



5 LESSONS

Learned from Watching
My Sister Battle Cancer

There's a light awaiting us at the end, but there is also **LIGHT** *throughout* the tunnel

By Paige Aiono Call

Heavenly Father blessed me with a younger sister who doubled as my best friend. We were only 15 months apart and were inseparable. Hailey could light up the room with her beautiful smile and contagious laugh. She was so strong, and once she put her mind to something, she never gave up.

At the age of 18, Haley was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumor. Through her journey, I have learned five essential principles that can help us overcome hardships.

1 Trust in Heavenly Father's Plan for You

It may seem overwhelming to think of all the things we could face in this life, but our Heavenly Father is aware of us. We must trust that He has a plan for us, even when life is hard.

Sister Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President, said: "Sometimes we are afraid to trust because we don't understand God's absolute love and desire to help us. But when we study Heavenly Father's plan and Jesus Christ's mission, we understand that Their only objective is our eternal happiness and progress."¹

We can develop our trust in Heavenly Father by increasing our study of His plan and seeing, in the scriptures, His dealings with His children. During the hectic time when Hailey was undergoing surgery and treatments, I found comfort in knowing that God has our best interests in mind. And I trusted that He had a plan for Hailey. I know He has a plan for all of us, even though it may not be what we imagined for ourselves.

2 Look for the Light

We often hear the expression "There's a light at the end of the tunnel," but in my experience, there is also light *throughout* the tunnel as you walk through the hardships of life. Sometimes we must *choose* to see the light around us, no matter how small or dim it may be.

The light can be a sweet tender mercy from our Father in Heaven, the Holy Ghost reassuring us, or a family member or friend comforting us. Our faith in Jesus Christ can also become a light and a driving force that keep us moving through the dark.

Hailey was in the hospital for a month after initially finding her brain tumor, and I thought she wouldn't make it to my wedding, but just three days before my wedding day, Hailey was discharged from the hospital and



Choose to be engulfed in LIGHT

was able to attend my wedding reception. That was a beacon of light among dark trials. I knew that Heavenly Father was watching over us.

Look for the light. Choose to be engulfed in the light rather than the darkness. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles profoundly stated, “When we are in the light, we have ‘a perfect brightness of hope’ [2 Nephi 31:20] because we can see our mortal trials from an eternal perspective.”²

Although the trial of Hailey’s cancer was not taken away and we still felt that heartache, we knew that we were not left alone. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, was walking with us every step of the way. As you walk through the tunnels of your trials, look for those beacons of light and you will find them. They will help carry you through your hardships.

3 Be Courageous

Sometimes we doubt ourselves. We don’t see how we can overcome life’s adversities. But we are often stronger than we know. I witnessed Hailey display an immense amount of courage during her five-and-a-half-year

battle with brain cancer. She endured numerous surgeries, treatments, medications, and therapy. I never once heard her ask, “Why me?” or become angry at her circumstances. She endured it all and remained both faithful and courageous.

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “True enduring happiness with the accompanying strength, courage, and capacity to overcome the most challenging difficulties comes from a life centered in Jesus Christ. . . . There is no guarantee of overnight results, but there is absolute assurance that, in the Lord’s time, solutions will come, peace will prevail, and emptiness will be filled.”³

Our Heavenly Father knows our limits, and most importantly, He knows our potential. So when challenges come and thoughts of inadequacy fill our minds, or when we feel we cannot carry our load any longer, we can dig deep within ourselves to find that courage and know that we are not alone. Our Savior has already carried our load, and we can rely on Him to lift us up.

4 Remember Why You're Here

Success, failures, ups, downs, highs, and lows—we came to earth for all of it, not just for the good. We came to learn and grow, which we cannot do without hardships and challenges.

Doctrine and Covenants 29:39 states, “And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet.” Tribulation is a part of the Lord’s plan for us. It helps us to stay humble, and sometimes we can learn only by experiencing adversity.

Our experience in mortality brings a lot of growing pains, but as we come to understand and accept that this stage in our existence is a necessary step to eternal happiness and as we exercise our faith during the hard times, we will prepare ourselves to be reunited with our Heavenly Parents.

5 Use Trials to Become Your Best

As difficult as it was to watch Hailey endure her battle with brain cancer, it made us stronger as a family and brought us closer together. This life-changing experience has taught me to love more and hate less; to be happier more often than sad; to see the good instead of the bad; to be in the moment and not distracted; to be more sympathetic and less judgmental; and to enjoy my loved ones and not take them for granted.

The most important thing I have learned is how to rely on my Savior and Heavenly Father. While life’s challenges can knock us down, they can also teach us to get back up, turn to the Lord, and keep on going. And without the hardships, we would not know all the blessings that also come throughout our time in mortality. Our trials aid in molding us into who we are meant to be and help us reach our divine potential. While our Heavenly Father may not take away a trial, He does give us the tools to help us overcome them.

Tools to Navigate Trials

Navigating through our hardships is not easy, but I know that our faith in our Savior and our Heavenly Father can act as a lighthouse and guide us on the right course. We will all have trials throughout our lives, and the principles above are tools that can help us as we face our challenges. I’ve had to put these tools to the test ever since my beloved Hailey peacefully passed away. I know that she is now free of pain and suffering. Her mission here on earth was completed, and it was time for her to return home to our Heavenly Father.

Hailey inspired so many throughout her battle with cancer, and she did it all with such great faith. It is my hope that, whatever our challenges may be, we can all press forward with unwavering faith and with the knowledge that Heavenly Father loves us and will be with us. ■

NOTES

1. Jean B. Bingham, “That Your Joy Might Be Full,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 86.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Bearers of Heavenly Light,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 79.
3. Richard G. Scott, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17.



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