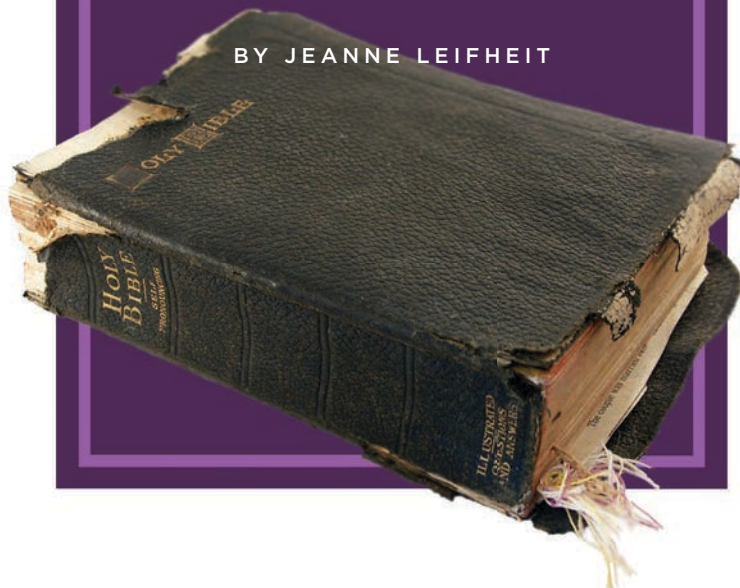


SCARRED BUT NOT BROKEN

BY JEANNE LEIFHEIT



*He gives power to
the tired and worn
out, and strength to
the weak ... But they
that wait upon the
Lord shall renew their
strength. They shall
mount up with wings
like eagles; they shall
run and not be weary;
they shall walk
and not faint.*

Isaiah 40:29, 31 (TLB)

When I was just seven years old, my mom was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. She was pregnant with my youngest sister, child number five. The medical staff recommended immediate surgery and cobalt treatments, but because of the danger for their unborn gift from God, my parents opted to wait until after their baby was born to take any action.

My Dad was a farmer, but with Mom's cancer diagnosis came concern for how they would afford adequate medical care without losing the farm. He secured a job at a local factory, working second shift which allowed him to farm in the morning. So began the roller coaster ride of diagnosis, surgery, treatment, and remission that would last for more than 40+ years. When Mom's health allowed, she was a vibrant volunteer in our Lutheran school, LWML, and church. She cared for family members and struggling neighbors, always ready to help with childcare and supply a meal.

To my parents' credit, they never displayed any weeping, wailing, or gnashing of teeth; just a sense of peace and acceptance that God had a plan. In fact, when I was a young adult, I was shocked when my mom apologized for my childhood being tough. What was she talking about? I had a fabulous childhood full of fun, hard work, and kitchen experiments. She knew the majority of the household chores and cooking responsibilities fell on me, but she was missing the beauty of that scar. Although she was often too weak to perform those tasks, her instructions were precise and sparked in me a love of cooking that still brings me joy today. She did fail,

however, at making me want to break into a happy dance at the thought of dusting!

Mom's Bible will be forever etched in my mind as the most beautiful book I have ever seen. Its binding was broken and tattered, no longer efficiently able to hold each chapter in place. Many of the yellowed pages were torn and ragged. The beauty of that book came from the fingerprints that left their mark each and every day. It was clearly Mom's lifeline, where she looked for guidance in her role as a godly wife, mother, and friend. It is what brought her that extra measure of strength with each new cancer diagnosis, when she faced the deaths of two grandchildren and other friends and family, when conflicts arose, and life on this earth hurt. Lest you think she perched on a pedestal, rest assured my mom knew she was a sinner and confessed her shortcomings to our faithful God. She lived her faith in a beautiful way, and her example will live in my heart forever.

In later years, my mom's frail body was a patchwork of life's scars that she used in a powerful way to instill in me a deep legacy of faith. On the morning of her heavenward journey, she woke up very early, pulled off her oxygen mask and said, "Quick, get this stuff off of me and get me ready. They are coming back for me today." She knew her suffering in that cancer-ravaged body was coming to a much-needed end on this earth, and she was ready to be with Jesus. *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid* (John 14:27 ESV).

Her final lesson from her earthly scars was the pure joy and peace she exhibited as she reached out and took the hand of Jesus. Q

It's a blessing for Jeanne to attend Cross Lutheran Church in Yorkville, Illinois.