

# You are all I need

I'm Johnny Chase. I was born into a 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. 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](http://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 was 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 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 feel 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 than 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 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 than 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 than it sounds.

I had a choice to either feel sick, lose 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.

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 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.

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](mailto: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.