

Anne Graham Lotz: What to Do When You Pray—And Things Get Worse

“Our light affliction, which lasts but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17).

Have you ever specifically prayed for something, only to have the situation get worse? Have you prayed for your health to improve, only to have your condition weaken, then deteriorate further when you have a negative reaction to the medicine you were given? Have you prayed for your job to be more productive, only to lose out on a promotion, then be asked to resign? Have you prayed for your child’s well-being, only to have him drop out of school, then learn that he is involved in drugs?

Things got worse for Mary and Martha when they sent word to Jesus in John 11:3, “Lord, he whom you love is sick.” Implied in the message was an urgent request on behalf of their brother Lazarus: “Please come. Do something. Help him. Make our brother well.” If they could have heard Jesus’ response at the moment He heard their request, they might have been initially encouraged, because when He heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it” (John 11:4). The logical assumption would have been that He was promising Lazarus’ illness would not become worse ... that Lazarus would not die ... that God would heal him. Yet not only did Lazarus not get better, things got worse. He did die.

When have you prayed and received initial encouragement through a promise from God? Has that promise led to confusion when it not only seems to be unfulfilled, but things get

worse?

On Aug. 17, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Almost immediately, God seemed to give me a promise from James 5:16b, "Pray for one another that you may be healed." I believed God was promising to heal me in answer to your prayers, even though I didn't know if it would be before surgery, through surgery, using chemotherapy, radiation or both. So my journey of faith began, undergirded by the prayers of many people.

Rather than be healed before the surgery, I went through surgery. Rather than the cancer being contained, it was found in a lymph node. Rather than experiencing minimum side effects to chemotherapy, I experienced a severe side effect to my second treatment. Rather than staying on schedule, my treatment was delayed for a week, and another chemotherapy infusion added.

So, when things get worse, how should you and I respond? With complaints? Self-pity? Fear? Doubt? Or trust:

—that God has a greater purpose than our immediate comfort.

—that getting what we want when we want it is not always for our good or His glory.

—that our faith is of more value than our physical health.

—that His strength will be sufficient for each moment of each day.

—that His blessings will outweigh any trial.

In this new year—when things get worse—let's choose to lay our expectations down and trust God alone. Period. {eo}

Anne Graham Lotz, second child of Billy and Ruth Graham, is the founder of AnGeL Ministries and former chairman for the National Day of Prayer Task Force. She has authored 15 books, including her latest, The Daniel Prayer.

This article originally appeared at .

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.