

# Personal Testimony: Mike Reed

Story by Suzanne Cittel

## God's Sustaining Power

***We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.***

Romans 8:28



Mike Reed

Mike Reed, senior pastor of CC Oceanside, CA, and his wife Hannah wept desperately as they clung to each other in the hospital hallway. They had just heard the bad news—Mike needed a liver trans-

plant—and for every donor there were 10 recipients waiting, many dying before ever receiving a new liver. Hannah now faced losing her husband, and their daughters, Kaila and Shawna, would have to be told that they might lose their dad. Hannah's mind whirled with fears about the future. Would God take Mike home, or would He heal him? How would she face life without her husband emotionally and financially? Mike had been denied life insurance. Her education and work experience would not provide a job with enough income to fully support herself and their girls. As Hannah began to pray for God's will to be worked out in their lives, the Lord began to replace her fears with peace.

Mike later described how fear, depression, and sorrow occasionally “pitched a tent” in his heart during this time. Nevertheless, he had only allowed the feelings to visit, still convinced that God was in control of his life.

Mike had encountered many medical issues before. At age 10, he had been diagnosed with aplastic anemia and underwent a bone marrow transplant from his older brother. Through the massive rounds of chemotherapy and the transplant, he contracted glaucoma and had to wear thick, coke-bottle glasses. Mike was emaciated and perpetually exhausted; deep depression turned his thoughts to suicide.

Too ill to attend school, Mike fell further into despair. After missing most of junior high, Mike finally became strong enough to attend high school regularly. Still emaciated,

he was convinced that he would never find anyone who could love him or want to marry him. The steroids had destroyed any hope for fatherhood.

His despair was transformed into hope when in 1982, Mike received Christ as his Savior. After graduating from high school, he attended Vanguard University, met and married his wife Hannah, and joined the ministry staff at CC Oceanside. After four years, the couple adopted Kaila; and later Shawna became part of the family.

When Mike began to show symptoms of liver failure, a new surgical intervention was being introduced. A living donor gives half of their healthy liver to a recipient. Since livers regenerate, both halves actually grow after the surgery. But who was selfless enough to offer one-half of an essential organ? Mike, Hannah, and the girls began to pray. Unknown to the family at the time, three brave men were willing.

Peter, a young marine who attended CC Oceanside, was the first to come forward. Although the testing showed he could not be a candidate, the hand of God was evident. Hannah's sister, who was living with the Reed family, met Peter; they fell in love and eventually married.

The second man, a pastor and friend, offered himself as a donor and was tested for suitability. His liver biopsy revealed a medical issue that would have not been caught through any other means and would have surely robbed him of life. With treatment he was cured. Mike and Hannah saw the good coming forth from their trial and continued to pray.

The third man to step up was Bob Burke. Like Mike, he was also a husband and father of two children, so Mike categorically refused. But Bob and his wife Paige insisted that Mike accept the offer. They had met Mike years before when Bob walked into CC Oceanside accidentally while searching for a different church. Then they had spent hours talking. Mike jokes now that God eventually used that mistake to save his life: “I call him every week to thank him; it drives him crazy.”

The operation was successful, but the aftermath was horrible. Mike shared, “The recovery was the darkest time in my life. They didn't tell me that the steroids and anti-rejection drugs were going to make me crazy. I felt like I was in a 10,000-degree oven. I couldn't sleep and had drug-induced anxiety. People would leave the hospital crying after visiting.” Eventually, Mike began to feel better.

*Through the crucible of his own suffering, Mike feels deep empathy with those experiencing long-term pain and illness.*

Through the crucible of his own suffering, Mike feels deep empathy with those experiencing long-term pain and illness. An 11-year-old boy with cancer who attends CC Oceanside names Mike as the only person who truly understands the devastating realities of his life. They speak often, sharing their common experiences. Hannah declares that the peace she experienced through it all has taught her to trust God in a way unimaginable to her before this trial of faith.

Both Mike and Hannah realize that God has given them the privilege of not only knowing the truth of the promise of Romans 8:28, but of actually seeing the way that God has worked all things together for good not just in their lives but in the lives of many others touched by their experience. This year marks Mike's seventh postoperative year. The doctors gave him six to live. If you ask Mike today why he is still breathing, he will tell you in no uncertain terms: only by God's sustaining power. ☞

[info@calvaryoceanside.org](mailto:info@calvaryoceanside.org)  
760-754-1234