

3 Deliberate Things This Woman Did After Her Mom's Devastating Diagnosis

After my mom was diagnosed with cancer, I made three decisions I will never regret. Cancer has a way of changing everything and turning your world upside down, of making you wake up every morning wishing it were only a bad dream. So here are three things I did—and would encourage you to do—when facing a challenging season.

1. **Step Out.** I had taken a couple of days off work so I could drive to Michigan and go with Mom to her doctor's appointment, where they would give her the results of her biopsy. She called me the day before I planned to leave to tell me she had called the office and asked for the results over the phone. They told her it was definitely lung cancer. In that moment, my focus and priorities shifted. I realized I was going to need to rearrange some things. I knew, almost instinctively, that I needed to step out of some of my activities and ministry commitments, some of which had been a part of my life for a long time, and clear space on my calendar. I needed to create more margin in my life so I would have the energy and time to be present with Mom and take care of myself and my family.
2. **Show Up.** Mom told me I didn't need to come anymore, because she cancelled her appointment. For a second I thought about not going. My daughters were in school, and I would need to make future trips to Michigan to help Mom. But I decided—and told my husband and daughters—that as often as I could, I would go. I wanted to spend as much time as I could with my mom during this difficult, unpredictable season. I would not later regret taking time off work and asking friends to help

juggle my kids after school. I would not regret putting miles on my car and gas in the tank, spending hours on the road driving to and from her house. Somehow, I knew that these would become the moments I would cherish, the memories I would hold in my heart forever. Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 3 that there is a time and a season for everything: to be born, to die, to plant, to uproot, to weep, to laugh, to mourn, to dance, to embrace, to refrain, to be silent, to speak. This was a season to show up and be there.

3. **Reach Out.** I knew I could not walk this journey alone. I needed help. Friends would often ask me, "What can I do to help?" Or people would say, "Let me know if there is anything I can do." While I appreciated the gestures, it was sometimes difficult to take people up on their offers. But I practiced saying "yes." I got really good at saying, "thank you." I learned to resist saying, "That's OK, I'm OK. I got this." I learned that even though I might feel like I can handle it right now, on Tuesday I might fall apart and be so appreciative and grateful that dinner is being dropped off, or that I asked to step out of the carpool for a few weeks.

When a dear friend of mine was diagnosed with cancer, her adult daughter was living on the West Coast, more than 2,000 miles away from her parents' home in Chicago. When she heard the news that her mom was sick, she says she made the easiest and best decision of her life. She quit her job, packed up her stuff and her dog, and moved home. She had a year and a half with her mom, and no regrets. She knew that home was where she needed to be.

Seasons change, and with them our priorities. We must seize the moments because we will never get them back. We've got to let the smaller stuff go, and quite simply, we need to learn how to say no to the things that will erode our strength and energy, distract us and use up our limited time. Because

saying no to lesser things will free us up to say yes to the things that matter more. Now is the time to go, to embrace, to speak words that need to be spoken, to weep, and to laugh. Now is the time to listen and tell stories and ask questions. Now is the time to forgive and to ask for forgiveness, to pray together and to pour out our hearts. Now is the time to love better than we ever have before. {eoa}

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