

# Faith and cancer

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Why is it so hard to talk about spirituality and cancer?

I originally began the story on cancer and spirituality /faith that appears in the spring issue ("[Keeping the Faith](#)") for the Healing Well department of the winter 2009 issue.

As I got into the story, I found there was no way to even address the question in fewer than 1200 words, and then everywhere I turned there were more nuances and approaches that I wanted to address. Finally, it was moved to a feature spot in the spring issue to have more room to explore what had become a long list of topics: How should I address faith and cancer when there are so many religions around the world, some of which ascribe to suffering as part of our earthly journey?

How do I respect those who use "God" in every sentence when it offends some people as not being intellectual? How do I bring in the fact that there is science about those who belong to a faith community and how much it helps people in so many ways – and the discrepancy our survey showed about those who believed in a higher power but did not get support from their faith community.

And what about spirituality, which was my original focus of the story before I found out that there is no real way to define it. I thought I would finally have a definition when I interviewed Ryan Campbell, the hospital chaplain who speaks on the video slide show, "[Chaplains Speak About Spirit](#)" and in the [Speaking Out](#) department. I asked Ryan to define spirituality for me. He laughed and said, "No way." Even he wasn't going to try and define it.

Our beliefs are ours and, while there are studies about aspects of what we believe and how it affects us, my hope is that in your life you have found help with your cancer through faith, spirituality, or some other belief in "things unseen." I know I have.