

Spiritual Needs of Cancer Patients

The most basic spiritual need of every cancer patient, as with everyone, is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who is the source of all hope. Beyond that, ministry to cancer patients should cover the four basic spiritual needs discussed below. The Word of God has life-giving power, and so for each spiritual need Scriptures have been provided which serve as a starting point for ministry.

To know how much God loves them

When facing the pain and despair of cancer, patients need to know that their suffering is not a result of God's lack of concern or love for them. They also need to know that God has not forgotten about them. Through ministry you can reassure patients that God's love for them is constant, limitless, full of compassion and the source of hope and strength that they need.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

– Deuteronomy 7:9

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

– Romans 8:38-39

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of the fullness of God.

– Ephesians 3:16-19

To know God is more powerful than the cancer

People fighting cancer can feel frustrated and anxious as their strength is drained by repeated treatments, surgeries and visits to multiple doctors. Hope is hard to hold onto when the battle lasts for months and even years. It is important to help patients remember that God is their most powerful ally in the fight for their lives.

Sovereign Lord, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do?

– Deuteronomy 3:24



Because Everyone's Journey IS Different

The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The Lord's right hand has done mighty things! The Lord's right hand is lifted high; the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!"

– Psalm 118:14-16

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.

– Zephaniah 3:17

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

– Ephesians 1:18-23

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

– Hebrews 2:14-15

To find courage and strength to fight the fear that cancer brings

Fear is a natural reaction to a cancer diagnosis. Cancer patients need to know that even though they are afraid, God has promised to be with them every step of the way. They also need to know how they can use God's word to fight the fear that threatens to overwhelm them. You can share with them how they can put on the "armor of God" to protect their hearts and minds from fear.

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

– Deuteronomy 31:5-6

Surely the righteous will never be shaken; they will be remembered forever. They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord. Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.

– Psalm 112:6-8



Because Everyone's Journey IS Different

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

– Matthew 10:29-31

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

– Ephesians 6:10-17

To know that they can trust God no matter what happens

Perhaps the hardest part of holding onto faith in God during a battle with cancer is finding the grace to trust that whatever the outcome, whether there is complete recovery or not, God's plan is good and just. Surrendering our own human understanding of what should happen and accepting God's sovereignty is difficult, but crucial for finding peace. Without this unconditional trust in God, a patient's faith may falter or fail throughout a journey filled with ups and downs.

The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

– Psalm 9:9-10

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

– Proverbs 3:5-6

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

– Jeremiah 29:11-13



Because Everyone's Journey IS Different

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

– John 14:27

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

– Romans 4:18-21

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

– Philippians 4:6-7



Because Everyone's Journey IS Different