

My name is Catherine Lamb, and I joined the Church as a convert in 1990. I tell you this, so that you know, that I have not always known the gospel, did not learn line upon line, but had and have should I need it, that one defining moment when I knew the Gospel was true, and had the decision to make, whether or not I was courageous enough to act on the information given. That's how looking back on it I see it, while living through it, I don't think I saw it quite as clearly as that.

In the same vein, the thing I wish to share with you is quite current, and perhaps I may view it differently sometime in the future.

In buying myself my first set of LDS scriptures, and seeing how other people had their's marked, I also bought myself a set of fluorescent highlighters, to mark the passages of Scripture that might strike me. I was fairly familiar with the Bible, from my youth, had read it frequently, but it would've been considered sacrilege to deface the book with markings, so you simply memorised a scripture that impressed you, or took note of it in your prayerbook. One would simply turn to your prayerbook in times of stress or otherwise and choose a scripture reference, go to your Bible and look it up, and allow God to Speak to You. So I always had the knowledge that the Scriptures are the Living Waters, and that God could use those self same scriptures to answer a problem of TODAY.

So off I went happily reading and marking my Book of Mormon, I needed to familiarise myself with the new, as I already knew the old. However it was when I went to read the Book of Mormon for a second time, that I found myself surprised. Passages clearly marked in Pink and Yellow fluorescent, were not speaking to me at all this time round, but other verses, were NOW standing out, that I couldn't understand how they had not been highlighted. So I got a green fluorescent marker for that reading, and a blue one for the next. Then I made the decision not to mark, as I realised that the Lord was speaking to me currently, and what He said to me today, might not necessarily be what He wanted to say to me tomorrow. When the time came that I needed a new set of scriptures, they came without the markers, although electronically I can mark and mark, and not deface, so things only get better.

**The Scripture I want to share with you today is Romans 8:38-39**

*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

*Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

This has been a long-standing favourite, one of the ones committed to memory in my youth, to be called upon, when needed.

Just last year, I had a medical issue, but I also had other more important things going on in my life. My youngest son was coming home from his mission in May, and it so being that our two older

children were now married, it was apparent that we could not accommodate everyone in our house, and yet wanted everyone together. The obvious choice was a family holiday. We booked a Villa with a pool in Gozo, just off Malta where we would be guaranteed some beautiful weather. Gozo had something for everyone, it has crystal waters for those that like snorkelling/diving, it has history – which will always appeal to me. They drive on the same side of the road as we do, being a former British Colony and it is one of the most relaxing places on earth. The main island Malta is also beautiful, but in a faster paced way, and so Gozo was the perfect choice. My mother's sister married a Maltese and has lived in Malta since 1956, so we have family there, and my father during my youth worked for Dublin Airport, which gave him access to some free and loads of cheap flights, so I had been to Malta many times in my youth, and had brought my children there twice previously. There was much that my older children wanted to do, to share their experiences of Malta with their spouses, neither of who had been previously.

What had happened was about 3 weeks before the holiday, I began to bleed, and put it down to menopause, my period had stopped the previous September, and I viewed this as a last Hurrah, which I would deal with when I came home from the holiday. The bleeding was not significant, and given enough sanitary supplies, there was no reason not to enjoy every minute of the holiday, which we did.

Upon coming home, there were some things to do, and amongst them, my husband needed a new job, as his had just closed down. He was very fortunate to be offered another job almost instantly. He spoke of how our daughter had just bought a new house, and how he'd wanted to go see it, but in starting a new job, he'd not build up any holiday leave for AGES. So I suggested the obvious, that he tell the new people he was not available to start until X, and take that week and visit Rose in Scotland, see her new house, do some of the little things she wanted her Dad to do round the house , and basically enjoy each other. Terry (son home from Mission) asked if he could go too. I had gotten round to sorting my medical issue, which in my mind was already sorted. I'd decided that worst case scenario I might need a hysterectomy, and at my age, my uterus was surplus to requirements, so had no issue, needed no one to hold my hand, when I got the news. My consultant, was very much hopeful that this worst case scenario wouldn't be it, it would be something much easier, so win win. I was prepared for the worst, which in my opinion was not BAD. So off Terence and Terry my husband, even taking the dog with them on the ferry, leaving me to relax, to enjoy all the things you do when you are alone, and I was really looking forward to my time.

So my tests concluded and I was scheduled to see the consultant for the results on the Friday, and Terence and Terry were due home on the Saturday evening.

The Friday morning before setting off for the hospital, I decided to just look at a scripture, something that I might ponder on that day, and do a proper reading of the scriptures later that night. So I took my quad and let it open. It fell on the page the above scripture , and I smiled and thought to myself, God is telling me today that He Loves Me – that's nice, and with a smile on my face I set off for the hospital.

My news was not the worst case scenario, but worse again. I was diagnosed with Terminal Cervical Cancer, surgery was out of the question, and treatment could only offer to attempt to buy me some time with my family. And I was alone to hear that, but I wasn't alone, because the consultant who gave me the news himself, thought I was in shock, and perhaps on one level I was, but what struck me was how going out that morning, rushing about to have all things done He had I believe orchestrated it, so that it was not my daily chapter or two, setting me up for the day, but a verse or two that had brought me great joy over the years, in many different circumstances. It was a gift. The consultant asked me if I had anyone with me, that he would happily go through everything again with them, so that I didn't have to, but I assured him that I was fine, hadn't anyone with me anyway, and was aware of the diagnosis as he had explained himself clearly.

Walking out of the hospital and driving home, I naturally was a little upset, but it was balanced by this Scripture, which literally quelled any tears that arose.

I have always known that God loved me, my father raised us to believe that God loved us more than he (dad) was able to, and knowing that love, I remember thinking WOW, that's loads. So it was enveloped in love that I drove the 15 miles or so home from the hospital.

I knew some things would be important to my husband, one being that he was the first one that I would tell. I didn't like the idea of them driving 8-10 hours with that news, so it was a no-brainer to elect to wait til they got home

Such news as this, needed to be given face to face. So I elected to keep this little gem, til Terence and Terry came home the evening of the next day. During that time, as I did what I did to prepare for their coming home, I realised how much of a gift it was to be able to sort out things in my own head, before I needed to share anything with anyone. It made me smile to see how it was that The Spirit was with me so strongly, literally wrapping me in a blanket of love, as the one scripture popped into my head I cannot count the frequency of times during that time I was alone, but not alone.

When they got home, I was able to present the information, in a calm and positive fashion, and together we were able to contact our children in Scotland and tell them in real time, while there were some tears, none of them were mine, and I found myself in the role of comforter, and well able for the role. I explained that one, by saying that I'd had the most time to get used to the idea. I understood what was happening on a physical as well as a Spiritual level.

We spoke of the Plan of Salvation, and how each and every one of us have a part in that Plan, and how it is the best possible Plan with me or whoever it was in mind. Oftentimes a collective plan needs compromise, as you can't please all of the people all of the time, something usually has to give. Not so with the Gospel, the Plan is one that my Heavenly Father devised, and in His love for me, and with the Bigger Picture, which He could see, He knew a long life and old age were not in my

best interests. I was not unfamiliar with this as it is a fairly basic principal of the Gospel, but in action I knew this, in a strength that I had never known before.

Fast forward to a couple of weeks ago now, and my chemo has concluded, so had been through the tests again, and was to find out what the next step was. Terry elected to be my carer for a year, deferring his plans for study and instead spending his time with me, taking care of my needs. Hospital appointments are a day long affair, so Terry parks in the car park (which costs a fortune, if used on a regular basis), and he brings me to the Day ward where I get my treatment, and when it's over, I call him, and have a porter wheel me to the set down area, where he picks me up. We have our established routine, which works best for us.

This time I was not expecting news, as all tests had not been completed, so was surprised to see my consultant and two other senior doctors in the room when I was called for the doctor's part of that expected day's visit.

The news was that chemo had been unsuccessful, the tumour had doubled in size and my time here on earth, is shorter rather than longer. However, the consultant said, there is no accounting for attitude, and with that in mind, he shared with me what he had written on diagnosis

*"unlikely to live til Christmas – 1 year Max"*

He felt it would empower me to know, that he looked at me now, and were I not to be in the setting ie sitting in a wheelchair in a hospital, it would never occur to him that I was even sick, never mind terminal.

As it happened, there was a clinical trial just beginning, the funding of only having been approved by the Government one week previously, and I am now on it. As such there was no delay between – this didn't work, and we have no other medical route to offer you, as has been some people's experience, it was for me, chemo was unsuccessful, there is another option, it's a trial, but a year is a long time in cancer research, and should we need to stop treatment, which is the more likely end, as they have much experience of the drug, just none in it's use against cervical cancer, there would likely then be another option, and we would play leapfrog, as long as I had quality of life.

Incidentally one reason the Government funded this trial, is that they are taking responsibility for the scandal. I am part of a group of women, who availed of a Government Scheme aimed at women's health. The lab chosen to process the spears didn't employ best practice, and so I and many others were given false positives. I attended every smear test I was called to, my last being two and a half years ago, which gave an ALL CLEAR perfect result. It is clear that I have had this build up in me over the past 5-10 years, and my consultant said, his estimation would be had he gotten me 3 years ago, a hysterectomy would've been the order of the day, coming with a calm assurance that that would do the job, and have no effect on life expectation. Some people have chosen to go down the legal route, but I have elected to spend my remaining time and energy in being with my family. Being Irish we are not terribly demonstrative in showing love, especially to distant family or

friends, but I find that I'm able to talk to people, thank them for their prayers, tell them I love them, and give them the frequent hug, and they are able to receive it. So many times I have been experienced this sort of thing being tried, and failing miserably, and we'd put it down to being Irish, we just don't do the touchy feely thing that well. Well we're doing it NOW, and doing it well.

During this time, people naturally want to be DOING SOMETHING – ANYTHING..... and it falls that they pray for me. My extended family have this down pat, and there have been rosaries and novenas and a trip to Lourdes, where my aunt sent me a photo of the candles she had lit for me in the grotto, and I messaged her back that it would not be my fault if the fire brigade had to be called.

I have a calm assurance that God loves me, and that nothing can separate me from that love. I don't know how much time I have left, and it doesn't matter, because it's enough. When people offer to pray for me I tell them that that is the best thing, as I have felt God's Love, how it sustains and buoys me up on my poor days, thankfully of which now are well outweighed by the good days.