

Karen Tripp

Seeing

GOD

in Your Cancer Journey

Six Devotions on Cancer and Faith



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Seeing  
**GOD**  
in Your Cancer Journey

by Karen Tripp MS LMFT

A dynamic collection of 41 devotionals written to assist those struggling with cancer to draw closer to God during their cancer journey through scripture, prayer, and connection to others facing the same struggles.



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## Devotion #1

### God is Bigger Than Your Cancer

God is bigger than your cancer. Have you ever heard such sweet words? There is something passionately comforting in knowing that this heinous disease that has seeped into your life is not in charge of your life: God is.

After diagnosis, cancer can stalk you like a giant, always in your sight no matter what you do or where you go. This is true for both those persons with cancer and those loved ones standing by their sides. For anyone close to this disease, cancer requires a huge amount of focus to process the tons of information your doctors throw at you. Comprehending the choices of treatment, the date of appointments, the names of prescriptions, or the types of side effects leaves little energy to understand the emotional impact of cancer. Although it's a struggle to take it all in, here's the important thing- you can't let cancer take over your life.

Cancer doesn't get to swallow your days and your nights. It doesn't get to put stress in your life or plague you with fear. It doesn't get to come between you and your loved ones and it doesn't get to come between you and your God. For many, these emotional and spiritual cancer battles can be as difficult as the physical battles. In short, cancer does not get to be more important than the most important things in your life. The most important things in your life are the things you can use to push the cancer back so you can breathe again.

Before a cancer diagnosis, you could easily see the most important things in your life, the things that made life full, rich, and worth living: sitting in the backyard with the sun on your face, watching your favorite baseball team win in the bottom of the 9th, buying a silly birthday card for your granddaughter, helping your neighbor fix his car, eating a tomato fresh off the vine, singing a favorite song in church.

The most important things in your life bring joy, hope, fulfillment and purpose. Christ is the Light to reach in the darkness of cancer so you can thrive on the blessings He has given you.

- What were the most important things in your life before your diagnosis?
- Which of these things are still important? Do you have new things that are important?
- If cancer is not the most important thing in your life, how do you figure out where it fits?

Jesus is a master at pushing back the chaos of cancer for everyone. Whether you have drawn close to Him since childhood, wandered from the comfort of His presence, or know Jesus only as an acquaintance or stranger, it doesn't matter. Jesus sees you as His precious child and He is with you now. He is closer than your breath. Whether sitting in the chemo room or waiting for your scan results, Jesus is with you.

As a believer in Christ, you may know that through life or death, Christ is always with you. But please also know this: Jesus has much more to offer you than the certainty of your salvation. Beyond being your Savior, I pray you come to know Jesus as:

- the rock that holds you when you're weak.
- the arms that lift you from the depth.
- the light that flickers in your darkness.
- the voice that soothes you in the silence.

Jesus is all you need and more.

Wherever you are in your relationship with Jesus, He wants you to come even closer. Listen to this promise from God:

*Come near to God and He will come near to you. James 4:8*

- Looking at this verse, as you move towards God, what will God do?
- How does that make you feel?

Just think of that! The closer you draw to God, the closer the Lord God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, will come to you! I pray that this program provides a path for you to draw closer to God in the chaos called cancer.

### **God is Bigger Than...a Good Snuggler**

As a young child, my daughter Heidi was a good snuggler. When I held her on my hip, it was like she molded into my side. Sometimes she would cling to me with all her might but usually we would just walk around together with neither one of us even using our hands to hold on. I could cook a meal, start the laundry, or vacuum the floor and there she would sit, perfectly attached to my side. My Grandma used to say, "Put that child down or she'll never learn to walk," but I didn't care. I carried Heidi everywhere. As long as she was right by my side, I never worried about her wandering off or getting hurt. Snuggled in my arms, I knew she was safe. She certainly seemed to know she was safe too.

But not everyone is a good snuggler. Some kids are so active, they give you a good hug but the next minute they're ready to get down. Other kids feel like dead weight in your arms. Carrying them feels like you're carrying a box of books instead of a cuddly child. And of course there are the kids that do not want to be held under any circumstances. They push against you when you hold them, making their desire to escape painfully clear. It's sad really. Because you know that every child could use a good snuggle.

The true master of the good snuggle is God. God wants to do more than carry you through life. He wants for you to fall into His loving arms and mold yourself into Him until you are a perfect fit. James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." In this verse the word "draw" means to "join one thing to another". God does not want to shake hands with you or give you a pat on the back. God wants you to fold yourself into His loving arms until you are completely joined together with Him.

Despite the sweetness of falling into God's loving embrace, we've all been tempted to break away. Are there's still times you give God a quick hug, then hurry on your way? Or do you sometimes sit in God's arms like a box of books unwilling to draw close. Painfully, we've each taken our turn pushing God away when we so desperately needed to draw deeper into His loving arms. Leaving God's embrace can bring feelings of excitement, independence, or determination, but do we feel safe? No. True safety only comes from the arms of God.

Some of my sweetest memories of being a mom are of carrying Heidi. I've no doubt that God has sweet thoughts of you as you slowly nestled down into His arms. Can you imagine resting your head upon His shoulder and folding yourself into His embrace? Draw near to God, my friend, and He will draw near to you.



# Devotion #2

## God is in Control of Your Cancer

Verse of the Day:

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28*

### Is God Really in Control of Your Cancer?

As a Christian counselor, I have heard numerous people tell me that they cannot imagine how anyone could survive hardship without Christ. Cancer is no different. The thought of facing the treatments, the fears, the frustrations without Christ would be unbearable.

- Take a moment and list three ways Jesus has helped you cope with your cancer.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

When struggling with cancer, there are times you can clearly see God working in your life. But then the side effects come, or your loved ones become distant, or maybe the tests results are discouraging. At these times it's easy to wonder, "Is God really in control of my cancer?"

The answer is a resounding YES! There is no radiation room, doctor's office, chemo chair or lonely night where God is not completely in charge.

Do not let the pain and fear that can breed in these places replace your knowledge that God is in charge. God does not want to see His beloved children suffer. God hurts when you hurt and weeps when you weep.

Even though you may believe God is in control, cancer can too easily throw a life out of control. Before the diagnosis, you had plans. You had plans for your career, your retirement, your marriage, your family and suddenly you have to shift those plans to include the demands of cancer, and cancer can be very demanding of your time, your energy, your focus and your emotions. When people say “everything changed when I heard it was cancer,” they’re not just talking about the changes in their body. They’re talking about the changes in their view of their lives. Cancer brings us face-to-face with the lack of control we have in our lives.

But cancer doesn’t affect God’s control of your life. Look at this verse:

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28*

Looking at the verse, answer this question:

- What things does God use for good?

God does not just use some things for good. God uses ALL things. God will use your misdiagnosis, exhaustion, nausea, pain, regret, loneliness and fear for good. God is completely in charge. So, if God’s purpose remains a mystery, rest in the certainty that nothing bad ever happens that God cannot use for good. Just think of it! Even in the midst of a sinful world, God promises to work all things — every stupid, senseless, destructive and evil things — for the good of those who love Him. God uses tumors, low cell counts, and even nausea and fatigue to fulfill His purpose. God would not be in complete control if He only used some things or even most things. God is in control, and He uses all things.

- Is it hard to imagine God using cancer for good? Why or why not?
- Would it help you to know how God is using the cancer in your life for good?
- What if you never see how God uses your cancer for good? Would it be hard to believe God is still using it to work for good? Why or why not?

To actually see someone's life touched by God through your suffering might help it all make sense. For some, any kind of suffering is easier to cope with if they can see a purpose. But let's face it. The burden of working your cancer into good sounds overwhelming. You may be asking, "How am I supposed to work this nasty cancer to be something good for God? I'm just hanging on myself." Don't worry. It's not your job to figure out how God will shine through you. It's God's job. After all, He can use your cancer to draw people closer to Him in ways you will never know. Your job is to hang on to Jesus the best way you can.

If you hunger to understand how God is using your cancer, it can be frustrating to not see evidence of God at work. You may only see frustration in the eyes of your family and fear in the eyes of your friends but no shining ray of God's glory. It's OK if you can't see His glory shining through your life. It's there. God promised. Really!

God promises more than showing His works to others. Read the verse of the day again. For whom is God working? YOU!! God promises to use His authority for your good! And God knows what is good. He knows we need His goodness; that's why He sent Jesus. Jesus will bring you blessings from burdens and hope from despair. It's true. He will bring you blessings from your burdens and hope from your despair.

Lay your head back and rest in the loving arms of your Heavenly Father. Know that your cancer is not senseless; it has purpose. God's purpose is for His glory to be REVEALED through YOU. All praises go to Him.  
HALLELUJAH.



## Devotion #3

### Looking at God's Purpose

Verse of the Day:

*Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven - as her great love has shown. Luke 7:47*

Think again about the verse from day one.

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28*

What is God's purpose?

God's purpose is to be reunited with His children. He looks at you, His beloved child, and wants nothing more than to have you stand before Him so He can envelop you in the richness of His love. The problem is that He is perfect and you are not. You're human. Humans yell at their kids and envy their neighbors. They say nothing when they should say something, and they say something when they should say nothing. Each person has countless imperfections, but God can't stop being perfect, and you, with your imperfections, cannot survive standing in His presence. To be in God's presence, you must be perfect.

Amazingly, this does not stop God from wanting you by His side, so He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to Earth. Jesus lived a perfect life, died an undeserved death and rose from the grave. Why? So when you stand before God, covered in all your imperfections, Christ's glorious perfection will take away your every fault so you too will be perfect. Imagine every fault, every guilt, every shame washed away by Christ, not only for the moment you stand before the Lord, but from the moment Jesus became your savior.

Please pray with me:

Lord,

I stand before You imperfect and in need of a Savior. Forgive me for any prideful times I may have taken You for granted or wandered from Your side. I need ou now. Reveal in me anything that keeps me from drawing closer to You and cleanse it away. I place my life and my soul in Your loving hands, now and forever more.

Amen.

Stop and absorb the joy of your perfect and merciful Savior drawing you ever closer into His loving arms. This is the essence of God's purpose.

Read here about a man and a woman. One recognized the need for Christ, the other one did not.

The Sinful Woman

Luke 7:36-50

Can you help me? Oh, no. I'm fine. (laughing) These are tears of joy not tears of sadness. You know, the strangest thing is that I'm crying. I can't even remember the last time I cried, but ever since Jesus came into my life I can't seem to stop. But look - you cannot be seen talking to me. Everyone in this town knows about the foul life I have led. You should go on before someone sees you.

What? You want to hear more about Jesus? I can't blame you. I was the same way when I first heard of Him. How can you not want to know more about a rabbi who eats with tax collectors and casts out demons? Those were the stories that drew me to Jesus. You see, I am a notorious sinner. Doesn't that sound impressive? Well, it's true. My sins were not committed as others- behind the mask of respectability. My sins were advertised for all to see. And in all honesty, I didn't care. I didn't care one iota until I heard Jesus speak.

You see, one day, I hid in the back of the crowd as Jesus spoke of lost people. I had been lost for so long I had begun to think I wasn't lost at all. But when Jesus said, "I have come to save the lost," I knew He was speaking of me. That day he did a powerful thing in my life. That day He gave me hope. Maybe I wasn't lost forever. Maybe someone had come to save me. Maybe that someone was Jesus. Could Jesus turn my unworthiness into worthiness? I wanted to believe it was true. Deep down I knew if anyone could wash away my past, it was Jesus.

Day in and day out, thoughts of Jesus' words wove through my mind. The hope ate through my tough exterior, and I began to laugh and cry again. The hope of being more than a lost soul made me desperate to thank Jesus for what He'd done for me.

I heard Jesus was to attend a dinner at a local Pharisees' house named Simon. This Pharisee did all he could to live beyond reproach. Constantly washing this and sacrificing that, he never wanted anyone to think he was not living in God's favor. No one's life could have been more different than mine. Simon had lived his life acting in ways to appear godly, and I had lived my life acting in ways to appear ungodly. Simon's house was the last place I'd be welcomed, but I was determined to go to Jesus. I could not go empty handed, so I bought an expensive alabaster jar of perfume to take with me.

Once inside the Pharisee's house, every eye turned to look at me with disgust. Before, I would not have cared what they thought of me, but now, with the hope of worthiness growing inside me, I skulked into a corner and waited until Jesus arrived. After a short time, the disapproval from the crowd overcame my desire to see Jesus. As I turned to leave, Jesus walked in and looked right at me. With that one look I knew I was no longer lost; I was found. That's when the tears began. Oblivious to every eye in the room but His, I went and knelt behind Him and began my task. Wetting His precious feet with my tears I then slowly and graciously wiped His feet with my hair. Looking back, I suppose all the guests were shocked by my behavior, but I was so overcome with love for this man who sees me as clean that I didn't care. Still weeping, I kissed and poured perfume on His feet.

When Simon saw how Jesus let me adore Him, the revulsion he felt for me poured off his face. Jesus turned to Simon and, as though knowing his every thought said, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, Teacher," Simon said.

"Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

Still kneeling behind Him, I looked at Jesus, stunned. Was He speaking of me? Was I the one whose debt had been forgiven? Before I could even fully form these thoughts, Jesus turned toward me and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

Then, through eyes filled with tears, I saw Jesus say to me, “Your sins are forgiven.” I think I stopped breathing as the room came to a halt. Right there, before all these people who looked at me with disgust, Jesus tossed aside the foulness of my life and made me new. As if at a distance, I heard the other guests say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

As the turmoil began, Jesus said to me, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Finding my way through the crowded house, I ran until I found myself here, crying, still crying my tears of joy.

- Who in this story was imperfect and in need of a savior to make them perfect in the eyes of God? Check all that apply:
  - The Sinful woman
  - Simon the Pharisee
  - the Guests
- Who was aware that Jesus was the way to becoming perfect in the eyes of God?
  - The Sinful woman
  - Simon the Pharisee
  - the Guests
- How did the sinful woman show her adoration and thankfulness to her Savior? \_\_\_\_\_
- Have there been times in your cancer journey when it has been difficult to feel adoration and thankfulness to Christ? Why or why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you wish to know more about being made clean through Christ, ask your Cancer Companion.



## Devotion #4

### When my Purpose and God's Purpose Collide

Verse of the Day:

*He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

Revelation 21:4

It probably came as no surprise in yesterday's devotion that God's purpose was to be reunited with His Children. Yet as much as we rejoice that God's purpose is to save us, life would be much less frightening if God's main purpose was to protect His children from suffering.

God hates suffering. He hurts when you hurt and weeps when you weep. God knows every time you hurt so much you can't sleep, every time you're so tired you can't lift your head. He knows every place the surgeon cut, the doctor probed and the nurse poked. God does not want His beloved children to suffer.

But it can be a hard pill for you to swallow when your purpose and God's purpose do not match up. Not that you ever want God to pull back on His plans for the salvation of the world, but could He just move the suffering you're dealing with to the top of His to-do-list for a while?

### God is Bigger Than...Your To-do List

Most days I have a to-do list. This is typically a good thing because the list helps me to stay focused. The problem comes when my list of things to do is so long it's impossible to accomplish in one day. That's when it's time to prioritize. Do the cats get food, or does my husband get clean shirts?

I have to choose what absolutely has to be completed today and what can wait. Sometimes prioritizing can be as stressful as trying to complete the list. If I knew exactly what the best thing to do was, I would do it. But more often than not, I randomly go through my day checking off what looks good at the time.

If God had a to-do list, I wonder what would be on it? The Bible gives us some ideas. It says He knows the number of hairs on your head and the exact time a sparrow falls. Keeping track of all that must be an accounting nightmare, and, of course, God's busy being our Rock and our Fortress, not to mention our Shield. The good news is that with everything He has going on, God does not have a problem figuring out His priorities. The number one most important thing on God's to-do-list is your salvation.

This is probably not a surprise to you. After all, salvation of the world is the whole reason God sent His Son to die for us. We all know God has many things that are important to Him. God hungers for justice and healing and protection for you and all those you love. The heartache comes when your top priority is different from God's.

I mean, let's face it. When you are sitting in a hospital waiting room, you're glad that God is about salvation, but at that minute you wish His top priority was healing. When the police are in your home or the pink slip comes from your boss, some protection and justice from God would be nice right about then. God wants to grant you all the healing, justice and protection you need if it does not get in the way of His plan for salvation.

Seeing the sickness, violence, and injustice around you, can tempt you to think God is not in control. But He is, friend...He really is. God's abundant love for His children makes Him hunger for their salvation, but God hungers for justice, safety and wholeness too. He hurts when you hurt, and grieves when you grieve, and when evil touches your life, He is moved to anger. But listen. The day will come when He will make all things right. Revelations 21:4 says when Jesus returns, He will "wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

One day, God's list of things to do will be completed. You will gaze upon the precious face of Jesus and He will have made all things right. All the injustice, sickness and pain will have been wiped from the earth as God gathers all His beloved children into His loving arms. Fear not, friend. He will indeed make all things new.

- Can you think of a time when you were blessed by God in such a way that you felt God smiled specifically at you? If so, when?  

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- Are there times when you wish God would guarantee that your purpose was the top of His to-do list? Can you think of an instance?  

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- One cancer survivor said to me about God’s purpose, “The hardest part is knowing there’s nothing you can do to change God’s will.” What are your thoughts about this?  

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Lord,

You alone know the depth of my struggles. You can see in to my hurt and my fears more clearly than I and so I come before You and ask You to place in me a faith so strong I can grasp Your will for my life through any hardship. Shine Your light into my darkness and lift my eyes always to You. You are truly my Way, my Truth and my Light.

AMEN



## Devotion #5

### Three Types of Suffering

Verse of the Day:

*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39*

Let's see what we've learned so far:

- Reading #2– God is in control even when cancer makes our lives feel out of control.
- Reading #3– God wants to draw us near so much He sent His only Son to die for us.
- Reading #4– God's main purpose is our salvation, but He hates suffering.

This leaves me wondering, “Where does all the suffering come from if God hates suffering?” Perhaps it would help to look at the simple life of a first grader.

### God is Bigger Than...a First Grader

As my son walked from the idyllic time of the childhood paradise known as kindergarten, into the adventure of first grade, I heard a door slam shut. No longer were his days filled with playing on the floor and listening to stories as he drifted off to sleep. Now he sat in a desk, completed worksheets and dare I say it? He had homework! The impact was obvious the first day of school – when my unending ball of energy came home from school and lay on the couch until supper.

My prodding and the sounds of his friends playing outside could not budge him. What changed? My son had discovered “work,” and he was tired. First grade was hard work.

After a week or two, Garrett’s energy level returned. Then he came home with a note from his teacher: “Garrett was throwing rocks on the playground and will miss recess for one week.” This note was followed by my son’s tears and pleadings and, of course, his nerve rattling anticipation of his father coming home. Now my son found more than just work in first grade; he found consequences.

Then came the infamous bus incident. Garrett’s school bus stop was the next neighborhood over so I would drive him to and from the bus stop. One afternoon I was late meeting the bus. Garrett spent the next 45 minutes riding the bus to the end of the line where I met him. As he climbed off the bus tired, frustrated and scared, there were more tears and pleadings, but this time they were mine. Garrett found persecution.

What are the causes for struggles in life? Struggles fall into three categories:

1. Struggles due to our circumstances: We live in a fallen world where work, burdens, and cancer are a part of life. Garrett’s exhaustion was due to no fault of his own, but rather the fatigue of moving from a half-day kindergarten to a full day first grade. Cancer falls into this category. Cancer is not sent by God, but is a horrendous darkness in this fallen world. Cancer is also indiscriminate, and unfair. Fair would be bad people – like murderers, rapists, and terrorists – getting cancer. Unfair is when cancer hits a mother of young children, a hardworking grandpa ready to enjoy his retirement, an innocent child, a loving sister or a precious best friend.
2. Struggles due to disobedience: We’re all tempted and too often choose to do what we desire instead of what God desires. Is there any greater temptation to a six-year-old boy than a rock on a playground? Regardless, this type of struggle is the consequence of our own behavior. Cancer is NOT a struggle of disobedience. Cancer victims have not done anything to deserve cancer. That’s why someone who suffers from it is called a “cancer victim.” If you have cancer, God is not punishing you. There is no tally sheet in heaven where God tracks your sins and then punishes you with cancer. Nor is there a list of faithful people who are immune to the darkness of cancer.
3. Struggles due to conviction: We’re following the will of God and suddenly other people’s sin cause us pain, even to the point of persecution. My negligence at the bus stop caused Garrett to struggle through no fault of his own.

There are some cancer cases that are the result of another person's sin. These are cases where someone has contaminated a work or home environment with no regard to danger placed on others. Unfortunately, most cancer is not due to a specific location or event; it is a condition of the world in which we live.

- Do you agree? Does it seem to you that cancer is the result of living in a fallen world? Or do you believe that cancer is the result of something you did or someone else did to you?
- 

Before we go on, it's important that you know one thing: your struggles are not stronger than the love Christ has for you. There is no place you have been and nowhere you will go that the love of Christ does not go with you.

Look at today's verse:

*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39*

Look at the list in the verse above about believers and answer these questions:

- Is there anything in your past, anything that you have done or was done to you, that could separate you from the love of God?
- Is there anything in your future, any pain, any procedure, any mistake that that could separate you from the love of God?
- Is there any evil, any demon, or evil person or evil deed that that could separate you from the love of God?
- Even in death, whether it's from cancer or a car accident or dying in your sleep, could you be separated from the love of God?

Pray with me:

Sweet Jesus, come into my heart and let me know that this promise is true: that truly nothing in heaven or on Earth can separate me from Your love. Your love is complete, it is unending and it is unstoppable. I praise You for your love. Let it fill my heart to overflowing.

Amen



## Devotion #6

### Bearing the Unbearable

Verse of the Day:

*Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. Hebrews 13:5*

Some of you have been in this place before. I don't necessarily mean cancer. I mean you have been in a place of intense hardship –whether it was losing a job, battling an illness or grieving for a loved one. Through this hardship you reached out to Christ and found His hand to cling to through all the pain and loss.

Once I thought that my faith in Christ would shield me from excessive hardship. It was like I thought I had a hall pass from the Lord.

### God is Bigger Than...a Hall Pass

Remember High School? Regardless of how prepared, organized or responsible you might have been, you had times you needed a hall pass. What do you do when you need to get a book from your locker or need to email that English paper to the teacher before the end of school? You go to the teacher that likes you best. You figure because they like you so much they'll give you a hall pass. All you really want is to get done what you need to get done without any hassles or problems.

There was a time when I felt that Jesus had given me a hall pass through life. I couldn't imagine Jesus letting me run into any serious hassles or problems. This belief ended one day when I was sharing some of my struggles with my Bible study leader. I commented, "But it'll be OK, God won't give me more than I can handle." And do you know what she said? "That's not the way the verse goes, Karen. The Lord won't give you more

temptation than you can handle. The verse doesn't say anything about struggles." The verse is 1 Corinthians 10:13 and it goes like this: "And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." Although that's great news about temptation, my Bible study teacher was right. It doesn't say anything about struggles. Sometimes life brings the unbearable.

The unbearable could be losing a child or experiencing uncontrollable pain or even helplessly watching someone you love in pain. There are definitely things that make you think "God, I can't take it anymore." So where did I get this idea that Jesus would give me a pass on any unbearable struggle? It wasn't because I felt privileged. It was because I felt loved. It was because of my deep and profound belief in how much Jesus loved me. Like that favorite teacher who I knew would give me a hall pass, I couldn't imagine Jesus letting me face the unbearable. But He does.

Maybe facing the possibility of the unbearable builds faith. After all, how much faith do you need to follow Jesus if you believe you'll never face the unbearable? Not much. Real faith comes from yearning to do God's will even if that road is tough, even if that road is unbearable.

But here is the important thing: Jesus doesn't want to be the teacher who gives you a hall pass and sends you on your way. He wants to be the One who places His arm around you and His shield before you and escorts you through the perils of this life. You see, the teacher with the hall pass lets you leave without him, but not Jesus. Once you've walked through the unbearable, grasping Jesus' arm and clinging to His every step, you know it's better to have Christ firmly planted at your side. Faith is not believing you're protected from the unbearable, but knowing if the unbearable comes, Jesus will bear it with you.

- Have you heard someone say, "God will not give you more than you can handle?" What do you think about that phrase now, knowing the verse is not about struggles but it is about temptations?

When it comes to walking with Jesus through the struggles of cancer, perhaps no one understood it better than Irene.

"Twenty-two years of dealing with cancer and I feel very blessed to be here. When I was diagnosed at 39, I never thought I'd be here this long. Then some days I think 'How did I get here so fast?'

With cancer, some people turn toward God and some turn away. For me, the worse things got, the more I understood that the struggles were a request from God to trust Him, to lean on Him. It was as though God said, ‘Surrender your trust to Me. I have a plan.’” – Irene, Breast Cancer Survivor (Excerpt from *God is Bigger Than Your Cancer*).<sup>1</sup>

- What do you think Irene meant when she said “the struggles were a request from God to trust Him.”
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- How do you surrender your cancer struggles to God?
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There’s that word “surrender”. I think it would be hard for us to go through a whole week of looking at how God is in control of your cancer and not use the word surrender. There is something so sweet about surrendering your need to be in control of things to the only One who can control them. For people like me who love to feel in control, this surrendering may be a repetitive thing. Monthly? Weekly? Daily? More? But accepting the things you cannot change, even the unbearable things, and surrendering them to Christ is truly a walk of faith.

Look at today’s verse:

*“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5*

Write a prayer to God telling Him what this promise means to you.

Dear God,

Amen

1. Tripp, Karen. *God is Bigger Than Your Cancer: Christian Insights for Cancer Patients*. Grover, MO: Fresh Water Press, 2008. 83. Print.