



Glimpses
Two Stories
of Hope and
Healing

by

Jan de Chambrier & Carrie Oliver

Foreword and Afterword by Dr. Gary Oliver

 Prayer Point Press

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*To Philippe de Chambrier,
my dearly beloved husband,
and the one who loves me as Christ loves the church.*

Preface

There is no doubt in my mind that I was called to write this book with my dear friend, Carrie Oliver. Diagnosed with different kinds of cancer sixteen years apart, our meeting was God-designed and our relatively brief friendship a divinely pre-ordained sisterhood. God had impressed on both of us His desire that we share the testimonies of His faithfulness through our life experiences and particularly our journeys through cancer. Although Carrie had asked me to collaborate on this project with her in early April of 2007, we never got past the preliminary planning stages, as her health declined rapidly thereafter and she died on July 2 of that year. It was on the day of her memorial service that I sensed the Lord impress on me that this book would still be written, and by both of us. The means would be Carrie's online updates, which she called "A Journal of Hope." After receiving her husband Gary Oliver's permission and blessing to proceed with this in March of 2008, I fervently prayed for the Lord to show me a format and to divinely synthesize our two stories and writing styles in a way that would glorify Him and bring encouragement to others.

I have never experienced such a continual outpouring of God's Spirit as in the writing of this book. Perhaps because I knew that it was so far beyond my own ability, I trusted Him to do exceedingly abundantly more than I could ask or even imagine according to His power at work within me. I began by making a hard copy of Carrie's online journal updates, which totaled 126 pages. I then

highlighted scripture references in yellow and passages that I could excerpt in pink, and categorized each entry by its predominant topic. I prayed each day for the Lord to guide me in the choice of the daily subject, and then chose a scripture on which to base the writing that day. I made the decision to graft our ideas together in the first person with direct quotations from Carrie's journal, and to separate our "voices" by spacing and font rather than quotation marks so as to make it appear more conversational: two friends comparing life experiences. I took the liberty of occasionally editing Carrie's entries, which I'm quite sure she would not have minded. I also received permission from Gary Oliver to use excerpts from his own updates on Carrie's website after her death.

The title for this book is derived from the final chapter, Glimpses. Carrie and I often talked about living every day as Jesus taught us to pray: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We felt so privileged to see glimpses of His kingdom everywhere we looked! And now it is a privilege to share it with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Every chapter is intended only for the glory of God and for the edification of His people. May those who read it come to know more fully the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge.

Contents

FOREWORD BY DR. GARY OLIVER	13
1 OUR STORY	17
2 DIAGNOSIS: CANCER	
3 PRAISE!	
4 FEAR	
5 HOPE	
6 GODLY MARRIAGE	
7 PASSION AND PURPOSE	
8 LONELINESS	
9 GIFTS	
10 REALITY	
11 PERSEVERANCE	
12 LIES OF THE ENEMY	
13 HUMILITY	
14 GROWN-UP GIRLFRIENDS	
15 THE JOURNEY	
16 ANGELS	
17 WAITING	
18 MENTORING	
19 TRUST	
20 RIGHT RELATIONSHIP	
21 GRIEF	
22 SACRIFICE	
23 PRAYER	

24	SUFFERING
25	MUSIC
26	HEALING
27	MAKING MEMORIES
28	TRANSPARENCY
29	FAMILY
30	MORE THAN CONQUERORS
31	BLESSING
32	JOY
33	COMPASSION
34	OBEDIENCE
35	ANNIVERSARIES
36	GLIMPSES

AFTERWORD BY DR. GARY OLIVER

NOTES

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Foreword

This is a book about joy, victory, happiness and faithfulness. Yes, there's some sadness, sorrow, and goodbyes - but it is a book that has a happy ending! It's about the difference that friendship and faith can make in some of the darkest and most difficult realities of life. It's about hope. Not merely hope in spite of something, but a very real hope in the midst of something. This is a book on how to not just survive, but on how to thrive in the midst of difficulties, both big and small. When events in life work to rewrite your life story and you are overwhelmed with a tsunami of circumstances and a confusing range of emotions that you didn't want and don't understand, what do you do? How do you respond? Where can you go?

It was over twenty years ago that I was told that what doctors thought was just a benign growth in my mouth was actually cancer and that they were going to operate in two days. I stood there holding the phone and staring out the window. These things don't happen to me! These are the kinds of things I help others deal with. But me, have cancer? No way!

Six years ago, I sat in a doctor's office and heard him give that same diagnosis to my wife Carrie, except that hers was for metastatic pancreatic cancer with a prognosis of just three to six months. It was actually infinitely more painful for me to hear her diagnosis than it was to hear my own. Given the somber prognosis, little did I know that God in His goodness and grace had much

more than three months for Carrie to continue to be with us and impact her world.

Shortly after Carrie's diagnosis, I received a phone call from one of my Denver Seminary doctoral students, Stew Grant, at that time the Pastor of Caring Ministries at The Woodlands United Methodist Church. Stew told me that he had spoken with Jan de Chambrier, who with her husband Philippe was a vital part of their strategic prayer team, and that Jan would be willing to meet us at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center and pray with us.

I still remember Jan's first meeting with Carrie and how encouraged and overjoyed Carrie was to have a special God-given prayer warrior friend to come alongside her on her M.D. Anderson visits, especially those few checkups when I was unable to accompany her. I remember the joy of Jan, Philippe, Carrie and me laughing and praying together, especially as we discovered mutual friends and shared interests. I remember God manifesting His presence through the powerful and healing presence of friends.

As Jan shared the story of dealing with her own cancer and other challenges, including major losses in her life, it was clear that God had brought Jan and Carrie together for a special purpose: not just to comfort and encourage each other, but to be a beacon of encouragement to others. Both had experienced God's healing power in mighty ways, and shortly before her death, Carrie and I had several conversations about our sense that God might have them share their powerful stories through writing a book together.

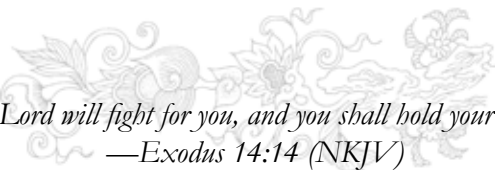
As you read these true stories, you'll discover new ways to see the hand of our sovereign God in all that comes your way. It allows us to embrace, if not celebrate, the circumstances of our lives in ways that don't involve a pseudo-spiritual "denial" of the diagnosis and pain, but that allow us to put it into the bigger picture of what only He can see, a picture we can rely on and trust. A picture that, according to Romans 8:28, He can work together for good.

As I write this, I am recovering from my seventh cancer surgery and four months of a tough regimen of chemotherapy. However,

I have great joy—and my belief in the goodness, grace, mercy and lovingkindness of my Lord has never been greater. I daily experience sovereign joy. I have a hope not born out of denial, but cultivated from having walked through pain and the death of several loved ones, having experienced the sustained presence and power of God's promises in the midst of the darkness.

The real-life stories of Jan and Carrie, the very real valleys they have walked through, will inspire and encourage you and point you to a reservoir of resources that you can draw on and drink from, no matter how difficult the circumstances of your life.

Gary J. Oliver, Th.M., Ph.D.

A decorative horizontal border featuring intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a light gray color, framing the text.

The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.
—Exodus 14:14 (NKJV)

Our Story



“I have an assignment for you, Jan, and her name is Carrie Oliver.” I was talking one Sunday to the Pastor of Caring Ministries, Stew Grant, at our church. “I know her!” I exclaimed excitedly. “At least, I know all about her and have already been praying for her. She’s a friend of my good friend Barb!” Stew elaborated, “Well, I want you to come alongside Carrie and be a friend to her when she comes to Houston for treatments at M.D. Anderson.” “I can do that!” I affirmed, with the joy that comes only from knowing that the Lord is at work and about to do something amazing.

Carrie was diagnosed with metastatic cancer of the pancreas in May of 2005. Although we had both lived in Denver, Colorado for several years at the same time, we had never met and yet had a dear friend in common, Barb Tallant. When Carrie received her diagnosis, Barb called me and was deeply distressed. I began praying for Carrie because the Lord kept putting her on my heart and because I knew she was dear to Barb. I had also heard a Christian radio interview a few years earlier in which Carrie’s husband Gary Oliver told of his own multiple battles with oral cancer. I remember being so impressed by his testimony. Even before we ever met,

the Lord had laid the groundwork for a profound friendship with the Olivers.

The reason Stew had asked me to come alongside Carrie was that I am a cancer survivor and part of the intercessory prayer and healing ministry at The Woodlands United Methodist Church in The Woodlands, Texas, serving along with my husband Philippe and a dedicated team of prayer warriors. I was diagnosed with endometrial (uterine) cancer in April of 1990 during my first and only pregnancy. There followed many years of related health crises and a commensurate growth in my walk with the Lord as I learned firsthand of His faithfulness in every situation. I grew very committed to helping others walk this journey of faith, and also became a peer mentor at M.D. Anderson, sharing hope with those who have been recently diagnosed with similar cancers.

My first meeting with Carrie actually took place on Thursday, January 19, 2006. I had phoned her the evening before, knowing that she was by then in Houston for treatment, and was struck immediately by the warmth and sincerity - and yes, even joy - in her voice as we chitchatted about the experiences we had in common and made plans for me to meet her at M.D. Anderson the next day. She told me that she would be having surgery to repair a stent and asked if I would come and pray with her. I was quite frankly astonished the next afternoon when the nurse led me back to the pre-op area where Carrie was lying on a gurney being prepped for surgery. She didn't appear to me to be a "victim" of cancer; she was simply beautiful, with big aquamarine eyes, stylish blonde hair and a megawatt smile, alive in the joy of the Lord. As we embraced with hugs that held the promise of a heavenly sisterhood, my own walk through the valley of cancer flashed before me. How deceiving appearances can be! Dr. Francis Major, the gynecologic oncologist who performed my surgery, had declared the day before my operation, "You appear to be so perfectly normal that if it hadn't been for your pregnancy, we would not have discovered this cancer for two more years." I would never have thought that cancer would happen to me; after all, I was strong, self-sufficient,

exercised regularly, ate(mostly) right. Neither was Carrie a likely candidate for this dreaded disease. But the fact that we had both become involuntary members of a club no one ever wants to join formed part of the basis for our friendship. Infinitely overriding that designation, however, was our common membership in the body of Christ. This would be the bond that would forever unite our hearts in a unique testimony of God's abiding love and faithfulness in all circumstances.

CARRIE

Journal entry, January 22, 2006: A dear woman from (she names some mutual friends) church in The Woodlands joined me, Jan de Chambrier. Oh, what pure delight Jan is. Jan had cancer sixteen years ago and has been through it in terms of surgeries and fears and walking through her own cancer journey. I loved her from first sight. She sat with me and prayed with me.

Carrie's periodic visits to Houston were times I eagerly anticipated, with so much to share about life and God's goodness and love. The frequency depended on whatever her current treatment protocol required, but would average about once a month. In between, we exchanged frequent phone calls and e-mails, discussing anything and everything good friends share: her recipe for peaches and cream pie and my description of the beautiful fuchsia azaleas blooming in our neighborhood; new insights into old Oswald Chambers' entries or the plot of Lori Wick's latest novel; comparisons of our sons and the challenges and victories of motherhood; our loving husbands and their sweet, funny ways; the students we mentored at JBU and Rice University. We would plan our meetings with the enthusiasm of a family reunion, yet it seemed almost incongruous that the venue was not the Galleria or the Museum of Fine Arts or the Cheesecake Factory, but the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. Whether it was sharing a sandwich in the lovely atrium café, browsing in the gift shop, getting our daily workout treading the sky bridge to the parking garage, or reciting favorite scripture

passages as we waited for appointments, memories were being made with each encounter and the bonds of our sisterhood became so strong that Carrie eventually started calling me “Twin”!

CARRIE


Email, April 3, 2007: Had a thought today! I think it would be a blessing to write a book together on walking through cancer. Let's do that someday.” Well, I must confess that this particular thought had occurred to me many times, but I was reluctant to broach it with Carrie because she was already a several-times published author and I thought it would be presumptuous of me, a complete rookie, to even suggest it. However, I seized the moment and responded immediately that I would love to do this together, and we soon made plans for me to go to Siloam Springs for a writing retreat together to outline the book. Tragically, the Oliver's middle son, Matt, died unexpectedly a few weeks later, and Carrie's health declined rapidly. She joined Matt in heaven on July 2, 2007.

On the day of Carrie's memorial service, I sat in that bizarre state of abject grief overlaid with utter faith knowledge that she was home in heaven with our Savior. I listened to one testimony after another of how she had touched lives for Christ: her family, friends, colleagues, clients. Then I sensed the Lord impressing on me, “This book will still be written.” I really had to ask Him about that one! “How, Lord? She's no longer here.” He then reminded me of Carrie's online journal (N.B. A Journal of Hope, www.carrieshealth.com); this website was suggested and designed by Carrie's friend Catherine Arnsperger, who thought that Carrie could share on the Web her progress, her heart, and what God was teaching her, and was begun on June 14, 2005, shortly after Carrie's diagnosis), and I saw light! When I asked her husband Gary about it, he promised me that he would pray about it and let me know. In late March, 2008, I was thrilled when Gary met Philippe and me for dinner and gave me his blessing to proceed with this project. Later on, when I asked him why he had agreed to allow me to write this

book and even to collaborate with me on it, Gary wrote: “While I wanted to think and pray about it, my immediate gut response was a strong “yes.” God had brought you two together for a variety of reasons, and I didn’t believe that her death was the end of what God wanted to do. Perhaps Carrie’s death was a different kind of beginning than any of us had anticipated.”

Our intent is for all cancer patients and their families and caregivers who read this to have the assurance that God is their ever-present help in trouble and will never leave or forsake them... that He turns to good those things that were intended for evil... that He works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose... that His mercies are new every morning, and His faithfulness is great. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God (II Corinthians 1:3-4). May He alone be glorified!

Gracious Lord, I offer to you this story of your faithfulness to me and to my friend, Carrie Oliver. I thank you that you have loved us with your everlasting love and surrounded us with your everlasting arms. I thank you that both of us have been healed: mine on this earth, and Carrie’s complete healing in Heaven. May the words that follow be acceptable in your sight and healing to your precious children who are suffering. I ask this in the name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen.



*I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take
heart and wait for the Lord. —Psalm 27:13-14*