

January 27, 2011

In awe. Overwhelmed. Thankful. Sometimes fearful. So many, many emotions and feelings inside me right now. Thank you all for reminding me (I need to hear it a lot right now) of God's power and His goodness. The visit with Dr. Berlin went well, he gave us good information we hadn't yet received. We are still in the decision making process as to what to do from here – have some stuff to read, etc. But while I know I need to do my part, I believe God is guiding our steps and if he wants to heal, He can do it through any means.

Understand that while I try to stay positive and allow the peace of Christ to “rule” in my heart, I do have rough times. Last night I got on my knees and face on the floor and sobbed; begging, begging with all my might, for God to heal me, to help my husband raise our boys, to share the story of His mercy for many, many years to come. My God is big enough to handle my fears, and He asks me to lay my burdens at His feet. What I'm still learning is how to leave them there.

And this morning, through that prayer, through the sunshine outside today, through the Spirit inside me, and through your wonderful messages, THE PEACE has filled me again. Thank you. Please pray for our decision-making. And for minimal “pressure” from well-meaning individuals to do what *they* feel is best for us.

January 30, 2011

I feel God is leading me to update this journal frequently, but I can hardly stop reading the guestbook long enough to do so! What I truly hope is that as you all come to this site, you too will read through the guestbook and be strengthened by each others' declarations of faith! There are so many stories of hope and healing, of MIRACLES. I hope I am not the only one to benefit from these stories. I know we all have trials in our lives. Jesus told us we'd have trouble, right? I hope that you are as encouraged as me by the vast connections throughout this world that being a Christian brings. As my dad put it yesterday, I am simply the current subject matter being discussed in a vast “network” that already existed. If this many people can come together to pray for me, it can happen for anyone.

I thought I would take a second today and tell you how I'm doing physically. See, for me the emotional battle is currently first and foremost. So it almost takes me by surprise when people ask how I'm feeling physically. I'm really in very little pain, most days. The severe rib pain which took me to the ER is very rarely felt, and only for a few minutes at a time. It's only maybe once or twice a week lately. I have moderate pain in my upper abdomen occasionally. (For my PT buddies/healthcare folks: I'd say maybe a 4/10). I can get by with over-the-counter tylenol or ibuprofen during the day, and have some days where I don't have to take anything at all. I usually take something at night for pain/sleep. My sleeping is fairly erratic, but I'm still getting a lot all total. The main struggle physically is just that I'm really tired a lot. I can't stand up for too

long before my back starts bothering me (probably still weak from pregnancy.) But overall, right now I feel pretty good. Makes it hard to believe I really have advanced cancer.

I'm hoping to start treatment this week, though it won't be on Monday now due to some other issues. I also hope to start "juicing" soon, as Dr. Berlin believes in it and I know several of you cancer-defeaters and others do too.

Finally, I encourage all of you to read Exodus 33. Our minister, Walt Leaver, brought it to my attention recently for another purpose but here's why I like it. Moses is pleading with God to change His mind. God decides to do what Moses asks instead of what He'd planned to do because, quoting God: "I am pleased with you and I know you by name." This is one of the MAIN reasons I get so excited about so many people all over the world praying for me by name. Surely, surely, God knows my name now! Thank you for bringing my name before the Father so much for me.

Now, stop reading my rambling and go and enjoy a precious day of life!! Every day is a gift!

January 31, 2011

I will begin chemotherapy at Tennessee Oncology tomorrow, Tuesday, Feb 1st, at 11 am.

I am beginning with a regimen known as FOLFIRI + Avastin. It will be outpatient chemo. I will go to the clinic for a few hours, then be sent home with an infusion pump for continued chemo for a total of 48 hours. I'll then go back to have them remove the pump. Then I go back for the second round two weeks later. Truthfully, I am looking forward to spreading out these doctor/hospital visits. It's hard to believe I really won't have to go anywhere for medical stuff for almost 2 weeks. There's been something almost every day for so many weeks now.

Please pray for minimal complications with the chemo administration and of course minimal side effects. Please pray my boys are not freaked out by the "fanny pack" pump, and also that they don't somehow unhook it! And please pray that my response is so amazingly, miraculously good that we are all amazed by the next set of scans of my insides. So amazing that God will prove to many that He is still in the miracle business!

February 1, 2011

I'm home and doing pretty well so far. I have several things I want to share, so forgive me if this is extra long.

1. I am very appreciative of and encouraged by folks who say things like, "You are amazing, you are so strong, you are so faithful, you are inspiring," etc. But also, it makes me extremely uncomfortable. You see, I really don't want the credit right now.

IT IS GOD WHO IS AMAZING; GOD WHO IS STRONG.

I am working through a Bible study book called “Jonah: Navigating a Life Interrupted” by Priscilla Shirer. I think this part of my life definitely qualifies as a life interruption (which she calls a divine intervention) and I am going to directly quote her:

“Giving God a position of significance in your daily life is of paramount importance. In the tale of your life unfolding right now, He, not you, must be the One in the spotlight.” AMEN!

People, don't be amazed by me. I'm in all ways ordinary.

But GOD – GOD is AMAZING and HIS PEACE is BEYOND UNDERSTANDING. Be amazed at what God can do.

2. Thank you to all who've passed on the “Cleaning for a Reason” information which offers free house cleaning once amonth for cancer patients. However, thanks to the extreme generosity of a man I call my “big boss” at STAR Physical Therapy, Regg Swanson, and thanks to my sweet co-worker Alison Jordan who worked out the details, I am getting WEEKLY house cleaning! I was going to decline Regg's offer until Alison, as well as the nurses I've seen, reminded me how important avoiding germs in general is right now. Wonderful Theresa came today and cleaned while I was in chemo, and WOW. Seriously, my house has never been so clean and she did it in 1/4 the time it would have taken me. I'm amazed by how much she got done in under 3 hours. WOW.

3. Another WOW – thank you to the “Believers” class at church for the iPad!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Yeah, iPad. What?!?! Uh-huh. THAT was my reaction. What?!?!? I don't want to be braggy at all, but seriously, who can get too whiny about this cancer thing when right now it feels like Christmas? I don't have a CLUE how to work the thing yet, but they thought it would really come in handy for passing the time in chemo and I can see how it will. Thank you guys so very much. I'm seriously still in shock.

4. I know many of you want to know about how chemo went today. Well, because I've already typed too much and I don't want you or me sitting at our computers too long and getting cervical disk bulges and low back pain (sorry, PT coming out in me – now sit up straight!) I will write more about it in the coming days. But for today, know that I'm feeling pretty good so far. No nausea, able to eat fine so far today, no big troubles at the clinic (a few little issues, kinda funny stuff, I'll share soon). The biggest thing I'm dealing with currently is I feel pretty jittery. Not mentally anxious, just got a weird kinda muscle twitchy, antsy, jittery feeling. Called the nurse about it- she said it could be the steroid they give me to help with nausea. Not a super common side effect but not unheard of and she thought it would be better tomorrow. She said I may have trouble sleeping tonight, but maybe the sleep aids I already have will be sufficient to get me some rest. Oh well, leave it to me to have a different side effect than most. I'm thankful that that's the worst thing I'm dealing with so far. At least if I can't sleep, maybe I can catch up on reading this guestbook. You all continue to inspire me!

Oh, and more on this later, but I was totally NOT AFRAID today. I was fired up! My old fierce-competitor-in- basketball/softball-nature from my younger days was back and I was ready to, as my sweet friend Kat said, “Start kicking cancer's booty!”

I just simply cannot end a post without again thanking you all for the prayers. I know they are carrying me through – glory to GOD!

February 2, 2011

Alright, 24 hours of chemo treatment is in the books. I certainly don't feel 100% but I'm sure it could be much worse. I'm making it. More on that in a minute.

Hooray, the sun is shining outside my window. Thank you, my loving Father!

Thanks for putting up with my attempts at humor. When you grow up with the last name of Pigg, you just can't take yourself too seriously and you learn to crack the jokes first.

Putting a link here that some of you may not have seen.

<http://www.chesleysummarphotography.com/?p=2338>

Thanks to the great idea of my friend who wishes to remain anonymous, we got to do this photo session on a beautiful day last weekend. I am so thankful we did this, so thankful for Chesley sharing her gift, and as I've already said – I'm praying God keeps me in pictures like these for years and years to come.

I have so many things that I want to share on these journal entries that I have a list going so I can spread it out. I am amazed that anyone reads it at all, but I pray God is strengthening your hearts too in some way as you read. And also making you smile.

I want to take a minute today and talk about how Brian and my sweet boys are doing. I know many, if not most, of you come here because of your great love for them, and this trial in our lives is certainly not one that is only affecting me.

As I talk about Brian, I'll try not to gush but I can't promise not to cry. And I know I'm going to contradict what I said yesterday, but Brian IS amazing! He is in NO ways ordinary! It may not be as evident because he doesn't pour out his heart ad nauseum like I do (that's a little punny, huh?), but that man is made of the strongest stuff there is. Many of you ask me, "How's Brian doing?" My answer is always, he seems to be doing just fine. And when I ask him, that's what he says. He says, "As long as you're ok, I'm ok." But that's not really accurate. Because, when I'm not ok, he's still strong. He reminds me of all the reasons for hope. And I never have to do that for him. He is working extremely hard right now because, you see, this is his busiest/hardest time of year at work right now (Jan- March). But he comes home at 8 pm at night with a smile on his face and plays hard with our boys, since I haven't been able to be really active with them. He is just tireless. He gets up early in the morning and finishes up work, or pays bills, or stays up-to-date on our insurance coverage, until the boys get up and he helps them go potty, find some breakfast, etc, if I'm still in bed, which is often the case. He prays with me and for me at night and they are the most beautiful prayers I have ever heard. (Now, I'm crying.) He is my rock and

my treasure and he is just about near perfect in my book. Please pray for him to stay strong and for work to get a little easier.

The boys are doing great also. They understand that Mommy is sick and they have to be gentle with me right now, especially with my “button” giving me medicine to feel better. I showed it all to them yesterday and explained that the machine was sending medicine inside me and it was going to help me not be sick anymore. I explained we had to be careful with the machine and the tubing. They paid close attention but then were back to their normal playing selves when we were done. My sweet Scott is fascinated by the port, and he frequently comes and gently pulls my pajamas over just enough to check on it. He looks intently at it for several seconds, then smiles at me. I ask him if it looks ok, and he says yes, and I tell him “Thank you for checking it for me.” They said the sweetest prayers for me last night. Camden prayed, “Please help Mommy’s medicine to work and make her not sick anymore.” Scott prayed after Camden and said, “Please help Mommy’s milk (Scott’s a big fan of milk and I’m pretty sure he would love the idea of IV milk infusion), I mean Mommy’s medicine to not choke her and to make her feel good.” Guess he saw some potential for strangulation with the long tubing. And as I tried to sleep last night I figured he just may be right!

So, now a brief update on how I’m feeling – right, like I can be brief. I don’t know how detailed I should be here. I guess I’ll say it’s gone past the point of nausea on two occasions so far (once at 1:30 am last night and again around 10:30 this morning). I slept about 4 hours all together last night (two separate 2-hour stints) and had about an hour nap this morning. I don’t want to eat anything but I’m eating what I can. Working on a yummy Smoothie King smoothie right now, but I’ve also gotten some other solids down fine. So, at this point, I’m tired, a little achy in my back, and moderately nauseated, but really can’t complain too much. I’m thankful it’s not worse, though I realize it may get worse before it gets better. I think about Brian and my boys. I tell myself I can do this for them. I’m visualizing the drugs zapping all those bad cells and making them vanish into thin air. If I feel a little twinge of pain in my liver region, I force myself to think: “Alright, a bunch of bad cancer cells just got creamed!”

Well, so many more thoughts rumbling around in my brain, but that’s a plenty for today, huh? Kudos to you if you’ve actually read it all!

February 4, 2011

We continue to be overwhelmed by the generosity and spontaneity of so many of you, and because of that, I have to start by saying the following:

please no one buy me a juicer (at least not yet.)

I am trying. I am. But I have not successfully KEPT any of it down yet. I hold my nose, drink through a straw, focus on my boys, tell myself it’s apple juice – everything I can think of to get it down. I was SO PROUD of myself for getting down 3 ounces of juiced spinach/apple/lemon yesterday. It was down for about 10 seconds, and then came right back up. Mom told me to cut

myself some slack and try it again next week when I'm hopefully not as nauseated from the chemo. I know, that makes a lot of sense. I'm just so stinkin' competitive and stubborn sometimes, I just wanted to prove I could do it! Clearly, I can't. Not yet. But honestly, I'm not sure what I can do about it if it won't *stay* in once it's in. I've not given up hope on the juicing yet, but I just do not want a juicer in my home at this point. Seriously, just *thinking* about it right now could send me straight to the bathroom.

And now another random tidbit I've been wanting to share. Ever since we lost Anna I've been intrigued with the Job story. I read back through the book in the first few weeks after her birth. I found so much in there that I never realized was there, and so much touched me deeply. And now, since the cancer has been found, I feel such a connection to Job. Though my story is not nearly as devastating as his, I too lost a child and then the attack on my own body began. I have prayed and prayed that this connection is a "sign" from God that I too will have the same "ending" to the story as Job did. "Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than His beginning... So Job died, old and full of days." ([Job 42:12](#), 17) This is my constant prayer and hope.

Here's the neat part: While waiting to be seen at our second visit to Dr. Penley's office (oncologist), there was one man and his wife in the waiting room. This was the visit where we were to find out the result of the liver biopsy – cancer or not. Many of you were already praying for us, and were covering us in prayer through that visit. So I sign in, go and sit down, and a nurse comes through the door and calls, "Mr. Job?" (pronounced like in the Bible) Seriously, I just got chills typing that. The man called first was Mr. Job. My dad and I looked at each other, and we both laughed and did a fist bump.

So, now you know at least part of the reason for my confidence in a good outcome for me. I know, I know, it may be "coincidence," and I know that God has not had the final word yet. I am aware of the other alternative. Yet, I have this confidence that I too will see good days, that God is going to bring about a miracle, and I can't explain why I feel it.

Now, having said that, I am still struggling. But my struggle is currently fighting the physical battle. I want my deliverance to come now. I want to come out of the valley now. I am tired. I am uncomfortable. I feel weak. I have had minimal side effects thus far I think, in the grand scheme of things, but I have still been in the depths of self-pity over the last several hours. God has shown me that in fact, I am not strong enough. He has shown me that I desperately need His strength to get through.

So, today I read this scripture: "Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

I have nothing like the faith of Paul. I am taking no pleasure in where I am now. But I am trying to meditate on these words and trust that I will see their truth one day.

So, to summarize how I'm doing:

The pump was removed yesterday afternoon. I'm glad to be rid of it, as it was cumbersome. The

nausea is a SMIDGE better since it's been removed. But I'm still taking anti-nausea meds as often as allowed. I don't want to eat anything, but I'm trying. I'm exceptionally tired and run down, and just don't feel like doing anything but laying in bed or on the couch. They have told me that should continue to get better and better over the next day or two. But as I mentioned, I'm impatient and want to be better now.

I do have to praise God about one thing today though – I have slept WONDERFULLY the past two nights. I have no doubt many of you prayed specifically for that to happen after the bad night I had Tuesday night, and you need to know that those prayers were answered powerfully!

Love to you all – you bless me so much.

Sara

February 6, 2011

This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it!

I am feeling SO much better today. So much better. I have now learned one benefit from the really tough chemo days (and actually, I don't even know that I should use that phrase, because I don't think I have any idea what a truly "really tough chemo day" is) – and that is that a "better day" seems

OH. SO. GOOD.

Thank you, heavenly Father, for the ability to be standing and walking around, for being able to do so for several minutes at a time, even. Thank you for food TASTING good, and for the gift of it not being such a chore to try and eat it.

Forgive me for every past whine about my weight, about my sweet tooth, about my inability to control portion sizes, about my love of carbs and especially pizza. What a gift it is to enjoy food!

Several of you have told me that you enjoy reading my writing. I am amazed. I have always been a book lover, a lover of words. When I come across a well-turned phrase, I swish it around in my brain like I imagine a wine connoisseur swishes wine around on his palate, and it brings me such pleasure. (Clearly, I know nothing about wine tasting. I'm sure you don't swish.) I have always processed things by writing. I've always expressed emotion much better with written words than spoken. I've always had a dream of writing a book.

So, to you who've complimented, dare I say even enjoyed my writing – that's kinda like giving an m&m to a chocoholic, I reckon. Picture a dog getting his belly scratched and in complete delirious joy. That's kinda what those comments do to me! Someone even called me "eloquent" today. Such a wonderful word, eloquent. I think that's a stretch, but it sure is nice to hear.

However, as I read your comments, e-mails, and cards – I realize many of you turn a phrase far better than I. You express your faith in such wonderful, vivid, encouraging ways, and God is using you.

I don't have long to write today, because {insert any number of not good enough reasons} but I did post a few pictures.

Some of you have seen my (other) blog post about our sweet Anna, but some of you have not, so indulge a proud mama as I have posted a few of my favorite pictures of her. She is my beauty in heaven.

(Insert shameless plug for Katie Moseley Photography

<http://kmosleyphotography.com/>)

Katie is a dear, sweet sister in Christ who volunteers her time and talents with a national service called "Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep" and she took these priceless photos of Anna and us as a part of that service. Katie has a gift not only for photography, but also for navigating a very difficult, emotional situation with true grace. If you ever know someone who goes through a late miscarriage/stillbirth – please pass on the name of this service. What a precious thing they do!

I've also posted a picture of my port, not because it's all that fascinating, but because my sweet Scott "fixed" it for me. We all know a good "Cars" band-aid can heal all kinds of woes, correct?

Thank you for reading my ramblings. Lots more "swishing" around up there in my noggin', including some of my thoughts from my first day of chemo, some powerful song lyrics, and what for me were "signs" on that day, and other ideas in my head. I'll get it all out eventually, for my own sake. If any of you enjoy it too, that's just icing on my cake!

Much love to you all.

YOUR PRAYERS ARE WORKING!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

February 8, 2011

I woke up this morning (Hooray! Thank you, my Father!) with a few thoughts churning in my head, and feel like I need to put them to "paper."

Oh, that poor woman! Imagine, being 33 and being told you have advanced cancer. Imagine the fear of knowing you may not have long to live. Imagine the sadness of looking at your two young sons and thinking you may not get to be around to see them grow up, graduate from school, get married, have kids...etc, etc. Imagine that poor man, thinking he may have to raise those two boys by himself.

I would imagine those are some of the thoughts and possibly conversations among those of you who have heard of our situation. That's probably the thoughts I would have had if I heard of

someone else who was dealing with this. In fact, those are some of the thoughts I had in my first several hours after the emergency room visit. They are the thoughts I have had to battle in my mind periodically since those early days.

But here's the thing – I could look at any of you and say the same thing.

Ok, that felt a little like, “I’m rubber and you’re glue, whatever you say bounces off me and sticks to you. Nah, nanny, boo-boo.” Sorry. Don’t take it like that.

But really: It’s not like before I was diagnosed with cancer I had any more guarantee of living to see another day than I did after being diagnosed.

And it’s not like any of you without cancer have any guarantee of living longer than me. Sorry, but you don’t.

I could look at you and say, “Oh you poor 45 yr old. You are going to be killed in a car accident next week.” “Oh you poor 22 year old, you have an undiagnosed heart defect and are going to have a sudden heart attack next time you play basketball.” “Oh, you poor man, you are going to be in a mall where a crazed gunman goes on a rampage and you’ll be in the line of fire.”

Why in the world did I let this diagnosis shake me up so much? None of us know the number of our days. I never have! This is why each day is a GIFT!

[Job 14:5](#) “A person’s days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he CANNOT EXCEED.”

Now, my intention here is not to spread fear, but HOPE!
HOPE, my dear friends!!

For when I came face to face with this reality, with my mortality, I realized something.

Actually, I don’t *have* to die.
Jesus did it already, so I don’t have to.

Actually, this soul is *not* mortal. It’s immortal.

“Christ Jesus has **destroyed** death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” II Timothy 1:10.

DESTROYED DEATH!!

So what am I afraid of?

My soul lives on! It never dies! Sure, this body dies (but I’ve always had complaints about it anyway :)). Sure, there’s some transition into my next body, and I don’t really know how that works, but I’m pretty sure it will be a really cool thing. And my soul doesn’t die during that transition.

Ah, but what about Brian, what about my boys? There's the rub. This one took me a little longer. But that's the joy of the family of God!!! All of you have surrounded us with so much love, so much love IN ACTION. I'm not worried about them anymore! You all have shown me that they will be ok.

Sure, I still beg God because I think He desires for children to be raised by a mother and a father. That's HIS idea. HIS plan. So I still remind Him of that a lot! I WANT to be around to see them grow up, and I know HE understands and LOVES that I do! He loves my boys, all 3 of them, more than I do!!

I'm no preacher; I have no training in relating spiritual wisdom. I can only tell you what God has shown me in these last few weeks and how He has given me peace.

[Psalm 39:4](#) "Show me, Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is."

[Psalm 90:12](#) "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

So, just take a minute and think about it. And watch that fear dissipate. Watch HOPE fill you up. If that doesn't happen, maybe you need to take a closer look at Jesus. Maybe you need to have some more thoughts, maybe talk to someone who *is* trained in relating spiritual wisdom. Because this HOPE, this FEARLESSNESS, can be there for you too. Remember, I'm ordinary. But Jesus is REAL and HE can give you this hope too!

Have a great day! Thank you, God, that we are all living and breathing today! Help us to make the most of this day today!!

February 10, 2011

Good morning! The sun is shining in Nashville, Tennessee today and there is an extra brightness to the day thanks to the sun reflecting off the beautiful snow. Oh, I'm very ready for spring, as most of us are around here, but on a day when we're stuck around the house anyway, it sure is pretty to look at.

(Ending my sentence with a preposition leads me to another thought – Brian told me one of the people who has signed the guestbook is a former English professor of his. I hope all the scholars out there reading will allow me some poetic license as I'm sure my writings are full of grammatical, punctuational, and spelling-al errors. Obviously if I ever write a book, I will need a good EDITOR!)

I am posting my other blog address for someone who asked:
<http://bscwalker.blogspot.com>

I am feeling wonderful this week, by the way! (That is what this website was ostensibly created for, right? To update you on my physical journey with cancer? Not to sucker you in to reading the various musings of a wanna-be-writer. See how I did that? I'm sly like that! By the way, I

had to look up how to spell ostensibly.) No nausea whatsoever, no “other” (further south) side effects at all, almost normal energy level, hardly any back pain. Feeling good feels *especially* good after last week.

What I am enjoying thinking about over the last couple of days is the concept of prayer warrior. Specifically, about how they come in every shape and size, and they all fight a good fight! They all strengthen my soul and I think they all are very deadly to the dark forces.

There are the prayer and fasting warriors. I was contacted by someone who initiated a large-group “day of fasting and prayer” effort that spanned the states of GA, TN, AL, KY, VA, OH, NY, FL. To all of you who participated in that effort, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I too believe there is extra power when we fast and pray. I was also contacted by someone who wanted to tell me she was committed to regular weekly fasting for me. She wanted ONLY me to know this, as she believes in being very *private* about fasting. She also informed me that it is difficult for her to fast because of hypoglycemia, but that challenge makes it even more meaningful to her. How can I not feel amazingly encouraged by this!

Then there are the “praying without ceasing” warriors. The people who pray constantly, throughout the day. This fascinates me, as it is something I’ve never really figured out how to do. I want to work on it, though.

There are the determined, structured “daily pray-ers.” The ones who set their alarms to pray at a certain time every day. The ones who have a “red dot” (shout out to Brent High) on their watch and pray their specific prayer every time they see that red dot. I love that commitment, that diligence. Thank you!

Possibly my favorite to think about right now are the munchkin prayer warriors. I LOVE every story about how your kids are praying. I know one person who told me their sweet girl prays, “Thank you God that Mrs. Waffle is sick.” I love that God knows exactly what that means! Someone else told me that instead of “Please make Miss Sara well” her son says, “Thank you for making Miss Sara well.” So she told me, “It’s already done, Sara.” LOVE THAT! I love when you tell me your kids remember ON THEIR OWN to pray for me. Wow. How humbling. Because I love it so much, I am posting pictures of all the cards that the kids have sent me. My boys helped me spread them all out on the floor yesterday and I took the picture from my staircase. I hope you will show your kids those pictures and tell them that I have saved EVERY SINGLE ONE that I’ve been sent and that they are the most special things ever! Please teach your kids that what they do makes so much of a difference in my life! I hope they will feel so special that they will want to do it for many other people who could use that encouragement!

Another of my favorite prayer warrior types are the “Thee and Thou” pray-ers. How beautiful are their prayers to me!! Have you heard a good one of those in awhile?

“Father, thank you for this day Thou hast given us. Please allow us to use it to Thy glory. Thine is the power...” Obviously, I’m not good at it. There’s at least one man in our church who is, and it just gives me warm fuzzies every time I am blessed to hear it.

As all of us continue to pray, and learn about prayer, I want to share something I've read recently. These thoughts are taken from "The Ragamuffin Gospel" by Brennan Manning.

"Prayer is another area that many struggle with because they aren't aware that in the freedom of the Spirit there are as many ways of praying as there are individual believers.

Pray as you can, don't pray as you can't...

(Story about child coloring) A little child cannot do a bad coloring; nor can a child of God do bad prayer.

A father is delighted when his little one, leaving off her toys and friends, runs to him and climbs into his arms. As he holds his little one close to him, he cares little whether the child is looking around, her attention flitting from one thing to another, or just settling down to sleep. Essentially the child is choosing to be with her father, confident of the love, the care, the security that is hers in those arms. Our prayer is much like that. We settle down in our Father's arms, in his loving hands...essentially we are choosing for this time to remain intimately with our Father, giving ourselves to him, receiving his love and care, letting him enjoy us as he will."

I hope you enjoy that picture of prayer as much as I do. Thank you again for all your prayers for me. I hope and pray we are all growing as we spend more time in our Father's lap. Oh, how He must delight in it!!

Have a wonderful day!!

February 13, 2011

It is [4:45](#) am. I have been awake since 3. I prayed for awhile in bed, then layed there awhile trying to go back to sleep, then finally gave up and got up. I was laying there writing in my head, as I often do when I can't sleep, but then that gets my brain to working so much that I often can't turn it off enough to go back to sleep. So here I am. And I am showing you the battle.

Instead of posting the "writing" I was doing in my head, which is a post in progress and much better done on more than 4 hours of sleep, I decided to check on a couple of my fellow cancer battlers who've reached out to me in the midst of their own wars. I had been pointed to one in particular who was doing some experimental, alternative treatment for her cancer. She too was very young (in her twenties), had colon cancer, and it had metastasized to her liver. I had contacted her with questions about this treatment she was doing. She sent me a very kind and caring e-mail back, and expressed such great faith in God in that e-mail. I have been faithfully praying for her since receiving it.

I think she has died. My only way to check on her was through a facebook group that had been set up, and it seems to no longer exist. I found one message that indicates she's "gone home with

the Lord.” (I’m not mentioning her name as I have no definite knowledge.) I am devastated, and I didn’t even know her.

Then I decided to look at Saturday’s mail. I was excited to see a card from some dear friends in Virginia. My friend wrote out a wonderful prayer she had prayed for me – asking God to grant my boys what He’d granted His own Son: a mother to raise him; a mother to love, teach, guide, and comfort him through all of his trials. But she also included a touching card about her own father’s journey with cancer, a journey that lasted 2 and a half years. She is faithful and thankful for that time, and I greatly appreciated her card to me.

But ,

I want more than that. More than 2.5 years.

Here, in the night, I’ve been reminded that I might...

Oh, I can say it. I can think it. But I’m not going to finish the sentence for the sake of my family who will read.

Here, in the darkness, my faith wavers, my hope wavers, the fear threatens.

I will choose to look at Jesus. (Just typing the name, I feel its power.) When Peter walked on the water, during the storm, to Jesus, he started to sink only once he began to look about him at the waves crashing around him. I will reach for Jesus, and cling to Him. At times, it is with white knuckles. At times, I have to repeat His name over and over in my head and wait to feel in my heart that He is present. But I choose in this moment, in the darkness, to stop looking at the storm about me, and to look at my Savior.

“...Let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith...” (Hebrews 12)

My Father –

You are the author of my faith, and of the story of my life- write it well. I know how *I* want *this* chapter to end. I know that *I* want my story to be a LONG one, with many, many chapters after this one. But God, I will not skip ahead in my mind. I cannot write this story myself. I will trust that YOU are the perfect writer, your ways are higher and you will work everything out for the GOOD. I will read one word, one sentence, one page at a time by living one step, one hour, one day at a time. And I will try to keep my eyes on your Son. *Help* me keep my eyes there. Be the *perfecter* of my faith. Make it more perfect.

I love you. In the name of Jesus, Amen

February 15, 2011

Today, I begin Round 2 of the physical and chemical battle against this cancer. Actually, my mom is right. It's not really my battle. The battle belongs to the Lord. I just have to be still and watch him work.

As I set out today, I am in awe of how light this burden feels.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” ([Matt 11:28-30](#))

Thank you, Jesus.

In addition to the gift of His supernatural peace, I am convinced that it is YOU He is working through to lighten my load.

“Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” ([Galatians 6:2](#))
My friends, you've lightened my load.

I copied this next paragraph (and didn't change the use of bold text either) from an e-mail I sent to our church family on January 5th, long before setting up this caringbridge site:

“I cannot explain this feeling, but I believe that God is at work and is going to perform a miracle. He is STILL able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. I do not know why our family is “under attack” if it is, but I believe that what God is doing in our situation is **bigger than me**. This story is not about my faith, or Brian's faith – it is about the **power of God made manifest in the unity of the church; in the love that believers have for each other**. God is moving in you and working through you.”

I had no idea of how *big* God was going to make this, of how far and wide He would spread this story; of the myriad ways that I would be shown **love**.

Today, as I begin round 2, I have:

- inspiration from the book “Jesus Calling”- thanks to Lisa
- new comfortable lounging clothes- thanks to the Petty sisters
- I've washed my hair with Nioxin and will be putting baking soda on it to help prevent hair loss – thanks to Amber, mom, the Sears, and Stacey
- green tea to combat nausea – thanks to Marcia, Janina, and Becky
- a freezer stocked with smoothies, frozen lemonade cups, and other nausea-friendly foods – thanks to Debbie and Vanessa and others
- beautiful springtime flowers to look at – thanks to Brooke and my “kingdom seeker” family
- new entertainment for my boys – thanks to “the fair ladies,” Jenny, Francie, and others
- an iPad ready to help pass the time today – thanks to the “Believers”
- a beautiful hand-knitted prayer shawl to keep me warm and filled with prayers – thanks to

Francie and others

- a cute new bag to carry all my stuff in – thanks to my “PT gang”
- awesome music to “pump me up” – thanks to Rebecca, Courtney, Alison, Matthew West, and others
- a website full of encouraging messages to read while I’m sitting in chemo

Oh, I could go on and on. I know I’ve omitted some, and I truly don’t want to sound boastful, and this is not about STUFF.

But this is about YOU. What YOU are doing. Rather, what God is doing in you. These are just some of the *tangible* ways you’ve shown love. The intangible ways, the prayers, those are countless.

I say again, I believe God wants to show His power in this situation, and He already IS! He is showing the power of UNITY, of LOVE. YOU all are amazing and YOUR response to me is miraculous.

For some reason, God has allowed our story to be the rallying point, but this is about THE RALLY.

(Those of you present at BWH for the women’s prayer time that long ago Friday know what I’m talking about. You can’t deny it.)

To put it more concretely: this website, and its escalating visit counter up there in the corner, is about the guestbook, not the journal posts.

I wish I could tell every story that I’ve been told of how God is working and moving among you. This morning, I just want to share the stories from one dear, precious friend. She emphasized to me that she’s never before experienced anything like these two situations.
(Her name has been changed at her request.)

Suzy told me that after hearing news that I was having serious medical issues (this was the day after our ER visit), she was awakened that night at 3 am to the sound of the most joyful baby laughter. She has an 8 month old little boy, but he was sound asleep. And she also said it was obvious that the laughter was from a baby girl. Suzy told me, “Sara, I wish I could describe to you just how happy this laughter sounded. I believe it was Anna, and she was waking me up to pray for you at that hour.”

Suzy also told me that she set her watch alarm to pray for me that Friday of my first oncologist appointment. She said she’d been praying “like crazy” all week long, but wanted to deliberately pray at the same time I was meeting with the doctor. She said she got on her knees to pray, had barely started, when she had this clear thought in her head: “Suzy, I’ve got this.” She believes God spoke to her in that moment. And she’s never experienced that before.

My friends, my family in Jesus – He’s got this. And He is working in YOU. Keep spreading that love. There are many, many others besides me who need it. YOU ARE AMAZING! God be praised.

February 16, 2011

SAVOR

It is 1 am, and the chemicals which *God* created, which *God* allowed to be discovered, which *God* allowed researchers to combine and repeatedly verify their effectiveness against cancer, and which *God* allows caring, compassionate doctors and nurses to administer – also known as chemotherapy – are now coursing through my body. I am doing well so far, actually markedly better than I was on day one of round one. Apparently, one new side effect this time is they have gotten my creative juices to flowing. I have layed in bed for the past two and a half hours composing this post, the post that’s been “swishing” for several weeks. This is the post I’ve been hesitant to write for fear that it will lead many to conclude that I am certifiable. Or you may conclude that it’s the drugs talking. I hope and pray that neither will be your conclusion, but that you will allow God to do in your heart what He’s been doing in mine. But I want you to know it without all the pain it took for me to know it, for Him to get my attention.

(My apologies to those of you who are getting text message alerts of my postings. *Might* want to consider changing that, as it seems I will often be posting at odd hours!)

My love of writing has always been a release for me; however, at times like this it feels a burden. For in this case, I feel woefully inadequate to most effectively combine words to convey my feelings, and yet they must come out. Apparently tonight, I will not rest until they do. I pray God will help me write tonight. You write your story, God.

For here’s my “craziness”:

Cancer is the most *wonderful* terrible thing that has ever happened to me.

Here’s God’s “foolishness”:

He’s given me such *joy* in the midst of pain.

“For the **foolishness** of **God** is wiser than human wisdom.” ([1 Corinthians 1:25](#))

You see, I was a slave, and I feel like I’ve been set free. And I’m so excited about it, I can’t keep it in.

I’ve been freed from so many things. I’ve been freed (at least most of the time) from fear of tomorrow. I’ve been freed from control: for I CANNOT cure nor worsen my cancer. It is completely in God’s hands. I’ve been freed from the endless comparisons and ranking I do in my

head. Thoughts of: I'm not talented enough, I'm not smart enough, I'm not good enough at my job, I'm not skinny enough, I'm not as good a decorator as her, I'm not artsy and creative enough with my kids, my house is not clean enough, I'm not as organized as her, I'm not good enough at coupon-ing and saving money, I'm not interesting enough, I'm not fashionable enough... I could go on and on (and I might expound in later posts). **NONE OF THAT MATTERS!** I am **FREE** to enjoy the life I'm living!

Life has such a **sweetness** to it right now!

(Oh, it's not sweet all the time – I shared that previously. But God is allowing those weak times to be so few and far between, that it is truly unbelievable unless you could actually get inside my head and know!)

You see, my vision was clouded, but now I SEE! And I'm so excited about it, I can't keep quiet. I can't even sleep.

Quite literally, a blue sky is more blue. A hug from my boys, from anyone really, creates a warmer warmth in my bones. Simply holding hands with my husband is a more meaningful touch. The laughter of children is a more beautiful song. The smell of a newborn baby (this one's really crazy, considering how I miss Anna) is an even sweeter smell. A long talk with a friend brings a deeper kinship. My precious parents and siblings, all my family, are more precious still. My church family, feels more like real family. A chocolate chip cookie, well, that's always been awesome, but is amazingly even **BETTER!** (Again, most of the time – not so much while on chemo.)

Perhaps most significant, the words of scripture ring truer than they ever have in my life, and the presence of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and angels are more real (at least most of the time) than they've ever been. I can SEE all this now. How sad that it took all this suffering to get me here.

So much goodness, so much joy, all around me, all the time, and I was missing it.

Life is sweeter, and I'm relishing that sweetness.

Good old Suzy, the same one from my last post, had the most perfect, glorious word:

SAVOR

(just now finding it cool that that word is so close to “savior”)

That's what God has enabled me to do these days – **SAVOR** life.

My prayer is that the next time you see a blue sky, you will rub your eyes and look again, **SAVOR** it and see if doesn't look bluer. That the next time you are faced with either taking care of the dishes in the sink or reading the book your child just asked you to read, you will let the dishes wait until tomorrow, and you will **SAVOR** a snuggle. That the next time you are stuck in a long line anywhere, you will **SAVOR** a chance to let your mind wander to praying for someone

who needs it. That the next time you stay longer than planned talking to a good friend and consequently have to go through the drive-thru for supper, you will say to yourself, “It’s ok, I was savoring!” That the next time you put your kids in bed 15 minutes after bedtime because a spontaneous tickle fight ensued, you will SAVOR it. That the next time someone “interrupts” your day to share and trust you with some of the load they are carrying, you will SAVOR a chance to be a listening ear and make a difference in that person’s life. That the next time you are doing your job, your occupation to the best of your ability but wonder if you should skimp on it and go home early, you will SAVOR the chance to do the job God gave you and do it well, with praise and not guilt. That the next time you have a chance to eat your favorite dessert, you will SAVOR it, because God created our taste buds too! God’s goodness comes in many forms that are easily missed!

Tomorrow morning, when you wake up, I humbly suggest you try something I’ve been trying to do for the last several days:

Immediately get down on your knees (or whatever humbling position your frame will allow) beside your bed and 1) praise God that you woke up, 2) praise Him for giving you the day that lies ahead, and 3)ask Him to help you SAVOR all the good things that will fill it up. Ask Him to keep you from missing a single one. It will take ONE MINUTE to do that. I have time for that, you have time for that. Try it one day and see if you don’t get addicted to it.

I will end with the **real** words of truth; the life-giving, living and active words, spoken straight from the mind and heart of God:

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” ([Philippians 4:8](#))

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” ([John 10:10](#))

LET THE SAVORING BEGIN!

February 17, 2011

I am now free of my chemotherapy pump. A few of you were graced with the gift of seeing the oh-so-stylish fanny pack on Tuesday afternoon, and you could see that there’s not that much to it. The pump does all the work, I don’t have to push any buttons, and it’s pretty lightweight. I just strap it around my waist, or sling it over my shoulder because that is just SO MUCH COOLER, and off I go.

However, the pump brings a heavy, heavy mental burden. The machine makes a quiet whooshing noise every 2 minutes or so, as another 0.1 mL of drug is sent speeding through the several feet of clear plastic tubing into my body. While I am somewhat comforted in the fact that there is

something tangible attacking the cancer inside me, it is a constant reminder that I am facing a giant. The pump noise and presence repeatedly pulls my mind away from the presence of God and back to the diagnosis, the presence of cancer.

Now that's it's gone, I feel so much lighter. I just finished savoring a delightful shower (can't really do that while on the pump – too tricky to keep the port site dry). The side effects have been about the same as last time, or maybe a little bit better. Thank you so much for the prayers specifically about minimal side effects. I know God is granting that request.

After finishing my last post, I thought of a few other thoughts along the same vein.

If anyone is confused about how to savor life, I prescribe the following:

WATCH CHILDREN.

They are the MASTERS at savoring.

I was thinking about this two nights ago, while listening to Camden (age 5) pray.

“Dear God, please help everyone in our family to have a good time all the time.”

This is an oft-repeated prayer of his. I used to just smile, thinking in my snooty, grown-upness, “Well, that's so simplistic of him. Some day he'll learn that's impossible. Everyone has burdens and trials and no one has a good time all the time.”

Um, wait a second. He's only praying for us to do as [Romans 12:9](#) says: cling to what is good. Of course trouble will come. But Jesus said it too, didn't he: “In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Preach on, Camden.

So watch children. Listen to their wisdom. Here's some examples:

Riding down the road today, the excitement from the carseats: “Look! Diggers!” – savoring

(Imagine a low, dramatic voice from my 3 yr old:)

“Mommy. Guess. what.

Nana (pause) made (pause) us... (dramatic pause for effect)...CHOCOLATE MILK!!” – savoring

“Nana, why do we pray before we eat?”

“Because we tell Jesus thank you for our food, because He gives it to us because He loves us. What else did He do to show us He loves us?”

“He died on the cross.”

“That's right, so we can go to heaven some day.”

from my 3 yr old: "That's where Anna is! Is there more than one heaven?"

"No, there's just one heaven."

from my 5 yr old: "But if there were two heavens, Anna would be in the BEST one."

I wonder, you know the story about Jesus telling his disciples to let the children come to Him? I wonder if it did Jesus, in his human nature, just as much good as it did those kiddos. I wonder if it didn't lift his burdened spirit. Someday I look forward to asking Him about it.

I do not want to give the false impression that I am extremely well-read and spend countless hours reading spiritual books, but I want to quote Brennan Manning from "The Ragamuffin Gospel" again. He says what I'm trying to say with much prettier words.

"By and large our world has lost its sense of wonder. We have grown up. We no longer catch our breath at the sight of a rainbow or the scent of a rose.

We get so preoccupied with ourselves, the words we speak, the plans and projects we conceive, that we become immune to the glory of creation. We barely notice the cloud passing over the moon or the dewdrops clinging to the rose petals. We grow complacent and lead practical lives. We miss the experience of awe, reverence, and wonder.

So often we religious people walk amid the beauty and bounty of nature and we talk nonstop. We miss the panorama of color and sound and smell. We might as well have remained indoors in our closed, artificially lit living rooms. Nature's lessons are lost and the opportunity to be wrapped in silent wonder before the God of creation passes. We fail to be stretched by the magnificence of the world saturated with grace. Creation doesn't calm our troubled spirits, restore our perspective, or delight us in every part of our being. It reminds us instead of mundane chores: changing the page on the calendar or ordering our snow tires. "

He quotes Frederick Buechner:

"For what we need to know, of course, is not just that God exists...but that there is a God right here in the thick of our day-to-day lives who...in one way or another is trying to get messages through our blindness as we move around down here knee-deep in the fragrant muck and misery and marvel of the world."

Manning again: "How do we live in the presence of the living God? In **wonder**, amazed by the traces of God all around us."

So spend some time with kids. Watch them. They will teach us to wonder, to savor.

God tells us to have child-like faith. So might as well get ready: heaven will be full of 5 year olds!

February 21, 2011

It is Monday afternoon, February 21st, and this is the beginning of an “off week,” as I tend to refer to them. I had round 2 of chemotherapy from Tuesday to Thursday of last week. I will go in again for the same chemotherapy drugs one week from today, on Monday the 28th. This means that this, Lord willing, is a blessed week of NO doctor appointments and no chemotherapy treatments: an “off week”. This also means that I am trying to cram an awful lot of “savoring,” living-life-to-the-fullest stuff, in to these weeks. That said, I don’t find myself wanting to sit too long at a computer. However, I am so touched that my silence on this site seems to make those of you who don’t know me maybe a bit more concerned, and I don’t want you to worry!

Next Monday’s treatment will be chemo round 3. All I know so far is that we are doing 4-6 rounds of chemo therapy and then I will be re-scanned (probably CT scans, possibly PET scans I’d guess) to see how the cancer is responding. At that point, the treatment plan will be reevaluated. I may switch to a different “cocktail” of chemo at that point. I’ve been told there would have to be VERY significant changes to my scans in order for surgery to be recommended. The cancer was initially so widespread in my liver that cutting it out was not an option. I wouldn’t have any liver left. Also there was no initial need to resect the colon, because I had no blockage or bleeding.

I realize that there are many people who would be uncomfortable with my lack of knowledge at this point about the long-term treatment plans/goals. And that’s fine. Everyone handles these things differently. For me, I’ve just gotta take it a step at a time. (I think God kinda laughs at our long-term projections and plans anyway.) My sweet, sweet dream is that my next scans will be crystal clear! If they aren’t, well, we (the doctors, me, Brian, etc) will cross that bridge when/if we come to it.

So let me clarify a few things. If you go to my “welcome” page on this site, there is a box at the top of the page that says, “My story”. That is where I am trying to update my medical situation and make sure that stays up-to-date. If something significant changes with the treatment plan, oops, VICTORY PLAN, then I will post it there ASAP.

I am using this journal to try and keep everyone posted on my physical and emotional well-being. If, God forbid, there is a significant decline in my physical health, I will try to update my journal quickly so that specific prayers can be prayed.

If I don’t update, please assume this:

I AM OUT SAVORING MY LIFE AND LIVING IN WONDER AT GOD’S GOODNESS.

Please don’t read this as anywhere near, “back off.” I truly mean to say that I am touched by your concern, but rest assured I will let you know if something big happens.

So a quick word about last week:

Chemo week is rough. Tuesday, the first day, is not really too bad. Appetite diminishes but minimal side effects otherwise. Wednesday, Thursday: rough. Weakness, fatigue, constant

nausea, all food and liquids are gross but I force in what I can, some vomiting (but not much, PRAISE GOD), moderate abdominal cramping (bad cells being zapped, I hope!). I basically live on my couch or in my bed and remain in a horizontal position. Friday this time: actually pretty decent. Much less nauseated, though still not interested in eating and still very tired. For some reason this time, I had a fair Friday but then a bad Saturday (was actually a little worse than Wednesday and Thursday – have no idea why.)

Sunday: great! Today: also great! Today I actually did about 30 minutes of light exercise/strength training in the clinic where I work (or worked?) and it felt fantastic. So good for me emotionally. So far, no hair loss that I can tell. That may be coming down the road though, from what I've been told. But I've also been told (by the nurse) that there's a decent chance I won't lose enough hair to be noticed. That's really so far down on my list of concerns though! But I'm sure some are curious.

I will leave you with one final thought – here's some proof that God answers prayer.

Here's a prayer I started praying several months ago, after Walt brought it to our attention in a sermon:

“God, let me make a difference for you that is utterly disproportionate to who I am.”

If God is touching as many lives through this story as so many of you tell me He is, it is completely disproportionate to this vessel: a painfully shy, introverted girl who has always sought to blend in and draw as little attention to herself as possible.

Yet, I encourage you to pray that prayer. For I am being blessed beyond measure on this journey. But watch out, because if you mean it, He will do it!

My love to you all!

Sara

February 24, 2011

I'm still here, praise God! I have been on my knees praying for some dear friends lately, and I realized how much I long to hear from them to know if my prayers are being heard. So I get it, I get why you long to hear a word from me.

Please know that your prayers are having a mighty effect – not only on me but on the Kingdom. See, if you weren't praying for me to live, to have strength, to have peace, then I may not have those things. Then I wouldn't be able to write what I write, which you tell me is changing lives. (We all know it's God right? I've belabored that point enough?) It's all just a big circular thing. Isn't it amazing, how God works in this world? It all comes back to the gift of His Spirit in our hearts. Thank you Father for that precious gift!

But back to specifics: I've had a good week. The boys and I have savored precious time with friends, Scott and I savored lunch with Daddy at work one day, and today we savored a nice big muddy puddle in the back yard. Well, actually I watched them savor it. They splashed and splashed and basically were true to their Pigg genes in looking like a couple of hogs rolling around in the mud. The old Sara would have NEVER allowed it. The old Sara would have thought it wasn't worth the massive clean-up afterward. But oh how I delighted in their giggles today!!

I'm still dealing with erratic sleeping patterns. I've gotten 5-6 hours of sleep the past two nights. Yet somehow, I've not been too sleepy during the day. I have felt more general weariness, and that combined with grey skies has made me have a few more discouraged moments and has made me more weepy. I've also felt a bit more of my old pain – but I try to remind myself that that may be due to lots of cancer cells dying. Oh how I hope that's the case! So in your prayers for me tonight, please pray for sunny skies (especially this weekend as Brian and I have some special outdoor plans of savoring), and for me to get restful sleep.

Now, can I just say that I absolutely love those of you who've called me "our Sara"? It warms me to my core like a nice hot cup of tea. I'll try to explain below:

What I want to tell you is a love story. (Now all the men reading have officially signed off – see ya later!) It is a love story from first to last. It is the story of a God who loved his daughter beyond all human comprehension. It is the story of a God who loves all of us beyond our ability to fathom. Do you see that when you read the Bible? The book about a God who created a masterpiece in creating mankind, and who loved His people with such a passion that He pulled them back to Him over and over and over and over? He pursues relentlessly because He loves us that fiercely, that deeply.

My story is a love story. Isn't that a crazy thing to call it? God let my baby girl die and let me have advanced cancer. But I know in my heart it's because He loves me so much.

See, I've always felt the love of God. I've always felt like His favorite, to quote a kindred spirit (who also said that He's big enough that we are each His favorite.) I've always felt it because I was blessed to be raised by the greatest set of parents ever to walk the earth. Sorry, but it's true. (Now I'm holding back tears.) Those of you who know them can give me an AMEN. Our family wasn't/isn't one in a million, it's one in 20 million at least.

What I've never felt is the love of people. Oh, I knew mom and dad loved me, and my grandparents, you know – those people who are pretty much required by law to love you- but that was about it. Just ask my mom, who the Lord knows has tried every method of extraction possible to extract my particular thorn in the flesh. I've never felt that I really mattered to any one. Mom and Dad even told Brian about this problem of mine when he asked them for my hand in marriage. They said something to the effect of, "Sara is very special. But she doesn't think so and she needs to be reminded quite a bit."

So my God, who loves me with an unyielding love, has brought me to my knees with "suffering" and allowed me to see what I've meant to people, to many of you. He has shown me that even though I've led this little bitty life, which has always felt so insignificant to me, I've made a mark. Your notes, e-mails, calls, messages have removed the thorn in the flesh that I've lived with for 33 years. My gracious God has healed me! He's healed my spirit!

I've thought, you know if this cancer takes my life- what a way to go out! I hope this doesn't offend, but it's like getting to sit at your own funeral and know what you've meant to people.

And then I thought – why on earth does it take a CANCER diagnosis to make that happen?!?!

Why don't I tell people BEFORE they are dying how much they have meant in my life?

So, that's my thought for you today.

Please don't miss a chance to tell someone what they mean to you.

We don't all get a nice long warning before it's our time to go. I know you know that. This is not a new revelation. I just hope it's a reminder to us all.

Thank you for letting me feel loved – it has made all the difference in my life.
I'm happy to be “your Sara.”

Go tell someone else that they are “your _____”

And always, ALWAYS know, that you are God's. And you are His FAVORITE!!

February 26, 2011

It is 11 pm on Saturday night, and as Brian and I traveled back home late this afternoon, I turned to him with tears in my eyes and said, “It's going to be another late night.” He said, “Why? Because you have to write?” Yep. The man knows me.

You see I've been writing in my head most of the day today, and I'm pretty sure that by now I've figured out that sleep will not come until I get it out.

The tears fall when I am overcome with emotion at how God is filling me up right now, and that emotion also must be poured out in words.

Brian and I traveled this weekend to a beautiful place in the northern hills of Alabama called Gorham's Bluff. Thanks to our class at church, who took up a collection for us soon after Anna died, we were able to get away and finally celebrate our anniversary.

Oh, yes, that's a detail to this story that God is writing in our lives that many of you may not know. We delivered our beautiful stillborn baby girl on December 6th, our 7th wedding anniversary. Just when you thought God had made this story interesting enough, there's another tidbit for you to take in. Here's another good one: I was diagnosed with colon cancer on my 33rd birthday. Yep, you can't make this stuff up. What a writer God is!

But people, what Satan attempts to make more tragic, God has redeemed. See God gave Brian and I a precious anniversary present for our 7th (how God does love that number 7!) anniversary. What we went through in that hospital in less than 24 hours with our baby girl CEMENTED our relationship in a way I never imagined possible. I cannot adequately explain how much deeper

my love for my husband is now. God allowed me to witness just how unbelievably strong Brian is, how very deeply he loves his children, how very deeply connected to them he is, even from the womb, and how very deeply he loves me. Brian and I are so much closer now after that experience. Happy anniversary to us!

And as for my birthday, well, “new Sara” was born that day. That day, along with the experience with Anna of course, my vision became more clear. God rescued me from all the worries about things that just don’t matter in this world. God helped me to see more clearly His power, His PRESENCE.

So Brian and I spent the night last night in a comfortable little cottage on a bluff overlooking the Tennessee River. We enjoyed a delicious gourmet dinner (which tasted GOOD to me, praise God!) by a crackling fire. I had a nice, long hot bath in a big old-fashioned clawfoot tub. We woke after a long, restful night’s sleep to bright sunshine streaming in the windows that surrounded the room. We layed in bed for awhile, relishing the fact that there were no children to attend to, no job to get to, no treatments to prepare for; that we had no schedule or agenda for the day. We talked for a long time, read Psalm 91 aloud, and then I read aloud today’s devotional thought from “Jesus Calling.” Here’s what it said: “Rest in MY PRESENCE, allowing me to take charge of this day. Do not bolt into the day like a racehorse suddenly released...” Now tell me that book wasn’t written for me! We prayed together, and again, the tears flowed. But they were good tears. Tears of joy at the gift of the day that lay ahead. Tears from an overwhelming peace that filled me as a result of that prayer. Brian and I each pray so much differently now.

We had a huge breakfast that again I was actually hungry for and enjoyed. I felt so good physically that we were able to do a long bicycle ride, soaking in the sunshine and the beautiful view. We did an easy hike to a waterfall, and then sat there in stillness for at least 20 minutes, savoring the sound of the falling water. We walked another trail to a bench with a great view of the bluff and the river. We sat on that bench for over an hour, talking some, but spending a great deal of time in silence, in awe of about 5 or 6 hawks soaring through the air.

Maybe this is more detail than you care to know. But I want you to know that your prayers for our weekend were answered and answered beautifully. Our souls were refreshed by the warm bright day, God’s perfect creation, the peaceful stillness.

I have much more to say – actually very little of the above was what I chewed on most of the day today. I am going to get that out tonight on paper so that I can sleep, but wait to post it here for another day or two. Remember, I want you to be out savoring your life and not sitting at your computer getting back problems!

Thank you for praying for our weekend. God heard and answered!

“Be still and know that I am God.” ([Psalm 46:10](#)) What beautiful ancient words!

February 27, 2011

Ok, bear with me, this is a long one. I intended to wait a few days to post it, but after Walt's sermon this morning, I want to go ahead and post it. I wrote this last night, and I find it amazing that God was putting very similar thoughts in my head as he was putting in Walt's.

"I just don't think I could be handling all this as well as Sara seems to be."

That is a quote from a friend of mine who says she hears that from others. And her answer is perfect, "Yes you could! It's because of God!"

One of you sent me a message that said, "Sometimes God sends his servants to the front lines."

I want you to understand that that is what I feel. But what I believe is that God has sent me to the front lines to see that the battle is HIS! And for some reason He seems to want me to be a wartime reporter. I feel compelled to send you messages from within the battle.

And the main message I think I'm supposed to send is "FEAR NOT!"

It feels like I'm a reporter who's gotten to the battle only to see that there really is no battle. The battle has already been won! And it's so exciting I can barely contain myself!

Oh, my friends, God is so much stronger than any little dart the dark forces may send our way.

This armor that God's given us, it holds up in the battles we face! It holds up!

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." ([Eph 6:10-16](#), emphasis mine)

God has spoken it in His word; therefore it is truth. It IS possible to stand! We can extinguish the devil's flaming arrows! So why is it so surprising that I (well, it's God, but what we see is me) am doing it? Why am I surprised that God is protecting me, protecting my heart, has enabled me to hold my ground?

My story – stillborn daughter born on my wedding anniversary, accidental discovery of advanced cancer, difficult treatments – I think that qualifies as a pretty major assault from the devil. But somehow, somehow, I have not fallen under the weight of such great tragedy. By His great mercy and power, God has given me more joy than pain, has given me peace that is beyond understanding, and has even answered lifelong prayers that I've prayed, lifelong dreams that I've

had – prayers for a sense of purpose, prayers to help me feel loved, dreams to write words that touch hearts. I'm in the middle of something that should cause me nothing but heartache, and somehow God has given me joy! I'm not making this up. I'm not just saying what I think I'm supposed to say. This is what I feel in my heart! I'm not trying to *be strong for you*, God has given me strength *forme*, and is allowing you all to be touched by it too!

And so I say again, "Fear not!"

(One of you recently brought it to my attention that that was Jesus's most preached commandment.)

"Refiner's Fire – my heart's one desire: Is to be HOLY. Set apart for you, Lord." Do you sing that song? Do you mean it? I don't think I used to understand it at all. The fire from the refiner – that's not a pleasant thing. But shouldn't we be joyful when it comes? In the middle of our difficulties, our challenges, the times when we don't understand why we are being tested – we can be joyful that God is refining us, making us HOLY. For that we should be THANKFUL. Because it is our heart's ONE DESIRE.

Do you know the story of Elisha and his servant? When they were surrounded, and from a human perspective there was NO WAY OUT? NO POSSIBLE DELIVERENCE?

"When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (II Kings 6, emphasis mine)

Sara here, reporting from the front lines, and I can almost see them. I can definitely feel them. We have prayed, and the army of God surrounds me. God's power is with me! It is stronger than death, than cancer, than these seemingly insurmountable odds. I don't have to fear!

Is God's power here because there is something special about me? Well, yes.

But it's the same thing that's special about you – GOD LOVES YOU! JESUS DIED FOR YOU! HIS SPIRIT LIVES IN US! The battle has been won!

The only battle *we* must wage is the battle of the mind, the battle of the eyes.

And those are posts for another day.

Now, I apologize for yelling at you with my all caps and bolded text and exclamation points. But quit thinking I'm weird or amazing or extra strong or anything different than you are or could be. In fact, I know many of you have already experienced all of what I've written. You've been in the refiner's fire and you've been delivered and lived to tell the tale. And that is what is awesome

about worship. We all get together and tell God how thankful we are that He's WON! That He gives us His strength and His grace when we don't deserve it but when we need it most!

So now, the words to a beautiful song that brought me to tears in the car on our ride home (I wish you could hear the music too, it would be so much more powerful.)

“My foes are many, they rise against me.

But I will hold my ground.

I will not fear the war, I will not fear the storm.

My help is on the way.

Oh my God, He will not delay!

My refuge and strength ALWAYS.

I will not fear, His promise is true.

My God will come through ALWAYS!

Trouble surrounds me, chaos abounding.

My soul will rest in you.

I will not fear the war, I will not fear the storm.

My help is on the way.

I lift my eyes up, my help comes from the Lord!

I lift my eyes up, my help comes from the Lord!”

Holy Father, open all of our eyes – to see as Elisha's servant saw. Help us to put on and then to trust in Your armor. Help us to be thankful for periods of refinement, when we see that armor hold up, when we see your power and your peace prevail.

My friends, my help is on the way, I know it! My God will not delay.

March 1, 2011

Just a short post tonight. (I know, you're saying, "Yeah right! I don't believe you can do it.)

Chemo round 3 started this morning at 10:00 am. I have felt good most of today. My nausea has just started to kick in now, but I tried to get ahead of it so I took one nausea med about an hour ago and then the other one about 30 minutes ago.

I met with "my" nutritionist today, my dear friend and a registered dietician Anna Hicks. I met Anna my freshman year of college almost 15 years ago, and was instantly drawn to her sweet spirit. She spent almost 3 hours with me today helping me to weed through the avalanche of nutritional advice I've been given and answering my ignorant and embarrassing questions. She brought multiple helpful computer printouts for me, and I am so thankful for all the time she has already spent to help me feel less overwhelmed by the entire subject. Thank you, God, for this sweet friend, who also knows the refiner's fire and has come out shining so beautifully.

I also want Ginger to know that I wore your "victorious" shirt today to my treatment – thank you! And your long letter moved me more than you can imagine.

And Lisa, I wore the hat you made me because, God be praised, I slept so well last night that I slept through my alarm this morning! I didn't have time for a shower before treatment, so I threw the hat on and went!

And Shelly and Kat, I am scheduled for my first acupuncture treatment on Thursday. (Supposed to help with side effects, especially nausea)

Last night I went to our Sunday evening services, not knowing if it was a wise thing to do or not. You see it was "Baby Bible" night, where each of the new babies in our congregation receives a special Bible and we as a congregation pledge to help the parents to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It's typically a favorite night of mine. However, last night was hard. You see, I was pregnant with Anna with most of those women; we were supposed to be up there with our sweet Anna. I made the decision to go because I wanted you parents of those precious babies to know that I love you and I love those babies and I am not resentful of your joy! Each one of those babies is a precious masterpiece of the Creator. And those moments and every one of those baby toes (kind of a fetish of mine) are to be savored!

However, as I sat there in profound sadness, longing for someone to acknowledge my baby girl, sweet Joy Brown, seated just down the row from me, passed me a note that said simply: "I just want you to know that I am thinking of your precious baby girl in heaven."

God heard my heart right there in that moment, and He gave me Joy (literally!). He came to me, through precious Joy, in a very REAL way in the middle of my sadness and showed me that He was right there, feeling my sadness, holding my hand.

He graciously gave me just what I needed in that moment. Joy B- you are a treasure and, by the way, perfectly named!

My friends, my baby girl is real and is living, just not with me. Please do not be afraid to remember her with me, and speak of her with me. In doing so, you honor me and show me your love.

Ok, this post wasn't all that short, you were right!

Sending my love and thankfulness for all your prayers, cards and comments.

Sara

March 2, 2011

And I am free again! Got the pump disconnected from me this morning around 10:30. So far, praise GOD, the side effects have been even less than the first two rounds! I stand amazed and thankful, so thankful.

Want to share something my friends Becky and Amy sent to me. I believe everyone faces a significant battle in their lives, so I hope that if you are facing one yourself right now that you will substitute your particular struggle for the word "cancer" in the words below.

What cancer cannot do:

It cannot cripple love
It cannot shatter hope
It cannot corrale faith
It cannot eat away peace
It cannot kill friendship
It cannot shut out memories
It cannot silence courage
It cannot invade the soul
It cannot reduce eternal life
It cannot quench the spirit
It cannot lessen the power of resurrection

Does that sound a bit familiar?

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation (cancer, depression, abuse...), will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

[Romans 8:38-39](#)

Love and hope to you all – Sara

March 3, 2011

I have had some thoughts simmerin' in my little noggin over the past couple of days, so here they come.

First, let me again say that I am so thankful for the specific prayers regarding side effects. I do not know what is different this time, but I am praising God that I have felt so much better with this round of chemotherapy so far. I have not vomitted AT ALL this round, have had better energy and stamina, and have tolerated eating and drinking so much better. Seriously, those who've seen me have emphasized that I just LOOK so much better this time. In terms of my physical appearance, I tend to think when God is the one giving me strength it can't help but be apparent even from the outside.

So, acupuncture today. Hmm, what do I say about my time as a human pin-cushion? Interesting seems to fall significantly short as a description. I really liked and trusted the acupuncturist. The initial stick (sticks, as I'd guess there were 20 or so needles) was definitely painful for me, but once they were all in, a very deep relaxation took hold. I think I may have even fallen asleep, because much more time than I thought had passed by the time it was said and done. He promised I will see a significant difference in my energy level tomorrow, so we shall see...

Now, to my simmerin' thoughts.

BE STILL

Last night I had a "lightbulb" moment.

Let me set the scene:

One night, in the days after Anna's death, as we were putting the boys to bed, I realized that I may never have another baby to cuddle and hold. I then realized that my boys will very soon be big enough that physical contact from old Mom will be "yucky," so I asked Scott, my 3 year old, for a "special snuggle" in his bed. I crawled in bed next to him and held him close, talked about his day, and just enjoyed spending a few quiet moments with him. Ever since then, every night he asks either Brian or me, often each of us, "Can you peas snuggle wif me?" Well, because we are acutely aware of how fleeting this stage will be, we typically oblige. So last night, I crawled into Scott's bed for a snuggle. See he'd had a big day, and well, he was just in rare form. He was past the point of tired, to the delirious point. He was rolling around all over the place and talking a blue streak. Seriously, I couldn't get a word in edge-wise, and couldn't get him to calm down enough to relax and get to sleep. He'd had a few meltdowns in the evening, and I KNEW he needed to relax and have a good night's sleep. That's what his little body needed. But he would not allow himself to get still enough to let that happen. Finally, I said slowly and emphatically, "Scott. BE. STILL."

I layed one arm over him, lovingly, gently, but firmly enough to stabilize him and help him to calm down and get to sleep. I held him close. He didn't fight it. He just curled into my arm and very quickly, fell asleep.

As I layed there listening to his even breathing, I thought, “Oh, God, is THIS what you’re doing for me?”

I got the distinct picture of God lovingly, gently, wrapping His arm around me to *stabilize* me and “force” (for lack of a better word) me to relax and see the beauty of the life that I was missing.

He hasn’t dumped heavy burdens on top of me to pin me down into a contorted, painful position where I’m forced to look at Him and plead for release.

He’s used loss, cancer, chemotherapy-induced fatigue to put me into a position of stillness. And while there, He’s wrapped His arms around me to stabilize me. I can feel His love in that embrace, just as I know Scott felt in mine.

See, I was drowning. I was missing LIFE-FILLED MOMENTS, PURE JOY MOMENTS all around me in my endless quest for that mythical perfect day. You know, that day when my to-do list was all crossed off, when everything in my house was in its perfect place, when every square inch of this house was clean and organized to within an inch of its life. As much as I was longing for my baby girl, I was overwhelmed with the thought of adding one more child to fall miserably short of perfection in raising. One more child to feel guilty about neglecting while I cleaned and cooked and frantically crossed-off my to-do list. I felt like I was drowning just with two children. In my hurry-scurry pace I was “rolling around all over the place and talking a blue streak” – to myself, to God, to anyone who would listen, with my “woe is me” diatribe. I am ashamed. I am ashamed that it took all of this tragedy for God to get my attention.

So He whispers to me, “Be still and know that I am God.” “Trust me.”

Not “Be still with your body but then work your mind furiously in prayer to say just the right words so that you can get what you want.”

Not, “Be still and I will tell you all the answers you desperately want.”

Not “Be still just long enough to read your Bible with an air of self-righteousness so that you can mark it off your list of good things to do and then move on to the next item.”

Not “Be still and doubt the fact that the FULLNESS of God dwells in you because that doesn’t make any sense.”

He said, “**Be still and KNOW that I am God.**” [Psalm 46:10](#)

“**Be still** before the LORD and wait patiently for him” [Psalm 37:7](#)

“The LORD will fight for you; you need only to **be still.**” [Exodus 14:14](#)

“The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “**Be still**, for this is a holy day.” Nehemiah 8:11

“**Be still** before the LORD, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.”
[Zechariah 2:13](#)

“He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! **Be still!**””

Not sure, but it sure seems like there’s something to this idea of stillness. I’m having to learn the hard way what true stillness is. God has had to gently and lovingly “pin me down” to calm me down, to calm my inner storm. I hope it doesn’t take that for you. I hope we can all practice this: just being still with God, physically and mentally, even if just for 5 minutes. Just crawling into His lap and feeling His love, His goodness, without having to say or hear (read) a word. Just resting in His arms. Trusting that HE IS, He is who He says He is, He ALWAYS is, and that’s enough.

Maybe soon we can say as David did:

“Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child with his mother, Like a weaned child is my soul within me.” [Psalm 131:2](#)

Ah, the beautiful hymn:

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change, He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake
To guide the future, as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: **the waves and winds still know**
His voice Who ruled them while He dwelt below.

Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord.
When disappointment, grief and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love’s purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

I wish blessings and peaceful stillness on you all –

Sara

March 7, 2011

Today, I want to introduce you to my Dad. I asked him to write down some of the powerful thoughts he's shared with me from the moment this battle started that have helped me to keep my focus where it should be. His words have just helped me so much, and I knew that it could be of help to others who may read, because I believe we all face significant battles. Satan is active seeking to pull us away and he spares no one in his quest. So, I pray that these words may sink in to your heart as well, and they can help you guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

Here's Dad's thoughts, I've added some emphasis:

When we arrived that fateful Tuesday morning, I saw clearly what I had detected in your voice on the phone. No "wringing of hands"... no "fretful wailing"... just a weary surrender to an overwhelming enemy ...cancer...advanced cancer...active cancer...appearing out of nowhere, compounding the weight of woe over the loss of our precious Anna.

I begged you not to lose hope, but rather to **prepare yourself** for the life and death "battle for your mind and heart." Satan is tremendously skilled in prompting our minds to **focus on the seemingly insurmountable foes** that present themselves during our lifetime. He whispers "give up"... "give in"... "just let it go." He loves to come to us in the darkness of night, on the dreary days, in the lonely hours, and **when we are physically weak**. And he is very good at what he does.

Some 2000 years ago, Paul pleaded with us to battle for our hearts and minds. When the sudden onset of a powerful calamity threatens to overwhelm, he exhorts us to...(now, take a deep breath)

take our eyes OFF the danger before us

close our eyes

reminisce about the many, many times, the Almighty God has powerfully intervened and come to our rescue

and **give thanks**.

And with that **renewed recognition and trust in the ALMIGHTY**, we pray and make "supplication" (i.e. beg with every fiber of hope and assurance in our being!). The **certain outcome** is "the peace that passes understanding" that "will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." So says Paul in [Philippians 4:6-7](#).

So my precious Sara, fight hard for your mind and heart! In this spiritual and physical "tug of war" in which you are now engaged, **don't be overcome by the view of the powerful enemy that would pull you into the abyss before you**, but instead, ever hold on to the "rope of hope."

Look over your shoulder, and see the powerful armies of God who are pulling with you, and let the strength of His mighty arms pull you to safety!

Now my words (I always have to have the last word, huh Dad?):

Dad was more brief here than I thought he'd be. He's concise, I'm verbose – no surprise there.

He has said to me repeatedly, think about what God has done! Focus **THERE**, not on the enemy!!

All the medical community and doctors can do is define and measure the size of the enemy (the cancer, in this case). But no matter what is found:

THAT IS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE POWER THAT GOD CAN UNLEASH IF HE WANTS TO DO SO.

So, Dad asks me, where are your eyes? Where is your mind?

There is our battle. But even that, we don't fight alone. That's the beauty of the Holy Spirit – that can **HELP** us in our weakness!

So when we try and encourage someone who is weak, who we know is engaged in a battle, I don't believe it is helpful to tell them, "It's ok to feel scared, it's ok to be afraid, it's ok to doubt, it's ok to not be strong all the time." (Unless they have already shared those emotions with you, then you can **RESPOND** that way.) Instead we need to remind each other (not in a preachy, judgmental way) – let's take our eyes off that, off the scary enemy, and let's force our minds back to Jesus, let's look at God together, and remind ourselves of His promises and His actions in the past. His power!!

What Dad says Paul says is true – the only certainty He says we have from those supplications, is the **PEACE**. Not the answers exactly as we're asking for them, but **PEACE**.

But from where I'm sitting, that is enough. The peace is indescribable, and it blocks the fear. When peace fills you, the fear cannot take hold. And when you are thankful (i.e. savoring!) you don't see the enemy.

It is certain. Paul says it. God says it. It's certain.

Do you really believe it? It's either true or it's false. It's not a partial peace – it's not a grey area.

THE PEACE IS CERTAIN if we will only battle in this way!

I stand as a witness to these things. For I have seen its certainty.

PRAISE GOD!

March 10, 2011

Good morning, God's favorite! Do you remember that you are? You are a beautiful, perfect, UNIQUE masterpiece of the creator, made to fulfill His special UNIQUE purpose for *your* life, made to glorify His name in a way NO ONE ELSE CAN. How wonderful is that?!?

Gotta quote Brennan Manning in *The Ragamuffin Gospel* again. (He says he is quoting Robert Hotchkiss.):

“Christians ought to be celebrating constantly. We ought to be preoccupied with parties, banquets, feasts, and merriment. We ought to give ourselves over to veritable orgies of joy because we have been liberated from the fear of life and the fear of death. We ought to attract people to the church quite literally by the fun there is in being a Christian.”

Can I get an AMEN!!

Now, I believe there is a serious place for awe, for reverence, for silence and stillness before God. But it seems that I go to that extreme too often. There is definitely a place for joy and celebration!! We've been liberated! That should excite us!

I think it *is* exciting us. I know I feel it in my church family. I believe something amazing is happening there, and too many of you have told me you feel it too for me to dismiss it.

A beautiful thing is happening.

I can't quite get my head wrapped around it to describe it, but it has something to do with

LOVE, TRANSPARENCY, BEING REAL, LETTING OUR WALLS DOWN,

admitting we don't have it all together and we are tired of pretending that we do. And people it is **FREEING!** I can see it in your eyes as you talk to me and feel it in your arms as you wrap me up in a hug, and I see it among you as I look across the church building. We are **LOVING** each other for the messes we are, loving without reserve and it is just exciting.

Even our amazing, Godly minister took a great step of faith last night and let his walls down for all of us to see. I know this is difficult for a man who is supposed to be our spiritual leader, who is in fact hired to be that; but, praise God, is it so refreshing to see him, at great apparent risk to his job, share an ongoing family struggle and say, “Yep, I'm just like all of us. There are things about God's ways that I don't understand either, but I'm still here and I am going to trust Him, and I still need God's wisdom and his mercy!”

And there's no risk to his job! Good gracious – when he finished talking, we surrounded him, literally – an auditorium full of people got as closely packed in as possible – and we prayed. In that moment I believe we each took a piece of this heavy burden from his shoulders and we loved him for his transparency. What a privilege to help him carry his load! I just know, I **KNOW**, he must feel so much more **FREE** today! **LIBERATED!**

I am so grateful that Christ began the church – a family that we can walk through this life with. My family – thank you for beginning to let down your guard, to show your true beautiful selves – for though you may not feel it, that’s what God has made of your messes. Beauty.

I want to share something I wrote after a particularly moving service not too long ago:

I want you each to know how deeply moved I was by our last singing service. I’m not sure that I have ever experienced such a sense of true community in worship. It is no secret that Brentwood Hills is blessed to have many members with remarkable singing talent, but last week, there was a deeper loveliness to our typical blend of beautiful voices; and that was the harmony of sincere hearts pouring out our offering to God. The Spirit was moving, I believe. My family, it was a sweet, sweet sound. We were a collection of broken souls reaching out in hope for the perfection and healing of our God.

As I sang, or should I say *attempted* to sing through my tears, I was encouraged as I looked around at my spiritual family – many of whom had eyes closed, or heads bowed, or heads nodding in agreement with the words – singing of their longing to be nearer, still nearer to God. I saw you who have been wounded by recent deaths in your families, you whose hearts have been torn by struggles with infertility or miscarriage, you who have been bruised over and over by battles with addictions yet continue to fight, you who have been beaten down by unfaithful or abusive earthly family members – I saw you earnestly and deliberately sing, “It is well with my soul,” and I believed you. I watched you who have bravely battled alongside your children that struggle with disability, you who have chosen to serve the poor, the lonely, the outcast, the difficult to love with your time and your hearts instead of seeking worldly fame and fortune, you who have continued to seek God in the face of burdens, sing, “Lord, reign in me, in my darkest hour,” and I was connected to you. We were a group of equals – equally searching and equally longing for our true home.

In scripture, we are called to teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, as we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in our hearts to God. My family, you did this and you do this for me. I was edified, I was encouraged, I was accepted, I was admonished, I was empowered. Praise God for the blessing of corporate worship! Thank you for reminding me that not only are we communing with God in worship, but we commune with each other, as we in *one voice*, lift our broken hearts to the healer and lover of our souls. Thank you for helping me to truly worship.

Lord God, please don’t let us go back to our old ways of polishing up the outside and hiding behind thick walls. Help us to continue to be more and more transparent and REAL with each other! Let us experience that FREEDOM!

Now, as to how I’m feeling this week – are you really still reading? Wow.

I feel very good. Other than sleeping being erratic still, I have no other real complaints. I pulled out a big chunk of hair in the shower the other day, and that was emotional. But then I took a deep breath and asked God to prepare me, to help me remember that it’s just hair.

Mostly, I just feel excited. Because God is at work all around me and in me. I hope and pray that also includes being at work against this cancer.

Go and BE FREE today! I love you all, especially if you've actually read all of this!

March 15, 2011

It is [12:30](#) am in Nashville, Tennessee, on the first night of my fourth round of chemotherapy. So where am I? Of course, on the computer, writing.

Thank you God, for clarity of thought. Thank you steroids for keeping me awake to write those thoughts.

Tonight I'm convicted.

I'm so convicted I just might possibly write two different journal entries with all these thoughts.

Tonight I'm convicted by Trent's sermon Sunday morning: that we are either saved or lost. Almost saved is as impossible as almost pregnant.

I'm convicted by my three year old, my precious Scott. My precious Scott who mentions "baby Anna" every few days and often asks when do we get to go to heaven?

Who asks, "Can we go to heaven on Friday and see Anna?"

Shame on me for not having this longing. This strong belief.

For Scott, heaven is as real as Nana and Papa's house. As real as Chattanooga. As real as the zoo. And he wants to be there. ASAP. Do I?

I think part of my hesitancy is that I know people who haven't been saved.

"And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved." Acts 2

Do I decide who is saved and who isn't? No, that's not my job. God decides, but the above scripture is pretty clear. Like Trent said, if people are saved, then they must be saved *from something*. Something that people who *don't* call on the name of the Lord will *not* be saved from.

Acts 2:

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

“In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.

When the people heard this, they were **cut to the heart** and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” With many other words he **warned** them; and he **pleaded with them**, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

From Matthew 24:

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and **earthquakes in various places**. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

I'm not the only one to be recently convicted by these passages. I've had several of you mention them to me. I think that means something. God is putting it in several hearts.

Have you seen billows of smoke lately on the news? Have we had a few earthquakes? Are there some nations rising against nations?

Do I mean to scare you tonight? Oh no, definitely not. But does God? I'm not sure.

I'm not afraid. I know many of you who will read this are also not afraid.

In the Matthew passage, Jesus also says, “but see to it that you are not alarmed.”

I John says: I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know that you have eternal life**. And also: In this way, love is made complete among us **so**

that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. And in Romans: Therefore, there is now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**.

I know that most people who will read this journal already have that confidence! Most people who I know and dearly love have this longing for heaven. But I believe there may be those who read who are struck with fear. Who in the depths of their hearts know that they are not in Christ Jesus. You know.

Should you come to Jesus simply because of the fear of condemnation? Why not? It surely does seem like those folks in Acts 2 were pretty afraid. They asked, “What do we do?!?!?!?”

Peter said, “Go study your Bible and decide if baptism is really important. Once you figure that out, find a church whose worship style you like, see if you can get comfy there, and then respond to Jesus, if you feel like it.”

No wait, he said, “Join a Bible study, go to church, learn as much as you can about Jesus and the church, and once you have a much better understanding and motivation beyond fear, then get back to me. We’ll schedule your baptism for a few weeks from now.”

(PLEASE know I am not trying to step on toes. I’m not trying to convert anyone to the “Church of Christ”. I’m not trying to sell baptism. Because that can be just getting wet. I’m trying to “sell” salvation – because I’m just not sure how much time we have left here.)

Acts 2 : “Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Even more convicting: Jesus said, in his LAST instructions to his disciples before he ascended to heaven: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you to the *very end of the age*.”

Well, I think that’s as clear as it gets. Make disciples (help them to believe!), baptize, and then teach them to obey.

I plead with you, as Peter pleaded, don’t wait another day. You just may not get it. Find Jesus now. His gift is free, if we believe. If you believe, you’ll do what he asks. And then you can learn all the beautiful things about Jesus and rest in his assurances, his promises. Then a grand and glorious thing can happen: what may have begun as fear will be transformed into beautiful gratitude and love. For perfect love casts out fear. (I John)

Please hear the love in my voice. Don’t wait another minute, and if you don’t need to read this but someone you know does – don’t wait another minute.

I love you and I love Jesus. God take us to our home and do it quickly!

March 17, 2011

Thursday morning, March 17th, 9 am:

I had a wonderful night's sleep last night, and feel better this morning than I did last night. This round of chemo, round #4, has been pretty up and down. Had a really rough night last night and my poor mom had to clean up some really unspeakable messes. Oh how I pray this cancer business is over soon, for ALL of us.

Three important things to write about today:

1. **My next CT scan will be one week from today: Thursday, March 24th, at 10:50 am.** My prayer remains the same: God – work a miracle. Eradicate ALL of the cancerous cells. I've been reading back through the stories of healing in the New Testament. Can't really find an example of Jesus or his apostles saying, "No, you don't need to be healed yet. You need to go through this for a few more months before I show compassion." Sure, Jesus had to put off a couple of people for a few days, but then the healing was full and complete. Someone feel free to correct me if I'm missing a story. If the fullness of God is in me, if the same Holy Spirit who raised Christ from the dead is in me, then why not? Why not?

2. This is one of those times when I feel trapped by the English language, when I feel inadequate. I want to tell the members of "Team Journey" thank you for an indescribably moving day and I don't think the words exist to describe just how much it meant to me. Team Journey was put together by my first college roommate, Debbie Black Rose, to run in the Colon Cancer Coalition's 5k in Chattanooga this past Saturday. To Debbie's and my surprise, the team ended up being 45 people strong (the largest team at the event) and raising \$1500 dollars (the largest amount raised by a team) with 12 different sponsors. Amazing.

To look around that beautiful morning and see "Team Journey" shirts everywhere, amazing. To see college friends I haven't seen and have hardly spoken to in 10 years run in a race wearing a shirt that says, "supporting Sara" – I'm fighting back tears just thinking about it. Many of them were really pushing their bodies to run that distance and I thought about how they were enduring physical discomfort just to show love and support for me. Sweet Cassie said, "Ran my first 5k in about 15 years, but I can't think of a better reason to make my "comeback" than to show Sara our support!" Dear Ashlee walked it even though she is several months pregnant! As I stood on the sidelines and cheered for the team close to the finish line, my beautiful sister ran past me, openly crying, and I lost it. My sister, who was running her very first race ever, pushed herself hard because she knew I was wanting to run, that I would be out there running it if I could, but she was doing it for me. It was something she could do. After the race, members of Team Journey who had never met me, but were friends of other team members, came up to me, looked me in the eye, shook my hand, and said, "It was an honor to run for you." So moving. To EVERYONE that was a part of this special day – sponsors, runners, family, cheer-ers – thank you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

(I'm posting several pictures from the day on the "photos" page.)

3. This event made me change my mind about posting about "The Walker Run." For those who don't know, my amazing physical therapy class has put together a 5k walk/run in Brentwood on

April 9th. I've been hesitant to "advertise" it myself because technically the funds raised are going to us. I'm so appreciative of that, as I've obviously been unable to work for several months; however, I'm sure you can imagine my hesitancy in asking people to come out to it myself. But then I decided, I don't think this thing is really about me. It's about God's people and the BIG ways they can show love! It's about the message on the t-shirts: savoring the sweetness of life one day at a time – that message needs to get out. I don't want anyone who would have liked to have been at the event to miss out and find out about it later, thinking, "Oh, if I had only known about it I would have been there."

So, here's the info:

The Belmont Physical Therapy Class of 2003 would like to invite everyone to participate in:

"The Walker Run, Live for Today"

Date: April 9, 2011

Time: 8:00 a.m. (registration, sign-in 7:00 a.m.)

Location: Brentwood High School

This 5K fun run/walk is designed to help support Sara and her family as they walk this road and continue savoring life.

Additional information and registration forms are available at: www.thewalkerrun.weebly.com

Please feel free to email thewalkerrun@yahoo.com with any questions.

We encourage you to SAVOR your own journey and join us in "The Walker Run, Live for Today"

Also, there is at least one group of people in Ohio who can't come down for the race: BUT they are officially registering so they can get their shirts (with the great message!) and they are getting together to walk/run that day on their own. They are going to take a picture of their team and send it my way. For those who may not be able to come to Nashville, if you want to go for a walk that day where you are, just to show me your support, please send me a picture of you walking!

Thank you so much for everything you do for me. I'm so blessed to be walking this road with so many cheering me (us) on!

March 21, 2011

Thought many of you local folks might like to know that there will be a story about “The Walker Run” and a little about me too on Channel 4 news tonight (WSMV) at 6 pm. The news man also said the story will be on the internet for one month.

<http://www.wsmv.com/news/27268836/detail.html>

Dennis – you were so nice and so easy to talk to! Thank you for honoring me by coming into my home and thank you for covering this story that God is writing in my life.

Thank you amazing PT class and STAR Physical Therapy and everyone else who is making this event happen! Praying God allows me to be there!

March 23, 2011

Things I have savored today:

- Waking up
- Getting on my knees and praying: “God, thank you for a restful night’s sleep. Thank you for this, a new day; for it is a gift. Guide my steps today and let me follow your plan, not my own agenda. Help me to shine your Light wherever I am.”
- Scott waking up and calling for me – thanking God that his mommy is still here to come to him when he calls for me
- Scott’s crazy bedhead morning hairdo
- Camden’s excited “Me!” when I enthusiastically asked on the way to school: “Who is ready to have a fun day at school with his friends and learn some cool new things?”
- A moving prayer experience with several of the other mothers of Camden’s classmates; including precious Sybil who quietly asked if she could put her hand on me and pray in her native Ethiopian language because that is more comfortable for her. I have no words for how powerful that was, even though I had no idea what she was saying. God knew and that’s enough.
- A breakfast at Cracker Barrel with a new friend, Becky, who has come to know me through this website.
- Becky, a published author, telling me I am a good writer
- Becky also telling me that when her son asked her to come outside and watch him ride his bike the other day, and she really wanted to go and take a nap after a long night’s work, she thought of me and went outside and watched him. And she is so glad she did.
- Catching silly Scott trying to drink pancake syrup at the Barrel
- A spur of the moment lunch with old friend Belle and new friend Melanie. Old Sara would have said no because there was laundry calling her.
- Belly laughing at hilarious Belle and Melanie
- A phone conversation with my sister Dinah and hearing precious Will, my nephew squealing with delight in the nearby bathtub
- An unplanned visit with Julie who brought me beautiful purple flowers and brought the boys some chocolate. Old Sara would have pushed her back out the door because it was my only 25

minutes at home before having to pick up Camden, and again, laundry called.

– Getting to hold a precious baby brother of a classmate of Camden’s when I picked him up from school. Can’t get enough baby snuggles.

– Going to Walmart and giving a stranger a gift card just for the fun of it. Never done any random act of kindness like that before and it was so fun!

– Finishing at Walmart faster than I anticipated and getting to come home and finally get to the laundry (going right now)!

– Listening to the awesome CD that Anna Grace B. made for me. Pumped up the volume and sang, danced, and cried to “Mighty to Save” (Oh my savior, you can move the mountains. MY GOD IS MIGHTY TO SAVE. JESUS CONQUERED THE GRAVE!)

– Seeing my boys get excited and sing along to that wonderful song that they love even more than me.

Lord God, oh how you reach down and show me love each and every day. Thank you for the amazing moments of today. Thank you for the wonderful people you’ve surrounded me with. I beg you to continue to show your limitless power, specifically in physical healing that defies medical explanation.

The words playing on my CD player right now:

“And if my God is for us, then what could ever stop us? And if our God is with us, then what could stand against?! Our God is healer, awesome in power...”

March 27, 2011

It is Sunday afternoon, and I wait.

My appointment with the oncologist is at 9 am tomorrow morning. I wait.

I wait in eager anticipation.

From “Jesus Calling” (yesterday, March 26th):

“Waiting on Me means directing your attention to me in hopeful anticipation of what I will do. It entails trusting Me with every fiber of your being, instead of trying to figure things out for yourself. Waiting on Me is the way I designed you to live: all day, every day. I created you to stay conscious of Me as you go about your daily duties.

I have promised many blessings to those who wait on Me: *renewed strength*, living above one’s circumstances, resurgence of hope, awareness of my continual Presence. Waiting on Me enables you to glorify Me by living in deep dependence on Me, ready to do My will. It also helps you to enjoy Me; *in my Presence is fullness of Joy.*”

God has already done so much in my life that I never could have dreamed possible. Why did I, a little shy part-time physical therapist and full-time mom, get to talk about God on the Nashville

news? Why has this website been viewed so many hundreds of thousands of times? Why is God changing hearts through this story?

I can't fully explain it, but I believe He will continue to amaze us all by what He is doing...

So I wait, in "hopeful anticipation"...

Today, I am struck by the irony. The irony that I have a disease called cancer – a disease characterized by:

- rapid growth
- uncontrollable spread

I looked up the definition of cancer in one of the many educational materials I have refused to read (because really, I spend enough time thinking about cancer as it is).

Cancer: a group of more than 100 different diseases. Cancer occurs when cells become abnormal and keep dividing (multiplying); forming more cells without control or order.

Do you know what I see all around me? I see the uncontrolled spread of joy, of hope. I hear people praying everywhere and am witnessing rapid growth of spirituality, as the prayers become more bold, more heartfelt, more raw, more focused.

I see you Christians being abnormal, living your lives more intentionally, savoring the "small" blessings that each day holds.

I beg you, don't let it stop. Don't let the toxic chemotherapy of the world around you kill this rapidly spreading joy, hope, peace. Let hope metastasize from you, all around you – spreading from person to person as you live your life in bold JOY, bold CELEBRATION!

(Side note: I am excited that we will get to see tangible evidence of this joy-oma, this "joy cancer", this metastasizing hope, by the many people gathered for "The Walker Run-Live for Today 5k!!!)

Do you know that that is what God wants for your life? HOPE, PEACE, JOY. That is what He created us to know, to feel. I praise God for this season of my life where He has made me know it.

"For the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace...**" (Galatians 5)

"May the God of **hope** fill you with all **joy** and **peace** as you trust in Him, so that you may **overflow** (sounds cancerous to me!) **with hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit." ([Romans 15:13](#))

So my prayer tonight:

"I call on you, O God, for you will answer me;
give ear to me and hear my prayer.

Show the wonder of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes.

Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings..."

[Psalm 17:6-8](#)

And may we all remember the words of David tomorrow morning:

"In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before you and
wait in expectation." ([Psalm 5:3](#))

March 28, 2011

GOOD NEWS!!!

GOOD NEWS!!!

The direct quote from my CT scan:

"Impression: Significant interval improvement in hepatic and nodal metastatic disease."

Just a minute, I am savoring that word "significant"...

OK, Dr. Penley came into the exam room, asked how I was doing, and said, "Are you ready for some good news?"

"Yes, lay it on me. I'm ready!" I said.

The enemy is on the retreat, precious prayer warriors! He said the CT showed that all the areas of the cancer were reduced. He said my CEA (tumor marker, a protein in my blood that they check with each treatment) has been steadily decreasing (indicating less cancer), and also my platelets, which had been high, are now back down to a normal level.

So by every indication, I am improved. Nothing was even unchanged, much less worse.

He gave me a copy of the CT scan results, and for reference, several of the masses were measured:

One decreased from 30 x 28 mm to 19 x 15 mm.

Another decreased from 47 x 20 mm to 25 x 10 mm.

I am obviously thrilled!

Would I have been more thrilled if he came in and said "It's vanished. There is no cancer in your body anymore"? Um, of course. Could God have done that? Absolutely, I have no doubt. But God *is* answering and I know His plan *is perfect* and His *timing is perfect*. The walls of Jericho didn't fall on the first day, Naaman wasn't healed with the first dunk in the Jordan River, the lepers had to go and show themselves to the priests and *as they went* they were healed.

And now my wise Dad has shared with me something he "happened upon" (thank you, Holy Spirit!) *yesterday*, and said he's never really noticed before:

[Deuteronomy 7:17](#) and following:

(I just looked at what I typed and said, "I'm using too many colons!" Oh how punny!) Anyway, from Deuteronomy: "You may say to yourselves, "These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?" But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and all of Egypt....The Lord your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear....**The Lord your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once,** or the wild animals will multiply around you. But the Lord your God will deliver them over to you..."

I don't want to have to do any more chemo. Who does? But I know that God is refining me. I know my character is being shaped by each rough chemo week. Again, God is the perfect author of this story, and He only writes happy endings!

So the plan is to continue what we're doing. Continue this course of chemotherapy, these drugs, until they appear to no longer have an effect. We will have repeat scans periodically to check the progress.

Bottom line: **GOOD NEWS!!**

Please get on your knees and thank God for answering our prayers. Please send up a grateful shout of "hallelujah!" if you are so inclined. I am!

Lord God, you continue to shine upon me! Thank you for a day of good news. Thank you for your Holy words, that always give me the encouragement that I need, in every circumstance of life. Be pleased with our praise on this day, may it be a sweet sound in your ear. Continue to drive out this enemy, little by little if that is your plan. Continue to write your story! We love you and thank you for loving us!

In the powerful name of Jesus we pray, Amen!!

March 29, 2011

It is Tuesday afternoon, and in my house right now my 5 year old is working on some drawings, and my 3 year old is doing something in the kitchen that I'm sure I should be checking on. I'm in the family room, sitting at my iPad (one of the many gifts I've received since starting on this path.) We are listening to some great music that has also been sent to me by dear friends. "Everything rides on hope now..." my stereo says to me. So true, speakers, so true. Never been so thankful for contemporary Christian music as I am these days.

I am to go in for Round 5 of chemotherapy tomorrow. Not necessarily looking forward to it, but I am glad to still be alive today to get to have a 5th round.

Today I want to tell you about our robins. Seriously, that's what we call them. I'll ask the boys, "Do you see our robins out there?"

There are two beautiful robins that I have now seen at least two or three times a day for the past two or three weeks at minimum. Whenever I look in the yard, either the front yard or the back yard, they are there. They are always in the part of the yard where I happen to be looking.

Yesterday mom took the boys to preschool while we went to see the oncologist, and when I returned she said, "When we left the house, there were two robins in the front yard and I promise they both looked straight at us." I hadn't told my mom about our robins.

A few days ago, when I was pulling out of the driveway to take the boys to school, the robins were parked on our front steps. And I promise you, they held themselves erect, like two watchful sentries.

Two days ago, as we were eating breakfast, I looked out the back doors and saw them both walking along the top of our privacy fence, as if doing their rounds and monitoring the perimeter of our property.

Then this morning, I went to the boys' room to help them find clothes and make up beds. I looked out the window into the backyard, and yep, there were our robins. I PROMISE YOU, they stopped what they were doing and both looked straight up to the window. They stared at me in the window for a good 5-10 seconds.

So call me crazy, but I think they are my angels. Or they are at least my visible reminder that the angels are standing guard. They watch me, they watch the perimeter of our home. They stand guard at the front door to my house. And they are always there. Always on the ground (or on the fence). Not in the trees or flying around.

Scott and Camden now tell me about them: "There's our robins!"

Alright, now that I've officially lost many of you, because you just weren't ready for this level of craziness ...

I want to share an e-mail sent to me by a dear friend on January 7th. She lives down the street from me and so passes my house often. Really try to picture this:

"I drove by your house after the prayer meeting. As soon as I drove by, I saw another picture in a flash:

Your house had the most brilliant light streaming out of it, like there was no roof. Light poured forth all the way up to the heavens and back down. I heard the words, "Now is the time for open heavens in this house." All around giant angels kept bending down, whose heads I could only see when they bent down, and they kept putting these boxes of something into your house. These boxes were brilliantly lit also, and I don't know what was in them. They were gifts of some sort. At times light particles would fling out of the boxes like sparkler firecrackers. The glory of heaven poured down and faith and praise went up, so just a continual column of light was seen from your house to heaven... Your name is Walker, and that's not by accident. Walk on, woman of God. You are a warrior sent to disperse darkness wherever you go, and that you will do."

Wow. Wow. Can you picture that in your mind's eye? My friend has a gift for describing the unseen; the spiritual realm which we know exists. We know it. The WORD tells us it is so. He will command His angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways so that you will not strike your foot against a stone ([Ps 91:9-12](#)). So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. ([II Corinthians 4:18](#))

Do you feel like an unbeatable, unstoppable warrior in this world? Do you see with your eyes of faith the huge angels all around you? If the Spirit is in you, if you are in Jesus, you are unbeatable! YOU ARE! The power of GOD is with you, and His heavenly servants as well!

So I greet my robins, my angel sentries. I picture the huge angels all around me, and I praise God. I praise God for His strength, His power, His presence. I thank Him for the gifts the angels are bending down to give me: your messages of hope – in guestbook entries, e-mails, text messages, mailed cards. They light up my heart like sparkler firecrackers.

“...We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!” ([Romans 8:37](#))

Walk on, my fellow conquerors!

April 2, 2011

passing on some info: (Oh my word, I'm getting excited!!)

Important Announcement from

The Walker Run, Live for Today!

Due to the overwhelming response of participants for the race (thank you, thank you!), we are now offering and *strongly encouraging* early t-shirt pick up:

EARLY T-SHIRT PICK-UP

When: Friday night, April 8th

Where: STAR Physical Therapy at

A-Game Sportsplex

215 Gothic Court

Franklin, TN 37967

Time: 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

If you are not able to pick up your shirt on Friday evening, we request that you *please* come early on Saturday morning. T-shirt pick up for those pre-registered and day of registration will start at 7:00 a.m.

Also, at 7:30 a.m. Saturday morning, we will begin announcements followed by a special presentation for the Walker family and a prayer before the race begins at 8:00 a.m. It is our hope to have as many people as possible through t-shirt pick-up and lined up and ready for “opening ceremonies.”

We also ask that you carpool if possible. There will be overflow parking available at Granny White Park where there is a paved walkway that leads to the high school from the park. Please allow for extra time.

OVERFLOW PARKING

Granny White Park

610 Granny White Pike

Brentwood, TN 37027

Again, we thank you for your support of this event and your cooperation in any of the above ways to make race day as efficient as possible. We look forward to seeing you all there!

Please visit www.thewalkerrun.weebly.com for additional race day information.

April 4, 2011

Alright, well, I'll start with the obligatory answers to “How are you doing?” For that is a frequent question, and I am thankful that so many care enough to ask.

(Pause to say hello to my robin- he just flew up to perch gracefully on a tree branch just outside my office window. He's HUGE, by the way. I think I neglected to mention that.)

I'm tired. I'm emotionally tired and I'm physically tired. I'm actually tired of talking about cancer. I'm tired of being constipated and having to work so hard with so many different methods of attack just to try and get some “movement.” I'm tired of the fact that I feel and sound like a BM-obsessed geriatric (no offense intended to all the very wonderful and pleasant geriatric souls that I know) and I'm only 33. This has never been an issue with me before but seems to be my reaction to the chemo.

I'm tired of my nostrils being so sore and sensitive, also a side effect. I'm tired of bloody discharge when I blow my nose every morning, thanks to rawness and coumadin-induced blood flow.

I'm tired of being tired. Yesterday was a beautiful day here but I didn't have energy to do

anything beyond go to church, though I was thankful I could do that.
I'm tired of this bad taste in my throat that lasts long after the nausea is over.
I'm tired of living life every other week.

But I really don't want to whine. I just really don't. I'm saying all the above to try and be real – to be honest and transparent and real. I don't want to give the impression that I'm somehow above some self-pity. I do struggle.

Now that that's out of the way, I just want to say that mostly, I'M EXCITED!!!! Seriously excited about "The Walker Run, Live For Today."

(If you didn't see my previous post – check it out for important info about the event.)

I'm excited about the event for so many, many reasons:

1. Lord willing, I get to be around to see it and be there! These kind of things often happen only after someone has passed away. NOT while they are still living and walking around!
2. We will all get to see tangible evidence of what **one life** that is not perfect but is ever seeking God and *His* perfection can mean, how many other lives it touches. That is one thing I am learning. Sure, many of you who will participate have only just come to know me, but many who will be there will be there because of how my "little life" as I call it, has touched you in some way in the past. I know it's not just me though. We'll see how my parents' lives and in-laws' lives have touched others, how my siblings have touched others. What a ripple effect simple obedience to God can have!
3. Along the same vein, we get to see what a BIG thing God can do through 4 sweet girls who just wanted to show their friend some support. My sweet friends, also PTs: Amy, Lisa, Rachel and Jennifer – who have amazing talents but have never planned an event like this before have just hit it out of the ballpark! They had an idea born out of love, stepped out in faith, and God took it and multiplied it like the loaves and fishes! (They won't tell me how many are registered, but they say it is OVERWHELMING and they are just blown away!)
4. I get to see most all of my PT school classmates. What a crew we are!
5. I get to meet many of you who are praying for me, encouraging me, and keeping me going.
6. My family – Piggs and Walkers, who are hurting as much or maybe more than me – get to see how amazingly supported Brian, Camden, Scott, and I are!

I could go on and on. (Please note that money is not on the list. I truly keep forgetting that part. But I am convinced that we are going to keep getting to do great good with the funds that are raised!!)

If you can't be there, that is SO FINE! I am equally thankful just that you even read my words here; that you've offered even one prayer to the Father for me, for us.

If you are going to walk that morning and can get a picture of yourselves, PLEASE DO. E-mail them to thewalkerrun@yahoo.com and they will get to me.

Now, I have more I want to say, but I think I'll write it a little later and maybe post it tomorrow. There is some housework that needs to be savored (more on that later.)

As always, thank you for caring for me.

“But the Lord is [our] support. He brought [us] out into a spacious place; He rescued [us] because

He delighted in us!”

[Psalm 18:19](#)

April 8, 2011

These thoughts have been stirring in my head for the past several weeks and today I woke up in the wee hours of the morning and couldn't quit the “writing in my head.” These are the times I usually feel I need to put these thoughts to paper.

Please know right now that the following really has nothing to do with cancer, so if you only come to this site to check my progress, then be forewarned: you may want to quit reading.

Actually, now that I think about it, these thoughts actually need to be put into action, not just “to paper”.

I've been convicted again. A beautiful African American woman at my church has made me ashamed of myself, bless her soul.

Imagine this with me: Imagine someone gives you a free ticket to the final four (or if you aren't a sports fan, a free ticket to a cool concert or play). You aren't sure where your seat is, but you are just excited to be going because YOUR TEAM has made it to the big game! You walk in, hand the attendant your ticket, and he says, “You can sit anywhere you want in the whole arena. Even down on the front row if you want!” You've had the good fortune to arrive a bit early and there are lots of open seats. You say, “But how will I know if I'm sitting in someone else's seat?” He answers, “Oh, there are no assigned seats. It is just first come, first serve.” So you say, “AWESOME! I'm headed up to the nosebleed section. I want to sit pretty far back from the action, where I might get distracted and not be able to see well much less pay attention.”

No? That's not what you'd do? I wouldn't.

But that's what I've done for years... at church.

Now imagine this with me: Imagine walking into a church service to see the front pews of the auditorium comfortably filled. To see people sitting close together, as close to the action as they

can get. To see them talking easily with each other, eagerly anticipating worship, not worried about “taking someone’s spot” because there are no assigned seats. Would you assume that they were all related to each other? That some big family reunion must have gone on in town and now they’ve all decided to come to church together?

Guess what – that’s what every church service is! We are all related in Christ and our time of worship is a grand reunion after being out in the world as foreigners, strangers, and aliens.

So why do I instead choose to sit 20 feet away from the next person until crowding and maybe a polite usher force us closer together?

Why do church staff have to block off the balcony, the back pews, the side sections, in order to get us all to sit close together, down front?

What must God think when he sees us desire the close seats at concerts and sporting events and then angle for the back pews at His gathering, at His table?

Is it because we don’t want to be that close to the action? We don’t come to church to get emotionally involved, like we do when we emotionally cheer on our favorite team, right?

Here are some of my excuses:

I want to sit near my friends, the people I know. And then I want to complain about how it’s hard to get to know other people at this big church. Yeah, Sara, that makes a lot of sense. And how much time do you spend chatting during the service anyway! That’s not what you’re there for.

Well, what if I have to get up in the middle of the service? I don’t want to be a distraction. Yeah, I think I had to get up in the middle of a service all of 2 times in 2010, so this is a valid reason for me, right? I think not. (For some folks it is, I know.)

What about that James passage about not taking the choice seats? ([James 2:2-4](#)) Shouldn’t I leave the front seats for a visitor, because those are the best seats? Um, every time I go to visit an unfamiliar church, that’s right where I want to go – right up in front on the front row, by myself. Yeah right.

So I’ve been convicted by this beautiful lady at church who sits on the front row, alone. I’ve watched as she sits with rapt attention on our minister as he shares the words and thoughts of God. She is so focused, so peaceful, so obviously thrilled to be there and so oblivious to everything else going on around her save her experience of worship to our Father. She nods, says, “Yes, Yes Jesus” as we sing, as we listen to truth. Not in a distracting way; not in an attention-seeking way. In a “true fan” way. She truly worships for an audience of ONE.

And I am ashamed. I am ashamed that I don’t have such a desire to be “close to the action” that I don’t even care that I’m sitting up there alone, that I don’t care that people have “watched me” walk up that far. I am ashamed that I seek the “back half” of the auditorium because that way I probably won’t have to meet new people at church.

And I wonder. What must God think when HE enters our place of worship to be with us? What does He think of me?

Maybe this is just me. Maybe it's not that big of a deal. But now it is a big deal for me.

So my family is going to be trying to move a little closer, down front. NOT because we want to "be seen" but because we want to show God we are pretty happy to be there.

I'd sure be happy if you joined us if you can. But rest assured I will not judge if you don't. I know there may be many reasons you need to sit near the back.

I just want my family to show God that we are excited to be at His table.

Maybe, just maybe, one day our worship services really will start to look like one BIG family reunion.

(And if that day comes, my apologies to the ushers who may miss their jobs! ;))

Thanks for reading, and just think about it. That's all I ask.

April 13, 2011

It is Wednesday morning and I am in the middle of round 6 of chemotherapy. For those who may be new to my journey, I went into the oncologist's office yesterday, had lab work done, had a visit with the oncologist, and then stayed in the treatment room for 3 hours of chemotherapy infusion via a port-a-cath that sits under the skin just below my right collarbone. Once those medicines are infused, I am sent home with one additional medication that is pushed in by a pump. That med takes about 48 hours to be infused. So today I am sitting at home in silence, except for the clicking on my keyboard and the click of my pump every few minutes as another .1 ml of drug is infused. I wrote several weeks ago how the pump is not physically heavy, but is mentally devastating in its weight, because it "reminds me of the giant I am facing."

And then God sent another angel my way. For my sweet friend Laura Beth, who insists she's not a writer, sent me a beautiful text message that read:

"I'm visualizing the chemotherapy as the Holy Spirit today. May you be filled with the goodness and healing that only HE can provide. May you be reminded of His power and strength with every "click" of medicine. His Power is IN you."

Once again God sends an angel to help me control my mind.

It's all in the perspective with which you CHOOSE to view the world. Thank you, LB, for refocusing my perspective.

Now, as to the Walker Run, Live For Today 5k this weekend. How do I even begin??

I have told several people that it just may be the highlight of my life so far. I know I should not put it above my wedding, or the birth of my children, but man, oh, man, it sure is close.

I arrived early to the race, so that I would have plenty of time to speak with as many people as I could, including the volunteers that arrived at 6 am! (I wasn't that early!) When I arrived I was already astounded at the number of people working to make the event happen. Each had their job, and people were working in huge teams to accomplish their tasks. I was pleased to see my friends Amy, Lisa, Jennifer, and Rachel calmly observing, only occasionally directing. These amazing (I know I need to stop overusing that word but it is so appropriate) women, PTs, who had NEVER BEFORE organized an event like this – had it running like a well-oiled machine. This becomes even more significant once you know the number of people who were there: over 1200 participants. Yes, one thousand two hundred runners/walkers. HUGE.

Then the participants began arriving and I was dumbstruck. They came from everywhere and soon I looked out and it was a sea of people. I started to get weepy. Little Sara, who thought for 33 years that she was unloved and insignificant, looked out over a crowd of 1200 people all there to show their abounding love and support. I am holding back tears even now.

It was a beautiful morning. I hadn't watched any weather reports, but I was told by one person that if we did have one of the isolated rain showers that were predicted, it was supposed to arrive in Brentwood at 8 am.

Let me tell you what happened instead at 8 am.

We, my family and the race organizers, were standing in the bed of a truck, Brian and I having just been presented with a check for over \$30,000. I had said my thanks to the masses, trembling and still in total shock that these people were here for me, for my family. Then our dear minister came to say a beautiful prayer for all of us. He thanked God for the beautiful morning, because it was beautiful, though slightly overcast. As I stood there with my head bowed and eyes closed, as he concluded his prayer, a great light shone in through my closed eyelids. I kid you not. I opened my eyes and the clouds that had been shielding the sun had moved away during the prayer. God showed His presence to me and to the others on the truck in that moment, at 7:56 am.

I didn't mention that I noticed that to anyone, but then later that afternoon, Rachel, who'd also been on the truck, asked me and another girl who'd been up there: "Did you feel, when Walt spoke of the weather in his prayer, a sudden distinct warmth from the sun?" "Yes!" I shouted. "I noticed that and light, and I'm so glad you noticed it too." She then said, "It's like God wanted us to know that He was here." My thoughts exactly.

The race organizers have many such stories of how God worked in the behind-the-scenes planning to make everything come together so smoothly. And boy did it! The entire event went off without a hitch.

Let me tell you of my recent epiphany.

Last week Camden wasn't feeling well. He doesn't get sick often, but when he does he is really pitiful. For those who don't know, he's had two very frightening febrile (fever-induced) seizures. So when he is ill, I become very concerned and watch him like a hawk. We gave Camden a lukewarm-to-slightly warm bath to try and combat the chance of a rapidly rising body

temperature, and then pulled his shivering body out and wrapped him in a robe and laid him down under several warm blankets. I then snuggled in close to try and add my body warmth to help him stop shivering. He finally stopped, and was just lying there, comfortable and drowsy. I stayed beside him and just stroked his hair, whispering to him about happy things. He then just out-of-the-blue said, "I love you, Mommy."
(He is sweet but NEVER does this.)

I stayed beside him because I just wanted him to know I was close. That he was not alone.

And then I had another vision. A vision of my Jesus, using multiple methods to try and show me that He is with me, holding me, never leaving my side. Do you know that's how He has used you, my friends? He used Laura Beth to show me he's with me even when I face my giant. He used all of you at the race (and used the sun) to hold me even closer, in a great big bear hug!

You are truly the arms of Jesus to me. You have helped me to find peace in this storm and stop shivering in fear. I encourage you to continue to be that for other hurting people. I believe God wants to use us all to comfort the hurting, because that is exactly what Jesus would do if He were here in the flesh. We are Christ's body – what a privilege!

The thoughts of God:

[Isaiah 66:13](#) – As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you...

Thank you for comforting me, Jesus. I love you

April 16, 2011

I would appreciate extra prayers because this round of chemo is the worst yet. I'm just not sure how much more of this I can take.

But I wanted to share this wonderful quote that I read today:

HOPE is the ability to hear the music of the future...

FAITH is having the courage to dance to it today.

(Peter Kuzmic)

My Father- Lift my spirit and set my feet to dancing. May the sweet joyful music of my future be not far off. Come quickly to my deliverance.

In sweet Jesus name, Amen

April 19, 2011

Thank you for the prayers! And for all the encouraging words. I am finally on the upswing now, though the swingin' up is taking longer than I'd gotten used to with the last rounds. In case it's not apparent: I'm impatient, don't like being still, don't like having to lay around, and I'm pretty much a weenie with physical discomfort.

I have had more trouble with nausea/vomiting and eating/drinking this round. Also, apparently SOMEONE over-prayed for my constipation issue because I've swung to the other extreme. Just kidding about the over-praying thing of course! But all those factors combined to get me very dehydrated apparently. When I went in to the clinic yesterday, I was convinced I would find out I was severally anemic as well, but PRAISE GOD, my hematocrit was just fine and I didn't need a blood transfusion to get me back on track. I was seriously so weak I also wouldn't have been surprised if I'd had to be admitted to the hospital, so again, PRAISE GOD, I was thrilled that I felt so much better with just one liter of IV fluids. Your prayers continue to be answered.

So again, THANK YOU!

Today, I am still not as good as I usually am on my "off weeks," but I am significantly better. I have to lay down a lot, which my perfectionist, gotta-be-productive-self rages against, but as I've covered before, it is good for me to have to be still. I have to lay down to stop the stomach cramping, but I am thankful that that usually works.

I am looking forward, Lord willing, to a beautiful weekend with family, celebrating the first birthday of one of my precious nephews and celebrating the most wonderful, amazing event in the history of the world, the resurrection of Christ.

I wish for all of you to have a joyful Easter full of family, friends, and celebrating with reckless abandon the VICTORY of our Lord Jesus!

Love and peace to you all!
Sara

April 21, 2011

Yesterday in Ladies Bible Class, which I thank God that I was feeling well enough to attend, we discussed our answers to a question that went something like this:

"Is there a passage of scripture that you applied in your past that helped prepare you and sustain you through a certain difficult time in your life?" Something like that.

I thought you all might like to know my answer; the passage that I committed to memory years ago, never knowing that it would take on a new and deeper meaning, that I would lean so heavily on it in my mid-30s.

[Proverbs 3:5-6](#)

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.”

It is the first scripture my boys ever memorized, and they can both recite it to you now, because I began teaching it to them as soon as they learned to talk. If a child can learn to say please and thank you, can learn names of the objects around them, they can learn to string these words together.

I can think of no better words that I want seared deep, deep, deep down into my boys’ hearts and minds. They may not understand exactly what the words mean at this point, but the words are true and life-giving, and I believe they will serve them well through whatever challenges their lives hold; including, God-forbid, the loss of their mother.

I remember sitting in a Bible class that my father was teaching and he said this, “The whole of the Bible comes down to this: God is saying, ‘Do you TRUST me?’ That is the point and question of all of scripture. DO YOU TRUST ME?”

Do you see that when you read the Word? He gave Adam the garden, with one rule, and asked, “Do you trust me to provide your needs and trust that I’m right when I ask you to stay away from the one tree?” Adam failed, and blessings were lost. He asked Abraham many times, “Do you trust me?” Enough to follow me to a strange land? Trust me to give you a son when it no longer seems possible? To give me back the son of promise? Abraham did, and oh how God directed his steps and showered blessings.

The nation of Israel – when they trusted, God did great and miraculous signs and wonders, when they failed, God allowed persecutions and captivity to remind them of where their trust needed to be placed.

Do you trust me? He asked Ruth, he asked Esther, he asked David, he asked Job. And God showed Himself to be faithful, ever faithful when HE ALONE was trusted.

In the New Testament, it continues. Jesus asks, “Do you trust me, trust the Father, enough to live differently? Do you trust that God knows what is best for your life?”

It all comes down to trust. The Bible is a blessed account of how God has proven time and time again, in both individual lives and in dealing with huge nations, that He can be trusted and is the *only* thing to be trusted.

So this is my life’s desire, to trust. And in these days, the second phrase of the scripture has taken on new meaning: “and lean not on your own understanding.” There are many, many things about suffering, especially my own, which I do not understand. But that’s ok. It is actually a relief to me that I do not have to understand; I do not have to figure out the great cosmic meaning of human suffering, of my own suffering.

God only asks me to **trust** and to “acknowledge Him in all my ways.”

All my ways. That’s not a Sunday-morning-only kind of action. It’s an all-encompassing phrase, indicating a God-centered and filled life. Do you trust me, Sara? Enough to **acknowledge Mein ALL YOUR WAYS**: in laundry, in school drop-off, in treating patients, in serving your husband, in cooking dinner, in sitting in chemo treatment rooms, in illness?

This is the life I seek, and the life I want my boys to seek.

And then we come to the ending: the **promise**, the *blessed, beautiful* promise: “and He will direct your paths.”

Yes, my Father, that’s what I need. That’s what you’ve proven you’ll do time and time again: for Abraham, for Israel, for Ruth, for Esther, for David, for so many...

Here’s a song that says it all:

“I’m running back to your promises, one more time. Lord that’s all I can hold on to. I’ve gotta say this has taken me by surprise, but nothing surprises you.

Before a heartache can ever touch my life, it has to go through your hands. And even though I keep asking why, I keep asking why...

No matter what, I’m gonna love you. No matter what, I’m gonna need you.

I know that you can find a way to keep me from the pain, but if not, if not, **I’ll trust you**. No matter what.

When I’m stuck and there’s nothing else, by myself. I’m just sitting in silence. There’s no way I can make it without your help. I won’t even try it.

I know you have your reasons for everything, so I will keep believing. Whatever I might be feeling, God you are my hope, and you will be my strength.

No matter what, I’m gonna love you. No matter what, I’m gonna need you. I know that you can find a way to keep me from the pain, but if not, if not, **I’ll trust you**. No matter what.”

So my precious Father, I acknowledge you. I acknowledge you with my head *and* my heart, my words *and* my deeds. I do not understand. I do not understand many, many things. But I am glad that you do. That you know and grasp and understand *and control*. Please direct my steps. I know that you will, for you have promised, and you cannot lie. Thank you for caring for me, little me, oh Great God of the Universe. Thank you for bending down to guide my steps. In the name of Jesus I speak and cry out to you. Amen.

April 26, 2011

Alright, do you want the good news or the bad news first?

What? The bad news you say? Me too. I like to end on a positive note.

And really, it’s not bad news. It’s more like let’s eat our vegetables before getting to dessert. Vegetables aren’t bad, they’re just not as much fun as dessert. Unless we’re talking about juiced veggies, like beets or spinach. Then that’s bad news...

What? Get on with it you say? Sorry for the stream of consciousness. Welcome to my brain on drugs...

The vegetables: I am in the middle of round 7 of chemo, started it yesterday. That means I only had 4 days of feeling good between last round and this one. I had planned to insist on postponing this round for two weeks, because we are set to go to DISNEY WORLD!! WOOP WOOP! next week and I didn't want to risk not being fully recovered from this round in time. So I had looked forward to this being a great no-chemo week. Dr. Penley, my oncologist did let me have the final say, of course, but he felt strongly that we should keep at it and not get off schedule. And here's the good, no great, no FANTASTIC news why...

The dessert: My last CEA (tumor marker obtained by blood test every two weeks) was NORMAL!! PRAISE THE LORD! NORMAL, NORMAL, NORMAL, NORMAL, NORMAL! I am seriously in love with that particular word today, like little boys love mud. I am dancing around in it today! (The word normal, not actual mud that is.) When Dr. Penley told me that yesterday, I said, "That's really great news, right? Like jump up and down, shout for joy great?!" His response was, "Well, our goal here in managing the emotional responses to cancer is not to let our highs be too high nor our lows be too low. But yes, this is really great news. You are responding beautifully to the treatment." I like Dr. Penley. He's a good level of encouraging but I am learning he is definitely a realist. Doesn't sugar coat anything. But don't tell, him – I'm jumping up and down and shouting for joy anyway!

My understanding of the CEA, which is very minimal, is that it is a measure of disease activity, and the less cancer you have, the lower the number. A "normal" number doesn't necessarily mean all my cancer is gone, only a scan of some sort could tell us for sure. It does mean I have significantly less cancer than when I started this process, and who knows, maybe NONE! So please, please get on your knees some time today and thank God for more wonderful news!

In other news, literally actually, my article hits newstands next month. I was asked by the nice folks at Focus Press (focuspress.org) to write an article for their THINK Magazine. I think you can order it digitally from their website, or I think the magazine is available at Barnes and Nobles bookstores, possibly at Christian bookstores also. My article is in the May issue. So I am officially published now! This is a dream come true for me, the always aspiring writer, so I'm really on cloud 9 today. I would copy the whole article here for you to read, but I don't think that's quite fair to the Focus folks, so I won't do that. So for those of you who just can't get enough of Sara Walker (bah hah hah hah- even I've had enough of myself!) just run right out and get you a copy of their fine publication, or download it in your pajamas. Thank you, Focus Press for fulfilling my dream.

In more Sara Walker news, I think another article about me and my family, written by the fab Becky Andrews, comes out in next month's Wilson Living magazine (as in Wilson County, TN – Brian's hometown and current home of most of Brian's family). I continue to be blown away by how God, through you all, is spreading this story He is writing in my life, our lives.

I am thankful for much today: NORMAL CEA, minimal side effects so far today, that I had a wonderful Easter weekend with my family, my article, and you all. Thank you for the myriad ways you bless my life.

May you have a wonderful, Spirit-led day full of rejoicing, full of hope and filled with many joyful moments!

May 1, 2011

The battle of the mind, oh, how it ebbs and flows.

So much good in my life right now, and yet so much difficult. I have much to be thankful for, and yet at night, always at night (though not every night, thank God) I battle the demon of discouragement.

As this journey with cancer stretches out over many slow hours, days, weeks, months, I grow weary and discouraged.

Most of the time I feel a great relief in knowing Who is in control and knowing that it is not me. There is an enormous relief of pressure to know that a greater, infinitely wise Power controls both my destiny and my daily adventures.

However, some of the time, I feel like a marionette. A marionette whose strings are being jerked along through a very sinister, dark play, a painted smile on my lips but hollow to the core and powerless, so powerless.

This is falsehood, an image of Satan, and I intellectually know it. But it is a falsehood which repeatedly comes to mind and I fight. I fight with the only weapon in my arsenal: my Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

I woke in the night one night last week, and wept. The discouragement demon swelled. Praise God, He reminded me of my Sword, and I pulled out my Bible. I rarely do what I'm about to describe, but it was dark, I didn't want to wake Brian, and I also needed the Spirit to lead: I decided to just open the Bible to a "random" (read: God-chosen) page and read, hoping God would take me to life-giving words that I needed in that moment. I thumbed across the closed page edges and then pulled it apart quickly, letting it open at a "random" page. Oh how God provided! For these are the words I read, and they are ones I don't recall reading before:

[Psalms 70:16-24](#) (emphasis mine)

"I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign Lord;
I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone.
Since my youth, O God, you have taught me,
and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.
Even when I am OLD AND GRAY, do not forsake me, O God,
till I declare your power to the next generation,
your might to all who are to come,

Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God,
you who have done great things.
Who, O God, is like you?
Though you HAVE MADE ME SEE TROUBLES, MANY AND BITTER,

YOU WILL RESTORE MY LIFE AGAIN;
from the depths of the earth
YOU WILL AGAIN BRING ME UP
You will increase my honor
and COMFORT ME ONCE AGAIN.

I will praise you with the harp
for your faithfulness, O my God;
I will sing praise to you with the lyre,
O Holy One of Israel.
My lips will shout for joy
when I sing praise to you –
I, whom you have redeemed.
My tongue will tell of your righteous acts
all day long,
for those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion.

I believe I can praise and live joyfully even now, but I also believe a day is coming when this cancer will be a thing of the past, a distant memory, and even more JOY will fill my days. I believe I will get to say as Job says, “The Lord made [Job] prosperous again and gave Him twice as much as he had before. The Lord blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the first.” I believe in my heart of heart those days are coming. It is the waiting that is hard. But God gives me the strength when I need it. He equips for each day, one day at a time.

Thank you, O My Father.

May 11, 2011

I am still here.

I have just been disconnected from my pump today after completing Round 8 of chemotherapy. For that reason, I am still not feeling too well, so this post will be just a quick catch-up list of info.

1. We had an wonderful, wonderful time in Disney World. The entire trip was a great gift from God – beautiful weather, I had more than enough energy, the boys were SUPER TROOPERS and loved it all, and we just had a blast. I cried several times out of sheer overwhelming joy.
2. Dr. Penley informed me Monday that my last CEA was also normal. (This means it has been normal for an entire month!) I am scheduled for another CT scan of my abdomen on FRIDAY, MAY 20th, and he said he expects it to show continued progress since my CEA has been so good. I am praying of course that it shows even more progress than he would have guessed. (NO cancer at all would be just lovely!)

3. I (and maybe Brian too) am scheduled to speak in the auditorium class at Brentwood Hills C of C, next Wednesday night, May 18th, JUST about our experience with Anna's stillbirth. The purpose of the class as I understand it is to share our "living illustration" of God's work in our lives. I am fairly nervous, but am trusting God that His Spirit will guide us to tell this part of the story He is writing in our lives. Although I know that the less people there, the more comfortable I will be; I also believe God has wants us to share our burdens and more importantly His triumphs in the midst of storms. I saw so clearly His presence with us throughout that whole experience, and feel compelled to share it. So I hope that if anyone reading here would benefit from hearing about our stillbirth experience, you will join us next Wednesday night at 6:30. (www.brentwoodhills.org)

That's all I feel up to typing tonight. If we ever get our home computer fixed, I will attempt to upload pictures from Disney.

Thank you as always for caring for me.

Love to you all.

-Your Sara

May 15, 2011

I've been thinking a lot lately about the concept of "grumbling."

I fear I have been doing a fair amount of grumbling.

You see, it is a curious thing to simultaneously appreciate and hate the drugs that are making me better. I began chemotherapy on February 1st with a sense of thankfulness. After weeks of the mentally and physically exhausting diagnostic process, with so much unknown and feeling so helpless, I was so excited to be able to start doing something to "fight back" against the cancer. As mentioned before, I was excited to "start kickin' cancer's booty."

Now, as chemotherapy approaches, I am filled with dread and I get pretty whiny, especially to God. "God, why do I have to do more of this treatment? Why do I have to be confined to my couch for the next 5 days, vomit repeatedly, be unable to speak more than a few words at a time without becoming more nauseated, etc?"

And I wonder. Does God get angry? Does He say, "My child – you are blessed to live in an age where these treatments are developed, to be able to afford these treatments, to have multiple medications to combat the side effects. You were calling to me to cure your cancer, and I have given you access to the drugs needed! Would you go back to the days of knowing you were ill but not fighting against it?"

I wonder. For scripture speaks against this grumbling.

[Numbers 11:1](#) Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the Lord, and

when He heard them His anger was aroused. Then fire from the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp.

[Numbers 14:1-2](#), 26-27 That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert!”...The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites.”

In fact, I encourage you to read all of Numbers 11-14. It is a sobering tale.

See, as I’ve learned about those complaining Israelites since childhood, I’ve pictured it this way: I’ve always imagined a bunch of dusty old Hebrews, walking around their tents muttering yiddish under their breath all day long, muttering complaints about their situation all day, without stop. I equated grumbling with discontented muttering – very audible and constant. But that’s probably not right. They probably had moments of smiles, moments of laughing at their adorable children, moments of sharing jokes, etc. But their overall mindset was to focus on what they didn’t have (meat!). They mistakenly felt God didn’t know what He was doing and should have left them in Egypt. God was present, was providing for their daily needs, and yet they prayed for more, for better, for different.

Yep, that’s me. God is giving me what I need to LIVE, and I grumble about how it’s slow, how it’s not pleasant. I don’t want the manna anymore – even though it’s keeping me alive. I want meat, good tasting meat. I’m sorry God.

This is also sobering: it says they “complained about their HARDSHIPS.” Yeah, that sounds like they were justified in what they were complaining about, doesn’t it? They weren’t complaining about good things, but about hardships. Hardships. But guess what?! That didn’t make it OK to complain!

We justify our complaining, whining, neediness before God, don’t we? Maybe you don’t, but I do. But God, it’s so HARD. What I’m dealing with is so HARD! So you are ok with me whining to you about it, right?

I’m just asking that we think about this. I know, God does say to cast our burdens on Him, does love us enough to handle our fears and needs. I believe that. I am encouraged by the frank words of David, who cried out in the Psalms about injustices against himself.

But do we take it too far? Does casting our cares and burdens become grumbling? God will judge. I think I should spend more time recalling God’s sovereignty, His faithfulness, His constant Love, His daily provisions. Not whining about poor, pitiful me.

(Aside: Again, I encourage you to be careful as you try to minister to hurting people. We are probably too quick at times to say, “It’s ok to be down. It’s ok to complain, it’s ok to be angry.” There may be a place for that, but I’m not sure that is the best way to encourage someone who is suffering, at least most of the time.)

[I Corinthians 10:10](#) And do not grumble, as some of them did – and were killed by the destroying angel.

I believe as Christians, we should all be grateful optimists. We should all see the glass as half full – NO MATTER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. ([Philippians 4:10-13](#))

Don't rationalize by calling yourself a "realist." Before you let any complaining word come out of your mouth, think about GRUMBLING. Don't be a grumbler! (Don't make me call you out on Facebook – a HOTBED for grumbling!)

Sorry, don't want to be judgmental. Certainly, I'm working on it too.

Cultivate a grateful heart. I think that's Sarah Young's phrase. If we really do this, it is quite a good preventative measure against grumbling. If we are busy counting our blessings, it doesn't leave time for complaining. And there is ALWAYS something for which to be thankful. Like just now, I can be thankful that I figured out how to end that last sentence without a preposition! Hee hee. No, there are even better things than that, if you can imagine!

In my example, even when chemo has me feeling awful, I can be thankful that I am still alive to be "feeling" anything, even bad. And we can ALL be thankful that in the end (really, the beginning), we will be in a place of no more sorrow, no more tears, and no more pain! Nothing can take that away from us.

"To be grateful is to recognize the love of God in everything He has given us – And He has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of His love, every moment of existence is a gift of grace."

-Thomas Merton

"Maybe we could spend a moment at the end of each day and decide to remember that day – whatever may have happened – as a day to be grateful for. In so doing we increase our hearts capacity to choose joy."

-Henri Nouwen

(For those of us with kids, let's not wait until November to ask our kids what they are thankful for. Maybe we could ask every night at bedtime – "What is something that you were very thankful for today?")

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with THANKSGIVING, present your requests to God."

-[Philippians 4:6](#)

Just some thoughts that have been simmerin' and swishin' in the old noggin these days.

Here's to a grateful week!

I'm grateful for all of you!

– Your Sara

May 19, 2011

Precious friends and brothers and sisters in Christ –

My CT scan tomorrow is at 11:30 am CST. I will report to the imaging center at 10:30 to drink the contrast solution.

I am not allowed to eat or drink anything for 6 hours prior to the test. This means I will essentially be fasting from breakfast.

I would like to humbly ask that anyone who feels so called will also fast from eating in the morning until after my test time, and be in prayer for me and the results of the scan.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will post results of the scan as soon as I know – that will probably not be until Monday.

– Your Sara

May 23, 2011

About an hour ago, I spoke with my oncologist's nurse, who gave me some information about my scan results. These are almost her exact words:

The scan showed what is known as “a mixed response” to the chemotherapy. This means that it has worked well in some areas, but in other areas it is not doing what it was hoped it would do.” She indicated that this may mean it is time for a change in treatment plan – perhaps a different cocktail of chemotherapy drugs.

I am to sit down with Dr. Penley in his office tomorrow and go over the scan results in better detail. So I will know more tomorrow.

This is not terribly surprising information. I was told from the beginning that there are several treatment options (“guns in the toolbelt”) to fight colon cancer and that I would “likely need all of them.”

The trouble I have is that I know the only gun that really matters – the power of The Great Physician. And I know He only needs one bullet. So understanding why He is asking me to wait is what I cannot understand.

I know you've told me I'm inspiring; that I have great faith. But I don't. My faith is so very, very weak. So very, very small. I am so tired and can't find one inspirational thing to say. I have cried an ocean of tears today, over the last several days. I am worn out. I am discouraged.

This is what I feel:

Psalm 77

I cried out to God for help;
I cried out to God to hear me.
When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;
at night I stretched out untiring hands
and my soul refused to be comforted.
I remembered you, O God, and I groaned;
I mused, and my spirit grew faint.

You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.
I thought about the former days, the years of long ago;
I remembered my songs in the night.
My heart mused and my spirit inquired:
Will the Lord reject forever?
Will he never show his favor again?
Has his unfailing love vanished forever?
Has his promise failed for all time?
Has God forgotten to be merciful?
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?

So now I go to pick up my boys from school. I will take them out for a special treat to celebrate the last day of school. I will hide my anguish as best I can and attempt to be happy, to be content, to trust, to wait. It is such a battle. And I am so tired of the battle. So very, very tired. But I must battle, for them, for my precious, precious boys.

Lord Jesus,
come and take us home soon. This world is not home. I need you. I need you so much. Lord, don't be still. Show your power to save, to restore. Show the power of prayer, of so many, many prayers. Forgive my weakness, my pitiful faith. Thank you for understanding – for experiencing this same feeling, the feeling of God being so far off. I cling to you and know you know what I feel.
I love you, Jesus. I know you love me, God, and I am trying, trying to trust you.

May 26, 2011

How can I possibly thank you for the way you have encouraged my soul, lifted my spirits, and made me feel loved?

I am convinced that no one going through a battle with cancer has ever been more loved, more supported, or had more cheering warriors on her side.

You impress me with the perfect words of encouragement, the perfect reminders to my heart of TRUTH.

And now a major character flaw of mine has been exposed: impatience. Have you noticed when I speak of the gifts of the Holy Spirit I stop after love, joy, and peace? Though I've done so subconsciously, it is highly likely that that is due to the fact that He still has a lot of cultivating to do in me in order to develop this particular fruit. I am most definitely a work in progress on the patience front.

How fitting that the post that came immediately after the "grumbling" one was full of grumbling. Father, forgive me. I am a sinner and am ever thankful for your grace and mercies that are new every morning.

I met with my doctor on Tuesday. The explanation of the "mixed response" to chemo drugs was fairly complicated, but I will try to summarize:

Basically, all the cancer cells in my body are not the same. The majority of the cells it seems has responded very well to the first line of attack – the chemo combo called "FOLFIRI." However, there were some areas, masses, that had *slightly* grown because those particular cells are resistant to the FOLFIRI. This is apparently a fairly common occurrence in the practice of oncology, for many different kinds of cancers, and the doctor repeatedly said, "This is not catastrophic; this is not the wheels coming off." He said it just seems to be the time to change drugs to see if the second line of attack – FOLFOX – might be more effective at this point, especially against those resistant cells. He also said he plans to consult with Dr. Berlin at Vanderbilt about the wisdom of this change in treatment, something which I'd planned to ask him to do but he volunteered before I even asked.

The good news is that he also wanted me to have a two week break from chemotherapy treatment. So BOY OH BOY am I planning to SAVOR these next two weeks!

My dear mom called me and told me this on Monday afternoon (before I'd talked to the doctor): "Maybe this is a merciful act of God – maybe He knew you needed a break from treatment and this is how He's worked it out to give it to you." WISDOM.

As we left the doctor's office and I told Brian, "I feel much better now. Do you?", my dear rock of a husband said this: "Well, I wasn't worried anyway. I didn't feel bad about yesterday's news." Thank you God for this rock of a man.

When I'd called him at work, in tears, on Monday, he said, "Sara, just because the cancer is not all gone now doesn't mean it won't be someday." FAITH.

You see, I'd gotten complacent. I'd started looking ahead and forgetting the wise words of Jesus: Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

I'd started to imagine scenarios instead of being thankful for the blessing of TODAY. I'd forgotten that God is already taking care of tomorrow. I'd forgotten that I have no down side here: either I get to live with my boys (all 3 of them!) here on earth, or I go to a better place, full of family and friends who've gone on ahead, and with my Jesus.

Thank you for reminding me. Thank you for loving me. I think it probably sounds cheesy to say this, but my heart is so full of love for each of you that it literally feels as if it will burst. I am so blessed.

For those close friends who have seen me in person and hugged me, spoken words of hope, sent me private messages – you know who you are – I love you beyond what words can describe. I don't even feel that I "see" your outside anymore, your physical body, but instead I see your beautiful souls, your beautiful hearts, and they are connected to mine with a seemingly tangible tight cord that is unbreakable. I am so blessed.

And I hope it goes without saying, but this little church-of-christer is equally blessed by the love and support from all you Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and so on. For all who are in Jesus are One. God knows those who are His, and I believe God's people worship Him in a variety of ways and a variety of buildings. What unites us is so much more central than what divides us: our Lord Jesus Christ and our need for Him. I am glad to call you family.

What I'm trying to say is thank you. And those two words seem so inadequate. I truly love you. The Holy Spirit has used you to restore my hope, my trust, my thanksgiving, my PEACE. I feel guilty for making many of you hurt with and for me because of my overreaction and impatience. I'm sorry. I'm a work in progress.

Know what I'm looking forward to about heaven today? Getting to sit down and spend as much "time" with each of you as we want! How grand that will be!

– Your Sara

June 2, 2011

Well, friends, I have got a pool to get to with my boys as we attempt to savor the beautiful days of summer while I feel good, but I did want to tell you that I finally uploaded a few pictures of our family at Disney World. Hopefully you can see the pure joy on all of our faces. It was truly a wonderful, wonderful trip where we made many great memories as a family. I can't thank you enough for making it possible for us, financially.

I hope to put many, many more pics up on our blog eventually – my goal is to get our home computer back up and running in the next few weeks. So for any who want to see even more Disney pics (eventually), the address is <http://bscwalker.blogspot.com>

I start chemo again on June 8th (this next Wednesday.)

As always, thank you for your prayers and tremendous support.

Love,
your Sara

June 5, 2011

Interesting and a little bit eerie...

1. I wrote this on Facebook in Feb. of 2009 when the “25 random things about me” was going around:

“I wish I was better at describing the great joy, peace and love I experience everyday as a child of God. My heart hurts for the people in my life who don’t have this.”

– Never imagined so many would read my thoughts on the love, joy and peace of God.

2. My friend Sara Jo wrote this to me in a card EXACTLY one week before Anna’s stillbirth:

“My prayer for you is that you and Anna will always be close and that together you will teach many about our Father and Savior.”

– Never imagined that my experience with Anna would give me a powerful testimony about the faithful presence of God during the storms of our life and that I would have the platform I’ve had to share it.

3. I wrote this about 1-2 weeks JUST BEFORE Anna’s stillbirth (the beginning of my “storm”) in response to a “favorite passage” question:

“If the question is what verse lately has made an impact on me and been a comfort to me, it would be [Romans 9:20-21](#). “But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to the one who has formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’ Does not the Potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?” I have struggled recently with how small my life seems to be and small my role seems to be in the world and in the church. Shouldn’t I have done some great thing for God by now? I don’t like attention or being in charge, but still, shouldn’t God have done something “big” through me by now, if I’m living faithfully? Am I fulfilling His purpose for my life? He says that He who wishes to be greatest should be least, but I have trouble being least, being unnoticed and believing that’s where I should be. How am I making a difference for God like that? I find great comfort in these verses from Romans, which makes me quit worrying and questioning the Potter. It’s ok if this clay is for common use.”

-Sure sounds like I was asking for all this, doesn’t it?

It is so interesting to look back over one’s years and see the hand of God at work, leading and directing, teaching and admonishing, correcting and molding. What a stubborn piece of clay I’ve been at times, and yet He’s worked His plan, and He continues to work it out.

Finally, my mom sent me this interesting link. I encourage you to check it out. How she arrived at Jeffbridges.com is beyond me, but this is right on: <http://www.jeffbridges.com/perception.html>

June 10, 2011

It's Friday afternoon, June 10th, and I am sitting in my office and updating Caringbridge from my desktop computer. Hooray! A "small" blessing but I am SO thankful to have it up and running again.

I have not started treatment yet because at the beginning of my visit with Dr. Penley on Wednesday, he made me aware of an opportunity to be a part of a clinical trial that is looking at the efficacy of a new antiangiogenesis drug (the Avastin part of my treatment). My case lines up perfectly with their target group for the study, and I will still be getting the same chemotherapy (FOLFOX). So we are in the process of determining if I can be a part of the study. (Translation- Will insurance pay for it? Will baseline testing prove me to be safe to do it? etc, etc)

I will stress that this is NOT:

-starting experimental treatment because my case is so dire.

This IS:

-a chance for me to make a difference in the goal of improving cancer treatment without sacrificing effective care for my particular cancer.

(Excuse me, I have to go help a little 3 year old cowboy who just swaggered into the office with no shirt on and "Mr. Brown's" little toy handgun tucked into his pocket. Oh my.)

So, that's all I know for now. Hopefully I will be able to begin treatment one way or the other next week. I have had increasing upper abdominal pain (in the area of my liver and transverse colon) in the last 10 days or so, which has been very discouraging. Therefore I am anxious to get back in the ring, so to speak, and resume the fight.

But again I am reminded:

Be still. The Lord will fight for you. You need only to be still.

He is giving me just enough for each day. And He is showing His presence in each day in myriad ways: robins, sunshine, cards from you, texts from you, prayers from you, CB comments from you, ancient words of scripture that speak straight to my soul, the laughter of sweet sons...I could go on.

For those who wish to pray "specifically," please pray:

- 1) That the Lord will direct me to the right next treatment step (right “arm” or group of the clinical trial if that works out)
- 2) That my pains may diminish or continue to be manageable (I am thankful my pain med continues to control the pain at its worst: during the night. I am eternally thankful for the development of percocet!)
- 3) That my CT scan next week (which will be performed as baseline for the clinical trial if I do enter it) will not show any scary level of development over the last 3 weeks.
- 4) That God will continue to get me through the treatment, without severe side effects that could limit how much chemotherapy they can give me.

Contentment, not comfort. That is what I am to strive for. Ever increasing trust in God for daily provisions. He does not promise comfort. But He promises peace, Presence. This is what I am learning. Trust. Dependence. Contentment. I am weak, but He is strong. When my world is shaking, Heaven stands. When my heart is breaking, I never leave His hands. Never. His hands that shape the world are holding me. He is an immovable Rock that neither slumbers nor sleeps. He does not change like shifting shadows, but is the Father of LIGHT, who holds me as the apple of his eye. He rejoices over me with singing. He will turn my weeping into dancing. I sow in tears, but I shall reap joy. These are life-giving words.

And now my chair is shaking, because a squirly 3 year old cowboy is now climbing on it and attempting to spin it. I’m so thankful he still has a mommy to pester.

With Love,

Your Sara

June 13, 2011

I know it is late and many won’t read this in time, but I am scheduled for a CT scan tomorrow so will be forced to fast again until the test. It feels very presumptuous to ask, but thought there might be those who would like the opportunity to fast with me again and pray for the scan results. My scan is scheduled for 12:50 pm CST.

I am having a lot of pain tonight, but the percocet is of course “slowing me down” if you get my drift so I am hesitant to take the full dose. I would appreciate continued prayers on that front as well.

Read this in Jesus Calling a few minutes ago: “Just keep focusing on Me as we walk through this day together.” That is what I will try to do tomorrow.

– sara

June 19, 2011

Quick update today, because after talking to a couple of people I've realized I haven't kept my prayer warriors up to date.

I started chemotherapy on Friday, two days ago, and just unhooked myself from the pump a couple of hours ago. I am officially in the clinical trial, and was very thankful to find out that I was randomized to the study group I would have chosen if I had the option. I am getting one of the two avastin-type experimental drugs, and the one I'm getting has already been studied in 500 people (the other experimental drug had only been tested in 26 people so far). So Friday I began FOLFOX + IMC1121B :).

I was also told on Friday about the results of my CT scan last Tuesday. I didn't read the report this time, but Dr. Penley said the scan showed some minimal but measurable growth of my cancer. He said this was no surprise since we hadn't been actively treating it in a month. He did say it wasn't any real remarkable growth, which was a relief to me since my pain had markedly increased. I was fearful of much worse news. The scan also showed that the bases of my lungs are still free of cancer. This is always good news to me because my pain is so near my lungs that it gives me plenty of reason to be concerned about that.

So far with this round of chemo I'm managing ok. I feel badly that Brian is basically on his own today with the boys- getting them ready for church, feeding them (including finding them food- if I was a really good wife/mom I'd prepare for my down days a little better, I suppose), ending their fights, cleaning up their messes, etc- when this is Fathers Day. I haven't had as much difficulty with nausea, but enough to keep me from eating much. So far today I've had a glass of orange juice, some gatorade, a piece of toast, and 1/3 of a small ensure drink. Hopefully if I can get some more calories in I can get some more energy, which is probably my chief limitation.

Thank you as always for your concern and faithful prayers.

Happy Fathers Day to all the wonderful men out there who take that role very seriously, and especially to my Dad, Brian, Coleman, Michael, Alan, Clark and Mike. Peace and comfort to all of you who are missing your earthly fathers today.

Thank you, heavenly Father, for another day, for each breath of each day is a gift.

-Sara

June 23, 2011

It is 4 am on Thursday morning and I find myself unable to sleep. I am sitting in our home office listening to the birds sing their chorus of praise, unable to even wait until the light of day to raise their voices in song. Praise God I am awake and sitting upright. For it is not PAIN keeping me from sleep; it is not the sedative effect of percocet keeping me in sleep. (Praise God I have not had to take any pain pill for the past two days, in daytime or in the night!) After spending the last several days doing very little besides laying and sleeping, it is a joy to not feel the heavy weight of extreme fatigue and drug-induced sleepiness.

It strikes me suddenly today that the appeal of reading these random thoughts of mine on this blog is probably not due to the unsurpassed wisdom and witticism of my particular words, which my writer-aspiring self would very much like to assume, but instead is due to sheer curiosity. It strikes me that many may just have the question, "What must she think about? What thoughts would go through *my* mind if I were to have to deal with all this?" Yep, that's probably why I would read if I were in your shoes.

The answer- well, I guess you are reading it. Or really a portion of it. And the thoughts are as polar and wide-ranging as you can imagine they would be. Being on chemotherapy, being unable to drive, cook, clean, run errands, play with my children, read, watch television (for the torturous mindlessness and superficiality of it all compared to my recent life experiences!), being unable to do really anything but lie (lay?), gives one an inordinate amount of time with one's thoughts. Lots of thinking.

So this extremely long introduction leads me to my current musing: the idea of endurance, and my cloud of witnesses.

"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing." ([James 1:2-4](#), NLT)

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us." ([Hebrews 12:1](#), NLT)

Oh how little endurance I have. How my spirit cries out for relief at the first hint of discomfort. God, I want to be comfortable! Take this trial away NOW, take it away completely. I'm really done with it. Done with learning dependence on you, done with learning how to handle physical and mental weakness. I'm over this desert stuff, take me to the promised land – you know that milk and honey dripping around everywhere stuff. It's been a WHOLE SIX MONTHS you know. You know that, God? A whole SIX MONTHS. That's a lot to ask isn't it?

And I think of my cloud of witnesses.

I think of my mom's father, my dear Pappaw. The most optimistic, cheerful, loving life and loving work man I've ever known, diagnosed with Parkinson's at a young age. Watching that disease slowly deteriorate his body but NEVER deteriorate his spirit, his hope, his drive, his love of life. How he sought out and gained NEW preaching and teaching roles while in it's grip, refusing to be slowed. How I never heard ONE WORD of complaint, of self-pity, of crying out to God for deliverance from the disease. He endured.

I think of his wife, my dear Mammaw. Who stood by his side, ever watchful but submissive, ever loving and supportive. Who suffered the deterioration of her own joints to attempt to help him physically by lifting, assisting and straining in ways her own body should not have been subjected to, but who I also NEVER heard utter, "Why? Why me? Take this from us, God!" I saw love, patience, ENDURANCE. Not for 6 months, but for YEARS. Over a decade. She endured.

I think of my dad's grandfather, Pa. A man I didn't know well, but remember and remember through my father's eyes. A man who was a farmer through the Great Depression, a man who lost both a young wife and a young son. A man who had known great tragedy that was never "healed" in this life, but who trusted God with all his heart and soul and taught my father to do the same. He trusted this God that had taken his wife and son, and loved Him with his whole heart.

I think of my dad's dad, my special Granddaddy. A man I watched my whole life, until his death 5 years ago. A man who as an elementary student, watched his slightly older brother die a sudden death after a head injury sustained when that brother stood up for my grandfather who was being bullied at school. A man who carried that burden, that loss, that guilt, not for six months, but his whole life. But he carried it deep inside, ever trusting God and loving God despite this weight. He was a blue collar worker during the week, and Bible student by night, and gospel preacher on Sunday. A quiet, introspective, hard working servant of the Lord who drew people to him like no one I have ever known. Not with words, not with boisterous personality, but with the truest, deepest love and care. He endured.

I think of his wife, my special Granny. Who buried that godly man, the love of her life, 5 years ago after his battle with liver failure. Who cared for him in his last weeks with such self-sacrifice and love. Who now bravely walks through this life without him here, for the first time since they married when she was a teenager. Who loves her family with a passion and stands by every single one of them. Who finds laughter and joy with her great-grandchildren, and even still cooks amazing meals for us all. She's not just without him for 6 months. They are physically separated until eternity. But she clings to God, trusts, hopes, believes, finds joy. For more than 5 years now. She endured.

I think of my prayer partner friends. Two women I've been blessed to pray with almost weekly for the past 5+ years. Two women who endured the trial of infertility. Not for 6 months. But for 2 long years. Who I watched pray with hope for 2 years. Who REJOICED with me in the birth of my son during that time. Who did not give up. Who prayed earnestly for others during their time of waiting, and did not give in. (By the way, I cried tears of joy for these dear souls when they announced to me on the *same morning* that they were *both* pregnant and who delivered their

precious babies *within 2 days of each other* in the *same hospital!* Oh how God answered our prayers!) They endured.

I could go on. I could mention Brian's Aunt Pat and Uncle Mel, faithfully enduring the trial of ALS. I could mention dear Amy, faithfully enduring the trial of a child with autism. I could mention another friend, bravely enduring the trial of an eating disorder and one-time suicidal thoughts.

So many more. You have **endured**.

And I wince. For my impatience over *6 months*. Six months that have also been highlighted by many of the most wonderful times of my life – the Walker Run, our first Disney trip, etc.

Endurance – not yet Sara. You have not even come close to knowing what that means yet.

Oh, I'm not being hard on myself. My trial is hard and difficult. God understands my cries for deliverance. I know that.

But I have seen you do it. I have seen you run your races. And I thank you. I thank you for inspiring me. For reminding me about timing- God's timing. Timing we may not understand, but is always right.

And I look forward with you. To reuniting with many of our cloud of witnesses. To the day when GOD HIMSELF will wipe away our tears – ah, precious words. The day when these trials are no more.

In the meantime, thank you for showing me how to run.

-Your Sara

July 5, 2011

It is Tuesday July 5th, and I have just completed my 10th round of chemotherapy. (Unhooked on Sunday)

Today I am thinking about numbers.

10 rounds of chemo. I average 5 bad days with each round. That means I've gone through at least 50 really bad days. 50 days of nausea. 50 days of vomiting. 50 days of extreme fatigue and weakness. 50 days basically confined to a bed or couch.

That's a lot of days.

I hate them. I hate every one of those days that have been stolen from me. For those that think I try too hard to be positive all the time, that I don't let myself feel down enough, or experience the range of emotions I should feel, no need to worry. I despise what I'm going through.

There are days I am just ready to give up. I'm ready to die, I even ask to die. Yesterday afternoon was one of those times. I simultaneously needed to be sitting on the toilet, throwing up into the toilet, and laying down with my legs elevated so that I would not pass out- and obviously that was impossible. I was having intense stomach pains, I was heaving, I was dizzy, I was in a cold sweat. This is an ugly ugly disease with ugly treatment.

I pray the thoughts of David in Psalm 13: "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" And Psalm 143: "Answer me quickly, O Lord, my spirit *fails*."

Last Thursday night, the night before going in for this round of chemo, I cried myself to sleep. I sobbed. If God collects all our tears in a bottle, as scripture says, then I'm pretty sure I've filled up enough 2-liters to fill a grocery store. (This verse is now posted on my bathroom mirror: "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy." Psalm 126) My mind had traveled back to about 7 months ago, when we were eagerly anticipating the birth of our little girl and there was no heavy burden of cancer. I imagined what I had imagined back then: she would be about 6 months old, and we would all be enamored of her. I'd be watching my boys hold her and make her laugh; I'd be enjoying learning about girl clothes and figuring out how to keep a little bow or barrette in her sparse hair. Oh how I wish those days had come to pass.

But as I said, I'm thinking about numbers today. And here's some good numbers:

over 800

That's how many cards I've been sent in the mail (just since the cancer diagnosis – that doesn't count the 200+ cards in the month between Anna's death and the cancer diagnosis). That also doesn't count the 100+ cards from kiddos that have been sent my way.

In six months, ok that's half a year so around 26 weeks, and mail only comes 6 days per week, so that's 156 days. 800 divided by 156 equals 5+ cards per day that I've been sent in the mail. That's what I'm averaging.

5+ cards per day

I'm not trying to brag. Except on you. That's how well you've encouraged me.

over \$18,000

That's how much money was given in Anna's name to Agape of Nashville. A worthy organization that does much good in the kingdom of God.

over 205,000

That's how many times this website has been visited by those of us who need a word of encouragement. Who need to see God's people holding each other up; remembering God's faithfulness and miracles in the past.

1

That is one precious family member that I know of who has come to faith and been baptized because of how these events have touched his precious heart. Perhaps my favorite number of all.

So I press on. I try not to think about the bad numbers, but the good ones. I try to take it one day at a time, and find some joy in each day – and God does provide some joy in each day.

As I was sitting in chemo on Friday, a nurse came in with two ladies, giving them a tour of the treatment room. These same ladies were in front of me when I went to check out after I was done. It was clear it was their first day. When I walked out to the lobby area, they were still there, and it was obvious the older woman was struggling to keep it together.

I felt compelled to do something, yet very afraid. Shy Sara doesn't bother people she doesn't know, especially if they are upset.

But I remembered how dark and scary those first days were. And I remembered how you've shown me love.

I went over to her, laid my hand on her back, and said, "Did you get some bad news today?" She said, through tears, "Yes. It's my husband. It's just a lot to take in."

I told her the beginning is the hardest. I asked her if I could pray with her. She said yes, and I said a simple prayer, asking for good news soon, asking for strength.

I hope I was able to shine a little light into that dark day for her. I know God's Spirit is able to do that. YOU ALL have shown me that.

Again, not trying to brag. Just thankful that in that "bad day" for me, God allowed me to find joy in passing along the love that's been shown to me.

God is changing me. You are teaching me. God knows the number of my days, and they are the perfect number.

-Your Sara

July 15, 2011

It is Friday afternoon, July 15th. I had chemotherapy this week beginning on Tuesday. I was in the doctor's office that day from 9:45 am until 5 pm. Makes for a long day. I then came home with my infusion pump and it finished around noon yesterday. I unhooked myself at home, which involves administering a saline flush and a heparin flush of the line to the port-a-cath. The port is a small "button" (as we call it around here) that was inserted long ago just under my skin, and is located just below my right collarbone.

When I told the boys Monday night that I was going to the doctor the next day to get more medicine, Scott said, “That means I can only hug you on this side (holding out his right arm) not on this side” (holding out his left arm.) The other night when Camden prayed, he said his usual, “Please help Mommy feel better and be well” but then also added, “Please help Mommy be able to eat whatever she wants to eat.” Interesting what kids pick up on. We haven’t discussed my eating habits. He’s just noticed how difficult it is for me to eat for several days.

I continue to be astonished at the rising visit counter up there in the right corner of your screen. It boggles the mind that so many would be interested in how I am doing and/or what I have to say.

I have done fairly well with this round. The fatigue continues to be all-consuming, but the nausea is minimal as compared with FOLFIRI. That said, I have had one episode of seeing my dinner again a few hours after swallowing it. But one episode is highly preferable to multiple episodes. I am also dealing with a new side effect this time, called hand-foot syndrome. For most of yesterday I had fairly severe hand pain – my hands were bright red, as if blistered by the sun. The only things that brought relief were ice cold rags. Mom would bring me one damp rag from the freezer, I’d hold it in both hands in a prayer-type clasp, and then a couple of minutes later it would be warm from the heat of my hands and I’d be ready for the next one. Last night, the sensitivity also started on the bottoms of my feet. I finally broke down and took two of my old friends, percocet, and thankfully that took away all the pain during the night so that I could sleep. All of that is much better today though, and being able to type is a HUGE improvement. This side effect is from the pump medicine (not the study drug) and it may mean that we have to reduce the dose of that medicine in the next round(s). At this point, I’m not sure if I’m happy about that or not.

I type the above information in an effort to be “real,” to let you know about my physical condition because many of you have said it helps you to “know what to pray for.” I also realize someone may come across this blog who is also going to be treated for colon cancer and maybe knowing what I experienced may help in some way.

However, I really hate to always write “the heavy” as I call it. I am frequently reminded of others who have it much worse, and then I feel silly for complaining. And I also have realized lately that I have brought a lot of people to tears over the last several months – in several different avenues and places.

As much as I appreciate the tears of others, for they indicate the depth of emotions that have been stirred, I would really rather make people laugh. Really. I wish I was a humorous writer, but any “funny” that I have comes from a long-standing sarcastic, self-deprecating nature, and that just doesn’t seem to be too appropriate on here.

So, I have several different posts writing themselves in my head these days, but today I don’t want it to be so “heavy.” I just want to share a phrase with you that I came across a few months ago that has spoken volumes to me. You know how I like a well-turned phrase.

I thought it might grab your attention as well, if you are anything like me: perfectionist, addicted-to-the-to-do-list, wanna-be overachiever, task and goal oriented, etc, etc. If you are the stay at home mom who wonders if cleaning up children’s messes all day is really what you are meant to do. If you are the working-outside-the home mom who just can’t seem to get it all done. If you are a man who feels the pressures of the world on your shoulders.

It is simply this:

“Never tire of doing even the smallest things for God, because He isn’t impressed so much with the DIMENSIONS of our work, as with the LOVE in which it is done.”

Chew on that for a bit.

That’s why I said awhile back that I had housework to savor. This is how I’m trying to approach “normal” tasks these days: instead of resenting the laundry, I pour into it my love for my family and gratefulness that I have a family to clothe and that God has provided clothing. Instead of resenting that I have to reorganize the closets again to try to find room in this little house for our stuff, I savor the fact that God has so abundantly blessed us. Instead of hating having to make that second trip to the grocery store because I forgot something, I look to see who in that store needs a nice smile today and I feel love for my God who makes food so very accessible; who continues to provide our daily needs and who has granted me another day of life to care for my family.

“Never tire of doing even the smallest things for God, because He isn’t impressed so much with the dimensions of our work, as with the LOVE in which it is done.”

Just a thought I thought you might like...

-Sara

July 18, 2011

I woke up this morning to bright sunshine, after a restful, uninterrupted night’s sleep for the first time in weeks. As I lay in bed, just coming to, my mind naturally went to prayer and as I often do, I became so in awe of my God that the tears poured out. I am going to attempt to type out that prayer, as best I remember, even now typing through tears.

“Oh Lord, my God, my Father. I am in awe of how you continue to shower me with abundant blessings, in the midst of this desert. I thank you for a good night’s rest, and for the sunshine this morning. My Father, you know my heart. Lord, I am so tired and weary. Oh Father, I just come to you as your daughter and I beg, I beg you to be merciful. Lord, I beg you to bring me out of this trial. I beg you to be the one who relents, to be the God of compassion, to be the God who heals. I don’t have beautiful words, I don’t deserve to be rescued, I just long for it and ask you to heal because of who YOU are. Because of your unrelenting love, your constant faithfulness, your inability to lie, your beautiful promises to sustain your people. God, please come quickly to my rescue. Heal me completely so that your name may be praised above all else, above medical science. Heal me and make your name great, show the power that you can unleash when your people call on your name with one voice. Show that you are still the great healer. Lord, show Dr. Penley something he has never seen before, that he may come to know you. Lord, let me

complete the work before me, to raise my boys in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to serve my husband throughout our lives as I vowed to do.

I am so thankful Father, so thankful for how you have changed my heart, for how you have let me make a difference in others' lives, for how you have brought me so much closer to you. I am being changed, pruned, refined and I thank you for that. I am in awe of how you have changed me."

And then I was really crying and just out of words and I thought I would try just listening. I've never really done that much, and I don't know that I did it well or correctly. But this is what came into my head...

"Oh my child, my child. I know the plans I have for you, MY plans to give you a future and a hope. I will sustain you, my child, I uphold you with my hand. I will not let the righteous fall."

So of course the tears continued. When I try to listen, and again I don't really know what that means or how to do it, I always hear, "my child" over and over again.

I am in awe of the love of God. The perfect, unconditional, unrelenting, pursuing love of God.

Then I got to my knees, as I try to do every morning before starting my day and prayed my simple prayer that is changing my life:

"Heavenly Father,

Thank you for today. For today is a gift. Thank you for another day that my boys have their mother and Brian has a wife. Please help me to be led by your Spirit today. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight today, my Rock and my Redeemer. In the name of Jesus, Amen."

Not sure why but just thought I should share this today. Apologies for any tears it causes you to cry.

Have a blessed day full of light and full of love.

-Your Sara

July 27, 2011

I am in the middle of my 12th round of chemotherapy today. I am writing this post from my parents' couch, with my Gatorade close by as well as a heating pad under my back, and a trash can and towel close by as well. So far I've had no need for the trashcan and for that I am thankful. I know many have told me they are praying for milder side effects this round, and so far that seems to be the case.

I don't have energy to write much today, but I want to tell you that your prayers for my good days are carrying me through, by the grace of God. Last week I was able to exercise on our great yard sale find elliptical on 4 different days, for 20-30 minutes each time. I was also able to do 10 minutes of basic core strengthening exercises that I have taught patients for years on 5 days. This was so good for me emotionally. The boys and I had several playmates with lots of friends, and all 4 of us Walkers had some great quality family time together.

Monday night this week, just after getting in bed for the night, I again began weeping, knowing what the next day would hold. My precious husband listened to my heartaches and fears, and then said exactly what I needed to hear and be reminded of. His is an unshakable faith that I envy.

Yesterday morning as I sat waiting for an hour and a half for my chemo to begin (they were apparently overbooked), I began weeping again. It was so embarrassing, sitting amongst a roomful of cancer patients who are so brave. But then God put three strong, faith-filled women in that room with me that afternoon, two of whom have cancer, who initiated conversation with me and reminded me of God's great power. They spoke (actually I think the Spirit spoke) straight to my doubts and forgetful heart. Thank you, Lord, for that gift.

I am scheduled for my next CT scan on Wednesday, August 10th. By God's great mercy, this allows us to take a beach trip on the days we'd planned to, and then I am scheduled for the next chemo on the 12th, which again by His mercy allows me to be the one to take Camden for his first day of school.

My prayer remains bold- that all signs of cancer will have disappeared when they take images of my abdomen again. My God is able, so able.

I appreciate your prayers more than I can put into words.

-your Sara

July 31, 2011

Well, it [is 4:45](#) am on Sunday morning here in Nashville, Tennessee, so you know what that means. Time for your weekly dose of half-conscious insanity from good old me. Seriously, who can expect very rational thoughts at this time of the day? Yes, mom, I did take a sleeping pill last night in attempt to get a better night's sleep. However, since I've been awake since 4 am, my body apparently didn't feel the need for more dozing.

So my question for you today is: Are you dizzy yet?

A friend recently told me that I am a "psalmist," that my writing reads much like David's in the psalms, where he almost sounds manic-depressive. And while I don't feel that I should even be mentioned in the same sentence as the inspired David with his beautiful, poetic writing, I do

relate to the extreme range of emotions. In fact, I'd thought to myself months ago that I would have to liken the ride to manic-depression. Because, oh my, the highs are so very high, and the lows are so very low. Aren't you glad the Psalms are in the Bible? They put words to my thoughts and someone once said, "We read to know we are not alone" – it is good to feel in company with David with my emotions.

I am finding that the analogy of an "emotional roller coaster" is very apropos. Oh the exhilarating freedom of the high points! I wish I could find the right words to express my joy at "normal days." Days where I can get up and clean up the kitchen, unload the dishwasher, help my boys get dressed and ready for the day, etc. I have subjected dear friends to dripping, sappy thank you e-mails after just one ladies' dinner out because I was so consumed with love, and joy and thankfulness. On my good days, I just feel I will burst because my heart is so full. I try to appear "normal" and not about to explode with ecstasy, but if I run into you and I just smother you with hugs I hope you'll understand why. (There, that ought to be sufficient to make people keep their distance from me at church. Hee hee.) Understand, to me it's like I'm at the top of the roller coaster peak and I can't help but to raise my arms and squeal.

And then there are the stomach-churning (very literally) drops; the lows. It's equally hard for me to explain how alone I feel, how desperate for relief, how heavy the burden of cancer is. It feels as if I'm at a playground and every one else is walking around free, but I am stuck waist-deep in a deep sandbox, trudging my way around one slow step at a time. I look around at all of you outside of the sandbox and wonder, "Oh, what would it be like to be free, really free of this? To be able to run, and jump and skip outside of this heavy sand?" And to be honest, even on my best days it still feels like at least my feet are buried in the sand, for the cancer never really leaves my mind; it is a burden I can't quite shake even on the best of days. I long for the day I can shake free of this sand and just FLY! (And I wonder why some of you AREN'T flying...)

So back to my question: Are you dizzy?

See that is the truly remarkable thing to me. You have chosen to strap yourself into this roller coaster, willingly. You have chosen to bear this burden with me, to fight with me, and you don't have to do so. It amazes me and strengthens me in a way, again, that I can't explain. To know I am not really on this roller coaster alone. To know you choose to be with me. How can I thank you? Please, seriously, someone tell me how I can do so. How?

One of you, or probably several of you, have written in the guestbook or in messages to me to "remember the thousands who are fighting this with you." To be honest, I haven't felt the truth of those words until just recently. It felt like no one else was having to fight, that I'm the only one doing the fighting, because my body is the only one physically subjected to the fight. What exactly are YOU fighting? Are you fighting God in your prayers? That idea never sat well with me either. No one should be fighting God.

But then a couple of scriptures have gained my attention:

Are you feeling like a conqueror?

'cause ya are!

Are you dizzy yet?

Thanks for strapping in.

-Your Sara

August 1, 2011

Thank YOU, Brentwood Hills teens.



You have no idea how much you lifted me up today.

Never underestimate the power of your words and the power of your thoughtfulness. There are many hurting people in the world and I hope you will always do the “small things” for them, because they actually aren’t small AT ALL.

You brought me to tears of gratitude today.

August 9, 2011

We have just returned from a wonderful beach trip, thanks to our good friends the Gentrys. Much savoring occurred, I assure you.

Just a reminder that my CT scan is tomorrow (Wednesday) morning at 11:30 am. I would be so grateful if you prayed about it.

I will likely know the results on Friday.

God bless you, as you have and are blessing me.

-Sara

August 12, 2011

I promised I would try and update this site as soon as possible with the results of my CT scan.

Basically, there has been no significant change since my last scan.

Dr. Penley advised me not to be disappointed (but how can I not be, to some extent, knowing what God is capable of and knowing how many are praying?) because he said it was really too early in this treatment regimen to expect a significant change. He said that he would not have ordered a scan yet, but the protocol of the clinical trial required it. He believes it is too soon to give up on this course of treatment. I asked several follow-up questions related to longer term management, etc, and we discussed a few other drugs that are still in “the back pocket” that may prove to be more effective in me, but that as of now we need to continue in this plan and give it more time.

He gave me a copy of the report which I have just now read thoroughly. I was fearful of doing that while in the clinic because I was afraid that I might not be able to keep my composure.

The scan shows that the total number of lesions in my liver remains stable. Several reference lesions that have been measured with each scan have shrunk, and at least one has increased. All increases and decreases are 5 mm or less – which Dr. Penley states is within an error rate of the scan – meaning they are insignificant changes either direction. He felt it overall showed slight improvement, and stated that “at worst, it indicates the cancer is stable.” The word “stable” was used throughout the report.

So am I disappointed? Yes. But not devastated. God continues to show me that I have no control. It is tempting to, and I am probably guilty of somehow thinking I can manipulate God. My brain wants to keep some level of control – if I just believe enough, if I just could pray the right way, if I could just eat enough broccoli, spinach, blueberries and other cancer-fighting foods, if I could just pray the scriptures over myself enough...It is difficult for me and my oldest-child,

perfectionist self to handle not “winning” – surely it is something I’m not doing right as to why this is not improving faster. This is part of my battle. But as Brian reminded me last night, God has a plan and it is perfect. I shared with Brian that this is totally rocking what I have always believed about prayer. I KNOW God hears us all, but I don’t understand why it seems He will not be moved, not swayed, not act. And yet at the same time, I have seen so many times how He IS acting – He is giving me supernatural strength to endure, He has worked out the timing of treatments/scans so that we could take family trips and I could take Camden to his first day of kindergarten yesterday. Through you, He encourages me over and over and over again. Many prayers ARE being answered. Just not the “big one” yet.

So I must wait. I m reminded that I am not God. I will thank God that I have today and I will trust Him to take care of tomorrow. I will spend this day watching my children and parents and being thankful for them. I will go to bed tonight and thank God for taking me through this day and I will ask Him to give me tomorrow. I will repeat to myself over and over that I am not alone and that He holds the future.

I do have something else to write about that’s been bugging me lately.

I hope that if this cancer does destroy my earthly body, that no one will announce it with these words:

“Sara Walker LOST HER BATTLE with colon cancer on ——”

I’m sure it’s my competitive side talking, but when I hear that statement, it implies to me that CANCER was the victor. Oh no, sir! My victory is in Jesus and I will be the victor no matter what happens to this temporary earthly body.

So for those who write church announcements, I just ask that you think about how you word that. For ALL Christians are conquerors, all have a final victory. I would rather read:

“ _____ went home to his eternal reward after battling cancer...

_____ received her crown of LIFE after enduring cancer...

_____ has achieved the ultimate victory over cancer after battling it for years...

_____ has been welcomed into eternal joy after running his race with cancer with endurance...”

Something along those lines.

I heard an old,
Old story
How a saviour came
From glory
How he gave his life
On calvary
To save a wretch like me

I heard about
His groaning,
Of his precious blood's
Atoning
Then i repented
Of my sin
And won the victory

Oh, victory in jesus,
My saviour forever
He sought me
And he bought me
With his redeeming blood

He loved me
Ere i knew him
And all my love
Is due him
He plunged me to victory
Beneath the
Cleansing flood

I heard about his
Healing,
Of his cleansing pow'r
Revealing
How he made the lame
To walk again
And caused the
Blind to see

And then i cried
"dear jesus,
Come and heal
My broken spirit"
And somehow jesus
Came and brought
To me the victory

As always, I thank you for your prayers.

– Sara

August 17, 2011

It is Wednesday afternoon and this is day 5 after the last round of chemo (I had a treatment on the 12th). I have actually had a shower today, put on normal clothes, fixed my hair, and applied makeup.

(Scott just now walked in the room, after going on an exciting trip to Lowe's with his Papa, and said, "Oh, you got dressed. Where are you going mommy? Clearly this appearance I now have is not the norm for the past many days.)

I had to lay down on my bed at several intervals during the whole process this morning, so my energy level is only slowly coming back, but it *is* better today. In the past 5 days I have eaten one quarter of a bagel, two small bowls of cereal, three small containers of jello, and one half piece of toast. Most of that has been consumed in the last 2 days. I am careful to drink as often as I can stand it – mostly gatorade, some ginger ale, and some water. My appetite is not back yet, but I can at least force myself to eat. I couldn't even really think about food for the first 3 days.

But... the sun is out, Camden is enjoying kindergarten (I will post a picture or two in the photos section for those who asked), and I am feeling better...so enough about that.

Today I am thinking about another way I've been changed through all this.

I long for Jesus to return.

My ears strain every moment of the day to hear the trumpet call.

Oh, I've always thought it would be nice to go to heaven someday. It would be a pretty nice place. I'd have a bigger house and it would be sunny all the time and I think I will be able to fly, and that's exciting. But at the same time, I've had these thoughts in the past, "Jesus, it would be great if you came back, but I'm really looking forward to this family vacation in the Bahamas next week...or ...I've worked really hard on this first birthday party, can we please have that first...or...but I really want to see what Stephanie's baby will look like, can you wait until after he's born?"

No more. I pray every day for Jesus to come get us. I kinda think it's doubtful that praying for it is going to make it come any quicker, but it just comes out anyway in my prayers.

This world is so full of pain, injustice, suffering. I hurt for myself of course, but I also hurt for those children starving in Somalia, for those women and children in abusive relationships, the orphans, the crippled...I could go on. My own suffering has opened my eyes to how much

suffering is all around me. And I imagine how much it must hurt God, who loves us all more than we can imagine...

So I long for Him to come and make all things right. And I'm thankful for that new longing in my heart.

And now, the life-giving words. Oh, friend, what I've typed below is long, but savor every word. Read it slow: the beautiful picture of what is coming, from the mind and mouth of GOD himself, who cannot lie, these are GOD's words...

from Revelations 21 and 22:

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband [can you even imagine what kind of wedding planner God must be?!?!?]. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

[ooh, this is good, wait for it...]

"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

"He who was seated on the throne said, **"I am making everything new!"** (The exclamation point is in the Bible. Even GOD is excited about it!)

"He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty, I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes all this will inherit all this, and I will be his God, and he will be my son [or daughter].

"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb'. And he...showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates."

"I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and

the Lamb is its lamp... On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there is no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it..."

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, **I** flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads."

"The angel said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true.'"

PRAISE THE LORD. IT IS TRUE. IT IS ALL TRUE.

Come, Lord Jesus!!

August 28, 2011

I tend to forget that there are people who read this website who don't know me, who don't see me on my "good weeks." I suppose I am selfish with my "good days" and want to spend my time living, doing the things I love, instead of sitting down at this computer and writing.

Also, I truly get a little tired of talking about myself. And to be honest, at times I actually resent the fact that I even have a caring bridge website. I so want this part of my life story to be over – the cancer part anyway. I so want things to be "normal" again. (I do hope to continue writing, and actually already have a website in the works as a new place to continue this writing once my cancer journey is completed, Lord willing.)

But then yesterday I learned that Lisa Schell passed away. Lisa was a co-worker of my brother-in-law who was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer last year. She reached out to encourage me in my cancer battle even though she didn't know me. She was full of the love of Christ and she couldn't help but share that love and that hope in total healing from God. She underwent a surgery on Thursday of last week and passed away due to complications in surgery. She was so looking forward to that surgery, convinced that God was going to bring her through it and that all her remaining cancer would be removed during that surgery. And now she is gone. I never met her but my heart grieves. I grieve because she leaves behind a son. I grieve because she had so much trust in God, was so hopeful and faithful to God. She served others when she herself was going through such a trial.

Yet I know she has won her battle. She endured, and now cancer has been forever defeated in her.

I also am rejoicing. I am rejoicing that another brother in Christ who has been battling cancer has been given a victory here on earth. Frank Meza is a Godly man, a minister of the Gospel, and he is now cancer-free. God heard the prayers of many and showed His great power to heal.

Both of these people trusted completely in God. Both were calling on Him and begging for healing. One was healed, one was taken home to be with Jesus.

How unsearchable are God's ways.

How unclear is my future.

I have today. I am thankful for this day. I cannot worry about tomorrow because that will ruin this day.

How difficult are these lessons I am learning.

And you deserve an update on me. You deserve to know how you are helping me. I don't know how many good days I have left and I can't afford to waste a single one. Lisa and Frank taught me that.

I have had a wonderful good week. I have savored many things since recovering from my last treatment:

- driving the carpool to kindergarten and listening to the funny conversations among 3 kindergarteners
- blowing bubbles with Scott on a beautiful sunny day and marveling at the colors of the bubbles in the bright sunlight
- eating dinner and watching pre-season football with old friends who we haven't seen for many, many months
- volunteering in Camden's class and seeing his excitement and pride that his mommy was there
- visiting a dear, sweet shut-in who endures immobility and loneliness but exudes such joy in living; oh how she teaches me
- baking a pear crisp from the pears in our pear tree
- reading an e-mail from a friend who said, "Praying for you has strengthened my relationship with God" – reminding me that God is working good from my pain
- finding out my sister is expecting a baby girl and that she and my brother-in-law are going to honor our Anna by including "Anna" in her given name
- praying with a group of women devoted to prayer, and listening to sweet Joy James pray for me through tears of love
- praying with a different group of mothers devoted to praying over Camden's school, and being surprised that they also chose to take the time to pray for me, including a new dear friend being moved to tears in her prayer for me
- speaking to a ladies' Bible class at church about some scripture near and dear to my heart
- going to the Wilson County Fair with my family and my brother and his family and seeing the thrill in my boys' faces at all the sights, smells and sounds
- celebrating Scott's 4th birthday with his sweet little friends at the local splash pad/park

Your prayers enabled me to feel good enough to do all those things and more. You deserve to know that. Especially if you aren't here to see it. You deserve to know that there is still no outward indication of my illness. God in his mercy has allowed me to remain "looking normal,"

which is a great benefit for my boys, sparing them from confusion and sadness. You deserve to know I have slept very well every night this week.

I continue to thank you for your prayers and in the same breath ask you to continue to petition our Father on my behalf. I long to be in heaven, but I cannot stomach (intentional choice of word, though horribly ironic) the thought of leaving my precious sons or my partner in this life. I pray for God's mercy, that He would show His power, that His name will be glorified in my healing, that He would show the power He can unleash when His people call on His name.

I go for round 14 of chemo tomorrow (Monday the 29th).

– Your Sara

August 29, 2011

I am not having treatment today. When I went in this morning, I was running a low-grade fever of 100 degrees. The doctor is concerned I have either caught some pediatric virus or have a UTI, despite the fact that I have no real symptoms. My white blood cell count and neutrophil counts were both high enough that I was ok to have treatment as far as those factors were concerned, so that was good to hear. I was told that I can go in and have treatment Thursday if I am doing better by then.

I don't feel quite right today – very fatigued, weak, and my back and abdomen are painful. I am laying on my couch on a heating pad and have just taken two percocet. I plan to conk out and try to let whatever this is run its course. I am selfishly hoping that I can go in Thursday for treatment so that I can still be a part of the few things I have specifically planned for what I anticipated my “good weeks” to be.

As always, I appreciate you all so much.

-Sara

September 1, 2011

I was able to have treatment today, praise God. I am now back home after a long day as usual at the clinic. But thankful to have the cancer killing drugs coursing through me, doing their work, I pray. I will disconnect the pump on Saturday.

September 7, 2011

I sat down to the computer about this time yesterday to update my journal, but two sentences in and I very suddenly began having severe pains in my liver region (right upper quadrant of the abdomen, along the bottom of the rib cage – where most of my pain typically is). I tried laying down as this position usually resolves the pain within a few minutes, but it was not getting better, only worse. Sweet Scott, my 4 year old, and I were the only ones home and he was being fantastic. Just playing and being his happy little self. He did go and get his doctor kit after I told him why I was laying down, but unfortunately his best efforts did not resolve my pain.

I called my dear neighbor down the street who has a daughter going to school with Camden and has a son, Jack, who is just a few months younger than Scott. (Jack and Scott have become fast friends watching for their big sister and brother at the bus stop!) She graciously agreed to handle Scott for me while Brian took me to the hospital. (I didn't know she would have to have Scott and eventually Camden too for pretty much the entire day. Thank you Sally and Brian!)

My doctor felt we should go straight to the emergency room since they had the imaging machines at the ready. Oh how I LOVE the Baptist Hospital emergency room (dripping sarcasm)- TERRIBLE experience all the way around the last time we were there, which was January, when they initially found the metastasis. However, we had a much better experience this time, during the daytime which may be the key, I don't know.

I was given morphine pretty soon after we got there, and then x-rays and ultrasounds were done of my abdomen. To make a long story only slightly less long, they were able to rule out all serious concerns: bowel perforation, bowel obstruction, etc, etc. We did get the good news that:

1) My liver function tests (blood tests) are still in a normal range.

2) My liver, via ultrasound, did not look any worse to the ER doc than it did in January.

– Caveat: the liver also didn't look significantly *better* than in January, which is somewhat discouraging after 14 rounds of chemo/8 months of treatment. However, yesterday I was just glad it didn't show some new monstrous tumor that was responsible for my new pain.

My oncologist came by to see us around 4:30 or so, and explained that there were basically 3 potential reasons for this sudden pain:

1) constipation – Ah yes, my old friend constipation. What a time we have of trying to stay somewhere in the middle with regards to “looseness” of the bowel. Sigh... He felt that the pain may have been a) a cramping-type pain of the intestines trying to get things moving again after the last chemo dose, or b) a result of the liver being pressed up into the diaphragm more due to bowel distension from being “backed up” on the right side.

(I know you wanted this much detail, I just know you did... But I am honestly trying to ward off a lot of questions in person.)

2) a capsular lesion – meaning some part of the cancer has grown just enough into the outermost covering of the liver to cause a significant irritation when it rubs against my diaphragm

or

3) tumor necrosis – YES! Option 3, option 3, that’s what I pick!! That means cancer death, as in a big old bunch of liver tumor just got whacked!

From what I can surmise from the above explanations, option 1 or 3 should mean this pain is temporary, but option 2 would mean I may be stuck with it for awhile. I am praying, praying this is not the case. Because I can’t function with this pain. I can’t take care of my kids or go places while hurting like this.

I was in mild pain when we came home from the hospital at about 6:00 last night – was able to eat a bit (soup was delish- Rosa!) and rest comfortably – but was still under the diminishing effect of morphine. I went to sleep at bedtime just fine, but then woke at 1:30 am in the most excruciating pain I have ever felt. I was unable to move at all. With cries of pain, I finally managed to get a hand to Brian to wake him up. He had to physically roll me over to get me into a position to take my percocet. The good news is that after about 30 minutes, the pain was mostly gone and I slept well the rest of the night. I woke this morning with no pain. However, after about 30 minutes of being out of bed the liver pain began again, albeit not severely. It is enough pain that I cannot fully straighten up in standing, and I cannot take a deep breath in, but if I remain sitting or lying and breath shallow, I have almost no pain.

So that’s where we are. I am not getting far from home yet at this point because my pain is just so unpredictable right now.

I had a whole different post in mind yesterday, so maybe I will write that tomorrow or later this week, Lord willing.

I do have to say that I had that indescribable peace yesterday. I just felt calm (even BEFORE the morphine!). I could sense God with me in a very real way. I have your prayers to thank for that. I am still not overly worried. I’m frustrated – because as we’ve established, I’m not so good at BEING STILL – but not depressed or angry.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, that no medically emergent situations were found yesterday. Thank you for pain medicine that controls the pain. Please continue to give me the strength to handle whatever this day brings, and help me not to worry about what tomorrow “may” hold. Thank you for friends who are always at the ready to help my family. Thank you for a tireless, faithful husband and tireless, faithful parents. Thank you for hearing the prayers of many, and for putting me on their hearts when they pray. Thank you for being close, though you hold the whole universe in your hands. In the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

September 9, 2011

[2 Corinthians 2:19a](#) –

“But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for **my power is made perfect in weakness.**’ ”

This seems to be the lesson I am to learn right now. Of course, I may be wrong, but it is a verse that keeps coming to mind over and over and over again.

PRAISE THE LORD – My pain has subsided!! I am able to stand fully straight, sleep comfortably at night (though I haven’t tried without a pain pill before bed yet), and move normally during the day. I even went for a walk on this beautiful morning and was able to jog **SLOWLY** for **VERY SHORT STRETCHES** of the route. I am eating normally again, though I continue to have very little appetite and foods taste so different than they used to taste.

God’s power is made perfect in weakness. I have never fully understood what that meant, and I don’t fully understand now, but my eyes have been opened to one way: God reveals His power to bring strength to the weak through the members of Christ’s body – His church.

Some friends have said to me, “I am so proud of the way you are letting others help you. I tend to refuse help, want to handle things myself, but you just let others help and that in turn helps us and gives us joy to do that for you.”

My response has always been, “It is just because I’m so weak and pitiful, I need lots of help.” I don’t consider it a “strength” of mine to let people help me. What I perceive is that I am so weak I need lots of help.

So God’s power is made perfect in my weakness – His power to comfort my hurts. And He works that power, at least in one way, through His church. I firmly believe that.

So, I write today a long-overdue, inclusive thank you note.

Shortly after my diagnosis, we were bombarded with people offering to help: “Let me go buy groceries, let me bring food, let me watch your boys, let me pick your boys up from school, let me do some house repairs around your house, let me do your yard work, etc, etc.” This was such a blessing, but also quite overwhelming to me. I didn’t write down names, didn’t keep records of what they specifically offered, didn’t record what days they were able to help.

My dear friend, Karen Robichaud, who herself has been through the flame of a great health trial, offered to “coordinate help” for me, though neither of us knew what form that would actually take initially. She knew from her own experience that all the offers of help could be overwhelming. So she began by setting up a super-organized spreadsheet with names, phone

numbers, days of availability, preferred days to help, etc. This in and of itself was invaluable. I still have it.

But then we took it a step further. She arranged a call schedule – so that one person each day would call me in the morning and see what I might need that day.

I CANNOT overstate what a comfort this has been to me. I knew that there were many at the ready to help, but then I became overwhelmed to the point that I couldn't decide who to pick to call – These questions plagued me: Who had helped just recently? Whose turn should it be to call so I don't "overuse" any certain person? What if they already have that whole day pretty planned and then they feel badly that they aren't able to help like they'd like to?

Now, those questions and worries have disappeared.

Instead, I know that each day (weekday – Mon-Fri), one person has volunteered to be on what I call "Sara Call" for that day. They have signed up and planned in advance to be available to me for that one day. So I don't have to worry about interrupting a busy day for them!! Ahhhhh!

The organization has morphed a few times, as has the organizer. (Many thanks to Belle C and to Allyson G, who've also organized.) Now they have organized an on-line schedule, so folks can look online at what days are taken/available and thousands of calls/e-mails don't have to go back and forth. This particular website they are using also sends an automatic e-mail reminder a day or two in advance to the person who has signed up. They are currently using a website called "food tidings" to do this.

My "call girls" for lack of a better term, or for want of a laugh, have done ALL kinds of things to help me. They have:

-kept my boys

-brought us dinner (ready to eat or frozen to put in the fridge)

-bought us milk, orange juice, bananas and eggs when I realized right before a chemo morning that we were almost out

-given me a ride to chemo

-picked me up from chemo

-brought me a Sonic drink

-taken my mom to the ER here for me once with some scary heart-like symptoms

-sat with me while at home on the pump, while Mom had to go do other things so that I wouldn't be by myself

-prayed with me over the phone

-brought me flowers

-brought me special toothpaste for cancer pts (a hygieneist)

-brought me shampoo that was supposed to help me keep my hair (guess it worked! :))

-left messages that included a spoken prayer for me

– many more things I cannot now bring to mind but have been so helpful and meaningful

To all my “callers” – please know how much I have appreciated your availability. There have been many days I have not been able to talk on the phone (when I’m on chemo, talking makes me get more nauseated for some reason) but please know I HAVE NOT intentionally avoided your calls.

Your simple phone call (*whether or not I need anything that day*) is a comfort to both me and maybe even more importantly to my parents, who know there will be someone else checking on me when they can’t be here.

To those folks reading that live in other areas, I write this here today so that you know of another way you may serve those in trials. I know of another family at church for whom this has recently been implemented, even for just a few weeks as their son recovers from serious surgery, and I think it has been a great help to their family as well.

Even if no one organizes something formal, maybe you can just make it a point that every Tuesday you are going to check with Mr. X to see if he needs something that day.

It frightens me to begin thanking folks for specific things on this website, because so many things have been done for me over the last several months. I hope to do another post to mention some of the creative and vastly different things people have done for us to encourage and help us. But please know that I cannot possibly rank them. Every time someone shows us a kindness in their own unique way, it means so much. So if I inadvertently leave something out, it is because my memory is TERRIBLE. TERRIBLE. Not because it wasn’t meaningful and greatly appreciated.

You are showing me God’s power when I am extremely weak. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

-Sara

September, 21, 2011

I feel I should apologize for the long lapse between posts, and yet at the same time I know most of you would scold me for doing so. So for those that would scold, pretend I didn't say that.

I think the reason I have not written is because I have felt completely empty, completely dry, completely abandoned.

Not abandoned by you, but by God.

“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? LOOK ON ME AND ANSWER, O LORD MY GOD, GIVE LIGHT TO MY EYES, OR I WILL SLEEP IN DEATH.” (Psalm 13) – David

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27) – Jesus

“Where is God? Go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is in vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face...” – CS Lewis (after the death of his wife)

This is where I have been, where I find myself on many of my dark days. I have had no energy to write to you from that place, no courage to confess to you my weak, wavering faith.

As my trial continues on, it is becoming harder, emotionally and physically. As my trial continues I have been distressed to find my resolve weakening, my confidence in God shaking. I do not appear, to myself at least, to be being strengthened by this trial. My faith does not appear to be growing as a result of this testing, but becoming weaker. That embarrasses me. I am ashamed.

A few nights ago, at the end of a very difficult day for me, my 4 year old prayed, “And God, thank you for keeping my baby sister Anna safe in heaven, and thank you for keeping Camden's baby sister Anna safe in heaven.” And I lost it. I wept. Brian helped the boys to bed and I fell on my face on my floor and cried out to God. “God this is too hard! When, when will you restore hope and joy to this family? Why all this sorrow after sorrow? When will you come to deliver? Why do you wait? I know you hear. Why do you not act?”

And yet, in the same breath I can tell you that I see God's hand at work. I still see Him molding and shaping. Oh what a painful process it is, but He is here. That same night, after I got myself together and was able to stop crying, I went to the boys' room, having promised Scott a “snuggle” for a few minutes. Camden asked to join us, so I had one sweet boy on each side of me snuggled up against my side. Camden placed his sweet little hand on top of mine, and they each fell asleep beside me. It was such a precious, precious moment. God comforted me through my dear little boys.

A few nights before, I had a special God-moment during a conversation with Camden. At bedtime I had told him I loved him and I was proud of him. He said, “I'm proud of you too,

Mommy.” I asked why and he said, “Because you aren’t scared.” I was taken aback, not sure what he meant, and he said, “Like that time when I got sand in my eye and it really hurt. I thought I was going to die and I was scared. But you aren’t scared.” I haven’t talked openly to my boys about not being scared to die. I have no idea where he would have gotten this idea.

Actually, I do.

Because two days before my dear sister-in-law Stephanie had told me, “I know you probably don’t want Camden and Scott to remember these hard days, but I pray that they do. That they remember you and Brian and how brave you were through this time.”

God showed me within 2 days how He was answering Steph’s prayers.

And before that, a friend wrote to me that after reading about my recent intense pain that took me to the emergency room again, she prayed fervently that she could bear my pain, for one night, so that I could sleep well without pain. She wrote me that God heard that prayer and that night she had severe pains that kept her from sleep most of the night, **IN THE EXACT SAME PLACE I HAVE HAD MY PAIN.** And that night she spoke of, I remember having **NO PAIN** during that entire night. It was my first pain-free night in several weeks. God is answering.

My father shared with me that he is wrestling too. That there is so much that he also doesn’t understand about this all. And that at times he beats his fists, declaring

“I will NOT LET what I DO NOT UNDERSTAND take away from what I DO understand.”

He physically beats it into his brain as he fights his battle of the mind. As he always does, he encouraged me yet again in my own battle.

Most recently, on a particularly sleepless night, I pulled out my Bible to fight against the surrounding darkness, and decided at random to read from Romans, since that is what our congregation is studying on Sunday mornings. And this is what I read:

Romans 4:18 and following

“Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed, and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead – since he was about a hundred years old- and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, **being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.**”

And then today in the women’s Bible study I was able to attend, the video lesson spoke of God’s ability to do amazing works, and specifically referenced the story of Abraham and Sarah in having a child at old age.”!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (Yes, I sobbed during the video, because I felt God was speaking directly to me, impressing that story on my heart again.)

You see, I haven't shared this with you yet, but I believe God has promised me another baby girl. I believe He spoke to my heart in that quiet room during our memorial service with Anna and gave me that promise. It was a sudden, unexpected stirring of my heart, because just the night before I had convinced myself that I NEVER wanted to be pregnant again. So this promise came completely out of the blue. And I believe He confirmed that stirring just 6 days later in an encounter at church that I won't go into now.

I have believed that He is going to fully erase this cancer. I know that sounds crazy. But that is what I expect to be found with every single scan. I believe I am to be fully restored and have another baby girl. I have faced the fact that my "body is as good as dead" – the 5 year survival rate for Stage IV colon cancer is 7% – but I hope against all hope".

So you can call me crazy, you can call me strong-willed, you can say I am not accepting the will of God, but I believe He has put this hope inside me. And I am trying to be like Abraham, because I AM **fully persuaded that God has power to do what he has promised.**

God can do amazing things. His power is limitless. No one can convince me otherwise.

So save your statistics. Save your odds. I don't trust in them. "Some trust in horses, some trust in chariots," some trust in doctors, some trust in odds, some trust in scientific research, but I trust in the name of the Lord Our God.

So until my dying breath, I will hope. And though He slay me, yet will I praise Him (Job).

As always I thank you for reading. I thank you for praying.

September 26, 2011

It is Monday afternoon and I have just returned home from chemo treatment #16. My little pump is whirring away as I type, administering the 3rd of my 3 chemo drugs. I am quite nauseated but not otherwise feeling too bad yet, so I felt I should take this time to write a bit. I feel maybe I should clarify my thoughts from my last post.

But first, a few things:

1. I am very thankful to the Grandview Youth Group for organizing a big yard sale this past weekend with proceeds going to benefit our family. What a beautiful, amazing thing the body of Christ is. These precious teens, who have never met me, wanted to do something for us simply because of the bond we share as brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank you so much, Grandview folks (and my Brentwood Hills CC church family for your donations)! I hope to come and visit soon and relay my thanks in person.

2. Update on my physical condition: I had a good week last week, for the most part. I experienced relatively little pain, was able to sleep well for the most part, and was able to get out

and enjoy life with my family and friends. I am not bouncing back from treatments as quickly or as thoroughly as I used to, and it is frustrating that on my best days I still feel run down, fatigued, and a lack of energy in general. I spoke with Dr. Penley about that today. He said that is very common for someone who has been on chemotherapy for this long. He likened it to a marathon, saying mile 25 feels a lot different from mile 1. That analogy made good sense to me, even though it is frustrating. He is hoping I can take an extended break from chemo soon, but is not able to tell me when yet, because it depends upon what the CTs show. But back to last week: the Lord blessed us yet again with another wonderful weekend family trip – our first ever camping trip. My generous cousin Jeremy and his wife Juli loaned us their own very nice pop-up camper AND their truck to tow it so that we would not have to sleep on the “cold hard ground” as one friend said. We had perfect, PERFECT beautiful weather and the boys had a BLAST. We camped with 26 other families from church, and we’re pretty sure the kids outnumbered the adults. I had prayed so much for a good weekend, that I would feel well enough to enjoy it, and that the weather would cooperate, and the Lord answered all those prayers and then some! It was even better than I expected. I even had enough energy to ride my bike with my family quite a bit as well as paddle a canoe for a bit. We enjoyed a late night talk with good friends around a campfire on a cool evening, while the boys slept hard all snuggled side by side in their sleeping bags in the camper, having thoroughly expended their abundant energy during the day. We rode bikes, fed fish, did some fishing (well my 3 boys did while I supervised), roasted hot dogs, roasted marshmallows, ate smores, threw rocks in the lake, went for a ride on a pontoon boat, and just completely enjoyed ourselves. I am so thankful for the chance to make special memories with my boys now, and I hope we made some great ones this weekend.

3. My next CT scan is after this round. It is scheduled for next Thursday, October 6th at 12:30. As always, I will be fasting and praying that day, and would appreciate anyone who would want to join me in that.

Now, as to clarifying my last post:

I saw a friend who said, “Well, I got confused by your last post. You said you were really discouraged in the beginning, but then by the end you didn’t sound so at all.”

Yes, exactly. Welcome to the rollercoaster. I can go from thoroughly disheartened to overflowing with faith and hope in about 2 seconds flat. It is a constant bipolarism (I probably just made that word up.)

But that is why I love Psalm 13. David sounds a little contradictory too.

“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, O Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death; my enemy will say, ” I have overcome him,” and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love. (What? Didn’t David just say he felt forgotten?); my heart rejoices in your salvation. (What? Rejoices? Didn’t he just say he has sorrow in his heart every day? And salvation? Didn’t he just say his enemy will say “I have overcome him.”?)

I will sing to the Lord, for He has been good to me. (Good? Wasn't he just saying God was hiding his face?)

Oh, I can just see David wrestling. He knows, has SEEN, God do amazing things in his life. God has delivered him in awe-inspiring, fantastic ways. I'm no scholar, so I don't know when in his life David wrote this Psalm, but I imagine it to be after he has killed savage animals with his bare hands while working as a shepherd, after he slew Goliath with just a little rock. He has seen God's power with his own eyes, and now he doesn't understand why God is waiting to act now, allowing David's enemy to "triumph over" him.

David wrestles. He wrestles with his emotion. He stubbornly draws his line in the sand, intensely coming back around to what He KNOWS in his head about his God.

So David determinedly clings to 3 things: God's actions in the past, God's promises for the future, and God's character, His very nature.

1. He says, "I will sing to the Lord, for He HAS BEEN good to me." He is determined to focus his mind on the ways the Lord has cared for him in the past and brought him through time and time again.

2. His heart "rejoices in God's salvation". He knows God saves. He saves his children. David knows his own salvation is at hand, that God always wins in the end.

3. And he says, "I will trust in your unfailing love." He knows in his heart that God is a God who loves perfectly, unconditionally, unswervingly, unfailingly (might have made that word up too – I'm blaming it on the drugs.)

David clings to what he "knows", while what his heart "feels" is abandonment from God.

That is where I am. Right there. Thank you, David, for writing this Psalm. Thank you Holy Spirit of God for inspiring these words. What a comfort they are.

I make a conscious decision every day to hold to what I know in my head, to at least repeat the words of truth even if I don't "feel" their truth. I know God is there. I know He hears. I know He has made glorious promises to His children. I know He loves me beyond my ability to grasp. I know He wins in the end, no matter what.

I "feel" abandoned on my dark, uncomfortable days. In hope, I believe he will heal me on this earth, but what I don't understand is the delay, the intense suffering, the escalating suffering. I know the struggle makes me appreciate good days more; I know I am learning dependence upon God, but I don't understand why it has to continue on for this long. Haven't I learned enough by now? Why does it have to be this hard?

I don't "feel" particularly loved at those times. But I "know" that I am.

I may not actually be clarifying anything. I may just be muddying up the waters even further. I don't know that it's possible to understand until you go through something like this. I don't know.

I guess to summarize: I am discouraged by my current state, by my suffering now. But I am hopeful for the end result. I am holding on to hope for a bright future – the future of Job, the future of Ruth, the future of Joseph, the future of David.

Hope that maybe that makes a little more sense. If not, you can just call me crazy. That's kinda how I feel anyway.

I hope that maybe this may be of some encouragement to someone else going through a particularly rough battle. I encourage you to hold on tightly, resolutely, stubbornly to the words of truth – God IS love, it is WHO HE IS. God works everything to the good for his children. Hold on to truth even through the doubt, the fear, the dry times of the heart. Keep that firm grasp, even white-knuckled as it may be, even as slippery a grasp as it might be. Don't let it go.

As always, I thank you for reading and encouraging me. You ARE holding up my arms, as Aaron and Hur did for Moses. I am convinced that any good that may be coming from these posts is coming directly from God in response to your many prayers for me. So if you like anything you read, give yourself a little pat on the back and give praise to God for answering your prayers.

My love and blessings to you all.
-Sara

October 3, 2011

Ahh, the blessed “off week” from chemo...

I am posting today at the request of my dear friends who are, quite literally, COOKING UP yet another way to love and support my family.

(Insert obligatory disclaimer that it makes me feel super weird and uncomfortable to personally “advertise” events meant to support us; however, they asked that I do this and I just can't tell my sweet friends no.)

The Details:

“Sweets for Sara”

Donation Bake Sale

Wednesday, October 5th, 2011 (as in two days from now)

3:00-6:00 pm

5652 Valley View Road; Brentwood, TN 37027

“A prayer box will be available to give Sara your written prayers or words of encouragement.”

So, my dear friends (who also happen to be fabulous cooks, FYI) are having a bake sale on what promises to be a beautiful fall day, to show love to my family and they want you to know about it and come join us!

If the good Lord wills it – I will be there, along with my little fellas!!!

I am looking forward to personally thanking and hugging many of you who are praying so fervently on my behalf and who encourage me so well on this blog.

Thank you, Holy Father, for you are truly the lifter of my head. You continually refresh me with your living water and bread of life. Thank you for this beautiful day, for energy and strength today. Thank you for the way you pour out your love for me in so many ways, including the generosity and thoughtfulness of so many precious, precious friends and family. Pull us all tighter into your embrace today and shine your bright light through us. Thank you, King Jesus. In your precious and holy name, Amen.

October 10, 2011

It is with a heavy heart and a bit of a benadryl-induced fog that I write to you today. So forgive me any significant errors in this post, but I knew that many are anxiously awaiting news and I want to relay it now and not keep you in suspense.

I was told that the CT scan again showed a “mixed response.” And so shall this post be – a mixture of good and bad.

Unfortunately there were no signs of any cancer regression on the scan. Some spots were the same size, while others had grown, and had grown significantly.

For this reason, Dr. Penley feels it is best to change course again. He felt to continue on with this regimen would only put me at further risk of toxicity while not adding any benefit. It is clearly not helping nor even keeping the cancer stable.

He explained two options at this point: 1) beginning a “targeted treatment” with a drug called vectibix; and 2) exploring experimental drugs (in Phase 1 or 2 clinical trials).

So today I began with my first vectibix infusion. He did want me to go ahead and consult with a physician at the Sarah Cannon research center to be exploring my options for experimental treatment, so that consultation is scheduled for October 31st.

For the medical folks: vectibix is a drug that inhibits EGFR (I think those are the right letters). It is made of human monoclonal antibodies, so is not “chemotherapy.” Its goal is to stop growth, not directly attack the cancer cells, as chemotherapy is designed to do. My biopsies were specifically studied to determine if there was a certain K-RAS mutation that might respond to vectibix, and I did have that mutation. So this vectibix might be a good match for me and may prove to be effective.

The good news is that it is not supposed to have the severe side effects that chemo has. I only sit in the clinic for one and a half hours for its infusion, and then I go home with nothing, no pump, nothing. So I have been given a bit of a break from chemo and for that I am thankful.

It was difficult to hear this news today. By God’s grace and your prayers, I was able to take the news without breaking down in the office.

I have spoken recently of my hope, my belief that God will heal me. My mind continually reverts to the passage in James which states that “the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” I know SO MANY very righteous people are praying and praying often and so I just can’t imagine how God will not hear and answer with healing. I have heard such passionate, spirit-driven prayers that I cannot imagine that God will not act. And as I listen to my kindergartener pray I cannot imagine how God could let him down.

And yet I am also very aware of the possibility that His plan may be for me to die very soon. My purpose on this earth may be to show others how to walk into death without fear. Because I do not fear death. I promise you that I do not. I can state that with full confidence and honesty.

What pains my heart is to think of the pain my children will face. What I fear is that so many of you who are praying will lose confidence in God if He does not answer me/us by healing me. I do not want my death to be a stumbling block to any believer.

I know that whatever happens to me will be for the greatest good. I believe that with all of my heart. I cannot see how my death will accomplish the greatest good, but that does not mean anything. What is my understanding? What is my knowledge? Nothing. God’s thoughts are higher than my thoughts, His plans are greater than my plans.

Please, please trust God no matter what happens to me. Please know that He is love, He is goodness, He is sovereign. Please know that I do not view death as losing, as an unanswered prayer. I hope that I do not have a “funeral” but a “celebration of life” service, a “celebration of victory.”

Again, my situation is win-win. I go on to raise my boys and love my husband, family and friends on this earth, or I go to a far, far better place with no more pain and no more sadness. What a great relief that is! What a precious gift.

I am sorry I don't have better news to pass on to you on this day. God's ways are unsearchable and I have no answers for you. I only have questions. But God is sovereign and His plan is perfect. Hold on to that. And treasure this day. That is all I know to do. To continue to try and live just one day at a time.

And today, the sun is shining, my boys still have their mommy, and God is still on His throne.

October 19, 2011

I so want to have good news to write on this blog. I so want to encourage and uplift, not whine and complain and share my sorrows. However, I don't want to be insincere in what I write. I try to be honest and true to what I am going through.

I can start with some good news, I suppose. The boys and I were able to do a little traveling over the weekend. We talked my sister-in-law Michelle into coming with us along with my two nieces. We were able to spend Saturday night in Montgomery with my Aunt Pat and Uncle Steve, and visit with them and my cousins Will, Drew and Laura. It was wonderful to see them and we talked and laughed about happy things without having to discuss all the cancer drama, and I had such a good time. Thank you so much for the fun night, Phillips.

On Sunday morning we worshipped with the Vaughn Park Church of Christ in Montgomery. This is the church where I grew up and I don't think I have the words to express how special it was for me to worship there again. To see the families that I grew up around; to hug the adults that were my role models, my Sunday school teachers, my youth group chaperones, as well as the friends my age with whom I spent long youth group road trips or many hours on the basketball court. To see them unchanged, sticking together as family. What a comfort that stability is, what reminders of my happy days in that place. What strength it gives me to know that so many of them are praying so fervently for me and for my family. I grew up witnessing their righteousness, and I know their prayers are heard.

And now for my recent discouragement – as if my story wasn't already eerily similar enough to Job – I have developed a severe skin reaction to the new medication. I was told it was a possible side effect, but after making it a week without severe side effects, I thought I was in the clear. (The reaction started Saturday evening so you VP folks might have noticed it.) It greatly worsened during the day Sunday and then on Monday. It basically looks like the worst breakout of acne you could imagine, and covers my entire face, inside my ears, behind my ears, my entire neck, front and back, and my chest and upper back. My face is red, swollen and raw, with hundreds at least of tiny and some not so tiny whiteheads. My scalp is affected as well, such that it hurts to comb my hair.

[Job 2:7](#) “So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.”

[Job 7:5](#) “My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering.”

Now I am thankful it is not covering my whole body as with Job, and I also don't have worms that I know of, but it has been very tempting to scrape at the painful sores, and occasionally one will open and bleed.

The similarities of our stories continues to strike me.

And boy, do I relate to his words. I have been so emotionally broken over the last few days. I don't want anyone to have to look at my face because it is so grotesque, and so I feel isolated, alone. I have laid in my bed and asked to die. I have begged.

[Job 3:20](#) and following:

“Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure, who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave?... What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness, I have no rest, but only turmoil.”

[Job 6:8](#) and following:

“Oh that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for, that God would be willing to crush me, to let loose his hand and cut me off! Then I would still have this consolation – my joy in unrelenting pain- that I had not denied the words of the Holy One. What strength do I have, that I should still hope? What prospects, that I should be patient? Do I have the strength of stone? Is my flesh bronze? Do I have power to help myself, now that success has been driven from me?”

My friends, I type through tears. I do not want to write of giving up, of such overwhelming sorrow. But this is where I am. I can reread your comments, your cards, but all I do right now is hurt. It just hurts. I just don't understand why I must go through such pain. You can't explain it to me. I know in my heart of hearts that God has some plan, and His plan is perfect, but right now I am completely worn out. I don't feel strong enough – I am not made of stone or bronze. I don't need to be reminded of anything about God, about His word. I just need someone to sit and cry with me, without saying anything. This is just hard, plain and simple.

My reason to want to live is for my boys, and for my husband. They are the only reasons for which I cling to life. But I can't be the kind of wife Brian needs like this – I can't keep the house, nor meet his needs. I can't be the kind of mother my boys need like this. Not with this physical pain and loss of physical strength. I can't play with them, read to them, bathe them, enjoy them except in watching from a distance. My heart is literally breaking into a million pieces as I face this each day.

Maybe I shouldn't have written today. Maybe I shouldn't be pouring out this level of despair.

I will say that the doctor's office did tell me that this skin reaction is often a sign that my cancer is responding to the cancer medication. I am trying to hold on to that, but I can't help but think I've been told that before.

Please don't try to fix me. Please just pray that God will. Please pray that my skin will heal and allow me to be out in public again, so that I will not feel so alone. Please pray as I know you have been, that this valley will come to an end soon, in one way or another. I just don't feel I can take much more.

And if you don't see me for awhile, understand it is because of my skin. Thank you for caring about me.

October 20, 2011

I'm not sure how I failed to mention this yesterday, but I forgot to mention that after we left Montgomery, Michelle, the kids and I headed down to the beach to spend a couple of days with Brian's parents. I wasn't able to enjoy it quite as much because of my face, but it is always soothing to my soul to sit by the ocean and hear the waves crashing against the shore. The boys thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Camden spent hours riding the waves on his boogie board, and I had to go out into the water and summon him in closer twice because he had worked his way out to neck deep water. I am proud of his bravery, though it certainly makes me nervous, because our last beach trip was the one when Camden suffered the infamous huge jellyfish sting. Scott enjoyed digging in the sand, and running back and forth from the very edge of the surf screaming in delight. Thank you Coleman and Helen for a wonderful fall break get-away.

And just FYI, I am taking a high-powered oral anti-biotic for my skin. I was also given clindamycin T gel to use when the dose of anti-biotic is up.

And DeeDee – I am drinking the Genesis juice as best I can. I got 8 ounces down yesterday, shooting for 12 today.

October 23, 2011

I want to sit down tonight and attempt to describe what a comfort church worship services are to me these days, as well as my love from and for my church family. However, as I do so I feel perhaps less able to describe these emotions that any others I have thus far.

I was unable to attend services this morning because I have been waking in significant pain the last few mornings and also occasionally getting sick from my morning dose of anti-biotic. I was able to attend this evening's services, and consider this the greatest blessing of my day today. My heavenly Father knows how much I need this time, these interactions, and He continues to graciously make it possible just when I am feeling my lowest.

As I sit in that auditorium, literally surrounded by hundreds of brothers and sisters, I feel you as a shield, as a literal army surrounding me. I feel an extra level of protection from all darkness and evil in that place. As we join our voices in song, I just can't adequately describe the peace of God that almost tangibly settles over my entire being, like a warm, soft blanket basking me in warmth and comfort. My spirit soars and I am reminded of the astounding promises of God, His astounding faithfulness in the past, His steadfastness in remaining right by my side every moment of every day, in shielding me under His wing. I believe the Holy Spirit of God moves during our times of worship and He renews me, refreshing the deepest part of my soul. It's cliché I suppose, but it is **EVEN BETTER** than a shot in the arm. It's even better than the "happy buzz" of a dose of 2 whole percocet!

And my church family... sigh, now I am really at a loss. I shared with some of you the other night that one of my biggest fears in having a prolonged illness is that I would be forgotten. That I would slowly but surely creep down the church prayer list, as new, very worthy, more emergent

needs arose. I felt sure that it would be, “Oh, Sara Walker... she’s still alive... she hasn’t asked us for anything lately so she must be doing ok. It’s cancer. Hundreds and thousands of people we know have cancer. We can’t just keep praying for it consistently. But we’ll keep her “on the list” and that will be good enough.

OH MY, I ask your forgiveness. I supposed your faithfulness in prayer for others to be like mine. I can pray for someone for a few weeks maybe, but then my attention is divided, my focus wanes. Not so with you. You are teaching me the meaning of Jesus’s instructions to his disciples to “always pray, never giving up.” My church family, you are as repeatedly, steadfastly, **BOLDLY** praying for me as much as you did even before my official diagnosis, even in the first few weeks of treatment. As I have failed to make “measurable” progress in my fight against these rogue cells, my faith has wavered. I have become less confident in God’s desire to heal me. But you, you have told me over and over that He is just as able to heal me completely today as He was 10 months ago. You continue to ask for a miracle, when I feel I have gone hoarse from asking. You **DO** stand in the gap for me. You **DO** hold up my arms as they did for Moses, for my arms are now so tired from the battle. There has been **NO LET UP** in the private prayers, the special collective prayer sessions, the meals, the hugs, the cards, the endless offers to help and support in any way possible. Tonight, as I was enveloped in hug after hug and as people looked me deep in the eye to ask me how I was really doing, I felt not one minute of self-consciousness about my skin. What a blessing! To come to a place looking very different, very scarred and have my family look right past that into my heart...I just have no words.

I am so richly, richly blessed by my church family. The deep and abiding love of the body of Christ is a precious, most beautiful thing to behold. I have been convinced that is unlike any other love this world could ever offer. How do you possibly go through trials in this life without it? I couldn’t do it.

Know that I love you all so very, very much. You are holding me together, keeping my head above water, through the Spirit of God that flows from within you. It is as if you each have a rope tied to my rollercoaster, refuse to let go, and are working together to drag it up whenever it sinks to the lowest points. How can I possibly thank you for that?

And I thank all of you who read this. For you continue on this journey with me as well. You continue to fight, to listen, to comfort, and most of all to pray. You are teaching me how to pray continually.

God is at work. I believe that. I don’t understand it. I don’t understand at all how this story has spread and continued to grow. But my view is that it is because of the tremendous way that you have responded. The way the vast body of Christ has united in love and service.

Jesus said the way the world will know that we are His disciples is by our love for each other. My brothers and sisters, know that you are loving this little pinky toe (You know it was the little piggy that went wee, wee wee all the way home... hee hee) of the body of Christ and honoring it and caring for it as a most precious, more valuable member. You have profoundly changed my life. And you are giving the world quite a teaching.

God continues to provide for us Walkers one day at a time. He faithfully gives me enough strength and pain-free moments each day. And He continues to bring me moments of joy in each day, moments to savor.

Praying you have a blessed day tomorrow and can slow down enough to recognize the tremendous blessings all around you.

All my love –
Sara

October 27, 2011

When we last left our cancer patient, she was nearing a peak of the roller coaster after a particularly moving worship service. But as we know, what goes up must come down...

When Dr. Penley walked into the exam room on Tuesday morning for my scheduled appointment, his exact first words were, "Boy, did I do a number on Sara Walker. I am so so sorry." He went on to say that my skin reaction was one of the worst he'd ever seen. For that reason, we were going to be unable to continue vectibix as a course of treatment, at the very least at the current dosage. He said he wanted me to come back in one week and if the skin has healed enough, we may continue vectibix at a lower dosage. If it was not sufficiently healed, we would have to eliminate vectibix as a treatment option, and we would be moving straight into Phase 1 and/or Phase 2 trials, depending on what is available.

We then spent a considerable amount of time just talking – talking about other options for pain management, since what I am currently doing is not working well for me/making me functional; talking about the benefit of an anti-depressant, talking (at my request) very calmly about how one dies from colon cancer and what the end is like; talking about alternative cancer treatment options; etc. Once again I was reminded how much I like his bed-side manner and am impressed with his knowledge. It was easy, compassionate conversation.

Another nurse came in ask questions that conclude the other clinical trial I am now finished with, and she said, "Wow, this was all just from one treatment of vectibix?" Yes, lucky lucky me. Remind me again just how rarely unfortunate this is.

I left the office, not having treatment of course, and knew that I was just barely keeping my composure. As I sat in the lobby waiting for my mom to come back and pick me up, I decided to listen to my ipod, thinking music would help calm my nerves. Unfortunately the song that immediately started playing was a very happy, playful song that is attached to a very strong memory for me. I remember singing the song with the boys in the back yard one beautiful spring afternoon in 2010 when I was pregnant with Anna. I remember thinking that day how happy I was, how blessed I was to be home with my precious boys, how excited I was about our baby girl on the way, how wonderful my life was.

So as that song began playing in the lobby of the Baptist Medical building, the tears erupted. It is so difficult for me to go back in my mind to those happy days before my nightmare began. I had so much joy, so much peace, so much to live for and enjoy. I can't even imagine at this point ever feeling like that again. Oh, I can find things to be happy about now, find things to smile about, sometimes I laugh (although that now causes pain), but it is SO HARD. I know, I am the same one who wrote about the sweetness of life, about savoring. Know that I fully meant those words at the time; life did have a special sweetness to it in those early months. Know that I am still trying, I am still attempting to find things to savor in each day. And God still provides them. But it is SO HARD to do, and there is a constant black cloud of sadness lurking in the background that can't be dispelled even in those better moments. This burden completely weighs me down. I am completely broken now, completely empty. My hope is a dim, barely flickering candle light, burned down almost to the wick. By God's grace, it is not extinguished completely yet.

I sat in that Baptist lobby and watched pregnant woman after pregnant woman walk by, I watched newborn after newborn go by, and I sobbed. I wanted to scream – “Do you know how blessed you are?!” “Do you know how blessed you are to be getting little sleep at night because your baby has the life force to scream at you and tell you they need to eat?!” “Do you know how blessed you are to have difficulty getting up and down from a chair because you are carrying a healthy full-term baby in your stomach?!”

I am not angry at those women, at those babies. I am angry at sin, which brought this suffering into the world; I am angry at the dark powers for waging battle and occasionally gaining ground in the battle for my mind and thoughts. I am confused. How did this happen? I was completely healthy. I have lived a completely healthy life.

And then God saves the day again. His words have infused life into my soul again. Simply spending 5 minutes reading the Word, and I am reminded – “Sara, you don't know anything. You are not God. You did not create this world or anything in this world. You do not fully grasp My power. One day, one hour at a time. That is all I need from you. I will get you through this next hour. Just be still.”

Lately I have been trying to meditate on the phrase, “The Lord your God goes before you.” That is currently more comforting to me than the idea of him by my side, or of his carrying me; both of which are very true too. But I am greatly comforted by the idea of him clearing the way before me. Taking the brunt of forceful attacks and shielding me. I would rather be no where else than in his shadow, under his wing.

The Lord provides daily: I have been blessed to spend some precious time with dear friends in my home, helping to pass the time, distract my mind, encourage me. I have been able to cry with special sisters who have fought the same battles. And here's some providence for you: literally just one week before my skin reaction started, the Lord allowed me to develop a friendship with a woman in our church family who is a nurse in dermatology. She has and continues to be a wealth of helpful information AND supplies also as I continue to try and treat my skin.

So, now that I've unloaded emotionally, here's the rest of the details.

MONDAY I go to the Sarah Cannon Research Center to be evaluated and educated on what clinical trials they have that I am appropriate for.

WEDNESDAY I go back for a second opinion with Dr. Berlin at Vanderbilt (who I saw just before ever beginning treatment back in February.) I will see if he has any other ideas and also find out about what trials Vanderbilt has going on that might fit my case.

THURSDAY I am to go back to Penley and determine if we will continue to try vectibix in the interim or not.

I have not yet started an anti-depressant but will probably start it in the next week or two.

My skin is healing slowly, my pain is manageable though with more pain meds than I would like, I am eating moderately well though still have almost no appetite. I am trying some extra alternative supplements that Dr. Penley signed off on and am hoping to start some juicing in the next week. (My juicer is being delivered today I think.) I can get out a bit but it really fatigues me.

Please know I have taken your suggestions and looked into all of them. Some we are trying, some we don't feel is the right time to try.

I know my posts have been very down lately, but please do not worry that I am suicidal or have completely given up. There is just not a whole lot to jump up and down and scream with delight about lately. I still believe that day may very well come. Know that my prayer now is just for this to be finished, one way or another. I pray that if He doesn't intend for me to live, that He will take me home today. I pray that every day. (I've prayed that every day for over a week and I'm still here, so hmmm.... But I also pray that He will show mercy, put His power on display, and come quickly to heal His child.

As you pray, I hope you will pray the same. And that you will pray that He direct us into our next steps of treatment / no treatment / trial / etc. I could also use prayers for gut motility, if you get my drift. Having to take extra pain pills is making that a huge challenge.

Thankful for God's faithfulness, for your diligence in prayer, for the ancient holy words and the power they have in my heart, and for this day.

– Your Sara

November 1, 2011

I have no brain power for "creative" writing tonight, if you can ever call it that. And my computer is not keeping up with my typing either, which is highly frustrating.

I thought you might like to hear about yesterday's appointment at the Sarah Cannon Research Institute. Brian was able to go with me and we were given good information on how things will work if we choose to enter one of their research studies. It was encouraging that:

a. The oncologist could come up with a list of 5 or 6 studies she thinks may be a good fit for me just off the top of her head. It is always better to hear of options as opposed to "we don't know what else we can do for you." I will hear later in the week the one they suggest I start with. Most all of the studies involve one visit per week to the facility; most are tolerated better than chemotherapy.

b. I really liked all of the folks we spoke with that we'd be in most frequent contact with. All were very kind, compassionate, focused, and optimistic.

c. The facilities are very nice – obviously fairly new; and on my long days there I will get to have a private room.

I was given some additional meds to treat the skin condition, because that has to be resolved before I can start any trial. So man, have I got a LONG list of current medications going now!

Tomorrow is my visit to Vandy.

Thank you for keeping up with me.

-Sara

November 7, 2011

Sara Walker, reporting live from her home pharmacy. Taking a break from taking drugs to update you on the latest with me.

As you know, I went to Vanderbilt last Wednesday for another opinion and to get initial information on their clinical trial process.

I met with Dr. Berlin, who thankfully seemed to be in a really good, lighthearted mood. We had a very pleasant conversation/exam. He, being the 3rd oncologist I have seen with this skin rash, had yet a 3rd opinion on the best drugs to take to treat the rash. So – to date I think I have had 7 different prescriptions to treat this rash. I have taken a course of doxycycline, a medrol dose pack, and a course of bactrim, with another prescription for minocycline to use in the future. That is in addition to the various prescription creams used to treat it. It has taken nearly all my concentration to take these meds correctly.

Dr. Berlin was of the opinion that it was too early to throw out the vectibix option. He noted that having the skin reaction does raise my odds that the cancer is positively responding to the drug; and it has proven to be a very effective drug in the past. He feels that if I can take the minocycline DURING the course of vectibix administration, I can possibly prevent such a severe

reaction from occurring again. He thought it would be worth it to try at least one more round of vectibix and then have a scan to see what it's doing.

This made sense to me. As much as I don't want to have to continue dealing with skin reactions, I do want to at least have a clear picture as to if it is helping or not before just tossing it out the window.

So at this point, I have been finishing up the course of bactrim, and will return to see Dr. Penley on Thursday of this week. (I was scheduled to see him last week but cancelled since I was just starting the bactrim and wanted to give it a chance to work.) Assuming he is on board with Dr. Berlin's opinion, I will hopefully be having another vectibix treatment (perhaps at a lower dosage) next week.

In the meantime, Sarah Cannon and Vandy are each testing my biopsy tissue for other mutations to help guide the clinical trial placement choices.

As to how I am feeling these days, it is highly variable day to day. I have unfortunately been having more bad hours than good hours – having to take pain pills much more often, spending a significant amount of time in bed/on the couch because that is the least painful position. That said, I have been able to go and do the few things that I had hoped to do outside my home – going to see “Wicked” with Dinah and Stephanie, going to see a movie with Molly, Kelly and Vanessa, going to church to participate in the 25 hours of prayer, going to worship services yesterday morning, etc. I have also been able to “entertain” (if you can call it that at all) dear friends in my home and spend some wonderful time catching up with new and old friends here at home.

God continues to get me through one day at a time. And He is using so many of you as His hands and feet.

Finally, I have promised my friends I will mention another special event that is being held to help our family financially. Tomorrow afternoon, Tuesday Nov. 8th, from 2-6 pm at Lipscomb University, several vendors are having an event called “Shopping for Sara.”

The following is copied from Facebook:

SHOP FOR SARA TOMORROW

Location: Lobby of Hughes Art and Engineering Building on the Lipscomb University Campus

Come do your holiday shopping and benefit our sweet Sara Pigg Walker!

Vendors include: Stella & Dot, Thirty-One, Usborne Books, Itty Bitty Children's Boutique, Ye Peddler, Ramona & Company, and Kelly's Kids!

SILENT AUCTION items include: Tiera Betts photography session, Live music for your holiday party from musician Erin Sparks, celebrity styling session from Stella & Dot, All-Inclusive trunk show from Stella & Dot, autographed Tim Tebow football, 2011 World Series baseball, Christmas painting from Emily Wiles Nielsen, SNAP fitness gym membership (2), Vera Bradley travel set, Petunia Picklebottom diaper bag, TOMS gift card, nutrition consultation from Healthy

Beginnings LLC, and more from Anthropology, Brentwood Interiors, Usborne, Thirty-one and MORE!

The more the merrier, so bring some friends! Yummy refreshments too! The Hughes building is the new building behind Mcfarland and Crimson. Additional parking available at Stokes across the street.

Proceeds will go to Sara Walker's family.

We are a most blessed family.

I leave you with a favorite Beth Moore quote that summarizes many of my thoughts these days:

“The biggest reason why I can trust in the sovereignty of God is because I am so utterly convinced in the sweetness (goodness/love) of God.”

One day at a time. It really is the best way to live...

November 11, 2011

It is a beautiful, crisp, sunny fall morning in Nashville, Tennessee, on this day, 11-11-11. I am home alone, sitting in my quiet office, Mom having just left to take Scott to preschool, Camden being at kindergarten and Brian already at work.

I am to head to Baptist in a couple of hours for another infusion of vectibix. This is the same medicine that gave me the severe skin reaction, but I am premedicating with a strong antibiotic (minocycline) in an attempt to head off such a severe reaction this time around.

I have been sad lately about something in particular. I have felt, as Job said, that my “days have no meaning” ([Job 7:16](#)). I have very little productivity most days, as I can only be up on my feet for a bit before having to sit or lie down. I have been reading a lot, watching a lot of television, or just lying and doing nothing much of the time. I know many of you will find this ridiculous, but then I feel sad and some guilt when my friends talk about their acts of service to God – teaching Sunday school classes, attending Bible studies, serving the inner city, working with the Hispanic ministry, etc. I feel guilty because I can't do any of those things “for God” as I would like.

Then I realized, what I can do is write on this blog. I still do not understand why anyone reads it. I still do not understand why the simple words and thoughts I share have any impact on other hearts. But too many of you have told me that they do for me to deny it. God seems to be doing something, and so I cannot abandon it. So I have decided to attempt to write here more often. That is my promise today.

There are so many thoughts that filter in and out of my mind throughout the long days, as I have an unusually great amount of time to think; and so it is difficult to know where to start.

What has been foremost on my mind the past few days is the concept of being angry with God. I have not, at any point in the last year, been angry with God. Some people cannot understand this, and so I have been trying to formulate an explanation, mostly for myself.

I believe the answer is: the fear of God. I have equal parts fear of God and love of God in my heart.

You see, I was raised to know not only the God who welcomes the little children and takes them on his lap, as we see Jesus do; but also the God who came down to Mount Sinai with thunder and lightning and a thick cloud and fire, so that the people trembled and whoever touched the mountain would die. I was raised with the strict instruction to freely approach my loving Father who loves me more than I could ever comprehend, but ALWAYS approach Him with great humility, realizing His great power and perfect holiness; with the strict instruction not to ever assume I had Him figured out, because He is infinite knowledge and infinitely complex and my finite mind could barely even begin to understand Him and His ways.

So who am I to be angry with God? Who am I to question His purposes? This God, who loves me completely but who could strike me down instantly.

And then I think of the cross. I think of how the perfect, loving, sinless Jesus took the full cup of God's wrath, when he deserved not even the smallest sip. He suffered the full measure of God's righteous anger and punishment toward all sin – all murder, all child abuse, all torture, all stealing, etc – he took it all on his shoulders so that I can live. I think of God's great, incomprehensible love for me in doing this and I think, how can I be angry about cancer? How can I whine about not having a "comfortable life" when this earthly life is just a breath and He has given me eternal life in the perfection of heaven? He gave it to me as a free, undeserved gift. The greatest gift I could get. How could I ask for MORE? What a brat!

God is God. I am dust. I am a speck in light of His vastness. (Is that a word? Drugs people, remember I am on strong narcotics. Ha!) What right have I to get angry?

I tell you what does make me angry. People who tell me they know exactly what God is doing in my life (or really any life). For instance: "God is testing you." Maybe He is; it is quite possible. But maybe the suffering is of Satan and God has allowed it. I get angry when people assume they know the mind of God that perfectly.

I get angry when people tell me what to feel. Tell me what *you* feel, but meet *me* where *I* am. Remind me of God's love but don't tell me to do a 180 emotionally, as if all I needed was someone to just tell me and then I could do it. No one knows what I feel, no one knows how this feels to me, but God does, and He knows perfectly. Remind me of that. Don't assume you know, just because you have been through something similar. It doesn't mean our emotions and responses are the same.

I don't mean to sound harsh. I truly don't. I hope that it makes us all think about what we say to the suffering. I really feel that we (because I am just as guilty of this in the past) just try too hard to say the "right thing" – as if the more we say and the more scripture we quote will somehow be just the thing to make the pain vanish – when all that needs to be said is "I am here. I hurt with you. I love you."

So I am not angry with God. I love my Father more deeply than I ever have in my whole life. He has saved me and I am thankful. I want to live whatever days I have left in a way that shows Him how thankful I am.

On a different note, I want to extend an invitation. (Ha! Now that I've finished my sermon that's what I'm supposed to do, right?)

Lord willing, we are planning on having a balloon release to celebrate what would have been Anna's first birthday. My boys both think of their sister Anna as being very much alive in heaven with God, and while they have their childlike faith in where heaven is, we want to release a bunch of balloons "up to heaven" for her to show her our love.

And we would be honored if others could join us. I would love for my boys to have a very tangible picture and make an indelible memory of the many people who love their sister and love them.

Though her birthday was Dec 6, we plan to do the balloon release on Sunday, Dec 4th so that more friends (especially school-aged kids) will be able to join us.

So please mark your calendars for **Sunday, December 4th at 1 pm, weather permitting, at Crockett Park in Brentwood. (I will be more specific as to location as it gets closer.)**

It will be BYOB: Bring your own (helium filled, of course) balloons.

This is the day that the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it.

November 14, 2011

Now that I have done exactly the opposite of what I intended to do...

Now that I have caused many of you to wonder, "Did she write that last post in response to one of my cards, one of my comments, one of my conversations with her?"

Now that I unintentionally accused you of being like Job's friends to me...

A retraction is necessary. (I really need a filter on my mouth sometimes. Ok, a lot of the time...)

Let me be very clear:

Out of the over 1000 cards I have received in the mail, exactly 2 have upset me.

Out of the over 7500 comments left on this blog, exactly 2 have rubbed me the wrong way.

Out of what is probably millions of personal interactions I've had with individuals trying to encourage me, exactly ZERO have offended me in any way.

You do not need me to be "preaching" to you about how to encourage the suffering. You are teaching me what is effective.

However, I still hear this spoken all the time:

"I just don't know what to say. I just don't know what to do. I'm just afraid of doing the wrong thing."

I said I did the opposite of what I intended. What I would like to do, more than anything, is help people to be LESS afraid to approach the hurting. To be unafraid of saying or doing the wrong thing.

Now, I can almost hear the collective groans from all the professional counselors and psychologists who have studied for years about the proper way to minister to the hurting and the grieving. So while I am hesitant to speak any more about the subject, I feel the need to clarify myself. I speak only from the experience of one well acquainted with suffering, not from any professional training. But here's what I've learned:

1. Pray

I am convinced that if one earnestly seeks God in prayer before encountering the hurting, the Holy Spirit will guide us into wisdom, into the words to say, the way to say them. He will show us how to best reach the person's heart in the way that God wants to do through you. He will protect us from doing or saying the "wrong thing." Pray before writing a card, before going to a visitation, before approaching a person. Ask for guidance and He will be faithful.

2. Just be PRESENT.

You have heard the phrase, "Always preach the gospel, and when necessary, use words." I believe it would be equally true to say, "Always comfort the hurting, and when necessary use words."

What to me has caused the most pain in my heart is avoidance. Many people say they stay away because of the reasons listed above – I don't know what to say, I don't know what to do, I'm afraid of saying the wrong thing. But the sufferer doesn't realize that is your motivation. It can easily come across as not caring.

Physical presence – a hug, a hand squeeze, sitting by the side in silence – these speak volumes. These expressions of love mean more than any words I have heard. And doing them repeatedly is not a nuisance (maybe if there are too many words that come along with it it can). Remember I

am a PT. I firmly believe that God created our sense of physical touch to have special physical and emotional effects on our body and minds. Just put your arm around them.

3. Express love.

“I love you.” I believe these are the only words needed the majority of the time.

Sure, we put pressure on ourselves a lot to show “love in action”. But I contend that just saying the words is an action in itself that makes a world of difference. Everyone wants to “do something.” But the simple act of stating love can not be undervalued.

4. Share the pain.

Tell the person that you hurt with them. That one statement, besides, “I love you,” has meant the most to me. It has kept me from feeling so alone. Others have chosen to allow their world to be interrupted by my pain just as I have been forced to do. What a comfort to know I don’t carry this alone.

I believe that where most people get into trouble with trying to be a comforter is that they are so worried about “saying the right thing” that they just keep on “saying”.

Let me take that pressure off right now:

There is no “right thing” to say. There is no magic phrase, sentence, paragraph, quote, scripture, or essay that is going to instantly heal a hurting heart. There is no perfectly constructed sentence that is guaranteed to reduce pain by 50%. So relax. Express love. Express acceptance. Don’t make it a goal to “change” but to boost.

By the same token, it is difficult to say the wrong thing. I think specifically of those who ask me about Anna. It is not as if my reaction to questions about her is, “Oh, I had completely forgotten about losing a child. Now I’m sad about it again. Why did you remind me about it?” It never leaves my mind. A question does not cause “pain swelling” or any such thing. Sure, sometimes we don’t want to talk about it. And that’s pretty easy to pick up on quickly. But most of us appreciate genuine concern to ask about our suffering.

Alright, I hope that as you’ve finished reading this you now feel released, a new bright FREEDOM to encourage even more than you ever have.

Just pray, the Spirit will guide you. I know because He already has in the way you encourage me.

And I hope that can be the very last of my ignorant counseling advice...

-Sara

November 16, 2011

I feel that I have just been given the first shred of hope in quite some time and am anxious to share it with you.

First, in answer to the many who have asked: No, I have not yet started to have any adverse skin reaction with this latest round of vectibix. I still have the vestiges of the original rash, but it continues to slowly get better. However, be aware that after the first infusion of vectibix, it took 10 days for the rash to begin. So I won't be in the clear for several more days. If I can make it past this next Monday without a worsening of the rash, then I hope to be in the clear.

I have just received a call from Sarah Cannon Research Institute (SCRI). Their testing found that I DO have the B-RAF mutation, which means I am an ideal candidate for a very specific Phase 1 trial (B-RAF/MEK). I was called by the research nurse at SCRI, and she informed me that e-mail communication had already passed among all 3 oncologists with whom I have consulted (Penley, Bendell at SCRI, and Berlin at Vanderbilt) and all are in agreement that I should proceed into this trial as a first course of action.

The research nurse told me that it is one of her favorite trials because

- a) it is extremely well-tolerated by most patients and is one of the most benign of the trials
- b) it has been shown so far to be highly successful; the majority of patients in it have seen significant shrinkage of their cancer (though more are melanoma pts, less are colon cancer)
- c) it is not as time-intensive for me as the other trial they were looking at beginning with – not such long days in the clinic, I won't be in the clinic as frequently, etc.

I have been in prayer for our next step, that God would make it clear. Just last night I prayed my most intense, focused prayer specifically about what to do next. I prayed, “God, you have promised that if I will trust in you with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding, and if I will acknowledge you in all my ways, that you will direct my paths. God, I am trusting you. I am certainly not leaning on my own understanding, Lord, because I do not understand all this. I do not understand what direction to go, whether to choose purely alternative treatments at this point, whether to stay with vectibix when my pain only seems to be increasing. I do not trust my instinct or my knowledge in the least. I am now trusting you to direct my path. Lord, I believe you will, YOU will direct me.”

And then I get this call today. Wow. God, you amaze me at every turn.

All the doctors are in agreement. There was clear physiological reason to choose this clinical trial, it wasn't just “what's left over” after all mutations have been ruled out. They have located a specific genetic mutation to try and affect. That is about as clear direction as I could hope for. And to top it off, to hear that it may be one of the more easily tolerated trials? I can't help but feel optimistic and oh so thankful.

In other news, my eating is improving. I haven't shared much details of this on the blog, but my weight has been dropping at a rather alarming rate for the last couple of months. I just have had no appetite. However; that seems to be improving in the last week or so. I have started this week taking a specific medicine that is an appetite stimulant (yes, my home pharmacy grows and grows) and it seems to be helping as well. So more for which to be thankful...

I am one day closer today, my friends. One day closer to this battle being over, one way or another. That is what I tell myself every day. One day closer to relief.

Pray for wisdom, pray for no skin reaction to this latest round of vectibix (which would delay my entrance into this trial, as of now I would begin it in early Dec), pray for appetite, pray for “movement”, pray for pain relief.

But above all, pray for Jesus to come and take us home...

November 18, 2011

Why me, God?

Why me, God?

WHY ME, GOD?

Why was I born to two loving, faithful Christian parents whose tremendous love for each other is only eclipsed by their unyielding love for you? Why me?

Why was I born into a prosperous, free nation and have never known hunger or neglect? Why me?

Why, why was I blessed to attend Christian schools throughout my secondary, college, and graduate education; being nurtured by dedicated Christian professors and making lifelong Christian friends who have challenged my faith and helped me to grow closer to you? Why me?

Why, why did you give me such success in school, so that I never struggled to eventually grasp difficult concepts and make the grades needed to enter my professional career? Why me?

Why did you give me a Christian husband who has fulfilled every dream I've ever had about the man I would spend my life with – who is faithful, patient, hard-working, even-tempered, not materialistic, handy, smart, a fun but teaching Daddy? Why me?

Why did you give me a job right out of school with amazing Christian co-workers who have become dear friends, and enjoyable patients to treat, and for a family-based company with its priorities straight? Why me?

Why God, why did you give me not one but two beautiful healthy boys with absolutely no physical or mental disabilities or limitations? Boys who bring me such pride, joy and laughter each day? Why me?

Why Father, why did you let my dreams come true in being able to stay home with those boys some days and also be able to serve patients a few days per week? Why did you work it out so that they were always being taken care of by Christian friends in their homes while I was working? Why me?

Why Lord, have you placed me in a city with multiple top-rated medical institutions full of brilliant and also caring medical professionals? Why me?

Why, my sweet Father, have you walked with me every day of this journey?

I've been asking the wrong questions. These are where I try and direct my mind now. These are the only why questions I have a right to ask.

Lord Jesus, Hold me in your arms. No, better yet, bring my face just inches from yours, gently cradle each side of my jaw, and fix my eyes on You. Keep them there. In your strong gentleness, do not let me turn my head even one fraction of a degree to the left or right, to see the wind or the waves. I want only to gaze at You. You are real, all else is passing away. You are real and true.

November 23, 2011

It is Wednesday afternoon, the day before Thanksgiving, and I am most happy to report that I have had no skin reaction whatsoever to the last treatment with vectibix. Again, the last vestiges of the original reaction remain, but that is becoming more faint with each passing day.

I am also happy to report that I have had some of the best days I have had in MONTHS over the last week. My energy level has increased tremendously – just yesterday I was able to take a shower and not have to lay down to recover from that effort for at least ten minutes afterward, which had been my pattern. I was even able to stand to fix my hair and put on my makeup, which is my normal practice but something I haven't been able to do for at least the past 6 weeks. I have consistently been able to eat 3 meals a day. I have even been having consistent, healthy "movement"!! Bottom line – I am almost approaching "good days" again.

I am having some severe pains at times, so all is not rosy and easy, but so far the pain meds eventually will get the pain under control. Sometimes it takes several doses and the pain can make it very difficult for me to breathe. But thankfully, those pains are not constant.

I am so thankful to be feeling better in time for Thanksgiving. I am thankful that I am actually looking forward to the food, which believe me I know is not the important part, but when I'd anticipated dreading having to force the food in, it is exciting now to think I should actually enjoy that too. This Thanksgiving will be the most meaningful ever in my life, because I am now so thankful for each and every opportunity to be together with my family. I no longer take for granted just that they are THERE – that each of us is ALIVE. I will probably burst into tears or laughter about a hundred times tomorrow. I'm gonna be a mess, I'm sure!

I wanted to write today to reveal a little bit more about the balloon release in honor of Anna.

I am well aware that we are not the only family to have suffered the loss of a child. It is a tragedy that many, many have suffered and is a quiet ache that many still feel deep inside.

I plan to release 3 balloons on Dec 4th: one for Anna, and one for two babies who were taken from two different friends earlier this year. It would make me most happy if others used this opportunity to recognize and honor children that they know await them in heaven.

One of the babies I will be remembering was a miscarriage at 12 weeks of gestation. The cultural “norm” seems to be to keep these “early miscarriages” very private, which is fine of course, but it also seems to be expected that the mourning should not be the same as for a late term stillbirth. I find it ridiculous that women and men are expected to adjust their level of grief according to the week of gestation.

A LOSS IS A LOSS.

My heart hurts for friends who have suffered miscarriage and then felt they had no where to take their pain; who felt it should be hidden immediately.

What I would hope is that maybe some people who are planning on joining us for the balloon release can experience an emotional release of their own as they honor a life that I truly believe is waiting for them in heaven (no matter how early it was lost), that LIVES at the feet of Jesus’s throne even as we live and breathe right now.

This can be done as openly or as anonymously as you wish. You could still just release one balloon, but know in your mind that it is to honor another child or children as well. You could write information about the other child on the one balloon, or you could release a separate balloon for each child you want to remember. Names/dates could be written on the balloon, attached to a card on the balloon string, or not included at all.

I do think that if there are several who feel comfortable releasing more than one balloon, it will be eye-opening to see how many have been touched in some way by the loss of a child. I believe we can and will draw strength from this act of unity, from seeing that we are not alone in this heartache. It can be a powerful testimony that several of us are taking a stand against the dark forces and demonstrating to them that this loss has not defeated us, but we hold steadfastly to the God who works all things to the good.

I want to make clear that the focus of the afternoon will be on celebration. On celebrating ETERNAL LIFE, that death has lost its sting, that Christ has defeated death, that we rejoice in the reality of heaven and that we look forward to the grand reunion one day. I hope that the mood is reflective but not somber. I hope the predominate mood is of joy, thankfulness and hope.

My prayer is that the balloon release will be a healing time not just for our family, but for many.

Happy Turkey Day to all! I expect much savoring to occur, my fellow savorers!

Love, Sara

December 1, 2011

It is Thursday afternoon, and I am enjoying a day with my very best friends from physical therapy school, who have spent the day lifting my spirits and lifting my Christmas tree! The hard part of getting the tree ready is now done, thanks to their help, and now me and all three of my boys can do the fun part of hanging the ornaments and reminiscing about where they came from, etc.

I had my initial visit with Sarah Cannon yesterday to begin the process of starting the clinical trial. I will post more about the trial later, but for now will say that the goal is to begin the trial drugs next Friday, December 9. There are many baseline tests and medical appointments that have to be performed between now and then in order to begin. And of course, there must be no big surprises in those baseline tests for me to be included in the trial.

One of the tests required is a chest/abdominal/pelvic CT scan. That was initially scheduled for next week, but has been moved up to tomorrow because it seems that I likely have a kidney stone(s). Yes, you read that right, a kidney stone. Because my story wasn't already hard to believe anyway – why not throw in something else? I have had stones before, and this pain is pretty telltale. I also had clinical signs which I won't go into, but the imaging tomorrow will be definitive. I'm not sure what to ask you to pray for, because I don't know what the other possibilities for the pain are, but I am hoping that we don't find out that my kidneys are full of cancer. Please just pray for the CT scan, that we will get the best results possible.

My hemoglobin has been dropping in recent weeks and I am also going in tomorrow for a blood transfusion. I am hoping this helps greatly with my energy and the shortness of breath I've been experiencing recently.

ANNA'S BALLOON RELEASE:

The Where:

Crockett Park
1500 Volunteer Parkway
Brentwood, TN 37027

If you turn at the light onto Volunteer Parkway, you'll pass in between an elementary school and a church. Continue to go straight on that road following signs into the park. You will veer around to the left and see a large amphitheater on your left. We hope to do the balloon release in the middle of the big open grassy area out in front of the stage. There is a small stone platform in the middle of that grassy area which will be the center of the event. A few words will be said before we sing "Happy Birthday" and release the balloons. I anticipate the entire thing will last no more than 30 minutes.

The Why:

I felt I should maybe clarify how important this event is to Brian and myself, because it seems I have failed to convey that message in previous posts. This is basically equal in importance to me as a funeral, and I want family and close friends to understand that.

This is not something we plan to do again. This is a one-time opportunity for those close to us to express their love and support for our family in the loss of Anna.

I have absolutely no regrets as to how we initially handled Anna's death. Brian and I are fairly quiet, introspective people and we initially felt it important to take care of each other, be united together and very privately deal with the grief and loss. We allowed only our parents and one sibling in town to visit us in the hospital. We had the memorial service with just us and the minister. We spent the next several days at home just the two of us, not taking phone calls or accepting visitors. I remain convinced it was exactly what we needed to do.

However, several family members and close friends expressed desperation in wanting to "do something," to "see us," to "be there," "to say goodbye to Anna." That is what this event is for. This is that opportunity. It is something we have been thinking about for months, not something kinda fun for the boys that I thought up just a week or so ago. This is your chance to support us in our loss of Anna. It means the world to us.

My best friends from PT school understand that – one flew in from Philadelphia to be here with me.

Do I expect people who hardly know us at all to be there? No (though you will be welcome.) Do I hope family and close friends will make an effort to be there? Yes.

In terms of the weather, obviously I have no more control over that than I had in it being December when she died. I can't control it nor am I clairvoyant to know if the weather will cooperate on Sunday. I have not looked at a weather forecast at all, because I choose to pray and wait in faith. I have been praying about the day for months and have asked, just as I did for the Walker Run, that God will smile on the day and let us have good weather. I believe He is going to bless it.

However, if not, then that's ok. He has His ways and reasons. And I know that I need to check the weather sometime in advance. SO...

What I will promise is that I will post on here by 8 pm Saturday night whether or not we plan to have the release. (Clark, I will talk to you earlier than that about separate arrangements.) If it is cancelled, it will not be rescheduled. If you need to know before 8 pm Saturday, and you check the weather and don't think it's gonna work out, then by all means make your own decision and skip it if it's not worth the risk.

I will update again as soon as I know anything about kidney stones. I would appreciate prayers that they pass quickly if present, and I would also appreciate prayers that no surprises pop up in all the baseline testing tomorrow and next week.

December 2, 2011

Anna's Balloon Release will be at 1:00 pm tomorrow.

The weather reports I have seen predict the rain to begin in Nashville/Brentwood late in the day tomorrow. However, I will completely understand if many of you do not feel it is worth the risk. Our family will likely be out there, even if there is a light drizzle. If it is a downpour, we won't try it.

Yesterday proved to be yet another interesting day at Centennial/Sarah Cannon. Last Wednesday my appointment was at 11, and I left there at 5:15. Yesterday mom and I got there at 7 am and left at 4:45. Both days I was only supposed to be there a few hours.

My CT scan did not reveal a kidney stone. It did reveal that my cancer has continued to grow unabated. The vectibix had done nothing. It also revealed a lot of fluid in my abdomen, called ascites, which basically makes me look and feel pregnant, and this is likely responsible for much of my pain. Most likely this fluid build up is due to the widespread cancer. The scan also revealed a "large pericardial effusion," which is a large build up of fluid around my heart. This information was determined in the middle of my first bag of blood with my transfusion. This sent everyone into a bit of a tailspin, meant I needed an echocardiogram right away, and meant we were in a holding pattern with the transfusion until the echo was performed and analyzed. I was obviously fighting a lot of fear during this time.

The good news is the echocardiogram was just fine. The nurse said, "It showed a completely different picture than the CT scan did. The echo looks great." There was a bit of fluid around the heart but that is normal with cancer treatment.

I came home feeling pretty discouraged last night. I felt I should be elated about the echo results, and the fact that there was no kidney stone, and about the fact that they didn't find that my kidneys were full of cancer. But I was just very tired, very sore, and devoid of hope. Oh, I failed to mention they also found that there is a lot of "junk in my lungs," primarily in the base of my right lobe (just above my liver). They said it could be metastases, but it could also be pneumonia (I've started a 7 day course of cipro), or just atelectasis from not breathing deeply enough because of pain. I know that I breathe very shallow due to pain, so I am trying to fix my mind on the fact that that is the cause. The nurse encouraged me to try and take deeper breaths at times to open up those bases of my lungs and I am doing so. Still, I am discouraged because I am having to take so much pain medicine these days to keep the pain in control.

But then today my hope has returned. I actually feel better today than I have in weeks in terms of energy and stamina. I have been on my feet a LOT today. I seem to have much less shortness of breath. Everything is still on track to begin the study next Friday, and the oncologists and nurses are very optimistic that these drugs will work for me. Their hope is rubbing off on me.

Please pray that tomorrow is a good day for me as well since it is an important day for us.

As always, I can't thank you enough for praying for me.

-Sara

December 5, 2011

Perfect.

Just as our Anna was.

Yesterday's balloon release was beautiful and moving. God took my dream and made it abundantly more.

My spirit was lifted just like those balloons. Perhaps one day soon I will come down from the clouds and somehow find the words to describe the perfection of the day. Until then, I want to share the beautiful prayer my father wrote and shared yesterday. The words were perfect, just like the day, just like our Anna.

"Dearest Heavenly Father, the Giver, Sustainer, and Exalter of life and all that is good.

The great I AM...The true and only God...

We lift our hands, hearts and hopes to you this day, in our remembrance and celebration of our children,

The ones here with us today,

and especially the ones now with You.

We beg you to come to us.

Send your Spirit, your angels, your heavenly hosts to us.

Come deep into the secret, sacred chambers of our thoughts, where we hurt, hunger and are most tender from the aches and sorrows of loss and longings.

Oh God, Layer your holy truths on our emotional scars...whisper to us those soothing words of Jesus ..."Do not let your heart be troubled; do not be afraid...in my Father's house are many mansions...it is true, let there be no doubt. I am here, and so is Anna, your precious child. You, too, are my precious child and there is a place for you here with us as well...where we can be together forever".

Oh God Almighty, Send us Your Peace...hold us close and give us rest.

And brighten our today with the precious promises of eternal joy, wonder, energy and excitement that awaits us on the GREAT Day when we all Soar through the Heavens, meeting our Lord in the air.

Quicken our steps in childlike joyous anticipation for the day we are whisked away to the home prepared by a Loving Father for his long awaited children, with the shouting and rejoicing of angels and heavenly beings on the DAY we are reunited with those we love and long for so deeply.

Lift us up high this day Father, bless our remembrances of our children, renew our spirit, and send us soaring through the heavens...reunite us now in Faith and Hope while we wait...and keep us clothed, warm and secure in your everlasting love.

Through the perfect Son, Jesus Christ, we, the "born again", cry out to you this day.

AMEN"

December 8, 2011 (part 1)

I don't have much time to explain, because I am on my way to Sarah Cannon ASAP, but I need to ask you to stop and pray very hard, very specifically, for the next several hours.

We finished up all the preliminary screening before the clinical trial yesterday afternoon and were told that there really wasn't anything that could come up at this point that could keep me from starting the clinical trial tomorrow.

Then I got a phone call this morning that the blood testing done yesterday revealed that one of my liver function tests had shot way up, to 3 x above normal. The study will only let you participate if you are up to 2.5 x above normal. In other words, yesterday's reading would exclude me from the trial.

I have been asked to stop the cipro I was taking, come in today for IV fluids, and we are going to draw again and see if the number comes down. They said that this particular liver test has been holding steady for several months so this was a real anomaly that it had shot up so dramatically.

Please pray that the number comes back down to an acceptable number to start the trial. Please pray that the fluids and stopping the anti-biotic works.

I had so much hope, so much hope after yesterday, after talking more about the great success of this trial with other patients. More hope than I've had in months. And now it has come crashing down around my feet. You see why it is so hard for me to get hopeful about anything...something seems to always come up (literally, in this case).

Please, please, please pray, pray, pray that the number comes down and I can start the trial.

Will keep you posted....

(part 2)

God is good!! And so are you, prayer warrior!

My tests numbers came down enough that I can start the trial tomorrow!

The numbers actually came down before getting the fluids – so it was ALL PRAYER, ALL GOD!

Hopefully I will have more time tomorrow to share with you more details about the trial itself.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be your name!!!

December 10, 2011

The young nurse sat on a stool three feet from me and held out the bottle of pills.

“This is the BRAF inhibitor, so you need to take two of these right now. Do you have enough water there?”

Wait just a minute. Do you realize what you are handing me? Do you realize that to me this feels like my final hope, you are handing me my cure, what I’ve prayed for for months? Do you realize what I have been through physically and emotionally for the past almost two weeks, the hurdles I’ve had to get over just to be given these pills? Do you realize the tear-filled prayers that I and countless others have prayed just for me to be sitting here today, being handed these pills?

“We are really excited for you to start this trial. I mean, this trial is just great. We have seen so many improve with this trial. Really, *everybody* sees significant shrinkage with this trial.”

“Ok, I just need a minute to pray before I take this.”

And my tears came unbidden. I spoke to the Lord from deep in my heart, as the tears washed over my face.

“Oh Lord, I thank you for getting me to this point, for making my many lab tests what they needed to be. I need you to make this work. Lord, so many treatments have failed. The cancer has grown, so many side effects have gotten in the way, so much has not gone as doctors expected. Please, **not this time**. Please have mercy. Please show your compassion. You have worked out difficult details to get me into this study. I believe you led me to it. Lord, let the drugs work. But let my healing be such that it even surprises the doctors. Father, I want you to have the honor and the glory for rescuing your child. Show, without a doubt, that when God is with you, you are different from the rest of the world. You have access to greater power. You are protected in a different way. Show that when many prayers are lifted, it makes a difference. Give

me a chance to tell the story of your great love for me. How when all looked so bleak and the end felt so near, you pulled me up out of the pit. God, please, let this be the beginning of victory.”

I wiped my eyes and opened the bottle of pills.

“Are you ok?” the stunned nurse asked.

“I’m ok. I just have a lot of hope right now and I just really want this to work.”

“Well, like I said, we really think this is going to make you better.”

“I know. But I’ve been told that before. We’ve just had a lot of bad happen over the last year. I really need things to turn around.”

She finished explaining the meds and then suddenly gave me a hug before leaving the room.

The BRAF trial has begun. I am on C1D2, meaning cycle 1, day 2. I take 3 pills (2 drugs) every morning, and 2 pills (1 drug) every night. I have to make sure I have fasted one hour before taking the meds and then don’t eat for 2 hours after taking the meds. I will return to Sarah Cannon on Monday for some more lab work (more on this in just a moment). Then I return 2 weeks from yesterday for lab work and to be given refills on my meds. After that I will only go to Sarah Cannon once a month for labs and refills. I will have CT scans every 8 weeks, and as long as things are responding favorably, I will continue the study. I will see a dermatologist periodically and have echocardiograms periodically during the study but I think that’s every month or two months also.

The primary side effects to these drugs is skin rash, which 80% of patients have. They may also cause fevers. There is slight chance of nausea, fatigue, constipation/diarrhea, etc, but few deal with that. I’ve been told that most patients are able to live quite normal lives for years on this study, including working full-time.

Monday I have to return for more lab work to have those good old liver function tests repeated. In addition to my function tests being elevated, my bilirubin has been gradually increasing to a concerning level. If that looks bad enough on Monday, Dr. Bendell (now my primary oncologist – she is amazing!!!!) wants to send me to a gastroenterologist for a procedure to examine the patency of my bile duct. I may need a procedure to free up the bile duct if a tumor is starting to encroach it.

There are so many positives about the course of things lately. First of all – we got all of this massive testing for the study done and got me going on the study before the main craziness of the Christmas season is upon us. The study requirements are so minimal in terms of time commitment that I am going to be able to attend, Lord willing, all school Christmas parties, Christmas programs, maybe even church Christmas functions, etc. In addition, side effects shouldn’t keep me from enjoying the holidays. I should be able to finish up Christmas prep at our house (shopping/wrapping), enjoy Christmas day with my boys, and enjoy traveling to family

Christmas events. I had prayed so hard for a break from chemo over the holidays and that has been granted. Praise the Lord!

Here's where my prayers are focused right now:

1. That my liver function tests and bilirubin numbers will not be a concern on Monday. I don't know a lot yet about the GI procedure that may have to be done, but obviously it involves an endoscope and is at least minimally invasive, therefore carries some risk. I would just as soon avoid that all together if I can safely do so.

2. That I have no major unexpected reactions to this drug, but that my body responds well to it. Obviously, they didn't expect the terrible reaction I had to vectibix. I don't want to be that outlier again, with either my skin or anything else. I don't want something else to get in the way of giving these drugs a chance to work.

3. That this is the beginning of brighter days for my family, the beginning of true victory on this earth over cancer. I want the chance to share a powerful story of healing and grace. I can't tell you how ready I am to conclude 2011 and begin 2012. Lord willing, I truly believe it is going to be an amazing year for me and my family. My hope is in the Lord! Nothing is too hard for God, the God of all flesh. Nothing is impossible with God. I cannot see the future, but God is there, working out the details with His loving hand.

Bless you, be blessed this Christmas season, be merry, let your heart be light, and be filled with the True Light of the world.

-Your Sara

December 12, 2011

Direct quote from the nurse this afternoon on the phone:

"...and your liver function tests look fine. They did come down. In fact, it looks like they came down quite a bit here."

God is so very good. All the time, but it is especially easy for me to say so today. Now on to more Christmas preparations...So thankful I have the health to undertake them!

Thank you for bringing my requests before God's throne...

Sara

December 26, 2011

Here's how the Walker household felt about Christmas this year: EXCITED!!!!



(If you click on the pictures link, there is a normal picture of us in the same get-up. These pictures were taken after church on Sunday morning.)

My wanna-be writer-self desires to spend considerable time here exercising my creative muscles as I update you on the latest in our continuing journey. However, my often tired, mother of two energetic boys who are on Christmas break-self desires to spend as much time enjoying said break with those boys as I can and so lacks the mental energy tonight to write creatively.

As I shared several posts ago, I want to share good, positive news on this blog – and tonight I can!

My energy, my appetite, my stamina have returned!

I don't think it is possible to really get across how much better I feel now without describing how bad things had gotten, and perhaps I will do that tomorrow. But let me just say the difference is night and day.

I almost feel “normal.” Praise God, I am not experiencing any real side-effects from the clinical trial drugs. I do have extreme fatigue that hits me every once in awhile (like yesterday afternoon – I slept from about 7:15 pm last night until 8 am this morning) and that could be related to the new meds, but it is not happening in a very consistent manner as yet. I also have numbness in my fingertips and in my toes, but we aren’t sure if that may be a residual issue with my last chemo drugs.

I have had no skin reaction!!

I am able to be up and about, drive, take care of the boys, do household chores, etc, all without being completely out of breath. Again, if you don’t know how bad it had gotten, this may not mean much. Let me just say that simply having a conversation used to get me out of breath. And I spent 95% of the day either sitting or lying on the couch or the bed. I also was only eating about 200-300 calories per day, on a good day.

I also have had to take very little pain meds. Before, I was eating them like candy – as often as I could take them, at max dosages. Including liquid morphine, which I understand is one of the strongest narcotics you can have at home. For most of this past week, I have taken pain meds when I first wake up and then right before bed and that’s it!

I had a follow-up appointment at Sarah Cannon this past Friday. The research nurse and doctor were so excited to see how much better I was looking and to hear how much better I’d been feeling. They said I was their Christmas present. Dr. Bendell remarked about my last liver function tests (the ones that I already blogged about, telling the nurse response on the phone): “I couldn’t believe how much they had improved just in 3 days on the new drugs!” The research nurse then said, “I can’t wait to see your labs today.” They both insisted my eyes looked so much brighter and that I had the “positive make-up sign,” meaning that I must be feeling better because I’d had the energy to put on make-up again.

I don’t know much about my labs from Friday other than that my iron and hemoglobin were both the same – a tad on the low side. I am supposed to start taking an iron supplement. Yep, let’s throw one more thing in there in constipation’s favor. Thrilled about this, as you can tell.

I had also lost another 6 pounds in 2 weeks, which I was not happy about. But then I realized that my belly didn’t feel as swollen with ascitis, so I am hoping that’s where most of the weight loss came from.

Christmas was thoroughly savored in the Walker household. I couldn’t even estimate the number of times I’ve thought to myself, “Thank you, Father” over the last week. To have so much energy, to feel so “normal”, to spend so little time in doctor’s offices during the break – I am so very thankful. God is merciful and God is ever good to me.

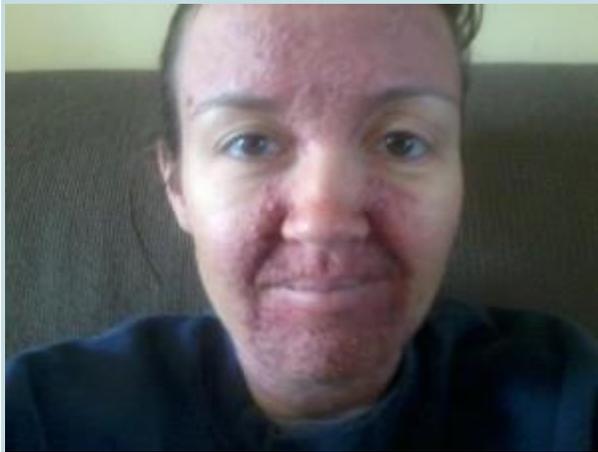
I owe several people thank yous: Carolyn and daughters for decorating our mailbox, whoever spent considerable time raking and bagging our leaves, all of you who openly or anonymously sent us money to make our Christmas a little sweeter, you who donated to Agape in our Anna’s

name, and many more I'm sure I'm forgetting. My love and thanks to you all. Our cup overflows.

I believe more good things are in store. But no matter what may come, my God still carries me. I don't deserve His goodness, but He pours it down. Thank you, sweet Father. I climb in your lap, I rest in your shadow, I put my head on your shoulder, and I will wait for you.

December 29, 2011

I am sharing this photo not to elicit pity, but because I want to share what I am calling my "face miracle".



This picture was actually taken several days after the rash started, and several days into medication, so this is when it was starting to heal. In other words, this was not at its worst. However, I think you can see why I doubted that I would ever want to step foot in public again. I think you can have a better idea what I have to be so excited about – so it may help you understand better the last picture I posted!

I don't know how much time I have left (my family gets mad when I say things like this) but I am just so thankful for GOOD days again. And it is a "small" thing, but I am thankful that I am not dealing with a nasty rash again, at least not so far...

January 4, 2012

My mind has been awchirl again lately with thoughts, ponderings, potential posts. But I continue to fight my constant battle- time management. Every morning I wake I pray that God would lead me, because I truly struggle with what is the best use of my time. I know my boys will only be little for so long, so I don't want to miss precious time with them. I also know the Christmas tree is not going to take itself down. And then my body seems physically unable to leave the kitchen

sink when it is full of dishes or when the nearby kitchen counter is covered in crumbs, stray bits of paper, sticky sippy cups, etc. Well, and we could talk about my online scrabble addiction, but let's not go there (I love the words "qi and "jo" and I have absolutely no idea what they .mean!)

I realize this plight is not unique to me. We all want more hours in our day, huh? Or many of us wonder if we're allocating our time appropriately, right?

But here I am today, carving out some writing time.

I suspect that no one is more happy that 2012 has arrived than me. That no one was more thrilled to say goodbye to 2011 than me.

I feel more refreshed by the beginning of this new year than I ever recall feeling in the past. Yes, I still have Stage 4 colon cancer. Yes, I am still undergoing treatment. But I feel good again! I can do normal life things again. I can drive again, be out and about again. And I don't have to think about "good weeks and bad weeks". I don't have to think, well, I know I can't do anything on that Tuesday because I'll be down with chemo. Sure, I'm still not guaranteed tomorrow (and neither are you, as we've discussed) but I can know for a fact right now that if I am still here, I won't be getting a chemo infusion.

Today is kind of my birthday. "New Sara's" birthday, that is. One year ago today I came home from the emergency room, having just found out that I most likely had metastatic cancer all over my liver, though we didn't know yet where it had started. I came home convinced I had only hours to live. And in a way I did die that day. "Old Sara" died. I couldn't have foreseen the events that would take place that would totally change everything about the way I look at life, at relationships, at God. I never imagined I would be writing today words that would be read by thousands of individuals. That God would use our story to strengthen the hearts of His people all over the world. I don't say this to be boastful, except in God. He has done it. All I did was start typing on a website page that my friend set up for me. So "happy birthday to me." I have a new heart, and I am thankful for that.

I am resolved to live more intentionally this year, or for whatever time I have left. I am resolved to soak up precious moments. I am resolved to spend more time with my Creator. I am resolved to do the fun, special things now, and not wait for a special occasion that I may never see. Perhaps more on my new years' "goals" (I actually hate to call them resolutions) in a future post...

I want you to know that I don't take lightly the fact that so many of you take precious time out of your day to read my words. I pray before I type a single word, that God would use what I write to somehow affect your life, your heart in the way He sees fit. What our eyes see, what our minds absorb, affects us for the good or for the bad. What we fill our minds with affects the people we are, what comes out of our hearts, our mouths, etc. So, I pray hard that reading my words is not a waste of time, but that God uses these words for GOOD.

So I want to share that recently I have been struck by two big things:

1. God likes to come in and save the day at the last minute.

I keep thinking He just may not intend to cure my cancer because He hasn't yet. And that may be true. But it doesn't have to be.

Brian was reading the story of Daniel in the lions' den to the boys the other night when this thought first occurred to me. Closing the lions' mouths was pretty much the last (time frame-wise) possible way God could save Daniel. I'm sure Daniel was praying pretty hard for quite awhile for salvation from the lions before He was mid-air on his way into the den. I'm sure in mid-air he thought, well, this may be how it ends. He had probably prayed the king would change his mind. That the law would be changed, that there would be some malfunction in the lions den entrance, etc. And then I got to thinking about the parting of the Red Sea, the walls of Jericho, the fiery furnace, the starving woman and her son during the time of Elisha (or was it Elijah?) (she was about to make a last cake of bread to eat and then die with her son) about Joseph, about the people Jesus raised from the dead in the New Testament – in every case, it looked like the end. In every case, there were probably “unanswered” prayers for salvation by some other way before God revealed His plan for salvation. Go back and read those stories again. Those people could have easily lost all hope by the time God intervened. In fact, many times it says specifically that they had.

So I hope. I hope against hope. I believe my God can still fully heal me from this disease. And I will believe until my dying breath. He is able, so able. (But you already know this. You keep reminding me!)

2. I will try to keep this short. You all know that verse in Jeremiah we all like to quote. “I know the plans I have for you...” I will sum up:

God's plans: 1- prosperity, 2- hope, 3- future. Say that again, God's plans: prosperity, hope, future.

Hooray – those are my plans too!! God is GOOD.

Here's to a GREAT 2012!

January 9, 2012

I am now one month into the BRAF/MEK clinical trial at Sarah Cannon Research Institute.

I had a full morning this past Friday as required at week 4 of the clinical trial. My morning started off at 7 am with an echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart), followed at 8:15 by a dermatology exam, which was followed by lab work/exam at Sarah Cannon at 9 am. The echocardiogram and dermatology work-up are periodically done during the study as a part of the protocol. I assume my echo was normal since I didn't hear otherwise on Friday. The dermatologist also told me that he saw no signs of squamous cell carcinoma, which is a possible

side effect of this study. Good, good. Thank you, Father, for no significant complications in either of these areas.

Once at Sarah Cannon, we began with labs. First up, the weigh-in. Oh what a strange thing this is. My weight was up 4 pounds!!!! (You may recall I was down 6 pounds at my last appointment.) Never in my (previous) life would I have imagined I would be so excited about weight gain. But I was pumped. For the first time in awhile, I significantly out-ate the cancer. It is a nerve-wracking thing when I see my unclothed self in the mirror these days – ribs poking out, emaciated shoulders and arms, etc. So I am hoping to continue the increasing numbers on the scales and hopefully not look so much like I'm wasting away when I look in the mirror... Next, blood pressure, temperature, oxygen sats...all normal. Good.

Then blood draw. No biggie. Been poked with needles too many times to count now. Know exactly where my best veins are...

Next, off to an exam room to chat with a nurse practitioner. "You look great! How are you feeling? Any problems? Any med changes?" Doing well, feeling better, no major issues to discuss. No real side effects that I can tell. Taking some iron, though not nearly as much as you people told me to take. "That's fine, just slowly increase your iron supplement intake. Alright, hop up here and let me listen to your heart and breathing, then listen to your abdomen and palpate it a bit...Ok, doing great. Head on over to the patient lounge and wait."

Now, wait time. Have to wait until the labs come back to make sure I can continue the trial. After about 1.5 hours, the nurse comes in and says my labs are fine so the orders are sent to the pharmacy for next month's pills. After another half hour, the nurse comes in with all my pills for the month and says, "We'll see you next month, after you have your CT scan. Call us if you need us."

What? Really?

I'm still not sure I really believe it. Do you have any idea how long it has been since I've gone a month between some form of medical appointment or procedure? I don't even know! It was some time in the middle of 2010 – early on in my pregnancy.

So, I just used about 5,000 or so words to share 2 main points: 1) I was thrilled that I've gained weight over the last two weeks instead of losing more. 2) I don't have any medical appointments for one month. Astonishing.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the prayers!!!

I continue to feel good. I have a normal appetite, normal sleep patterns and I am taking very, very little pain meds. (I am pretty much back to only taking pain meds at night now.) I have almost normal energy. I can do almost everything I want to do, with the exception of running around with my boys and exercising at my previous level. Thanks to my new best friend Miralax, I am even, dare I say it, fairly regular. I know you care about that detail too.

I was thrilled to be able to drive the carpool this morning. What a joy! Three kindergarteners are nothing if not entertaining! I usually try to say a prayer out loud for the kiddos just before they get out of the car. This morning when I finished, sweet Camden said, "And thank you that my mommy can drive us to school again." (I wasn't able to drive the carpool much last semester.) MELT.MY.HEART. Thank you Merciful Father!

I would like to humbly ask you to remember another young mother with colon cancer when you pray for me. Yes, Satan continues to attack my church family. Her name is Jennifer, she is my age, and you can read her story on her own caringbridge site ([jennifercalendine](#)). She has two children very close to my kids ages; in fact, her daughter is in my son Camden's class at church. Please pray that both of us will be fully healed to raise our children and be the mothers and wives we desire to be.

And finally this has nothing to do with anything but I just want to end on a funny note. A short time after watching a movie on Netflix this afternoon, Scott asked me, "Mommy, can we watch some more Reflex?"

My physical therapist-self was so proud...

The Walker household's verse for January:

"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you."

[Isaiah 26:3](#)

Blessings and peace-

Sara

January 17, 2012

Afternoon, God's favorite!

I hope you haven't forgotten that's what you are! Repeat after me:

I was made in the image of the most magnificent being in the universe. He created me to be unique; to move and walk in this world in a way that no one else has or can do. I am a beautiful, specifically and perfectly designed creation of the master artist. I bring Him pleasure and joy just by *being*.

I read this in Jesus Calling (written as if they are the direct words of Jesus): "My face is shining upon you, beaming..."

I love to think of my Father, and my Jesus, *beaming* at me. Oh how I want to make them proud...

Somewhere I heard the phrase: "We read to know we are not alone." I have decided that in this season of my life I *write* to know I am not alone. Oh how your comments lift me up! I never feel alone.

I think of you all as my friends. As these posts write themselves in my head, I think, "Oh, I can't wait to share this with my friend!" With you. Seriously, I will be driving down the road, have

some thought that is new to me, and be very frustrated that I can't just pull over and write up a post on caringbridge.

It really is like am holding my breath until I can find a moment to write to you...

And so my hope is that as you read, you know *you* are not alone. Not alone in your trials, not alone in your desperation, not alone in your victories, not alone in your comic moments, and most definitely not alone in your determined clinging to the Saviour, even when it's by the skin of your teeth and your "head faith" must carry on though your heart feels cold.

(Not to mention not alone in your bowel issues, apparently.)

Because this is Caringbridge, I feel obliged to report on my physical state of being and general cancer-related Stuff.

February 3rd is my next CT scan. **February 6th** I will receive those results.

I still feel very good. I saw a dear friend this past week who had seen me at one of my lowest points. In fact, she told me that she had cried all the way home that night, convinced she might never see me again in this life; convinced I had very little time left. At the time, I would have agreed with her. She can't believe how much improved I am. As I said, unless you know how bad it had gotten, you can't fully appreciate just how fantastic I am doing now.

I have the occasional liver pain: when I laugh, when I yawn, and when I inhale deeply. However, all of those are brief moments and certainly not worthy of taking pain meds.

Other than that and possibly some extra fatigue, I feel very much like before-cancer and before-pregnancy Sara. At least physically.

Also, plans are already in the works for the second annual "Walker Run, Live For Today 5K"!! Mark your calendars for April 14th!

Now, I must wax philosophically. (For those not interested in my ramblings, you've been warned and can close this window now.)

We read from Malachi chapter 3 on Sunday morning.

For some reason this jumped out at me:

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty.

Yep, it happened just like God said. God sent John the Baptist, and right on his heels came Jesus. He kept His Word.

GOD CANNOT LIE.

“Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.” [Joshua 21:45](#)

“He who is the glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind...” [1 Samuel 15:29](#)

Oh, we can lie to God. Sure we can. We sing, “God will take care of you” when we worship Him in song, but do we always believe He is taking care of us? Or we sing, “What have I to dread? What have I to fear? Leaning on the everlasting arms. I have blessed peace with my Lord so near...” But do you mean it?

Oh friends – I have faced them! The things I feared most! The loss of a child, a diagnosis of cancer. And I testify to this – GOD’S STRENGTH IS SUFFICIENT! His burden is light. Jesus bears my burdens, and He lightens my load. He never leaves, never forsakes, never abandons!

God CANNOT lie.

So I cling to these promises:

“Because He loves me, says the Lord, I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. **WITH LONG LIFE I WILL SATISFY HIM** and show him my salvation. ([Psalm 91:14-16](#))

“Love the Lord, all his saints! **The Lord preserves the faithful...**” ([Psalm 31:23](#))

“Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may go well with you and that you **may enjoy long life on the earth.**” ([Ephesians 6:2-3](#))

God keeps His Word. His precious, precious Word.

Hallelujah!!

And that’s my two cents for today.

(Exhale. Now I can breathe again for awhile...)

Sara

January 18, 2012

God's timing is amazing.

Mid-2010: Started praying this prayer: **God, let me make a difference for you that is utterly disproportionate to who I am. Everything about this site proves that He has answered.**

December 6, 2010: My 7th wedding anniversary and the day I delivered my beautiful 38-week stillborn daughter, Anna.

January 20, 2011: My 33rd birthday and the day I was diagnosed with cancer.

December 2, 2011: The day of my blood transfusion and the day the Lord allowed me to start making my "comeback."

December 4, 2011: Anna's balloon release, when I felt better and had more energy than I'd had in weeks.

December 7, 2011: The birth of my niece, Anna Darby; the day after the one-year mark of our family's nightmare year. A blessing in the form of a new life, a new beginning.

Mid-December 2011: Continued to gain energy – able to attend the boys' Christmas parties, able to shop for my family, able to enjoy the pre-Christmas excitement and anticipation!

Christmas 2011: Joyous, thankful time with family and friends. Cried with my family as we prayed our thanksgivings to God for faithfully bringing us through the most challenging year I can ever remember any of us facing and blessing us with a joyful Christmas day and Dinah's new baby to boot! Not to mention the announcement from my brother that he and his wife are also expecting a child this year! So much rejoicing after a year of so much heartache!

January 2011: My return to "normal" energy during the month that Brian is at home the least, since this is his "busy season" at work. God allowed me to feel better just in time!

2010-???: God allowing me to go through the most difficult challenges of my life so far at the same time my oldest child is going to kindergarten. In terms of my spiritual growth, I feel sort of like a kindergartener: learning new lessons constantly and being completely absorbed in and fascinated by LEARNING. It's as if my eyes have only now been opened. I was missing *so much* before.

Heavenly Father –

I would not have chosen this schooling. Am I that difficult to teach? And am I this slow at learning? But Lord, you have proven time and time again that you know just what you are doing *with time*. Thank you for bringing me to a point of *daily* and *full dependence* on you, and

when I am healed I ask that I not lose that sense of utter dependence. I continue to beg for your mercy. I ask that in your mercy, in spite of the fact that I don't deserve it, that you will remove this cancer fully and completely, and that you will grant me the miracle of another baby girl; a child whose very existence will be a tangible reminder of your power and love. Those are my heart's longings and so I lay them at your feet.

Lord God, I trust that your plan is perfect, no matter what it is and whether I like it or not.

King Jesus, seated at God's right hand, I ask everything in your NAME, which I love above all names.

Amen

January 21, 2012

Did you like how I oh-so-subtly reminded everyone in my last post that my birthday was coming up? I assure you that was not my intention, but I did have to laugh at myself for doing it, even though it was subconsciously.

Last night as I lay in bed, praying with Brian, I could not stop the tears from spilling over onto my cheeks. But for a nice change, the tears were not tears of sadness, not tears that accompanied desperate begging. They were just plain old tears of overwhelming joy and thankfulness.

Allow me to explain:

Now, before I go further, let me tell you that I am not so conceited that I think anyone really cares to hear about every detail of my day. However, yesterday was my birthday. You see, as is the case with so many things in this life, I have a whole new perspective on birthdays. Having a birthday is AWESOME! As adults, I don't think most of us celebrate it enough! It sure beats the alternative, right?? Last January 4th, immediately after getting home from the ER, I was convinced I would not live to see my 33rd birthday, much less my 34th!

SAVORING – OH HOW I SAVORED YESTERDAY!

I began my day with an early breakfast at The Puffy Muffin with my dad. For those who don't know, my Dad is working out of Brentwood during the week now. We've never done a lot of just father-daughter stuff before, so it has been a real treat to enjoy time together. I savored biscuits and gravy that tasted SO GOOD. My dad savored seeing his daughter eating a normal amount of food...

Later in the morning, I took Scott to preschool and then went to a day spa for my next birthday treat. Thanks to sweet Christine, I was able to get a relaxing facial. The facial included some gentle massage to my face, shoulders and arms. SAVORED that! Words escape me as to how

wonderful it was to be lying down being pampered instead of lying down trying desperately not to vomit...

After that treat, I went to lunch with a relatively new but dear friend. To me anyway, she and I have just “clicked.” I savored a delicious sandwich and a generous amount of Dr. Pepper! Oh what a joy it is to be enjoying food again! Foods and drinks taste right again, and my full appetite is back. In fact, I have decided it is probably time to start watching my portions again, and limiting how many sweets and snacks I allow myself to have, etc. (Because if I always ate like I wanted to, my diet would consist of 40% pizza, 10% cola drinks, 25% salty snacks, and 25% desserts.) Hallelujah!!!! I savor every delicious bite/sip these days. I also enjoyed some stimulating conversation with my friend. I’m pretty sure we solved every theological debate existing in the churches today!

After lunch I went to Camden’s elementary school to help in his classroom, as has been my habit on Friday afternoons that I feel good. To my surprise, when I entered Camden’s class, I was immediately instructed to stand in the birthday chair so the class could sing “Happy Birthday.” Talk about a tear jerker to a cancer patient! I could have melted into a puddle of tears right there on that chair. What a treat to have 21 precious kindergarteners singing to you with big smiles on their faces. And to top it off, they also handed me a jumbo-sized birthday card consisting of their artwork and carefully signed names which they had made earlier in the week. Amanda Davis (Camden’s teacher who I am proud to call my friend and sister in Christ), YOU are THE BEST! The class then proceeded to chant in one voice, “Birthday spankings! Birthday spankings!” I quickly let them know that I would only allow Camden’s daddy to take care of that. Wink, wink

I left the elementary school and went to pick up Scott. Thanks to Facebook, I was greeted with happy birthday wishes from several other moms. Who wouldn’t enjoy that? I knew there were no plans for a birthday cake, because I hadn’t made said plans, so I decided Scott and I should go get ice cream (frozen yogurt really, but don’t tell Scott). We went to Sweet Cece’s and I discovered that thanks to their punch card system, I was due for a free cup of yogurt. Thankfully, I discovered this at the register, or else I would have gotten myself WAY TOO MUCH! Happy birthday to me! (Oh, Camden had gone home with a friend to play after school, which was why it was just me and Scott.)

Scott and I curled up on the couch with our “ice cream”, the iPad, and cartoons on the TV. While we watched, I read my hundreds (LITERALLY!) of messages on Facebook. Say what you will about the evils of Facebook, it sure does boost one’s day on your birthday! You all spoiled me! I also listened to my phone messages and read my text messages. I am so blessed!

After a dinner I did not cook (though I haven’t cooked in over a year because of the extreme generosity of the family of God!), we lit a candle over the delicious Godiva chocolate bar Brian surprised me with (which was perfect because I’d rather have that than cake any day) and my three favorite fellas sang me “Happy Birthday.”

My day came to a great end with me and Brian watching a movie together and sharing a bowl of popcorn. Just an FYI, we watched “True Grit,” recommended by Karen R.- thanks! – and I highly recommend it myself.

This morning I was able to get up and make a simple french toast breakfast for my family. As I cleaned up the kitchen afterward, I was fighting back tears yet again. Such simple joys, but such great blessings that I'd always overlooked before...health to prepare food, ability to enjoy the taste, time and health to sit down all together as a family and eat, the anticipation of a relaxed Saturday enjoying each other's company...

Our God is SO GOOD!

Thank you all for your part in making my birthday a true day of celebration and joy!

My Father –

I am overcome with thankfulness for these great days you are giving to me. I rejoice, my soul rejoices in this peace you have poured with reckless abandon into my heart. Thank you for opening my eyes to the tremendous blessings that saturate my life. Help me to remember that I have reason to be bursting with joy every day – no matter the circumstances or challenges that ensue – simply because the great God of the universe is in love with me, makes His home with me, and will be with me forever. Because You go before me, and because you know me more perfectly than all and yet still delight in me. God, today I don't ask for anything else. I just thank you.

In the name of Jesus,
Amen.

January 26, 2012

I am a little too much Mary right now, and not enough Martha.

Oh wait, this is Caringbridge. I feel obligated to update you on the cancer story.

This is why I feel constrained on this site. In this place on the world wide web, I am defined as "The Cancer Patient." I am the young mother with colon cancer.

But that is not who I am. I am a child of God, temporarily residing in this world, in this time, in this body until I go to my true home, my forever home. So this body has cancer. So? I'm getting rid of it soon!

[Take a pen and make a small, one-inch line on a piece of paper. Now just under it, start another line and draw it all the way to the edge of the paper. Then attach another piece of paper and continue your long line across that whole sheet of paper. Keep adding papers, until your long line stretches across your whole house. The first line, the one-inch line, that represents your life on this earth. The second line represents PART of your eternal life. Do you have a mental picture?]

I truthfully don't think about the cancer too much these days. I do think about the indescribable things God continues to do all around me and inside of me.

But back to the cancer update, since this is Caringbridge...
I am most happy to report that my days are gloriously mundane.

Gloriously.

I get up, I eat breakfast and fix breakfast for whoever hasn't eaten yet. I pack lunches, I drive, I go to the grocery store, I pick up toys, I wash clothes, I pick up toys again, I break up wrestling fights that go too far, I clean up spilled milk, I make up beds, I pick up toys, I answer e-mails, I unload the dishwasher and then immediately fill it back up. I pick up toys and I go to bed. I stay up too late looking at Pinterest like many of the rest of you. I pin recipes and crafts that I will never make...

But I digress (which reminds me – I had to laugh at myself again because in my last post I talked about food an awful lot. Clearly I'm enjoying it!)

Here's what I'd rather talk about.
As I said, I'm a little too Mary these days.

I am falling in love with Jesus.

I want to sit with Him, talking to Him, listening to His Word, ALL THE TIME and I am frankly getting impatient for heaven so I can see Him.

I thought I loved Him before.

I was raised to know Him, raised to pray in His name. Raised to think of His sacrifice during communion. Raised to appreciate His suffering.

But now, now...oh what joy He brings! Oh how I can just see, just SEE Him sitting beside me, holding my hand, smiling at me. I see Him laughing a big, boisterous, tear-inducing, belly-shaking laugh along with me when my little Scott does something funny (which is every day.) I imagine us in heaven, sitting with our feet dipped in the river of life, listening to the birds sing and feeling a cool breeze on our faces, talking and just enjoying the view. I imagine then noticing the holes in his hand and crying, sobbing because He had to do that for me, and Him wrapping His arms around me, wiping away the tears and saying, "Oh, Sara. It was my great joy to suffer for you. You were so, so worth it."

Sometimes, I stretch my hand out to the side and try to hold His hand. I truly do. I know He is beside me though these eyes can't see Him. I keep thinking maybe one of these days, for the briefest of seconds, He will allow this earthly skin to feel His own. So far, it hasn't happened. But I keep my hand there anyway, and just enjoy imagining it. (Try it – it's pretty fun!)

I have been doing the Beth Moore study "Jesus the One and Only." I've just been working through the workbook on my own, not watching the videos or being in any group discussions. And I am finding that I can't get enough of Him. [Here's my recent crazy – Beth had written

about her own thoughts of being with Jesus in heaven. And I got jealous. Seriously. I thought, “No, he’s going to be with ME in heaven. Not you. Sorry, sister.”]

Isn’t that ridiculous? I’m so glad Jesus is omnipresent now! And although I don’t think my jealousy was a righteous reaction to what I read, it was also exciting. I’ve never in my life felt that strongly about Jesus before.

I am falling in love.

Nothing in the Beth Moore study has been new to me. I have read stories that I’ve read over and over and over again. But there is something to this Savior. Something about spending this much concentrated time with Him...I can’t help but fall in love. And I can’t help but long to be with Him, truly with Him. I am tired of these earthly eyes that can’t see anything!

If you came to my house, you would see that my Martha side needs to come out. I believe I need a little of both women’s spirits: for Jesus calls us to serve.

Before cancer, I was 100% Martha. Ok, maybe 95% Martha and 5% Mary. A leeeee-tle OCD about cleanliness and organization, and just DOING in general.

Now, I just want to sit at His feet. I feel so precious to Him. Isn’t that crazy? God/Jesus let me get cancer. They have let me suffer. I never would have thought that all of this suffering would bring me closer to my Savior. But then of course it has...Who else can I cling to...

It is late. My brain is shutting down and I clearly can’t make complete sentences anymore. I shall call it a night.

But first, you know I have to thank you again. Father has given me good days, but at least in part in response to your petitions. Thank you for mentioning me to Father, my brothers and sisters.

Lord God and King Jesus,

How I love you. How I long to see you and truly be in your presence. You are love and you are good, and your mercies ARE BRAND SPANKING NEW every morning!!! I praise you with all of my being. Help me, oh help me Father, to reflect your love. Let every act and every thought be an act of gratitude to you, for loving and saving me. I pray for every person who will read these simple words of mine – that they may fall more in love with you, and be ever more convinced of your great, INDESCRIBABLE, PASSIONATE love for them. Thank you for pursuing us all.

In the most beautiful name of Jesus, Amen.

January 31, 2012

Short update today, since I am sitting at the public library (due to internet connection problems at home) and wild man Scott will not be contained here for long. Pretty sure library-required behavior is the antithesis to Scott's personality.

I wanted to remind you that my CT scan is this Friday, the 3rd. As usual I will be required to fast that morning, and anyone who wants to join me in fasting and praying would be most welcome and appreciated. The scan is at 10:50, so I will be eating lunch. It's just a fast from breakfast.

I also want to make sure to warn you Brentwood Hills folks, in case you missed Walt's warnings the past few Wednesday nights, that I will be "telling my story" tomorrow night in the auditorium class.

Consider yourself warned.

Actually, I'm kinda excited about it because I decided to tell our story in a little different way. So for those (few of you I'm sure) that have read every word I've written on here, I don't think you'll be bored. I'm hoping to make everyone think maybe a little differently about me, about their own lives, about God.

Things are busy but happy in the Walker household. I think we may have a budding evangelist in our household. Any preachers reading may want to seek out a member of my house for lessons in how to get people to respond. Wild man Scott, at the ripe old age of 4, performed no less than 5 baptisms last night. Unfortunately, they were all on his 6 yr old brother in the bathtub. I guess Camden had a lot of repenting to do. I was listening outside the door, and kept hearing, "[dunk], Now Camden, I baptized you. You have to praise God. You have to praise God." (brief pause punctuated with giggling) "[dunk] Now, Camden (giggling) you have to praise God. (more giggling) Praise God."

I got a good laugh out of all this...but then I got to thinking...

I think Scott may be on to something. His theology isn't too far off, is it??

Here's to a happy Tuesday. May our eyes be open to the beauty and blessings all around us, as well as the hurting and lonely.
Lord Jesus, come soon.

February 6, 2012

GREAT NEWS! GREAT NEWS!

Ok, I cannot get that font big enough.

I have 36% less cancer than I had 9 weeks ago. In just 9 short weeks on these two little medications, over one-third of my cancer is gone. GONE.

I actually like the sound of 50% reduction better, and one of my tumors *was* reduced by almost half.

I had hoped for stable. I remember someone at the research center saying early on, “We often just see that the cancer is stable at the first scan, but then it goes on to shrink.” Stable, please Lord, just let it have stopped *growing*.

I am tempted to type out every precious word on this CT scan report, even the ones I don't understand, but I will try and just hit the highpoints. You more medical people feel free to let me know if I've got something wrong.

CT chest: Stable right upper lobe subpleural pulmonary nodule. [This has been showing up on almost every scan and is tiny, hasn't been growing, and hasn't changed with this medication, so they seem pretty confident it's not likely to be metastasis.]...Resolved bibasilar atelectasis, infiltrate [My last scan showed some problems at the base of my lungs. Could have been pneumonia but they also thought it may have been from disuse because breathing deeply caused pain. Regardless, it is now “resolved” – what a beautiful word!]... No new thoracic adenopathy or soft tissue mass [lymph nodes here still good, no new masses to be seen – thank you Jesus!!]...Heart size normal, no pericardial effusion [the last few scans have showed significant pericardial effusion, which you'll remember led to an emergency echocardiogram in the middle of my blood transfusion in December.]

CT ABDOMEN:

(here's my favorite sentence of the report)

Decreasing

size

of

multiple

hepatic

lesions

affecting

all

segments.

Did you enjoy every word as much as I did? I am enjoying everyword.

Here's my second favorite sentence: No new hepatic lesion demonstrated [No new cancerous spots in the liver]

Followed closely by my third: Improving retroperitoneal and mesenteric adenopathy [Shrinkage of the cancer evident in my abdominal lymph nodes as well]

Left hepatic lobe lesion 87 x 46 mm, prior 131 x 71 mm (that was a 5 inch tumor, folks)

Right hepatic lobe lesion 27 x 24 mm, prior 47 x 45 mm

Conclusion:

1. Stable tiny indeterminate pulmonary nodules. [Stable and tiny. I might just name my next child Stable Tiny Walker. Ok, that might not be a good idea.]
2. Decreasing size of hepatic metastases (Love how they use the word "decreasing" instead of "decreased" – yep, I think it's going to continue too! Decreasing Walker? Nope, probably not good either.)
3. Decreasing size retroperitoneal mesenteric lymph nodes.
4. No new lesion suggestive of metastasis.

[Joshua 3:5](#) Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.

He has done it again. He has done amazing things again.

Dr. Bendell said it herself, though not giving God the credit.

"These results aren't good. They are amazing."

How can I thank you for praying for me? I believe, I KNOW prayer matters. There is **limitless** power *available* and subsequently *directed* by just one faithful child of God praying to Him, and this power is infinitely multiplied by the cries of many. And while God always acts in accordance with His will, we know His "will" is multi-faceted and so His initial plan may be altered by our prayers. I cannot explain this, but I believe with all my heart that it is true. But that is a discussion for another day...

So, while all praise for healing goes to God, our Maker, I remain indescribably thankful to you for beseeching Him in prayer on my behalf.

My Father – I am in awe of your love for me. I am in awe that you care so deeply for this brief whisper of a life here in this fallen world. You have already given me everything. You gave me Jesus. You freely gave me an eternity sharing in Christ’s inheritance, which I have no claim to whatsoever. None! You gave me your Spirit, so that I am never alone. So that I can know a peace through this dark world that defies explanation. How can I ask for more? And yet I have. I have asked that you stretch out your mighty hand and heal this dying body, for a little while longer. I have begged for your mercy and compassion, to allow me to help my husband and raise my sons. You know I long to see you face to face. You know I long for it as I have never longed before. But you also know my love for those boys, a love which you planted in my heart. God, make me fully well and in so doing make your name great. Remind us of your incomparable power, cause us to tremble in fear for a moment again, before we realize with great thanksgiving that you are FOR US, your chosen people. God, who am I, that you should show me such love? I love you, my Father. I trust that all your ways are good and right, and are too wonderful for me to understand. I rest in your wisdom and perfection, your perfect love. I treasure you today, Father, and I thank you for good news. Finally, some good news.

Amen.

February 11, 2012

By the way, have you heard that one-third of my cancer is gone?

I think it is just now sinking in. I realized this week that I have had 6 abdominal CT scans (or maybe 7, I may have lost track of one) and besides this one, I’ve only had one other scan after which I got good news.

So before the nurse practitioner came in the room and shared the news, I was a nervous wreck. I thanked God that I wasn’t like that all weekend. Only in the hour or so before getting the results Monday morning was I anxious at all. I was by myself. Brian had intended to go with me, but Scott got sick Sunday night so Brian had to be home with him Monday morning. As I sat alone in that small room, in silence, I steeled myself for bad news. I mistakenly thought that I could keep myself from becoming emotional – for little did I know that the good news would bring tears of relief and tears of joy to my eyes immediately.

Any-hoo...

With this good news comes a renewed lightness to my steps. I am a little tired of taking myself, taking life, so seriously.

So, in sad news: My hair is thinning.

In happy news: I have thick hair so I don’t think it’s too noticeable yet. Oh wait, I just told everyone who knows me, on the internet. May be hat shopping soon.

In sad news: um, nope, I think I’m all out of sad news

In happy news: My great hubs took me out to a delicious dinner at Mere Bulles last night (thank you to the gift card givers – you know who you are and I love you! Ditto to the awesome childcare – Mike and Michelle) What a treat- to enjoy a meal together and have totally adult conversation. And what joy to enjoy the taste of food again.

Oh, just thought of sad news: Have had to start watching my portions again when I eat...

In happy news: My very own website is in the works! I'm about to pop I'm so excited about it. I might be partially spilling the beans a little early so I might be in trouble. Brian Holaway (www.brianholaway.com – check him out, maybe then I won't be in trouble) is doing all the hard work that I know NOTHING about and he is a faith-filled treasure. When he and I first sat down to discuss ideas, he said, "Now, if I were to suddenly die tomorrow, all my work, all my passwords, etc, can be accessed by my friend so you won't just be out of luck." This was not a question I would have ever thought to ask. Bless him, he wasn't worried about my brevity of life and him doing a lot of work that would just go down the tube, but was aware that NONE of us are guaranteed tomorrow. Yes, I think I will work with you. My kind of fella!

So I will be leaving Caringbridge and moving to my own little corner of the vast worldwide web. I am excited about being able to post more pictures, write a little more, make the posts a little more interesting, I hope. It will be linked to Facebook and other social media and hopefully have the ability to continue e-mailing you when I post.

If you don't like it, well, sorry, but it's your fault. You keep telling me you enjoy my writing. So I want to keep doing it! (I'm smiling at you as I say this – I hope you are smiling back...)

In other happy news: I just finished 20 minutes on my elliptical machine. 9 weeks ago I got noticeably short of breath talking on the telephone. I did 20 minutes of moderate exercise today.

Oh God, you are so good.

Still taking it one day at a time. Still praying hard that the cancer regression continues. Today, this day, the sun is shining and I feel good.

My heavenly Father – It is a joy to be your child today. Thank you for this day. I rejoice in it for you have made it. Thank you for energy, for the shining sun. I eagerly anticipate going into your house tomorrow, singing your praises, honoring your Son, hearing your sweet words, having a meal with you, and spending the first few hours of my week visiting with you, my Father. Remembering that soon, very soon, we will not be separated at all; for your Son is preparing a room for me in your true, eternal house. And there we can visit as much as we want! What joy! Until then, how I love our weekly tradition of time together; me and my Papa, the King of Kings.

February 16, 2012

Things are still a rockin' and a rollin' here in the Walker household.

I continue to feel good, and I continue to believe that God's only just begun to work an amazing miracle in my body. Time will tell, I suppose.

Been working tonight on the new site. Yes, I will of course post the web address here! And I am hoping that anyone could get e-mail updates when I post on it too, just like you do from Caringbridge. I didn't mean to imply that you had to be on Facebook. Kudos to you who are Facebook holdouts.

I have been asked about the talk I did at my church on Wednesday night a few weeks ago. It will be shared in some form or fashion soon. Probably on the new site, maybe a "reenactment" on youtube. You all are sweet to want to hear it/read it. Especially if you heard it the first time!

Since I don't have any side effects to talk about – PRAISE GOD!- I'd love to tell you about my funny boys tonight. (Brian was working late.)

We were talking about our house's "February Bible words" (memory verse), which is [II Corinthians 4:17-18](#), specifically about the part "we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen." Camden asked, "Well, if you can't see it, how do you fix your eyes on it?" I explained that we have "heart eyes" and they see what we spend the most time thinking about. So I said we need to spend more time thinking about what we can't see, instead of what we can see. "So, should we spend more time thinking about lego's or Jesus?" (They both answered "Jesus.") I continued, "Should we spend more time thinking about God's love or about Star Wars toys?" ("God's love." they both said.)

"Scott, can you see God's love?"

"No" he answered me.

"Where is His love?" I was looking for "in my heart."

What I got was:

"in his belly."

"No." (Trying to keep a straight face) "Where is God's love?"

"In his throat?" Scott enthusiastically answers.

Moving on...

Then we talked about how we should spend more time thinking about the unseen because those things are eternal, instead of temporary (the rest of the verse).

"Do you know what temporary means?"

Camden: No. What does it mean?

Me: It means it won't last forever, it only lasts a short time. So the things we *see* here won't be in heaven. They are temporary.

Camden: (On the verge of tears) You mean we won't see lego's and our other toys in heaven?

Me: (backtracking, trying to maintain their excitement about heaven) No, but we will have even better toys in heaven!

Camden: (eyes narrowed and skeptical) How do you *know* there will be toys in heaven?

Me: (trying to tread carefully here) Uh, well, because I know for sure that heaven is going to be even better than here, even better than we can imagine.

Camden and Scott: YOU MEAN WE'LL HAVE ALL THE GUNS IN THE WORLD IN HEAVEN?!?!?!?!?!?

Yes, my boys' idea of Utopian perfection is an endless supply of guns.

Oh dear. Just a heads up, you may not want my kids having a deep philosophical discussion with yours about our eternal inheritance.

My answer: (obviously stretching here) Uh, well, I don't know about that. Maybe you'll have toy guns that shoot good things like fruit or candy...

They liked this idea.

On second thought, maybe you don't want to have a deep philosophical discussion about heaven with me either...

Yep, doing the best I can over here, hoping the Holy Spirit will fill in my gaps...

I take some comfort in the fact that at the end of the discussion, Scott said, quite plaintively, "Mommy, when can we go to heaven? I want to go there now! When can we go there? I wanna hold my baby sister."

Me too, Scotty, me too.

Lord Jesus, come soon.

February 23, 2012

Sorry for bombarding you today, but I think this is too powerful to wait. A dear friend sent me this message today, and I think it is a powerful description. She actually had sent it one year ago, but saw this image again today as she read my earlier post, so she resent it, with one more

paragraph added today. I hope after you read it, you will reread it, and picture yourself instead of me. Because I believe this is what all God's children should look like with the power of the Holy Spirit living inside us:

“Sara, I continue to pray. Today as I prayed I saw you again; this time you had a crown on your head and a sword in your hand. You swung the sword again and again with your face set, and with every swing you beat back the enemy, hitting him and wounding him mortally each and every time. You weren't desperate in this vision; you were MIGHTY. Christ's power flowed in waves as you fought; and yes I can say it was not a desperate fight; you were not overcome or just barely hanging on. You were winning! Everytime you swung the sword you shouted out scripture verses with an authority that gave me goosebumps. I had to laugh at your FB post about “little shy you”. I said it before and I'll say it again: you might be that way in personality, but inside, in the SPIRIT REALM, you are bold as a lion. You are powerful. You have resources. YOU have weapons. You know how to use them. When you pray, when you praise, when you declare the Word, when you humbly trust the Lord with all your being, it derails satan entirely. Your humility, and trust in the Lord, is utterly destroying to the demonic realm.

You have the gift of faith, as stated somewhere in Romans.....God wants to use it, satan wants to steal it. Your name is now Walker, and that's not by accident. Walk on, woman of God. You are a warrior and sent to disperse darkness wherever you go, and that you will do. You were created to do this. It's why you are here.”

—
This is what she added today:

“I am in awe of God. I sit in silence at His feet. Do you know why? Because you are a normal, ordinary person....with an extraordinary God. What God has done, just so far in your story, is incredible. I realize in following your journey.....God wants the extraordinary in EVERY one of His children's lives. Every one of us! Does He want us to have cancer and other terrible things? No of course not.....but the fact that EVERYTHING, including stage 4 cancer, can be used for His glory and good, enables me to see clearly His true sovereignty in all it's majestic glory.”

YES!! YES!! I am in all ways ordinary, except for the extraordinary love and grace of God. That is all I am trying to do, in opening up my crazy life and thoughts to you all is to show you that: that I am ordinary but look what GOD can do with ordinary! How amazing is HE!!!!

Walk on, my fellow warriors. Rise up and walk on...

p.s. Have you ever thought about what Shadrach, Meshak, and Abednego's lives must have looked like AFTER the fiery furnace? What were the rest of their lives like? I've never thought about it either, until today. Talk about fearlessness! What on EARTH would they have had to fear after Christ saved them from the fire? Boy, I bet they were BOLD!!

God, King Jesus- Just like you did so many hundreds of years ago, you have saved us from the fire, from the fire of hell. I want my life to look like Your ancient servants' lives did after you saved them. What have I to fear, but you alone?

(I may start calling some of you Shadrach, just as a reminder to us both!
wink, wink)

February 23 2012

Satan doesn't want you to read any further. How do I know? Because this is the second time I have written it. I had completed it, proofed it – hit “post” and it all vanished.

So be aware, it just might stir something inside you. Something radical. I have prayed that it would.

—

Something's a brewin' inside me...

It gets me so fired up that I want to go around shaking people, grasping them by both ears and then YELLING in their faces...

Something that makes me literally quiver with excitement and anticipation...

Victory is ours!

No weapon of Satan can stand against us, there is nothing to fear!

The battle belongs to the Lord!

Imagine, just *imagine*, what it would look like if the people of God stopped cowering in fear. If we stood together, tenaciously proclaiming the **victory of God**.

Satan, that liar, that great deceiver, who HATES US, who HATES our families, how he would despise that! How angry it would make him, if we dared to realize that we can BEAT him.

Read of God's victories, my friends. Read of them in His powerful word! He didn't just win. He won BIG, DECIDEDLY!

Then read of His promises to US. It takes my breath away:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the **hope** to which he has called you... and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the **same** as the mighty strength he exerted when he **raised Christ from the dead**

Now to Him who is able to do **immeasurably more** than all we ask or **imagine**, according to **his power** that is at work within us

In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us

Do you feel unconquerable?

(Or do you feel defeated? That is a LIE OF SATAN!)

Are you living victoriously?

Please, please, I beg you, pray this prayer with me. On your knees, hands held high, shout it if you dare. Summon your inner warrior; summon your righteous anger against all the pain, all the fear, all the suffering in this world.

Holy and Great God,

Light a fire inside me. Let it consume me. Consume me with your power. No more, NO MORE! will I cower in the darkness. No more will I allow Satan to have a foothold in my thoughts. For you have armed me, I cannot be defeated! Go before me always, and open my eyes to your victory! Today I stand; I stand on your side. Consume your people. I will be courageous.

In the perfect and powerful name of Jesus, who is above all things, Amen

People of God, I beg you, RISE UP

February 28, 2012

Satan doesn't want you to read any further. How do I know? Because this is the second time I have written it. I had completed it, proofed it – hit “post” and it all vanished.

So be aware, it just might stir something inside you. Something radical. I have prayed that it would.

Something's a brewin' inside me...

It gets me so fired up that I want to go around shaking people, grasping them by both ears and then YELLING in their faces...

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Imagine, just *imagine*, what it would look like if the people of God stopped cowering in fear. If we stood together, tenaciously proclaiming the **victory of God**.

Satan, that liar, that great deceiver, who HATES US, who HATES our families, how he would despise that! How angry it would make him, if we dared to realize that we can BEAT him.

Read of God's victories, my friends. Read of them in His powerful word! He didn't just win. He won BIG, DECIDEDLY!

Then read of His promises to US. It takes my breath away:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the **hope** to which he has called you... and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the **same** as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised **Christ from the dead**

Now to Him who is able to do **immeasurably more** than all we ask or **imagine**, according to **his power** that is at work within us

In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us

Do you feel unconquerable?

(Or do you feel defeated? That is a LIE OF SATAN!)

Are you living victoriously?

Please, please, I beg you, pray this prayer with me. On your knees, hands held high, shout it if you dare. Summon your inner warrior; summon your righteous anger against all the pain, all the fear, all the suffering in this world.

Holy and Great God,

Light a fire inside me. Let it consume me. Consume me with your power. No more, NO MORE! will I cower in the darkness. No more will I allow Satan to have a foothold in my thoughts. For you have armed me, I cannot be defeated! Go before me always, and open my eyes to your victory! Today I stand; I stand on your side. Consume your people. I will be courageous.

In the perfect and powerful name of Jesus, who is above all things, Amen

People of God, I beg you, RISE UP

March 1, 2012

It's been an exclamation points kind of day! Getting closer to launching the new website and talked to a book publisher! I'm excited to let you know two things tonight:

1. You can go to the new website now and subscribe, even though it's not up and running yet.

The site address is

www.savoringtheday.com

You will see a place to enter your e-mail address. (No worries – won't be selling or giving out any e-mail addresses.) I think I'm correct in saying that by entering your e-mail there, you will be notified by e-mail when the site is up and running. When the site is up and running, you will also have the option to get an e-mail notification when I post to it, just like you do on caringbridge.

2. The Walker Run 2012 is just around the corner! I promised my dear friends that I would post the following "advertisement" about it. I hope you will consider joining us that day. It was such a fun day last year!

Here's what they sent me to post:

The Walker Run, Live for Today 5K 2012

The Belmont Physical Therapy Class of 2003 along with the support of STAR Physical Therapy and Belmont University Physical Therapy faculty and staff would like to invite all of Sara's friends, family members and prayer warriors to attend the second Walker Run, Live for Today 5K.

WHAT: A 5K fun run/walk. All fitness levels welcome!

WHEN: Saturday, April 14th, 2012 at 7:30 a.m.
Race day registration and check-in begin at 6:30 a.m.

WHERE: Brentwood High School
5304 Murray Lane
Brentwood, TN 37027

WHY: To show love and support to Sara and her family as they walk the road of her fight against colon cancer and continue savoring life.

HOW: Register online at www.racesonline.com or check out our website www.thewalkerrun.weebly.com for mail-in registration forms and other information. For questions, email walkerrun2012@yahoo.com

**Note – If you are registering on-line and have children 12 and under that are going to participate (they are free), you still need to sign each child up in the "children 12 & under (no t-shirt)" category so we will have a consent form for them. If you are doing mail-in registration, you will also need to include a consent form for each child 12 and under. Thanks

March 4, 2012

<https://youtu.be/2lhtx417HwU>

Just a link to a song that I could sing with all my heart. I agree with every word. Thank you for sending me the link, Mom.

I have savored a laughter-filled weekend with dear friends and former roommates (sp?) from college. Thanks Ashley, Lana, Dinah, Courtney, Kat, and Amy for a wonderful time.

This means I did not savor very much sleep this weekend. So.Worth.It.

Have I thanked you for your prayers lately? Because I am ever, ever so thankful.

I pray you have a blessed week of living in the moment and finding something to let your heart sing about.

Oh, and did I tell you my robins are back? This morning I was in a potentially unsafe part of N'ville (long story) and I promise you that I looked out of the car window and a robin that looked exactly the size of my unusually large-chested robin at home was perched on the nearest fence. Amazing...

March 7, 2012

I was at a baby shower last night, surrounded mostly by women I didn't know, and I was asked, "So, Sara, tell me about the new website? What is it? What's it about?"

A hush fell over the room.

Ok, it probably didn't but it sure felt like it.

I was momentarily dumbfounded. I still find it extremely odd to find out that total "strangers" know all about me and what's going on in my life. It astounds me. ASTOUNDS me. Little, shy, previously invisible Sara.

And again God whispers, "With me ALL things are possible."

Once I got over the shock of finding out that most of the women (super fun, Godly women, by the way) in the room had been following this blog, I think I stammered out something fairly unintelligible that included the phrases, "new perspective," "transformed by the renewing of the mind," "living the abundant life," yadda yadda. It was definitely more a Moses the Stutterer moment than a Peter on Pentecost moment.

I was frustrated with myself the rest of the night.

Yes, what are you doing, Sara? You better have a better answer than that next time.

Truth is, I'm not exactly sure. I'm just taking the next step on a path that I believe God is dictating.

And God whispers, "This is about me, Sara. This is not about what you're doing. It is about what I'm doing. You are only to point to Me."

I have realized a few things:

1. God has given me a new perspective, a new way of looking at this everyday, ordinary life.
2. God has given me a gift of writing. (Or so many of you tell me. I'm not sure I'm convinced, but I'm trying to use it anyway.)
4. God has given me a voice, an audience. It makes no sense why so many have been drawn to my words here. It makes about as much sense as choosing uneducated fisherman to spread the gospel. Or choosing Moses the stutterer to go before Pharaoh. Or choosing little shepherd David to be a great king.

I still remember the day and the moment this idea of my own website first came to me. I could think of little else for several hours. My mind raced with the possibilities. I came home and spoke about it with Brian. Brian, my logical, practical husband. I expected to get lots of questions, lots of doubt about the realistic-ness (I'm sure that's not a word) of my plan. That's Brian's nature. Instead, he was quietly but instantly supportive. Not overly enthusiastic in a whatever-you-want-to-make-you-happy-instead-of-depressed way. But in a confident, logical, realistic way.

So I started praying. I prayed, "Alright God, if this is what you want, please bring it about. I don't know the first thing about how to do this. I don't even know who to ask for help. You need to send someone to me so I can know it is of You."

And He did just that.

So I plan to continue. To write to you about this new, more focused way of looking at life, at living in the moment. To write the words that God places on my heart.

And the new website is my temple. Just as David longed to do, I want to build a space where God can abide. I want to create a space where we can experience God's presence, where we can sing His praises, where we can marvel at His deeds. A place where our minds can breathe and our souls can soar. A place where we can drink deeply of what is good, what is noble, what is true, what is honorable, what is right. A place where we can encourage each other to remember this is not home, and where we can talk longingly of Real Home. A place we can spur one another on to good works, a place that we can seek to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. A place of joy, humor, transparency, a place to find the ABUNDANT LIFE.

If God will be there, then I believe it needs to be beautiful; it needs to be done well and it needs to be done right.

So Brian Holaway and Tim and Holli Dilks, they are my Bezalel and Oholiab ([Exodus 35:30-36:2](#)). God sent them to me in answer to my prayer. They are skilled in all things INTERNET, and are crafting a beautiful, welcoming space on the web with their special, God-given talents.

If it is of God, it will succeed.

If it is of God, then He will dictate what success is. If it is just one life made more holy, then it will have been worth it.

If it is of God, then who knows how big it could get. God has already exceeded my expectations in every possible way.

Shy Sara trembles, but steps out anyway.
I take a breath, I pray, and I step out.

March 13, 2012

Hello, God's favorite child! Did you know that's who you are? Because you are. He is most passionately in love with you.

Welcome to my little corner of the worldwide web! I want to welcome you in and give you a big old hug. I want to encourage you to take your shoes off and get comfy. I want to lead you over to a big overstuffed chair and hand you a steaming cup of your favorite hot drink. Then let's have a nice long chat, just you and I.



Well, that's exactly what I would do if it were possible through a computer screen. That's what I hope you will envision when you come to this place in cyberspace: a nice chat with an old friend who loves you just for who you are. Imagine sips of hot tea between sentences.

Ahh. So good.

I want to show you around my new little home here on the Web. In fact, over the next few days I hope to do just that: show you around and explain to you my dream for each of the little spaces. In the meantime, feel free to look around a bit today. You will see that there are several “rooms” to the site that I hope to start utilizing soon. My hope is that as you explore today, your excitement will grow. I hope you will be even more inspired to be a SAVORER!

I want to talk about living. I want to talk about living abundantly.

Sure, we may talk about cancer a little more. We may talk about trials and tribulations. (Can I get an amen and a little good old gospel music playing in the background here?)

But we will lay everything at the feet of Jesus. We will allow His light to fill those dark places. We will seek and we will find the good, the noble, the true.

I commit the following to you:

1. Not one word will be typed on this site that hasn't first been covered in prayer.
2. Every word typed on this site will be for the purpose of renewing the mind, because I want to be transformed, and I hope you do too.

So, for today, I say to you: **WELCOME.**



And let the savoring begin!

March 24, 2012

I am itching, just itching I tell you, to get back to the more meaningful, personal writing that I'm guessing you'd rather read just as much as I'd rather write.

However, I do want to make sure that we are all on the same page about this website: my vision for it and how it all works. There are specific purposes and meanings behind several elements, and I just want to make sure you know them!

For instance, the address. You'll note it is *not*: "sarawalker.com." Why? Because, this is not about me. This is about a revolution, a new way of looking at life. Ok, actually not a new way. Just a return to the oldest way – the way the ancient words of scripture encourage us to look at life. This is about a community of savorers, a community of people who want to encourage each other to hold on to the good.

One of my favorite things about the caringbridge site was of course the comments section. You all are tremendous writers yourselves and you all have tremendous stories of your own to tell. I have as much to gain from you as you do from me.

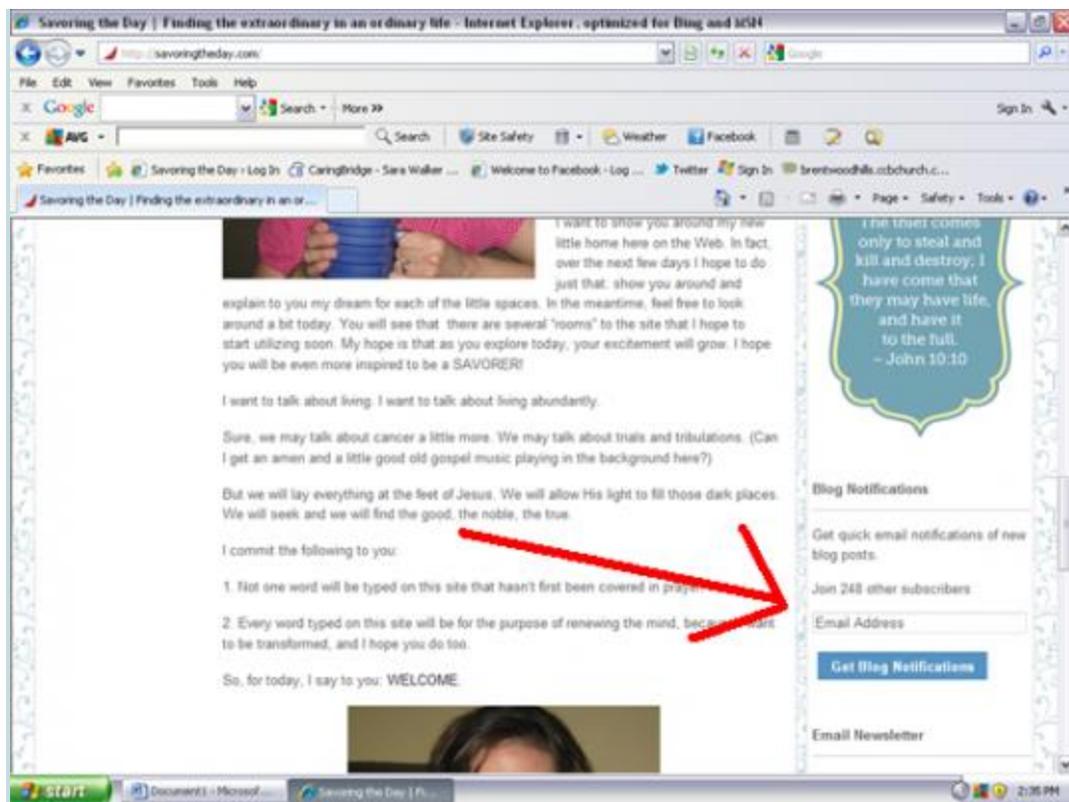
(Plus, I'm no cult leader. I'm not going to be asking you to drink the koolaid. Hence, it is not sarawalker.com)

But more on all this later.

For today's lesson, please understand this:

If you want to be notified by an e-mail that I have put a new post on this site, you need to sign up to receive blog notifications.

**If you signed up before the site went live to be notified of its launch – this *doesn't* automatically sign you up for blog post notification. Confusing, yes. Simple to correct: also yes.



(I cannot tell you how proud I am of myself for getting the above image onto this post. A brief pause to savor that I actually accomplished something like this on my own...)

That picture is to show you exactly where to correct this issue.

If you want to receive an e-mail when I post to the site, enter your e-mail address on the sidebar, right where that lovely red arrow is pointing. Then click the box that says “Get Blog Notifications”.

Hope that’s as clear as mud. If not, leave a comment and I can actually comment on your comment (another feature I am excited about because I couldn’t do that on CB!) and hopefully we can figure this thing out.

March 24, 2012

If My Father wills it, I hope to post on Saturday afternoons specifically for this purpose: to offer to you a little something to help prepare your minds for worship on Sunday.

I hope that we have the chance to learn together how we may worship God more fully, as we discuss and share our many perspectives at other times on this blog. But for today, I just offer

this bit of scripture as a catalyst, as a small flame that might help you to enter worship tomorrow with a renewed passion, a refreshed spirit, a deeper hunger.

My challenge to you is to put a new picture of Jesus in your mind. Try not to picture him as the meek, peaceful, mild-mannered man petting a lamb with a dopey, brainless smile plastered on his face, as some artists have drawn him. Don't picture him as the emaciated, bloody man with all of his ribs threatening to burst through his skin as he suffocates on the cross.

Picture him as the huge, muscular, powerful former-carpenter who easily threw the money-changers' full, heavy tables across the temple with one hand. A man whose strength, authority, and rage was such that no one dared to stop him as he did so. Picture him as the man who taught with a booming voice, with such a commanding presence and authority that a whole hillside of people could hear every word and no Pharisee dared to stop him.

No, better yet, picture him as Ezekiel describes him:

Over their heads was what looked like a throne, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown.

(Ezekiel 1)

That is the Jesus before whom I will be falling, facedown, as I worship tomorrow.

“Oh worship the King, all glorious above...”

March 26, 2012

Let's chat a bit today about the menu item up there called “Extraordinary Stories”.

Another of my favorite things about Caringbridge was when you would leave your comments and relate, oh so briefly, some modern-day miracle that you had personally experienced or that you had seen in a life close to you. I cannot overstate how much each and every one of those stories have helped to restore my hope on days when I felt the last ounce of hope slipping from my grasp.

Wouldn't it be neat – I thought to myself – if there was a website that did just that: that collected stories of God's current faithfulness for anyone to come and read when they needed a reminder of His trustworthiness, His power?

“Well, honey, that's what the Bible is for!” someone might say. (Did you just read that in a very southern voice? I did.) Let me just say, I couldn't agree more. Absolutely – the ancient words of

hope and stories of God's faithfulness to his undeserving children have more power than ANYTHING to restore our heart and minds.

That said, why do we think God only worked in mysterious ways way back in "Bible times"? Maybe, just maybe, it's because we don't tend to share our stories of what He's doing right now, or we don't do so often enough.

So I happen to be of the opinion that it would be a good idea to have a central place to find many modern-day stories of God's miraculous provision! I can't tell you how excited I am about this! You don't have to scroll down through comments on my CB page anymore, you don't have to search out and read several personal blogs – you can come right here and read all the stories you want. Anytime – even in the middle of the night when you can't sleep! (Maybe a website like this already exists? Please enlighten me if so.)

This is of course dependent on you sharing your stories with me. It won't work otherwise. Maybe you don't have one yourself (even though to that I would say your eyes just haven't been opened to see it yet), but you know of someone else's miracle. Please, please, ask that person to write it down and send it to me!

You can keep them anonymous. When you send me your story, I will assume if you click: "this is for Sara's eyes only" – you are giving me permission to share it anonymously. (Otherwise, you wouldn't have sent it here at all.) If you don't feel you are a good enough writer – bah – if God wants to use your story, He will give you the right words. I can clean it up a bit with some simple editing, but it's the events and the emotion you share that will hold the power.

I have already been sent several stories, and know of several others that I will be seeking out. So be checking that page often! (My goal is to post one every 1-2 weeks). My understanding is that you will not be getting an e-mail when I update that page.

For today, I thought of no better one to start with than my sister's story. I didn't even know she planned to send this to me. It was a pleasant surprise.

So, if you want another story of God's amazing faithfulness, please read.
If you want to leave her comments – please feel free to leave them on this post.

And be thinking about your story. Let's all add our "bricks" to this house of praise!

{And by the way – "The Savorers" are increasing by the minute! :-)}

March 28, 2012



Right now, I'm hoping he's clairvoyant.

My little wild man, the charmer, the heart-stealer, my joy, the comedian, the shoe-lover, the stylish one, the one who teaches me daily what it is to live with a zest for life, what it is to truly savor. I'm hoping we can add prophetic to this list.

We were stretched out on a blanket under the maple tree, he and I. We must have a picnic today, he insisted. It is a sunny day, lunch needs to be enjoyed outside.

Our robins paced on their watchtowers, watchful. Red-breasts puffed out in power, in confidence. A gentle breeze licked our cheeks and a slow warmth soaked into our skin. I laid back, linked my fingers behind my neck, supporting my head on bent arms. The familiar strain was immediately present through my upper abdomen.

When, Lord? I am 34, this, just laying on my back, this shouldn't be hard. When will I be able just to lie down again without any discomfort? Something else taken for granted – lying down without pain. How many times did I do this without pain and never thank you? What am I taking for granted now...

And he interrupted my thoughts, as he constantly does. As he is doing at this very moment as I type. He cannot breathe without noise. If he is awake, he is making noise. In his room hangs a favorite quote: "boy (n): a noise with dirt on it." He lives this definition; he personifies boyhood.

"Mommy, you have just a tiny bit of cancer."

I opened my eyes, squinting at him in the sunlight. He was only inches from my face. Cheese. He smelled of cheese, peanut butter, and dirt. Always dirt.

It wasn't a question. He stated it as fact. "Really?" I said.

“Yes, just this much.” His index finger tip and thumb were mere centimeters away from each other.

I hope you are right, my son, my wild one. I hope you are right.

I have a scan this Friday, March 30. As always, I will be fasting that morning. I ask everyone who feels a pull in their heart of hearts to do so to join me in that fasting.

I will learn results on Monday, April 2nd. I will share the results as soon as I can.

I ask to live. Not for myself. I am ready for Home. I long for it. But I grieve to think of leaving them. They are my reason to fight; my will to live. I want to walk through their early years with them, kiss their skinned knees and later their bruised hearts as they face the disappointment that this life eventually brings.

So I beg you to pray. I pray you will beg. HE can do it. He CAN.

(By the way, in case you haven't seen it yet – the place to click to leave comments is up there to the left of the posts's title, just below the date.)

March 29, 2012

If I accidentally stumble upon another blog of a homeschooling mother of eight, I am going to crawl into a hole...

I am going to crawl into a hole and start muttering, “You is kind. You is smart. You is important.” Over and over and over again, whilst sucking my thumb and twirling my hair.

No offense to you homeschooling moms. No offense to you mothers of eight or more. No offense even to you, homeschooling mother of eight who blogs. Bless your hearts. You are extraordinary.

Bless your hearts, you bloggers with your recipes for organic homemade smoothies with ingredients I've never heard of, and your free printables of “25 Easter crafts to make with your toddlers.” I know you mean to encourage. I know you mean to share valuable information that can help us be better mothers. I know it. Deep down I know it.

It is not your fault that you make me want to crawl into a hole. It really isn't. It is not your fault that I am still sitting over here trying to figure out how you even have time to take a potty break from all the laundry, grocery shopping, and meal preparation that must go along with rearing eight children; much less have a spare minute to take gorgeous pictures of all the crafts and organic goodness taking place in your home at any given point in time. But then write about

it in step-by-step detail on your beautiful blog? What am I doing wrong? I don't have the foggiest idea how to even *start* to get to your level...

I have *two* children. One under the care of the public school system for 35 hours per week. One in private preschool for 13 hours per week. I am having a red-letter week if we have clean underwear to put on every day and don't run out of bread for school lunches at least once during a two-week span. I wish I was exaggerating.



Here's a picture of my desk right now. Old Sara would not have been able to sleep at night until there were *at a minimum*: healthy straight little piles. For new Sara, this actually looks tons better than it has for the last couple of weeks, because you can actually see some of the desk surface underneath.

Am I proud of this? No. Do I think that if you are "savoring" properly, your desk should look like this too? No. Understand I am not passing judgment either way.

But if you are ordinary like me, and this is more your reality, feel at home here.

Oh, I fear, FEAR, that in some way my blog may at some point make someone feel "not _____ enough." You fill in the blank: not holy enough, not spiritual enough, not creative enough, not Bible-knowing enough, not patient enough, etc, etc. I fear that somehow, someday, someone might read something and walk away feeling NOT ENOUGH. I fear that if I write about my successes, successes I think you too could achieve, you will not understand that the failings are far more frequent. You will not understand that I truly believe that, "If I can do this, if I can, I *know* you can do this too. Because I am SO ordinary."

You are enough. You are enough for Jesus. Right now, you are enough. He died for you, for me, in our ugliest, most unworthy states: in our sins.

That said, I do want us all to strive together to be better, to be more, to be closer to Jesus and to be more like Him with each passing day. I don't want to be satisfied, to be complacent. There is work to be done.

So come to me, all you ordinary. All you huddled masses yearning to break free of the “perfect Facebook status” and “perfect parent” status. All you who have had a New Years’ resolution for the past four years to learn to make smoothies. All you who are completely befuddled by extreme couponing. All you who more often than not consider Chick-Fil-A waffle fries an acceptable vegetable serving, at least for this night. Next week we’ll do better.

All you who sometimes fall asleep in prayer. All you who have had a New Years’ resolution for the past four years to read the Bible all the way through, and fall apart by February. All you who have a red-letter day when you only raise your voice to your children once.

And if it ever happens, if you ever come to this place, or any place on the web for that matter, and feel overwhelmed, feel less than worthy – shut it down immediately. Shut it down. Unplug, get up and move.

If you are looking at this blog and you haven’t spent 5 minutes today in the arms of Your Creator, just you and Him: shut it down. If you are reading my ramblings and you haven’t spent 5 minutes looking into the eyes of your spouse and listening, *really listening* to how their day went: shut it down.

But I hope you’ll hang with me. I hope we can figure out this calling together – this calling to be *in* but not *of*. This calling to be holy, as *He is holy*. This calling to take up our crosses.

God knows, with whatever days I have left, I need your help...

And now this calls:



April 2, 2012

“Well, the results are not what we’d hoped to see.”

Those were the nurse practitioner’s first words. If I had a nickel for every time I’ve heard that sentence after a CT scan...

My cancer has grown.

Not everywhere, but enough.

Of the two largest tumors that they’ve been measuring and keeping tabs on in my liver, one was slightly bigger and one was slightly smaller.

The key finding was new lesions. “New lesions” are my nemesis. “New lesions” are quite possibly the ugliest words in the English language.

I had new cancerous lesions in new lymph nodes and in my liver. “Several new lesions” in my liver.

This means: time for new drugs. The sole reason for new drugs: new lesions.

It seems that as tough as my spirit has been to defeat: my cancer is tougher. It appears that as “smart” as I’ve been told I am (believe it or not, I used to be known somewhat for my brains), my cancer is smarter. Kill it one way; it quickly adapts and finds a way around that obstacle to continue growing.

So the plan is to start a new clinical trial at the end of this month. The new drugs will include a MEK inhibitor (which is what I’ve been on) and will also block a second protein pathway in the cell (P something). I actually was found to have a mutation in both pathways, so instead of attacking one, as we’ve been doing; we will now be attacking both. Rather, attempting to block both.

Until I start the new trial, I am taking nothing. I have to get this current med completely out of my system.

I am discouraged. I have run the gamut this afternoon: profoundly disappointed, profoundly angry, profoundly confused, completely hopeless. I have no answers. No peace that God has a plan. No assurance that He has even heard a single prayer. No sense that He even cares. I feel as abandoned as any person in the world with advanced cancer. What is the point? What is the point in following God, in trusting Him, in crying out for His help? I am no different than an unbeliever in dealing with this.

And yet, I know, if I would truly think about it, it has mattered. I know He has blunted the pain. I know He has spared me from side effects. I know all is not lost now.

Just earlier this week, I found out that my ovaries survived chemotherapy. Chemotherapy can kill ovaries, permanently stop egg release, induce menopause. Mine were spared. I still have what's needed to bear more children.

Maybe that was my sign of hope for this week?

Right now I don't even want to analyze my feelings. I need to just go numb for a little while. I know when I emerge, God will be there. I know His peace will return. I know I will see He has never left.

My boys are outside. It is spring break. My plan had been to do quite a bit of writing over the break, while my parents entertained my boys. That plan is over now. I really don't care how badly some of you want to read "my book." I don't know how much time I have left and I just want to play with my boys. I just want to be with my boys.

Signing out, a broken once again but somehow still breathing, Sara

April 4, 2012

It was an extreme case of seasickness.

I haven't quite figured it out yet: how to fix my eyes on Jesus when receiving CT scan results. But that is what I must do.

Monday was the first time, the first time in all these many months of getting test results, that I did not allow myself to consider beforehand the possibility that I might get bad news. I did not sit and imagine countless things I might be told: varying degrees of metastasis, wide-ranging speculation on odds and how much time I have left, multiple new changes in treatment plans that might have to be examined. I didn't gird up my spirit with words of truth. I did not make any attempt to steel myself against a huge unexpected wave crashing into my little vessel.

So Monday's devastating blow came at me from the blindside, and my eyes were not fixed. Not at all fixed.

"But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind." [James 1:6](#)

From "Seasickness" on Wikipedia:

The real cause is in the mind, which receives conflicting signals: while the eyes show a world that is still, our body sends signals of a moving environment. This discordance causes the mind to send to the whole body a general alarm signal.

The only, and quite simple way, to re-synchronize the signals is a conduct that will help our eyes to send the proper information of the movement.

Focus on the horizon. [Try to fight] the tendency of the eyes to focus on the objects nearby.

If you can stabilize on this latter reference system, the disturbance will disappear almost immediately.

There are behavioral methods to help the synchronization of the senses, such as being fully aware of the movements of the boat and anticipating them. Avoid reading, watching TV, and even talking to neighbors. After some time, depending on the individual, the mind will be oriented, and it will be possible to resume all normal activities.”

Of course this wisdom is in God’s word:

“Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you.” [Prov. 4:25](#)

“And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.” Hebrews 12: 1-2

My friends, understand that my world fell apart on Monday because I was seasick. When I am in doctor’s offices, when I am forced to read CT scan reports and informed consents for new trials, I am forced to look at my enemy full in the face. I am forced to look at the winds and the waves that surround me in this storm.

It is the ups and downs; the quick, sudden and unexpected movements of what is “nearby” that disorients me. It disrupts my anchor: hope. On Monday night, my anchor felt dislodged.

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.” [Hebrews 6:19](#)

My disappointment comes in part because I want so badly for God to show up and show off. I believe with all of my heart that ANYTHING is possible for Him, that PRAYER MATTERS, that we should PRAY BIG, BOLD PRAYERS. I want Him to validate that belief. I want Him to make me not look like a fool. But that’s not His job. How dare I ask Him to prove Himself again? He has done it over and over and over again and we still reject Him.

What is amazing, what is miraculous, what I praise Him for today is this:

As far away as he felt Monday night, He feels closer than ever before, now.

Monday night, prayer felt so useless. So pointless. But my fear of God and the Spirit of God within me will not let me turn my back. So I just prayed this:

Oh my God, oh Jesus, oh my God, oh Jesus. Be here. Just be here. Oh my God, oh Jesus...

That’s all I could say. I went to sleep crying, literally crying those words.

And I have spent the last two days focusing on stillness, on the horizon, on what I KNOW to be true.

God is REAL. God is LOVE. God is GOOD. God works ALL THINGS FOR GOOD. My HOPE is firm and secure.

I reminded myself of my two options: I live or I LIVE.

Christ has defeated death. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Imagine this scenario: A woman lives on the streets; a beggar in a cruel, evil world. One day, the prince of that land comes to find her. He says, “I am preparing a place for you in my beautiful castle. You will no longer live here in this dirty, evil world. I will come back to get you and you will come and live in my Father’s palace. And not just you, but you and all those you love, if they too will trust me enough to accept this gift. I’m taking you away from this filth and this danger forever, and taking you to place more grand than I can even explain. You just have to see it. I’m coming back in two months.” Imagine just a few weeks later he comes back to her and says, “Well, things are ready ahead of schedule. You get to come today; several weeks early! You can go ahead and leave this place and come with me – to a place that is so beautiful I can’t even describe it. To a place where I guarantee you will never ever be sad. You can leave these streets forever.”

Why would that be a bad thing? Why would she choose to be anything but completely grateful and excited to go?

Maybe you are thinking what I’m thinking. That the only way she would even hesitate is if she is leaving two young children, a husband, family.

My friends, please understand. That is my only hesitation. That is the only reason that Monday’s news was difficult. That is the only reason I cling to this life at all.

But here’s His promise: He will protect those I love. I left that part out of the story. The prince promises her: “I will personally, I, MYSELF, watch out for your children and protect them until their place is ready in the palace. I will never leave them nor forsake them. If I have come to take you early, it is because this is the better way; though you do not know all that I know to understand why that is the case.”

My scenario is win-win.

My friends, I believe it is not yet decided. God’s arm is not too short to heal and heal miraculously even now. Perhaps He is setting the stage for an even grander revealing of Himself. And my Old Testament teaches me that His mind may even yet be changed.

So I will beg. Every morning and every night, and all times in between, I will beg for His mercy and His compassion. I will not use pretty words. I will not bargain. I will just plain beg for mercy.

But either way, my hope is secure. The victory is won. God wins. In the end, God wins.

I am sorry I got seasick on you on Monday. The Spirit of God, in His great mercy, has reset my anchor.

If yours slipped a bit too, do not give Satan the satisfaction. Do not give him the satisfaction of stealing your hope. Of stealing your prayer life. Dig in deeper.

Because this is in that book too:

“And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up.”

Jesus taught His disciples that they should “always pray, and never give up.”

Holy God,

We need you to bring stillness and order back to our minds. We are disoriented, as we are buffeted day and night by the penalties of our sin and our eyes have trouble fixing on you. Father, I thank you for this time to be with children. For it is really that simple. I want the faith of a child. And so I put my hand in your great big hand, I ask your forgiveness for my tantrum, and I beg for your mercy. For I don't deserve it, but in your great love, that's never stopped you before. I love you, My Father.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

April 9, 2012

He is risen! Hallelujah!

The beauty of the day yesterday and the beauty of the Easter service yesterday morning can only be outdone by the beauty of those words:

He is risen!

I could write for a month of Sundays about the glorious feelings all of the above inspire within me. I mean, when's the last time you've seen an ugly Easter? When's the last time it was gloomy, rainy and dark on Easter Sunday morning? I can't tell you the answer for me – I'm just not sure that I've ever experienced a gloomy Easter Sunday. I believe all of creation can't help

but glorify God on the anniversary of that beautiful, eternity-shaking day! Can you even imagine how breathtakingly beautiful it must have been on the actual Resurrection Day? If the land went dark for 3 hours in the middle of the day that horrible Friday of His death, how it must have been bursting with light and color on that happiest, most victorious of mornings!

He is risen!

Do you feel renewed? I do. And it inspires me to begin a new phase of this dream that is this website. I dream of a place where we can encourage each other in so many ways, including “spurring one another on to good works.”

I want us to challenge each other with spiritual exercises that are attainable, even to us ordinary folk. I would like us to share ideas for service that will help us all to savor this life, and most of all, to look a little more like Jesus.

So my challenge to you today is a way to

SAVOR FRIENDSHIPS.

Step One: Spend today in prayer, asking God to guide you to the name of a friend that needs to be encouraged.

Step Two: Starting tomorrow morning, try to send that friend a daily text message or e-mail of a verse of scripture. Try to do this daily for one week. You may feel you need to explain what you are doing, but I challenge you to explain as little as possible. Try to pray for that friend all week. I would also encourage you to maybe choose a friend who doesn't have a whole lot of attention right now, who doesn't have some major life crisis going on that many know about, who may not be receiving many prayers on his/her behalf just because life seems ok right now. Those may be the ones who are hurting most.

Step Three: Think about what you are learning or experiencing through the exercise. I will write about my experience – oh yes, I'm taking the challenge right along with you – next week and ask for comments on what you got from it, or maybe more importantly, what surprising things you saw God do through it for your friend. I can't wait to learn from you.

So, all you folks who “signed” the list to commit to savoring, THIS MEANS YOU.



I challenge you and I challenge myself.

Let's share some inspiration this week and see what we learn.

Side note – prayer warriors for me: I am experiencing very intense back pain right now and for the last 10 days or so, that no one seems to be able to explain. PLEASE pray for relief. My extensive pain meds are hardly touching it.

April 12, 2012



Are you ready, ready, ready – ready to run?

Or walk, as the case may be?

Ooooooh, we are getting so excited abround here. Mr. Weatherman is predicting a beautiful day, of course! And so many of you have told me you are going to be there. I am getting all jumpy and fidgety just thinking about it!

I need to make sure you are aware of a few important points:

- Early T-shirt pick-up is **Friday night at A-Game Sports Complex, from 6:30-8:00 pm.** If it is at all possible, you are *strongly encouraged* to pick up your shirts early. [Click here for directions.](#)
- The race will now *start* and *finish* on the **Brentwood High School track.** The entire run will not be on the track, just the start and finish. Parking areas are still the same: you may park at Brentwood High School or Middle School or at Granny White Park. The track will be accessible from any of those areas. Don't worry – everything will be clearly marked.
- **Plan to get there early!** Parking may be limited due to some other events going on in Brentwood that morning. Also, those who want to make sure they see the big presentation before the race (you know, where I get to stand up in front of everyone and be thoroughly embarrassed) need to make sure you are there and checked in **no later than 7:15 am.** Registration starts at 6:30.

Lord willing, Saturday will be a great time of SAVORING! Let's rejoice in a beautiful spring day, the health and freedom we have to enjoy it, and let's savor some precious friendships! I hear there are a few surprises this year that weren't there last year too!

Hopefully, if you have any other questions about the run, [this website](#) will answer them.

Walker Run 2012 – Here we come!



April 13, 2012

I have prayed that this story may be as moving to you as it has been to me. I have prayed that you may be convicted once again of God's overwhelming faithfulness to His children; of His relentless love and pursuit of us, His priceless creation.

*This story was entrusted to me by a dear friend and spiritual mentor. A woman who is as spiritually strong as anyone I know. A woman whom I would have never guessed would have any struggles like this. Who, just like so many of us, can keep it all together so well that if I shared with you who it was, you would feel the same initial shock that I did. **Father, let us all remember that every person we meet is fighting some kind of battle.***

To the writer, who understandably wants to remain anonymous:

Praise God for your courage, sweet sister. Praise God for your humility and transparency.

Praise God for the victory He has won in your heart and continues to win as you put your hand in the hand of our Savior each day. Thank you for adding your brick to this house of praise; for adding your stone to this memorial altar that we are building to remind us of the faithfulness of God. I didn't think it was possible to admire you more, but after reading this outpouring of your heart, my love and admiration has increased ten-fold.

(*Side note: My friend who submitted this said she had trouble figuring out how to submit it through the site. If any of you have any difficulties at all with navigating the site, with getting certain links and buttons to work properly, etc: PLEASE click the "contact" link on the home page and send me a message to let me know. We are still trying to work out several kinks, so I just need to know if something is working or not working. Thanks!)

Her beautiful words, untouched by me because I believe they were Spirit-given:

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### **Despair, Hopelessness and the Relentless Pursuit of God**

How did I come to this state of existence: despair and hopelessness? I was married to a wonderful, supportive man and had two beautiful children. I worked at a challenging and fulfilling job. I was an active member of a local church. So how did I land in a pit of despair and hopelessness?

I grew up in a mildly dysfunctional family. However, we never lacked for anything: not housing, food, clothing. Our parents provided us excellent educations from pre-school to college graduations. Our extended families loved us and supported us.

Perhaps this despair and hopelessness was rooted in a need to be perfect and an overwhelming sense of responsibility. As the oldest, I was often left “in charge” of my siblings. Of course, I had no authority over them, but I felt a great sense of responsibility for their welfare. For example, we lived overseas when I was a pre-teen. While there, I devised a detailed plan to care for my siblings and get them back to the states to our extended family members should anything happen to our parents. I don’t think my family ever knew about this concern. Then later, as an adult, I felt responsible for a co-worker’s divorce because I had not prayed hard enough. And, of course, the demise of my parents’ marriage was my fault because I had made my father feel old by giving him grandchildren.

The irony of the timing of my fall into this pit was that I was simultaneously delving into scripture as a participant in an in-depth Bible Study. I was also meeting regularly with a prayer group. However, the scriptures only convinced me further of my worthlessness. I hid my despair from those in the Bible study and the prayer group. O, I knew God was good and amazing and loving. I knew He was worthy of my devotion. I understood that Jesus had died for my sins.

But, I could not see myself as someone whom God could trust, because I couldn’t trust myself.

As a teen I fell into an eating disorder that vacillated in its control over me. There would be months in which I seemed to have conquered it, only to be followed by years of being obsessed by it. Why would God trust someone who couldn’t be trusted to care for a body that was supposed to house His Holy Spirit? Someone whose pride and shame caused her to refuse the help her husband tried to get her? Someone who had proven herself untrustworthy with all the responsibilities He had given her.

Someone who was a complete and utter failure.

The eating disorder and related depression consumed me the older I became. Satan whispered and I concurred with his assessment: I was a hopeless, impossible, worthless failure who only brought pain and shame to her God and her family.

It was time to bring relief to them.

I gathered all the left over pain medicines I could find and wrote a letter to my husband. I was just so tired of fighting this battle...

But then a friend called. The only person other than my husband who knew about my eating disorder. A friend who worked in an urban trauma emergency room; a “no one takes a break” – busy emergency room. We talked for ten minutes. I didn’t tell her about my plans.

After we hung up, I curled up on my bed and slept for three hours. When I awoke I put those medicines in a bag along with the note and gave them to my husband when he came home.

My friend later told me that she had a nagging thought run through her mind all morning telling her to call me. The thought kept coming over and over again to the point she had to stop what she was doing and call me. We both believe the Holy Spirit was prompting her to call me. That call saved my life.

And so began my ascent out of that pit of despair and hopelessness onto the path of abundant living. It was neither pretty nor instant. Many times I slid back down the slippery, slimy sides of that pit.

*That was when Jesus, who would not give up on me, jumped into that nasty pit and carried me out.*

My walk on the path of abundant living has not been perfect. I stumble often and many times wander off the path of abundant life to the old trails that led to that pit. But each time that happens, Jesus comes and says to me, “Hey, *remember Whose you are*. I am never going to leave you. I will never abandon you no matter what you do nor where you go. I am with you always. So let’s get up and get back on the path I designed for you to walk.”

Satan still reminds me of my failures. Jesus reminds me of His constant companionship. I continue to be overwhelmed by His grace and mercy. Do I feel worthy? Not really. But I know He thinks I am worth taking off His royal robes, removing His crown and diving head long into my sin sick world. I know He thinks I am worth giving up His life so I can live with Him. I know He thinks I am worth pursuing when I stray. I know He thinks I am worth encouraging when I don’t think I can take another step. I know He thinks I am worth chastising when I become focused on myself and not on Him. This knowledge is too much for me to comprehend.

It is unfathomable to me that He considers me worthy but I know it is true.

I cannot express my amazement and gratitude for Him.

He is mine and I am His always and forever. With His hand in mine, I can go and do amazing things.

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Amen, sweet sister. AMEN!

April 16, 2012

Finally, the post I have been wanting to write to you for weeks and weeks now; since long before this website came about. It just didn't seem right for Caringbridge somehow, and then we needed to take care of other business on this site since it went live, then there was the whole bad scan interruption, etc, etc.

I have been anxious to write to you about my experiment. Oh, I suppose as we get into the details here, there may be some of you who say you've been living this way for years. That there is nothing to be excited about, no need for an "experiment." But for me, it's a whole new world, a whole new way of living. And it has rocked my world. It has rocked it and rolled it and turned it upside down and inside out. It is the most exciting and unnerving thing I have ever done.

I call it: "**The Holy Spirit Agenda.**"

Every morning, when I get out of bed, the very first thing I do is hit my knees right beside my bed and I pray this prayer:

"Dear Heavenly Father,
Thank you for another day. Thank you for another day that Camden and Scott have their mother, and that Brian has his wife. I will rejoice in this day, for you have made it. **Father, help me to follow the Holy Spirit's leading today, and not follow my own agenda. Help me to follow your agenda for this day.** May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight today."

Now, that may sound familiar. I think I might have written about it on CB before. But I'm not sure it looked quite like this. I've been slowly fine-tuning it.

Then the excitement starts.

For then I get to watch how God orchestrates my day. I get to see the beauty of a God-chosen path. He does choose the most scenic routes!

How does this work? Well, first of all understand that I do not view any human encounter as coincidental anymore. With every interaction that occurs during my day, I try looking at it through "Spirit eyes". And I try to discover which of these three categories the interaction fits into:

- 1) An interaction that God has orchestrated so that I may share God's love with that person
- 2) An interaction that God has orchestrated so that I may receive God's love through that person
- 3) An interaction that will bring about worship to God

Or, in shorter terms:

is it for:

- 1) me?
- 2) them?
- 3) God?

I was blown away as I read Friday's extraordinary story, because I knew I hoped to write this post this week. The story gave a perfect example of someone listening to the Spirit's leading. She had my friend's name on her mind and instead of shooing it away and focusing on her critical job, she decided there was some reason she was supposed to interact with my friend that day. And just look, just READ, what God did through her attention to his leading.

Maybe many of you have always lived like this. Maybe you've purposely made no specific, minute-by-minute schedule for your day because you wanted to be open to the Spirit's prodding. Maybe you often abandon your day's schedule to do the unexpected service for God and it never bothers you. Maybe you look at each person you interact with and think "I need to do something to show the love of Jesus to you." Kudos to you, if so.

That wasn't how I lived, in my BC years. (Before cancer). I was a slave to the to-do-list. I had to schedule my day down to the minute if I had any hope of getting everything done that I believed needed to get done. Otherwise, the world would literally crumple to the ground.

Being out for weeks at a time with cancer treatment pretty much clears up the priorities for a person. The most amazing thing I've witnessed: my world hasn't fallen apart without anyone rigidly adhering to my scheduling and viciously attacking my to-do-list. My mom, my husband, my friends were able to step in to do the key things: provide food, clothing, clean shelter for my family. For everything else, it was ok not to keep such tight reins on everything.

Now we're back to the extras: the soccer, the holidays, the gymnastics, the playdates, the date nights, etc, etc. And I can still keep things rolling while following God's leading for each individual day. God knows what is important and what needs to get done better than I do. If I just have to find time to get the dishwasher unloaded and make that Target return – He gives me that time.

So, what does this look like:

As I said, I start with that prayer. Then I begin to work on whatever it is that I think I should do that day: if it is run an errand or two, I head that direction. If it is work on the ever-present housework, I begin that. If it is a scheduled appointment, I go to that. But I do not ever plan my day down to the minute and hour and specific order of how I will do things. That way, if someone calls and says, "Hey, I think I am going to take the kids to the park after school today, want to come?" I can say, "Yes" and I will know that God wanted me to savor a park afternoon with my kiddos. If someone comes to my mind that I haven't talked to in a long time and there is no reason for them to come to mind, I take the time to call or text or e-mail them, and usually say a prayer for them as well. If I unexpectedly run into a friend while I'm out, I listen to them in a whole new way, trying to discover if they just need a listening ear, if they just need a hug, if they

need me to speak some truth into their life, if they need something to laugh about. I really listen now.

I do schedule things in advance of course. I am being asked to speak in more and more settings and I schedule those in advance. I know this is against the popular women-speak these days, but I try really hard to say “Yes.” Because I trust that God is directing my paths, I try very hard not to say “no.”

Sure, there is a place for discernment in how we spend our time. And we absolutely should say “no” to many things. Things like too much time on Facebook, television, movies, smutty magazines, gossipy phone calls, etc. We are smart people. We know what we need to be saying no to. I am convinced it is NOT the “random” human interactions that we should be avoiding.

But I am telling you that my experiment over the last several months now is to try saying “Yes” to God’s plan and He hasn’t steered me off course yet. He hasn’t over-booked me yet. He has planned my time far better than I ever did, BC.

I have time to savor lunches with friends who need to feel God’s love but also time to organize the boys’ summer clothes. I have time to savor baseball in the backyard with my boys but also time to get the grocery shopping in. Do I have time to do my Bible study and keep my house spotless? No, but God knows that the house doesn’t need to be perfect. Do I have time to call my grandmother and encourage her and also spend an hour on Pinterest? No, but I have time for a 10 minute scroll through Pinterest because God made bedtime go so smoothly with the boys that I find I have an unexpected free 10 minutes just before bed.

I know, I have written too much already. And believe me I could write volumes more. But I am going to stop for today with hopes that I can continue to delve into the experiment with you a little bit more over the coming posts and weeks, Lord willing. For one, I can’t wait to tell you about my new to-do-list. See, if you are really a to-do-list person, as I am, you know that that is a deep, deep down trait that just can’t be abandoned completely. So what did I do? I got me a new to-do-list! And I can’t wait to share it with you. And I want to talk more about the Scriptures that I think teach this way of living and the promises that those passages include. And I want to talk about divine appointments vs. interruptions. Can you tell I’m fired up?

But for today, I want to get your initial reaction.

Please, it seems like many of you have been hesitant to comment on this new site like you did on CB. And I can’t quite figure that out. You are still visiting in droves, as my web stats show me, but you aren’t leaving comments. I want to keep learning from you! Really. I don’t just want comments to make me feel like I’m cool or something. Ha! Ha! I want to try and figure out this Spirit-led living together. The comment feature on this site was one of the things I was most excited about, because I can actually directly respond to your comment and so can someone else. So your comments can start whole new discussions and conversations!

So, please comment – tell me what sounds interesting about this experiment, what sounds way too difficult, what sounds realistic, what sounds unrealistic. I truly believe it can be done whether you work outside of your home or inside your home. My friend’s story from Friday is an

excellent example of that.

Is it a prayer you'd be willing to pray: "Help me follow your agenda today?" Do you already pray it in a different way? Please, let me hear from you and gain from the Holy Spirit that lives inside you. I believe each of us is made to see and understand God in a different way because He's too big for any one of us to grasp all of his dimensions; and so we have to share our understanding with each other so that we can get a bigger picture of God. But that too is another post for another day.

"Trust in the Lord, with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths." [Proverbs 3:5-6](#)

What do you think? How do you lead a Spirit-led life? Could you be doing it better? Do you let Him direct your paths or do you lean on your own understanding?

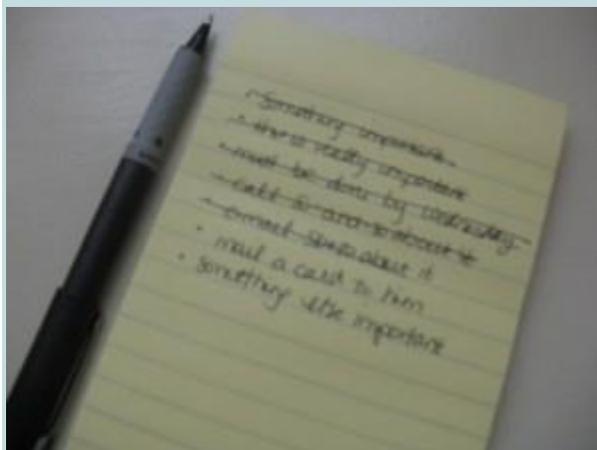
April 19, 2012

The to-do list

Wait, that may deserve bold type:

The To-Do List

If you are a list maker, you get me. You get that if the thrill of making a to-do list is surpassed by anything, it is only surpassed by the thrill of



Marking Something Off the List.

Word. Some of you are feelin' me. Am I right? Yep, your head's nodding too.

BC (before cancer), the productivity of any day was directly proportional to the number of items marked off a to-do list. Therefore, by the Law of Inverse Something or Other, a day was *not productive at all* if *nothing was scratched off* the to-do list.

So when I started [my experiment](#), I had a dilemma. A serious one. I was leaving my days wide open for God, and though there was more satisfaction in that than I can put into words, my own to-do lists were gathering dust. Items on those lists were being eliminated at a frighteningly slow rate of speed. I know, I KNOW, that my priorities are much closer to where they should be now than they used to be. But old ways of thought die hard, and I couldn't fully escape this sense of being "unproductive."

Finally, one day it hit me. I mean it hit me like a ton of bricks. Duh, Sara, duh. All you need to do is come up with a to-do list that you can actually do. A list that matches your new priorities.

So here's my new list:

- **Follow God's agenda for today**
([Psalm 119:133](#), [Jer 10:23](#), [Prov 3:5-6](#))
- **Pray continually**
([I Thess. 5:17](#))
- **Constantly list my blessings**
([I Thess. 5:17](#))
- **Train the warriors**
([Deut 6:6-9](#), [Prov 22:6](#), [Prov 29:17](#), [Eph 6:4](#))
- **Serve my husband as I would serve Jesus in the flesh**
([Eph 5:22](#))

That's it. Not rocket science, I know. As I face any decision during the day about how to spend my time, I see if it fits one or more of these items. As I lay down every night, I think through my day and determine how many of those items I could cross off for that day. I freely admit I rarely complete my list. (But if I could easily cross off the whole list each day, then it wasn't a real to-do list, was it, list keepers? Yeah, you know what I'm talking about. There's got to be a challenge.)

In case you are wondering, "Train the warriors" is of course about raising my boys. I have just decided in recent months that I wanted to become a little more focused in this regard, and using the phrase "train the warriors" helps me to remember the seriousness and importance of my goal in parenting them. We don't just want to raise them to be generally well-adjusted members of

society. We want to raise them to be courageous men who fight on the Lord's side at all times while they pass through this life as strangers and aliens.

Oh, I still have the other kinds of lists, but to be honest I only look at them a few times a week. They no longer control me and they no longer get to dictate whether or not I have been "productive."

So, here's an example of how this helps me:

A few weeks ago I planned to run an afternoon errand with the boys – taking some items back to Sears. For some reason that day, I thought of a shut-in that we hadn't visited in quite awhile. I didn't know why she came to mind that day, so I decided maybe we needed to go see her. (See my last post.) I also know that I want to train my boys to have a Godly love and respect for the elderly, especially their spiritual elders. So I figured out this activity fell into both #1 and #4 on my list, and I decided to abandon my other to-do list item of making returns. That sweet lady died just one week later, and I am eternally thankful God prompted me to go and visit her just one last time. My mom was running errands the other day in Cool Springs and was able to make my Sears return for me quite easily. Thank you, God, for helping me make the right choice that day.

I give you this example not to be boastful, but just to encourage you that though I get it wrong most times, when I do manage to get it right, God makes everything else work out.

So for my list-making friends: if you are thinking about trying "the experiment" but balk at the idea of abandoning the to-do list, I humbly recommend that you try making a new one. One like this one that can be added to the top of your other lists. Yours probably won't look like mine. Many of you may come up with better ones. I'd love to hear if you try it, and I'd love to hear one or two items you think of that I should think about adding to mine. It's a work in progress. I hope that I am constantly learning more about how to walk in God's paths; constantly being transformed closer to the image of Christ.

Just a few of my thoughts for today, friends. May God richly bless you this day with a greater sense of His abiding presence. I can't think of any better blessing He could give. Unless Jesus were to come back. That'd be just fine by me...

April 19, 2012

I want to point out a couple of things about the website.

First of all, I realized there is not a great place for me to put updates on how I'm doing medically, unless I just write a whole blog post about it. So, what I've done is create a new page that you can access just by going to the "about" page.

To be specific:

1. From the home page (www.savoringtheday.com) click on the menu item across the top that says “about”
2. Scroll to the bottom and there is a sentence that says “Click here to find out my current prayer needs.”
3. Click on the word “here.”

There you can read the latest of what is going on medically and find out **specific prayer needs**. For today know that I am dealing with a whole-body rash that is very itchy and looks awful. Thankfully, my face has been spared. The dermatologist did a biopsy of two spots as he isn't even sure what it is, and should get those results back tomorrow. Yes, like Job, I want to scrape my body with broken pottery just to alleviate the itching. But as bad as it is, it is not as bad as the face rash last year. I would appreciate prayers that they can determine the cause and that it is not too serious, and of course that it can GO AWAY.

Second, please be aware that I am having to go in and manually add names to the savorers page. So if you have tried to add your name to the list and don't yet see it, please don't do it again. I just haven't gotten around to updating it again yet. It is so neat to me to see all the different cities where people are committing to abundant living – to savoring. What an encouragement! My hope is that it encourages you to keep on fighting the fight! You've got a brother or a sister on the other side of the country fighting alongside you!

Finally, I hope to post about The Walker Run soon, and include some pictures from the spectacular day. Hoping God gives me some words to explain how grateful my whole family is for that day...

I have posted another post today so scroll on down if you want to read a little more.

“Love you to the moon and back a billion quadrillion times”, as we like to say around here...

April 19, 2012

For those who don't know, my tremendous employers at STAR Physical Therapy, who sponsored the Walker Run, and have already done more amazing, mind-blowing things to support my family during my illness than anyone could ever hope for and that I would have ever imagined, surprised us at the race by announcing that they are sending us Walker Four to Disney World. Yes, mind-blowing, over-the-top support. You will remember that we went to Disney last year for the first time thanks to the generosity of my church family. So now my boys know what to expect.

And they are just a little excited:



I think they have studied this book together every day since the race. I just wish you could hear their conversations. I don't want this blog to have a lot of personal pictures, but I just thought this was too perfect an example of savoring not to share.

Heavenly Father, the giver of all good gifts: I praise you for all the blessings you have rained down on us even in the midst of our suffering. Our cups overflow. I pray you will allow us to enjoy this trip together whenever it happens. Teach me how to savor this life like my boys do...

(Two other posts today – so keep scrolling down if you want to catch them all.)

April 23, 2012

It is Monday, April 23rd, and I have not taken *any* anti-cancer medication in 22 days. This should mean that I should be taking pain meds pretty much around the clock, should be having pretty severe pains in my liver area (right upper abdomen), should be having difficulty sleeping, etc. This is because my tumors should have grown significantly during this interim – as they have during each of my interim periods between treatment plans. And while it's possible that

they have grown a lot, I'm guessing they haven't grown quite as aggressively because my pain has not increased as it has during other interim periods. I am taking a bit more pain meds than usual but as far as pain goes, I am doing fairly well now. The strange back pain I was having has resolved. Thank you, God.

The goal is to begin the next clinical trial I am to be on on April 30th, one week from today. This new trial is one that will attack the PI3 K pathway within my cancer cells. I have a PI3K mutation, and so just as the last trial helped significantly for a time, this too should help significantly for at least a time, because we know I have a mutation here.

You may recall that last time we talked I said I would be starting a trial that attacked both the P and the B mutations that they know I have. Well, that trial is still in the backpocket as another option to try when we've gotten all we can out of this trial (the P only). The reasons we are doing this P-only one first are: 1) it had an earlier slot opening so I could start treatment again earlier and 2) if we were to try the other trial first (attacking both B and P) then we would lose this P-only one as an option because of their trial's exclusion criteria.

The new trial is also an oral medication. The side effects are essentially the same as the last trial I was on, which is definitely good news. Also, my friend who is a brilliant geneticist (doctorate level, works in research at Vanderbilt) told me that the P pathway is a really strong one, stronger than the B pathway. She thinks it is probably the one more responsible for the rapid growth of my cancer and more responsible for its stubborn nature, refusing to be killed.

I will have to spend significantly more time at Sarah Cannon. I will have to be there at least once a week for a couple of months, and some of those times I will be there for very long days – as in 8-10 hr days. This is so they can draw labs throughout the day, etc. It doesn't mean I will be hooked up to machines or to an infusion pump for hours at a time. I am thankful for that. It might mean I get a lot more writing done, as I will have to pass the time doing something!

My geneticist friend tells me I am on the cutting edge of cancer treatment. This is the newest stuff, the cutting edge, and I am reminded how thankful I am to live in Nashville, TN. When I am at Sarah Cannon (SC), I am one of the few from here in town. In fact, most of the nurses and schedulers assume I am from hours away, because that is the case for most of the people being treated there. As we discussed what trial I would do next, the research nurse and doctor were careful to explain the differences in how much time I would be required to be at SC. I listened politely but then assured them that is not what I would base a treatment decision on. They said, "Yes, not for you, but for most people we see who have to arrange airfare, hotel stays, etc, it is a big deciding factor for them." I am so blessed to be here. I have to be away from my family so very little in the grand scheme of things. Thank you, God.

This week I will be completely busy all Wednesday and Thursday doing preliminary testing to start this next trial : echocardiograms, EKGs, fasting and non-fasting bloodwork, eye exams, skin biopsies, etc. We are trying to get everything done so that I will be able to start next Monday.

So how am I feeling now? Mostly pretty good, all things considered. I have pain in my abdomen when I breathe at all deeply, when I yawn, when I laugh, when I twist, when I stretch my

shoulders back. I am very sleepy a lot of the time, and seem to hit a wall about 5 o'clock every day where I just cannot keep my eyes open. I am mostly still very hopeful that this is all going to be completely healed one day, but I have times where I get very distressed and down. More on that later maybe. Every morning and every night I put my face to the ground in the most humbling position I feel I can get in, and I beg. Most of the time I beg through gushing, body-wracking tears, for God to have mercy. For Him to allow me to stay here for my boys, for Him to spare them the pain of losing their mommy. For Him to spare Brian the pain of losing his wife.

Then there is also this:

(that's a quarter on my leg)

And yes, this all itches like crazy. Like CRAZY.

The dermatologist determined by biopsy that this is dermatitis, and said that basically means it is an allergic reaction. I praised God that it wasn't more serious. He said he wanted to just "watch it for awhile." No one seems too concerned with figuring out what I have had a reaction to. And as I think back to when it started (which was sometime in the last week of March), I can't figure out what it could possibly be. He said it was a very atypical presentation of dermatitis. I said "Welcome to my life." Nothing is simple or straightforward with me. And if I'm going to have a skin issue, I'm going to have a big one. I don't do anything half-way, huh?

So now you know the latest. I hope to be starting a new trial next week, which from the outside will look a lot like the old trial except for more frequent and longer hospital visits.

Please pray that this skin issue miraculously resolves and does not complicate or prohibit further cancer treatment. Please pray that my body responds well to the new drugs, and of course mostly that the cancer is killed by the new drugs. Please pray that I will continue to find meaning in each day and will not have to search desperately for a reason to get out of bed at all, as I had to today.

Please pray for Jesus to just come back and get us. I am so ready to go Home with all those I love.

As always, I thank you for caring enough to read and to pray. I know your prayers are holding me together.

My heavenly Father,

You never give up on me, and I refuse to give up on you. I know you are wise beyond my understanding. I believe that you are good, that you are love, a deeper love than I could possibly understand based on our weak human version of it, and that you bless those who love you. I do not understand anything about my life right now, but I am thankful you don't ask me to. So instead of thinking about my misery today, I will count my blessings. I will tell you as many things as I possibly can today that I am grateful for: for the sunshine, for my car, that there is gas in it, that I don't have to worry about my next meal, that I don't have to worry about pain thanks to pills, that my boys are happy in their safe, nurturing schools and that I don't worry

about them while they are there, that my husband has a good job and I don't worry about his faithfulness to me or to You when he is away from me...

This is where I will put my mind today. I love you, God, and I love you, Jesus. To the moon and back a billion quadrillion times...

April 25, 2012

It was an ordinary moment.

You see, the triggers are often hidden in those ordinary moments. We were riding home from a weekend adventure. My mind was wandering aimlessly, contentedly among a variety of thoughts, not stopping for too long on any one subject but peacefully roaming along a number of different lines of thinking. It had been a good weekend and we had savored the moments. I was confident of that. The landmine came very unexpectedly.

I was thinking of my good friend who was to be induced into labor the next day. She was to deliver her third child and my mind began to speculate on the excitement and anticipation she must be feeling on this day. This joyful anticipation of going into the hospital with rounded belly, and coming home with arms full of joy, love, sweet baby smell and perfect baby feet. Meeting this child she had carried for nine months and beginning the process of discovering all the amazing facets to this new little soul, this brand new creation of the Master Artist.

And without warning my mind flitted to comparison, to what I anticipated from time in the hospital this week. I too was anticipating a long hospital visit, but there was no joy in my anticipation, for I was to prepare my body for another battle with cancer. I would enter with belly full of disease, belly not bursting with life ready to unfold, but with dead and dying tissues – necrosis they call it. I would leave with arms empty, and my body holding a little less life-giving blood.

Wasn't it just yesterday that we were eagerly anticipating our Anna? That I was dreaming of our time in the hospital with her, our first meeting – face to face? That I was fantasizing about showing her off to family and friends who came to see us in that happy maternity ward? How did this happen? How did I skip that part? How did I get here again?

The tears burst through, despite my attempt to hold back the tide. I didn't want to add memories of a crying mommy onto the end of a fun weekend full of happy family memories; I didn't want that for my boys. Oh, I let them see me cry from time to time. I want them to know it's perfectly ok to cry out to God, to let Him see your emotion, to feel those emotions and still come away knowing you trust Him. But not today, let's end this day on a high note. Just today.

Brian: "What's wrong?"

“I just got to thinking about K, I just got to thinking about their baby, about how they are going to the hospital tomorrow and coming home with a baby; and I am going to the hospital this week because I have cancer all over my body. ” Keep in mind this sentence took several seconds to get out, as I was crying heavily. Bless his heart for piecing it together.

“It’s just not fair. Oh, Brian, it’s just not fair.”

A pause, tears flowing, body shaking, mind grasping for solid ground through this earthquake of emotion...

He held my hand and quietly said all there was to say. I’m sure I had just torn open a fresh scar for him, made him feel a pain he had only recently managed to bury. How selfish of me but how very much impossible to avoid. For he said: “No, it’s not fair.”

And then a sudden stillness. A sudden sensation of arms wrapped strong around me, a rush of whispered, unintelligible but calming words.

“I know this feeling too. Let’s talk about unfair.”

It was a whisper, the Still, Small Voice.

Understand it was not sarcastic, not condemning, not angry. Just sympathizing truth.

My Jesus, brutally beaten, bleeding, exhausted, gasping for air, because of my sin. Because of your sin. Because of every human who has lived or who will ever live’s sin. Think of every dispicable, evil act ever perpetrated on this earth. He carried it all on his back.

He drank the full cup of God’s wrath. God’s WRATH: THE. FULL. CUP.

This man, who was Perfect Love. This man who was sinless, blameless, perfect. This man who healed, cast out, raised, fed, created, loved. This man who laughed with children and welcomed them on His lap.

This man was brutally tortured, spit upon, murdered – so I can share in His inheritance. So I do not have to suffer the consequences of my unending selfishness.

And I whine about “unfair.”

Let’s talk about unfair, my sweet one.

Oh, my Jesus, my loving God,

Surely your patience and your love for me is unfathomable. Be deaf to them: these selfish words of complaint; for I do not want your perfect, loving ears to hear them. I want only to sing praise, to sing my gratitude. Let that be all that you hear. Not because it is sin for me to bring my hurt to you, but because it is not what you deserve. It is not what my heart of hearts longs to

bring to you. I want to pour my life out in gratitude, and gratitude alone, to you.
In the Name of Jesus, Amen

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses... [Hebrews 4:15](#)

God took an ordinary moment, and infused an extraordinary truth: “It’s not fair.” He knows this feeling too.

April 26, 2012

We get pretty excited around here about answered prayers and any evidence of a less aggressive cancer:

For those who don’t know, and I can’t remember who does know now: I had extensive blood work done yesterday (as in 14 tubes full) and had both a CT scan and a PET scan today.

I just spoke with the research nurse who had seen the results of all those tests and said there has been **no significant growth of the cancer or deterioration of my labs** during this month of no treatment. Praise God! This is a first!! My labs are holding steady – my liver function tests remain **in a normal range** (there’s that beautiful word “normal”) and there was no big change in my tumor marker (also a blood test). She said the CT scan had mixed results, meaning a couple of places had even shrunk a bit, despite no treatment for 25 days! Thank you, God!

So everything looks good at this point for beginning the next trial on Monday. Thankfully, in other answered prayer news: Dr. Bendell found a loophole which allowed me to go ahead and start treatment for the cancer next week despite my dreadful dermatitis: a dermatitis that again defies explanation by any of a number of doctors, and beats anything they have ever seen. A few weeks into the trial we may be able to start treating the dermatitis with steroids or other meds.

In terms of current prayer needs:

1. Please pray that this current whole-body (face-sparing) dermatitis that I have will resolve soon.
2. Please pray that I have minimal pain with my core liver biopsy tomorrow. The drug companies need more of my tissues for study purposes. This was a very painful procedure last time (last year), but they were unable to give me the full pain meds to help last time too. (Can’t remember why now.)
3. As always, pray for full healing of my cancer. “Is anything too hard for God?”

While spending time in waiting rooms this week, we were given even more evidence that we are extremely blessed to live here in Nashville. One man explained to us that his brother, a current Sarah Cannon patient, is from North Alabama and was being treated at MD Anderson in Houston, TX (one of the most well-known cancer treatment hospitals in the country.) His doctors at MD Anderson referred him to Sarah Cannon (SC), saying the best place in the country for his cancer to be treated was just about 100 miles from his home – at Sarah Cannon Research Institute in Nashville, TN. We also met another lady who told us she had met patients at SC from as far away as San Francisco.

Thank you, Father, for putting me in good hands here at home, so that I am only very minimally away from my family. What a tremendous blessing!

Thank you for your prayers. I know they have been heard!

April 29, 2012

First, a note about the pictures I use on the posts here. Most of them have been taken by my ultra-talented friend Amy, who by the way has one of the best extraordinary life stories of anyone I know. She takes pictures of ordinary things but in a way that makes them look extraordinary. Some of them are windows, light fixtures, bathroom tiles, etc. I hope this emphasizes how there is extraordinary to be found in all the ordinary around us. Maybe that will be a new challenge to you now, as you look at the pictures – “What ordinary thing is that?”

I had lunch with a couple of good friends several days ago, only a few days after posting about [my experiment](#). One of those friends shared with me that her first response to that post was very negative, and she disagreed with at least one or two of my points.

First of all, let me say this: I thanked God for the rest of the day that I have such a real friend who would tell me her honest reaction instead of talk about me and my “wrongness” to everyone else *but me* and never give me the chance to talk with her about it. *Thank you God, for REAL friends.*

I told her I would LOVE it if she would have lovingly left a rebuttal comment, but then she explained the difficulty in doing that. No one wants to be the first one to disagree with the poor cancer lady. I get that. I do.

But please, let me assure you of a couple of things:

I am just trying to figure out what this Christ-like, abundant living is all about and am certain I have more questions than answers. I do not think I’ve got it all down and am absolutely right on all things. Oh Lord, may it never be so!

I do not get offended by people who think differently. I love to hear it, because I love to be challenged to look at things from a different perspective. How else do you grow and learn? Again, it is important that it be spoken with respect and love. You can love me and hate my ideas. And it is possible to get that across in a comment.

I actually long for some good debate on this website. That's why the comment functionality was so important for me. I want to glean from your wisdom. I truly, truly do.

But now, back to where I may have left a wrong impression.

I fear I gave some poor examples of how this Holy Spirit Agenda translates to every day life, and also my friend couldn't figure out how to reconcile it with her supervisor-ordained job responsibilities, being a full-time working professional. I fear I may have left the impression that I equate following the Holy Spirit's agenda to "slacking off," "playing hooky," "ignoring responsibilities."

Oh, if you only knew how far from the truth this is for me. If anything, I am a little *too* unforgiving of people who do not take seriously the command to "let your yes be yes and your no be no." Christians are to be people of their word! I am too unforgiving of people who do not take seriously these instructions: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters" [Colossians 3:23](#).

I believe Christian employees should be known as the hardest working, most dependable employees at their place of work. Yes, I have been out of work for over a year now, and so the examples I gave of following God's leading were geared more toward the stay at home mom, but **I absolutely believe you can work full-time or part-time and should still be able to follow the Holy Spirit's agenda for your day.**

If you work outside the home, then I think He speaks that agenda a little more clearly, if anything. I get that your day is usually dictated to you by your superior. I would just suggest that you look at the interactions that will occur during your work day a little differently – look at them as a possible divine opportunity instead of just a job responsibility. Does that mean you engage in a spiritual conversation with each of those you come in contact? Well, of course not. But I believe there may be some way to reflect Christ in each encounter: through your warmth, through your good listening, through your attentiveness to detail, etc. I would encourage you to go back to my list of three: is the interaction for you? them? God? You just never know what God may be doing in each interaction you have. **I absolutely believe that if you are doing your very best at work, as if you are doing the work for God, then you are doing exactly what God wants you to be doing with that time.**

Let me also say I would never mean to suggest that keeping a clean house is not important. We are to be good stewards of what we have and take care of what is entrusted to our care. Keeping a clean, orderly home is a gift of service to our families that helps there to be a good, welcoming connotation to the word "home" and that is important for our ideas of "home with God." I believe there absolutely are times when God wants me to be home cleaning my house, serving.

I also want to say here and now that I did not mean to fire a shot in the fragile cease-fire held between the working mom and stay-at-home mom. I believe you can do either to the glory of God.

Let me say that again:

I believe you can do either to the glory of God: either work outside the home or stay-at-home.

(I wish more than anything we could all stop being so defensive about whichever position we are in and just love each other and support each other as mothers doing the best we can. Sigh...)

I hope this makes things a little more clear as to what I meant when I wrote about following God's agenda for my day. Please understand, it is a challenge for me every single day. I know that I often still make the wrong choices and too stubbornly hold on to what I think should be done.

To conclude today: I would say let's all remember that story about the Good Samaritan. That's a tough one, isn't it? We aren't told why the priest and the Levite passed by the beaten man. Maybe they had "God-ordained" job responsibilities to get to? I don't know. Like I said, that's a hard one. So all I know to do is to ask God to help me make sure I don't pass by the opportunities to serve when he wants me to stop and act. Maybe that's a better prayer for the day: "God, don't let me be the priest or the levite today. Open my eyes and give me the will to be the Samaritan."

So for those I offended by my bad examples last time, I apologize. For those whose feathers were ruffled because maybe the Spirit inside you was convicting you to give up a little of your control over your day, I do not apologize. *God, make us all uncomfortable until we start to get it right!*

And please, lovingly disagree with me. I will love you even more if you do!

~~~~~  
*What I am savoring today: REAL friends and loving Christian debate...*

## May 5, 2012

**I** know you deserve an update.

I know I have a responsibility, which I created myself, to update this site frequently.

How have I been doing on the new drug?

Fair. Fair to partly cloudy.

Still not as bad as chemo. Not even close.

I have mild nausea occasionally, but no “production” on that front. My old compazine prescription keeps it in check well.

My main issue right now is I have no energy. In related news, I also have no appetite. This is a bad combination.

I think you might best get the picture of my state right now if I told you I feel like an empty shell. Imagine if you will, and I know this is a lovely thought, a dirty windowsill, with a dry, crackly fly or beetle carcass just lying there. That is the closest thing to which I could compare myself these days.

My body just wants to lie. I would estimate I am in a horizontal position at least 20 out of every 24 hours, and am sleeping about 15 of those hours. My brain knows this only induces further weakness and fatigue. My brain doesn't really care. My heart semi-cares, and occasionally makes a bold move to get me up and doing something, when I think about my children. But that isn't happening often enough.

“Anorexia” is one of the common side effects of this drug. Yes, eating is about the last thing I care to do. I have tried to analyze why: does it make me nauseous? A bit. I have noted my mouth is strangely dry and every bite I eat is like chewing up cardboard. “Just make yourself eat, why don't ya?” I don't know the answer to that. I do try. Sometimes I do try. Every bite is torture. I realize how ungrateful that sounds. Forgive me, Jesus. Do you know this feeling too? Surely you do.

I have resumed taking the anti-depressant again. I was doing so well for so long I had discontinued it. We'll see if that helps.

We've definitely come to the part of the story where the Moses, Aaron, and Hur analogy fits well. I don't know how much longer I can hold up my arms. Any assistance on that front is appreciated. I know you are trying. I know you are battling fiercely.

I do want to share my shred of hope. My dad found my engagement ring. Maybe some of you forgot you can check my prayer needs [here](#) and didn't realize it had gone missing. It was missing for two and a half days, but I kept praying, believing God could return it to me. My dad found it in the backyard. Yes, it had survived almost 3 days in the backyard, and didn't get carted off by some bird or animal. Finding it was literally like finding a needle in a haystack. God still hears my prayers. I know He does. In the deep recesses of my dry cracked shell, I know He does. I believe He will heal me yet.

Forgive my silence. Forgive my dryness. But I must be authentic. It's the only way I know to be. I know my joy will return. I know this is just a bad stretch of days. I know He's not done. I hold on, white-knuckled, but I hold.

## May 9, 2012

**I** confess. I used to be a realist.

I'm starting to think that was a sin.

See, I used to pray prayers like this: "God, please heal that marriage. But when it fails, Father, please help them not to give up on you." Or like this: "God, please bring full healing to my friend. But when she dies, please comfort her family."

I might mention the miracle in my prayer; I might acknowledge that God had that power. But I didn't really expect Him to use it. I expected the logical, the probable outcome. I didn't pray with any boldness. I prayed by giving God an out. That way if it wasn't His will to work the miracle, I was safe. God still answered my prayers. Life was less confusing that way. God was easier to manage, to understand. He fit in my brain, in my realm of logic.

Of course. Of course I need to believe in a God who does miracles now. Of course. One might argue I am shifting my perception based on my needs. I can't say that you are wrong about that.

But this verse convicts me. This passage cuts me to the core, separating joint and marrow. These words stops me dead in my tracks. And I only noticed it recently:

II Timothy 3. "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive...(a whole bunch of other bad things) **having a form of godliness but denying its power.**"

Think I'll say that again: "Having a form of godliness but denying its power." That's listed in with a whole bunch of other "bad" sins.

I don't want to do that anymore.

I shudder. I shudder to think of how I mentally denied God His due power for so many years. So that I could understand. So that I could avoid disappointment when His will was different. What if I'd had the faith to ask for more? To ask for bigger.

"You do not have, because you do not ask God." ( James 4)

And then someone introduced me to this verse. I think maybe I've mentioned it before. Jesus says in John: "Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and **they will do even greater things than these**, because I am going to the Father." ([Jn 14:12](#)) What? Greater than healing the lame, the blind, the demon-possessed? Greater than raising from the dead?

I tend to let the “scope of defeat”, the odds, determine how I pray. If it is a mild illness, oh then I will pray “bold” prayers for full healing. If it is an early marriage problem being handled as soon as the slightest hint of trouble arises, I ask for full reconciliation. Denying the power of Godliness?

I remember early on in my illness, when we faced test after test to try and get a full picture of just exactly what and where this cancer was, in other words, just how hopeless it was, “the scope of defeat;” my father said something profound to me. Forgive me if I’ve shared before:

“All we are doing right now is sizing up the enemy. We are getting a picture of how big he is. But no matter what is found, it **doesn’t hold a candle to the limitless power of God that He can unleash if He chooses to do so.**”

He went on to explain it this way:

“It is like tug of war. You are on one side pulling. All you can see is the vast empty pit in front of you, and you see the size of the enemy on the other side pulling you toward it. What you cannot see with these human eyes, but what you must fight to see with your spiritual eyes, is the enormous God and all His heavenly hosts who are behind you, just over your shoulder, pulling *with you*. If you could see them, oh there would be no reason to fear at all! You would see you’ve got this sewn up. It’s not even a contest.”

I like the way Beth Moore puts it in “Jesus the One and Only”:

“Even in our churches, many are learning more about the power of the devil than the omnipotence of the living God! Many do not understand that surrounding dynamics (circumstances, odds) like the length and depth of defeat have absolutely no bearing on Christ’s ability to perform a miracle. No bearing.”

God kinda gets on Moses’s case for doubting the scope of His power. In Numbers, we are told about how the Jews were whining about having no meat. God says He’s gonna give ’em some. In fact, he’s gonna give ’em so much it’s gonna make them sick. Moses says, paraphrasing, “What? How on earth are you going to do that? I’m down here with 600,000 men, and even if you caught every fish in the sea, that wouldn’t be enough. Even if we slaughtered every single animal we have that wouldn’t be enough.”

The Lord answered Moses, “**Is the Lord’s arm too short?**”

These are my new constant words to God, my meditation: Is your arm too short? They remind me. They remind me that God EXCELLS in the hopeless realm. That’s His favorite place and time to work, it would seem. That I have no business deciding what “realistic”, what He can and can’t do.

So, I confess. I was a realist. But now I live in HOPE. From I Corinthians 13: “Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” We always skip ahead to that last sentence, don’t we? But hope, HOPE is in there with the BIG 3.

I am called to have hope and I am called NOT to deny the power of Godliness.

I don't want to be a realist anymore.

## May 19, 2012

**T**he moment had come.

It was finally here.

He looked around and saw the crowds, and he knew the time had come.

This was it.

*“And seeing the multitudes, he went up on a mountain, and when he was seated his disciples came to him.”*

“He went up on a mountain.” Oh, what a great writer you are, my Father. The first time around, when you came down to us, to give us instructions on how to live, how to walk through life, you came to a mountain. It was on a holy, untouchable mountain that you gave Moses that first law, that first covenant. You don't want us to miss the importance of what your Son does now, do you?

He is to bring us the new law, the instructions of how to live, how to walk through *this* life, under the new covenant. **In the New Kingdom.**

Jesus knows the significance of the moment. Is this the first time He will speak to a crowd this size? I love that Your word tells us that when he looks upon the masses of us, that what he sees is *hurting sheep*. What he feels is *compassion*. What he longs to do is *gather us in and soothe our hurting, lost souls*. For we like sheep have gone astray...

I wonder if you could have heard a pin drop. I wonder if in that moment, when he goes up on the mountain and takes a seat, if the masses recognize the significance of the place, of his posture. Was there immediate quiet: their thirsty souls eager to drink up the very first words and every drop thereafter of the living water he is about to share? Or is it chaos? Is there a cacophony of sound because a group of undisciplined sheep is bleating their need for a shepherd? Does the silence come only after he starts talking, and the balm starts to seep into their ears and coat the open wounds of their souls.

Imagine with me, imagine yourself there. Imagine your hunger, your intense curiosity at how he will begin. This man with supernatural powers; this man who has performed miracles; this man who has drawn a crowd; this man they say may be The Messiah...What will he say first?

I imagine Jesus's deep breath before he speaks. What will he say first? How does he introduce this New Kingdom, the good news that He has been born to share? He wants the sheep to hear his voice and come in. He doesn't want to frighten them further; he doesn't want to scare them away. How will he introduce the Kingdom?

He takes a deep breath, he looks out through eyes of love. He projects his voice loudly, but gently, over the sheep...

(Are you thirsty for His opening words? His introduction to The Kingdom?)

*"Blessed are the poor in Spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

What did he just say? Did he just say the kingdom is for the poor in spirit? Wait a minute... Isn't there a long list of rules, of complicated legal forms and perfection that must be attained to even begin the process of changing my citizenship to this new kingdom? Poor in spirit? That's me. I want to hear more...

"You are royalty if you are spiritually poor. If your spirit is low, you HAVE royal blood. The Kingdom belongs to you.

Are you sad today? You are my kind of person if you are deeply mourning something. And not only that, but guess what? In my kingdom you will find the comfort you seek. I promise you that.

You are awesome if you are a little bit shy, if you shy away from confrontation and seek a quiet life. You have a huge inheritance coming. Yes, huge. The whole earth.

Oh come near, come near me my people if you crave righteousness! If you want to please God but find it so hard to follow all the old laws and get so discouraged with yourself that you mess us LEFT and RIGHT. I love you. And even better, I am going to fill your cravings.

You are an important part of this New Kingdom if you just love to forgive people and let them go on their merry way. If you just have a hard time holding grudges and just want to live peaceably instead. You are going to find mercy for yourself in this Kingdom.

You are my kind of people if you have a pure heart, unstained by this world. If you are as good as gold on the inside, I am telling you today that you WILL SEE GOD. You will see Him with your eyes. He wants to be seen by you.

I am telling you that you are awesome and worthy if you make peace. If you just hate to see an argument and you just get in there and try to calm everybody down. You are so worthy that I'm telling you, you are God's sons. That's right. Princes and Princesses of the King. Royalty.

You are Kingdom people, you are blessed, you are specially anointed, if you are mistreated for the sake of doing right. If you get left out, if you get slandered, if people are downright mean to you, you get some very special blessings coming your way from me and from My Father. You

get the Kingdom. You may lose a few friends here, but you get a whole Kingdom. Imagine your crown and your castle and your feasts right now.

Get excited! Be happy! Be joyful! Oh boy, what you've got coming to you!! I wish I could describe it to you, but you're gonna have to trust me. It is SO GOOD what you have coming!

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I love how Jesus introduces the New Kingdom. I love how he draws in the hurting, the simple, the mourners, the hungry, the thirsty. I love his promises to soothe, to fill, to comfort, to give grace, to see God. I thirst to be described as pure in heart, as merciful. I am challenged. But mostly I am warmed and soothed. I have found my shepherd, and my heart sings out!

I pray you find comfort in these words, or maybe a slightly new perspective in my paraphrase. Go back and read the life-giving words yourself (Matthew 5). They are better than my paraphrase any day.

I pray it gives your heart a renewed hunger for worship to Jesus and God our Father tomorrow.

I pray when you look around your congregation at the people who have taken the time and energy to be there for worship, that your eyes will be blind to the external appearance – to the new clothes, to the nice cars, to the fancy bags. I pray those will be completely invisible to you and you will see sheep. Confused, chaotic sheep who find peace and order in the presence of their Shepherd. Sheep who have come to drink up living water and pour out songs of praise to the Shepherd who has led them safely through the week. I pray you will see the components of the Kingdom that Jesus describes: you will see a collection of the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, the hungry and thirsty, the sinners who mess up RIGHT and LEFT, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted.

I pray we may rejoice together and be exceedingly glad, reminding each other of our GREAT REWARD in heaven!

“I just want to be a sheep, baa baa baa baa...”

~~~~~

Heavenly Father ,

We long to be in your presence, and we love to start our week gathered together: your sheep who are ever grateful for the goodness of our Shepherd. Please, Father, may your Spirit give us single-minded focus as we pour out our hearts to you. Let us worship for an audience of ONE. For we know that when we are pouring ourselves out as a drink offering to you, that it can't help but edify those around us. It can't help but move us and inspire us. For those are the natural by-products. Help us to remember the goal in worship is to GIVE, to POUR OUT. And it is only then, ONLY THEN, that we can *receive* from worship. What a great gift that you give to us – to

fill us up even as we empty ourselves unto you! May we please you with our offerings to you tomorrow. Prepare us for it today, Lord God.

In the beautiful, precious, Holy Name Above All Names, Jesus Christ; Amen.

## May 9, 2012

**I** am going to attempt to post the prayer needs updates to my blog posts so that anytime you want to come and check what my prayer needs are, you have two options to find them. The new option will be to look to the categories listed over there on your right hand sidebar, and click "health updates." Here's my update for today:

5-9-12: Things seem to be looking up. My energy and appetite seem to be on the upswing again, though we have a ways to go in both departments. I am very thankful that I am dealing with very little pain if any these days. I am having some neck and lower back pains which are not directly related to the cancer, but that's about all in terms of pain. My current prayer needs remain basically the same:

1. That the current drugs will rid my body of cancer cells!
2. That I will have no significant side effects to the new drugs
3. For my energy and appetite to continue to improve
4. That this body rash will go away. I am going on 6 weeks of dealing with it now. Hopefully, steroid treatment is in my very near future (as in, next week near.)

As always, I can't thank you enough for your prayers for me. I know that my current improvement is directly related to your petitions that my appetite and energy would improve.

## May 27, 2012

Happiness is...

...the high-pitched baby squeals and belly-shaking giggles erupting from the soft pink lips of my sweet niece Anna Darby

... my momma's chicken salad with juicy grapes on a light, flaky croissant

... fresh summer buzz cuts on two boys' heads and running my hand repeatedly along their fuzzy tops

... eating pizza off paper plates in the cool dusk of evening, with chlorine-reddened eyes and unisex beach towel skirts

... "What do you want me to do off the diving board this time, Mommy?"

... the baby lotion/little bit of spit-up sweet smell of baby Darby

... four boy cousins breathing deeply after laughing hard together all day, dozing peacefully all together in the big playroom

... snuggling next to my 6 yr old on the hammock; he engrossed in his book and me lazily rocking it side to side with my foot, just breathing and thanking

... sharing funny kid stories, true mom confessions, and our deepest longings for our children with my best friends: my sister Dinah and sister-in-law Stephanie, all while floating aimlessly in the refreshing cool pool

... my parents' satisfied grins as we, their children, relate all our parenting woes and frustrations

... my husband's childlike excitement as he tells me of the appearance of the first tomatoes in our garden; an excitement undiminished as they appear year after year

... the soft glow of two flashlights in a blackened room as my two rambunctious boys happily explore books "as long as we want to" after night-time prayers, because it's "not a school night"

... caring hugs and expressions of love from church "family" at Sherrod Avenue (my parents' and sister's church) who love me because they love them

... Dad on the grill

... watching in amazement as my tiniest nephew inhales two grilled hot dogs

... the sweet night-time prayers of four tired boy cousins who can barely keep their eyes open a second longer

... cornhole and Vandy baseball

... pink cheeks and pink noses, sun-kissed and sweet

Happiness is SUMMER.

Happiness is FAMILY.

Happiness is the love of Christ that fills us all to overflowing; that moves in us and among us and around us like a refreshing mist; that colors our world, our lives, our time together in beautiful hues of pink, gold, blue, orange, purple. The love that is a living, breathing being that shimmers like deep blue pool water, that billows like delicious smelling smoke from the grill, that glows like a sun-reddened face. Love caressing our souls as we soak up the precious moments together. Living slowly. Drinking in the moments: the smells, the sights, the sounds, the JOY. The knowledge that He is in all and above all and in control of all, taking care of our every need and pouring out his abundant blessings at every turn.

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows. [James 1:17](#)*

Heavenly Father – I thank you over and over and over again for the perfect gifts that fill my life to overflowing. For buzz cuts, for sunscreen, for baby spit-up, for family. Thank you for being a Father of lights: I revel in the fact that there is no darkness, no shadow of turning, no shifting in you. You are LIGHT, always bright, golden, dazzling light. Let me see it with my heart's eyes: these gifts floating down: slowly, perfectly, deliberately, from your bright heavenly storehouse, wrapped in light and color, sent specifically to me, your innocent, waiting, expectant, wide-eyed child with arms outstretched, who knows you not only will provide but you will give in abundance. Help me to see that each and every day, Heavenly Father. Thank you and open my eyes to the gifts I know I am still missing, failing to catch as they float to the ground, but You send them anyway because you are my faithful Father.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

## June 11, 2012

“The scan has shown that you have a new area of metastasis in the brain.”

These are the words I have dreaded from the very beginning. These are the words that were said to me last Wednesday. And I have seen that somehow the world does not stop turning. It continues to move on its axis, the sun still comes up when it is supposed to, little boys still giggle, and there are still moments of laughter and joy in my heart.

I have been doing poorly for the past couple of weeks. My appetite was minimal and my spine pain, both neck and low back, combined with a lack of energy, was keeping me mostly couch or bed bound. I had a scheduled appointment with the nurse practitioner on Tuesday, and we discussed several new strategies and several new drugs to address the problems. I had a renewed hope, though it was tenuous.

We were to leave for the beach the next day, Wednesday morning. However, by Wednesday morning I was having symptoms that I couldn't control. I had begun vomiting repeatedly for no

apparent reason. I was moderately constipated. I had a significant new abdominal pain. I began to worry about a bowel obstruction. The last thing I wanted was to get a few hours down the road to the beach and get in such straights that we were stuck with no good medical options. So I decided to call the doctor early Wednesday morning to see what they recommended.

My description was enough for them to ask me to come in to see them right away. I was keeping nothing down, including water. My last weight had been 104 pounds (I am naturally around 130) and we certainly didn't want it to decrease any further.

After I arrived, they immediately began fluids and pain meds through my port. The doctor came in to check me and quickly determined that a bowel obstruction was not likely. However, she wanted to do some scans to be sure. I was under the impression the scans were to rule out obstruction. I would later understand she'd been hoping to rule out something else.

She told me that in addition to the normal scans of my abdomen, she planned to add in a CT scan of the head. She said it was probably nothing but she was just being her careful self; "being anal" to use her words. I knew enough to know this could be bad. But I didn't figure there was a point in asking what she might be looking for when we would find out for sure what it showed within a few hours.

It was around 4:30 on Wednesday afternoon that the verdict was delivered. The head CT had revealed an area of metastasis in my lower brain: the cerebellum. It was one, rather small, rather discreet spot, measuring 19 mm across (which is less than one inch.)

She explained the new plan, her new recommendation. She recommended [cyberknife](#). Cyberknife is not actually "cutting" at all. It is very local, targeted radiation done robotically with a high degree of accuracy. The Sarah Cannon folks have had their machine three years, so they are experienced, but many places do not offer this technology at all. I have been given a very high-tech, aggressive option for treatment, with significantly lowered risks than surgery because it is not invasive at all. It should, over about 8 weeks time, kill most if not all of the cancerous cells in my brain.

She went on to explain the plan would be to take care of this brain lesion with the cyberknife and then quickly move on to another clinical trial drug. In other words, address the brain issue but then we would be back in the same boat – hoping to find a trial drug that will control the growth of the cancer and hopefully keep it from spreading anywhere at all, including back in the brain.

She said that the CT of the abdomen showed mixed results again. Some spots in my liver were reduced, some had grown, and there were some new tumors. She didn't recall any other new organs or body areas of metastasis.

There was a big "however." CT scans of the head are not as accurate as an MRI. I would have to undergo an MRI of my head the next day to make sure that there were no other areas of metastasis; to make sure that there were no small spots that had gone undetected. This began the most pleading prayer over the next few hours – "Lord, let them not find anything else."

I was admitted to the hospital to get the nausea (which was likely caused by the swelling around the brain lesions) under control and to get my bowels moving again. Thursday was to be full with MRI and cyberknife preliminary testing and appointments.

The MRI did reveal another area of metastasis, but only one more discreet area. I have two small spots, very close together, in my cerebellum. The rest of my brain was clear. I am still a candidate for cyberknife. Thank you, Lord.

For those that don't know, the cerebellum is mostly in charge of posture, balance, and coordination. Thankfully, I have not noticed any deficits in these areas, with one exception. I have noticed some difficulty talking. I have no trouble retrieving words and knowing exactly what I want to say, but the formation of the words doesn't always happen as I expect. This is very mild, however, and most folks don't even notice anything off with my speech. I only notice trouble occasionally.

I have been told it is safest for me not to drive, just because my reaction time may be slightly off. I've been told that a short trip to the grocery store, etc, is probably fine, but of course as a doctor they have to tell me no driving. I get that. I plan to avoid it at all costs when I can.

There are supposed to be no real side-effects nor long-term ill-effects of the cyberknife. Most people resume normal activity within a day or two. The most common complaint is a bit of fatigue and occasional nausea. I've been told I probably won't even lose enough hair to be noticeable. I've been told there should be no long-term brain function limitations or losses.

My oncologist hopes to begin a new trial as early as the first of July. In the interim weeks, she wants to try a non-trial drug currently on the market just so we are fighting with something until the trial can begin (I can't remember the name of it). She said that depends on what my insurance will allow.

So that is where we are today. The goal is to have the cyberknife procedures (probably a 35 minute treatment on two back-to-back days) later this week. I am on a steroid to reduce brain swelling but it is also greatly improving my appetite and energy level, which is nice. Overall, I am feeling much better than I have in recent weeks. I am still battling constipation. We got things moving way too much in the hospital, had to take immodium to shut it down, and now I'm having to get aggressive getting things moving again. I have not yet reached the optimum middle ground. This means I am very bloated, which does not help with appetite. Any prayers on this front are appreciated.

I know this is a long post. I wanted to make you as aware as possible, because I know the only information shared so far with some is that it is spread to my brain. This can conjure up all sorts of fears and imaginings.

God's peace is an amazing thing. I have certainly run the gamut of emotions over the last several days, and still can do so on any given day. I find hope in the fact that the doctors have still not mentioned or speculated on time-frames. They have not mentioned hospice care; they have not spoken of end-of-life issues at all. I am trying not to go there ahead of them. In fact, at one point

in the hospital I became very upset and called Brian over to start telling him many of my wishes for death/burial/etc. We got only a few minutes in and were interrupted by a nurse coming in to work with me. We both felt that maybe that wasn't an accident.

I do continue to pray that if God's will is to take me home early, that I will go quickly without a lot of deterioration – in weight, in brain function. I do not want my children to remember me like that. So if I go, it may be suddenly. My greatest hope is that again, that no one will say "I lost my battle with cancer." I hate HATE that phrase. Cancer will not win. Jesus will win. End of story.

Mostly I still have this hope: this hope that God is only adding this brain piece to make my story more interesting. That when He rids me of cancer it will be just that more miraculous. I can't explain this hope. But it lives and thrives in me.

What to pray? Boy, I can't tell you that anymore. I still believe He, the great God of the universe, the God of all flesh, is powerful to do anything. I hope you will not turn passive in your prayers for me. That you will not relent to what the world says in its wisdom is likely to happen. I will submit to God's will, and I continue to believe that His plan is somehow perfect even if death is His plan, but that may be yet to be determined.

My goal now: just take the next step, Sara. Just the next step. All is out of my control. I live the next minute, the next hour. I take one step at a time. I will not let uncontrolled worrying about what MAY happen ruin this day that I've been given.

*Heavenly Father,*

*You are good. You are love. I beg you for mercy. I beg you to come with your power that knows no bounds, no limits. I ask for my eyes to be fixed on you, and not the storm clouds around me. Be merciful to my children, to my husband, for I have made promises to be a help-meet and a partner. Be merciful to my family, to my friends. I long to see you face to face and be home, but my work here may not be done and I can't stand to think of their pain. You are good, you are love. I will remember this.*

*I ask everything in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.*

## **June 24, 2012**

It is Sunday, June 24th. I believe my last update here was on June 11th.

MUCH has happened during that time frame of which I hardly have the energy to write.

My family was able to head to the beach a day later than planned. The boys were so looking forward to this family trip that I hated to disappoint them. It was out of my hands, for it rained

the whole time. We had a few hours of dry though still overcast time, during which some digging in the sand and playing in the waves still happened.

We got back late Sunday evening. I remained mostly bed or couch-banned for the next few days, which were a confusion of doctor visits. One included a treatment with fluids and pain pills because I just wasn't doing well.

I presented for the cyberknife treatment on Thursday morning. (Thankfully many of my most faithful prayer warriors were able to join me Wednesday night to pray over the event, and God through them washed away most of my fears. Thankfully I felt well for their visit, and I even felt good heading into the cyberknife.)

Dr. Gray estimated the cyberknife would take 40 minutes. It lasted 1 hr and 17 minutes. The last 20 of which were torture. He later insisted he didn't use more radiation, just many movements of the machine took longer than he realized.

But I still felt ok leaving the procedure. It wasn't until several hours later that the pain rebounded and started to get worse.

We called the cyberknife on-call number. They didn't call back the first time. By this time I decided I had to get to a hospital. And I was so light-headed from frequent vomiting that I couldn't get there by myself. We called 911.

I rode by ambulance to the ER. I cannot describe how difficult it was being transferred to the ambulance. We were on a second-story sofa. I think I may have vomited on a medic. I was barely holding onto consciousness.

They finally stabilized me around 1:30 am I would say. This led to a long hospital stay – through Thursday night and into Saturday. Bless his heart, Brian was right there. He didn't want to leave my side.

So now it's Sunday, a week later. I have managed to stay out of the hospital this week, but I am truly living hour to hour. I have small goals each hour.

Writing here has not been one of them. But you deserve to know.

I don't know how much writing will be done, but for the foreseeable future, understand it is not my priority. For one, my brain feels quite foggy and not up to writing here. I truly hope this will change soon. More time out from brain radiation = less fatigue, or so I've been told.

I am hoping to start the next clinical trial with drugs for colon cancer on July 10th. I have preliminary paperwork and testing to be done in the meantime. That and living by the hour.

I truly hope you are still savoring the day. Any day out of bed can be a great day. And I still find moments to savor. They just don't leave any time for savoring writing.

July 10. You need to hang on to that date and I need it to work.

As always I thank you for praying for me.

## July 10, 2012

Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. Psalm 91: 14-16

The Lord, King Jesus, has brought me slowly, often dragging me when I lacked my own strength, to treatment plan #6. We have completed 3 traditional treatment plans before starting on experimental drugs, and now I have completed 2 experimental drug regimens.

When my tumor was originally sequenced, it was found to have 2 mutations that made it a cancerous cell vs. a healthy colon cancer cell. The first mutation was attacked in the first trial, the second mutation was attacked in the second trial. This that I have started today will be the first clinical to try to attack both.

Hope that is as clear as mud.

This all brings me hope. This, I would expect to sound good to those who count their chariots (Psalm 20). But I will take it. God has given me scientific reasons to have lifted hope.

The plan is very similar to trial 2. I will be taking daily oral pills, morning and evening. Side effects are expected to be as before, which are very minimal (so MUCH BETTER than chemo).

Because so very many things have come up in the 9th inning that we didn't anticipate, I truly didn't want write and speculate about today. One day at a time, right? Father, let me live one more day, just this day.

And I am posting this from my treatment room at Sarah Cannon (SC) on trial day 1. So it will not be pretty either to the ears nor the eyes. I am quite groggy. Maybe more on that later.

But I am so thankful to those who've gotten me here: my Great and Loving and Faithful God and my great, loving, and faithful prayer warriors. Ever so THANKFUL.

I hope to write more in the coming days about the "coincidences" that got me to this trial. I hope to write more about the nurse who was assigned to me today, who believes and prays herself, who stated "there's just something about you, I have just had you on my mind ever since I had you that one day earlier." I think God put you with me today for a reason", who prayed a loving and tearful prayer with me just before I took my first pills.

God has been EVERYWHERE today. Like the mountains surround Jerusalem. Love has been powerful. Who can escape the faithful and loving omnipotence of God?

Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name...