

Monday, March 15

Janet Hughes

2020 was filled with turbulence and hardships for all of us. For me, the uncertainty and heartache began in February 2020 when my mother had a significantly disabling stroke. This stroke left her unable to ambulate and worsened her memory.

Four weeks of inpatient rehab helped her regain some ability to ambulate short distances with assistance. But at exactly the time she was discharged to skilled nursing where she was to receive additional physical, occupational and speech therapies, COVID-19 hit, and everything came to a screeching halt.

Therapies in skilled nursing facilities were modified to prevent the spread of this highly contagious virus. Physical therapy sessions moved from a group setting in the facility gym to the limited confines of her room.

In assisted living, where she was eventually moved, outside visits from physical therapists were halted to limit potential exposure. From outside a glass door I watched my mom's health quickly deteriorate. I couldn't get in the building to monitor her the way I wanted. I couldn't hug her or hold her hand in support. In-person communication was nonexistent and I, on the outside, was helpless.

She was, on the inside, dying every day alone. Weeks went by with biweekly visits between a cloudy glass door and evening cell phone calls on my way home from work. This lasted until she had another stroke that left her nonverbal. Two-way verbal conversations with my Mom ended. Our 20-30 minute glass-door visits became a personal ramble of my daily, mundane activities without the kind and gentle motherly advice and opinions she would have normally shared.

COVID-19 unfairly crippled my mom and me in so many ways, without directly infecting us with the virus. Ten months have passed and the future doesn't look any brighter. COVID numbers are growing, and vaccine roll-out is slow and hasn't reached the most vulnerable in community living settings quickly enough. I still can't hug my Mom. I can't help her bathe, eat, or just watch a TV show with her.

Many have expressed sorrow and empathy for the situation. Some may even wonder how I cope. Many are in my very bad situation.

How do I cope? What has helped me get through? These are not easy questions. Some days I don't feel like I am coping very well, and I'm certain I'm not. Some days I have a bitter, angry attitude and nothing can or will ever get better. There are days that I am just not sure how much more heartache I can endure. My chest is heavy and my heart beats hard and strong, while negative thoughts in my mind overtake all reality.

Sometimes during these moments I find myself taking a deep exhalation to alleviate the heavy chest, sweaty palm, and crowded mind. I remind myself that I am not alone.

God is walking beside me. He hears me. He knows my struggles. He knows exactly how I feel. He will still love me when I get angry. And He will still love me when I drift farther away. When I pray I ask for strength and wisdom to guide my decisions. I ask for faith, knowing that the future is uncertain and things are out of my control. I don't always come away from my prayers with clear directions or an instant fix, but I always feel more at ease. I don't know how

this story will end... but God does. How do I get through? I think the words of the song, "Trust in You," by my favorite contemporary Christian artist, Lauren Daigle, sum it up nicely:

*When You don't move the mountains I'm needing You to move,
When You don't part the waters I wish I could walk through,
When You don't give the answers as I cry out to You,
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You.*

*Truth is, You know what tomorrow brings.
There's not a day ahead You have not seen.
So in all things, be my life and breath.
I want what You want, Lord, and nothing less.*

Lyrics: Lauren Daigle, Paul Marbury, Michael Farren
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