

When Fear Knocks, Let Faith Open the Door

by Roberta Nixon

FEAR—THE FEELING THAT COMES

over you when you don't know what's going to happen. There's a feeling of helplessness, lack of control, a sense of doom and gloom. All of those feelings are negative.

Faith can help us see the positive in negative situations and as a result wonderful things happen. Scripture points us to some examples.

NOAH

God went to Noah and instructed him to build an ark. We're told that, *"By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith"* (Hebrews 11:7). In reverent fear Noah did as he was asked. He would most surely have feared for those whose lives would be lost. But Noah did as God had asked. His faith in God allowed him to work

MARY

Mary was going about her life when there suddenly appeared before her an angel who, sensing how Mary may react, said, *"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus"* (Luke 1:30-31). Imagine the fearful thoughts that must have gone through Mary's mind. What will I tell Joseph? What will become of my reputation? But she said, *"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to*

me according to Your word" (Luke 1:38a). She had found favour with God. She let her faith take away the fear she felt.

JESUS

The ultimate fear—death! After communing in the upper room with His disciples, Jesus went off to the Mount of Olives where he prayed, *"Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done."* And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:42-44). Here is Jesus, the man, about to face His death, and He is fully aware of it. And in His human nature, He isn't walking into it cheerfully. And He prays, just as we can pray. And God will answer that prayer, though maybe not always with the answer we want to hear.

How do you react when fear comes knocking on your door? The faith we have in our Lord and Saviour should influence how we decide to approach the fear we are feeling, but do we allow it?

In July 2014 Kim was a 39-year-old wife and mother of two preteens. She was the Sunday school superintendent at our church. She would design the most amazing bulletin boards and banners that reflected the seasons of the church year. She was also a beautiful



quilter. That summer, fear knocked on Kim's door as she was told she had stage four colon cancer; the mucinous type, meaning there is no cure.

Seeing Kim at church following her diagnosis, I was always amazed by her attitude and the sense of peace that surrounded her. The first time I approached her after hearing her news, I was in tears and she reached out and comforted me! I was filled with guilt for what I had been able to experience (the weddings of our children and becoming a grandmother) that I knew she would not. I really didn't know what to say. In the end it didn't matter because she handled it, witnessing to me as she did.

I was so taken aback by her quiet acceptance that I asked her if she would share with me some of what she was going through. Between her bouts of chemo and infections, she did so. Let me now share with you how Kim let her faith open the door.

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My diagnosis

Life expectancy, chemotherapy, no cure, six to eight months without treatment, 2 1/2 to 3 years with treatment. Words. Lots of words. I was in shock. I just kept nodding my head as the doctor told us how we should proceed, not understanding any of it.

A week earlier I had gone in for surgery to debulk and remove cancerous tissue from my body caused by the stage three ovarian cancer I had originally been diagnosed with. Following the surgery and the biopsies taken, my diagnosis changed. The cancer lay within the mucus of my entire abdomen. It was like all my organs were floating in a pool of cancer.

Now the doctor was talking about “palliative” chemotherapy, but only to give me more time with my family, not as a cure.

How? What did I do to cause this? The doctor assured me it was nothing I

had done. It was in my genetics. I hadn’t been screened because I was too young. Colonoscopies are usually not done until after you turn 50, and it’s very difficult to identify during regular pelvic exams. “It is a silent and insidious disease. Often patients are completely unaware of this cancer until its advanced stages,” the doctor said. Well, okay, so this is now my situation and I accept that it was in God’s plan from the beginning. I don’t know why it’s happening, but I think everything will be okay. I know that God doesn’t give us more than we can handle. He loves us!

Year one

Chemotherapy was initially very frightening. I sat alongside other patients hooked up to IV drips like an exclusive club I wanted no part of. Through it I experienced a wide range of emotions—fear, anger, despair and feelings of complete loss of control, not only over my future, but my present, as well.

Through my periods of distress

I have relied on prayer, reading my Bible, talking with others and spiritual counsel from our wonderful pastors. Through those comforts my feelings have changed and I found peace.

I have learned that the love of family is immeasurable. They have been there helping us throughout this time. I can no longer drive my children to their different activities. I can’t prepare our meals. I’ve had to rely on others to do these everyday things, mostly my mom.

How do I feel now? Grateful. For the 40 years God has given me. For the two beautiful children my body was able to produce before I got cancer. For my loving husband and father of my children. For my mother and other family members who have put their lives on hold to help us through this time. I am grateful for the life experiences I’ve been blessed to have. Grateful to my church family. But most of all I’m grateful for Jesus Christ and what He has done for me.

I am grateful for this journey. By going through it I am reminded that by relying on God’s Word we gain strength when we need it most and our faith is deepened. God is in control. He is allowing me to have cancer for some greater purpose that I do not understand.

I feel privileged, to be honest. He is working through me, just as He works through all Christians. I feel a part of the family of God. I pray that the legacy I leave my children will have enough influence on them to grow their faith in Jesus Christ. I want to see my children in heaven one day. I want to see all those whom I love in heaven! I am racing against time, but I pray that God will send the right people at the right time to bring them closer to a Him.

To say that my faith has never wavered would be untruthful. It’s difficult to accept that I’m not being allowed to raise my children to maturity, like everyone else. Oops, there’s sin creeping in; coveting what others have. This is when I tell myself to stop and be thankful for what I do have. It’s with this attitude, prayer and concentrating on my blessings, that I’ve been able to endure the chemo, hospitalization and various sicknesses.

Yes, there are times when I grieve for my family’s loss when I depart this earth, but the sadness has been eased by knowing the sadness is there because there is so much love there.

A calmness and peace have washed over me and I can attribute it only to God’s faith in me.

“Peace I leave with you; My peace
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Two of Kim’s many banners.



Fear/Faith, continued

I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27).

Year two was very short for Kim. In October 2015 she entered the Palliative Care Unit at the Pasqua Hospital. It was there that she lived out her final days. I was able to share with her what I had written, and she was very pleased, mostly for knowing that she would be able to be a witness for Christ to so many. This was always at the forefront of her mind.

While there were many things Kim couldn't do, there were lots of things she did. She spent time teaching her children the basics in the kitchen so they could be self-sufficient. She sewed their wedding quilts. She created boxes of memories for her family members. Rather than sit back and allow the cancer to run her life, she chose to live it the best way she could, remembering that her actions were her example and her legacy to others.

Kim stressed to me that through her journey she was never alone. That Christ was with her the whole way. That with Him the unbearable became bearable. That the light of His glory was always before her. Her greatest desire lay in the hope that all those she loved would see how her faith gave her strength and

brought her peace, so they, too, could experience it. So that she would one day be united with them in heaven.

At Kim's funeral we sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives," an Easter hymn. How appropriate that she would choose that. Kim knew that because Christ overcame His earthly death on the cross and lives, she, because of her faith in Him, now lives with Him.

Kim's final thoughts...

I find comfort in knowing God has a plan for me, that I am not alone. "So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Romans 12:5). Many before me have died and so will many also after me. We know that because of the fall of man (sin), death is a part of life. Every one of us has to pass through death's door—some of us just happen to die sooner than others in God's plan. It is through God's grace that He sent His only Son to die for me and my shameful sins. This gives me confidence and peace knowing He loves me immensely. I have nothing to fear.

The older I get, the more I realize how much I do not know. However, I do know this: God keeps His promises and He loves us. We know this from the many stories He lovingly provides for us in the Bible. He gave us the Bible

to communicate how much He loves us and "not to fear." In fact, there are hundreds of references to "fear not" in the Bible. How well He knows our human nature. Satan is relentless, trying desperately to plant seeds of doubt in a person's mind—trying to mess with us—right up until the end of our lives. I will not let Satan grab hold of me before I die by letting fear overcome me. I will not give him that satisfaction. I have a responsibility, also, to my children, to let them see me loving life; to let my faith shine before I depart this earth. We all have this responsibility as Christians."

In closing, it is my prayer that in those times when you face an uncertain future—be it a health issue, job loss or the death of a loved one—you'll think of Kim. That you'll remember how she did not let the fear of her earthly death control her, but rather that she let her faith open the door, and chase those fears away.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

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Your wait time is...

Recently I had to use several customer service phone numbers, and I found myself very frustrated at the whole automated process for handling inquiries: "For service in English, please press 1", "for X please press 2; for Y please press 3", etc., then "Caller volume is higher than normal. Your estimated wait time is 96 minutes" or whatever. Arghh! I just wanted to speak to a human!

How thankful I am that God doesn't have an automated system to handle our prayers: "For health and wellness, press 1; for safety in travel, press 2, for broken relationships, press 3", and then "Caller volume is higher than normal. Your estimated wait time is 683 minutes."

Isaiah 65:24 (NIV) says, "Before they call, I will answer, while they are still speaking, I will hear." Do you hear that—**before you call**—God is already hearing and answering. Isn't He amazing?

I was contemplating this in the dentist's chair one morning, and used the time to pray for some sisters in the faith whom I had recently been asked to lift up in prayer. I hope God could hear my prayers above the sound of the hygienist's cleaning tool and the suction tube!

Before you call, He already knows what's going on in your world...take courage, dear sisters.

Deanna Hautz, Hope Lutheran Church, Port Coquitlam, B.C.