

Three Life-Changing Lessons I Learned from Cancer

I was recently asked to do an interview about my personal journey with breast cancer on one of Moody's radio stations. As I prepared for that interview, God reminded me of all I learned through my breast cancer experience. Since October was Breast Cancer Awareness month, I thought I'd share some of those lessons here with you, my friends!

A routine mammogram found my cancer. Now let me just say there's nothing routine about a mammogram! Right, girls?! However, that mammogram saved my life. (If you haven't gone yet, friends, go for your mammogram!) I was quite young and still very much in the process of raising four kids, which made the diagnosis pretty scary for both myself and my husband. I ended up having a bilateral mastectomy and multiple reconstruction surgeries.

As I think back on those years, I remember lots of surgeries and battling tiredness. I remember walking every day and memorizing Psalm 46. I remember moments of great fear and discouragement. However, in all the chaos of cancer, there were three life-changing lessons I learned.

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Cancer Was Very Clarifying: Cancer has a way of slicing through your priorities like a surgeon's knife. Very quickly you are able to discern what is most important in your life. I remember arguing with my doctor because I was under contract for a speaking engagement and needed to feel well enough to go. I wanted my surgeon to hurry up and schedule the surgery so I could move on with life. She calmly looked at me and said, "Becky, I don't think you're getting this. You have cancer and it's going to take at least a year out of your

life, and I don't care about your speaking event!"

Those were strong words to me but very corrective. I went home that day discouraged but ready to consider the question, "What is most important to me?" I realized without a shadow of a doubt that far more important than any speaking engagement was precious moments spent with my husband and children. From that day on, I asked the Lord to fill me with the ability to savor each and every precious moment with my kids and my husband. I began to cherish each moment I was alive.

Cancer Awakened My Heart to a Deeper Desire to Experience God's Presence: Up until I journeyed through cancer, my faith was very cranial. I knew what I believed and why I believed certain truths about God. But cancer awakened in my soul a deeper desire; I wanted more. I didn't just want a faith based on propositional truths. I wanted to experience the presence of God every day. I wanted a vibrant relationship where I experienced His love and goodness tangibly.

God answered the cries of my heart. Sometimes He woke me in the middle of the night and I would feel His love overwhelming me. Sometimes I would be out on a walk and the presence of God seemed to envelop me. I knew He was right there with me, closer than my breath. Sometimes I would be reading His Word and the words would jump off the page at me, and I would know He was speaking!

Praise music was a huge part of this journey for me. As I would listen to worship music every morning and discipline myself to praise God for who He was above the cancer, I felt His love more than ever before. I realized in new, fresh ways how deeply God loved me. I experienced His loving presence all around me.

Cancer Taught Me to Embrace My Limits: Honestly, limits are hard for me. I wanted to be out changing the world but often I was laying on the couch too tired to move. The Holy Spirit

began to speak to my heart that His desire for me was that I be still and know—not just cranially but experientially—that He is God (Ps. 46:10). I learned that rest wasn't a waste of time but a beautiful privilege modeled by God Himself, who rested on the seventh day of creation. I learned that it was enough to simply be on the couch listening and snuggling with my kids. I learned that it was enough to be present, not perfect. During those years, I learned how to say “no” when I was not up to things physically. I learned to embrace my limits.

The truth is while no one wants to be diagnosed with cancer, looking back, I thank God for my cancer journey. He healed me not only physically but also emotionally and spiritually through the journey. He clarified for me what was important, He awakened my heart to a deeper ache for Him and He taught me gently but firmly to embrace my limits.

Friend, if you have a loved one or friend journeying through cancer, may I suggest you get a copy of Psalms for the Anxious Heart? God is using this little devotional in ways I never thought possible. And with the holidays right around the corner, it makes a great little gift for family and friends! {eoa}

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