

Painful Laughter: Waiting for a Healing

Faith is useless. At least, that's the thought I continually had to take captive.

My heart focused on the pain instead of God's healing presence. Years ago, my belief in His power and love for me was tested.

On March 27, 2006, one day after a life-changing trip to Israel with my parents and older sister, the unthinkable became reality. My father had a stroke.

The expression on my sister's face brought a sick feeling to the pit of my stomach. She began to cry as she shared the news with me. My first reaction was "God, help us!"

Years have passed since I first saw my dad lying on an emergency room bed hooked up to machines. Thinking back, I remember the uncertainty of that time and how what used to be simple for him wasn't so easy anymore.

My father's attempts to walk to the car or to open a bottle of water brings those memories to mind again. The stroke left him paralyzed on his left side. He walks with a cane, jerking his left leg forward to make the next step. When his throat is dry, he coughs as he struggles to take the bottle cap off with his good hand.

God has brought him far and I believe for his continued healing. These days, he's as independent as he can be. He enjoys rolling the windows down and driving himself 1.5 hours to visit my granddad twice a week, using a right-handed device on his steering wheel.

Something as traumatic as a stroke also can affect a person's

mind and emotions. And I've seen that too. Although Dad was never afraid to show how he feels; situations that never prompted strong emotions before do now. At first, there were times when he would weep uncontrollably. He'd then burst into laughter. Even in silence, he'd smile as he tried to open his eyes to see through the tears.

I'd end up crying and hugging his neck as I laughed along with him. It's difficult to hear a loved one weep, but I'm thankful for the sounds of unexplainable laughter that followed.

It's tough to watch someone you love go through a serious health crisis. You feel helpless and hopeless. There's nothing you can do to ease their pain or restore their body. If you find yourself in that situation, just know that God can simply speak a word of healing and all is righted again.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened. What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?" (Matt. 7:7-9).

As you stagger through your own ordeal, remember to continually give it to the Lord. Pound on the door until your fists are bruised and heaven opens and pours out healing. Pray without relenting that your loved one is made whole. Have faith, and God will move mountains!

During the first few weeks, my dad spent his days in a sterile rehabilitation hospital room. Each night after visiting hours, despair consumed me. Every step I took away from that building reminded me that he couldn't walk as I could. Guilt ate me up. I felt terrible for leaving him there. I had to let him go night after night kissing him on the head goodbye.

Walking to the elevator and out the doors was grueling. It wasn't fair. I shouldn't have to leave my father in that place. Time alone with the Lord and His encouraging voice

helped me more than words of sympathy from anyone else. So, if you need solace, seek out the Prince of Peace. He offers comfort like no other.

God knows life is miserable sometimes. Release your pain to Him. He knows your the heaviness of your sorrow; He bore the weight of His Son's death. God understands your frustration, even when you don't feel like anyone cares—even Him. If you let Him, He'll show you how much He cares for you and your family.

A few months after my father's stroke, I surveyed my heart about my dad's health and wrote this:

"Painful Laughter"

Uncertain where this is leading
God, open Your ears, I'm pleading.
The one thing I never knew, never hoped would come,
a time when my life came undone.

My father lay bruised and broken.
Trying now, I can find a slight hope within.
Seeking hard for what I'm after,
grateful for his painful laughter.

My anxiety calms when I see my father laugh in spite of his physical weakness. His faith has always been strong, but he's even stronger now. He walks the best he ever has—with our heavenly Father.

This article is officially ending with a "to be continued." When he gets his full and complete healing, there will be a new story to tell.

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