer's disease, visit www.alz.org, e-mail info@alz.org or call 800-272-3900.

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