

their faith and how it has affected them, both personally and in relation to the care they provide their spouses. All have found a safe place to be, instead of feeling alone or without support.

Emerging Themes

ADRD has changed the lives of all of these participants in drastic ways, yet they hold onto their faith and place their strength in their god. With the daily experience of caregiving for spouses with ADRD, stress, uncertainty, an overwhelming sense of isolation often takes over. People deal with these problems in various ways, but how does their spiritual life impact this aspect of an ADRD caregiver? The emerging themes that came out of the interviews address different facets of spirituality and its effect on spousal caregivers of ADRD victims.

Kristina's description of caring for her husband, who suffered from an aggressive form of dementia, known as Lewy Body disease, highlighted the ups and downs that a caregiver of a spouse with ADRD must face on a daily basis. Her words provide a background against which to examine the themes that are found in the transcripts of these participants. Kristina stated:

The most difficult part about caring for my husband with Alzheimer's is that none of your family or friends, your typical support system, are there for you when you need them the most. They do not get it, they are not there for you, they just don't understand. But you still have God to rely on, guide you and support you. This is important to remember because at the same time you are grieving the loss of your husband, you are faced with trying to raise a child. And while all of this is going on in your life people are standing around looking at you wondering, "Are you

losing your mind? What are you doing? You're crazy, you know?" But if you dare say that I lost my husband, they would go, "What are you talking about? There he is."

So to me, that's the part that needs to be stressed to Alzheimer's caregivers. They need to be helped to realize that they have just had a death in their family and nobody knows it but them. They don't even honestly don't know it at first. I did not know it at first. But I was in such grief, I was so grief stricken and I wasn't dealing with it if it were grief. And I couldn't deal with it; I couldn't get a handle on it because I didn't know what was wrong with me. But I have just had the death of my husband. Plus I had all these extra duties put on top of me to try to swim through it. You have all the financial, the entire medical, and every decision there is to make, all on your own self because friends and family on the outside don't understand or don't agree with what you're doing. So, you have nobody to bounce it off of; you are used to having your husband there to do that. All of it is just gone, I mean its dead, it's gone; it's just as if you died physically. And everybody is laughing and joking. And you are saying "But, what's wrong with you?" That's the part caregivers live with and nobody understands it.

You have physically lost a person, whether it is your mother, your dad, your husband; you have lost them for dead with Alzheimer's. And in turn then you have added responsibilities. That's where you're so overwhelmed, you just want to give up, and think I don't know what to do? And I think everybody in this situation gets frustrated. But if you have the physical strength of the Lord, He will guide you and let you know, "I know you are overwhelmed, but I'll get you

through it. I'll open the doors. Ok, one step at a time and you go forward." But if you don't have the Lord, you don't have anything. You have no one to guide you or give you strength. You might as well be in your own grave that somebody will throw dirt on. So many losses happen daily and you just keep losing more and more, it doesn't stop until they are finally in their grave. And you know when that time comes; I think that every caregiver whether they admit it or not is saying, "Thank God, it's finally here. What a relief!" "I've done it for all these years and I'm grieved out," for a lack of a better way to put it. You think "now I can finish my grieving and it'll end." But you know you grieve somebody a year or two, it's usually different with every individual. But you grieve them and get on with your life.

With Alzheimer's, that doesn't happen, you keep grieving because you lose more and more of that person everyday. And now I've lost my husband, next I'm going to lose my teenager, then I'm going to lose my child, and then I'm going to lose my baby. The loss doesn't stop until they are in the grave. So it's such a long drawn out period of grieving or a constant loss.

And all you can rely on at that point is to believe that the Lord is going to take me through it and somehow believe that He is guiding me and I'm on the path, I'm right where He wants me to be today. You may think is this where I would like to be today? No! You know my mind would say "Hey I would like to be a millionaire. I'd like to be out on a yacht out in the Pacific", you know I would like lots of other things. But that's just our mind, you know it's not there. But in my mind I know this is where God wants me to be today? Yes! And He'll

take me where he wants me tomorrow; everything will be fine because He is guiding me step by step, if I allow Him to.

The themes that emerged from the interview process are shown in Table 2.

Detailed illustrations of each theme are included, and direct quotes from the participants' transcripts supporting these themes and subthemes follow.

Table 2

Emerging Themes

Spirituality and Religion

EMERGING THEMES	
I.	Spirituality versus Religion
A.	One and the same
B.	Separate
II.	Trusting God
III.	Don't Ask Why (because ...)
A.	Acceptance
B.	God's guidance
C.	Prayer life
D.	Blessings
IV.	Growth and Understanding

Spirituality versus Religion

Analogous to the current research literature on spirituality and religion, participants in this study had a variety of views on whether spirituality and religion are independent concepts or part of the same concept. The following section will outline these views.