

When my mother was diagnosed with cancer

I still remember the day I was told that my mother was suffering from terminal cancer. It was one of the darkest days of my life.

In the weeks preceding that, I had spent many days fasting, praying, and seeking God. During this time the Holy Spirit had given me much revelation about myself – my past and my future. He brought me healing in significant areas of my personal life.

The cancer, however, took me by surprise.

I reacted by fasting, praying and confessing healing scriptures over my mother. My mother was a committed Christian. She was not afraid of dying, but she was concerned about how we (her children) would cope without her.

As the weeks passed, God showed me that her life on earth had drawn to a close.

I refused to accept this. How could I possibly let go of my mother? There was no one I loved more in the world, and I was no Abraham!

God waited patiently for me. We talk about waiting patiently for God, but God is more patient with us, than we are with Him.

A few weeks later, my sister and I told each other that we would always follow Jesus, no matter what happened to our mother. We would always love Jesus, because He was our saviour.

That same day, the Lord took my mother away, exactly as He had revealed to me in a vision a short while before.

I can still remember standing by her bed when she stopped breathing. I recall a strange peace filling my heart and my mind - the peace of God that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7)*.

I didn't sleep at all that night.

In the months to come, I would question many things, primarily, my faith in Christ (why didn't He heal her?), and my pursuit of a medical career that was impotent to heal the one person I loved. None of this made any sense.

I was furious with God. I stopped praying, or reading the bible. This just made things worse.

I later turned back to God as I realised that there was nowhere else to turn.

I had many questions for God - Why? Why? Why? Why my mother? Why me – when I had followed Him diligently? To make things more difficult, God kept very silent. I had expected God to reach out to me, and comfort me as He had done so many times before, when I was in distress. But He said nothing.

I suffered as a medical student – I failed my third year exams, as I had spent my time at my mother's bedside, instead of revising. I remember sitting my exams, and not knowing any of the answers. This was another blow because I had once been an "A" student. The sadness of loss, the pain of failure, the mockery of my teachers (who weren't aware of my mother's death), and a complete breakdown of my family's relationships, made me wonder – where was God? Did He really love me?

I learnt A FEW truths from that long nightmare.

1. **God will bring us safely through every period of testing, if we put our trust in Him.** Isaiah 43:2 says "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze".
2. **God is a God of miracles.** I learned to live without my mother, as impossible as it seemed. I passed my medical exams, and God has done more for my career than I could have asked or imagined (Ephesians 3:20). Most of my family have given their lives to Jesus (cousins, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces...). God brought a new measure of peace to my home.

I don't believe that medication or therapy or surgery, is contrary to God's will. But only God can heal perfectly, without any scars or relapses.

As a doctor I have seen patients healed through prayer. I don't pray for my patients openly, but pray for them regularly in my own secret place (Matthew 6:6). I recently prayed for two patients in a coma, with my prayer partners. Both of them were delivered from death's door, and are doing well.

3. **In Christ there is suffering.** In Revelations 1:9 John talks about "... the suffering ...that (is) ours IN Jesus". Jesus baptises us in the Spirit, and also in the Fire (Matthew 3:11). The fire of God refines us of the impurities of this world, and makes us holy for the work of God.

The School of the Holy Spirit is called Suffering. Jesus too was perfected through suffering (Hebrews 2:10). If we accept suffering as God training us in order to promote us (Psalm 57:5-6), suffering begins to make sense.

When I was a medical student, and later when I became a doctor, every promotion was linked to tests or assessment exercises – this method of

elevation through testing comes from God. Before God elevates us, He trains us and tests us.

4. **God is Sovereign and eternity is more important than anything on this earth.** In the greater scheme of things, my mother's fight with cancer, won her (and me) eternal rewards. Romans 5:4-5 says that, "suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope".
5. **Finally, though God kept silent, He was always with me.** In the early part of the Book of Job, God kept silent. Though Jesus "was sleeping" when the furious storm of bereavement, loss, failure and rejection swept into my boat, He was always with me (Matthew 8:24).

Paradoxically, that period of God's silence brought me incredible hope, great peace and mighty strength.

I am more confident in God knowing that Jesus will be "with (me) always" (Matthew 28:20) and that "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death ... (He) is with me" (Psalm 23:4).

Our confidence does not come from knowing the way ahead, but from knowing the Way.

God spoke to me one day and said, "Though I took your mother away, I AM with you. You will never lack for the love and the understanding your mother showed you". Indeed I haven't.

Our God understands us completely. There is no sorrow He does not know about, or pain that He cannot heal. He cares deeply for us. He never tires of listening to us. We don't have to hide anything from Him – not our fears, our weaknesses, or our insecurities. Thanks to Jesus, we stand in a place of acceptance; we live in the land of grace.

If you are going through a furious storm in your life, I am confident of one thing - Jesus will never abandon you. He is faithful and reliable (Rev 3:14). As long as you don't abandon Jesus, you will see a better day.

Finally, let me leave you with these words of encouragement from the epistle to the Romans (8:28, the Message) "we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good."

**All the scriptures quoted are from the New International Version, unless stated otherwise.*