**ICanServe Foundation**

**Silver Linings 2019**

**WHEN A LOVED ONE HAS CANCER**

**PICC Banquet 2 & 3**

**SPEAKERS : Tirso Cruz III**

 **: James Deakin**

 **: Sigrid Perez**

**MODERATOR : Cherie Gil**

(clapping)

0:00:05 Cherie: Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat. Isang pasalamat kay Kara na inimbita ako uli dito sa ICanServe and Silver Linings and I’m always willing ang grateful to be able to be of service to, to a our countrymen, to sisterhood and brotherhood. Anyway, let’s get the ball rolling. So umpisahan ko na pong i-introduce sa inyo ang ating speakers for this session with the topic When A Loved One Has Cancer. Medyo makabagbag damdamin ngayon ang pag-uusapan natin dahil lahat siguro tayo may mga kaniya-kaniyang… journeys, stories and maybe questions even that you want to know from our… esteemed guests. So first, let me introduce to you, ang aking kumpare, kumpareng sarado ito. A good, good friend of the family since I don’t know, how many years… solid na kaibigan pati ho ang asawa na naging classmate, batch mate ko pa high school, ganun na katagal kami magkakilala. Siya po ay isang multi-awarded winning actor and one of the most respected names in the industry today. He is a lung cancer survivor and personally experienced the pain of losing a loved one to cancer when his son, TJ, passed away last year. I-welcome po natin Mr. Tirso Cruz III. (clapping)

0:01:41 Cherie: Ang ating susunod na inimbitang speaker para mag share ay isang TV Host, halika tabi-tabi tayo dito, Pipo, Kuya Pip. Siya po, isa po siyang TV Host and Road Safety Advocate and he dedicates his breast cancer awareness advocacy to his mom and his sister, Jean, and every… And her sister, the mom’s sister as I understand na si Jean and every other woman that has bravely taken on the fight. James embarked on a high impact pink car campaign that hit the roads of Metro Manila to raise awareness. People signed their names on the pink vehicle, post photos of it on their wall or news feed. He said the Pink Panther is a reminder to families stricken with cancer that someone is thinking and praying for them, patients and their families are not alone. Ang ganda naman ng ginawa niya. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. James Deakin. (clapping)

0:02:50 Cherie: Thank you. And lastly but not the least, I’d like to introduce to you Sigrid Perez. She’s a wife and mother to 8 children, unbelievable. Nakikita niyo ba na nakalabas sa kaniya ay walong anak! Hindi ko akalain ito, ngayon lang. Ngayon ko lang din po siya nakilala. After her son was diagnosed with Leukemia in 2005, she and her husband Paul were thrust into a life changing experience. Having personally experienced the challenges of families with children fighting cancer, they decided to form Project Brave Kids Inc., an organization dedicated to supporting families with children fighting cancer. Sigrid graduated from the University of Asia and the Pacific. I just live across (laughs) And with the degree in Humanities with field of specialization in Communication. After realizing that her passion lies in teaching, she pursued post graduate studies in Family Life and Child Development from the University of the Philippines. She was a preschool teacher, a curriculum head and an associate director of preschools here in Manila and in Cebu. She is a certified points of view??? practitioner and a family life mentor. She also helps her husband run their business in food, Papa Diddi’s handcrafted ice cream and advertising, the Grupo Sorbetero Company. Wow! That’s a whole lot of living you’re doing. Ladies and gentlemen, Sigrid Perez. (clapping)

0:04:28 Cherie: Ok, I’m so happy to be a part of this wonderful afternoon. So umpisahan na po natin ang ating mga pag-uusap at katanungan. Please feel free to ask any questions ok? Ako ay idi-direct ko lang ang ating konbersasyon.

Cherie: So I think I won’t sit anymore, I’ll just stand here. Can I sit there next to you Sigrid? Ok. Well, ako po ay , maybe before I open the mic to everyone, I’d like to share also na… two days ago nandun ako sa Baguio, umpisahan ko na yung istorya at nagsho-shooting nung September 25. And… kumakain ako sa dun sa Café at the Ruins, kinukuwento ko yung aking childhood. Nung maliit pa kaming magkakapatid pumupunta kami sa Baguio at sumasakay kami ng mga kabayo. Ang aking yumaong kapatid na si Mark Gil eh namatay din dahil sa lung, lung, lung, liver cancer. At madalas kaming sumakay together ng kabayo. Paborito niya isang putting kabayo, kinukwento ko sa aking mga kasamahan, mamaya-maya bigla na lang tumugtog sa background ung kaniyang paboritong kanta na What A Wonderful World. Ang ganda ng song (sings) What a wonderful world… eh birthday niya. So sabi ko, “Naku, he always makes it a point to make me feel that he’s just there watching over me and celebrated his birthday with me.” Which brings me to that first question, my brother passed away 2014, so that’s 5 years ago na. Does the grief ever go away, people?

0:06:18 Tirso: No unfortunately. The grief never goes away. Ah sabi nga nila, “You learn to live with it.” Natututo ka lang na as the years go by, feeling mo nagiging matibay ka until the next flow of memories flood you. (makes a tsk sound) Pasensiya na kayo iyakin akong talaga eh. (audience: Ok lang) Until the next time that the memories flood you and brings you to tears and after a while start to recover. Life goes on hanggang, after a couple of days biglang may maaalala ka na naman. You see, the hard part about losing a loved one sa cancer, like my son, 37 years I was, we stayed in the same house, we lived in the same house, and suddenly when he’s taken away, you’re left with all the memories eh. I go up the stairs, I see the door to his room. Ah… I’m so used, my wife and I are so used to the fact that in the morning before he goes to work, he goes into our room and no matter how late he comes home, no matter how tired he is, he passes by our room and… just good night. So it’s good morning, good night, it’s a, it was a regular routine for as far as I can remember and then suddenly wala na yun especially nung bago pa lang siyang ano, when he was taken away from us. There are days when you wake up and… I expect the door to our room to open and see him. But of course, deep down inside you know it’s never gonna happen. So… the grief never really goes away. Funny, funny ang tinanong mong una, ang una mong question, does the grief go away because nung bago pa lang nawawala yung anak ko, somebody sent me a phrase. Sabi niya, “The grief never ends. It changes. It is not a place to stay in. it is not a, it is not a sign of weakness nor is it a lack of faith. Grief is the price of love.” And that, that phrase has always stuck with me, every time maaalala ko yung anak ko, puma-flash back sa akin yun eh. And I guess some of, I don’t know, somebody who follow me sa Instagram, para akong luko-luko eh (laughs)… hanggang ngayon every morning I greet my son sa Instagram. Every morning I greet him and it’s like it’s the other way around now, I report to my son in the morning, I tell him what my day is gonna be like and ah… what I’m going to do. And of course, I always end it with “Missing you my son.” and #nevertobeforgotten. So in short, as you go back, the grief never really ends. It never ends. It will never disappear.

0:09:54 Cherie: Yeah, I… thank you Pip. I… completely understand and… I feel we’re like really brothers in the industry and in Christ. I like what you just said about grief. Grief is a price of love. Sa akin kasi yung kapatid ko 5 years ago na rin so it’s… time has passed but still, my grief has already come to a place of surrender and strength that I know he’s there watching over me. So that somehow gives us peace but Sigrid, being a life mentor, and I’m sure you’ve faced as well your own journey, both of your son and father. How did that, how did you, how would you advise and how would you also share with us your own journey as well and how you had to cope with that grief.

0:10:48 Sigrid: Thank you. Just to let everybody know yes, just like what Ms. Cherie said, my… the first time I ever heard the word Leukemia was when I was an 8 year old girl and my mom told us, “Your dad has leukemia.” I’ve never heard of that term before. So for an 8 year old to hear that, “What does that mean?” you know. And then of course she said, “It’s a serious disease.” Which means at that time, that was in late 70s, early 80s, she told us that, “We will have to leave you for half of the year.” Well, she didn’t tell us that but it did take that long, 4 years, half of the year they’d be out in the US for treatment. That time it wasn’t so advanced yet so we were fortunate enough to have had that benefit to be able to bring him to the US for treatment. But my world came full circle when I had my son who at 3 years old was told, we were told that he has leukemia. I said, ‘That’s a familiar word. I heard of that before.” Sabi kong ganun. But can it happen to a young child? It can. In fact, now there are more than 3500 cases, diagnosed cases of childhood cancer in the Philippines. Diagnosed alone, so… and it’s growing day by day, year by year and it’s growing. And that’s the reason why we were inspired, my husband and I were to set up Project Brave Kids because then we were thrust into a world na, “Oh my gosh ang dami rin palang cases na similar.” You know, they are fighting. Parents who would have to go through that, not only seeing their child suffer, go through painful experiences, some… what really woke us up was when we were told that, “You know, you’re lucky, you’re able to provide your child. You know, some benefits of the anesthesia and all.” But when we got to see the situation in some charity hospitals where they don’t have that benefit, dinadaganan ng nanay or ng magulang ang mga anak para lang magka bone marrow aspiration or magka intrathecal where they prick your spinal cord, you know to get the medicine in there. I said, “Wow, what is this? What is happening? There’s injustice that’s happening here. Children are supposed to play. They’re supposed to be out there having fun, living the times of their lives, not going through this. But it happens. And that’s why, that’s what moved my husband and I to really you know, make life the best way we can in whatever way we can to make it more a little more comfortable for the families who go through this because it’s not only the child. Minsan iisipin mo, “Sana ako na lang.” Di ba? Bilang nanay, ako na lang. I was talking to Pheobe earlier, she said the same thing na parang at least sa akin, hindi sa mga anak ko.

0:13:39 Sigrid: Pero ang hirap eh, masakit kasi pag nakikita mo bilang nanay na nakikita mo yung anak mo nagsa-suffer. So… that’s why we are now a community. We have our BFK, BKF there, Brave Kids Fighters to community of moms just supporting one another after diagnosis. They are there to support what are the options you can do, the things that you know, we can help you, just hand holding all of the new dignosed patients.

0:14:07 Cherie: That’s fantastic as I only just heard about the foundation today. Fully, what does it do, does, aside from of course like a support group helping other mothers and other parents deal with the situation. In terms of what you mentioned, the financial limitations of dealing with this, how do we deal with that now? I mean, where are we at in terms of like, charity hospitals, particularly Brave Kids Foundation. Is it also one NGO that can actually help, even raise funds for these?

Sigrid: We’ve done, we’ve done that work before. We’ve done some… fund raising for that particular project. We have, we’re a 4 fold program. It’s named after my son, Seve - Social and Family Life, Education, Values Formation and Endowment. So that was part of our thrust before. But now that hearing after, after hearing the previous talk on financial assistance, there are really, you know the awareness has, is out there.

Cherie: So I guess I came too late… (laughs)

Sigrid: (laughs) No but it was, the awareness is there. And the provisions for financial assistance are more available especially with the new law, the Universal Health Care plus the cancer law that you know, the Cancer Coaliton Philippines has really put across and has pushed so hard for there is now, there are now options available for financial assistance. So that’s one aspect. The other aspect is really the social emotional support that all of our patients need. Carers or patients themselves. They all need…

0:15:38 Cherie: And which is greatly needed for healing…

Sigrid: Yes.

Cherie: To be surrounded by that.

Sigrid: And to just have the positivity and support ‘coz the patients get it from their parents themselves. Yeah…

Cherie: Of course. Of course, it’s extended.

Sigrid: And you as cares need it, yeah. You need the positivity.

0:15:52 Cherie: So they can also come to you freely any time. You have sessions to deal with them like counseling them like any time.

Sigrid: Yes. Yes.

0:16:02 Cherie: More on the --- Sigrid. James, what you did with your car. Where is the car now, the Pink Panther?

James: Well, I’ll get to that. I just wanted to add something about when you were talking about grief coz I couldn’t be helped but be moved by both of your stories and I came, I lost a very, very, very good friend not to cancer but very, very recently and very suddenly. He was my age, which means very young. Di ba? (audience laughs) That’s not a joke, don’t laugh. Ok thank you. No, what he said, well I put this here and I thought it might help you and it sums it up for me. I said, “Grief I’ve learned…” I don’t know who originally said this but go because like most people you don’t wanna hear the worst case scenario. My mom being the support of sister said, “Look there’s nothing to worry about just go. If you don’t believe me I’ll go with you. Sige na nga I’ll get checked with you.” She had the same check on the same day and the doctor didn’t let both of them leave. They were both diagnosed with breast cancer that day. So she just went there to accompany. And she came out with breast cancer. So when we got the news that it was a double whammy because we are so close to both, and I from this side of the world, we’re in the Philippines, she’s in the gold coast in Australia, how do you help? How do you, you know we couldn’t just keep flying backwards and forwards and all that. And the little I know about cancer or what I learned about cancer is cancer loves darkness. Ok? It’s one of the divide and conquer type of disease. It likes to isolate you. It likes to pull you away from your support system and your friends because that’s where it does its best work, in the darkness, in the shadows. So the only way I knew how to fight it was light. Shine a light on this. Because the more people talking about, the more people who know about it, the more people who are encouraging that is your best bet aside from whatever treatment you’re going through. I’m not offering it as a replacement but it is very valuable. When you shine a light on it and the only way I knew how to do that was to paint my car pink. Because my mom knows I love my car more than just about anything except my family. I’m a car guy that’s what I do for a living and I love my car. So for me, to paint that car bright shocking pink, the same color as that shirt, and drive that around, it was a daily driver, to pick kids at school, it did everything. It created this, this support system and it became so magical for those 2 that for the first 3 months or so, they almost forgot they had cancer. Because everybody was talking about everything else and it started to become this phenomenon on Facebook and I realized how much impact it had. And what also freaked me out was I realized how many people have been touched by cancer. Everyone had a cancer story. So I offered them this, I said this shouldn’t be for my mom and Tita Jean, this should be for everyone. You have somebody that you know is struggling, has struggled or you even lost them to cancer, let us write their names on this. So people started writing their name. Within a few days, the car didn’t have a single spot left on it. Names were everywhere. The people were signing it and all that. And it became this beautiful rolling memorial so to speak but in a very positive way, attracting attention, getting people to talk about it, getting people to get checked. And all that awareness went to a very good place.

0:19:33 James: I eventually had to take it out only because of this, I didn’t foresee this problem. It was wrapped in a pink foil so it wasn’t paint, you know how they wrap these cars, it looks exactly like paint and it’s, it’s actually very, very good. But after a while the names started to fade, right? So we were, my kids were like every other week, were tracing over it. But then, even then there were thousands of names on the car. And what I didn’t want to happen was this, after 2 years or 3 years and that car was being displayed in malls and, and every, anyone who asked for it, I just gave it to them to use. And I didn’t want it to look like it was starting to degrade and starting to lose its…

Cherie: Life…

James: Kasi there was sacredness attached to it di ba? And as, as both of you know with relatives that you lost, and you put your name on that car, and you saw that car one day either parked in a street and it’s all faded with dirt and all that, I didn’t know how would that affect you. So I thought while it’s still there and still intact, I removed the paint, the paint meaning the foil, we folded it into a little box, we put it into the trunk of the car and it’s sealed there forever. And now, if it ever is involved in any kind of you know, it’s parked on the side of the road, people don’t know and it’s nice and it’s safe now.

Cherie: Well preserved.

James: Yes.

Cherie: What car was it?

James: It’s a Volkswagen Polo.

Cherie: Awww… cute.

James: Yes.

Cherie: Very nice car.

James: Your car? (talking to someone in the audience) We call it the Pink Panther and it touched so many lives. It was really incredible.

Cherie: I like that.

James: You know what? Little anecdote.

Cherie: Yes.

James: And I may still do it, I hope I can still do it, we were actually going to, it inspired so many people that there was one guy and the owner of the Ferrari dealership here in, in Manila and Maserati. He got so inspired he did the same to his brand new Maserati, right? (audience reacts)

Cherie: Pink.

James: One thing to do with a Volkswagen Polo, na diesel, manual, one thing to do to a top of the line Quattroporte.

Cherie: Oh my goodness…

James: About 12 million peso car, he covered it pink. Do you know that I eventually challenged him to a race, my diesel Polo against his Maserati V8.

Cherie: And what?

0:21:50 James: And the rules were going to be like this, we will race but on social media because there’s no way that the Volkswagen Polo could compete with a Maserati. So it will be on likes na lang. (laughs) So we’re gonna have this big race. It didn’t happen because of something…Tsk, there was a, there was a reason it didn’t happen but we’re hopefully gonna solve that and make it happen.

Cherie: So he actually painted his Maserati pink?

James: He did.

Cherie: Who is he?

James: I don’t… Mark Su???

Cherie: Ah well, who else, of course.

James: Yes. So I wonder if it’s still pink. I don’t know if he removed it. It might still be pink.

Cherie: How wonderful. Well, on that note, gaya ng sinabi ni James no? I think it’s a fantastic thing that I truly believe is to bring light sa, sa paligid, sa inyong kalooban, sa kasamahan. Di ba? I mean, much as it’s difficult, it’s very hard, like in my case when my brother that time was also going through liver cancer, nakakabuhay sa kaniya talaga yung trabaho niya. That’s what kept him going… yung kaniyang sense of purpose, yung kaniyang sense of usefulness. Siyempre hindi niya pinaalam sa publiko na meron siya, ayaw niya no? Fighter din at bumili ako ng Yellow Cooper (laughs)… to bring light everywhere we go and take it up on road trips and, and we go down to Tagaytay and we drive around. So, yeah I think also meditation has helped a lot right? Yung prayers, a strong sense of prayer and faith. But coming to that, there are moments when… there are days that talagang heavy hearted ka and you’re helpless. How does the family dynamics change? Is it for the better after you lose someone you love? Does it make it come together in a tighter way or in not a better way? Who would like… ako naman maraming questions kasi…

0:23:52 Tirso: I believe even without talking about it, the… the family became tighter, became closer and ah… you know, you know things that you take for granted in life when everything is just fine and dandy, you just, you know, it’s like going through the motions. You don’t pay attention, too much detail on little, nitty gritties and then suddenly when something like this happens and you go through it for… well I would say, an extended period of time and until the time that you know, one of you is gone like what happened to us. I mean like, like you know, the, the I should have, could have, would have, questions are always there like… you start blaming yourself like I should have done more, I should ah, I should have shown him more love and everything. We, we got trapped into that for a while, my wife and I and even ah… Bodie, my son and my youngest daughter, Djanin, though they never talked about it, you could sense, sense it in them. Until one day ah… he was a doctor in St. Luke’s told, I think we were talking right after TJ passed and then we said, I don’t know for whatever reason he was about to ride the elevator and he stopped and came back and said, “Mr. Cruz, Mrs. Cruz, if there’s one thing I don’t want you to do,” he said, “Don’t ever blame yourself for whatever. Don’t ever blame yourself because…” He said, “I’ve never seen a parent who wouldn’t readily give his life for his son and do everything for his son. For sure… “ He said, “You and your wife have tried to do everything for him. It’s just that when something like this happens, you feel like you’ve been robbed.” I’ve been robbed of so many more years that I was hoping I could spend with my son but ah… unfortunately it was time for him to go to heaven. The only thing that really made us strong was our faith, relying on the Lord and it was a hard (clears throat), I’m sorry. It was a very hard journey, accepting the fact that your son died. And then, holding onto your faith and holding on and believing that the Lord didn’t short changed you, the Lord didn’t rob you of anything. It’s just that it was time for your son to come home. And… but still up to now, I mean like you know, being touchy, being able to embrace each other, being able to give my son a kiss in the morning when they leave or… at least taking, taking a little time, you know, “Ma, I’m going.” “You have a great day. You have a good day. God bless you.” These were the things before that for a while we never really focused on, we never really took time out to say, I mean, like you know, when you’re eaten up by the system. You’re eaten up by work. You’re eaten up like you’re running after time and… years ago, we… for a while, we lost this. We didn’t have time to say goodbye to each other. We didn’t have time to sit down and eat properly. Sometimes… one would eat ahead of the other. And you know, we wouldn’t have time anymore to have at least once a week to bond as a family. But after this happened, we, we made sure that there would always be time for that, I mean like no matter how busy we were, no matter how things were looking like you know, we’re running out of time. No… we, we always had, we, we made sure that there’ll always be a time to stop, sit down, even for short road??? just to have dinner, eat, talk, find out what’s happening in each other’s life and… hopefully we’ll continue to do that and it will grow stronger and stronger and stronger.

0:28:26 Sigrid: That’s, that’s part of your journey of healing really… so I… actually even if my son is alive now, it, it doesn’t stop us. I still cry at this point, you know, I’m just so thankful that my son is still alive but what cancer taught us was to make each moment count, really, to make each moment matter. And now more than ever I… what hit home is really the phrase: deliberate parenting, intentional parenting. Just really being there for my 8 kids, each one of them, spending time with each one of them, asking them what is important for them, finding out what matters to them. What makes them laugh? What are their passions? You know what, what are their fears and really looking for that time with each one of them. And there shouldn’t be any excuse. It should fall behind whatever commitments you have because you never know. Just like in his case, you never know when God will call them. You know, and although it is a journey that you have to go through, it’s a part of your healing process where you accept, you deny. I went through that phase also because it runs in my family as I said, my dad had it. And when my son had it, I started asking myself, “What, what is wrong with me? You know, “Why, why my son?” But ah… you’re right Mr. Cruz like, really you shouldn’t blame yourself. You just have to focus, move forward, look at what you can do, arm youself as a parent.

0:30:06 Sigrid: “What can I do?” Research. “How can I help? How I can be my doctor’s partners in this?” You know as parents, “How can I help?” And you know, even speak their terms. “What is ANC? What is BMA? What is intrathecal?” These things, so that you, you become your chilld’s or your, your relative’s aid and assistant in this because more than any, you know, more than ever, you need, they need you and you are their source, I’m speaking from the caregiver’s point of view, you are their source of strength and inspiration. And that’s a lot to take on. It’s not easy. It’s not easy, it’s difficult to, to really be, become the source of joy and strength of, of the people in your lives, the loved ones who are facing cancer. But you have been given that gift and that role. And really that special role is, is on you and, and you can do it. Kaya, kaya ‘to. You just have to have the positive disposition and I cannot stress enough, faith. I don’t think I will ever survive this or anyone, James or Ms. Cherie, will ever survive this, if there was no admission that there is a far greater being than you. Because there are, like father, what Fr. Orbos said, “Yes, it may… C starts with cancer, but C also starts with Christ.” Who is a far greater being than all of us and who’s there hand holding you, telling you, prodding you, “Kaya niyo ‘to. Gagawin natin ‘to. We will go through it no matter what happens.”

0:31:45 Cherie: Thank you Sigrid. On that note, in lieu of that, minsan tao lang tayo di ba? Nauubos din tayo, nahihirapan, nade-deplete ka rin ‘coz the whole energy’s I mean, it could also drain you. So, on that note, do you recommend, or did you go through counseling as well? Aside from being yourself a mentor, for your own dynamics in your family of feeling helpless in your own discovery and how to deal with it. Is it important to, do you advise of course, I believe you should, one can and one should, but did you have to go through that? James in terms of your, you yourself is a positive, strict looking guy (laughs) I mean like, you know, you think bright, so… did you…

James: Well, we… we, my mom survived and so did Tita Jean. So they were, they were cleared eventually. So they’re in remission. Thank you.

Cherie: Fantastic. (audience claps)

James: And ah… so it is, we didn’t have thankfully, to go through that, through the counseling of losing my mom. But we lost her brother to cancer as well after that. So… it’s just, you never get too cocky with cancer right?

Cherie: Yes, yes. So there’s always that fear and the possibility of ending up with life being taken away.

James: There is, there is. You don’t, you don’t taunt it just let it, just let it be where wherever as long as it stays away from you and sana… but I don’t have an answer for the counseling side because we didn’t lose, we didn’t lose my mom to that.

0:33:12 Cherie: But in effect James, I mean the process of you not knowing also if she would be in remission or not, the possibility of it happening. Right?

James: Oh that’s the horrible part. Absolutely I mean, I just, I mean I’m just hearing stories here and I know many people in the room have also lost a very, very close loved one to, to cancer. I can’t put myself in that space but yes, I can put myself in the space and then I can’t compare to whatever everyone else have gone through but it’s a very horrible feeling ‘coz you just, it’s the uncertainty. I mean, it’s… it just you don’t know and you feel so helpless. And obviously as a loved one, that’s, that’s really what you want to do, you wanna be able to see how can I help. So… that’s how I was able to help. And it did help me so maybe that was my therapy too.

Cherie: In your own way. Your own coping mechanism.

0:33:58 James: So maybe in a way, it was a very selfish act.

Cherie: So what do you feel you wish you had done? Or this, rather at the time, there’s also like the elephant in the room. Like sometimes, you can’t even talk about it. Hindi ba? Ang hirap. Paano nga ba? Ano, tawa na lang ba tayo dito nang tawa? How would that be? I mean, how do you approach it on a daily basis? There’d be moments that, the denial is also there.

James: Well… thankfully that car sorted that problem out because it put that conversation right into the public wall. So… all of a sudden it’s like, well whether you like it or not, the elephant is now talking. (laughs) So, it became its own little thing there and so it didn’t create any taboos around it. It didn’t create that I don’t know how to bring it up because now that screaming pink Polo going around Metro Manila and if you didn’t see it on the road, you saw it online. It was making its rounds so it, not just for our family but for other families who didn’t know how to deal with it and talk right. It became a trigger for conversation...

Cherie: There you go.

James: To be able to talk about it. Remember cancer hates that. It hates unity. It hates all those things that bring us together as human beings. It wants to come in, divide and conquer. So try to find a way where you can bond together, you can bind together. In unity there is strength. And the overall impact of a good, positive outlook. You cannot underestimate that. Even doctors, medical doctors will tell you how important that is. Your outlook, the way you feel about it and being positive about it.

0:35:31 Cherie: So yun. It’s obviously living proof that your mother and your aunt survived cancer and to actually approach it with an open mind, open heart and with a very strong faith, and to be there for each other. Di ba? Pipo, is there anything about this whole journey that you discovered about yourself that you never knew about yourself?

Tirso: The only thing that I discovered about myself is that I had to really depend and rely on like, he said, just hanging onto the Lord. The hardest part of that, of that journey was, you know I’m sure a lot of you can identify with this, you know when you’re looking from the outside, I mean like, you have a friend or a close, a person close to you and whose family, who has someone in their family who’s sick with cancer, it’s so easy for you to come up with logical… explanations and you know, “Don’t worry, she’ll survive this. We’ll fight this. You just have to have faith. You have to, you have to look on the bright side.” But when it happens to you, all that logic flies out the window. I mean, you don’t wanna accept it. You don’t wanna face it even though you know the inevitable is there already. The doctors talked to you about it. You refused to accept it. It happened to us, my wife… in the six-month journey, during the latter part, of course, the oncologist talked to us about it already, about… quality of life that my son would have, should we continue on with the treatments and… well it was clear, I mean for me at least, it was clear, I could see him weaning slowly on a daily basis. I could see him, drifting away. And there was one day, I was about to talk to my wife. I said, “You know, we have to talk about this.” And that was, that was the only thing I was able to say. “You know we have to talk about this.” And she comes up with one word, “No.” So I shut out. I mean, ok, I mean like you know, ok we’ll fight. We’ll fight, no matter what happens, we’ll fight. Same thing came out of the mouth of my son, who is now a pastor, Bodie and the sister. I said, “What’s your stake in this?” “No, we’ll fight. We’ll fight. We’ll go on.” And so even deep down inside me, I was trying to be logical but of course I was looking at my son and I wanted him to live so much. I wanted him to survive. I wanted him to be able to go over the hump as the Lord helped me to go over that hump. Because as you mentioned earlier, I am a lung cancer survivor. I was operated on in 2014 and up to now I have my regular pet scan which is next month I’m due for it though I have been cleared almost every year since 2014 by my doctor. (clapping) But everytime that my pet scan comes, that fear still comes into my mind. The only one, the one thing that I pray for every time I have my pet scan, 2 words. I only want to see 2 words on that paper when it comes out – no recurrences. And every time I see that I’m well, I’m fine, I’m great. (clapping) And I all, and I attribute that to the Lord, our God, I mean like…

Cherie: And I vouch for that.

0:39:36 Tirso: No one else.

Cherie: I vouch, I vouch for that.

Tirso: No one else. That’s… I mean like, I knew I had very good doctors. But deep down inside later on in life, I realized even my doctors were chosen by God because if God didn’t give me the good doctors, I wouldn’t have survived this disease most probably. (clapping)

Cherie: One great man, people and I vouch for that. His faith is strong and look, you have a pastor for a son pa! Oh, created more faith in the family. Well…

Tirso: It’s funny now, I mean like you know, sometimes other pastors approach me and say, “How does it feel to be pastored by your son?” (laughs) And I said, “Ah… it’s, during the first… few months it was weird.”

Cherie: Sure but never mind pastor ka namin.

Tirso: Yeah but pastor ko siya so…

Cherie: Para sa amin namang mga kasamahan niya sa industriya lalo na isa na ako dun, pag magkakatrabaho kami, ako yung pina pastor niya. But yeah, I wish we can share some more. We have 10 more minutes left, if there’s any other question that you’d like to ask, please feel free because this is actually your floor. Go ahead ma’am.

0:40:46 Q1: Hi.

Cherie (off mic): What’s your name?

Q1 (off mic) Edith po.

Cherie: Edith.

Q1: Yeah, magandang hapon po sa ating lahat. Ako po si Edith, Edith Reyes po ng, from Antipolo City. Kasi po lahat po nung kuwento niyo, naka relate po ako dun kasi po I have 3 children and my, and my son was the youngest. Namatay po siya sa cancer. Ah… he was 3 years old nung mahiwalay po ako sa tatay niya. So mag-isa ko lang po siya pinalaki until naging chef po siya. Ngayon po nung nagkasakit, hindi po niya alam na may sakit siya, hindi po niya alam kasi po masyado siyang fascinated as a chef. Actually nag a-appear na siya nun sa ANC pag nagku-cook, yung cooking. Tapos po lagi po siyang merong food tasting sa Blue Leaf, sa BGC. Talaga pong masyado po akong na-ano sa kaniya, marami siyang binigay na kasiyahan sa akin dahil nag abroad po siya. Nagpunta po siya ng Canada. Dun po siya sa Tony Roma’s nag work. That year, 2013, umuwi po siya ng Pilipinas kasi po nagbakasyon siya. Pero nagtaka po ako, afer a while sabi niya po sa akin, “Nay hindi na po ako babalik ng Canada.” So nagalit po ako kasi ang usapan namin pagbalik niya kasama na niya ako. Kasi po yung asawa niya hindi niya pwedeng isama agad-agad dahil nagkaroon po ng open heart surgery, pinalitan yung valve. So ang sabi niya ako daw ang isasama niya. So dun po nag-away po kaming dalawa. Nag-away po kami kasi nga as a mother kasi masyado, yung kung baga, yung ano ko na makarating din po ako dun as immigrant. Ang sabi niya po sa akin ganito, “Nay ayaw mo ba yun? Kasi nung umalis ako, maliliit pa yung mga anak ko hindi ko na sila nakasama. Ayaw mo yun magba-bonding tayo?” Yun ganun po yung sinabi niya sa akin. Tapos po nun nung sabi niya, “Huwag kang mag-alala magkakaroon ako ng trabaho.” So naging Executive Chef po siya ng Josiah’s. Actually dun po siya nag ano, nag work. Ngayon po nung ano na siya, nung nagwo-work na po siyang ganyan, so wala akong magagawa kasi anak ko po siya, nagpupunta po siya sa amin during mga off days niya. Pag andun po siya sa amin, hihiga lang po siya dun, sasabihin niya po sa akin, “Nay huwag mong sasabihin kay Kay na nandito ako, gusto lang kita kasing makasama.” So hihiga-higa po siya sa kama, aamuyin yung kili-kili ko, niyayakap niya ako. Yun po yung ano niya, tapos ho nung September 24, 2014 nagpunta po kami sa doctor kasi tumu… ano siya nagkakaroon ng bleeding sa ano, sa nose. Tapos po nalaman ko sabi, “Hindi mo ba alam na ang sakit mo,” Sabi po nung ano, nung doctor sa kanya, “Cancer ang sakit mo.” So nagulat po ako. Talagang at that time hindi ko alam kung iiyak ako o ano. Tapos ang sabi niya sa akin, “Oh, bakit ka ninenerbiyos cancer lang yun eh.” Sabi niya po sa akin. Nung anak ko po. Kasi siguro pinapalakas niya po yung ano ko. Ngayon po di sa madaling salita, nag chemo po siya, nag chemo, nag radiation, lahat po ginawa. That time PCSO, DOH, pabalik-balik po ako kasi hindi naman po kami mayaman. So ganun po ano po. Nung, bone cancer po kasi siya eh. Ngayon po nung, siguro po mga 5 months na siya, 5 months na po siya, kasi po tayo pag namamatayan po tayo, gusto ko lang po i-share na, iba ang level namatayan ka ng nanay, ng parents, iba rin yung level namatayan ka ng kapatid, pero iba pong level pag namatayan ka ng anak. Napakasakit po talaga kaya ramdam ko po kayo Mr. Cruz sa nararamdaman niyo dahil hanggang ngayon umiiyak pa rin ako. Kaya nga po nung, yung anak ko po… masakit mawalan ng anak pero nung nakikita kong in pain yung anak ko, ako po nakiusap sa Diyos, “Lord, kunin Mo na po yung anak ko kasi hindi ko siya kayang nakikitang ganito kahirap.” Kasi ho umiiyak, nagmo-moan po siya. Sobra. Ma’am kaya ko lang po ito (crying) sine-share ko ho sa inyo kasi… kasi po hanggang ngayon ang sakit-sakit po talaga ma’am, wala ng… nag-iisa kong anak na lalake, bunso pa po, ang sakit po talaga. Ang sakit…

0:45:38 Cherie: Well… kaya nandito po tayo para mag share with one another, and share each other’s strength and thank you so much Edith (clapping) for sharing your story with us. Ako po, hindi ko rin po ma-imagine kaya isang inspirasyon din sa akin si Kuya Pip. Tama nga, ika nga ng Mommy ko rin, hindi talaga na e-expect na mauunahan kayo ng anak di ba? It’s but normal na mauuna yung mga magulang. So I cannot still imagine the pain of… what my mother has gone through especially and… Pipo and Lyn, my dear friend, Lyn. And I still feel her still going through it. Yes, please. Come if you don’t mind. We have one last…

Q2: Ako po si Stella…

Cherie: Question, ah there’s the mic. Ok. Hi Stella.

Q2: Ng Brave Kids Fighters. Ano po… si… tanong ko lang po kay Mr. Tirso Cruz III, ano po kilala po kayo sa pagiging relihiyoso talaga, kayong mag-asawa po, dumating po ba kayo sa point na nung kinuha yung anak niyo, nagalit po kayo sa Panginoong Diyos?

0:46:58 Tirso: Hindi po ako magsisinungaling. Yes. Yes. When my son died… para bang I said to myself, “Time will come when you take me,” I was talking to God, “Time will come when you take me, I have a bone to pick with You.” Because the question was… “Why take my son?” I mean, “He hasn’t done anything wrong.” I mean, you know. For a while po, totoo yun yung sinabi niyo, for a while… nagalit ako sa Diyos. It’s only the people who love me and the people around me who… basically really, not really wake me out, wake me up out of that anger but you know, alam mo namang mali ka. Alam mong mali ka, alam mong wala kang karapatang kuwestyunin nang ganun ang Diyos kaya lang… dahil sa pagmamahal mo sa anak mo, dahil sa sama ng loob mo nawala yung anak mo, you’re, you’re looking at some ano, someone to lash out at. Para bang you’re looking at someone to blame for it or whatever and… para bang… you’re supposed to be a good God. Di ba? So why? Why? Why nangyari? So opo, totoo po yung sinabi niyo. Siguro kaya niyo naitanong baka kung may nangyari na rin sa inyong ganun, siguro nga nagalit din kayo sa Panginoon. Madaming beses na po akong nagtampo sa Panginoon. Kasi po ang totoo niyan, namatayan na ako ng kapatid, namatayan na ako ng nanay, namatayan ako ng tatay. Pero nung mamatay yung anak ko, ibang klase yung sakit. And if one thing sa mga… sa mga nanay na nandito ngayon, sobra. Sobra, saludo ako sa inyo. Kasi alam ko, bilang ama masakit sa akin mawalan ng anak eh. Pero alam ko mas masakit sa nanay kasi kayo nagdala niyan sa sinapupunan, nasa pupunan niyo for 9 months, dala-dala niyo yan, kasama niyo yan sa katawan niyo. And not only that, after that when you gave birth, pinalaki niyo pa yang mga yan. You weaned, you gave your life. I mean, sabi nga nila, every time a woman gives birth, she puts her life on the line. And you were willing to put your life on the line because of your love for them kaya alam ko… it’s more heart breaking and heart wrenching for a mother to lose a son as compared sa tatay. Of course, pareho kayong magulang pero… I can relate to the pain that it brings sa bawat magulang lalo na sa mga ina. Kaya sa inyong mga ina, I take my hats off to you na na-survive niyo yung ganun, pinapalakpakan ko po kayong lahat. (clapping)

0:49:54 Cherie: Thank you so much Pipo. Thank you Kuya Pip. Well talaga namang hindi natin maiwasan na when we talk about such a topic like this, that we will all feel very emotional and it’s very good in healing, feeling. I think this is also very important for us to all be healed together and come together in that one strong unified energy of positivity. Thank you so much again, James for sharing your light and your… your spunk for life. And thank you so much, Sigrid for also being there to help other mothers and families and continuously… support this, this venture with the Brave Kids Foundation, our Brave Kids is that right? Project Brave Kids. And of course, most of all to my dear friend, Tirso Cruz III, thank you for your, (clapping) for your human, soft and authentic vulnerable side talaga, thank you grabe. Thank you so much for your strength. Maraming salamat ho. (clapping) I am thankful to be part of this. An eye opener. An eye opener. Paul…

0:51:05 Paul: Ok, maraming, maraming salamat sa ating mga panauhin, ang apat na panauhin. Alam ko gustong-gusto niyong magpa-picture sa kanila. So let’s do this na orderly, parang awa niyo na po. Ok? (laughs) Kasi ako po’y ina-assign sa kuwarto na ito, so ayoko pong umalis tayo na magulo. Medyo mabigat po ang ating pinag-usapan, bibitbitin po natin ito kasi alam ko marami tayong natutunan. Pero I think we need to gather sa plenary for our final closing. But bago yan meron tayong, tulad ng mga sessions kanina, tatayo sila dito, ang mga photographer natin nandito para kuha lahat ok? So respetuhin na lang po natin ang space ng ating mga, mga guests, so para huwag na masyadong magpa-selfie. Maraming salamat po. So may I ask you to please sit, and then the photographers will take the photo from the stage. Yeah…

Paul: So inaanyayahan po namin lahat na tumuloy po sa plenary pagkatapos ng picture taking. Napaka importante po na magkaroon po tayo ng closing bilang isang komunidad, ok.

Paul: Ok, so tayo po lahat para magaganda po ang mga litrato.

(picture taking)

Paul: So please, I’ll see you all po sa Plenary Hall. Ang official closing po ng Silver Linings mangyayari po.

**0:53:27: END OF SESSION**

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**