



# KEEPING FAITH

## *Through the Trials of Life*

Article by Dr. Bruce Wood

*Dr. Bruce Wood, Fightin' Texas Aggie class of '73, has served in ministry for over 50 years—almost as long as the 55 years of wedded bliss to his amazing bride, Connie. He is a local business owner, but has also earned the esteemed titles of father and grandfather. Not only is he the author of **Rising up to Meet the Challenges of Life**, he truly embodies his own written word through his triumph over cancer. Bruce's goal through the many hats he wears is to spread the message of Christ through loving people and changing the world in the process.*

Photos Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Wood Illustration by iStock/Anastasiia Hevko

**Certainly, there will be trials and challenges in life;** there are real struggles to face, setbacks to navigate, hardships to live with, and losses to grieve. They come in all shapes and sizes and often quite suddenly and unexpectedly. I certainly was not prepared for a diagnosis of liver cancer.

On February 6, 2023, I was rushed to the emergency room with severe abdominal pain. After many tests, the doctor gave us the news, "You have cancer in your liver and that is what is causing all the pain." I was shocked and in disbelief. How could this be happening to me? Just the day before I was vibrant, healthy, and strong—and now I was sick with cancer. As the reality of cancer began to sink in, I was sad,

confused, afraid, and uncertain how I could endure the days ahead.

A treatment plan was developed which included drip chemotherapy and endless rounds of needles and nurses. In June of that year, I was told by a surgeon at a world renown cancer hospital in Houston that there was nothing he could, or would, do for me. He advised me to go home and see my oncologist for further treatment. He was saying, "There is no cure for you."

When faced with the real prospect of dying, I grieved. I cried. Not for the fear of dying, but for leaving the ones I loved the most—my wife Connie, our four children, six grandchildren, and multitudes of dear friends.

During the summer of 2023, I had a defining moment, and asked myself, "Was I going to let cancer define me?" By the grace of God, I decided not to let cancer take over my life, as though it was the victor. It wins, and I lose.

In her book, *50 Days of Hope*, Lynn Eib reminds us that "We can do little to choose whether we get cancer, but we can do a lot to choose whether we become its victims."

Thankfully, my oncologist never gave up hope. She wanted a second opinion and referred me to another surgeon at the Methodist Hospital in the Medical Center in Houston. The surgeon agreed to do a liver resection and removed two thirds of my liver and the baseball-

sized cancerous tumor. Following surgery, I endured more chemo and radiation treatments.

Through this trial I learned that we never need to go through the difficult seasons of life alone. We are never alone, because God has promised that nothing can separate us from His love and presence. This was the experience of the Apostle Paul. He went through unbelievable trials. He was beaten, shipwrecked, slandered, hungry, tired, alone, and when he pleaded with God to remove the thorn, God reassured him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV).

Here's the deal...when you go through a storm, do not let go of the Savior's hand and He will never let go of yours. Now was not the time to give up or give in—now was the time to cling to Jesus and let Him carry me through each day.

Not only did I experience God's presence, but I was also surrounded by a host of friends. Connie and I were

transparent about the pain and Connie sent weekly updates describing my physical, emotional, and spiritual journey. We let them know us, see us, share with us, and walk with us. We discovered people really do care and are eager to support, listen, and pray. Everyone was amazing! And you know what? We were never alone...we will never be alone if we stay connected.

A lifelong friend checked in regularly. One early morning when I was particularly distraught, he came over in his pajamas to be with me. He let me cry openly and held me with compassionate arms. He regularly reassured me that I was stronger than I thought. He was right!

In addition, a clergy friend sent me a caring card every single week without fail. "What am I saying?" When you walk through the storm, never walk alone. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Allow your friends, family and support group members to know what you are experiencing. Don't let the trial define your worth and purpose. You are stronger than you think, and God is much greater than you think!



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stronger  
together*

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