

Back From The Brink—A COVID-19 Prayer Success Story

Note: This is part one of a two-part series.

“For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and self-control” (2 Tim. 1:7).

When COVID-19 first hit, I chose not to fear. I truly felt it was a pandemic of fear even more than it was a pandemic of health. But let’s face it—most of us fear for our health, don’t we?

Also, I said all along that we were all going to get it eventually. Christians are supposed to be protected by God all the time, right? So, if I die of COVID, it’s really no different than dying any other way, right? I mean the death rate of life is actually 100%, isn’t it?

Nobody gets out of this world without death unless they live until the second coming. So why live in fear?

Having said that, I am also in the high-risk group. I have been a Type 1 diabetic for 45 years. So, I wore a mask, washed my hands and generally tried to follow the social-distancing guidelines. I often said, “If God wants me to die of COVID, then no one will stop Him, and if He wants me to continue to serve Him here, then that is what will happen. This is the attitude I tried to have, like Paul:

“For to me, to continue living is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

So now, as Paul Harvey says, let me tell you the rest of my story ...

It started on a Thursday, beginning with a cough. I tested positive on Sunday. The first week, it got a little worse each

day, but overall, I thought I had a mild case.

I got sicker and weaker for 17 days straight. I lost 17 pounds in 17 days. Close friends and ministry connections quickly went to their knees for me. My Tuesday night prayer group called me and prayed as a group for me on the phone, claiming the blood of Jesus and encouraging me to have faith instead of fear.

They sang and praised God for my future healing and were a great encouragement. I cried and listened and quietly thanked them after about an hour.

I couldn't talk without coughing. I couldn't complete a sentence without losing my breath. I communicated my needs to my sweet wife in short phrases and one-word requests. Discouraging, to say the least.

Mostly, I talked to God. I prayed constantly.

Lord, I said, if it's time for me to come home, I'm ready. If this is the end of my spiritual warfare ministry for You, I'm good with that. I'm tired. I am hurting. I confess my fear of not being able to breathe.

I began to realize this might be the end of earthly me. I started to picture seeing my dad again, grandparents who have gone ahead and loved ones I miss who have finished their walk. It was actually both exciting and scary.

But as I sat and thought through all this, it felt wrong. It felt as if I still had work to do, ministry to do, encouragement to hand out and God's love to share with hurting people. I was very conflicted, though I didn't share these intimate thoughts with anyone.

The pessimistic nature in me realized there were many details of daily life that my wife (a school teacher) would struggle to figure out if I went on to heaven. I needed to fix this

before the end, if this was the end.

"Babe," I began, "the truth is I am not getting better, and I need you to video me showing you how to do some things." She didn't argue. It's only a backup plan, right?

So, we would record one thing, and I would rest and take some more pills. We would record something else, and I would try to eat or take a nap. This went on for a couple of days. We covered how to order my books from Amazon at the author's price, how to do the online banking and how the bills were reconciled and paid.

She never complained. She never cried (in front of me at least). She also never told me to stop. We both knew we were staring a crisis in the face, and it could go either way (which was later confirmed by my doctor).

At one point we went to the ER for evaluation. I was getting worse, and everyone really knew it. After the evaluation, the ER doctor met with us.

"What do you recommend?" we asked.

"I'd really like to put you in the hospital," he replied, "so we can keep you here and see when a bed becomes available. We were at their separate ER facility, and there were no beds available in the hospital.

We asked if there were any other options and discovered we could go home, taking oxygen with us, so that's what we did. This was five days in.

The oxygen helped, but I continued to slowly and steadily get sicker and weaker. Additionally, we found ourselves turning up the oxygen to higher and higher levels, starting at one and eventually landing on five, the maximum for our at-home unit.

This is why we ultimately started recording the videos. I thought some about heaven, God and dad, and some about what

else I needed to show my wife. My life of busyness and activities was reduced to my blue Lazyboy recliner and short trips to the bathroom, dragging an oxygen line back and forth. I went from walking an hour a day for exercise and being very active to getting out of breath on 10-step trips to the bathroom. *Life really is short. We all die—maybe it's my time* ...

About 10 days in, I couldn't eat. So there I was, on an insulin pump, sugars running a little high and no appetite. For the first time in 45 years as a diabetic, I went a full day with almost nothing to eat; I just couldn't get it down.

It was at about this time that I began to learn the "sacrifice of praise." I would pray and thank God and praise Him in spite of my circumstances. I would raise my hands and thank Him. I thanked Him for all He had already done, for the privilege of suffering for the kingdom and for being at home during my final days instead of in the hospital, isolated and alone. I cried and praised, truly a sacrifice in the face of my ongoing struggle. It felt good.

That day (Day 16) I finished one of my critical medications, and the next day, the Lord's Day, I was able to eat a little. It's wasn't much, but it was better than nothing. And I knew I absolutely had to eat, or I would be on a ventilator soon.

Although I began to eat a little better, it was obvious I wasn't improving. I was just holding my own—and barely.

By Saturday, Day 17, I was at a critical point. We had just added a new antibiotic and scheduled another TeleMed session with the doctor for Monday. We were desperately praying for the new medicine and for God to come through with a miracle.

That's when I decided to make a public request on my Facebook page for prayer. At that point, I wanted all the prayers I could get, and I still felt God had more work for me to do here and now. Here is what I posted at 9:45 a.m.:

“Prayer request: I’ve been diabetic for 45 years. I am very sick with Covid. It’s day 17 and I’ve been getting weaker every day. Please post a prayer for me if you feel call to. Or fast for me. Thank you.”

Watch for Part 2 of this story to see what unfolded. Only God can do this stuff! {eoa}

Steve Hemphill spent 30 years as a Christian business owner before becoming an author. His dad died unexpectedly, and Steve found a sealed envelope in the home safe with instructions: “If you find this after I’m dead, do NOT open it.” What would you do? This led to a series of books, first on heaven, and the others on Spiritual Warfare. His books include: My Search for the Real Heaven; My Search for Prayers Satan Hates; What Are the Stakes? and God’s Power for Our Daily Battles. You can visit his website at .

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