

At Thanksgiving, This Miracle Story Will Inspire You

This Thanksgiving, many believers are making a special attempt to focus on the blessings God has given even through all the challenges of 2020. But Pastors Eugene and Laura Smith of City Church in Sanford, Florida, have some extraordinary reasons to praise and thank God this year: the miraculous healings he has provided for both Laura and their son Austin.

I was deeply moved when I heard this story last Sunday at church. Eugene and Laura Smith are our pastors and friends, so I was aware behind the scenes how serious it was for both of them. I also knew how thankful the Smiths are, so I invited them to tell their story to inspire you at Thanksgiving.

Laura's story began 19 years ago, not long after she and Eugene had moved from Seattle, Washington, to plant a brand-new church in Florida. She had "breast cancer, kind of your garden variety, stage 1-2," she says. She had chemotherapy, radiation and surgery and says, "That was a very difficult time for our church."

But 10 years later, the cancer recurred, and in 2012 she had a double mastectomy. She continued her busy life, but in 2014, one of her sons noticed a lump on her neck which turned out to be two tumors on her thyroid. "'As skillful as a surgeon as I had, he was not able to completely save my vocal cord. So my left one is paralyzed, and it took away my ability to sing. And speaking is more difficult, but 'little voice, big God,'" Laura says, attributing the miracle of her survival to the way City Church fasted and prayed throughout her surgery and radiation treatment.

Her cancer "was so advanced that every time they checked me, they thought that it would have returned because of the size

of the tumors at the time," she says. "So praise the Lord, miraculously, we were able to hold it at bay for five years."

But then cancer struck again. After local doctors checked out a new lump that had appeared on Laura's throat, they immediately referred her to Mayo Clinic. Ultimately, she learned that the cancer had already progressed to her sacrum, her lower spinal cord and her liver. She says, "They tried to re-treat it with the original treatment. But they said it had progressed so far that the cancer cells had morphed into something that's nontreatable."

Eugene says the doctor who came to tell them about her prognosis gave them the sad news that "really, there was no cure. And that you just do the best you can with this." He and his nurse both used the term "palliative care," or comfort care given just before and during hospice.

"So I blurted out, 'Well, let's pray,'" Eugene says. "And so I prayed. And then when I finished praying, the doctor looked at me and he said, 'Well, can I pray?' And I said, 'Absolutely.'"

At the time, the Smiths had no idea the doctor was a Spirit-filled Christian. Eugene says, "We held hands and prayed, and he said, 'Father, I come to you in the name of your Son, Jesus. And I curse this cancer at the root, and I command it to die in Jesus' name. Just like that.'"

Laura says that was the turning point. Because the doctors said her cancer was untreatable, she didn't have to endure chemotherapy or radiation. But what she did do was read, study and learn everything she could about natural cures for cancer and how they could work in combination with faith. "We like to say that I've approached it through prayer, pills, plant-based [diet] and power walking," she says.

Laura says doctors began scanning her every three months because they believed the cancer would spread rapidly. "And so they scanned me," she says. "They scanned me again. The last

time they scanned me, they did another full-body scan.

“And that’s when the doctor went through all the parts of my body,” she says. “He kept saying, ‘Clear, clear, clear, clear, clear, clear, clear.’ And I said, ‘Well, what is my condition now?’ And he said, ... ‘I would say that your condition, I would state it as stable, improving.’”

Laura looked up that term, which she says is an informal way of saying “remission.”

“And he said to her, because he was on a Zoom call, ‘Just go and enjoy your life,’” Eugene says. Laura adds, “He said, ‘I’m not sure what you’re doing, but continue to do what you’re doing.’”

But the Smiths are celebrating yet another miracle this Thanksgiving. Back in August, their son Austin, a law student at the University of Connecticut and a married father of two, went from not feeling well to being completely paralyzed in just a few days. Doctors determined that he had contracted Guillain-Barré Syndrome, an autoimmune disease, Eugene says, adding that based on what they could see in the natural, doctors told their son, “Austin, you’re probably never going to walk again.”

But Austin, City Church and others prayed for a miracle. “We’re praying; the church is praying; people around the world—and we’re posting this online, and we’re believing God for a miracle,” Eugene says. “And I’ve got to tell you—in the natural, when I was looking at it, it didn’t look good.”

God gave both Austin and his parents Scripture verses that encouraged them through this time of illness. “One of the nights as I was seeking the Lord, I just got this one verse, Psalm 34:19: ‘Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers us from all evil,’” Eugene says. “That’s our verse,” Laura adds. And Eugene says, “All you need is one word from God.”

But Eugene says his son had even greater faith than he did. He and a crew did some remodeling of Austin's house and even planned to buy an elevator lift. But Austin insisted, "Dad, you're not going to buy it. I'm going to walk out of this hospital," Eugene says. Austin kept urging his family to pray and to keep on praying.

And God responded. Last weekend, the Smiths celebrated their multiple miracles with their City Church family (view the service [here](#))—and Austin walked onto the platform carrying one of his children and using only a cane for support. Eugene says his son still has some paralysis in his fingertips and feet but is walking, which the doctors told him he would likely never do again.

To hear more of the Smith family's miracles and celebrate with them about the great things God has done, listen to the entire episode of the *Strang Report* podcast [here](#). And please share it with others who may need some extra Thanksgiving encouragement this year. {eoa}