

This I Believe...

My mother's death is the most painful experience I have endured up to this point in my life. But although Mom suffered much physical and emotional pain during the months before her death, those months and that experience were also a gift from her to me that will last a lifetime.

I can't remember ever experiencing any level of joy or peace during that period of 411 days, but the end result was a gift that can never be measured. What I experienced with my mother during that time did much to shape how I have tried to live my life each day thereafter.

I remember so clearly the day I flew from California and arrived at Kettering Hospital in Ohio. Having suffered two massive strokes after an unsuccessful surgery, my mother lay totally paralyzed and without speech. As I was riding the elevator to the ICU, I remember hearing someone complain about not finding a convenient parking place; having to walk so far to the hospital entrance. That was a life-changing moment for me... an important lesson about putting things in perspective, and remembering to try to focus each day on **what really matters in life**. "Don't Sweat the Small Stuff", is putting it a little too simplistically, but I truly embrace that philosophy. It's a theory that many of us find easy to support, but it was not until that elevator experience that I could internalize it so effortlessly.

Throughout my mother's ordeal, I continued to be able to see more and more accurately what was most meaningful during our time together and in the bigger picture. Had I not been experiencing my mother's journey at that time, I will never know how many years it might have taken for me to benefit from that wisdom,

This I believe...

That what we experience during our lifetime will not necessarily occur in our pre-planned or desired time frame. It happens according to God's plan for us, and how fortunate we are to be able to trust in His judgment and His all-knowing wisdom.

When something happens in my life that I have not planned for, hoped for or anticipated, and that appears far from being a blessing, I remind myself that God is helping form my life experience, and He is providing me with another opportunity to benefit from an experience that may not appear to be a blessing at first glance. God has done His part by providing me with an experience I did not anticipate or hope for. Now it is my responsibility to determine what I am supposed to learn from this experience; how to unwrap and appreciate the gift he has just given me. And once I have determined the purpose and value of the gift, my challenge is to internalize it, and make it a lesson that I can integrate into my life on a daily basis.

My hope and prayer is that I never miss or fail to see the value in one of those unique opportunities that God gives me to make my life and the lives of those around me the kind of life that honors Him more each day. The lessons to be learned from our disappointments and misfortunes are awaiting us each day.

This I believe.