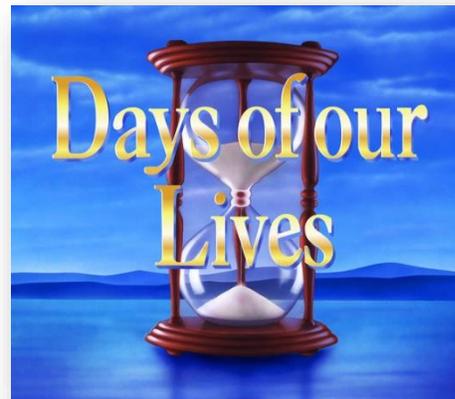


## Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

February 18, 2019, Presidents' Day

Dad was transferred to Memphis in 1970 to become the Director of the Cotton Cladding Division of the USDA, and Mom and Dad joined First Baptist Memphis straightaway, since it was then pastored by Dr. Paul Caudill. Dr. Caudill had been my Dad's pastor in rural North Carolina decades before, and had been instrumental in the direction of his life. Dr. Al Weir was my parents' physician for forty years in Memphis (and my physician, when I got sick while in Memphis).

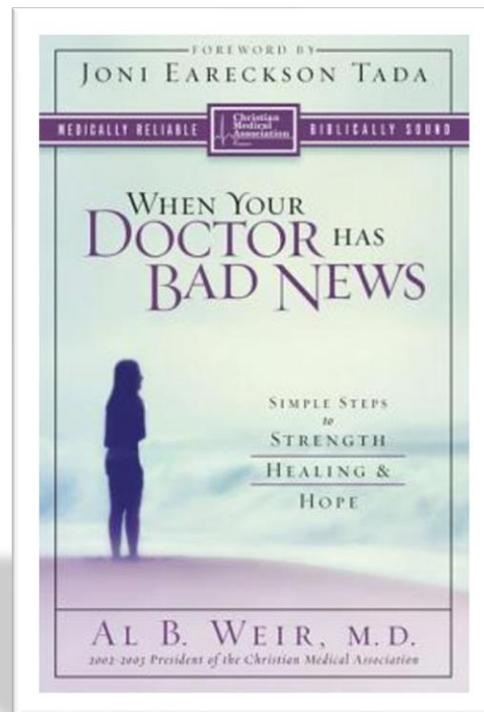


In 1970, I was a sophomore at Georgetown College in Kentucky, and when I was in Memphis, I attended the college class at First Baptist. In that class was Dr. Weir's son, also Al Weir, who was also in college (at Rhodes in Memphis, I think).

Time passed, as time will do. Al and I both finished college. He finished medical school and became a renowned oncologist in Memphis. I finished college, did the Navy Thing, went to seminary (several times), served a bunch of churches, and became the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Bristol, Virginia.

Al became an officer of the Christian Medical & Dental Associations (CMDA), headquartered in Bristol, Tennessee, and he and Becky moved to Bristol for several years, where he became one of the Deacons at First Bristol, and it was my glad privilege to be their pastor.<sup>1</sup> After a few years, Al & Becky moved back to Memphis, where Al became a Clinical Professor of Oncology at the University of Tennessee Medical School and the Chief of Oncology at the VA Medical Center in Memphis.<sup>2</sup>

As an oncologist, Al has had many occasions when it has been his responsibility to tell patients things they didn't want to hear, and out of those experiences, together with his own robust faith, Al wrote *When Your Doctor Has Bad News: Simple Steps to Strength, Healing & Hope* (Zondervan, 2003).



I had read the book before, and have given away many copies of it over the years (I'm giving copies to all of my current physicians), but the book has taken on new meaning for me during the last four months. In early November, when my colon trouble first surfaced, and last week, when we learned that the cancer had grown through the colon wall, at least a little bit, I'm sorry to say that my very first inclination on both occasions was to "curl up into a ball and wait to die." That was

<sup>1</sup> While Al was in Bristol, I was invited to submit my resume to the pastor search team of the grand old First Baptist Church of Memphis, but I didn't feel released from my service as pastor of the grand old First Baptist Church of Bristol, Virginia.

<sup>2</sup> Al was also a physician at the Eku Baptist Hospital in Eku, Nigeria, from 1983-1985.

catastrophizing, of course, but I still felt a lot like that for a short time during both of those weeks. After a bout with the “melancholies” (we call this the meLANCHolies at our house), I returned to the promises of God’s Word and to the excellent guidance of Al’s book.

For those who are in Christ, of course, death is not our enemy. Our Lord Christ has transformed death into the gateway to Glory, and I will be very glad to be in “Narnia,” whether soon or late. And apart from those two brief seasons in “the slough of despond,” this “Journey of Compassion Enhancement” has not been a difficult one. I have felt VERY prayed for, both by you and by friends in many places across our land, and I have kept a spiritual journal of this whole experience.

The truth of the matter, humanly speaking, is that I’m still in pretty good shape. There is no evidence that the cancer had moved beyond the colon, and it has now been removed (I have a lovely scar as proof!). I have an excellent oncologist here, and Al will consult with her on my treatment plan. There is no need for me to “curl up in a ball,” so I won’t do that. I’m having too much fun ☺.

And here are some of the excerpts from Al’s book that have been helpful to me:

I will not lose; I will substitute.  
I will not stop; I will turn.  
I am here for others; not just for myself.  
I am not alone; God and those I love are with me (p. 53).

*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness (2 Peter 1:3).*

“Dear God, I have lost my glasses. I don’t know why. My health is broken and my dreams are broken. You alone have the power to heal. Work through my doctors. Work through my prayers. Work through the prayers of those who love me. Please, show your power and make me whole again. Amen” (p. 71).

- Don’t look beyond the horizon. Choose a visible goal toward which you can direct your energies.
- Remember that fighting the battles involved with your illness must be an act of the will, not of emotion.
- Plan to win.
- If you fail to reach a goal, remember that it was only one step that failed, one battle that was lost, not the whole war.
- Pray daily for strength in the battle.
- Life outside your illness continues. Be part of it (p. 75).

“I don’t know what God plans on this earth and what he doesn’t plan. It seems that sometimes when we suffer he withholds the hand that could stop that suffering. But I know we can trust the hand. It’s the same hand he withheld when his own Son was suffering for me. I know that whatever he plans grows out of his love for me” (p. 79).

If you are now looking toward a difficult future, it is critical that you decide what you should hold on to while you live out the rest of your life (p. 101).

You may not be able to force yourself to feel happy again, but you can force yourselves to plan events that will drag joy back into your life. Rather than curling up in a corner

until the rest of life passes, sit at a desk and list the things you've always wanted to do, then walk through the rest of life checking off the possibilities as you do them (p. 110).

There may not be enough time left for shallow relationships. Choose the people you really wish to be with (p. 111).

As you face the bad news your doctor has handed you, seek the good, seek God, and with God beside you, you will find the good (p. 114).

If we face the sun/Son, the shadows will be behind us, but if we turn our backs to the sun/Son, all shadows will be in front (p. 120).

We can quit this life, quit our work, and leave our job unfinished as soon as we face difficulties, or we can pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, put our hands to the plow, and work until our job is done. After the tears, we must once again focus on what God has brought us here to do (p. 159).

Cancer is so limited.  
It cannot cripple love.  
It cannot shatter hope.  
It cannot corrode faith.  
It cannot eat away peace.  
It cannot destroy confidence.  
It cannot kill friendship.  
It cannot shut out memories.  
It cannot silence courage.  
It cannot invade the soul.  
It cannot reduce eternal life.  
It cannot quench the Spirit.  
It cannot lessen the power of the Resurrection (p. 159).

If God is all-knowing and all-powerful, and if he really loves us, then I am convinced that *we do not suffer in this world unless God has planned for us, in our suffering, a purpose that is greater than our pain.* Sometimes we discover that purpose even before we get to heaven (p. 177).

**Soar we now where Christ has led,  
following our exalted Head.**

**Made like Him, like Him we rise,  
ours the cross, the grave, the skies** (p. 188).

Amen, and Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*

Dave

