

Real Life Stories
The Valley of the Shadow

This is Grace's story. She was born in Toronto, Canada, in 1989. She was a beautiful, sweet-natured girl who was well loved by her peers. Her face always glowed with unusual warmth and vivacity and her captivating smile always brought a sparkle to her soft brown eyes. Grace's life was in full bloom until one morning in early July 2003. This is Grace's story as it was published in her school yearbook (a book containing contributions from pupils) and excerpts from her personal diary.

"It was just after grade eight graduation (in Canada). I was so looking forward to a long summer break, but little did I know that that summer would change my life.

In early July 2003 I started to feel very tired every day and weaker than usual. First checkups didn't show any problems. But I also started having severe attacks of pain in my abdomen, lower back and legs. So, back to the doctors we went again. This time an ultrasound was suggested. I wasn't expecting anything serious. However, the ultrasound showed a mass around my spinal column. The doctor suggested that we go to the Hospital for Sick Children as soon as possible. Although he was able to arrange an appointment quite quickly, my pain increased extremely - almost to the point of my being immobile.

Surprisingly, after our appointment at Sick Kids, we were told that we would be admitted to stay. Many, many tests followed including surgery as well. Then came the shocking news: I had a cancerous tumor on my spine. So many feelings passed through me all at once. I was confused, mad, scared and I was trying to realize what was really happening. I couldn't believe it. I knew God allowed this to happen but I didn't know why. However, I wasn't really upset with God. Most people blame God for the bad things in life. Of course, I was really sad and scared, but somehow God gave me peace so that I could accept it.

I had just gone through major surgery on my back but they could not remove the whole tumor. It was on a very delicate spot on my spine. So instead they released the pressure it made on my spine by scraping some off to test in the lab. This helped a lot with my pain in my lower back and legs. The doctors needed to determine the type of cancer and any available treatments. As a result, I had to undergo stressful chemotherapy and rounds of radiation. Before any of my tests or sessions with a doctor, I would pray with my mum and dad together. I have to admit I was quite scared sometimes, even to tears. However, deep down I always had a sense of peace.

That summer was filled with endless tests and I met many doctors, nurses and hospital staff. I was praying more than ever the following weeks. Since I was confined to the hospital for the whole summer, I found much more time to read my Bible every day. I felt my relationship with God was strengthening. He and I were becoming closer. I really felt His comfort and peace whenever I prayed. Sometimes I would still ask, Why? Why me, God? It encourages me to remember that God has a purpose for everything. (Romans 8:28)

Near Christmas time (2003) I felt led to get baptized. I felt that, since I was saved and part of the family of God, I wanted to get baptized. I wanted my life to be a witness for Christ. I felt really good that night. I was consecrating my life to God. When my grade 9 school year began, I was determined that I would do the work and pass the grade. This would have been something impossible on my own, but with everyone's prayers, the Lord helped me through the whole year. With the help of my classmates, teachers, the filming of the classes and sending my homework everyday, I was successful. For this I am thankful to all of them.

Today I am still fighting this horrible disease, but only with the help of my Lord have I made it this far. He helped me through the pain, through all the needles, treatments, and through all the bad reports that we have received from the doctors. My home assembly has made a difference and still does, with thoughtful prayers, caring actions, sincere love and beautiful gifts. I thank them all so much for this. This is the love of the Christian family of God. The power of prayer is great. I can't imagine how difficult this experience would be without the Lord Jesus Christ. So all I can do is pray and depend on the Lord for the rest!"

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Grace's father writes:

"Our daughter, Grace, was saved in 2001 and later on baptized and received into fellowship at Eglinton Avenue Gospel Hall. The title Grace chose for this yearbook article was 'Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me'. While Grace walked through the valley, she was conscious of the Lord's presence as He promised. Shortly after she wrote this article, the doctor told Grace there was nothing more they could do for her medically except to try to manage her severe pain. The day after she heard this news, Grace wrote this prayer in her personal diary:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know everything is in Your hands. It has always been. There is nothing that human doctors can do. However, You are the great physician. I do not know what Your plan is, but I do know You! Whatever You do is the best for me. You have promised in Your word, 'all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose.' I know You have a purpose for my illness. I just do not know what the purpose is. Of course I want to get better; but You may have other plans. I accept whatever You do. I thank you so much for everything You have done for me. You may want me to be with You soon. I love You, Lord. I thank You for dying on the cross for me and for saving me from my sins. I know You can heal me, but Your will be done. Thank You for giving me peace, I really need peace. I know You can take away my pain. Please do, Lord, but again Your will be done. Lord, You have helped, comforted, calmed and cheered me up. You have brought me through a whole year and about three months. Now, please let me be able to see the yearbook when it comes. I am really excited - just two weeks please.

These were Grace's last words in her diary. God granted her prayer and gave her exactly two weeks. He also granted her simple request to see the yearbook. Two weeks later, Grace died and went to be with her beloved Redeemer on November 1st, 2004 after battling with cancer for about 16 months. We are missing her greatly but we know she is in a far better place".

Grace would have been 15 years old just over two weeks after she died.

Gleaned from Precious Seed