

"God is always



Olympic gold medalist and motivational speaker Scott Hamilton shares his journey of faith and how God's love is guiding him through his battle with cancer

By Gina Roberts-Grey

Scott Hamilton was no stranger to training. The Olympic gold medalist and four-time consecutive U.S. and World champion figure skater knew that practice was the key to perfecting his famed skating style and signature backflip. But in 2004, as he gazed at his new wife, Tracie, and their 14-month-old son, Scott realized no amount of training or practice could have ever prepared him for that moment. He looked at Tracie with tears in his eyes and admitted the terrifying truth: "I have a brain tumor." Without skipping a beat, Tracie grasped Scott's hands in hers and began to pray. "Everything about my faith had led

with us"

up to that moment," the now-59-year-old tells *Simple Grace*.

"The second Tracie started to pray, something shifted in me. She'd taken the problem straight to the Lord, and I knew that kind of faith was exactly what I wanted driving my life from then on." Here, Scott shares how living for God changed everything.

GOD WORKS WITHIN US

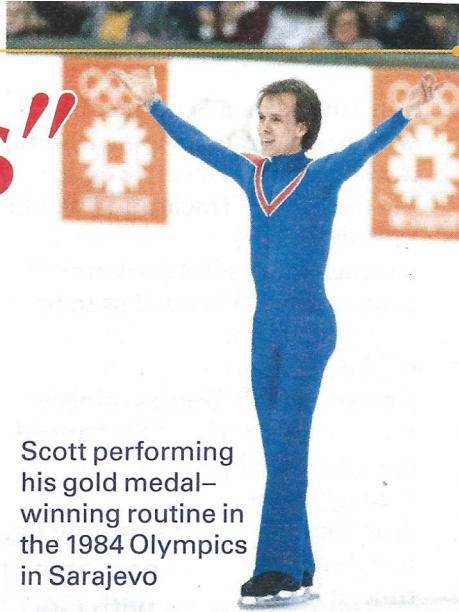
Adopted at age 6, Scott was raised in a Christian home in Bowling Green, Ohio. Though his childhood was happy and full of love, he had struggled with a mysterious illness that stunted his growth. When Scott was 9, his pediatrician suggested enrolling him in an ice-skating program to improve his confidence and health. By the age of 13, Scott's natural grace on the ice had garnered the attention of elite coaches and sponsors and set him on the path to becoming one of the most beloved Olympic champions of all time.

Through the years of his success on the ice, Scott believed in God, but says he never felt

Scott performing his gold medal-winning routine in the 1984 Olympics in Sarajevo

close to Him. "I was raised a Christian but I didn't know *how* to have faith," Scott recounts. "As an athlete, I lived by lots of rules and guidelines, and that was how I understood faith: as a set of rules to follow. It lead to a lot of anger and frustration."

Despite the disconnect, Scott turned to prayer when he was diagnosed with testicular cancer in 1997. "I tried to reflect on God's gifts and focus on healing," he shares. But even after treatment and going into remission, Scott's faith still felt hollow. "My relationship with God was in disarray," he admits. "I stayed on the bench instead of pursuing a true relationship with Him." ➤



► In 2000, when Scott met his wife-to-be, Tracie, she gave him a whole new perspective on loving the Lord. “Tracie and I would talk about faith, and hers was so much more solid than mine,” Scott smiles. “I wanted us to be on equal ground, so I started to explore my faith more.” It was a meeting with Tracie’s minister that turned the tide. “He handed me a Bible and asked if I had ever read it,” Scott describes. “I had, but at the time, it honestly seemed like a bunch of fables and fairy tales.” But when the minister suggested he look at the Bible as history, Scott started to reread the Good Book with a clearer understanding.

Slowly, Scott began to see how God’s love had been woven into all areas of his life—past, present and future. “I realized that God had always been showing up for me,” Scott shares. “One of my first breakthroughs on the ice happened with a program choreographed to a song from *Godspell*. And my 1984 Olympic exhibit was skated to ‘Amazing Grace’. Looking back, there were choices I made in my

life that weren’t consciously made from faith. But I see now how God was working in me, like He does in all of us. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit live in us whether we see it or not!”

GOD CALMS THE STORM

So as Scott faced surgery to remove his first brain tumor in 2004, he knew a stronger, deeper connection with the

“I see my health issues as part of my relationship with God. If He wants me to face cancer again, that’s what I’ll do.”

Lord is what he needed to have hope for his future. “I began building a real relationship with God,”

he says. And when Scott was diagnosed with a second brain tumor in 2010, that relationship was put to the test. “It was more of a knockdown because I had two kids. I had so much to lose, so I had to completely trust in the Lord.”

With God by his side, Scott had the second tumor surgically removed, but a complication caused a brain aneurysm that resulted in uncontrollable shivering and body spasms. As he fell into despair, Scott says that a calming voice sounded in his mind. “I heard the words, *This too shall pass*.

It just kept repeating it until things calmed down,” Scott shares. “God was there with me, reminding me that whatever the storm, it would pass. And I knew that whatever I faced, He’d be with me.”

EACH DAY IS A GIFT

Today, Scott continues to grow closer to the Lord and finds shelter in Him during his latest storm. In 2016, Scott was diagnosed with a third brain tumor and has chosen not to pursue medical treatment. Instead, he is putting his trust in God, living a healthy lifestyle and enjoying every loving, faith-filled moment with his wife and children. “The tumor has shrunk, but I know my days are numbered—when you have a hobby of collecting life-threatening illnesses, eventually one will win,” he says with a chuckle. “Nowadays, my prayers aren’t to take away my affliction so much as they are to thank God for His gifts every day, and to ask for His help in living in all the precious moments He gives us.”

Scott says he has begun to see his illness as a blessing. “It’s part of my relationship with God,” he



Scott’s wife, Tracie, and their four kids (pictured at a benefit for the Scott Hamilton CARES Foundation in November 2017) are his biggest supporters in his cancer battle

explains. “If He wants me to face cancer again, then that’s what I’ll do. I’ll be as strong as possible while growing in Him. When I worry or feel weak, I bathe myself in Matthew 7:24–27, about building a house on rock instead of sand,” he smiles. “It reminds me God is always there: He’s the foundation for that house on the rock. And whatever storms come, my faith in that house stands strong.” ∞

Read Scott’s secrets to success in his new book, *Finish First* (Thomas Nelson, 2018; Hardcover \$20, Kindle \$10, Nook \$10)

