

*“If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me.*

See Judges 6:17

Whilst in prayer late in 2001, I prayed for guidance from God and a sign that I was doing the work that he required. Most of my work for God is of a quiet subtle manner and it is easy to think that one is being self-indulgent in thinking that one is doing work according to God's will.

In an extremely rare event, God did speak clearly to me. I was told that there would be cancer during 2002. That not one of my immediate kin would be affected at this time, but that several people who were as family would be affected.

One would have an extremely aggressive form of cancer, but that if they acted quickly it would not kill them. However, I was to lose another. “Who would it be”, I asked of God? “It will be Ron, he will die after several months of hospitalisation and poor health.”

“Oh no, does he have to die? Can I pray for him not to get this illness and relieve his family of this suffering?”

God's reply was: “If you were to pray for this to not happen, I would not refuse your request. But consider, before you pray, that Ron's time has been nominated. Your prayers will not change the date of Ron's death. The alternative way for Ron to die is from a complication of his diabetes. The alternative will be quick and sudden. However, consider the healing that will come from Ron's cancer. Long term rifts within his family will be healed. Ron will come to terms with his life and will die according to *my* will and *my* grace. There will be dignity, resolution, love, peace, and understanding through his death.

So consider, will you pray to avoid his cancer? or will you pray for the strength to provide the support that *I* demand of you? For by this prayer, you have made yourself *my* servant. You are charged to love and support Ron and his wife and children. You are bound not to speak of this until such time as they and *I* give you release to do so. For to speak out of time is to risk calamitous turns of events. For you do not know if *I* may choose to heal Ron for the lessons have been learnt. You are not to preclude the possibility of healing through the *Holy Ghost*. Nor shall you speak, lest you change the course of events and make manifest that which does not need to be manifest. Nor shall you speak, so that after your conscience is clear that you did not speed Ron's illness or death.

Instead *I* charge you with providing practical support, affirmation, emotional comforting. Help them to be as happy as possible, help them be receptive to *My* presence. For through you, they must know that Ron's coming was known to *Me*, and the way was prepared.”

“How long?” I asked of God, now accepting that it was God’s will that this was to occur, and that to pray for an alternative would be to pray for something less beautiful than God had planned.

“Ron will die between 13-15 months after being diagnosed,” I was told. “How long does he have to live?” I asked. “He will not quite make two years from the time of this prayer.”

So bound to secrecy, bound to witness whether this prophecy was true or the manifestation of precipitating mental illness; bound to look upon my friends with love, respect, fear, hope, and prayers.

In Autumn of 2002, a close friend (who has requested that her name be withheld) had a positive pap smear. God gave me permission to speak to her at this time. I was allowed to tell her that I had been told that a few of my friends would be diagnosed with cancer this year. But that only one of them was destined to die of the cancer. That destiny belonged to Ron. However, her own cancer was serious and she was to comply with the doctor’s suggestions. There was no time for her to check out alternative medicines before heeding her doctors’ advice. However, she could use alternative medicine to complement her medical practitioners’ interventions. My friend was bound not to speak of this to others until such time as Ron became diagnosed, yet again to avoid precipitating what did not need to happen.

At this time, God was also gave permission for me to talk with my husband (but not of Ron’s death), so that he could later bear witness to the truth of God’s prophecy.

My friend had the cancer surgically removed six weeks after diagnosis. The biopsy results showed that she had a particularly aggressive form of cancer, and that if she had not been diagnosed and had it removed so quickly, it would have quickly metastasised and spread throughout her body.

In the meantime, Ron and his wife (living names withheld for the sake of peoples’ privacy) had announced they were moving to Queensland. (Boxing Day was spent with them totally bemused by my crying in the bedroom way in excess of what a move to Queensland entailed). I remember them telling me that I was making a mountain out of a molehill, after all we would still be able to catch up every Christmas and Easter – airfares aren’t that expensive. How hard to abide by God’s will and refrain from speaking. How hard to not exclaim “Seize the day, you don’t know how few days you have left!” But God’s presence reminded me that to speak of something is to make it manifest, and that there should be no guilt to Ron’s illness. So I spoke not.

Nor did I speak when Ron and I had difficulties the following Easter. When Ron and I disagreed about something that was to do with principle, something fundamental to my belief of living according to God’s will. I recognised the debate and sought to avoid it,

it was one of Ron's favourite themes, of which I did not countenance, and therefore there would be no agreement on this matter. Ron wanted to progress the debate, and because I would not enter into the debate, then entered into a debate about whether I had the right to refuse to enter into the debate.

This debacle meant that the two families did not spend one day of Easter together in 2002, the first time ever since both Ron's wife and my first pregnancies.

Once again I turned to prayer. Regret at not being strong enough to spend the time together. Resolute that the matter was fundamental to *God's* will and that I was not to back down, or be manipulated into 'agreeing' to end the debate, nor to have a full on argument in front of the children when Ron could not succeed in his objective. I prayed for peace, forgiveness, patience, understanding and forbearance. I asked God how was I to do his will to help Ron through the coming period if he was to behave like this. No words of wisdom, no wondrous visions, just my faith in God that all would be as needed to be at the right time.

Months of waiting, months of praying, months of uncertainty; only faith in God gave provide comfort and strength in these matters.

Ron became ill in winter 2002. We looked after his children whilst they went to a get together in with friends and family nearby. Ron was very sick, and at the party one of his brothers told Ron he should go see a doctor because he looked like he was dying. His wife met us at the house and took the kids straight to the car. We did not talk to Ron as he was too sick.

Ron and his wife went to their doctor the next morning. Ron's doctor took one look at him and sent him straight to Concord Hospital. Within a few short weeks the test results diagnosed Ron as having a form of lymphoma/leukaemia. He was told that if he had not come to hospital when he had, he would have died within three weeks.

Ron had mature age diabetes for several years. The doctors went back to his blood tests after the diagnosis, – and the cancer only appeared in his results in May 2002 – a few weeks before.

Ron stayed in hospital for a several weeks until the chemotherapy and transfusions got him more stable. During this time, our family often looked after their children one day on the weekend. This gave his wife a chance to spend more time with Ron, and the children a chance to take a break from the reality of Daddy not being at home and being in hospital.

On the first weekend after Ron's diagnosis, his wife and I spoke about telling others about Ron's illness. There were people I knew that they had not seen in years that would be really pissed off if they hadn't been told and things were to go severely

wrong. Ron's wife told me that she and Ron had already discussed this, and that they did not want people in their lives solely because they knew Ron was sick.

They still lived where they'd lived for years and they still had the same phone numbers. If people wanted to have them in their lives, they could. They did not want to be spending their days proving they were friends with people who did not care about them as people. (There are people who like to talk about their 'friend' with cancer because it gives them something to talk about). However, real friends are the ones who are in their lives, irregardless of health or personal circumstances. I named some people who would create slander if they were not told, and his wife told me that she would back me up later should such slander occur.

The next few months was spent providing practical love. A brother and some close friends are nurses, and were able to help Ron and his wife understand the blood results. Anyone who knew Ron, knew that he loved his food. They would look at this blood results, and identify where he had nutritional deficiencies. This would lead to 'cravings' for food, which lead to a couple of the closer families arranging food to meet these needs e.g. avocado, sushi, salad, bananas....

No one can fault how well Ron, his wife and their children accepted and co-operated with Ron's medical treatment. The chemotherapy was successful and Ron was declared to be in remission in February 2003.

Coming from a strong Irish Catholic background, Ron had four healthy brothers. All four brothers donated blood samples so that the doctors could investigate the possibility of a transplant. As without a transplant, the cancer would return and be unlikely to respond the chemotherapy on the second or third pass.

A strong match was found. Ron and his wife met with the transplant doctor at RPA hospital. They had a five in 10 chance of a complete cure, 4 in 10 of a partial cure, and 1 in 10 of him not making it. There was an upper age limit beyond which they do not do the transplants, and they will not do transplants unless the patient is in remission.

Ron and his spent much time discussing this matter, they had two children aged 9 and 7. Without the transplant Ron had a matter of months or perhaps a few years. With the transplant Ron's life expectancy went back to the statistical norm. (Remember, I had kept my word to *God* and not told them of the prophecy). They decided to proceed with the transplant.

Ron went into RPA in April and had the transplant in May. He came home for a couple of weeks and was readmitted within two weeks. He became very sick and drifted in and out of consciousness for several weeks.

There was a particularly pertinent telephone conversation with him in July. Ron was very frightened and concerned that he was going to die. My response was to note that we are all going to die, the issue is how well we live.

He replied angrily "I am going to die now!"

"No you're not" was my reply, "You're on the phone talking to me and lucid. You're not about to die now."

"You don't understand", he said.

"Let me ask you something, Ron. Have you not been able to use your eyes?"

"Yes"

"What? When you're awake? Or just when you are asleep or not conscious?" I asked

"When I'm not conscious" he said.

"Good. Then you're not about to die. That is how you will know you are about to die. Until that happens you have enough time to do what needs to be done. That might happen next week, next month, next year, ten years from now. In the meantime, the issues is not whether you are about to die, it is what you are going to do while you are alive".

This was a fundamental turning point for Ron. At this point he accepted his illness, and accepted that he had a choice. He chose to work on his relationships, he made peace with God (saying prayers with the Catholic priest whenever he was conscious whilst the priest was on his rounds). As his wife said, Ron was not a religious man, but he was deeply spiritual and he now made that explicit for all to see.

This was a time of beautiful healing. There was confirmation that long standing family feuds had been resolved. Ron's life became a testament to the dignity of living, irregardless of the physical condition of his body; his will, his character, his love, his charity, his strength became manifest. He did not hide his spirituality, he accepted what he was, and gave his best to all who would share it with him in his last few months.

Ron died on my son's fifth birthday. My husband had spent the night at their house so that his wife could be by her husband's side when he passed over. Several months after Ron's death, she told me that he knew he was going soon because he'd lost his sight for a time the day before he passed over. He spent the much of that day doing his final bequests. On the morning of Ron's death, my husband rang me just as I was dropping off the children to school to tell me that Ron had passed over at 7.27 am that morning.

Ron's funeral was beautiful, well-attended, and a testament to the love of his family. Ron demonstrated in death that respect and dignity does not come from our jobs or what we do for a living, but on how we treat and interact with others. What most people remember about Ron is how he would meet them at their level, and talk about their needs, and entice them to move forward in their learning.

Ron died six months ago<sup>1</sup>. His wife and two children, have grown into beautiful loving people. Their close kin and support network have stayed with them because of the dignity, strength, humility, grace and love that they manifest. They have not become dependent on their family and friends, they have not demanded, they have not ignored others' needs. Ron's wife now constantly wears a cross that was bought for her first birthday after Ron passed over.

I have suggested to her on a number of occasions that she might find attending church useful, particularly for her little ones. Unfortunately, her family have not been treated well by church authorities, and so she shuns moving within their circles. This begs the question of all Christians. How many people stay away from our churches because we have abused the powers of the institution of the church? How many times have people been smote, not because they did an un-Christianly thing? But because they have transgressed human laws or offended egos of church goers, who then mistakenly think they have the right to strike back in the name of the church?

We might close the doors to our churches, but that does not close the doors to God. Christians know from our history that you can not kill Jesus' mission. How many times have we been outlawed, made illegal, had to pray and learn in small and private groups? Look to the world now, where Christianity still prevails, even under the most inauspicious circumstances. Look to how people still find Jesus, even when there is not a church building on every street corner. If such people can find Jesus without the institution of the church, how many people within our own community have come to Jesus outside of the institution of the church?

We bemoan declining church numbers? Is it because people are turning from God? Or is it because they are turning from churches?

Do we suffer from misapprehensions that we can behave like spiritual bullies because we attend an institution each week? Do members of our congregation do so? I say yea, I give witness to examples across all denominations. Do we gainsay such behaviours? If not, aren't we as guilty as those who do such things?

Jesus is a gentle God<sup>2</sup>. Nowhere in the bible does it talk of him bringing plague, pestilence, violence or harm to any person of any creed, gender, age, race or religion.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was written April 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Since writing this paper, I've come to understand that Jesus is the personification of God and that during his incarnation, Jesus chose to manifest how God *prefers* to act, but is not bound to act.

Jesus knew that it is not the colour of our clothes, our skin, our gender, nor our traditions that bring us to God. It is faith, and faith alone, that enables the hand of God to touch our lives and make manifest God's will.

Through faith we gain wisdom and love. Through faith we learn when to speak and when to be quiet. Through faith we learn that we are the stewards for God, and that he is a loving and gentle god, endlessly forgiving and endlessly faithful. Through faith we know that God will provide and all will be as it should be.

It is faith that enables us to stay our hand and hold our tongue lest we transgress God's will for peace and love. God can make manifest what is unseeable, what is unknowable. God can find the way forward when no way is apparent. God asks us to have faith and to pray, for the way forward will become manifest in God's own time.

Often we talk of speeding the day. Nay, say I. For if the day were tomorrow, how many souls may be saved? Do we pray for the day to be speeded to deny others access to God? Nay. Instead pray for completeness in your assigned tasks. Pray that more people may be saved. Pray that there is time to save those who can be saved. Pray that we do not drive away those who can be saved through self-importance, arrogance.

Pray that we be as attractive as possible to bring back as many souls as possible. This is God's prayer. Do not deny God. Do not deny his works. Do not besmirch his name with human iniquities, nor use his institutions or vessels for self-gain.