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*Chapter three*

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*Cancer again*

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Beginning in May of 2019, I started having pain in my lower back. The symptoms appeared to be a sciatica issue—constant lower back pain, and additional nerve pain in my buttocks, thighs, calves, and ankles. The pain started on my right side, but then moved to both sides. Over time, the pain at night became constant and so severe that the only way I could sleep was on my sides, with a pillow between my knees. Laying on my back, my stomach, or anything in between simply hurt too much to allow me to sleep. I've never been one to take any medicine, but I began needing two extra-strength Tylenol multiple times a day and night. I lived with a heating pad and ice bags.

I started to see a very good chiropractor in March of 2020. I received adjustments every week for five months, but experienced no improvements. Then I went for deep tissue massage therapy for a month, but still had no relief from the chronic pain.

I refused to let pain manipulate me. I turned my eyes and my heart away from the pain and any possible causes, and I looked to Jesus, where my help comes from. The COVID-19 pandemic took hold of the United States in March of 2020, and by April we were in a lockdown that lasted months. Our ministry wasn't able to meet, but

we continued to have livestream healing ministry weekly, sharing the good news of Jesus the healer in the midst of widespread sickness and fear of sickness.

Kent and I spent most of the spring up north in our safe haven—a beautiful lake house in mid-Michigan. We took care not to go into the public, or even to spend time with our family that lives in that area. We spent our days working on the lake house and the property, making improvements that we'd wanted to make for years but had never had the time to work on. We cleared shorelines and hillsides of pervasive and nasty plants. I was healed of poison ivy three times without meds! We pushed ourselves hard. After every work session, I would sit down with a heating pad or an ice pack, take two Tylenol, and rest for a bit—then get up and do it all over again.

That spring we took a huge step of faith and made the decision to downsize—to sell our beautiful 3700 square-foot home of 27 years, buy a piece of property outside of the city and suburbs, and sign a contract to build a new custom 2500 square-foot home. At about the same time that our builder broke ground for our new house, we put our old house on the market. It sold quickly, and we had about six weeks to move. The work of purging, organizing, packing, and cleaning began. Once again, we pushed ourselves physically with the work of packing and moving.

Finally, after months of waiting for a doctor's appointment due to COVID, I was able to see my PCP the Thursday before Labor Day weekend. I shared with her the details of the chronic back pain I had been fighting, and the chiropractic care and deep tissue massage that I'd already had, to no avail. She sent me that very day for an x-ray of my back. I got a phone call that afternoon, asking me to go in that same day for a CT scan. I said no, since we were on our way up north for our final summer weekend at the lake house. But on the Tuesday after Labor Day, I went in for the CT scan.

The next call from my doctor was an order for a series of MRIs—for my brain, and for my cervical, thoracic, and lumbar vertebrae. After

the MRIs, my doctor's office called again, this time requesting I come in to go over the results of the tests. I scheduled that appointment for the next day, September the 10th—moving day.

What was going on in my mind and my heart during this time? Kent and I were standing in faith, knowing Jesus very personally as our healer. Yes, we were shaken, but no, we were not panic stricken. On September the 10th, our house of 27 years was filled with movers, packing up our life on a truck and taking it away to storage. In the midst of that day I asked Kent to pray with me. We had a house full of men, and no furniture, so we went outside on the deck. There was no furniture there either, so we sat on the steps, and we prayed. We acknowledged the bigness of our God and His perfect will to heal. We turned our focus to biblical promises of healing, and the finished work of Jesus. We made the decision that no matter what we heard from the doctor, we would keep our eyes on the report of the Lord. We asked God to help us place His word as a shield between us and the doctor's report, and to keep us in peace.

We weren't surprised at the doctor's report of a tentative diagnosis of cancer. The test results pointed to CNS (central nervous system) lymphoma, with tumors in and around my thoracic and lumbar spine. But those words didn't cause our faith to be shipwrecked. Not. At. All. We finally had an answer to the chronic back pain and new direction as to how to pray and believe God for His healing! We had gone into the appointment with our hearts and minds guarded with the word of God, the final word. And God's peace simply took over and carried us through the rest of that day and into our new season of healing!

It was moving day. We emptied our home of all of its contents, had them put into storage, walked away, and into a new season of life. Trusting God. Dependent upon Him. Completely.