

Excerpt from Chapter 21

We held back our tears as we said our good-byes to the nurses. One of Karla's favorite nurses, Sona, took me aside and, her eyes welling up with tears, asked me, "How do you have so much faith?" I don't remember what I told her, but I do remember that it felt good to feel that God was working through me.

We checked out and I anticipated a very long, quiet ride home. To my surprise, Karla wanted us to stop and pick up food before we even got on the freeway. She ate and talked to Michael all the way home. I don't remember any of that conversation; I just zoned out and watched the world going by around me.

We asked our friends to put the word out that we'd prefer no visitors that night. We were emotionally exhausted and wanted to be able to shower and get into bed. Karla and I still had not talked about the MRI results. I just kissed her and the boys goodnight and fell into bed. I think sleep came while I was still praying.

It was midnight when Karla woke me with a whisper, "Mom, I'm hungry. Take me downstairs." Exhausted, I pulled myself out of bed; Karla was too unsteady on her feet to walk downstairs alone. As we walked, she laughed, as usual, at her wobbliness. I admired her ability to laugh at herself even at the most challenging times. And somehow, I managed to laugh, too.

She said she had just spent an hour crying on the phone with her friend Adam, discussing with him the decision she had to make about whether to participate in the chemo trial. By this time, Adam had taken on the role of a big brother; she trusted him and knew he would offer good advice. As it turned out, he told me later, Karla was the one with the answers that night.