2013

Out of the Boat: Trusting God in the Midst of Life's Storms

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OUT OF THE BOAT: Trusting God in the Midst of Life's Storms

by
Jonathan K. Stubbs

With an Introduction
by
Pamela H. Stubbs, M.D.

Empire Publishers and GrantHouse Publishers
2013
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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the memory of Deacon written in honor of Pamela Hamilton-Washington, Edith H. Stubbs, Marvin A. who have stood with me during life’s possible.

is offered in thanksgiving to God possible.

INTRODUCTION

by

Dr. Pamela Hamilton-Stubbs, M.D.

When the doctor told Jonathan the biopsy was positive for prostate cancer, I already knew. I knew because of the solemn faces of the office staff, the quietness of the room and how we came before others but watched them leave the waiting room. I could not believe that my husband, who rarely ate meat and was not obese, could have prostate cancer. He’d gone to his primary care physician faithfully for an annual examination. Then I realized the annual appointments were not preventive but for early detection. I cried all the way home from the doctor’s office. It took me several days to overcome the sting and focus on how I could help my husband.

I started with prayer. God sent Jonathan to me and I do not believe God will take Jonathan away too soon. I asked God to guide me and show me what I needed to do to protect my blessing. God told me to plant an organic vegetable garden and to feed Jonathan the rainbow of vegetables, fruits, grains and nuts. God sent knowledgeable friends and gave me research skills that I used to review the medical literature for evidence based research on foods that stop cancer cell reproduction. I found a new world of medicine and nutrition.

Jonathan was not receptive to change initially. We argued about diet change and life style changes. I felt extremes of emotion during the last years and only prayer helped me this far. I decided
to cook all meals and do the grocery shopping. This allowed me to control nutrition. I cooked three meals a day and made snacks. I wanted Jonathan to exercise but he did not. I bought a small Trampoline and told him to jump on it everyday. He did not take to either of these well until a man who calls himself a naturopathic doctor came to our home. This man taught me several things. It is important to protect your assets from people with unproven “cancer cures”. If you spend all your resources on things that don’t work, you’ll be broke when something of benefit becomes available. One thing this man said that continues to help Jonathan and me, “God said He would supply all of our needs but nowhere in my Bible does it say you will like it”. Jonathan started eating the uncooked foods.

Jonathan did not move fast enough for me and at times I found his support lacking. I persisted in my efforts to help Jonathan not because of Jonathan but because of God. God sent Jonathan to me. I remember my prayer and God telling me “I will send you someone greater”. It was my commitment to God that kept me going. Let your commitment to God motivate you.

Shortly after Jonathan was diagnosed with prostate cancer my mammogram was abnormal. I thought I would learn about resources, treatment and prevention as soon as possible. But it was difficult for me to read to help myself. I began to understand how Jonathan could be slowed by inertia. Our love ones need us to do the work, to give them the push and we need God to keep us going.

When I was asked to write something for this book, I did not know where to start. This is an incredible journey characterized by every emotion known to humankind. There will be tremendous highs and tremendous lows. My goal is to help you hold on to the positive. To come through this experience filled with love,
the grocery shopping. This allowed me to do three meals a day and made snacks. I exercised but he did not. I bought a small jump on it everyday. He did not take to a man who calls himself a naturopath. This man taught me several things. It is sets from people with unproven “cancer resources on things that don’t work, nothing of benefit becomes available. One continues to help Jonathan and me, “God of our needs but nowhere in my Bible. Jonathan started eating the uncooked move fast enough for me and at times I persisted in my efforts to help Jonathan but because of God. God sent Jonathan lawyer and God telling me “I will send you my commitment to God that kept me sent to God motivate you.

man was diagnosed with prostate cancer normal. I thought I would learn about prevention as soon as possible. But it helped to help myself. I began to understand loved by inertia. Our love ones need us from the push and we need God to keep us to write something for this book, I did this is an incredible journey characterized to humankind. There will be tremendous hopeful. My goal is to help you hold on to the through this experience filled with love, forgiveness and understanding but most of all with hope. We are not responsible for the outcomes. We have no control over life, death, health, illness. These things belong to God. What we can control and are responsible for is our own behavior.

Let every thing you do be done for God. Ask God for guidance and to show you your role and responsibilities in a manner that is perfectly clear to you. Let there be no doubt as to what your responsibilities are. View yourself as a servant of God doing God’s will and submit yourself totally to the will of God. This will be very important when you get negative thoughts such as “I am not appreciated”, “He/She wasn’t there for me,” “I’m doing everything.” Remember that you are not doing anything for a particular person. You are doing the will of God. Pray for strength, compassion and understanding. Don’t look to others not even your loved one for approval. Seek the approval of God and only God.

Be selfish. Do it for yourself. Think about your relationship. Take time to write all the good things the relationship provides. If your relationship is beneficial to you, work to save your joy. This makes it easier to put in the long hours that may be required.

Hope.
It was about 10:00 p.m. on a cold winter’s evening at the end of 1992. My father lay in bed with his eyes closed. Steve, the night nurse came in, looked at him and carefully raised the sheets. My father needed a catheter. As a result of a long battle with cancer, my daddy was incontinent.

Having found a catheter, Steve returned to the room. He told my father that he would try not to hurt him. My daddy who had lain there peacefully until that time opened his eyes and instinctively looked in my direction. Our eyes met. As Steve was inserting the catheter my father, in a very hoarse voice, began to scream. He looked at me and said, “Can’t you do something?” I felt pained and held both of his hands. I held his hands to reassure him, and to try to prevent him from impeding Steve’s medical assistance. (Looking back on it, perhaps I was trying to reassure myself, too.)

My father twisted and turned with feeble and fading strength, his face distorted by the pain. His pleading eyes I will never forget. After what seemed an eternity, Steve had completed his work.

A few days later my father died. I was blessed to be at his bedside praying with him as he slipped away peacefully – gathered up into God’s everlasting arms. When my time comes (when all is done), I want to die like my father did. A peaceful passing. If at all possible though, I want to avoid the terrible pain that marked much of the last part of his
Journey.

Almost twenty years ago, I made up my mind to write about that experience. Since I am a law teacher, as you might expect, I began writing a law review article involving euthanasia in the United States and several other countries. Writing such an article might well have been therapeutic for me. At that point in my journey, however, I could not bring myself to do it. The sense of loss was too great, the emotional pain too real. My father had suffered with prostate cancer, and unfortunately, he was diagnosed as having it once the disease was already well into its final stages.

There had been warning signs along the way. During the summer of 1990 my father, mom, some family friends, and I visited my brother and his family in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. My father rarely complained about not feeling well, but after we had been at my brother’s home for a couple of days, my daddy said that his back was bothering him. He insisted that we leave promptly because of his discomfort. My father thought that the pain had come from his prior work at the Yorktown (Virginia) Naval Weapons Station where he was a rigger for over thirty years. As described by my daddy, the work of a rigger was work that “was too dangerous for anyone else to do or that no one else knew how to do or that no one else would do”. As best I can tell, moving heavy pieces of equipment, painting towers several hundred feet in the air, and handling deadly chemicals (Agent Orange?!?) during the Vietnam War, were a few of the tasks that fell into his description of rigging. We thought that like many of his co-workers my daddy might have been experiencing back pain related to his previous employment.

In fact, after a thorough medical work up, we discovered...
In April 1991 that my father had prostate cancer that had spread to the bones. His physician said that he would likely be dead in six months, eighteen months at most.

My daddy, mom, brother and I were all stunned. My father appeared to be in fine robust health. And yet there was the grim assessment. I personally felt badly. In several churches I had witnessed and been blessed by God’s power and gifts of healing, deliverance and discernment. I had seen people physically healed. Others secured deliverance from negative spirits and turned from suicidal and other self destructive behavior like drug addiction. They made radical, positive, and sustained changes in their lives.

I am not a physician. You do not necessarily have to be one to sense when a person is ill. Based on some of my prior experiences, towards the end of 1986, I felt that my father had cancer. In this instance, I suspect that it was a spiritual gift of discernment. However, it was a feeling that I shunted to the side. My “rational mind” said surely it was my imagination, or I was being “too spiritual”, or perhaps paranoid. I now realize the insight was right on target.

Prostate cancer researchers tell us that the disease often starts early in males’ lives, sometimes in their teens. The disease can fly under the radar screen for decades and finally make itself known when a person is in his mid thirties, forties or as in my daddy’s case, in his early sixties. While I felt badly that I did not trust my spiritual intuition and tell my father that I thought that he should get a thorough physical evaluation in 1986, I had to accept facts: we had to deal with the present, and so we sought medical advice from a local urologist in the Hampton Roads area.

The urologist said in essence that there was no hope of...
recovery and that hormonal therapy was probably the best option. If that failed, then he recommended external beam radiation.

Initially my daddy responded well to the hormonal treatment. His PSA plummeted from 212 to less than 4. The urologist did not recommend any other lifestyle changes, and about a year later the bone pain returned. We tried external beam radiation without success.

My father sensed a need for fruits and fresh vegetables in his diet. He had a friend who was a minister who also had prostate cancer and had done quite well after juicing fruits and vegetables.

I was not particularly impressed with using nutrition as a way of helping to give my father a survival advantage. It did not occur to me that foods that my father was or was not eating had chemical properties (phyto-chemicals) that could help or hinder him in his battle to live. I did not see any great benefit (or harm) in juicing fresh fruits and vegetables and adding them to his diet. I knew nothing about nutritional support in dealing with cancer, and none of the physicians with whom we dealt mentioned it.

I do not like to dwell on the past. It is possible nevertheless, to learn from it. As I look back on the situation, I was undoubtedly influenced by the pessimistic views of my dad’s urologist. My father certainly was. In fact, he commented about how his treating physician seemed to try and “leave you with no hope”. When I reflect, I find myself asking myself this question: after a physician has pronounced someone gravely ill is it possible that subconsciously the physician may buy into his prophecy and help (subconsciously) to bring it to pass? Stated differently, in
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some cases, do physicians have a stake in making sure that
they are not proven wrong by a patient overcoming what
appear to be impossible odds.

Claiming defeat often becomes a self fulfilling reality...
In the fall of 1992, my brother and I found out about a
clinical trial of a new drug (suramin) at the National Cancer
Institute. About this time, my father experienced a blood
clot in his leg. His urologist insisted that he go into the
hospital immediately. My father reluctantly agreed. While
having minor surgery to prevent the clot from going to his
lungs, my dad lost a lot of blood. He became depressed,
weak and slowly began to sink.

We were told that in his weakened state he could not meet
the criteria to be in the experimental drug trials. I tried to
be realistic. Again, in retrospect I recognize that my negative
pective contributed to not pressing forward to verify that
he was ineligible or to ascertain whether an exception could
be made.

When I broke the news to my father that we could not
take him to Maryland for the trials, he simply said, “Tell all
my friends [to come and see me].” I called the folks who I
thought were closest to him, and within forty eight hours
each of the dozen or so people came to the hospice unit,
many of them traveling over fifty miles to get there.

My father said that when he first became sick that he felt
that the illness would bring him to death’s door, but that he
would come back with a strong testimony. In his last days,
he said that he was still looking for a miracle, and that “I can
accept it any way that it comes.”

BROTHER JON