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There is one thing stronger than your mind, it's your heart. My mind battled my heart for days, weeks, then months because I couldn't quite accept the fate my family had been given. My father was diagnosed with heart failure when I was a young child, so I couldn't help but desire to blame the one person I learned about each day, God. My mind gave me great explanations as to why everything I believed in was bogus, but my heart told me to stick it out, see what the future holds. I had the hardest opponent I've ever faced, myself and due to that I learned the power faith holds over momentary pain.

When My father was prodded, examined, and tested to determine his state, I sat still on the hallway floor full of surgery rooms. Each doctor that appeared gave my mother different bits of information, but in the end saying we were blessed, lucky, and should be ever grateful. My father's heart was working at twelve percent and was surrounded in liquid. My parents were supposed to fly out on vacation the next day and if they had my father would have died as the plane flew into the air. I'm blessed they told me. Really? My father still suffers I thought, experienced surgery after surgery for months, jumps from drug to drug to keep himself alive, and can't be the man he was before because he was so blessed to not die quickly but slowly in front of the people who love him most. I asked myself if I was blessed because I wasn't the one in the hospital bed, or if it was because my father rather did not die instantly by a death that may not have hurt much, but had to suffer in agony each day for the rest of the life that he had left.

I was a toddler running around my Nonna's house already shouting prayers. Some of the first things my family taught me as a child were prayers, I learned them in English and Italian because prayer would be the way my Nonna and I communicated. Church on Sundays, Catholic grade school, and a strict Italian grandmother that was determined to have grandchildren that lived in the likeness of God. God was someone I learned about each day at school, at home, and the man I was told would always be there even though I could not see him. My faith in him was real, I thought he was invincible, the person who secretly told me what I was destined to do in my dreams. Struck with awe, the day I heard my father was ill I couldn't help but believe that if I prayed to God, my father would be healed. I prayed, I brought out my rosary and I begged. I told God I would sacrifice anything I had, so my dad may live and be himself again. I stayed steady requesting this for months. It wasn't until my parents sat my brothers and I down and told us my father was never going to get better, that I stopped praying and believing in God overall. I couldn't believe in someone who was supposed to be there for me, listen to my request, do what was best for me, never leave me, but managed to ignore all I had said for months. I felt alone, unheard, and all I wanted was to blame God for the suffering my father would have to endure.

My brain told me I was right to be angry, in fact that there was too much anger in me to even believe anymore. I concluded that if God was real he wouldn't make my father suffer when he had done nothing wrong. I was angrier when I realized my father's suffering rubbed off on my mother, my brothers and I, we weren't the same anymore we too had to suffer in our own way. Waking up in the morning was what I feared most because what if only four people woke and my father didn't. I have been lucky, that hasn't happened but one could see the distorted suffering my family experiences. With all this, my brain told me to throw God in the trash, my prayers didn't work, and if he was real, he would have ended our suffering. My brain wasn't alone, my

heart spoke out and told me that my resentment and anger was only going to hurt me. I stayed angry for a while, but eventually it hurt too much and I chose to listen to my heart. In the midst of the madness only one of my body parts knew what I needed, to believe. I had to believe in something greater than what I could see. Something greater developed my happiest moments and deepest experiences of sorrow. I didn't desire to understand to fight this being anymore, I just wanted to understand. After time, I understood that I would never know everything, but I knew I was loved because there are days my father doesn't suffer and it is a joy filled day. My heart had won, I told my brain to accept what my heart believed. It took time, but eventually I began to pray again, I believed in something.

Fighting yourself is scary because you always win. My head or my heart was going to win the fight, but how could I know which one should. I learned to trust and believe in others, this helped me to see that the pain I was put through was a test. God tested my families faith and honestly, we almost failed. He didn't leave, he was the nagging burn in my heart, he held onto me when I was suffering and refused to let go. I thought God had left me but he was my heart, he refused to let me forget love and forgiveness. I battled myself to see if my faith was real. I learned that I could close myself off but it resulted in a very unhappy person or I could accept help from the people I could see and the ones I couldn't, resulting in a happier girl. Watching someone I love suffer forced me to confront my faith, fight it, and watch it overcome me when I tried to deny it. My grandmother taught me to communicate through prayer and without the foundation of God's love I wouldn't be able to beat my mind out and let my faith shine.