

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT LISA STRINGER AND *GOD DID NOT DO THIS TO ME...*

Perspective changes not with words, but with life's challenges encountered. What we take for granted can be stripped away with one doctor's diagnosis. In her book, Lisa Stringer shares her own journey of realization, not as the patient, but as the wife of the one who experienced the diagnosis of Stage 4 cancer. I believe this will not only encourage family members but be a great tool for all who are navigating the roadblocks of life.

—*Joni Lamb*

Co-founder, Daystar Television Network

I just finished reading *God Did Not Do This to Me* and felt it was well written. I enjoyed reading it and could see (and feel) the hand of God through your family battle and journey with cancer then remission. A good writer makes you feel as if you were there during the story line, and Lisa Stringer came through in that area. Your testimony will continue to be a great source of encouragement to many as you share your story of faith, commitment, and God's grace with those in need.

—*Alan Bullock*

Vice president, Daystar Television Network

The chronicle of this journey moved me deeply because I have witnessed this priceless family minister through this personal trial with a tangible, authentic consistent witness in every place to every face, every time. The love and reality of God was shared with everyone in their path: medical personnel, patients, family, friends, associates, and strangers. Doug and Lisa's deep desire for all to know the Lord personally and be saved shines through this testimony. Furthermore, they continued to contend for

their nation and world even though in this health battle. Their eyes were stayed on the Lord to overcome. “So help me God” is a theme throughout this story as this family leaned upon the truth of Scripture—the living Word of God Himself—and kept their radar focused on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a call to believers everywhere to fast and intercede for our fellow brothers and sisters in need. Whether a health crisis or another battle, this journey will lead you to seek the Lord for your own victory! I thank God for His kingdom increase through the healing of Doug and grace to his family—so that privilege of the irrevocable call of God flies on like the eagle.

—*Lisa Crump*

Vice president, Volunteer Mobilization  
and Liaison to Prayer Ministries  
National Day of Prayer Task Force

The unexpected crisis in life comes to all of us without warning or time to prepare. That is why this book is a must read! It will encourage, give hope, and help to those who are currently trying to maneuver the hairpin curve of crisis and it will help those whose road is currently smooth and straight to now make large deposits of faith and trust in our God who will see all of us through the good, bad, and impossible moments of this life. Thank you for sharing what it means to walk by faith and not by sight!

—*Becky Riggle*

Grace Community Church, Houston, Texas

Little did I know that day in July 2002 that God gifted me with an apostolic father of the faith, Pastor Doug Stringer. My personal life and ministry has been impacted on so many levels. Lisa Stringer is a woman of strength, humility, and courage,

a woman whose life reflects her abandoned love and servant's heart for her heavenly Father and her family. I am honored to call her friend! Thank you, Lisa, for writing this book, as the daughter of a father you lost to cancer, the daughter of a mother who lives life with you as a widow, and as a wife who walked the journey of battling cancer with her husband. Many daughters have done well, but you excel as a beautiful example, of a hero of the faith, for all women to learn from your life! This book exemplifies biblical proportion faith. You faced the Red Sea and crossed over on dry ground. You put Christ and others first as you and your family fought the good fight together on every level of life:

- ✦ In the spirit, with weapons of faith, prayer, communion, and obedience to your call to serve.
- ✦ In the medical realm, with chemo and medicine.
- ✦ In the soul, staying on top of and sorting through intense painful emotions.
- ✦ In the natural, with exercise and dietary changes.
- ✦ In the relational realm, by caring for one another through it all.

You gathered five smooth stones and, in the name of the Lord, the giant was slain! What a living testimony your family is of the love and power of God revealed through a life of obedience.

This book will touch the lives of multitudes who have had to confront the pain of loss on any level of life and especially those who are on the journey of battling a diagnosis of infirmity. I remember those days when the whole world was praying and believing for a miracle. As I would look at the magnet picture of Doug with his bald head on my refrigerator, one of my many prayers was, "Lord, Ashley prayed for a daddy. You didn't bless this child with Doug as her dada to now take him home to be

with You. The prayers of this child have Your heart. I add my faith to hers and agree with Ashley! Daddy will live and testify of the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! Whose report will you believe? I believe the report of the Lord!”

—Marlene J. Yeo  
Director, Somebody Cares New England  
Director, He Cares for Me  
Pastor, CCF Ministries, Lowell, MA

How could a book about cancer be inspirational and faith-building? It’s because Lisa Stringer’s book focuses not on the power of cancer, but on the goodness of God and His faithful presence while we seem to be walking through “*the valley of the shadow of death*” (Psalm 23:4). Many people who receive a cancer diagnosis are overwhelmed by fear. Some immediately put their trust in medical science, as if God was no longer the Great Physician. Others reject medical options altogether, hoping for a divine miracle, but refusing to avail themselves of the help of doctors. Lisa Stringer’s book is an honest account of the how the Stringer family sought the Lord’s guidance each step of the way, ultimately experiencing profound victory amid gut-wrenching challenges. Whether you or a loved one is facing cancer or some other life-altering trial, you will be transformed by the hope and courage you find in these pages.

—Jim Buchan  
Author, writer and speaker, Crosslink Ministries

The world so much starves for the lack of the real, day-to-day stories of those who have encountered troubles, even life-threatening assaults, and have experienced the transformative power and relief of the gospel. Lisa Stringer shares just such a personal and family story in her new book, *God Did Not Do This to Me*.

Her words of her personal and her family's struggles as her husband was diagnosed with stage-four cancer are reminiscent of the apostle Paul's incredible and palpable words in his letter to the Philippians. Therein, he describes his many struggles and agonies as a "*fellowship of [Christ's] sufferings,*" which led to such a valuable result in his life that far surpassed any and everything else that he as a human being could ever experience—that being "*knowing Christ Jesus [his] Lord!*" Lisa Stringer's story is just such a similar, transparent testimony. I heartily recommend everyone read and listen to her victorious battle!

—*Randall J. Pannell, PhD, MDiv*

Professor of Christian Ministry, North Greenville University



**GOD  
DIDNOT  
DO THIS  
TO ME**



**GOD  
DID NOT  
DO THIS  
TO ME**

*Finding Hope, Courage, and Faith  
to Face Our Toughest Challenge*

**LISA STRINGER**



WHITAKER  
HOUSE

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## **GOD DID NOT DO THIS TO ME**

### **Finding Hope, Courage, and Faith to Face Our Toughest Challenge**

Somebody Cares International  
P.O. Box 925489  
Houston, TX 77292  
[www.tpmi.org](http://www.tpmi.org)  
[www.dougstringer.com](http://www.dougstringer.com)  
[www.somebodycares.org](http://www.somebodycares.org)

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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the many who have gone before us, who chose to give it their all when met by unexpected detours... some of whom are now rejoicing in the presence of the Lord. To everyone who joined our journey and contended for us in prayer, you were a vital part of our story and I thank God for you daily.

To my family, both spiritual and natural, and dearest friends, you know who you are and how much you mean to me. Thank you for never giving up and always speaking life over us.

Doug, thank you for fighting for us, for your destiny, and for reminding us that God did not do this to you; therefore, it didn't belong to you. You are the best thing that could have ever happened to me outside of my salvation. I love you more than words can express.

Ashley, you are joy, love, and faith to the max. Never lose that gift and keep changing the world one smile at a time.

When words fail me, my eyes fill with tears of gratitude to God for His provision, abounding love, mercy, and grace. I don't know how people live without Him. He makes all things work together for good.



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## FOREWORD

**D**uring my sixteen years of treating patients with ear, nose, and throat disorders, I have diagnosed and treated many patients with head and neck cancers. The patients look to us for answers about their cancer. They ask, “Why me? How long has it been there? What are my survival odds? Why does God allow this?”

As a Christian, I have a foundational string of verses that I keep in the back of my mind when I have a conversation with someone who is asking, “Who is Jesus?” or “What is grace?” These Scriptures move through Romans—5:12 to 3:23 to 6:23 to 5:8—to Ephesians 2:8–10.

I keep these verses at the core of our conversation and cater the flavor of my words to the appropriate personality and place. As I have matured in my Christianity, this flow of verses keeps me from “shooting from the hip” when I have the opportunity to evangelize.

After reading Lisa's book, I was humbled by a profound realization. I "shoot from the hip" when providing spiritual insight to a cancer patient's questions. Even though I run a men's ministry and rely on Scripture to help disciple those needing spiritual growth, I did not have an intentional scriptural basis to provide responses to my patients' questions when they have head or neck cancers. Of course, the Holy Spirit was spilling over into my discussions with my cancer patients, but would you consider that maybe at a subconscious level I resisted it? Hear this: I received my surgical training before accepting Christ as my Savior at the age of thirty-six. I was trained to give objective diagnostic and therapeutic information to patients prior to realizing the depth and power of God's grace and omnipotence. I had not received *any* training on the application of Scripture to this process. I had not read a book that correlated grace into the unique issues of patients battling death. But God has provided that book now.

After reading *God Did Not Do This to Me*, I have purposeful Scripture to rely on and use as the core of my conversation when addressing these precious patients' fears and despair during the seemingly endless sequence of events that accompany cancer diagnosis and treatments. Lisa Stringer's book has been my sanctifying grace continuing medical education.

This book is packed with relevant Scripture that perfectly applies to every step of the roller coaster ride of emotions and spiritual attacks that a cancer patient has to endure. It is a *must read* for every physician and health care provider who interacts with cancer patients. Christ was very intentional about His pursuit of our salvation. As health care providers acting as the hands and feet of Christ through Christian action, we are called to be intentional in our responses to these patients. We do not receive this type of training during residency and I don't recall

any courses at our annual medical education meetings that provide the information that I obtained from this book.

Thank you, God, for using Lisa to deliver your sanctifying grace to me!

—*Steven T. Wright, MD*  
Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery  
Founder and President, Born to Live Men's Ministry  
College Station, TX



## INTRODUCTION

**M**ost, if not all of us, are confronted with obstacles, roadblocks, or detours we did not expect at some point in our lives. Some of these can knock the wind out of us and seem overwhelming and insurmountable to overcome when we are face to face with them. These unexpected challenges can be heartrending, thus depleting us physically, emotionally, mentally, financially, relationally, and, yes, even spiritually.

In my personal case, I needed to know the Lord as my Comforter, the Great Physician, and Healer, Provider, Strength, Peace, and Hope in a very trying storm for me and my family when confronted with a diagnosis of 80 percent aggressive B-cell lymphoma cancer. Everyone's story may be different, yet regardless of our personal circumstances, we can fix our eyes on the Author and Finisher of our faith, to know from whence our hope comes.

Little did I realize at the time just how the diagnosis would also affect my family, friends, and many who were following our

battle, in different ways. As you read this book, *God Did Not Do This to Me*, by Lisa Stringer, my wife, you will see how after receiving the gut-wrenching news, I drove to the parking lot of a local grocery chain to be alone and process. I can only imagine how difficult this was for my wife and family, who were having to process without me while waiting for me to come home.

This book is written from my wife's perspective, from having to live through this emotional roller coaster not only as my wife, who was battling for her husband in intercession, but also as the primary caregiver through our family's unexpected battle and journey.

Initially, each time Lisa would read a portion of what she was writing to me, it was difficult for me to hear it. When she finally gave me the full rough manuscript to read, it brought back so many memories and emotions that I just couldn't continue. Lisa has captured so many details, timelines, moments, and honest candor that I know the reader will find them personally relatable.

Those who have read the book have said it brought them to tears, chuckles, laughter, and hope in the midst of their own storms. Regardless of what storm or overwhelming challenges you may face, may you find encouragement, peace, and perspective to carry you through it.

As I mentioned earlier, everybody's story may be different. Your storm may not be our storm. But may you, too, be confident of the amazing, great, and abounding grace of God, our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble.

—*Doug Stringer*  
Founder/President  
Somebody Cares America  
Somebody Cares International

# 1

## IN THE BEGINNING

**I**t was a brisk winter day in March 2015 in Haverhill, Massachusetts. We were ministering there at the invitation of Pastor Marlene Yeo, the director of Somebody Cares New England, a chapter of Somebody Cares America, a ministry my husband founded in 1981. Somebody Cares is a network of organizations and churches impacting communities through prayer initiatives, compassion outreaches, and disaster relief. We also encourage and equip leaders globally and we were in New England to do just that—encourage and equip leaders in the region.

We were excited about the potential snow and enjoying the change in scenery. We live in Houston and anyone who is familiar with the weather there during the winter months knows it can be 75 degrees one day and 50 degrees the next.

Doug and I had returned from a full day of ministry assignments to “the Yeo Hotel.” Marlene and her husband, Harry, transformed their basement into beautiful guest quarters, with a living room and full kitchen. It is our preferred place to be when ministering in the region.

Doug had settled in a chair at the desk in our cozy room to answer emails on his laptop. Moments later, he turned to me and with a very dismal look and a soft-spoken voice, he said, “I don’t feel well; the lump I felt in my throat a few days ago feels larger.” I looked at him and stayed quiet for a moment, focusing my eyes on his and then focusing in on his throat, which he kept touching. Sure enough, the lump he had felt on the right side of his throat was now evident.

Perhaps someone who met Doug for the first time would not have noticed the lump, but if you brought attention to it and focused in on his neck, you would see the swelling about the size of a peach pit. We talked about him going to see a doctor upon our return to Houston, and then prayed together, asking God for His healing, grace to continue to serve and not let this be a distraction, and for peace to dwell in both our hearts.

Doug took the initiative to email his cousin, who is a professor and chairman of the Department of Otolaryngology and Communicative Sciences at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Otolaryngologists are physicians trained in the medical and surgical management and treatment of patients with diseases and disorders of the ear, nose, and throat (ENT). He also emailed a dear friend and partner in ministry, Dr. Steven T. Wright, who after some correspondence, suggested we see an ENT he knows in Houston. He forwarded her information and we were able to get an appointment shortly thereafter.

That day, Doug continued with his responsibilities and spent hours returning emails and studying. Like so many other strong-willed leaders, he didn't allow his mind to be consumed with what wasn't feeling physically right, but focused on his mission and heartfelt assignment.

The next day, after a powerful time of ministry, we returned to the room. It was evident to me that his concern was growing. Often, we put on a strong, public face of great strength, stoically not allowing people to see our emotions.

## BOTH THE LUMP AND IMAGINATION GROW

In the privacy of our room, Doug began to let his guard down. He sat back in the chair with an unsettled look on his face. "I think it's getting bigger," he said. Doug grabbed my hand and ran it over the area. It was incredible and disturbing how quickly the lump was visibly growing in size. Moreover, I could see the consternation in Doug's eyes.

THE MIND, WHEN NOT BROUGHT UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF GOD,  
CAN NEGATIVELY AFFECT YOUR HEART AND BODY. YOUR WILD  
IMAGINATION CAN CAUSE UNDUE STRESS.

His concern was my concern multiplied by my mind going into overdrive. The mind, when not brought under the authority of God, can negatively affect your heart and body. Your wild imagination can cause undue stress, which also affects the way the body operates. Second Corinthians 10:5 urges us to "[cast] down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Never did the thought of cancer come to mind in my moments of processing, *What could this be?* I had been intentional about

praying that cancer would never come to any member of my family...because it had taken my father's life. Can you relate to that? There is power in our words and because I was faithful to pray that specifically, then in my mind, it wasn't even a possibility. I didn't know what this abnormal lump was, but I knew a doctor could fix it and, moreover, the doctor of all doctors, Jehovah Rapha, would take care of Douglas, heal him, and make all things work out.

Days earlier, Doug had mentioned to me that something wasn't right. He felt fatigued and sluggish. In fact, he mentioned an awkward feeling in his throat. In retrospect, I realize Doug looked more tired at the end of his long days, but I chalked it up to the stress of the burdens he was carrying. I also recall him touching his throat, stroking it from his neck upwards, much like when he shaves. As I have pondered and processed many memories, I remember Doug stroking his throat at the dinner table, in the car while at a red light, and even lying in bed. Doug is not one to complain. In fact, when he doesn't feel at his best, he is the first to adjust his daily diet by adding natural or organic remedies.

While in New England, we participated in the food pantry distribution to those in need in Haverhill, taped a local television program with Pastor Marlene, and then ministered at the School of Transformation at Citywide Church of greater Lowell. It was there that Doug shared at a bilingual service, which I interpreted in Spanish for those in attendance, who appreciated and needed the translation. Many pastors and leaders from across the region were present. Doug reminded us that we need courageous and persevering leaders for the days in which we lived.

## PRAYER BRINGS BREAKTHROUGH

I recall that as the service was coming to a close, Doug had a few words of knowledge for some in attendance. He spoke life

over a young man sitting in the congregation, saying he would have a much-needed breakthrough in the next few weeks. After the service, we found out that the young man was a worship leader, husband, and father. His parents are pastors and people of great faith. He had been on a waiting list for years for a kidney transplant and was getting to a very desperate place.

We had no knowledge of that at the time. We left church that day with expectation and continued to pray for this young man daily throughout the following days. Weeks later, we received word that a miracle had taken place: a match was found and he would receive his transplant. Our prayers were now focused on all going well and for his body to welcome the kidney and that it would function as it should. Wesley Hernandez had the surgery and as of the publishing of this book, he continues to flourish and is raising his beautiful family and ministering through song.

Here we were, believing God for a miracle for our new friend and co-laborer, not knowing Doug had cancer growing rapidly in his body. He did not let the discomfort become a distraction that would limit him from doing his kingdom assignment. Doug continued about the Father's business and kept his eyes on the Author and Finisher of our faith.

It was now April 6, the day we were scheduled to see the ear, nose, and throat specialist that Dr. Wright had recommended. With each day that passed, the lump in Doug's throat was getting slightly bigger; every day, I saw him stroking his throat more and more. I don't know that he was aware of how often he was touching his throat. I think it was reactionary to whatever he was feeling in the natural.

April 6 was a much anticipated and very important day for us. We would finally begin the process of getting answers and

hopefully a quick fix to whatever was causing the fatigue, discomfort, and now more noticeable lump in his throat. It was also our daughter's thirteenth birthday. Because of our travel schedule and prior commitments, as well as the limited days the doctor had available for new patients, this was the soonest and only day we could see Dr. Deborah Miller.

It was a beautiful morning in early spring. I awoke with joy; after all, this was the day the Lord had made, we were going to get Doug well, and we had a birthday to celebrate. I prepared my husband's coffee to go, gathered my things, loaded the car with what was needed for the day, and awaited for the family to come exiting through the door. We had a joyful thirty-minute ride to the doctor's office. Ashley sang songs like she always does and talked about all the things she wanted to buy during her shopping spree date with her dad.

GPS told us we had arrived. As we unloaded from the car, I could sense that Doug was uneasy. I can only imagine what he was thinking. It was his daughter's birthday and this is not where he wanted to be. He was quiet as we walked toward the elevator and found our way to the office.

The three of us settled in the waiting area and Ashley began to distract us from focusing on the many patients who were waiting to be called back. Her voice was full of excitement as she reminded us of all she wanted to do that day and where we would have her birthday lunch. In the midst of some smiles and laughter, a door opened and a nurse said, "John Stringer, you can come back now." Doug's full name is John Douglas Stringer Jr. He was named after his father and to differentiate between the two, he is known to almost everyone around the globe as Doug Stringer. Ashley and I patiently sat in the waiting room while Doug went back to see the doctor.

## WAITING PATIENTLY

Waiting rooms can be a place of reflection, silent prayers, and gratitude for our health, family, and so much more. In the waiting room, you can see many people who, in the natural, look really sick. Some are alone, some are angry, and some fight or argue with each other without any regard for those around them. It amazes me how many use foul language with each other—and how many do it in front of children.

**IF YOU EVER NEED PERSPECTIVE AND APPRECIATION FOR YOUR OWN HEALTH, GO TO THE WAITING ROOM OF A HOSPITAL OR MEDICAL BUILDING AND YOU WILL SURELY FIND IT THERE.**

If you ever need perspective and appreciation for your own health, go to the waiting room of a hospital or medical building and you will surely find it there within a short window of observation. I tried to entertain Ashley, as I saw her get a bit impatient after a while. In her mind, the doctor would get Daddy healed quickly and we would go on to celebrate her birthday in grand style.

When Doug finally came out into the waiting room, he was quiet, and shared what felt like a simple and courtesy smile. We made our exit to the elevator, where he put Ashley first and began to ask her where she wanted to start her fun day. I, on the other hand, wanted the four-one-one.

After giving Ashley some attention, he shared that the doctor would put him on a ten-day antibiotic, hoping that would work. If it didn't take care of the issue, then they would biopsy one of the lymph nodes. In my mind, the biopsy would not be needed because the antibiotic would take care of whatever infection had made itself present in Doug's body. And besides that,

we would pray for his healing and God would answer, just as we had asked of Him.

## A DADDY/DAUGHTER TRADITION

Doug focused his attention back on Ashley and off to the mall we went. He has always made it a point to do something extra special for Ashley on her birthday. It was a daddy/daughter tradition. That year, we chose to host a coming-of-age tea with the intercessors who come and pray faithfully for our nation, as well as all the prayer requests we receive from all over the world. To have these seasoned prayer warriors, whom we love dearly and highly esteem, pray over Ashley and speak into her life would be a priceless treasure. The tea would take place many weeks later because of our hectic travel schedule.

First stop was brunch at one of her favorite spots and then we would continue on to the mall for her mini-shopping spree. Doug had taken his laptop with him, so he could sit in a centralized coffee shop in the mall and work while Ashley enjoyed spending her birthday money.

Ashley is the kind of shopper who can spend an hour in each store, carefully studying each piece she may potentially purchase. A deep thinker and visionary, she is very methodical. She enjoys studying the potential of any item she may choose to purchase and often forgets that there is a budget and a time constraint when she walks in. She is all about style and colors—and she loves jewelry. She could shop every other day.

I'm the exact opposite, and so is Doug. I go into a store with a particular purchase in mind. I rarely let other items distract me. I am laughing as I write this because this is a gift. I have told my husband many times how fortunate he is to have me. :) He doesn't have to worry about my overspending on myself. I hope

some of you ladies are laughing right about now. I imagine there are some who feel sorry for me, too.

We told Daddy that we would come and check in after each purchase as Ashley had asked for permission to visit at least three stores. Doug was more than willing to release his girls and wait patiently. I imagine that many men can relate as they accompany their wives or children on a shopping mission.

Family time is important to Doug and he's very intentional about making sure Ashley has times of his undivided attention. He also includes her as much as he can in ministry opportunities. Many times, he has said that it makes no sense to help to save others if he is going to lose his own family. Thus, Doug and Ashley have a very special bond. In some ways, they are two peas in a pod because they are both very witty, often playing jokes on me—and sometimes on each other or other people—and both living life with pure joy, looking to seek the good and not the bad in others.

## PRAYING FOR GOD'S HEALING FIRST

Our final stop on Ashley's birthday was the pharmacy to pick up the prescription Doug had received that morning. Doug and I prayed over the medicine and asked the Lord to allow it to do only what it was intended to do, with no adverse reaction or side effects. Think of all the commercials for medications on TV that give you hope for a medical issue you might have, but then the voiceover rapidly tells you, "May cause heart attacks or sudden death," and any number of unwanted problems.

Doug has always asked us to pray and ask the Lord for healing before we take anything, giving Him all authority over our lives. I recall the first time he saw me take two Advil out of the bottle and asked what I was doing. I told him I had really bad

stomach cramps and needed pain relief so I could continue on our assignments with ease instead of discomfort. He asked me, “Did you pray and ask God to heal you first?” I remember looking at him with disbelief. Of course, I had asked God to take away the pain—I had asked Him as soon as it started.

Sometimes, I share this story with ladies with a big smile on my face, as I know they fully understand my wanting quick relief from pain. In all seriousness, though, I absolutely understand what my husband was trying to teach me. With the advancement of medicine and all that is readily available to many people, we are used to taking pills or medications that will cure or help just about any issue that’s not life-threatening. Many don’t give it a second thought.

The reality is that as a believer in Christ, we are taught to pray and invite Him to be our Healer, Liberator, and Deliverer:

*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

(James 5:13–16)

I have honored my husband’s request to pray before I take anything and feel great peace about including Him even in the littlest of things. I also believe there is honor in honoring my husband’s simple yet faith-driven request.

## CALLS TO PRAYER

April 8 is our wedding anniversary. Since our return from New England, Doug had traveled to Waco, Texas, to be a part of The Gathering Waco at Baylor University and was fully engaged in working on The Response South Carolina, a call to prayer for a nation in crisis. The latter would take place June 13 and would be a true Joel 2 and 2 Chronicles 7:14 prayer gathering called by then-Governor Nikki Haley. In Joel 2, the prophet declares the day of the Lord, there is a call to repentance, the land is refreshed, and the Holy Spirit is poured out. In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God tells King Solomon, *“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”*



*Doug, at left, prays over then-Gov. Nikki Haley of South Carolina with her pastor, Rev. Jeff Kersey of Mt. Horeb United Methodist Church in Lexington.*

Facilitating this gathering required many trips to meet with pastors and leaders in the community and share the heart and vision that the Lord had given David and Cindy Lane from the American Renewal Project. It was about churches uniting

and awakening so that we could impact the soul of our nation. This was a chance for us to respond corporately and respond in humility, repentance, and renewed consecration, seeking heaven for God's intervention. Doug and the team believed that God could awaken His church and do a work in us and through us so we could impact the soul of our nation in a good way and we could be a blessing to the nations of the world. There was excitement in the air and hope amidst all the negative rhetoric we would receive from the news throughout our nation and around the globe.

## A BEAUTIFUL MESSAGE FROM MY HUSBAND

I awoke on the morning of our anniversary with joy and gratitude for the new day, and the fact that my husband left cards on my night stand, knowing they would be the first thing I would see upon getting out of bed. When I signed on to social media I found this beautiful message on my Facebook page:

Lisa, it's now after midnight and you are asleep. But, as we enter into Wednesday, April 8th, I wanted to say Happy Anniversary! I'm a blessed man to have such a loving family. I always love to come home. As Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz used to say, "There's no place like home!" I love the way you and Ashley, and of course our puppy Asia, always get excited when I arrive home from the office or from a ministry trip. I love our daughter always filling the house with singing and dancing in the Lord. I love our family times together...and so much more. You really are a great wife, mother to our daughter, a daughter to your mother, and a friend to others. We have laughed much, wept over our city, nation and nations...dreamed and believed for the emerging generation, as well as our ministry stewardship. I love the

way you believe in Christ in me, and understanding the burdens I carry in the depths of my heart and soul. I pray I will always bring you the joy, peace and hope that you deserve. I also love the fact that we get to celebrate our anniversary twice a year. Our official intimate wedding on April 8th, as well as our public celebration with many friends and family at the end of May. Anyway, when you wake up and when you read your FB Page, I will have already told you Happy Anniversary, and you will have read the cards I left around, but wanted to keep on letting you know that I love you and it really is a Happy Anniversary! OK, can I have a cappuccino now?

Doug is a big romantic at heart. He loves quality time and has the gift of giving. He is the type of man who will go to a Hallmark store and read through many cards before deciding which is the right one. More often than not, he likes the messages of many of them and will proceed to purchase them all. I have found that outside of him purchasing a gift for me, it is best that I go with him as he will buy the store. As I reflect now on what we did not know prior to receiving the diagnosis, I thank God that my husband was and is intentional about making memories with not just his family but his friends, too. Doug lives in the now and feels strongly about not putting off for tomorrow what you can do today.

As the ten days of taking the antibiotics continued, so did our full schedule. Doug and I noticed that the nodule on his neck was now larger in size and there was no obvious healing taking place. He could feel the disturbance of the increase in size of his node. He felt more fatigued and was just not the full of energy husband and father I was used to seeing. Something was just off.

He reported back to the doctor and she suggested he take the next step of having the nodule biopsied. We would have to find a window to get this outpatient surgery done. Because his assignments are not confined to one city, this would be no easy task. Finding a day that was open for him as well as the hospital would be a challenge. The medical team shared how he would be awake when they inserted a very long needle in his neck to get what was needed for the testing.

It is at times like this that we often realize how much we hurt when our loved ones hurt. As a parent, a spouse, or a best friend, one often wishes we could take the pain for them. I didn't like the fact that my husband would have to endure this procedure; it was not something one naturally wants to do. I saw concern in his face and a desire with all his heart to be an example of strength for Ashley and me.

I recall sitting in the waiting area, praying for peace in his heart and health in his body. I also found myself praying for the many who were in the waiting area, as the stress that some were carrying was quite evident. After the procedure, Doug and I went to a favorite breakfast spot prior to his returning to work. He had been fasting as instructed and had worked up an appetite.

Doug felt the discomfort in his throat was becoming more tangible with every meal, but he would just briefly mention this in our conversations. Days later, we would receive a call that they did not get what they needed and he would have to endure the procedure again. The soonest we could get the second biopsy done was Wednesday, May 6.

From the days of taking the antibiotic and over the next few weeks, we would travel throughout Texas, Boston, New Hampshire, Chicago, Orlando, Atlanta, Alabama, and more.

We had been a part of the National Day of Prayer gathering in Houston, Nights to Honor Israel, and ministry celebrations, and helped to raise funds for the earthquake that had taken place in Nepal, as well as mobilizing help and resources for those affected by it. Ashley was writing and recording music and keeping busy with her schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and volunteer work at the church. We are a family of faith and we kept on doing what we were called to do, praying and believing for Doug's healing...yet wondering how God was going to make all things good for us.

### A LIFE-CHANGING PHONE CALL

It was now Friday, May 8, a month since our anniversary and the day that Doug received a phone call that would forever change our lives.

Doug had been part of a live taping at the TBN Houston studios for their telethon week. It was a powerful time of ministry. That afternoon, I recall posting a photo on social media of Doug and the other pastors agreeing in prayer for the needs of the many who called in their requests. With the intensity of rush-hour traffic in Houston, Doug felt his time would be better spent working the remainder of the day at the house rather than spending about two additional hours in traffic to work out of the office for one hour. Doug was in his home office, sipping a cup of coffee, his attention fully on his computer screen. I was in the kitchen preparing a meal and doing some chores.

Doug's cell phone rang and he answered it as he stepped out of the office area. For some reason, his phone service was not that great in our home, so he often had to head outside or sit in his car to take a call or complete it. As he passed me, he said, "Yes, doctor." That got my attention. *Could it be that the doctor was calling with the results?* Doctors usually don't do that; instead,

a nurse or someone from the office staff calls. Nonetheless, I was determined to tether myself to him to find out what was going on. You can imagine that with every day that passed, we were in need of relief from this uncomfortable distraction, in need of answers. *What was growing in his neck—and why?*

I was only a few yards behind him. He was already sitting in his car and I didn't ask permission to get in; I just opened the door and sat in the passenger's seat. I proceeded to shut the door as quietly as I could and sat silently, paying attention to every word he said, trying to read his body language. I would look away for a few seconds at a time, trying not to make him more uncomfortable than he already was. After all, he was not given a chance to take the call alone.

### “HOW BAD IS IT?”

Doug continued to listen to whatever the doctor was telling him. I could tell something wasn't right because Doug's countenance had changed. It was obvious he was not receiving good news. Whatever it was, at no time did I ever imagine it to be cancer. Doug would not look at me; his eyes were locked in a forward gaze. That alone had my heart beating a tad faster.

I then heard him say, “How bad is it?” Oh, my goodness, was my heart beating right out of my chest! *How bad is it? How bad is what? This can't be bad! I was not expecting bad!* Then I heard the heart-wrenching, horrible “c” word come out of my husband's mouth. He still had his eyes fixed forward. That in itself was painful, not because he wasn't acknowledging me, but because he was hurting and I knew that if we made eye contact, one or both of us would break down at this point.

We had been on an emotional rollercoaster and we were about to take a drop from one of the scariest peaks on one of

the worst rides people can experience. I was struggling with everything in me to not allow tears to stream down my face. After all, I was still only hearing one side of the conversation. I recall Doug getting choked up and his voice cracking as he fought back the natural reaction to bad news. He then asked, “What kind of cancer is it?” My heart stopped. I felt like I had been shot and life was moving in slow motion. I could feel every nerve in my body. A deep pain set in.

“Assumption is the lowest form of knowledge” is something my husband learned from Dr. Ed Cole. Doug often says this in our home—and so does Ashley. Sitting in the car, hearing the word “cancer” come out of Doug’s mouth, there wasn’t much to assume. It’s a word no one wants to hear, not because you’re afraid of it, but because getting rid of it usually comes at a high cost—physically, emotionally, financially, and in every other way imaginable. And let’s face it, many are terrified of the word and its potential consequences, including death.

Doug finished his call with the ENT doctor and continued to stare ahead. He took a deep breath. “It’s cancer,” he said with a broken voice. His eyes, still fixed ahead, not looking at me, became glossy with tears. He took another deep breath.

“I have large B-cell lymphoma and it’s 80 percent aggressive,” he told me. “They don’t know how bad as they need to run more tests.”

I was speechless; all I could do was reach out to touch his hands, which were fixed on the steering wheel. I tried to hold back the tears, but it was a losing battle. I took a deep breath and brushed my cheek against my shoulder, trying to hide the natural effect of my broken heart. I recognize that Doug probably knew this was hard for me to hear, but in the moment, we often try to be emotionally or physically strong for those we love. He

tried hard to maintain his composure and did so to the best of his ability as he continued to share more information.

“They have made phone calls and are setting up an appointment to see a doctor at MD Anderson first thing next week,” he said. “In fact, I believe they are trying to get us an appointment for Tuesday.”

### DOUG SPENDS THE DAY ALONE IN PRAYER

Finally, he turned to me. With tears in his eyes and a very choked-up voice, he said, “You go inside. I need to be alone for a while.” I didn’t want to leave him. I wanted desperately to wrap my arms around him and hug him ever so tightly. I wanted to believe this was just all a bad dream. We gazed at each other for what seemed like an eternity, saying so much with our eyes without even saying a word. In reality, it was probably only a few seconds. He looked away again and said, “I’ll be okay. I just need to be alone.”

With deep breaths and slow-flowing tears running down my burning cheeks, I nodded with affirmation and acceptance of his desires. “I love you,” I told him. I looked away, made my way out of the car, and slowly shut the door. I glanced at him but he only continued to look forward. Then he put the car in reverse and drove away.

I was broken. I felt like I had been painfully punched and my knees were about to buckle. A mammoth weight had just been placed on my shoulders.