

## A Story of Cancer—The Truth of Love

Dear Friends,

*A few months ago, a friend was sharing with me her inspiration to publish a book focusing on stories of women who have had an experience of God that transformed a potentially painful situation into one of peace and love. I responded, "Oh, I've had one of those." I was a little hesitant in talking about it - for how can you put the experience of God into words? Because of her interest I began sharing a little bit about my encounter with Divine Love. As I talked, I could see by her expression, that even though words are limiting, she too felt the love. She asked if I would give further details about it so she could include it in her book. What follows is a transcript of the words I used to describe my experience.*

*When deciding on a title, it seemed appropriate to use the word "story" when referring to the cancer. "Story" is defined as: "a narrative, fictitious tale". This account is a narrative tale about cancer. This was just a story. The truth of the experience was love. As you read about my experience, see it as a symbol—a representation of our natural state of mind. Use it as a reminder of the unreality of anything that is the opposite of love. I share this account for all of us as a helpful tool to snap us out of our misperceptions and jog our memory that Love is our only reality.*

All my love,  
Patti

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The more I understand about the experience, the less I can find the words for it. There is a hesitation in actually putting this on paper because it feels that to put words to it might limit it in some way. I guess you could say I'm a little bit shy - trying to capture and speak about something that is beyond words.

If I had to put a term around my experience, I would say that it represented the teachings from *A Course in Miracles* of being in the right-mind where things are happening, but there is no definition or meaning around anything and the mind is at peace and *in love*. When someone said the word "cancer", it was a neutral word for me. It was as if it was spoken in French and I didn't know what the word meant. I didn't want to know. I didn't need to know. People were speaking, but my mind was so resting in peace and love that the word didn't draw my attention or make me curious to know more about it. For instance, I'd have conversations with doctors, and they would say, "You have an aggressive form of cancer" or "You're not going through this test to try to find out *if* you have it, but to see what is in your future and what we need to do and how aggressive we need to be." They were saying these words and I would respond, "Oh, hmm, okay". It had no bearing on my mind at all. It was as if they were saying, "The sky is blue." And I'm thinking, "Oh, okay. But it's blue every day."

I was nonreactive. I wasn't engaged. I wasn't planning. This doesn't mean I wasn't responsive. They would say, "Go here" and I'd say, "Okay, I'll go here." And then, "Now, go there," and I responded, "Okay." "Now you have to have surgery." "Okay, I'll do surgery." I was going through the motions, but my mind was not engaged or invested in them. My body was moving and things were happening to my body but they weren't happening to me. It was as if I was standing outside

my body, and everybody was talking about my body, but it didn't matter, because I was not my body. It had no bearing on me at all. It was really a state where you have no concern for the body whatsoever. And why would you, if the body was not who you are at all? It was like the body was a puppet or a doll.

I believe my experience was a glimpse into the real world. When you are in your right-mind, you see everything as false, and therefore you do not react at all. Why would you react if you knew you were dreaming? There is the recognition that everything that appears to be happening is happening to the body. But because the Holy Spirit holds in your mind the True Identity, it is obvious it's not happening to you! It is similar to the experience of wearing a Halloween costume and someone saying, "We're going to have to cut your costume." Your response would be: "Okay. Cut the costume. It's not going to affect me at all." But, I imagine the way I responded may have looked to others like I didn't care. That's probably how it did look to those who really cared what happened, because I was not engaged in making any decisions at all.

The additional piece of being in the right-mind, I believe, is that you see and experience only love. The state of mind of love is a very good indicator that you are not in denial. In denial you are mindless; you're shutting down and shutting out. You're trying to keep away outside, as well as inside forces that seem to want to come up into your awareness, whether it is fear, pain, suffering, anything like that. But this felt like a heightened awareness, the opposite of being depressed. Everything was seen more clearly and felt more intensely, and there was really only love to feel.

It was probably the most alive I've ever felt, and the most connected to others that I've ever felt, even though they couldn't understand my experience. I didn't need them to understand. I still felt completely connected with them. Whereas in the past, whenever I was trying to explain an experience, if someone didn't understand me, or questioned me, or attacked what I was trying to say, I would become upset. To me, this was the only reality there was. And just because they weren't seeing it, didn't mean it wasn't there.

This state of mind was a gift. But, before I could receive the gift, I had to release some deeply held beliefs. If you associate yourself as the body, you will not be able to accept the gift. And if you think this world has any reality whatsoever --or should I say -- if you *want* this world to have any reality, you will not be able to accept the gift. The gift was easily, easily received when those two things were accepted in the mind. If you think about it --fear is present when you believe you are about to lose something of value. So, if I think *I* am the body, and want to be the body, and I think the body is going to die, I will be afraid. With breast cancer it is very interesting, because it is so identified with being a female. To lose the breast, which they were talking about, is identification not only with the body but also with being a woman. If I don't have my breasts, then I am not a woman. So now it really is attacking my identity. If we believe this is who we are, then the mind will suffer and be in a great deal of fear.

The fear left the minute I decided or was willing to say, "I (the Mind) am about to have an experience of what it's like in the dream to have cancer. This is a dream experience. And I am not the body. So this dream experience will happen to the body. But it's not happening to me." That's pretty much what I said the night I heard the initial diagnosis.

Another thing that seemed to set my mind in right-mindedness was a decision of what I wanted to experience. My friend later said that I told her that same night, "I'm *about* to experience God." And, there *was* an excitement for me the next morning. I was about to have an experience of God, and I remember being very, very excited about that. I remember saying throughout the couple of weeks when all of this was happening, "I am having an experience of God."

So the three thoughts that were in my mind were: 1) I am going to have an experience of what it is like to have cancer in a dream, 2) it is happening to the body, not me, and 3) I am going to experience God. No matter what is happening, wherever I go, I want to experience God. What happened after that was the body moving to different places, going through different things, but the mind was in that awareness all the time.

The next morning when I went to the clinic for additional testing, I was in such a heightened state of peace that everyone there seemed like an angel to me. Their voices were sweet and love was everywhere. Every once in a while I would catch their words, and I would think their words were so funny. For example, this woman was preparing me for the procedure, and she was saying, "You know, I had this done, and I know you are probably very afraid." And I just thought her words were very funny because fear was the farthest thing from what I was experiencing. And then all these women were around me. They were taking a little bit of the tumor out. And the doctor was over me and she was saying, "I'm so sorry. This is going to hurt." And I'm looking up at all of these women, and I didn't feel a darn thing. I felt nothing. I didn't feel their hands on me, nothing. And she said, "I know this is hurting you. I'm very sorry." And I thought that was so silly. I'm thinking to myself, "I don't even feel you touching me." And I thought, "This is so cool."

They were telling me what I must be physically feeling, and emotionally feeling, and I thought that was strange because I wasn't having any of those experiences. I didn't say anything. There was no reason to contradict them. There was no reason to convince them of anything. I was just marveling at the idea that my mind was at complete peace. It was kind of like an out-of-body experience, but I wasn't hovering over my body. I was seeing things from my physical eyes. I could see the needles and people and all that stuff, but I was not attached to my body. Whatever was happening to the body was not happening to me.

After that we went into a private room and the doctor was sitting with me, and she had a book on breast cancer in her hands. She said something like, "The initial biopsy results show you have an aggressive form of cancer. The results of today's tests will only confirm the first findings. I want you to take this file, and I want you to take this book, and I want you to go home and call a surgeon."

She handed me the breast cancer book and I am looking at this book thinking, "Hmm, I wonder why I have this book?" Because I was not at all identified with the body, it seemed strange to me that "I" needed this book at all.

She must have mistaken my lack of response and acceptance as shock. Because she said something like, "I know you're in shock. I know that you can't really comprehend." And I remember thinking, "I'm not in shock. I'm hearing everything you're saying." It was just that she was talking about the body. She wasn't talking about me. And that, I'm sure, looked like denial. But to me it was peaceful.

“Go do this.” “Okay, I’ll do that.” To me the words were non-alarming. It was like someone saying, “Go to the grocery store.” “Okay, I’ll go to the grocery store.”

Having an experience in a situation in which others are afraid can be a temptation to join with them in the body identity and fear. There were brief moments when I would start identifying with who they were talking about and what they were talking about. I recognized that I had a choice to share in this point of view or not. For example, I went to see a friend of mine who wanted to teach me how to address the cancer naturally—how to treat it with diet and all of that. I remember sitting in her kitchen and she was giving me pages and pages of information. There was a moment when I seemed to leave my right-mind. It was as if I realized, “Oh, you’re talking about *me!*” The minute “me” was identified as the body, I became very overwhelmed and afraid.

After I left that meeting, I recognized that any time I left that right state of mind, and it seemed as if it was me they were talking about; I would sit quietly and repeat the word “God.” This would quickly return my mind back to peace. I then would be able to maintain that state for days. So it wasn’t that I didn’t go in and out of it sometimes. But when I went out of it, all I needed to do was to set my mind on truth and remember God.

This practice was helpful when I was having interactions with people, especially those close to me. I remember having a conversation with my husband. I was sitting on the couch; he was on the chair, and I saw that he was in fear. He was basically telling me to snap out of it. He told me I was not worrying about this enough, and he was afraid that, because of that, I wouldn’t make the right decisions. I think if he could have shaken me by the shoulders, he would have. It was interesting being in that state of mind when others didn’t know what to make of it. They saw it as complacency and not caring and probably a little bit insane. I didn’t defend against that, because I knew exactly where I was. I just said, “All I can do is explain to you what I am experiencing.”

When you are in your right-mind you are in a constant “now,” which means there are no thoughts of the past or the future. There’s no planning and there are no decisions to make because everything is already given. I remember saying to my husband, “I know that you are afraid. But, I am telling you that I am experiencing only love. That’s all there is to my experience. To me, it is already okay.”

When we told our daughters, they were very, very upset. And they cried. One of my daughters had a friend whose mother had died of breast cancer just a year before. So she went right into thinking that I would probably die, because in her experience, you die of breast cancer. As we were sitting at the table and telling them, I watched them very closely. I could see that they were very upset. I had a lot of compassion for their experience. But, even that did not bring me out of a peaceful state of mind.

I was telling them as best I could that I was okay. And that they would be okay. It wasn’t a pat answer but I knew they might hear it as a pat answer. What I was trying to express was that it didn’t matter. It didn’t matter if the body died from it or didn’t die from it, because what would die was not me. But, of course, those words were pretty hollow to them. I think I might have said something like, “I know you are in a lot of fear. But I want you to look really closely at me and see that there is no fear. There is nothing to fear. So if you can’t experience that within yourself, watch me. I’m not making this up. I’m not just giving you a positive thought. I am not in denial. I am

perfectly at peace. And if I could give you that peace, if you could just rest in that peace, then this won't be hard for you." Sometimes they were upset and afraid, and then sometimes they were okay. It really was only two weeks in the end, because things happened pretty fast.

So for those two weeks, when I was with the girls, I was not entertaining thoughts of death, or what it would be like to not be with my girls, or what was ahead for us. To me, there was only now. And in that now, there was perfect peace. So, there was no reason to even think about what you would normally think about. This was in 2004 so my girls were still young. I wasn't thinking about leaving them, or what it would be like to leave them. None of that. None of those thoughts came into my mind. That's probably the most significant thing for me. Because as a parent, you would think that would naturally come into your mind. But I knew they couldn't lose me, no matter what happened. It seemed silly to talk about that, because that wasn't the experience of it at all. Whatever happened to bodies didn't matter. There could be no separation.

I think one of the most interesting things with going through this with other people who were upset and reacting, was that I knew it was important to be okay with wherever they were coming from. They didn't see what I was seeing, so that's why they were reacting. It was like they were watching a different movie than I was, and seeing something that wasn't there. My only job in communicating with others was to share with them what was really there. I wanted them to know: "You can have this experience, too. Look at it. Look at it. Feel it. I know you are in fear, but there is no reason to be. If you could experience what I am experiencing, you would see that so clearly." I didn't want them to suffer. There was no reason to. I just wanted to reassure them.

This is another important part of the state of right-mindedness. All I had was love for everyone. I didn't need to convince anybody of anything. There were a lot of people reaching out to me and my family, all with different ideas on what would be helpful. Some were doing traditional prayers, some were expressing fear, and some were giving advice. Inwardly, none of it was an answer for me because the whole thing was happening in a dream. So there was no reason to be responsive or to react at all. Why react? Why get invested at all in any of those things if it wasn't happening in reality? "You want to give me that advice? Okay. Sure. Thank you very much." All I felt was love. All I was aware of was love. Even when the surgeon was telling me what she wanted to do, why she wanted to do it, what her philosophy was, what she thought it was, etc., I responded, "Okay."

Her philosophy was to take it step by step, and not jump to a more traditional school of thought where everything is cut out that could be a problem, a possible threat. She wanted to remove the tumor and take a biopsy of the lymph nodes, test everything, and then go back into surgery.... take the lymph nodes out; take the breast, etc., depending on the pathology report. They scheduled the surgery right away.

After surgery, I went home to recuperate and wait for the results, and then learn what course of action the doctor wanted to take. I didn't take the pain pills they prescribed, mostly because they upset my stomach. I don't remember being in pain at all, so it really didn't matter. Something interesting happened during this time. The day following surgery, as I was resting in bed, my mind began to wander into thoughts of how people were being so helpful. Everyone was rushing to meet needs that we as a family didn't even know we had. I felt so much gratitude for the whole experience. It felt like my heart would burst with love. Then I remember my thinking something like, "Maybe I'm not worthy of all of this attention. After all, I really have not suffered, been in

distress, felt fear, anxiety or worry.” Boom! I instantly felt guilt and unworthiness and fast on its’ heels was the awareness of physical pain. Both happened almost simultaneously. There I was in deep pain both physically and emotionally when just moments before I was in love and joy. How opposite can experiences be? I was aware of the sudden change but I let the thoughts swirl around anyway. I went deep into experiencing the pain of not being worthy of love and the guilt for taking something that I didn’t deserve. I cried and cried. I remember actually thinking that the physical pain was my just desserts. After a few hours, I decided that was enough of that. I literally said, “I’m done with this”. I then started to repeat “God” in my mind and my inner distress and physical pain went away.

A few days later, I got the call. They had examined the tumor and found no cancer at all. There wasn’t even the presence of pre-cancer cells. There was nothing. Clean. One hundred percent clean. You could tell the doctor was having a hard time understanding this turn of events. She told me that after getting the first report she sent it out for further testing and “still not one cancer cell was found. Nothing.”

My reaction to this news was the same as it had been throughout the two weeks.....calm, nonreactive and nonattached. I found myself responding much like I did when they were telling me I had cancer. I calmly responded, “Oh, okay.” My state of mind remained consistent, stable and unwavering. The news didn’t matter.

When people thought I had breast cancer, they were praying for my body to be healed. When they found out there was no cancer they called *that* the miracle. They were all reacting as if it was bad news to have a sick body and good news to have a well body. Everyone was saying, “Oh, thank God, our prayers were answered. You must be so elated. You must be so excited.” This made no sense to me. Anything I would pray for I already had. I was already experiencing peace, love, joy and a feeling of being completely safe. What else could I want? I was trying to explain: “I’m not happy now because I was unhappy then. Nothing has changed. I was happy then, and I’m happy now. And if it were cancer, my state of mind would not change.

I had a very clear experience that we are not the body. I had a very clear experience this is a dream. And there is nothing to fear. I had a clear experience of being in the Presence of Divine Love and that is our only reality. And all of *this* was the miracle.

We might be tempted to think breast cancer is an extreme case where it would be impossible to be in a state of peace and joy, and that of course you would experience fear, pain and upset. We might think a peaceful state of mind is too difficult to maintain when others are frightened, or the body seems to be threatened. We might think the journey to achieve this state of mind is a long way off. These are all mistaken thoughts. I had only been studying *A Course in Miracles* for a couple of years then, so it wasn’t as if I was a longtime Course student. All I did was apply what the Course was telling me to practice. When I first heard the initial report, it occurred to me, “I can apply the Course here.” And that’s all I did. I gave all of my willingness to practice. My single desire was to experience God. I did not identify with the body and chose instead to identify with Spirit. I had one moment free of all other thoughts including the “realness” of the experience. And each time my mind wandered into false thinking, I chose again.

What happened after this experience is also an interesting story. One might think that I let go of all illusions completely and “disappear(ed) into the Heart of God.” Instead, what happened for me was I started to cling even more tightly to certain parts of the illusion: my relationship, money, my grief over losses, my desire to build a career, my need to keep busy, etc. In looking back, I believe this reaction was because I saw how thin the veil was, and how quickly this whole world and my identity as a body would crumble. Because it didn’t take much—just a bunch of willingness and a desire to experience only God. Poof. There I was, in that state of mind where the world was not real, and there was no personal “me”. So I spent a lot of years afterwards defending against that experience, because I got too close, and my mind wasn’t ready. It just was not ready. I had a peek into the eternal, and saw that truth was and is already complete and it is the only Reality that exists. And now I use time to prepare the mind *to* accept this.

I can’t tell you how extremely grateful I am for this experience. When you experience the total non-reality of the body and the One reality of love, it becomes an amazing teaching example. What I’m trying to say is that it makes all illusions ridiculous. Because if an illusion that we classify as really real and really scary and particularly bad is experienced as not real at all, it starts to make them all sort of crumble. I came to the Course thinking this would be a great way to manage my illusion. After this experience I realized that the way to be free and to be at peace is to let go of my belief in illusions, including my identity as a body. I go back to that experience often. It helps me to stay clear in *why* I want to heal my mind and it reminds me to not get lost in thinking there are other goals to pursue here.

How many times are we tempted to ask for a healing of the mind so we can have something in the world of form—albeit a well body, money, relationship etc.? If you had a healing of the mind, what happens to the body or in the world of form would be completely irrelevant because you would be experiencing only God’s Love. And to have a healing of the mind, you need to see that what is happening to the body or in the world *is* completely irrelevant. It is a slippery slope, and we can deceive ourselves in thinking we are pursuing the goal of awakening, while really seeking a better illusion. That is why this experience is valuable as a mind watching tool. If I am tempted to use my practice to try to change the illusion, and I get caught up in that, I go back to this experience to remember that a truly peaceful mind is a mind that is not identified with illusions. And in order to rest in gentleness, love, complete safety and peace, I must be willing to accept:

The world of death, sickness and attack is not real.

The body is not me.

There is only God.

This is why there is nothing to fear.

That’s the teaching!

In theory, I can read that a million times. But, what a gift to have the experience that the teachings are true. I see the journey as really just steps in willingness to see and release all ideas that oppose the truth of these teachings. This really *is* our only purpose. There’s nothing to do, nothing to strive for, no worldly goals to reach, and no better choice than God. Because, when you’re in this

state of mind- you are experiencing joy, peace and a complete absence of fear. There is nothing in this world that compares to it.

It seems silly now to be shy about sharing this. Why wouldn't I want to shout *that* from the rooftops?

*\*Suggested reading: A Course in Miracles Workbook Lessons #136, #137.*