

WORKSHEET: DEVELOPING A PLAN TO HELP YOUR FRIEND

To be used with the book *Loving Your Friend Through Cancer*, by Marissa Henley

My goal is for you to take the information provided in the book *Loving Your Friend Through Cancer* and develop a plan for helping your friend in her unique situation. I hope these questions will assist you with that process. You can also find this worksheet in Appendix Three at the back of the book.

Chapter 1—When cancer strikes a friendship

1. My friend said God didn't give the assignment of cancer to me as an individual—he gave this assignment to me and my community. What do you think about this statement?
2. Like my friend with a private plane, God has given you specific gifts to be used to minister to your friend. What tangible, emotional, or spiritual resources has the Lord given you that you can share with her? Make a list.

Chapter 2—The diagnosis: A stressful beginning

1. What are your previous experiences with cancer? What baggage are you carrying into your friend's journey? Who else could you talk to about this other than your friend (while also avoiding gossip)?
2. What emotions did you feel when you heard your friend has cancer? How do you think she's feeling? How is she expressing these emotions? Is she openly emotional or more reserved?

3. Which of the specific ways of supporting a friend in the diagnostic phase stood out to you as something God is asking you to do for your friend? Write them down, along with a plan to put the ideas into action.

Chapter 3—Circles: Knowing your role

1. What is your perception of your friend's support network and where you stand in it?
2. Are your friend's logistical needs extensive, typical, or minimal? Will she need a larger circle of friends sharing the burden, or can it be handled by a few close friends? How does this affect what your role will be?
3. Which of the responsibilities listed for your circle resonate most with you? Are there responsibilities outside your circle that you feel called to as well?

Chapter 4—Your friend as a sick person: Understanding physical needs

1. What questions do you have about your friend's treatment or prognosis? Do you need to set aside your need for these answers, or is there someone you can ask? *(Note: It is probably not appropriate to ask your friend or those closer to her for this information. The internet or a medically-knowledgeable friend who is further removed from the situation might be able to help.)*
2. If your friend will lose her hair, how do you think you will feel the first time you see her bald? Try to process some of these feelings ahead of time so you can focus on supporting your friend when the moment comes.

3. What are the places where you see your friend or where your family members see hers? Remember to be aware of your family's health before being with your friend or her family. Who else can you share this information with on behalf of your friend? Make a note to repeat this reminder again at the start of cold/flu season.
4. What are the names of your friend's doctors and nurses? Write them down and add them to your prayer list. Your friend will appreciate it if you know the names of doctors and nurses she sees regularly, so she doesn't have to explain who she's talking about every time.

Chapter 5—All the stuff that needs to get done: Understanding logistical needs

1. Think through your friend's week. What are her weekly responsibilities? Which of these might she be unable to do right now?
2. Think through your weekly schedule. Where do your responsibilities overlap with your friend's in a way that makes it simple for you to help her? Are there regular weekly commitments you can make?
3. Who else can you rally to help with your friend's logistical needs? What is the best way for your group of friends to organize yourselves to meet her needs?
4. Which seasons or holidays will fall during your friend's treatment? How can you help her at these special times: Cleaning out closets at the end of the season, taking her kids shopping for winter coats, making valentines or other holiday cards with her kids, buying teacher gifts at the end of the school year, etc.?

5. What unique circumstances does your friend face with regard to logistical needs? How can you and her other friends address these needs?

6. What are some meals that you make often that are easily doubled? Plan to make more each time you prepare this meal so you'll have some to share with your friend's family.

7. What are some favorite foods of your friend and her family?

Chapter 6—Moving beyond “I’m sorry”: Understanding emotional needs

1. Which of the emotions we discussed do you see your friend having? Is she typically prone to depression, anxiety, or isolation that might be worsened by her current trial?

2. How do you think your friend would respond to the “This sucks, God is good, I love you” framework of support?

3. Which of the gestures mentioned in this chapter would feel supportive to your friend? What do you need to do to put some of these ideas into action?

Chapter 7—What the Bible says about suffering: Understanding spiritual needs

1. In what ways do you agree or disagree with what I wrote about how God relates to us in suffering? Were any of the ideas new to you? Do you need to wrestle through any of these by meeting with your pastor to discuss?
2. In what ways do you see your friend wrestling spiritually? What biblical truth could be beneficial to her in that struggle?
3. What are some ways that you could practically keep God's promises in front of your friend?

Chapter 8—Praying for your friend

1. Which of the ways to pray for your friend were new or thought-provoking for you?
2. What obstacles are standing in the way of you regularly praying for your friend? If you have a hard time remembering to pray, would periodic alarms or calendar reminders help you consistently pray?
3. How could you set aside specific time to pray for your friend? Who else could you ask to pray with you?

Chapter 9—When the world moves on: The challenges of cancer survivorship

1. Which aspects of my description of survivorship do you think apply to your friend's situation?
2. How has your friend expressed difficulty navigating survivorship?
3. Which specific ways to support a survivor stood out to you? How can you put these ideas into action?

Chapter 10—When there's no cure

1. What are some ways you can show support to your friend while minimizing her need to respond?
2. What is your friend's mood in her current situation? What tone do you need to match in your communication with her?
3. What are some of your friend's logistical challenges? What are some ways you can help or rally others to help meet her needs?
4. What are your feelings about your friend's prognosis? Who can you trust to listen well and help you process these feelings?

Chapter 11—One last thing you need to know

1. What are some of your friend's needs that you know you are *not* meant to meet?
2. What unique role do you play in your friend's support system?
3. Which of the temptations that I mentioned did you most relate to: Wanting to do everything, feeling guilty about your good health, or being tempted to live inside her head? How can you cope with this struggle?