

How to Keep Your Dream Alive

Editor's Note: *Bo Stern's husband, Steve, has been diagnosed with ALS, an incurable degenerative disease.*

It's been a tough couple of weeks on the ALS front lines, and last night was especially hard, filled with breathing mask difficulties and some scary choking episodes into the wee hours. I'm sure every serious illness comes with problems for which there are no solutions, but ALS seems to specialize in them. I often feel helpless and useless, sitting beside Steve while he chokes and tries to find his way back to regular breathing (and then apologizes for keeping me awake).

This morning, my Facebook news feed is filled with tributes to another friend lost to this battle. We are expecting to say farewell to several more within the next few weeks. And sometimes it seems we're no closer to finding a cure than we are to achieving Lou Gehrig's batting average (.343!).

But the other day I was home from work because it was Martin Luther King Jr. Day. And though I know we still have far to go in achieving true racial reconciliation and equality, I wonder if, in his lifetime, he could ever have imagined that his name would be attached to a national holiday. As he fought on the front lines of racism and segregation, how could he have known how significantly he would help to alter the course of history? He just did the work. And he believed. And I'm guessing sometimes it felt like he was believing his way through quicksand, because he said this:

"If you can't fly, then run; if you can't run, then walk; if you can't walk, then crawl; but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward."

I am working at believing. Believing for a day when breakthroughs will come. When science will crack the mysterious code that keeps so many suffering. I am believing

that, even if there's never a national holiday to celebrate the eradication of this relentlessly brutal disease, that my grandchildren and great-grandchildren will gather for dinner somewhere and the same time every year. And they will raise their glasses to their strong, valiant soldier of a granddad who never stopped fighting.

I wonder: What are you believing for today? What seems impossible? I am wishing you the strength to stand in the trenches and the strategy to make inroads that generations will thank you for. I am wishing you life and joy and peace in the battle, though sometimes those things seem impossibly incongruent. I am wishing you the bravery of Abraham Lincoln and Amelia Earhart and Malala Youfsazai. Because we all have a story, and we all have a storm. May we have the faith to believe with Martin Luther King Jr. that "unearned suffering is redemptive."

So, I guess, I am not wishing you a quick way out of your battle, but I am believing for you and for me that every square inch of our battleground will be redeemed. And on that ground, beauty will grow, wild and free.

Let freedom ring.

Bo Stern is a blogger and author of *Beautiful Battliefields*. She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they are still fighting with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends, and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Ore.