

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005



Please send any letters to:

Phil and Laura Chase
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To request a DVD of John's testimony, put the words "DVD Request" in the subject line.

Posted Tuesday, January 20, 2004 at 9:04 pm

Dear loved ones,

Today has been one of the hardest days of my life. Late last night our son John was diagnosed with bone cancer.

He had been suffering from a vague pain around his kneecap for weeks, he couldn't remember any severe injury, and it would not respond to anti-inflammatory medicine. The xray showed a large mass in the proximal head of the left tibia. A friend of Phil's, an orthopedic surgeon (who just happened to be there when the xray was taken) said it was most likely an osteosarcoma: rare, found in teenagers, fast-growing, deadly cancer.

Phil and I spent the night in agony. John slept peacefully.

Today John had a bone scan and it showed no metastasis (cancer cells in other parts of the body besides his knee). We thank God.

Late this afternoon, Phil and John flew to Houston to MD Anderson Cancer Center.

At this point, we anticipate the only cure is to amputate John's leg above the knee.

Please pray for us. We are "perplexed, but not in despair". Johnny is aware of the situation, has agonized, but is bravely facing this Goliath. Pray that he can stay unafraid and sense God's presence surrounding him.

We feel greatly supported by our families, friends, and church. Thank you for all your prayers on our behalf,

Laura

Posted Thursday, January 22, 2004 at 10:30 pm

Phil and John were amazed by the skill and kind consideration of the people at the cancer center today. They saw the cancer doctor (oncologist) in the morning and the bone/joint surgeon (orthopedic surgeon) in the afternoon.

John is coming to grips with the amputation ahead. The doctors gave him other options involving keeping some of his lower leg and foot, but he would have limitations in his activities and a fragile "knee" that would require constant surgeries to be useful, and ultimately, amputation anyway. Phil has been very honest with the doctors and they have responded candidly that most parents don't come in ready to talk amputation, even though that is the most likely treatment to give John a useful, active limb in the shortest time, and a cure.

Tomorrow will be more tests, but the policy of this cancer center is any painful procedure will be done with the patient well-medicated. You'll have to ask John next week if he remembers any of these tests!

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Chemotherapy will probably be one course every month for four months with a five-day hospital stay each time. The chemo is imperative because almost all osteosarcoma patients have tiny specks of cancer cells already in their lungs that are invisible on a bone scan. The chemo should clear all those specks out.

We're not sure yet about the timing of the surgery. John will probably be in Texas for a couple more weeks.

Phil and I are feeling less in shock, and more of the "peace that surpasses understanding." We are so grateful for the prayers you are making on our behalf. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Laura

Posted Thursday, January 22, 2004 at 11:55 pm

Johnny and I spent the day talking with the oncologist and the surgeon.....and waiting.

Big decisions to be made about saving the leg with the likelihood of the knee being weak and needing lots of attention vs. amputation and hopefully a functionally strong and useful remnant. The institution leans toward saving the limb. Johnny and I are leaning toward amputation and a prosthesis.

Johnny is already planning some great practical jokes for his new leg, we've had some great laughs. Regardless, Johnny will need 4 courses of chemotherapy 4 weeks apart to treat lung metastasis that is likely there but not yet seen on xrays. Good likelihood of complete cure but the chemotherapy is rather harsh...hair loss, low blood counts, risk of infection, damage to the heart.

...Not a whole lot of other choices on the table short of a miracle. God's peace is here, sleeping well, lots of tears and crying out to our Father for intimacy with Him..taking our brokenness to him and asking Him for more of Him...relationship with the Father. We feel your prayers and are so grateful for the outpouring of love..God is real, He is good, and He is faithful. Read Hebrews 12: 7-11 and insert the words "spiritual child training" wherever you see the word discipline (which is what my study Bible says the greek implies). Tomorrow we expect a bunch of tests to complete staging of the tumor.

Thank you for your concern and love..

Phil

Posted Friday, January 23, 2004 at 8:40 pm

Tough day today.

We were told yesterday as we left the medical center that they are scheduling more tests and would call us with the details today. We waited and finally heard at 3 pm that we would have some tests Monday and Tuesday, then perhaps see the surgeon again Thursday to discuss options. Did I make the mistake of asking God to teach me patience?

Lots of conversation with God today...mostly surrender...man this is hard...at least I can cry.

My brother-in-law, an oncologist at the same hospital in a different department, called me at 4 pm to see what had happened today. When he found out nothing he was outraged...hopefully he can grease the skids. I just rest in my fathers hands and trust He will take care of things in his time. Johnny is doing great..."I just wish they'd cut my leg off and get it over with." We talk a lot. Scripture comes to life in they valley....check out Ps 73:25-28. "It is good to be near God."

Nothing medical planned this weekend...

Phil

Posted Saturday, January 24, 2004 at 2:40 pm

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Woke up today fantasizing about God healing John between the biopsy on Monday and the MRI scan of the tumor Tuesday. Imagining the unbridled joy.

I think thoughts of faith that heals and my mind drifts to the father in Mark 9 "I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief." Then Jesus healed his son. I know the path to Christlikeness often comes by way of adversity endured. I am grateful God doesn't ask me to choose between my son's healing or knowing Him more intimately...maybe I can have both.

God knows best and He always acts in love...these are the things on my mind today...thank you God.

Romans 11: 33-36 is sweet!

Phil

Posted Sunday, January 25, 2004 at 8:56 am

I spent a few hours in the medical center library yesterday researching the various options available to John. There is a surgical operation for an above knee amputation that involves converting the ankle joint into a new knee. It has been done for at least 15 years. Kids who have had this operation often can be involved in athletics and have a gait very similar to their pre-amputation gait. Sounds like the best of a host of rotten options...these are not the kind of decisions I would wish on anyone. Other treatment decisions include whether to do chemotherapy before or after surgery, the research is not clear cut.

You can specifically pray that if we need to make those decisions that God will make the correct way obvious. I know in my heart that it really doesn't matter which way we decide because God can make even man's wrong decisions right. I'm working hard not to dwell too much on the future. God's grace is sufficient for each day and the trouble therein. He will give us the grace for tomorrow when tomorrow comes. I know the path of self pity is a hole that leads nowhere good. Scripture, prayer, and love and encouragement from other believers help keep me on track. The Lord is good and his mercy endures for ever, his faithfulness continues to all generations.

John and I are so thankful for all your prayers...

Phil

Posted Sunday, January 25, 2004 at 10:20 pm

We had a restful day and great worship service today. John went to youth group with his cousins tonight, saying if I'm going to be down here for a while I might as well get to know some kids. Tomorrow is a big day. A cat-scan of his lungs looking for metastasis, blood tests, and a biopsy of the tumor. A visit with an oncologist friend of my brother-in-law who deals with adult sarcomas early in the day to help me know what questions to ask John's oncologist when I meet him later in the day. Some times it is helpful to get a heads up on what the issues are. I would like to come to some conclusions on a plan of treatment tomorrow. Then another issue is before he can start chemotherapy he needs a port put in and this is not scheduled until a week from tomorrow. My brother-in-law knows someone at another hospital who does these on adults for him with a one day notice. I'm hopeful we can move things along a bit so we can go home and perhaps get the remainder of the chemotherapy in Ft. Wayne. Pushing poison isn't rocket science once you decide which ones. Also John needs his braces off for chemotherapy. Chemo causes mouth sores and the braces would aggravate the situation. Our orthodontist is making arrangements with an orthodontist here...pray this doesn't hold things up.

Thanks for your prayers...we feel God's peace and even some joy.

Phil

Posted Monday, January 26, 2004 at 10:33 pm

Big day today...

Johnny had a chest CAT-scan that looked clean, yeah!! I met with the oncologist armed with questions. The conclusion was that we can reasonably follow through with John's treatment in a Ft. Wayne hospital under the care of a pediatric

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oncologist named Dr. Hill, someone I have referred many patients to.

I contacted Dr. Hill by phone and he said he would be happy to help in any way he can. The biopsy I thought was scheduled today was actually just a consult to prepare for the biopsy that will take place on Thursday. I would be happy to leave some tissue behind for their research but I don't think I can hang until Thursday...time's a wastin'. I just got tickets for home and we will fly out Tuesday and arrive in Ft. Wayne at 9:57pm. I plan to let Dr. Hill know we're on our way tomorrow and hopefully he'll be able to arrange for a biopsy and port placement Wednesday or Thursday. After that, we can get on with chemo if God doesn't heal John between now and then.

I also met with another oncologist who takes care of Adult (16+) sarcoma patients. He brought some interesting issues to the table that will help a lot as we decide on what course to take in John's care. God answered your prayers for clear direction. Now pray for a smooth transition and perhaps a little faster pace in getting John the care he needs.

Finally thank you for your continual prayer for John's miraculous healing...if that is not the course God chooses it won't be for lack of prayer!

Resting in God's peace and joy,
Phil

Posted Tuesday, January 27, 2004 at 11:15 am

About forty-five minutes ago, yesterday's CT scan was being reviewed and John's uncle found a 4 cm mass on John's kidney. We are reeling, but trusting for God's peace. Phil and John will not be able to come home for a while. Johnny's uncle is really shaking things up at MD Anderson. It looks like they will be able to take both biopsies this afternoon under general anesthetic.

Pray for wisdom. Thanks.
Laura

Posted Tuesday, January 27, 2004 at 11:07 pm

Ok, I've got whiplash. Plans got changed when we were told the cat-scan showed a kidney mass. We canceled our plane flight when my brother-in-law shook things a bit. God provided time today so that John could, under general anesthesia, have both the knee and kidney biopsied. The knee showed osteosarcoma as predicted and the kidney showed a benign cyst (which needs no treatment). Thank the Lord.

Then the chest CAT-scan final report showed definite evidence of small amounts of cancer in John's lungs. The treatment for now is an aggressive all out attack with chemotherapy in the hopes the tumor is sensitive to the stuff. We are flying out Wednesday morning and will arrive in Ft Wayne at 1 pm. Hopefully, we can get John's braces off Wednesday afternoon. If all goes well, (and God doesn't blow everyone's mind with an immediate miracle) we hope to get a central line put in and start the cell war on Thursday.

I'm sure it won't surprise you to hear that a cancer center is an interesting place to get into conversations with people about Jesus... I haven't gotten much reading done.

Thanks for your prayers...
God is good...mysterious...but good.
Phil

Posted Wednesday, January 28, 2004 at 9:20 pm

John and I are back home after going to the othodontist to get his braces off. We had a great reunion, it's nice to be able to tuck my kids into bed again. Laura acts like she's glad we're back. Taylor and Corrie are on break till Monday so we are all together. It turns out that the surgeons won't be able to install the port for the chemo until Friday and they don't do chemo on the weekends...so no chemo until Monday. Not our first choice but I'm slowly coming to grips with this a God thing. If I can't believe that God is in control of every detail of this process I would despair. Only God is a rock firm

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enough to place my trust.

The delay in chemo answers another desire I had...John is a Bible quizzer and has nearly memorized Hebrews. His team has an invitational this weekend and he wanted to participate...thank God. A delay in chemo that God orchestrated isn't going be a factor in the healing we hope He intends to accomplish for John. It's interesting, in the midst of trial, how easy it is to get all focused on the trial and forget about all of God's blessings in my life. 10 of them surrounded me when I arrived home. Ps 13:5-6 But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.

Thanks for your concern and prayers,
Phil

Posted Wednesday, January 28, 2004 at 10:31 pm

I want to thank all of you for praying for me, you can't imagine how much your prayers lifted my spirit and kept me from getting depressed. As I read your cards and remember your phone calls I am almost moved to tears by how much you care for me.

When my Dad and I came home this afternoon, I was immediately deluged (I am not sure what that means but it sounds cool) by a horde of siblings overjoyed to see me again...and competing to play with my crutches.

Although I am home (and pretending to feel great) I am still worried about what is coming. Please pray that God will give me peace in the days to come. When some of you see me walk into church...bald, please sign my head (Taylor came up with that idea, I'm not sure what Mom thinks).

Thank you for all your prayers, if God choses not to heal me it won't be from lack of prayer :-)
In Christ,
Johnny

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In Christ,
Johnny

Posted Thursday, January 29, 2004 at 9:49 pm

We had a fun day of goofing off. A port to use for John's chemotherapy will be placed tomorrow (Friday) under general anesthetic at 1:30, pray that this goes smoothly. The general anesthetic he got for the biopsies made him pretty sick for a few hours so you can also pray that he recovers quickly enough to go to the quiz meet Saturday. We talk a lot around here about the paths that we can choose to allow our thoughts to take through the day. I recognize in myself a background whisper wooing me to self pity, fear, bitterness, anger. I know that these paths only lead to destruction and that the better, life-giving alternative is to run to Jesus and ask Him for more of Him to heal my brokenness.

Thank you for praying for us that we might continue to run to Him instead of taking refuge in thoughts that would

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ultimately destroy us. Today God also pointed out to me that He loves John more than I could ever imagine, and that through all this He will see John through; comforting him, holding him, surrounding him with his love, and protecting his tender little spirit. I'm so glad we have God!

Thank you for holding us up in your prayers,
Phil

Posted Friday, January 30, 2004 at 10:25 pm

Surgery went smoothly today and no post-op puking. John even downed a Blizzard on the way home. The pediatric surgeon who did the port is a Christian and was a Bible quizzer when he was a teen. He prayed with us and was very kind.

John is sore but intends to quiz tomorrow. We worked on Hebrews while we waited for his surgery...oh to be able to memorize that quickly...an uncluttered mind.

Laura and I have crossed a sort of threshold in this process. It involves surrendering John to God and knowing that we can trust God to do what is best. As parents we often give lip service to our children being God's and holding them with an open hand, but sometimes life reveals the heart. We also have an assurance that everything is going to be OK. We're not sure what that means other than God is good and in the end we know that everything is going to be OK.

Thanks for your prayers...God answers...
Phil

Posted Saturday, January 31, 2004 at 10:24 pm

Quizzing went great today. Four of our kids, Corrie, Paula, Marta, and John participated. John even managed to get some questions right while taking Vicodan for pain. Thanks for your prayers...it was a great family day.

Tomorrow after church several elders and pastors at our church will pray for healing for John and anoint him with oil. This is something mentioned in James 5:13-18. The Bible has come to life for our family these days. Passages we've read numerous times before, now bring overwhelming peace, reassurance, and joy. Consider Rom 8:28in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose..

I don't pretend to know what God's final plan is for all this, but I know it will be for our good--for John's good--because God has promised and He keeps all his promises.

Thanks for your prayers and concern...
Phil

Posted Sunday, February 1, 2004 at 5:07 pm

Great day of being in the company of other believers. Starting with church service and Sunday school, then the pastors and elders laid hands on John, anointed him with oil and prayed for him. Then a small group meeting with our friends this evening. We are so blessed with a family of believers in Jesus, who hold us up in prayer, encourage us, and help in too many ways to count. We know many weep with us, thank you for your compassion and love. How do people do this without Jesus and his family. God's peace is so real and so available if we just go to Him. Check out Phil 4:6,7; John 14:27. You should see John, same sparkle in his eyes, same cheerfulness and smile. Thank you God for peace in your presence.

Tomorrow we have some tests in the morning and then chemo starts in the afternoon.

Thanks for your prayers...
Phil

Posted Monday, February 2, 2004 at 6:07 pm

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Today John had more tests in preparation for chemotherapy. He will be given a bunch of fluid IV overnight to prepare his body for the CIS-Platinum, which is one of the chemo drugs. This medicine is very harsh on the kidneys and typically causes nausea and vomiting. When I was told chemo wasn't until tomorrow, my head didn't feel like exploding like it had with previous delays. I suppose that is a sign of complete surrender to Jesus...Whatever, Lord. We met Dr. Hill, the pediatric oncologist who will direct John's care here. He is a Christian and prayed with us. John is plugging away at schoolwork.

Here's how you can pray: That the chemo kills the tumor. Pray also that John's body will be protected from these poisons. You wouldn't believe the potential side-effects.

Scripture for the Day: Psalm 27:4,8,13,14, one thing we ask of the Lord to dwell in his presence, to gaze on his beauty, to seek his face. We are confident that we will see the goodness of the Lord. Be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Thanks for your prayers...
Phil

Posted Tuesday, February 3, 2004 at 11:57 pm

John and I slept in short snatches last night. He has to be up to the bathroom every 2 hours because of the IV fluids they are giving to protect his kidneys. Adding to that vital signs and other nursing comotion left us hoping for some naps today. I had hoped a glance at John's knee today would reveal a quick miracle, end of trial, lessons learned. That doesn't appear to be God's plan. Once we start down the chemotherapy trail there really isn't any turning back.

The chemotherapy started today and John has suffered none of the expected nausea and vomitting...Praise God! The nurses are pleasantly surprised...they know we're all praying. John's spirits are good though he figured chemo side effects would get him out of school work.

I play Candyland with my kids from time to time and those who have played will remember that there are several short-cuts in the journey to the final goal. I was asking God if there wasn't some short-cut to knowing him intimately, to having a relationship with God of heroic proportions. He's helping me understand that the road of adversity is the short-cut. Chemotherapy and whatever lies ahead is the fast track to intimacy with Christ for John, our family, and perhaps all you who suffer with us. Everyone has trials in their life. It seems that God isn't nearly as concerned about our comfort and pleasure as He is about our relationship with Him. The Apostle Paul communicates this truth in Phil 3:7-11 ...I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...

Our family can never thank you enough for your prayers, cards, and various expressions of love and concern.

God is soooo good...
Phil

Posted Wednesday, February 4, 2004 at 10:03 pm

Laura spent last night, today, and tonight with John. He's having occasional waves of nausea now but doing well overall. He'll get another 24 hours or so of chemotherapy and hopefully get out of the hospital Friday. God's peace and comfort are such a blessing and answer to prayer.

I ran school at home today...it's definitely easier sitting in the hospital with John...my admiration and respect for my wife compounds whenever I step into her shoes. I talked with a surgeon in Indy who does the surgery we are interested in for John, a procedure that moves the ankle to the knee and produces a strong, activity-tolerant leg. This takes place after 4 cycles of chemotherapy. I'm doing well if I don't think much about tomorrow... but we still have to do a certain amount of planning ahead. Jesus specifically said not to worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matt 6:34) God's grace is here for each day's trouble, not tomorrow's. The trick is to plan without worry.

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Thank you for lifting us up in prayer...
Phil

Posted Thursday, February 5, 2004 at 8:44 pm

John finished up this week's chemotherapy today. He is experiencing occasional waves of nausea, vomiting twice, no appetite, little energy for anything other than Nintendo or watching TV. Dr. Hill is pleased with how John is doing, especially with his attitude. I don't feel as bad as I look. God bless that kid.

Hopefully John will come home Friday and get a few more days of IV fluids until his appetite perks up. Laura and I don't cry often now, but when we do it is usually in response to the awesome reality of faith in Christ, displayed in God's faithfulness and in the outpouring of love from our family in Christ. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. John 13:34.

Thank you for your love...
Phil

Posted Friday, February 6, 2004 at 6:13 pm

Hurray, John and I got home mid afternoon. He's tired but eating some and hasn't vomited since this morning. We met with home health to train us in running an IV fluid while John sleeps. This will keep him from drying out and should help him feel better without us having to force feed him fluids during the day. Now you can pray for his energy level, his appetite, that his white blood cell counts don't get to low, that he doesn't get infected while his immune system is down, that he doesn't get the mouth sores that often develop, and of course that nasty old tumor...die sucker.

Many people have commented that our strength of faith during this trial has been an encouragement to them. I have to weigh in with Peter as he answered Jesus question as to whether he too would leave Him as many others deserted Him. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. (John 6:68) I know there is nowhere else to go. Its normal to think of eternal life as eternity in heaven with God after death. Jesus tells us now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. Eternal life is also knowing God here and now, a living breathing relationship between the finite and the infinite. God confirms this reality to us every day. We would be fools to run any way but toward Jesus.

Your prayers for us make a difference...thank you for caring...
Phil

Posted Saturday, February 7, 2004 at 4:50 pm

Today, John has been able to eat more...mostly out obedience to his mother rather than hunger. The preferred item seems to be Carnation Instant Breakfast, a banana, two scoops of ice cream, and enough milk to blenderize it. Make every bite count is the rule of thumb until his teenage appetite kicks in. John's knee pain where the tumor is has been minimal since the chemotherapy finished...prayer plus poisons. Good attitude, not much energy, lots of naps, little nausea,...thank you God. John and I wept together as he shared with me how real God's presence is in his life right now. This earthly daddy is grateful John's heavenly daddy is taking good care of him.

You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. (Ps 32:7) Thank you God for giving my little boy a good hiding place... thank you that it is big enough for everyone who will come to you.

God is here...
Phil

Posted Sunday, February 8, 2004 at 10:50 pm

John felt too pooped-out to go to church today. He listened to some sermon tapes while the rest of us went to church. Nothing like the body of Christ at church to mend our wounds...we came home refreshed, encouraged, and loved. John was nauseous until mid afternoon when he thought bacon sounded good. Laura cooked up a pound and he ate half of it.

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Reminds me of having a pregnant wife in the house. John's spirits are good...I told him he doesn't have to fake it and he assures me that God is close...this warms my father heart and builds my faith.

As I unhooked John's IV this morning I wished we could turn the clock back to a less complicated time. Under the surface of confidence in God there are lingering doubts, a yearning for comfortable living and ease. I liked my life three weeks ago better. Then I read in my Bible For with you is the fountain of life, in your light we see light. (Psalms 36:9) Lord let me be so satisfied from your fountain of life that I no longer long for counterfeit satisfactions. Let me be so blinded by your light that the commotion in my life fades into its proper place. As I was driving east toward church this morning the sun was right in the middle of the road, straight in my face, blinding, unavoidable, blurring my vision of my surroundings, warm on my face. OK God, I get it...here comes the the joy.

Thank you for prayers...

Phil

Posted Monday, February 9, 2004 at 11:48 pm

John had a check-up today and is doing well. He can quit the IV fluids...his labs are normal. We expect his immunity to drop later this week. He has periods of feeling pretty good punctuated by vomiting out of the blue...normal I guess. Pray that the vomiting stops so he won't need IV fluids. Other prayers are that the things we are doing to prevent mouth sores work and that there will be no infections and minimal suppression of his immunity.

Ever just want to wake up from a bad dream? John and I were talking about how this seeming nightmare has actually awakened us to a new found reality of God's presence in our lives. It's like we were asleep before and now we are more fully awake. Nothing like being put into a position of flat out dependence on God to wake us out of our spiritual slumber and bring us into an awareness of God's presence and love. Is it possible that rotten situations in life help us to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God? (Ephesians 3:18-19)

Thanks for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Tuesday, February 10, 2004 at 11:55 pm

John has done great today. Some nausea but no vomiting, cheerfully working on school, playing a friend's Playstation, twinkle in his eye. I'm back seeing patients in the office. Many express concern and support. God, make my peace and joy in you a contagious disease so that other broken people can catch it and find wholeness in you. Jesus said, I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10) Our family is experiencing life in Jesus in the midst of this trial...what if others find their life in Jesus through it as well. Now that gives meaning to what might appear to be senseless suffering.

Thanks for praying...

Phil

Posted Wednesday, February 11, 2004 at 11:11 pm

John woke up feeling great this morning, then during our family Bible study as he was sucking down a power milk shake he suddenly vomitted. Mental note: John's constant companion...vomit basin. Really, John is doing well. We won't miss the stealth hurling, whenever it stops. He has long spells of feeling pretty good. It's interesting to me how easily I trust God with my soul for eternity, but trusting him with life during these short years on earth is a struggle...go figure. If I can't trust God with John's well-being and all the other details of life now, I'd better find a different answer for my eternal destiny. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5,6)

Thanks for your prayers...

Phil

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Posted Friday, February 13, 2004 at 6:35 pm

John is feeling good! Eating well, no vomiting, sleeping well, cheerful. Plugging away at school, Bible quizzing, and a Star Wars novel. His white blood count is low as expected. He is at increased risk of infection meaning no group activities, lots of hand washing, and prayer. Pray with us that his counts come up quickly for his safety and so he can get his next dose of chemo planned Feb. 23. No other signs of nasty chemo side effects...thanks God. God's peace is here.

We know everything is going to be OK because God is in control and He loves us...He loves John. The world offers up quite a menu of things to run to for comfort. Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false Gods. (Psalms 40:4) I have witnessed people in crisis running any direction but to Jesus, and finding only increased desperation and brokenness. Running to Jesus brings us the life and wholeness we need and desire.

God is answering your(our) prayers... heart-felt thanks...

Phil

Posted Monday, February 16, 2004 at 8:39 pm

John had blood tests today and his white blood count is back to normal, he has had no mouth sores, and his energy and appetite are rebounding...answered prayer anyone? In anticipation of his hair falling out, he and two friends buzzed off their hair today. We're looking for some non-toxic markers for scalp graffitti. We have an appointment with a surgeon and an oncologist in Indy on Thursday. Otherwise we are looking foward to settling into a nonmedical mode until the next chemo blast next week. We would love to see that tumor shrivel-up... we'll keep you posted.

As we come off the sprint of the last couple of weeks I'm coming to realize that this is a marathon we're looking at and we need to keep a marathoner's mindset. Part of that is not slacking off after we have come up a steep hill. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8) On the level ground, where it is tempting to coast, it is all the more important to not drop our guard, remembering that our enemy never rests...and be totally obsessed with Jesus.

God bless you for upholding us in your prayers...

Phil

Posted Thursday, February 19, 2004 at 8:00 pm

John and I spent the day seeing two doctors in Indy. Dr Hock is a pediatric oncologist. We visited for a bit and then he reviewed John's xrays with a radiologist. They think most of the small nodules on John's lungs might be histoplasmosis...a common infection in farm country and harmless. He has one larger one on his right lung they are also wondering about... we're going to run some more tests...painless tests to John's delight. Then Dr Rougraff is the oncologic orthopedist. After discussing the options, short of a miraculous healing, the best option will be a rotationplasty...amputating the knee and bringing up the ankle to use as a new knee...but before connecting everything they rotate the foot to face backwards so everything will bend right. He says they do this more in Europe for kids who want to be able to keep playing soccer. The other options have more limitations on activity and more complications. As this doctor is trying to discribe all the different options and their limitations... John keeps saying forget that and then he launches into all the plans he has for his fake leg.

John's ready to go...but first three more rounds of chemotherapy. How can I ever doubt God. He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things (Romans 8:32) This verse argues from the greater (giving his son) to the lesser (giving us all things). This resonates with me as a father. The Father heart of God was willing to even give his son...even to the cross. How can I doubt God's good intentions toward us...his kids. I can trust the Father heart of God.

Thanks for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Sunday, February 22, 2004 at 10:05 pm

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

Had a busy day today going to church and then driving to South Bend to visit Laura's dad who is to have open-heart surgery tomorrow. Please pray for him, Bill Carter. He has a relationship with Jesus and is not afraid to die, but he would love to have more time to serve the Lord. John starts IV fluids tomorrow at home in preparation for starting chemo Tuesday. Laura obviously feels torn between the two. John will also have a PET scan tomorrow to evaluate the nodules in his lungs.

Those of you who have seen John can attest to his peace in the Lord. For the Lord is good. His love endures forever. His faithfulness continues to all generations. (Psalms 100:5) I love words like forever and all. Words I don't have to wonder about or qualify. Forever includes yesterday, today, and tomorrow. All generations include Dad Carter, Laura, and John. Doubt and fear have no root in the promises of scripture where God reveals his true nature and puts to rest our fears.

Thank you for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Monday, February 23, 2004 at 10:36 pm

Hey everyone, Dad has been bugging me to get on the web and post something. NOW, is probably the best time for me to say something because it is the only day(since chemo.) that I feel good enough to type something other than commands for a computer game. I have been anticipating all weekend about chemo tomorrow, but I thank you for all your prayers because when I turn my eyes toward Jesus...all the worry and fear are shrunk down to a tiny smudge on the computer screen(I came up with that analogy all my self :-). Knowing you are praying is a huge encouragement to me...God is with me everyday.

Somewhere in Matthew Jesus said not to worry about tomorrow, and that verse has stuck with me this entire adventure. I recently read 2 Corinthians 12:9 God's power is made perfect in weakness I really understand that verse now and thank God again and again for his strength. Thank you all so much for praying and supporting me.

In Christ(and that is where I intend to stay)

John Chase

Posted Tuesday, February 24, 2004 at 9:54 pm

Such a day of good news!

My father came through his triple by-pass heart surgery and is recovering. My sisters tell me he is talking and up. Thank you, LORD, for extending his life. Thank you, friends, for praying for him and me.

Phil and Johnny are bunking in the hospital tonight. Thanks to the wonders of laptop computers, Phil spent the day doing his taxes at Johnny's bedside, while Johnny killed tumor cells all day with chemo.

Another dose of good news came today. The PET scan done yesterday demonstrated a lot of cancer activity in Johnny's leg, as expected, but showed no similar activity in his lungs. We are not out of the woods, but it is very likely that the spots in Johnny's lungs are not cancer. We are cautious, yet hopeful, since this significantly increases the likelihood for cure.

Thank you dear friends for standing with us in prayer! We KNOW the comfort of our LORD, deeper than ever before. And you, His Hands and Feet, have supported us with hugs and meals and comforting words and notes in the mail that come at just the right time. Thank you for walking with us.

Finally, I'd like to stop a misconception out there. Some of you who read this have commented on how strong we are. Let me clue you in up front. All my education, experience, wisdom, confidence, etc. lasted all of about 5 minutes after Johnny's diagnosis. I am a heap of cooked spaghetti on the floor. There is no strength here. Anything strong you see is purely Jesus. And He's there for you, too.

Laura

Posted Wednesday, February 25, 2004 at 11:01 pm

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

John slept much of yesterday and today. The medications he gets to prevent side effects makes him sleepy and when he wakes he feels pretty good. Dr. Hill is really pleased with how well he is handling all this...thank you God for answered prayer!!

This PET scan result has been an interesting aside to me in this journey. I know that clean lungs raises the odds of cure in this disease, but honestly, does it really matter if John's lungs are clear or not? It is a nice little glimmer of hope for a cure for John...and we all pray for that...like children pleading with their daddy. But where must we place our hope. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and My God. (Psalms 42:5) A downcast and disturbed soul is the soul of a man who puts his hope in anything but God. I can't put my hope in a cure for John. I can put my hope in God...he's proven his love through Christ...He'll do what's right.

Thank you for praying...
Phil

Posted Saturday, February 28, 2004 at 8:04 pm

John and I came home from the hospital yesterday. He slept about 90% of the time during the chemo and he has decided he prefers that to being awake and nauseous. He's pretty pooped out but in good spirits. He'll get IVs every night through the weekend to keep him hydrated. Thanks for praying for protection for his good cells while we beat-up the cancer cells. Our whole family is reaping the benefits of your prayers...God is here and He is close.

Yesterday I woke early with a worship song on my mind, I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross. As I looked at my son sleeping on the bed nearby, lips pale, cap on his bald head, IV's running into him...I thought how I dispise what cancer has done to my son. Then God reminded me that he took my cancer (sin) and put it on his son. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21) There is a lot of talk about the suffering of Christ, but what of God the Father watching his son beaten, bloodied, hung on the cross as my sins were paid for. Out of love for me, God chose...he chose to allow his son to suffer so my problem with sin could be taken care of. May the small personal pain of this trial with my son drive me to the loving arms of my God who withheld nothing that I might get everything.

Thanks for praying...
Phil

Posted Sunday, February 29, 2004 at 2:57 pm

Hey, everybody. Johnny will now exit Internet silence. The only things I remember from being in the hospital are reading my book the first day and watching the movie Batman the second or third day. It's funny what happens when you are drugged enough to sleep three days away, so if you want the plot to Batman don't ask me. I only remember the part where he gets the Bat Signal.

Resting in the Lord is a very strange phrase. I was really resting at the hospital, but it's difficult to rest at home, lying in bed, wondering about what is happening to the cancer. I'd rather just sleep through this entire thing, than have to function through it, like doing school. All I can really do today is thank all of you for your prayers and letters. They are so encouraging.

Johnny

Posted Wednesday, March 3, 2004 at 11:42 pm

John is getting to the tail end of the chemo related vomitting. It doesn't hurt when he puts weight on his bad leg now which is a good sign that the tumor is responding to treatment. He isn't supposed to be putting weight on it because of the risk of fracturing his weakened bone and causing spread of the tumor...his mother was not shy about reminding him of this when he announced that he was painfree. Next hurdles this cycle are low white cell counts, possible mouth sores, and risk of infection for the next five days or so...thanks for praying.

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

John's attitude and faith remain inspiring. Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.' I'm taking notes on John. He is so good at resting in the Lord and his promises. I worry that he hasn't known the Lord as long as I have...that he isn't very spiritually mature. Hmmm, seems to be an advantage rather than a handicap. Oh God, give me childlike faith in you.
Phil

Posted Friday, March 5, 2004 at 7:20 pm

John's white count dropped as expected...lots of hand washing and no excursions out of the house for a few days now. John has had a couple of mouth sores, but as soon as he washes his mouth out with some nasty antibiotic rinse they dissappear. His energy and spirits are good. Our family got first dibs at scalp graffitti. The markers are water soluble so there will be plenty of creative opportunities...we really need to have a contest for most creative entry.

Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Psalms 73:25-26) What does it mean to have God as my portion. If many ordinary treasures are denied me I will be content. Or if I am allowed to have them, the enjoyment of them will never be necessary to my happiness. Or if I must see them go, I will scarcely feel a sense of loss since I have the source of all satisfaction, pleasure, and delight...I have God as my portion. (stolen from Tozer)

A good solid trial has a way of testing these things. I have been found wanting...but I'm moving in the right direction with God's help.

Grateful for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Tuesday, March 9, 2004 at 6:24 am

John's white blood count is back up and we all breath a sigh of relief...especially John who is sick of being home-bound and hand washing. He had only minimal mouth sores and really feels good. He has tests Friday to see how his hearing, kidneys, and heart are holding up through this. Judging by the decreased swelling and absence of pain in his knee the tumor is responding well to treatment. He remains cheerful... even during school.

Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalms 37:7) What an interesting verse. What comes first and what is to be my focus...delighting in the Lord. What is the promised result? I know some of the desires of my heart are not God-pleasing and are unlikely to be given to me by God. I also know that as I pour myself into delighting in the Lord, He will transform all the desires of my heart into ones that He is pleased to give me. I need only preoccupy myself with delighting in the Lord and trust my desires and their fulfilment to Him.

Delighting in God's answers to prayer and in your prayers on our behalf...

Phil

Posted Friday, March 12, 2004 at 9:04 pm

John and I spent the day at the hospital getting tests. We got good news and bad news. His hearing hasn't been affected by the chemo and his blood tests look great. The heart and kidney test results won't be read until monday. The test for histoplasmosis was negative...meaning the nodules on his lungs are still of uncertain origin...I'm glad its no mystery to God...we'll let Him carry it. John feels great and is sleeping over tonight at a buddy's house and then Saturday night with his brother at Taylor U...time to romp while he feels good.

...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) My actions and very being are dominated by my thoughts. Where I allow my mind to go is a good test of my commitment to Christ. I understood this before cancer but now I am realizing that everyday is filled with forks in the road for my thought life. As I decide between worry and Christ, or fear and Christ, or self pity and Christ, or bitterness and Christ, or doubt and Christ...I am finding the road toward Christ gives life and peace. While the other alternatives are tempting they ultimately lead to death. I choose life.

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

Thank you for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Tuesday, March 16, 2004 at 10:06 am

Sleep deprived from two overnights away from home this weekend has left John looking forward to his four day nap at the hospital this week during his chemotherapy. I hooked him up to IVs at home this morning to hydrate him for the start of chemo tomorrow at Lutheran hospital. Several of you have asked what the game plan is right now. Here is what we know so far:

John needs two more weeks of chemotherapy. Then in late April he will (barring a miracle) have an amputation of his knee at which time his ankle will be moved up and rotated so his toes point backwards. His ankle will then function as his knee joint. Later he'll be fitted with an artificial lower leg/foot. After recovering from the surgery for a couple of weeks he will have some more chemotherapy (don't really know how much more). Tests along the way help define the treatment course. Right now his knee swelling is nearly gone and he has no pain there which are signs that the cancer is responding to treatment. At surgery they will take a closer look at the tumor to gauge response. Thank you for your concern and prayers. John is doing great in his attitude and faith... God is near!

Truth be known, my heart yearns for my old pre-cancer life... no sense in denying it. By the same token I recognize that through this God has awakened in me a dormant yearning for knowing Him and this is the path toward that end. ...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus... (Hebrews 12:1,2) This is not the path I would choose but it is clearly the path marked out for me and my family. Now is the time to persevere and fix our eyes on Jesus.

Thanks for your prayers on our behalf...

Phil

Posted Wednesday, March 17, 2004 at 9:18 pm

John is snoozing away his hospitalization...punctuated by the cruel torture of being awakened every 2 hours for an output measurement. We got some good news that his kidneys and heart are not showing ill effects of the chemo drugs...thank you God! If all goes as planned he will be released from the hospital Friday.

I was expressing to Laura a while back that I feel disoriented. Routines are upset, perspectives are different, I feel off balance. As we talked I began to realize that rather than disorienting, this trial is having the effect of correcting my orientation. When all was comfortable, it was hard not to settle in as a citizen of the world and feel at home in this life. Scripture points out that the more appropriate posture for people of faith is that of an alien and stranger in the world. (1 Peter 2:11, Hebrews 11:13) Home is heaven and in the mean while I should expect a certain unsettled feeling, like that of a traveler in a foreign land. I suppose a case could be made that red flags should be waving if the world is feeling too much like home.

Thanks for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Sunday, March 21, 2004 at 4:28 pm

John got back from the hospital Friday. He says he can't remember the hospital stay even though he was up every 2 hours for outputs and had a few short conversations. Aren't drugs great. He's occasionally vomiting and feels tired but his attitude remains good. He gets hooked up to IVs at night until the vomiting stops. He'll have a few blood tests this week but otherwise not much medical. Thank you for your prayers that his good cells be protected while the cancer cells croak, no mouth sores, protection from infection while his immunity is low, and his continued faith and strength in Christ.

Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. (Psalms 63:7) That's our family. What a great word picture of baby chicks under the wings of our Father. Not just protected and secure but singing.

Thanks for your continued prayers...

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

Phil

Posted Friday, March 26, 2004 at 8:16 pm

John has been post-chemo vomiting the last few days, but now he has started obediently eating for his mom. He says an ice cream sundae tastes like water, and he has no hunger... imagine that. His white blood cells are low, as expected, so we pray that he gets no infections or mouth sores now. His joy in the Lord is evident to all...thank you God for touching John.

Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me. (Psalms 86:17) While immediate miraculous healing for John would be my first choice for a sign of God's goodness, God continuously showers signs of his goodness on our family. Pinned down for specifics, I could write a book, but right at the top of the list would be God's close abiding with John. As we walk this journey with him, he's the one taking the beating, and God showers on him grace, confidence, and peace. Another huge sign of God's goodness is the love and support extended to us by others. Each time someone says to us I'm praying it's like soothing ointment on an open wound. Thank you, God, for signs of your goodness.

Thanks for praying...

Phil

Posted Tuesday, March 30, 2004 at 6:49 am

John's blood test today showed his white count is climbing, but unfortunately he has developed anemia. The anemia requires a blood transfusion tomorrow. He is also going to have an MRI and a Cat Scan tomorrow. The MRI is of his leg to evaluate the tumor in preparation for surgery (or to document a miraculous healing by God). The Cat Scan is of his chest to get a better look at the nodules (or lack of them). John continues in good humor and just goes with the flow. We talk often of not worrying about tomorrow and not getting sloppy spiritually.

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22,23) Though I feel weak and tired - no matter what the storm may bring - God's great love will sustain me...I will not be consumed. He feels my pain; He'll carry the load for me; He really does care... His compassions never fail. Every morning they are new... never running out, never exhausted... I don't have to wonder if they will be with me today like they were with me yesterday and tomorrow will be the same. I can depend on Him, first and foremost, without qualification or hesitation...great is His faithfulness. I'm so glad I know God.

Thank you for praying...

Phil

Posted Wednesday, March 31, 2004 at 11:15 pm

John's transfusion went well. He got home with pinker cheeks and promptly started jumping rope with his sisters...quite a feat when you are supposed to stay off one of your legs. The MRI of his leg showed some response to the Chemo but was short of the hoped for miraculous response. His chest Cat Scan however showed no nodules other than one small one and the irregularity near his esophagus that they doubt is tumor. In other words the multiple small nodules seen before no longer show on Cat Scan. This is good that they disappeared but bad that they were most likely cancer. After his surgery John will need an aggressive course of Chemo to finish those little buggers off for good. I'll see if I can't get John to post something in the near future...he's doing great.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably (infinitely) more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:20, 21) How's your imagination? Mine is in rare form, especially when my asker is engaged talking to my Heavenly Daddy. There's no question in my mind...He is able. This power that makes him so capable is also at work within us. And the bottom line...His glory...not my comfort.

Thanks for praying...

Phil

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

Posted Sunday, April 4, 2004 at 8:12 pm

John takes his fourth run of chemotherapy this week...Tuesday through Friday. He'll snooze the week away. Surgery is tentatively scheduled for the last week of the month. We actually try not to do a lot of thinking about that...trusting that God's grace will be there for us when we need it. God's presence and grace are here each day and if we let our thoughts drift to the future we are quickly reminded why it is best to not go there. That is one of the life lessons that is part of this trial.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. (Revelation 4:11) The only thinkable relation between me and God is full lordship on His part and complete submission on my part. I owe him everything in my power to give him. They are, after all, His to begin with. They only exist because He wills it. He only created them for His glory. Only grief lies in giving to Him anything less than everything. And in total surrender my life as a Christian ceases to be complicated and becomes the essence of simplicity.

Thank you for your concern and prayers...
Phil

Posted Wednesday, April 7, 2004 at 9:33 pm

This session of chemotherapy is going well. Even on drugs John is pleasant and good natured. John's kidneys are showing some shadows suggesting the formation of some large kidney stones. Everyone is scratching their heads since this is not typical of this chemo routine so he will have a Cat Scan of them tomorrow to look closer. I spoke with the surgeon today and he has reviewed the newest MRI of John's leg. He said the changes he sees in the tumor are the type he would expect of a tumor that is responding well to treatment. After surgery they can more precisely gauge the response of the tumor. The clearing of John's lungs is also a good sign. We penciled in April 27 as the surgery date. It feels good to have a date...on the other hand...yuck!

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:22,23) This trial has definitely brought home the reality of inward groaning as we await the redemption of our bodies. These physical shells are fragile, temporary, and flawed. I'm so glad we have a hope for better to come for eternity.

Thanks for your concern and prayers...
Phil

Posted Saturday, April 10, 2004 at 11:30 pm

John got released from the hospital Friday morning and is back to the vomiting routine. Pray that his stomach will settle quickly. The Cat Scan of his kidneys showed no kidney stones. The shadows were left-over dye from previous x-rays. John and I got a little shock when we asked for specifics of the chemo plans after surgery. We thought it was 4 more treatments...turns out it is 12 more. He'll finish up mid December if all goes as planned. He's a little down about that... I hadn't really pursued specifics about post-surgery chemo plans because it was hard to see past surgery. He knew it might be more than 4 but 12 was quite a shock. Pray for our patience with this process and perseverance. I won't miss this yucky feeling in my stomach...just keep running to Jesus, the one who died and rose from the dead to give us life to the full.

Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy. (Psalms 99:5) My reaction to life reveals who or what is exalted in my life. What do I exalt and before what footstool shall I bow? Personal ambition, money, self comfort, human love,...God must not take second place to anything. Desperation and a severe lack of better alternatives has a way of bringing a guy right to God's footstool in worship and surrender. Oh God, be exalted above all my earthly affections.

Thank you for your prayers and have a blessed Easter...our Savior is risen...
Phil

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

Posted Tuesday, April 14, 2004 at 6:16 pm

John has stopped vomiting and we are thankful. Despite puking his guts out for three days he still managed to joke around, announcing the steak tasted just as good coming up and My hurling has become cold and efficient. Humor is good medicine. It's not that we never get down, but we know not to park there, and whom to run to when we are low. We know that God is in control, he loves us, and he has a good purpose for all of this. We are so blessed to have a relationship with him. You can pray that as John's white blood cell counts drop that he'll be protected from infection and mouth sores. Also, as we get closer to surgery...

When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold my by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. (Psalms 74:21-24) I'm not much better off than a stupid animal when my heart and spirit aren't right. As I turn my attention to God, no matter what the circumstance, I realize that he is right there, holding my hand, guiding me along the way. And oh never forget...the hope of glory. Earth isn't heaven and I shouldn't be surprised when it doesn't feel like it.

Thank you for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Friday, April 16, 2004 at 11:41 pm

Hi everyone, this is Johnny finally getting around to saying something. Dad has already written about what is happening medically with me so I will just give you a brief update on how I am feeling. I am in high spirits for the most part, but my throat is really sore so please pray that it gets better. Matthew 28:20b (And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age) would probably be the best description of my feelings for the future. Jesus is with me and will stay with me so I don't have to fear the future. I'm a little disappointed, though, because my blood counts are so low I can't go to the Quiz Invitational (at my own church) Friday and Saturday. I can't wait to quiz with the Ducks again!

I now understand how Christians with life-threatening illnesses can seem so happy; it is Jesus shining through their weaknesses that gives them such peace and joy, because I can tell you those of us on the hot seat aren't just naturally happy people. Well, thanks for all your prayers and I will try to put up another post before surgery.

In Christ,

Johnny

Posted Monday, April 19, 2004 at 10:59 pm

John's counts are coming back up. He got a sore throat this time and a few small mouth sores but otherwise things have been uneventful. He says next summer he plans to be the ultimate party animal after this year of sitting around and medical busy-ness. John's oncologist is pleasantly surprised by how few mouth sores he has had. We shared our rituals with him and then there is that army of people praying. Thank you so much. I have often commented to others that our family is reaping the harvest of seeds that others are sowing on our behalf. If John is not healed it won't be for lack of prayer. It's humbling and sweet to know others are lifting our names to the Father.

As great as it is to know others are praying for us...scripture reveals that we have some other heavy hitters interceding for us before the Father. The Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express... Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. (Romans 8:26,34) I don't know much about how this prayer thing works. I do know that scripture tells us to do it, Jesus himself often did it, God listens when we do it, I have never heard of someone doing it too much, and the more I do it the sweeter it gets.

Thank you for praying...

Phil

Posted Wednesday, April 21, 2004 at 11:43 pm

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

John's counts are up and he's feeling strong physically and spiritually. He is anemic and will need a blood transfusion to pump him up before surgery. Little by little all the details for his surgery are falling into place...less than a week away. Every day we are ministered to by the Lord through his personal touch, by our friends, and even by people we don't know all that well. Every day he gives us opportunity to minister to others because of this trial.

As I make arrangements for John's surgery I wrestle with conflicting thoughts. I have no doubt that God could heal John in an instant, and I often ask him for that...no surgery, no disfiguring a beautiful body, a no-brainer for lots of praise and honor to God. It feels odd to be asking my Father for that immediate miraculous healing, fully expecting that he may do just that, and yet make preparations for surgery. Surgery is obviously plan B on my list. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out. Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen (Romans 11:33-36) OK... let God be God...he knows best...he'll do what's right. Help me God to embrace your plan whatever it may be. As long as I have breath, I will praise the name of the Lord.

Thank you for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Sunday, April 25, 2004 at 7:37 pm

Surgery is scheduled Tuesday. Here's one dad who will be looking hard at his son's knee Tuesday morning before anyone else touches it. I'm so glad we know the Lord. There is obviously some apprehension in our house about John's surgery but no despair. We know that we can trust God to do the right thing in our lives and to give us the grace for whatever that may be.

As a parent it is a great faith builder to see God comfort and carry my son as he walks a path I have never been asked by God to walk. I'm also proud as a dad to watch my son keep his head up and his eyes fixed on Jesus. You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal. Isaiah 26:3-4.

Thank you for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Monday, April 26, 2004 at 10:41 pm

10:30 A.M. is when my surgery starts, I am not very excited. Through this entire day I have been trying not to think about tomorrow or what is coming, it is so hard not to count the hours or think about how this will be the last time I will get to feel my left knee. The only way I can keep from being overwhelmed is to hold on to Jesus with both hands, he is supporting me and caring for me. He hasn't yet given me the grace for tomorrow, but I know that he will give me the strength when I need it. My desire is for complete healing, that tomorrow there would be no operation and this whole nightmare would end, but I understand that God may have a better plan (I hope he doesn't) for me and that there are places I can go with 1 and 1/2 legs that I could never go with 2. Please pray for tomorrow and thank you all who have been praying.

In Christ,

Johnny

Posted Tuesday, April 27, 2004 at 5:07 pm

The day started early with a trip to St. Vincent's Hospital in Indianapolis. After a quick check of John's knee it was obvious to all of us what God's answer was about the surgery question. We prayed with Dr. Rougraff, the surgeon, and sent John off to surgery about 11:30. We got periodic favorable updates through the day while several friends sat with us. Surgery finished at 4:15 pm. Dr. Rougraff said he couldn't have been more pleased with how it all went. We thank God for his perfect will and his mercy at every step.

Thanks for your prayers that supported us through this difficult day...

Phil and Laura

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

Posted Tuesday, April 27, 2004 at 10:32 pm

Johnny's surgery started about 5 minutes ago. Corrie and I are still going to our classes today, but we periodically check our answering machines for news. As soon as we hear any news we will post it for everyone to read.

'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.' (Jeremiah 29:11) Even with everything that is happening, God has given us a peace that he is in control of everything and will work it out for his glory and our good. Thank you so much for your prayers. We feel the Lord's comfort even among the cornfields of Upland, Indiana.

Taylor and Corrie

Posted Wednesday, April 28, 2004 at 11:09 pm

John is doing well. He is sleeping alot and his pain is well controled with an epidural. He's relieved surgery is done, and is at peace with this whole deal. He has been up on his good foot for a short walk and sits up on the edge of his bed periodically. We are really pleased with his progress and courage. You can pray for speedy healing, good pain relief, full recovery of the nerves that were traumatized in surgery, freedom from infection (he has a slight fever right now), and early release from the hospital. Also pray that he would keep his eyes on Jesus as he walks this journey.

One of the surgical techs told me that before they put John to sleep he was calm and said, I'm not afraid, Jesus is right here with me. So God says no to keeping the leg but yes to my son experiencing intimacy with Christ. This makes me cry....tears of sorrow mixed with unbridled joy. Life with Jesus truely gives us a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, a garment of praise instead of a spirit of dispair. We will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord, for the display of his splendor. (Isaiah 61:3)

Thanks for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Friday, April 30, 2004 at 7:22 am

John walked a few hundred feet yesterday while I tagged along pushing his IV pole, ready to steady him if needed. He vomits regularly from the medicine in the epidural (I think) but it controls his pain so well he hardly cares. He sleeps most of the time...I try not to wish the days away because I am enjoying the rare pleasure of time standing still.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. (Proverbs 18:10) Sitting in the room with John's broken little body the only safe escape from the storm is the Lord. All I need to do is run to him.

Thanks for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Friday, April 30, 2004 at 10:10 pm

John walked several hundred yards today. His pain was well controled until his epidural catheter fell out and then things got pretty desparate until they got him switched over to an alternative pain reliever. He's comfortable now. The doctor says he may go home Sunday if we can control his pain without IV's and if the pesky fever that appears each morning goes away....please pray toward that end with us. The Lord continues to comfort us each day.

I read today that we come to Jesus in our suffering looking not for a pathway out of hardships but for a pathway into his presence. Is it possible that knowing Jesus more intimately because of a trial is better than being delivered from that trial? Perhaps this is what Paul is getting at when he writes, our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. (2 Corinthans 4:17) My flesh screams for relief from the trial...my soul cries out to know Christ more. It appears that this trial will go on for a bit...I anticipate that my soul will experience Christ in a fresh and glorious way.

Thank you for your concern and prayers...

Phil

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Posted Saturday, May 1, 2004 at 11:59 pm

Very tough day today. John is either sleeping from the narcotics or in some level of pain from moderate to severe. Unfortunately he can't sleep all the time because he must get out of bed and walk periodically and eat for strength and healing. It's my job to make sure he does these...so I'm not the most popular guy in the room much of the time. The doctors are working to adjust his oral pain meds so he can go home tomorrow. Please pray for good relief of his pain and the ability to deal well with the pain when he has it. The rehab road often isn't easy so he's going to need a good dose of grace as he continues this journey. We're so glad God doesn't waste pain...we're confident he has a purpose for all of this, though it's hard to see sometimes from this vantage point.

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. (1 Peter 5:10) Well I could do without the after you have suffered a little while part, but the rest is good...uh... apparently God thinks it is all good. John and I are looking forward to the less ouchy part of this plan. God promises that he himself will restore us and make us strong, firm and steadfast. We'll be able to look back on the suffering and say...it was just a little while...and it was good.

Thanks for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Sunday, May 2, 2004 at 20:26 pm

John got home today. His pain is well controlled but he occasionally vomits his medicine up making it tricky to give him his medicine and keep it down. Pray that the vomiting would stop and for continued good healing and pain control. So nice to be together as a family again. Much to be thankful for...

Thank you for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Tuesday, May 4, 2004 at 10:23 pm

I started John on IV fluids tonight. So far he has been able to keep his pain meds down and has been practically painfree but he has kept little food or liquids down otherwise. This afternoon he's not even kept fluids down so the IV will help keep him from dehydrating and I can give some IV meds for nausea. So far so good. Over the next few days we will be able to taper off some of the pain meds and hopefully his gut will settle. His attitude is good for the most part and he is adjusting to his new anatomical layout well. He can pretty much go where ever he wants.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. (Psalms 118:1) In a little over three short months I feel like we have been through a hurricane. Sure, God has answered some of our prayers with a no... but it gives me great confidence for the future to know that through it all my heart is still thankful to God... I can still shout that the Lord is good... and I know beyond a doubt that his love will never fail us because it endures forever.

God bless you for standing with us and praying...

Phil

Posted Thursday, May 6, 2004 at 9:53 pm

John is having minimal pain now and off all pain meds except Tylenol and Aleve. He's busy plugging away at school work and does laps around the house to get back in shape. The vomiting is gone and he's obediently eating for his mother. God has blessed him with a desire to see the big picture of life instead of focusing on his personal losses. We talk a lot at home...this is new to all of us and we want to be teachable students. No chemo for 10 more days and John sees the surgeon in a week. Each day...every breath...what a gift from God.

Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. (Psalms 86:11) A teachable spirit, that's my desire. I am so easily deceived by my flesh, the world, and the devil. My internal wrestling with God's plan and my yearning for control is evidence of a divided heart. Oh God, your way, your truth, your glory...and for me, give me an undivided heart.

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Thanks for your prayers...

Phil

Posted Tuesday, May 11, 2004 at 9:48 pm

I am now two weeks out from surgery. I am doing ok but now and then I get a jolt of pain in my leg, please pray that it goes away. I only get to see my leg when dad changes the dressing, it looks pretty weird. Jesus has been so good to me through this, when I start looking ahead at 12 more chemos I could just cry, but when I feel that way I close my eyes and pray to my savior that he would take my worries and he does. I have spent a couple of hours re-reading some of your letters; I have burst into tears from your support. As I sit here typing this I can't help but feel blessed. God has blessed me so much by giving me so many supporters. I needed your support and you gave it to me. Thank you all for your prayers.

In Christ,
Johnny

Posted Thursday, May 13, 2004 at 9:04 pm

Mom drove me down to Indianapolis this morning (long drive), we arrived almost 45 minutes early (that has got to be a Chase record). We sat down in the waiting room and I opened up my Quizzing book. Our visit with Dr. Rougraff was short but very positive. The first thing we found out was that he is going to wait another week before taking out the staples (thank God because it looks like it is going to be painful). The second (and best) thing he told us is that the analysis of the removed tumor showed up as 98% DEAD. The cancer cells that were not dead looked so sickly that Dr. Rougraff said that they would have probably died within a week. We sadly still have to do 12 more chemos but at least we now know that those evil tumor cells are being slaughtered and all this vomiting isn't for nothing. Mom and I left the building with big smiles on our faces and our hearts were praising God for such good news. Thank you all for your prayers and supporting letters. If anyone has a good idea for painless staple removal please let me know. A blow to the head for unconsciousness has already been recommended (by Dad).

In Christ,
Johnny

Posted Sunday, May 16, 2004 at 4:33 pm

Last week and the week coming seem like a cease-fire in the war. John gets out daily for about a quarter mile hike (with his crutches) and goes up and down the stairs in our house three at a time. Someone lent us a wheelchair which he hasn't used yet. God's grace to John and our family touches us daily. When John saw his surgeon last week he was pleased with John's progress but some of his wound isn't healed yet so no staples out until later this week which delayed chemotherapy a week. The pathology result of the tumor in his leg showed 98% cell death of the tumor cells (95% or better is considered a favorable response to chemotherapy). This great result has caused some controversy about the next steps with John's treatment. Please pray for the doctors making those decisions. Also pray that John's wounds heal well and that a nerve in his foot that isn't working would wake up.

The story of Lazarus is told in John 11:1-44. It's interesting that Jesus delayed his trip to help Lazarus and allowed him to die (verses 6, 14, 15) A friend sent us a quote from John Piper commenting on this. How many people today - even Christians - would murmur at Jesus for callously letting Lazarus die and putting Mary and Martha through the pain and misery of those days? And if people today saw that this was motivated by Jesus's desire to magnify the glory of God, how many would call this harsh or unloving? What this shows is how far above the glory of God most people value painfree lives. For most people, love is whatever puts human value and human well-being at the center. So Jesus' behavior is unintelligible to them. But let us not tell Jesus what love is. Let us not instruct Him how He should love us and make us central. Let us learn from Jesus what love is and what our true well-being is. Love is doing whatever you need to do to help people see and savor the glory of God in Christ forever and ever. Love keeps God central. Because the soul was made for God.

These are truths that have come to life in our trial. They give meaning and purpose to what appears on the surface to be

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needless suffering. It would seem like a cold truth were it not for two sweet words nested in this story of Lazarus. Jesus wept. (John 11:35) He didn't weep because he could do nothing about the situation. I'd like to think that he was moved by the grief of his friends. He doesn't go about heartlessly orchestrating the events of our lives for his glory...but he grieves with us and sheds tears with us as he works our his perfect and loving plan. God be glorified!

Thank you for praying....Phil

Posted Wednesday, May 19, 2004 at 9:06 pm

John should get his staples out Thursday...he isn't looking foward to it. Someone suggested he interview the staple removal technician and check her references to make sure she is gentle and experienced. We're going to put some numbing cream on the wound, give him some pain medicine, and pray...so it shouldn't be too bad. Chemo is scheduled to start Monday but the jury is still out about what drugs to use. John has some pressure sores that need healing...one on his heel. He plugs away at school, more motivated than ever since his brothers and sisters are done for the year. His attitude is great. God showers him with grace for each day. When we get up-tight we are reminded of the simple little lessons...don't worry about tomorrow...trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Jesus said, I am the vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. (John 15:1,2) Disruptive moments in life are definitely times of pruning. In order for me to thrive and blossom I need to be pruned from time to time. Yes, pruning hurts but the gardener is loving and skilled. Someone once said, The Father is never closer to the vine than when He is pruning it. That's been my experience.

Thanks for praying...
Phil

Posted Sunday, May 23, 2004 at 10:38 pm

John's staples came out Thursday...he's glad he doesn't have to go through that again...it hurt. His wounds are healing well and he is in a cast to help protect his leg and keep his foot pointed (ballerina position) in preparation for fitting his prosthesis after chemotherapy is done. His spirits are good. Chemotherapy is set to start again Tuesday. The decision has been made about what medications to use next. It has been an interesting, make that agonizing, process. There are as many opinions as people we talk to. The bottom line is that no one knows the right thing to do. There are extremely aggressive approaches that run the risk of putting John on the heart transplant list because of drug toxicities but hold the promise (unproven) of better cure rates. There are less aggressive approaches that make you wonder if two years later you won't look back and wish you had done more. There is the possibility that John is already cured or the possibility that nothing will cure him. It's all quite maddening. Then there's the alternative medicine options. We have asked God to help us know what to do and he has answered with a peace about the decision.

Listen to advise and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise. Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails. (Proverbs 19:20-21) These verses have been my refuge through this decision making time. God knows our desire for wisdom and he will help us know whose advise to follow. Ultimately it is God's purpose that will prevail...a good purpose...a loving purpose...a purpose that will bring glory to God.

Thank you for standing with us in prayer...
Phil

Posted Wednesday, May 26, 2004 at 10:08 pm

John is about half way through this week of chemotherapy. We have changed drugs now and have decided to go with the original treatment plan rather than the other more aggressive (dangerous) proposals. He's still getting some high dose poisons. You can pray in particular for protection for his bladder, brain, and bone marrow, that he won't get mouth sores or infections, and that any remaining cancer would respond to treatment. John is cheerful, tired, and resting in God's overflowing grace.

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. (Psalms 20:7) Back in King

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David's day, chariots and horses were the premium fighting tools for battle. In this cancer battle, there are plenty of options for fighting to win. My natural bend is to choose the hardest hitting most aggressive alternative in the fear that anything less may fail to accomplish a cure. This verse helps me to get my focus back to where it belongs. My trust is not in the chemo; my trust is in the Lord. The Lord will be the one who heals John...or not. I'm glad we have chemo, but I'm more glad we have a Loving Almighty God.

Thanks for your prayers...Phil

Posted Saturday, May 29, 2004 at 8:33 pm

John got out of the hospital Friday. He only vomited twice and was awake and interacting with the world about half the time. This new medication seems less hard on him but he feels pretty washed out right now at home...Please pray for a quick return of his energy, freedom from mouth sores, no infections, and a continued focus on Jesus as the source of his joy and peace. God is so faithful to give us peace as long as we look to him for it.

In the midst of a trial it is normal and right to cry out to God for relief. But we can't and shouldn't make that the dominant theme of our lives as we wait on God for his answer. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. (Psalms 313:2) The dominant theme of our lives in and out of trials needs to be satisfaction with relationship with God. As I slog through this muddy water of John's cancer I am finding that God is enough...my soul is satisfied in Him.

Thanks for your prayers...Phil

Posted Wednesday, June 2, 2004 at 9:11 pm

John is recovering quickly from this round of chemo. His energy is back, he's plugging away at school and Bible quizzing, he's cheerful,...life is good. His white blood count is down so we are praying that he won't get infected, won't get any mouth sores, and his counts will recover quickly. Daily we rest in God's peace and run to Him when it isn't here.

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Psalms 139:16) Even before our birth God had a plan for our lives. I find much more comfort tracing this current storm in our lives to God's hand rather than to some random misfortune of life. Knowing that God is love perfected and that He is in control allows me to rest in a peace beyond understanding.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Saturday, June 5, 2004 at 10:34 pm

John's feeling good even though his white count and hemoglobin are low. All that means is that he needs to limit contact with others to prevent infections...he has no mouth sores. He also may need a transfusion before his next chemotherapy. God has blessed him with a wonderful attitude which makes life easier for all of us. He's working hard on finishing up school (two weeks to go) and Bible quizzing (he has a tournament next weekend). A day doesn't go by without an encouragement card arriving in the mail. We receive daily reminders that many are lifting us up in prayer...humbling...speechless.

A quick update on Laura's dad. He has recovered from his surgery completely and feels much better than he has for months. He is grateful for your prayers on his behalf and so are we.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. (John 14:1) Some of Jesus' words to his disciples on their final night together before he was crucified. The answer to a troubled heart...trust in God. The cause of a troubled heart...misplaced trust and/or lack of trust in God. Is God trustworthy? If he isn't I need a different God.

Thanks for your prayers...Phil

Posted Wednesday, June 9, 2004 at 11:00 pm

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Quizzing finals is this weekend; I hope I have studied enough. I am still working on getting comfortable at night, please pray that I will sleep better. As for my attitude I am still in high spirits due to all the support I am getting from all of you and to God's grace. As summer starts I can watch my siblings swim and ride bikes and it is kinda discouraging but I have decided that next year I will be the ultimate party animal on one and a half legs. When mom comes in from weeding usually she says, John, I can't wait until next year when you can help me. I think she has a next-year list for me to do, so I may also end up being the ultimate pack horse.

Isn't it great how we get new bodies in heaven? I won't need to walk around with a fake leg there. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thank you all for your prayers and cards.

In Christ,
Johnny

Posted Sunday, June 13, 2004 at 9:48 pm

John saw the surgeon Thursday and his wounds are healing very well. One nerve is damaged but he thinks it will heal in time (and prayer). John is as active as you can be with one a half legs. He is still in a cast because it feels better immobilized for now. He and his sisters had quiz meet this weekend...they won second and will go to a national competition next month. He remains cheerful and goes with the treatment flow. Tomorrow starts another round of chemotherapy.

Praise the Lord. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him! (psalms 147:1) Three words struck me in this verse...good, pleasant, and fitting. And what are these words describing? Praise to God. My praise to God is not dependent on my circumstances but on who He is. He is worthy of my praise...created to the creator...child to Father...beloved to lover. I may not always feel like praising him, but as I praise him I experience how good, pleasant, and fitting it is to praise him.

Thanks for your prayers....Phil

Posted Thursday, June 17, 2004 at 10:11 pm

John got home from the hospital this evening...tired out, on the edge of vomitting, but happy to be home. We are hopeful he can bounce back as quickly as his last round of chemo so he can attend some of cancer camp next week. It is a special summer camp for kids with cancer to get together and have some fun. Thanks for also praying that he won't get mouth sores, infections, and that his healthy tissues would be protected while the cancer gets destroyed.

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) Wow, are these commands really in the Bible? If I claim to be in Christ Jesus these are my goals...my calling. Some good food for thought, reflection, and flat out crying out to God for help to live the life he calls me to.

Thanks for your prayers...Phil

Posted Sunday, June 20, 2004 at 9:11 pm

John vomited on and off through the weekend including this morning but then was ready to go to church and off to cancer kids' camp this afternoon. He had been unsure about going this past week because of bad camp experiences he has had in the past, chemo side effects, and because of his present physical limitations. As we talked about it I mentioned that it might be a great opportunity to encourage some other kids in the Lord. He replied, I know dad! That is the main reason I want to go. Pray for that soldier. His immunity will bottom out this week, he will be at risk of infections and mouth sores. (and pray for his parents during this separation)

My conversation with John reminded me of these verses. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in

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any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have recieved from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3,4) John and our family have indeed been comforted by God in this trial and I am confident He will continue to comfort us out of His compassion for us. Part of the joy found during suffering is having the opportunity to share the comfort we have recieved with others in their troubles.

Thanks for your prayers...Phil

Posted Thursday, June 24, 2004 at 10:25 pm

We didn't hear from John this week while he was at camp until this morning when the oncology nurse called and reported that he had a fever, chills and no white blood cells. They transported him to the hospital and started IV antibiotics right away. Then we received John's report that camp was a blast. He was surprised how many of the teens were bitter about their cancers...imagine that. All he was missing by having to leave early was a dance tonight...he wasn't too upset about that. Pray for a quick recovery of his white blood cells and resolution of this infection. The Lord is good!

Listen to me...you whom I have upheld since you were concieved, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. (Isaiah 46:3-4) God upholds us, sustains us, rescues us, and carries us from the womb to the tomb...and then comes the good part.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Monday, June 28, 2004 at 10:35 pm

John was released from the hospital Friday so he could attend his grandparents 50th wedding anniversary. We gave him IV antibiotics all weekend and now that his white blood cell count is up we can stop them. He's feeling good and we have a two week break until his next course of chemotherapy so he can go to the last Bible quiz invitational of this season without a chemo hangover. It's nice to look foward to a little lull in the flurry of medical activity. The Lord showers us daily with his comfort and grace as we run to him for them.

I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. (Psalms 34:4,5) I am reminded by these verses not to get sloppy spiritually, especially when it looks like things will be going easier for a bit. It's natural to run to God when the heat is on but when things cool down (like now) its easy to let things slide. Keep seeking the Lord, keep looking to him and my face will be radiant...I will be delivered from fear.

Thank you for praying...Phil

Posted Monday, July 5, 2004 at 4:22 pm

Here's a question: What seems to drag on and on and on? Answer: CHEMOTHERAPY! You know I do not know how those kids with leukemia survive three years of chemo. Well I guess God just gives them the grace to get through it. I met some really neat kids at cancer camp but I also saw what cancer does to kids without God. Some kids get mad at God for cancer but because they reject the only source of grace and joy all they get is their own depression and self pity. We had a short vacation at Michindoh (family camp) last weekend, which was fun. Next year I will get to swim, waterslide and run. I have another week off from chemo and am feeling good. Thank you all for praying and thank you for your continued support.

In Christ,
Johnny

Posted Monday, July 12, 2004 at 11:06 pm

John had a appointment with his surgeon Thursday and got his cast off. He has a pressure sore wound on his heel that looks good but is not yet healed... meaning no swimming yet. He also has a nerve that isn't working yet so keep praying. The bones have healed together and he is starting a home exercise and stretching program to start preparing for his new

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prosthesis (maybe later this year). It has been a nice break from chemotherapy these last few weeks but tomorrow its back to buisness at Lutheran hospital. John continues to lean on Jesus.

I found a verse in scripture that I go back to again and again. I know that I have read this verse dozens of times in the past but it really resonates with my life circumstances right now. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. (1 John 4:16) My life is a bit of a mess right now. This reminder in scripture has been a great place to run to in the brokenness. God's love for me is a fact that I know. Not only do I know God's love but I also rely on it...I trust in God's love even when my feelings and life situation would call it into question. The awesome thing is that as I turn my attention to His love He gives me relationship with Him...way better than a picture perfect life.

Thanks for your prayers...Phil

Posted Sunday, July 18, 2004 at 11:06 pm

John was released from the hospital Thursday and we all breath a sigh of relief...one more down...nine to go. Now we hold on while his counts drop and pray for protection from infection and mouth sores. His attitude is generally good which makes the whole process much easier on all of us. We continue to look to God for his grace in all this and He is right here...what a great spiritual experience. We really can trust God.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. (Psalms 46:1) Refuge means a quiet place to go to for protection. Ever-present means God is easy to find if I'll look. Here's my testimony...God's presence and sheltering is here and experienced...especially in this time of trouble. And my strength...well that's God.

Thanks for your prayers...Phil

Posted Saturday, July 24, 2004 at 10:02 pm

John had a good week. No signs of mouth sores or infections. His white count should be coming up by Monday. He got a blood transfusion Friday...its weird that this stuff is so routine now. We met with the guy who will be making John's leg when he is ready. It is hard to find someone with experience doing the kind of prosthesis that John needs. Eric is local, has done four previously, and is enthusiastic about taking John's case. His heel is healing slowly but surely. He remains cheerful (for a teenager) and daily displays God's grace. Thank you God!

Jesus speaking the night before his crucifixion...I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (John 16:33) My study bible points out two interesting contrasts in this verse...between in me and in the world and between peace and trouble. I experience unexplainable peace as I abide in Christ. The world I live in offers up some pleasures but I shouldn't be surprised when trouble visits. Bottom line...trouble will not consume me because Jesus has overcome the world. I am thankful for peace! I am thankful for Jesus!

I am thankful for your prayers...Phil

Posted Sunday, August 1, 2004 at 7:06 pm

John has finished his three courses of Ifosfamide and now starts a new drug (for him) on Monday. The routine is the same - four or five days in the hospital, but his white counts won't drop as much, he shouldn't be as nauseous, and the treatments can be given closer together. He continues to work his foot for strength and flexibility. The pressure sore is healing slowly but surely. He went to a promise-keeper event this weekend with some friends and came back with a big smile. He keeps facing the right direction (toward Jesus) and this keeps his attitude good and his faith strong.

I will not leave you as orphans. (John 14:18) What a wonderful promise from Jesus. The word orphan elicits feelings of abandonment and despair. That's not from the Lord. He has adopted me into his family with all the rights and priveledges of a son whose dad is God. Any perceived distance between me and God is from feelings that haven't yet yielded to fact. As I meditate on fact my feelings should fall in line with the truth.

Thanks for praying...Phil

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Posted Saturday, August 7, 2004 at 9:30 pm

This new chemo drug I'm getting isn't as bad as the other stuff. I get the drug on Monday and have to stay in the hospital until it all washes out. The doctors said my kidneys are working great so I got out a day earlier than expected because they got rid of the drug so fast. Getting out of Chemo early was awesome, well, at least until Mom said I had to make up 2 days of school on Friday. I am feeling ok, this chemo was not as bad but Mom still gave me atavan (it helps my nausea but it makes me forget everything). Mom commented today about how when this all started she would cry when I would hurl, but now she can eat a sandwich and carry on a conversation during my retching. Dad took me to see a prosthetist and he showed me what my leg will look like. It was cool. He also said that I would be able to water ski with it as long as I hosed it down afterward. Thank you all for still praying and sending cards, it is touching how everyone still remembers me through this long trial, I guess I didn't expect to still receive cards 7 months into this. Please pray I don't get any mouth sores with this new drug. God is good!

In Christ,
Johnny

Posted Sunday, August 15, 2004 at 5:06 pm

John has been doing great. He quickly bounced back from the last chemo. Thankfully he didn't get any mouth sores, vomitted very little, and really feels good physically. He is caught up with his school work (which we started up last week), reads Star Wars novels, and is plugging away at strengthening his foot for his prothesis. He says that he is actually looking forward to being able to do chores again. His positive attitude is a daily testimony to God's love and grace being poured out on him, the same grace available to anyone who realizes their need. Tomorrow starts up his next round of chemo...we're hoping it will go as smoothly as the last.

Deal with your servant according to your love and teach me your decrees. (Psalms 119:124) Before John's cancer I thought I had a pretty good handle on God. Its interesting trudging through this experience to see how my understanding of things about God that I thought I already understood are much clearer to me now. If I didn't believe that God was dealing in love with me and my family though this cancer I would turn my back on God and find the God that was worthy of my attention. But knowing that God lovingly deals with me through all my experiences in life causes me to turn to Him with a heart to know Him more. Hey I wanted to know God before all this broke loose but I am finding that adversity brings to light things about God that I guess are difficult to grasp without it. Now I am more hungry than ever to know God. As sweet as relationship with God is now, I anticipate that in the future I will look back on my current understanding and say I didn't quite get it then.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Sunday, August 22, 2004 at 9:10 pm

John did well with chemotherapy this week... no vomiting, plugging through school, pretty cheerful except that he had to stay until Friday because his drug levels didn't fall as fast as last time. There was some question about a medication error. Six months ago my head would feel like exploding if that happened but this time...whatever Lord, you take care of it. I guess that is what surrender is all about. John's heel sore has healed and he enjoyed the luxury of swimming in the pond again. It didn't matter that the water was cold and the air temperature 60 degrees. He came out of the water with blue lips, shivering, and happy. A week off of chemo now. Pray for no mouth sores, DEATH TO CANCER, enjoying each day, and intimacy with Christ.

It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. (Psalms 119:71) I read once that it is the ragged edges of life that bring us in close proximity to the text. It is so true that when my feelings are low, when God seems distant, when I want to hit the rewind button and delete a scene of my life, the words of scripture come to life with power, comfort, and hope.

Thanks for praying....Phil

Posted Sunday, August 29, 2004 at 4:45 pm

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

The weeks seem to tick by quickly, here we are time for another chemotherapy session. I'll plug John into an IV tonight and he'll check into the hospital tomorrow morning. He will be in the hospital until Thursday or Friday depending on when the drug levels drop to a safe level (pray for a Thursday discharge). He has been bouncing back from this chemo drug (methotrexate) quickly and life has been pretty normal otherwise. John's heel sore is completely healed and with exercise his foot is getting stronger. Swimming has been a great way for him to blow off teenage steam. Keep praying that the paralyzed nerve on the top of his foot would be restored. Many comment on John's upbeat attitude..that's God in him.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) I was in conversation with some friends when one of them remarked that his problems are trivial compared to our family's trial with John's cancer. My mind drifted to the phrase written by Paul our light and momentary troubles. When this all started I was amazed by Paul's understatement of his many hardships. Stoned near to death, shipwrecked, beaten, imprisoned, his life was constantly threatened. I realized during that conversation that my perspective of life is being refined by my son's cancer. No matter what the hardships, they are light and momentary compared to the eternal glory that they are accomplishing. God gives us almost daily glimpses of the eternal glory he is working through John's cancer. Immagine what God is doing that we can't see. Yes, cancer stinks... no, I would never deliberately put my son through this... yes, it is a light and momentary trouble compared to the eternal work God is doing through it.

Thanks for praying...God is good...Phil

Posted Friday, September 3, 2004 at 9:06 pm

Hey everybody, I've had a couple of great days. I escaped early, from the hospital that is, yesterday. Dad says I drank like a fish and washed that poison out in record time. My doctor came in Thursday morning and asked if he could grant me a wish, what would it be. I thought for about .003 seconds and replied, to leave this prison. He answered, your wish is my command. My drug level was .1 (right at the limit). I got home and felt sick all Thursday but at least I was back in my domain. Today I woke up early and started school. At noon mom called me down stairs. I was met there by two volunteers from Make-A-Wish toting a pizza party and a new laptop computer. That made my month. This thing is a beast, so an appropriate name applies...Sauron. (If you haven't seen The Lord of The Rings you won't get it)

I have six chemos left. Next week I will have a Cat scan to check on the nodules in my lungs. Most of them were gone at the last check in April. Please pray that they are all gone now. Thank God for no mouth sores, swimming (mom calls me the waterbug), a new computer, good spirits, and peace. Thank you all for praying.

In Christ,
Johnny

Posted Thursday, September 9, 2004 at 10:00 pm

Great news on the CT scan of John's chest today. Two areas of concern on his last xray are unchanged and probably are not cancerous. They will need to be monitored over time, but as long as they don't grow they are probably nothing...goofy blood vessels, scar tissue, or whatever. What an answer to prayer! This was a nice dose of good news as we head back into another week of chemo starting Monday...back to the nasty stuff for three rounds...low blood counts, vomiting, low energy. We appreciate your prayers and encouragement.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. (Psalms 107:1) With good news and answer to prayer it is easy to give thanks to God and acknowledge his love. But good news or bad we will give him thanks...for he is good...he is worthy of our thanks and praise.

Thanks for your prayers...Phil

Posted Friday, September 17, 2004 at 6:00 pm

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

John got home from the hospital this morning. He mostly slept through the week to control his vomiting...he will be on IVs for the next few days until he can keep stuff down adequately. This hospital visit was a little more stressful than most because John's younger sister Marta had her appendix taken out Monday night. Everything went smoothly, but sitting in a hospital 120 miles away with John while Laura helped Marta get taken care of was a bit stressful. Marta has bounced back quickly. Please pray for John to be free from mouth sores, infection, a quick recovery of his white blood count, and continued joy in Christ.

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!' (Matthew 14:30) Peter was doing well walking on the water until he started to focus on the wind and waves. When things were happening Monday I did fine as long as I kept my mind's-eye focused on Jesus and his loving care for me and my family. I had nothing to fear and could rest in peace and confidence in my Lord. When I did allow my mind to venture into focusing on the storm I was quickly reminded by a fearful spirit that I am much happier and better off focusing on the goodness of the Lord. I know and rely on the love God has for me (1 John 4:16).

Thank you for praying...Phil

Posted Friday, September 24, 2004 at 3:13 pm

Laura spoke about our experience with John at Grabill Missionary Church on August 22, 2004. This is the text of her talk:

Confessing Christ in the Middle of the Storm

by Laura Chase for GMC 8/04

Hi, I'm Laura Chase. My husband Phil and I have ten children, we live in DeKalb County, and our fourteen-year-old son, Johnny, has cancer.

I am a beginner at suffering, and the great temptation I have is to be silent until all the ends of this story are neatly tied up and satisfying. But you, my brothers and sisters, need to hear from the middle of my pain that what you and I believe is true. The Bible is more comforting, heaven is more real, and the comfort of Jesus more tangible than I have ever known before. I am in difficult, threatening territory. But if I'm paying attention, I can just make out the sweet aroma of Christ. He's already been here, preparing the way.

In January, John had been complaining about a sore knee and Advil and Tylenol no longer brought relief. My husband Phil is a family doc in Auburn and he took Johnny to the hospital for xrays late one night. A specialist who was never there on Mondays, let alone 9:30 at night, peeked his head in the door of the xray department and offered to read the xrays for Phil. They lifted the xrays to the ceiling light. Clear as a textbook case, it was osteosarcoma: a deadly, fast-growing cancer of the bone found in one in a million teenagers. John sank to the floor to keep from passing out from the shock. Phil remembers saying to him, "Aren't you glad we're Christians?"

Because the specialist was there, Phil didn't have to diagnose cancer in his own son.

When they came home, we cried and prayed together, and Jesus comforted us. After a sleepless night, Phil and John flew to Houston to a cancer center. They got the last two frequent flyer seats on that plane. Why Houston? My brother-in-law is an oncologist there and he knows one of the world's authorities on childhood osteosarcoma. Arrangements were made quickly, John was seen, tested, and sent home with a treatment plan. The large size of the tumor and probable spread to his lungs meant very aggressive

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chemotherapy, followed by amputation, followed by more chemotherapy. The harsh side effects had to be risked for any hope of saving John's life.

We didn't face this storm alone. I got the word out to our friends, and soon we heard from Christians across the country that prayer was going up for us. Prayer meetings gathered for us in India, in Brazil, in Africa. And you guys at Grabill Missionary Church were incredible. We'd only been attending this church for six months, but the Lord moved you to circle around us right away. You prayed for us; you spoke comforting words; you hugged us; you brought us meals, and books, and blankets, and cookies; you visited us in the hospital; you sent us notes and cards; you shared your own experiences with cancer; you offered suggestions for doctors and nutrition; and you reached out with love to our other children. You truly became the hands and feet of Christ to us.

The aroma of Christ led us step by step at John's amputation. The surgery John needed was European. God led us to a surgeon in Indianapolis who had exactly the right European training. God placed a Christian friend of mine in that surgeon's operating room staff. He knew the scheduling people, so it was no coincidence that the aroma of Christ filled the operating room that day because a Christian anesthesiologist, several Christian nurses and several Christian medical technicians were praying for Johnny as they worked on him. The Lord gave Johnny strength the first time he saw his short leg. He reacted not with horror, but with relief.

I am learning eight lessons right now. First, I am not in control. I have to remember that God's love is in my best interest, not for my happiness, but for my holiness, to make me more like his Son.

Second, my attitude is my choice. I tend to drift into fear, worry, and self-pity because I think I deserve those feelings. Instead, I must choose to turn to Jesus instead of my feelings, and he replaces fear with peace, worry with hope, and self-pity with praise.

Third, I choose to not anesthetize myself with distractions. It would be easy to run from the pain into too much television, movies, games, vacations, good fiction, or good food. Right now, it's better to face the fear and cry out the pain than to continually put it off and refuse to deal with it.

Fourth, time and dealing with it makes the pain lessen. Every time we had new bad news about John's condition, it was like a kick in the stomach. Cancer. Metastasis. Amputation. Low blood counts. Blood transfusions. More tests. Pressure sores. Slow healing. Probable mouth sores. Loss of hair. These took the wind out of me. I mourned. I couldn't eat or sleep. At John's first chemotherapy, I cried watching the poison run into his veins. I ached every time he vomitted. The first time he tried to walk on crutches after the amputation, he screamed out in pain and I felt it. But God is kind, and with time the pain grows less, like a callous. We have a "new normal." Chemo and amputation problems are routine now. I can eat a sandwich while I hold a basin for John to vomit in. I can decorate around medical equipment in most every room. I don't fold John's socks in pairs anymore.

Fifth, God still answers many prayers "yes", just not the big one. Phil and I cried out often, "Just heal John!" We begged for a spectacular miracle; that at the time of surgery, there would be no tumor. God said no. But it has been amazing how many little miracles he has said yes to. John hasn't suffered mouth sores when his immunity is down. His bones healed quicker from the surgery than his surgeon expected. Sometimes Johnny bounces back from chemo and can leave the hospital a day early. And the peace continues to bouy us up and give us joy. The scriptures are so comforting, even the boring stuff comes to life. Andy Crouch says, "When we go to the cruel edges of the world, we bring our lives closer to the

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text.”

Sixth, God's grace is given to the person who is going through the trial, not to everyone who has to watch. For weeks after the diagnosis, Phil and I slept fitfully. John? He slept like a rock. I get angry on and off at God for doing this to my beautiful boy. John isn't angry. He's got the grace he needs. You don't have the grace right now to have a child with cancer, but I do, because I need it.

When you say you can't believe God is good because kids get cancer, I tell you that God is with my child who got cancer, just like God will be with you when you need Him. Watchman Nee says something like this: Grace is like a train ticket you pick up at the station. It is for one person only. And it will be there when you need it, and not a minute earlier.

Seventh, it's OK to laugh. When John found out how rare this cancer is, he said, “It took an awful lot of bad luck to get this cancer, so I've probably used it up for a while. Hey, now's the time to buy a lottery ticket.”

He told his oncologist the reason he got cancer was because in November he broke a chain letter.

He was disappointed to find out Make-A-Wish wouldn't buy him an animal, a motor vehicle, or a firearm.

John has seven chemo treatments left. If all goes well, he will be done and be walking on a prosthetic leg and growing hair by Easter. You Tom Hanks fans will love this. He wants to call his new leg Wilson.

He has received a half-dozen blood transfusions. He knows many blood donors are very intelligent, so he's hoping these transfusions might improve his spelling.

Someone said, “When a pagan gets cancer, God gives a Christian cancer so the world can see the difference.” Johnny has seen the difference. He's been to cancer camp where a lot of kids can't smile. “Those kids need Jesus,” he says. He wants to go back next year and tell them.

Last, Jesus told us to live one day at a time, and I forget that. I am not promised that I will have Johnny tomorrow, or that I will be here. And you know what? I can bear one day of sorrow. It's the looking ahead that destroys me. I will trust Jesus for strength to bear today's pain. Christ holds me, John, and all of us in the palm of his hand. Cancer is here today, but it cannot follow us where we're going. Until then, I keep noticing the aroma, the sweet aroma of Jesus who walks through the valley of the shadow of death before us, preparing the way.

Posted Tuesday, September 28, 2004 at 4:00 pm

I am doing well, my blood counts are back up, nausea is gone, no mouth sores or signs of infection, and Jesus is close to me. I can't remember much from my last chemo, thank's to Atavan. Dad said I was reading a book, but when I opened the book yesterday I couldn't understand the plot and had to start from the beginning (again... or so I am told). I looked at my laptop and couldn't understand where all the new programs came from. But the worst was when I came to my senses I couldn't remember that Marta had lost her appendix. Anyway, thanks for praying and sending cards. Please pray that my surgeon will let me get an artificial leg the next time I see him (Oct. 4) so that I won't have to be Hopping' on The Promises anymore.

In Christ,
Johnny

Posted Sunday, October 4, 2004 at 9:30 pm

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John spent the weekend with his brother at college. They both have bald heads...one from chemo and the other to support his brother. They have been messing around in the dorm and playing computer games. Tomorrow its back to business with 5 days of chemo in the hospital followed by the usual. God has been so merciful to protect John from infections, mouth sores, depression, and a host of other miseries. I'm confident your prayers play a part in those (and other) blessings. Tomorrow we also meet with John's surgeon...hoping he will tell John to go buy a leg.

He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (2 Corinthians 5:15) Why do I resent trials in my life? It's because I have not yet completely given up living for myself. Yet one reason Christ died was that I would live for him and not for myself. Trials are good at revealing my heart and they lead me to repentance and a heightened desire to live for Christ. Frankly, it's too painful to endure a trial living for myself. Its through this kind of reflection that I can actually be thankful to God for trials because I can see how those trials are replacing my old self-satisfied religion with passionate relationship with Christ.

Thanks for your prayers...Phil

Posted Saturday, October 9, 2004 at 10:00 am

John got back from the hospital yesterday morning...happy to be home and washed out. He'll sleep much of the weekend, get IVs at night to keep him hydrated, and hopefully perk up by Monday. The surgeon released him to get his leg. He said most kids aren't ready until they are 9 to 12 months post-op but after only 6 months John's bones are completely healed (even with chemo) and his muscles are strong enough to support him....go God! The fitting process takes a while and we have to work around chemo so we are hoping to have him on two legs by Christmas. Pray for God's protection from infection, mouth sores, other ill effects of the chemo. I was telling John about an acquaintance who got cancer and was giving up on God...he replied,why would they bite the hand that feeds them? Isn't that the truth!

These (trials of many kinds) have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:7) Trials are meant to test our faith. If our faith is genuine it will survive the test and result in praise, glory, and honor for us...?...no...for Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). This, for the Christian, gives suffering meaning and purpose.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Monday, October 18, 2004 at 3:00 pm

John has weathered another week with no immunity without infection or mouth sores...thank God and thanks for your prayers. Tomorrow we travel to Michigan to start fitting for a prosthesis. A foundation has offered him an all expense paid trip to Utah for a week of skiing in January so we are hoping to fast track this process so he can build up his strength enough to go. No medical stuff this week...chemo again next week. John remains upbeat and cheerful.

...we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Romans 5:3-5) Rejoicing in suffering can only be possible with the proper focus. Focusing on the suffering only makes me miserable, disappointed, and depressed. Focusing on the results of suffering...perseverance, character, hope...does not disappoint because it leads me to the love of God poured out into my heart by the Holy Spirit. Instead of Why God I exclaim Wow God!

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Sunday, October 24, 2004 at 9:00 pm

John had two appointments to work on fitting his prosthesis this week...hopefully he will be walking again by Thanksgiving. Chemo starts up again this week. This is the last hard one, to be followed by three easier ones and then he'll be done (around Christmas). One day at a time is harder as we get closer to the end but it is so important. Let us not wish a single day of our lives away since each one is precious and tomorrow comes with no guarantees. Great life lesson. John continues to putter along good naturedly and cheerful.

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For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God. (2 Corinthians 1:20) If I am disappointed in God it is likely that I have set my expectations on something that God never promised me in the first place. God only promises me what will bring glory to him, and he will not fail to keep every one. In Christ all God's promises are Yes and Amen to his glory...which is after all why I was created and continue to exist.

Thanks for your prayers...Phil

Posted Monday, November 1, 2004 at 6:00 pm

John got out of the hospital Saturday morning. He hasn't vomitted since he got home and is feeling good now. We went for another fitting for his leg and it will probably be ready in two weeks. This week his immunity will bottom out again and we're praying for no mouth sores or infection. He continues to rely on the Lord; this was best exempified by a conversation that happened in the hospital last week. For most of John's stays at the hospital he is heavily sedated to help with the nausea...to the point where when he is conscious, he can barely talk. A male nurse who has cared for John during many of his chemo stays was saying that John's personal strength has gotten him through this and will serve him well in life. John replied through half-opened eyes and with slurred speech...It's Jesus that gives me strength.

...But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:9) Isn't that what hardship is all about? God allows it into our lives, and when we get to the end of ourselves we learn to rely on Him. My natural bend is to rely on myself. I am learning, because I have no other reasonable choice, to rely only on God...who raises the dead. I guess he can handle it.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Tuesday, November 9, 2004 at 2:00 pm

John's counts are back up with no sign of infection or mouth sores...thank you Lord. Friday he is due to get his leg...lots of anticipation. John is cheerful and plugging away at school...he's only 2 weeks behind.

Be still and know that I am God. (Psalms 46:10) What a great verse to meditate on as my mind swirls with the complications of life. Take a deep breath, slow down, rest, and be still. God is consistent, God is capable, God is good, and God is enough.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Saturday, November 13, 2004 at 11:02 pm

Hey everyone! I got to walk on Friday! My prothetist finished most of my leg and let me try it on. I got about 1/2 a step without crutches, my muscles weren't strong enough. With crutches I was able to take two laps down the hall. Then my muscles were killing me so I tried just standing. It felt so good without crutches, all I could do was to wave my arms (they were finally free) and smile. It was so encouraging to see my leg (Wilson) and try it out. I wasn't allowed to take Wilson home because my prothetist had to do the final touches. I get to take it home next friday after Chemo. I can't wait! Thank you all so much for praying and encouraging me.

In Christ,

Johnny

Posted Monday, November 22, 2004 at 8:00 pm

Wilson is here! After four days of chemo I went to see my prosthetist on Friday and he said I could bring Wilson home. It feels so good to stand and walk. My muscles aren't strong enough to let me walk distances without crutches but I can take a few steps without them. It is exasperating when I try to climb the stairs because I can't bend my leg very much. I also can't walk on Wilson very long without my ankle aching. But besides that I am one happy chap. Thank you for praying and writing. Please pray that my muscles strengthen quickly.

In Christ

Johnny

John Chase, December 24, 1989 - December 22, 2005

Posted Sunday, November 28, 2004 at 6:15 pm

John is up and about and doing well. My new leg hurts in a wonderful way. He can walk across a room without help but otherwise he uses one crutch for support and balance. It will take awhile for the strength in his leg to come back from disuse. His foot was too swollen to get into the prosthesis yesterday from overdoing it...all a normal part of the rehab process. This week is the next to the last chemotherapy. He is handling this stuff well with no mouth sores, good energy level, and only mild nausea for a few days. His biggest problem is boredom in the hospital and having to do school because he feels well enough to do it. We have much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving.

He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. (Malachi 3:3) The refining process is the method of removing impurities from material to make it more useful and valuable. It requires time and heat. God is described in this verse as a refiner. He refines me and purifies me with time and adversity. How does the refiner know when the metal is purified? When he can see the reflection of his face in it. This gives meaning and purpose to the adversity that God allows my way...that I might more clearly reflect the face of my Lord.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Sunday, December 5, 2004 at 9:25 pm

John had an uneventful week of chemo and got out Thursday A.M. His nurse told John that he had broken a record for her when he drank in excess of 10 liters (about 2.5 gallons) in a 24 hour period. John is convinced that if he drinks more water he will get out of the hospital faster since he can't leave until a certain drug level in his blood gets below 0.1 units. It seems to work! He is walking with the assistance of only a cane...his prosthetist told him to get rid of the crutches because he was leaning on them too much. Each day his leg gets stronger and his gait more natural. He is one happy kid and quickly points to God as the reason.

The fear of the Lord leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble. (Proverbs 19:23) John is such a graphic example of this verse to me. Here is a kid who has every reason to be unhappy with the cards he has been dealt in life. Yet he is a smiling, joyful, happy teenager...content, and seemingly untouched by his obvious trouble. Oh God, our creator and sustainer...thank you for giving us life.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Sunday, December 12, 2004 at 5:15 pm

John continues to do well. He had a CT scan of his chest Friday and it showed no evidence of cancer. He gets around mostly carrying his cane now. He has his last round of chemotherapy this week. He is smiling alot right now, partly because he just got a new Lord of the Rings computer game, but mostly because of the Lord in his life.

Endure hardship as discipline...God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:7-11) God's discipline (literally child training) doesn't feel good at the time, in fact given the choice I would quickly choose comfort and ease over discipline any day. But God's discipline is designed to lead to holiness...if I would value holiness as God does, I would gladly embrace discipline...hardship. Thankfully, like a good parent, God doesn't wait for me to ask for discipline...He knows what I need. He will also see to it that a harvest of righteousness and peace will be produced if I allow myself to be trained by it.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Monday, December 20, 2004 at 8:50 am

John's last week of chemotherapy went uneventfully, concluding with a party with the nurses. He gets his infusion port pulled on Wednesday and that concludes the active part of his treatment. It would be an understatement to say we are all relieved and pleased to have arrived at this point. We have all been molded by the experience. Thankyou for walking with us and praying

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Endure hardship... (Hebrews 12:7) I was interested to find out that the word endure literally means to remain under. It implies remaining under its force, embracing it, allowing it to do its work. When I encounter hardship my gut tells me to run from it, fix it, and if I can't do that then distract myself from it. God wants me to not waste it. It has a purpose. It is for my good (verse 10) and God is showing me he loves me (verse 6). It will produce a harvest of righteousness and peace (verse 11) if I will let it train me. I can testify that rotten as it is that my son got cancer...the experience has produced a bountiful harvest in our lives.

Thnaks for praying...Phil

Posted Monday, December 27, 2004 at 8:20 pm

Hey, I'm done!! No more chemo! Hallelujah! My last chemo ended two weeks ago and I had my port taken out almost one week ago. I am so happy! I had an end-of-chemo party with the nurses at Indianapolis and I said good bye (hopefully forever). Then we had Christmas and now I am getting ready for the ski trip in January. I still have to go back every three months for a (hopefully short) checkup but it looks like we are at the end of all this. Wilson is fine (though I still limp and can't go far without a cane). Thank you all so much for praying, sending cards, calling, and encouraging me through this tough year. All I can do is thank and praise God for all he did and is continuing to on my behalf. In Christ, (who is not going anywhere)

Johnny

This has been a pretty intense year to say the least. I have often told people that John's cancer has been a great learning experience. Not one that we would have ever chosen but definitely one filled with many life lessons that have made us better people and hopefully more useful to our master...Jesus. It has been a real life test to see if our faith in Jesus works...Yes!... it not only works but it gives life...life to the full as Jesus promised. We know that this particular trial may not be over...there may be more...perhaps pain that right now we cannot bear to think of. But this I now know in full confidence...along with whatever our loving Father in heaven allows into our lives...He also gives the grace to bear it...and not just to bear it but to find intimacy with Him through it. We know and rely on the love God has for us. (1 John 4:16)

We're not going to be posting things to the web as often since the dust in our lives is settling for now. We'll try to post some kind of update once a month or so. We can't begin to thank everyone who has upheld our family in prayer this past year...but here's a heart felt thankyou. Our family has reaped the benefits of your faithfulness in prayer.

Here's a big hug and God's blessing on you...Phil

Posted Wednesday, February 9, 2005 at 8:20 pm

John is thriving. He is growing again, gaining weight, walking on the treadmill (he wants to run), back on the household chore chart, and getting caught up in school. He is getting tingling in some places on his foot that were numb. The week of skiing in Utah in early January was a blast. The advice from other amputees on the trip was to ski on one leg and use special forearm crutches fit with small skis to help with balance. He was doing black diamond runs by the end of the week and leaving his cautious old dad in the dust...make that powder.

It is such a treat to be able to live a relatively normal life again. It's hard to believe that less than 2 months ago John was still getting chemotherapy. Looking back on last year brings to mind the poem Footprints in the Sand. The poem refers to God's promise to always walk with us through life. During some dark days of our lives it may appear that there is only one set of footprints in the sand...but that is because He is carrying us. Looking back, I can testify to God's tender care for our family.

When the active treatment phase of this cancer journey ended we entered a new phase of follow up visits and monitoring. John has tests and doctor visits late March. This phase has it's own aura of uncertainty and anticipation. The issues though are really still the same. Can I trust God? Is there any peace and joy to be found outside of complete surrender to his will? Is there anything I love more than God? Does God really love John more than I do? God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear... (Psalms 46:1,2) Enjoy each day.

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Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Thursday, March 17, 2005 at 8:54 pm

Well, what started as a day that would just be uncomfortable, ended as a day that destroyed my cancerlessness. This morning I was going to Dekalb Memorial Hospital for a CAT scan. After some difficulty with the IV, I finally got on the table thing and waited for the scan to finish so I could go home and start school. But when the scan ended and I walked up to dad standing in the hallway he said, I was watching the pictures being processed, they don't look good. Suddenly, with the subtleness of a freight train, I felt a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. I suddenly started praying that God would make it just a mess up in the CAT scan. The technician came in and started looking through the pictures. It was an obvious splotch on the scan right about the center of my right lung, he measured it as about 3 cm across. And that wasn't the only one, there was another, smaller one near the wall of my left lung. I started feeling numb, thoughts were running through my head, Cancer? I thought it was gone! Does that mean more chemo? Why did God let this happen in my life again? Then I re-realized the two problems with that question: why and my. Why do we ask why? Will knowing the answer to that question make everything better? Since I'm a Christian I have already dedicated my life to God. So It's not 'my' life, it is his to do with as he wants. I have no idea why he chose cancer in my life. But, again, those are two wrong words to use. As I started feeling self pity, a warning popped into my head that Dad had said a lot in the past 400 or so days. Don't run to self pity, those only lead to a death trap of depression, anger, and a loss of joy. I turned the other way and started praying for strength, joy, and for his will to be carried out. On the way home I prayed and prayed. Thoughts like God doesn't listen. or He is just sitting out there waving a sign that says 'all your nausea and chemo was for nothing!' and snickering about my pain. seemed to fill up the airspace of my brain as quickly as I shot them down with scripture. On the way home we stopped for breakfast. I sat in front of my food praying desperately for God's grace and fighting self-pity. Suddenly, with the obviousness of a mouse squeaking 2.7 miles away, I realized that something was different. It wasn't really a change in what I felt, it was a change in focus. I felt peace. Now, as I type this I can truthfully say that I am not angry at God, I don't want what I got and if I start thinking about the future I feel worry. I can't say that I am happy about all this but I am not mad at God. We are going to see Dr. Hawk on Monday, now all I have to do is try to concentrate on today and to keep focused on God. Please pray that Dr. Hawk makes the right decisions and that when they do surgery, all of it will be taken out. Also pray that the cancer doesn't spread or grow and that I can stay focused on God instead of the future. Thank you all for your thoughts and prayers.

In Christ (where else would I go?)

Johnny

Posted Saturday, March 19, 2005 at 9:46 am

It has been a great three months since we finished John's chemotherapy. Life has been relatively normal. John has gradually gotten stronger, climbing trees, doing his family chores, man-training projects, catching up with school work, walking on the treadmill for exercise, Bible quizzing, running the pharmacy on our mission trip to Mexico last week, lots of smiles...now this. My heart aches with disappointment with God. Is this really necessary? Weeping, I crawl into His lap and groan.

Bottom line...do I trust God? If I can't trust Him with my boy...His boy...then I better go find a god that I can trust. We know and rely on the love God has for us. (1 John 4:18) He may not do everything we want...he certainly wants us to tell him what we want...regardless the outcome we can trust his love.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Monday, March 21, 2005 at 7:35 pm

John and Phil spent today in Indianapolis seeing specialists. First, we had a good report from the bone doctor who did John's surgery last April. John's leg is completely healed and feeling is slowly returning to his foot. The doctor encouraged us with a report of a patient he had that had a cancer nodule plucked out of his lung 12 years ago and has been disease free ever since.

John's oncologist (cancer doctor) has a new experimental therapy that stimulates the immune system in the lungs by inhaling a substance through a nebulizer (like asthmatic patients use). The goal is that John's own immune system would be beefed up and recognize the cancer cells and destroy them himself. The substance has shown some promise in

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preliminary studies and John is a good candidate. It has no side effects to speak of, and he can do the treatments at home.

We met an oncology chest surgeon (talk about specialized!) who takes out nodules all the time. He wants to clean out John's right lung first (where the larger nodule is), then a month later, do the left side. He'll take a good look during surgery to see if there are any smaller nodules that didn't show up on the CT scan, and remove any he finds.

Surgery is scheduled for Good Friday (we don't know the time yet). John's glad there's a plan and he's ready to go.

God is encouraging us with peace, hope, and confidence in his love for us. It's tempting, while lying awake in bed or staring off into space, to let ourselves imagine the worst, and try to guard ourselves for the news. And what good does that do? Instead, we need to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ (II Corinthians 10:5) This means obeying Christ when he says don't worry about tomorrow and don't be anxious about anything. He really means it. And when we make our thoughts obedient to Christ, we find life and hope.

Thank you for standing with us at the throne of grace in prayer.

Phil and Laura

Posted Thursday, March 24, 2005 at 7:00 am

The news from Tuesday is good. John's bone scan showed no evidence of disease except for his lungs. So unless God performs a miraculous healing we are going ahead with surgery on Good Friday at 11 AM to remove the golf-ball sized tumor on his right lung. We will be in Indianapolis at St.Vincent's.

Laura's Bible study group prayed together for us Tuesday morning, and she was very encouraged. We have heard from Mexico that a group of pastors that we saw two weeks ago on a mission trip were gathering to pray for us. Last night a group of our Auburn friends gathered with us for prayer. Over the past few days many have approached Phil to say they care and are praying. Laura cried out in agony to the Lord on Monday, Don't you care for us and our troubles? and within 15 minutes, she was ministered to by Linda, Shindok, and Kike. When the Lord tells you to reach out to somebody who is in pain, jump on it. What a miracle it is to the suffering one when care comes out of the Heavenly blue! You are the hands and feet of Christ! And if you think the Church is a weak, boring, unproductive bunch, just go to Her for prayer when cancer hits. There is NOTHING like the strength, encouragement, and hope that comes when Christ's body gets down to business. ...the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way. (Ephesians 1:22,23).

Thanks for praying...Phil and Laura

Posted Friday, March 25, 2005 at 4:00 pm

Once again God has expressed his perfect will in a way we never expected. This week several of our children have had a viral illness with cough and fever. We got to the hospital this morning for Johnny's surgery and found out that he had a temperature of 100.6. An hour later, when they were preparing to put in his IV, I asked them to recheck his temperature and it was 101.8. Within an hour we were on our way home with a new surgery date set for April 12...that's right 2 1/2 weeks from now. I can't begin to describe the mixture of emotions we are experiencing. What has God got in mind for Johnny? What is God trying to teach us?

I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. (Psalms 40:1-3) Its interesting to see that the only thing asked of me in these verses is to wait patiently, turn to him, and cry out. No amount of struggling will get me out of the slimy pit. He's the one who will lift me out and put me on a firm place. He's the one that will put the song of praise in my mouth and cause those who watch to fear and trust Him. Because it is all about HIM. It's Friday...Sunday's coming!

Have a great Easter...I know we will...and thanks for praying...Phil

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Posted Saturday, April 2, 2005 at 12:30 pm

John got over his virus after four days and lots of sleep. We were able to leave on a family vacation we had planned for months, and since John's surgery was canceled we could all go together. Lots of hiking and beautiful scenery in southeastern Ohio of all places. John's attitude is good...when asked how are you doing he is apt to reply, good as long as I don't think about tomorrow. Thanks for the reminder John.

Several have suggested that God intends to heal John completely and perhaps he won't need to have the surgery after all. I have assured them that John will get a chest xray before his surgery date in 10 days. Nothing would please us more if there was nothing to remove. Looking at him now, you would never guess there was something going on in his lungs. I sort of weigh-in with Martha when she said to Jesus, But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask. (John 11:22) Its clear from the context that she didn't really believe Christ would raise Lazarus from the dead, although she knew he could do anything. Nevertheless he did what she didn't dare believe he would do. I know God can do anything...I'm hesitant to paint him into a corner with the statement that his intention is to completely heal John...even though I am pleading along with all of you for just that miracle. God will reveal his perfect plan in time and we surrender and believe.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Monday, April 11, 2005 at 6:45 pm

God does hear and answer prayer!The results of the CT scan this afternoon were mostly encouraging. The big mass in John's right lung has grown only slightly in the last three weeks. Even more encouraging was the other mass (in the left lung) has decreased in size without treatment, all by itself! Now it is barely visible on the high-resolution CT scan. We praise God, that maybe only one surgery will be needed. That sounds like a miracle to me! Anyway, the surgery is tomorrow (8 AM) to remove the large mass in the right lung. Pray John can heal quickly, that the mass in the left lung will completely disappear, that no more masses will form and that the surgeon will be able to completely remove the big mass. Pray that John, Phil, and I can let Christ shine through us with love, joy, peace, and patience toward all the medical personnel we see this week, whatever happens.

Thank you for encouraging us with hope by praying for us.

Laura

PS John really enjoyed being in the play on Friday night. His favorite part was teasing the audience with a (scripted) fall. Many in the audience knew he has a prosthetic leg and gasped in dismay. John loved it!

Posted Tuesday, April 12, 2005 at 3:43 pm

John was waking up at 12:30 after the 1 hour surgery. The surgeon said he was able to remove the entire mass without difficulty and he saw no other evidence of cancer. He will be in the pediatric intensive care unit overnight, then will move to a regular floor.

Thanks be to God for his mercy and peace.

Laura and Phil

Posted Friday, April 16, 2005 at 12:28 am

John got home in the late afternoon today from Indy, in significant pain in his right chest, but happy to be out of the hospital. The doctors were pleasantly surprised with how quickly he recovered from surgery. He starts an inhaled immuno-stimulant next week and has surgery on his left lung tentatively scheduled for May 10 (assuming the nodule that has already shrunk by half isn't gone by then). We'll pray for a miracle and God will do what's right. Our pastor preached on miracles last Sunday. Several statements have been rattling around in my head since then. Times of need test the level of our trust of God. Tests are always about trust. The outcome of our test is not the point. The point is whether we will trust God regardless the outcome.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to

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God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7) In response to our prayers God promises peace that defies reason. Also that same peace will guard our hearts and minds, which certainly need guarding through all this misery. The heart (seat of emotion) and the mind (seat of reason) that often fight each other, must both surrender to God's unexplainable peace. This has been our experience this week. Solid, palpable peace to the core of our beings. Peace like Altoids' candy: Curiously strong!

Thanks for praying....Phil

Posted Friday, April 22, 2005 at 10:00 pm

Well, ten days out from surgery and I am almost back to normal (or at least the way I was before I got cut open). Every time I sneeze or cough I can feel it burn right down my rib cage. I can breathe though and that is a important fact so I can't really complain. I went to see my prosthatisit and he made a few adjustments on good old Wilson, it turns out that he was 1 1/2 in. too short. I must be growing. Before the surgery, I thought a lot about how God could have healed me during my CAT scan the Monday before. I mean, it would have been perfect! The day before surgery God shows his power by making my lungs clean. The doctors would scratch their heads and claim that the first scan just messed up but we would know that it was the Lord who healed me and praise him for it. One thing I learned from all this is that you can't put God in a box, and if you try, he will reveal his omnipotence and throw your plans out the window. Another thing I learned is that you can't and shouldn't try to force God into anything, saying things like, I'll won't do this if you don't do that. is futile. Do I really think that God needs me to do anything? God doesn't need me, I need him and trying to control him is like trying to control (to borrow from C. S. Lewis) a wild lion. I wanted God to heal me, I wanted it so badly, but now that He has revealed what he wants in this situation, all I can do is submit and trust that He knows what is best for me. Thank you all so much for praying for and supporting me, please pray that my lungs heal quickly, and that the nerves in my leg (from my other surgery, April, last year) will completely regenerate (I'm starting to get some feeling back where there was none). Also pray that the tumor in my left lung that has been shrinking would completely disappear so I won't need the second surgery. I have a CAT scan on May 6 to reveal God's answer to that request.

In Christ,
Johnny

Posted Friday, May 6, 2005 at 9:30 pm

I had my CT scan yesterday... and I came home with good news. The nodule in my left lung was still there but it doesn't look like cancer anymore. It didn't change at all since the CT I got a month ago, right before the surgery removing the big, growing nodule from my right lung. The left-lung surgery looks like it will be canceled or at least delayed, because Dad decided that unless there is a visible, growing, metastatic tumor we won't do surgery. I probably will have to go get a CT scan every month for a while, but ... NO SURGERY ON TUESDAY!! My dad talked with my oncologist today and they have a difference of opinion about my surgery but Monday we are going to review the films with him in Indy and hopefully everyone will be in agreement after that meeting. Please pray for God's wisdom in these decisions.

Looking back on the circumstances of the last 6 weeks, I've realized how God's timing has been perfect. My first surgery was scheduled on Good Friday. It was cancelled and delayed for two weeks because I came down with a fever. I am enrolled in a clinical study that has very rigid requirements. One of the requirements is that I have a CT scan within 2 weeks before my first surgery. Since my surgery was cancelled and delayed two weeks, I had to have another CT scan, which revealed that the apparent tumor on my left lung was shrinking with no treatment at all. If I hadn't got a fever, I would have had surgery on Good Friday, started the experimental drug, and the repeat CT scan before my second surgery on the left lung would have shown that tumor shrinking. The conclusion would have been that the drug was working on a metastatic tumor and the tumor would need to be removed a month after the first surgery, according to the rules of the study I'm in.

Now it appears the nodule in my left lung is not likely cancerous and I have escaped the knife for now! I was stunned when I heard that we aren't going to do the surgery, almost as stunned as I was when I found out there was cancer in my lungs. I had begged God to take this cancer away, but I expected bad news. The cancer still might come back, but with the unknowns comes one thing I can be completely sure of: He has a plan. Thank you all so much for praying . God is good! Maybe this battle against cancer is over, maybe not, but it is God's plan that I am following (not mine).

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In Christ,
Johnny

Posted Tuesday, May 10, 2005 at 9:30 pm

Today was to be surgery day for John's left lung nodule. After discussion with John's oncologist and much prayer we decided to hold off on surgery until this nodule acts more like cancer. I am inclined to respond THAT'S GOD when doctors scratch their heads and are at a loss for explanations. That's the case with this nodule which inexplicably shrunk in size. I am also inclined to chose the path with least misery factor for John. The down side of this decision is that John had to drop out of the clinical trial he was in, but the therapy was unproven at this point and remaining on that treatment wasn't compelling enough reason to have major surgery on something that may not need to come out. Time will tell. John will have another CT scan in two months. Right now the living is good and life is uncomplicated and full of joy.

Thanks for asking about Laura's dad as well. He's recovering from his neck surgery, and walking about 40 steps with a walker now. He's bound and determined to get better! Mom and Dad have dandy around-the-clock help which has met the daily care needs for now. We praise the Lord for his provision of help.

I (Phil) am dealing with a little incident that happened more than a week ago; I broke my nose cutting down a tree. Tomorrow I will have a brief surgery to reset it. Of more concern is a persistent infection in the wound. Thanks for praying for all to go well.

I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord. (Psalm 27:13,14) What a great scripture to meditate on. These verses fill me with confidence and hope; they redirect my attention off the circumstances; they calm my fears. Thank you God for your scriptures.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Saturday, June 04, 2005 at 5:33 am

Yesterday John had a CT scan of his lungs. Unfortunately it showed more cancer. His right lung now has a new 1 cm lesion and his left lung has three: two small 2 mm lesions and the one that had shrunk now growing and back to 8mm. Not exactly what we had been praying for. We see John's oncologist Tuesday and will likely be scheduling surgery after that. First John and I are going on a white-water rafting trip next week with some friends. John is disappointed but does a good job in leading all of us in not worrying about the future. Lately he has developed a penchant for climbing trees...his mother would rather not know what he's up to.

Thank you for praying for my (Phil) nose. After draining pus for 4 weeks, a hunk of wood about the size of a dime came out of the wound and the wound immediately dried up and healed. I have a nice scar on my nose to remind me of that little lesson in patience and trusting God. When the wood came out and I knew that trial was over I exploded with joy and gratitude to God, weeping and gushing praise to Him. It consumed me. Then God asked me why I have trouble gushing such enthusiasm to Him as I worship and praise Him in church for my salvation. In all of life God is training us.

One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done. (Ps 62:11,12) Sometimes when things aren't going the way I would like it feels like I'm being backed into a corner with nowhere to go. Pressed by adversity, I know that running to anxiety, worry, bitterness, self pity, miracle cures, and other gods is not the answer. So here I am trapped....with God....who is strong and loving. Now I understand He has lovingly backed me into this corner so I can know Him more. I can trust Him and live my life in peace and joy.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Thursday, June 09, 2005 at 7:24 pm

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John is scheduled for surgery June 27. The plan is to do a sternotomy, opening his chest in the center, like open heart surgery, and taking out the nodules from both lungs at the same time. The surgeon is convinced that this is less painful than the surgery John previously had because they don't have to cut across muscles used in breathing. It just gives me bad visuals. For now it will be nice to live life for a few weeks without medical interventions. John feels good, is trusting God, and thinking little about tomorrow. We're going whitewater rafting for a few days, then he has cancer camp.

Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. (Matthew 6:34) With what appears to be looming in the future - it is hard not to go there with my thoughts. In fact as I try to discipline myself to enjoy what God has given me each day, I have a recurring thought accusing me of living in denial of reality. I am coming to realize that rather than living in denial of reality, it is living in obedience to Christ. And as I live in obedience to Him, I find life and joy and peace and rest. I read recently don't let the things you cannot control destroy your enjoyment of the things you have been given.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Saturday, June 18, 2005 at 7:38 pm

Hey everybody! Cancer has struck again. Well I guess God hasn't finished teaching me with cancer, yet. It is royally depressing to have cancer, be cured of it, have it again, be cured again, and then have it show up again. HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO KILL YOU?!? rings true in my ears. I only answer that I can come up with to that question is, As many as it takes. Which I might add is a really lame answer. Why won't God just take it away for good? and Is God punishing me for something that I did? and Didn't I learn what he wanted me to learn with the first time cancer showed up? are some of the questions that came up when I saw the CT scan. I don't have an answer to the first one, and though I desperately want it, I don't need it. The second question is more difficult, I know that God is just, and I also know that I have/do/will sin against him. But I also know that Jesus did/does/will forgive me and has washed me with his blood, so that God doesn't see my sin when he looks at me. I don't believe that God is punishing me, although he has every right to and I do deserve it. I believe that he has a greater plan. When and if he decides to cure me, he will. And finally, the third question -- I may have learned everything that he intended for me to learn in this cancer experience but God does not waste pain. He may have given me this pain and this comfort (that is coming from him) so that I can comfort others in pain. All I can really do is pray for strength and live for God. Today I experienced a depression, everything seemed worthless and nothing seemed good. I asked God for comfort and it arrived about one minute later in the form of our visitation pastor! Did I ever mention that I love that guy? We spent a half-hour just talking and then we prayed. Boy, God really knows about comfort and encouragement. Thank you all for praying for me and supporting me in this. I am off to cancer camp this week. I am hopeful that I can spread some of the comfort the Lord has given me to others. In Christ (still here, where else would I be?) Johnny

Posted Sunday, June 26, 2005 at 6:57 pm

John had a repeat CT scan of his lungs yesterday to see what needs to come out tomorrow. He now has 2 nodules on the right and four on the left lung to be removed. Surgery is planned for 9am or so. John is trusting God to take care of things and doing his best not to think about it... which he says is difficult when he is packing for a hospital stay.

Our pastor once said that worry is nothing but meditating on the wrong things. This is surely a powerful life lesson on being obedient to Christ in not giving ourselves over to worry. God knows that worry does nothing but steal our joy and peace. If we disobey him by worrying we quickly experience its destructive fruit. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about these things...and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:8,9)

Thanks for praying....Phil

Posted Monday, June 27, 2005 at 8:05 am

Wow! Shortly after we arrived in Indianapolis, the surgeon reviewed Johnny's new CT scan with the oncologist and they felt it would be best to delay surgery at least a month. The reason? Since John has developed a few small nodules in just the last 3 weeks and since the goal of surgery is to make him disease-free, they thought it would be best to wait

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and see if more nodules develop in the next weeks so they could remove all of them at once. No sense in doing a major surgery that must be repeated again in a short interval of time. We are relieved, totally at peace, and grateful to God for his clear direction.

Thank you for your prayers. Phil, Laura, and John

Posted Saturday, July 23, 2005 at 2:05 pm

John is doing great. He is volunteering at a church camp for two weeks as a student assistant. He got back from his first week yesterday, tired and happy. People often ask how John is doing and I usually answer spiritually and emotionally well, and physically he feels good but with the cancer in his lungs we're not really sure how he's doing physically. I spoke with John's cancer doctor at M D Anderson in Texas and he suggested that more chemotherapy might be in order when surgery has removed all visible cancer. It's controversial and he isn't making any promises of cure or even definite benefit. Hey, we just want to do what's right for John...don't give up...do no harm. Ultimately we want to do what God wants us to do. Nothing medical happening until mid-August when John has another CT Scan of his lungs. We will send off a copy of it to M D Anderson and to Indianapolis and come to some conclusions for a treatment plan by the end of August.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. (Psalms 32:8) God's promise to us. No need to worry about future decisions. When John's last surgery was canceled we all knew it was the right decision. God gave us complete peace. No need to fret over lack of clear-cut direction for the future. Right now we have no decisions to make. Life is good. Each day is a gift. God is here now and He will be here every tomorrow to guide us each step of the way.

Thanks for your prayers...Phil

Posted Sunday, August 14, 2005 at 4:22 am

John had his CT scan and the lung tumors of the previous scan are bigger and he has three new ones. This pretty much rules out surgery in the near future since we don't do surgery until he isn't forming new tumors. The scans are in the mail to Houston and Indy and we will have a game plan in the next week or two. We are disappointed but taking it in stride.

I was praying the other day...thanking God for revealing his love to us in Christ. All of a sudden God impressed this thought on me...I'm revealing my love to you through John too. I just started weeping.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Sunday, August 28, 2005 at 4:02 pm

It has been a great couple of weeks with a week at a family camp in Michigan and then this week John's teenage cousin was here for man-training and fooling around. John feels great and can even run for short distances. He has found a new passion in full-contact half-court basketball.

John and I had a conversation yesterday that I had been putting off for a few days. Earlier this week I talked with his oncologists in Indy and Houston. The doctors in Indy are ready to go in and take out whatever tumor is visible with two separate surgeries (one month apart) with the hope that no more new tumors will materialize in the near future. The doctor in Houston agrees with the surgeries but says he should have one or two high dose blasts of chemo first followed by surgery then followed by two or more blasts of chemo. This time the doses are higher and the toxicities are more severe.

The prognosis for doing nothing is death in 6 to 9 nine months. The prognosis if he has surgery alone is unknown because we don't know if he will continue to form new nodules and if he does whether they will be operable. His pattern so far has been one or two new nodules a month. There is also a limited amount of surgeries you can have because there is a limited amount of lung tissue you can live without. The prognosis if he has chemo and surgery is a 20 to 30 percent chance of some response and a remote chance of cure.

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I told John the decision is really his..... I honestly don't know what to do and neither does anyone else. We hate to charge in with alot of misery if it just makes things worse without any real benefit but we don't want to give up either. We cried together and asked God for a hug. In some ways this is more difficult than first getting the diagnosis. The sense that there is a choice to make between three rotten paths is pretty awful.....but God is here...He won't let us take a misstep...He will show us the way.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5) Hey God, we're asking for some direction here. I'm glad you love this kiddo more than I do. I know you have a good plan. Help us to bring you glory. We know John is going to be in heaven some day, we just need help with some of the details between here and there. And if you could let him hang around here a lot longer we'd be grateful.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Tuesday, August 30, 2005 at 4:30 pm

I'm pretty bummed. When Dad told me how bleak the situation is, I broke down and cried right there. I had suspected that something was up, but I hadn't realized what our choices are. I know that what ever happens the outcome will be me going to heaven sooner or later. I know that God has a plan for my life and knows how many seconds I have left to live. But I have two sick choices: One, we could wage a Holy War against the cancer, hitting it with combined chemical and technological warfare (chemo and surgery). The problem is that we have already hit it with surgery and chemo and they didn't seem to work. This choice will multiply the misery factor and probably won't do anything but make me sick and miserable. The chance for cure is pretty bleak, only 20-30% of kids show some response to this treatment. Thankfully, we aren't dependent on statistics. And that brings into light that we don't have to do anything, I mean, everyone is going to die and I am not afraid of that. We could just back off, we already gave medicine a chance. We could just sit and wait on God for his timing. He might choose to keep me on the earth a little longer. I know he can. The second choice is a lot less painful but it also seems like it would be giving up. What if God wants to use medicine to heal me? If so, couldn't he heal me without medicine? The old saying, God parted the Red Sea, but that doesn't mean we stop building bridges echos in my head. I know that by doing nothing I would be trusting God completely, but would God want me to just wait around? I don't like either choice. I am still in shock about how hopeless my physical situation is medically. No one knows what to do. I am begging God to give me the wisdom to choose and to have peace about it. Please pray that God will give me wisdom and peace and that I could sleep better. Also pray for me about preparing my testimony because I am going to give it to a bunch of kids at a private school on Wednesday. And finally, please ask God for my complete healing. I am in such agony about what is happening, it would be so wonderful if God would just take this cup away. Thank you all for praying for me and lifting me up. Please continue pleading for me before the throne of heaven.

In Christ, (I am hanging on to him with both hands)
Johnny

Posted Friday, September 02, 2005 at 6:31 pm

John and I made a trip to Indy to talk with his oncologist about his future treatment plan. To make a long story short, we decided to pass on the chemotherapy. We will repeat his CT scan about mid October and if there are no new nodules we'll do surgery to remove all the ones that are present in the hope no more will form. If he continues to form new nodules then we'll go with comfort care and enjoy the good days while they last. Doctors are notoriously bad at predicting the future so we're not going to worry about it. John has peace with this plan and understands we can change direction any time he wants.

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. (Psalms 16:11) I'm convinced that God is not going to let us goof-up his plan for John. One of God's miracles is joy in spite of difficult circumstances. We continue to ask God for John's healing, but God given joy isn't dependent on him jumping through our hoop.

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Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Sunday, September 25, 2005 at 1:45 pm

John is doing well. He knows God is in control and will do what's best. He has had several opportunities to share his testimony. He has learned how to rollerblade on Wilson (try it on a stilt some time). Chemotherapy doesn't seem to have affected his ability to hit clay targets in gun club. He keeps his usual upbeat, twisted sense of humor. Life is good and there is peace and joy in our household. October 10th we'll get another CT scan of his chest. If there is no new disease then we'll set up surgery to remove what's there. If he has grown new nodules we don't plan any further treatments.

On the heels of a long narrative of how bad things were, Jeremiah writes, Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him. The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. (Lamentations 3:21-26) That's where we are right now. Quietly waiting on him. Calling to mind his great love, his unfailing compassions, and his faithfulness, we are filled with hope and are not consumed. The Lord is my portion...God is enough!

Thank you for praying...Phil

Posted Monday, October 10, 2005 at 7:54 pm

John had his CT scan today and unfortunately he has four more nodules and the ones already present are larger. This bit of bad news came on the heels of a remarkable experience last week. Last night John, three of his siblings, and I got back from a mission trip to Mexico. We did a medical and dental clinic along with children's Bible schools and evangelism. Because of a hurricane 150 miles away we were dogged by rain most of the week. Wednesday we were planning to go into a remote mountain village to work. The day started sunny so we decided to try to get there despite water-vulnerable dirt roads. Halfway there the rain started again and we had to turn back just short of the village. Our interpreter remembered a small church nearby just off the paved road, so we went there.

We were greeted by the pastor who had been praying for help from God, because his foot had gotten infected and he had no money for a doctor. I checked his foot and gave him some cream and antibiotics. He didn't think we should stay that day to do a clinic in his church because the rain would keep people home, but he wanted to sing us a song and share his testimony.

He told us of his son who 6 years ago was diagnosed with lung tumors, and the doctors said they could do nothing. He prayed in the hospital over his boy who by then was quite sick, and the next morning the tumors were gone. The doctors sent him to a medical center, and after 10 days of testing the doctors declared it a miracle, and the pastor was able to testify to to them all of the greatness of Jesus Christ. As the translator was translating for us, he began to cry since he knew nothing of this story. The pastor then asked John to come up so he could pray for him, and as we all gathered around John, God showed up. As the pastor prayed, crying out in Spanish and then speaking in tongues, we all started weeping. The pastor, who speaks only Spanish, said over and over in clear English, You're free.

The next day we were supposed to minister in a different mountain village. Since the rain was causing flooding everywhere, we arranged with this praying pastor to return the next day to do the clinic in his church. Many of the people we treated the next day were members of that pastor's church. A handful of them shared stories of how they had started coming to that church after a family member had been sick and had received healing there. I began to wonder if this pastor didn't have the gift of healing that scripture talks about. This is interesting because I don't really believe in going to a person who supposedly has the gift of healing. I figure we have been given open access to Jesus, why mess with middle men? Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

Obviously, God isn't going to let my theology stand in His way. All this to say that we came back from Mexico with a sense of wonder and with high hopes this morning when we went in for the CT scan. Its easy to fantasize about miracles and wonder if God will actually give you one. I know God can trust me with one. I wouldn't be shy about giving him

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the credit. I know it still isn't too late -- but I am disappointed. I don't need to make excuses for God. No, God doesn't need anyone defending Him. And I can crawl right up in his lap with my needy, aching heart and find peace and joy and rest.

For now we will not pursue surgery or other questionable treatments. We will enjoy each day. We will probably get another CT scan in mid-December. John has been given several opportunities to share his testimony which he has enthusiastically accepted. Otherwise he plugs away at school, Bible quizzing, computer play, and other teenage boy stuff.

Thanks for praying....Phil

Posted Wednesday, November 09, 2005 at 6:34 pm

Hey Everybody! I have had a group of enjoyable weeks since my last CT scan. A family in our church sent us on a week-long vacation to Myrtle Beach a few weeks ago. During which, Mom was forbidden from doing school (Oh Yeah!!). So we spent an awesome week hanging around the beach, sitting in the hot tubs, and goofing off in the massive room. But on that trip I started having a weird pain in my right side, it became hard to breathe and I instantly started thinking about cancer. It is very hard to forget about something when it is related to your difficult breathing. Dad got me some pain meds and prayed for me, and it became easier to breathe. This all happened on the first day and the second day there. I kept taking pills through the third day, but on the morning of the fourth I quit taking the pills. It still felt tight but it didn't hurt. We sadly returned home, and I have had very little trouble with my lungs since. I have, emotionally, had some trouble with it though, it has proven to be a constant reminder of cancer. But because of that, it has also been a constant reminder of Jesus. And no matter what happens in my lungs, Jesus will stay with me through it all. A week ago, Dad found a magazine at work that was accidentally delivered there, it was addressed elsewhere. An article that was entitled Chemo Lite about low-dose chemotherapy taken by pill caught his eye. The chemo is given in very small doses and the person suffers almost no side effects (except for a low chance of hair loss). The thought behind it is that it impairs the cancer growth, though it probably won't kill it. Dad called my oncologist and he told us about his experiences with it. In one instance, he saw the nodule melt. Well it sounded like it was worth a try so we ordered it and now I am taking 2 massive pills every night. It seems really weird to be taking chemo without all the nurses in Indianapolis or Ft. Wayne or puking my guts out. Our hope is that the chemo will make life miserable for those cancer cells. Hopefully, because we aren't letting the cancer recover between treatments (like we did with the high-dose chemo) and I've never taken this medicine before, the cancer might finally Bite the dust. Of course there is also the possibility that God is zapping those cells right now and so speculation would be moot. I am hopeful about the chemo but I know that it can't do a thing without his blessing, so my hope is in God. I haven't lost my hair yet (but I also only started it a couple of days ago). Thank you so much for praying and continuing to pray. Please pray that I will keep my focus on God and not loose hope and that the cancer will be annihilated.

In Christ,
Johnny

Posted Sunday, November 27, 2005 at 2:52 pm

John continues to do well spiritually and emotionally. Physically, unfortunately, he is not doing as well. He has periodic coughing spasms, sometimes coughing up a blood clot. He has developed two painless lumps, one on his temple area and one on his ribs. They don't show up as bone cancer on xray but they are likely related to it. He was short of breath last weekend with minimal exertion and it turns out his hemoglobin was 5 (over 10 is normal). After 4 units of blood he felt much better and his color improved. He has various aches and pains that come and go. He sleeps more. He has been invited to a ski trip in early January in Utah. I have started him on pushups, situps, and pull ups, along with treadmill time to help condition for it. Hopefully he can go. He spoke at a church last week, he is speaking at another next weekend. My favorite line from his testimony is as long as I have breath in these cancer infested lungs I will use it to praise the Lord. Go John! Go God!

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him....If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?...I am convinced that neither death nor life...nor anything else will be able to separate us from the love of God

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that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (scripture portions from Romans 6:28-39) I love words in scripture like all, everything, nothing, and anything. When the visible reality of my life doesn't seem consistent with these all inclusive words I run to God's love. God has not withheld his love from me in the past (the greatest example is sending his son Jesus). God doesn't withhold his love from me now (the most obvious example is his peace and joy on the face of my son). God isn't going to withhold his love from me in the future. No need to fear, God is for us.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Saturday, December 10, 2005 at 9:03 am

John's physical condition has begun to quickly deteriorate. He needs pain medication day and night now. This sedates him but he is comfortable. He is always short of breath and breathing rapidly; we have oxygen and breathing treatments that provide some relief. He walks only short distances and wears out quickly. His hair fell out, leaving our household with 2 and a half bald heads. Mine by genetics and his brother Taylor's by razor for solidarity. He needed another transfusion of 4 pints of blood only 5 days after his last transfusion. He has had 11 units of blood in the last 2 weeks and we don't know where it is going. He has spells of a gut-wrenching cough that often brings up blood and sets our whole house on edge when they happen. He eats very little now. He doesn't have the energy to smile much anymore. John knows God could still heal him if He chooses, but he is understandably discouraged by God's answer of no to that request right now. He has several opportunities to share his testimony coming up but I don't think he can physically do it. He's not crazy about speaking in front of large groups of people but he loves pointing to Jesus as the source of his hope. Hope of eternal life in heaven after he takes his last breath, and hope of living life this side of heaven in relationship with God. I'll put up a post of the testimony he shares.

What do I do as discouragement seeks to replace joy in the heart of my son as his life slowly slips away and just breathing becomes hard work. What do I do as I watch my wife's heart break in grief. What do I do as I watch each of my children wrestle with the distress of their brother and parents as well as their own feelings. What do I do as my extended family and friends compassionately extend their hands asking if they can do anything to help and I can't think of anything....but prayer.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) What do I do? I lead the charge by getting my eyes fixed on the right stuff, on the eternal not on the temporal. Much of my life I see things as if I were looking through foggy glasses. If only I had the unfogged spiritual glasses to see things as they really are. John is alive and well spiritually. He is nearing the time when he gets to shed this temporary earth-suit, with all its issues, to be replaced with his perfect eternal garments. His troubles are achieving for him a glory that, if I could see it, would make these troubles light and momentary. He is being renewed inwardly day by day. God loves that kid more than I could ever hope to and he won't abandon him in his time of need....nor us. God keeps his promises. God sees things the way they really are, from an eternal perspective not temporal. God will do the right thing. We won't lose heart if we keep our eyes fixed on the right stuff.

Thanks for praying....Phil

Posted Wednesday, December 14, 2005 at 4:39 am

John has moved into our livingroom, two reasons really: he is too weak to go up the stairs to his bedroom and he prefers being part of the familiar chaos of our household to peace and quiet, although sometimes he pleads for a volume adjustment. He speaks in a strained voice and very little because breathing is so much work. He was put out with me for previously writing that he doesn't smile much, stating, The smiles are inside me Dad, it's just very hard to get them to my face. He coughs less now, can still stay up late playing computer games with his brothers, reads his Bible some, talks to God alot, but sleeps most of the time. Narcotic patches control his pain and morphine inhalation treatments help with his air hunger. His Sunday school teacher asked him yesterday if there was anything he wanted the boys in his class to know. He said, Tell them: This is not all there is.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him,

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and he with me. (Revelation 3:20) The Lord brings this verse to mind frequently these days. It is often used to encourage unbelievers to accept Jesus as their savior but actually it was written to believers. What a wonderful statement of intimacy of relationship with Christ. As I tucked John in last night we prayed together and sobbed. My thoughts drifted to a cold night almost two years ago in my car parked in the snowy parking lot of our local hospital having just seen John's xrays and the likely diagnosis of cancer. Crying out to God we were concerned about the future that lay ahead but we knew that Jesus would be with us. He has been with us. He is with us. He will see us through...like sitting down to a meal together. All we need to do is keep the door open.

Thanks for praying..Phil

Posted Saturday, December 17, 2005 at 5:17 am

I got up early for a meeting yesterday and found John playing a new computer game a friend had given him. He had been up all night, bent on conquest. His brother had worn out at 3 AM. After I had given him a breathing treatment we had this conversation. Dad, I think I'm anemic again...You probably are John....I want another transfusion....Are you sure you want one?...I'm not ready to give up...John some things we do in medicine prolong living and some things prolong dying...What do you think I should do?...I wasn't planning to give you anymore blood, but if you want a transfusion I won't withhold it from you...Dad, do you have peace with that?...uhuh...Then lets wait...I love you John...I love you dad. I could barely see the road through tears as I went to my meeting. That evening he told me he'd been praying and didn't want anymore blood. A friend at church once comforted me with the words, We know how to live...what we don't know is how to die. I doesn't sound comforting but it gave me permission to feel uncomfortable with all this.

A photographer friend carved out some time and came to our home to take a family picture. We set everything up outside and then my oldest son carried John out to pose with everyone. It was hard not to cry between smiles for the camera. Many people have brought meals over; our freezer is stuffed. If love could be measured in food volume we are smothered.

The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel - which means God with us. (Matthew 1:23) This Christmas will probably be the most memorable in my lifetime. Every year as we approach Christmas we will think of John. Every year we will be reminded of God's life lesson in 2005...God with us. Comforting us, holding us, guiding us, carrying us. Isn't God good.

Thanks for praying....Phil

Posted Wednesday, December 21, 2005 at 5:27 am

John spends his days and nights on a couch next to the Christmas tree. He is apologetic that he needs to be served and quick to express thanks, even squeeking out a smile once in a while. Quite honestly each of his family members is anxious to be able to do some small thing to comfort him or lessen his misery. He cannot lay down but instead sits up with a pillow on his lap to rest his chest and head upon. He dozes alot but I think he is more aware of his surroundings than he appears. Last night I was up with him and had just smacked my head for the second time on a low hanging light fixture. John looked up with a twinkle in his eyes and raised two fingers in the air mouthing the word two. Yep, the stairs still go to the attic. I laughed and cried at the same time...weird.

The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. (Psalms 145:17) John is comfortable; Jesus is here. While it appears that God doesn't intend to heal John physically, it is a wonderful truth to know that we worship and serve a God that is capable of instantly growing John a new leg and lungs; yes, even raising him from the dead. And God doesn't mind if we keep asking. Not only that but we know that if God chooses not to restore John's health, whatever God does is righteous and loving and good. Isn't it merciful of God to give our family this time to care for John. Day by day as his physical body withers it becomes more obvious how ready his eternal soul is to be freed from this decay into God's glorious presence. I said it to John the night he got diagnosed and it rolls through my head many times a day...Aren't you glad we're Christians.

Thanks for praying...Phil

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Posted Thursday, December 22, 2005 at 4:11 am

John died this morning. For some reason Laura and I couldn't sleep so we sat up and dozed on and off in the living room with John. He was sleeping more soundly than usual and suddenly he woke up bright and excited and said, I'm going home now. It's awesome. I'm going to be with Jesus. He was so happy about it. Then he fell into a restless sleep and died peacefully several hours later. God is so merciful.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7,8) Way to go John. I'll see you in heaven.

Thanks for you prayers....Phil

Posted Thursday, December 22, 2005 at 9:12 am

Funeral arrangements for John are visitation 2pm-4pm and 6pm-8pm Monday 12-26-05. Service will be 2pm Tuesday 12-27-05 with one hour visitation before the service. Location will be at Grabill Missionary Church, 13637 State St., Grabill, IN.

John requested that memorial gifts be sent to Connections for Christ. This is a ministry that our family has been associated with for short term mission trips to Mexico. More information at www.connectionsforchrist.org

God's peace is flooding our home.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Friday, December 23, 2005 at 12:02 pm

Countyline Church of God taped the last time John was physically able to give his testimony and gave us a DVD copy. If you would like a copy to encourage someone's walk with Jesus send us an email at therook37@hotmail.com with the subject line DVD request and we'll get a copy to you in the mail. We also plan to post it on the internet in a week or so but it is a large video file so only people with high-speed connections will be able to benefit from it. John loved pointing to Jesus as the source of his strength and he wanted everyone to know it.

This is a transcript of the testimony:

You are all I need

I'm Johnny Chase. I was born into to totally Christian family, if you don't know, I have nine brothers and sisters. I was born again at age four, Jesus came into my heart and started a changing work in my life. I was a good Christian kid, I knew all the answers during Sunday school and could name all twelve apostles. My dad took me on my first short-term missions trip when I was 11. I enjoy playing outside, running, swimming, skeet shooting, playing video games, building models, roller blading, and reading. My life was a pretty normal one, the worst problems were when I had trouble getting along with my siblings. But, when I was fourteen, I started having a pain in my knee, it really hurt to run, jump, and ached all the time. My dad, who is a doctor, thought it was growing pains, I tried not to complain but my leg hurt a lot.

The week before our vacation to Florida, January 18, 2004 to be exact, Dad took me into his office to get an X-ray, he had started wondering about what was wrong with my leg, pain medicine didn't work and there was a lump in the middle of my knee, right below my kneecap. As we came into the hospital, Dr. Kaminsky, who is a specialist in children's bone disorders, walked in. Dad showed him my knee, and Dr.

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Kaminsky offered to take a look at my X-Ray. He is from a Fort Wayne hospital and never comes in on Mondays especially at 9:30 at night. I had the X-ray and Dr. Kaminsky looked at it in the hallway. He then told us, up front, that it was Osteosarcoma: a cancer of the bone. It is caused when some bone cells start growing when they shouldn't, the result is bony lumps that grow and spread throughout my body. He also said that since it has broken down most of my knee, I would probably lose my leg, and then he recommended the rotation-plasty, which is a surgery in which the ankle and foot are cut off, turned around 180 degrees and reattached to the bone right above my removed knee. There was a short period of silence and then Dad said to me, with a tear running down his face, "Aren't you glad we're Christians?"

I didn't really hear him then, my body and mind were totally numb, which continued until we came to the car. We both sat down and looked at each other, and then burst into tears. That night, I poured out my heart to God, begging him for healing, and asking for his peace. I wondered about how people with horrible diseases can praise God, and I begged him to give me that ability also. I don't think I slept much that night. The next morning we started telling our friends, who instantly started offering to make meals for us, baby-sit, and do anything that they could to help. Our phone wouldn't stop ringing, everyone we knew wanted to encourage us and to tell us they were praying.

My uncle, who is a cancer specialist in Houston, Texas, knows the world's authority on Osteosarcoma and got us an appointment with him. When we arrived that night, my uncle picked us up and had us stay with him. In Houston, we were worried that we would be waiting around for weeks in order to get anything done, but God took care of that by providing me with the VIP treatment there. We set up a treatment plan and learned a lot about the rotation-plasty. While we stayed in Texas, we still cried here and there, but things got better as God gave us his peace, hope, and restored our joy. My brother, who is a total geek, and is quite proud of it, set up a website for us so that people wouldn't have to call us in order to get news. The website is www.johnnychase.org. God was with me in Houston, he gave me a peace about what was happening. I didn't want to lose my leg but I decided that God knows what is best, and he will heal me if that is part of his plan. Our treatment plan was four rounds of chemo, surgery, and then twelve more rounds of chemo.

We went home and I got to see my pile of cards. There were so many people encouraging me and praying for me. I am the kind of person who thinks that when I receive a gift from someone I have to give one back. But I couldn't do that here, the amount of love people showed for me was and still is breathtaking, I could feel a debt that I can never repay piling up. There were so much love flowing into my family from God's people, I couldn't cry anymore. How masterfully God uses his people.

We went to my Orthodontist to get my braces off, because chemo causes nasty mouth sores. I found out that my Orthodontist had diabetes, and he told me about a chemical that works pretty well to prevent mouth sores. It tastes awful but it seemed to work. Then he looked me straight in the eyes and told me to "hang on to God with both hands." I pondered that as we drove to the hospital, I realized that a form of holding on to God is to run to prayer every time I feel lonely or discouraged or resentful or depressed. I made a decision that I wasn't going to feel depressed, depression is a death trap and only makes you feel worse. I discovered that my attitude is 99 per cent my choice and the way to keep it good is to count my blessings and thank God for them. I still had blessings, like a loving supportive family, plenty of food, good friends, eternity with Jesus, and the promise that he would stay with me no matter what happens.

I had a surgery in which they placed a port right under my skin so that I wouldn't need to get an IV all the time. My first chemo was the worst one: puking, feeling sick, heart burn, the cable TV stunk, loud

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pumps, noisy hallways. I had my own room but Chemo is not something fun. The later ones were easier because they started using Ativan, which basically sends me to happy land and I don't remember anything. A couple weeks later, because my hair was falling out, I shaved it, and a few of my friends shaved their heads too. It was pretty funny being bald, I could shower with a bar of soap, no dandruff, and bunch of people gave me hats to wear. I soon became aware of the tension between IU and Purdue people. I had a Purdue cap and about half the people who commented on it were telling me to change it, I also had an IU winter hat, and I got some interesting remarks about it from people who have seen me wearing the Purdue hat. I think it was all in fun but I did felt like a traitor.

I finally got through the first four chemos. My Oncologist told me that sometimes they have to sedate kids because they are so miserable from mouth sores. But I made it through with less then five. We found a surgeon in Indianapolis who has done a few rotation-plasties. The husband of my mom's childhood friend arranged the schedule so that all of the people in the operating room were Christians. I was really worried about the surgery, but thanks to God, I slept like a rock, the night before surgery. The pain doctor gassed me and I don't remember anything else. But mom told me that when they wheeled me into the operating room, one of the nurses had asked if I was scared, and I said, "I'm not scared, God is with me." I guess I believe the same things even when I am drugged.

Basically, what they did was..... (Show them my leg)..., As for the surgery itself, it was one of the smoothest rotation-plasties my surgeon had ever done, he said that one of the hardest things about this surgery is matching the Tibia and Femur together, but mine fit perfectly together. My first memory after surgery was looking down at my shorter leg and saying with relief instead of loss, "It's gone." And I knew I was talking about the cancer.

The next few months were a blur, chemo, a week of play, chemo, a week of play, chemo, a week of play. The twelve chemos that made up the second group seemed pretty futile, I mean, the cancer was already gone. We didn't really do much that summer or fall. I had under-arm crutches so I was really maneuverable. Make-A-Wish, a company that grants "wishes" of kids with possibly terminal diseases, came and gave me a sweet computer so I would have something to do during chemo. Around Thanksgiving, I got my leg, I named him Wilson after the volleyball from the movie Castaway.

As the first chemo was the worst, the last chemo was the longest. We left the hospital and had my port taken out a couple of days before my birthday, which is December 24. We had an awesome Christmas and New Year, and we really celebrated because it looked like the end of cancer, just one horrible year. But God stayed true through it all, we didn't even have to pay for much of it. By the end of the year, I had spent almost \$500,000 on hospital bills. But because of insurance we only had to pay a few thousand dollars. This also got rid of the "which is cheaper?" question so that cost didn't affect any of our choices. Basically, Chemo is the only time I intend to spend half a million dollars of somebody else's money, on something that makes me sick, not to mention the hair loss. And now, back to life.

Three months later, on March 17, 2005, I had a CT scan to make sure the cancer was gone. It wasn't. Cancer returned in the form of two nodules in my lungs, one in the left lobe and one in the right. That hit me like a anti-tank gun. We returned home crying again, it now seemed like all sixteen rounds of chemo were futile. I went to bed feeling betrayed, why did God let us go through all that pain if he was going to let cancer into my lungs anyway?

I let my Bible flip open and read the first verses that my eyes fell upon. 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 "Praise be to

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the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows." I closed my eyes and tried to praise God, but all that came out was a strangled sob. Even in my tears, God listened.

We were going to have two surgeries, we had the first one and once I recovered from it, we scheduled the second one, but I got sick with a fever and we had to cancel. When I recovered we had another CT scan and the nodule in my left lung shrunk. We canceled the surgery because cancer nodules always grow, if they don't they aren't cancer. So we went home weeping in joy. Thanking God for my fever, which was what delayed the surgery long enough for us to see that the nodule shrunk. I again thought this was over. But the next CT scan showed up more nodules, so we scheduled surgery again, But God cares about our pain because when we finished prepping for surgery, the surgeon told us that some of the nodules were so small he didn't think that he could get them, they were the size of grains of sand. He, instead of just doing surgery like it was scheduled, decided to screw up his schedule and cancel because he didn't want to make me go through surgery more then I had to. Thank you God for giving me a surgeon like this. We delayed the surgery for a month and a half in order for new nodules to quit popping up. So I had a pretty good summer. I got to help out at Camp Mack (our church camp), and went to another camp devoted only to kids who have, or have had cancer.

In early August we had a CT scan, Dad told me that we would talk about it later, he wanted me to be able to enjoy our trip to Cedar Point that Friday. When we got back, my Dad pulled me aside and told me about the CT results and what he found out. I knew he had been kind of edgy but I never expected what he told me. Basically my lungs don't look good, there were four new nodules, Dad sent the report to my cancer doctor in Indianapolis and to the specialist in Houston. They both had different opinions, the surgeon wanted to go in now and, this time, do two surgeries, because some of the nodules are in hard-to-get places. The Specialist in Houston wanted me to do more chemo first and then surgery. The choices don't look like fun but what choice did I have? Well, my dad told me about a third choice. The Specialist said that if we do nothing, I will be dead in 6-9 months, and if we do only surgery, my life expectancy doesn't improve much, if I continue to form nodules. With chemo I have a one in five chance of improvement, and doctors would consider the cancer shrinking even a little bit an improvement, even if the person doesn't live any longer. Their definition of "Improvement" is more morbid then it sounds.

I had a choice to either feel sick, loose my hair, get scars everywhere, and probably still die in 9 months, or live for my nine months and one day just get short of breath and die. I know that we don't live by statistics. God can heal me even if there was a .0001 per cent chance of survival. We had a meeting with our Oncologist and decided to wait and see if more nodules show up. If they don't, we go for surgery, if they do, then we wait on God some more. We had already given chemo a chance. The nodules are in a place where the surgeon can get at them, so we are taking it as a sign that God may want us to do surgery eventually. It seems like trying to read God's mind, but God didn't let the nodules grow in a place where the surgeon couldn't get them. It would be so much easier, in a morbid sort of way, if God would just let cancer grow in a place where surgeons can't get at it. Then I would be forced to just sit back and die, or sit back and wait for God's healing.

It is not like I want to die, who does? I like living, but I'm not afraid of death. Heaven sounds like a great place. If God wants us to do surgery why doesn't he just heal me without it? If I continue to grow nodules, surgery will be for nothing. And trust me, it hurts.

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A few weeks ago, a magazine "accidentally" showed up at my dad's office. It had an article about low-dose chemotherapy. It is designed to prevent or slow the growth of cancer without the side-effects of high-dose chemotherapy. It sounded too good to be true, my dad called my oncologist and he agreed to give it a try. Although I have lost my hair again it hasn't made me sick. I don't know if it is stopping the cancer though. Right now I am coughing a lot more, usually with blood. I also have several lumps on my body, one right here on my forehead. I also get breathless really easily. These daily reminders make cancer a lot harder to ignore.

I am still begging God to take away my cancer, that would be so awesome, that is what I have desperately wanted since all this started. I have wondered why. Why doesn't God just take Cancer away? Why did he give it to me in the first place? Why is he allowing it to be so hard to give my testimony "Why" I have discovered, is not a question that God has to answer. If I knew the answer, sure some of this wouldn't seem so pointless, but would knowing "why" make everything better?

In the Bible, Job's problem was that he needed to know why. He said that God was punishing him for no reason. That he didn't deserve any of what happened to him. But God told Job, "How can you know what my purposes are? Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" God wasn't saying that Job deserved what was happening to him. God said that Job, in his great wisdom, couldn't possibly fathom why God did what he did. "Why" isn't a question that needs answering, though it can trouble my thoughts.

Sometimes when I was discouraged, I would think about making "deals" with God, "I will do this if you heal me." When God didn't hold up his end of the "deal" I would wonder why God passed up this great deal. I was acting like God needed me to do this or that. God doesn't need me. I need him, and trying to persuade or trick him into anything just doesn't work.

When it came to the future, Jesus showed me two policies. One: Do the planning and decision making. Two: when finished, stop thinking about it. When I thought about the future, 99 per cent of my thoughts were worries. Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." It wasn't denial, because I was planning for the future, I just wasn't worrying about it. It isn't easy, especially now, but God is helping me through it.

Is my situation hopeless? This is a question that Satan loves to throw around in my mind. I really don't have proof that God is healing me. All I really know is that I am going to heaven. That knowledge doesn't really help when Satan hits me with "here and now" questions. All I can really do is try to ignore him and say that "here and now" doesn't matter. Because in the past I was subconsciously counting on a miracle from God, Satan could sometimes erode my shield of faith. I had so much trouble fighting Satan's lies about how God didn't care because I was giving him ammunition by basing my defense on what God was doing for me. Satan simply made me focus on where "God's caring" didn't obviously show up. In desperation, I talked with my dad about what hope I have on this earth, and he helped me remember that Jesus promised never to leave or forsake me. That is my hope on this earth. I do want him to heal me, but I am no longer pretending that God promised to heal me.

I know for a fact that God will get me through what ever shows up, and I am going to keep following him even if it kills me, and I would rather die knowing I am doing what God wants and planned for me to do, then to live to be ninety, knowing that I turned from his plan and went my own way. God is the only

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reason I get out of my bed in the morning, his love is how I got through the first day, his joy is what keeps me smiling, his peace is what helped me deal with the loss of my leg. He gave me patience to stand all 16 chemo treatments. In his kindness and goodness, he surrounds me with loving Christians who care more about me than I can know. God has been faithful in his promises to stay with me and never forsake me. And because of Jesus, I am not afraid of death, because when I die, I know I am going to heaven. And as long as I have breath in these cancer infested lungs, I will use it to praise the LORD.

Posted Friday, December 23, 2005 at 7:31 pm

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9) Last evening as I was returning from purchasing a plot for burial at the cemetery my attention was caught by the spectacular sunset. I couldn't help wondering what John was seeing in heaven. I heard once that anything of beauty here on earth is only a foretaste of the beauty we will experience in heaven.

I can't possibly relate all the emotions we are experiencing, but I can tell you they are healthy and good. Right at the top of the list would be relief. Relief because John's fight is over and we no longer need to be concerned about his welfare. We know he is now experiencing pure, sweet, unimmaginable joy in God's presence. Relief because we no longer carry the weight of this trial. Relief because God has shredded any doubt we ever had about his faithfulness. Relief because frankly we didn't know how we would feel after his death.

Is it OK to tell you we feel great...fragile but great. Tears flow easily and unashamedly. They honor John and the special place he has in our hearts. They honor God as an expression of gratitude for his goodness to John and us. They heal our battle wounds. They express victory over Satan and his shrewd attempts to make something evil from what God intended for good.

We are really looking foward to celebrating Christmas. We're looking foward to the visiting times with family and friends and people whose lives have been touched by John. We're looking foward to celebrating John's life and what he believed unto death on Tuesday.

Have a wonderful Christmas with us as we all celebrate the birthday of the One who destroyed the power of sin and death.

Thank you so much for praying...Phil

Posted Tuesday, December 27, 2005 at 5:47 am

We had the time of visitation yesterday. I was a little nervous because I had never been on this side of a visitation before. What a wonderful way to spend a day. Stand in one place for six hours and get stroked by family and friends and even people you have never met before. People whose lives have been touched by John and our family. People who love us and have been praying for us and cheering us on. People that God sent to express his love to us through tears and kind words and hugs. Now I understand - visitation after the death of a loved one is healing.

Jesus wept. (John 11:35) My kids love memorizing this verse because it is the shortest verse in the Bible. It is a verse about Jesus at the tomb of his friend Lazarus who had died three days before. There have been many reasons proposed as to why Jesus wept at that time. The reason I find most satisfying is that Jesus knew Lazarus was in heaven and he was about to raise him from the dead and bring him back to this nasty old world. Jesus knew how great heaven is because he left heaven to come here to die for our sins. It grieved him to bring Lazarus back from that to this.

It is great to be able to smile on this side of John's life. At the visitation people would often have a bewildered look on their face as they visited with Laura and I and the kids. THEY ARE SMILING. I think some were afraid we'd be slumped on the floor - sobbing, quivering, miserable piles of flesh. Actually, before John died I wasn't sure how we'd react, we've never done this before and that makes it a little scary. But we have Jesus.

What's not to smile about. My son is in heaven. My son isn't suffering anymore. We really don't know alot about

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heaven, but God has promised us it will be great. One thing I know - earth isn't heaven and I don't need to feel that John has been cheated of anything by going there a little earlier than I wanted. When I miss John my thoughts quickly go to the realization that he is happy and I will see him again someday. As a dad isn't that ultimately what I want for all my kids. I want them to be happy in life and I want to spend eternity with them in heaven. If I can't have both then I'll choose the later. I still shed tears and these honor John and the special place he will always have in my heart. My tears are also a sacrifice of praise to my God who knows what is best and always acts in love.

Today is the funeral. When I asked John what he wanted at his funeral he said' I just want it to glorify God. His sisters prepared a powerpoint to one of John's favorite songs. I want to share some thoughts but I'm afraid I'll cry and no one will understand what I am trying to say.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Wednesday, December 28, 2005 at 5:37 am

Yesterday was a great day. Many encouraged us saying that John's funeral pointed straight to our great God. I wanted to share some thoughts, many prayed that I would be able to speak, and God answered powerfully. I wondered if walking away from the fresh grave of my son would hit us with a new wave of loss. Quite honestly, we are so full of assurance that John is rejoicing in the presence of God that it is hard to wallow much in feelings of our loss. Besides that we are being not just touched but slammed to the floor and pinned there by the out pouring of love from family and friends and even complete strangers.

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. (Ephesians 1:18-19) As Laura and I prepared to leave John's grave side the funeral director approached us and said, God has touched you in a special way. I'm sure this man has seen it all. I woke early this morning and began weeping as I realized that someone was probably praying for us right then, and the joy and peace that my family and I are experiencing even in this shadow of death is from the faithful prayers of so many people, many of whom we have never met. Through this journey of John's cancer and then his death God has opened the eyes of our hearts as this verse says. We have a new understanding and confidence in the hope he has called us to, the riches of our inheritance, and God's incredible power for us. That's why we have peace and joy even now. I was weeping out of gratitude to God and to you who have prayed. I was weeping out of repentance because I do not pray for others as I ought. Oh God teach me to pray. May this powerful life lesson be a catalyst in my prayer life. May those who have lifted us up in prayer receive back a hundred fold the fullness of Christ that you have poured into our lives because of their faithfulness.

This last year John was picking up the guitar and this was one of his favorite songs to play. We sang it at his funeral.

Blessed be your name by Matt Redman

Blessed be Your name in the land that is plentiful
 Where Your streams of abundance flow
 Blessed be Your name
 And blessed be Your name when I'm found in the desert place
 Though I walk through the wilderness
 Blessed be your name

Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise
 And when the darkness closes in Lord
 Still I will say

Blessed be the name of the Lord
 Blessed be Your name
 Blessed be the name of the Lord
 Blessed be Your glorious name

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Blessed be Your name when the sun's shining down on me
 When the world's "all as it should be"
 Blessed be Your name
 And blessed be Your name on the road marked with suffering
 Though there's pain in the offering
 Blessed be Your name

You give and take away
 You give and take away
 My heart will choose to say
 Lord, blessed be Your name

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Friday, December 30, 2005 at 6:40 am

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. (1 John 4:16) I woke this morning remembering months ago when I was meditating on God's display of love to us in Christ. If nothing else, I could look to Christ's life and death for me as ample evidence of God's love for me. And that is a love I could rely on when some things in life didn't look so loving. Then God revealed to me that he was showing his love to me through John also. I cried then and it still makes me cry but for a different reason. Back then I couldn't see it but I knew by faith it was true. Now I cry because I can see it. God has showered his love on us in visible tangible ways that put to rest any doubt of his love. We know his love because we have experienced his love in a powerful and unforgettable way. The countless words and acts of kindness from others have shown us God's love. The beautiful way God has sustained our family during the hard times shows us God's love. The obvious way God cradled John in his arms through his trial and even to death showed us his love. Our peace and joy that defies understanding shows us God's love. Even something small like God helping me give the eulogy at my son's funeral without sobbing uncontrollably showed me God's love. Here's what I said:

In 3 John verse 4 the apostle John wrote, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. My son John walked in the truth right up to the end. Jesus Christ is that truth.

When things were good he would give thanks to Jesus.

When things were bad he would seek comfort from Jesus.

If you asked him if he was mad at Jesus because of this cancer he would say, I can't bite the hand that feeds me.

He loved bringing attention to Jesus, often times deflecting a compliment someone had just paid to him by saying, It's all Jesus.

Some of you might not know John's last words.

A few hours before he died he woke from a sound sleep and with bright eyes and excitement in his voice he said ,I'm going home now. It's awesome. I'm going to be with Jesus.

Those of you who knew John well would agree with this - If John could speak from the grave he would say, This is not all there is. Give your life completely to Jesus.

Thank you for all your prayers for John and my family.

God is so good and God is enough.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Sunday, January 1, 2006 at 3:17 pm

Funeral and Graveside Messages:

"Funeral Message Johnny Chase" Pastor Bill Lepley Psalm 77

To your entire family, Phil, Laura, Taylor, Corrie, Paula, Marta, Maria, Carter, Susannah,

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Colson, Bethany and your entire family I want to express my deepest sympathy.

The stark reality is that none of us planned to be here today. It was not on our calendars. We all planned to be somewhere else at this moment. But because of an appointment with death we are here. And this is not the last appointment with death we will keep. There will be at least one more for each of us.

What makes the *joy* of this memorial celebration of Johnny's life, so vivid, is the background against which it is set. It is set against the background of *suffering*. The dark background of suffering is what provides the contrast that makes our *faith in God*, and our *hope in his promises*, so brilliantly visible.

A perspective like this, at the loss of such a young life, is possible only when we choose to place our entire lives, in God's all powerful, hands. That is what we call, **Faith in Christ!**

Faith in Christ makes a difference. It makes a difference in how we live life, and it makes a difference, in how we face death.

Faith in Christ is how you explain *eyes filled with tears*, and *voices echoing God's praise*, both at the same time.

Faith in Christ is how you can explain the *sense of loss* and the *sense of joy*, both residing in our hearts at this moment.

The message of God, for this moment, to each of us, is one of soaring confidence in Him. That's what **Faith in Christ** produces in us. Because you see, even this stretch of life's road is not beyond his reach. God's compassionate care for us is as fresh as this morning's sunrise.

Lam 3:22-23 Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

And so, this is why, we confidently place our brokenness, in his strong hands. Because his

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compassions never fail us, and his faithfulness is always great to us!

This was the kind of courage that guided Johnny's life, especially these last two years. Because he lived with such confidence in God, he would want us to do the same.

Ps 77 is a portion of God's word that shows us how to navigate time like these in our lives. It shows us how to experience a grief that lead to growth. The truth of God's word is what lights the path we now walk on. This Psalm shows us how personal anguish can lead to spiritual growth. This Psalm shows us some crucial steps that lead from despair to joy, from our own inadequacy, to God's sufficiency.

No matter how much we try to fight it, suffering is a part of life. It may be in the form of a broken body or a broken heart but, sooner or later, it comes to all of us.

Suffering can make us or break us. When it hits our lives, with full force, we have two choices: **To blame God** and reject him, believing he could have prevented it, or **To trust God**, that it is part of our lives is part of His mysterious plan for us. Suffering is often the crucible in which faith is formed.

The Psalmist had an exceptional ability to be honest about his spiritual struggles. His honesty is shown throughout this psalm. Whether he is confessing his own failures, or admitting his confusion over God's ways, he perseveres. He holds on to his belief in God, and that belief produces hope. Words of instruction and wisdom for those of us who are left to walk life's road.

1. Take some time to focus on yourself.

As you serve others who are suffering, don't forget yourself or ignore your own needs. Your need for God's help matter too.

Psalm 77:1-4 I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. 2 When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted. 3 I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint. 4 You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.

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Sometimes people condemn this kind of expressions as being selfish. But it's really just being honest. And honestly acknowledging our hurt can be a huge step toward healing. When we take the time to focus on what is happening to us, God will help us see beyond what is happening to us. After all, God is thinking about us, too. He loves us. He desires our greatest good.

While God cares about our suffering, He is also concerned about molding our lives so that we will bring honor to Him. Sometimes our suffering prevents us from understanding everything God is up to. That may be why he sometimes moves slowly. We will cast all our cares on God only when we are honest enough to admit that we are overwhelmed by them.

1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

This verse doesn't say it's wrong to have anxiety, it says it's simply unwise to try to bear it yourself. Give it go God! If we try to cover up the pain, or pretend it is not there, we are really relying on ourselves to deal with it. So looking within ourselves, and becoming aware of our own hurts and needs is a big step toward all God has for us in the future.

God is our refuge. He waits eagerly to take us in, to listen to our heart's cry, to care for us, to comfort us, to mend our broken hearts. But first we have to acknowledge our need of his help.

2. Don't be afraid to ask God hard questions.

He now takes up a series of questions. Questions not about himself or his circumstances, but questions about God. There is nothing wrong with asking God hard, honest questions. There's a difference between asking questions and questioning God. A big difference. Don't miss the significance of this difference.

Some think these questions are accusations against God. I don't think so. I think they are questions, that will lead us to re-affirm, in our hearts and minds, what we already know to be true, about the goodness of our God. Listen to these questions...

Psalms 77:7-9 "Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? 8 Has

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his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? 9 Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?"

We know that the answer to all of these questions is **NO!** God has not rejected us, or forgotten us, or failed us. He is not withholding his compassion from us. His love for us has not vanished, especially not when we face things like this.

God is not angry with our honest questions. He wants us to ask them. When we do, he wants us to listen to him. Though God may seem silent during parts of our journey, do not mistake his **silence** for his **absence**. The one who said, "*I am with you always,*" meant it for right now in your life.

For every believer, there are times of darkness. Times when we don't have answers to all of our questions. Living by God's clock means learning the discipline of patiently waiting on his ways.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

So, because of this, we can say with Jesus; "*Not my will, but your will be done, God.*" "*Not my way God, but your way, God.*" The conclusion of these questions brings us to the realization that trusting God with what we can see and what we can't see, is our best response to what we experience. It's how we say; I want your way in my life God.

3. Remember God's goodness in your life.

Wrestling with life's problems and circumstances can wear us down. It can sometimes cause us to forget what God has already done for us. When those times come, and they come to all of us, we need to remember all that God has done for us.

Psalms 77:10-12 Then I thought, "To this **I will** appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High." 11 I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, **I will** remember your miracles of long ago. 12 **I will** meditate on all your works and consider all your

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mighty deeds.

Notice how he puts it. “**I will...**” Three times he says it. “**I will!**” He is choosing to remember God’s goodness, in spite of his suffering. When God seems silent, he says, “*I will remember what he has done for me.*” When the way seems too difficult, he says “*I will remember your miracles of long ago.*” When his mind seems confused, he says, “*I will meditate on your works and consider all your mighty deeds.*”

When we remember what God has done for us in the past, we know that, once again, even in the midst of a great test, He will lift us up. And He will reveal Himself to us. Looking back, on God’s goodness, gives us the perspective we need in the present, to find his hope for the future.

4. Express your heart to God in praise.

To express a prayer of praise to God, in the midst of our grief, is an expression of faith in him. It is saying that we truly believe, that in all things, God is working for our good.

Psalm 77:13-15 Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God? 14 You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. 15 With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

“Prayer has been called the slender nerve that moves the mighty hand of God. Any form of sincere, believing prayer channels God’s power into our lives and situations, but the prayer of praise especially releases His power. Praise is “faith in action”— and faith brings victory that changes circumstances or victory in circumstances as they are. - Warren and Ruth Myers

Placing our eyes in God, and choosing to praise Him, is the final step toward growth in the midst of grief and suffering. Praise proves we are; **Heb 11:1** “...sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” As we praise God, our spirits rise, and we reaffirm God’s rightful place at the center of our lives. As Paul wrote; **2 Cor. 3:18** “we... are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory...”

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"Praise is like a plow set to go deep into the soil of a believers' hearts. It lets the glory of God into the details of daily living." - C. M. Hanson

So, because of this we choose to say with the psalmist,

Psalm 89:1-2 I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. 2 I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

My question for you is this. Have you made a place in your life for God. This God the Johnny knew and loved and followed wants you to know him to.

Eph 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

I want to give you an opportunity, at this moment, to do exactly this. To ask Jesus Christ to come into your life.

Grabill Missionary Church, December 27, 2005, 2:00pm

Graveside Service for Johnny Chase, 12/27/05 Pastor Bill Lepley

Psalm 62:5-8,11-12 5 Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. 6 He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. 7 My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. 8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge... 11 One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, 12 and that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.

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And so, as a deliberate choice of faith in God here is what we do...

1. We **trust** in God at all times... The good times and the bad times.
2. We **pour out our hearts** to him... He understands and invites us to share the burden of our lives with him.
3. We remain **unshakably confident** in His promises to us... When our faith in God is sure, even the tragedies of life are not enough to shake His firm grip on us.

The Act of Committal...

We choose to cherish the memories of Johnny that will always be sacred to us. We delight in the sustaining strength of our faith, because it is stronger than what we now face. We will be comforted by the hope we have in eternal life, a hope that now fills our hearts. And so with confidence in our faithful God we commit all that is mortal of our loved one to this resting place. Because we believe in the resurrection to follow and the reunion we will one day have in heaven.

I'm Free

Don't grieve for me for now I'm free
I'm following the path God laid for me
I took his hand when I heard him call
I turned my back and left it all
I could not stay another day
To laugh, to love, to work or play
Tasks left undone must stay that way
I found that place at the close of day

If my parting, has left a void
Then fill it with remembered joy
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss
Ah yes, these things, I too will miss
Be not burdened with times of sorrow

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I wish you sunshine for tomorrow
My life's been full, I've savored much
Good friends, good times, a loved ones touch
Perhaps my time seemed all too brief
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief
Lift up your heart and share with me
God wanted me now
He set me free
- *Author Unknown*

Posted Monday, January 02, 2006 at 6:04 am

I lift up my eyes to you, to you whose throne is in heaven. As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he shows us his mercy. (Psalms 123:1,2) I woke yesterday in tears. I was remembering the look of delight on my son's face as he uttered his last words. What a mercy of the Lord to us. God didn't have to do that. That moment was for us, a gift from God.

As I reflect on the past two years I can see mercy upon mercy from God. Many are chronicled on this website. Here is one that was not. The day John died I woke with the memory of my Dad's death. The family had gathered and one by one my five siblings and I sat alone with my dad, reminiscing about memories we had through the years, receiving and giving forgiveness when necessary, and expressing many previously unspoken words of love to each other. My time with Dad is one I will always cherish.

I felt impressed to have each of my older children write a note to John expressing such thoughts to him. They were hesitant but complied with my request. Later that day when John was between naps and alert, each sibling tearfully read their letter to him. God showed up and it was a beautiful, sacred moment in our lives. Each child has thanked me since then for that opportunity. We could have missed it because John died less than twelve hours later. God had mercy on us. That's the kind of God we serve.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Thursday, January 05, 2006 at 4:36 am

My oldest two children are back to college. I have seven children still at home but the house seems unusually empty. The hubbub of the holidays is past. We restarted homeschooling and I returned to work. We are slowly sorting through John's stuff. An empty feeling is creeping in. I know this is a normal part of the mourning process but it is disorienting.

I realized that before John's death the great temptation was to fear the future, to worry. Now the temptation is to sin in our grief. I have never heard anyone talk about sinning in mourning but I can definitely feel the enemy's tugs. Many suggest that anything goes is the healthy way to mourn. I can see many wrong choices presenting themselves to my family and I.

First there is self pity, a rat's nest that looks awfully comfortable, but like a mud-lined pit, is easy to slide into but hard to climb out of. Then there's the temptation to get frantic in activities or work to distract from the pain. Or how about ruminating about what we might have done differently to alter the course of events. Of course there are the old favorites of anger at God, bitterness about life's turns, depression, overeating, playing up our pain to every listening ear, ...

Jesus said, whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14) No, we refuse to sin in our mourning. Anything other than Christ that offers itself up as a balm for our pain is a counterfeit. Lord, you promised that if I drank your water I would never thirst. I'm thirsty Lord. I'm counting on you to quench this thirst in my heart with the water of your presence. Full of you, Lord, I will never thirst. Aren't you glad Jesus keeps all his promises.

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Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Sunday, January 08, 2006 at 3:11 pm

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23)

Many people have indicated concern over how I am doing since Johnny died two weeks ago. I certainly have times of sadness. Especially as I sort through his schoolwork. I admit I can't throw away his perfect chemistry tests or his sterling Stanford Achievement Test scores. He was a fine student, and the reality hasn't hit me yet that he will never need these again. Besides, I am so very proud of him; without him, it seems to me the intelligence of the people of earth has dropped a few points. Well, okay, I'm his mom. Few could beat him in chess, even when he was groggy on chemotherapy or pain medication.

I am also grieving as I clean out his bed, his desk, and drawers and gather his possessions for his siblings and close friends to pick through and find momentos. Thanks to many generous encouragers, he had some pretty neat technology. But the simple things I find take more time. A secret code key, an interesting stone, an incomplete model airplane, burned but unlabeled CDs, pictures, and saved letters invite me to pause and wonder what significance each had to Johnny, and why he stored them, other than he didn't get around to throwing them away. I thought about going through his things with him before he died, but at the time it seemed dishonoring, as if it might sabotage hope in being cured. Yes, he had hope in a miracle up to the last. And it would have been wrong to take that away.

Our many fun times together as a family couldn't obscure the fact of John's terrible prognosis. It was like living in the shadow of a teetering boulder, soon to crush what time we had left. We have been in mourning already for two years, watching Johnny deteriorate. This is why you don't see me in passionate mourning now. I've cried it all out already, and I'm so comforted as a mom to know Johnny isn't suffering any more, that I can smile and feel relief. I miss John terribly, but agree with Phil: What is our highest priority as parents but to see our children chose Christ and follow him --no matter what that means-- to the end? We know where Johnny is.

One fear I had going through Johnny's possessions was unfounded. Was Johnny who he portrayed himself to be? Drama and deception run rampant among my people. Even with homeschooling, there is no guarantee that anyone lives his internal life consistent with what other people see. As I cleaned out nooks and crannies, I stumbled upon prayers he had written, secret prayers he never intended to put on the website or have other people read. The handwriting is atrocious -- a sure indication the words were full of emotion when he wrote them and for his (and the Lord's) eyes only. Sometime I will type them up, and it will have to be me, for having graded his schoolwork for eleven years, I am probably the only one who can make out his writing. They are beautiful and honest, full of horror at his situation and faith in his kind Savior to see him through it. No reason to fear as I worked through his things. Johnny was as full of integrity as I could ever hope. No pornography, no despair, no secrets. Only Jesus.

I treasure your prayers,
Laura

Posted Tuesday, January 10, 2006 at 5:45 pm

Johnny tried to be deceptive only about one thing, and he was lousy at it. He didn't want us, especially his mother, to know how bad he had been feeling since about October. He winded easily, he slept a lot, and he had trouble getting around to his schoolwork and chores. (Like a mother wouldn't notice this?) I didn't talk to him about it, and it was hard for me to know whether to push him to be responsible or not. If I let up too much, I was afraid he would lose hope. And he beamed with satisfaction when he felt good enough to do valuable work for the family. I was not duped by his smiles and jokes, because his hacking cough, day and night, relentlessly reminded me that this boy was being consumed by cancer and there was nothing, absolutely nothing, I could do about it.

His last 10 days room air suffocated him, and he needed oxygen and morphine to keep from being terrified because he couldn't breathe. We gave John a bell he could ring if he felt he was in a crisis and we were in another room.

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The last two weeks of Johnny's life were agony for me as a mother, for I became frantic trying to ease his suffering. Looking back, I realize it was then that Johnny began ministering to me. He recognized my helplessness and gave me little useless things I could do to serve him like getting ice water or Kleenex or more blankets or sit next to him and rub his back. He thanked me every time. After a breathing treatment, I'd ask, "Are you comfortable?" He'd answer, "I'm perfect."

And I admit with embarrassment my greatest temptation during this time was to run away. Not run to Monte Carlo or something, but slightly out of the fray; anywhere in the house I couldn't hear the machinery, the coughing, or the bell. The Lord got my attention, and I began to consciously make the effort to stay beside him as much as I could while he suffered, and I'm glad I did. Every day the Lord provided an opportunity for me to get away from it all for a while and be refreshed.

And this is, as Phil says, the raw, earthly side. Where was our kind Savior during this agony? Right beside us, feeling our pain, filling our home with peace and joy, and tangibly sending us his people. I now have seen "the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18). The riches are you all. You are a secret, spectacular network of Christ's workers just waiting for orders, present in every city, ready to love someone in crisis at a moment's notice. You cross ethnic barriers and denominations. Christ is so visible in you.

You sent a three-foot stack of cards which sit in our kitchen corner like a monument to love. The cards were penned with encouragement, scripture, and prayers damp with tears for us. We are now going through them one at a time during our morning family Bible time and pray for each of you, because what goes around in the Kingdom of God comes around! Your emails were so timely and encouraging! You fed us with your best recipes and in large quantities! You cared for our children and took them places. And best of all, you visited Johnny. Daily for the last two weeks of his life someone came and prayed with him. He was so grateful for your prayers! Several have mentioned to me that they were awakened at 4 in the morning on the day Johnny died and prayed for us. Then after Johnny went to glory, you surrounded us with more mail, and fruit, and flowers, and you came to the viewing and stood in line for hours just to hug us. Seven hours of compassion. What a healing time visitation is! You showed up en masse to send Johnny off at his funeral even though it was only two days after Christmas and you had other things you could be doing. Each of us has only twenty-four hours in a day, and we are so deeply honored that you spent so much of those days on us.

Christ continued to whisper to us through the scriptures and the love of other believers that he had not abandoned us, that what he was accomplishing through John was bigger than we were, and that Johnny was never in danger, that we were loved and in the center of his will, and everything was going to be okay.

King David delighted in fellow believers who served God with him: As for the saints who dwell in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. Ps 16:3. We too delight in those who are standing with us, you are glorious!

If you have a moment, please pray for two dear young ladies in our life. Hillary May is 16 and just starting chemotherapy for newly diagnosed Hodgkins Disease. Her web site is www.caringbridge.org/visit/hillary. Karis Kornfield is a young lady born without functioning intestines and is today undergoing a complete intestinal, liver, pancreas transplant. Her last one failed and we are praying this one might be successful. Her website is www.aup.org/karis/latest_update.htm.

I treasure your prayers,

Laura

Posted Thursday, January 12, 2006 at 6:37 am

Many times during Johnny's ordeal, I dreamed that a miracle would happen, that I would awake the next morning and Johnny's appetite would be back, or the cough would be gone, or the tumors would disappear from the CT scan. I prayed, "Dear Lord, couldn't you heal him now? Aren't we doing enough good with what has happened already to bring you glory? Can't you stop the agony now, before we lose Johnny?"

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Over and over God would impress these thoughts on me. "Yes, I could. Johnny could live a normal, earthly life and you would have a great miracle story to praise Me with. And I know you would be faithful to give Me the glory.

"But what if I ask more of you? What if what is happening to Johnny has eternal ramifications beyond what you understand now? What if by taking Johnny Home to myself I am able to accomplish what could not be done on earth any other way? What if by your not losing faith in Me, many came into my kingdom and found abundant, eternal life? What is that worth?

"You know, Beloved, many of my children have walked through desperate times, and will continue to. What if, by being faithful to the end, you and Phil are able to comfort desperate people because you have earned a little legitimacy in suffering?

"But as an alternative, what if, after I healed Johnny, some turned from Me because I didn't heal their loved one like I healed yours?

"Or you might begin to offer people some spiritual formula for healing that "worked" for you, rather than hope in my greater plan.

"Your hope will not disappoint you, even if I take him, for I have healed him. He is safe with me."

It is reported that D L Moody reflecting on his own mortality said, "One day you will see this headline in the paper: 'DL Moody Is Dead'. Don't you believe it! For at that moment I shall be more alive than I ever have been."

John, right now, is more alive than he ever has been.

John 11:25 "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.'

In hope of eternal life, grateful for your prayers,
Laura

Posted Saturday, January 14, 2006 at 4:41 pm

How does a person get through such a difficult thing as a death of a child?

When I was in my early teens, I had read almost all of the short books in our small church's library, so I picked up a bulky one, Foxe's Book of Martyrs, mainly because it had pictures. That Sunday afternoon I read about a mother and a teenage son who were condemned to be burned at the stake for their faith. The mother was forced to watch her son die first. I expected that she would wail with despair and thrash around in agony, and probably that was what her persecutors expected, too. Instead, as they tied the boy and started the fire, and as he felt pain, she shouted encouragement to him, "Be strong and brave! You know the truth -- believe it now! Forgive your enemies! Do not fear, you are not far from the Savior's embrace! I will join you soon!" He, and then she, died not in bitterness but in hope, not in weakness, but in victory. I remember closing that book reverently and weeping for that valiant, faithful mother. The world was not worthy of her.

I would never have come to the conclusion on my own that the death of my child could be faced with courage, obedience, and peace. I doubted I could ever be strong like the mother in Foxe's Book. I was always one of those who watched with awe as a suffering fellow-servant obeyed through violent adversity.

But watching adversity is not living it. I could trust the Lord to make my responsibility clear when the time came.

I needed to stay on my square.

Follow this analogy. Life is like a board game. There are a lot of squares you can find yourself on or move to. Some are

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advantageous or daring, and some distract you from your objective and don't accomplish anything. Keeping the big picture in view is the best way to negotiate your way to victory, but on an average day, keeping the big picture on a complicated board game is very challenging. The squares look like they all have the same value, but they don't. Judgment gets foggy because there are too many options.

One thing I now understand is that the fog lifted with the dawn of suffering. The rays of light from the perspective of suffering illuminated the gameboard differently, certain squares became dull and others stood out. Squares of obedience glowed and revealed they were strong and substantial. Squares of rebellion, distraction, self-pity, fear, and worry could be seen edgewise in the light and it was clear their props were knocked out and they were flimsy as tissue-paper and dangerous, false places to stand. I knew if I inched out on these squares, they would give way, and I would crumble. The choice was painfully clear. There weren't a lot of legitimate places to go.

I would be safe if I stayed on my square.

One square stood out brilliantly on the board. It was labelled, "Trust in the Lord" and it drew me. It was solid and real. Staying in that square, I knew what to do, because written on the four sides of my square were "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" and "Bless the Lord and give him glory." Trust in the Lord, and its consequences (joy, patience, prayer, and thankfulness) were choices. When times were good, this square looked like many others and sounded like hard work. But in suffering, it kept me sane. The four consequences were still hard work, but by obeying, I learned they were my nourishment, my stability, and my strength. By obediently remaining on that square, sleeping on that square, crying on that square, caring for Johnny and all the others on that square, Christ breathed life into me. To face this hardship, I stayed on my square. That is truly how I did it. I could do nothing else.

At Johnny's death, our other children wondered how our family would handle it. Corrie said that she was worried because in many TV shows and movies when a child dies, the dad becomes a workaholic, the mother gets suicidal, the younger children become bullies at school, and the older girls run off with their boyfriends and get pregnant. Sorrow becomes the one excuse in popular media that lets people sin without condemnation.

And frankly, we don't know how we will fare, either. We've never done this before. But "staying on the square" seems to apply here, too. Why should we add to our sorrow and grief by behaving as if we have no hope?

Philippians 4:4-7: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Thank you for praying for us that we can grieve without sin,
Laura

Posted Saturday, January 21, 2006 at 7:57 pm

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. (2 Corinthians 1:3-6)

Something struck me the other day while I was talking about this passage with some friends. First of all, let me testify to the overflowing comfort our family is experiencing during this trial. Second, this idea that the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives has a new meaning to me. I used to think this sharing in the sufferings of Christ was a condition limited to apostles, prophets, church heavy-weights, people living in countries where the church is persecuted, etc. Now I see that God allows suffering into the lives of Joe Christian for a purpose I had not previously understood.

If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in

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you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. Our suffering is for the comfort and salvation of others. What a concept. As you see Christ comforting us, take comfort and patiently endure your suffering. Be encouraged fellow suffering Christian. The Father of compassion and God of all comfort is real and personal and faithful. He will comfort you. Your trial will comfort others and lead to their salvation.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Monday, January 30, 2006 at 3:53 pm

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1) It has been a little more than a month since John died. I ran across this verse in my reading recently and fireworks went off. The truth of this verse has sustained our family through this trial.

Tucking my children into bed at night and missing John, the empty spot at our dinner table, little things around the house that remind me of him...dwelling on these things do not breath life into me. This is not where I park my thoughts. I run to what I hope for and to the unseen reality of life.

John is in heaven. He will never suffer again. He is done with this struggle of the flesh. He is happy. He would rather be there than here. Would I really rather he be here than there? He would be unhappy with me if I said yes. He would want us rejoicing along with him.

What is it I want for my kids? I want them to live their lives for Christ. I want them to spend eternity in heaven rather than hell. I want them to be happy but not at the expense of the first two. Bingo! John did and John is.

We got faith. We are sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Faith based in the right person makes all the difference. Thank you God for the gift of faith.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Sunday, February 26, 2006 at 7:36 pm

It has been a while since I posted something. The primary reason is that life is full. Our family is doing well. We are pleased for John's joy in heaven and God is comforting us.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28) I love this verse now. I love the word all. I love that God has mercifully shown us glimpses of the good He has worked through what on the surface seems pretty awful.

God definitely used John's life as a testimony to His greatness. We have recieved many notes from people whose faith was strengthened by John's short life. We have responded to over 100 requests for the DVD of John's testimony. I will never be the same after the experiences of the past two years. My love for God has blossomed. He has proven His faithfulness and goodness to my family and me over and again.

John wasn't a perfect person. He had many blemishes in his character, just like we all do. But God showed us through John that God can use even imperfect vessels to accomplish His good work if they love Him and are surrendered to His purpose.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Friday, June 2, 2006 at 7:33 am

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Posted Thursday, June 22, 2006 at 9:23 am

Taste and see that the Lord is good.(Psalms 34:8)

It's been 6 months since Johnny died. It seems like years ago and then it seems like yesterday. It's nice to not have to paint on a smile. We are truly filled with joy, peace, and God's comfort.

Laura and I have had several opportunities to speak publicly of God's goodness through this trial. God has also brought many people across our paths that we could encourage with our experience. Having opportunities to share God's goodness with others brings great satisfaction and gives meaning to the pain.

Our family is thriving. Each of our children appears to be dealing with their personal loss with grace and peace. No acting out, no bitterness, nothing but normal kid stuff. Thank you God!

Thank you for your concern and prayers. We are blessed to have an army of people who love us and uphold us in prayer. We know our joy is the fruit of your prayers.

Thanks for praying...Phil

Posted Thursday, December 21, 2006 at 8:19 pm

On the one year anniversary of Johnny's death I thought it would be good to post an update. Quite honestly it is painful to spend much time thinking about Johnny. We miss him immeasurably in too many situations to count. We often fondly refer to some of his quips and antics. It is good and healthy to miss him, but dwelling on his absence brings no joy.

Take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5) Would our Lord have us dwell on our loss? I think not. Jesus promised us life to the full. (John 10:10) Obedience to Christ in my thoughts will refresh my life as surely as disobedience saps me.

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What thoughts will bring me life? Thoughts like knowing I'll see Johnny again. (1Thes 4:16,17) Reminding myself that Johnny is done with suffering. (Rev 21:3,4) Thinking of Johnny's delight and happiness in heaven in the presence of Jesus. (2 Cor 5:8) These things lift my heavy heart. They make me smile. They refocus my eyes on what is unseen and eternal, rather than on what is seen and temporary. (2 Cor 4:18) They set my heart on things above, not on earthly things. (Col. 3:1-2) They help me experience the life that Christ promises, and confirm to me that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6)

Many ask about our family, How is everyone doing? With gratitude to God I can honestly report that all is well in our home. Each member of our family continues to find peace and grace to deal with Johnny's death. We do not grieve as those who have no hope. (1 Thes. 4:13).

Thanks for praying....Phil