



## Terminal Cancer

Everyone who is diagnosed with cancer hopes that they will go into remission. They are praying for a miracle—for God to heal them completely. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Sometimes the cancer has spread so much throughout the body that it no longer responds to treatment. At this point, the patient is left to face the fact that they will soon die. This can be a scary and disheartening time for both the patient and their family and friends.

It is important to know that, often, end of life care is not well-discussed in families of believers. Prayers are still being said in hopeful expectation that God will miraculously heal their loved one. Consequently, talks of death may be seen as having a lack of faith. However, communication is very important. In fact, research shows that discussions regarding end of life care and patient wishes decreases stress levels and increases the ability of the patients to cope with their illness.

In the Old Testament, when Satan was allowed to test Job, his suffering was so great that he wished he had never been born (*Job 3:1, 11; 10:18-19*). Wanting to offer comfort and sympathy (*Job 2:11*), three friends visited Job. Initially, they simply sat with him in silence (*Job 2:13*), and waited for Job to speak first. Laments over pain and suffering are normal and acceptable before God. When Job's friends tried to make sense of his suffering, to question his integrity, and to defend God, they began to trouble Job (*Job 16:2; 19:2*) and even offended God (*Job 42:7-9*). It may be well enough to follow their initial example when dealing with a cancer patient who is terminally ill—to sit with, to suffer alongside. Perhaps just your presence and a listening ear is enough. Allow the patient to talk about death. They may have questions about what to expect. They may want to discuss their wishes. Give them room to express their feelings and listen without feeling the need to rush in with all the answers. Never underestimate the value of your presence!

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How to care for someone with  
terminal cancer:

- Listen. They may ask why this is happening to them. Allow them to express their fear and/or frustration. Let them cry and talk through their sadness and regrets.
- Pray with them and for them. Where appropriate, for healing, for endurance, and/or for acceptance and peace.
- Give them a journal to write down their feelings. If they are willing to share their writings with you, talk through the descriptions.
- Follow up often. In their distress, they may need to know you still care. A simple phone call or text message will lift their spirits and remind them that they are not alone.

