

How Prayer Defeated Agonizing Cancer

In the summer of 2006, our middle son Paul, who lives in New York City, came to visit us in Florida. While visiting he came down with a heavy rash on the left side of his forehead, and I took him to the hospital. They diagnosed it as shingles and advised him to see his doctor when he returned the city.

Upon his arrival home, Paul's doctor sent him to a specialist to do a hip bone marrow biopsy and aspiration. A few weeks later, Paul was diagnosed with bone marrow cancer, multiple myeloma, in advanced Stage Three. He was told he might have six months to live and there was no cure.

Immediately, my wife Paula and I booked a flight to New York to be by our son's side. We prayed and consulted the internet, seeking the best medical experts all over the country. Paul had been referred to a world-renowned cancer research doctor heading a specialized study on Paul's form of the disease. He put Paul on experimental chemotherapy and steroid treatments.

Several months later we went back to the doctor for an update, he showed us how the cancer had slowly declined and stopped advancing. Even with this amazing news, the doctor recommended a stem cell transplant, because the cancer could come back. The transplant could prevent or delay its return for seven to ten years.

After much prayer and discussion, we decided to go through with the transplant. Paul was placed in a pressurized room with a double air door entry. He would become a bubble boy.

It was a two-step process, during the first phase, the doctors withdrew multiple stem-cell collections from his bone marrow. Then, they gave Paul chemo to kill all the cancer cells, which completely wiped out his immune system. This was expected, and

the doctors assured us within 24 to 48 hours, his white blood cell count should regenerate. Then, they would transplant the cleaned stem cells back in.

While we waited in the room with Paul we prayed for his immune system to reestablish itself, and watched our son's agony increase as blisters began covering his lips, the inside of his mouth and entire digestive system.

"Dad, my insides are on fire, and all my bones feel like they want to burst," he told me.

By the fourth day, Paul's immune system had still not recovered, and he was weakening fast. The doctor told us his body was shutting down and warned us our son may not make it.

A few hours later Paul looked over at me and whispered, "I don't have the strength to fight anymore."

Time was running out. I left the room quickly to find the doctor and urged him to do something.

"We have exhausted all that science can do. Paul may not make it, prepare yourself," said the doctor. "His immune system needs the spark of life and we don't know how to do that."

My wife and I went to the hospital chapel and began to pray. In my mind, I heard a whisper telling me to call everyone we know and ask them to pray for Paul. So I started going through the contacts in my phone.

Afterwards, I went back to Paul's room and waited in silence. Suddenly, a monitor connected to him started beeping. A nurse came in, checked the instrument and drew a blood sample from Paul. She kept returning every five minutes, checking the monitor.

When I asked what was going on she said, "We've found a white blood cell count and it's rising rapidly. It's a miracle; Paul got the spark of life. Your prayers did it." Soon dozens of

hospital staff were in the room, and the doctor confirmed the nurse's statement.

Shortly after, they performed the transplant. We were told he would be recovering in the hospital for the next six weeks but, one week later, Paul was released from the hospital.

A few months later, he was working full time again and has remained healthy ever since.

I do not have all the answers as to why God spared my son over someone else's, but what I learned from this is experience is the power of prayer, and I know I saw God perform a miracle right in front of me, for which I am grateful for each day.

Jack Manilla is owner, president and CEO of Portofino Pools in Jacksonville, Florida. He shares his life journey in his new book, Secrets of The Pink House.