

The Holy Spirit & Healing — Phoebe's Story — November 11, 2018

Good morning! I am so glad to share some of my experiences about God's Holy Spirit. When I became a Christian, some 30 years ago, God's Spirit immediately became part of my life. I had been an atheist till I was 21, but when I realized Jesus was my Savior, I immediately had a strong sense that I had eternal life, and I felt the presence of angels going up and down along my sides. Since I had so often mocked people who believed in eternal life, I knew something significant had happened. I later found that the Bible says "...very truly I tell you, you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 15:1, NIV).

Earlier this year, I was diagnosed with cancer. My diagnosis came at a bad time-although I realize there's never a good time! What I mean to say is that my husband Peter and I had been through one challenge after another in the 2 years preceding my cancer diagnosis. I was petrified when the Dr. told me I needed a hysterectomy, but, also, I felt strangely ok. When my friends and family called, I would tell them actually I feel ok. I had a tangible feeling that God was carrying me. And I remained strangely ok through the surgery, the hospital stay, and then the waiting for the results, which is sometimes the hardest part. I actually loved my hospital stay. When the doctor told me I could go home, I said I needed another day.

When I say I was ok, I don't mean in the way that we sometimes say, 'God is good, I know He can do all things.' Because God may be good, and he may be willing to do a lot of things, but that didn't guarantee that my husband wasn't going to lose his wife or my children their mother. When it came time to meet with my surgeon, I watched her scroll weeks ahead to schedule it. I've had my fair share of trips to the Operating Room, and normally I'm terrified, but I said 'no, let's go now, let's get it done.' And it was in the next few days.

When surgery time came, a dear old friend of mine waited outside the OR with me for hours, but I can't remember a time where I laughed so much waiting to go into surgery. I remember thinking the people around us must be confused, or even a little alarmed. I walked into the operating room filled with hyper-busy, maybe a little manic, doctors and nurses. Some of you know these OR rooms, they are freezing with white walls, and generally uninviting. So the peace and sense of humor I had definitely wasn't coming from the situation! Someone told me to get up and lie down on this very high, narrow slab of freezing metal where they were obviously going to slice me open. I thought that moment was pretty funny since I was the sick one and there were about 10 able-bodied people in the room who could have helped me up! I got chatty with the anesthesiologist who was discussing when she was going to take a break with the other anesthesiologist. While she stuck the needle in my arm, I told her "I really would prefer that you didn't take a break, that other doctor looks like he needs a lot of rest!"

When my husband and I first found out about my cancer, Pete had a strong feeling from God that this trial would over in a couple of weeks. Thankfully, this prediction turned out to be true, and my cancer is now gone. I'm grateful, but please don't hear me saying that God always heals. In fact, there are a number of things I would like Him to work harder on! But in my effort to explain God's breaking through in the case of my cancer, Peter's prediction did a lot to help me get through it.

When I returned home from the hospital, I was listening to my Google device, and a song I hadn't heard before caught my attention. I had the sense the song was important. While we waited that long week to see if my cancer had spread, one evening I was worshipping to this new song, and the Holy Spirit became palpable. It felt thick around me, like He was wrapping me, and I started to dance, and actually kick up my feet. I knew my husband and son were behind me trying to understand what was going on. And then I realized, "Oh yeah, I remember now, this ordeal is a chance to be close to the Lord on a whole other level." I was so elated to

have this opportunity. Now please understand, I don't normally thank God for *near death* experiences! I'm not that Holy. And, of course, I didn't want to die, but in that moment I was actually so grateful!

I have been a Christian for a long time, but prior to my cancer, I still wasn't sure God would show up for me if I *really* needed Him. Can I *really* lean on God in all circumstances? This had always been a big question for me. But, the outpouring of the Spirit, immediately after my cancer diagnosis, answered this question definitively. God saw me; He increased His Spirit as soon as I was scared. I felt His peace and comfort and a steady stream of 'I'm here with you.' As I mentioned, I felt almost physically carried, and cradled, by the Holy Spirit. I have absolutely no doubt now that the Lord will be there if I need Him in both small and big ways. As some of you know, these realizations became critically essential this past summer. . .

While my family was on the River Church retreat, I heard that my younger sister had suddenly died. As I would find out in the days following, she had died of a drug overdose which was an additional shock, because I didn't know she was using. I had considered her my closet companion through all our troubled growing up together. To get through my grief, and bounce back, I *fundamentally* have to know that God sees me, and He is there for me. And I have more faith in that now, with my experience of God being with me through cancer and the love this church has shown us. So thank you all!