

This is a beautiful God story for those of you who have family and friends who do not know Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

My cousin Roger was diagnosed with cancer in November of 2006. He was told he had 1 – 2 years. Roger and I are not what I would describe as real close. We grew up together and saw each other at weddings, funerals, family reunions and such. In a nutshell, he is my cousin, we come from the same family and I love him. I didn't know where he was with his faith so I assumed he did not know God. As we did not live in the same city, opportunities to see each other were few, so I sent letters, cards, and emails. In them I would share my faith in a personal way, explaining how God helped me through difficult times. Explaining how God is a personal God. And each day I prayed. I prayed for healing to his body, comfort for his pain and suffering and I prayed that he would come to know God in the midst of this trial. Along the way I got a clearer picture of Roger's heart. He was always gracious and thankful for words and prayer but never let me know what he believed. It was not until over a month ago that I discovered just how hard he was struggling. Roger was now in hospice care and I called his wife Terri-Lynne to find out how they were coping. She sorrowfully explained that he was angry, bitter, and did not want anyone to talk to him with regards to a god or anything spiritual. He was not expected to live more than a couple of weeks. The hospital offered a pastor or priest and he declined. It was at this point that the only person he would see was Terri-Lynne.

Roger passed away on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November at the age of 37. He left behind his beautiful wife and their 2 young sons. I felt a great depth of sorrow for the family. Sorrow for myself. Sorrow for him. And I was mad. I was mad that he was so stubborn and that I may never see him again, while hanging on to the hope that his final thoughts were with Jesus.

I had heard that the funeral was going to be very 'un'spiritual'. This was not the case. It may have been the original plan, but God had another plan. When I arrived that morning Terri-Lynne introduced me to Pastor Joel.

Let me tell you about Pastor Joel. Pastor Joel used to be a stand up comedian before becoming a Christian (...for real). Joel and Roger were friends for 8+ years. Roger knew Joel before he became a pastor, and before he became a Christian.

Joel told us the whole story so very eloquently and humorously in his message. He told us of the good times that he and Roger shared (we were laughing and crying at the same time). Over the years Joel had made many attempts to share with Roger what he had found. Roger did not want to hear. With Roger's failing health, Joel relayed his deep concern for his unrepentant heart, his life after death hanging in the balance. I sensed that many people in the room were reflecting on their own crossroads as they listened. Joel told us he prayed God would soften Roger's heart. He prayed God would give him words that Roger would hear. God gave him Luke 23. Jesus hanging on a cross. The 2 thieves hanging on each side. One mocking. The other confessing. And this is what he read by his hospital bed. He was able to share the gospel in a most beautiful way. It was incredibly moving. He asked Roger if he wanted to accept the awesome gift of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for his sins. Roger accepted and they prayed.

Roger told Joel he remembered something about the Lord being his shepherd, Joel smiled "yeah that's Psalm 23 ...The Lord is Roger's Shepherd, Roger shall not want, He makes Roger to lie down in green pastures, He leads Roger beside still waters, He restores Roger's soul..."

This was the last time Joel saw Roger.

I sat there ... jaw dropped ...in total awe of what God can do. Pastor Joel invited anyone at the funeral (there were easily 250) who would like to say the prayer that Roger said that night. After the service, Joel told me 15 people gave their life to Christ that day.

In past years (and especially in past months) I've felt discouraged about the impact I have as a Christian on family and friends who have no relationship with Jesus. In 8 years of walking with God, stumbling here and there, I could say that I hadn't really helped lead a single person to Christ. I've always tried to recognize and use the opportunities God gives me when he puts someone in my path, and I have prayed for opportunities that God could use me, but nothing really significant would come of them that I could see. I prayed for Roger for over a year. My kids prayed for Roger, my husband prayed for Roger, my home group prayed for Roger. I am sure that there were thousands of prayers for Roger from so many.

I now realize I don't have to be the one sitting beside the hospital bed and I am discouraged no more.

I had a great honour and privilege to speak at my cousin's funeral. Just one night prior, still in the dark about Roger's confession and repentance. I read the Bible all day and late into the night trying to find something that could bring comfort. The morning of the funeral God gave to me Psalm 40.

I waited patiently for the Lord; He turned to me and heard my cry.  
He pulled me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and mire.  
He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.  
He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our Lord.  
Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in Him.

Thank you Jesus