

Why You Shouldn't Let the 'C' Word Scare You to Death

I was on the way home from church with my husband and heading into a drive-thru car wash when my mom called with the news.

"Diana, I got the biopsy results back, *is* cancer..."

It was the fear that had been buried in the back of my mind for months, ever since my mom began complaining of a particularly itchy area that refused to relent, not even with the most potent ointment the doctor could prescribe. She calmly proceeded to inform me that she'd been diagnosed with a rare form of cancer called Perianal Paget's disease.

"It isn't *that* serious," she tried to assure me. "They will likely remove it surgically. No chemo."

And then she made a joke about the tumor's location, but I couldn't laugh; it was all I could do to hold back the torrent of tears I could feel burning to escape my eyes.

"It isn't funny, mom—it's cancer," I said, my throat tightening around the word, that ugly, toxic, dark and oppressive, joy-stealing word that can effortlessly make one forget what faith is. At least that's what it did to me.

After I said goodbye to her, I stared out the window, tried to drown out the barrage of thoughts and questions with the cacophony of the car-wash tunnel, and sat perfectly still, afraid to move for fear of what lay ahead. Just minutes ago the sunshine embodied the tone of a splendid Sunday morning, but now it shone with a sickening brightness that made me want to flee into the nearest patch of shade and weep within a shadowy shroud.

The enemy found a chink in my armor that day. In fact, he had

observed that I was missing an entire piece of it, a crucial one that is referred to in the New Testament as the Shield of Faith; it is the very weapon with which we are to “extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” My first reaction to hearing the word “cancer” was not to hold up the shield and recall God’s promises, remember His faithfulness, or ask Him for peace and assurance, but to cower and retreat into darkness and isolation ... the ideal place for dread and distress to consume me.

When we got home, my husband prayed with me, held me, and helped me call upon close friends and family to join us in intercession for my mother. The following day she would be having a colonoscopy and upper G.I. which would indicate whether the cancer had spread. My husband and I, along with a few incredible friends, fasted from food for 24 hours and prayed for a negative report.

Praise be to God, our prayers were answered. A CAT scan further confirmed that my mom’s tumor was localized. The next step would be to have it surgically removed six weeks later.

My mom’s surgery was last week, and I was blown away all morning long as dozens of friends, family and church members, even Facebook acquaintances whom I’ve never met in person, texted, messaged and called to tell me they were earnestly praying for her successful surgery. And into the evening, I received just as many follow-up messages and was thrilled to deliver the news: “They got all the cancer! She’s in recovery now. It was total success!”

Because that’s what the doctor told us.

During my mom’s surgery, a pathologist also biopsied another small area in the same section as the tumor. In fact, it was *within* the margin that the doctor excised. We just found out that there are still cancer cells left—microscopic ones that went undetected during the surgery.

When I received this bit of news, I didn't crumple and cry as before. I bowed and I prayed. I surrendered my anxiety, my frustration and my anger to the Lord. No whys, hows, ifs or buts were permitted to attack and steal my soldier's shoes "fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:25, NIV, emphasis mine). I refused to slip and fall into fear.

Although there are moments when my flesh feels pulled toward the ground where a trap of worry lies in wait, my spirit is looking heavenward, because I know my Helper, my Healer, my King is there.

*I look up to the mountains;
does my strength come from mountains?
No, my strength comes from God,
who made heaven, and earth, and mountains.*

*He won't let you stumble,
your Guardian God won't fall asleep.
Not on your life! Israel's
Guardian will never doze or sleep. (Psalm 121:1-4, MSG)*

Civil-rights leader Ralph Abernathy once said, "I don't know what the future may hold, but I know Who holds the future."

How true that is. From relationship strife and rebellious children to a cancer diagnosis or an untimely death, no matter how well we prepare, we can never know with absolute certainty what lies ahead or when bad news will turn a sunny Sunday upside down. But *we do know* the One who sits above time, the One who *created* time, marked off Earth's dimensions, laid its foundations, tells the ocean how far its waves may roll onto shore, commands the dawn to break and the rain to fall, who numbers the clouds, the stars and the hairs on our head.

I can think of no greater peace than the kind that flows from

not merely a knowledge of, but a *relationship with* Almighty God. He loves us more than any human ever could. He desires to do “immeasurably more than all we ask for and imagine.” He has plans to prosper us, to give us hope and a future.

This fallen, sin-cursed, swirling sphere called Earth is rife with brokenness, disappointments, tribulation and tragedies, all bitter repercussions still rippling out of Eden. But ...

The Word of God promises a new heaven and a new Earth. All the pain and sorrow we endure today will not be remembered but wiped away forever along with every last tear.

” ... creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21, NIV).

Until that day, we must make a choice whenever we are faced with adversity.

Will we stand firm in our armor and wield our shield, or will we dissolve under the weight of the fiery onslaught?

Will we turn to the world for wisdom and comfort or to the One who knows us best and loves us most, who suffered ridicule, rejection and a horrific death so we could be reconciled unto God and have life in abundance?

Whatever you are going through, I urge you using the exhortation of the apostle Paul: *“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.”*

Diana Anderson-Tyler is the author of Creation House's Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness and her latest book, Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness. Her popular website can be found at [www.creationhouse.com](#), and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925. Diana can be reached on Twitter.

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