

Love's Legacy

Love's Legacy

A Story of Hope and Healing

Stephanie Dalla Rosa



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Dedication

When I started this book, shortly after I found Mom's journals, I was determined to finish it for her. Although I do believe that she would be very pleased that her words and wisdom are being shared and helping those in need, this book is not *for* her. It is for the Glory of God and that his will be accomplished through our story.

My Heavenly Father, her Healer.

Only by the grace of God was I able to put this book together. I was a complete mess, much like the contents of this book when I found it among Mom's things, but slowly and piece by piece, as I put this book together God put me back together. Guiding me all the way. I can't see the whole picture of my life or this book, but that doesn't matter because the One who matters most, can.

Daddy, her soul mate.

I know this is one of the toughest trials you have gone through but, don't let go of the rope! Mom would want us to

hold on. For it is only God who can get us through these times. She could not have gone through what she did without you by her side. You may not feel like you did much or that what you did even mattered, but it did! You did! You meant more to her than you know. Just being there and attentive to her is what she needed most. Holding her, giving leg and foot rubs is how she knew you loved her even without saying it. She loves you very much! You will see her again. And, when you do you will see that she is well and whole and more beautiful than she ever was here and so very happy to see you!

Genisse, her daughter, her friend.

You always stepped in when Mom was not available here on earth and you have more than been there for anyone who needs you. You are like her mini-me. I despised you for it when we were young but, I love you for it now. Thank you for stepping up. Not only were you there for us, but you were there for her when she needed you. I know it was not easy, but you did it anyway! She loves you very much and can't wait to tell you in person!

Kyle, her son, her protector.

She relied on you and knew you would do anything for her! Your tender love and sweet spirit connected with hers like no one else. She loves you, Kyle, more than you will ever know! She taught you early on to trust God and let Him control your life, but, even more that you can have a special relationship with Him because He loves you unconditionally. With that connection with God, you will see her again, not only in Heaven, but in everyday life. She lives all around you, she lives in us, and she

lives in you! Let the light of Jesus shine through you, so we can also see her, through you.

Karman, her daughter, her helper.

You were always there to help out when she needed you when we were all growing up. Helping out with the house or cleaning and cooking. She trained you to be an amazing mother. Let her life shine through you so that your children may get to know her through your actions, your words and your tender, loving care. Teach them to trust God in all circumstances as we saw in her. She wasn't perfect and you will make mistakes, but let God lead you and guide your family to stand on a solid foundation.

Lindy, her daughter, her joy.

You may feel like you've been left on your own, abandoned maybe, but nothing could be further from the truth. Mom loves you and remains with you. As you raise your children, she is right there inside you. Most importantly, God is with you! He never left and *never* will. All you have to do is ask and allow Him to work through you. Let Him guide all that you do and you can never go wrong. I'm not saying it will be easy but you have strength to endure whatever life throws at you. You have a giving heart, and that is awesome, but don't forget to receive too. Think of all the blessings you have coming back to you!

Christopher, her son, her comforter.

You were very special to Mom, Christopher. You were her baby, her last child. You spent many hours talking through the night. She knew she could count on you to listen without

judging, condemning, or interrupting. You listened with your heart as well as your ears and she cherished every moment you spent together. You shared a special bond. Don't let that go! Hold on to that, but rely on God when you feel weak. Keep living for him, let him guide you through life. You will see her again. He loves you even more than she does—and that's a lot!

Thank you

I love you Mom! Thank for showing me how to stand on the solid foundation of Christ when there is nothing else to stand on. Thank you for showing me great faith, through your example!

I want to say thank you to the many people who helped encourage me through this journey. Not only in writing this book but helping me through grieving and pointing me back to Jesus. Thank you, Christin Heller, for your many prayers. Thank you, Mark Killingsworth for never giving up on me and giving me that extra oomph to finish the book. I couldn't have made it without you. My Stonebridge Church family. God used so many of you in drawing me back to him. Thank you, Jeff, Heather Cvitak, and the whole Martial Arts USA clan. You were also an instrument in getting my focus off me and back on God.

We will not fear in hard times and we will prosper.

God will make a way when there is no way!

– Mom

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Introduction

In finding Mom's journals a couple weeks following her funeral, I started reading and recalling what I was feeling or thinking at the time she wrote the entries. Mom mentions God telling her to write a book. A book she never wrote—or did she?

I decided to type out her journal entries from the day we went to the hospital until she was too sick to continue. Along with her journals I found her box of index cards. I knew she would write down scriptures that helped her through hard times but when I opened the box, I couldn't believe my eyes. The box was full! Full of God's truth that she found as she studied his word. Not only scriptures but her thoughts about the truth she found and how she applied it to her own life. Amazing!

I took the box and recorded her entries. Anything in smaller print is Mom's words, her thoughts, and feelings. I tried to match the scripture and her thoughts that fit with what she was feeling. These verses are at the end of the book. I prayed that God would lead me in matching these up as well as organizing it in a way that will help others. After her journey ended and mine began,

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I used her words of wisdom to help me get through. You will find her selected scriptures along my journey as well. I filled in my own journal entries corresponding to hers and input my thoughts and feeling at the time. As you will see, as yet I do not have the level of faith my mother did, but I pray in time I will have or at least be on the right path to great faith.

As I read and reread this book, making little changes and modifying it, I am repeatedly touched by what she wrote. Those of you who knew my mom, I pray, will be encouraged by her faith. Those of you who didn't get the privilege, I'm sorry. She was an amazing woman, and I pray that you will get a sense of who she was through this book and may also be encouraged by her words and mine. I hope you laugh and cry with us and we walk this journey together. I pray it touches your heart as we pour out ours and will encourage and build your faith as well.

PART I
MOM'S JOURNEY

Starting Point: Do You Trust Me?



*They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts
are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.*

—Psalms 112:7

*My doctor said they found a tumor in my colon and it is cancer.
When you receive an evil report and it causes your knees to
buckle, that puts you in exactly the right position to ask God for
help and to feel His hand resting on your life. Don't forget in
the dark what you've learned in the light.*

Cancer. Had I really heard those words? The room started to swirl around me and I clung to mom's bed to keep from falling. "This can't be happening. Things like this don't happen. God, what's going on? Why her? Why now?" A million more thoughts rushed around in my head. I didn't feel the peace Mom did. I was in shock. My head was spinning, my stomach churning and my muscles turned into jelly. I had to sit down. Mom wrote that if you receive news that causes your knees to

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buckle, pray. That's just what we did. I grabbed her hands, knelt down beside her bed (I couldn't stand anyway) and I pleaded to God on her behalf. Because life as we knew it would never be the same.

Everyone's journey is different. I watched from the outside of cancer as Mom experienced inside. The goal of healing? The same. The path to get there? Totally different. Her faith was amazing. I have learned so much from her, not what she told me, but what she showed me. Mom told me that God asked her, "Do you trust me?" She said yes. A week later He asked again, "Do you trust me?" again she said yes. The thing is, she does!

God knows this journey I am starting on. He isn't surprised (although we were) He has prepared all I will need along the way.

When it was time God's peace covered me completely! No fear! A nearby room filled with family and friends gathered to not only pray for me, but to support my family. One of my lungs collapsed during surgery. But when the respiratory technician came in the next morning, he said he couldn't believe the before and after x-ray was the same lung. It was inflated and functioning like it was supposed to. They stopped the respiratory therapy. (God's hand at work) Stephanie and Arthur spent that Fourth of July watching fireworks from my hospital room while I slept off and on.

I don't understand what you, God, are doing. But, in your infinite wisdom, you knew what this journey would produce in my life and you will set me on a straight path. I am truly at rest when I consider all you have done and what you have yet to do.

It was one of the longest days of my life. We waited for what seemed like days for her to get out of surgery. The odds were

Starting Point: Do You Trust Me?

not in our favor. Immediately following surgery Dad, my sister Genisse, and I met with the surgeon. He informed us that they were able to reconnect her colon, so they didn't have to put in a colostomy bag. (Mom prayed hard about that one.) Another one of God's amazing displays of His love for her. The doctor was also able to get all the other spots where the cancer had spread except for the liver. It was the only organ where there was too much to take out. Chemo would have to take care of that. We met her in her room. She was in and out of it all day. It was Independence Day, so we watched fireworks for a little bit. We were all so exhausted we ended up just going to bed. God is amazing in how He plans everything out before we know what we need. I was on summer break so I could stay during the week and Lindy, my younger sister, covered the weekends.

I enjoyed the time Mom and I had together, just the two of us. God took something horrendous and turned it into great Mother-daughter bonding moments. We played games, watched movies and worked puzzle books together. Sometimes just talked about whatever. She still trusts Him. Totally and completely!

God is helping me through this, I still have perfect peace. I've wanted to laugh all afternoon. I have been filled with such joy today. The doctor took the stomach tube out today. Stephanie and Lindy have been helping me walk the halls. Moving slowly, but getting stronger every day. I can't wait to see what God is going to do. Whatever it is, I know it will be awesome and for His glory!

When Arthur came tonight, he brought me an angel of praise. Her arms were stretched out wide looking toward heaven. She looks as if she could start dancing at any moment. It couldn't have been a more perfect gift, because she was expressing what I have been feeling all day!

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God is good! Not just good, great! Amazing! Awesome! I prayed God would show Dad the perfect gift. I am glad he listened and that God cares enough for us that He would help us with such a small task. Compared to what he can do, it seemed so small yet so very important to us. I wanted Mom to feel our support and love through this gift and she did. He cares for us so much that he gave us the perfect gift for her. When I look back and see how God was answering prayers, I wonder why I ever started to doubt. This was the start of a long, hard road ahead of us. I knew that God was there every step of the way, whether or not I saw or felt him close by.

The doctor said I could go home later today! Can't wait! They brought me a full meal today, meatloaf. Oh, the heartburn! Stephanie and I watched a movie to help pass the time. Lindy spent the night with me and helped me walk the halls.

I stayed with my grandparents that night and returned early the next morning. She couldn't have any jewelry on during surgery so I was wearing her wedding rings on a chain around my neck. I felt her with me even when she wasn't.

I can't help but think about how God wants this kind of relationship with me. The kind that makes me so excited to wake up the next morning just to be able to talk to him and spend time with him. He is here for me if I'm having a bad day or need something, yes, but he also wants to rejoice with me when good things happen too. How sad it must make him feel when I ignore him or go to others before going to him. He should be the first, good or bad.

While we were watching movie, one of the PCA's came in to check Mom's vital signs. She thought it was cute to see us in

Starting Point: Do You Trust Me?

bed together and asked what we were watching. She said she had **While You Were Sleeping** with her if we wanted to watch it. She left to continue with her duties. It was one of our favorites so we were really excited. I don't know if God had anything to do with that, but it made Mom really happy. So, He probably did! He has a way of showing up and making things happen without us even realizing it. I'll get to heaven and say, "That was *you*?" Of course God will just smile, kiss me on the head as I stand in awe of his awesome love for me.

It's finally here, the nurses are working so hard to get everything ready. They came in to take out my staples. That was interesting, they only took out every other one. It's was almost 2:00 pm before they got all the paperwork done, but I'm on my way home. We stopped for some real food. I could only eat a little but, it tasted so good!

I was so excited to hear she was cleared to leave. When they came in to take her staples out, they asked if I wanted to watch. Of course, why not? I think I got through three staples before I had to sit down. *Nice job Steph*, I thought to myself! I pulled myself together and helped her get dressed. She will have the remaining staples out later (which I won't be present for!) It felt so good to be leaving that place and going home with Mom. It was all I could do not to run. Homeward bound, after we stop to get some good food. It seemed like it took us twice as long to get there, but we finally made it.

Home at last, there was a big sign across the fireplace that said, 'Welcome Home, We Love You!!' Genisse made it and her two boys, colored it. The church arranged to have meals delivered

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every evening for a week. It was such a blessing. I am sleeping on the couch because I can't get in and out of the water bed yet.

Once she was settled on the couch and it was time to relax and enjoy being home. Our clean, quiet, no-one-to-bother-us home. We both took a very long nap.