

Kingdom Moments – A Miracle for Dezmond



A MIRACLE FOR DEZMOND

By Jeff Kimbrel

March 5, 2023

L to R: Jeff, Ava, Dezmond, and Mary Kimbrel

Our son Dezmond was born on January 13, 2011, in Boise, Idaho. We arrived in Hawaii on July 4, 2012. My wife Mary jokes that Dezmond's soul heard we were going to Hawaii, and he decided there was no way we were going without him.

EVERYTHING SPIRALING OUT OF CONTROL

In early November of last year, a doctor took **samples of an abscess/growth on Dezmond's gum**. The doctor told us not to worry about cancer because oral cancer does not occur in eleven-year-old children.

I was standing outside of Adela's Country Eatery on November 11, 2022, waiting for take-out when I got the worst news of my life. I received a call from Dr. Nishimoto, an oral surgeon.

"Jeff, are you home? Are you sitting down?" asked the doctor.

"No, waiting for food."

"If you want to go home, I can call you back."

"Absolutely not, please tell me now."

The doctor said. **"It's cancer."**

It was like I was somewhere else watching myself talking into my phone. I just stuffed down every proper emotion and asked Dr. Nishimoto questions on Dez's treatment as if my son was a car. It was all I could do to maintain composure.

Dr. Nishimoto explained that he spoke with the doctor he did his residency under in Seattle. They agreed Dezmond would be needing surgery to remove all of the teeth/gums below the upper left jawbone. Part of his palate also needed to be removed. A piece of Dezmond's leg bone would replace the jawbone/palate and a skin graft would be used to cover it. In addition, Dezmond would need a neck dissection to remove the lymph nodes which would result in a sizable scar. A prosthesis

would be made to replace his caved facial features and teeth. But even with that, growth in that area would be stunted and have a slight deformity. When Dez stopped growing, he would be a candidate for dental implants. That was the good news. After this treatment he would begin chemotherapy.

I cannot fully express the love we have for our older daughter Ava and beautiful son. For Dez I was charged with the responsibility to teach him to be a good man, to care for his mom and sister, to rise above my accomplishments and faults, find his own path, and achieve his dreams. I want nothing else in this world but this.

Now with the news, we began to worry about getting Dez through the next few years. Will there be a next few years? Can he go to school? Is this going to stunt his growth? He will not be able to box! He loves boxing. What about his guitar lessons? He was going to start playing in a three-piece band. What is this going to do to him mentally? We had so many plans and everything was spiraling out of control.

FINDING GOD AT DVG JIU JITSU

During the early fall 2022 I received an advertisement for a new Brazilian Jiu Jitsu school on my Facebook feed. Professor (black belt instructor) Brandon Gross was making the pitch. I knew him as a K-Team BJJ instructor in Kaneohe. He had a great reputation and taught a Friday family class that had a great logo of a father holding his son on his shoulders. I explored the webpage and saw that there was another instructor, Professor Garrett Whitman at DVG Jiu Jitsu. I signed up for an appointment to meet both professors and was a new student by the end of the meeting.

A couple of weeks later, before the DVG grand opening day event, we received Dezmond's diagnosis. I texted Professor Brandon that I had a family emergency, and it would not be possible for me to attend, congratulated them on the opening, and I would follow up the next week.

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I called Professor Brandon later that week and told him that my boy had cancer. I felt so defeated in every way. I continued to tell him I wanted to come to class but I might be a bit of a mess. **Professor Brandon listened. He knew I needed help and asked if we could pray. He asked for God's guidance and strength for Mary and me, for Dezmond's healing, and courage for the trials ahead.** When I arrived at school for class, both Professors Garrett and Brandon received me. **They both let me lean on them with my pain. Professor Garrett emphasized prayer to me, and Professor Brandon said that his church was praying for Dezmond.**

SO RARE, THE FIRST OF ITS KIND

On November 30 we arrived in Seattle for consultations with a specialist. After more tests, Dez's surgery was scheduled for December 14.

While we waited, we received more information about Dezmond's tumor. It is a rare form of squamous cell carcinoma called a "carcinoma cuniculatum." There have been **only ten cases of this particular cancer, but never an oral cancer. All ten had been skin cancers. Nothing about this made sense and Dezmond's case was shared throughout the American and UK Pathology community without any returns or insights.** To compound this, multiple boards of pathologists were having a difficult time agreeing given the specifics. Signing off on the cancer diagnosis so treatment could go forward would have been a first for any of them. It was perceived as a professional risk.

At that surgery on December 14, five teeth with gum were removed. They cut the tumor out with the teeth/gums but refrained from going further. They sent the samples to UW and UCSF for testing and review from a few pathology boards. It was relieving that they did not do the whole surgery. They did leave a plate in his mouth covering the surgery site that was sewn in, but it dangled onto his lower mouth causing some difficulty. We came back for an appointment days later and the plate was removed as **his doctor confirmed the diagnosis of cancer.**

The following weekend was Christmas and we decided to go home for Christmas. The day we flew out of SEATAC, **we were only one of two flights out as all other flights were grounded** due to a winter storm.

The next week his Seattle doctor called and said that she hurt her shoulder in a slip and the **operation would be postponed to January 20th.** She said she was cancelling all her surgeries except Dez's.

A MESSAGE OF HOPE FROM A FRIEND

Moments before we headed for the airport on January 17 to return to Seattle for the second surgery, a friend from DVG Jiu Jitsu messaged me and said, **"I have faith in God, and I know He's a God of restoration."** God spoke directly to my family through my friend delivering a **message of hope, respite, and restoration.** Then we got the call **surgery was stopped** because the UW sample did not have genetic markers for cancer.

We returned to Dez's local doctor a few weeks later and there was a **new growth spotted** on the affected area. Pictures were taken, more tests were done on the samples, and it was decided the **surgery would proceed.** There was enough suspicion with the samples of cancer coupled with new growth that all the pathologists agreed the surgery should go on February 27.

CRYING OUT TO GOD

To confess, I have **never been to church voluntarily. I was baptized** while attending a Lutheran school. I later chaperoned youth to services at the Vineyard in Boise, Idaho.

I listened to Garrett and Brandon and spent a lot of time praying. At least I hope it was praying. It was not eloquent or measured words, but **words mostly driven by fear. I cried out, "Please, God, not my boy! Please don't take my son!"**

I was not very good at praying, but **I wanted that connection.** I tried to express myself better. I relaxed and might have called Jesus, *Dude*, a few times. I guess just as long as we were finally talking, **I asked Jesus to help me be a**

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better person, swallowed some pride, and apologized for some of my previous attitudes and behaviors. God helped me explore the idea of forgiveness and letting go of bitterness, which has always been a struggle for me. Wanting to go forward on this path and needing my son to have some heavenly hope, I decided we should start going to church before the surgery. Having been invited by Pastor Brandon to attend Mountain View Community Church, we naturally landed there.

On Sunday, February 19, we attended MVCC. I needed and appreciated the message. Pastor Rob anointed Dez with holy oil and we received prayer.

As we arrived in Seattle for the February 27 surgery in Seattle, Dez was quiet, but tears fell. He had been so brave throughout this ordeal. I cannot understand what it must be like for him. As a father I try, but the uncertainty of his future and having to be disfigured to save his life was just so much surgery for anyone. For older adults it is scary. but for a boy?

Dez was prepped and anesthetized for surgery. While he drifted off, we talked to him. We told him we loved him, and that he would be all right. We waited for them to wheel him away from us.

THE LORD ANOINTS DEZMOND

At MVCC, when Dezmond was being prayed over, something was pressed into my hand with some instructions. I was and had been utterly emotional and barely saw who passed it to me. Pastor Rob anointed Dezmond with holy oil while we prayed for God to grant Dez strength, healing, and His blessings to get past this terrible day. As Dez was about to be wheeled into surgery. I asked for a moment and took out the gift that had been handed to me. I had inspected the small cylinder of oil days earlier, opened the cap, and smelled the wood oil flower scent. I had thought about what to do with it, but praying and holding it, I knew now was the time.

As I leaned in and gave him a kiss on the head, oil was already on my son. Somewhere between his morning shower, between us turning around so he

could put on his gown; somewhere between these small moments and this huge event and my fumbling with the lid, the Lord had already anointed my son. The Lord had already put His mark on him. Following the lead, I dabbed my finger and traced a line on his forehead and the nurses left with Dezmond.

The Lord watched over my son. He let us know He was there, actually there, and always ahead of me. I profoundly see this now. I want to live up to this moment and blessing, following this interwoven plan and finding my path and my ohana to be closer to the Lord.

While waiting near the cafeteria the doctor approached and said she cut a wide area of Dez's gum and sent it to SFSU for testing. The results were that there was no cancer in the samples. We were overjoyed, but I was confused. She explained that the body can pick up the fight against cancer late in the game. She checked his lymph nodes and they felt fine. He would have an MRI in a few months and regular visits. She said she was still having some genetic disorders ruled out, but the area is free of cancer, and she will have all the tests run again. We stayed a few more days in Seattle until the second test returned. It was also negative for cancer or a genetic disorder.

SECOND CHANCE AND RENEWED HOPE

We came home to a second chance and renewed hope. Dez still has some bumps ahead, but we are trusting in God and trust He has him back in boxing, back in lessons, back to him emerging into a teenage boy. I thank God everyday now. I know to whom I am grateful for now, for blessing us with our son, for being with Dez when he was helpless and delivering him back to us.

On March 5 we attended MVCC to testify Dez is cancer free. Mahalo to Pastor Rob, Pastor Brandon, Professor Garrett, the aunty who gave Des the watercolor (it is hanging), the aunty who handed me the oil, and everyone at MVCC. I appreciate you all and for the home to worship, learn, and serve.

Kingdom Moments – A Miracle for Dezmond Continues (4)

Jeff Kimbrel
September 10, 2023

On November 11, 2022, my then 11-year-old son **Dezmond was diagnosed with a rare form of oral cancer.** Dezmond went through a series of **various tests and surgery with five teeth and part of his gum removed on December 14, 2022.** The news was **devastating with more surgeries needed.**

The people at **DVG Jiu Jitsu and MVCC ministered words of peace and comfort to us and prayed for Dezmond's healing.** We arrived in **Seattle on February 27, 2023, for another planned invasive surgery.** When they cut out some samples and checked, **there was no cancer in the samples.**

We were told Dezmond would need to be checked again in six months. **I returned to MVCC today to testify that Dezmond's test results continue to indicate he remains cancer free at his six-month check-up.** Thank you to our Lord Jesus and the people of MVCC for your prayers.