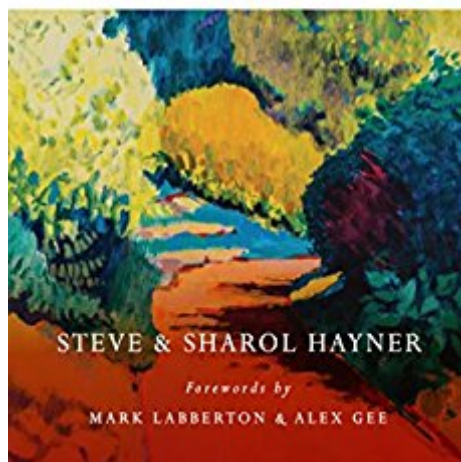


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Joy In The Journey: Finding Abundance In The Shadow Of Death

J O Y I N T H E
J O U R N E Y

Finding Abundance in the Shadow of Death



Synopsis

Hearts & Minds Bookstore's Best Books of 2015, Memoir Steve Hayner was serving as president of Columbia Seminary and was healthy and fit when he found out he had terminal pancreatic cancer. He and his wife, Sharol, embarked on a journey together with their children that soon included tens of thousands of visits from friends and acquaintances via the CaringBridge website. The overwhelming response to their posts on this website attested to the surprising and engaging way that they chose to live in the face of death. As a result they uncovered the remarkable truth that God, our good Shepherd, provides a feast for us when we are in the valley of the shadow of death as well as in the green pastures. Steve was always known for signing letters and emails, "joyfully." These pages, including reflections from some of those closest to Steve and Sharol, offer us a hope-filled glimpse into what it means to walk with God in honesty, with joy, even through great pain.

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Customer Reviews

Joy in the Journey is a collection of reflections from a couple (and occasionally friends and family)

going through the struggle with a terminal illness. Steve Hayner was president of InterVarsity, as well as holding a number of other teaching and pastoral conditions. He died of cancer in early 2015. The book is composed almost entirely of blog-like entries into CaringBridge, a web site that allows people to share their journeys through illness. Thus, readers experience the journey with the Hayners as they find out Steve's diagnosis, realize the disease is terminal, and continue to live their lives. A surprising number of applicable insights are found throughout the posts. One example was Steve's reflection on "wasting time" and using time wisely in the face of death. He not only outlined some ideas for how to consider time usage, but also stressed the importance of doing things you enjoy, and how relaxation should not just be considered time-wasting. Alongside insights like these is an infectious sense of hope. Steve, Sharol, and friends all display a vision of looking ahead to the joyful life with Christ, and the hope that is brought through reflection on the Word of God. Interspersed throughout the book are poems and hymns, allusions to and quotes from the Bible, and more. These tidbits are not just insights into the hope found in Jesus, but also provide ways to reflect upon grief and joy in life. It would have been nice to include some sort of index or way to find specific discussions within the text. More discussion of some of the comments made throughout the book might have also made it more useful. As it stands, however, it remains a beautiful book that has several insights and reasons for hope all over.

There are many who are facing cancer and death these days. It seems like every day we hear of another friend who has this possibility ahead. When Steve Hayner was diagnosed, he and his wife Sharol decided to begin sharing information with friends and asking for prayers by joining Caring Bridge, a service for those with computers. And after years of ministry on both sides of the country, the two of them had many friends who wanted to know what was going on. Steve was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in the spring of 2014 and he died in early 2015. That was a short time, but Steve and Sharol decided right away to be open with all who wanted to know: "how are you feeling?" and before they knew it, they had a book called *Joy in the Journey, Finding Abundance in the Shadow of Death*, published by IVP Books, at www.ivpress.com. There is a brief preface by co-author Sharol Hayner, who explains that their messages to family and friends on the Caring Bridge website were not intended to be a book, but somehow they grew. And we begin to read about happenings of the days ahead for Steve and Sharol. Perhaps I should warn you: this is an amazing, powerful book, in which two people who love each other, and who love Jesus, the Lord of all, share difficult health problems, deep feelings about each of their problems, and....you better have tissues ready, that's all I can say just now. Steve was serving as president of Columbia

Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia at the time of his diagnosis in the spring of 2014 and Steve and Sharol were living in the president's house. Before that, he had served as pastor, preacher, teacher, and for a time as president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

A journey through cancer and a journey of joy would seem to be two very divergent paths — particularly if the cancer is terminal and if it hits in the midst of a season of health and productivity. However, Steve and Sharol Hayner have invited readers into their experience of Joy in the Journey — a hard pilgrimage that took them through pancreatic cancer, chemotherapy infusions, side effects, great pain, and loss. They pull back the curtain on grace lessons from their day-to-day struggle to live their way into acceptance and peace. Throughout Steve's illness, the Hayners kept family and friends up-to-date using the CaringBridge website, never intending to write a book. However, their authentic writing and the deeply theological truth they share work in tandem so that Joy in the Journey avoids sentimentality, instead singing in the key of biblical lament. Abounding in grace, Steve writes through days in which he prays his goodbyes to the people he loves and to his career as president of Columbia Seminary. Sharol walks her own grieving with traveling mercies that allow her to wait through the weeks of unanswered questions and the months of serial unknowns. Disappointing test results, a galloping malignancy, and nine short months of living and dying with a terminal disease demonstrate on a macro scale what those of us who believingly follow Christ know well: life is fraught with — even characterized by — tumultuous days. Able-bodies and good health make daily adjustments to circumstances and changing relationships a bit easier, but in all the unmet expectations that are part of every normal, mundane day, it is clear that we are being prepared through our daily disciplines and laborious attempts to follow Jesus for darker seasons and a deeper following.

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