

PITCH: WHAT A SURGEON LEARNS THROUGH SICKNESS AND SUFFERING

*Dr. Charles W. Page has practiced surgery for over 25 years and has journeyed with thousands of patients. He's the author of *Courage for the Sick and Suffering* and the founder of *Spoonful of Courage* a ministry which aims to give hope and inspiration to those facing life challenges. Today we're going to hear some of his stories about those who have learned to the possibilities in their health problems.*

Q: What inspired a busy surgeon to write books about how to overcome obstacles?

A: Everyone faces adversity. But adversity isn't the greatest obstacle. It's how we respond. Everyday I see examples of people who have responded in God honoring ways to their health struggles. Part of my motivation wells up from my own circumstances.

About eight years ago, my office building burned down. I'm a dinosaur. Unlike most physicians who are employed, I had a private practice. As I watched my building burn, I thought it was going to be the end of my career.

But there's this stairwell in my office going up to my office. As our health care system began to decay, I actually began to pray more in that stairwell.

After the fire, as I walked through the rubble and soot of my office with the fire marshal and my wife, I wondered what the stairwell would look like.

I was so encouraged. It was burnt up, but still standing.

In that stairwell, I found four things which I could rebuild my life upon.

- 1. My Bible. It was black and covered with ash, but every word had endured.*
- 2. My black doctor's bag. The soot had given it a special shine.*
- 3. Pictures of my five children, which reminded me there are still people I need to influence.*
- 4. A cross hung on a beautifully stained wall. The wall and cross were blackened and burned by the fire, but when I removed the cross from the wall, behind the cross there lay an image of the cross set in the charred wall.*

I live in small town Texas, so as word spread people began to share their stories with me. (I was still on call, in spite of the fire.)

One man who had an invalid wife told me his house went up in flames in the middle of the night— despite all his efforts to stop it. He couldn't get her out. So that man watched his house go up in flames with his wife inside.

When I heard that story I thought, What am I belly aching about? My adversity pales in comparison to his.

Q: Why not call your ministry *Spoonful of Sugar*?

A: The books and ministry are not called a *Spoonful of Sugar* for a reason. I don't attempt to sugar-coat suffering. *A Spoonful of Courage* embraces faith, hope and of course, courage, as we find the strength to persevere.

Spoonful of Courage collects stories about ordinary people who have responded in extraordinary ways to their health challenges. Working as a surgeon for almost 25 years, I've seen the impact faith and a positive

attitude can have in people's toughest moments. The stories of these everyday heroes inspire us to see our hardships through a different set of lenses—through the lens of hope regardless of circumstance.

The two most common feelings associated with those experiencing illness are loneliness and discouragement. The true stories I share remind people—they are not alone. They have a great cloud of witnesses, cheering them on, inspiring them to keep going and make the best out of their circumstances.

Q: What is the Big Idea you want people to understand about how to endure health challenges?

A: First Sickness and pain is God's reminder that we aren't in control. It reminds us of our self-deluded thinking that we are sufficient in ourselves to overcome ourselves.

There are three opportunities suffering bring:

- The potential to learn, mature, and grow spiritually
- The opportunity to encourage others in our struggles
- The possibility of drawing near to God in a way we don't normally do in health.
(Psalm 46:1)

We first have to look UPWARD, focus on God's character and promises. And then we need to look INWARD and see what adjustments we need to make in our health challenges. When we begin to look OUTWARD in our struggles God seems to satisfy our needs (not wants).

Q: What story about your patients has inspired you the most?

A: *ONE OF THE STORIES IN THE BOOK—called PECANS IN HEAVEN, TELLS A STORY ABOUT A PATIENT OF MINE NAMED KATHERINE. She SUFFERED WITH A LOCALLY ADVANCED BREAST CANCER.*

AT THE TIME I WAS TREATING HER, MY OWN MOTHER WAS DYING OF LUNG CANCER. THE IRONY OF THE WHOLE SITUATION IS THAT AS A SURGEON, I COULD FIX OTHER PEOPLE'S CANCER—BUT I WAS HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING FOR MY OWN MOTHER.

For some reason, KATHERINE reminded me of my mother. Anyway, here's this lady—DYING OF BREAST CANCER—YET SHE WAS THE HAPPIEST, MOST CONTENTED, MOST PEACEFUL PERSON YOU COULD EVER MEET.

Here was her secret: Katherine never asked questions about herself, her prognosis or her condition—when she came into the office. She didn't think of herself, her pain or her circumstances at all....Instead she brought THESE LITTLE SACKS OF PECANS with her to my office and gave them to my staff, people in the lobby and of course me... SHE WOULD COME AND ENCOURAGE ME—THIS DISCOURAGED DOCTOR.

KATHERINE 's life demonstrated a principle. WHEN WE GIVE— WE LIVE. WHEN WE COMFORT OTHERS, WE RECEIVE THE COMFORT OF GOD. KATHERINE SAW HER HEALTH CHALLENGES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BLESS AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS. As she did, she found the strength to deal with her disease and move on.

Q: What is the single most idea you're sharing in these book which will add value to the readers?

A: *THE BIG IDEA OF SPOONFULS IS TO HELP PEOPLE SEE THEIR GREATEST CHALLENGES AS THEIR BIGGEST BLESSINGS. WHEN WE UNDERGO TRIALS/AFFLICTIONS/AND SUFFERING WE*

TEND TO COCOON OURSELVES. We naturally become INTROSPECTIVE AND SELF FOCUSED. WE BEGIN TO ASK THOSE QUESTIONS. “WHY ME? WHY NOW? WHY THIs particular circumstance? WHY GOD? HOW I AM I EVER GONNA SURVIVE THIS?”

THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF A SPOONFUL OF COURAGE IS THIS: That we can, with God’s help, TRANSFORM OUR THINKING ABOUT OUR HEALTH DIFFICULTIES. and ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO CHANGE OUR ATTITUDE IS TO LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE OTHERS AND ENCOURAGE THEM.

Q: How can folks connect with you?

A: You can find us at spoonfulofcourage.com. There we have lots of free resources for you to check out. We have short 2 minute video devotions and a downloadable journal and Bible Study, Surviving Sickness and Suffering that you can download.

Free Ebook: *Stories of Hope and Faith for the Sick* [LEFT BUTTON: FREE e BOOK \(geni.us\)](http://geni.us)

Video Series: [Bible Study and Journal for the Sick \(oppyo.co\)](http://oppyo.co)