

To Learn To Rest In The Lord

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It was in October 1993, I first learned that my sudden illness was inoperable advanced lung cancer (stage 4 adenocarcinoma), the emotional tearing was devastating. The median survival of this cancer, despite treatment, is approximately 10 months. I was then a 54-year-old anesthesiologist. I was a partner of a private medical practice group and an attending physician in a prestigious teaching hospital on Long Island. I was at the peak of my career. I had an excellent medical history, no major illnesses or surgery. I ate sensibly, never smoked nor drank, exercised regularly and stayed slim. I somehow thought I would be healthy until the dreaded cancer came to me. I simply did not understand why. God had other plans for me.

I grew up in a Christian family. But I drifted away from the Church and had spent 40 years not paying much attention to matters spiritual. Cancer makes me feel vulnerable. I am very, very aware that I only have a limited survival time on this earth. I need God that I am so sick and can no longer make it alone. I need to ask Jesus to fill the void in my heart. It is time to come into the Church I have stayed outside most of my life. I inquired neighborhood Church asking for spiritual help. I rededicated my life to Jesus Christ. I start attending Chinese Fellowship in Community Church. I was baptized later on. God gives me rest for my soul, and the love and peace of God fill my heart and mind. Death holds no fear for me anymore.

I started the arduous trek through modern medicine with chemotherapy. Every morning I kneel in prayer, thanking God for everything He has done for me. In November 1993, I was enrolled in a new clinical investigational project at

Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. The treatment was given for 2 days and repeated every 2 weeks. The side effects were horrible. I also suffer from the helplessness and the enfeeblement after the therapy. Those 2 days are soon to become a no man's land of anxious anticipation, in which I wait, mostly in prayer and silence. God did answer my prayers. In 1993-94, there were 17 snow storms in New York, not one of them fell on my treatment day and hindered me from going to the city for therapy. There was a greater than 50% shrinkage of my tumor. Even though I cannot go back to my old normal life, I do achieve a new "normal" by incorporating the spiritual, emotional and physical changes resulting from my cancer experience. In January 1995, I had a progression. The tumor increased in size and my symptoms got worse. But another new clinical research study was available for me just in time. I participated right away. Each treatment cycle includes chemotherapy for one day for 4 weeks in a row, followed by a 2 weeks rest period. The side effects are worse than the first treatment scheme. Again there was a significant shrinkage of the tumor. The metastatic lymph nodes on my neck became impalpable. My symptoms have taken a turn for the better. Jesus said, "Come to me, ... and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11 : 28) I am learning to rest in the Lord, and living one day at a time. I do experience the "quietness and trust" (Isaiah 30 : 15) by daily fellowship with God through Bible study and prayer. I do not ask, "Why me, God?" To me, cancer becomes a blessing. I have learned indeed, "God is our refuge and strength, and ever present help in trouble." (Psalm 46 : 1)

