

After 5 Years, What God Taught Me About Fear, Faith and Cancer

Five and a half years ago, I heard the diagnosis that strikes fear in so many men: I had prostate cancer. It was stage 1 and moving to stage 2. It's not really dangerous until stage 3, but by the time it metastasizes at stage 4, it's too late. Prostate cancer is slow-growing and one of the easiest cancers to treat, but there can be serious complications. Through a series of what I saw as miracles, I decided to try a fairly new treatment out of the country called high-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) treatment. On Jan. 24, 2014, I was treated. Since then, I've been cancer-free with no bad symptoms.

Through research, I concluded that I could have gone about three years before the cancer would have metastasized, then about two years until it would have killed me. That is my own speculation, but this much is certain: the cancer would have killed me eventually unless I died of something else first. I likely would have died by now. But we serve a God of miracles, and today I'm not only still alive, but healthier than ever.

If you've experienced a cancer diagnosis (either for yourself or a loved one), I hope my story will help give you hope for a bright future ahead. My advice: Believe God for the best path to cure, take control of your own health rather than passively doing whatever medical personnel or insurance companies tell you, and believe God will work all things together for good.

I first discovered I had prostate cancer because I have regular medical checkups. At those checkups, I get the PSA (prostate-specific antigen) test. The test helps determine whether you may have prostate cancer, and every man should have it done. My PSA test numbers showed there might be a

problem. I had a biopsy, and 7 of 12 samples had cancer. I learned that 22 percent of all men will hear this diagnosis. Many more who have this disease die of something else and never know they had cancer because they never had it checked.

This was an emotional shock for me: I walked into the doctor's office thinking I'd be fine, and I walked out a cancer patient. At first, I couldn't believe it. After all, I was in good shape. I felt healthy. I did not feel sick at all.

I found out there are actually seven different things you can do to treat prostate cancer—and none of them involve chemotherapy. After researching my options, I ended up not choosing radiation or surgery, two of the most popular choices. In my experience, a lot of people just do whatever their insurance company or doctor recommends. At the risk of sounding cynical, every doctor I met when I was weighing options pushed the procedure that made them money and criticized the other methods. I felt it was important to take charge of my own health.

I had to move from fear to faith. For me, it was about believing God that I would find the right treatment, meet the right doctor and experience the right outcome. I know God heals through medical science as well as faith. I also know people who believed they would be healed, and they weren't—with no clear reason why. But I chose to put all my faith in God and believe He would guide me to the right treatment option. Eventually, He led me to HIFU.

Today my ordeal with cancer feels almost like an unpleasant dream. It happened, but somehow it doesn't seem real. Yet God used this surreal, difficult season to teach me three important lessons.

First, I learned that life is not forever. Being diagnosed with any kind of cancer or terminal disease will forever affect how you look at life. I had to grapple with the fact

that I might die, and I needed to have things in order. I became more sober about my mortality. You need to be ready to meet your Creator at any time. Because of that, I leaned into the Lord more, asking Him for guidance about my decisions. *Which treatment should I get? Which doctor should I trust?* Through that process, I believe God deepened my faith and matured my character.

Second, I became more compassionate to other people struggling with cancer or chronic illnesses. If I learn that a friend or an employee at my company is dealing with cancer, I take the opportunity to share my story and pray with them.

Third, my brush with death here made me more thankful for Christ's gift of eternal life. My wife and I have already chosen the Scripture we want on our tombstone: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23b). I want anyone who walks by my grave one day to encounter the gospel.

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