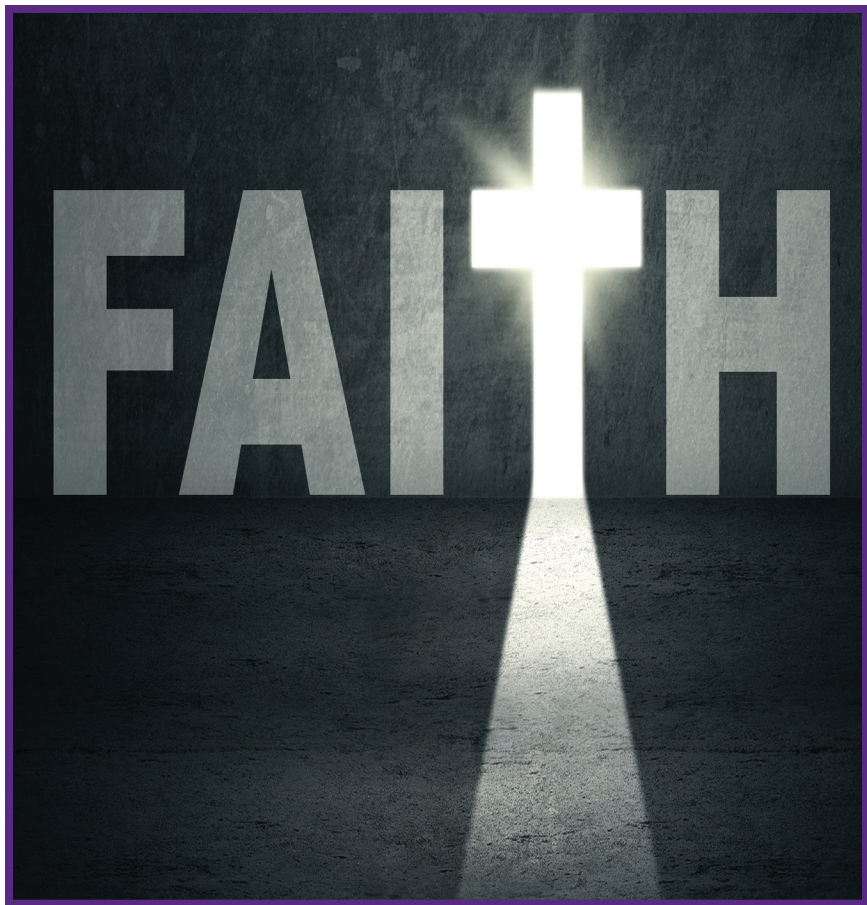


Placing Your Complete Confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ

IF YOU HAVE FAITH...



PASTOR RORY CLARK
with Tony LoGrasso

Barah Ministries, Inc.

IF YOU HAVE FAITH...

Matthew 17:14-20

*When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.” And Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.” And Jesus rebuked the demon, and the demon came out of the man’s son, and the boy was cured at once. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not drive the demon out?” And Jesus said to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, **if you have faith** the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain (any obstacle), ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.”*

by
Pastor Rory Clark
with Tony LoGrasso

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Provided for You in Grace

No price appears on material produced by Barah Ministries. Anyone who wants Bible study resources from this ministry can have them without charge or obligation. God provides the truth of the Word of God in grace. This ministry wishes to reflect God's grace.

While Bible study resources from this ministry are free of charge, they are not without cost. If, as you study the Word of God, gratitude to God motivates you to contribute to the continuation of this ministry and to the dissemination of the Word of God, you are welcome to participate.

Second Corinthians 9:7

Each one must do (giving) just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful (grace oriented) giver.

Giving is a “want to” not a “have to” proposition. You can't buy God with your gifts. Your giving does not encourage God to bless you. Everything you have, including your treasure, comes from God. You are free to share the resources God has given you to advance His work.

Dedication
from Pastor Rory Clark

To Tony LoGrasso, my dear friend, for living this journey.

To Tony's mom Rosemary LoGrasso, and father-in-law Otto Becker, both of whom went home to be with the Lord in 2016...we'll see you again soon, and then for all eternity.

To the entire LoGrasso Family for being a stunning example of faith.

To Maryann LoGrasso for the gift of an extended life for Tony through her stem cells.

To Jennifer LoGrasso for being THE LITTLE ROCK through the Power of THE BIG ROCK, the Lord Jesus Christ.

To Tony and Jennifer's children, Olivia and Noelle, that they choose a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they may know the value of placing their faith in Him.

Thanks from Tony LoGrasso

Pastor Rory has graciously afforded me this space to count my blessings, and to express some words of thanks. This could be a volume unto itself, but I have managed to edit it down to a few paragraphs.

First, I'm thankful for the blessing of counting Pastor Rory as a great friend and mentor. We first met in 2006, through his consulting profession. As a student of his Focus Selling Customer Development System, I learned valuable lessons that have helped me to elevate my performance professionally. As fellow believers in The Lord Jesus Christ, we instantly became friends. His mentorship continued when he began publishing his bible lessons on the Barah Ministries website and as podcasts. He welcomed this Catholic "double agent" as a member of his "non-resident congregation," and for years now he has been edifying my soul with spiritual growth through teaching biblical truth, in a simple and easy to understand way, which has helped me grow as a Christian. Thank you Pastor Rory for allowing me to share my story of faith through this book.

I'm blessed by and thankful for all those who were there for me in countless ways, big and small, through my fight with cancer. I'll start with my wife and life partner Jennifer, my daughters Olivia and Noelle, and my Weimaraner Blitz. I'm grateful to

all those that helped my immediate family through the difficult times, including my father Sam and my late mother Rosemary, my siblings Maryann, Joe, and Sal, their spouses Dr. Jim Caris, Jeanne and Sandra, and all my wonderful nieces and nephews; my father-in law, the late Otto, mother-in-law Ginger, and sister-in-law Elizabeth.

And I'm grateful to so many other people God has graced my life with: my countless friends, especially my close gang from grade school who are like adopted brothers to me, and their blessed families; my many aunts, uncles and cousins, for their love, generosity and prayers; my gracious neighbors and friends in Lake Orion MI, who helped us in so many ways; the generous and prayerful people of Christ the Redeemer Church; all my prayer warriors at Barah Ministries: Rory, June, Denny, Larry and too many others to name; my dedicated and talented medical teams at Henry Ford Health Systems and Karmanos Cancer Center, who have helped me and who continue to monitor me. All these people make up the deep, wide fabric of support that the Lord decided in eternity past to place into my life for when I would need it most.

I'm mostly grateful to our Lord, for His gift of a mustard seed of faith, His bounty of grace and love, and His promise of eternal life. All praise and honor be to our Lord God!

Lastly, I want to thank those of you that read this book. However it may have come into your hands, thanks for your interest in it. I pray it inspires you even in a small way to grow a closer relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To the Unbeliever

This book is for you. You may be unaware of the fact that you were born physically alive and spiritually dead.

Ephesians 2:1

And (at physical birth) you were (spiritually) dead in your trespasses and sins...

As a result of Adam's original sin, God placed you, from birth, on the team of His enemy, Satan. This is not your fault, but it is your circumstance. If you have yet to hear the Gospel Message, the good news of how God frees you from this predicament, or if you have heard the Gospel Message and rejected it, you are considered an unbeliever in the plan of God.

Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world God's invisible attributes, His essence...His eternal power, omnipotence...and His divine Nature, as Deity, have been clearly seen, being understood even through what has been made (all created things), so that all creatures are without excuse before the justice of God.

All of us will meet the Lord Jesus Christ face-to-face one day. While you are on the earth, the Lord makes Himself visible to you, both through created things and through the people He

sends to evangelize to you. Are you listening?

Responding positively to God's invitation to be saved, the Gospel Message, is a simple conversation with God the Father. For one of the thieves crucified next to the Lord Jesus Christ, it was a nine word conversation.

Luke 23:42-43

And the repentant thief was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!" And the Lord Jesus Christ said to the repentant thief, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise (you are saved by believing in Me)."

This approach to salvation may seem "too easy" to be true. It is easy for you. But the accomplishment of your salvation was not easy for the Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified as your substitute to make salvation easy for you.

There is a description of what it takes to be saved on the Barah Ministries website at www.barahministries.com under the Publications tab. It's a free copy of the book, *And You Will Be Saved*.

You can have a deep, intimate and personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. To do so, you have to make the most important decision of your life. It's the decision to let God save you.

Acts 16:31

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved...you and everyone in your household who also believes.

Decide for the Lord Jesus Christ! Join me in heaven!

CHAPTER ONE

Do You Have Faith?



*“Faith is believing in something when
common sense tells you not to.”*

—Quote from the movie “Miracle on 34th Street”

If You Have Faith.....

Do You Have Faith?

It was a battle that began with the words no one wants to hear. “You have cancer.”

What you are about to read is more wonderful than anything I could ever dream up to write for you. This is a journey from unbelief to faith that was lived. It’s a chapter in the life of a dear friend, Tony LoGrasso, and his family...his wife Jennifer, his daughters Olivia and Noelle, and his dog Blitz, a Weimaraner. They are a family that endured a battle not uncommon to the world’s families. It is a battle that tears many families apart and that leaves many individuals in ravaged disarray. It’s the battle with the scariest of all diseases...cancer.

Enjoy Tony LoGrasso’s telling of his own story. Then we’ll see what the Lord Jesus Christ has to say about faith in Him and about faith in His Word. We’ll close by asking ourselves what lessons from Tony’s life apply to our own journey from unbelief to faith.

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith...and that faith is not from the source of yourselves, it is the gift of God...

CHAPTER TWO

The Human Problem: Unbelief *Tony's Story*



F.A.I.T.H.

(F)orwarding (A)ll (I)ssues (T)o (H)eaven

The Human Problem: Unbelief

Here's Tony's account of his journey...

Pastor Rory asked me to share with you my faith in God, how that gift of faith helped me and my family through our “cancer fighting” journey, and how the experience has changed us forever. I am happy to share my story. I pray by doing so, in some small way, it helps strengthen you or it grows the seed of faith God planted in you, to dispel your unbelief. We know from Matthew, Chapter 17, Verses 14 to 20 that just a small speck of faith, like a mustard seed, is all we need to make a mountain move, or to make cancer go away.

Matthew 17:14-20

*When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.” And Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.” And Jesus rebuked the demon, and the demon came out of the man's son, and the boy was cured at once. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not drive the demon out?” And Jesus said to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, **if you have faith** the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain*

(any obstacle), 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."

Having been raised in a Roman Catholic family, with a priest as an uncle to boot, I can't remember ever not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. So God implanted a "mustard seed" of faith in me long before my bout with cancer began. But I think my experience with cancer has been the first real test of faith for me. You'll be interested to read about my instances of unbelief and my instances of faith during the battle.

There I was in September of 2011 (yes 9/11), hustling and bustling in my busy life. I was working too many hours in my sales job at Curtiss-Wright Corporation. I was spending too little time with my wife and kids. I was spending too little time listening to my Lord. Frankly, I didn't make time to just pause to enjoy the rosy smell of so many blessings in my life. Yet it didn't seem that I was running my life that way at the time.

I thought it was a nuisance that I needed to get a routine physical just to avoid the \$100 per month penalty my company's health plan was going to charge me unless I got a physical and provided them with a health screening form filled out by a doctor. I was too busy to really think much about nonsense like this. Go...go...go. But I went anyway. It was quite a surprise when Dr. Krebsbach, my primary care physician, said there was an abnormality with my red blood cell count, and so he needed me to go for a different blood test at a "specialty" clinic. I had recently had stomach flu, and Dr. Krebsbach said the test results may have been affected by that, but he wanted the "specialty" tests run to get a more accurate diagnosis. I took down the time, date and address of the appointment he made for me, and punched it into my Blackberry as if it were just another business meeting. I told Jennifer what

the doctor told me, but I convinced her that there was nothing to worry about. I felt great. So the notion that there could be anything wrong with me was inconceivable. And unbelievable.

There's that word: unbelief. The first instance of my unbelief is a subtle one. I possessed a blinding form of unbelief, a willing ignorance of the signs God was sending me. I turned a blind eye to the circumstances God was putting in my life for my own good, like my insurance penalty if I didn't get the routine physical. I was failing to acknowledge the existence of the Lord Jesus Christ's every moment presence in my life, perhaps because of a delusion that I was the one in control of my life. My delusion was manifested in my habit of being too hurried and too impatient to fully be present in each blessed moment of my life. I was too busy to smell any scent, to hear any sound, to see any sight, or feel any emotion that the Lord Jesus Christ was sending my way. It was an unhealthy and toxic way to live.

The "specialty" blood test was set for Friday, September 30, 2011. Jennifer had plans to drive to Cleveland that afternoon for a long-overdue weekend visit with her good friend Jill. She asked me if she should delay her trip, but I insisted she go as planned, again assuring her there was nothing to worry about. I would be back home when the kids got out of school, so she should go enjoy herself!

The stage was set. It wasn't until I arrived at the appointment and saw that the "specialty clinic" was actually an "Oncology and Hematology Center" that the reality of the situation first entered my thick skull: "OH GOD, DO I HAVE CANCER?!" The test results were ready that very same day. My universe came crashing down as I sat listening to Dr. Dabak as she explained in a very unemotional, business-like tone how the tests revealed the

presence of a protein which is the telltale indicator of Multiple Myeloma, a rare cancer of the blood plasma, residing in the bone marrow, for which there were treatments, but as yet no known cure. Or so she told me. "I am very sorry," Dr. Dabak said in a more sensitive tone that I can remember very clearly. To determine the stage of my cancer, she then immediately put me through a set of full body x-rays, since Multiple Myeloma deteriorates the bones in its more advanced stages. I kept a positive upbeat veneer with the x-ray techs, but I remember clearly it was while I was laying on that x-ray table in that dark room that I first broke down into tears.

On my drive home, I decided I needed to muster the strength to keep up the veneer for a few more days. I was not going to ruin Jennifer's weekend with this catastrophic news. I knew it was likely to be her last weekend get-away for a long time. I would tell her when she got back home Sunday night. And because I did not want to tell another soul until I told her, I had to keep the emotion bottled up all weekend with the kids. Those were two of the longest days of my life. The only friends I could cry to privately until Jennifer returned were my God and my dog Blitz, a Weimaraner. I hugged him an awful lot that weekend. And I prayed. The worst thing I did was to search the internet to learn more about Multiple Myeloma. There was that word. Incurable. Three to five year life expectancy. These were some of the first things I remember seeing that stuck in my head. OH MY GOD!

I remember taking my kids to a local carnival on Saturday, outwardly trying to be cheerful, yet inwardly I was a wreck. I was thinking, "I'm going to die a horrible, slow death! I'll never see my girls graduate! I'll never walk them down the marriage aisle! I'll never hold my grandchildren! I'll leave my poor wife to raise this family on her own, without enough income. OH MY

GOD!” These were the sad anxieties racing through my head. In other words, I was encountering more unbelief! Unbelief destroys hope. Well, I was letting it destroy mine. I certainly wasn't thinking about Mark, Chapter 9, Verse 23, when Jesus said...

Mark 9:23

“...all things are possible to him who believes.”

Nor was I praying like the epileptic boy's father in Mark, Chapter 9, Verse 24 when he said...

Mark 9:24

“I do believe; help my unbelief.”

The kids were in bed Sunday night when Jennifer got home. I hugged her as if she'd been gone for years. I asked her how her weekend went, but she immediately sensed in me something was wrong. I said, “We need to talk,” and I took her hand and led her to sit with me on the sofa. She said later her immediate fear was that I was going to ask for a divorce. When I told her about the diagnosis, of course she felt terrible for not being there for me. She would have cancelled her plans and turned around immediately if I had called her, and she was not accepting my rationale for waiting until Sunday to tell her.

It was an enormous weight off my shoulders to finally confide in her. Like any marriage, our relationship has had its rough patches. But I don't think I've ever been more grateful for her in my life than at that time. We both cried an awful lot that night. I need to say this...I can tell you all about the emotions I experienced throughout this entire ordeal. I cannot relate to you all the emotions she experienced. But I can tell you how she

acted. Immediately, she became my rock of strength. Without hesitation, from when I first told her, and throughout the entire ordeal, she lovingly moved into the role of my caregiver, my counselor, my psychologist, my medical researcher, and my prayer partner. She was there for me from when I first told her, and she was there for me through the entire experience. She was also there for our kids to help them cope. Never once through this whole ordeal did she freak out. If she did, she did it privately, never in front of me or in front of the kids.

This is one of the instances of faith building. Many relationships don't last in the face of tribulations such as cancer. I have a friend whose marriage ended while he was being treated for cancer. I am so very blessed to be able to say cancer may have actually made the relationship between Jennifer and I even stronger than before. How did Jesus provide his unconditional love to me in my time of need? One big way was to arrange in eternity past that I would marry a woman who would give me her unconditional love during my time of need. Discovering that our relationship was actually strengthened by this test has been a major faith building experience for me.

Our first order of business was to figure out what to tell our kids and how to tell our kids, who at that time were just 11 and 8 years old. We decided to sit them down in the morning, and tell them we had a serious matter to discuss, kind of like how I told Jennifer. Wouldn't you know it, the first thing they wanted to know is if mommy and daddy were getting a divorce! We explained that I have cancer, told them what we know about Multiple Myeloma, having educated ourselves a lot more about it, and how it's treated, and that I might get very sick with the treatment. We assured them that God would take care of us. There were a lot of tears and hugs, and we decided it would

be best if we let them stay home from school that day. They needed time to deal with their thoughts and emotions, and to ask questions about mortality.

The next few days were difficult ones: telling our family, telling my employer, telling our closest friends, including Pastor Rory. I believe it was early October when Pastor first asked the Barah Ministries congregation to pray for a friend of his in Detroit, whom they'd never met. As the news spread, it didn't take long for my Barah Ministries Prayer Corps to form and for them to begin powerful appeals at the Throne of Grace on my behalf.

On the medical front in those early days, there were more doctor visits and more tests, including my first bone marrow biopsy. Dr. Dabak determined that fortunately I was at a very early stage, between Stages 1 and 2 she said, with no bone deterioration. But I was forbidden from lifting anything greater than ten pounds.

Just days before Thanksgiving in 2011, I flew to Houston to seek a second opinion at MD Anderson, one of the premier cancer centers in the world. I was able to quickly get an appointment with the help of a friend. Help from friends is a recurring theme in my story. MD Anderson confirmed Dr. Dabak's diagnosis, and concurred with her recommended two phase course of action. Phase One was to undergo three to six rounds with a trio of drugs proven to control Multiple Myeloma in many patients, including two chemotherapy drugs: Revlimid (a pill), and Velcade (an IV drug), as well as a steroid, Decadron. Those drugs were known to have very mild side effects. For instance, they would not induce hair loss, (which was the least of my worries, because there wasn't much up there to lose). More importantly to my still very career-focused way of thinking, the side effects were mild enough where I could continue to live a "normal life," with the

only restriction being that I would have to curtail travel because of my need to visit the clinic twice a week for my IV drug.

The objective of Phase One was to drive the disease into remission. But it would not be a lasting remission because Multiple Myeloma eventually will come back without more drastic treatment measures. Hence the need for Phase Two: the stem cell transplant. This would involve heavy-duty chemotherapy that would hospitalize me for several weeks, and was designed to kill the myeloma and the rest of my bone marrow. It could kill me, too, if the stem cells failed to engraft to help rebuild my marrow. The stem cells could be from myself or from a donor that was a close enough genetic match. More on that later.

The doctors had laid out their plan. Phase One had been approved by my health insurance company. Now the decision was up to me to actually agree to the treatment. But part of me feared that by jumping in I would be stepping into a point of no return. There were rare but potentially life threatening side effects from the drugs, like risks of inducing secondary cancers. Jennifer and I had also been doing a lot of research into the cancer fighting benefits of organic diets, and holistic remedies. We had read there is a school of thought that says the “cancer industry” seeks to discredit any news about the success of non-traditional therapies for fear that it would disrupt their cash stream.

This unbelief had to be overcome by faith. Ultimately I decided it was time to take a leap of faith: faith that God brought me to my doctors for a reason; faith that the doctors were presenting me with the course of action I was meant to take; and faith that it would be successful.



The Multiple Myeloma Awareness Ribbon

Sketch by Olivia LoGrasso

CHAPTER THREE

The Divine Solution: Faith *Tony's Victory*



Second Corinthians 5:7
We walk by faith and not by sight.

The Divine Solution: Faith

Phase One chemotherapy treatments began on January 13, 2012. It was about this time that Jennifer convinced me to allow her to begin chronicling my fight with cancer on the CaringBridge.org website. I have to admit that initially I had some big reservations about the idea of advertising to the world that I'm a cancer patient. Dealing with cancer is an intensely personal matter, and understandably I think most cancer victims tend to want to deal with it as privately as possible. But again I put my trust in the Lord, and in Jennifer's ability to tell the story well. And this is a leap of faith that I am so glad I took. Jennifer's updates were so well done that friends and family would call her clamoring for their weekly update if she was ever late in publishing one. It helped spread the word to an ever widening fabric of friends, many of whom I've never met, but who signed my guest book just to let me know they were praying for me. The many guest book postings filled me with cheer and humor at times when I really needed it.

I want to share the first of Pastor Rory's many awesome posts, this one dated February 11, 2012...

Tony:

Here is God's sense of humor. Maybe I am not just your Pastor. Maybe I am also your bone marrow donor. That's how God's sense of humor works. If I

am your donor, you would become cool on a whole new level. Ya feeling me, Dawg? ☺ Swab me.

I hope this note finds you and Jennifer and Olivia and Noelle doing well. I am a fan of adversity like this. People are amazing during times of adversity. Why are we always crying for prosperity and retirement and a lottery win when the best comes out in us during times like this?

It's amazing to watch your strength at this time. Maybe your body is ravaged by cancer, and maybe your sleep is disrupted, and maybe you're eating roots and berries like Yogi Bear, but nothing has stolen your sense of humor, your love of the Lord, your lovely family, or your work ethic.

I have the Christmas picture of your family on my desk. In times of adversity, often families pull apart. I see yours huddling together, moving closer, closing ranks, and weathering the storm. I feel confident that you will all come out the other side as people better able to endure because of it.

James 1:2-4

Consider the conclusion that it is all for the purpose of joy, your absolute happiness, my brethren (believers in Christ), when you encounter various trials (pressure),//knowing that (through experience) the testing of your faith (your complete trust in God and your complete confidence in His Word) produces endurance.//And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect (mature) and complete

(undamaged), lacking (being deficient) in nothing.

God gives us situations like this to make us happy. We are happiest when we know we can endure anything, when we are not afraid because we know we are upheld by Him, and when we see those around us who are really on our side. Adversity reveals this.

Press on. And KNOW this...you are delivered. It happened in eternity past and it will be revealed to you in the coming days. God has already assured your victory. It is sealed. Let there be no doubt in your mind. Press on.

Pastor Rory Clark

Wonderful messages like this, and the story told by Jennifer's updates, gave us a permanent record of this amazing journey that we will always cherish.

Well, after six months of taking the Phase One medicine, the results were not as favorable as we had hoped. A bone marrow biopsy revealed the reduction in myeloma numbers was only a partial remission, not a complete remission. This meant that for Phase Two, doing a stem cell transplant with my own cells would be pointless, since we would only be putting cells with myeloma back into my body. A transplant of cells from a donor would be more effective. But this is where things got really complicated, and where our Lord truly came through for me.

First, my insurance company threw me for a loop, by letting me know that the hospital I had been dealing with for my treatments to-date, Henry Ford Health Systems, was not considered "in the

network” for doing stem cell transplants, and would cost me about three times more out of pocket, about \$10K, than the only in-network hospital in my area, Karmanos Cancer Center. I had grown to really like and trust the medical team I was dealing with at Henry Ford, so I considered this an outrageous inconvenience. While this proved to be another example of unbelief on my part, what was actually playing out was God’s hand in moving me to the team at Karmanos that would ultimately execute the treatment that is allowing me to write this to you, free of cancer. It turns out Karmanos does about three times more stem cell transplants per year than Henry Ford. And the doctor I talked to there, Dr. Al-Kadhimi, was the first one to tell me and Jennifer that it may actually be possible to permanently cure the disease. Up to that point the best we were told we could expect was maybe a five to seven year remission, then it would come back and the transplant process would need to be repeated. The older a patient gets, the more life threatening the transplant process becomes. Dr. Al-Kadhimi explained that there have been cases, however, of patients who have received donor transplants and have been in remission for about fifteen years and counting, since the clinical data just does not yet go beyond that amount of time.

I was quick to agree to his plan of treatment. But two more hurdles had to be cleared: 1) the insurance company had to approve the transplant, and 2) we had to find a suitable donor. The insurance company hurdle proved to be only a minor delay of maybe two weeks before full coverage was approved. It was the donor search that proved to us, more than anything, that God truly has my back. There’s only a twenty-five percent chance that a sibling will be a close enough genetic stem cell match. I have three siblings, two brothers and a sister. Testing revealed my sister Maryann to be a perfect ten out of ten genetic parameter

match. I'll never forget the moment when my sister called me in tears of happiness after Karmanos notified her. It was May 30, 2012, the day before my birthday, and it was the sweetest birthday gift I've ever received. I was with a colleague, about to visit a customer, and I broke down in tears. For me, this moment was the ultimate faith builder, the proof this Doubting Thomas needed that I was going to be delivered by the hand of God, and that He answers all prayers. It was the ultimate bunker-buster of my remaining unbelief.

Many of my anxieties about entering the transplant process subsided. My fears about beginning my lengthy medical leave from work slipped away, and I stopped taking Xanax for anxiety. My fear was that my company would not stand by me as I entered this dark tunnel. I would be hospitalized for seven weeks, and would be home-bound to recover for another five months. But I let faith take over, that even if that were to happen, it would only be because God has something even better planned for me. As it turned out, the people I worked for at Curtiss-Wright Corporation stood by me every step of the way, and they continued to be there for me through my gradual transition back into the hectic work pace that I wasn't sure I would ever be able to engage in again. I'm not sure yet if that is a good thing. But I know I'm not as work-centered as I used to be, and it's more of a priority for me now to enjoy and to be present in the time I spend with my family.

John, Chapter 1, Verse 16 says this...

John 1:16

For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

Here are other examples of how God has thoroughly “graced out” my family and me through this terrifying journey:

While I was in the hospital, my siblings, with lots of help from other relatives and friends, organized a hugely successful golf outing fundraiser for me. Friends whom I had not spoken to for ten years showed up for it. It raised enough funds to keep us whole after all the medical co-pays and loss of income from when I was getting fractional long-term disability pay.

While I was in the hospital, my mother-in-law Ginger left her home in North Carolina to take care of our kids for a month, allowing Jennifer to be with me during my most difficult times.

So many friends and family pitched in to provide meals, to take our kids places, and to do our yard chores, like closing our pool.

Jennifer and I both were reluctant, at first, to accept all the help. Ultimately we opened ourselves up to the graciousness of it all. We became deeply humbled and awestruck at the width and the depth of the support fabric God has placed in our lives.

My children have handled it beautifully. They had to cope with a harsh reality...their parents are mere mortals. As parents, we want to shield them from this reality. In this case, we couldn't shield them. Ultimately, I believe it strengthened them and made them more mature. It has absolutely strengthened the LoGrasso family unit, and brought us all closer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The cancer went into remission in March 2013 when the Multiple Myeloma markers in my blood test first went to zero. My fourth bone marrow biopsy, which was done in August 2013, about a year after my stem cell transplant date, confirmed remission.

In retrospect, I can truly count it all joy! My journey has been a time of spiritual renewal. Throughout the journey I learned a simple truth: faith is the antidote for unbelief. It is such a powerful truth.

I hope reading this has increased your faith, even if just a little. Because that's all the faith it takes. A little. Faith about the size of a mustard seed. I've taken about thirty-seven different kinds of medications during my battle with cancer. That's a lot of medicine, and I believe it makes me an authority on medication. I can tell you with confidence that the only medicine you'll ever really need is from God's Pharmacy. It's called Faith – the Cure for Unbelief. I'd like to close with a prayer of thanks:

Heavenly Father...

Thank you for the blessing of my adversities with cancer. May it serve as a billboard to others, and may it advertise the power of having even a small amount of faith. Help us gain the fruit of strengthened faith from reading this story so that we may find ways to share this faith with others. We ask this through the power of God the Holy Spirit, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

CHAPTER FOUR

What does the Bible Have to Say About Faith?



Jesus Christ

Sketch by Olivia LoGrasso

Mark 11:22

*And Jesus answered saying to them,
“Have faith in God...”*

What does the Bible Have to Say About Faith?

Tony said it well...faith is the antidote for unbelief. Yet even for the best of us, our faith wavers. Note the faith of the apostle called doubting Thomas...

John 20:19-29

So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus (after His crucifixion) came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you...as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when Jesus had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them...if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained." But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But Thomas said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands...and reach here your hand and put it into My side...and do not be unbelieving,

but believing.” Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”

If You Have Faith is a story about the revelation of God’s presence in our lives. It’s a story about the blessings that come into focus as a result of adversity. It’s a commentary on how God’s plan is revealed to us when we open our souls to listen for Him. Like Doubting Thomas, needing to see his Savior’s scars to believe, it took the adversity of cancer for Tony to become fully aware the many blessings in his life...not only those that he received during his fight with cancer, but also the blessings in the past, and the blessings to come in the future.

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith...and that faith is not of yourselves, it is a gift from God...

God has given all of us the gift of faith. In Tony’s case, it was a gift to be born into a family that introduced him to a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Through this relationship, Tony developed a life-long receptiveness to the Word of God that set him on a path of seeking continual spiritual growth. He sought out people to learn from so that he would have a deeper, more personal relationship with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. I count myself as blessed that Tony has used my teaching to further his spiritual growth.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace (in yourself), patience, kindness, goodness (toward others), faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (in your relationship with God)...

The deep and wide fabric of support Tony mentioned was no accident. The outpouring of love and generosity from family and friends that appeared in Tony's time of need is not a coincidence. There are so many things Tony could have never anticipated as being set aside for him by God in eternity past, before Tony ever knew he had cancer.

For example, the hugely successful golf outing and banquet fundraiser...the donations provided outside of the golf event, given cheerfully out of love for Tony and his family, not from compulsion, to care for his financial needs. Fruit carries within it the seeds from which future fruit is born.

A lifetime lived by Tony's parents loving others unconditionally taught Tony and his siblings to love others. Tony's sister Maryann demonstrated this unconditional love by being a willing stem cell donor, when she could have easily said, "No."

A friend of Tony's from grade school, with whom Tony had lost touch for many years, learned of Tony's illness and his fundraiser through Facebook. Being the owner of a sign printing company, he contacted Tony's siblings, and volunteered to provide signs for the golf outing fundraiser. (See page 47)

In Tony's story, he mentions his wife Jennifer as his main rock of support through the entire ordeal. Marriage, if nothing else, is a leap of faith. Chance brings together two people who fall in love, and decide to form a marriage bond. But no one can predict the "for worse" part commonly mentioned in traditional marriage vows. The true character of a partner only gets revealed in a time of crisis. Stress from a crisis of health such as cancer, too often leads to an easy out...divorce. Truly, it was a divine blessing that God brought a woman into Tony's life that so unselfishly

sacrificed for him.

Second Corinthians 12:10

That is why, for the sake of Christ, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The story mentions multiple events that worked in Tony's favor...how Tony was prodded to get a routine physical...how he was steered to the best medical team around...how his sister Maryann was discovered to be Tony's perfect match donor...how so many stepped up with support and generosity, easing Tony's anxieties so that he could concentrate on returning to good health.

Were these all merely coincidences, or was the Lord's protection available to answer the many prayers for Tony?

James 1:2

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

In this story, Tony mentions that cancer was in many ways a blessing. Having to cope with the possibility of losing his life during the prime of his career, then returning to health by God's grace, prompted a reexamination of priorities, and a reassessment of what is truly valuable. Knowing that stress is a factor that could lead to the recurrence of cancer, today Tony is less career-centered, and seeks to relieve stress by living a more balanced life. Quantity time with his family, his friends, his dog, and his fishing pole have become larger priorities for him.

Tony received another blessing when an unsolicited career opportunity with a new company came his way in 2015, allowing him the ability to work primarily from home with a great amount of time flexibility. This has allowed him the ability to be more present in the lives of his wife and daughters, and has in-turn given his wife the time and freedom to pursue a rewarding career of her own.

It is well known that healthy food is a powerful medicine. And in his wife Jennifer, Tony has also been blessed with a partner and caregiver who is passionate about keeping Tony, and the entire family cancer-free, through better eating. Following her lead, the family has become avid researchers of, and true believers in the value of an organic diet, and the cancer fighting effects of natural supplements. In addition, tapping into the benefits of using carcinogen-free cleaning agents and food utensils in the home has become a priority.

It can't be known if these measures will keep Tony cancer free, as Multiple Myeloma has a reputation for returning. But at the time of this writing, five years removed from the stem cell transplant, Tony has remained cancer-free, with no need for maintenance drugs. Tony is a blessed man.

Second Corinthians 1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble.

Cancer did revisit Tony's family. In 2016, a difficult year, cancer claimed the lives of Tony's mother in January, and his father-in-law in September. To watch the rapid deterioration of a parent,

and to experience the utter helplessness when there is nothing you can do to help them get better, is a true test of faith. Yet with the blessing of having their faith tested and strengthened by their own ordeal with cancer, Tony and Jennifer were better prepared emotionally to deal the loss, trusting in God's perfect plan. They were better equipped to lend comfort and strength to their dying parents, and to their family members, through this difficult time. Tony will always consider it one of his most memorable blessings, to have been able to be present with his father and siblings, praying together at his mother's bedside, at the moment she drew her last breath, and went home to be with the Lord.

Ephesians 6:10-11

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Tony realizes he still does not have life all figured out, and he knows he never will. He still gets stressed over many things: worries about finances, arguments with his wife, getting angry when his children make bad decisions, fears for his children's future, struggles with work related problems, and many mistakes in his role as a husband, father, employee. Alas... Tony is human. Yet the long lasting blessing left by the aftermath of Tony's experience with cancer is the confidence that comes from knowing the Lord is with him to bear the yoke of Tony's many tribulations. It is a blessing of lasting peace to know the Lord will continue to provide and protect. We simply take advantage of the power of prayer, and ask Him to handle all our trials, especially when things seem darkest.

Second Corinthians 5:7

...for we believers in Christ walk by faith, not by sight—

What do we learn about faith from Tony's journey? We learn to heed James' warning...when we ask God to help us in prayer, we must...

James 1:6-8

...ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

The Lord's half brother is a bit harsh isn't he? But he tells the truth. We have a choice. Faith or unbelief. Faith is a painless road. Unbelief is torture. Which will you choose when it is time for the trials of your life? The truth be known, you will choose both. And you will lean more heavily on unbelief if you're being human, like the apostle Thomas.

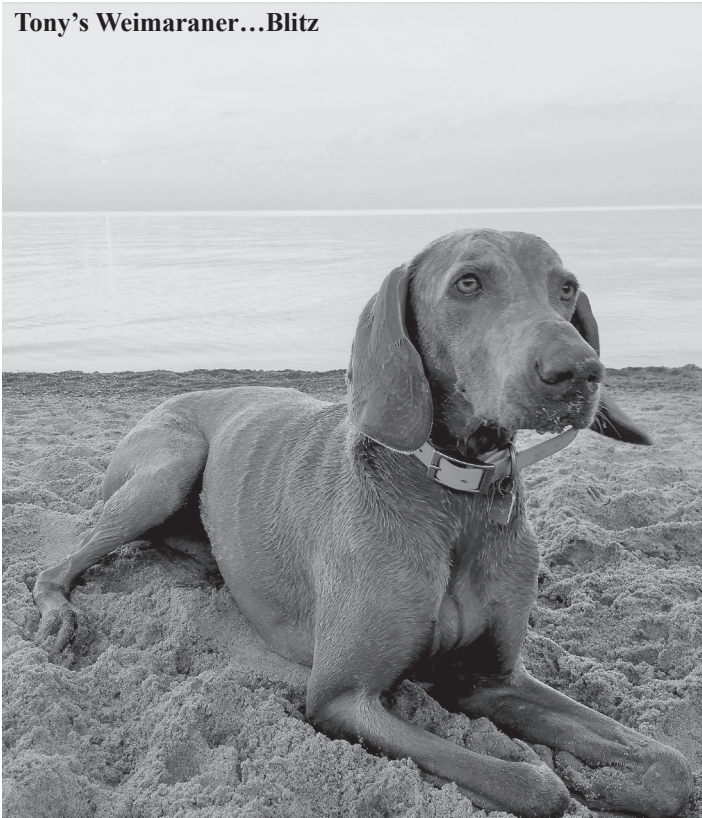
Thankfully the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is faithful to us, even when we doubt.



CHAPTER FIVE

What are the Faith Lessons in Tony's Story

Tony's Weimaraner...Blitz



Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Jesus, and He will make your paths straight.

What are the Faith Lessons in Tony's Story?

The apostle who struggled the most between the poles of faith and doubt was Peter. One of his many struggles is highlighted in the letter of Matthew.

Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately the Lord Jesus Christ made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, while He sent the crowds away. After Jesus had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray... and when it was evening, He was there alone. But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves... for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night (between 3:00am and 6:00am) Jesus came to them, walking on the sea (about a three mile walk). When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I...do not be afraid." Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And Jesus said, "Come Peter!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of Peter, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

Tony's journey from unbelief to faith is an inspiring one. And one of the great benefits of passing through the fires of life's trials is the chance to edify others who are passing through the tunnel of tribulation.

Tony got his chance pretty quickly after he became cancer free. Here is a letter of encouragement Tony was privileged to write to a woman named Patty, who was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. Her stem cell transplant took place on April 8th, 2016. Her sisters and her kids were not suitable donors, but she was able to get stem cells from an anonymous donor in Germany who was a close enough match. Tony wrote this letter to her six days before her transplant.

Patty:

My name is Tony LoGrasso. Our mutual friend Maureen Slobig told me about your situation. I went through a stem cell transplant myself in August 2012, at the Karmanos Cancer Center in Detroit, to combat Multiple Myeloma.

I remember the feeling of fear, particularly after taking the pre-transplant chemo, the stage you are in now as I understand it. This ordeal requires a leap of faith on your part. You have just jumped out of an airplane, and you're praying that the stem cells will be the parachute that saves you. And you know the recovery is going to be difficult and dangerous. I just want you to know that there is wonderful light at the end of this scary tunnel.

I am now in complete remission, four years after the transplant, and I can barely remember the feeling of sickness, and the few weeks I spent in the hospital followed by the months of home-bound recovery as my immune system rebounded from the Stem Cell Transplant. That procedure is truly a God given miracle of modern medicine. I was blessed to have nearly no graft versus host disease (GVHD) complications. And those fellow patients I have kept in touch with who do have some lingering GVHD, consider it only a mild inconvenience, easily controllable with medication. I have included here a picture of myself while I was at the hospital recovering, and a picture of myself taken a couple months ago while enjoying a hike with my dog.

I just want you to know that, like me, you too will return to the life of a normal person. Rest in the faith that God will do this for you with His strength, though the fabric of family, friends and the medical team He has put in place for you. Nobody's life is ever the same after cancer. I look back on it as a blessing that has helped me put life in proper perspective. I sweat less about the small stuff, and place greater value and what truly matters: my wife Jennifer, my two daughters, my wonderful extended family and friends, and mostly my relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Life is more precious and much sweeter now.

Patty, I'm praying for you and for your husband and for your caregiver Bobby, and for your sons. I pray that you, too, will get to a point where you cherish

life as I do, and you look back at this time as only a momentary, light affliction.

*Yours in Christ,
Tony LoGrasso*



Faith...we can do all things through the one who keeps on pouring His enabling power into us...our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May you believe in Him and be saved...may you count on Him for all things.

About Pastor Rory Clark

Reflecting on this life, one constant has made it special... my relationship with my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My claim to fame is a “three yes lifestyle.”

I said “YES” to the gospel message...

Acts 16:31

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, you and everyone in your household who also believes.”

I said “YES” to the daily study of the Word of God...

Second Peter 3:18

...but keep on growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I said “YES” to the use of my spiritual gift.

Ephesians 4:11-12

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ...

Promotion to the office of Pastor-Teacher was granted by my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on January 13, 2008 in Tucson, Arizona.

First Peter 5:6

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt (promote) you at the proper time...

The ordination was performed by my lifelong friend Pastor John Farley.

I am a diligent student of the Word of God, I have passed written and oral examination, both publicly and privately, for the privilege of serving my Lord in the capacity of Pastor Teacher.

My aim is to live a fourth “YES.” I say yes to accurately reflecting, through my teaching, the unconditional love, the glorious Person, the magnificent essence, the lucid thinking, and the impeccable work of my Lord to the hearers God provides.

To Believers

As a believer in Christ, when you are positive to learning the Word of God, you open up a world of possibilities. You let God transform you into a person who is capable of receiving the highest and best God planned for you. When you are negative to learning the Word of God, you are rejecting the heritage and the privileges of being a believer in Christ, instead letting everything in this nutty world become your truth.

Allowing distractions prevents you from getting to know God, And His thinking, as it is revealed in the Word of God.

Second Timothy 3:16a

All Scripture is inspired by God (literally 'God breathed')...

Second Peter 1:20-21

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own private interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men carried along by the God the Holy Spirit spoke directly from the exact thinking of THE God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you study the Word of God, you open a world of understanding that gives your life purpose and meaning and truth.

John 8:32

"...you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Truth leads you away from a life of slavery, away from religion, and away from empty religious practices.

Galatians 5:1

It was for freedom that the Lord Jesus) Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm (in the freedom) and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery (like religion).

You can't say you know God or that you love God if you don't know Him and His Word. When you study the Word of God, your spiritual life bears fruit...

John 15:8

"My Father is glorified by this, that you believers in Christ bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

Therefore study!

Second Timothy 2:15

Be diligent in the study of the Word of God so as to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

Pastor Rory Clark

Barah Ministries

Gilbert, Arizona



Pastor Rory Clark leads Barah Ministries, a Christian Church in Gilbert, Arizona. He laid aside a twenty-one year relationship with religion in the form of Roman Catholicism, and a twenty-nine year relationship with the legalism of Systematic Theology, for a lifestyle devoted to studying and teaching God's grace as outlined in the Word of God.

Pastor Rory provides his congregation with an accurate representation of the person, the thinking, the work, the reputation, the essence, and the unconditional love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He teaches the Word of God from God's perspective, not from man's perspective.

"I provide serious students of the Word of God with accurate biblical knowledge which gives them the opportunity to have a deep, intimate and personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. I am happy to lay down my life in diligent study for the hearers God provides."

how do I get to Heaven?

Act 16:31

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,
and you shall be saved, you and everyone
in your household who also believes."

Faith Alone In The Lord Jesus Christ Alone