

I thank God for the gift of Cancer!

Article written by Bronwyn Chin for the 'Equal but Different' journal: June 2012

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I don't like being in pain and I don't like having terminal pancreatic cancer. I would like to grow old with my husband and see my kids grow up. But God appears to have a better plan. I know that he is faithful. His plans are the best and do not revolve around me. Acts 13:36 says: "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation he fell asleep ...". When God has done what he wants through me, I will die in his perfect timing.

Why has God given me cancer? Maybe it is to make me repent of my wrongs and turn to Jesus - it has certainly done this. Maybe it is to make me talk more to my friends and family about Jesus - it has certainly done this. Maybe it is for reasons way beyond my understanding - it is certainly at least this. All I know is that God has given me this gift of cancer to use for his glory. We pray daily for the cancer to miraculously go away. But if God chooses to say no, we can trust him nonetheless.

It is still hard to really grasp that I am only here for a very little while. But as the bible teaches:

"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." 1 Peter 1:24

When I was suddenly diagnosed in December 2009, it was a total shock. I had no idea that I was sick. My life at that time involved being a busy wife, a mother of four active children (aged 9,12,14,15), and a part time General Practitioner.

Widespread pancreatic cancer has a very bad reputation and my oncologist originally gave me a prognosis of 3 to 6 months to live. However God has had other ideas and my cancer has partially responded to chemotherapy. For the last two and a half years I have received chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and surgery, and lived with ill health, knowing I have a time bomb inside. My family have become experts at coping with me regularly vomiting, and being bed bound at times from the different treatments.

As the cancer keeps spreading throughout my body I am very aware that Jesus is my Lord and Saviour in whom I can depend, and that all other ground is sinking sand.

I am so grateful to God for everything. I am thankful for who God is, his majesty, his splendour, and his promises. I am thankful for my family, friends and life.

I am so thankful to God for the resurrection of Jesus which means I will have victory over death and don't need to fear pain or the dying process. It is such a comfort to read:

"Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

'The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'. 1 Corinthians 15:55-57

As I get sicker and spend a lot of time lying down in pain, I sometimes wonder what use I am to God and what he wants me to do ... now. I miss being able to do things. I actually miss physically being able to tidy up! And I miss the joy of serving my husband and kids more.

What is hard is coping with chronic pain and deteriorating health while still navigating the physical and emotional challenges involved with 4 children and a busy husband.

Another challenge is “not knowing”. It is impossible to plan. Last year I had 5 hospital admissions. I have no idea what condition I will be in 6 weeks, let alone whether I will even be alive.

However, I am just so thankful for God’s guidance in the bible. The bible is so clear about what God wants me to do now, even as I get sicker.

‘Be joyful always; pray continuously; give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus’ 1 Thessalonians 5:16

God is so clear. This is what God wants me to do now. Thank him. As I write, I have just returned from a visit to my oncologist. He is urging us not to receive any more chemotherapy (or other treatment) out of compassion because (in his view) it only has a 10% chance of treating the cancer and will greatly erode the quality of life that I currently enjoy. It is hard to stop and have no treatment. It feels like giving up. But I still know I can thank God.

Leaving my husband and 4 gorgeous children grieves me greatly (and makes me cry every time I think about it, even as I write now). However, I know God will take care of them. Please pray that each of them will continue to trust God into eternity.

So I thank God for this gift of cancer because he is good and he is using it for his purposes. The plans of the Lord are perfect even if I don’t know the reasons for everything. All I know is that soon I will be with the Lord forever because Jesus alone has saved me through his death and resurrection.

I hope to see you all there!