

## **PRAYER LISTS MEAN GREAT FOOD**

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My mother recently underwent hand surgery and, surprisingly to me, made it a point to notify everyone in advance. She did everything short of place a display ad in the local newspaper to let folks know of her diagnosis and treatment. In contrast, I will go out of my way to keep people from knowing my medical business. When I'm not feeling well or having surgery, the absolute LAST thing I want to do is talk about it. Conversing about medical stuff is just downright icky. Plus, it's contagious. Mention that you've had an upset stomach and within minutes you'll probably learn the details of someone else's recent week-long bout of diarrhea. I'm an easygoing person, but it's actually a well known rule at my dinner table: no medical talk. But that's another story.

Since her hand would be in a giant bandage and my mom was going to need assistance with everyday chores, I offered to stay at her house and help out. But even before she underwent the scalpel, I quickly realized that my presence wasn't needed. Mom had planned her recovery period with the precision of a four-star general overseeing a withdrawal of troops. She'd arranged for a neighbor to pull the trashcan to the curb once weekly (even though I'd be there), walk my dog (even though I'd be there), and water her outside patio plants (even though I'd be there). She hired a maid service to clean the house (no argument with that one).

She even added her name to the prayer list at church. Maybe it was so everyone would know why she wasn't sitting in a pew that Sunday, or perhaps she did it for the sense of security in knowing that a hundred people were praying for her fast recovery. On the other hand, maybe she did it for the food.

Within an hour after Mom arrived home from the hospital, the doorbell started to ring. A steady stream of people flowed through the house bringing flowers, green plants, balloons, and casseroles. Lots of casseroles. Later that evening, her best friend arrived toting a fully prepared dinner. All I had to do was heat it and serve it. The next day, another complete meal was delivered by another of Mom's friends. Upon quizzing the benevolent chefs, I learned that my mother's Sunday School class had actually made a dinner delivery *schedule* for the entire week! All because of full disclosure: Mom had openly—and in vivid detail—told her social circle about the surgery well in advance of its scheduled date.

Then again, Mom and her friends can discuss things that end in "oscopy" with the ease of American Idol fans discussing the season six finale. I know. I've witnessed it firsthand. Several times. At her dinner table. It had a profound affect on me. It's what created the need for my earlier-mentioned rule.

But back to Mom. As planned, I stayed with her while her hand healed. My dog was being walked. The house was cleaned. The trash can was magically going in and out of the garage, precisely on garbage collection day. The outdoor plants were green and

happy. And the food kept coming. Delicious homemade meals that arrived at our door complete with handwritten serving instructions. (The only food that ever arrives at my front door is a Dominos pizza.)

It was sort of like being on vacation without going anywhere, and it gave me time to begin work on my next novel. My main responsibility was to return dishes to their rightful owners. Of course with each dish delivery, I had to report on the patient. Which wasn't that horrible since my updates didn't occur in the same sentence as, "would you please pass the rolls?" I quickly learned the medical-talk lingo, and by the third or fourth oral report, I found myself gossiping with Mom's friends about everything from the golf pro's prostate to the mailman's esophagus. I may have even uttered something that ended with "oscopy".

My no-medical-talk-at-the-table rule still stands. But I've decided that prayer lists are great, especially when those praying can also cook. I've already told mom to count me in if she has another surgery.

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