

Dr. Mom – part 2*~ Faith ~*

I went back to the hotel struggling with tears and trying to pray. I got out my Bible and tried to read, but couldn't focus on anything. My mind was too fragmented. For the first two nights I dosed myself with antihistamines trying to knock myself into sleep.

Steve and I would pray together during the day, which helped us both. And of course we talked and talked and talked and talked and talked... endlessly. That at least seemed to occupy my mind. I would be busy with texts and phone calls. Steve would be busy with texts and phone calls. It was all a strange sort of busyness. We talked to the nurses and the cleaning lady and this person and that person and each other...and we were okay now.

Bedtime was different. Bedtime was quiet. Steve and I would usually stay in the ICU until 10:00 or 11:00 at night. Sometimes I'd go back to the room at 10:00 and then he'd stay on for a couple of hours.

We stayed in a hotel across the street from the hospital. The rooms each had a double bed, a nightstand, and a rocking chair. Nothing fancy. There was a TV, but I never turned it on. On Wednesday night I was lying in bed trying so hard to pray, but I just couldn't do it. What do you say? Do you pray for healing? Is that really going to happen Lord? Is that your will? What is your will? I didn't know.

I felt God was calling me to kneel down. I didn't want to kneel. My knees hurt when I kneel. I really didn't want to kneel. But I felt like I was supposed to so I knelt down in front of the rocker. That way at least I could hold on to it and maybe get some of the weight off my knees. I felt strongly called to give Elisa's life to God. I helplessly thought, "She's going to die. He wants me to give him her life and she's going to die."

I felt inexplicably compelled to do it anyway. So I held my hands up with my head down and I said out loud in an unwavering voice, "She's yours God, live or die." Then I brought my hands down to my knees, which were still hurting. But all my fragmentation was gone. Clarity and serenity had come flooding into me. I didn't feel fragmented. I didn't feel fear. I only felt peace. It wasn't a peace that she was going to live. It wasn't a peace that she was going to die either. It was just peace and I was at peace with it. I learned what it means to trust God.

We all have this sense that God's going to do what we want because he loves us. He's nice. But I learned to trust God even when we don't know the outcome, even though we know what we want the outcome to be. Trust God no matter what and keep going down that black hallway. You don't know where that hallway's going, but you know there's a light that's with you.

And with that I quit crying. I never cried again while I was with Elisa in the hospital.

The next day I shared my prayer with Steve and he understood the bell of peace I described. We often talked about how the black dog would start chewing on our bell; that black dog image is actually from Winston Churchill. It's what he

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called the anxiety that he would get during World War II, the black dog of anxiety. That's what it felt like. I'd feel it chewing at the peace. But I could pray, Steve and I could talk about it, and then peace would seal up around me. And things happened. Weird things happened. The lady, I'll never forget. I don't even know if she exists. She must exist.

The SICU, surgical intensive care unit, is on the second floor of the hospital and there's a big waiting room off of that unit. And then there were two or three individual family rooms that were assigned by the hospital for the sickest patients in the hospital to have privacy. Steve and I had one of those rooms. But we would often go down to the cafeteria for lunch. The hospital cafeteria is not a great restaurant but at least it had a salad bar and sometimes meatloaf or pot roast, so we'd go down there for a 'real' meal. One day, as we headed down for lunch this very large, African-American lady got on the elevator on the second floor at the same time we did.

In a big, assertive voice she asked, "You have somebody in ICU?"

I answered, "Yes, my daughter. Why?"

"How's she doing?"

"Well, there are problems."

By this time, we were on the first floor and got off the elevator. She stepped off with us, grabbed each of our hands and loudly proclaimed, "We're going to pray." She marched us over to a window and she prayed. I mean she PRAYED! She prayed for Elisa's bones, muscles, blood vessels and nerves. I think she hit on everything and man oh man did she pray. Finally she said "amen" and was abruptly gone.

Steve and I were up and down that elevator dozens of times, but we never saw that remarkable woman again.

After about three weeks, with new surgeries averaging every other day, the infection in Elisa's left flank became wildly uncontrollable and she went septic. On short notice she was rushed to an operating room in the exact opposite corner of the hospital from the SICU. Steve and I followed her gurney all the way, up and down, and up and over, to the other end of the hospital. They rapidly wheeled her into the operating room and we went to a waiting room where a volunteer greeted us to check in. The routine is to give the name of the patient you're with so that if the surgeon comes out the volunteer can tell the doctor whether family is waiting. I said numbly, "We're here for Elisa Hays."

She looked on her schedule, then looked up and said, "I don't have her name on my schedule. She's not scheduled for surgery." I answered, "Oh she was an add-on at the last minute," and at that her eyes grew wide. She softly asked, "Is that the lady who's been so sick and was in that bad accident?" When I wearily answered, "yes" she welled up with tears and said, "I've been praying for her." Then to herself she quietly repeated, "I can't cry in the waiting room. I can't cry in the waiting room," as she wiped the tears out of her eyes. I was astounded; this stranger had been praying for my Elisa.

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She had heard about her because my daughter was the sickest patient in that whole giant hospital. And this kind woman had been praying.

Over and over we met kind and compassionate people. Steve even got to know some of the nurses on a personal level. He was exceptionally good about connecting with everyone who cared for Elisa.

And I got to know the cleaning lady. She and I talked medical issues because her knee was just killing her. I finally said, “You need to see a doctor and get that knee replaced.”

“I don't know if it would do anything,” she answered.

“Oh don't worry. They'll replace that knee,” I reassured.

“I need this job so bad. I've got to have this job.”

“They'll give you sick leave, time off. It's okay.”

And about a week later she came in the room proudly stating, “I've seen the doctor and I'm scheduled for surgery!” She was so pleased and I was really happy for her. She even hugged Steve when she saw him. She's a sweet lady.

Early on while in Wichita, I searched my computer for pictures of Elisa as a child to post on Facebook. I chose two. One was of her at three years old in a little blue dress sitting on a cabinet in our house in Nebraska. The other, with her wearing the same cute dress, is of Elisa and I sitting on the couch looking into each others' eyes. First born and Mommy. I cried every time I looked at those photos. All I could think was, “She doesn't know what's coming. And neither do I.” It's the one thing I haven't been able to get over. We never do know what's coming though, do we?



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