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## Faith Walk | Finding hope while facing the worst

It's 2:30 a.m., and I can't sleep. My mother-in-law, Teri, is sick. It's not the kind of sick where you get better — it's stage IV pancreatic cancer, the kind where you get worse and worse and then you die. Still, I pray for a miracle. But I don't expect one. I worry that my doubt might make the chances even slimmer, but I can't help it.

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I know bad things happen to good people. And our pastor preaches that God is there to comfort you in times of sorrow, that God doesn't promise all will be rosy. Instead, the Bible says that the worst thing is not the last thing, that there is always hope, often here on earth and definitely when we move beyond.

I feel a bit of what might be meant by God's comfort. As Teri's support network gathers around, I realize these same people are here for me, too. My brother-in-law, father-in-law and I eat breakfast in the cafeteria, praising the cheesy potatoes, weighing career options, bemoaning the atrocious eating habits of toddlers. I'm getting closer with them and other friends and family members as we pass time in hospital waiting rooms, getting snacks for one another, summing up doctors and nurses, crying.

No one deserves to get cancer, certainly not this aggressive, incurable kind — I know that. Still, it can feel so cruel when it attacks a dear loved one, and in this case, someone who has rescued me countless times. Five years ago, when my daughter was 1 month old, I couldn't eat or sleep or do much of anything but cry and worry. I had postpartum depression and anxiety. When the baby monitor felt like an anchor around my neck, Teri whisked it out of the bedroom, graciously assuming night duty. My husband and I fell into bed, blissful knowing that our daughter was in good hands and we were about to embark on many hours of uninterrupted sleep. I still remember how good that felt.

As I continue to cope with the responsibilities of motherhood, Teri is my constant backup. She often tells me what a wonderful job my husband and I are doing, how well the children will do in life given the foundation we're providing. Until she began having symptoms last April, she watched the kids at her home two or three days a week while I worked. It was a relief to know that they were in the best possible care.

So, yes, I pray for a miracle, knowing that it usually doesn't happen the way we wish or envision.

Even now, Teri helps me see the good, how her need has brought out a generosity in others who perhaps have surprised even themselves with how much they can give and how good it can feel. But the best part — and yes, even in this awfulness, there is a "best part" — I'm witnessing someone realize just how much she is loved. The outpouring of kindness has moved her to tears of joy, and I want to believe that this is but a tiny fraction of the true miracle in store for her, and one day for me too, when we meet again.

Kim Schworm Acosta is one of 13 contributors writing the Faith Walk column. Reach her at [faith@kcstar.com](mailto:faith@kcstar.com).

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