

*120 Devotions of Lasting Hope
for Lingering Health Issues*

INCURABLE FAITH

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**UNCORRECTED
PROOF**

ANDREA HERZER

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MULTNOMAH

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To Jesus, my savior, who has been “a shelter from the storm
and a shade from the heat” (Isaiah 25:4)

And to my husband, Mark, who joined me in the storm,
carried the umbrella, and never left my side

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A Letter from My Heart to Yours



Beloved reader,

I'm glad you're here, because I wrote this book for you. If you are living with health challenges or are a support person for someone who is, *Incurable Faith* is for you. If you're the person who smiles through the pain while facing treatments, surgeries, and uncertainties that no one else seems to understand, *Incurable Faith* holds hope for you. If you're the person who fears disease progression or disability, these words will encourage you. If you're the person fighting hard to hold on to life or even battling the urge to give up, *Incurable Faith* will strengthen you. If you're the caregiver, medical provider, family member, or friend who supports those afflicted by health issues, this book will equip you to persevere with greater compassion.

Living with health challenges can create a deep sense of loneliness during a time when you need people the most. Even supportive loved ones might not understand the depths of your pain, fear, and sadness about your medical issues. If you're desperately trying to find a diagnosis for your baffling symptoms, you might even begin to question your ability to trust your own feelings. You may feel the grief of shattered dreams, and even shattered friendships, when health issues limit your activities or confine you to home or a hospital. How do I know about these thoughts and feelings? I've experienced them all, and more, having lived with life-altering health issues

for over two decades. In fact, when I began writing these devotions, I had no idea my future would hold more than one hundred medical procedures, increasing disability, and aggressive advanced-stage cancer.

As the daughter of a physician, I grew up hearing about the ravages of illness from a doctor's perspective. But my experiences with decades of debilitating illness have taught me the true burdens and secret worries of a patient. In *Incurable Faith*, you will read about my private struggles and learn how Jesus has met me and continues to meet me in my pain. You will discover His sufficiency in every sorrow and find His peace for every worry. You will learn the practices that will fill you with overflowing joy despite any diagnosis. These are just a few of the Scripture-based and life-tested truths I have brought together in *Incurable Faith*.

When I began my own journey with life-altering health issues, I wanted a guidebook that would show me how to live well while feeling unwell. I found books about suffering and books by those who had already been healed. But there were few inspirational Christian books written by authors with ongoing medical issues *during* their health challenges.

I had been a follower of Jesus for many years, even working in ministry, but I wasn't fully prepared to undergo this depth of suffering. My faith was being refined and tested, but I secretly began to wonder if God was punishing me. Didn't Jesus promise abundant life to His followers?

I was hungry for healing, but God satisfied my hunger with an unexpected feast. He provided wisdom for my walk, mercy for my mess, and hope for my heart. Almost seven years after my first diagnosis, I began to chronicle my daily health battles by sharing how Scripture helped me fight. I dreamed that these devotions would one day bring hope to others who suffer from medical issues.

What I *never* dreamed was that my journey through illness was far from over. But I am a living testimony that you can embrace a beautifully abundant life even during a devastating diagnosis.

So curl up and settle into a cozy space. Snuggle into a blanket and tuck into comfort as you read the following devotions. Get ready to live *with* your health issues by living *within* infectious joy and incurable faith.

With love and blessings,

Andrea

A Note About the Format and Content



Reading a book or studying the Bible can seem overwhelming when you have health issues. Medical treatments, medication side effects, and chronic illnesses often limit attention span and concentration. I understand these limitations, so I grouped the devotions by length instead of by topic. But I also included a topical index in the back of the book. You can choose what to read based on your need each day, or you can read the book from cover to cover!

How to decide what to read each day:

- *Do you have a specific need, such as perseverance, hope, or strength?*

The **topical index** on pages 273–277 will help you find a devotion.

- *Do your health issues impair your ability to focus on a lengthy devotion?*

Section One: A Satisfying Snack offers short messages that are meant to replenish and revive your spirit when health issues limit concentration and attention span.

- *Do you feel well enough to sink into a heartier devotion?*

Section Two: A Marvelous Meal has medium-length entries that are just right for days when you have the energy and ability to focus on reading a slightly longer passage.

- *Do you want the comfort of spending some extended time in Scripture?*

Section Three: A Fabulous Feast contains the longest devotions. Each stand-alone chapter might be just the right choice when you are lonely and want the extra comfort of a lengthier quiet time.

Each devotion includes these components:

- **Scripture**—a verse to plant in your heart and mind
- **Passage**—a devotion to help you through life with health issues
- **Prayer**—a short conversation with God
- **Truth to Embrace**—a concise takeaway truth to embrace throughout the day
- **Worship Song**—music to accompany the day’s devotion, with a Spotify playlist of all the songs available at www.andreaherzer.com/playlist.

Sections Two and Three include one of the following:

- **Ponder**—how the passage relates to your own life
- **Practice**—an action that will enrich your faith and your life

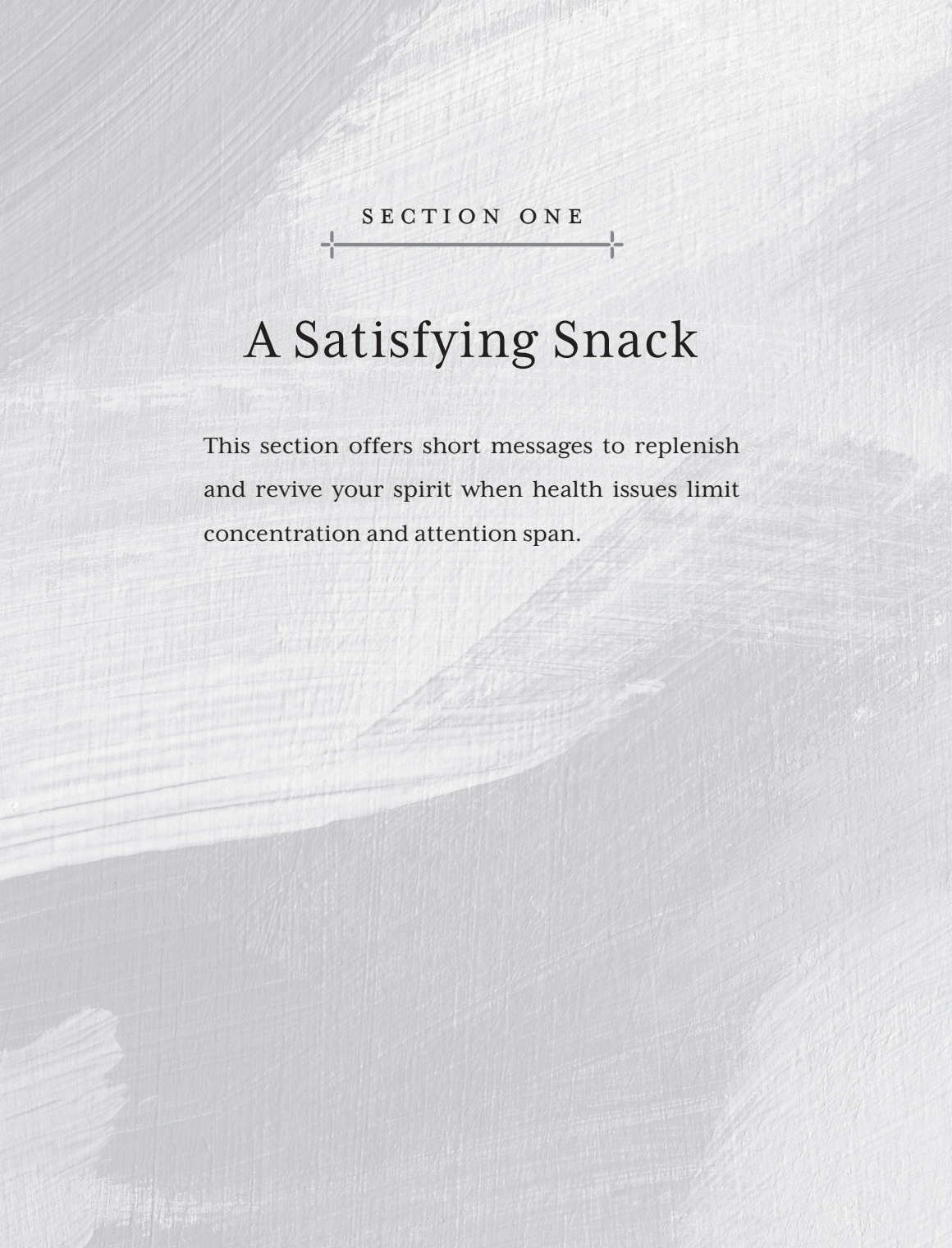
I understand the burdens of illness, so I wrote *Incurable Faith* with your needs in mind. There are no dates on devotions because I know how hard it can be to keep up with a daily format when you have surgeries or treatments. The scripture is written out to make it easily accessible, but I encourage you to open your Bible or Bible app and read the entire passage. You may also choose to keep a journal and pen or a voice-assisted computer nearby to record your Ponder answers and complete your Practice exercises. I chose not to include an area to record your responses in the book so as not to discourage those who are unable to use writing utensils. However you choose

to respond—whether by voice-assisted technology, typing, or handwriting—recording your thoughts after reading a passage can be a helpful practice and a wonderful way to later reflect on your journey.

Last, you won't want to miss the Resources section (beginning on page 261), which is full of helpful information. There you will find encouraging scriptures and books for further reading, as well as crisis-hotline numbers and even a twenty-four-hour prayer line. Caregivers will find recommended books and websites to assist and support them.

I pray that as you read *Incurable Faith*, you will experience the powerful presence of God and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you are not alone and are dearly loved.

Spotify playlist of recommended worship songs:
www.andreaherzer.com/playlist

The background of the page is a textured, monochromatic illustration of a mountainous landscape. A winding road leads up a hill towards a small building, possibly a cabin or a church, nestled among trees. The style is painterly and atmospheric, with soft lighting and visible brushstrokes.

SECTION ONE

A Satisfying Snack

This section offers short messages to replenish and revive your spirit when health issues limit concentration and attention span.

He satisfies the longing soul,
and *the hungry soul* he fills
with GOOD things.

—Psalm 107:9, ESV

The Proper Place



He is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.

—Ephesians 1:21, *NLT*

No doctor ever proclaimed, “You have cancer,” when I was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma. My father, a physician, responded to a texted photo of my bulging neck by texting back, “It looks like lymphoma,” so I knew cancer was a possibility. My primary-care doctor said, “Your CT scan is suspicious for lymphoma.” My surgeon told me the specific types of lymphoma revealed in my biopsy. Although no one uttered the words *You have cancer*, the words *I have cancer* filled my mind for weeks.

You have likely felt dread in the pit of your stomach upon hearing bad news. That is how I felt whenever I thought, *I have cancer*. But Jesus is more powerful than any disease. Even cancer. The thought that I had cancer took my breath away, so I inhaled peace by replacing that thought with this one: *I have Jesus*. The power of that beautiful name restores me. Cancer stays in its proper place when I place my trust in Jesus. Today I still have cancer, but one day I will have eternal healing from every disease—and I will still have Jesus.

Pray: Jesus, Your name is above every other name. You are my healer, savior, and friend. One day You will rise with healing in Your wings to destroy the power of every disease. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit, and give me all I need to endure until that day. In Your mighty name I pray. Amen.

Embrace: My disease stays in its proper place when I put
my trust in Jesus.

Worship: “What a Beautiful Name/Agnus Dei (Medley)” by
Travis Cottrell, featuring Lily Cottrell

Trust the Teacher



I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.

—Isaiah 42:16

I taught a spunky visually impaired student named Kelly in my first-grade class. Kelly was new to the school, so she depended on a mobility teacher to help her safely navigate the unfamiliar environment. The teacher took her through the school hallways and gave instructions along the way. Kelly eventually learned that she could trust her teacher to guide her to the places she needed to go.

You may feel unsure and lost when illness alters the landscape of your life. But you are not alone. Jesus is the teacher who guides you. He does not watch from afar as you navigate the difficulties of illness. He knows the way through your challenges and will take you safely through every twist and turn. Your confident trust in the Lord will increase as He guides you; you do not travel through illness alone.

Pray: Dear God, thank You for guiding me and teaching me to navigate difficult paths. You made a way for me to have eternal life, and You make a way through everything I face. Thank You for illuminating the steps I need to take to move forward. Keep my foot from every wrong path; guide me on the way that leads to life. In Jesus's name, amen.

Embrace: Jesus helps me navigate the difficulties of illness.

Worship: “You Know My Name” by Tasha Cobbs Leonard, featuring Jimi Cravity

Blessed Opportunities



How can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

—Romans 10:14, NLT

Earlier this week, I called a friend who had just learned her mother has cancer. I prayed with her and shared scriptures that helped me during my own cancer diagnosis. A repairman in my home overheard our conversation, and when I hung up the phone, he told me that two of his family members were also fighting cancer. His heart was heavy for them. Our conversation easily shifted to spiritual matters, so I shared with him the comforts of faith in Christ. I have met many people who are eager to receive spiritual truth when health issues burden them. Illness is hard to bear, but it opens up blessed opportunities to share gospel hope.

Pray: Lord, may my story be an encouragement to others. Let them witness Your power as You turn weakness into strength and trials into blessings. May even the unexpected disappointments in my life serve as a platform to bring glory to You. Give me the courage and opportunity to tell others the good news of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Embrace: My illness can open up opportunities to tell others about Jesus.

Worship: “Each One, Reach One” by Babbie Mason

The Provider Always Provides



Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

—Matthew 6:26

God often provides for our needs through other people, but we cannot expect them to meet our every demand during illness. Sometimes we might be overwhelmed by the outpouring of support. Other times we are undone by loneliness and lack. I am humbled when people help me during illness and further humbled when they do not.

When I fully trust God as my provider, I can release others from the burden of meeting the tremendous needs that arise with illness. He often provides in ways I least expect, so I must be open to His plan during this season of my life. I am learning to be flexible and patient. God may be working in the hearts of people around me to teach them how to serve, or He may be training my heart to discern my real needs. Either way, the Provider always supplies what is best.

Pray: Dear God, You are my provider. I will approach Your throne with confidence, and I will approach people with grace and love. When they cannot help me, please enable me to release any offense so that no root of bitterness will grow in my heart. Thank You for all the ways You provide for me. In Jesus's name, amen.

Embrace: God uses great need to develop greater faith.

Worship: "He's Always Been Faithful" by Sara Groves

The Secret Step



I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

—Isaiah 48:10

Homemade organic chicken broth is a staple in my home. I put freshly diced vegetables and a whole chicken into a pot with clear water. Then I add a handful of parsley, savory herbs, and a few peppercorns. The ingredients are a bouquet of freshness and flavor. But even the best ingredients will produce a cloudy chicken broth if I don't take an additional step. The secret to creating a clear broth is to carefully skim off the foamy gray substance that accumulates on the simmering surface of the liquid. Could I expect to produce an appealing broth without removing the impurities? Of course not! Yet I become just like that unappetizing broth when I stew in indignation, anger, and bitterness about my health issues without the additional cleansing step of repentance. God uses the fires of affliction to bring my impurities to the surface so that confession and grace can completely skim them away.

Pray: Dear God, help me remember that stewing in anger or bitterness will make the fires of affliction feel unbearable.

Chronic illness is a long simmering process; use it to test and transform me. Refresh me during my heated trials. Your strength is the ingredient that enables me to endure. Thank You for loving me enough to make me into a new creation. In Jesus's name, amen.

Embrace: My afflictions bring impurities to the surface
so that confession and grace can completely skim them away.

Worship: “Refiner” by Maverick City Music, featuring
Chandler Moore and Steffany Gretzinger

Getting in Shape



Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand.

—Jeremiah 18:6

My children loved to play with modeling clay when they were young. Their tiny hands pounded it until it was pliable. Then they parted it into various flower or seashell molds that I kept just for that purpose. Sometimes they pressed the clay into a mold and forgot about it. When it dried, it remained in the shape of the mold.

Debilitating illness presses hard; it crushes every last vestige of self-reliance and pride out of us. There are times when suffering is so deep that it changes us completely. We become pliable and ready to be molded, for better or worse, by what we cling to during trials. What do you cling to when you are hard-pressed by illness? Let your ailments press you closer to Jesus so you will be shaped and transformed into His beautiful image.

Pray: Dear God, change me into the person You created me to be. My suffering is reshaping me; I am ready to be molded. Teach me how to press into Jesus so I will be transformed into His image. Help me wholeheartedly cling to You during my trials. Amen.

Embrace: I will cling to Jesus so I can be transformed into His image.

Worship: “Close to You (Live)” by Mosaic MSC

Worst-Case Scenario



Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

—Proverbs 3:7–8, *ESV*

I had a unique superpower when my children were small: I could glance into a room and immediately find every safety hazard. The sharp table corners and open outlets were no match for me! That skill may have helped me protect my toddlers, but it hurts me when I apply it to my health issues.

I look into every potential negative outcome when I'm given a new diagnosis. Then I tell myself I'm being realistic by mentally preparing for the worst-case scenario. But the truth is that these ruminations actually arise out of fear and unbelief. When thoughts are filled with trepidation *about* the future, they leave no room to consider God's sufficiency *for* the future.

We want to be realistic when facing illness, but is it reasonable to imagine a future without the presence of an omnipotent God? Our days belong to the God whose thoughts and ways are beyond human comprehension. None of us can accurately predict the future with a mind that is limited to the present. So I will stop my vain imagining, and I will trust the God who is able to do immeasurably more than I can imagine with every aspect of my life.

Pray: Dear God, thank You that my life is in Your hands.

I never need to imagine a future apart from Your loving care.

Please stop my fearful and worried thoughts. I choose to rest in You; I trust You with my future. In Jesus's name, amen.

Embrace: I will be a realist by embracing the fear-reducing reality that I can trust God with my future.

Worship: “Because He Lives (Amen)” by
Matt Maher

Come to My Aid



Contend, LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take up shield and armor; arise and come to my aid.

—Psalm 35:1–2

When I was a child, I had two friends at school who were my constant companions. We were all sweet little girls individually, but something happened when the three of us got together. There is a reason for the saying “Three is a crowd,” and it must have been coined by a teacher! Inevitably, two of us would side against one, and tears would ensue. There was usually a teacher nearby watching and waiting to help. Sometimes she separated us to prevent conflict; other times she let us work things out for ourselves. But she always comforted the one who had been hurt.

The psalmist David said, “You have taken from me friend and neighbor—darkness is my closest friend” (Psalm 88:18). Often pain and illness seem like our closest companions. They regularly take sides against us. But we have a teacher named Jesus. Sometimes He shields us from their attacks; other times He assists us in the fight so our faith will grow. But He is there without fail, watching and ready to come to our aid. And He always brings comfort.

Pray: Lord, thank You that You are always by my side. I need You today. Sometimes You separate me from my hardships, and other times You give me what I need to endure them. But You never forsake me. Be my helper today. Be my advocate in my fight with illness. I submit all of myself to You today. I will rest in Your watchful care. In Your precious name I pray. Amen.

Embrace: Jesus is always ready to come to my aid; He assists and comforts me when health issues rise up against me.

Worship: “Always (Live)” by Passion, featuring Kristian Stanfill

Resting on My Foundation



Be still, and know that I am God.

—Psalm 46:10

Do you ever feel trapped by the limitations of being in bed with illness? You might long to get up and be active, but your body has other plans. One day I was bemoaning my bedridden state of exhaustion and pain. I sought physical comfort by sinking down into my soft mattress, and the sensation reminded me to sink my thoughts into the comfort of worship. God brings healing contentment to my soul when I meditate on His character instead of the characteristics of my illness.

He is holy. He is just. He is merciful. He is loving. He is sovereign. He is good. He is my provider. He is my healer. He is my friend. God's character cannot be characterized by my limitations. Health issues may temporarily bind us, but His love is boundless. We are lifted above the frustrations of our limitations when we lift up God's name. Peace blankets the bedridden stillness when we rest our thoughts on Him.

Pray: Dear God, there are times when I want anything but stillness in my life. I long to be active and well. Teach me how I can be active in my faith, praise, and prayers when I am inactive because of my health struggles. Help me rest in Your care when I am in bed with illness. When I sink into the comfort of the mattress beneath me, I remember that You are my

foundation. I will rest my thoughts on You. In Jesus's name, amen.

Embrace: God brings healing contentment to my soul when I meditate on His character instead of the characteristics of my illness.

Worship: "Be Still My Soul (In You I Rest)" by Kari Jobe

A Reason to Rally



When Jacob was told, “Your son Joseph has come to you,” Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed.

—Genesis 48:2

Living every day with chronic pain, illness, and fatigue means we have many occasions to summon our strength. Sometimes our love for others propels us beyond ourselves. We get out of bed to take care of family members or visit with friends while everything inside us is screaming for rest. At times, we rally because we are determined to complete tasks the Lord has placed on our hearts. I rally my strength during overwhelming pain and fatigue to write devotionals to bless others just as Jacob rallied his strength to bless his son. We all need a reason to rally. What is yours?

Pray: Dear God, there are days when I cannot rally much strength at all. Give me all I need to get through those days. Propel me by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Fill me with the love and purpose that give me a reason to keep going. I can summon my strength because You are my strength. In Jesus’s name, amen.

Embrace: My love for God and others can help me rally my strength every day.

Worship: “Christ Be All Around Me (Live)” by Leeland, featuring All Sons & Daughters

The Laundry Room Song



The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

—Psalm 121:7–8

I helped my three children memorize Bible verses for school by making each verse into a song. We sang the verses throughout the week until they were easy to recall. According to my children, my terrible singing gave them great incentive to learn their scriptures quickly. Once, I wrote out Psalm 121:7–8 on a large whiteboard in our laundry room to help them memorize it. I would softly (okay, loudly at times!) sing it to myself while doing the laundry. Doing laundry exacerbated my pain, so this particular passage reminded me that the Lord watched over me to keep me from actual harm. Placing God’s Word in an area of your home where you are most apt to need it can give you the comfort and strength to make it through the day.

Pray: Dear Lord, thank You that Your Word comforts and strengthens me. Prompt me to recall scriptures when pain, brain fog, and fatigue cloud my mind. Please give me the wisdom to plan ahead for those difficult days. Help me hold Your Word in my heart by having it easily accessible in my home. Thank You that it both sustains and saves me. Amen.

Embrace: I will hold God’s Word in my heart by making it easily accessible in my home.

Worship: “Your Word” by Christine D’Clario

His Presence Brings Peace



On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

—John 20:19

In Jesus’s first appearance to the disciples after His resurrection, He greeted them by proclaiming, “Peace be with you!” In the original Greek, the word for “peace” is *eiréné*, which implies complete wholeness, tranquility, and rest. Jesus entered the room that the disciples’ fear had locked, and He gave them the peace they needed. Their difficult circumstances were the same, but Jesus in their midst meant that everything had changed. His presence gave them peace that unlocked their courage and restored their faith. Invite Jesus into the midst of your health struggles. His presence will always bring peace.¹

Pray: Jesus, I need courage and faith right now. I invite You into the midst of my struggle with pain and illness. Restore me, Lord. I receive Your complete wholeness, tranquility, and rest today. Amen.

Embrace: Jesus brings tranquility and peace when I invite Him into my struggles.

Worship: “Nothing Else” by Cody Carnes

Connected, Not Rejected



Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

—1 Corinthians 12:27

Long-term health issues can be isolating. They might even prevent you from enjoying the active life you once led. While undergoing surgeries, treatments, or infusions, your only human interaction might be with medical staff. And if you are bedridden or homebound, you already know the brutal isolation that illness imposes. But no matter where your health issues take you or leave you, they can never keep you from your position in the body of Christ. Those who have accepted Jesus Christ are forever part of His body. Illness and fatigue may prevent you from regularly attending church or enjoying an active social life, but they can never keep you from filling the place in the body that only you can fill. You are forever connected, never rejected, and always loved.

Pray: Dear God, there are times when I feel so alone. But the truth is that when I accepted Jesus, I became forever connected to other believers. Thank You that I have a special place in the body of Christ. Illness may isolate me from others at times, but You have loved me enough to make me part of Your forever family. Thank You, Lord. Amen.

Embrace: The isolation of illness cannot separate me from the body of Christ.

Worship: “How Beautiful” by Twila Paris

You Are Radiant



Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.

—*Psalm 34:5*

The first time one of my health issues demanded privacy was when childbirth complications created the need for additional surgeries. I'd presumed that my ob-gyn surgeon's nurse would follow medical privacy laws, so I was unprepared when her husband walked up to me at church and announced, "I hear you had surgery! My wife talks in her sleep." My face grew hot with shame and anger. Although inappropriate, his comment did not create my shame. It merely uncovered this truth: I *already* felt ashamed of my afflictions and even more ashamed of their cures.

Are you undergoing difficult medical treatments to regain your health? You might need pessary devices, drains, or suppositories. You may have lost all your hair or even parts of your body. Do you feel embarrassed by your medical issues? Reflecting on the indignity of illness opens a door for shame to enter. Reflect instead on God's estimation of your unchangeable worth. He created you with dignity that disease can never take away. He loves you so much that He sent Jesus to give you complete freedom from shame. You are never covered with shame when you reflect the radiant beauty of Christ.

Pray: Dear God, thank You for creating me with dignity and worth. Take my feelings of discomfort and embarrassment about my disease, and use them to impart greater compassion

for others who suffer. Fill me with the knowledge of who I am in Christ. Amen.

Embrace: Shame will never cover me when I reflect the radiant beauty of Jesus Christ; I possess dignity and worth that illness cannot take away.

Worship: “You Define Me” by Kim Walker-Smith

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