

My Dad and the God of H.O.P.E.

Romans 15:13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

When I decided last spring that the spiritual emphasis week theme this year would be H.O.P.E., based on Romans 15:13, perhaps I should have expected to have that hope tested this summer. Only 4 hours after returning to New Hampshire on July 20th from 2 weeks of boys’ camp in Pennsylvania, my mom called and said my dad was in the emergency room, it didn’t look good, and my dad had requested that I and my siblings be there. I left within 30 minutes and drove 21 ½ helpless-feeling hours through the night to Florida, hoping to get there in time if he wasn’t going to make it. By the time I arrived, my dad had come out of emergency surgery to remove 6-8 feet of intestines, and he was on a breathing machine. Day after day we waited and prayed for him to wake up and be able to breathe on his own, eager for the breathing tube to come out. It was a roller coaster ride filled with ups and downs – the scariest night occurred when his temperature rose to 105.9. The days turned into two weeks, and the breathing tube isn’t supposed to be in longer than 14 days. Would dad become alert enough for the nurses to be able to take it out? Would he be able to breathe on his own if they did? Finally, on the 15th day, he finally became alert, the tube came out, and he successfully continued to breathe on his own. The days ahead brought many more setbacks and successes, but after 23 days in the intensive care unit and 34 days total in the hospital, dad finally moved to a rehabilitation facility. He is still in rehab, as his advanced Parkinson’s disease makes his recovery slower, but he continues to improve and gain strength daily. I ended up spending the rest of the summer down there and continue to travel back and forth when we don’t have a spiritual emphasis week, trying to support both my dad and my mom. We eagerly look forward to the day when my dad is able to return home! While this hasn’t been the easiest journey, it has also definitely been an intense learning experience, especially about hope, trust, and prayer. Over and over doctors and nurses used the word “miracle” to describe my dad. Many of them, as well as the therapists, have come into the room after reviewing my dad’s medical records and remarked, “You look much better than I expected!” Even in the times when the situation didn’t look good, God’s grace was still there each moment. He reaffirmed over and over that he truly is “the God of hope.” Thank you to all of you who prayed and encouraged us!



Dad leaving the hospital and breathing fresh air for the first time in 34 days!



Regaining strength

As we travel to schools this year, I am sharing this personal experience as part of the H.O.P.E. week. Although this experience has turned out well, we all know that there are times when life doesn't turn out the way we want it to. Can we still have hope? On Wednesday of this past week, a youth pastor who was also the dad of a 6th grade student at the school we were at lost his battle with cancer. Some students heard the news that day, while others found out the next morning right before chapel. The chapel message that morning was one of the most difficult messages to teach in 11 years of doing this, as the "E" in H.O.P.E. stands for "Eternity." Paul, who himself was beheaded by the Romans, wrote that "to live is Christ and to die is gain," and that he desired to "depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Philippians 1). John wrote of a place where every tear would be wiped away and there would be "no more death or mourning or crying or pain," and where God would dwell with His people (Revelation 21). How sad it would be if our hope was only in people and on this earth! HE is our hope, and neither I nor the teachers nor the students believe it was coincidence that the message that morning, planned long before, focused on eternity and the hope that we have.

Please continue to pray for my dad, the school family who lost their dad, and people you know who need the eternal hope that only Christ can bring! Thanks!



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