

It's Really True

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It was about 12:30 a.m. The sky was a rich dark, blue and everything was quite peaceful. I was returning home after being with a friend for the evening. On route I happened to pass the hospital where my father was first admitted. I've passed by several times since he passed away but, on this particular evening, something caught my attention.

From my vantage point, I noticed the original room he was placed in. He was on the fifth floor, the closest one to the edge of the building. At that particular time there was a lot of construction going on right next to his window; however, despite the noise that surrounded his room, there was nothing that distracted us more than our concerns for my dad's health which apparently seemed grim.

With the suggestion of the doctors, a biopsy was taken to see if the mass was cancerous and, if it was, at what stage of advancement. We waited for what seemed like an eternity for the biopsy results. Although the chances were high that the mass was cancerous, we hoped we were somehow wrong. Everyday seemed like a holding period. We prayed over my father throughout the day and late into the evenings. I didn't want to leave my father's side, knowing that this report was weighing over him, even though he shared that it was in the Lord's hands.

I only wondered, and still wonder, what thoughts were encircling his mind during that time. I question how many memories came to his awareness, memories of his childhood, recollections of his mother with whom he lost at the age of 19, and memories of my mother and their first meeting. Perhaps he remembered the time when I was born as well as my brothers. Only God

knows what he thought and felt, but I did think about him and even as I was home those few evenings, I missed being by his side.

It's true, the entire situation was in the Lord's hands, but my faith seemed so weak and frail. I have to admit, I was quite scared about the pending diagnosis. I remember coming home, alone, late at night and just falling on to the bed. I simply sat there with the lights off, staring into the dark ceiling. Tears quickly fell from both sides of my face, like an incessant stream of water moving to and fro, each steady stream finding its way downward between each crevice.

I cried out to God for him to have mercy on us. I pleaded for him to change the results if they were bad, even though I knew quite well, I wasn't worthy to have my petitions answered based upon my life. With shame, I still cried out to him hoping he would at least look at my father's life and see his heart - a man who passionately sought to know, obey, and live like his only son, Jesus.

Here was a man who started each day ingesting every word in his well-worn Bible; he prayed for each family member and asked God for wisdom for the decisions that awaited his day. Whatever it took to tug at the heartstrings of God, my father yearned to know him in a way that most of us can't even understand.

As humans, we struggle enough to connect with and understand those we love so dearly. We wake up to them, eat with them, and even know their unique touch. Yet, in spite of this, we struggle to connect with them intimately, to both know them and also be known by them at the most deepest parts of our being. That will always be the limitation of being human.

Nonetheless, my father knew, that in spite of our human struggles with intimacy, he understood it was better to seek him than not seek him at all. So

why shouldn't God at least consider my appeal based upon my father's life. I wanted to hear something, something that would at least appease my greatest fears. I never ever heard anything, unfortunately, during those dark moments. I simply sat in silence, lying in a pool of my own sorrow.

The day finally arrived when I heard the horrific news. On this particular morning, I arrived a few minutes later than all the other days and just missed the doctor by a few minutes. I walked into my father's room. He was on the phone talking to his best friend, and I overheard the tail-end of the conversation which indicated that it was cancer but I wanted to hear firsthand from my father before reacting. He sounded so strong, encouraging his dear friend not to worry about him so I somehow believed it would be ok. That was my father - always looking out for the needs of others before his own.

As he finished his phone call, I immediately asked, "Did you hear anything yet?" He responded bluntly, "It's cancer and it's one of the worst kinds you could get."

I immediately felt a numbness cover my entire body. I've never experienced anything like this before in my life. It was something so different and unique that it's hard to describe in words. If I could describe the experience, it was like having a fast-moving train hit me, yet I never felt an ounce of pain.

Tears immediately formed on the perimeters of our eyes. As typical males we tried our best to hold back the tears; however, reality seemed to bite into our emotions more than our pride could withstand.

For me, the actuality that my dad might be leaving us quicker than we expected was starting to knock a little louder and a little too close to our fragile hearts. What would we tell mom, let alone my brothers? Just a week ago, my father entered the hospital and was told he had pneumonia. It was treatable

and our family doctor assured us that my dad would be leaving the hospital in a few days.

Now we hear an entirely different story: my dad's body is fighting death and may never return home with us again. What compounded our emotions were that we didn't know if it was treatable or not, how much time we had, or what was ahead for us in this journey. All we knew was that something was gravely wrong with the news.

How could this really be true? My father lived a life of integrity; he was a man of great character. He was known by many for his exemplary life, his life of strong ethics and morals both professionally and personally. He loved the Lord, his family, and so many individuals. In fact a few months prior, I received a phone call from him. He shared with me that he felt he had about twenty more "good" years left in him and wanted to spend that time in full-time ministry with my mother. He wanted to do more with his life, even though I knew he already did more than the average person does in a lifetime. He passionately wanted to invest his life in others, to pass on powerful principles he learned along his journey, and raise up a new set of leaders. He was even willing to turn down other financial offers that would afford him a wealthy life. Opportunities would always seem to surface but he knew better than to give in to something that was only temporary.

Don't get me wrong. My father was an astute businessman. He was sought after from the highest levels of our government and from very prominent corporations because of his wisdom. I believe he was most known in the business community for his strong sense of ethics, since he always sought to do what was right. So for me, I saw firsthand a man who lived a life grounded in his relationship with God, and then from there, outwardly extended what he was given by God to others.

This all seemed to be trivial, now. His dreams seemed to dim slowly. His countenance began to change in front of me, even though he was always positive. I know he desired to meet our wives and his grandchildren one day but that all appeared to be in question.

One evening when my brother's and I were in the room, he shared with tears in his eyes how sad he was when he lost his mother at a very young age. The fact that she never got to meet us always grieved him. But his sadness was apparently greater when he pointed out that there was a very good possibility that he may never meet our children also.

For years my mother and father had been planning many things for our children, things we weren't even aware of. Their love encompassed the future of our families.

As he shared I was beginning to sense the greatness of this man, not because he was talking about himself, for he wasn't. He was talking about us and our futures and our future lives in Christ. It was his sense of "giving" that seemed so natural and real that led me back again to the heart of God.

I, too, began to reflect on my life and the time I had with such a special father and a man of God. Would I be spending this Thanksgiving and Christmas with him? Would we have some time for closure before he was called home to be with the Lord? Will we ever see those visions we talked about as a family come true, or would they also fall by the wayside?

Moreover, would he ever meet my wife and children one day? I wanted to have my father and mother hold my children. I envisioned several years back the time I would have the opportunity to drop my children off at my mom and dad's house, knowing that our precious children would be safe, loved, and, yes, spoiled. And more importantly, I knew my parents would share and model the love of Christ with them. I looked forward to seeing the Agoglia family of

five increase in numbers, where my brothers, my sister-in-laws, and nieces and nephews could all sit together and enjoy great homemade meals, fellowship, and even worship in the same place. Our home has so many traditions, some that were passed down through the family lineage, some of which were created in our home. How I longed to see my parents see those traditions embraced by us with our own families. Once again, these were all in question.

On that day, what seemed like an eternity of panoramic memories was only a few short minutes. Time appeared to stop for me and my father. My entire life raced through my mind. Memories of love, trials, traditions, family, faith, and our futures all seemed to appear before me, much like a big screen on a Dolby TV.

On that night, I went home feeling quite distraught and scared. I laid in my bed with tears flowing like a broken faucet. And on top of that, I had an intense migraine which seemed to cut like a knife through my face. Little did I know that my family's life was about to face a permanent change.

As I look at that hospital window once again, many memories come to cognition and many emotions overflow my broken heart. Time has passed yet I still feel that emptiness without my father. I miss the man I was able to care for while he slowly suffered. I wish I could see his brown eyes again, so full of compassion and love that I'm not sure any of us really knew how unique he was. He was an enigma to a large degree, always giving beyond his means, and loving beyond what he was asked to. He simply followed the call God deposited in his heart and obeyed.

Thought:

I just wonder if my perspective has been wrong all along. I've been wrong more times than I've been right so why shouldn't I miss this one as well. As I've looked through that "window" so many times, I can't help but see a great man

suffering. I see a wonderful husband and a faithful father slowly moving away from this world.

But maybe in all truth, he wasn't just my father, my mentor, and someone I admired. Perhaps he was something even more - an angel sent by God to demonstrate his love for us.

And even if my dad wasn't an angel as God sees one, I know one thing for sure...I've known a very special man for 33 years. No one will ever come close to him as I see it, except for the One who is truly the greatest - Jesus Christ.