

GRATITUDE

In Difficult Times



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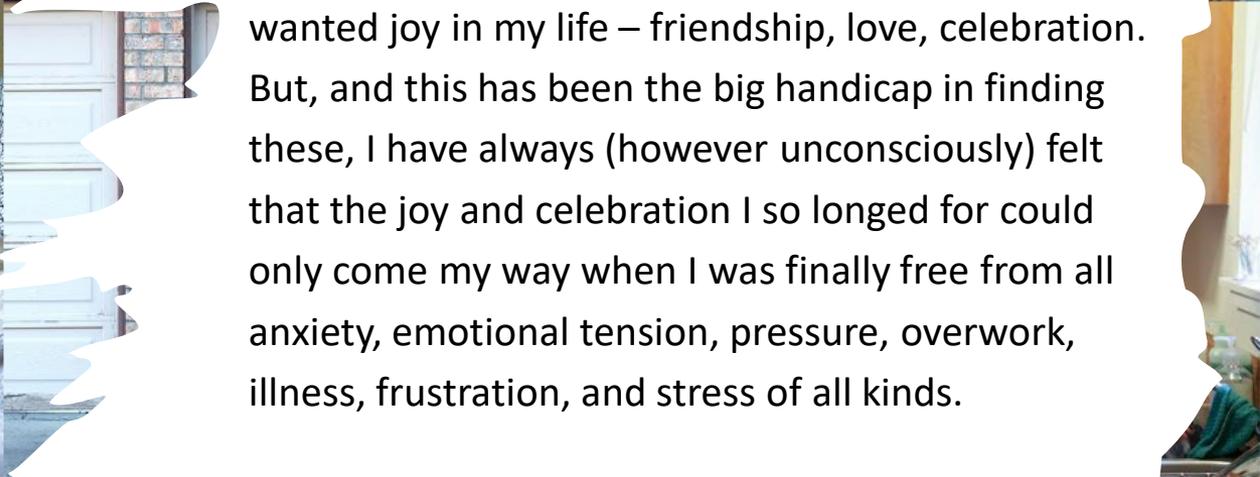
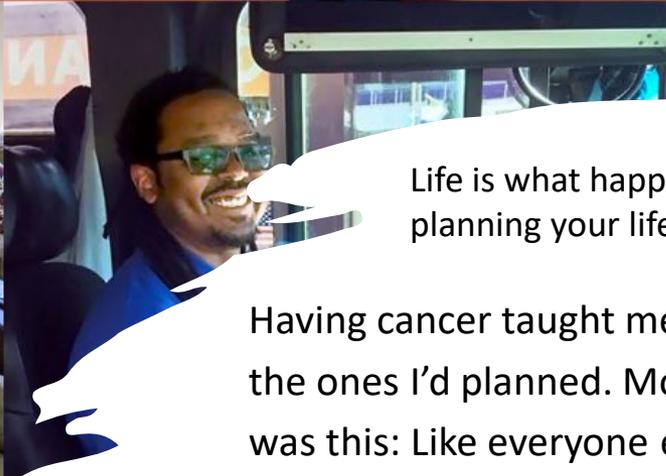
- Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thes 5:16)



- Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (Col 4:2)

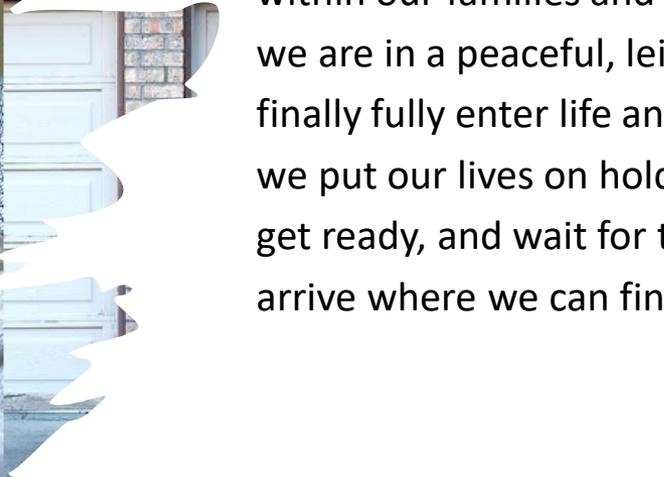
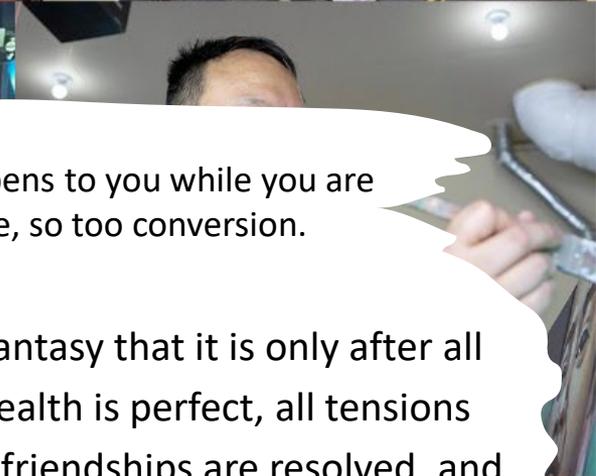
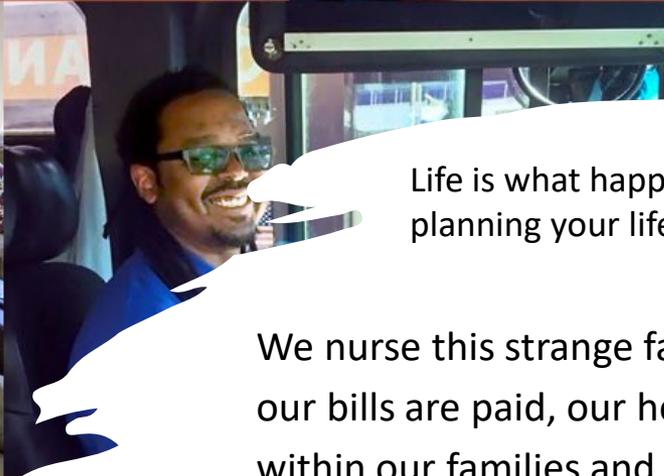


- Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. (Col 3:15)



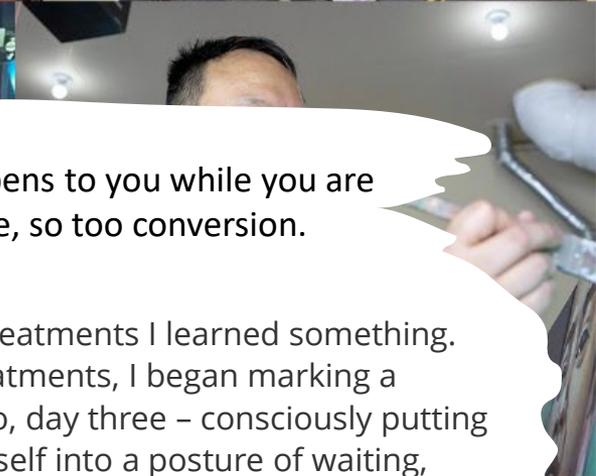
Life is what happens to you while you are planning your life, so too conversion.

Having cancer taught me some lessons other than the ones I'd planned. Most important among these was this: Like everyone else in this world, I've always wanted joy in my life – friendship, love, celebration. But, and this has been the big handicap in finding these, I have always (however unconsciously) felt that the joy and celebration I so longed for could only come my way when I was finally free from all anxiety, emotional tension, pressure, overwork, illness, frustration, and stress of all kinds.



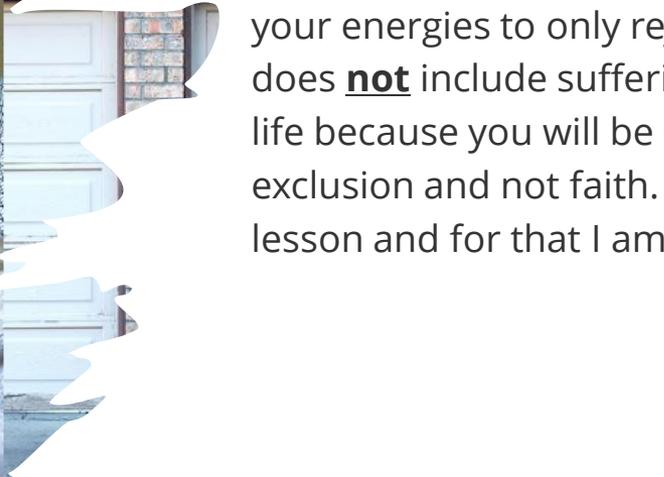
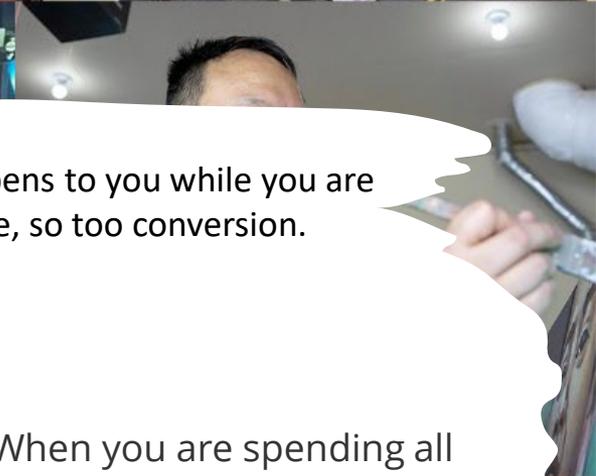
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We nurse this strange fantasy that it is only after all our bills are paid, our health is perfect, all tensions within our families and friendships are resolved, and we are in a peaceful, leisured space that we can finally fully enter life and enjoy it. In the meantime, we put our lives on hold as we perpetually gear up, get ready, and wait for that perfect moment to arrive where we can finally rejoice within life.



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While undergoing cancer treatments I learned something. When I first started the treatments, I began marking a calendar - day one, day two, day three - consciously putting my life on hold, putting myself into a posture of waiting, marking away the days until, in my fantasy, the treatments ended, and I could live life again. But strangely, as the days unfolded, to my own surprise, I found that I was living through one of the richer and happier periods in my life. Inside of the tiredness, nausea, and neuropathy, I was finding a rich enjoyment in friendships, colleagues, work, and (on days when I could actually taste them) food and drink. The six months within which I was undergoing cancer treatment, turned out to be, to my own surprise, six happy and deeply meaningful months.



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As John Shea puts it:

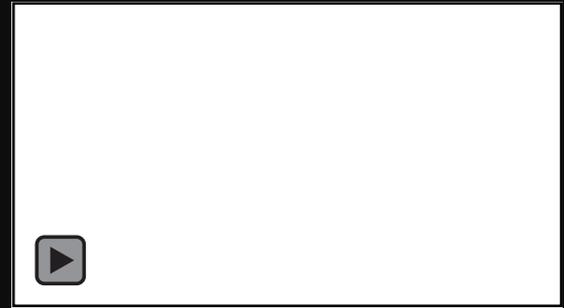
Life includes suffering. When you are spending all your energies to only rejoice in that part of life that does **not** include suffering, you will **not** enter into life because you will be dominated by fear and exclusion and not faith. Cancer taught me this lesson and for that I am most grateful.

- Ronald Rolheiser, OMI

YOUR TURN

- What one thing have you heard about or experienced during the pandemic that has been unexpected
 - something that you now appreciate – are grateful for.





“I live in tranquility and trembling...there is not a guarantee in the world. Oh, your needs are guaranteed, your needs are absolutely guaranteed by the most stringent of warranties, in the plainest, truest words: knock; seek; ask. But you must read the fine print. “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” That’s the catch. If you can catch it, it will catch you up, aloft, up to any gap at all, and you’ll come back, for you will come back transformed in a way you might not have bargained for-dribbling and crazed. ...You see the needs of your own spirit met whenever you have asked, and you have learned that the outrageous guarantee holds. You see the creatures die, and you know you will die. And one day it occurs to you that you must not need life. Obviously. And then you’re gone. You have finally understood that you’re dealing with a maniac.

I think that the dying pray at the last not “please,” but “thank you,” as a guest thanks his host at the door. ... Divinity is not playful. The universe was not made in jest but in solemn incomprehensible earnest. By a power that is unfathomably secret, and holy, and fleet. There is nothing to be done about it, but ignore it, or see. And then you walk fearlessly, eating what you must, growing wherever you can, like the monk on the road who knows precisely how vulnerable he is.”

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- - From Annie Dillard’s “Pilgrim at Tinker Creek”

Live Jesus in Our Hearts . . . Forever!

