



From Coping to Cure

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LESSON 13: YOUR WIFE HAS INOPERABLE CANCER

THOUGHT STARTER:

Is the peace of God that guards your heart and mind available in a crisis?

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7, NKJV

It had been about two years since Eva had her operation. Her cancer problem was behind her, and we had planned to spend Thanksgiving Day with our daughter, Beth, and her family. Instead, Eva was in a hospital in Florida. Shortly after Eva had been wheeled into the operating room, the surgeon came to us with the chilling and terrifying news that she had inoperable cancer and had six months to a year to live.

At first, the news left us stunned. Surely, we thought, there must be a way to overcome this problem. The doctors proposed a combination of chemical and radiation therapy. Eva and I didn't sleep well for several nights as we absorbed the reality of this news.

We were forced to take an in-depth look at just what peace is. We had spent the previous thirty-five years studying and searching for correct principles to live by. Most of what we had found was from the Bible, and we had traveled the world trying to teach what we had learned. Over the years, the most common problem we had seen was people who were struggling in their quest for peace. Now, we were being given one of life's acid tests: can you have peace during a painful death?

WHERE DOES PEACE COME FROM?

Together we found several verses that directed us to the God of peace:

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.” (2 Thessalonians 3:16, NKJV)

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7, NKJV)

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33, NKJV)

**“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, . . . and be thankful.”
(Colossians 3:15, NKJV)**

These verses made it clear that peace is something that originates with God and is available to us under any conditions, which included our present circumstances. Philippians 4:6-7 indicated clearly that God's peace is beyond our human understanding. Even though it is real and I have experienced it over the years, I still don't understand it and can't really explain it. It just works.

Picture a peaceful person with relaxed muscles, normal blood pressure, a quiet mind, and a calm and contented heart. Consider the opposite: tense, anxious, stressful, and uneasy. We had to face the fact that we were not peaceful.

How can you be peaceful when you face a painful, slow death? How can you be peaceful when you have tough decisions to make? For example, what do you do about a specialist's recommendation that you undergo chemical and radiation therapy when another specialist doesn't recommend it? When you pray and ask God for guidance, and there is only silence? When you receive solicited and unsolicited conflicting advice from many friends and associates who care deeply?

We turned to our Guidebook for help. These were the time-proven instructions that we already knew and that needed to be applied to our new circumstances. Never before had we faced a situation like this one.

**Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
and He shall direct your paths.
(Proverbs 3:5-6, NKJV)**

If you combine this verse with Philippians 4:6-7 and John 16:33, it is clear that if you want to get a hearing from God you need to present your “requests” to Him in a relaxed, cheerful, thankful, trusting fashion. We have an opinion about how things should turn out, but we need to be neutral about how they actually do turn out.

Eva and I had very definite opinions about how this situation should turn out. She had always been a healthy woman. We wanted her to be healed! Why should a good

woman who has been faithful to God, her husband, and her family suffer a slow painful death by cancer? It didn't make sense. Of course we were anxious! Why shouldn't we be?

But the Bible said we needed to come to the Lord in the proper spirit. The Bible said to relax and trust God. We asked the Lord to help us, and we experienced a miracle. He did calm us down and we were able to trust Him.

Eva decided she didn't want chemical and radiation therapy. Our research indicated that this might prolong her life a bit, but only at the cost of intense suffering. She preferred to try a special diet and food supplement program.

When we let a specialist and some of our friends know about our decision, we experienced a chorus of intensive opposition. I was confronted by some of our best friends who said we must avail ourselves of the finest medical technology available. They insisted I would never be able to forgive myself if I didn't do this.

When the judgment of people we respected was so strong against our decision, Eva and I had to reconsider. We prayed fervently for direction. Silence.

I remembered a time when Moses was in need of direction. He cried out to the Lord, and the Lord gave him this answer:

"My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Exodus 33:14, NKJV)

That seemed to be our answer. Eva did not change her mind and we proceeded with our plan. We discovered that we could not commit our ways unto Him once and for all. We found ourselves drifting away again and again from peaceful trust in God.

Eva could not follow the rigorous diet and food supplement program that she had selected. Slowly she lost weight: 120 pounds, 110 pounds, 100 pounds, 90 pounds. Sincerely concerned people came to call on us. They asked about our faith. A prayer of faith should heal her. We were asked if there was any known sin in our lives. We appreciated their interest. We searched our hearts and as best we could tell, there was nothing that blocked our prayers for healing.

Several dear people proposed that our faith was too weak. They would pray for Eva themselves and we could benefit from their faith.

Eva just lost more weight and got weaker and weaker. She stuck to her decision not to have chemical therapy. Weeks grew into months as we observed a steady physical decline. At the same time, our faith and trust in the Lord grew. We realized that peace was not dependent on God doing what we wanted Him to do, but peace was dependent on knowing that He was God and He knew what was best in every situation.

Our daughter Sue was able to spend the last six months of Eva's life with her. She was

a missionary with the North America Indian Mission which we have worked with since she was a teenager. Now that Eva was sick, the mission assigned her to look after her mother. I canceled most of my itinerary and also spent the last six months of her life with her. Numerous other people spent several days to a week helping to keep the home going. Our whole family gathered together for Christmas. Mel and Bertha Willett spent five or six weeks near the end of Eva's life. Tom and Ruth Tate, dear friends for thirty years, took a week out of a very busy life to be with Eva. We were surrounded by many people from all over the world; they offered sympathy, friendship, and help with housekeeping, cooking, and running errands.

TRUSTING GOD IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

Notwithstanding the prayers of people all over the world, Eva continued to fail. One day it hit me more clearly than ever that she would die. It made me mad and I let God know it! Like many people in my situation, I had refused to accept the obvious. One day as I was leaving our condominium, walking toward the elevator and venting my wrath at God, a presence seemed to be in that hallway. It was as if a voice spoke: "Trust Me. I am God. Let Me comfort you and give you peace. I will not change Eva's condition. You want to be angry and rebellious about it. I want you to let Me change your heart."

Once more, I needed to return to trusting God. I needed to repent and let Him calm me down again, and again commit Eva into His loving care.

About six weeks before she died, Eva told me the pain was becoming more intense. She became so preoccupied with her pain that she couldn't think about anything else. She asked me to keep reminding her to look to God for peace. When she was relaxed, she said, the pain was less.

We prayed for wisdom. About that time, Dr. Steiner from Buffalo dropped in to see us. He taught us some relaxation techniques that helped greatly to relieve her pain. Together, Eva and I asked the Lord to teach us how to help her to be peaceful. We created a plan that combined physical relaxation and yielding her heart to the Lord.

For physical relaxation we did what Dr. Steiner taught us. I would kneel beside the bed and whisper to Eva, "Tighten your toe muscles and let them go. Tighten your foot muscles and let them go. Tighten your ankle muscles and let them go. Tighten your calf muscles and let them go." We worked this way with all the muscles from the bottom of her feet to the top of her head. I will be eternally grateful to Dr. Steiner for his help.

In addition, we chose some Scripture verses that I repeated after the physical relaxation exercises. I would whisper:

**This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.
(Psalm 118:24, NKJV)**

This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10, NIV)

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts: . . . and be thankful. (Colossians 3:15, NKJV)

Then I would whisper, "Let the Lord give you peace. Just let Him give you joy. You need more today than you ever needed in your whole life." By the time we finished this, she had drifted away into blessed, peaceful sleep.

We repeated this routine six, eight, ten times a day. Sometimes she would call me; sometimes on my own I felt the urge to go to her. We looked forward to these little meetings, and we actually enjoyed them in that we both knew we were participants in something beyond human understanding.

I do not for a moment discount the wonderful support, affection, sympathy, and help given to us by beloved friends. We had the best that human beings can give. However, we all witnessed something supernatural happening to Eva in those last several weeks of her life.

She continued to lose weight until she was down to seventy pounds. She became more and more serene as the end neared. There was a kind of angelic aura of joyful peace about her.

She allowed the peace of God that surpasses understanding to guard her heart and mind through Jesus Christ. This was Eva's final word by living it out in her life:

Let the peace of God that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds. (Philippians 4:7, NKJV)

Lesson: I need to give my request to God, but trust the decision to Him.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Review the thought starter at the beginning of the chapter. What thoughts were started?
- Review the lead Bible verse. What does it say to you? Did you observe yourself in relation to the verse? Did you observe others in relation to the verse? Did you find any additional verses?
- What is your response to the lesson at the end of the chapter?

1. Is it ever right to be peaceful when there is a tragedy or a crisis?
2. When do you need peace the most?
3. Is it possible to have peace today, with the existing circumstances in your life?
4. According to Exodus 33:14, what condition will assure you that God is with you?
5. What conditions tend to detract from your concentration on God?
6. According to Philippians 4:6-7, John 16:33 and Proverbs 3:5-6, what conditions need to exist when you want to approach God with a request?

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