



Flo Harvey

Usually, my writing develops from something the Lord is trying to teach me. Often those lessons come from my eight children, my church community at Northridge Friends Church, my vocation as a florist, or some other aspect of my life's journey. As I began these writings, one of my close friends, Angie, lost her battle with leukemia. It has been so very hard. But as I've reflected on those events, Angie and our Savior taught me some pretty valuable lessons during that time. Lessons I believe we all could learn something from. So this week, I am sharing a bit of Angie's story. I pray you are blessed and encouraged by her life and how she challenged us to *live* in her dying.

BIBLE READING: Job 13:15a (NASB)

“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.”

Angie left the appointment with the specialist encouraged. The bone marrow biopsy would be back the following week, but the doctor seemed to think there was nothing to worry about. Some treatments to boost her levels and she would be good to go. Angie and her friend went to lunch.

During that lunch, Angie received an urgent call from the nurse asking her to return to the doctor’s office right away. They were ushered into an exam room and the doctor immediately entered. He explained that as he viewed her marrow under the microscope, he had observed leukemia blasts. His recommendation was to begin chemotherapy the next day. Boom! The “lightning bolt” from out of the blue that changes everything.

Angie faced this devastating diagnosis with tremendous peace, the same way she had faced many other difficulties she had encountered. She knew her Savior and was confident in his hands. She began chemo treatments with a calm spirit and with determination to fight for life. Wow!

What lessons she was teaching us all! In observing her calm confidence in the Lord, I was called to task. Many times, when faced with much lesser trials, I had complained, faithless and afraid, certain that God had forsaken me in my time of need. Angie’s walk was challenging me to dig deeper, pray fervently, pray more. To know God as intimately as Angie did. To establish a faith that would give peace when the “lightning bolts” strike.

SONG: How Firm a Foundation

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, hold us close and be near, especially when troubles come and life is hard. Give us your peace. Amen.

—Flo Harvey

BIBLE READING: 1 Timothy 4:10 (NASB)

“For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the Living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially believers.”

Angie began her difficult treatment protocol filled with tremendous hope. She was determined to fight hard and to glorify God as much as she could throughout this battle. She tried her best to schedule treatments around her girls’ activities and family commitments. She continued to attend church functions, Bible study, and social gatherings. Angie never lost hope, even as she began to feel the effects of the chemo. She listened, loved, and laughed through it all.

Hope in the face of overwhelming adversity is breathtakingly beautiful, like a rainbow during a frightening thunderstorm. I believe it is because we don’t see a lot of hope in our culture these days. Especially when people are faced with Job-like difficulties. We might hold tight to hope in the beginning of trouble, but as the walls around us crumble more and more, we throw in the towel. Hope is abandoned for anxiety, worry, and depression. We wonder about the “whys” and “what fors.”

Lesson number two from this: Angie challenged those around her to have “hope in the hard.” To look beyond our circumstances and believe that God was in control, even if it meant we might walk in sickness or even death. To trust fully that God would give us his strength to hope in the hard places of life; to have beauty for ashes.

SONG: Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, it is our deepest desire to know you more fully and to trust you without question. Help us to hope in you no matter our circumstances. Amen.

—Flo Harvey

BIBLE READING: 1 Timothy 6:12 (NASB)

“Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

Angie continued chemotherapy treatments. They took a heavy toll on her physically, but she praised her Savior anyway. She was determined to get through this battle and on with her life.

The chemo almost killed her before it was finished. She fell into a coma, and was moved to ICU. Family and friends signed up to sit with her, or to bring meals to her family. We prayed for a miracle. The doctors didn't think one would come.

Praise the Lord, Angie awoke! But after weeks in a coma, there were more challenges. She was temporarily paralyzed from the neck down. Even with an adjusted chemo regimen, physical therapy, and rehab, Angie remained assured. Just another hurdle to get over. Moving forward always. Her faith and trust held fast. “God's got this,” she would often proclaim.

Most who met Angie were amazed at her trust in God. Despite her challenges, she clung to her Lord and was quick to tell others about him. She prayed with a friend to accept Jesus in her living room, suffering with the illness that had encouraged him to pray. She was adamant that everyone should know her Savior.

Lesson number three: Many didn't understand how or why she could continue to believe and stand strong, but they wanted what she had. Her witness drew them to her and to her Lord. It also reminded us that others were watching us...was Christ permeating our witness, or were we repellent to those around us? Angie created a desire in us all to witness well.

SONG: My Faith Has Found a Resting Place

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, may our love and trust in you be so deep and rich that it pours out on all around us, drawing them to you. Amen.

—Flo Harvey

BIBLE READING: Ephesians 1:18a (NASB)

*“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened,
so that you may know what is the hope of His calling...”*

The doctors lowered the dosage of Angie’s chemo and lengthened the duration. She slowly regained her mobility and strength. She worked hard in her physical therapy and rehabilitation so that she could resume some of her family responsibilities. Through it all she continued to be a blessing to others.

Angie was part of a long-standing ladies’ Bible study, a biannual retreat group, and other ministries. With all she was facing physically, she could have thrown in the towel. Instead, Angie seemed to draw deeper into those areas, participating as she could and keeping up by phone, text, or email when she was unable to attend. She never wavered in her belief that if it was God’s will, he could heal her. She also acknowledged that her healing might take place in heaven. She was okay either way. God did not make mistakes.

That depth and strong conviction blessed us. Non-believers were eager to know more about what gave her such peace. Believers were challenged to reevaluate their own relationship with God, and ask some hard questions. If we were in her place, would we glorify God as well as she?

Lesson number four: Would the Holy Spirit pour forth from us in such a profound and powerful way if we walked a similar path? Would our burdens bless or be our downfall? Do we use our time effectively to prepare for what the Lord calls us to do? Looking inward was a requirement to find an answer, and it wasn’t always as beautiful as Angie.

SONG: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father God, lead us beyond ourselves and our circumstances. Help us to bless others, even in difficult times so you are glorified in everything. Amen.

—Flo Harvey

BIBLE READING: Psalm 4:1 (NASB)

“Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! Thou hast relieved me in my distress; be gracious and hear my prayer.”

The chemo didn't work. What she had been through was all for naught. Angie's leukemia could only be treated now by a bone marrow transplant. Amazingly, an extremely good match was found through a nationwide bone marrow registry. Angie and her mother Val made the trip to Kansas City for the procedure and all that it entails. The transplant was completed, and for many weeks they were there, away from family and friends.

Angie had begun blogging about her journey very soon after her initial diagnosis, and she continued that from Kansas City. She “reported” on her daily schedule of tests, procedures, struggles, and victories. It was a lifeline from her to us and vice versa. All the while, she waited to see if there would be “life in the blood” from this transplant gift from a total stranger.

She befriended other patients, nurses, doctors—always ready to listen, to encourage, to love on those God brought across her path. Illness was never an excuse to do anything less than her best.

Lesson number five: I was soooo convicted. I could give up for far less, excuse myself from obedience for some little problem. I could have a pity party and become self-absorbed so easily. Angie encouraged me to do life better, to be present in my relationships, to love more...especially to love God more deeply, even in times of trouble. Christ's blood had given us a “transplant” of sorts and that was a gift that was much more precious than ever before.

SONG: He Giveth More Grace

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father, guide us and help us to navigate through tough times. May we cling to you as our strength when we are overwhelmed and lost in life's chaos. Amen.

—Flo Harvey

BIBLE READING: Hebrews 4:16 (NASB)

“Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”

The bone marrow transplant and following isolation period was complete. Angie and her mom came home. Periodic tests were done to watch her counts, testing the transplant’s success. Angie felt more and more like herself, and as they neared the critical follow-up dates, we all dared to claim victory. She would be one of the success stories—one of the miracles.

But victory looked different than we had hoped. Tests showed new leukemia blasts in her blood. The transplant had failed. After consulting with doctors, they decided there was nothing more they could do. Healing would likely come in heaven rather than here on Earth.

Angie took this in stride. She didn’t lose hope, even when the doctors gave her only a few weeks to months to live. She was steadfast in her faith, though she didn’t understand why. She trusted, though it could appear that she had been abandoned. Angie chose to believe that God had plans for her “good” despite what the world saw as a tragedy. It was well with her soul.

Lesson number six: I was challenged to have a peaceful spirit in the hard places. I know that doesn’t happen without intentional work on my part. Prayer, study, fellowship, experience, worship, relationships all play a part in our growth and spiritual maturity. The outcome is having a richer, more deeply grounded faith that outshines adversity. I wanted to grow up to be like Angie, shining for my Jesus.

SONG: It Is Well with My Soul

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, we don’t want a flimsy faith that falters when facing the hard places in life. May we hunger for more of you and your power to meet life’s challenges in ways that glorify you. Amen

—Flo Harvey

BIBLE READING: Philippians 1:21

“For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

As soon as Angie received the shocking news of her “final” prognosis, she raced into planning mode. She was determined to live as full a life as she could in the time that God gifted her. She planned a family trip to Florida, a get away with her two school-aged daughters, a retreat with her Bible study ladies, etc. She desired to do as much as possible before she began to feel sick.

She and her family hosted a huge “living party” out at their farm and invited hundreds of people to celebrate Angie and her life. Angie never looked more beautiful, joyful, and *alive!* God’s love and presence in her overflowed for all to see. She was living fully, even in her dying.

Lesson number seven: A wake-up call to each of us. Every day, each one of us is a day closer to heaven. Are we living with that urgency, fervently desiring all that God has for us? And desiring to share that overflow to others? I don’t. Not like I should. But I will. To honor my God and my friend. Angie accomplished most of her goals. She felt well until about the two month mark. She fell sick on Saturday, and was meeting her Lord face to face early the next Tuesday morning. My heart aches for her family and their loss. But I rejoice in having been blessed to be her “student.” I’ve been changed for the better. Well done, “good and faithful servant.”

SONG: Precious Lord, Take My Hand

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, we know our time on Earth is fleeting, but we forget so easily. Keep us mindful of our minutes, that we might use them well. Amen.

—Flo Harvey