

## Second Chances

I was able to write four letters this week. One was to my Internist of 45 years who was retiring. We had grown old together, doctor and patient. We listened to each other's life events. He never failed to give me good advice and I hope on some occasions I returned the favor. We are the same age, and I knew this day was coming but I did not want to break in another doctor. When the receptionist gave me the news I began to cry, and I realized how much I had come to depend on his steadfast manner and his sense of humor and most of all his common-sense medical advice. We had aged together and had once known the jobs we did as young, hopeful, medical professionals. When I complained about having my heart listened to through a sweatshirt or sweater, he understood. That was not how we were taught to do it. We had become old fashioned together. He knew HIPAA before it was a law. He would not discuss or even admit he knew another patient. I liked knowing he would only discuss me with my other doctors when necessary. Although I have learned that he does discuss me with the surgeon who did my cancer surgery, and they refer to me as "A blast from the past!" When he was older, he quit doing hospital visits and would send his Associates to see me. They always reported to me that he said they had to be nice to me. I will miss him and will remember the jokes we shared and the times he helped me through difficult times. When I was diagnosed with cancer, he was the first one I called. The receptionist said, "He's expecting your call." He had already received the news and when I asked him if he would come and check on me in the hospital, he said he would be there every day and he was. I always complained that he would call me with test results so early in the morning that I was half asleep and could not remember what he said but I always remembered if it was good or bad and that was all I needed. I will miss him.

My second letter was to a friend recently diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She had always called me when she read my devotionals in the Upper Room. She is a wonderful woman with a great sense of humor and a beautiful attitude. We worked together for years.

My third letter was to a woman recently diagnosed with breast cancer. I hope my words of empathy and experience with this disease will strengthen and encourage her as it comes from a 37-year survivor. I have been on the heights when I realized I had survived but I have also been in the pits as I feared its return. I understand the days when emotions run rampant.

My fourth letter was a letter of condolence to the family of a nurse I worked with. She spent her last days fighting dementia. This smart, intelligent, hard-working woman did not deserve this ending, but no one does, her least of all. She was a wife of many years, a mother, a nurse, a Christian and a friend. She will be missed. I had run across a picture of the two of us together at work. I set it out with the plan to send it to her but never got around to it. I regret that I lost that chance to share with her that remembrance.

We have a God of second chances, God calls us to love one another. His forgiveness comes to us with our faith, and we embrace it. I find it harder to forgive myself. But this is also part of God's forgiveness, the letting go and beginning again. If we ask God to remember when we did something he forgave us for will he say yes or will he say that sin no longer exists. God allows us every day to start fresh to be renewed in our faith, to receive his grace yet again. He wants us to grow closer to him to his love and forgiveness. May you be blessed today by the love of God in your lives. We are a forgiven people. Not perfect but striving for perfection.

Jeremiah 6:16 This is what the Lord says: Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.

Lord, we thank you for the day, for the new beginning you bring to us every dawn. Another chance to follow your word. Be with us each day that we may follow your ways. Be with those who are ill and suffering from disease, and those grieving for loss of someone they loved, be with those who are seeking you may they see you in their day and in their night. Be with all that enter our doors may they find you waiting. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry and grant him all good things, be with his family. Bless them. Be with our Staff and Leaders, give them insight and discernment.

Be with our church may we truly be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. It is in his name we pray. Amen

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