

Ben Sasse Calls Terminal Cancer Diagnosis a 'Touch of Grace,' Explains Why

"There are no maverick molecules in the universe."

Through tears and a catch in his throat, those are the words former Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) told CBS News host Scott Pelley on an emotional episode of "60 Minutes."

While he's known for his status as "senator," Sasse made clear early in the conversation that his accomplishments on Capitol Hill pale in comparison to the other titles he holds: a husband of more than 30 years, a father of three children, a neighbor, a friend.

The 54-year-old Nebraska native told Pelley it was his December diagnosis with five different kinds of cancer – chiefly, a late-stage battle with pancreatic cancer – that illuminated his life's most important work in an undeniably palpable way. That, he said, has been a "touch of grace."

Pelley asked Sasse, a reformed Christian, why he believes "God has put you to the test."



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"Death is wicked, death is evil, death is not how it's supposed to be," said Sasse. "And me getting a cancer diagnosis, again, is pretty small on the grand scheme of things. But it's a touch of grace, because it forces me to tell the truth. And the lie I wanna tell myself is that I'm the center of everything, and I'm gonna be around forever, and I can work harder, and store up enough, that I can atone for my own brokenness."

He added, “I hate cancer. But I’m also grateful for it. I tell a lot more truth to myself than I used to do it when I thought I was super omni-competent and interesting.”

Sasse also told Pelley his fight against such aggressive cancer – an illness so painful he tried repeatedly to scald his back in the shower to relieve throbbing pain from tumors pressing against his spine – has “definitely” made him closer to God in ways he would not undo.

“I can acknowledge my dependence [on God] in a new way,” he said.

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