



Stronghold Ministry's The Exchanger

June 2009

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Praising Through Pain

How to make sense of suffering. Four pointers on praising God in the midst of pain.

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Caretaker's Testimony

How one mother is handling her daughter's all out war with cancer.

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Stronghold's Prayer Room

Prayer for our cancer patients is not an afterthought, but a major tool in our support.

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Coming Events

- **Cancer Support Group**
Thursday evenings @ 7 p.m. Call for location - 214-221-7007.



Praising Through Pain

-Joe Fornear

If you're like me, worshipping God is easy when life is pleasant. Put me on a highway breezing along with the windows down and a good song on the radio and God and I are tight. But throw in a traffic jam and zeal cools off considerably. Then when I face a bona fide test, like chronic pain, sometimes my appreciation for God seems to plummet. Difficult circumstances force us all to decide: is praise a reward we give God for His good behavior, or is praising Him unconditional?

1 Peter 1:7-8 uncovers the big picture connection of praise and suffering. *"So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."*

Rejoicing while suffering is great theory, but how do we make it practice? How do I attempt to snap out of the doldrums?

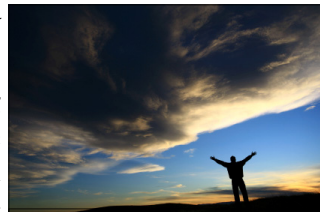
1) **Value the Lord more than the things of this world.** Peter compares our faith to gold for a reason. Impurities in gold are burned off by fire, making it more genuine, shiny and valuable. In a similar way, the heat of suffering clears out dependence on impure human crutches, such as alcohol-dependence, or

greed-motivated financial decisions. Knowing Christ's love is the windfall blessing if we turn to Him instead of the world's toys. Peter connects the dots for us; if we don't suffer, we also will not experience the depths of Christ's goodness. We can fight God about this, but He is clear: the path to great freedom in Christ entails pain.

Is praise a reward we give God for His good behavior?

2) **Adopt a long-term, eternal perspective.** Peter emphasizes that at the end of time as we know it, the focal point of history will be revealed - the Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory. Suffering helps focus our priorities on His eternal purposes. We can get distracted by temporary goals, such as bank accounts and popularity.

3) **Realize "it is not about me."** One day we will get it; the overall purpose of this universe was never about us. There will come a day when the only issue will be whether we honored the Lord Jesus during our brief lives on earth. What is more important, His glory or my comfort?



Will you still praise Him in the midst of a storm?

4) **Praise Him anyway.** We are taught early in life to thank people when they do something nice, and to get away from people who hurt us. So why in the world would we praise God when He allows persistent pain? When we truly grasp that suffering is rooted in God's best intentions for us, we will praise in spite of circumstances. So praise Him anyway!

Testimony Time

We are featuring testimonies from warriors and caretakers we serve. This month we share some of the journey of caretaker, **Phyllis M.** Phyllis and her daughter, Amy, are from Madill, Oklahoma. *Please join us in praying for a miracle for Amy since she is in critical condition.*

My daughter, Amy, was 29 years old, working on her PhD and employed as a graduate assistant at Oklahoma State University in 2005 when she noticed a strange mole on her left upper arm. After a biopsy it was determined to be melanoma. A wide resection of skin was removed from the area around the mole and a lymph node biopsy showed no signs that the cancer had spread, so we were very thankful and felt our prayers had been answered. Amy opted to do interferon treatments for a year to insure the cancer did not reoccur, because we knew how deadly melanoma is if it spreads.

Things went well for three years. But in late 2008 Amy noticed a small bump on the back of her head. By Christmas the bump was the size of a pea and there were others coming up in various places on her scalp. A PET scan showed the melanoma had already spread to various organs and was considered Stage IV. Over the next few weeks, various scans showed that Amy has melanoma in her brain, lungs, kidneys, spine, bone, adrenal glands and a lot of subcutaneous tumors. The original oncologist gave her chances of any response to chemotherapy at 10%. There is no cure. The Lord led us to MD Anderson where they have a melanoma wing. They recommended 15 days of radiation therapy to the brain and then a regimen of chemotherapy.

Our family are people of faith and at the first diagnosis began to pray and call on friends and family to pray because we knew that Amy's hope of survival lay in the hands of the Lord. During this time, my sister ran across the Stronghold Ministry website and sent in a prayer request to Joe and his team to add their prayers to ours.

When I received Joe's testimony of healing from melanoma, our faith was increased that God is still in the business of performing miraculous healing. Then Amy received a wonderful care package from Stronghold that contained a wonderful devotional book and a book of God's promises among other things. This gift happened to come on Amy's birthday which made it extra special.

During this time Amy's health was deteriorating badly. Her nausea and vomiting were preventing her from eating and drinking. She lost 40 pounds over a four month period. The pain in her back was so bad she could hardly get out of bed unassisted. She was on an enormous amount of pain medicine to keep her comfortable so that she mostly slept all day. One of the nurses suggested that if the restaging scans showed that the cancer was worse we should consider palliative care. At that point we called all of our prayer partners, including Joe and Stronghold Ministry, to pray even harder for a miracle. It was the Lord, I believe, that led the doctors to order an MRI of Amy's spine to see what was causing all the pain, and it turned up a fractured vertebrae. A simple surgery was done to repair that fracture and it was successful in relieving Amy of much of her pain. Now, praise the Lord, she is taking very little pain medicine, and she is feeling very well and able to get around normally. Her nausea has subsided and her appetite has returned.

Last week Amy had a brain MRI done and several CAT scans for "restaging." While the cancer is still there, in almost every area it was no worse. And because of the Lord providing improvement in Amy's appetite and strength, the doctor was optimistic about continuing treatment.

We really appreciate the interest and attention that Joe and his ministry have given to praying for Amy. Her condition is still very, very serious because of how deadly melanoma cancer is. We would ask for continued prayer for Amy as she has more procedures and chemotherapy to go through. We are praying for God to heal Amy in a way that will give Him all the glory.

-Phyllis M



Stronghold Prayer Room



Please join us in prayer for these warriors

As Stronghold reaches out to these individuals with cancer, we don't want to neglect the centrality of prayer. Will you take a moment to intercede with us for these warriors? It is motivating to know our prayers are like sweet incense to the Lord (Revelation 5:8).

Revelation 5:8

The twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

*Lord, please heal
and strengthen
and comfort each
of these whom
You love so much.*

	Tina	Mr. L		Correy
Priscilla		DavidM		Jeff
Susan	Rex	Lynne		Mr. S
	Laura	Althea		Sara
JohnB	Randy	Peggy		
Kevin	Lori	Rich	Mary Sue	Patrick
	Robbin	Joanne		Stephanie
Ed				
Larry	Carolyn	Donna	Brian	Amy
				Joan
Dave	Claudia	MikeP		
			Kathy	Rich
Garret	Angela	Gloria		
			MikeD	Bekah
Betty	Becky	JohnN		
			Janice	Brisy
Carla	Frank	Milton		
				Monette
	Sue	MaryAnn		
Gloria		Bill		

