

5 November, 2015

[Heading back to Duke for the scan...](#)

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On Tuesday, November 10th at 11:30am, Travis will have a scan to follow the radiation on the lung lesions that took place last month.

The side effects from the radiation were manageable and Travis continued to work, coach, bike, camp, and enjoy my new vegan culinary creations.

I like this time between treatment and the scan because it allows for unpacking, thinking, reorganizing, healing, anchoring our kids, and gearing up for whatever is around the bend. That physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental space is so important to have in between two intense times of cancer events. It is a bit like the flat part of a rollercoaster when you have just climbed to amazing heights and get to enjoy the view. But you have no idea what is next.

A few months back, I had a day alone while Travis was in a meeting and wrote the following. I share it with you in an effort to remind you that we all need each other.

Today, a friend reminded me of when I wrote about trusting God with hands in the air as we ride this cancer rollercoaster. She confided that she holds great fear of any future suffering that awaits her, fear of losing a child or of cancer in her husband.

You know what? Me too.

Looking at rollercoasters from the outside can be scary. Even terrifying.

I write this as I sit in the empty lobby of a 2 star chain hotel overlooking the largest rollercoasters in all of the southeastern United States. Travis was in meetings today, I don't have any responsibilities, I have a whole day in front of me, there is a rollercoaster theme park right outside my window... and I actually love the thrill of rollercoasters. The choice to spend the day riding rollercoasters is mine.

But I have decided not to ride the rollercoasters...only because I do not want to ride alone.

Who would sit next to me, legs stuck to the plastic chair, shoulders touching, nervous chatter wondering what this ride will be like?

Who would share in the teeth gritting anticipation as we click-clicked up the track?

Who would gasp with me as we crested over the top of the track and we saw just how far we would fall?

Who would scream with me as we shot down the track, leaving our stomachs a few paces behind?

Who would hold my hand, white knuckled as we made the

*tight curves, first to the right and then to the left?
And who would laugh with me as we slowed down, mouths
open, hair windblown, catching our breaths?
And who would be there to retell the story of the ride: the
anticipation, the twists, the turns, the thrill?*

*If you ever notice, few people ride rollercoasters alone. We
need others for hand holding, for shared screaming, and for
the looking back on the ride.*

*When Travis did chemotherapy in South Carolina, the
infusion room was set up to foster community. If someone
needed privacy, there were private rooms available. But
those rooms were always empty. The patient and the
caregiver chairs were so close to their neighbors' chairs
that it was impossible not to engage in conversation for the
long hours that were endured. In that environment of
shared suffering, friendships were forged, jokes were made,
side effect tips were shared. When one person finished
chemotherapy, everyone celebrated.*

*When Travis did chemotherapy in North Carolina, someone
told us that we could request the "social wing" of the
infusion center. We never found it because it did not really
exist. The patient and chemotherapy chairs all faced away
from other people and towards the windows or the
television. While we found great peace in looking out
towards the majestic mountains, we had to actually walk
around with the IV-infusion poles to talk with other
patients.*

On Travis's first NC chemotherapy, we were seated

somewhat close to a woman in her early 60s who was on the exact same chemotherapy regimen. Only a few minutes after Travis received the first dose of the new chemotherapy, he became sick. Very sick. The kind of sick that requires all the nurses to run, for someone to grab the trash cans for vomit, for all chemotherapy to stop, for the head nurse to come and consult if chemotherapy could continue. And not long after Travis was sick, our same-regimen neighbor became sick too. And that was just the beginning of the 12 sessions.

Every two weeks, we would enter into the infusion room, sit in our corner chairs and greet the same-regimen woman . As she was alone, I would walk over to chat about our favorite books, her grandsons, her move from Florida to the mountains, and we would compare notes about the side effects from the last chemotherapy. Even though she had some family in town, she always came alone.

After the third chemo, Travis's hair started to fall out. It came out in patches. It woke him up at night as it caught on the cotton weave of his pillow. He finally gave in to shaving it off. He called a coworker, his medical resident, his pastor friend, his boys, and they all took turns with the shaver until he was bald. When he walked into chemo 4, it was the first time he truly looked like a chemo patient.

So it was no surprise when we sat in our chemo corner chair for session 4 that our same-regimen neighbor was also bald. She, too, saw her hair fall out in patches, was woken up by the cotton weave hair pulling, and decided to shave it off.

But she did it alone.

And it was too much.

She quit.

In the middle of chemotherapy, she took her IV infusion out, walked out, and never came back.

Because no one rides rollercoasters alone.

Everyone needs someone to hold their hand, share their screaming, and when it is over, be able to look back at what they have just conquered and retell the stories.

Honestly, I would not have chosen this ride. Nor would I ever wish this on anyone. But I am thankful that I get to sit next to Travis for every ascent, for each loop-de-loop, for each turn, screaming together, and holding hands. And I will also be thankful for the day that we can stop and look back and retell the story of when we rode that rollercoaster.

Thanks for riding the rollercoaster with us.

With love and friendship,

Amy and Travis



Aidan as a robot, Lilli the cowgirl and Patton as a soccer player



Lots and lots of greens!



Travis and his groomsmen (14 years later)



Future USA women's world cup team



Aidan turns 6!



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