

Doctors Said She Had 5 Years to Live—17 Years Ago

In 1999 when a cardiac surgeon told me I only had five years to live unless I lost at least 100 pounds (preferably more) and kept it off, all I could think about were the things I'd miss. I wanted to choose to live (Deut. 30:19-20), but the mountain I knew I was going to have to climb seemed impossible.

Miracles do happen, because with God's help, I've lost 260 pounds since then.

What Did I Want?

The main thing I thought about when the surgeon left my room was that I wanted to be there to see my then-9-year-old daughter grow up and get married. I wanted to be there on the most special day of her life. I also realized how much she would want me to be there.

I realized how selfish it would be of me to graduate myself to heaven by eating whatever I wanted whenever I wanted it and not be there for her on that future special day. Being there for my daughter and son became a motivating factor during the next years of my weight-loss journey.

Vowed to Be Present

That day in that hospital bed, I vowed to do better, to make a way to be present in my children's lives. There had been so many times I had barely been present. At that point in time, I couldn't walk far, could barely go shopping or attend school events. I never volunteered to be a parent chaperone because I would just slow everyone down.

Anytime we went on a family vacation, my husband explored with

the kids while I sat in the car reading but wishing I could be with them. It seemed everything in our lives were planned around my limitations. I was precluding my family from being complete by my inattention to my health.

I heard once that the definition of a dysfunctional family is one in which at least one family member has limitations that affect every member of the family. We had a loving, close-knit family. I didn't realize that it wasn't necessarily the behaviorally challenge foster children we began taking care of that made us dysfunctional. It was me.

There was a vast difference in me from when my daughter was a grade schooler and when she got married.

Her wedding day was an overwhelming kind of celebration day for me. Of course, I was celebrating Jenny and her new husband, Nigel, but I was also just celebrating being alive.

Rude Cardiac Surgeon

I was well-aware that a rude cardiac surgeon saved my life by being bluntly honest with me back in 1999 when he said, "Your heart was never designed to pump blood through a body of your size. You'll be dead in five years if you don't lose 100 pounds and keep it off."

Then he promptly turned and walked out of the room leaving me to die in my own fat. I'd done this to myself and I knew it. I wanted a fast cure. I wanted everything to be right with the world. I bargained with God.

I cried. I moaned. I wailed at God for making me this way. I screamed at myself for not being able to control my appetites and cravings. I admitted I was a ticking time-bomb ready to explode in my family's face.

Motivation

At every turn, I saw the sweet face of my daughter in my mind.

My son was 15 by this time. I figured he and his dad would do fine. My husband would do good with my daughter, of course, but she needed a mom. My mother and grandmother were already in heaven. I was it, and I had a responsibility to present for her as long as possible.

I knew what it felt like to lose one's matriarchs. It felt like being exposed, like being the next in line to expire. I didn't want her to have that feeling then. It wasn't the right time. It wouldn't be fair to her.

Space and time precludes me from sharing my entire story. That's what my book, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds* is for. Let's just say God's grace grabbed hold of me in a way I never thought possible.

He showed me what to do. He led me to people who helped me on my journey. Most of all, when I surrendered my weakness for the foods I craved, His grace-power stepped in (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

Today, I am not just alive. I am alive with abundance that only being in the center of God's will can bring. It's an abundance that Jesus gives, more than I expect, life in its fullness till I overflows (John 10:10). {eoa}

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