

## A Personal Journey Discerning Fear versus Love

Whole time I was preparing I said, “I am not going to cry and here I am crying with Maureen’s introduction,” said Maria Barnes, Naturaphic Doctor and Motivational speaker, when she opened the August 11 BELIEVES session on “A Personal Journey Discerning Fear versus Love.”



“Fear,” Barnes said, pausing to let the depth of the word resonate before she began sharing her story.

“I am going to start off with a story as a kid,” she continued. “We were walking to school and this friend was afraid of dogs. I wasn’t but she was.”

Barnes went on to recall that one neighbor in particular who always sat on her porch had a dog – a little dog with an instinct for fear. Whenever her friend passed by, the dog would run after her.

“Then one day my friend said, ‘I am tired of being afraid. I am not going to run anymore.’”

So the next time the dog chased Barnes’ friend, the friend stopped after beginning to run. She turned to the dog and said, “You’re not going to run after me anymore.”

“It was then that she realized the dog had one-eye, was running with a limp, and had no teeth,” Barnes laughingly shared. “We had known this for a long time, but she didn’t until she turned to face the dog.”

*We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light. -- Plato*

“As an adult I can remember being afraid as an entrepreneur and wondering if I could provide? When I faced a problem, could it be solved? Do you remember a time when you were afraid?” asked Barnes.

She then asked each attendee at the session to take the card she placed in front of each of them and pause for a moment to write down the one word they each associated with fear.

She paused, and then continued.

“Not many know my story,” said Barnes. “I was diagnosed with Stage 2 Breast cancer in 2011. I had no health problems prior. At the time, I was doing Professional Figure competitions, was a mom, and had two kids. I never knew how that diagnosis would change my life for better. It drew me from a life of fear to a life of love.”

Barnes recalled that she thought she knew who she was as an adult, and what she was doing.

“I was a mom, a manager in Finance in Corporate America, an entrepreneur, and was in an Executive MBA program. However, this journey was really my opportunity to figure out who I was.”

In the process, Barnes divorced her former husband, decided to leave Corporate America, and focus on being an entrepreneur. The divorce was very challenging.

"I had a lot of hate towards the decision I made, which led to a lot of guilt and shame. What continued to take place was a process that I didn't know. I was struggling financially, questioning decisions, and more."

Then one morning she woke up on the couch and felt a lump.

"Oh my gosh ... I am going to have breast cancer," she thought.

Barnes had the lump checked out and the doctor said it was just a cyst.

"Part of me said, 'Yes!! Just a cyst.' Another part said other things."

Barnes left the doctor's office and for two years held on to the part of her that had said 'just a cyst.'

"That's what I wanted to hear," she stated.



Barnes then went on to do a National Figure contest in Las Vegas in 2013 and won. While there a woman came up to her and said, "Is that a lump? You need to get that checked out."

Then she came home from the trip, and when she was at home her daughter also told her one day, "Mommy, is that a lump?"

"It was God telling me to look at this, and not hide," Barnes said. "So I told myself since they're going to tell me it is cancer, I am going to handle it a certain way."

Being healthy, that is what she told herself.

"What happened however was I went into a major depression because of having this information to 'manage my life,'" she said with growing emotion. "I was failing as a mom. Failing in business."

Shen then began to cry.

"I stayed in bed figuring out how to kill myself. Gun? Too messy. Pills? No. Go to an island? No. I kept thinking of my kids and just decided to lay there. Then I heard this little whisper ... 'Try. Try to figure something out.'"

So Barnes called some folks and ironically a naturaphic doctor was passing through the area.

In that moment, she found hope.

“The doctor told me, ‘You can do this, you’re going to be OK.’”

On the same day she was in the office with doctors, she had someone in her home teach her to meditate.

“By the time I went to pick up my kids from school ... in that moment I was able to be strong enough for my kids and have belief.”

Barnes decided to take a year to deal with her cancer with natural methods.

“I learned how much fear was driving my life. I learned through that year how to forgive myself, and accept who I was. I learned that it’s just a journey. It was more emotional healing that I needed. I learned how much damage I was doing just from my own thoughts.”

Barnes later went ahead and had the lump removed. She received no radiation treatments but did have some reconstructive surgery.

During the time of the surgery, Barnes said it felt so good to have the lump gone.

However, at the same time the lump was removed, she was served papers from her former husband related to child custody.

“I was like, ‘God, what’s going on, I am sinking here!’”

So after surgery, she would wake up each morning and work out. One particular morning though, she woke up and after working out saw a spot.

The cancer was coming back.

“It was growing the entire time and I didn’t see it,” Barnes said. “Just like when we gain weight and don’t see it until all of a sudden it’s there. I didn’t see this thing becoming a monster, but then I saw it as a monster.”

Then one day soon after, her lung collapsed. Barnes could do nothing but stay in bed for two weeks. Then she got to a point where she couldn’t move.

“I was like a 40-year-old woman turning into a 90-year-old woman. My life got shut down. I heard God say, ‘You’ve got to stop.’”

At this point, her family didn’t know of what was going on, and many others didn’t as well.

“I was stubborn. I heard God say, ‘You are standing in your own way. Sit down and take a back seat and get out of the way.’ Don’t we do that? We’re afraid and seize for control, but we really need to trust.”

Everything was unfolding and everyone could see it unfolding, but Barnes was in denial.

“I was tired of fighting. I had to acknowledge I was sick, because I was. When everything came out, I realized I had to go through the process. I was afraid. I was afraid of chemo. Afraid of death. Afraid of going in and never coming back out.”

When Barnes surrendered she said she did ask God for one thing – to put her with people who care and have compassion.

Shortly thereafter she found a surgeon recommended by a friend. When the visit with the doctor ended she said as she was walking out of the office the doctor hugged her – something she felt was unusual -- and that was enough to know

God was taking care of her. She also went to an oncologist referred to her by the surgeon, and he too had compassion like the surgeon so she sensed being surrounded by compassion.

“So I went through chemo – 8 rounds. The hardest thing of going through cancer was seeing the mess going on in my body every day.”

The oncologist at one point told her she was getting “Stage 4” cancer and that’s when she realized she had to let everything go. She didn’t feel she was going to make it.

However, after delivering the Stage 4 news, the oncologist told Barnes, “Let’s go look at this” – referring to the images and scans taken. When he did, he said, “I think I can get this.”

“When the doctor started to talk, I said, ‘God, there’s more to me than this.’ I had to get myself together for what was coming – chemo. When I went through chemo, I had never experienced pain like that. When I went through that though, I was healed emotionally. There was no more resentment.”



Barnes shared with the captivated audience at BELIEVES that she had to go through this to be able to share a message of hope.

“The average person going through chemo needs someone to walk with them to do so with love, not fear.”

She added that she believes when we go through change in life, sometimes we have to go into a cocoon and not know what’s going on.

When she did this she said she learned she was selfish, and that she didn’t care as much about people as she thought.

“I also learned I am loved. I still survived.”

She said learned how powerful God is too.

“My former husband called me up during that time and said, ‘You can do this. Your kids need you. You’re their mother,’” Barnes said while not holding back tremendous tears and emotion. “He had never acknowledged me as their mother. God, You are amazing.”

Do challenges still come for Barnes?

“Oh, yeah. They keep rolling in, but when they do I can say, ‘Do you know what I have been through? I can show my kids it is possible to walk through fear. A lot of what we go through is all in our heads.”

Today, Barnes is cancer free and the wound has closed up.

“I walked through something I was afraid of, gave up control, trusted, and only had vision on the end result, on Him. So while I traveled through the forest, and dogs with one-eye and no teeth were running around, I kept the eye on the end.”

As Barnes closed her remarks she shared a quote from Dorothy Thompson -- *Only until we let go of fear, is it that we have the ability to live.*

“Remember the piece of paper you wrote word on related to fear? I want you to take that word, ball it up, and put it in the trash. Is it really faith, when we’re walking in fear? The two can’t be in the same room. Is it really faith? It can’t be that way.”

Then Barnes concluded her remarks and opened the time up for questions.

CTK parishioner Sharon Zukauckas commented, “It’s sometimes tough to hold all that someone says like you just did. I can relate because my mother went through breast cancer for 10 years. From what you shared, I got reaffirmation we can be in peace going through anything.”

Barnes said in response, “It was a major struggle. People would reach out, and I was very transparent. I had to laugh at it because it was humorous. When I learned to let go and trust, I was able to still laugh.

Leslie Sharkey, another BELIEVES attendee then commented that a lot of what Barnes said about meditation sounded like prayer.

Barnes commented, “What I learned is prayer is talking with God, but how often do we sit still and listen to be in a place of receiving. We’re all in God’s love. When I pray, I release my burdens to God. When I meditate, I receive God’s love.”

She then closed the session by sharing, “My thing was cancer, but it doesn’t mean that others going through other things don’t go through the same emotions. The bottom line is, love or fear. It’s one or the other. You can only choose one.”

