

Cherish the Day While You Can

Staring up at the ceiling in a dark hospital room, I wondered what was going to happen next. How did I end up here, Lord?

A week ago I was walking, laughing, talking, working and enjoying myself, and today ... Today I lay unable to move, turn over in bed without assistance or do anything that I've done for years without giving it a second thought. What happened? How did it happen? Why didn't I see it coming? How long will I be out of commission? What's next?

How much did I ignore the subtle reminders that I was doing too much, pushing too hard, not eating well or getting enough sleep? *"I'll take a week's vacation to rest at home,"* I thought. That week was the first of seven weeks of illness and what seemed like forever to recover. No, it wasn't a stroke or heart attack. It was a combination of things affected by my body's reactions to certain medications, but which uncovered a more present danger to my life.

In the weeks that followed, I realized just how many blessings I had taken for granted. Simply basic things like raising my arms, sitting up, getting out of bed, standing, walking, getting my clothes on and personal hygiene. My daily prayer was, "Help me, God. Help me to do this ... Help me to move over here ... Help me to get into the wheel chair ... to stand ... get dressed. Help me make it to the restroom." And when He did, it was "Oh, thank You, Lord." I was so grateful, and totally dependent on Him and my caregivers. I realize that I was and will forever be totally dependent on Him—even for the air I breathe, and I am grateful. So grateful!

My mom had a Spanish saying which translated means, "No one really knows (appreciates) what they have until they no longer have it." I often thought on that. Then I began to thank God for what remained. It wasn't over. I was down but not out. I

thanked Him for the outpouring of well wishes, prayers, cards, visits and gifts of love and friendship. I thanked Him for the caregivers He provided in that season—some who literally saved my life. They were wonderful gifts from God, expressions of His love.

In my frustration and desire to quickly recover and be out and about, I had to submit my independent, self-sufficient self to this season of forced rest and recuperation. In the midst of it, He was and is forever faithful. He never left or forsook me and He continues to uphold, strengthen, heal and provide. I thank God for continuing recovery. Every morning as I awake I thank God for another day. I cherish it.

I learned something else in that season. In my busyness and focus on family concerns and responsibilities, I had neglected to take proper care of myself—to maintain my own *physical* health. As a result, my immune system succumbed to infection. It crept in silently and unnoticed until weakness took its toll and I had to be rescued by medical personnel who with their knowledge, skill and experience intervened on my behalf.

In the same way that our physical bodies can be affected by neglect and become open to microscopic invaders, we can become so busy doing what we feel is important that we can neglect our own *spiritual* health and become vulnerable to invasion by “spiritual bacteria.” They are minute and unseen and we won’t see their effects until we are left weak and unable to stand like we should.

Their aim, as the enemy behind them, is to kill, steal and destroy. While we are focusing elsewhere, neglecting our time of personal worship, forgetting to digest the Word, or rest properly in prayer by casting our cares on Him, the unseen army penetrates the open and empty areas of our lives, and before we know it, we have become spiritually incapacitated.

What can we do when we reach that point? Well, we can call for

help. We can call 911 for a rescue squad. We can call spiritual mothers and fathers, trained and experienced in intercession, warfare and inner healing to take our vitals, administer first aid and deliver us to our heavenly caregiver.

During this time we need to totally surrender and submit to the Holy Spirit as our ultimate caregiver. We need large doses of the Word of God and determination to exercise our faith, as well as allow the joy of the Lord to be our strength. It might take a while, but eventually we will be able to “stand, walk and run” once again.

I don't take the same things for granted anymore. I cherish every day. I am grateful that I have regained much of what I lost in that season. I even look forward to shopping for Thanksgiving dinner now that I can stand and push a grocery cart again.

Let's cherish the day—not just the meal, parade, football, shopping and decorations, but this special day set aside to express our gratitude to the God who made us, saved us and delivered us from darkness into His glorious light. Let's enjoy our friends and family, but give honor to the one who is ever faithful.

Prayer Power for the Week of November 24, 2014

This Thanksgiving week, take time from all the busy planning, shopping, preparing and cooking to cherish each day and thank our God for all of it. Spend some time reflecting on His goodness and even the things you take for granted—like eating, walking, sleeping and even breathing. Express your gratitude for these things and ask Him to help you guard your heart and mouth to give Him praise and not take these things for granted. Thank Him for sending His Son to provide salvation. Thank Him for family, friends and employment. If you are able, thank Him that He can use you to be a blessing to those suffering from loss of jobs, health and loved ones. Ask Him to

open doors of opportunity for you to express His love by serving others in this season (1 Thess. 5:17-18; Ps. 100).