

Clinging to Grace

Just about this time last year, I lost my precious sister-friend Janet. In 2008, Janet was diagnosed with myelofibrosis, a rare form of leukemia. She participated in a number of clinical trials. She endured regular chemo. She was in and out of the hospital, increasingly so the last couple of years of her life. Although Janet had days of discouragement and days she wanted to give up, those days were the exception. Overall, Janet clung tight to God and shared Jesus with everyone who would listen.

In the last few weeks of her life, the doctors also treated Janet for a fungal infection in her lungs. The aggressive treatment required almost daily trips to the hospital for intravenous medications. Many of Janet's friends, including me, pitched in to help her husband with the hospital trips, which often took all day. I wanted to help and encourage her, but she blessed me instead.

On one trip, the lab tech struggled to get the blood she needed for testing from the port in Janet's arm. Getting it from another vein would have been an ordeal. Janet naturally went straight to prayer. Not silent prayer, but out loud, asking God to intervene. At first, I worried about how the lab tech would respond, but when she began to pray with Janet, I joined in too. Within moments the blood was flowing and the three of us were singing a praise chorus.

On another day, during yet another intravenous treatment, I walked with Janet down the hallway to the bathroom, as she pushed the IV pole ahead of her. I stood outside the bathroom door, just in case she needed anything. Almost immediately I heard her voice. It sounded like conversation, not distress, but I still asked her if she was okay. She quickly replied, "Oh, yes. I'm just talking to Jesus."

God used the crucible of this terrible illness to refine Janet's faith and foster total dependency on Him. Her relationship with Jesus was intimate and real and very tangible. Anyone she came into contact with could feel it, even if they didn't understand it. And she never hesitated to tell others the source of her strength.

Janet's journey greatly impacted me. I watched her faith grow increasingly stronger even as her body grew weaker. She leaned on God every moment. She gave Him praise for everything, big and small. She never hesitated to talk about Jesus with the medical personnel, hospital employees, and other patients. Her trust in God and her love for Jesus were obvious. Her physical weakness revealed the strength and grace of God.

Janet's life exemplified the sufficiency and power of God's grace. Her "weakness" constantly revealed God's glory and strength. She gave God the glory and praised the name of Jesus every step of the way. In small victories and massive setbacks, she stood firm, unshakeable in her resolve to hold tight to her Savior. Janet's life - and death - pointed others to the grace and glory of God. And I had a front row seat.

Has there ever been a time in your life when God worked through a trial or difficulty to point others to Jesus? If so, describe it.

This post is adapted from Kathy Howard's new Bible study L lavish Grace: Poured Out, Poured Through, and Overflowing. L lavish Grace is a 9-week journey with the apostle Paul that helps readers discover God's abundant grace for their daily lives and relationships. You can find out more about Kathy, her speaking and writing, and find free resources at www.KathyHoward.org.