

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Science and God

Teen Credits Both with Cancer Remission
by Paul Asay

What Happened:

Right before the end of his junior year in high school, 17-year-old Peter Srsich of Golden, Colo., developed a cough. It stuck with him all summer, and after a month or so, he started to feel incredibly tired, too.

None of that seemed normal for a healthy lacrosse player, so he went to the doctor. There, he learned he had a tumor the size of a softball in his left lung. “It was so large,” he told ABC News, “they couldn’t put me under anesthesia because there was a risk I wouldn’t wake up, so they couldn’t even get a biopsy of it.”

He was forced to undergo a brutal barrage of chemotherapy and radiation in the hopes of beating the cancer back. He was taking painkillers for the discomfort and suffering from depression. “Things had kind of started to pile up, and I started questioning, why would this happen?”

In the midst of it all, his faith helped buoy him. He began to feel the presence of God in the hospital. As his hope returned, Srsich asked the Colorado Make-A-Wish Foundation if it could find a way to let him meet the Pope—a wish the organization was able to grant.

One of Srsich’s friends created more than 1,000 green rubber wristbands with the words “Praying for Peter” emblazoned on them. The bands also included Peter’s favorite Bible verse, Romans 8:28: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose.” They were distributed around the world.

Now, Srsich’s cancer is in remission. He’s playing lacrosse again, this time in college, and training to be a priest. While some say Srsich’s visit to the Pope miraculously healed the teen, Srsich himself believes the answer is simpler and more complex. “I credit all the years of medical research and the training of all the doctors going to school,” he says. “All that definitely cured me; but God was behind it, helping me go through the treatment.”

Talk About It

Sometimes people talk about science and faith as if they were at odds with each other, but God wouldn’t say so. If He created the universe, He certainly had a hand in the natural laws that make it work. Many scientists would say the more you understand science, the more wondrous the universe looks—and the more awesome God becomes.

When you look at the world around you, what strikes you as miraculous? Does knowing the scientific explanation of something make it any less of a miracle? Do you think God works through science? Does He sometimes work outside the bounds of science to craft real miracles?

Most people who get sick go to a doctor to get help. Many Christians, though, ask for prayer, as well—and science shows that people who have strong religious beliefs tend to be healthier and recover more quickly when sick. Have you seen science and faith work hand-in-hand this way? Are there other examples in which religion augments medicine or technology?

Have you seen God and prayer work in your own life? When? How?

What the Bible Says

Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Where can I flee from Your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, You are there;
If I make my bed in the depths, You are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
If I settle on the far side of the sea,
Even there Your hand will guide me,
Your right hand will hold me fast.
(Ps. 139: 7-10)

“Ah, Sovereign Lord, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You” (Jer. 32:17).

“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” (Ps. 27:1).

Paul Asay has covered religion for *The Washington Post*, *Christianity Today*, Beliefnet.com, and *The (Colorado Springs) Gazette*. He writes about culture for *Plugged In* and wrote the Batman book, *God on the Streets of Gotham* (Tyndale). He lives in Colorado Springs with wife Wendy and his two children. Follow him on Twitter at @AsayPaul.