

MY TRIBUTE TO MY SON



My Journey through grief following Jon's death

Bishop Warwick Cole-Edwardes

A FATHER'S TRIBUTE

A wise son brings joy to his father - Proverbs 10:1

The call I had been dreading for weeks came. Murray, my son's voice pierced not only the morning darkness but also my very soul; "Come dad ... Jon is going" he said from his brother's bedside in St. John's Hospital in Bedford. My thirty-three year old son had been diagnosed with cancer and his courageous battle of two years was now entering its final hours.

My senses were numbed as I return to my bed and with my wife Mary, pray that God would give our son sufficient life so that we could bid our final farewells. Sleep was illusive and as we consoled each other in the pre-dawn dark, we also made preliminary preparations to fly to London to be at our son's side as his life on earth ended. A very dear friend phoned to say he had booked two return tickets for us ... go now ... he said.

Life for the Cole-Edwardes family had been a roller-coaster affair for some time. Beginning with the heart-stopping news that a man in the prime of his life, with a young family, in what was thought to be peak physical condition, was in fact in the grip of a dreaded cancer.



His wife Sarah, twins Joel and Grace, aged a few months, brothers Gregg and Murray, on occasions could not come to terms with watching a loving husband, devoted father, brother, son, much loved friend and gifted sportsman, reduced to total inactivity in a hospital bed. Life in a fallen world was at time beyond comprehension.

As the new day came to life, Mary and I finished our packing and later headed for the King Shaka Airport in Durban to board our British Airways flight bound for London. Jonathan had been hospitalized in that city as doctors and hospital staff were doing all in their power and understanding to rid him on this silent killer. At times, he appeared to be gaining the upper hand in his struggle as he continued to excel in sporting activities. Competing in an Iron Man competition some months before his hospitalization. Jonathan was the very picture of all that is good in life with the promise of more in the future.

As was the case of the previous night, sleep was a luxury denied us and as we made our way through customs at Heathrow, we were greeted by a close and longstanding friend, Dave Coulton who drove us immediately to the hospital where Jon was.

We arrived our son's side, and the sight of our emaciated son broke our hearts. Mary, Sarah, Jon's wife, together with her mother Sherry and I stood around Jon's bed and in hushed tones prayed with joined hands, drawing strength from each other. Later when everyone went back home, I stayed the night with Jon, his last on earth, as his life slowly and painfully ebbed away. As I lay next to him, praying, reading the Bible and holding his hand, I thanked God for this most wonderful gift, my son, who in the next few hours, by my reckoning, would be gone too soon.

As the sun eventually guided in a new day, after a dreadful night, I phoned Mary and told her and Sarah to come, Jon was soon to go into glory. I held him lightly as he drew one last breath and very peacefully, he was ushered into the presence of his Lord, whom he had served so wonderfully. I was only too aware that it was God Himself who gives life and He who takes it back to Himself in His good timing and this truth sustained me as I contemplated a future without one of my three sons.

A few weeks earlier, Jon sent me this amazing text regarding his cancer, which touched my heart so deeply.

Cancer is designed to destroy the appetite for sin. Pride, greed, lust, hatred, impatience, laziness, procrastination - all these are the adversaries that can attack. Don't just think of battling against cancer. Also think of battling with things are worse enemies than cancer. Don't waste the power of cancer to let the presence of eternity make the sins of time look as futile as they really are.

He very calmly called his minister and me because he wanted to discuss his funeral service. Phew ... with a breaking heart ... I listened to my son, but I was unable to speak! I kept on thinking, "this shouldn't be happening," planning the funeral service of my son.

Our lives would never be the same again, and Jon's death became the defining moment in my life, truly Sentinel Part 4. At his service in a packed church, I gave my tribute to my amazing son. How I managed it only God knows, but here is the summary.

1. SCHOOL

He attended Scottsville Primary School before going to Kearsney College in the beautiful valley of 1000 Hills area, finishing off with a post-matric at Maritzburg College. I suppose academics was not on his agenda, but he loved his sport and excelled.



2. **HOME**

Our family has always been a close one where we loved the outdoors and the amazing holidays in our Caravan. We had a Speed Boat and Jon and his brothers would be the first on the Dam and the last to bring the boat in, they were amazing times, where all their friends and girlfriends would join us for the holiday of a lifetime.



3. CHURCH

Holy Trinity Church in Pietermaritzburg was our spiritual home for all the boy's childhood. Jon would join his brothers and nine hundred and fifty other children at the annual Snoopy Club which I ran, and it was here that one of our Youth pastors led

Jon to Christ. One of my greatest moments in life was kneeling down with Jon at his Confirmation as he put all his trust on to the finished work of Christ. He became a man of God.

4. ENGLAND

After graduating with his degree he left for England to enjoy playing cricket for Biggleswade and Ickwell, where again he excelled.









Jon and Sarah were married and the Lord blessed them with Joel and Gracie, who became Jon's mighty warrior and princess – life could not have been any better ...

5. MISSIONARY

It was while in England that Jon spiritually blossomed and grew. Soon after being diagnosed with his cancer, he sent me this message:

"I'm going after the lost Dad. I want to be like you a missionary to Africa. In Standard five, I told my teacher I wanted to be a missionary to the Congo, it is close now. I'm loving my prayer time with the Lord, praying for healing, praying for the ministry and praying for my family."

Jon, 16 April 2012

At his church, he was being nurtured by some incredible friends and his passion now became Missions. He was often asked to preach at youth meetings and men's breakfasts and was being greatly used by the Lord with a desire to serve Africa. He managed to raise enough money to put in a borehole in the village of Nsangwe in Malawi. This is a desperately poor area and now to have clean, fresh water available has transformed the lives of a whole village.



With everything moving so beautifully in his life, the call then came from the Lord - his task was done and Jesus was calling him home. I remember so clearly lying next to him when he asked me, "Dad, tell me about Heaven, I am soon to go there." He often used to quote this poem; it really spoke of his life as a Christian.

"What is the meaning of the Christian life?
Is it success? Or vulgar wealth? A name?
It is a weary struggle - a mean strife
For rank, low gauds, ambition or for fame?
What sow we for? The world? For fleeting time?
OR far off harvests, riches, mere sublime?

The brightest life on earth was one of LOSS
The noblest head was wreathed with sharpest thorn
Has He not consecrated pain - the Cross?
What higher crown can Christian brows adorn?
Be we content to follow on the road
which men count failure - but which leads to God.

When the Memorial Service had ended, we celebrated Jon's life with family and friends. It was amazing that even some of his Scottsville Primary School friends came and some of my KMBC past students. The following day together with Dave and Tim I then conducted the cremation service. I remember so clearly being absolutely broken, shattered, my heart felt it had been ripped out of my body, so that when I saw the hearse arrive, I broke down totally.

BUT

When I was able to get my emotions under control, we had a beautiful committal where I left my precious son in the hands of Jesus, to await the resurrection when Jesus returns. By God's grace after the service as we passed by the coffin for the last time I simply put my hand on the coffin and said, "I love you my precious son, see you soon."



With Jon's ashes in my rug sack, Mary and I came back to Pietermaritzburg to carry on with KMBC and Footprints into Africa ... but ... I came back a new man. I became a new Principal, a new missionary, a new husband; Jon's death had changed my life forever. Eternity had gripped my heart and a passion to spend my life in total abandonment to Jesus was my longing. You may ask what did I learn – three-lessons:

 The reality of God's <u>sovereignty</u> – that we, like everyone else, are always in his hands, and neither bereavement nor anything else occurs apart from his overruling will.

- 2. The reality of <u>our own mortality</u> that we, like everyone else, are not in this world on a permanent basis and must sooner or later leave it for another mode of existence under other conditions.
- 3. <u>The reality of heaven and hell</u> that we leave this word for one or the other, and that we should use the time God gives us here to ensure that as saved sinners, we shall go to heaven, rather than as unsaved sinners go to hell.

Jon was now in heaven but how wonderfully he had used his time here to witness to the Lord. How precious those words he would have heard "Well done my good and faithful servant."

BUT Theology must transform our lives, so it was important for me to now respond correctly to Jon's death. I turned to Packer, Lewis, and the Puritans for help and from my readings learned how there were to be three responses from my life:

To what exercises of mind and heart (attitudes and actions) should the bereavement experience lead us? Said the Puritans characteristically, these three:

1. The exercise of **thanksgiving** for all that we valued and enjoyed in the person we have lost and, in the case of a believer, for the happiness to which we know that Jon now enjoys.

I became so grateful for the times I sat and heard Jon preach, the visits we made to Charles Simeon's Church in Cambridge and John Newton's Church in Olney and the hours we spent talking about the missionaries. I became overwhelmed with thanksgiving. The Lord gave me thirty-three wonderful years with Jon, filled with fantastic memories. I also remembered how Jim Eliot, Henry Martyn, Nate Saint also died in their early 30's. This quote was so meaningful to me:

"The death of those who are young and pure in heart may seem premature in the eyes of the world, but it can be glorious as well. Sorrow of such a kind is a necessary and precious element in God's over-ruling purpose of love. These four men were to average a life-span of only thirty years each – Henry Martyn was thirty-one when he died; Ion Keith-Falconer was thirty; Brainerd and M'Cheyne were twenty-nine. Theirs were short lives, but they crowded them with effort and their brevity was to add its special distinction. Henry Martyn's term of active service lasted a little less than nine years in all; Robert M'Cheyne's less than seven; David Brainerd's less than five; and Ion Keith-Falconer's but a few months. They lived as the children of time; they were pilgrims on the road to eternity.

2. The exercise of <u>submission</u> to God, as we resign to him the loved one he has taken from us, confess to him that we had no claim on the continuance of that loved one's earthly life, and consciously put ourselves in his hands for whatever future experiences he has in mind for us.

I came to the point of totally submitting to the Lord's will for Jon, He was a dear son, I miss him greatly, but the Lord knows best. How grateful we are to see the Lord at work in the lives of Joel and Gracie and now to see how the Lord has brought Jon's brother Gregg and Sarah together in a beautiful marriage ... we serve an amazing God, and I have totally submitted to his perfect will.

3. The exercise of <u>patience</u>, which is a compound of endurance and hope, as we live through our bereavement on a daily basis. Richard, in his sadness at losing Margaret, Lewis, mourning the loss of Joy, does the same in *A Grief Observed*.

I am a different man to what I was; the death of Jon has transformed my life. The journey through bereavement is not easy and much patience is required. But **Eric Liddell** wrote so beautifully from China:

"Circumstances may appear to wreck our lives and God's plans, but God is not helpless among the ruins. Our broken lives are not lost or useless; God's love is still working. He comes in and takes the calamity and uses it victoriously working out His wonderful plan of love."

Those words say it all ... "He comes in and takes the calamity and uses it victoriously."

So today my visits to Malawi are always full of emotion, and my work at KwaZulu-Natal Missionary and Bible College and Footprints into Africa is now full of purpose and passion; training pastors and missionaries for Africa.

"Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee"





Truly, God gave me a son in a million ... his example and his death have made me the new man that I have become ... a sentinel point in my life, Part 4.



This was an article about Jon written by Lungani Zama

Sep 2, 2012

Joining hands for a 'good oke'

We sometimes take things in life for granted. It's only a significant event that jolts us out of our complacency, reminding us that life is as unpredictable as a round of golf.

Once the bravado of booming drives and the eternal regret of the short putts that didn't even touch the cup die down, we often forget to look at the bigger picture. Until, that is, that bigger picture seeks us out and reminds us how life, like a badly hit tee-shot, can take a path of its own.

On Wednesday, there was a poignant golf day at Mount Edgecombe, held on behalf of Jon Cole-Edwardes.

Jon, or "Space" as he was known at school and in cricketing circles around KwaZulu-Natal, was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer a few months ago. It was a jolt, a significant speed bump in a life that was just taking shape, with "Space" having become a father to twins last November, and also playing his part in the lives of those less fortunate.

A true athlete, he had raised funds through various endurance races to install a borehole in a remote village of Malawi, to get water to those in desperate need. To borrow a phrase he often uses, Jon is a "good oke".

And now, he is battling the biggest "Everest" he has ever seen. But, as he pointed out – and as was evidenced by Wednesday's turnout – he is not fighting alone. There are plenty of other "good okes", mates from school, others from varsity and the club cricket scene, and from his church community, all doing their level best to help a friend, a brother and a father.

It never ceases to amaze how far friendships made on sports fields as youngsters go in life.

One of Jon's good mates since childhood is one Kevin Pietersen (KP), who has been in the headlines lately for plenty of reasons.

But, away from the media glare, KP has been busy organising a golf day in London with a few buddies to help out and raise funds for the Jon Cole-Edwardes Trust. When one considers that KP's circle includes the likes of Shane Warne, Sir Ian Botham and Piers Morgan, you begin to realise just how sizeable that contribution could be.

As soon as news of Jon's diagnosis spread, his family was flooded with messages of support and pledges to assist. As is the adage on school fields, when you injure one, you injure all. In a room dominated by testosterone – and more than a whiff of whisky – there were plenty of lumpy throats when a video message from Jon was played at dinner.

After all, most of those in attendance have much in common with Jon, save for the savage challenge that lies ahead for him. A lot of us have young kids, and are already looking forward to cajoling our boys to their first try in a proper rugby match, or to see our little princesses steal the show in a musical one day.

The sight of Jon's brood swarming over daddy, oblivious to the perilous present, hit everyone in that room hard, because it could so easily have been one of us in that position.

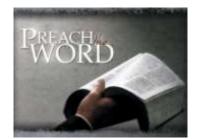
And that realisation got people thinking. And talking. This wasn't Messrs Walker, Daniels and Jameson talking, but rather concerned citizens realising that we are the lucky ones, and we ought to be doing more for those in desperate need.

A professional cricketer pledged to become linked to a charity organisation, while a group of mates voiced an intention to start a trust of their own, which will help wherever they can. There were several others, all dead-set on doing their bit. And all the while, Jon is in our thoughts and prayers.

Cancer has chosen a formidable foe this time, but we all know that Jon will play this out with the straightest of bats.

Here's to the good oke.

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How better to close this tribute than to give you a copy of one of Jon's sermons ... it makes riveting reading, opens up his heart, and is so challenging and moving:

One of Jon's heroes was Henry Martyn.

When Henry Martyn arrived at Calcutta, India, in April 1806, he said these words: "Now let me burn out for God." Martyn was influenced by other pioneers in mission publishing, such as William Carey and David Brainerd. Like Brainerd, Martyn truly did burn out for God, for after only six years on the mission field, he died. Those six years were filled with an extraordinary intensity of service to the Lord.



Jon's life was influenced by Henry Martyn ... "Now let me burn out for God"...

Brothers, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you all. It is an awesome privilege, and a real joy. Today I am going to share my heart, I love doing that, to share a bit of my journey so far, what the Lord is doing in my own life, and where I feel being led. I cannot say it loud enough or often enough; I am hugely excited about the future, massively so, I have never been this pumped for Jesus and for what the future holds. The truth is I have no clue where I will be in a

year from now! I am soon to be retired, work has offered me an early retirement package, which I believe is another miracle in itself, because for a year now I have been praying into being freed up to serve the Lord, but the issue of bills, supporting my family has made me pause and wait on the Lord, this I believe is the Lord loud and clear. I will soon be free to do whatever, to go wherever and that excites me the most. One thing I do know for certain is that the Lord knows exactly where I will be, He declares there are plans for all of us, and that he will show us great and unimaginable things. When I am dreaming big and it makes me laugh because they are so huge, they are imaginable dreams; just imagine unimaginable.

The Lord has literally turned my life upside down this past year and a half and wow it has been tough in parts, lots of tears, soul searching, but filled with plenty of laughter and joy. The overwhelming feeling I have is one of gratefulness, thankfulness and privilege. I have said often; this past year and a half has been the greatest of my life ... the best ... its crazy!

A passage, which the Lord has placed on my heart a lot, and I keep referring to it; for encouragement, inspiration and peace is Philippians 1:14; 19-21. It is fantastic, very challenging.

To paraphrase:

"I want you to know brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear. To live is Christ, to die is gain. I am hard pressed between the two."

What a passage! In my suffering, I find myself telling the same story to many people over and over. It has been incredible to see the Lord at work through what we are going through. Friends and family are on fire for God; the chains are off, Jesus is being proclaimed all over the world, but best of all in the daily lives of many of these people and their stories of courage and faith in stepping out for Jesus has been awesome. Our situation is most definitely advancing the Gospel, and my prayer every night is "more Lord more", more opportunities to share my heart, more opportunities to share with people the hope we have, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. People are very open and ready to receive. That's the overwhelming truth in all of this; people have been so open to what I have to say. It is not about drumming up positiveness, forcing myself into a stupor, a trance like state, ready to walk on coals ... no, this is different, way

different. This is quiet confidence in Jesus. A friend sent a poster to me the other day "whoever kneels before the Lord, can stand before anyone"; I like to think anyone and anything. Quiet confidence maybe, but with Christ, I am able to stare death in the face and confidently say, "I am not afraid." Christ has done it all for me, I know a place has been prepared for me, and you in heaven, now that is beyond amazing. The thought of seeing Jesus, spending eternity with Him and some of my heroes like David Livingstone, William Carey, Henry Martyn and the Apostle Paul. I am going to chat to these guys every day! Heaven is going to be great, better than that, it is our final destination, our home - no more pain, no sickness, so sin, just perfectness. Because of that certainty that Christ has won for us, we can stand firm, not on a slippery surfboard, but on the rock of ages, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

No matter how bad a situation becomes, no matter how impossible the odds, nothing is impossible for him who believes. I always say, "I don't care what the doctors say, I don't care what anyone tells me about this cancer, the Lord is in control, He has the final say so, and until he calls me home to be with Him, here in the power of Christ I'm going to stand - just like that great song says".

If you had to ask most people "what is the worst thing that can happen to you, or what scares you the most, the majority will say dying." Lance Armstrong in his book, It's not about the Bike, said, "it was death that petrified me most and forced me to fight as hard as I could." As amazing as the book and his story is, I read it again recently, and I could not help but be a bit saddened by his story this time. What a man, what a fighter, what courage he has, BUT no Jesus, no certainty, no hope and no peace. The world doesn't another fighter, a cancer survivor as they say, another great story, they need to know and believe in the greatest story of all - the death and resurrection of Jesus, who has given us the greatest gift for all who believe. That is what the world needs. We have been saved from our sin, and hell! Death sucks, it is one thing that gets the bravest man wobbling at his knees, doubting. The most arrogant man looking into his soul, maybe he is not as great as he thought he was, would people even remember him? The richest man looking at what his riches cannot buy; eternal life. It will, if I am honest, get most men thinking. It puts life into perspective, very very quickly. I have the privilege of sharing the message of hope on a daily basis but I do think, "how come, why now, why is everyone so keen to be involved to join the fight, and to encourage? The minute you are told you have incurable cancer, everyone pulls together. The question I am asked the most is "Jon you are so positive, so inspiring, how do you do it, I don't know what I would do! What an opportunity to acknowledge that I am weak, very weak, but because of Christ, I am strong, because of Jesus I can stand firm, full of hope, full of faith and full of belief.

My story is your story, it is the same. Jesus died for all of us. I want everyone to know and feel what I feel inside, the peace, and the surety. It is very simple. We are all going to die; we are all going to be accountable on day. It is just I have been told, humanly speaking, this might be sooner than you. I am constantly asking to be filled with the Spirit, asking for God's help. I was thinking of not adding this next part, but I have to. I went through a stage of almost complete lack of sympathy for other people's problems. It is not like me at all, and I know it is an arrow the devil loves to throw at me. About a month or more ago, a young girl spoke of how she had pain in her knee and the Lord miraculously healed her. At the time I was thinking, are you serious? Get over it, you think you had problems? I will take your sore knee any day, let's swop. Shocking, I hated thinking that. Also, a friend of Sarah's had a tough labour, and she was talking about all the problems she had or was having and all the time I was thinking, you will be fine, trust me I promise, we too had a tough childbirth, very traumatic and trust me, you don't have problems at all! We are in a battle and as much as Jesus is doing miraculous things, the devil is trying everything to stop this tidal wave. Praise God for His forgiveness and grace that surrounds me and all of us every day.

I am always asking the Lord for opportunities to share my heart and wow is the Lord opening doors! It is incredible, all the time. I was at a golf day last week and got to share my heart and the Gospel with about one hundred people, most being what we call 'celebrities". Kevin Pietersen has been a really good friend of mine since childhood and he organised the day for the JCE Trust. The JCE Trust has been set up now by my brother. It all started a few months ago when a close friend from South Africa said he wanted to help and wanted to give or raise money. This really gave me a heavy heart, weighed me down a lot until Sarah said that I had to accept this as it could be the Lord opening a Ministry. From that time on I was sold; I said anyone can get involved, organise events but there had to be a Gospel presentation; I or my brother had to share our hope, our faith and our belief; what the Trust was all about. The Trust has now blown out of the water, and after about two months our website, which is not great, still in the early stages, had 60,000 hits.

The Golf Day was the most phenomenal day, not because there were all these celebrities, the Sky Sports team were televising it, BBC as well, but because walls came crashing down, like Jericho! The atmosphere, the vibe was out of the world, seeing everyone wearing a 'Believe shirt' and the wristband, I could not stop smiling and thinking, Lord you are the best! This is crazy, how many blokes get to share the Gospel and testimony with Shane Warne? What is going on here? After the golf, I gave a short talk at the dinner and a presentation, which for me was extremely moving. Because it was a new audience, people I did not know very well, made it all very raw again and speaking about Jesus and my family, was the greatest. I felt so privileged to be able to do that. I did not say

anything special, nothing drummed up, no flashy lines or catchy slogans, I shared why the JCE Trust means so much, the overriding purpose and future plans of the Trust, the hope that I have, the belief that I have, it was incredible. I know the Lord was with me, I felt it, I could sense His presence the whole day. Before the day and the dinner, I was really nervous, what would people think or say, would they be open to what I believe, and would they support the Trust knowing that it is all about Jesus. I only knew one other Christian who was there, Dan Walker, the BBC presenter, and he was going mad! It was awesome to see and hear from him what he thought of the day. He said he had never been to a Golf Day like that, and he has been to plenty! The response since has been incredible, so many messages of thanks. I loved Richard's sermon the other Sunday talking about Jacob being ambushed. Well, you know the Lord has just ambushed a whole of people when 'celebrities' come to you and just hug you, no words to say, just tears. There were plenty of tears, but the feeling I got was that the Lord was there, and 'ambushing', many were in that minute thinking of their kids, maybe all the money they have, or the great lifestyle they have, thinking about their lives and their final destination, can they call Heaven their home? Maybe convicting them of dreams they let go of. What would you do if you were in my situation? Would you change anything in your life, would you be doing anything differently, pursuing those dreams you put on the back burner? Would you want to do more for the Lord? I drove out of the Estate, put on 'Mighty to Save' and thanked the Lord for one of the greatest days ever and the opportunity to glorify Him, that's what it's all about.

That gold day has just been one of the events that has been planned, there have been plenty in South Africa and I know there are many more to come, this is just the beginning. Angus Buchan, the farmer Evangelist who wrote 'Faith like Potatoes' read it! Says ... if your vision does not scare you, it is not big enough ... I look forward to praying into these with you brothers and living it out with you.

I look at where the Trust is now, compared to when it first started three months ago. After two months we already had 60 000 hits on the website as I said, it really hit me hard, what a platform we have, what an opportunity the Lord has given us. It is God's Trust, He is the Trustee, it is His money, and He gets all the glory.

Yes, it is not great I have cancer all over the place, it is not great they have told there is not a cure, and it is not great that I have to think about death, but jeepers is the Lord at work here!!! The Lord is moving mountains, He is opening up hearts, and He is renewing minds. I have to pinch myself, all the time, at the opportunities the Lord is opening up. So many people are hearing the Gospel, that might not have heard it because of what I am going through and I can really say like Paul, it has served to advance the Gospel. May it continue!

In terms of prayer there will be a Cricket day and Gala Dinner in October at my old school with Shaun Pollack, Jonty Rhodes, Andrew Hudson, Butch James, Craig Joubert, H.D. Ackerman, Keegan Daniel, the Springbok flanker, and Mark Fish, former soccer player, all confirming they will be there. Shaun, Jonty and Andrew are all Christians. I don't like to drop names but these guys bring people in, fill out places. When you have the support of these guys, events are filled and so at the Gala Dinner there will be five hundred people there. I am hoping to go out for that and speak, God willing. But, what another opportunity, and this is what is happening. We are not a cancer charity, we are Christians on a mission, a mission to bring and share the message of hope to the Nations. At the moment, that is South Africa and England. Our caption for the Trust is 'Believe'. For two reasons, everything is possible for Him who believes and so with expectation we wait on the Lord for healing. Incredibly, we can even expect that! Second, we believe, because Jesus believed in us first. He came and died on the Cross for our sin, He paid the price for our eternal freedom. I want everyone to believe, that is the dream!

I am so very blessed, in fact, life couldn't be any better for me, it is wonderful. I have the most incredible wife who has been through, in one year, what many don't experience in a lifetime. She has her ups and downs, but the Lord is using her so powerfully among her friends and I am so proud of her. I have a son Joel and a beautiful daughter Grace, they are amazing to be with, perfect in every way, and I love being their dad. Life could not be any better for me. As I said last Monday at the golf day, I am not afraid of death, I am not afraid of dying, because of Jesus I have a hope, far greater than anything this world has to offer, I can't wait to go home to be with the Lord, but I always find myself saying 'no yet Lord, not yet' ... I love being a dad, a husband, I want to serve the Lord fulltime. When this all started, right after being told my diagnosis I was in the corner of a hospital room, alone with tears rolling down my cheeks. I just knew in that moment my life was never going to be the same again, I felt the Lord calling me, I knew walking out of that hospital, before I had even told Sarah the news, that the Lord needed me, I must now drop my nets. Everything had to go, my job title from now on 'Fisher of Men'.

I am now full of faith, full of hope, the peace the Lord has blessed me with is indescribable, and it does surpass understanding. The courage I now have also surpasses understanding, if you had known me a few years back - you would understand. The very first service we ever came to, a few people were being welcomed in and they had to stand up. I said to Sarah 'oh no! this can't be! If we become members one day, we are going to have to stand in front of all these people! Come on, we can't do that, maybe we can have our own private welcoming in'.

And so I say, 'I am fighting; I am fighting big time'. David went out alone, but I am running out to this Goliath with an army of believers with me. I am not fighting in my own strength; I am fighting on my knees. Thank you, brothers for fighting with me, for believing in the impossible, for believing the best is yet to come. There is no greater bond than a Christian brother, may we change the nations, take the message of hope to people who have none. I have been saying a lot, 'the army of believers is growing'. It is great to see. The fields are ripe for harvest but the works are few says the Lord, I am going to be out there, I hope to see you too.

When Sarah felt ready, we had a tree planting ceremony at KMBC where, together with the staff and students, Sarah and I planted a tree in memory of Jon. Today it lines the path to the lecture rooms with its lovely red bottlebrushes. In the quad, outside the classrooms, there is a lovely concrete bench and plaque which shares pride of place on the KMBC Campus.













