

Illusionist Says God Used Cancer to Offer Rebirth

I'm a psychological illusionist. I spend hours thinking up ways to make people think something is happening when it really isn't. So over time, I've developed a bit of skepticism about how things work.

When you're a magician, you realize that most of what's going on behind the scenes is fake. One famous magician said, "To become an illusionist is to give up wonder."

To many, the idea of an all-powerful God seems silly, and as a teenager, when I would talk to people who would go to church, I remember thinking that they were just falling for a simple magic trick. They wanted it to be true because it gave them peace; it was a crutch for them.

When I went to college, I began to think about all of the different philosophies and ways that people believe, and I decided that I was going to answer "the God question" once and for all for myself. I majored in psychology, so I studied the brain and the mind. And I took religious studies courses from people who didn't necessarily believe in God.

One Sunday, I was invited to a church, and I experienced something that morning that did not fit my worldview. I began to wrestle with the claims of Christ. I prayed to receive Christ. But as the next few years went by, I followed Him with a head knowledge; I had a hard time relating to people's testimonies about their intimate relationship with God.

I had grown up understanding how to make people believe something was real when it was not. I began to pray: "God, if You are real, then I need You to bring me back behind the curtain. I need You to show me how it works, and make this so real that it is impossible for me to deny You. I do not want

to be a phony.”

Little did I know that God was getting ready to answer that prayer in an amazing way.

I will never forget the day, in late 2008, that I began to feel significant pain in my right leg. It became so overwhelming that my wife, Eli, took me to the emergency room. A doctor told me, “Mr. Munroe, I have some bad news. You have cancer—a very aggressive form of leukemia. We cannot cure you of this disease.”

At the time, Eli and I had been married for five years. We had a 3-year-old little girl and a 2-year-old little boy. I remember thinking, I need more time.

“There is something we would like to try,” the doctor said. “It’s a bone marrow transplant. The problem with your body is that your white blood cells are making bad copies of bad copies. Your body is deceiving itself; it’s playing a trick on itself.”

I had lived my whole life learning how tricks work, but this was the best trick of all, because these copies were so good that my body couldn’t recognize them as being the wrong thing. I was thinking, My time is running out. I am dying.

The doctor explained: “We need to completely destroy your cells, your blood and immune system, and we’re hoping to find someone in the world whose DNA matches yours closely enough to grow a brand-new immune system, a brand-new blood system from scratch. We’re going to substitute someone else’s perfect blood on your behalf so that you can live again.”

They began the most vicious concoction of chemo, the goal of which was not just to destroy the cancer in my body but to destroy me. It was hell; it was a slow death. I tried to be strong for Eli and our children, but I was scared. Without a perfect substitution of blood cells, my life was over. And out

of seven million people in the database of the National Bone Marrow Donor Program, there was one perfect match for me—just one. It was a 19-year-old female.

They scheduled the transplant for April 23. “You’re going to get a brand new birthday,” the doctor said. “You are going to be like a baby all over again. The nurses will celebrate your new birth in the hospital. You get two birthdays now for the rest of your life.”

I had heard that terminology before. That sounds like John 3, I thought. Although John 3 is talking about spiritual birth, now I was going to be born anew physically. On April 23, they brought a bag of blood into my room, and everyone was hoping in that moment that my body would receive new life from that blood. That new life dripped into my chest and began to grow a brand-new immune system.

Today I’m 100 percent cancer-free as a result of that perfect blood. And when they look at my blood today, they see a 19-year-old female—they see XX chromosome. I’m reminded of the verse that says: “It’s no longer I who live, but it’s someone else who lives on the inside of me, and the life that I now live, I live by faith” (Cf. Galatians 2:20).

In the months after the transplant, I started piecing together what God had done in me and for me. The doctors, not intending to quote Scripture, had talked about the power of the blood and why life is in the blood. And when I received my donor’s perfect blood, it meant new life for me. My 30th birthday had been three days before the transplant, and I spent that birthday essentially dead on a table, kept alive by machines. With the transplant, I became in a sense a new creation, with a different cellular makeup than I had before.

The God of the universe had taken me back behind the curtain, just as I had asked Him to. And I was placed into a seat of wonder like I never expected. Cancer is what God used to do

it.

You can believe that what happened to me was simply a statistical anomaly, that I'm just the one-in-7-million guy. Or you might have to consider that there is a Person bigger than you and that there's something going on behind the scenes of this existence.

To this day I am skeptical about a lot of things, but one thing I have no doubt about is that there is a God who wants to transcend space and time and have a relationship with you. And there is no doubt in my mind that the teachings of Jesus and who He claimed to be are true.

I think the gospel is more relevant today than perhaps ever before. All the statistics point to a culture that's sick, almost like we have a spiritual cancer that is eating us away. I think we are more ready for the gospel than we've been in a long time. The haze is kind of wearing off, and the next generation is beginning to see we're in bad shape. The gospel teaches that at center of who you are is a relationship that you are wired for, and there is only One who can fill that void.

My Hope is an important project to participate in because it is a poignant, relevant tool that we can use to do what we are called to do anyway—make disciples of all nations. Anyone can use this tool, this format, to share Jesus with people. It's just so easy.

I feel like people today are shying away from the “professional Christian” whose job it is to tell them about Jesus. They want to hear from people who live normal lives but whose lives have been radically touched and changed, who know truth and are walking in the fullness of what God has for them. That's what is so great about *My Hope*—it puts a tool in those people's hands.

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