

My Battle with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Beckie Butcher

iUniverse (Mar 12, 2012)

Softcover \$9.95 (52pp)

978-1-4697-7378-0

Butcher's encouraging tone helps people find meaning in life during a debilitating illness.

It was 2007, and forty-three-year-old Beckie Butcher thought she was dying. Something was dreadfully wrong. Every joint and muscle in her body ached; her brain and vision had fogged over. She was unable to get out of bed except to eat and use the restroom, and she couldn't carry on a coherent conversation. When she was finally diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), an autoimmune disease, she was devastated. In *My Battle with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome*, Butcher shares the intimate and moving story of how the disease impacted her life and led to personal and spiritual transformation.

Butcher had worked as a lab technician, but had made plans to follow her dreams and open her own catering business until CFS struck her life. Although warned by a support group, she was completely taken by surprise when the person she least expected to leave her did just that. "It was worse than a death for me," she writes, "because it wasn't a death at all. It was a conscious decision made of this person's own free will." Butcher's hope is that, by sharing her experiences, she can offer hope to others who are frightened, angry, and feel that they are alone as they deal with the ravages of CFS.

Christians especially will find her story encouraging, as it was through hearing of God's ability to turn her suffering to good and believing that, no matter what difficulties she was facing, God was always with her, that she found the strength to go on. Ultimately, she found a chiropractic treatment that improved her condition, and she shares this information in her book.

Butcher's "Five Questions to Ask God" are designed to help Christians find meaning and purpose in their lives even when they are downed by a debilitating illness, and her "Five Questions to Ask Family and Friends" can help those who are ill and their loved ones build bridges of mutual cooperation, shared faith, and honesty. Especially helpful are her pointed examples of what not to say to someone who is ill—the well-worn clichés that are more likely to provoke irritation and anger than to provide comfort.

Conversational in tone and generally well written, the book nonetheless has errors, including the frequently incorrect placement of quotation marks ("While I was doing' ok,") and apostrophes ("Gods' promise); a few sentences could be improved, such as "after twenty years of helping others, I was helpless to myself."

The cover design, while obviously well-intentioned, is a bit dark and murky, leaving the relevant features somewhat obscured. The back cover matter, with its words of praise for the book, is clear and inviting, and the author has supplied an attractive photo that enhances the brief biographical statement. The table of contents and copyright pages are clear and informative, and the book's design and layout are pleasing and easy on the eye.

The author has succeeded in providing information, hope, and encouragement to those who suffer from CFS. She shows how it is possible, even when faced with a devastating illness, to grow in understanding, tolerance, and faith.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May 29, 2014)

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