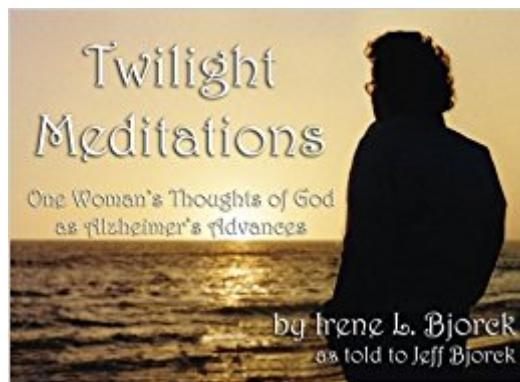




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# **Twilight Meditations: One Woman's Thoughts Of God As Alzheimer's Advances**



## Synopsis

A portion of the proceeds from every book sold will be donated to help fund Alzheimer's research. Clinical psychologist, Dr. Jeff Bjorck, is glad to introduce you to his mother through the pages of this book. *Twilight Meditations* is a tribute to her journey of faith through the valley of the shadow of Alzheimer's disease. In spite of her severe illness, Irene Bjorck has continued over the past several years to offer her occasional spontaneous comments regarding the God she has loved throughout her life. These quotes are sure to encourage Christians from all walks of life, and those who do not share Irene's faith are still sure to be deeply touched and inspired by her pervasive sense of gratitude. This volume begins with a brief photo essay chronicling Irene's amazing life. Thereafter, each page features one of her quotes, with backdrop photos of her stunning artwork and/or colorful images of her Heavenly Father's creation. The perfect companion for a quiet afternoon, this book will provide hope for everyone, but particularly those who are also slowly saying good-bye to loved ones whose lives are being tyrannized by Alzheimer's.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"How do we honor our fathers and mothers when they become forgetful and confused? Dr. Bjorck has given us a clear and thoughtful answer in this loving tribute to his mother's gifts, talents, and a faith which endures despite the progression of Alzheimer's disease. This book beautifully captures his mother's voice and enduring identity as a child of

God." --Benjamin T. Mast, Ph.D., ABPP; President, Society of Clinical Geropsychology; Professor, Psychological & Brain Sciences, University of Louisville; Author of *Second Forgetting: Remembering the Power of the Gospel during Alzheimer's Disease*"What you will find here are tender, kaleidoscopic windows into a truly thankful heart. What could provide a better witness to the fact that deeper even than memory is Reality itself? Irene Bjorck demonstrates that no one sees or shows that better than a grateful heart." --Mark Labberton; President, Fuller Theological Seminary; Professor of Preaching; Author of *Called: Living as God's People in the World*"Twilight Meditations" is unlike any book I have seen or read. It is visually stunning, and also filled with deep spiritual insights into the character of God. Irene L. Bjorck, while suffering from advancing Alzheimer's, speaks of how God always remembers, even if we forget. The photos, taken by her son, Jeff Bjorck, fit perfectly with the ideas and themes of his mother's words of wisdom. As a reader, it becomes clear that there is a deep bond of love between this mother and son, and I found myself moved by that page after page. This book will be a source of encouragement for those whose loved ones are suffering through the disease, but I suspect it will be a great blessing to everyone who reads it. I know it was for me." --James Bryan Smith; Associate Professor of Theology, Friends University; Director, the Apprentice Institute; Bestselling author of *Good and Beautiful God*"Twilight Meditations" not only humanizes those who struggle with Alzheimer's, it tenderly honors one woman's struggle to remember what matters. Bjorck skillfully combines unique artwork (done by his mother), stunning nature photographs, and direct quotes, allowing readers to better understand how to love and interact with family members who battle this devastating disease." --Dorothy Littell Greco; Photographer and writer; Author of *Making Marriage Beautiful*"Twilight Meditations" is a deeply touching and visually beautiful book containing Irene L. Bjorck's thoughts of God as she suffers from advancing Alzheimer's disease. Her son, psychologist and Fuller Seminary professor Dr. Jeff Bjorck, introduces the reader to his godly mother, Irene, through a brief biography, photos of her artwork, and many of her inspiring quotes regarding faith and life. This book is precious and will be a great blessing to all who read it, particularly those who encourage and/or counsel Alzheimer's caregivers." --Rev. Siang-Yang Tan, Ph.D.; Professor of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary; Senior Pastor, First Evangelical Church Glendale; Member, American Association of Christian Counselors; Author of *Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Christian Perspective*"As a provider for patients with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers, I have searched for a resource that would offer them encouragement and inspiration during a time of desperate need. Irene and Jeff Bjorck's book is a fantastic resource for caregivers of loved ones who are

afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. Irene's faith-filled quotes and artwork are enhanced by Jeff's stunning nature-based photography. Together, they present a unique and open window that prominently displays Irene's love for God as she progresses through the disease. Irene's quotes provide inspiration to caregivers who may doubt God's love during difficult times, as she demonstrates that God does not abandon the suffering or those who care for them. Her words serve as a fervent reminder that nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:37-39)."

--D. Erik Everhart, PhD, ABPP; Clinical Neuropsychologist; Professor, East Carolina University

"For an encouraging peek into one mother's journey through memory decline, read through *Twilight Meditations*. You will find not only the joy of how faith endures but also the everlasting love of a son for his beloved mother."

--RJ Thesman; Writing Coach and author; Author of *Sometimes They Forget: Finding Hope in the Alzheimer's Journey*

From the Preface: Over the years, I have known many people who have found themselves caring for a parent with Alzheimer's. I would often encourage such individuals by noting, "Some people go to Heaven in an instant, but some people go to Heaven a little at a time, and we are privileged to keep house for them as they leave more and more rooms empty." Then in 2010, my mother began to vacate her first "room."...She was starting to experience clinically significant mild cognitive impairment. Now it was my turn to take my own "housekeeping" words to heart....As Alzheimer's disease slowly but steadily usurped more of my mother's mind, her persistent faith prompted the idea for this book, especially as she continued offering her comments on God in the midst of her increasing confusion. I found myself thanking God for each of her quotes, which seemed to provide glimpses through the fog to the bright and peaceful place where my Mom was still very much at home with her Heavenly Father.....Of course, I also know how blessed I am that my mother has retained her cheerfulness and gratitude. In our broken world, where all creation groans (Romans 8:22), it could have been equally possible that she would have become increasingly aggressive and irritable....Indeed, many do have parents or spouses whose Alzheimer's disease draws them down into dismal places. Moreover, I would sympathize if the caregivers of these suffering ones are tempted to wonder whether this dark descent signals God's abandonment. It is my hope that...my mother's story and quotes might encourage especially those who wrestle with such doubts about God's love for an afflicted loved one. My prayer is that God might give you the faith you need to know that, even if your family member seems dragged into the deepest depths, God is still

there (Psalm 139:8), and His love truly never fails (Psalm 136).

Here's how I felt and still feel after reading this wonderfully written and illustrated account of one woman's life -- hopeful, encouraged, nostalgic, reassured, calm, and most of all inspired. Inspired to aspire to the level of unfailing faith and happiness that Mrs. Bjorck continues to live each day of her life. I've already purchased this book as a gift and look forward to sitting down with it myself over and over again...especially when I may be in need of some reassurance.

Jeff Bjorck is a clinical psychologist who has served as a professor Fuller Theological Seminary's Graduate School of Psychology since 1991. He also is the son of a woman succumbing to the ravages of Alzheimer's disease. Jeff used to tell people who found themselves caring for a parent with Alzheimer's that, "Some people go to Heaven in an instant, but some people go to Heaven a little at a time, and we are privileged to 'keep house' for them as they leave more and more 'rooms' empty." In 2010, in his words, his mother "began to vacate her first room. Twilight Meditations begins with a thirteen-page biography of Jeff's mother, Irene, describing her childhood bout with polio, her studies in commercial art, her marriage to Walter, her experience of becoming a Christian, her raising a family of three children, and her eventual move from New Jersey to California to be close to her son and daughter-in-law. The biography is accompanied by family photos chronicling her story. Irene was quite an artist in her day and in a variety of media. I was blessed to be the recipient of one of her signature watercolor roses superimposed on my wedding announcement many years ago. There are also photos of some of her last paintings and drawings through which the effect of the disease on her art becomes evident. The remainder of the book is comprised of meditations of Irene's recorded by Jeff from 2012 through 2017 as Irene reflected on life, her faith, and on God. The quotes are accompanied by Irene's artwork from her earlier years, as well as by photographs of flowers and nature and other things Irene enjoyed all her life. What comes through in the quotes, the artwork, and the photographs is a life of faith lived with deep gratitude. And it is captured lovingly by a son with the hope that it may be helpful to someone else caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's. I remember a few years ago going to share communion with a parishioner and her husband in her home. Helen had been a faithful volunteer leader in the food pantry ministry of our church, but she was beginning to have problems associated with Alzheimer's. It was the last time I would visit the two of

them in their home. When I came to the moment in the liturgy when I broke the bread and said that Jesus had told his followers to do this “in remembrance of me,” Helen began to cry, asking, “What will happen when I can’t remember any more?” In a moment of inspiration that I know came from God I was able to affirm that even if she couldn’t remember, God would always remember her. I was reminded of that moment when I read Irene’s meditation on page 79: “God never forgets anything” (September 14, 2014) and the final recorded meditation on page 123: “He never forgets” (March 16, 2017). The audience for this book is, admittedly, narrow. But for those caring for loved ones with Alzheimer’s, I highly recommend it. Sometimes those affected by Alzheimer’s become aggressive and irritable. As Jeff notes, he is grateful that his mother has retained her cheerfulness and gratitude. Perhaps especially for those who have seen their loved one’s personalities become more difficult to deal with, this book may be a light shining in the darkness.

Reading *Twilight Meditations: One Woman’s Thought of God as Alzheimer’s Advances*, took me on an unexpected journey. I was invited into Jeff, and his mother, Irene’s life, home and heart. Although I am not of the Christian faith, I was able to resonate deeply with Irene’s thoughts and feelings, as they were not very far from mine. My beliefs may be different, but our faith is similar in that we have a strong belief and ties to our religion. I smiled, I cried, I rejoiced and was saddened. Alzheimer’s invades the entire family, not just the person affected. I admire Jeff and his family for staying strong and having faith. Irene’s artwork is beautiful, and speaks volumes. It is worth getting the book just for her artwork, although it’s hard to put the book down once you start reading it. It really is very meaningful. I thoroughly enjoyed and highly recommend *Twilight Meditations: One Woman’s Thought of God as Alzheimer’s Advances*.

I have enjoyed listening to Jeff Bjorck’s music for many years, so I thought his (and his mother’s) *Twilight Meditations: One Woman’s Thoughts of God as Alzheimer’s Advances* might be a good addition to my library. This book is a collection of his mother’s words Jeff has written down over the past several years. In reading it, looking at the artwork and enjoying the photos, you get another look into a gifted artist and storyteller and the extraordinary woman, Irene Bjorck, who is his mother. If you pick up the book

quickly and scan through it, you might be inclined to skip the preface, introduction, perhaps even the yearly section intros and focus on Irene's wonderful quotes and art. Don't! A thorough reading of this short book is invaluable to the meaning and purpose of Irene's life. This is a story of a woman who has known both joy and pain and still loves God. This is a story of hope for those who are grieving loved ones afflicted with Alzheimer's. And yet, it is more than that. It is a story of a woman who for most of her life has stood firm on the rock of salvation and whose words show us she is still held by the hand of God. Two of my favorite quotes are "Whatever I might think, it will always be better than I think." (p. 20) and "Someday, we will all be together, and that will be the best conclusion." (p. 118). Irene's beautiful quotes can be a steadfast anchor to be visited and revisited in the midst of our grief.

I was deeply touched by this small volume of expressions of Love: God's love for us always, the love of an elder for God's world, and the love of a son for his mother. It is profound that in this fast paced world, Dr. Bjorck slowed it all down. He stopped and he listened. He joined his mom's words with beautiful photos and memories of a life. And then.....he shared with us. This book slowed me down as I savored every page, and sometimes was moved to tears. As a psychologist with a specialty in geriatrics, and as a daughter of a mother whose mind is now spinning webs of fantasy and beautiful travels, I know this story in my own life. This book brought me to loving tears of joy. As Irene Bjorck stated "This is just a phase in God's working." I recommend this book. I recommend it to all of us who wish to remember the pace of life we may have forgotten. I recommend it to those who wish reach out to our aging loved ones and those who are not sure how to reach out. I recommend it to anyone who needs to remember Love.

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