

Adventure of a Lifetime

It was a cold, Spring morning like any other.

My phone rang, and on the other end was the nurse who had recently examined me and removed a suspicious-looking mole on my right leg. Suddenly my whole world changed with one word...

Cancer.

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I was never to be the same.

Questions raced through my mind like wildfire. How could this happen? I was just 43 years old, and my life could end. Would I be snuffed out like a low burning candle, never again to trumpet the Good News in the nations?

That week, the voice of the Lord spoke. It was that still, small voice, the one that originates inside our redeemed, human spirit. It flashed through my mind as a flood of thoughts and carried the Father's authority, and His love.

"The enemy is aggressively trying to kill you before your time. You must be as aggressive in fighting him, as he is in fighting you."

Two weeks later I endured my first major operation. Yes, they found the cancer had spread into my lymph nodes and become deadly. I was diagnosed with Melanoma, Stage 3b and absolutely needed drug treatments to survive (save from a healing miracle that God could send; I prayed and many people prayed for that miracle, which eventually came, though not in the timing nor the way I was expecting it).

I remember trembling in fear as I came out of the doctor's office. I stood alone, feeling the weight of now having to travel on a journey I had never imagined.

Major operations, very difficult treatments and a grim diagnosis all were placed before me. I felt weak. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling," (1 Cor. 2:3).

The Road Forward

Some days we are in sunshine. Some days we are in shadow. This particular day was a shadow. I trembled for a moment, standing there and then a ray of hope entered my spirit as the Spirit Himself reminded me of Joshua 1:9, "Have not I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." That ray of hope began to grow like a small seed in my heart. I knew the voice of the Lord, and His voice was leading.

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What I didn't know was how to have courage. What is courage? I asked one of my dear mentors, Pastor Dorothy Langstaff. She replied in a hand-written note, one that I am quoting from now and that I will cherish the rest of my days, "Hello Dear Braveheart, you asked, 'How do you have courage?' I've come to realize it's like manna. We need it every day. It doesn't seem to keep long when faced with adversity. The Lord is our source of courage and hope. We can encourage ourselves in the Lord, remembering what He has said and done in the past; His words for the future and the strength, comfort and encouragement we receive from others who care. Someone has said, 'Courage is when you feel the fear, and do it anyway'." Mama Dorothy (as I always affectionately called her) went to be with the Lord in the Fall of 2023, but I will always remember our talks, prayers and notes of encouragement like this.

Whatever adversity you might be facing today, whatever trial

of fire you are called to walk through, know this: "When you pass through waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame kindle on you," (Isa. 43:2).

Love Will Speak: Face To Face

Until a few years ago, I had traveled and preached in 25 nations spreading the gospel. The day of my diagnosis began a long break from preaching or traveling. After the initial shock wore off, and still clinging to that Scripture from Joshua 1, I was now facing the reality of treatments. Since I knew the Lord was calling me to become a warrior (though a weak one, at that) and enter into the battle for my very life, I had to take the most aggressive treatment I could. I was offered four choices of immunotherapy, a standard treatment for melanoma. Skin cancer, often unnoticed, spreads malignant cells inside the lymph nodes, deploying like an enemy army to kill us. Immune therapy works to build up the body's natural immune system to fight that army of cancerous destruction.

With most of the treatments, the side effects include a fever, as the fever causes the body to naturally fight all possible enemy cells. To make matters worse, that cancerous enemy was inside my body now and acting like an invisible Klingon battleship (for you fellow Trekkies). Something was missing inside my body to fight it. It was invisible to my immune system and simply declared to my cells which were naturally designed by God to fight it, "Move along, nothing to see here."

That summer morning as I was out on my favorite prayer swing, I asked the Lord: "So which treatment do I take?" Immediately, He brought me to Psalm 32, verse 8, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye on you." In the original languages, some translations say, "eye to eye" or even "face to face." So, like Moses was "face

to face with God," (Exod. 33:11), I understood that God was saying symbolically, almost poetically, in this Scripture, that He "would make it very clear" which treatment to take. Yet this is the very heart and beauty of my life's calling—you too can become "eye to eye" or "face to face" with God Himself that we Christians call "Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

So I fasted. And I prayed. And I praised all summer.

Really?

What did I have to "praise" for? I was facing possible death and a whole list of side effects. The answer: "Through Him, then, let us continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name," (Heb. 13:15). This became my lifestyle, beginning that summer and lasting nearly five years. Most of the time I offered these "sacrifices of praise" during times of uncertainty, times of real suffering, times of waiting in faith for the next PET Scan results. Whatever battle you are currently called to fight, remember God is worthy of our praise, and we are daily struggling against the principalities and powers which seek to destroy our pure life in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:10-18). I have always considered sickness and disease as an enemy of God, not to be trifled with. We must pray and seek to destroy His enemies and sometimes (as in my case), these battles last years, not days.

8 "Contacts" from God

The end of the summer came and I was faced on a Friday with making my decision of which treatment to take that following Sunday night. During those three days, it was like I was in a really nice theatre with Dolby Surround Sound. God's voice was quite literally everywhere, surrounding me! I encountered the voice of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in eight unique "contacts" that weekend:

1) The Established Word: I was standing upon a Bible verse of

truth, "I am the Lord who heals you," (Exod. 15:26).

2) The Living Word: this is when the Holy Spirit breathes upon a Scripture and gives you a "Word from the Word." I had two of these from Joshua 1 and Psalm 32.

3) The Inner Witness of the Spirit: this was the sense of peace and joy (like a green light) every time I prayed about one of the four; that same "Witness" gave me a tightness in my spirit, like a red light, when I prayed about the other three.

4) The Inner Voice of the Spirit: He whispered within me the name of the treatment I was being called to take.

5) I Dreamed a Dream: my oncologist appeared to tell me which treatment to take.

6) Providence: this is where the Father goes before you to prepare a person or circumstance in His love, just for you! I walked into a restaurant and there, right in front of me, was one of my Jewish friends. He asked how I was doing, and when I told him I had cancer and was not doing well, he suddenly smiled and said, "Survivor!" He had been at Stage 4 and was a survivor too, and he encouraged me, "God will show you which way to go."

7) Media: Holy Spirit led me to watch an episode of a Ken Burns documentary and while watching, the name of my treatment was on a World War II airplane as the "Female name of the Plane" (the soldiers sometimes put a picture of a woman and named her on the nose of the planes), taking off into battle!

8) Symbolic Speech: this is the language of visions and dreams and God is speaking in metaphors all the time. For me, the name on the airplane was symbolic speech as it was the exact name, "Peg" of the common name given by the doctors to the official name of my treatment: Pegylated Interferon. This symbolic speech encouraged me to begin the "PEG" treatments and they would become like warplanes going forth to battle the

enemy of cancer and defeat it!

So, off I went into the battle, which lasted a full five years...and I have come out the other side of the test with a testimony—I am healed! All praise to God!

The Trinity Speaks

As Jonathan Edwards once noted after studying the topic of the Triune God extensively, “I think [the doctrine of the Trinity] to be the highest and deepest of all Divine mysteries.” As a diamond or special gemstone reflects the light shone upon it in many facets, so God’s glory upon you continually reflects many aspects of His voice to discern and His love to experience, and all three persons of the Trinity are actively involved. To put it very simply, as you study each way God speaks, think of His contact with you in these terms (while remembering that this is all a mystery):

1) The Father speaks primarily externally, through His providence, circumstances, nature and creation, and other ways. These signs of His love are quite literally everywhere. And each sign then bears witness within your spirit, through the Holy Spirit’s confirmation. “For God (the Father) so loved (agape) the world that He gave His one and only son,” (John 3:16).

2) The Son, Jesus Christ speaks primarily through both His Word (the Bible) and through His body (other believers). We are all part of the one body of Christ no matter what our church background. His Word (the Bible) is the foundation of all revelation and the trusted source of confirmation for everything we hear from God.

3) Holy Spirit speaks primarily internally, from within your human spirit, as He now inhabits your heart with the divine kingdom of God. His voice flows out of your mind and can be discerned by your spirit. And He confirms all direction at least two or three times through both internal and external

means.

Please also note, Holy Spirit is a Person who comes to abide inside every believer in Jesus Christ. His workings require the believer to actively participate in a sanctifying, holy lifestyle that involves a dying to self and all of our old, self-centered, flesh-driven priorities.

A Media Missionary

I pushed forward into treatment, and into the days of shadows. I suffered through strong fevers which lasted three to five days. I endured 69 weeks of fevers in a row the first two years. I underwent four major operations to remove cancer. And I kept praising! I was face to face with God throughout these days of battle, and He kept speaking. His presence was glorious every single day that I had enough strength to pray.

I wrote down 21 possible ways that we can encounter God each day, week, month and year—if you are actively listening, that is! I published them in my book, *Love Speaks: 21 Ways to Recognize God's Multi-Faceted Voice*. I had an encounter with the Lord in prayer one day, and He whispered in His still, small voice, “Carl, I’m offering you a new calling as a media missionary.” Media Missionary? What on earth is that? After I prayed further, this turned into a calling to become a visual storyteller utilizing my documentary filmmaking skills.

I travel back through history discovering God’s voice for a new generation. I link moments of God’s faithfulness in history with stories and modern interviews, to give faith in the present and hope for the future.

He said to me, “Begin your media mission with 21 documentary film episodes, each one based on a chapter of your book and teaching people a new way to hear my multi-faceted voice.”

That calling came seven years ago, and by God’s grace I have completed this seven-year assignment producing 21 full

episodes of *Love Speaks*. Our team is grateful to be able to say we have won gold, silver and bronze “Telly” Awards for excellence (a secular award, not a “Christian” program, with other winners including Netflix, PBS and the BBC).

The Adventure of a Lifetime

So, what can you do right now to begin your own lifestyle of learning and journeying with God “eye to eye” or “face to face?” One simple answer: *expect*. Expectation is a wonderful gift to our free will. By expecting the Father, Son and Spirit to speak, you are following the ways of faith. And faith is action. Faith is a verb. Faith is expecting that God, your Father, has already visited your tomorrow and can speak and lead you today. Remember the truth: you will have days of sunshine. And days of shadow. Yet God is to be praised in all your days. And truly some of those moments are a real “sacrifice” of praise. So put on your seatbelts, as my friend, J. Lee Grady, former editor of *Charisma*, declares in my book, “because listening to God and following His direction is truly the adventure of a lifetime.”

Rev. Carl Wesley Anderson is an international equipping evangelist and documentary filmmaker. His vision, through itinerant ministry and his unique calling as a Media Missionary, is to inspire and equip believers for passionate discipleship and hearing God’s voice. Carl is a Stage 3b Melanoma cancer survivor and walks in faith through God’s healing and calling in his life. Learn more from *Born to Blaze Ministries* at www.born2blaze.com and www.carlwesleyanderson.com.