

The Prayer

I searched each hospital room to my right and to my left, until I finally reached Mom's door. I have always felt uneasy in hospitals, and the glimpses of those lying in their beds with masks and tubes all around them didn't help at all. I was relieved to finally reach her room, yet the reality of facing her caused a whole new kind of stress. We have always had a strained relationship, and since I had become a Christian, it seemed to be even more difficult.

I opened the door slowly and found her sitting up in her bed watching television. She was surprisingly in good spirits, considering she was there due to severe heart issues. She was thankful I had brought with me her own nightgown and belongings and could not wait to go in the bathroom to change. I sat quietly in the chair beside her bed, waiting and wondering what we would talk about.

As she came out of the bathroom and was placing the remainder of her things in the closet, I was shocked as she said the last words I would have ever expected to come out of my mother's mouth.

"I believe God is giving me a second chance at life!" she exclaimed. "When I knew I wasn't feeling well, I came straight to the hospital because I knew something wasn't right. They told me I nearly had a heart attack. And now I'm here and I believe these people are going to help me get well."

"Well, I'm really glad to hear you say that Mom," I said. "You really do need to take better care of yourself, and perhaps this was a bit of a wake-up call for you."

Surprisingly, she and I sat and talked about all sorts of things. My little girl was about to celebrate her second birthday, and I was pregnant with baby number two. It was a surprisingly pleasant conversation as we chatted about this and that. I was thankful for the chance to talk with her as a mother and grown daughter should.

The conversation turned toward spiritual matters again, and I made a fatal mistake of saying something about how she might want to look into finding a church or something to that effect, mainly due to her proclamation that "God was giving her a second chance."

It was as if a dark cloud had entered that hospital room. She looked at me coldly and said, "I want to go to sleep now. I think you should go."

I was speechless. Her countenance changed within seconds, it seemed. We returned to the 'snippy' type of conversation to which I was more familiar. I was near tears as I walked toward the door. I looked back at her as I pulled the door shut. She was watching television again.

I held back the tears as I got into my car. Before I knew it, I was sobbing out loud. I have lived with this pain in my heart for so long. Why did I even dare to hope something would be different now? I found myself praying out loud, "God, if she is never going to change, please just take her. I can't handle this anymore." I continued to say this prayer in my mind as I drove. My eyes were blurred by the tears streaming down my face.

The next day, I was sitting at my desk at work when my phone rang. It was my sister calling to say, "I'm here at the hospital. I cannot believe it, but Mom is dead. She died earlier this morning."

"No! No! No!" seemed to be the only words my mouth could form. "That's impossible! I was just with her last night!" All I could think about was my prayer the night before. I am guessing my cries were louder than I realized, as my co-workers started gathering from other offices. I was completely undone.

My husband came to pick me up after I had called him. I shared with him what I had prayed the night before. We remained silent as we drove to the hospital to be with my sister. That day I learned an unbelievably valuable lesson. Be careful about what you pray for, and God does answer our prayers.