

## Mrs. Taylor's ODD Question

Shortly after my initial diagnosis in the spring of 2003, I received a phone call from a dear friend and mentor of mine, Mrs. Taylor. She is a tremendous lady – living in the golden years of her life – full of faith, hope, encouragement, and a constant smile.

Several decades earlier, long before I met Mrs. Taylor, she and her husband had lost a 16-year-old daughter to cancer. Anyone who met the Taylors quickly learned about Judy, their daughter, because her life had impacted them in a truly special way. It no doubt must have strengthened their faith in God – giving them more compassion and love to share than most folks I know. And it also inspired them to do great things in their church and community – on large scales and small – while touching countless lives in the process. Mine is just one of those lives, but it is forever changed by their love for others.

My phone rang one evening in March 2003 and Mrs. Taylor was on the other end. She had just learned about my cancer diagnosis and wanted to chat with me. We talked for a while and I caught her up on things. Then she stopped and abruptly said, “Laura, I want to ask you a question. Are you thankful for it? Are you thankful for the cancer?”

I know I froze on the other end of the phone – with a pause that seemed to last an eternity! Now, being raised in true Southern fashion, I’ve always been taught to be polite to my elders – and everyone else for that matter! But for that one instant, I found myself struggling to maintain my Southern manners!

I was thinking to myself, “What?? Did I hear her correctly? Thankful for cancer? Who would be? What kind of question is this and how do I answer it?”

Well, Mrs. Taylor must have sensed my shock and she filled the silence gap – with yet another question! “Have you stopped to thank God for your cancer?”

I politely mustered up a, “No ma’am, I haven’t.”

She continued, "God teaches us in Philippians 4:6-7 to be thankful in all things. That scripture tells us: do not be anxious for anything but in ALL things, through prayer and petition, WITH THANKSGIVING, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Laura, I can't say that I know exactly what you are going through, but you know I've had a similar experience. I want you to know that the day will come that you WILL thank God for your cancer and all the wonderful blessings He'll show you and give you through it. When that day comes, you let me know. In the meantime, I'll continue to pray with you and for you."

Our phone conversation ended shortly thereafter. Once I hung up, I shared Mrs. Taylor's ODD question with my husband – with what must have still been a very perplexed look on my face! We discussed it and both tucked it away in our hearts, as we continued to think about the conversation every day for much time to come.

I wondered if what Mrs. Taylor had said was true – would I eventually get to that point where I actually thanked God for my cancer? Would that day come? Would God open the eyes of my heart to see His higher ways and purposes so that it would make sense to me?

Well by now, I'm sure you can guess the answer. He did – and I did. It took me about six months of experiencing God on a new and incredible level – of walking through life-changing encounters each day...but it happened. My heart opened and changed, and I just woke up one day and realized it. I had become incredibly thankful for my cancer – not necessarily for the disease itself – but for the opportunities, experiences, and blessings it was bringing to my life.

I've had the opportunity to meet so many amazing people along the way that have touched my life and my heart immensely. I would never have encountered them otherwise. I've learned so much from so many of them, as they've shared their hearts and lives with my family and me. And I hope somewhere along the way we left a little joy or happiness with them as well. What true blessings God gives us in the most unexpected places.

Yes, as strange as it sounds, I'm thankful for my cancer. Period – end of story.

And it never would have happened without the bold question that was asked by my dear friend several years ago. But what a difference that one question made. It forced me to look deep in my heart – at my faith – and to trust God and HIS plans, not mine.

As He reminds us in Jeremiah 33:3, "Call to me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." (NKJV)

How thankful I am that I did just that.



 **one amazing journey**

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