

Anchored in Applause: Acclaims (Testimonials) (Reviews) for *Navigating the Stormy Seas*

What a blessing it is to have the privilege of knowing Dr Hilary Adams, the author of *Navigating the Stormy Seas: My Journey of Triumph*. This book is a must-read for anyone seeking to strengthen their faith. Dr Adams is a shining example of Courage, Faith, and Hope, a living testament to the greatness of God. As you delve into the pages of *Navigating the Stormy Seas*, you will be drawn into the depths of her journey, experiencing both the joys and pains she encountered during her battle with cancer. Through her story, Dr Adams demonstrates that the promises of God's Word are not mere words but a reality. Dr Adams proves to us that God's word is real and that painful experiences are not meant to destroy us but to facilitate our growth along with aligning us with God's purpose. This book is a heartfelt arrangement of scriptures and unshakable faith designed to uplift and inspire every reader. It serves as a beacon, guiding us to a place of faith and hope in our Great Physician, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Joseph Nelson, Bible College President

As a minister and a medical doctor, the word 'cancer' evokes a different (and hopefully more balanced) reaction in me than in the average person. Dr. Adams' book is similarly balanced in its presentation of the raw, negative reaction to a poor physical prognosis while not relinquishing the possibility of a positive spiritual outcome. Her consistent use of stormy seas as a metaphor is not only engaging but also relatable, even as she acknowledges and embrac-

es the sovereignty of The One who has the power to control the weather but sometimes chooses not to.

Dr. Adams reminds us that “Life brings storms, but they reveal our hidden strength and resilience...” and that “even in the most turbulent times, God is with us, keeping His promises and revealing His goodness.”

I highly recommend this book for those who would like (to paraphrase Dr. Adams) to transition from being a patient to a survivor. I am convinced that this testimony will bring you hope.

Dr. Evan Nepaul, MD

Dr. Hilary Adams’s book, *Navigating the Stormy Seas: My Journey of Triumph*, is a truly awe-inspiring exploration of her courageous battle against cancer, coupled with the unwavering faith that guided her through this incredible journey. Drawing from my extensive experience as a nurse specializing in hospice care, I have witnessed the heart-wrenching struggles of cancer patients, and sadly, many of them never had the chance to share their stories. Dr. Adams, on the other hand, not only survived but triumphed, and we are privileged to hear an extraordinary tale of survival and resilience. What truly sets her apart is her unwavering determination not only to survive but to thrive, even in the face of uncertainty. She has redefined cancer by infusing it with the word LIVE; her narrative is a must-read.

Throughout my nursing career, I’ve often struggled to connect with cancer patients in a meaningful way. However, this book has illuminated a path to effective communication and empathy. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone in need of hope

during their darkest moments, whether it be in the realm of illness, strained relationships, financial hardships, or any other tribulations they may face.

Navigating the Stormy Seas: My Journey of Triumph is a captivating and uplifting narrative that will leave you with a renewed sense of purpose and a strengthened belief in your capacity to conquer adversity.

Grace-Ann Elaine Dalling, RN, BSN

Dr. Hilary Adams takes us on a deeply personal and remarkably transparent journey through her battles and ultimate triumph over life's most challenging events. In her faith-fueled book, she unveils the inner qualities and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit that propelled her toward victory. I've had the privilege of knowing this exceptional and authentic Christian for nearly three decades. Dr. Adams has carried a divine calling throughout her life, consistently leading her to moments of triumph.

Every reader, just as I have been, will be uplifted and enriched by the profound testimony she shares. This book is a wellspring of inspiration, and after immersing yourself in its pages, you'll discover newfound motivation to persevere and claim victory in your own life.

Rev. C. Allen McMillan, Senior Pastor

Navigating the Stormy Seas: My Journey of Triumph by Hilary Adams is a superbly written account of her physical journey from cancer to healing and her spiritual journey that grows and facilitates her healing process. From the depths of the staggering diagnoses and

treatment of cancer, she shows us how to have unshakable faith, to “cling steadfastly to the Word,” and to use prayer and praise as our weapons. Recommended for all who are weathering life’s storms.”

Deborah Raines, High School Educator

Storms do indeed come to every life. Hilary takes us on a journey through a storm of storms and guides us along the way with help from above and a Christian narrative that will strengthen the reader for what lies ahead. Exciting, deep, and an excellent resource on how to conquer the challenges life brings us.

Kim Zuber, College Professor

NAVIGATING THE STORMY SEAS

**NAVIGATING THE STORMY SEAS:
MY JOURNEY
OF TRIUMPH**

HILARY ADAMS



PALMETTO

P U B L I S H I N G

Charleston, SC

www.PalmettoPublishing.com

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Paperback ISBN: 979-8-8229-3420-7

eBook ISBN: 979-8-8229-3926-4

Cover Design: Minted Oak LLC

Acknowledgments

I want to express my deepest gratitude to all those who have been a part of my journey through the stormy seas of cancer. Your support, love, and encouragement have consistently helped me navigate the darkest of nights.

First and foremost, I want to thank my family—my rock and anchor. Your strength, patience, and boundless love sustained me through every turbulent wave.

My heartfelt gratitude extends to my spiritual fathers, Dr. Joe Nelson and the late Dr. J.R. Lewis. Their unwavering support and deep reverence for the Word of God have been pivotal in drawing me into a richer and deeper appreciation of Scripture. Dr. Nelson, with his invaluable Jewish heritage, has been instrumental in broadening my understanding, teaching me to dive deeper into the truths and rightly divide the Word of God. Their collective wisdom and mentorship have been the guiding lights in my journey, and for that, I am eternally grateful.

To my incredible medical team, I extend my deepest gratitude for your expertise and dedication to my well-being. Your skillful hands and compassionate hearts have been instrumental in navigating the challenging journey of my recovery.

My friends, both near and far, your presence and words of comfort were like life vests that kept me afloat during the most challenging times.

To my faith community, thank you for your prayers for holding me up in faith when I couldn't do it on my own.

I am indebted to the countless individuals who shared their own stories of survival, reminding me that I was never alone on this voyage.

And finally, to my Divine Navigator, Jesus Christ, my Lighthouse in the darkest storm. My heart overflows with thankfulness for Your enduring presence and the peace You have brought into my life.

This book is a testament to the power of love, faith, and courage, and I dedicate it to all those who find themselves navigating their own stormy seas. May it be a beacon of hope and inspiration on your path to triumph over adversity.

Navigating the Stormy Seas: My Journey of Triumph

From Adversity to Victory—A Cancer Survivor's Tale

A Woman of Courage

*Born from desire, she walks through the fire
Scaling rugged peaks and braving fierce storms
Though sometimes she trips through brambles and thorns
With deliberate steps, she walks undeterred
For a fall is a luxury she cannot afford
Though night's grip may tighten, she is drawn to the dawn
In daylight, the world seems so tranquil and calm
Yet beneath the veneer, pain and hurt often churn
She forges ahead, seeking solace each turn
Driven by love and strength deep inside
She knows up ahead victory does reside
Navigating the rugged trails with hope ever so strong
Believing that soon, the trials won't be long
God's grace is her anchor; His love as her song
Urging her onward, where she truly belongs
With steadfast faith, she takes each step with zest
Not haunted by failures but ahead to a deeper depth
Behold, a new dawn breaks, and her journey nears its crest
With her Savior beside her, she knows she's truly blessed*

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Introduction: The Inspiration Behind the Voyage

“Times of great calamity and confusion have been productive for the greatest minds. The purest ore is produced from the hottest furnace. The brightest thunderbolt is elicited from the darkest storm.” —Charles Caleb Colton

People thought I was going to die. But I didn’t! “You have cancer.” Those fateful words changed my life forever, causing the world around me to crumble. It was a storm I had never anticipated, a disruption that threatened to consume me. The road through cancer was unexpected and foreign to me. Like a ship trapped in turbulent seas, leaving me feeling isolated and powerless. In that moment, I was faced with a choice— Do I succumb to despair or do I embrace the identity of a survivor?

But what if I die? That thought scared me. My life was sailing smoothly when cancer darkened my horizon. However, I embraced the fact that my destiny lay safely in God’s embrace, with Him guiding my life’s journey, determining its peaks and troughs. My faith had always been my anchor, and this trial was the ultimate test. Even though the odds were against me, I held firm to my convictions and was determined to endure and win. My competitive spirit within me whispered, “This is a challenge you can overcome!”

It felt like I was on a turbulent sea, surrounded by crashing waves and dark clouds, uncertain if I would make it through unscathed. It's challenging to hold onto the promises woven into God's Word during your storm. But here's the incredible part—these challenges often transform into the setting where our faith is solidified, where the lessons ingrained in our hearts become the foundational pillars on which we stand, steadfast and unwavering.

Navigating the Stormy Seas: My Journey of Triumph is my personal account of conquering one of life's most formidable trials. You may be traversing your own tempest—a distressing health diagnosis, the heart-wrenching loss of a loved one, the unsettling instability of your finances, the painful dissolution of a relationship, or the heartache of infertility. Regardless of the turbulence you're facing, it's vital to recognize that you are not alone. Even when God's presence may seem distant, rest assured He is right there with you.

No matter the severity of your life's tribulations or how daunting your challenges or adversities may appear, please remember that hope persists. You possess the resilience to overcome it!

My heart goes out to those who have lost loved ones to this relentless disease. My deepest sympathies are with you as I myself grew close to many friends who lost their own battles. In those dark moments, I leaned heavily on God's grace and favor, which sustained me even when I lacked the strength to pray. Only through His boundless love and mercy am I here today, sharing with you the incredible power of faith and the belief that nothing is impossible.

The pain of heartbreak, the sting of rejection, and the weight of disillusionment can lead us to question if God is still by our side. Feeling scared or uncertain is a part of our human experience. However, we must remember that God works behind the scenes for our ultimate good, even in our darkest moments. Rest assured that brighter days lie ahead and that God walks with us every step of the way. He has not left you.

This book is a testament to survival, hope, and victory when the odds seem insurmountable. It is a testament to the fierce battles of my life and shows that it is possible to endure the harshest circumstances and emerge stronger than ever.

Most importantly, we don't have to navigate these challenges alone—seeking guidance and support from those around us can make a world of difference. We can conquer anything that comes our way with steadfast faith and trust in the Almighty.

My friend, you are not walking this path alone. Never let go of hope. Keep fighting, keep believing, and keep moving forward, even when life feels like an uphill battle. As I share my unique experience, I earnestly pray that you will find the courage to fight another day, knowing victory is attainable. I pray that my story can serve as a beacon of hope, reminding you that the sun will shine again. My pastor, Rev. Robert Tisdale, often says, “Your current chaos will not define your future and your purpose,” and I am a testament to that.

As I reflect on the pages of this book, I am amazed by my incredible journey through cancer. It is a journey that has tested my will to live, challenged my faith, and ultimately led me to the triumphant shores I stand upon today. I discovered an

inner resilience I never knew I possessed, and I challenge you to look through your own trials as an opportunity to unleash the faith warrior that lies within you.

When I was first diagnosed, the world around me seemed to crumble, and the waves of fear threatened to engulf me. The path ahead was obscured by doubt, and the horizon seemed distant and unreachable. But, as the storm raged on, I discovered an inner strength I never knew I possessed.

This book is not just a collection of words; it is the chronicle of my transformation and rebirth. Beyond my own story, I hope you will find something more—a source of inspiration, a beacon of hope, a reminder that there is a way forward, even during life's most turbulent storms.

I invite you to embark on this journey with me, to navigate the stormy seas of adversity, and to discover, as I did, the remarkable victory that can only be found on the other side. May this book be a guiding light for all who read it, illuminating the path to your own personal triumphs.

**For our present troubles are small and won't last very long.
Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them
and will last forever! 2 Corinthians 4:17 NLT**

1

Setting Sail: The Beginning of My Journey

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” —Proverbs 3:5 (ESV)

It was an early Saturday morning, a time I cherished for its calm and serenity. The world was still wrapped in the embrace of slumber, and I found solace in the stillness of the day. I often believed that in those silent moments, you could hear God speaking to your heart, and it was, without a doubt, the most peaceful place in the world.

That morning, I sat at my kitchen table, content in the stillness of the dawn. I wasn't dwelling on the recent medical test I underwent a few days prior or what its results might be. Instead, I was at peace, appreciating the gift of each moment that morning unfolded.

Suddenly, the tranquility was shattered by the shrill ring of the telephone. I reached for it, my heart quickening with unease. On the other end of the line was a voice I had not expected to hear so early in the day—the surgeon who had performed my biopsy.

“Is this Mrs. Adams?” he asked in a matter-of-fact tone. I replied, steady but apprehensive, “This is she; how may I help you?”

Without preamble or pleasantries, the surgeon got straight to the point. “My name is Dr. Stanley (To protect Dr. Stanley’s privacy, we won’t use his real name.), and I am calling with your biopsy results; I am sorry to say it came back as cancer.”

The directness of some doctors can be striking. There was no small talk, no polite inquiries about my well-being, or gentle warnings about delivering bad news. Dr. Stanley’s words were like a hammer blow, a stark and unfiltered revelation of my new reality. At that moment, my world seemed to contract to the sound of his voice and the weight of those words. There was no sugarcoating, no attempt to soften the blow. It was cancer, and it was a powerful adversary.

In the same breath, Dr. Stanley informed me that he had already taken the initiative to contact an oncologist in my area. This specialist would call me the following day to discuss a treatment plan that needed to commence.

As he continued to speak, my heart immediately became heavy, and my world started to spin. The magnitude of what had just transpired began to sink its way in slowly. The words “You have cancer” echoed in my mind. I was facing a battle against a relentless foe that threatened to reshape my life in ways I could not fully comprehend at that moment.

Cancer has always been associated with others, with people I read about or saw on TV. It wasn’t supposed to be a part of my story. I took a moment to collect myself, my hands trembling as I reached for a glass of water. I needed to compose myself, to find some semblance of strength. With a shaky voice,

I responded with a weak “okay” to the doctor’s instructions while feeling like I was in a daze.

As I hung up the phone, time seemed to stretch into an eternity. I sat there, feeling utterly paralyzed. At the time of my diagnosis I had recently gotten married, and the news of cancer had come crashing down just two weeks after returning from my honeymoon. It was as if life had pulled the rug of happiness from beneath my feet, and I was tumbling into an abyss of uncertainty.

Cancer? It felt surreal, like a nightmare I desperately wished to wake up from. The questions raced through my mind like a never-ending loop. How had this happened? Why me? I had no family history of cancer then and couldn’t fathom where this illness originated. It was bewildering and painful. It just didn’t make sense.

As the weight of my diagnosis pressed down on me, I finally found my voice. “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,” I cried out instinctively. It was a desperate plea, a lifeline to the faith that had always been a steadfast companion in my life. In shock and disbelief, I clung to the belief that Jesus was my Healer and Strength. It was a lifeline, a whispered prayer that I repeated as if to anchor my soul.

No tears came, just a tightness in my chest that stole my breath. The anxiety was suffocating, but I refused to let it consume me entirely. I had faith, and I had hope, even in the darkest of moments.

As anxiety wrapped around me like a thick fog, obscuring my vision and clouding my judgment, a singular truth pierced

through the haze: facing this monumental challenge by myself was not an option. The weight of the situation was too great, the emotional toll too demanding. I recognized the need for support, for allies in this battle, to help me navigate the stormy waters ahead.

With trembling hands, I reached for my phone, determined to seek reassurance from my family and close friends. But as I dialed their numbers, one after another, no one answered. I was alone, stranded in the middle of the most significant storm of my life. The news of cancer is isolating; it creates a chasm between you and the world you once knew.

No one wants to hear those words: “I’m sorry, you have cancer.” But in that moment, as I grappled with my diagnosis and isolation, I knew that my faith would be the cornerstone of my journey. It was a journey through uncharted territory, but I was not alone. Jesus was with me, and I clung to that belief as I faced the uncertain road ahead.

A Life Altered

It all began with an excruciating pain in my right leg, which had become my relentless companion. Night after night, it would grip me so intensely that sleep became an elusive dream. It was a torment that defied explanation, and I made countless trips to the emergency room, each visit marked by a glimmer of hope that I would receive answers this time.

The emergency room had become a place of both relief and frustration. The harsh fluorescent lights, the sterile smell, and the endless waiting were etched into my memory. Every visit

was a cycle of pain, hope, and disappointment. The doctors and nurses did their best, but the tests they ran came back inconclusive, leaving me in a state of perpetual uncertainty.

I often wondered if this was all in my head, a manifestation of some hidden anxiety or stress. But the pain was undeniably real, a relentless throbbing that left me physically and emotionally drained. It was a test of endurance, both physically and mentally.

As I lay on the uncomfortable triage room bed at the local hospital, wrapped in a thin hospital gown, I couldn't help but feel a sense of *déjà vu*. I had been here before countless times, and it was hard not to feel a tinge of embarrassment. The cost of these repeated ER visits and the looming copayments weighed heavily on my mind, but I had no choice; the pain demanded attention.

Finally, the ER doctor entered the room, his demeanor hurried and preoccupied. I launched into my description of the excruciating leg pain, trying to convey the depth of my suffering. I was determined to be persuasive, knowing that my medical records probably bore a troubling pattern of frequent visits to the same ailment.

"It sounds like you may have just pulled a muscle," he said, his voice tinged with an air of skepticism. "But let's run some blood work and an X-ray to rule things out."

I couldn't help but wonder what "things" needed ruling out, but I nodded in agreement. Several vials of blood were drawn, the crimson fluid disappearing into the sterile world of laboratory analysis. I was wheeled to the X-ray room, where

the technician took several scans of my leg, capturing the pain in haunting grayscale images. Then, I was returned to the cold and uncomfortable triage room to wait for the results.

Time stretched on endlessly while I anxiously awaited the doctor's return. Doubts clawed at the corners of my mind. Was this pain merely a product of my imagination? Perhaps I was burdening them with my frequent visits? I couldn't help but feel afraid that my suffering would persist, lurking in the shadows of my thoughts like a constant haunting presence.

When the doctor finally returned, he wore a puzzled expression. "One of the tests shows your white count a little elevated," he said, his tone uncertain. "This could just be from a virus, but nothing concerning to worry about. The X-ray showed no muscle distress; however, the protocol would require me to order a CT scan, just to be sure."

The CT scan felt like a new level of unpredictability, a deeper dive into the unknown. I underwent the scan, my mind racing with questions, when I returned to my room to anxiously await the doctor's verdict.

He returned with the results, and his words hung in the air like a heavy fog. "All the tests look fine," he said, "and the best course of action would be pain medication and rest. We'll provide discharge instructions, and you should follow up with your family physician. If the pain worsens, don't hesitate to return to the emergency room."

With those words, I was again discharged, my heart heavy with frustration and confusion. The pain remained as relentless as ever, and the dread of not knowing what was causing

it had cast a long shadow over my life. Little did I know that this journey was far from over, and the answers I sought would come in a way I could never have anticipated.

The path to diagnosis was proving to be a labyrinthine journey through countless medical appointments and tests, each offering a glimmer of hope followed by the crushing weight of anxiety. After multiple visits to my family doctor, he finally decided to refer me to an orthopedic specialist, offering a ray of hope that someone with specialized expertise might unravel the mystery of my excruciating leg pain.

Seated in the orthopedic specialist's waiting room, my heart danced with a blend of hope and anxiety. Past disappointments had taught me to temper my Previous setbacks taught me to manage my expectations, but the chance to find the answers I had long sought served as a beacon of hope.

The specialist's demeanor was reassuring as he entered the room. He listened attentively to my description of the relentless pain that had consumed my life for so long. With a reassuring smile, he said, "Don't worry, there's no way this could be cancer. Cancer doesn't typically cause this level of pain. In my years of experience, I've never seen pain like this associated with cancer."

His words offered a momentary respite from the uneasiness that had haunted me for so long. I desperately clung to a glimmer of hope, a lifeline to my turbulent thoughts. Yet, the specialist's cautious nature compelled him to take further action. He scheduled a bone biopsy with an orthopedic surgeon to rule out any potential underlying issues.

The days leading up to the bone biopsy were filled with a strange mix of anxiety and relief. I desperately wanted to believe the specialist's reassurances, but the nagging doubt still lingered in the recesses of my mind. What if this pain was something more sinister than anyone had anticipated?

Facing the Unknown

As I journeyed through the uncharted territory of illness, I found comfort and peace in the embracing arms of faith, a gentle haven in the midst of my storm. The Bible had always been a source of strength and guidance in my life, a wellspring of wisdom and comfort. In the pages of scripture, I discovered that victory was not a distant dream but an inevitable destination waiting for me to claim it.

However, even with the assurance of victory, I learned that faith didn't exempt me from the struggles of anxiety and discouragement. My storm felt like a relentless tornado, tearing through my life with unrelenting force. I was engulfed with despair, and it seemed as though the waters of adversity were closing in around me, threatening to drown me in the worst storm I had ever faced.

In those moments of despair, I found kinship with the disciples of old. They, too, knew the turmoil of storms—literal and metaphorical. The biblical account of Jesus calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee resonated deeply. The disciples were seasoned fishermen, well-accustomed to the treacherous waters of the sea. Yet even they were overtaken by fear when a fierce storm raged around them.

“Suddenly, a furious storm came up on the lake so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!’” Matthew 8:24-25 NIV

It was in that story that I saw a reflection of my journey. The disciples had Jesus with them in the boat just as I had faith in my heart He was with me. Despite Jesus being present, fear gripped them, and they questioned if they would survive. It was a reminder that even in the presence of faith in God storms of life are bound to happen. The presence of God does not mean the absence of problems, situations or circumstances.

But there was a crucial lesson to be learned from that narrative—the power of faith can calm the storm. Faith can transform my tempestuous circumstances just as Jesus spoke to the wind and waves, bringing peace to the chaos. It was a revelation that anchored me in believing there was hope.

I clung to my faith with firm determination. I whispered the name of Jesus in my darkest moments, declaring He was my Healer and my Strength. The tears eventually shed were not tears of defeat but tears of surrender, acknowledging that, in my weakness, God’s strength was made perfect.

My spirit was fortified by the knowledge that I was not alone. Just as the disciples found peace in their storm, I, too, found moments of calm during the chaos. It was a testimony to the transformative power of faith and the healing balm it offered to my wounded soul.

Imagine finding a lantern in the darkest forest; that's what each word from those scriptures felt like to me. Every fragment of my faith became a source of comfort, shining light on my path reminding me that even during the toughest times, I wasn't battling alone.

The story of the disciples caught in a raging storm, with Jesus seemingly asleep in their boat, resonated deeply with me. Like the disciples, I too felt abandoned and overwhelmed I wondered, "Where is Jesus when I need Him the most?"

The disciples' apprehension at that moment was apparent, and their desperation was evident as the storm threatened to consume them. The storm raged, and their world was torn apart, much like the turmoil that had engulfed my life in the face of illness. In those moments, it felt like Jesus was silent, asleep to my cries for help.

It was a poignant reminder that our faith along the way can falter during our most tumultuous storms, and we can feel abandoned by the very source of our hope. The disciples' initial response to the storm was panic, and they failed to turn to Jesus until the situation became unbearable.

In retrospect, the question arises: Should they have sought Jesus the moment they saw the storm coming? Perhaps. But the reality is that our focus often narrows in times of crisis, and the storm's intensity can obscure our faith. Like the disciples, all we can see is the storm that surrounds us, and it becomes challenging to remember that Jesus is with us in the boat of life, even when He seems silent.

It's a powerful reminder that our circumstances can overshadow our faith, and we may miss the answers and solutions that are right there with us all along. Jesus was indeed with the disciples; He had never left them. Yet, their desperation prevented them from fully realizing His presence until they were on the brink of disaster.

In my journey, I had moments where I questioned why it felt like Jesus was silent in the face of my illness. There were times when I, too, had felt like the disciples, wondering where He was when I needed Him most. But as I reflected on their story, I realized that, just as Jesus had been with them in the boat, He had been with me through every trial and tribulation.

It was a lesson in learning to live in the present, being confident that Jesus is with us in the here and now, a truth that encourages us to seek His presence, not just when our back is against the wall but in every moment of our lives, good and bad.

In the middle of my situation, I shifted my perspective, finding comfort in the awareness that Jesus was indeed with me, guiding me through the darkest days of my illness. It was a reminder that faith isn't just about seeking answers; it's about embracing the presence of the One who walks with us through every storm, offering comfort and strength along the way.

The question of why Jesus, being all-knowing, didn't immediately intervene to calm the storm for the disciples. It's a question that has resonated through the ages and reflects our own human experiences when we wonder why God, in His wisdom, allows us to face difficult and trying circumstances.

As I contemplated this, I realized there are times when Jesus appears silent in our lives, and it seems He won't intervene until we actively seek Him. These moments of apparent silence can be unsettling and filled with anxiety, much like the disciples' experience in the storm. Yet, our faith is called upon to grow during these times, just like a mustard seed.

The mustard seed, though small, has the potential to grow into a mighty tree. Similarly, even if it begins as a tiny seed, our faith can flourish and strengthen through the storms we encounter in life. These storms, whether in the form of illness, adversity, or challenges, serve a purpose. They teach, instruct, admonish, and sometimes even rebuke us.

It's essential to remember that even when Jesus appears silent or inactive, He is never absent. He is always present, and His divine wisdom allows us to face storms that ultimately shape and refine our faith. In these trials, we discover the depth of our trust in Him and learn to rely on His strength and guidance.

While often painful and overwhelming, our tests and trials can catalyze spiritual growth and transformation. They challenge us to look beyond the chaos and turmoil and seek the presence of Jesus within the storm. In these seeking moments, we often find the peace, clarity, and strength to navigate the challenges.

In my journey, I realized that even when it felt like Jesus was silent, He was there, shaping my faith and teaching me valuable lessons about trust and perseverance. The storms I faced were not without purpose; they were the furnace where my faith was purified and strengthened.

So, while we may never fully understand why Jesus allows storms in our lives, we can find peace in knowing He is always present, even during our trials. Our faith, no matter how small it may start, has the potential to grow and thrive, becoming a source of strength and comfort as we navigate the uncertain road ahead.

“Jesus responded, ‘Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!’ Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly, there was a great calm. The disciples were amazed. ‘Who is this man?’ they asked. ‘Even the winds and waves obey him!’” Matthew 8:26-27 NLT

The disciples, in the middle of their terrifying storm on the Sea of Galilee, were indeed on the verge of experiencing God in a profoundly new way. Up to that point, they had witnessed remarkable miracles performed by Jesus—transforming water into wine, healing the sick, raising the dead, and orchestrating miraculous fish catches on the tranquil Lake of Gennesaret. Yet, the storm that engulfed them was about to reveal a new facet of Jesus’s divinity—He was the God who calmed the storm.

It’s often in the trials and tribulations of life, the storms that rage around us, that we come to know God more deeply and intimately. These challenging moments can serve to strengthen our faith, expanding our understanding of God’s power and presence. Much like the disciples, who had seen Jesus perform incredible miracles but faced a life-threatening disruption, we may need to confront the storms in our lives to experience God’s sovereignty in a new light.

The storm on the Sea of Galilee became an opportunity for the disciples to witness Jesus's authority over the forces of nature. He spoke to the wind and the waves, and they obeyed His command, becoming calm and still. It was a moment of revelation, where the disciples realized that the One they followed was a remarkable teacher and healer and the God who calms the storm.

In our lives, it's crucial to recognize that the storms we face are not merely trials to endure but opportunities to encounter God's presence and power in ways we may never have imagined. These storms can reveal aspects of His character that we may not have fully comprehended—His ability to bring peace during chaos, His presence in times of distress, and His authority over all circumstances.

As I navigated the tumultuous journey of illness, I, too, came to understand God in a new light. While I had always known Him as a source of comfort and strength, the storm of my health challenges allowed me to experience His healing touch and sustaining grace in ways I could never have anticipated. In those moments of vulnerability and desperation, I felt His calming presence, assuring me that I was not alone in my struggle.

The storms we face may be frightening, but they also have the potential to deepen our faith and reveal new dimensions of our relationship with God. They remind us that, no matter the storm, Jesus is with us, ready to calm and guide us to the other side. It's a life-changing truth that can offer hope even in the most turbulent times of our lives.

Embracing Faith During Fear

The disciples' experience on the stormy Sea of Galilee offers insights into the interplay between worry and faith. It is a reminder that fear, in and of itself, is not a negative emotion. Instead, it serves as an alert system, warning us of potential danger and triggering our innate fight or flight response. Fear has its place in our lives and can be a valuable signal that prompts us to seek safety and protection.

Jesus did not rebuke the disciples for feeling afraid; instead, their lack of faith and inability to see the purpose within the storm drew His rebuke. They had witnessed the miraculous works of Jesus, from healing the sick to even walking on water, and one might have expected their immediate response to be faith in His presence.

They exclaimed, "We will die!" It is a human response to worry, reflecting our vulnerability and our need for safety and security. In their moment of turmoil, the disciples' faith wavered, and they lost sight of the fact that Jesus was right there with them, a source of reassurance and strength.

Yet, the beauty of this narrative lies in the understanding that Jesus knows our weaknesses. He knows that being afraid is a natural response to danger. We do not have to pretend to be bold in His presence; instead, we can bring our fears and trust Him in our difficulties.

What is not acceptable is allowing worry to erode our faith, and it should not be the force that diminishes our trust in God's providence and love. Instead, it should serve as a prompt to turn to Him and seek refuge in His presence and promises.

The lessons from the disciples' stormy experience are profound and applicable to our own lives:

1. If Jesus is near, we need not worry: Just as the disciples had Jesus in the boat, we have His abiding presence in our lives. In times of trouble, we can take comfort in the knowledge that He is with us, guiding us through the storms we face.
2. Don't wait until it's too late to call on Jesus: The disciples turned to Jesus only when they felt their lives were in imminent danger. Similarly, we should not wait until we are overwhelmed by our circumstances to seek His help. He is always there, ready to listen and provide guidance.
3. Our mustard seed faith can be very impactful: Jesus Himself declared that faith as small as a mustard seed could move mountains. Our faith, no matter how small it may seem, has the potential to rebuke the winds and waves in our lives, just as Jesus did on that stormy sea.

Every experience we go through is connected to God's purpose for our lives. Our past shapes us for our future, and sometimes, it is in the breaking that we discover the fullness of His plan. The storms we face may be part of His divine design, teaching us valuable lessons about trust and the boundless power of faith.

As we navigate the storms in our lives, may we remember that, like the disciples, we are not alone. Jesus is with us in the

boat, ready to calm the storms and reveal His purpose during adversity. Doubt may rise, but faith can rise even higher, helping us to weather the storms and discover the true meaning behind every trial we encounter.

The concept that God has intricately mapped out the course of our lives and the steps we should take is reassuring. It reflects the timeless truth in Romans 8:28, which encourages us that “all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord.” This divine promise reminds us that nothing happens by chance as we walk in faith and align our lives with the Spirit of God. Instead, every event and circumstance is part of God’s overarching purpose and perfect will for our lives.

Living in alignment with God’s plan means surrendering our limited understanding and trusting in His divine wisdom. It involves acknowledging that God’s perspective reaches far beyond our finite comprehension. His thoughts and ways are higher than ours, and He is continually working out a miracle for us that extends beyond the farthest reach of our imagination.

In my journey through the storm of illness, I understood that nothing in our lives happens by chance. Even the most challenging and bewildering circumstances are part of a more extraordinary tapestry that God is weaving for our good. This perspective can offer hope amidst adversity.

As I aligned myself with the Spirit of God, I began to see that my experiences, including the trials and tribulations, were part of His purpose. These experiences shaped me into the person He had designed me to be. Even the stormy chapters of my life contributed to the beautiful story He was unfolding.

Walking in faith and living in alignment with God's plan requires trust in the unseen and the willingness to surrender control. It involves embracing the belief that every twist and turn in our journey, every high and low, leads us toward a divine destination. While we may not always understand the "whys" and "hows" of our circumstances, we can rest assured that God's plan works for our ultimate good.

God's perspective encompasses the entire scope of our lives. He is orchestrating big and small events to fulfill His purpose and bring about His blessings. His plan for us goes beyond our limited vision, and as we continue to walk in faith and trust, we will witness the unfolding of miracles that surpass our wildest imagination.

Through every trial, let us remember to hold fast to the belief that God's plan is always at work. He continually leads us toward a destiny that reflects His love, grace, and abundant goodness towards us.

**Now unto him that can do exceedingly abundantly
above all that we ask or think, according to the power
that worketh in us. Eph 3:20 (KJV)**

Power Thoughts:

1. My journey through life's tests doesn't exempt me from being afraid but anchors me in the assurance of victory.
2. Despite raging storms, faith can bring peace and healing to my wounded soul.
3. In times of crisis, my focus may narrow, but I must remember that Jesus is in the boat of life with me.
4. Even when Jesus seems silent, He is present, and my faith can overcome the intensity of adversity.

2

Caught in the Tempest: Facing the Challenges

**“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.”**

Isaiah 43:2 (ESV)

The day of the biopsy arrived, and I found myself in a sterile operating room, surrounded by masked and gloved medical professionals. The tension in the room was palpable as the surgeon prepared to take a sample of bone tissue for examination. It was a moment of vulnerability and helplessness, a moment when I realized the depth and the gravity of the situation.

The day I went to see the orthopedic surgeon for my biopsy appointment remains etched in my memory. A sick feeling gripped my stomach, and nervousness coursed through my veins like an unrelenting current. I attempted to distract my mind, but the weight of the unknown loomed large. Cancer was a distant thought, a possibility that had never crossed my wildest dreams.

I reassured myself that this appointment would be routine, a mere step toward finding relief from the mysterious ailment that had taken hold of my body. The prospect of a biopsy, however, was undeniably unsettling. The idea of a procedure that

might unveil something unexpected, potentially life-altering, was quite scary. Biopsies are often uncertain; you never quite know what they will reveal.

The surgeon's explanation that he might need to extract a substantial sample, involving the removal of bone in my femur area and its replacement with bone cement, only heightened my anxiety. The prospect of such an invasive procedure left me feeling uneasy. The guidance of computed tomography (CT) added a layer of complexity to the process, as it was necessary to ensure precision during the biopsy.

Despite my apprehensions, the day of the biopsy arrived, and the surgery proceeded as planned. The surgeon performed the procedure with skill and expertise, guided by the CTth scans. It was a surreal experience, lying on the operating table, aware that this moment would bring me closer to understanding the source of my suffering.

The surgery went well, and I was discharged to recover at home to wait for the call that would reveal the biopsy results. The pain that followed the procedure was excruciating, and I found myself dependent on crutches for months. The physical pain mirrored the emotional and mental anguish I was enduring.

In moments like these, the journey through the medical system can be as challenging as the illness itself. The waiting, the ambiguity, and the physical discomfort can test one's patience. Yet, it is also a time when the strength of the human spirit is often revealed. It reminds us that even in the darkest and most painful moments, there is a reservoir of inner fortitude that allows us not only to endure, but to press forward.

As the procedure concluded, I couldn't help but wonder if this would finally be the turning point, the moment when the elusive diagnosis would be unveiled. "This could be where this all ends," I thought. Little did I know the journey was far from over, and more trials were yet to come. The waiting game continued, and I braced myself for the results that would determine the next chapter of my life. But it was a journey I was determined to navigate with courage and the firm belief that there was a purpose and a plan for my life, and God was going to bring it out, even during pain.

Holding On in the Storm

Just as thunderstorms serve a purpose in nature, the storms we encounter can also have a deep and meaningful purpose. Thunderstorms in the atmosphere result from the collision of warm, moist air with colder, drier air. This collision sets off a chain reaction that leads to clouds forming and releasing energy in the form of heat. As the storm progresses and rain cools the process down, the energy dissipates.

Similarly, the storms we face often emerge when the warm and comfortable aspects of our lives collide with the cold and challenging realities we face. These storms can take many forms, including illness, loss, adversity, and hardship. They bring a whirlwind of emotions that are difficult to control.

Yet, just like the thunderstorms in nature, the storms of life serve a purpose. They have the potential to release energy within us—strength and faith that we may not have known we possessed. Through these trials and tribulations, we discover

the depth of our character and the wellspring of inner strength that lies dormant within us.

God uses these storms to increase our energy and strengthen our faith in His infinite wisdom. It's akin to condensing water vapor in a thunderstorm, where heat and power are released. Our storms, too, release energy within us, transforming us into individuals with greater endurance, wisdom, and faith.

However, it's essential to wait out the storms of life, just as we do with thunderstorms in nature. Storms can be tumultuous and overwhelming, but they are not eternal. They have a beginning, a middle, and an end. While we may not always see the purpose or understand why we must endure it, there is a reason.

Storms are not random, nor do they lack purpose. They are part of a larger plan designed by God that brings growth, transformation, and strengthening of our faith. By patiently enduring these storms, we allow the process of condensation and release of energy to occur within us, making us stronger and more resilient.

Surrounded by life's thunderstorms, our faith provides the anchor, guiding us through the turbulence and helping us find purpose even in the most challenging circumstances. The storms may come and go, but the faith we gain from enduring them remains a source of strength and inspiration on our journey. This enduring truth is beautifully encapsulated in the words of Isaiah 40:31:

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31 KJV

Life’s difficulties can catch us off guard, much like a sudden thunderstorm that rolls in without warning. These storms can be relentless, rushing into our lives with the potential for destruction, leaving us feeling vulnerable and uncertain about what lies ahead. During these disruptions, our sense of security and stability can be shaken to its core, and the darkness of the storm may obscure the path forward.

Life’s unpredictable storms are a stark reminder of our own human limitations. We cannot control when or where these storms will strike, nor can we thoroughly prepare for their arrival. They challenge our sense of control and often force us to confront our vulnerability. In these moments, we realize how little we can foresee or determine in our lives.

Yet, despite the turbulence and chaos that storms bring, they also offer valuable lessons. They teach us patience and the importance of faith. In the face of the unknown, we must wait, not always knowing how long the storm will last or whether we will emerge unscathed. This waiting can be a test of our endurance, a reminder of our need for inner strength, and an opportunity to deepen our trust in God.

Storms also compel us to focus on the present moment. When the future is uncertain and the path ahead is unclear, we have no choice but to be fully present in the here and now.

In these moments of mindfulness and awareness, there lies a sanctuary of calm and tranquility, even when surrounded by the tumultuous whirlwinds of life's tests and struggles.

We discover strengths we didn't know we possessed and find the courage to face adversity head-on. Our faith becomes an anchor, helping us weather the tempest and providing a glimmer of hope in the darkest hours.

While we cannot always prevent or predict tumultuous times, we can choose how we respond to them. We can choose to wait with patience and trust that the storm will eventually pass. We can focus on the present moment, finding moments of serenity in the turmoil. Most importantly, we can choose to hold onto our faith, knowing that it will guide us through even the most unexpected and challenging storms of life.

In the end, it is our response to these difficulties that defines us and shapes our character. In waiting in steadfast faith, we discover the strength to survive and thrive in the aftermath of life's unexpected storms.

The concept of waiting takes on a significant meaning. The word 'wait,' as illuminated in Isaiah 40:31, transcends mere passivity; it embodies the essence of trust and hope. It's an active waiting—a waiting that involves faith and patient hope.

Waiting in this context is likened to how a diligent waiter serves in a restaurant. It is not an idle waiting but a purposeful and intentional one. Here, waiting is a choice—an active decision to maintain trust and hope when things look dark and bleak. It is a deliberate choice to keep moving forward, even when the storm obscures the path.

Prayer becomes a powerful tool during this season of waiting. It can change the storm's trajectory while simultaneously redirecting our thoughts, emotions, and actions to bear it. Prayer is a lifeline connecting us to the All-Powerful God, offering guidance when we need it most. We express our trust and hope through prayer, seeking divine intervention and wisdom.

Praise is another essential aspect of waiting. We can find reasons to offer gratitude and praise even during bitter adversities. It is said that God inhabits our praise, and we draw closer to the source of our strength in moments of worship. Praise reminds us of the goodness that still exists even throughout the chaos.

Service is a powerful antidote to the stagnation that can accompany waiting. Engaging in acts of service and kindness for others benefits those we help and nurtures our sense of purpose and fulfillment. It shifts our focus from our trials to the needs of others, reminding us that even in difficult moments, God can still use us to help someone else and make a positive impact on the world.

The season of waiting need not be a wasted one. Instead, it can be a period of significant growth, transformation, and renewal. It is when our trust and hope are tested and our faith is strengthened. It is a time when we learn the art of waiting with purpose and intention, actively seeking ways to serve, praise, and pray.

Waiting is a dynamic process—a deliberate choice to trust, hope, and actively engage with life's challenges. It is an art that we can cultivate and refine, allowing us to navigate the storms of life with grace and faith.

As you trust, you will grow new wings. Those faithful in the waiting will not get weary on the way but will receive a spectacular infusion of strength. God's inexhaustible nature is transferred to those who wait or hope in Him. (The Hebrew Bible Commentary, Robert Alter) A renewal of strength after a crushing ordeal, surviving the storm and not growing weary.

Hope and faith, often used interchangeably, are indeed two distinct yet intertwined forces that play a significant role in navigating life's unpredictable winds. Together, they form a dynamic duo that can provide the strength and courage to overcome any obstacle.

Hope serves as the foundation upon which faith is built. The spark of anticipation, the eager expectation, propels us forward. Hope is the compass that keeps us moving in the right direction, even when the destination remains uncertain. It's the belief that something better is on the horizon, a brighter future waiting to be realized. Hope is the driving force that fuels our aspirations and motivates us to keep pushing forward.

On the other hand, faith manifests what we hold to be accurate, even without physical evidence. It is the trust and confidence in the unseen. Faith allows us to bring our hopes and dreams into the present moment, to grasp them with conviction, and to pull them toward us. It bridges the gap between the future we envision and our current reality. With faith, we can reach out and grab hold of the promises that await us, even if they have not yet materialized. It is the belief that we can move mountains, overcome challenges, and manifest our dreams.

When hope and faith are combined, they become a potent force that can propel us through the darkest moments of our lives. Hope motivates us to persevere and keep believing in a better tomorrow. Faith provides the strength and confidence to act on that hope to take bold steps toward our goals, even when the path ahead seems uncertain or challenging.

God's Word is a source of immense comfort and strength. It reminds us that we are not alone in our journey through hardships. When we turn to the wisdom and promises in the Word of God, we discover a wellspring of hope and faith that can sustain us through the most trying times. We receive guidance, direction, and the assurance that there is a divine plan for our lives.

In times of adversity, the combination of hope and faith empowers us to press on. It is the belief that with each step forward, we are inching closer to realizing our dreams and fulfilling our purpose. So, keep believing, hoping, and keeping the faith, for with this dynamic duo by your side, and you will find the strength and courage to navigate turbulent times and emerge victorious on the other side, basking in the light of God's goodness.

Battling the Waves

In the quiet room of the doctor's office, time seemed to stand still. The air felt tense, and the white walls seemed to close in as the doctor uttered those dreaded words: "You have non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma."

The room seemed to spin, and a rush of emotions flooded in. It was a moment that no one is ever truly prepared for, no matter how strongly they believe in themselves.

Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. The name alone carried an ominous weight, a label that would change the course of my life forever. Suddenly, I found myself as a lone sailor navigating uncharted waters with storm clouds darkening the horizon. The unknown stretched out before me like a vast, treacherous ocean, and I was at its mercy. My world was suddenly divided into the before and after, and I struggled to comprehend the gravity of the situation.

Meeting an oncologist for the first time can be an incredibly nerve-wracking experience. The unpredictability of the future, combined with the intimidating nature of the medical setting, can be overpowering. However, as I discovered, the right oncologist can make all the difference in your journey through cancer.

The remarkable woman who walked into the room had an aura of kindness that immediately put me at ease. Her friendly, gentle, patient, and pleasant demeanor created a sense of comfort and trust. It's a blessing to have a healthcare professional who not only possesses medical expertise but also exhibits genuine compassion and empathy. Such a doctor becomes not just a medical advisor but a supportive friend on the journey.

I was fortunate to find the best oncologist in the Mid-Ohio Valley, and my connection with her went beyond medical consultations. (One of my favorite memories is of her going above and beyond; she would later scour the town to find me hot candy, which became a cherished treat to alleviate nausea from the chemotherapy treatments.) Personable doctors are invaluable when dealing with any illness, particularly during cancer

treatments. They are the ones who care not only about your physical well-being but also your emotional and psychological health. They understand that addressing the whole person is essential in the battle against cancer.

Her dedication to ensuring I understand my diagnosis and treatment plan was evident not just through words but also through comprehensive visual aids, demonstrating her commitment to my care.

Cancer is a complex and frightening disease; her efforts to clarify and educate were invaluable. While the initial conversation may have felt overwhelming and numb, it was a starting point for the journey of understanding.

Cancer often presents a formidable challenge, and as my oncologist explained, it indicates that the immune system is struggling to keep pace with the rapid growth of cancer cells. These cells are harmful invaders, sapping vital nutrients and causing harm to healthy tissues. They replicate incessantly, defying the body's natural defenses. Understanding the nature of this battle is a critical step in facing it.

While undoubtedly complex, her treatment plan was designed with my best interests in mind. The CHOP chemotherapy regimen, combined with radiation therapy, was a well-considered approach. While cancer treatments can be grueling and challenging, they are the path to recovery and healing.

Anxiety naturally emerged as the reality of my situation sank in. Confronting cancer is a journey that can challenge even the most resilient souls. Yet, faith and support become

invaluable in moments of vulnerability. My prayer for strength and sustenance was a plea for God's power for guidance, a recognition that this journey was one that could not be undertaken alone.

Cancer is undoubtedly a traumatic experience that can shake the core of your being. The rollercoaster of emotions that accompanies such a diagnosis is entirely usual. It's essential to recognize that these feelings, whether anxiety or despair, are all part of the human response to trauma.

The journey through cancer is filled with challenges and moments of despair. It's a road that can seem grim and disheartening, and it's natural to experience a range of emotions in response. From the initial shock of the diagnosis to the anxiety of treatment and the unknown, each emotion you feel is a valid and understandable reaction to the trauma of cancer.

Within this traumatic experience, it can be easy to lose sight of hope. The weight of the situation can sometimes make it impossible to keep believing in a positive outcome. Yet, it is precisely during these dark moments that holding onto hope becomes crucial.

Hope guides us through the darkest of times. It is the belief that better days are ahead, that healing is possible, and that there is a path forward. Hope may waver sometimes, but it is a resilient force that can be rekindled even in the bleakest circumstances.

One of the remarkable aspects of the human spirit is its capacity to find endurance in the face of adversity. It's the ability to keep believing, even when the odds seem insurmountable.

Faith that carries us through the storm, even when the path is treacherous.

Despite the trauma, there is a reservoir of strength and hope through our trust in Jesus that can sustain us through the darkest times.

Through it all, the thread of hope will weave its way, reminding us that even during trauma, there is the possibility of healing and renewal.

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.” Psalm 46:1-3 (NIV)

As I read through the sacred words, my heart filled with hope; it was as if these verses were tailor-made for my journey through cancer. The promise contained within them became a guiding light during darkness, a reassurance that I was not alone in my battle. It was a reminder that there is hope, and it is meant for me at this very moment.

With its timeless wisdom and eternal truths, the Bible has been a source of peace and direction for countless individuals facing life's trials. When we encounter a passage that speaks directly to our hearts and circumstances, it feels like a personalized message from God. It becomes a wellspring of hope and comfort, a reminder that we are not alone in our struggles.

In my ongoing battle with cancer, I found that acting on these precious words in faith had been my answer time and time again. This faith allowed me to navigate the difficult moments with resilience and courage. It was a testament to the power of belief, even in the face of fear and confusion.

Keeping faith when circumstances are challenging is not an easy task, but it is a choice—a choice to believe in a God that never changes. It is the recognition that His divine presence knows you better than you know yourself, understands your anxieties, and has a plan, even when you cannot see it.

You have likely encountered unexpected and unthinkable news, moments when your faith was tested to its limits. It is in these moments that the true essence of faith reveals itself. It's not about the absence of fear or doubt; it's about choosing to believe, even when everything seems to be falling apart.

Life, with all its trials and tests, will inevitably bring moments that will challenge you. How we respond to these challenges defines our character and shapes our faith. My journey through cancer served as a testament to the power of belief.

Faith and hope sustained me through the most trying times. My story serves as a beacon of inspiration for others facing their own trials and tests, a reminder that even in the darkest moments, there is a path to hope and healing.

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you as though something strange was happening to you.” 1 Peter 4:12 NIV

Fortitude Amidst the Tempest

When faced with struggles, it's easy to lose sight of hope and become overwhelmed by the circumstances surrounding us. Whether we face sickness, financial turmoil, loneliness, or other trials, these challenges can cloud our vision and make it difficult to focus on the greater purpose behind the storm.

My journey through cancer brought to the surface the deep-seated belief that failure was not an option. This determination stemmed from childhood, having been raised by a single mother who worked tirelessly to provide for her family. My mother's intelligence, generosity, and emphasis on education instilled in me the values of hard work and giving your best in all you do.

However, this pursuit of perfection also led to self-doubt, anxiety, and loneliness. These negative emotions became constant companions, casting a shadow over my life. Yet, through my commitment to serving God, I began to uncover a different truth—that despite my imperfections, I was accepted and loved by a God who saw my true worth.

The Bible was pivotal in reshaping my self-perception and renewing my mind. Its timeless wisdom provided stability and truth in the chaos of life and held firm against the lies the enemy tried to convince me of. The words within its pages became a source of hope, a lifeline that reminded me of God's love and acceptance.

In my professional career as a data analyst, I've honed a crucial skill: the ability to sift through the noise and extract meaningful information. This skill is not just about focusing on

the core data; it's also about understanding what to do with the outliers—those pieces of data that don't quite fit the pattern.

Outliers can be tricky. They could represent anomalies that need to be addressed, or they could be distractions that skew the overall picture. The key lies in careful analysis. I approach these outliers with a critical eye, determining whether they hold any significant value or insights. If they do, they can be incredibly enlightening, revealing trends or issues that might have otherwise gone unnoticed. However, if they are just noise, it's important to recognize this and set them aside so that they do not cloud the overall analysis.

In much the same way, during my challenging times, I learned to harmonize the information I encountered with the teachings of the Word of God. Whenever negative thoughts overwhelmed me, I countered them with scripture, effectively pushing aside the non-conforming outliers of despair and doubt. This allowed the truth, as revealed in the scriptures, to assume the leading role in my thoughts and actions. By filtering out these mental outliers and focusing on the truth of God's Word, I found a way to center myself in faith and positivity, much like how I would in my professional work as a data analyst. This alignment provided clarity and peace, guiding me through the turbulent waters with a renewed focus and strength.

This practice was not always easy, especially in moments of vulnerability, but I recognized its power. Just as Jesus resisted the enemy's temptations with the Word of God, we, too, can apply the sword of the Spirit to combat doubt and build faith.

The voices you listen to during your darkest times play a significant role in your fight. I understood the power of positive words and surrounded myself with those who spoke life into my situation.

The Bible not only became a source of knowledge but also of faith-building. With each verse and promise, my confidence in God's plan for my life grew stronger.

A turning moment in my cancer battle happened when I received a personal promise from God directly from His Word—that I would live and not die. It filled me with faith and courage, dispelling the negative emotions that had weighed me down for so long. I clung to this promise. It reminded me that, even during the disruption, you could find peace and calmness through faith.

Discovering moments of stillness can be an intense challenge during our most testing periods. When faced with adversity, we often feel compelled to act, do something productive, and fight against the tide that threatens to overwhelm us. However, there are times when the most significant step we can take is to embrace stillness.

Your journey through cancer may bring with it not only physical challenges but also a need to confront your inner restlessness. As a person who thrived on productivity and action, the idea of sitting still and doing nothing felt foreign and uncomfortable to me.

Yet, during these moments of stillness, you will soon discover a different kind of strength—a calmness that transcends chaos. In these times, you will learn how to quiet your mind and find peace during turmoil.

Stillness isn't synonymous with doing nothing; rather, it's about cultivating an environment conducive to introspection. It involves filtering out the clamor of fear and anxiety and attuning oneself to the subtle murmurs of hope and faith. In this quietude, one can find clarity and a deeper understanding, a space where inner peace and strength are nurtured.

Throughout my fight against cancer, I experienced numerous instances of quietness, some chosen, others imposed by circumstance. These moments of quiet provided an opportunity to reflect deeply on God's promises, allowing me to draw strength from my own vulnerability. It was in these periods of silence that I tapped into a deep well of faith, a source of sustenance that carried me through the most challenging times. The stillness became not just a pause but a powerful tool in my journey, revealing an inner fortitude and a profound sense of peace amidst the storm.

Embracing calmness is an exercise in the discipline of stillness, and it demands a determined approach. As you learn to integrate this discipline into your life, you'll begin to see that even in those moments when you felt solitary amidst turbulent seas, there existed a tranquil core within the stillness of faith. This realization is a powerful one, showing that peace can be found even in the midst of life's most tumultuous times, anchored in the quiet assurance of faith.

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

Power Thoughts:

1. Surround yourself with those who speak life into your situation, as the voices you listen to during difficult times play a significant role in your healing.
2. Find power in the practice of stillness during challenging times. It's in these quiet moments that a unique strength emerges, a serenity that outshines turmoil.
3. Amid the fiercest storms of life, hold fast to faith as your steadfast anchor. In its embrace, remember you are never isolated. In the gentle whispers of Jesus, discover enduring strength.

3

Anchored in Faith: Finding Strength in Belief

“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

At the time of my diagnosis, I was deeply involved in my community, serving both as a college administrator and professor at our local Bible College. Additionally, I was actively involved in my church’s ministry and also worked at the associated Christian school. I continued to work for as long as possible during the treatment, but it wasn’t easy to continue working as the treatment progressed.

The first round of chemotherapy was a grueling experience. The nausea it brought was unlike anything I had ever encountered before. Food lost its appeal, which marked the beginning of an arduous journey filled with constant illness.

Despite the relentless discomfort, I remained committed to my work while undergoing chemotherapy. Fatigue gripped me, but my determination to control my life never wavered. I firmly believed that God could heal me, so I summoned every ounce of strength. I persevered through the overwhelming sensations, clinging to whatever faith I possessed and held on

with determination. Through it all, the Word of God became my anchor, the source of strength that sustained me when the going got tough.

**“So, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing
by the word of God.” Romans 10:17 KJV**

“Faith” is translated from the Greek word *pistis*, which means “belief, trust, or confidence in someone or something.”

“What does it mean that faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17)?” What does Paul intend to convey by the term “hearing”? In this context, “hearing” goes beyond the physical act of receiving sounds through the ears, as commonly understood in English. Here, “hearing” signifies something more profound—the reception and acceptance of a message or report.

So, the question becomes, “Whose report will you choose to believe?” Will you put your faith in the Word of God, which declares, “I am the Lord that healeth thee” (Exodus 15:26), or will you be swayed by the report that indicates the initial round of chemotherapy did not yield the desired results? Doubt began to creep in, and I was reminded of the man who brought his son to Jesus for healing:

**“The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water,
trying to kill him. ‘Have mercy on us and help us if you can.’**

‘What do you mean, “If I can?”’ Jesus asked.

‘Anything is possible if a person believes.’

**The father instantly cried out, ‘I do believe, but help me
overcome my unbelief!’” Mark 9: 22-24 (NLT)**

Trusting the Anchor

Nothing will keep you stuck in your circumstances and your life like unbelief. Unbelief limits what God will do in and through you. Unbelief is so powerful it can stop God's work in your life and keep you stuck right where you are for an exceptionally long time. Its power is such that it can thwart His plans for our lives and leave us stagnant for an extended period.

Lord, my faith is far from perfect. I believe in Your ability to heal the sick, for I have witnessed Your miracles before. I believe You are the God who restored sight to the blind, raised Lazarus from the dead, and can move mountains. But, at this moment, I am wrestling with doubts. I need Your assistance; help me find enough faith for this situation. Help me conquer my unbelief and doubt in this moment. I believe, yet I still harbor some doubt.

Faith plays an integral role in healing. Trusting in God's Word and believing in His promises brought me strength and hope during these trying times. It is crucial to place faith in the healing process.

Recognizing our limitations opens the door for God to work beyond what seems impossible and into His limitless possibilities. Faith is not merely acknowledging that God can; it's believing He will fulfill His promises. When we genuinely internalize God's Word and allow it to permeate our hearts, it becomes the bedrock of our faith. It's not enough to merely know the truth; we must also speak it, act on it, and live as though it is true. That is when our faith transforms into a potent force that can reshape our lives, fostering trust in God's promises.

My constant prayer remained:

‘Lord, strengthen my faith! Let me increase my trust and banish worry, anxiety, and self-doubt from my thoughts. Let me cling steadfastly to Your words and promises. You are my everything, and my faith and trust rest solely in You.’

Unshaken Faith

Initially, cancer had taken hold in my right femur, left leg, and below the right knee. I continued with the prescribed rounds of chemotherapy. However, the pain in my legs resurged, this time with even greater intensity. My doctor advised us to repeat all the tests, including MRI, CT scans, PET scans, and comprehensive blood work. The results were disheartening: the initial chemotherapy had not yielded the desired results, and the cancer cells had grown larger, spreading to my left side as well. The next course of action entailed radiation therapy and a more potent chemotherapy regimen. I dreaded it. If the earlier rounds of treatment had made me so sick, I couldn’t fathom what the more robust treatment would be like. It felt like navigating a turbulent sea, enduring a severe bout of seasickness. Whispers of unease coursed through my mind, yet hope remained undiminished.

In such moments, we do not need to witness the immediate results of our prayers, nor do we necessarily have to feel their impact. As the book of Hebrews tells us, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Often, circumstances may worsen, resembling the intensifying storm at sea. People from around the globe were fervently

praying for me, yet my situation appeared unaltered. Does this mean that God did not hear our pleas? Not at all. It meant He was orchestrating events in His own time for His glory, praise, and divine purpose.

Some may be wondering why an all-powerful God permits adversity and suffering. I can attest that God allows all things to unfold for our ultimate good. Nothing occurs haphazardly, for He is molding us for a greater purpose. The God I know is infinitely good, loving, omniscient, and omnipotent. He is always present to help us in our times of need, and there is no evil in Him. It is not His desire that you or anyone you know should suffer or be afflicted with illness. While He can utilize all circumstances for our benefit, He did not afflict you with cancer or illness to merely refine your character.

Life can undoubtedly throw us unexpected challenges, but it is unjust to hold God accountable for every hardship. Finding peace in knowing that God has already triumphed over every battle allows us to take refuge in His abundant grace.

“Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows.

But take heart because I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33 NLT

Every experience we endure is a tool for our growth. Nothing is without purpose in God’s plan. That illness was not intended to defeat you; it was designed to elevate you and fortify your faith to prepare you for the challenges ahead. With God, nothing is in vain. He masterfully weaves both

the favorable and the unfavorable circumstances into a tapestry for our benefit.

No matter how difficult or painful the situation may seem, God remains in control. It is essential not to squander your season but instead allow it to shape and refine you for the purpose that God has ordained for your life.

“These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” 1 Peter 1:7 NIV

Refining gold is incredibly rigorous, requiring significant effort to extract one of the most valuable minerals on Earth. It commences with the discovery of the ore, followed by the meticulous preparation of the mine. Afterward, the ore is transported to the appropriate location, and the intricate process of breaking it down begins, culminating in the refining stage.

Gold is renowned for its value, which appreciates with time. It’s a treasure coveted by many. However, the purpose of our trials far exceeds the worth of gold, as gold, despite its rigorous refining process, will eventually perish. In contrast, refining a born-again believer is an indispensable journey to secure eternal life with Jesus. We must undergo the process of spiritual refinement, as how we endure the trials and tests on our path to righteousness will determine our eternal reward.

Sometimes, our prayers may seem to go unanswered, or the response is delayed. Yet, we can take comfort in the unwavering

truth that our God is a God of perfection. He orchestrates all things with precision. Even when we cannot discern the signs, He diligently works things out for our benefit. Sometimes, our trials serve to test our endurance.

It's crucial to remember that God is perpetually at work, even when His handiwork eludes our sight. There may be moments of isolation, yet we can believe that God's divine plan consistently steers toward goodness. We can take refuge in the knowledge that He remains by our side through every storm and that even the most challenging times serve His greater purpose.

Navigating cancer is an incredibly demanding journey. It's marked by agony, confusion, and moments that test our commitment, sometimes making us contemplate giving up. However, amidst the tears, challenges, and sacred encounters with Jesus became the cherished milestones in this journey. In those moments, we can tangibly feel God's presence and hear His comforting voice.

I agree that perceiving God's hand in our lives can be arduous, especially when confronting hard trials like cancer. I frequently wrestled with anxiety throughout the day, pushing the limits of my faith. I discovered a valuable strategy that proved effective for me. Whenever unsettling thoughts or anxiety threatened to overwhelm me, I turned to the promises found in God's Word. I came to realize that hope and faith have the power to conquer doubt, much like light dispels darkness. Despite this battle being among the toughest I've faced, I remained steadfast in my self-discipline. So much was at stake, and my survival depended on my determination.

I believe that God never abandons our side, and we can discern His presence even in the bleakest moments. It's imperative to grasp the hope that one day, we will gain insight into God's purpose for our lives, even when it remains uncertain. We can wholeheartedly trust that He perpetually works behind the scenes and will never forsake us.

Have you encountered a circumstance where the path ahead was unclear, yet everything eventually fell into place? Take a moment to contemplate those instances and recognize them as potential signs of God's presence and direction in your life. Have confidence that God is orchestrating events for a positive outcome behind the scenes, even during times of complexity. Maintain your faith, and rest assured that all will become clear and meaningful one day.

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28 NLT

Power Thoughts:

1. Trials and sorrows on earth are tools for our growth, and nothing is without purpose in God's plan. Challenges are designed to elevate us and fortify our faith.
2. God never abandons our side, even in the bleakest moments. Trust that He perpetually works behind the scenes and will never forsake us."
3. "Hope and faith have the power to conquer fear, much like light dispels darkness. Stay resolute in your self-discipline during the most formidable challenges.
4. God works with precision, orchestrating all things for our benefit, even when we can't see His hand at work.

4

Weathering the Waves

“We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance.” Romans 5:3 (ESV)

After approximately six months of radiation therapy, the cancer continued progressing. Subsequently, I embarked on a rigorous chemotherapy regimen that spanned several months, yet the cancer continued its spread. It reached a stage, signifying that the lymphoma had extended extensively beyond the lymphatic system, infiltrating the bone marrow. Following several more months of chemotherapy, my doctor informed me that the only remaining option was a bone marrow transplant. Unfortunately, I couldn't find a suitable donor match promptly, so I resorted to using my marrow, a procedure known as an autologous bone marrow transplant. In an autologous stem cell transplant, healthy blood stem cells from your own body replace the malfunctioning bone marrow affected by cancer.

The transplant process was very intense for stem cell collection; a needle is inserted into a vein in your arm to draw out your blood. A machine filters out the stem cells, and the rest of your blood is returned to your body. A preservative is added to your stem cells and then frozen and stored for later use.

During the conditioning process, you undergo intensive chemotherapy to eradicate the cancer cells. This procedure carries significant risks, and the resulting side effects can be overwhelming. The high doses of chemotherapy target both healthy and cancerous cells, weakening your immune system. I spent several months confined to the hospital in isolation, with only limited visitation allowed. Those who visited had to see me through a protective screen to avoid potential complications from disease exposure.

The outcome was highly uncertain, and even the medical professionals expressed their apprehension because the treatment was not yielding the expected results. The cancer had extended to my brain at a particular juncture, necessitating chemotherapy targeted explicitly to that region. I was undergoing such an extensive regimen of chemotherapy that it took a toll on my body. It encompassed chemo pills and intravenous chemo treatments, and it seemed like everything I consumed contained some form of chemotherapy. The drugs were particularly challenging as I struggled to swallow them, often feeling so ill that I couldn't keep them down.

The aggressive chemotherapy not only ravaged the cancer but also inflicted deep burns across my body. My toenails darkened to the stark shade of coal, and my skin peeled away in painful fragments. The agony was relentless. The physicians made it clear that the damage was not just skin deep; the treatment had scorched my internal tissues just as severely as it had my exterior.

When my pastor, who had known me for over two decades, entered the sterile confines of my hospital room, he looked at

me but his eyes showed he didn't recognize me and thought he was in the wrong room. The person lying on the hospital bed bore little resemblance to the vibrant individual he had once known. Cancer, and its arduous treatments, had whittled me down to the bare essence of physical existence—skin and bones, a silhouette of suffering marked by the ravages of burns that spoke silently of the battle being fought within. Yet, inside this weakened frame resided an unbroken spirit, strong and unchanged by the storm.

Much like my struggle, the Apostle Paul faced his share of storms. He endured the harrowing experience of being shipwrecked on three separate occasions. He vividly describes his ordeals in 2 Corinthians 11:25, stating, “Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day adrift in the deep.” Yes, you read that correctly—three times! One of these shipwrecks is described by Luke in the book of Acts, specifically Acts 27.

“We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. On the third day, they threw the ship’s tackle overboard with their own hands. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.” Acts 27:18-19 (NIV)

The violence of the wind was overwhelming, and it's likely that the waves towered over the ship at times. Filled with anxiety and a sense of hopelessness, their desperation drove them

to take drastic measures to prevent the ship from sinking. They began to throw overboard anything they could lay their hands on, discarding valuable cargo that would have yielded profits from the journey.

By the third day, they came to the painful realization that the relentless storm showed no signs of abating. They disposed of their tackle, including anchors, sails, cables, baggage, and more. It's possible that, in their desperation, they discarded items without much thought, perhaps even getting rid of things that could have helped them weather the storm. Despite their Herculean efforts, the tempest persisted, and any glimmer of hope for salvation had vanished.

“After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: ‘Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed.’” Acts 27: 21-22 NIV

God consistently provides a word of guidance tailored to our circumstances and steadfastly fulfills His promises. Much like the storms in our lives, the storm Paul faced was part of a divine plan, serving as a conduit for God's ultimate purpose in our lives. Sometimes, we must navigate through storms to reach the other side of God's intended path.

In Paul's case, the shipwreck led him to an island called Malta, where he played a pivotal role in laying the foundation

for Maltese Christianity. It was within God's grand design for them to experience His divine power, ultimately resulting in the salvation of many souls. God's assurance that the lives of those aboard the ship would be spared empowered Paul to perform numerous miracles and share the gospel on the island.

Indeed, it's not always about us; as the Bible tells us, while the devil may intend evil, God can use it for good, ultimately leading to the salvation of many lives around us. We endure storms not only for ourselves but for our children and the generations that follow us. They must witness our courage and how we weathered the trials and tribulations and learn they can persevere in the face of adversity.

How we want them to remember us and how we confronted challenges becomes a crucial part of our legacy. Our ability to overcome the most trying times can serve as an enduring testament, a blueprint for them to navigate their challenges and tribulations with courage and faith. It's about leaving behind a legacy that demonstrates the strength and faith within each of us, showing them that they, too, can endure and emerge victorious.

Waves of Resilience

Your healing and victory fundamentally begin within your mind. What you think shapes who you become. Our thought life exerts tremendous influence over our mental, emotional, and even physical well-being. Your mindset establishes the level of expectation in your life, which can be positive or negative. I can personally attest to the power of this truth. There were

days when I consciously programmed my mind to focus solely on the positive, but there were also days when the weight of my weakness allowed negative thoughts to flood my mind, and I lacked the emotional strength to push them aside. However, that didn't deter me from renewing my commitment to maintaining a positive mindset the following day.

Reflecting on the story of the woman with the issue of blood, we see how her healing journey commenced with a single thought: "If only I can touch the hem of His garment." She never vocalized it; it was merely a thought. Having exhausted all her resources and enduring immense suffering, she reached a point where she thought, "What do I have to lose? If only I can push through this crowd and reach past the pain, the hurt, the trauma, the agony I'm experiencing right now and just touch His garment." Even if she could only extend her fingertips through the crowd to touch the hem of Jesus' robe.

Remarkably, Jesus, being omniscient, perceived her faith even though she never uttered a word aloud. He heard her unspoken statement of faith, which began as a thought, "If only I can touch the hem of His garment, I will be made whole." This beautifully illustrates the incredible power of our thoughts and their role in shaping our faith and healing.

Maintaining the right mindset is crucial when battling cancer. The treatment process is undeniably intense and can sometimes feel overwhelming. I've known acquaintances who gave up, not because they lacked physical strength but because the emotional and mental toll became too much to bear. They grew tired and found it challenging to keep going, leading

them to stop treatment prematurely. It's a harsh reality, and for those currently navigating such difficult times, I want to encourage you to persevere, for brighter days will come.

The darkness you're experiencing now is not eternal. If you can summon the strength to press on, even when you're exhausted, don't hesitate to seek help. Your family, friends, community, and church are there to support you. And in your moments of deepest despair, cry out to the Lord, saying, "I am struggling right now, Lord, send help!" I've done this countless times, and someone has always answered. God hears our whispers and our cries and understands our tears. Our thoughts hold tremendous power to influence our well-being, from inner peace to physical health and even our vision and strength.

Dr. Caroline Leaf, a cognitive neuroscientist, has extensively researched the mind-brain connection, the nature of mental health, and the formation of memory. When she notes that our thoughts can improve our peace, health, vision, fitness, and strength and significantly affect our overall health and vitality, she's drawing on evidence suggesting the deep impact our mental processes can have on our physical well-being. In her book

During my most trying times, even when peace seemed fleeting, I anchored my mind to the unwavering belief in God's healing power. This conscious choice to pivot towards positivity and hope, no matter the surrounding circumstances, had visible beneficial effects on my mental and even physical well-being.

The sense of peace came in waves, alternating with moments of overwhelming worry and anxiety about the outcome. Yet, in those troughs of worry, I found a lifeline in the Word of God. Those scriptures, which I had once diligently committed to memory, became my sanctuary. They emerged unbidden, echoing within me, as a soothing balm for my turbulent emotions. It was as if the very verses I had stored in my heart were waiting for such moments to reaffirm God's promises and restore a sense of equilibrium in my soul.

To truly trust God, I've discovered that it's necessary to know Him deeply. Let go of any lingering anger, resentment, or unforgiveness that may be lingering within us. These negative emotions can be destructive and hinder our progress. Likewise, self-pity should be avoided, as it doesn't serve us well. Instead, I've adopted the mindset of an overcomer, believing and declaring that I am already healed and cancer-free. This mindset was a source of strength, helping me maintain positivity and hope even during the most challenging moments.

Learning to Bend, Not Break

Navigating through tough times demands deep emotional strength, especially when anxious thoughts threaten to overwhelm us. In these tough times, as we draw on the strength and encouragement of our community, friends, and family, we are reminded of life's unpredictable nature. It often feels like a force that can unexpectedly knock us down, presenting challenges we never anticipated. Facing a continuous stream of challenges can indeed be frustrating, yet it's crucial to understand that

with determination, these hurdles can be surmounted. Adversity often arrives unannounced, catching us off guard. However, by placing our trust in God, who safeguards what we entrust to Him until the very end, we find the strength to persevere through even the most overwhelming situations.

God may allow us to be broken, but He never intends to destroy us. In our brokenness, He molds us into the best versions of ourselves, working everything for our good, even when we can't see or understand it. This is where faith and belief come into play, as faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

Through every trial and test, I've discovered that God had something bigger and better for me. My faith has grown stronger, my prayer life has deepened, and I've experienced God in extraordinary ways. I now have a clearer spiritual perspective and understand the purpose behind my challenges—to help others who might be going through similar situations. If you're reading this, God wants you to know that your story is just beginning.

God is the author and finisher of our stories, and nothing happens by chance. He has already mapped out our destiny and purpose, and He's not surprised by our circumstances because He is an all-knowing God, present in our past, present, and future. We gain faith by hearing and absorbing the Word of God, and when we immerse ourselves in His Word, it becomes alive in our situation. Believing in the truth of God's Word is vital; when He says He will make a way where there seems to be none, we believe it. His timeline may not align with ours; His ways are different, but He is always faithful.

Life will inevitably bring storms that threaten to overtake us, but the Word assures us of certain victory for God's children. Yet, even with this assurance, we may still grapple with moments of discouragement. As Jentezen Franklin wisely said, "Sometimes the best in you will never be released until the worst has been done to you." Painful experiences are not meant to destroy us but to facilitate our growth and align us with God's purpose.

What I know about God's character outweighs my feelings of doubt about the future. He is eternally good and always present. He will never abandon us; though we are not immune to problems, the Lord delivers us from them all. When we persistently show up for Christ and refuse to give up, these storms teach us lessons that we would never have learned otherwise, equipping us for even greater challenges in the future.

My journey with cancer felt like a storm, similar to Paul's shipwreck, but I clung to the promise that harm would not befall me and that survival was certain. This difficult season would eventually pass, leading me to a brighter place. Through this storm, my trust in God deepened, and my faith grew stronger, laying the foundation for believing in even greater miracles in the future.

**Don't be afraid, for I am with you.
Don't be discouraged, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you.
I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.
Isaiah 41:10 NLT**

Power Thoughts:

1. Maintaining the right mindset is crucial during challenging times. The darkness you're experiencing is not eternal; brighter days will come.
2. Our thoughts have the power to influence our well-being and vitality. Cling to your belief in God's healing power, even in moments of fear.
3. Life brings storms, but they reveal our hidden strength and resilience, equipping us for more significant challenges in the future.
4. God is the author of our stories and has already mapped out our destiny. Believing in the truth of God's Word is vital.

5

Lost at Sea: Navigating Uncertainty

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

—Psalm 119:105 (ESV)

Chemotherapy is a treatment method that utilizes potent drugs to target and eliminate cancer cells throughout the body. It is essential to recognize that these chemotherapy drugs don't discriminate between cancerous and healthy cells, particularly those that divide rapidly, leading to various side effects. The administration of chemotherapy necessitates careful monitoring by medical professionals to ensure patient safety, as incorrect dosages can pose serious risks, including harm or even death.

These chemotherapy drugs are essentially poisons, and their primary function is to eliminate any rapidly dividing cells in the body, which includes cancer cells. However, this broad-spectrum approach also means that healthy cells may be unintentionally damaged in the process. Consequently, chemotherapy is considered a high-risk and unpredictable treatment method. There are no guarantees.

Given the aggressive nature of the cancer, the primary goal was to combat it effectively. Nevertheless, the severe side effects resulting from high-dose chemotherapy are often devastating.

My body responded adversely to chemotherapy, leading to multiple hospitalizations for close monitoring. Even after being discharged, I frequently returned to the hospital due to issues like high fever or dehydration from persistent vomiting.

During my treatment, I spent prolonged periods connected to intravenous therapy (IV), with bags of chemotherapy drugs slowly infusing into my veins. At times, I watched the liquid as it dripped through the IV line until I drifted off to sleep, only to be awakened by additional medications aimed at mitigating the side effects of chemotherapy.

The entire process and treatment I went through were excruciating and unbearable. I developed inflammation and painful sores in my mouth, making eating or drinking anything agonizing. Eventually, I had to rely on a feeding tube. The relentless nausea and vomiting added to my suffering. My whole body felt like it was on fire, often followed by numbness and tingling or sharp shooting pains in my hands and feet. Even walking short distances had become a painful and increasingly challenging task. It felt like I was trapped in a body that no longer belonged to me. There were moments when it seemed like something else was in control, something almost foreign. To make matters worse, my immune system remained weak and vulnerable, constantly putting me at risk. It was as though my own body was working against me, hindering my ability to live life to the fullest.

Drifting Adrift

Throughout my treatment, I endured numerous medical procedures. The battery of tests seemed never-ending. I remember telling the doctors that the treatment and tests were sometimes worse than the cancer. I went from one biopsy to the next, followed by PET scans, MRIs, CT scans, and countless pricks and probes. I was prescribed more medications, received injections, and had to take shots of prednisone to bolster my immune system just enough to endure the rigorous treatment, all while battling never-ending nausea. The anxiety and claustrophobia I experienced during PET scans and MRIs were no walk in the park. But I had to summon the strength to endure the discomfort and pain to survive. It takes immense strength to endure such treatment, but I want to encourage others not to give up the fight. There is healing waiting at the end of the tunnel.

For six weeks following the transplant, I had to be isolated due to the risk of infection. The period immediately after the transplant is particularly critical because the white blood cells, essential for fighting off infections, are not yet functioning optimally. It can take six months to a year for the immune system to fully recover. In my case, it took even longer. Due to the heightened risk, I had to be closely monitored for any signs of infection, and even something as simple as a fever or cough could have serious consequences.

Despite all the precautions taken, I did develop infections and required round-the-clock treatment from a team of infection control specialists. Additionally, it takes time for the bone

marrow to start producing red blood cells again, so I needed red blood cell transfusions during my recovery.

I even experienced temporary memory loss because of the treatment. There were moments when I didn't recognize who I was, where I was, or even my family members. I was constantly vomiting, and my entire body felt as if it was burning inside and out.

Hair loss, though seemingly insignificant in the grand scheme of battling cancer, can be emotionally devastating. A few days after my first round of chemotherapy, as I combed my hair, it began to fall in large clumps. Though I had been informed that this would be a side effect, the reality of it hit me hard. All my hair fell out at once. Some cancer patients shave their hair before treatment to prepare themselves for the inevitable mentally. I hadn't even considered doing that; I thought my hair might gradually disappear. However, it all came down to my scalp, and I didn't need to shave it. Finding a wig that matched my ethnicity was challenging in my town, but I eventually found one close enough at the mall. It was a short bob cut with bangs. The lengths we go to survive! But even with the wig, I wasn't okay. The reality of having cancer sank in as I looked at my bald, burnt, and unrecognizable reflection in the mirror. I would cry for hours, often unsure of the reason behind my tears.

It's okay not to be okay. God desires honesty and transparency. David is an excellent example of someone who constantly acknowledged his feelings and emotions to God. "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted

within me?” Despite how he felt, he encouraged himself in the Lord, saying, “Hope in God.” Sometimes, in the middle of a storm, you’re not thinking about praying or encouraging yourself; you’re focused on finding a way to reach dry ground. During our challenges, we must remember that God’s promises are trustworthy and reliable, surpassing any physical symptoms we may encounter. Maintaining faith during adversity can be challenging, but we must trust God’s plan and ability to heal us.

The hospital chaplain visited my room daily to provide spiritual support and someone to talk to. Each day, I responded with a positive attitude and a reminder that “I will live and not die.” I shared with him that God wasn’t finished with me yet and that I had work to accomplish, assuring him that I would be fine after this ordeal. He was encouraged by my positive mindset and often came to hear me speak about the goodness of God. He said, “How can you be so at peace when you’re going through so much?” It was nothing but the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that kept me strong in my weakness. He even asked me to encourage other patients and share the hope I felt with them during some group sessions. Of course, it never materialized as I was too weak from the treatments.

God’s peace produces inner rest. It triumphs over worry and unease because it comes from Jesus Christ Himself, who is constant and unchanging. He’s the same yesterday, today, and forever. Nothing rattles Him. No matter what you’re going through or what’s happening around you, you don’t need to be

afraid, even during life's most significant storms. You may not like it, but you can handle it because Jesus can handle it, and He grants you full access to His peace.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 KJV

Hope on the Horizon

Storms are undeniably one of the most powerful forces on Earth. They possess the ability to uproot trees, damage homes, and even claim lives. The question of who is truly in control of these storms has been a topic of debate. Some argue that storms are merely natural phenomena governed by the laws of physics. However, there are those who believe that storms are under the control of a God.

In the pages of the Bible, we find numerous instances where God allows storms to fulfill His divine purposes. For instance, God sent a mighty storm to thwart the Egyptian army as they pursued the Israelites (Exodus 14:21-22). He also utilized a storm to divert the attention of the Philistines, allowing Samson to make his escape from their grasp (Judges 16:3). These examples make it clear that storms are not merely random acts of nature; instead, they are intricately connected to God's presence, power, and protective hand during times of adversity. Furthermore, storms often serve as a contrasting backdrop, illustrating the divergent destinies of the righteous and the wicked when faced with the fierce forces of life.

God is never too far from those He has called and chosen for such a time as this. Everything that happens in our lives is for a bigger purpose. God already knows your story; He was the one who wrote your story. He knows what was in the past and what is to come. He knows that whatever trauma or difficulty you face, you will get through it because He is right there with you. And when the All-Powerful, All-Mighty God of the universe is in the room with you, nothing that comes upon you will defeat you.

“The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps” (Prov. 16:9). “I know O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps” (Jer.

You may put in your utmost effort and strive tirelessly, yet the outcome is not always within your control. Whether it pertains to your endeavors in ministry, the choices of others, or unexpected twists in your health journey, there’s no scriptural formula that guarantees specific results simply by doing what’s considered the “right thing.” The only realm over which you have influence is learning to place trust in the God who reigns supreme over both gentle breezes and fierce storms. It’s about clinging to every promise He has uttered, even when circumstances and emotions try to shake that belief. In fact, it’s precisely during those moments of doubt that faith should be anchored even more firmly.

Sometimes, it might seem as if God has placed you in solitary darkness to illuminate the truth that He alone is the guiding light through the most intense storms. He’s inviting you:

“Lean back and trust me. I’ve got you covered.” Remember, His promise stands strong—“I will never leave you nor forsake you. I am your ever-present help in times of trouble, even when the raging winds blind your vision, preventing you from feeling My presence.”

The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:17-18 NIV

Power Thoughts:

1. It’s okay not to be okay. God desires honesty and transparency. Even during storms, acknowledge your feelings and emotions to God.”
2. When surrounded with challenges, remember that God’s promises are trustworthy and dependable, surpassing any physical symptoms we may encounter.”
3. “God’s peace produces inner rest, triumphing over fear and anxiety. You can handle difficult moments because Jesus grants you access to His peace.
4. Storms are not random acts of nature but are intricately connected to God’s presence and purpose. They illustrate the divergent destinies of the righteous and the wicked.

6

Sailing Against the Wind: Overcoming Adversity

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:13 (ESV)

My heart sank heavily when the doctor broke the news: I was unable to have children. The treatments, coupled with the bone marrow transplant, frequently resulted in individuals being unable to conceive. This infertility wasn't a consequence of the transplanted cells but rather the harsh effects of chemotherapy. The treatment indiscriminately attacked both healthy and cancerous cells, severely affecting reproductive organs in the process.

I recall the doctor cautioning me about this potential outcome, yet I clung to a sliver of hope. But almost right after the bone marrow treatment, I found myself abruptly entering early menopause. It was a traumatic experience that left me grappling with what's known as 'Reproductive Trauma.' Coming to terms with infertility is an incredibly challenging journey that can deeply affect one's self-worth as a woman.

Upon hearing the life-changing news of my infertility, I was hit by a wave of grief, sudden and intense. In that moment, I felt overwhelmed and numb, as if I had been struck by a massive truck. Emotionally, I was adrift, finding myself

disconnected and struggling to come to terms with the enormity of what I had just learned.

Throughout this ordeal, I held firmly to the gratitude of being alive, recognizing it as an immense blessing. Though the natural ability to bear a child had faded, my existence remained a testament to resilience. I gradually came to accept that God's plan for me wasn't dependent on my ability to give birth. His ways are enigmatic and often beyond our understanding. Embracing this truth, even in the midst of pain, I knew that maintaining my trust in Him was essential.

While I may not have given birth to a child, my journey through the challenges of infertility brought me an incredible blessing—the gift of the most beautiful child through adoption. I cherish this blessing daily and do not take it for granted. I consider myself immensely fortunate that God entrusted me with the role of a mother. It has been said that giving birth is a gift of nature, but adoption is a gift from God. It takes divine love to embrace a child as if they were your very own flesh and blood. I can honestly say that I couldn't love my child any more than I do.

Each treatment carried significant risks, and survival was far from guaranteed. Some of the potential side effects could endure for a lifetime. As the cancer advanced, the treatments became more aggressive, often with a low chance of a cure. It was a harsh reality to face.

In moments like these, my refuge has always been prayer. I reflected on the story of Job, who endured unimaginable losses in a single day. His servants and livestock were taken from him,

and then the most devastating blow came when he learned of the tragic loss of all his children in a violent windstorm (Job 1:1-19). Job's response to this unparalleled tragedy is a testament to his faith. He did not curse God; instead, he uttered these words:

Job stood up and tore his robe in grief. Then he shaved his head and fell to the ground to worship. He said, "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave.

**“The Lord gave me what I had,
and the Lord has taken it away.
Praise the name of the Lord!” Job 1:20-21 NLT**

Battling Headwinds

In our quest to understand the complex terrain of grief, experts like Elisabeth Kübler-Ross have provided invaluable insights. Kübler-Ross, a Swiss-American psychiatrist, introduced the Kübler-Ross model in her 1969 book, "On Death and Dying." This model outlines the five standard emotional stages experienced when dealing with grief and loss: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Denial is often the initial reaction, that surreal feeling of disbelief, as if the painful reality isn't happening. Anger manifests as an intense, sometimes wordless pain, leading us to express our anguish, often through prayers or tears. Bargaining typically involves pleading with God, questioning why this is happening, and seeking answers or relief from the pain.

Depression can become a significant part of the journey, and it's worth noting that chemotherapy itself can contribute

to feelings of depression. This emotional rollercoaster is an essential part of the healing process, encompassing not only physical but also emotional and mental recovery.

It's important to remember that grieving is a necessary process, not a linear journey. Each stage must be navigated, and sometimes, they reoccur unexpectedly. Healing is attainable when we lean on the strength of our faith and believe in the promises offered by Christ, even in the face of life's most difficult challenges.

In times of loss and adversity, turning to the scriptures offers us a wealth of wisdom and guidance. David, a prominent figure in the Bible, provides an exceptional example in the face of dire circumstances.

In 1 Samuel 30, David experienced a devastating loss, with everything dear to him slipping away. Even his loyal army turned against him. Yet, in the depths of despair, David found the strength to encourage himself in the Lord. His actions serve as an inspiring roadmap for us:

1. **Seeking Strength in Christ:** David's first step was to turn to the Lord for strength. He found comfort in his faith, recognizing that his trustworthy source of strength lay in his relationship with God.
2. **Unwavering Commitment:** David's commitment and devotion to God remained constant. Despite the overwhelming circumstances, he didn't waver in his faith or loyalty to the divine.
3. **Continuous Praise:** Remarkably, David never ceased to praise God. In the face of loss and adversity, he

maintained an attitude of gratitude and worship, recognizing the power of praise to uplift the spirit.

David's example teaches us that we can find strength, consistency, and comfort even in our darkest hours by turning to our faith and praising the Lord. His faith in God's plan demonstrates the enduring strength of the human spirit when rooted in belief.

David's remarkable courage in the face of adversity is a beautiful source of inspiration for us all. His ability to encourage himself in the Lord and remain steadfast in his faith offers valuable lessons:

1. **Faith as an Anchor:** David understood that faith can be a firm anchor during tough times. His trust in God's plan and goodness allowed him to navigate the darkest hours.
2. **Remembering God's Faithfulness:** David recalled God's faithfulness in past deliverances. This remembrance bolstered his confidence that God would remain faithful in his present challenges.
3. **Consistency in Worship:** Even during pain and loss, David maintained consistency in his worship. He recognized that praise and worship were not contingent on circumstances but were vital expressions of his faith.
4. **Dedication to Service:** David's commitment to serving God never wavered. He understood that adversity should not deter us from our responsibilities and devotion to the divine.

David's example underscores the enduring strength that faith provides. It encourages us to remember God's faithfulness, remain consistent in our worship, and stay dedicated to our service, even when faced with life's most difficult trials.

Persisting Through the Stormy Sea

Even when the weight of the world feels unbearable, remember the power of perseverance:

1. **Keep Showing Up:** In the darkest moments, summon the strength to keep moving forward. It may start with a single step or the support of a helping hand, but every effort counts. Attend to your commitments, even if it means modifying your actions to protect your health.
2. **Embrace Your Pain:** Allow yourself to feel the pain. It's a natural part of the human experience. Even Jesus, who knew sorrow and grief, teaches us the value of acknowledging our emotions. Through our suffering, we find the path to healing.
3. **Discover Purpose in the Storm:** Understand that every season has a purpose, including the storms that shake your life. Sometimes, it's about surrendering control to a God, allowing God to guide you through the storm. Even when doubt reigns, trust that there's a divine plan unfolding.
4. **Walking in Obedience:** Like Abraham, having a clear direction in the storm is not always necessary. Step out in faith and obedience. Your trust in God's plan

will be counted as righteousness, leading to blessings beyond measure.

5. **Revealing God's Purpose:** Often, it's during the storm that we uncover God's purpose. Just as the sun shines brilliantly after the rain, your faith and obedience elevate you to new dimensions of understanding and closeness to God.
6. **God's Unchanging Presence:** Remember that God remains constant throughout the ages. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. In your moments of distress, He's the sovereign God, always planning your deliverance and escape from any adversity.
7. **Express Your Grief:** Don't be afraid to pour your grief and suffering to God through prayer, just as Job did. He welcomes your honesty and offers peace in your time of need.

In times of grief and despair, know that storms are but moments to endure on the journey to brighter, happier days. The Bible provides wisdom and guidance to navigate any difficulty we face while following the path of God through adversity. Trust in His plan, lean on your faith, and you will emerge stronger from the storm.

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

Power Thoughts:

1. Keep showing up, even in your darkest moments. Embrace your pain as part of the human experience.
2. Find purpose in the storm, trust God's plan, and walk in obedience, knowing that God's unchanging presence is your refuge.
3. The stages of grief are natural and necessary. Allow yourself to move through denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, trusting in the healing power of time and faith.
4. Often, it's about stepping out in faith and obedience, even without a clear direction. Trusting in God's plan will lead to blessings beyond measure.

7

Navigating Uncharted Waters: Discovering Strength Within

“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” —Isaiah 43:19 (ESV)

I read a beautiful illustration of how cows and buffalo react in a storm. When a storm is coming, cows and buffalo respond very differently. Cows will see a storm coming and run east, away from the chaos. Eventually, that storm will catch up to the cows, and they will succumb to its force and, in most cases, may not survive. (*Evaluating fear and how you face it—Colorado Biz Magazine*. <https://www.cobizmag.com/evaluating-fear-and-how-you-face-it/>)

In the case of the buffalo, they react the opposite. They head west, right into the storm. By moving toward the storm, the storm’s impact is dramatically reduced. They often run through it and come out safe on the other side.

Our first instinct in difficult times is similar to the cows response: to run away from it and avoid facing the fear, hurt and trauma. We think it will go away if we ignore it and run as far away as possible. However, that is not the case. Most times, it catches up with you. It’s okay to lean into the feeling. Sit in it

for a moment and understand what you need to face and deal with that is causing so much fear. Is the fear of dying from this cancer causing me to have sleepless nights? If it is, what does God say about it?

Like the buffalo's approach of moving toward the storm to minimize its impact, there are moments when we must confront the storms in our lives directly, even when they appear overwhelming. Running through the storm to reach the other side requires faith. Despite the physical and emotional difficulties, it's essential to acknowledge that God is actively working to refine and heal us. This mirrors the buffalo's bravery in facing the storm head-on, with the assurance that they will eventually emerge safely.

Confronting challenges, even when they appear impossible, can lead us to personal growth, healing, and emerging from the storm stronger and wiser, much like the buffalo's emergence from the storm. We can discover hope and healing in our faith despite what we are going through.

The Winds of Change

During my chemotherapy treatment, I faced an extraordinary challenge: the inability to consume solid foods stretched for several months. Every attempt to eat resulted in immediate nausea and vomiting.

This relentless nausea and vomiting took a toll on my body, and the constant stream of doctors and medical professionals in and out my room made it challenging to find rest. My physical condition deteriorated to the point where

I resembled a mere shadow of my former self. Despite the worsening of my symptoms, I believed God was using this situation not only to prove His sovereign power in healing me, but to refine me in the process. I deeply identified with the biblical figure Job, who, in his suffering, cried out for understanding, but later understood the purpose God would accomplish in him through his pain:

**“And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God.” Job 19:26 NIV**

Like Job, hope became my steadfast companion, guiding me through the darkest hours. I held onto the belief that I would survive and thrive to witness God’s goodness on this earth. The Word of God was my daily source of strength and peace, two very strong pillars of support I knew I needed. The verses I had hidden deep within my heart surfaced like precious treasures to uplift and encourage me in my most trying moments.

Additionally, the extensive treatment had also inflicted some memory loss. Though the doctors reassured me that it was a temporary side effect of the medication, it felt like an uphill battle to remember simple things, still there was a constant thought I seemed never to struggle to bring to memory—the Word of God. Even when I couldn’t fathom my whereabouts or recognize my own family members at times, those verses that I had carefully stored within my heart served as a resounding call to persevere and never to relinquish hope. I used every

word of God as a true weapon of warfare as I continue the fight of my life with unwavering determination.

I whispered the songs and verses we sang in church to myself constantly. They too were founded in scripture and strengthened my faith. As it is said, “faith comes by hearing the Word of God,” even when you speak it to yourself. Scriptures like “I will live and not die and declare the goodness of the Lord

(Psalms 118:17)”, and “God is with me; He will never leave nor forsake me (Deuteronomy 31:6)” echoed in my heart. The Word of God is alive, a living and breathing entity. God Himself underscores the importance of “hiding the Word in your heart.” In times when you are too weak and sick to read the Bible, the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, will bring His promises to your remembrance.

I do not doubt that God sustained my life during those trying times. There were moments of overwhelming panic, but in those moments, I repeated the promises of God. My physical weakness was that I needed assistance standing to avoid falling. Through it all, I never lost hope and never stopped offering praise. I refused to give up because I believed in a God who could perform the impossible. I found peace in understanding that God had a purpose for this season of my life, and I remained hopeful that He would guide me through it.

Another remarkable aspect of thunderstorms is their role in maintaining the electrical balance of the earth’s surface and atmosphere. Without thunderstorms and lightning, this balance would dissipate in minutes. Similarly, the storms in our

lives are crucial for maintaining spiritual balance in our walk with God. These trials are necessary to challenge and strengthen our faith. If everything in life were always perfect, we would never see God as the One who calms our storms or experience Him as the Great Physician when we are ill. The songwriter beautifully captured this sentiment: “If I never had a problem, how would I know that God can solve it? How would I know what faith in His Word can do.”!

The wisdom of the Bible reminds us that within this world, trials are an inevitable part of our existence. The delicate balance of our spiritual walk with God is maintained in these trials, encompassing positive and negative experiences. The storms of life serve as essential components of this equilibrium; they are needed to ensure that our faith remains resilient.

Life cannot be a perpetual state of ease, for that is not our reality. Challenges and difficulties are integral to our human experience and play a pivotal role in shaping and testing our belief in God’s divine ability. Without these trials, our faith lack the depth and strength that only adversity can cultivate and would wither away.

In essence, it is during life’s most challenging times that we discover the depth of our faith and the immeasurable strength that comes from our trust in God’s promises.

Embracing Surrender—Pressing Onward

Throughout my life, I’ve carried the innate desire to nurture, mend, and create an environment of peace and safety for everyone around me. Conflict was something I shied away

from, always seeking harmony and tranquility, as if asking, “Can we all just get along and maintain the peace?” I lived by the motto, “Keep calm, play it safe, and avoid disrupting the silence.”

However, through my journey, I learned a fundamental truth—some things are beyond our control, regardless of how diligently we try to manage them. I could not dictate the actions, words, or emotions of others, nor could I prevent certain events from unfolding in my life. What I could control, though, was my response to these circumstances.

In those tumultuous moments, I came to a crucial realization that some things needed to be released and entrusted to God’s guidance. Going through my cancer-battle was one such pivotal process in my life. I had to relinquish my tight grip on the helm and allow God to take control of the winds. He alone possesses the wisdom to navigate the storm’s path, and if we grant Him the reins, He will always guide us safely through the stormy seas.

This surrender is not a sign of weakness but an act of faith, acknowledging that God’s divine plan surpasses our own understanding and control. It’s a reminder that we find strength in letting go and letting God chart the course, for He alone knows the way to safety and victory.

While it is undeniable that storms, whether in the form of hurricanes or life’s challenges, can have a negative impact on those in their path, they also hold within them a unique capacity to nurture growth and renewal, much like ecosystems responding to periodic lashings from tropical cyclones.

As these mighty storms traverse the ocean, their winds and waves stir the waters and break up bacterial patches lurking in the water, expediting the end of phenomena like the red tide, often witnessed along the Gulf and West Coast. Moreover, the blessing of tropical storms lies in their ability to deliver much-needed rainfall to areas suffering from drought, acting as nature's drought busters. These life-giving waters rejuvenate inland plant life and disperse plant seeds. Even what isn't blown about on the ground during the storm can sometimes be carried hundreds of miles downstream to replenish lost growth, be it from fires or urbanization.

Just as nature's ecosystems though difficult to maneuver through, our faith and resilience can similarly be fortified through life's trials. These challenges possess the potential to usher in a season of renewal and growth, leading to a stronger, more resilient spirit ready to face whatever storms come our way.

My cancer diagnosis unveiled a deep truth: This sickness was not intended to destroy me but to facilitate growth. It allowed my mustard seed faith to mature into a robust mustard tree that would eventually provide shade, comfort, and strength to myself and others facing challenges that test their faith in God.

“Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.” James 1:2-4 (NLT)

One of the most valuable lessons I've learned is that personal growth, much like the growth of a plant, cannot be rushed. It necessitates giving ourselves the time and space to develop naturally, at our own pace. Growth is a process that unfolds slowly, demanding patience and endurance. However, as we persevere through these challenges, we emerge stronger, more complete, and self-sufficient. We realize that the journey itself is a treasure, and we need nothing more. Everything we needed was right there all along.

Learning to let go and surrender to God's control was a significant part of my journey. I came to accept that there are certain aspects of life that we cannot change. My pastor, Rev. Robert Tisdale, often imparts the wisdom that "yesterday is past, tomorrow is a mystery; the only thing you can control is today." We may not control the storm itself, but we can determine how we navigate it without succumbing to its force. Challenges and difficulties, as I've come to understand, reveal our actual weaknesses, and provide an opportunity for growth.

In times of hardship, maintaining belief is crucial, even when circumstances remain unchanged. Our faith isn't anchored in what we see but in what God says. It's a steadfast trust that carries us through, knowing that in the end our faith and endurance will prevail.

Hardships can be our greatest motivation for spiritual growth or the source great of discouragement. The difference depends on our understanding of God's purposes through every trial we face. Are you going to face it like the buffalo? Or run from it like the cows?

Don't resist the suffering you are going through, as it will reveal God's Glory if we allow it to do what it was purposed to do. In my experience, the more complex the circumstances, the more the glory of God is revealed. The storms reveal who we can become and what we are becoming. Please don't run away from it. Run into it...the fire reveals who we really are. Our identity is refined and shows who we are becoming. Face The Storm—Don't run away from it.

**The righteous person faces many troubles,
but the Lord comes to the rescue each time.**

Psalms 34:19 NLT

Power Thoughts:

1. Instead of avoiding or resisting challenges, consider shifting your perspective. Approach them with courage and faith, knowing they can be transformative moments on your life journey.
2. Confronting challenges may be uncomfortable, but it's in these moments that our endurance is nurtured. The buffalo's approach teaches us to endure the storm to find strength on the other side.
3. Life's trials can nurture personal growth. Challenges, though difficult, can lead to renewal and a stronger faith.
4. Just as running into a storm reveals who we are and can refine our identity, facing life's difficulties head-on can bring out our best.

8

Calm After the Storm: Discovering Purpose

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)

Hope is more than just a word; it’s a feeling of eager and earnest expectation and deep trust. It’s the belief that something good is on the horizon because you’ve been assured it will happen. Hope isn’t a distant glimmer in the darkness; it’s the guiding light that leads us through even the darkest times. It can be found in the tiniest moments—the light piercing through the cracks, the warmth in a friend’s voice, the touch of a loved one’s hand, the beauty of nature, or simply the knowledge that a new day awaits. This hope empowers us to move forward, even when the path ahead is uncertain.

Navigating through cancer treatment is akin to sailing through unpredictable storms. It’s a journey into the unknown, where darkness often clouds the horizon, and the way forward may seem obscured. There are moments when the pain feels overwhelming, and hope becomes a lifeline—a glimmer of optimism in the form of a stable blood count or a meal kept down.

At times, the path ahead becomes shrouded in darkness, and the way forward appears hazy and uncertain. During these

moments, the struggle can feel overwhelming, the sensation of drowning in pain. In these trying times, any glimmer of hope becomes a lifeline. It might be the relief of a favorable blood count or the ability to consume a meal without the agony of vomiting.

Even if anxiety has never been a familiar companion, there comes a point when doctors convey that everything within their power has been done, and all that remains is to wait and see.

Have you ever had one of those moments where everything feels up in the air? Where doubt sneaks in like an uninvited guest, whispering thoughts you never asked to hear? It's like a shadow stretching across a sunny day, unexpectedly dimming your optimism. Suddenly, what was once a clear path becomes shrouded in fog. And that heaviness? It's not just in your head. It shows up in the choices you make; the sighs you let out, the way you might hesitate a second longer before taking the next step. We've all been there, battling those challenges, reminding ourselves to hold onto hope even when it feels like a tightrope walk.

Navigating the storms of cancer treatment requires courage, much like a sailor weathering an unpredictable sea. It's a journey that demands strength, hope, and an unyielding spirit in the face of the unknown.

Uncovering Purpose

There are moments when prayer may feel overwhelming, and the right words may elude us. A simple utterance of the Name "Jesus" can make a significant difference in those times. Even in weariness, when energy is in short supply and weakness

prevails, a whispered “Jesus” brings a serene calmness and a deep sense of peace.

In other instances, when circumstances seem beyond our control, it’s essential to remain still, to do nothing but watch as God begins to work it all out. In those moments, the message is clear: never give up, never quit, and never stop fighting. Despite the weariness and fatigue that may envelop us, if we hold fast to the Word and promises of God, He will unfailingly come through for us each time.

During certain seasons of life, our role may be to wait and witness as God assumes control and masterfully orchestrates our circumstances. This journey can be grueling, putting our determination to the test. Yet, it’s crucial never to surrender the battle. Even when weariness and exhaustion loom large, holding firmly to the Word and promises of God can bring about deliverance and rejuvenation.

In the face of adversity, hope emerges as our driving force, infusing us with the strength to endure and persevere. This hope carries us through the darkest times, reminding us that brighter days await.

Surviving in Style: Hospital Comfort and Unexpected Delights

During my time at the hospital, I found it challenging to tolerate those standard hospital gowns. However, I was immensely grateful for the generosity of my wonderful friends and family, who sent me beautiful gowns and robes. My initial preference was for the hospital gowns, as they allowed easy access to manipulate the IV and various tubes I was connected to. But after

a period of isolation, the compassionate nurses indulged my inner 'diva' by allowing me to take a daily showers and temporarily disconnect the IV so I could put on my gowns. If the hospital was going to be my home for several months, I wanted to feel as comfortable as possible. It's the little things we do each day that can significantly impact our attitude towards the challenges we face.

I made a firm decision to keep my spirits high and live each day to the fullest. I was determined to live, not merely survive, so I carried myself as if I were alive. Even the simplest acts, such as my doctor's effort to scour the town for hot and spicy candy to help with my nausea, meant the world to me. I am deeply grateful for the exceptional medical staff that surrounded me during my treatment; they were outstanding. Healing is a complex process, and God uses healthcare professionals as integral parts of that process. I never lost sight of Jesus as the Great Physician. My life was securely in His hands, so I trusted that He was at work through the hands of those responsible for nursing me back to health.

The effects of the high-dose chemotherapy damaged my bone marrow and reduced red blood cell and platelet production. So much so, I required several blood transfusions throughout my treatment. I experienced a loss of taste, rendering everything I ate was flavorless. My body was weak and lethargic and kept me confined to my bed most of the time due to the lack of energy. The side effects were often unbearable, and there were times when I would regurgitate everything I ate, necessitating hospitalization for nutrition via additional IV treatments.

We often hear the saying that troubles come to make us stronger, but when you're during such trials, it's an entirely different experience. All you can see is the moment, and your primary focus is on survival. I faced a choice: I could either yield and let the storm take me, or summon every ounce of strength in my frail body and swim against the tide. With resolve I chose the latter, knowing I was not alone; Jesus was right there with me in the heart of the storm.

God provided me with a constant reassurance that this storm had a purpose—His glory. He whispered to my heart, “You will survive, Hilary, because my work in you is far from finished. You have a purpose and a destiny that will touch countless lives. Through the words of your testimony, you will emerge victorious.” Even during excruciating pain and suffering, I bore witness to His goodness. Every person I encountered, I shared the incredible work of God in my life. I did not wait until I was completely healed to speak of His miraculous healing power; I declared it at every opportunity to the doctors and the nurses so that everyone who crossed my path knew of the God I served.

Indeed, our attitude in the face of adversity holds incredible power. When uncertainty casts its shadow, it can stall our steps, setting up barriers that delay our progress. It's like an invisible hand keeping us from advancing toward growth. Yet, if we opt for faith and purposefully take steps toward our faith-filled ambitions, we can endure the storm and emerge even stronger. It's vital to keep paddling, even when the waves are at their highest, and have trust that we will eventually reach the shore.

God's promise echoes in our hearts: "I am a present help in times of trouble," and "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So, regardless of how we may feel in the moment, we must hold fast to our faith and never stop believing.

The Guiding Star

We've all experienced moments of hurt and discouragement in our lives. Acknowledging these emotions and giving ourselves space to process them is crucial to our healing and deliverance. However, it's equally important to recognize that our faith can empower us to rise above these feelings and not let them dictate our lives. Even in the face of discouragement, we can embrace faith and prevent fear from paralyzing us. We can take deliberate steps toward our aspirations and maintain trust that things will fall into place.

Our emotions, though valid, don't have to define our existence. Just because we feel anger doesn't mean we should allow these emotions to dominate our lives. Instead, we can acknowledge and work through these feelings while consciously living in accordance with our values and beliefs. It's acceptable to question God or our life's purpose, but we can still strive to live with purpose and make decisions that propel us closer to our objectives.

It's often in our darkest seasons that God does His most remarkable work. Even when it seems like He's inactive, He is orchestrating everything behind the scenes. His divine plan continues to unfold, and nothing can obscure the radiance of His glory, not even the darkest clouds. The sun may be hidden, but its brilliance remains undiminished.

No matter what unfolds, we can maintain our trust that God remains in control and tirelessly works for our ultimate good, especially during the most challenging situations. It's essential to nurture our faith and cling to hope, fully aware that brighter days await us. One of the creatures that inspires me significantly is the eagle.

The eagle possesses two remarkable qualities that captivate our admiration: its incredible strength and its response to storms. Unlike other animals that seek refuge, the eagle can foresee the tempest approaching. Its vision is eight times sharper than that of humans. While others scramble for shelter, the eagle patiently waits. Although it lacks the power to halt the storm's advance, it remains unyielding and undaunted. It perches, and as the first raindrops fall, the watchful bird takes flight. Taking advantage of the powerful winds the eagle spirals higher and higher. Eventually, it breaks through the storm's dark clouds and ascends into the radiant beams of sunlight. Looking down, it witnesses the storm drenching everything below except itself.

The eagle possesses no ability to stop the storm, but it soars above it. Similarly, as Christians, we will inevitably encounter challenging times, trials, and various forms of suffering. God has bestowed His promises upon us and encourages us to trust Him. Each of these promises is meticulously crafted to sustain us through strong winds.

God's purpose isn't to sow fear or wreak havoc in our lives. Instead, He equips us with a unique strength, a power no other creature possesses. We are not just meant to rise

above turmoil, we're destined to stand tall, with the tempest raging below our feet, proving that we can conquer what seems unconquerable.

Life can be related to the story of the eagle in several ways:

1. **Anticipation of Challenges:** Just as the eagle can sense a change in the winds, we often have a sense of when difficult times are on the horizon. Life is full of ups and downs, and we may have an intuition that something is approaching.
2. **Strength and Resilience:** The eagle's ability to soar above the storm using the winds as an advantage showcases its strength and resilience. These challenges can be an opportunity for us to discover the depth of our inner strength and determination.
3. **Trusting in God's Promises:** The eagle trusts that the same thing potentially working against it can work in its favor. Similarly, in our storms of life, we can trust in God's promises and provision to guide us and provide us with the strength to overcome adversity. These promises can serve as our anchor amidst difficult times.
4. **Rising Above Adversity:** Like the eagle, we too can rise above our life challenges. Instead of being overwhelmed by adversity, we can choose to navigate through it with faith, hope, and determination, emerging stronger and wiser.
5. **Finding Light in Darkness:** The eagle's flight through the storm leads to the sunlight above the clouds. Maintaining faith and hope can lead us to a brighter

outcome. It reminds us that even in the darkest moments, there is the potential for light and renewal.

Overall, the story of the eagle illustrates how we can approach any difficult circumstance with courage, faith, and the belief that, with God's guidance and our determination, we can rise above adversity and find a path to a better, brighter future.

“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.”

Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

Weathering Life's Tempests

I've always been fascinated with storms, finding a connection between them and the tempests of nature. Living in Florida has given me a unique perspective on these forces of nature, as they are a common occurrence here. In the Sunshine State, it's not uncommon to wake up to picture-perfect weather one day and find yourself in the midst of a massive upheaval the next. Just as swiftly as these storms arrive, they depart, leaving little regard for the havoc they may have wreaked.

To the native Floridians, these storms are part of life's rhythm, something they can sleep through with ease. It's reminiscent of the biblical story of Jesus in the boat, where you can instantly identify those who aren't accustomed to Florida's weather by the umbrellas they unfurl or the overly cautious way

they navigate the roads (which, honestly, the natives should probably do as well).

In these meteorological dramas, I've discovered a powerful metaphor for strength in the face of life's unpredictability. Just as Florida's natives have learned to weather the storms, we, too, can adapt and find strength in the face of our struggles, knowing that they will eventually pass, leaving us with the opportunity to rebuild and carry on.

Some defining traits of storms:

1. Transience: Storms are fleeting. They arrive unexpectedly and depart just as abruptly.
2. Destructive Force: Their presence is marked by the damage they leave in their wake, a reminder of their power.
3. Phases of Fury: Storms often unfold in stages, building up to their most intense moments.
4. Post-Storm Radiance: In my experience with Florida storms, the silver lining is that the sun invariably emerges afterward, bathing the world in beautiful sunshine and sometimes even gifting us with the sight of a rainbow.

Each trial and test I encounter serves to fortify my inner strength and deepen my connection with God. It's an undeniable truth that the more we endure hardships for the sake of our faith, the more God showers us with His boundless love, comfort, and uplifting encouragement.

When one truly comprehends the essence of God, it becomes an unshakable foundation capable of weathering any storm life may unleash. I carry this knowledge with me, a steadfast assurance that I will overcome every challenge that crosses my path. My faith in God is my anchor, instilling in me the belief that He has a purpose for my life and will lead me through every storm.

In the face of adversity, I stand committed, knowing that I am never alone. This knowledge empowers me with strength. My heart swells with gratitude for my faith and the steadfast support of my loved ones. Together, we journey through the darkest hours, guided by the beacon of hope that lights our way.

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed but not driven to despair. We are hunted down but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

2 Corinthians 4:8-10 NLT

Power Thoughts:

1. Hope isn't just a word; it's the guiding light that leads us through even the darkest times, revealing that something good is on the horizon.
2. Navigating life's challenges is like sailing through unpredictable storms. To endure, we need courage and hope.
3. Even in the face of adversity, we can choose to live, not merely survive. Embrace the little things, maintain a positive attitude, and be grateful for the compassion of those around you.
4. Anticipate challenges, tap into your inner strength, trust God's promises, rise above adversity, and find light within the darkness like the eagle navigating a storm.

9

Rising Tides of Resilience: Unveiling Personal Growth

**“He calmed the storm to a whisper
and stilled the waves.” Psalm 107:29 NLT**

Storm chasers offer essential advice for handling storms at sea. Their recommendations are as follows: When a storm intensifies, it’s advisable to swiftly and safely reduce your boat’s speed. In turbulent waters, maintain sufficient power to keep your boat moving forward while allowing for effective steering. The goal is to travel at a pace where the water’s natural motion overtakes your boat’s speed, ensuring a smoother and more comfortable ride. This approach prevents your boat from overpowering the waves, reducing the risk of losing control or encountering a broaching situation, as noted in “6 Tips for When Your Boat is in Rough Seas—Jetdock.com.”

Knowing that God remains in control is comforting in life’s tumultuous waters. He reigns over both the dry land and the boundless seas. As we trust His divine guidance, we can find peace in His promise to steer us safely to the shore, even if the journey may seem slow and uncertain. With God, we are never utterly lost.

The Journey to Remission

Following a series of treatments—chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy, and targeted therapy—my doctor diligently monitored my progress. Each round of blood tests, X-rays, and imaging tests held a mix of anxiety and hope. Gradually, we received reassuring news: there were no signs of new cancer growth. Then came the momentous day when I was informed that my cancer had entered remission.

Cancer in Remission: When the signs and symptoms of cancer diminish or disappear, it's a significant milestone. For me, it meant that the disease had lost some of its former vigor and aggressiveness.

My oncologist cautioned that while the risk of cancer's return had diminished, regular check-ups would be an ongoing part of my life. This news stirred a sense of unease, but I held onto the faith that the Lord would continue to guide me through this journey, and complete the healing work He started in me.

Finding peace and trust in God's plan may be challenging during trials and tribulations, especially when He allows these circumstances to unfold. I never asked God, "Why did you allow me to have cancer?" Deep within, I knew there was a purpose to this trial. God wasn't finished with me yet. God was going to use this testimony as the building blocks towards fulfilling my purpose, and Him allowing me to go through it meant He trusted me to endure suffering and bring Him glory.

Even amidst a flood of tears, my hope remained steadfast and unyielding. This was simply another opportunity for God to manifest His presence in a remarkable way, to reveal

Himself as the Ultimate Healer. He had healed me before, but now He was preparing to display His power in an even more significant manner.

Many obstacle we face are opportunities for God to demonstrate His might. These trials cultivate compassion, enabling us to empathize with those enduring their storms. They empower us to be vessels of love, mercy, and grace to others, and allow us to prune our spiritual gardens to bring forth the fruit God desires us to produce, even during hard times.

Every storm carries a purpose, often stripping away our self-reliance so that we can wholly depend on the One who is the source of all things. In every situation we face, God's sovereignty shines through, reminding us that His presence is our greatest strength and His purpose transcends our challenges.

“So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.”

Peter 1:6 NLT

In the journey of faith, belief in God must override our feelings, serving God transcends mere emotions. Feelings can be deceptive, manipulative, and temporary, while God's Word remains a constant, unchanging source of truth. When we persist in prayer and faith, even when our hearts are filled with countless questions and answers that seem elusive, we gain strength to stand against the lies of the enemy.

Consider the plight of Job, a man who grappled with numerous questions and endured deep suffering without

immediate answers from God. His patience and faith are a testament to the tenacity of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Despite the many questions that swirled around him, Job remained steadfast, and in the end, God restored his latter days even more abundantly than his former ones.

Battling the Tempest

Navigating the storms of life shares parallels with sailing through stormy seas—a fearsome challenge for even the most seasoned sailors. These storms often arise unexpectedly, mirroring the unpredictability of life’s trials. Three key ingredients are required for a thunderstorm to manifest: moisture, instability, and lifting. These elements transform the atmosphere and give rise to turbulent weather conditions.

We too might encounter sudden and intense challenges in both our physical lives and our spiritual experiences. These storms can catch us off guard, leaving our lives in disarray. Such disruptions may indicate that the enemy perceives us as a threat, prompting spiritual turmoil. Confusion and chaos may reign in our lives in tumultuous spiritual atmospheres. The enemy seeks to instill insecurity within us, fostering feelings of instability. Yet, in such adversity, we must not succumb to worry but press forward with faith. Our journey through the storm strengthens our resolve and deepens our faith.

When life’s unexpected storms rage around us, it becomes challenging to maintain our faith and composure. Fear can easily take root, threatening to paralyze us. The enemy aims to distract and weaken us. However, we must fix our gaze on

what truly matters—our faith in God. Just as Peter walked on water with his eyes firmly on Jesus, we too can trust that God will uphold us, even when we feel as if we're sinking. With faith as our anchor, we can overcome any obstacle and emerge from the storm stronger than ever before.

In moments of uncertainty and fear, we find comfort in the promise: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen and help you and uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10 NLT

These words remind us that God's presence is our source of strength, and His support will carry us through the storms of life, making us stronger and more resilient in the process.

Power Thoughts:

1. Adversity can shake us to our core, but I stand firm, anchored in my faith. Know that God's promises are unwavering and reliable.
2. When we face the storms of life, whether they are physical or spiritual, they serve as opportunities for growth.
3. Fear is a natural response to turbulent times but choose not to let it control you. Instead, keep your focus on God, who is your ultimate source of strength.
4. Seek comfort in God's sovereignty, firmly placing your trust in His promise to lead you safely, even through slow and uncertain paths.

10

Sailing Towards the Horizon: A Journey of Triumph

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

1 Peter 5:10–11 ESV

Our journey is marked by relentless challenges, similar to being sheep guided daily towards the proverbial slaughter. However, our comfort is found in Jesus’ promise—the assurance that He will never abandon us, even when it feels as if He is not there. His faithfulness extends to the fulfillment of every commitment.

After the exhausting journey of treatments, encompassing chemotherapy and radiation, we face a new set of challenges—the lingering aftereffects. These enduring repercussions stem from the potent chemotherapy, countless medical procedures, and their impact on our bodies. They encompass damage to the lymphatic system, gastrointestinal distress, ulcers, infections, persistent weight loss, and bone and joint pain.

My healing journey stretched out over the next five years, a continuous effort marked by regular visits to specialists, ongoing blood work, and a battery of tests designed to monitor my progress. As I emerged from the haze of treatments, a new set of challenges appeared, ones that extended beyond the physical realm. Neurocognitive disabilities became a part of my reality, casting a shadow over my life. These included difficulties in reading, impaired verbal and nonverbal memory, defects in verbal fluency, a shortened attention span, and the constant companionship of reduced energy and fatigue. The list of post-treatment damage was extensive, a stark reminder of the toll cancer had taken on my body.

As the storm of treatments gradually receded, the realization that life would never be the same began to take hold. The aftermath of this massive tsunami of medical intervention demanded my attention. Cancer had left no aspect of my life untouched; its impact rippled through every dimension. Emotionally, I found myself grappling with the aftermath of the mental strain and agony that had defined my painful journey. Slowly, the process of healing began.

Rehabilitation became a cornerstone of my post-treatment life. Regular physical and cognitive therapy sessions became a vital part of my routine, aimed at restoring both muscle and cognitive function. Yet, it wasn't just my body that needed attention; psychological therapy played a crucial role in processing the loss I had experienced. The path to recovery meant challenging my memory, pushing my cognitive boundaries, and working diligently to regain what had been lost. It was

a journey marked by determination and countless hours of hard work.

One of the most challenging aspects of the healing process was transitioning from being a patient to being labeled a “survivor.” It was a shift laden with complex emotions, the weight of which was often difficult to bear. Healing after a traumatic experience, whether physical or emotional, demands time and patience. The wisdom that healing is a marathon, not a sprint, became my guiding principle. Rushing through the process was not an option; every step was integral to the journey, no matter how small.

In the moments that followed, I would discover that healing went beyond the physical. It was a holistic process, encompassing the body, mind, and spirit. It was about rebuilding a life that the disruption of cancer had disrupted. As I embarked on this transformative journey, I learned that healing, like life itself, was a personal and ongoing adventure.

Rebuilding Amidst the Debris—A Path to Healing

Whether physical or metaphorical, storms often leave behind a trail of debris and damage that demands our attention. The journey to recovery necessitates working through this mess, clearing the path so that we can safely navigate toward dry ground. The reassuring truth is that you’ve endured, emerging from the most challenging season of your life as a survivor. It’s crucial to be kind to yourself, offering grace and allowing ample time for complete recovery. The darkest days are behind you, and once again, the sun shines upon your path to improved health.

As the storm subsides, witnessing the gradual transformation of your physical and mental state is a remarkable feeling. Hair regrows, skin rejuvenates, and strength returns. While memory recall may still pose occasional challenges, cognitive reasoning often emerges sharper than before. These are the tangible signs of your strength and determination.

Reflecting on the journey, you may be surprised by the milestones you've achieved. Perhaps you've completed a university certification course excellently, showcasing your commitment to personal growth. And, after several years of perseverance, you've even embarked on the journey of writing a book. These accomplishments are testament to your tenacity and the capacity of the human will to triumph over adversity.

Even though the present might feel overpowering, find comfort in the assurance that things will get better. The journey may have been long, laborious, and painful, but your determination to overcome prevailed. You didn't falter when everything seemed tenuous. Instead, you clung to the Word, even when you were drowning.

As you continue along the path of recovery and rebuilding, remember that you are not alone. The scars and challenges you've faced are a testament to your strength and faith. The future holds the promise of brighter days, where the beauty of restoration shines through the cracks, and you emerge as a testament to the power of hope and triumph.

Though the current circumstances may appear grim, I assure you that brighter days are on the horizon. The phase of my journey was marked by enduring trials, challenges, and

immense pain. Yet, despite every setback and challenge, my resolve to triumph remained steadfast.

Each hurdle only reinforced my determination, making it evident that no matter the intensity or frequency of obstacles, my commitment to overcoming them never wavered. This unyielding spirit became my compass, guiding me through the murkiest of waters, ensuring that I kept moving forward, regardless of the trials thrown my way.

I refused to yield even when medical professionals grappled for answers, and the future seemed shrouded in doubt. Throughout the tumultuous journey, I clung steadfastly to the Word, even when it felt like I was submerged in an overwhelming sea of adversity.

As Christians, our journey through life is rarely a comfortable one. We are akin to sheep, often facing challenges and trials that can feel like a daily march to slaughter. However, among the rigors of this path, there exists a fantastic assurance: Jesus promised never to leave or forsake us. Even when His presence might not be immediately felt, He remains faithfully by our side, keeping every promise.

**“When you go through deep waters,
I will be with you.**

**When you go through rivers of difficulty,
you will not drown.**

**When you walk through the fire of oppression,
you will not be burned up;
the flames will not consume you.”**

Isaiah 43:2 NLT

To truly grow in faith, we must actively seek opportunities to demonstrate it, especially during difficult situations. While the circumstances themselves may not necessarily improve, our faith becomes fortified. Our ultimate aim is not merely to experience God as our Healer, although that is our desire, but to honestly know Him. God's will for us is not to be consumed by the storms in our lives; instead, He calls us to focus on Him. By shifting our gaze from the storm to the steadfastness of God, we can rise above the turbulent winds. It is a challenging task, but it becomes more attainable with practice. Christ's thoughts are revealed to us through the Word of God, and even in sorrow, we can discover the peace and joy of the Lord.

In the face of the unknowns that often shroud life's challenges, anchoring ourselves in what we know about God is paramount. His love, grace, and faithfulness are constants in our lives. We can place our trust in the assurance that He will faithfully guide us through every obstacle we encounter. Rather than fixating on the uncertainties, we can shift our focus to our faith in God and His divinely ordained plans for us.

The heart of the matter lies in trusting that God will fulfill His promises, as outlined in His Word. He is sovereign, already present in our future, diligently working out every detail for our good. The journey of faith is not about knowing every twist and turn of the path ahead but placing our trust in the One who holds our future in His capable hands.

As we navigate the storms of life, let us remember that our faith is a powerful anchor. It steadies us through the roughest seas and carries us toward the promises of a God who is both

faithful and sovereign. In our trust and faith, we discover the peace and reassurance that God's plans for us will always prevail.

“But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done: the saving of many lives.’” Genesis 50:19

The book of Genesis tells the story of Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his jealous and angry brothers. Despite this betrayal, Joseph climbed to a position of power in Egypt and saved his family from famine. Throughout Joseph's seasons of suffering, he remained faithful as God worked everything out for good, always by his side.

God uses suffering for a purpose and allows nothing we go through to be wasted. Although it may be difficult to understand, we must remember that this will pass. Recognizing that God is not punishing us through our struggles is essential.

It's important to remember that no matter what we experience, God loves us and sacrificed His life for us. We must trust that He uses our struggles and sufferings to make us into a better, stronger version of ourselves. As Romans 8:28 says, nothing can separate us from the love of God. So, let us hold onto the hope that this, too, shall pass and that God is not punishing us but using these challenges for a greater purpose.

The ancient book of Genesis unfolds the story of Joseph, a young man who faced betrayal and treachery at the hands of his own jealous and angry brothers.

After being sold into slavery, Joseph found himself thrust into a new world of adversity and hardship. This unforeseen turn of events presented him with challenges he could never have imagined. From the comfort of his father's favor, he was now faced with the grim reality of servitude, navigating a complex maze of politics, betrayal, and resilience.

Yet, even in these strenuous circumstances, his unwavering faith and enduring spirit would play pivotal roles in the story that was to unfold. Joseph's journey reminds us that God's plans are intricately woven into every twist and turn of our lives. God works all things together for good, standing faithfully by our side throughout the seasons of our suffering.

Although understanding this purpose may be challenging, we must remember that suffering is not a form of divine punishment. Instead, it is a part of the intricate tapestry of our existence, woven together by the sovereign hand of God.

During our trials and tribulations, it is vital to remember that God's love for us remains constant. He demonstrated this love through the ultimate sacrifice, giving His own life for our redemption. By placing our faith in His divine wisdom, we can draw comfort from the understanding that our hardships and pains are not without purpose. They serve as the raw materials with which God molds us into better, stronger versions of ourselves.

Romans 8:28 offers a comforting promise: "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." In the face of adversity, this verse reminds us that nothing can sever

the connection between us and the love of God. In clinging to this hope, we can find comfort in the belief that our trials are temporary and that God's purpose is not to punish, but to transform us.

**“Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love?
Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or
calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute,
or in danger, or threatened with death?**

**(As the Scriptures say, “For your sake, we are killed every
day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”)**

**No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory
is ours through Christ, who loved us.**

**And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us
from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor
demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries
about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell
can separate us from God’s love.**

**No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed,
nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us
from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus
our Lord.” Romans 8:35-39 NLT**

A Fortress in God

Clinging to the promises in God's Word can prove challenging when we find ourselves deep within the storm, uncertain if we'll emerge unscathed. Yet, it is often within these storms that the teachings we've hidden in our hearts become the very anchor we need—the foundation upon which we stand firm, resolved not to falter.

Storms, with their ferocity and intensity, serve as vessels for growth. They compel us to draw upon the wisdom and truth we've gained from the Word. These are the crucible to forge new perspectives we would never have gained had we not experienced these turbulent waters. Emerging from the storm, we stand stronger, bearing witness to the God who is capable of calming the waters and faithfully walks with us through it all.

We possess an unshakable refuge and fortress, a mighty stronghold that provides shelter and protection.

The unchanging presence of the Lord remains a steadfast source of strength and guidance. As we lean into our faith and nurture our passions, we can trust that God will not abandon us. His faithfulness knows no bounds, and He never places upon us burdens too heavy to bear.

The knowledge of His promises to hide us under his wings does not mean we will not experience hard times, but that His presence during these hard times make them bearable and provides profound comfort. No matter the ferocity of the storms that assail us, we can always find refuge in Him. He is our fortress, strong tower, and hiding place.

With this understanding, we move forward, steadfast in our faith and in our purpose. God is with us, keeping His promises and revealing His goodness. With firm conviction, we must remember that we are more than conquerors—victorious warriors in our battles. It is crucial to hold fast to the belief that God, who is unchangeable in nature is on our side, and is the Great Physician. He is and will be the ultimate restorer of our health.

To be more than a conqueror means possessing a faith that transcends adversity. It is a steadfast belief that we are destined for victory no matter the obstacles. With every step, even in the most trying times, we're comforted by the steadfast assurance that God is right there with us. In His embrace, we find loving support and the strength to face any challenge.

In our path toward healing, we find comfort in knowing that God's divine touch has the power to mend what is broken and renew what has been lost. Ultimately, God does not solely desire to heal us, He desires to make us whole! A complete mending and restoration of mind, body, and spirit., and unity with Him. Fulfilling this promise in our lives means the process will take us through areas of life that are not pleasant nor pleasurable, however the promise of restoration comes to those who are submitted and yielded to the trusted hands of the Creator.

Even when the world may seem against us, we hold fast to the knowledge that God is for us. He stands as our staunchest ally, championing our cause and working diligently on our behalf. His support fortifies us, empowering us to face each day with steadfast faith.

As we traverse toward healing and restoration, let us remember that God's love and grace are ever-present. We may face trials and tribulations, but our faith in God's redemptive power allows us to press forward with hope. God will restore our health in His time and in His way.

Power Thoughts:

1. In the storms of life, our faith in God becomes our anchor. Through trials, we discover new perspectives and emerge stronger. God remains with us, constant in His support.
2. God uses suffering for a purpose. Our struggles aren't punishments; they are part of His greater plan.
3. When the body, mind, and spirit are all in alignment, you are better equipped to cope with challenges.
4. Our faith grows stronger as we focus on the God rather than uncertainties.

11

Finding True North: Discovering Purpose

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)

Life’s challenges often strike without warning, tearing through our lives like mighty storms that threaten to leave us shattered. In these moments of chaos, we may not see a clear path forward, and our world can seem like a whirlwind of confusion.

In the face of devastating news or unforeseen challenges, it’s easy to feel like we’ve been ran over by a dump truck, our lives suddenly in disarray. These storms can feel relentless, testing our faith and endurance. But I’ve learned on my journey that purpose emerges in the darkest of storms.

Through the tears and sleepless nights, I discovered moments of gratitude. I came to understand that those trials were not meant to break me but to strengthen me for what lay ahead. They were growth opportunities, unveiling new perspectives I would never have glimpsed without having traversed those turbulent waters.

During these times, I find mind was continually dwelling on God’s Word, and one passage remained a constant reminder: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good.

He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people” (Genesis 50:20, NLT). Even when circumstances seem dire, God’s sovereignty prevails, and He can transform the most negative situations into something positive.

Life is a series of seasons, and we find ourselves battling through relentless difficulties in some of those seasons. These tests can shake us to our core, leaving us feeling battered and broken. However, it’s during these very trials that we are being equipped for something remarkable. Just like a skilled craftsman turning raw materials into a masterpiece, God is crafting a beautiful story from the chaos of our lives.

Every experience we endure, whether joyful or traumatic, or even the ones that seem unfair, is shaping us into the person we were destined to become. God knows our story and He has already scripted the ending.

The darkest nights eventually give way to the dawn of a new day. Your tears, shed in moments of despair, will water the seeds of a brighter future. Your struggles, though difficult, are not in vain. In the grand tapestry of your life, every thread of hardship and every stitch of adversity is contributing to the masterpiece that God envisions for you. Trust in the greater plan at work, even when it’s beyond your understanding, and know that joy will indeed come in the morning. He works behind the scenes, orchestrating every detail for our good and His glory.

Journeying with Deeper Meaning

Just as flowers need rain to grow and flourish, we, too, require the nourishment of adversity to reach our full potential. Consider the most beautiful and resilient flowers in a garden. They have endured harsh weather conditions, yet they bloom into their full glory. In the same way, your trials and tribulations are positioning you for the next level in your spiritual journey.

The growth and transformation you are experiencing now may not be apparent or even visible to you, but rest assured it is happening. You are becoming the person you were meant to be, a vessel of strength and inspiration for others who will walk a similar path. Growth must occur within us as we become rooted before the true manifestation of answered prayers and true glory come to light. Trust your process and water your faith with the Word of God, even in moments when your situation seems discouragingly stagnant.

I have learned firsthand that adversity has the power to transform us. In His wisdom, God uses these trials to mold us into vessels capable of carrying out His divine plan and purpose. Just as iron must endure the heat of the furnace to be forged into a powerful tool, we too must take the heat of life's challenges to fulfil our life's mission.

As we journey through life's twists and turns, we keep the flame of faith burning brightly. It's this very faith that becomes the unwavering anchor, steadying us when the turbulent waves of adversity seek to overwhelm us. Faith reminds us that there is meaning in our suffering, that our struggles are not in vain.

We embrace the journey, trust in the process, and never underestimate our story's impact on the world.

Trusting in God's Unfolding Story

In the face of adversity and perceived injustice, our faith may waver, and we question God's plan. But He sees the bigger picture, the grand narrative of our life, while we often focus on individual chapters. Our personal growth and development matter immensely to Him. You are a character in a story authored by God—a story filled with love, purpose, and redemption. These are merely chapters within the sweeping narrative of your life. Each experience brings you closer to the masterpiece God envisions. Trusting in God's Unfolding Story resonates with the promise found in Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT): "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

The pain will not destroy you, but it will develop you. You have survived, and you emerged with your gift still intact. God can trust you with difficulties so you can continue the work he has called you to do. Your journey isn't just about reaching a destination; it's also about the growth and development you experience along the way.

Life often tosses us into situations, leaving us scratching our heads and wondering, "What's the deal?" It's like trying to solve a mystery without all the clues. But here's the thing: life's riddles don't always come with immediate solutions. Sometimes, we're left hanging, wondering why things happen the way they do. It's tough, no doubt, but as time marches on,

those murky waters often clear up, revealing the hidden gems of wisdom in our experiences. Remember, God's "delay" does not always mean He has denied or left your prayers unanswered. Don't throw in the towel when it gets a bit hazy. Keep moving forward, keep your chin up, the fog will eventually lift, revealing the beautiful landscape ahead. Your story is still unfolding, and the best chapters are yet to be written.

God isn't in the business of leaving things in disarray and chaos; He doesn't look at a challenging situation and throw His hands up, saying, "I have no idea what to do with this." As a matter of fact, God specializes in transformation, turning darkness into light, despair into hope, and brokenness into wholeness.

Only the power of God can transform our mess into a powerful message, turn our tests into compelling testimonies, and convert our trials into resounding triumphs. Even a victim can be transformed into a victorious conqueror with the grace and guidance of God.

Each trial teaches us, builds our character, and strengthens our spirit. With every hurdle overcome, we gather strategies, insights, and resilience, not just for the present but for the future. This knowledge becomes our guiding light, ensuring that when the next storm arrives, we stand on a foundation of past victories and lessons, ready to face it with experience and strength.

So, when faced with the intense pain of infidelity and betrayal, I found myself drawing upon this very reservoir of strength and lessons. Recovering from the heartache of such a breach of

trust is undeniably one of the most challenging journeys. My world appeared to have plunged into a whirlwind of confusion, posing a threat to the very essence of my existence.

Betrayal left me feeling lost and confused, like a ship adrift in a stormy sea. My thoughts were in turmoil, and I even questioned my own sanity during those tough moments. These trials can feel relentless, testing our faith, strength, and endurance.

When I found myself in pain and anger, feeling like I didn't deserve the suffering, going through a rollercoaster of emotions—from anger to hurt, from fear to despair, and back to anger again. I shed countless tears until there were none left. Feelings of emotions like these can be utterly devastating. But in those darkest moments, recalling the victories God had already brought me through became my lifeline. The storm of cancer I had battled eventually made sense to me. God knew that even greater challenges lay ahead, and He was preparing me for those days. I finally understood why it took me so long to share my story—because cancer was just the beginning of my journey, but I was equipped for any and everything, because God already proved He is with me.

In every experience, it's important to remember that God is fully aware of everything we face. He always provides a way out, even if it doesn't unfold as expected. In the end, His plans often reveal extraordinary beauty. Nothing God does is ordinary because we are far from ordinary. We are a reflection of His uniqueness and beauty, and whatever we go through will work together for our good. There is immense joy in under-

standing that while we may weep through the night, there is assurance of joy in the morning. The knowledge that if God is on our side, no one can stand against us brings a sense of peace. It's comforting to recognize that the Lord guides every step we take and that every event in our life is known to Him. Joy lies in the steadfastness of our faith, knowing that it leads to our perfection and completion. We lack nothing in the end.

I was determined not to let this setback define me. Instead, I knew I had to keep moving forward. My goal was to bring back order into my life and regain a sense of safety and stability in this turbulent time. It was like finding a safe harbor after a storm, and my determination remained unwavering.

Rebuilding one's life and self-esteem after being deeply hurt by someone you deeply trusted was a challenging journey. Nevertheless, I firmly held onto the belief that everything unfolded for a reason, and with time, healing became possible. Placing my trust in God and maintaining faith that, in the end, everything would align for the best provided a sense of peace. Despite it having become a daily struggle and recognizing that the path to recovery was lengthy and demanding, my spirit remained steadfastly filled with faith and hope.

When you're on edge, unsure of when the next bolt might strike, a whirlwind of emotions can easily sweep you off your feet. It's a wholly human experience. These emotions may swirl within you, much like the chaotic elements of a storm, leaving you searching for calm amidst the turbulence. Acknowledge that these feelings are valid and entirely normal, and do not isolate yourself; seek help and counsel.

Hang in there, dear friend. Please don't let go of your grip on life. Envision a future where you stroll along that very same shore, offering gratitude to the waters that have strengthened you. You possess a reservoir of resilience that may surprise you, and deep within, you hold the spirit of a brave warrior, prepared to confront whatever trials await.

Gazing Backward, Moving Forward

As we reflect on the journey behind us, remember that you can achieve remarkable victories and conquer any obstacles that may cross your path. Hold onto your self-worth and cherish the love and support of those who stand steadfastly by your side. Keep pressing forward, and never let go of your unyielding faith. Believe in the promises God has for you and continue to have faith in yourself.

Take a moment to reflect on your passions, interests, and values. Consider what brings you the most joy and fulfillment in life. This process of self-discovery can serve as your compass, guiding your decisions and actions toward a life that genuinely reflects who you are. Always stay true to yourself, and never allow anyone else to define your worth or identity. You are a unique and special individual in your own right, and that's something worth celebrating.

Consistency in my commitment to serve became my steadfast anchor. The enemy would like nothing more than to isolate you when you're going through a struggle. It's a cunning tactic of the adversary to separate you from your church community just when their support is most vital.

I kept showing up through the hurt, the tears, and the pain, my praise unwavering. I recognized that my service to God wasn't tethered to my circumstances; rather, it was a testament to the depth of my faith. Through every painful step, I lifted my voice in praise. With every note and heartfelt prayer, my strength and resilience grew.

Experiencing pain at a deep level has had a significant impact on my life. It has allowed me to connect with others on a deeper and more empathetic level. Much more is discovered in the painful moments than in moments when everything is going well. When you go through intense suffering, it opens your eyes to the pain and struggles that others may be facing. I've learned that sometimes, the greatest gift you can give someone is the gift of understanding and compassion. Remember during these difficult times to remain authentic and utilize your experiences as steppingstones toward becoming a better version of yourself. Everything that occurs in our lives serves a purpose, God has a plan even when we can't see it.

**I am the LORD, who opened a way through the waters
making a dry path through the sea.**

But forget all that—

it is nothing compared to what I am going to do.

For I am about to do something new.

See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?

I will make a pathway through the wilderness.

I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.

Isaiah 43:16, 18-19 NLT

When we can't fully comprehend God's plan, He is constantly at work, paving a path through the wilderness and creating rivers in the dry wasteland of our lives.

Power Thoughts:

1. Life's challenges may be fierce and unexpected, but the potential for growth and transformation lies within them. They test our strength and endurance, shaping us into stronger individuals.
2. Every challenge we face, whether joyful or traumatic, becomes a thread woven into the tapestry of our lives. Trust in God's plan, for He works behind the scenes for our good and His glory.
3. God is not a bystander in your life's chaos; He's a transformer, turning despair into hope and brokenness into wholeness.
4. Your current storm is not in vain; it's a preparation for a purpose greater than you can imagine. Your struggles will become a message of hope for others, and your faith will lead you to victory.

12

Lessons from the Lighthouse: Wisdom Gained

**“Though your beginning was small,
your latter days will be very great.” Job 8:7 ESV**

The initial pain in my leg, which initially felt like a burden, ultimately became a lifesaver. If I hadn't experienced that pain, I might never have sought help, and the hidden cancer within me might have gone undetected for years. This experience reinforced the notion that even our most challenging moments can serve as catalysts for something greater. Life's storms, despite their discomfort and pain, have a way of forging the character we need for our unique journeys. Rather than avoiding them, we should embrace them, for they play a significant role in our personal growth and development.

In the midst of these storms, holding onto the promises that once brought comfort during calmer times becomes a challenging task. However, it's precisely during these turbulent moments that we have the opportunity to deepen our understanding of these promises. They play a crucial role in our growth, stretching us beyond our limits and shaping us into stronger, more resilient individuals. Through these battles, our core beliefs are strengthened, allowing us to boldly declare that God remains unwaveringly by our side in every

storm, never abandoning us. With this knowledge, we can approach future challenges with the unwavering assurance that God is our unshakable fortress, our tower of strength, and our secure hiding place.

The Bible itself provides examples of God utilizing storms as a means of safeguarding His people. One remarkable instance is when He unleashed a tempest to thwart the pursuing Egyptian army as the Israelites crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 14:19-20). Another powerful account tells of Jesus calming a violent storm that threatened the lives of His traveling disciples (Mark 4:35-41).

In the same way, times of sickness and suffering can be likened to storms that we must endure until sunny days of restoration and peace emerge. These trials are humbling experiences, reminding us that some battles are too heavy to bear alone. God calls us to yoke ourselves with Him, making the burden light (Matthew 11:28-30). We must trust His perfect plan, knowing that “all things work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

God's Greater Purpose in Adversity

Taking control of my own thought process presented a significant challenge, but with faith in God's Word and His strength, I managed to overcome it. Reciting Bible promises, expressing gratitude to God for His goodness and the victories in my life, and repeating affirmations filled with positivity and hope helped me stay focused and centered. One of the scriptures

that provided immense encouragement during this period was the story of Lazarus. The words of Jesus in John 11:4 (NIV), “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it,” resonated deeply with me.

Suffering and tests are not pleasant experiences. Going through something as challenging as cancer or experiencing any type of health issues is undeniably difficult. Just as weathering a storm is challenging, our setbacks can ignite anxiety and apprehension. Yet, through it all, I’ve come to understand that God has a way of blending both the highs and lows, molding them into a narrative that serves our greater purpose. He doesn’t cause bad things to happen to us, but at times, He uses them to fulfill His purpose in our lives. My survival through these trials serves a greater purpose: to share my story with others who may need hope and encouragement as they navigate their storms. It reminds me of the words from Romans 5:3–4 (ESV): “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.”

Endurance is the determination to press through despite our struggles, it is the vessel where genuine growth is shaped and strengthened. When we choose to persevere instead of giving in to despair, endurance is the true that molds us. Our character is honed through consistent endurance and steadfastness that empowers us to choose the right path consistently.

Character, the strength to do what’s right despite adversity, is the fruit of enduring trials. This strength of character

not only defines who we are but also guides our actions and decisions, ensuring that we stay true to ourselves, irrespective of external pressures or changing circumstances. And as the character takes root within us, it bears the beautiful fruit of hope. It's the kind of hope that remains, anchored in faith, even when everything around us seems bleak and hopeless.

These challenges serve as opportunities to develop and nurture hope. So, we can find reasons to rejoice when faced with adversity, understanding that it is contributing to the growth of enduring hope within us.

Trusting in the truths presented in God's Word, even when our circumstances seem contrary, is crucial. By embracing these truths as undeniable realities, we tap into their reservoir of strength. During challenging circumstances, we gain a new understanding of God's nature and presence.

Enduring difficult times undoubtedly leaves us marked and bruised. However, it's essential to recognize that within these storms, we possess the potential to rise above them. Each tempest we navigate becomes a classroom of life, providing us with valuable lessons that equip us to face future challenges with greater wisdom and confidence. Throughout my storm, God remained steadfast by my side. Every challenging experience taught me an invaluable lesson about the nature of the One who reigns above all:

- God is Sovereign. His control is unwavering. In the face of adversity, I held on to His promise: 'Hilary, you will live and not die!' This assurance was my anchor, a testament to His unwavering faithfulness.

- God is omnipotent. He can do all things. This storm would not last forever. I knew that, eventually, I would reach the shore and find solid ground.
- God is omnipresent, His knowledge encompassing all things. This truth fostered trust and deepened my faith, empowering me to believe in even greater miracles.
- God is omniscient, all-knowing, and all-seeing. His wisdom encompasses the past, present, and future, guiding our steps and offering insight into our lives. In the depth of my trials, I realized the significance of His omniscience, recognizing that He knew every twist and turn of my journey. Nothing takes Him by surprise, and His divine plan unfolds with perfect precision.

God doesn't instigate hardship in our lives; instead, it often arises as a consequence of the imperfections of humanity. In these trying moments, we find solace in the unshakable truth that God stands unwaveringly beside us, as beautifully affirmed in Psalm 91:14-15 (NIV):

“Because he loves me,’ says the LORD, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.”

I also discovered that while we focus on maintaining our physical health, we must also tend to our emotional and spiritual well-being. It's just as vital to shed negative emotions like worry, resentment, anger, and unforgiveness as it is to care for our bodies. The remarkable impact of our mindset and emotions on

our overall health and well-being is truly astonishing. Thus, we should prioritize our emotional and spiritual health alongside our physical well-being, embarking on a journey toward holistic healing.

Embracing challenges that push us to our limits offers a remarkable opportunity for personal growth and development. Although it may be uncomfortable, even painful, conquering these obstacles enables us to unlock our full potential and evolve into the best versions of ourselves.

In the tumultuous journey of life, there is always a meaningful purpose, and within the chaos, invaluable lessons are waiting to be discovered. Understanding that God isn't the architect of adversity; instead, He harnesses the power of challenging circumstances to impart wisdom and foster our growth. In life's trials, the unshakable promise that God will neither abandon nor forsake us is a steadfast source of peace. Even when His presence feels distant, we can hold fast to the belief that He accompanies us every step of the way. Your journey through your tsunami, emerging safely on the other shore, is a beacon of hope and inspiration for us all.

The Beacons of Insight

The fact that I survived such a harrowing ordeal is nothing short of miraculous. Every day, I am filled with gratitude, acutely aware that I owe my continued existence to a power much greater than any human understanding. I firmly believe that it was God's divine intervention that saw me through, guiding me safely out of the storm. The scriptures often speak

of God's enduring love and His promise to stand by those who seek Him. During my journey, these weren't just words on a page for me; they transformed into a lived reality.

"Healing is a process, miracles are instantaneous," I often reminded myself. This became a steady reminder through the long days and nights that blended into a seemingly endless cycle of pain and hope. Surrender was not a word in my vocabulary; giving up was not an option. I was committed to the process of healing, and in this commitment, I found strength I never knew I possessed.

My healing had already been achieved through Jesus's sacrifice on the cross. As I spent more and more time in prayer and reading God's Word, I felt even closer to God; his Spirit was with me wherever I went, guiding my thoughts and helping me to think in a way that was aligned with God's will which gave me a deeper understanding of His ways and plans for my life. You already have access to healing from God through what Jesus accomplished on the cross. It's a done deal.

You may have scars and damage from the storms of life, but these aren't just scars; they're badges of resilience, a testament to battles faced and won. Each one tells a story, reminding us of the winds we've weathered and the waves we've conquered. The beauty of enduring such hardships is the wisdom and strength we glean from them. When the clouds gather again, casting shadows of impending tempests, we emerge as transformed individuals, no longer trembling in fear. Armed with the experience from past battles, we now

possess a compass calibrated by past struggles, guiding us through even the fiercest storms.

Another storm on the horizon doesn't bring the same trepidation it once did. Instead, it's met with a resilience born from understanding and experience. I've emerged not just as a survivor but as a warrior, with a renewed sense of purpose and a deep appreciation for life's fragility. The challenges I faced have been transformative, reshaping my outlook and strengthened my spirit. Every test has served as a lesson, every pain as a foundation, shaping a stronger and more resilient version of myself.

And now, as I turn the page to the closing chapter of this part of my life's story, I do so with a sense of gratitude and triumph. This journey, with all its trials and tribulations, has not only tested but also revealed the depth of my strength and faith. It has been a journey of rediscovery, a reminder of the preciousness of life and the power of perseverance. As I stand in this moment, cancer-free and looking forward to the future, I carry with me the lessons learned, the strength gained, and an unwavering faith in the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Psalm 27:13 KJV

Power Thoughts:

1. Embrace each challenge as a stepping stone to greatness; your humble beginnings are merely the foundation of a remarkable future.
2. Life's storms are not obstacles but pathways to forge our character, essential for the journey ahead.
3. In every moment of suffering and testing, remember, these are not setbacks but opportunities to nurture a hope that withstands time.
4. Adversity does not break you; it builds you. Rejoice in these trials, for they are cultivating a resilient hope within.
5. Your current struggles are not your final story. Rise above them, for you are destined for a future filled with promise.
6. In the face of life's tsunamis, remember you possess an inner strength formidable enough to overcome any wave.
7. Your journey's hardships are the raw materials for your future strength and wisdom.
8. Each trial you endure is a testament to your resilience and a precursor to your triumph.
9. The pain of today is the strength of tomorrow. Endure, persevere, and watch as greatness unfolds.
10. Turn adversity into advantage. Each challenge you conquer paves the way for a legacy of strength and hope.

Appendix I

Supporting someone going through cancer is a delicate and compassionate task. Here are some tips on how to help someone facing this challenging journey:

1. **Avoid “Call Me If You Need Anything”:** People undergoing cancer treatment often hesitate to reach out because they don’t want to be burdened. Instead, take the initiative to reach out to them. Regularly calling, sending thoughtful cards, or texting to check in can provide much-needed comfort. Show them that you genuinely care about their well-being.
2. **Don’t Ask, “What Do You Need?”:** Cancer treatments can cause unpredictable symptoms and side effects, making it difficult for patients to anticipate their needs. Rather than asking what they need, surprise them with practical gestures. Bring over nutritious meals, offer to run errands, or organize a cleaning service for their home. Small acts of kindness can be beneficial when they’re going through a tough time.
3. **Replace “Just Pray and Trust God” with Empathy:** While faith and prayer can be essential for many people, acknowledging their situation’s emotional complexity is crucial. Instead of offering a simple solution, express empathy by saying, “I can’t imagine how challenging this must be for you, but I’m here to support

you through it. I'm here if you ever want to talk, pray, or sit in silence."

4. **Maintain a Positive and Supportive Attitude:** When communicating with someone facing cancer, it's vital to maintain a positive and uplifting tone. Your words and presence should offer comfort and encouragement. Avoid making insensitive remarks or asking thoughtless questions. If you don't have something positive to say, it's often better to say nothing and instead listen and provide emotional support.
5. **Educate Yourself About Their Type of Cancer:** Understanding the specific type of cancer and its treatments can help you offer more meaningful support. Read about their condition, treatment options, and potential side effects so you can have informed conversations and be prepared for any challenges they may face.
6. **Offer Specific Help:** Instead of vague offers of assistance, suggest specific ways to help. For example, "I can drive you to your treatment sessions," or "I can take care of your kids this weekend." Specific offers are more likely to be accepted because they alleviate the patient's burden of decision-making.
7. **Respect Their Wishes:** Everyone copes with illness differently. Some may want to talk openly about their cancer journey, while others may prefer not to discuss it. Respect their wishes and let them guide the conversation. Be a good listener and be attentive to their emotional needs.

- 8. Maintain Normalcy:** While it's essential to offer support, try to maintain a sense of normalcy in their life. Invite them to social events if they feel up to it or engage in activities you used to enjoy together. These moments can provide a much-needed distraction from their illness.
- 9. Encourage Self-Care:** Gently encourage them to prioritize self-care, including rest, nutrition, and exercise, as recommended by their healthcare team. Offer to accompany them on walks or assist with meal preparation to make it easier for them to focus on their health.
- 10. Be Patient and Flexible:** Cancer treatment can be a long and unpredictable journey. Be patient and flexible with your support. Understand that their needs may change over time and continue to adapt your assistance to what they require most.

Remember that your genuine care, empathy, and willingness to be there for them can make an enormous difference in someone's cancer experience. Each person's journey is unique, so tailor your support to their needs and preferences.

Appendix II

Here are a few of my favorite Bible verses on faith, trust, and hope to encourage you in your storm.

May these verses bring you comfort and strengthen your faith in God's presence during life's challenges. Trust that He is with you, guiding and supporting you every step of the way.

Deuteronomy 31:6—Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

John 14:27 (NIV)—Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Jeremiah 29:11 NIV—For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Psalms 5:11-12—Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.

Isaiah 43:2 NIV—When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Psalms 18:35-36—You make your saving help my shield, and your right hand sustains me; your help has made me great. You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way.

Psalms 107:29—He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

Psalms 34:17-20—The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

Nahum 1:7—The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

Psalms 91:1-16—He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 Corinthians 12:9—And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Philippians 4:19—But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Acts 27:20—And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)—Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)—So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Mark 4:35-41—And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

2 Corinthians 4:17—For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

Psalms 33:20—We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.

Psalms 150:1—127:6—Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.

1 Peter 4:13—**But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christs sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.**

Psalms 46:10—**Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.**

Isaiah 26:3 (NIV)—**You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.**

Psalms 91:4 NIV—**He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings, you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.”**

Psalms 62:1-2—**My soul finds rest in God alone, my salvation comes from Him, He alone is my rock and my salvation.**

Psalms 34:4 (NIV)—**I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.**

Psalms 32:7—**You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.**

Psalms 28:7—**The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.**

