

Deep Water

I cannot swim. When I went into Nurse's Training, I dreaded gym class. I had managed to avoid gym class all through High School. Because I had Polio, I did have some weakness in my legs and used that as an excuse to avoid gym. The doctor would write me excuses. In Nurses training however there could be no excuse. If I couldn't run around in a gym, how could I manage floor duty plus we needed an outlet from the stress of our schedule. So, I had to take gym and the first course was swimming. The instructor told us, there were 4 of us who could not swim, to put our heads under water. I calmly told her that if I did that I would drown. She was a very patient person and worked with me for three years to teach me to swim. She did get me to dive in from the deep end, but I would generally just pop up at the side of the pool. She finally made me swim to the other end of the pool. I had my eyes closed but noticed a stillness around the pool. No one was talking, unheard of in a class of girls. I opened my eyes, I always shut them in the water, and realized I was in the middle of the pool. Everyone was watching and there was this sweet instructor walking with a very long pole and following me. She kept yelling, "keep swimming!" I was in the middle of the pool. I panicked and heading for the side. She gave up after that, realizing that my fear was holding me back. She said that I did not have enough body fat to give me buoyancy. I said, "I'll drown." Her diagnosis did get me a milk shake at bedtime every night! I was not good at any sport, but we had to learn everything, archery, basketball, squash, tennis, you name it they provided it. I wasn't good at any of them, and the instructor was often the only one who would play tennis with me. I failed them all, but I liked ping pong. We had to have so many hours of unsupervised "gym" a week and I played ping pong. I realized in later years that I just didn't have enough confidence to trust the water. In later years we had a large pool, and I would swim from side to side, but I never trusted myself to go any further and I avoided the deep end. I liked being in the water but only where the depth was about four feet. I made sure my children learned to swim and did not pick up my anxiety, but it took all I had not to tell them to get out of the water. My problem was trust. I did not trust the water to hold me up, I did not trust my body to swim. It's hard to learn something when we do not trust ourselves or others. When I had cancer and was on chemo it took all I had to trust the treatment, to trust my body not to fail me, to trust the doctors for the best options but most of all to trust God in the process. Cancer is not a "take it out, it's over" disease. It is a struggle that keeps returning. For 10 years after surgery and chemo, I was reminded daily as I took a pill that it could come back and it took a long time to say the words to God, "Not my will but yours." God has been with me on this journey for 37 years and I still do not take each day for granted but thank God for it and feel blessed to receive it. I surrendered my life to God's will a long time ago and he has been "my strength and my song." Isaiah 12:2 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord is my strength and my song.

Matthew 14:26-29 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. But Jesus immediately said to them, "Take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid." " Lord, if it's you!" Peter replied, "Tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink cried out, "Lord save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "Ye of little faith," he said, "Why did you doubt?"

Dear Lord, we thank you for this day, we thank you for the beauty of this earth, we thank you for the love of those around us. Lord, we ask that you be with those in our midst who are ill and undergoing tests, and those with chronic illnesses. Be with those who mourn loss, loss of spouse or loved ones, loss of friends, loss of family, loss of loved ones through Alzheimer's and dementia and chronic diseases. Be with the hungry and the lost. Help us Lord to make your house a house of worship and prayer that transcends our differences. A place of safety where all are welcomed. May we be the hands and feet of Christ in this troubled world. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

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