

Nancy Madsen's Testimony

We went to church with my family while growing up and I married my high school sweetheart. God blessed us with three children and we were living the good "American" life - life was good. Hard work was the answer ---- Big house, Cars, Boat, etc. However, in the late 1980's the construction boom that had provided the money, the local status and our security failed. Most of the worldly things we had accumulated, we lost in the failing economy. Larry (my husband) lost his job. We sold the house, the lake lots, etc. and with three children to support, I went back to work full time.

I was mad and angry - I don't think I knew whom I was mad at but I wanted to leave; get away from all of this madness. All of the things I had I was losing; I was living a life with no foundation. I had built my strength on worldly things; not on Godly things. I had no hope and I could find nothing to jump-start my life again.

Since we had lost so much monetarily, all we really had left was our children; Clay, Jayme and Sarah. We began to invest our time and efforts in them. Little did we know what was in store for us. Clay, our oldest was a star high school football and baseball player. He had been scouted by major colleges to play collegiate ball for them. So while our world looked grim, his future looked fantastic. All that was to change. While on a family trip, Clay complained of a pain in his shoulder. We took him to the doctor where he was diagnosed with malignant nerve cancer. From the initial diagnosis, Clay was given only 6 weeks to 6 months to live. In January 1991, I was so totally lost, I had no foundation of any kind, not for myself or not for my family. How I kept from falling apart is totally a God thing. I should have lost my mind.

However, God was working in Clay's life even before we knew about the cancer. God had placed his warrior's around Clay. Christian men like his high school football coach, Ines Perez, his best friend's dad, Randall Jones, his team chaplain, Mark Westerfield, now our pastor. He was attending a young men's bible study and was not attending church with us. It was at that time that Clay accepted Christ as his Savior and the Lord of his life and he starting seeing life differently.

We went back to the church we had attended since marriage and they could not help us. Yes, they were nice people, but they could not reach out like we needed for them too. No one could possibly know what we were going through. The answers we needed were not to be found in the things and places we knew to look. In my heart of hearts, I knew I had to get help from someone or something that had some foundation. I was searching for answers, when I needed to search for The Answer. The Bible says the following:

Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV)

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

When it seems you can't go on, when there seems to be no hope in sight and when all that you know and have trusted has failed you, you dig down deep into the depths of your soul and cry out to God. It was in that hole, the absolute depths of who I was that I found that what I was looking for was "not of this world" (John 8:23). It was something bigger and grander than anything I could have asked for. For it was at the bottom of my despair that I found my Savior - Jesus Christ.

During the next two years Clay taught us so much about how not to be angry about the situation.

Luke 7:23 - Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.

Clay had learned not to trust in man but to put his trust in the Lord. I didn't have a clue how he could do it or was doing it. But I was learning – we all were, and not just us, but the community we lived in rallied around us.

After the doctors had exhausted all the traditional textbook treatments we were left with one last chance effort: a bone marrow transplant. The bone marrow transplant took place in another city and my husband Larry and I took turns commuting to the other city to be with Clay and staying at home trying to raise his two sisters. My two s were equally struggling through so much and at the same time trying to be normal teenagers. They, like us also didn't have the answers and also wanted to know **"WHY"**!

One night, after caring for my son all day, I left the hospital and started to drive to the place where I was staying. I was alone in a strange city two hundred miles from home. It was a dark and dreary, rainy night and as I drove down the freeway I was overcome with desperation. Weeping uncontrollably, I cried out to God that I could not take any more ("[you will] find me when you seek me with all your heart"). Suddenly, miraculously, I heard that still small voice whisper to me. I heard God say to me "Nancy, everything will be all right". He said it twice (and yes, he knew my name). When I got to the place I was staying I called home elated telling my husband Larry that God was going to heal Clay. It was an exciting time for us; but God had a different plan.

On Oct. 30, 1992, six weeks after God had "talked to me", we put Clay back into the hospital, knowing he would not be coming home to us again. On the morning of Nov. 4, Larry and I were able to pray over him and we thanked the Lord for the nineteen years we had had him and we gave him back to the Lord. Within seconds, God took him back home.

So the question is; how can everything be all right? As a mother, I obviously wanted my son healed and back doing the things that mothers want to watch their sons do: go to college, get married, have kids, be successful. But God tells us:

Psalm 116:15

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the of his saints.

The ultimate healing is to go home to be with the Lord. Clay's legacy continues. Clay's amazing story was seen on all three television networks as the members of his high school football team all shaved their heads as a symbol of solidarity, while Clay was in Chemotherapy. He came back and caught two passes in a game AFTER his Chemotherapy treatments and all of Central Texas where we live was caught up in the story. His story was captured on film and all of the local news carried Clay's valiant battle against the cancer that eventually took him home. Hundreds of young people have come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior because of the living testimony of Clay. On his high school campus is a plaque commemorating his life and our community just built a multi million-dollar recreation center for young people named the Clay Madsen Recreation Center.

2 Cor. 4:7

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Can one person make a difference? The answer is a resounding YES! Ultimately, as parents our goal is to see our children grow up to make an impact in this world. We tend to think that the traditional way: kids, marriage, job is how they will do it. God however looks at this totally different. He has entrusted the most important message of all times in the hands of human beings. And it is during the times of incredible stress that people look to our lives and say; "there is no way they can be handling this situation on their own". And it is at these times they have to come to the conclusion that it is not human strength that is getting us through it is God's. And in that tiny minute of recognition, we allow the most important message in the world to shine though and make an eternal impact. My son Clay, was able, with God's help to show that the all-surpassing power and love of God is greater than anything we have on earth. I could not be prouder of my son.

Our lives here on earth continue and my husband, two s, and myself have all found the Lord's peace in the loss of Clay. We miss Clay, but God has filled that void with the love that surpasses all understanding. We continue to tell our story at churches, youth groups, FCA and of course one on one as we are told to do in:

1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an

*answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.
But do this with gentleness and respect,*

Most people that we talk with can't conceive of losing a son or daughter at the age of nineteen. How can you have hope when your world is crashing around you? I have found that that hope can be found only in a person – Jesus Christ. He is the hope you can all have if you will simply ask Jesus Christ into your heart. He is waiting for you to call.

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