

Faith is Anchor in Health Storm

By Dale Fletcher

It's inescapable. We all will have health challenges in our lives. This past March I learned I had prostate cancer.

When a major health setback does occur, how will you deal with it? What will be your source of strength and hope? I had no personal experience at this. At age 56, I had only been hospitalized overnight twice for routine elective surgeries.

For 25 years I have been in the wellness profession. My role has been to help people prevent health problems. Most recently I have been writing and speaking on the connection between faith and health and have enjoyed writing a series of articles on "Spiritual Exercises for a Healthier Life." Now, over the last three months, I have personally experienced how having a close relationship with God can help a person walk through not one, but two very challenging health setbacks.

When the Urologist took a biopsy of my prostate, he shared his insights on how his patients that have a strong faith were more resilient and handled the battle with cancer in a stronger way. The medical literature speaks of this as well. Days before my initial surgery date I wrote this entry on my blog

"I don't know where I would be without my faith in all this. I'm a thinker not a feeler. As a rule of thumb, I tend to keep my mind, (and my body for that matter) busy as a coping mechanism in tough, stressful times. More and more I am learning how to turn things over to God. Spending enough time with Him in His presence is key for me to be able to do that. One of my favorite Bible verses is from Isaiah 40:31: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

Trusting that I am in His hands keeps me from being weary. It provides me strength and resolve...I am asking God to help me go through this with His strength - to go right through it emotionally and spiritually, not around it."

For three weeks before my scheduled surgery to remove the prostate I had a bad case of what I thought was laryngitis. During my pre-surgery checkup the anesthesiologist made a decision to postpone surgery as he wanted a specialist to evaluate me. In a visit to the ENT doctor I was diagnosed with a paralyzed vocal cord. I was told that in 75% of cases it repairs itself in six to nine months. A few days later I made this blog entry:

“This series of events has brought me even closer to God... for sure. I have been reading more about how God heals people. I have been very intentional about trying to be in His presence to be as close to Him as possible. It's during times like this that I have experienced the loving touch of God. I realize that I have a choice, a free will, to turn to God and be with Him more, or to turn away from Him and to try to do this on my own. I've chosen the first path. And I know I have been better off for it.”

Surgery to remove the prostate occurred in mid May. A post-surgery lab report showed that there were no cancer cells around the perimeter of the removed prostate which indicates that the cancer has not spread. Recovery from my surgery continues. Voice therapy to address my vocal cord problem began in mid-June. Most important, I'm continuing to grow even more deeply in my faith as I trust in God for total healing in both areas and I try to thank Him daily.

Like a boat's anchor firmly in place before a storm rises on the ocean, my solid faith was in place before my health “storm” crashed my world. Cancer and a paralyzed vocal cord could overwhelm me but my faith has helped me weather this storm in my life. Will your faith be an anchor for you when your health “storm” hits?

Lessons Learned

The Health Challenges I've faced in recent months have imparted a few lessons that others might find helpful:

- We have a choice to turn to our faith and God or to cope in unhealthy ways
- Study the Bible to see how God guides you in coping with the situation
- Read faith-related material to assist in growing deeper in your faith
- Recognize God puts people and circumstances into your life to help you grow and to support you
- Pray for strength, peace, healing and wisdom in making decisions
- Believe that God hears and will answer your prayers
- Ask friends for prayer and support
- Our strong beliefs and trust provide hope and encouragement

Dale Fletcher is a fitness coach and speaker who lives in south Charlotte. To contact him or read more about the faith and health connection visit

www.faithandhealthconnection.com