

Christ Over Cancer

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of

Christ Over Cancer

is dedicated to the loving memory  
of our Dear Sister in Christ

*Cindy Gresham*

whose unwavering faith in God  
during her battle with cancer  
inspired us all

## INTRODUCTION

**Sitting in a doctor's office and hearing that you have been diagnosed as having a type of cancer is a fear that almost everyone has. Unfortunately, millions of people are forced to endure this painful experience every year. However, we can all take comfort in knowing that God is always with us and he is there to comfort us and carry our burdens for us if we allow him to do so.**

**We often only hear the negative side of cancer and never hear the stories of hope and encouragement. The purpose of this book is to share these TRUE inspiring stories, helpful devotionals, encouraging scriptures, hilarious jokes and other helpful information that is hopefully useful and life changing for you.**

**This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Christ Over Cancer book and is an outreach ministry of Woodlawn Church of Christ, located on Highway 72 in Florence, Alabama. Over 1500 copies of the 1<sup>st</sup> two editions were sent to folks all over the United States. If you desire prayer, a visit, a ride to church, or just someone to talk with, please do not hesitate to give us a call. Our phone number is 256-767-3170, our email address is woodlawchurchofchrist@comcast.net, and our website is [www.woodlawcoc.org](http://www.woodlawcoc.org). In addition to our compassionate ministers, we have several cancer survivors in our congregation and a host of caring Christians that are willing to be a friend during a difficult time.**

**We hope this book is helpful and encouraging. The Christ Over Cancer ministry has a website where you can download the book, make a prayer request, and sign up for periodic devotionals to be sent to your email inbox. That web site is [www.christovercancer.blogspot.com](http://www.christovercancer.blogspot.com) .**

**Please call or email if we can help in any way.**

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CHRIST  
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**FOREWARD**

**By**

**Coach Don Meyer**

**Former Head Basketball Coach**

**Northern State University**

**Recipient of the 2009 Jimmy V. Award at the 2009  
ESPYS**

***Cancer and the Practice of the Presence of God***

In September of 2008, I had a rather serious car wreck and sustained quite a bit of damage. During the multiple surgeries that night, the doctors found carcinoid cancer around my liver and in my small bowels. After meeting with my wife and family a week later, we talked and composed the following statement to sum up our philosophy of dealing with the cancer and other problems:

*“It is now 10 a.m. on Friday, Sept 12, 2008. My trauma surgeon David Strand from Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, just told me they found carcinoid cancer in my liver and small bowels. The cancer was discovered during emergency surgery after my wreck on Sept 5, 2008. What’s great about this is I would not have known about the cancer had I not had the wreck. God blessed me with one thing we all need, which is truth. I can now fight with all of my ability. What I now ask is that everybody who believes in God would praise him for this discovery and pray to him to give me the strength, patience and peace to be a man of God on this journey. I am looking forward to coaching this season and am forever thankful to my team, who saved my life, and the coaching staff who has stepped up to the plate.”*

I am not real good on all the details or just what happens with carcinoid cancer. We just sort of let my wife Carmen work out all the details and stuff that requires brain power. Our cancer specialist is great and we rely on him and his care giver support staff to do the things they were trained for. My job is to get close to the Lord.

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Each morning before our 5:30 a.m. basketball practices, I would get up at 3:45 a.m. so I could have a time of solitude in my place where family and work could not enter. I would study from the works of Oswald Chambers, Prayer a Holy Occupation and My Utmost for His highest Journal. After reading from my Max Lucado's, Grace for the moment Daily Bible Study, I would go over my prayer list of people and concerns that only God, through His Holy Spirit, could provide relief, strength and power necessary to overcome trials.

Through this study and prayer the Lord taught me that peace is not the absence of troubles, trials, and torments, but spiritual calm in the midst of them. This time allowed me to leave for work with a full cup to pour out in service to others. It helped me learn to become a better servant leader. Our example as coaches is not the main thing in influencing our players and team.. it is the only thing. "Preach the gospel every day and when absolutely necessary use words." –St. Francis

The study of the word of God and service to others taught me about wisdom and humility. "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom." James 3:13

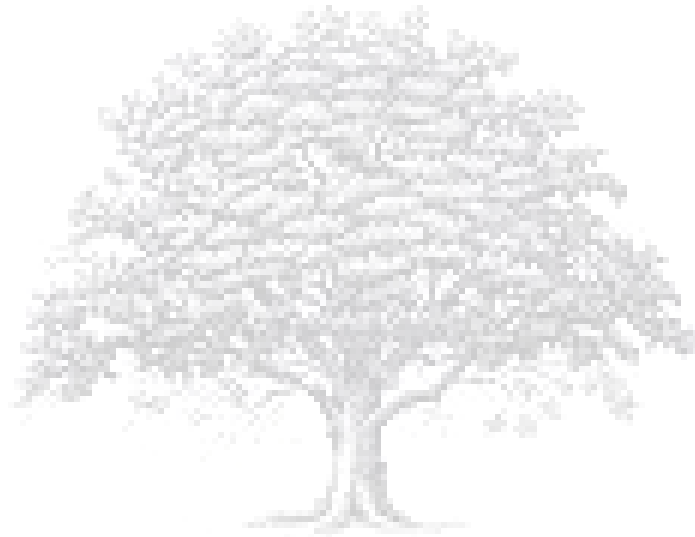
The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence has helped me in my study to gain peace and calm in the midst of troubles, trials and torment. My wife and I have purchased around 1500 of these books to give to others.

Keep busy, don't think too much, especially if you have limited brain cells like me. Enjoy each day that you live and live it to your fullest with the love of God encompassing you. He is always with you and the real trick is for you to snuggle up to him and let his Holy Spirit comfort you and lead you in ways that you can serve your Heavenly Father.

Try to be a child and live life like a trusting child who knows that their Father will give them the spiritual comfort that will enable them to deal with the physical pain if we only ask. Pray, pray, and pray and most of all pray for others. Intercessory prayer has the power to take our minds off our burdens and look to serve others.

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I ask not that God bless and keep all those cancer warriors who have it much worse than I do..... because I know that our Father is looking over us all.



## The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;  
Enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world  
as it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that He will make all things right  
if I surrender to His Will;  
That I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with Him  
Forever in the next.  
Amen.

*--Reinhold Niebuhr*

**Trust in the LORD** with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;  
in all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will direct your paths.

*Proverbs 3, 5-6*

# Survivor Stories



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*Prayer Changes Everything*

*Breast Cancer Survivor*

I am 53 years old and in December of 2008, I was diagnosed with Stage 2 Breast Cancer. I went in to surgery to have a lumpectomy, but just moments before the surgery, the dr. came in and said they just found another mass in the same breast. He suggested that I have a mastectomy because he was positive the second mass would be cancerous as well. I had to make that painful decision right there on the operating table. So, as you can guess I was totally unprepared when I came out of surgery. The hospital staff, though was very caring, and probably assumed that I had been fully briefed on what to expect with a mastectomy, but I had not been. I didn't even know what questions to ask. I came home confused, in tears, and in shock.

In the beginning, when I heard that I had cancer, I think I was numb but, not afraid. As I progressed closer to the actual surgery my fear heightened. What I was afraid of most was the surgery itself. I had never had surgery before this. The only 2 times I had been in the hospital were when I delivered my daughters, and both of those were natural deliveries. I do not have high blood pressure, but, when I went in for the checkup before the lumpectomy and the port surgery, my blood pressure was through the roof. I guess you could say, just the *thought* of surgery had my blood roasting!

Before, during and after my treatment for cancer, my family (husband, daughters, church, and work) helped significantly to ease my emotional distress and anxiety. They encouraged me to reach out to others who were facing the same things. I was just one more addition to a group that I have now named my "sisters in Christ and sisters of circumstance". They welcomed me with open arms.

God helped me in so many ways. My prayer life changed tremendously. I normally pray on my knees. After the treatments started, I could hardly move, so, I would pray while sitting up or in bed. I found that when I prayed like that, I was so easily distracted and my mind wandered often. As painful as it was, I began to force myself to get on my knees to pray. I

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couldn't hold myself up, so I can best describe my position as kneeling but with my head resting on the bed. It was like sitting on the floor and

resting my head in my Father's lap. I prayed and cried and cried and prayed. God was my Comforter. Of course, it was hard getting up off that floor, but it was so worth it.

I had always heard to look for the positive and focus on those things. The positive that came from this situation is that, with God's help, I was able to realize my appearance doesn't determine who I truly am. I would look in the mirror and think, "that's not me," but it was me! I am more of a thinker than a talker. So, while talking to myself, my survival instincts told me to "re-boot." I had to ask myself, "who am I?" As it turns out, with much prayer, that I was not that hairless, disfigured physical distortion I saw in the mirror. I was still me! I was a blessed child of God with a healthy mind, with motions that still worked on queue, and a changed body that I'd be leaving behind someday, so this was no big deal!

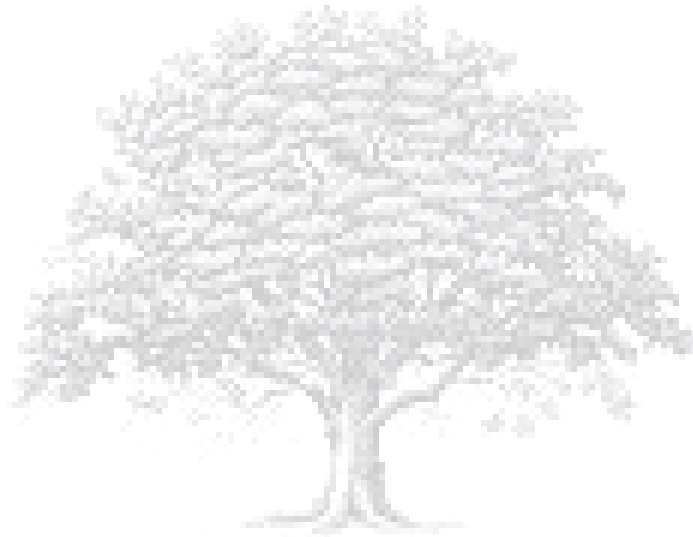
Mentally I am okay. I "re-boot" often because every day presents a new challenge. Now, however, I am truly seeing how this struggle with cancer has affected my youngest daughter. She is 18 years old now. My husband was often at work during my treatment and my oldest daughter lived outside our home. So, on many occasions, it was just my youngest daughter and myself dealing with my cancer struggles and setbacks. She went with me to my chemotherapy treatments and when she began driving, she would take me. She saw me cry more than the others did. She helped clean up when I was sick and she kept the house clean for visitors. She bore much of the weight and she did everything without complaining. However, I could see in her eyes the fear, sadness, and helplessness. Everyday, I tell her I love her and that I am so proud of her. It is important to let the caregivers know how much you appreciate and love them.

Cancer brought many changes, but many of the changes have been for the better. I pray more often, and I not moved anymore by others expectations of me. I take life at my own pace. Most importantly, I've learned to look entirely through the eyes of faith. God has always been

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faithful to me – even when I was faithless. There has never been anyone more dependable in my life than my God in Heaven.

My advice to the newly diagnosed is to learn as much as you can about your cancer and certainly support the cause to find a cure. Lean on God and throw away any doubt that you may have. If you are still breathing then God has delivered you in the past and He will certainly do it again. But, even if He doesn't, Praise Him anyway! With faith, anything is possible and prayer can change EVERYTHING!



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*Thankful for the Experience*

*Breast Cancer Survivor*

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My new journey in life was confirmed on June 20, 2007 with a phone call to tell me I had breast cancer, that it was extremely bad and for me to come to his office immediately. This call was from the surgeon who had done a biopsy the day before on a knot I had found in my breast. I actually had been feeling it grow over the last three months. We rushed to his office to be told that he would be removing the knot on Monday and would then send me to a radiation doctor afterwards. I was adamant that I wanted to see an oncologist before the surgery and he said that was not protocol. Well, I had 5 kids at home; the youngest was 2 ½ and I was only 35 and I felt my children needed their mother. So after much discussion and crying, we left with me saying I was getting a second opinion, but had no idea where to begin.

The hardest thing for me to do at the moment was to tell my children and my family. My son was nine at the time and when we got home he came straight to me and told me he knew something was wrong and wanted to know what it was.. I broke down and told him and with a brave smile he said “Mom, it is going to be alright.” With that, he gave me a much needed hug. The other children were devastated but very strong for me. The next few days were spent looking for an exceptional doctor and listening to people let me know how sorry they were for me.

On June 25, I found my doctors at Vanderbilt that would go thru this journey with family and me. I met Dr. Julie Means and the rest of my oncology team two days later. I spent all day with them running tests, confirming my diagnosis and explaining to me what my type of cancer meant. While I was in Florence, they were adamant that I have my tumor removed immediately. I questioned what infiltrated meant in my type of cancer and I was repeatedly told that it did not matter. The truth was that it did matter. It meant the cancer was already in my blood stream and extremely aggressive. If we had done surgery first, the cancer would spread thru my body and I would be gone in less than a year. With my team of doctors, consisting of my oncologist, my radiologist, and my oncology surgeon, a plan was made for the battle of my life. The very first day I was told that this would be a hard road and that if I couldn't

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stay positive that I would not make it. My cancer was already in my lymph nodes.

On July 5<sup>th</sup> my port was inserted and a lymph node dissection was done. The next day, I received my first dose of adriamycin and cytoxin. Within 30 minutes of starting the adriamycin, I felt horrible. For the next two months I continued to take these drugs. The first week of September, my drug therapy changed to taxol and herceptin and this was going to continue weekly for 15 weeks. However, after 10 weeks I had developed neuropathy so bad that my doctor was afraid to continue with the treatment. She was afraid I would not be able to walk anymore and that it would be permanent. We were now ready after 5 months of treatment to have a lumpectomy only to find out that the cancer was throughout my breast and not just at my tumor site. So, at my pre-op I find out that I had to have a radical mastectomy and lose the rest of my lymph nodes.

On November 27<sup>th</sup>, I had my mastectomy. Before the mastectomy, I thought losing my hair would be the worst part. This was a very difficult time for me and I think this was the low point of my battle. I was so sick and could not see a light at the end of this dark tunnel. Throughout this entire process there had been many lows and thoughts that I would not survive. But the GOOD LORD always carried me right through those doubts. Once again he picked me up after the mastectomy and got me ready for radiation which was to begin on January 2<sup>nd</sup>.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, my mother took me to Nashville and moved me into the Hope Lodge where I was to live the next two months while receiving radiation treatments daily and continuing my intravenous treatment. On January the 17<sup>th</sup> my mom and one of my daughters came up to stay the night with me and to bring me home for the weekend. Instead, as all cancer patients must learn, plans are meant to be broken a lot of the times due to this disease. Instead of going home I was checked into the hospital with a 105 degree fever and blood pressure of 40/60. This also happened to be two days before my 36<sup>th</sup> birthday. My children could not even come to the hospital because of the dangers to me. But the GOOD LORD answered my constant prayer yet again, "Lord just please let me raise my babies." With that, I was back out of the hospital and back in treatment. At the end of February, I was able to move back home and be with my

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family. This was a blessing but also a very trying time for me. My children had missed me and it seemed as though everyone was needing me all the time. This is a good thing, but at this moment it was very stressful for me.

November 15, 2010 I completed my last chemotherapy drug. I am very thankful to be able to have completed my treatment with a positive outlook. I had an unbelievably strong support team starting first with God. No matter how bad I felt or how scared I was, He was always there holding me strongly. Next was my family, including an amazing church family, friends, doctors and even strangers. Being sick and looking obviously very sick, it was amazing to me that a perfect stranger would want to give me a hug and tell me they were praying for me. It meant the world to me. I saw such selfless acts towards me and my children throughout this ordeal. Some have asked "Do you ever wonder why you?" The answer is always, "No." Not even during my darkest days when I didn't think I would survive did I ask that question. Why would I wish it on someone else? I just thought, if not me, then who? It could have been worse because it could have been one of my children. So, I am thankful it was me. I have been down roads and had journeys that have opened my eyes to many things that I knew nothing about beforehand. Today I am a better person for having gone thru it.

Today I have many side effects of having taken so much chemotherapy. The worst would have to be the neuropathy. I would rather not have it if it was up to me, but I also remember my constant prayer to God was to "just Please let me raise my babies." Today, I do have discomfort from neuropathy and lymphedema, and my head is not as clear as it use to be, but life is still good! I live life one day at a time, knowing that tomorrow may not be there. I am thankful for each and every day and try to enjoy as much with my family as I can.

My advice for someone recently diagnosed with cancer or going thru treatments, is to keep God by your side and he will see you through. Prayer is an awesome thing as you are laying in a tube having a scan or receiving some horrible chemotherapy. Just keep the faith and he will carry you through.

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### *My Daughter's Miracles*

### *Germ Cell Cancer Survivor*

Christmas Eve morning 1989 was very lonely and depressing. I was in the hospital holding my two year old daughter, Bethany. We had been at T.C. Thompson Children's Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee fighting germ cell cancer for 5 months. Doctors had tried to remove a tumor, which covered sixty percent of her chest cavity, but were unable to do so due to its size. However, they were able to remove enough to reposition her organs since the cancer had taken over her little body. She was then placed on a respirator in intensive care. We were told our only hope was to get her to St. Jude Hospital in Memphis, but she was too sick to move. For ten days she continued to get worse and worse. The cancer had spread and she had another tumor four inches in diameter attached to her liver and her vitals were dropping fast.

All I could think about is that this would be Bethany's last Christmas and we were going to spend it in the hospital. I wanted her to be home with Derek, her brother, and Bryan, her father. I was very persistent in begging the doctors to go home for just 24 hours. Dr. Bhakta, her oncologist, finally agreed to discharge Bethany, but the staff predicted we would be back within three hours. They did not see how we could manage at home with a child as sick as Bethany.

Bryan and Derek had been staying with my mother-in-law, Avis. Bryan loves Christmas and he had gone home and put up the Christmas tree. There was not any food in the house and the Christmas presents he had bought were at Avis' house. When we first arrived home we worked with a home health nurse to set up the I.V. pump and then started unpacking our things. We then received a phone call from Avis informing us that her mother was near death. Bryan left his family for an hour long drive to be with his grandmother as she passed away.

I quickly realized that I managed to get myself in a bad situation. I had no food and the presents were at Avis' house. There was no way I could leave and get food and gifts for my children for Christmas. My family was living out of town and Bryan's family was tending to their grandmother. I did not want to ask friends or extended family on Christmas Eve to leave their family on my behalf.

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At this time, I had been a Christian for 17 years. As I sat holding my sick baby and looking at the Christmas tree the plan of salvation and the depth of God's love began to have a deeper meaning. I knew that I would do anything to save my daughter's life. I knew God sent His son knowing that Jesus would suffer and die on my behalf. He loved me so much He watched His child die for me. I knew that God knew how I felt watching my child die. I prayed, "God you sent your son Jesus knowing He would die and you did that so we could have eternal life. This Christmas I'm not asking for food or presents, but please give Bethany a new earthly life. Please take this cancer from her."

Not long after my prayer, a neighbor saw our lights on and brought us food on her own accord. My Uncle Harold, who lived about a mile from our house, saw our lights on as he was coming home and later that night returned with a doll house he had made for Bethany. After midnight, Bryan's grandmother went to be with Jesus and he returned home to be with us. On Christmas morning, Santa Claus had come and our children were able to play with their presents. The best present came later that day when we returned to the hospital. Bethany had improved so much they did not readmit her. To this day, Bethany has never been admitted to the hospital again. That Christmas was bitter-sweet. We lost Bryan's grandmother, but God did answer my prayer and gave Bethany a new chance at life.

Cancer always leaves behind scars. Some scars you can see and others you cannot see. Bethany is now hearing impaired from the chemo. Her audiogram rates her from moderate to profound deaf. She can only hear loud sounds at low decibels. It also impacted the balance in her inner ear. We went from being parents of a child with cancer to being parents of a hearing impaired child. We decided to be oral with Bethany and started speech therapy at age 3. Her balance was a problem due to the hearing impairment. Our insurance did not cover much in regards to therapy. The physical therapist told us that if we could get Bethany involved in an activity that had repetitive motion it would be helpful supplemental therapy.

When Bethany started kindergarten we discovered that the secretary at her school owned a baton and dance studio. Darlene Johnson took

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Bethany one day a week with her to baton class after school. At age 5, our hope was for Bethany to learn how to walk and sit in a chair without falling. By the age of 10, Darlene and the others with ASTO, her dance studio, had developed Bethany's twirling skills to the level of placing her on ASTO's National Baton Team. Bethany then began to take baton lessons from Jenny Hannah, a national and world champion twirler.

We have always taught Bethany, "You can do all things through Christ who strengthens us." In the sixth grade, she did not think it to be out of place to sign up to play the clarinet in the band while enrolled in deaf education classes. The school was not too sure how this was going to work, but God had a plan! Steve Tonkinson, a member of our church who played the clarinet in the Chattanooga Symphony, gave Bethany private lessons on a weekly basis after school. While in high school, she made the East Tennessee State of America Concert Band three of her four years, and twirled as a majorette in the marching band all four years. She received a college performance scholarship to The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. She twirled four years as a majorette, played clarinet in the concert band and played saxophone with the basketball band. Bethany received her business and accounting degree and is presently working on her MBA and aspires to obtain a CPA license in the near future.

Bethany does not remember fighting cancer. She does not remember how strong and determined she was to not let it defeat her. I have seen the same determination and perseverance in her twirling, school studies and music activities. When she was 14, she became a Christian. She has enjoyed speaking to groups and sharing how God has always provided a way by placing people in her life to help her do what He leads her to do. I have seen God work many miracles in her life and I trust that He will continue to guide and protect her.

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### *Thankful and Hopeful*

### *Childhood Leukemia Survivor*

My story began when I was just 3 years old. I loved John Deere tractors, bulldozers, motorcycles, and spending time with my family. I can remember in those early years that it seemed like I was having to go to the doctor a lot and I kept having ear infections. The infections continued to increase until one day they decided to put me in the hospital for tests. I remember the day my parents took me to the hospital. I didn't know what was going on, but I knew I didn't like it at all. I was really scared. I wanted my mom all the time, and she even would sleep in that little hospital bed with me because I always had to be holding on to her. Eventually, the local hospital transferred me to Children's Hospital in Birmingham, AL, for more tests. I had no idea what was going on or what was taking place. But, I still remember, to this day, that a test called a bone marrow test had to be done on me. It hurt more than anything has ever hurt in my life. The test was done in room #1 and I never wanted to go back in that room again.

My family was right there with me all the time. I was diagnosed with Leukemia and although I was scared of the doctors and nurses, I really had no choice but to get used to seeing those type of folks because I would be seeing them a lot. At first I would really cry a lot...and I do mean a whole lot! We laugh about it now, but at the time I was scared to death. I cried almost every time they came into my hospital room because I thought they were going to poke me with some huge needle. I soon learned that was not always going to be the case. My family was really good to me. We would always pack my favorite toys (mainly tractors and bulldozers) to take with me when I had to stay for a few nights. I can remember dressing up in my Bat Man costume one day and scaring my doctor. I also remember my sister and cousin bringing me some silly string and spraying it when the doctors came in. We called it a "chemo" party! I can remember scooting my little IV pole around and visiting with my nurses. They would let me sit up at the nurse station with them. Sometimes we would pop popcorn and have a Coke together! I look back on this now and I can see that my parents really tried to make me feel comfortable and they tried to make it fun! That makes me smile. My family, and church friends were so good to come and see me too. My doctor, Dr. Howard, could tell that I had a really big family. He would

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always try to get us in a big room, because he knew I would have a lot of visitors. My aunts would come and we would play games, fly paper airplanes, color, and of course play with my tractors. I remember one time my best friend and my cousin came to see me and my cousin had made me a video to watch. That was really special to me.

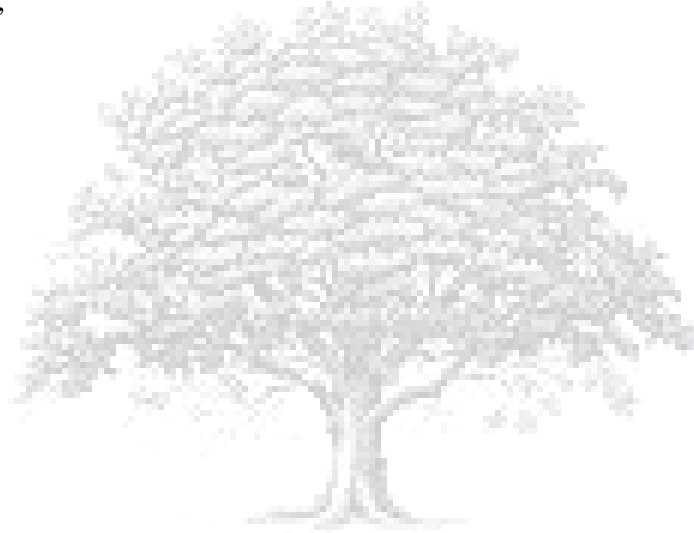
I remember getting to know the other patients as well. Since the treatment plan was so long, I got to spend a lot of time with the same kids. We would race with our IV poles down the hall, play in the playroom and share lots of special times together when our blood counts weren't too low. Imagine this picture, little kids all wearing our masks and hooked up to bags of chemo. We had no idea how serious our illness was, we were just kids having a good time in the midst of a lot pain.

I became close to my nurses and knew them all by name. I also picked up on a lot of the medical terms like chemo which was a word I quickly started using. I can remember asking my mom, "Is my white blood count ok?". I knew if it wasn't, there would be no being around any kids. That was hard at times, because my blood count was low a lot and I was not able to get out and go places. I remember I really missed going to church. One night I wanted to have my own church at my house since I had missed it so much. My grandparents came over and we had church. We sang my favorite song "When we all get to heaven." I will never forget that. I will also never forget "Richard". Richard Brown was and still is my nurse practitioner. He gave me all my spinal taps (unfortunately) and believe me it was a bunch!! He would come in my room and play games with me and talk to me and soon we became big buddies. I called him my hero! He still is one of my many hero's.

Richard got me involved in Camp Smile-a-mile, which is a camp I go to each year for children who have had cancer. I first went as a cancer patient and now I go as a cancer survivor! I try to encourage patients who are going through what I went through. What I went through was a long 2 1/2 years and I am glad it is over. I don't think I will ever forget all those shots and that yucky medicine. I know my mom cried a lot trying to get me to take my pills. That was one of the hardest things to do. Through all those hard times, a lot of good things came out of it.

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After two and a half years of chemotherapy, I was in remission and doing great. Of course, we had a big party and many of my doctors and nurses came. It has been almost 9 years now since my last treatment and I am considered "cured". I have been very fortunate to have a very healthy life and be an encouragement to others. Over the past 11 years, I have been involved in the Light the Night walk for Leukemia and Lymphoma. This walk has helped raise money to fund research and help cancer patients. As I hold my white balloon each year as a survivor, I am truly thankful. My hope is that I can always help others in some way. I always remember Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."



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### *Cancer Brings Opportunities*

### *Breast Cancer Survivor*

My family has four known consecutive generations of women with breast cancer. More importantly though is that there are at least that many generations of Christian women in my family. I didn't get the opportunity to witness my great aunt and my great grandmother as they dealt with the diagnosis and treatment. But, I did get to watch as my mother was given the news at the age of 39. At 19, I saw her graciously endure chemotherapy and its side effects. Throughout her treatment, she was courageous and faithful. I didn't realize it at the time, but I was being taught how to deal with adversity.

Those skills were required of me on October 27, 2009. At the age of 43, I was diagnosed with grade 3 stage 2 breast cancer. The diagnosis was scary. The treatment was horrible. The thought of recurrence is always looming. However, in spite of all that, many blessings came to me as a result of my cancer diagnosis. In fact, I have kept a list of good things that have occurred as a direct result of my breast cancer. So far, there are about 25 "good" things that have resulted. I recommend keeping such a list as it helps you focus more on the positive and less on the negative. The most important thing I have learned is that EVERYTHING we experience is an opportunity to reflect Christ. I sincerely hope I don't waste this opportunity to work for God!

## Christ Over Cancer

*God Didn't Let Me Down*

*Breast Cancer Survivor*

My Husband was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis about ten years after we were married. We thought it couldn't get any worse, but it did. I was diagnosed with Breast cancer in 2003. When Dr. Marchman gave me the bad news, I remember thinking Lord my husband is at home and requires 24 hour care what will I do. It wasn't long before I knew what to do. I prayed Lord will you please take care of this cancer?

I had a full time job. My husband, Mark, was in a hospital bed with oxygen and he required breathing treatments and suction every four hours. The list of things required to take care of Mark could go on for pages. I just didn't have time for Breast cancer. In the months that followed I had surgery, chemotherapy, lost my hair and all the other stuff that goes with treatment. Our Lord did not let me down. He provided me the strength to keep working even after a four hour treatment, and continue to take care of Mark.

Life was not finished giving me some hard knocks. My Mom was hit by a drunk driver and almost killed not long after my diagnosis. Since my home was already equipped for a physically impaired person, Mom lived with me and Mark for six months. Mark had one end of the house and Mom had the other. I was somewhere in the middle. It was kind of like a mini hospital.

Our Lord never gave up on me. He sent me a wonderful nurse to care for Mark while I worked and recovered from cancer. He also sent me a wonderful person to help with Mom. I got up each day and prayed for strength.

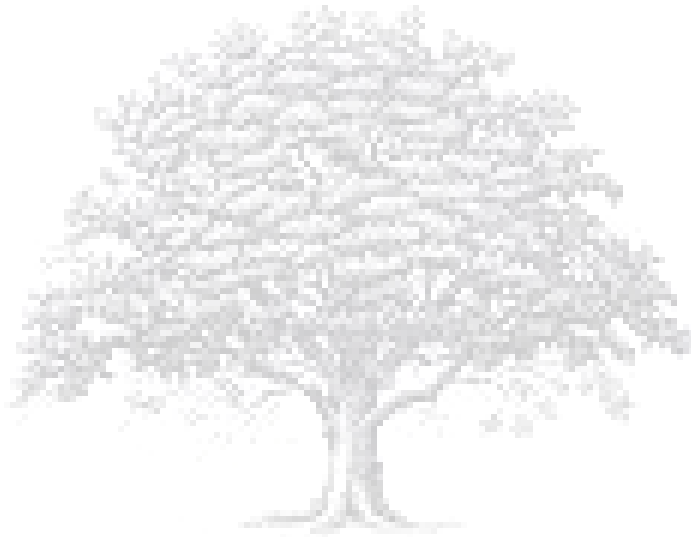
Family, church family, and good friends played a big role in keeping me going, but if our Lord had not been there in the dark of night when you are so alone, I would not have made it.

While I have been cancer free for five years, my precious husband and both parents are now living with our Lord. Death brings on a new kind of struggle, but I am still praying for strength and believe our Lord will provide an answer.

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I am so thankful to the Lord for answering my prayers. I am also thankful for being given the strength to take care of Mark, my Mom, and have cancer. **I am so looking forward to coming home to see you all one day.**

My advice to those with cancer is that although satan will try often, don't ever let the devil keep you from praying. Prayer works!!



## Christ Over Cancer

### *Something Good Will Come Mom of Childhood Cancer Survivor*

My son Brooks, was a very normal, very healthy 3 year old . It was the fall of 1998 and Brooks had just started preschool, 2 days a week. Everything seemed to be normal, he would cry for me some in the mornings, but then he would ease into the routine of preschool. Around October, Brooks began having a lot of ear infections. Sometimes he seemed a little "clingy" and ill at times, but nothing that made me question, "is something bad wrong with my son?" I took him to his pediatrician and they would do the usual antibiotic and tell me to give him medicine for his fever. No big deal.....or at least that's what I thought. It seemed we were at the doctor about every 2-3 weeks with this same problem, but it still did not occur to me that anything serious was going on. Everyone was thinking we were probably headed for tubes in his ears at the most. On Christmas morning, Brooks again woke up with a fever. Of course, my first thought was he has another ear infection. With the doctor being closed for the holiday we did the usual Tylenol /advil combination, planning to take him to the doctor the next day. At his appointment on the 26th of December, they said he did have another ear infection and they gave him a stronger antibiotic along with a shot. The next 2 days, Brooks was very sick. He had no energy to play with his new toys that Santa had brought him. He ran a high fever, and all he wanted to do was for me to hold him and rock him. That is exactly what I did. I held him and rocked, with each rock getting more concerned with what was going on with my son. I knew something was wrong with Brooks, but I never thought Leukemia.

We went back to the doctor on the 29th and they did some blood work. It was revealed that Brooks white blood count was extremely low. They wanted to put him in the local hospital to give him IV antibiotics and monitor him more closely. He did not have any bruises on his legs or arms, which meant his platelets were normal. They told me they thought he had some type of infection that was suppressing his white blood cells. After spending 2 nights in the hospital, Brooks had made no response to the antibiotics. His white blood count was still very low. On the morning of New Year's Eve, we left ECM hospital for Children's Hospital in Birmingham. I had heard of the place, but had never been there. I sat in the back seat of the car holding a very sick Brooks in my arms. He was

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holding a yellow bulldozer that his aunt Amanda had given him. I knew he was very, very sick. I was afraid we wouldn't even make it to the hospital. I held him and I prayed the whole way. Little did I know that this 2 hour drive would become a very familiar drive to me with many prayers, many tears and eventually, many smiles. As we arrived at Children's Hospital, we were immediately taken back to Clinic 5 (hematology and oncology) where they put cream on Brooks back to numb him. They said they were going to do a Bone Marrow test on him. I did not even know what a bone marrow was. But, let me be honest, it was the worst thing ever for a mom and her sick, precious son. I remember the room number, who was in the room, and the pain that Brooks experienced. I will probably never forget that moment as long as I live. After what seemed like an eternity, Dr. Howard (Brooks oncologist) and Richard Brown (Brooks nurse practitioner), and Anna Whorton (the resident) came into our room, they sat down, and I will never forget the look on Dr. Howard's face. With tears in his eyes he told me that Brooks had Leukemia.

I wanted to cry out loud, but I was holding Brooks and I didn't want him to see me upset. I tried and tried to hold it together as they explained what the next 24 hours would be like. It was very scary and devastating. I just held Brooks as tight as I could hold him. I didn't want to let him go, but they had to take him from me because they were going to put tubes in his ears to relieve some of his pain. I remember as they put him on the stretcher, he was crying for me. I had tried to be so strong up to this point, but I couldn't hold back any longer and I fell to the ground crying. My daddy and mother came and picked me up and the doctors decided to let me walk with him to the surgery room, as far as they could let me. After they took him in, my daddy was there with me and I just held his hand and hugged him for a long time. I was so scared. Daddy told me we were going to start praying and he would be ok. Daddy just kept saying "Brooks is gonna be ok, we are going to pray and I know he will be ok."

The next few hours were filled with a lot of tears, phone calls, and visits from the wonderful doctors and nurses. They treated us so good from the very beginning. They even moved us into a large room, because they could already tell that we had a big family and a lot of support from

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friends. Dr. Howard came in the room and sat down and said they had the lab results back that told the type of Leukemia Brooks had. Prayers were already being answered. Brooks had the most curable kind of Leukemia for his age. He went on to explain the treatment plan, which would start the next day, and the risk involved in the chemo drugs Brooks would have to take. Dr. Howard stayed very late with us, even though it was a holiday. I immediately felt very comfortable with him and trusted him. I had no idea what a special place he would hold in my heart, still today! I remember looking out the window that night at the fireworks, and I said to myself, "Brooks is going to be ok and I know something good will come out of it."

Good things did come out of it. Brooks got his port for his chemo the next day and started round #1 of chemo. Getting a 3 year old use to a hospital, doctors and nurses was not easy. We had many tears. I remember Brooks was always holding on to his little, yellow bulldozer. In fact, it still sits on his shelf in his room today. In 28 days Brooks was in remission!

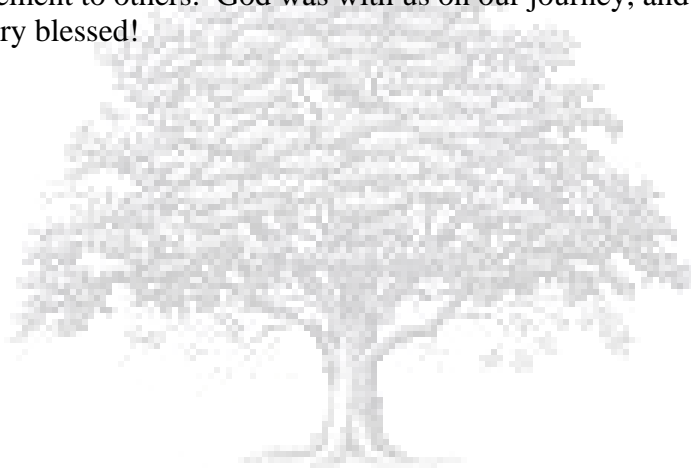
Even though Brooks would have to have chemo for the next 2 1/2 years, I felt like we had reached a milestone already! The next 2 1/2 years were filled with many doctor visits which included spinal taps, bone marrow tests, chemo pills and shots! Brooks was a real trooper the whole time. He soon became a little charmer to all the nurses. Children's Hospital went from being a strange and frightening place, to somewhere that felt like home to us. We made many friends along the way, some who passed on while they were in treatment, and some who are still dear to us today. So many prayers were offered on Brooks behalf. I remember one doctor saying "I have never seen a patient on so many prayer list as Brooks!" We were so blessed to have others praying for him. I believe that is why Brooks did so well with his treatments.

After a long 2 1/2 years, on July 19th, Brooks had his last bone marrow aspiration and last chemo treatment! He was through.....or was he? Yes, he was through with chemo, shots, and pills, but Brooks was not through being a hero and encourager to others who were going through cancer. Of course, we had a huge party, with family, close friends, and even doctors

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and nurses that had cared for Brooks. He had made it...he was a cancer survivor!

Now, after 9 years and being considered "cured", Brooks is an inspiration to others. As his mom, I am so proud of him. He goes to Children's Hospital each year, but this time not for a lot of pills and shots, but he goes as an encourager. Patients look at him and he gives hope to so many sick children. As Dr. Howard looks at him, he sees a "success story." This little 3 year old boy who was very sick is now a healthy, happy 15 year old. I look at him and see answered prayers. As Brooks' mom, I could not be more proud of what he has become. His story had a lot of pain and tears, but in the end, it has brought so much hope, joy, and encouragement to others. God was with us on our journey, and for that we are very blessed!



## Christ Over Cancer

*God Is So Good*

*Adult Chronic Leukemia Survivor*

My life was busy, really busy. With twin teenage daughters I was spread too thin and I knew it. So when I started feeling tired all the time I didn't think much about it. I was at good place in my life. Things were well with my health, my career, and my family. Everything was going great and then IT happened...

My family was attending the Lads to Leaders convention at the Opryland Hotel and I began to notice that I was lacking the stamina to run around to all the different events. I also noticed that I was having shortness of breath. I assumed that if anything was wrong that it might be my heart.

We returned from the convention on Sunday and Monday I saw my cardiologist. She scheduled an arteriogram for later that week. The arteriogram requires an outpatient visit so I went to the hospital for routine lab work on Wednesday. That afternoon my cardiologist called and said she needed to see me right away. When I arrived at her office she informed me that my white count was 575,000 (normal range is 8,000 to 10,000).

I wasn't sure what was going on but I knew it was not good. I was scared, nauseated, and afraid of the unknown. The next day I saw Dr. Patel, an oncologist, and he confirmed that I had CLL (Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia). I wasn't a stranger to the disease. My father had CLL and although the doctors said there is no connection, I will always believe otherwise.

I remembered that when my Dad was diagnosed the doctors told us that most of the people diagnosed with CLL were older, white males. What? I was a 45 year old female! How did this happen to me?

Dr. Patel prescribed a regimen of three chemotherapy drugs, my port was installed, and I began treatments within 10 days of being diagnosed. I would continue a three-day treatment routine for the first week of each month. During that time I was hospitalized for the first day of each round of treatment because I had a severe reaction to one of the drugs.

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My counts continued to decline during my treatment program. The medicine was working and that was good news! I did have a few bouts of nausea but the medicines helped to relieve it. I did not lose my hair. I had five months of chemo and then I got the news I had been working toward...I was in remission!

As I write this, I have been in remission for three years and my counts continue to be well within the normal range. I feel good. I have returned to work and my normal routine. I was even able to see my twins graduate from high school. God is good and I have been blessed!

I am convinced that it is not what happens to us in life that defines who we are but rather how we react to those events. I am also convinced that when things happen in our life that we don't understand, we are given a choice. We can allow that event to drive us further away from God **OR** we can choose to grow closer to God because of it.

In Hebrews 13:5 the Bible tells us that God will **NEVER** leave us. If you are reading this and you or a loved one have just been diagnosed...find comfort in **HIS** arms. If you are reading this and you are undergoing treatments...lean on **HIM**. If you are reading this and you are in remission...praise **HIM** because **GOD IS SO GOOD!**

## Christ Over Cancer

*Turning Your Pain to Praise*

*Breast Cancer Survivor*

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So another work day is coming to a close and on my way home from work, I stop off at the grocery store, not unusual at all. Just as I get inside, get the cart, out with the list and head off down the aisle, my cell rings. Ok, once again totally normal for me. My fiancé Stuart and I talk constantly. Yes, we even talk while grocery shopping. So expecting him on the other end, I grabbed the phone and answered quickly, but it wasn't him. This is the unexpected part....it is the surgeon who just two days before performed a breast biopsy on me. It had been my very first ever mammogram which had shown abnormal results not once but twice. We exchange pleasantries and he asked where I was at that moment. What difference does that make I thought? He was only supposed to say, "all is well...later!" But he doesn't ...he asked me to go straight home and call him back. Ok, that's weird I thought. All I remember saying, while standing in Publix pushing my cart around, was "are you saying it is cancer?" He said "Yes, I am. Call me as soon as you get home." I must have said ok, because I did what he said.

So, at this point, I am driving home thinking, I am only 37 years old and this well meaning yet overly zealous gynecologist has forced me to have a baseline mammogram like three whole years before it was even necessary is now telling me I have cancer. I mean on the first mammogram appointment they tell you like a hundred times that it is "not uncommon" to be called back for a second one. Ok, so I get that. But, I did not sign up for all this! I am perfectly healthy, never had any issues to speak of, so no big deal right? There is not even anyone in my family with a history of breast cancer, so they are probably just mistaken or something. Not sure what that something is, but just something.

I get home somehow, and I am still not sure how that happened actually. Fear was absolutely all I could feel at that time. I immediately called Dr Harriman back. It was already after 5:00 pm, but for the next two hours he talked me through the entire process that was about to unfold in front of me. At some point in the conversation he told me he prayed for calmness for me to take in all the information. It must have kicked in

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because he actually had me taking notes. Admittedly, I stink at note taking on the best day!

We had a long and terrifying conversation. I had so much info and so many more questions. I had no clue where to even begin to think. One thing my doctor told me that stuck with me was that whatever I did to not to get online and start researching my diagnosis. Instead he gave me a couple of websites to look at and more importantly, the name of a girl my age who had within the past year been through a very similar diagnosis and treatment plan. I had been diagnosed with DCIS (Ducal carcinoma in situ), which is a non invasive type of breast cancer. As my doctor put it, “if you could choose the type to have, this would be the one.” Funny, but that really didn’t make me feel a ton better! But you take what you can get in the way of encouragement I guess.

Another thing he said was, “I can treat this and you will make it through, but we have to quickly decide the course of treatment and waste no time in attacking.” So no pressure, huh!?

So, then comes the hardest part of all, saying it out loud to Stuart. Stuart is my love, my life, my rock, protector, my best friend, definitely my soul mate, and just my everything. We had both been through a lot separately for the past few years prior to beginning our relationship.

With terrible situations behind us, we had known from the beginning of our relationship that God had a divine plan for us together. He had brought us together in a way that was unmistakably His perfect plan for us both. He had shown us glimpses of it many times in the past couple of years. His provision and protection had been evident in so many aspects of our lives. So, obviously with all this hope and faith in the unseen, and of what I believed He had planned for our life together, I had a few questions for Him! I mean things like, why me, why now, what is up with this!?! We had both made it through so many challenges that I felt like we were on a reality TV show. Honestly, I really did not feel like either of us needed another challenge. So I was asking God to give us a break. Yes, I really said that to God! God knew I was angry and I told Him so. I probably told him that a lot and loudly at times. Which, by the way is totally healthy because, NEWS FLASH, God knows what you are

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thinking anyway. So many times I asked Him, “What is going on?” All we really wanted was to get married and begin our life together that we have waited literally years to start.

My Stuart is different, and I guess we complement each other in most situations but this one especially. He was just unbelievable and confident from the first moment and just wanted the facts. No “what ifs” or my whining, just the facts. We talked a lot, and prayed a lot more. We kept things to ourselves at that point. We needed facts to be able to make a decision. We were just focused on what we had to do to get this dealt with quickly. He just kept saying that God had it covered.

The next couple of weeks were a constant string of appointments with doctors, oncologists, radiation oncologists, plastic surgeons, surgeons, and gynecologists. Keep in mind they all deal with folks like us everyday. So, they are just routinely answering things they THINK you want to ask. Not really asking you what is on your mind though. So after the first 4 or 5 appointments, I am pretty happy with myself that I had only yelled in frustration at a couple of the doctors. One of those doctors being a very “popular” clueless plastic surgeon that told me reconstruction after radiation was just impossible. He said, “you just have to hope the surgeon does a good job and live with the outcome.” Yes, he actually said that to me and it was a conversation I will never forget. By the way this info was proven to be totally untrue. The other doctor who took the brunt of my fear and frustration suggested that I just make it easier on myself, and think about getting a prosthetic breast. This poor soul was well meaning just not prepared to deal with the concerns that I had.

Dr. Waples was the Oncologist my surgeon highly recommended, so I was kind of stuck with him. He was very exact and confident of the diagnosis and how he would approach treatment and the medication I would be taking as a continuing preventative treatment for my HER 2 estrogen positive cancer. But, there were a lot of other questions he just could not give me answers to. Looking back, I might have been a bit hard on him because after a very frustrating conversation during which he answered basically none of my questions with anything other than hypothetical answers, I just snapped! Possibly a little over the top and maybe unwarranted, but it happened. I kind of said loudly “are you a

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Christian?” I continued, “you say you are a Christian and that you pray for your patients, that you started a support group, but please understand that with all due respect you are not helping me understand this process at all and I need someone who can answer my questions now please!” I just spilled it all. I went on to say “look, I feel confident with my doctors being able to remove and treat this tumor. God had given me a peace about that. However, I am 37 and don’t want to live my life with one breast! I know that you probably cannot understand that!” To which he very calmly replied, “yes, you are right, and I am right now going to call someone that I think you should speak with immediately about this very personal stuff that I have no business talking about, because I obviously cannot make you feel better right now.” He turned out to be a very wise man and to this day I truly respect him for that. I see him every three months and I don’t think he is even afraid of me anymore!. Agreed, I maybe could have handled that a little more diplomatically. Ok, so I freaked out a bit, but sometimes you just have to say what is really on your mind!

So another divine appointment occurred. I like to think my little outburst helped that one along. Dr Waples did just what he said, and immediately I had an appointment with the person who would become my Radiation Oncologist, Dr Beth Falkenberg. My appointment was within the next five minutes. The quickness of my appointment probably had something to do with an overly emotional chick that could possibly be prone to a loud outburst again while sitting in his office. The funny thing is that she was previously not assigned to my case.

So I leave his office and head off down the hall at CCI to her office. Dr Falkenberg was absolutely sent by God just for me! No doubt He placed her in the picture. She was so knowledgeable, so down to earth, really close to my age, a Christian and, basically someone I would be friends with. Not too mention she was just plain honest. She held nothing back. She gave it to me straight; the good, the bad, and the ugly. Keep in mind up to this point I have seen four doctors who could not give me anything other than hypotheticals.

Dr Falkenberg gave me new hope and encouragement that drove me to make the best , most informed decisions about the impending surgery,

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radiation treatment plan, the long term preventative plan, reoccurrence chances, the medication I would take for 5 years after radiation was completed and even reconstruction options. I had been so discouraged about the reconstruction options that I had been given, which were NONE! I confided all that disappointment and fear to her and she told me about an amazing doctor, a man of faith and gifted plastic surgeon, Dr Patrick Lappert. She knew he was using technology other doctors were not using in our area to treat breast reconstruction patients after radiation. Indisputably, another God thing. She had just returned from a conference in Miami where he had given a presentation using this technology on a patient with the same diagnosis and basic characteristics as my case. Wow, is all I could say.

Stuart had gone with me to many appointments but when he met Dr Lappert he was blown away. It was so amazing how God was placing him as well as the other physicians in our path. We both felt at peace and and knew with all confidence that Christ' hand was all over this seemingly horrific situation!

Even throughout the treatments I was constantly receiving encouragement from family and friends. I was also forming close relationships with other cancer patients that I was seeing every day when I went to Clearview Cancer Institute (CCI) for my radiation treatments. What an awesome blessing that was for me. It was such a blessing that I still feel sad when I think about that last day of radiation. Leaving CCI and knowing I might never see some of those kindred spirits again was sad to me. I met so many people with so many stories, some of hope and others of such sadness.

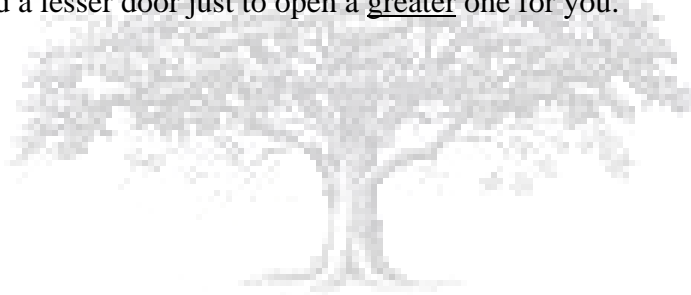
So, very long story short, I am now officially two years cancer free! I just completed what I hope and pray is the last phase of the breast reconstruction. Oh yes, and have been married now since March 28, 2009 to the most amazing gift God has given me, my best friend Stuart. We got married just a few days before the treatment plan went into action. We knew we needed to be together in one house to face the challenges. We are just so humbled, thankful and never cease to be amazed at how God has shown us that he desires to bless us far beyond what we can ever imagine...I even got a son out of the deal! Spencer is 7

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now and has been through it all with us he even went to radiation appointments with me so he could fully understand what they were doing. He is mine and I am his and that is a miracle.

For several years I had participated in the Ribbon Run, now it is different. I will not miss that run again. This is a club not one of us would have chosen to be a part of, but at the same time I feel privileged to be part of the PINK Club.

Finally, I just love so much that God's plan is ALWAYS perfect and ALWAYS better than the best thing you can imagine for your life. So I would have to be nuts not to want His plan right?! I have had many opportunities to minister to others through my life experiences and what a blessing that has been. One of the many verses I have claimed for years is: "You Lord, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm" Isaiah 26:3. In every trial, hold to the truth that with faithfulness and a little more time, your pain will turn to praise as you begin to see that God has closed a lesser door just to open a greater one for you.



## Christ Over Cancer

### *A Day To Remember*

### *Ovarian Cancer Survivor*

There are days in your life that you will always remember. Some of these may include your baptism, high school graduation, the day President Kennedy was shot, the landing on the moon, your wedding day, and the birth of your first child. Unfortunately, I have to add the day I was told I had cancer. I will never forget being given the news. My first thought was that I was going to die and I was not ready.

I had what I thought to be some minor female problems. I was told that I would need a hysterectomy, but it was not an emergency condition. I could schedule it at my convenience. I am one who cannot postpone anything that I know I am going to have to do, so I scheduled the surgery as soon as possible. The doctor told me that she could not believe I had been so prompt in taking care of my problems because I had a miracle happen to me that day. She had found ovarian cancer but it was off the ovaries on my pelvic wall. It was about the size of the end of her little finger. Ovarian cancer is deadly because it is difficult to detect until it is advanced. Had I delayed the surgery, the cancer would much more serious than what I was experiencing.

I was referred to the UAB Gynecology Oncology Center and had surgery again ten days later. They told me that they could not find any cancer. My immune system has apparently taken care of the problem. I questioned if it had ever been there but the slides confirmed the diagnosis. My case was one of their earliest diagnoses of ovarian cancer. I was advised to take chemotherapy to make sure that I had the best chance of getting rid any stray cancer cells. I completed the treatments and while I did not feel 100%, I was determined not to be "sick". It was late summer and early fall. I avoided crowds, was careful to rest, eat healthy, and take care of myself. I would sit where the sunlight would shine on me. I prayed, asking to be able to sleep and not worry about myself, and my prayers were answered.

The week my hair came out was especially difficult, but I knew I was so fortunate to not be sick, that I could not worry about my hair. I went to the Look Good Feel Good Program provided by the American Cancer Society. They helped me with a wig and provided all attendees with a

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lesson in caring for yourself during treatments. We were given a box of makeup, creams, etc. and were helped in applying them. We will all agree that we feel better when we look good.

After the treatments, my health improved. I had a blood test, the CA125, every 3 months, and saw my doctors locally and at UAB. At times, I felt like I had never even had cancer and looked forward to the five-year mark. Often I would go for days and never give it a thought. It is truly a blessing when it is not the first thing you think of in the morning and the last thing at night.

As I went into the fourth year, my number began to rise. Anything below 35 is considered to be normal. Mine was usually about 12. At one test it was 19, and I began to worry. Then it was in the twenties, and continued to rise. Soon, another tumor was found, and my ordeal began again. I had the same type of cancer, and again it was an early detection. I had surgery and chemotherapy at UAB. I did even better this time. I was never sick and I was not as afraid the second time around. I knew what to expect, my family and friends offered so much support, and I made it fine. I am again at the four-year mark. Hopefully, I will continue to have good reports, but if necessary, I can do it again.

Having cancer is a terrible experience, but your prayer needs to be that your treatments are successful. A positive attitude is so important to your survival. You need to expect to get better. Listen to your body and if you feel something is not right, be timely in having it checked out. Early detection can save your life.

Cancer has changed my life. When faced with the real possibility that I might not survive, I began to prioritize my life. I prayed that God would bless me with the opportunity to serve him and my community, to see all my grandchildren, to live to be a part of my children's lives. My prayers were truly answered and I am so thankful for my life. James 5 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible and in it we learn that the prayers of a righteous man are powerful and effective. So many told me that they prayed for me and I am so very thankful. Please pray for the sick and those who need prayers for other problems in their lives.

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### *The 3 P's of Cancer Survival Peritoneal Mesothelioma Survivor*

On September 11, I went into the hospital for laparoscopic surgery and the results changed my life. After the surgery the Doctor came in and said that she believed that what she had found was cancer but she was not sure if it was malignant or benign. The local pathologist could not make a positive determination so they sent the tissues to Harvard Medical School to get a diagnosis.

We waited for weeks, which seemed like an eternity, then we received the devastating phone call. It was malignant peritoneal mesothelioma. My heart stopped. All of the commercials rushed through my head. The first person I called was the preacher. I wanted my name on prayer lists as soon as possible. Then I called our parents. After about an hour my husband and I went to our children's school to tell their teachers and to ask them to pray for us. We were planning on telling our two children that night and we knew they would need support at school.

After leaving the school we went to the Doctor's office to get a copy of my paperwork so we would have an idea what we were dealing with and how it was treated. There was very little information and most of the articles were very negative. I talked to two of my friends and my sister-in-law. They began searching the internet trying to find a Doctor that was a specialist. After they searched they all agreed on the doctor. He was a specialist in Washington D.C. One of my friends called the doctor and asked if he would accept me as a patient. His office manager said he was out of town and would not be back for two weeks but she thought I would be a perfect candidate for his treatment. Now we are waiting again, except this time we have found someone who had great success in the treatment of my type of cancer.

Every day I prayed that God would help me to get through this. I knew my family needed me, so I stayed positive so they would not realize just how serious this was. I read my bible and inspirational stories more than I ever had. We finally heard from the Doctor about six weeks from my surgery. He told me that indeed I was a perfect candidate for his treatment. He also told me that I needed to be in athletic shape to survive the treatment. Immediately I joined a gym and hired a personal trainer.

## Christ Over Cancer

She was great. She and all of the others that I worked out with were so supportive. I looked forward to going to the gym. It was a great escape.

The hardest place that I went after the diagnosis was church. I did not know how to act. I knew God was with me but the first time at church you really have to face your situation. After church when I was speaking to everyone I really felt God's love. We had only been attending this church for about a year but at that moment I knew that God had sent us to this church. This is where my family was supposed to be during this time.

For the next few months, I continued to work out daily, read all of the healing verses that people sent me, and continued to grow stronger physically, mentally and spiritually. I was in for the fight of my life and I was ready.

On December 28, my family flew to Washington D.C. We were joined there by my mother, mother in law, brother, his wife, their children, and our preacher. December 30 was the day of my surgery. The surgery began about 9:00a.m. and lasted about six and a half hours. After the surgery the doctor came out to speak to everyone. While he was there, Matt asked if he could say a prayer with everyone. The Doctor said that was the farthest that any patient had come and brought their minister.

My treatment included surgery which removed the tumor, gall bladder, appendix, and the layers of fat in my abdomen. Next, they scraped the lining of the abdomen and applied the chemo directly in the abdomen. After the surgery I was in intensive care for a day and a half. On New Year's Day I was moved into a regular room and my husband moved in also. We were starting the New Year off much better than the last year had ended. All of our support group had left by Sunday, January 4. This was very hard because we had to send our children home to go back to school. Each day I got stronger and on January 13 I was released from the hospital. I couldn't wait to get home. The Doctor said that I was one of his fastest recoveries. I truly believe that all of the cards and messages on our caringbridge website helped me to get stronger each day because it was so encouraging to hear how many people were praying for me. I would encourage anyone in this situation to go to [www.caringbridge.org](http://www.caringbridge.org) and set up a website. This is a great way to keep everyone informed

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without being on the phone all of the time. It also gives others a way to get words of encouragement to you. It is very humbling when you hear how many people are praying for you and I believe that God does answer prayers.

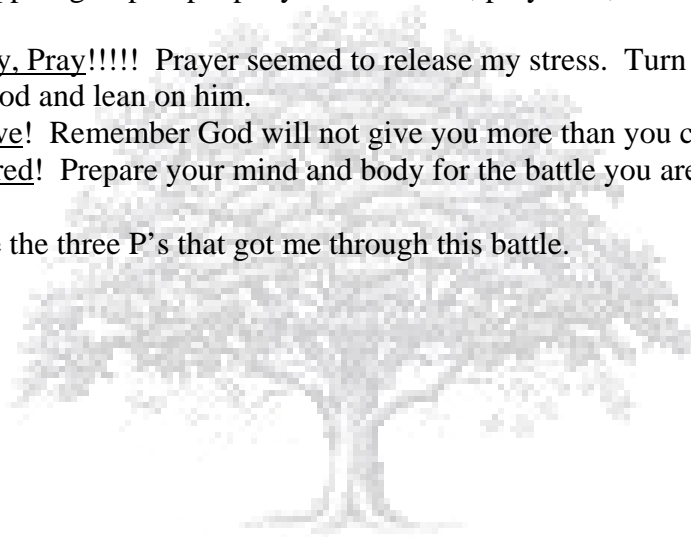
The Doctor gave me an excellent prognosis and now I will get CT scans every six months for the next five years. He said that if nothing shows up than to consider myself cured.

My advice for someone newly diagnosed with cancer would be to build a strong support group of people you can talk to, pray with, and cry on.

Pray, Pray, Pray!!!! Prayer seemed to release my stress. Turn things over to God and lean on him.

Be positive! Remember God will not give you more than you can handle.  
Be prepared! Prepare your mind and body for the battle you are about to face.

These are the three P's that got me through this battle.



## Christ Over Cancer

*Give It To God*

*Throat Cancer Survivor*

My experience started with a sore throat that just wouldn't go away. I had the sore throat for so long that it eventually got to the point where I wasn't able to talk, because I was so hoarse.

So, I was sent to a ear, nose and throat specialist, Dr. Dabbs. He examined me and thought he saw something, but wasn't certain, so he referred me to Dr. Cocke at Baptist Hospital in Memphis. Dr. Cocke told me this could be cancer, but he wanted another specialist to look. This was not a comforting thought. I was a self employed owner of a used car lot and had three children at home and a wife that was a stay at home mom. I had no time to be sick. Nevertheless, I made the trip to Memphis with my wife and Dr. Cocke did a biopsy of my throat. A few days later, I received the dreaded call that I had throat cancer, to be specific, it was a tumor on my vocal cord, which was why I was so hoarse. Dr. Cocke said it was not the spreading type and that the treatment was to remove it with a laser followed by 30 radiation treatments at Baptist Hospital in Memphis.

I have always been a strong man of faith in God who has brought me through many bad situations in my life. So, I did what I always did in bad situations in my life the day I received the news of cancer, I found a quiet place by myself and I had a long talk with God. I decided that I would leave my fate to God and the doctors. I had no fears at this point. It was truly out of my hands. I would do what I could do, but the rest, I would leave to God to sort out. I really had a peace about my situation given to me by God. Since I was young, my mother had always taken me to church and through my early years, God had instilled a great faith and reliance on Him. So, I knew exactly where to turn and He didn't let me down. I wasn't always as faithful to him as I should have been, but I knew He always had me in the palm of His hand.

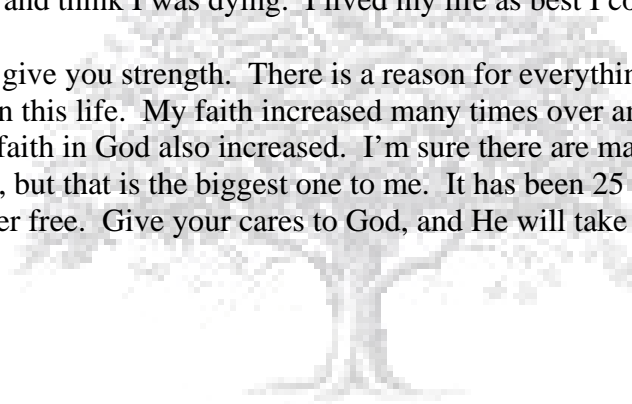
I didn't want my family to suffer at all because of my diagnosis or treatment. This may seem crazy, but the first thing I did when I got home from the hospital was to buy my two young boys go carts because I had promised them I would before I was diagnosed. I wanted to follow through on my promises. For the next 6 weeks, my wife and I would

## Christ Over Cancer

drive to Memphis in the early mornings , have a 30 min radiation treatment and be back on the road to our home, a 3 hour trip one way. We would be home by lunch most days and I would work until dark each day. I didn't always feel like working, but I knew my family had to eat and we had bills to pay, so with God's help, I was able to continue working.

My biggest fear was that I wouldn't be able to talk again. The doctors really didn't expect me to be able to talk without hoarseness the remainder of my life. But, God showed them. After the radiation treatments were complete, the cancer was gone and I could talk without hoarseness. I stayed busy the entire time I was going through the treatments out of necessity, but it also was good because it didn't give me time to dwell on the negative. I mingled with people and I didn't go into a cocoon and think I was dying. I lived my life as best I could.

God will give you strength. There is a reason for everything we go through in this life. My faith increased many times over and I know my family's faith in God also increased. I'm sure there are many other blessings, but that is the biggest one to me. It has been 25 years and I am still cancer free. Give your cares to God, and He will take care of you.



## Christ Over Cancer

*Fully Depend On Him*

*Colon Cancer Survivor*

On May 2, 2006, I went for a colonoscopy. I expected and was hopeful that all would go well. When I awoke from the procedure, I was told I had colon cancer by Dr. Wilkes. Shortly afterwards, Dr. Robert Bailey arrived to discuss surgery with me. On May 3, 2006, I went to Dr. Bailey's office for a visit and my surgery was scheduled for May 5<sup>th</sup>. My husband and son were with me and little did I know at that time that indeed, cancer does effect the entire family greatly. My son was set to graduate from Heritage Christian University on May 6<sup>th</sup>. I agreed to have the surgery on May 5<sup>th</sup> only if my husband and son agreed to attend graduation, which they did.

Fourteen inches of my colon was removed and twelve lymph nodes. One lymph node had a very small amount of cancer, so I was stage three and would need chemotherapy. In June, I went to the Northwest Alabama Cancer Center(NWACC) to begin treatments which lasted through December 2006. My CT scans were good , so I had no treatments the entire year of 2007. In December 2007, a routine CT scan revealed that my colon cancer had recurred in the left lung. My wonderful oncologists, Dr. Patel and Dr. Daugherty arranged for me to see Dr. Cleveland, and it was agreed that I needed surgery which was scheduled for January 24, 2008. I had a very small tumor removed and began chemo again in February which lasted until May 2008. At that time, another doctor at the NWACC, Dr. Hagler, suggested a routine CT scan which revealed a cancerous lymph node on the left side of my chest. Dr. Cleveland removed 90-95% of this lymph node and I followed that up with 30 radiation treatments at Bethesda. All went well and on my last CT scan, there were NO signs of cancer.

Even though chemo and radiation were not very pleasant, and neither were the three surgeries, I still had a wonderful family to rely on all the way. I also had friends and my church family to rely on, but most of all, I relied fully on God. I knew I could depend on Him. It is very hard to accept that you have cancer, but I believe it made me a better person. My greatest desire in life is to see my grandsons become Christians. One already is a Christian and I pray I can see the other one when he is old

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enough. May God bless you all, and always remember you can fully depend on Him always.



## Christ Over Cancer

### *Not Too Much To Handle*

### *Breast Cancer Survivor*

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in April 2006. Before the diagnosis, I was already an insulin-dependent diabetic, so that was plenty to deal with in my mind. But, I guess God knew that with His help I could handle it and so I was not scared when the doctor told me that I had breast cancer.

My treatment for breast cancer consisted of one year of chemotherapy every two weeks in Birmingham and eight weeks of radiation in Decatur. Throughout my treatment, my focus was that God would not give a person more than they could handle. This proved to be so true and I learned that I was a lot stronger than I ever realized. Prayers from myself, my family and friends, plus wonderful church support were the things that took me through that treatment process and helped me to be strong in the face of what could have been a very scary time for me. One of my prayers was that I did not want to look like someone that was sick. I feel that in my heart, I did indeed look very healthy during my cancer battle, except having a bald head of course 😊 .

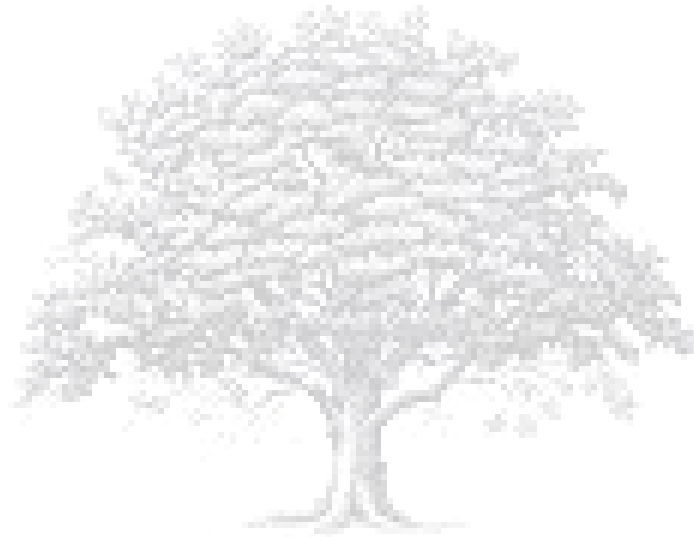
It seemed that good news and bad news was on the horizon for me after completing the year of treatment. I learned I was cancer free and three days later, my husband of five years told me that he did not love me and wanted a divorce. This was a devastating blow to me. But, God once again came to my rescue and helped me during this emotional disappointment. Friends and family reminded me that everything works out for the glory of God. If it means that I deal with hardships to bring one person to the Lord, then it is all worth it.

Good things did come out of my battle with cancer. My mother's life changed. My mom lives a wonderful spiritual life now. I would say she had a lukewarm relationship with the Lord before, but now that has changed to a spirit filled life. That was a big positive that I saw from before and after my battle with cancer. We don't realize what good will occur at the time of a cancer diagnosis, but there is always something good that comes out of it. I have been cancer free now for two years and feel much stronger. I do have some leg pain, but that is helped with anti-inflammatory medicines. I do not think about the cancer and I enjoy

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each day that I have on this Earth. I think positive thoughts as life is too short to worry about the what if's.

All of my friends have a Christ centered life and I surround myself with friends who love God. This helps me stay on the path towards heaven. My recommendation to others diagnosed with cancer is to pray and stay positive. Some days will not be easy, however, know that God is always with you 24/7. Remember there is someone who is worse off than you and be thankful for what you have. Never forget that God does not give you more than you can handle.



# Christ Over Cancer

*God Is In Control*

*Testicular Cancer Survivor*

I was 31 years old when I first realized something was just not right. I first went to my family doctor and he assured me that everything was normal and that I would probably never have to come see him again with this. To ease my mind, I decided to go for a second opinion. I made an appointment with an urologist and he performed another ultrasound and agreed with my family doctor that the tumor was not cancer. I was relieved to know that both doctors told me the same thing.

A few months passed and I noticed that the tumor had started growing. I was very fortunate to find an urologist in Nashville who was able to take me in quickly. He did another ultrasound. I will never forget that moment. The doctor came into the exam room and said he had something he wanted to show me. He took me to his computer and showed me the pictures and said something is not right with these pictures. He pointed out the tumor. He then took me into a separate room and sat me down with my wife and looked straight into my eyes and told me this was serious. I could hear my wife begin to start crying but God was with me and helped me remain calm so that I could ask the questions that I had. He said he was not for sure if it was cancer or not but if it was it could spread within a few months. He didn't want to biopsy it because he said that if it was cancer that the biopsy might cause it to spread faster. He wanted to take it out as soon as possible. It was near Christmas and I asked him if we could wait till the first of the year to perform the surgery. He said that would be okay, but we did not need to put this off any longer than that.

I had surgery on January 3, 2008. Everything went normal with the surgery but I would not know the pathology report for a few days. As you can imagine the wait for the results was very difficult. It was on January 11, 2008 that I got the phone call from my doctor telling me that it was testicular cancer. I had heard that word many times but never was it directed to me. I was in shock but I remained calm. He told me that I needed to come back to Nashville for some more test to see exactly how far the cancer had spread. He said after we received those results we would discuss treatment options. He assured me that I was going to be ok and that we were going to get through this. I was scared. I held my

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composer for my wife and kids but inside I was scared. Scared of the unknown. I knew with God's help I would get through this. I knew he would not put anything on my shoulders that I could not bear. And I knew that something good was going to come of this difficult time. I just had to keep my head high and hit this head on. I knew I wasn't going to go through this alone. God was holding my hand the whole way and I have a wonderful wife that was by my side to give me a shoulder to lean on. I had a church family who was right there with me giving me words of encouragement and praying for me.

When I found out that the cancer was limited to the one tumor and that it had not spread anywhere else in my body I was relieved. It was like a load off my shoulders. The doctor told me that he didn't think it was necessary for me to go through any treatments. I would just have to come back to Nashville every four to six weeks for CT scans for the first year. If nothing showed up and my levels never changed during that time then no other form of treatments would be necessary. If by chance it did then I would have to go through all the radiation and chemo treatments.

I just passed my one-year anniversary and I am cancer free. The chances of the cancer coming back now are very slim. I won the fight with cancer. I am in the second year and go to the doctor every three months for a scan and blood work. So far so good.

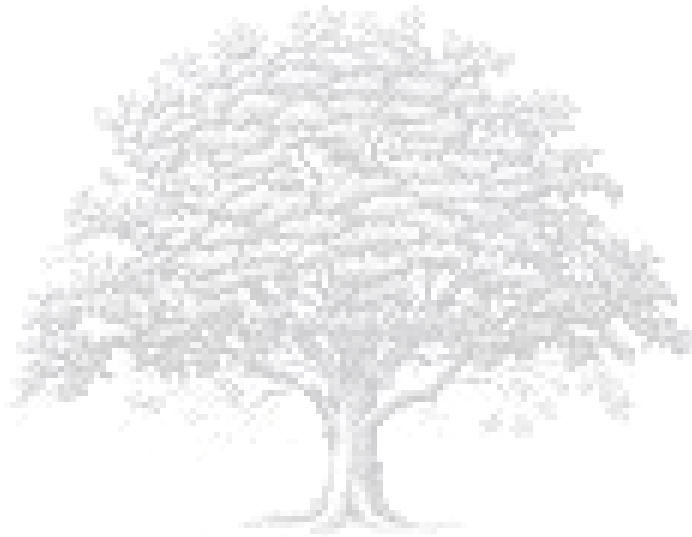
Physically I can do everything that I was doing before. I will say I pay closer attention to the way I feel on a daily basis. Every small pain or discomfort I feel makes me concerned. I know we are not suppose to worry but I think this is normal to be like this. I can't help it.

I look at life in a different way. Everything can change at the blink of an eye. I try to live each day as if it were my last. From this situation I have become closer to God. I spend a little time of each day in bible study. In fact I haven't missed a day yet and I am not planning on it either. The Lord has blessed me in so many ways and I plan on living the rest of my life for him. My faith is stronger now more than it ever has been.

If there was one thing that I could say to someone who just found out that they had cancer it would be, give it to God, because he can handle it for

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you. You can't go through this alone. With God all things are possible. Give it to Him and let Him handle it for you. God is in control. Don't ever forget that. Be strong and keep your head up high and hit it head on. You can overcome this!!



## Christ Over Cancer

### *God Answers Prayers*

### *Fallopian Tube Cancer Survivor*

In November 1987, I turned 40 years old. I have a wonderful husband and 3 boys. I always stayed very busy with my life. My husband worked evening shift and the boys were in school. I worked part time selling insurance. So, I didn't think that I had time to be sick. I was about to find out that I had to make the time.

In May of 1988, I had a pap smear and it was negative. I talked to my doctor about having a hysterectomy and he told me that it was up to me when I wanted to have the surgery. I scheduled the surgery for August 1988. At that time, we didn't have a cancer insurance policy. I didn't want to take out a policy but my husband and sister insisted that I take out one. I had not even thought about having cancer. I am glad they insisted. My sister and I had a hysterectomy the same day and we were put in the same room. She had to have a blood transfusion. I was told that I had fallopian tube cancer (Adenocarcinoma). This is a rare type of cancer. I was told it was optimal and that meant that it should respond well to treatment. They took out the cancer they could see. They then did a wash down after surgery and found cancer cells in this test, which wasn't expected. Then they gave me the dire news that I had three months to live.

The doctor wanted me to go 100 miles from home to take the chemotherapy. He told me if I hadn't had the surgery that I would have started losing weight and then it would have been too late to have done anything at all. I had to go every 3 weeks for 8 treatments of chemo and it took 6 months. They gave me 2 different types of chemo and these were called Cytosan and Platinol. My husband went with me for every treatment. He had to swap shifts at work to be able to carry me for the treatments. He went with me every time that I went for blood work. The nurse told me that I was lucky because a lot of men didn't stay with you when you were really sick. He was always with me when I needed him.

They told me that I would lose my hair after 3 or 4 treatments. I was told that I needed to get a wig before my 1<sup>st</sup> treatment because the color and texture of my hair would change after the 1<sup>st</sup> treatment. I got the wig and it was a good thing because my hair came out after the 1<sup>st</sup> treatment. My

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boys were there when I started brushing my hair and it was coming out by the handful. It really bothered me and my family when it came out. All that was left was some fuzz. It was upsetting to have your hair fall out, but you have to accept the changes that cancer causes.

I would go into the hospital and have blood work done and then they would carry me to the cancer floor. The nurse would start my pre-meds and later in the day, they would give me the chemo. She told me that most people get sick from taking the chemo. I told myself that I wasn't going to get sick. I got sick after one of the treatments during the 6<sup>th</sup> month. The reason that I got sick was that 2 of my boys were sick when I left home to go for the treatment. When I got there the nurse asked me what was wrong and I told her. She called out medical doctor and got an appointment for the boys that day. My parents carried them to the doctor for me. The nurse that helped me at the hospital worked with the doctor and she was a terrific person. She was a very positive person. Being positive goes a long way.

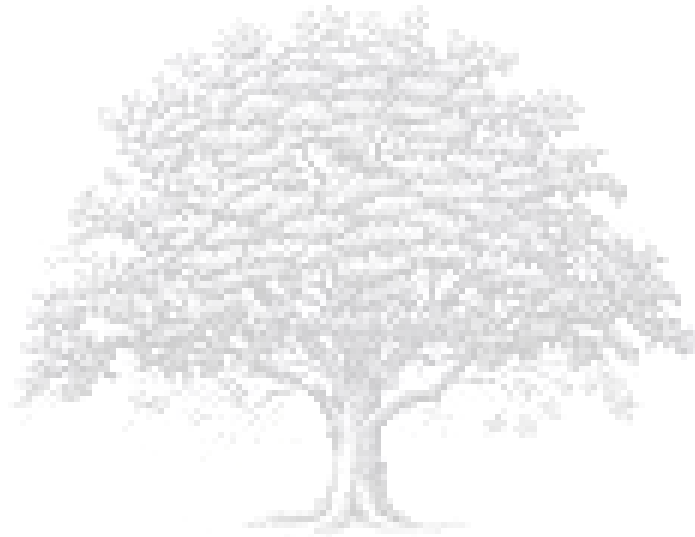
I was told that the chemo could destroy my kidneys. So, my husband would wake me every 2 hours to make sure that I went to the bathroom. The medicine made me so sleepy that I didn't know what I was doing most of the time. He would have to shake me to wake me up enough to use the bathroom. Thanks to him, I didn't have any damage to my kidneys.

After my 5<sup>th</sup> treatment, my blood counts became very low. I was put in the hospital and they gave me medicine to help build my blood. They also told me that I needed to eat as much food as possible. I really didn't want the food. I would eat a bite and cry. After about a week, I got to go home. After the last treatment, I had joints that started to swell. They sent me to a rheumatologist to find out what was wrong. The chemo had brought on rheumatoid arthritis. I had to use a walking cane for several months and it also affected my hand too. God got me through this and I got where I could walk and it only affected one of my fingers in the end.

What helped me the most during this long time was that I asked God to help me get through each day (one day at a time). I couldn't have made it without God's help. Even though I was only given 3 months to live, I

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want to thank God for letting me live the last 20 years. God answered my prayer!!!!



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*Family*

*Multiple Myeloma & CLL Survivor*

Sept 16, 1996 is the day I heard the words, “ you have cancer, multiple myeloma,” from Dr. Daugherty. At this time, I was taking my husband to the cancer clinic once a week for chemotherapy treatments. He had CLL and colon cancer. Eighteen years earlier, I had watched as my mother fought a battle with bone cancer. Her strong belief in God and her spiritual strength gave me the strength to accept what I have no control over, and to accept God’s plan for my life. Each day I live is a special gift from God and I hope I use it wisely and make everyday count. In 2004, I was diagnosed with another type of cancer, CLL. My faith in God has helped me to place the decision of my future in his hands. I have been blessed for 12 years and I hope to have many more.

Proverbs 17:22 – A cheerful heart is good medicine.

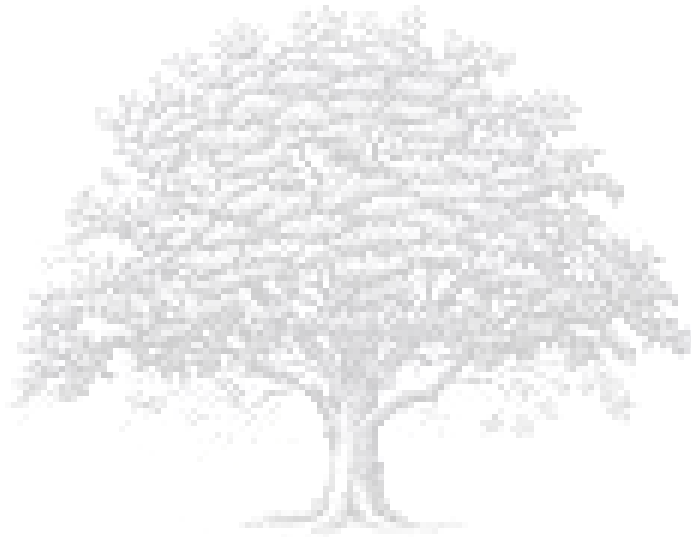
During this period of time I have also had two sisters die with cancer. One had brain cancer and the other with a rare type of lymphoma. My youngest sister was an inspiration to all who knew her. At her worst times when she was weak and very sick, she made you feel good about yourself. She would take the church’s songbook to her chemo treatments and get all the patients to sing with her while they were taking their treatments. They all seemed to enjoy it. She was well loved and you could see her “goodness” shining through. My husband was also inspirational to me and I remember that during his illness, his favorite scriptures were Philippians’ 4:11-13 and he read them often.

As I sit here today, I am trying to learn to leave the past behind and be satisfied with today. I get up each day and thank God that He granted me another day. God said, “don’t worry about tomorrow, it will worry about itself” – Matthew 6:34. He supplies our needs, one day at a time.

My advice to someone that is newly diagnosed is to talk to your family, and be open and honest with them. I have a tendency to protect my girls by not telling them the facts about my illness. I think what they don’t know will keep them from worrying. But, I’m learning to laugh and cry with them because we need each other and it helps to have someone with whom we can share our hopes and fears.

## Christ Over Cancer

Most of my family are members at Woodlawn Church of Christ. Knowing I have a Christian family and church family is a blessing to me. Throughout my cancer challenges, I have the comfort of the words Christ left for us... "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" Hebrews 1:35. I hope these words will be of comfort for someone. Just put your prayers and faith in God. God bless you.



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### *Be Strong, Have Faith, Don't Worry Testicular Cancer Survivor*

March 28, 1991 is a day I will not soon forget. I had been having some pain, so I did not delay in going to see my doctor. After an examination and some tests, my doctor warned me that this could be bad, but that we would know more soon. Three days later, I got the call that the tests showed that I had testicular cancer. My dad had passed away with a brain tumor, so when I told my mom, she was hysterical as she had a fear of cancer due to my dad's passing. Seeing how upset she was, my immediate reaction was to be strong for her. God blessed me with the ability to stay strong in the middle of such turmoil that stayed with me throughout my battle with cancer.

My doctor told me that if the cancer had not spread that I had a 90% chance of survival. After I got off the phone with the doctor, my thoughts were that if God wants me to live, then that's great. However, if God does not want me to live, I had the peace of knowing that I had made the proper preparations and I was ready to go on to be with Him. I decided that I was going to leave it in God's Hands! I was not scared.

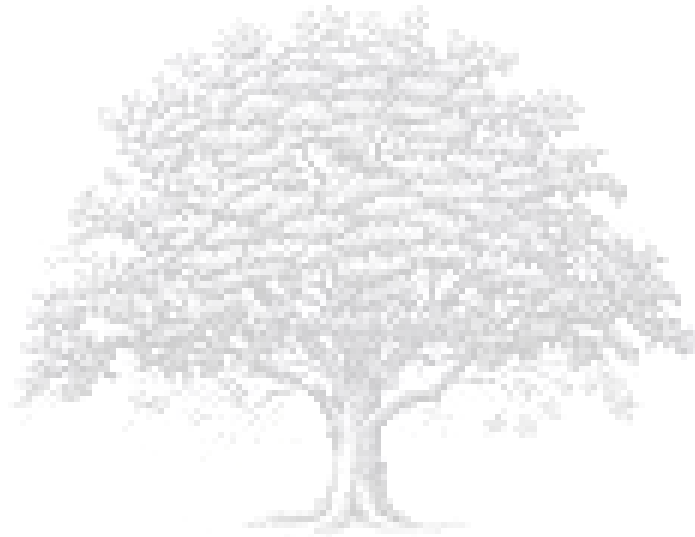
I had surgery to remove the cancer and then chemotherapy. I will admit that I had some apprehension about how the chemotherapy would make me feel since I had heard the awful side effects it could have. In actuality, it was not pleasant, but it was not as bad as I had imagined.

During my treatment, my Mom became sick and passed away only 7 days from the doctor telling me that I was cancer free. I wish my mom could have heard those words, but God has his plans and I didn't dwell on it. I had my mom during my sickness and having her made me be strong during a time that I needed to be strong. I have now been cancer free for 16 years.

I have had many health problems in my life, since I was born with Spinal Bifida. However, I have always had a strong faith in God and he has helped me through any health concerns I have had to endure. My advice to others facing cancer or another serious illness is to Never Give Up. Know that there is a higher power in God. Put faith in Him, because He and only He will decide when it is your time to go. Believe things will by

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okay and think positively. God doesn't want us to worry, but to have faith in Him. Do what you can do that is within your control and let the rest go and let God handle it.



## Christ Over Cancer

### *My Guided Journey*

### *Hairy Cell Leukemia Survivor*

My journey began January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2004. That was the day Dr. Daugherty gave me, a 33 year old, seemingly healthy husband and father of two young boys, the news that I had been diagnosed with Hairy Cell Leukemia (HCL). If I live to be 100 years old, I don't think I will ever forget that day nor the words that were said. I remember hearing that my blood showed a type of leukemia. It was at that point that my mind began racing and thoughts of my sweet wife, and my precious young boys living a life without me was about to send me into an uncontrollable panic attack. I never looked at my wife, though I could hear her sobbing in the chair beside me, but what I do remember is that an inner strength took over me and I was able to ask all the questions that I had and what options were available to me. When we walked out of Dr. Daugherty's office, I was trying to comfort my wife even though you would think it would be the other way around. It was not until later, that I realized someone had been holding me in their arms, comforting and preparing me for this news even before the news was known. That someone was my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The news had to be told. It was told to my co-workers, it was told to my friends, and it was told to my family. Each time it was told, it seemed to get harder to tell as the disbelief was even more astounding. Could this really be true? I had only gone in originally to get my cholesterol checked and a general physical. I was what someone might call a health nut. I ate well, watched my diet, exercised 3-4 times every week and was running up to 9 miles per week when diagnosed. What had I done to bring this disease into my body? Could I have prevented this? No known answers to these questions existed.

Having been saved and baptized around 6 years ago, I knew where to turn. Oddly enough, I had been teaching in my Sunday School class recently about trials and temptations. I had even been reading in James, chapter one about the perseverance during these trials and that sometimes these trials were necessary to make you what God wants you to be. These verses echoed in my head and on the day of diagnosis, I knew I had to make a choice. I could either choose to walk with the devil, blame God for this terrible situation, and abandon my faith, saying God had

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neglected me, or I could choose to walk with God, knowing that all things work to the good for those that love the Lord. I thought about James chapter one. I remembered all of my blessings and God's hand in my life in the past. The choice was obvious. God never abandoned me, he had bigger plans for me and this was just training. I chose and continue to choose God.

Now, I am not going to say that I was completely insulated from the devil. Then and even now, I regretfully sometimes allow the devil to enter my thoughts and pounce on me like a trampoline. But, I always try to remember I Peter 5:7, and I will cast my burdens on God and ask for his help in getting through my worries. He listens and comforts so well when we allow him to.

The early days after diagnosis were a particularly hard time for me and I allowed the devil to really play games with my thoughts. I became overwhelmed with worry and sorrow. I could barely look at my boys without crying. Longevity was not something I could see in my mind's eye. Once again, God came to my rescue. I had gone to UAB for a 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion. God gave me a blessing while I was there that sustains me to this day in dealing with HCL. HCL is very rare form of leukemia with only 600 cases diagnosed annually. The head of the oncology department at UAB had only seen 35 cases in 20 years. When my doctor at UAB, who had only seen 2 patients with HCL in his career, told me that his very next patient after me was also an HCL survivor, my eyes looked up. The doctor said this would never happen again in his career. He left and I was about to walk out the door when the doctor rushed back in. He said that his nurse had spoken with the HCL survivor and told him about me and that the survivor would like to talk with me. I agreed happily.

The "survivor" as I'll refer to him, talked to me and my wife and told us that he was diagnosed with HCL in the late 1980's. He was treated with 2CDA chemotherapy in 1990 when the drug was in its trial stage and he has been in remission ever since. He also shared that he had always gone to MD Andersen Cancer Center in Houston, but this was his first year to get his annual checkup in Birmingham. He reassured me that the treatment had been very tolerable as far as chemotherapies go and that he had been in great health for almost 14 years. He credited God for his

## Christ Over Cancer

good health. As we talked a golden cross slid out from behind his tie. He saw my wide eyes gazing at the cross and he said, “Oh yes, I am an ordained Lutheran minister.” So, sitting before me was an HCL survivor who had been a trial participant for the drug I was about to take, that has been in remission 14 years, was a man who had faith in God, and was making his first checkup at UAB after 13 years in Houston. All of this was happening in a doctor’s office that had only seen 2 cases of HCL in his medical career and now he had two in the same room. The survivor looked at me and said, “I think God had something to do with this meeting, don’t you?” I nodded in complete agreement. Was all of this a coincidence? I certainly do not think so.

On my drive home that day, my eyes filled with tears as I realized that God sent that wonderful survivor to comfort me and let me know he (GOD) had things under control and that I was going to make it through this and be a better soldier for Christ. It was also at this time that I was able to pull back the blinders and see that God had been preparing me for this moment for quite a while. I had changed employers several years ago to a more family friendly group that supported me during my illness beyond compare. I had gone in for a voluntary physical, even though I believed I was in great shape at the young age of 33. This was a physical which led to my somewhat early diagnosis. Furthermore, after considering it for more than a year, my wife and I had taken out a cancer policy only 69 days prior to my diagnosis, a policy that would help financially during our absences from work in the coming months. I used the word, “I” above, but “I” actually had nothing to do with any of that preparation. It was all GOD.

Today, I am doing well and thank God each and every day for what he has done and continues to do for me. I try to live one day at a time and enjoy one moment at a time. The devil still haunts me when I get a little tired, but I remember 1 Peter 5:7, take a walk and talk to God and all seems to be right with the me as God comforts my soul and mind. I have so much thankfulness in my heart to God. We each are given only a short time and our bottom line mission is to seek and save the lost, bringing more into God’s fold. My goal is to do all I can for God with the time that I have so that one day I’ll hear the words, “Enter in my good and faithful servant.” That’s when I plan to rest.

## Christ Over Cancer

### *Cancer – Not Me*

### *Breast Cancer Survivor*

In June of 1996, I went to the doctor for my yearly checkup which was nothing new for me. I had gone all my life for checkups with no big problems, however, on this day, things happened quite differently.

I had the mammogram done first, then saw the doctor. He discovered a lump in my left breast which he thought needed checking further. The next step was visiting my surgeon to have a needle biopsy done. This showed abnormal cells. I knew I had fibrocystic disease in both breasts, so I felt sure that was all it was. Anyway, we always think cancer happens to the other person, and not to me or my family.

Before all this confusion started, I had already planned a vacation for mid-July, so the surgeon suggested we plan to wait and do a surgical biopsy soon after the vacation was over. I was happy to wait because I was still pretty confident my problem was fibrocystic. Of course, I never mentioned my health problem to anyone, not even my family. I suppose I was in complete denial at this point.

In July, the surgical biopsy was performed and it did reveal that I indeed had cancer. Of course this was very shocking. So many things run through your mind ---What happens next? What kind of treatment? Will I even survive? One thing we learn is to rely on God and depend on HIS PROMISES!

I had a mastectomy on August 9, 1996. Next, chemotherapy every three weeks and after that Tamoxifen for 5 years. Chemo was not very pleasant. My biggest problem was nausea and fatigue. I was very weak and tired all the time. My sister was a great inspiration though. She tried to keep me laughing at all times. I have heard laughter and a positive attitude works wonders for sickness.

I am now a 10 year survivor and although my family and friends have helped me so very much, I still give GOD the praise and honor for everything in my life.

## Christ Over Cancer

*Make Every Day Count*

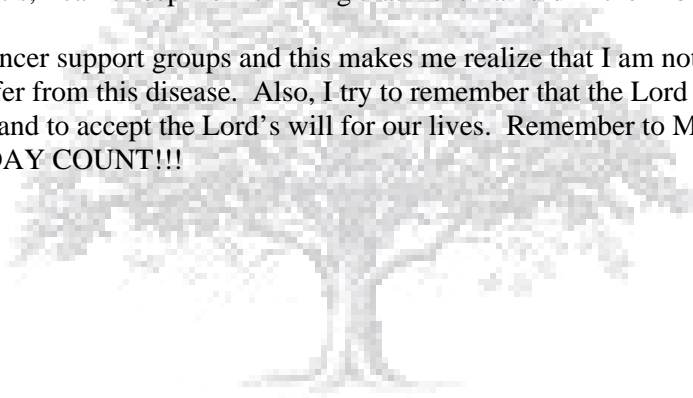
*Cancer Survivor*

Today, I am sitting here thinking about my feelings the day I found out that I had cancer. I remember that I wasn't sure what my future would be or even how long I would live.

I had gone in for my yearly checkup with no idea that I had anything to worry about, especially cancer. The day that I went back for my results, I was really shocked to learn of the cancer diagnosis. On my way home, it was a dark and rainy day. I was so upset that I got lost going home!

Two weeks later, I had my surgery to remove the cancer. After I came home from the hospital on a Sunday afternoon, I was alone and started thinking about what plans I should make. I started praying and I asked the Lord for one year to get my affairs in order. My prayers were answered because this year on December 6, 2007, I will be cancer free for 12 years!! If I am lucky, I will make it to 15 years, I can't keep from thinking that Hezekiah did in the Bible.

I attend cancer support groups and this makes me realize that I am not the only one to suffer from this disease. Also, I try to remember that the Lord is always in control and to accept the Lord's will for our lives. Remember to **MAKE EVERY DAY COUNT!!!**



## Christ Over Cancer

### Cancer Saved Dad's Life    Lung Cancer Through A Daughter's Eyes

My Dad was diagnosed with Stage 4 small cell carcinoma lung cancer in November 1999. I have always been daddy's little girl and when I heard the news I was shocked!! Dad had endured several health problems in the past: heart problems (open heart surgery with 7 bypasses), a stroke, and other minor health issues. However, we never thought we would have to add "Cancer" to his list. I really think that Dad was surprised also since his doctor had originally thought that the spot on Dad's lungs was just a shadow.

The thing that scared me the most is what I believe scares everyone the most, and that is the word "Cancer." I even had a hard time saying the word when I was explaining it to others. I just felt like if I acknowledged that he had this horrible illness that it meant I would lose him. I could not fathom losing him to this.

The thing that got me through Dad's cancer without a doubt was Dad's attitude. Dad always kept laughing and didn't go into the depths of despair regarding his cancer. He had *very little* hair and he would joke that he just knew he would lose what little hair he had and that it would be replaced with this thick, black, curly hair. He would always say, "Momma better watch out!" But, the few hairs he had held on for all it was worth. He didn't lose them. ☺ He had a great attitude and he didn't seem scared, especially in the beginning.

Scared or not, I prayed often for Dad. We had all been raised in the church. Momma is the best woman I know and has been a faithful Christian for my entire life. Daddy always encouraged her and insisted we go to church and church related activities, he just never joined us. Through the years, we invited him, but he always declined. So, when he was first diagnosed, I felt this overwhelming need to discuss his relationship with God with him. Even though I was very close to my daddy, it was one of the most difficult talks I had ever had with anyone. I respected him so much. He was a wonderful and loving father, and I didn't want him to think that I didn't think he had done a good job as a parent. However, I prayed and prayed and prayed about it and when I finally worked up the nerve, I found an opportunity to talk with him when it was just the two of us in the room. I basically cried the entire time. He felt sorry for me and he said, "Are you worried about me going to heaven?" I said, "YES!!!" He basically told me that he had his own relationship with God and that he had for years and that he wasn't going to discuss it with me. You know what... He did anyway!!

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That night opened the door for many other talks with me and others like Fred Dillon, Wayne Wood, and Eugene Pigg. I knew God was working. I had so many friends praying for Daddy. I felt this tremendous sense of peace that everything would be okay. I just knew in my heart that Daddy would be fine, not necessarily physically, but spiritually, which is what matters the most.

He lived for 18 months with cancer and had a good quality of life almost right up until the end. The most beautiful thing happened only days before my Daddy passed away. The many prayers were answered and my Daddy was baptized in June 2001. When Daddy came out of the waters of baptism, he said he felt like a new man, and I said, "that's because you are a new man now Daddy."

Anyone who didn't know my Daddy may have assumed that we pushed him or had him baptized without him having a good understanding of the actions he was taking. That is not my Daddy! He was fully aware and excited. It was completely his decision. I believe that it took cancer to save my Daddy's life. God waited just long enough for Daddy to make the decision to follow him and then he took him home. He was a wonderful husband and father and deserves to be in Heaven. When all of this transpired, it was a very magical time.

People involved could see God's presence through every step. Dad lost the physical battle, but he won a much more important one.

If I had to give any words of encouragement to family members that have someone you love enduring cancer, it would be to pray, pray, and pray. Ask all of your friends to pray. God's peace is like no other and He will provide all you need if you have the faith. God knows what is best, trust Him to work things out. Discuss your fears with Him because family members need to try to be strong for the one living with the illness. Another piece of advice is to laugh. Try to find some humor wherever you can, it really does go far. Momma and Daddy laughed all the time, it brightens the mood. May God Bless You.

## Christ Over Cancer

### *Never Give Up*

### *Acute Lymphatic Leukemia Survivor*

In 1971, I was diagnosed with Acute Lymphatic Leukemia (ALL). I was 11 years old. My family doctor discovered it while I was hospitalized for blood transfusions. He immediately made arrangements and sent me to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, TN.

When I arrived I was admitted to the ICU and started off with bone marrow tests and spinal taps to confirm the diagnosis. I was so scared. I kept thinking that I was going to suddenly wake up and discover that it was all a bad dream. I stayed in Memphis for one week and began taking oral and intravenous chemotherapy.

When I left after one week, I still had not been told about the diagnosis and I was determined I would never go back there again. Little did I know that I was to return in three weeks to start radiation treatment and more chemotherapy. I would continue going back and forth to Memphis for the next 17 years.

My cancer was in remission after I completed three weeks of radiation. I continued on with chemotherapy and trips to Memphis every three weeks for three years. In 1974, I had a relapse and I had to have more radiation. I achieved remission again and did well until 1976 when I had yet another relapse and had to start the process all over again.

I was 16 years old and very upset. The doctors were very straightforward with me, because I was ready to give up. They told me if I didn't want to start over, that I might have about six weeks to live. If I did start over, they could not guarantee anything, but they thought I could possibly have two more years left.

I started the treatment over and beat their estimates. As I mentioned, I was 16 years old at the time and now I am 47 years old. The survival rate for ALL is up to 90% today. Through God's will and the wonderful doctors and nurses at St. Jude Hospital, I can say that I am a cancer survivor. It was a long, hard battle, but I hope my story of perseverance will encourage someone else to keep fighting.

# Christ Over Cancer

## *I Survived Cancer*

## *Lung Cancer Survivor*

We retired from the State of Alabama in October 1997. I had worked more than 30 years as a counselor and my wife had been my “at home” secretary who took my calls and encouraged my clients when I was away from home. She worked without monetary remuneration. Two weeks after retirement, I went to work for AGAPE of North Alabama as a Christian counselor, working two days per week. So, I was an active person with an active life.

I quit smoking in 1992 and was quite proud of myself. In 1998, I had a recurring cough and saw my family doctor three times before I had a chest x-ray. The technician asked me to wait in the exam room while she looked at the films with the doctor. I noticed she seemed concerned but until I heard the doctor talking to my wife, I didn't think much about it. I said a brief prayer asking God to help me with whatever the future held. The doctor came in and told me, with tears in his eyes, that I had lung cancer. He suggested a specialist, and then added, “I've seen many x-rays like yours and I feel sure of my diagnosis.

My wife and I talked and prayed a lot the next few days. We saw the local specialist and talked with other cancer survivors. Our youngest son reminded us that his mother-in-law survived lung cancer surgery. We talked with her and she was very positive and encouraging about the surgeon she used. We promised to see the same doctor. We made an appointment with Dr. R.J. Cerfolio at UAB hospital where he was an assistant professor in the division of cardiothoracic surgery.

From the beginning, my wife was very supportive and positively encouraging. The diagnosis brought us closer and we talked and prayed more together. As we drove to Birmingham, we talked about what tests I might have and if Dr. Cerfolio would be the person we wanted to do the treatment and if he had done surgery on as many as 400 lungs, then we would use him.

We sat down with Dr. Cerfolio and went over my test results. He told us what he thought we would like to know about him first of all. He had completed training programs in heart and lung surgery and even though he had been at UAB for only a few years, he averaged about 400 lung surgeries per year. He felt confident that he could do the surgery I needed but indicated that a lot would depend on us and our attitude and a lot would depend on God.

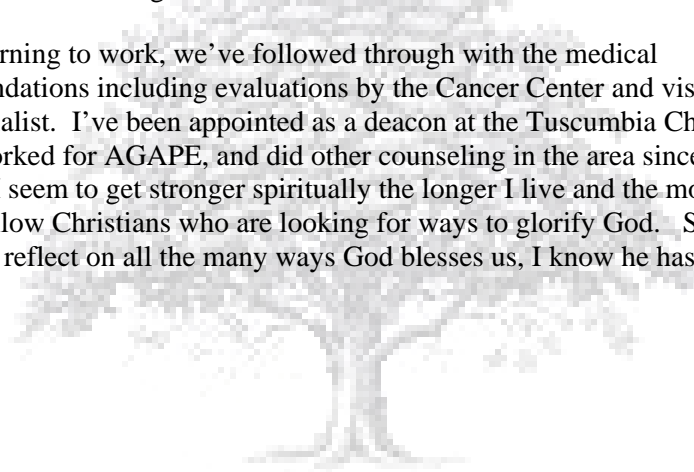
Dr. Cerfolio suggested that we go home and think about what we wanted to do and call him if we wanted him to do the surgery. Our response seemed to shock

## Christ Over Cancer

him when we told him we wanted him to do the surgery as soon as possible and that we were ready for the surgery that afternoon if that was okay with him. We told him we felt like we had to have the surgery before we could start to get well. We told him we had a motel room and that we would be there and be ready when he was ready for us. He made a phone call and found that he had a cancellation in his surgery schedule the next day. He started me on pre-op testing that afternoon.

Early the next morning, I was admitted, prepped and taken to surgery. The surgery lasted approximately 6 hours. I awoke in the recovery room with my wife by my bed. She had been there for hours. Once she was sure I was awake, she told the nurses in the room that I was a counselor and that they could get free counseling while I was a patient. To my surprise, one of the nurses posed a problem she was having and we worked on it a while.

Since returning to work, we've followed through with the medical recommendations including evaluations by the Cancer Center and visits to the lung specialist. I've been appointed as a deacon at the Tuscumbia Church of Christ, worked for AGAPE, and did other counseling in the area since my surgery. I seem to get stronger spiritually the longer I live and the more I'm around fellow Christians who are looking for ways to glorify God. Sometimes it helps to reflect on all the many ways God blesses us, I know he has blessed me.



# Christ Over Cancer

## Two Time Cancer Warrior Breast and Lymph Node Cancer Survivor

I am 48 years old and am a two time cancer survivor. I was diagnosed with breast cancer 13 years ago. At that time, I had a lumpectomy and 38 radiation treatments. I decided at that time that I would keep a positive attitude and be determined to fight it. I did great and after 12 years, I thought I had it made. However, that was not to be the case.

Almost two years ago, I went for my 6 month checkup and I was called 3 days later to hear my blood work was elevated. The doctors sent me for a lot of tests and it was determined my cancer had returned in my lymph nodes. I was devastated. The 2<sup>nd</sup> time around was definitely harder to be positive. In the beginning, I thought, "How could this be?" I'm healthy, I eat healthy, I work out and I'm a good person. How and why is this happening to me again??? But what I came to realize is that none of that matters to cancer. What matters is how you go forward from the point of your diagnosis.

I made a decision to focus on the positive and made it a rule to not allow myself to be surrounded by negative people or to listen to awful stories about some friend or relative who had a terrible diagnosis. I did not want anyone to feel sorry for me or cry about my situation. I decided to maintain a positive energy during treatments. When I would feel sick for 3-4 days, I would visualize being in a peaceful place. I would think of my two beautiful children or listen to my favorite music and go to church. Those things became my safe haven.

I never cried because my hair, eyelashes, and eyebrows fell out. I knew they would come back and be prettier than they were before. I had 5 beautiful wigs. I felt as though I needed to continue to do what made me feel good. I went to work every day, wore makeup, jewelry and my wig. Despite what was going on with my cancer, I knew my appearance was one thing I did have control over somewhat. I ate when I felt like I could and continued to exercise.

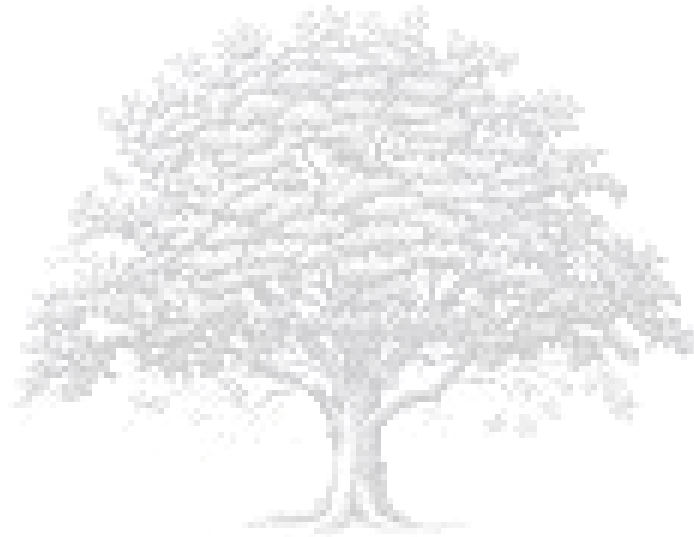
You also have to find ways to laugh during treatments. When people asked to see my bald head, I would pull my wig off and show them. I would explain to children why I was bald and let them see that cancer can be conquered. All my brothers and family would try my wigs on and we made lots of pictures and laughed about it. We decided my brothers made some ugly women.

Family, friends and a church family are great to encourage you in so many ways. Prayers, cards, and bringing food when you are too sick to cook were great. How blessed we are!!!! After I finished treatments and Spring came, I started a rose garden in my backyard. Roses are my favorite flower. I felt it would be

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my healing garden. Everytime my roses would bloom, I would think how wonderful it is to live.

I had my PET scan of my whole body in December 2006 and my cancer is gone! Praise God! Never forget that you are a survivor from the instant you are diagnosed. Do not allow yourself to be called a cancer “victim”. I have learned that cancer is just a word. It does not define me, and it can never ever conquer me.



# Christ Over Cancer

*Keep The Faith*

*Breast Cancer Survivor*

On Saturday afternoon in February 2000, while talking on the phone to my daughter, I found a knot under my arm. The next Wednesday, I was in Dr. McFall's office. He told me he thought it was in my lymph nodes. He sent me to a surgeon for a biopsy. Dr. Yoder, the surgeon, did a needle biopsy and called me the following Friday with the results --- Cancer.

I live alone, so it was easy for me to pray anytime, day or night. After a month of tests and prayer, Dr. Yoder did a mastectomy, followed by months of chemotherapy. I will never forget the day when the oncologist, Dr. Daugherty, talked to me about chemotherapy. He asked me if I had any questions and my answer was, "I don't know enough to ask questions." He replied if you have faith in God, you will do good. I immediately told him I have the faith in God, and he said, "Well, You WILL do good."

My family has been so good to me. Always there for me and encouraging me. Another blessing I have is my church family. They have been so good to me as well. Always there if I need them, always praying for me, which is the most important thing. I know I don't deserve all the blessings I have received, and I am certainly not any better than my friends that have gone on to be with the Lord before me since I first got cancer. I thank God everyday for the things he has done for me.

I did fine with chemotherapy and everything went well until 10-8-2004. I had a mammogram which determined I had cancer in my other breast. On 11-2-2004, I had another mastectomy. This time I did not have to take chemotherapy since we caught it early, which was another blessing.

I know the reason I am doing good today is because of all the prayers I have prayed and other people have prayed for me. I remember people I didn't know calling and telling me that they were praying for me. I received cards from ladies in the Sunday School class and from people that I didn't even know telling me they were praying for me. I can truly tell everybody that you need the Lord and you need to be close to him at all times, but especially during a cancer diagnosis.

There came a time in my life when there was nothing I could do but lean on God. It is a wonderful feeling to know you have the Lord always there with you. Good luck in whatever sickness you have to cope with, but always remember that GOD LOVES YOU!! God Bless!

# Christ Over Cancer

## *Not the End of the World*

## *Breast Cancer Survivor*

At the age of 71, I was in good health, or at least I thought I was in good health. I always had my annual checks-ups and mammograms with my doctor each year. Then in November 2001, I received a letter that there were more tests needed to make sure no cancer was present. I thought, this cannot be happening to me. I had a niece to die of breast cancer in 1992, and another niece also had breast cancer, but she had been in remission for 6 years. But, I still couldn't believe this was happening to me.

I went for another mammogram and for two hours they x-rayed to locate that tiny little spot so the doctor could do a needle biopsy. The doctor came out and told my husband that there was nothing to worry about, the spot was just a fatty tissue. I came home and went on with my life. Then one day a letter came which stated that I needed to check with my doctor soon. I went back with no thoughts that I was facing cancer. My husband, on the other hand, was a nervous wreck. The doctor looked at my file and said do you have someone with you? I said, "My husband is with me." The doctor called for him and told us that we were facing a big step, cancer.

We both began to cry and the doctor said this is not the end of the world. He said they were going to take good care of me. This was November 26, 2001 and on December 11, 2001, I had my right breast removed. I stayed overnight in the hospital and when we started to leave the hospital, the nurse began to explain how to take care of the drain tubes. I told her to tell my husband because blood makes me sick. He was such a sport. He told the nurse, "Now you went to school for 4 years to learn how to do this and you expect me to learn to do this in a few minutes?" He was the best nurse I could have ever had. When I started taking the preventive medications, it was my husband that reminded me to take my medicine each time.

After 6 years, I am in remission and feel fine. I have had four needle biopsies on my left breast because of cysts, but none were malignant. I thank God each day for my health and now I live everyday as if it were my last. I do not take my health for granted anymore. I thank God that I had a physical every year and caught the problem in time. I thank God for good doctors and nurses that took good care of me and for the wonderful husband that is now in Heaven.

# Christ Over Cancer

*Trust in Him*

*Breast Cancer Survivor*

As I think back to when it all started, I'm so thankful for so much, and though I've not always been what God was pleased with, I'm sure he said, "We will see", when I was so determined to do things my way. You know, my mom said I was a very stubborn little girl, and I guess I didn't out grow it.

I remember that cold February night as I was taking a bath. I felt what seemed like a small lump in my left breast. As I dried myself off, I said, "No, that is not a lump, it was just the way I was sitting in the tub." No it wasn't just the way I was sitting in the tub..... So, I let it go out of my thoughts for a while. I found myself touching where I thought I felt the little lump, about the size of a pea.

Things were going much better for us financially. After many years, we had a better job and had bought land and built a house, (our very own home). We had three healthy boys and a mortgage. Nothing was worth upsetting everybody, so I kept my thoughts to myself, and the only ones that knew about my problem was God and me. I talked to HIM about it and asked Him to take care of it. You see, I went to church, I was active, I trusted God, and I even taught my little ones in Sunday School. I was so happy to see my three boys saved and baptized and doing work at the church. So, life went on. The only thing that was not going so well was the lump that was getting bigger. So, I had to tell my husband. He was shocked that I had waited so long to tell him, and insisted on having it checked out.

I asked him, do you know how much money we owe? We could lose our home. I can't do that to you with all the hard work we've put into this place. I mean, we had insurance, but we had never used it. I was afraid we wouldn't have enough for all the expenses if it was the bad "C" word. This was in the early 1970's. So, we said we would wait a while before going to the doctor. I didn't feel bad and life went on and I won over my husband's wishes.

But, the time came that I had to stop pretending that all was well. I found myself sitting up in bed one night with my arms extended out in front of me saying, "Lord, I can't handle this anymore, will you please help me?" I didn't ask him to take it away, but I asked for help. Then I rested as it had been a long time since I had relaxed.

Time had passed, my boys were almost grown, the mortgage was paid off and by this time, my breast had almost rotted and it began to bleed. I finally said, okay; let's see if we can find a doctor that will help me. This was 1976.

## Christ Over Cancer

We did find a doctor that I truly believe God sent our way. The doctor said, we will not do surgery. We will use radiation. We did 30 days of radiation 4-6 minutes a day every day. I didn't drive and my husband needed to work. What was I going to do, how would I get there? Two of my good friends came by and said they would take me to my treatments and they did. Every day for 30 days, and we never missed a day. During the time of my treatments, my Dad had a heart attack. After my morning radiation treatment, I would go and sit with my Dad to give my Mom a break. Neither of them knew I was taking treatments. At the end of each day, my husband would pick me up and we would go home. God seemed to be working it all out and I felt so grateful.

Things seem to be okay and I didn't have any problems with the radiation, but in 3 or 4 months my breast started to blister up in the way it had been before radiation. The doctor said we have no choice but to take the breast off. On July 22, 1977, my breast was removed and my ovaries were also removed as a precaution. The surgery went well and soon I was going strong again, except I had to have chemotherapy. I went every month for 2 treatments, for six years. Then one day the doctor said, "This is all I am going to give you, I think you can make it now."

That was 30 years ago and I have survived to be a widow after 47 years of marriage with the father of my boys. I was also blessed to be married for 14 years to another dear man that passed from this life in 2006. So, I'm a widow again, but at the age of 79 years old, I can truly say God is real. HE is the best part of my life. HE let me do it my way. I don't recommend that anyone do what I did, it was very foolish, but I'm grateful for God's blessings. I can still tell others about the Love of Christ. Jesus is the best thing that this world will ever have in every way. Just thank Him for a way out of this world to a world much better than we can ever imagine. Trust Him.

## Christ Over Cancer

### *My Mother's Example      Brain Cancer Through A Daughter's Eyes*

Life is not always as we plan it to be. Sometimes, major events occur in our lives occur that totally change the path that we take. In March 2003, I lost my precious mother after a 6 week battle with a glioblastoma tumor of the brain stem. Cancer changed my life forever.

God blessed me with an exceptional mother. She wasn't perfect, but she was a godly woman who strove to be the virtuous woman as mentioned in Proverbs 31. She always taught me to put God first and that everything else would fall into place. When I found out that my mother had a brain tumor, it really threw me for a loop. I just wanted to be there for her as much as possible.

As I mentioned earlier, mother had a courageous 6 week battle with the brain tumor. The last few weeks of my mothers life, she was unable to speak due to being totally paralyzed and on a ventilator. You know, many people never have the opportunity to tell their loved ones goodbye. Although my mother was unable to speak, she had large brown eyes that spoke a thousand words. Growing up, my sister and I knew what our mother was thinking just by looking at her eyes. So, you can imagine what a blessing those beautiful eyes were to me at such an unbearable time. I knew through her eyes, she was telling us how much she loved us. We were also blessed to be able to express our love and appreciation for having such a wonderful mother to her. Today I give thanks to God for allowing me the opportunity to share such a heart altering time with my mother. I learned that even in bad circumstances, God showers us with blessings. We just have to realize the blessings.

At the time of my mothers death, I thought I wouldn't be able to go on without her guidance and help. However, it was my mother's example that gave me the strength to go on with what needed to be done after she was gone. I soon realized cancer could not take away her influence and the positive effect she had on so many lives, especially mine.

I no longer have the life I once had. Cancer has guided me down a different path in my life. I now have a rewarding job that allows me the opportunity to work with cancer victims. I can empathize and understand what families are going through when they have loved ones stricken with this disease. In my personal life, I know my family and I will always feel a void without my mother here with us. Yet, the emptiness that I feel each day reminds me of how blessed I was to have such a wonderful mother that helped so many and it also reminds me of those big, beautiful brown eyes. Cancer can never take that away from me!

# Christ Over Cancer

*God Did This*

*Liver Cancer Survivor*

In 2007, I went to the Kirklin Clinic in Birmingham, AL and was given news that would change my life forever. I was told I had stage 4 carcinoma of the liver. I had several tumors and was told by the doctor at Kirklin that there was nothing they could do. The doctor told me to go home and enjoy the short time I had left. I said, "No thank you, God hasn't told me I'm dying yet and neither can you."

I went to my home in Tupelo, MS, and decided to seek the opinion of the local oncologist, Dr. Hills. Dr. Hills told me that liver cancer was one of the most treacherous of all cancers. Dr. Hills confirmed the prognosis and said I likely had only 7 months to live. It was suggested that I start on pain management and try to gain some quality of life during my remaining months. At that time, the pain was so intense, I would just pass out as my body could not function with the excruciating pain. I had lost down to 91 pounds at this time. For a 60+ year old, this was almost too much to bear.

I prayed to God and said, "God, I can't go down any further." I buried myself in the scriptures, particularly the books of Hebrews and Job. I asked for prayers of churches all around the area. I had decided that I wouldn't give up. It would be for God to decide when I would go. But, God helps those who help themselves. So, I had to do my part and that was to NOT GIVE UP HOPE.

My daughter, who is a nurse, wouldn't give up either. She contacted MD Andersen in Houston and the Cancer Centers of America and other top centers to try to find someone that would be willing to help me and not just tell me to go home and die. God directed us to Vanderbilt Hospital in Nashville, TN. There, we met Dr. Bernard Kelly, a liver transplant surgeon. Dr. Kelly confirmed my diagnosis but refused to put a time table on my prognosis. He said that was God's decision to make. Dr. Kelly put me in touch with Dr. Chan, also at Vandy. Together they decided on my course of treatment. My treatment course ended up being 173 chemotherapy treatments. I told them that if I didn't make it, I wanted my battle to help someone else down the road. So, I told them to mix and match whatever treatments they felt would be best for research. They agreed.

The Vandy doctors coordinated with my oncologist in Tupelo so that I could receive the treatment locally. Scans were sent to Vandy for them to review. The 173 treatments took 3 years. During that time, I was extremely sick. People would ask me, "Why are you doing this to your body?" I said, "Hey,

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look what Jesus did for us! Since Jesus died for all of us, then certainly I can do this to help someone else.”

In July 2010 after 3 long years, I received a call from Dr. Kelly after he had reviewed the latest scans. He said “Hey feisty lady, are you ready to have surgery?” I was shocked to hear this because having surgery to remove the tumors was something they did not think was possible. They did not expect the tumors to shrink enough for this to happen. I told Dr. Kelly I would be there the next day!

On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, they removed the cancer and I was told afterwards that I was cancer free!!! I knew that God had done this. He had healed me when man said it wasn't possible.

Throughout my journey, I was able to witness to nurses, doctors and other patients. However, I feel that with this blessing comes responsibility. I tell anyone and everyone that will listen what God did for me. During my entire journey, I had a wonderful peace from God. I knew where I was going, so I was not worried. It has been a terrific journey where the good has more than outweighed the bad. I get to encourage people all the time now and that makes me so happy. One of my favorite verses that I constantly reminded myself of was Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Remember those words and remember to show joy and be happy in whatever circumstance you are in. God has a plan and find peace in that. Maintain a good attitude and fight, fight, fight. You do your part and let God do his. That way, in the end, you will know his full plan was accomplished.

# Inspiring Devotionals



## Christ Over Cancer

### **Its Great To See You Again**

Last year when my family moved, we inherited a little black dog named Jake. Little Jake probably has more breeds in his DNA than Donald Trump has houses. Jake is a mutt if there ever was a mutt. He's never going to win a dog show and no one can accuse him of being the smartest tool in the shed. However, Jake packs more love in his 20 lb frame than most people could muster up in a lifetime.

Whether its raining, sleeting, snowing or sunny, when I pull in my driveway at home, Jake launches himself off the porch and runs to meet my car. He runs beside the car all the way to the garage with his tail wagging back and forth faster than a duck jumping on a june bug. Every single time I leave and come back, it is the same reception. He sits down in front of me with the most hopeful eyes when I get out of the car, just begging for me to spend time with him, to relax and love him. He gives me his utmost attention and there is no place he would rather be than sitting beside me on the steps giving me all the love that he has.

Wouldn't it be nice to have someone each day that is so happy to see you, talk to you , love you and spend time with you? Someone that doesn't carry grudges and only begs for our attention? God is that someone. He never gets tired of hearing you talk, He has endless amounts love and He is ALWAYS happy to see you and spend time with you. Whether you need a shoulder to cry on because of a health issue or someone to talk to when the kids have all gone off to college. He meets you every day, so happy to see you again and is begging for you to spend time with HIM! Matthew 6:33 - "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

So, spend some time today with God, you'll be happy you did.

### What Side of The Fence Are You On?

There are few things more beautiful to me than a huge green pasture dotted with massive oak trees, outlined with a white split rail fence, and sprinkled with multi-colored horses. Not far from my house, is a horse farm where that scene is a reality. I drive by the farm several times a week and think, wow, those horses have it made. They have plenty of green pastures to eat and roam, trees to stand under to get shade, this must be what horses dream about when they sleep.

Recently though, I drove by and saw one of these "lucky" horses with his head stretched through the white fence trying with all of his might to eat some of the grass on the other side of the fence. I thought to myself, that horse has lost his mind. He has acres upon acres of beautiful grass to eat, but he's twisting and turning trying with all his might to eat the grass that is on the other side of the fence which is no better than the grass he has on his side of the fence. Crazy right?

Then it hit me, we all at times are a lot like that "lucky" horse. God has blessed each of us with so much, but we are often not happy, not satisfied, not content. We want the bigger house, nicer car, better body, etc., because it's something we don't have. Even though our needs are currently met, when we see what's on the "other side of the fence," we suddenly are not happy and become fixated on the other side. So, what is behind this insatiable appetite for the other side? How do we reverse this trend? It's all about contentment. ***Hebrews 13:5 says, Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."***

Remind yourself of times when God has provided for you, remind yourself of the blessings you currently have. We all can look around and see others whose lives are much worse than ours. Contentment is not a "feeling", it is a *conscious effort* we must make to realize our blessings. Reminding ourselves of God's blessings in our lives helps us remain content and not longing for the "other side of the fence." This even applies to those suffering with health problems like cancer. It is so easy to get a case of the "poor me" disease. But, remind yourself of what you CAN do -- not what you CAN'T do. Can you walk, talk, bathe, read,

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without assistance? If so, focus on those blessings and use them to somehow help someone else. It could always be worse than it is.

So, look around at the green pastures in your own life and remind yourself that your side of the fence is not a bad place to be!

God Bless!

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### **Stand Up To The Bully!**

Let's try something.... take your index finger and poke your arm one time. That was harmless...right? Okay, now poke that same spot on your arm 25 times. Still harmless, although bordering on somewhat annoying...right? Now, imagine poking that same spot on your arm 10,000 times without stopping. More than likely, you would have a sore arm. You would probably also have a bruise on the surface of your arm which is a sign of broken capillaries underneath your skin where the real injury lies.

This analogy is played out every day in our lives between ourselves and the ultimate "bully", the devil. We all have something in our lives that is vulnerable and is easy prey to the devil. It may be worry about our health, it may be worry about our financial situation, our kids or marriages or a combination of several things that the devil can "poke" until we are broken. At first, we try to handle these "pokes" ourselves thinking no one will ever know. However, over time, there are some visible signs that we are struggling. But, the real hurt is inside our hearts where our family and friends cannot see. As the "poking" continues and the devil's smile widens, the pain and bruising mounts and we can become lost in our struggle and lose our focus on God which is exactly what the "ultimate bully" desires.

The good news is that while the devil is the ultimate bully, God is the "ultimate principal." He can expel the devil from our lives and stop the "poking." He sees what others can't see and he can do what others can't do. We are told in 1 Peter 5:8 *"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* We are told in verses 9 and following to resist the devil, to stand firm in the faith and that God will himself restore you and make you strong and firm. But, how do we do that? How do we keep our thoughts from drifting to these worrisome areas where the devil preys?

God tells us how to do this in Philippians 4:8 *"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things."* In other words, FOCUS on the

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good and not the bad. Stay busy and focused on the good things in this life. Check on the sick, volunteer, surprise a friend that's having a rough time and buy them lunch, play games with your children and more. If we can focus on the RIGHT things and thereby stand up to the bully, the bullying WILL STOP! God Bless!

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### **Til The Storm Passes By**

Lately it seems we have had our fair share of storms in our lives hasn't it. In Alabama, we had a record number of tornadoes on April 27th that destroyed businesses, houses, churches, and most notably, took people's lives. Now, we are seeing a replay of this bad memory in Joplin, Missouri. The sifting through debris, the cries, the blank stares as people walk around....are all too eerily familiar. They wonder why this happened? Why didn't God protect them? Why me? Why, Why, Why?

Similar questions are asked by the 34 year old father of 3 young children after he finds out that he has stomach cancer. The whirlwind of cancer is a totally different storm, but the questions are the same. Why, Why, Why?

Only one knows the answers to these questions. However, James chapter 1 gives us some guidance on how we should react during these storms.....  
*"2Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."*

The fact that you are still here tells you that God isn't finished with you yet. He's just working on you. He's preparing you for HIS work. We all have a purpose in this life. That purpose just might be showing others how CALM you can be during your life's STORM. That purpose just might be helping someone get through their STORM in life because you've been through a similar STORM in your own life.

Storms come and go, but God is constant. His ways are higher than our ways. He sees and knows the future and just as we tell our kids..."this is for your own good," the same holds true for us. Even though it pains Him to see us suffer, He knows that he can use this storm for HIS good in the future.

No matter what type of storm you have endured in life, take shelter in God. Read His words, pray to Him, and look for ways to glorify Him no matter your storm in life. He will keep you safe til the storm passes by!

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## Joy To The World

Do you have anyone in your life that just exudes joy 100% of the time? Well, I do. There is a little guy at our congregation that has the biggest smile on his face all the time. I mean "ALL THE TIME." Every time I see him, he smiles that huge grin and says with sincere joy.... "Hey Mr. Marty, How are you?" We exchange our usual conversation... I tease him about girls and his new found mustache and then we talk about Alabama sports. He never fails to make me smile. I look so forward to saying hello to him b/c his attitude is so contagious. Even my 12 year old son said, "you know dad, you can't help but be in a good mood around that guy." So, our little buddy doesn't even know it, but he is affecting so many people in a positive way by sharing his God given joy with others.

God wants the same for us. It is so easy to let the circumstances of the day take control of our attitude. Happiness and sadness are really based on short term situations/circumstances. The trouble is that we allow those short term "feelings" to become our long term outlook. No matter our situation, God wants us to have joy and exude joy. The joy comes from knowing we are in His hands and that He will work things out for the best as we travel towards our eternal home. Joy is God's gift to every believer. It is the fruit that His Spirit produces within you (Galatians 5:22) from the moment you receive the Gospel (John 15:11). This joy increases as you study and obey God's Word (1 John 1:4).

We can affect so many people in a more positive way if we choose to be joyful no matter our situation. It really is contagious. Showing and spreading joy may be one of the best ways to show Christ's living example to others. No matter what your current situation may be, make the effort today to be joyful and see what a difference it makes! God Bless!

## Frogitude!



Once upon a time there was a bunch of tiny frogs....who arranged a running competition. The goal was to reach the top of a very high tower. A big crowd had gathered around the tower to see the race and cheer on the contestants.... The race began... Honestly: No one in the crowd really believed that the tiny frogs would reach the top of the tower. You heard statements such as: "Oh, WAY too difficult!!" "They will NEVER make it to the top." or: "Not a chance that they will succeed. The tower is too high!" The tiny frogs began collapsing. One by one.... Except for those, who in a fresh tempo, were climbing higher and higher....The crowd continued to yell, "It is too difficult!!! No one will make it!" More tiny frogs got tired and gave up.... But ONE continued higher and higher and higher.... This one wouldn't give up! At the end everyone else had given up climbing the tower.

Except for the one tiny frog who, after a big effort, was the only one who reached the top! THEN all of the other tiny frogs naturally wanted to know how this one frog managed to do it? A contestant asked the tiny frog how he had found the strength to succeed and reach the goal? It turned out.... That the winner was DEAF!!!! **The wisdom of this story is: Never listen to other people's tendencies to be negative or pessimistic....because they take your most wonderful dreams and wishes away from you -- the ones you have in your heart!** Always think of the power words have.

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Because everything you hear and read will affect your actions! Therefore:  
ALWAYS be....POSITIVE!And above all: Be **DEAF** when people tell  
YOU that you cannot fulfill your dreams! This is from an email I  
received, but thought it very worthy to share...

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### **Little Things Mean A Lot**

Several years ago, I had a friend that was moving his family to a new home. With three children, two of which were twins, his family had a lot of STUFF. Anyone that has moved can sympathize with the overwhelming feeling that comes with a move. The feeling that you will never get it all done, needing something that has already been packed, forgetting to schedule utility changes, etc. Moving can be very daunting.

In the middle of this chaos which was happening in the thick Alabama summer heat, my buddy said someone did something he will never forget. Without asking, a dear sister from my friend's church pulled up with cups, ice, and a big jug of sweet tea. In the South, we love our sweet tea and this dear sister knew the movers needed a break. My friend said that small act of kindness made a huge impact on him. To some, it was just a glass of tea. But, to my friend, it was a reminder that someone really cared about his family and just wanted to do something to make their chaotic day a little better. Making and taking tea wasn't a big deal to the good sister, but it was a huge deal to my friend.

Never underestimate how a small act of kindness can impact someone else's life. It could be a call or card to a person that is sick. It could be taking someone to lunch that has been having a tough time in life. Or, it could be as simple as buying someone a cup of coffee at work that has had a bad day. It doesn't have to be a big act to be a big blessing. Look for the little things in life that you can do to make a big impact for someone else.

God Bless!

### **The Complaining Virus**

Viruses are no fun. They cut us off from our family and friends. They make your entire body feel horrible. Plus, no matter how hard we try not to, viruses always affect someone else we care about negatively. None of us would willingly expose ourselves to such a virus. The problem is that most viruses can't be seen, so we are exposed and become infected and the cycle just goes on and on.

However, there is one virus that is visible and one that can be avoided and that is the *complaining virus*. We all have seen this aggressive virus in action, heaven forbid, we might have had or have the virus ourselves!! Either way, people infected with this virus often find that their friends stop calling them because they are no fun to be around. The friends that do call find themselves complaining to others as well. It's a highly contagious virus. Symptoms include unhappiness, low self esteem, few friends, and an overall feeling of irritability. Indirect symptoms can also include overlooked smiles, underappreciation for beautiful sunshine and generally taking for granted the ability to walk, talk, hear and love.

So, how do we avoid it and if we have it, what is the prescription for getting rid of it? To avoid it, stay away from those infected as much as possible as it can creep into your daily conversations easily without warning. To rid yourself of this virus if you're currently infected, grab a pen and paper and start a gratitude journal. At the end of each day, write down three things that were good that day. It can be as small as all the traffic lights were green on my drive to work. Be diligent about it though and write every night in your journal. You will find that your brain begins looking for positive things during the day and not focusing on negative things. A 2nd prescription is to pray for God to give you a pause before you complain so you can select your words and change them before they are spoken. Soon, you will be feeling better than ever.

When things are not going our way, whether it be sickness or some other unfortunate situation, we all have a tendency to complain. But, complaining is a waste of time and words and it hurts more than we know. The Bible addresses it in this way... "No rotten talk should come from your mouth, but only what is good for the building up of someone in

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need, in order to give grace to those who hear " -Ephesians 4:29 . Let's make every effort we can to stop the spreading of the complaining virus. We'll all be better without it!! God Bless!!!

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## Father Knows Best

Sixteen year old Lance Edwards stood at the top of the steps and took a deep breath before he went to talk to his Dad. Lance desperately wanted to go visit his cousin Tom and spend the weekend with Tom and his friends at the Univ. of Florida. Tom had told Lance that this was a big football weekend in Gainesville and that there would be lots of parties going on. The thought of being around the college atmosphere was exciting to Lance, and the only obstacle between Lance and his big weekend was getting the "okay" from his Dad.

Lance presented his case to his Dad and was beyond furious when his Dad quickly said "No." "But why?" were the first two words that scrolled out of Lance's mouth. Lance's Dad replied that Lance wasn't ready for that atmosphere. He told Lance that there would be temptations in that setting that Lance, a youthful 16 year old, wasn't ready to tackle. He continued that he knew what was best in this situation and that Lance needed to *trust him*. Lance continued to shoot back how unfair this was because other friends his age were going, that his Dad must not love him because he wouldn't let him go, and that he just didn't understand why his Dad would do this to him.

That weekend in Gainesville, the Gators lost the big game. There were fights all over town. Tom and his friends were at a fraternity party when a fight broke out and Tom and several friends were arrested for assault that weekend. When Lance heard what had happened, he was so glad his Dad had not let him go to Gainesville that weekend. He thought, maybe Dad knows more than I give him credit for.....

Seems that we all have been a "Lance" at one time or another in our lives. We pray to God for a cure, a job, a spouse, etc and when things don't work out exactly as **WE** want, we start saying...."Why not", "This is unfair", "Everybody else does it", "God must not love me". God simply says... "**TRUST ME!**" Though we may hate to admit it, our earthly fathers usually do know what is best for us and our heavenly father **always** knows what is best for us . It may not be what we want, but we can always TRUST that God will do what is best for us in every situation. As time goes on, we can always see how God's decisions are always the best decisions. God Bless!

### **Expect The Unexpected**

It had been six months since his last cancer checkup. For five months and 30 days, with God's help, he had been able to shift focus away from the reminders of chemotherapy, white blood cells and oncologists. But, today, the evil one kept his mind racing with the what if scenarios. What if the doctor walks in and says, "well, looks like the cancer is back." What if the cancer is back and the treatment doesn't work this time. What if, what if, what if... and they continue on and on. As he makes the drive to the oncologist's office that morning, he feels the pit in his stomach, the nervousness makes his legs shake and he takes deep breaths to calm himself. Then he decides to say one last prayer and beg God for good results and to ask for God to be with him during this visit. He says AMEN and takes a deep breath just wanting this morning to be over.

At the traffic light, he takes the moment to look around him and then back in front of his car. All of a sudden his eyes widen and he can't believe what he is seeing. The tag of the car in front of him is a personalized tag. The tag reads.... ULBFINE.... (translated-you'll be fine). He closes his eyes and looks again to make sure he read it correctly. Yes, that is what it said. People can write it off as coincidence if they want, but he knows the statistical likelihood of this happening at this moment in his life is astronomical. He knows that that tag is GOD's answer to his prayer. A peace overcame him and he walked into the oncologist office and received the news from the doctor that he knew he would....everything is fine. This is a true story.... I am sure of this because it happened to me.

Now God doesn't always work this way. He's not a vending machine where we put in a request and get something back immediately. However, he works in mysterious ways and answers prayers in ways that HE knows is best for each of us. This experience may never happen again, but that doesn't mean it didn't happen. These intimate experiences with God, may not happen in this way often, but when they do happen, they strengthen our faith and the faith of those with whom we share the experience. God Bless!

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Consider this story from Mark 9:

*Out of the crowd, one man answered Him, "Teacher, I brought my son to You. He has a spirit that makes him unable to speak. 18 Wherever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I asked Your disciples to drive it out, but they couldn't."*

*19 He replied to them, "You unbelieving generation! How long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him to Me." 20 So they brought him to Him. When the spirit saw Him, it immediately convulsed the boy. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. 21 "How long has this been happening to him?" Jesus asked his father.*

*"From childhood," he said. 22 "And many times it has thrown him into fire or water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."*

*23 Then Jesus said to him, " 'If You can?' Everything is possible to the one who believes."*

*24 Immediately the father of the boy cried out, "I do believe! Help my unbelief"*

So, no matter your situation, pray to God and believe that you will receive when you pray. Expect God to do the unexpected in your life. God's Will is always best and perfect and so we must know and accept that as well when we pray. Pray according to His will and accept his answer, but if we ever expect to receive what we ask for, we must always BELIEVE he will do it.

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### He Hears His Children's Voice

I was sitting in Sunday morning adult bible class a couple weeks ago behind a new family that had recently started attending church with us. This new family has two very small children. Since it was class time, the children were in their own bible classes. As I sat behind this new mom and dad, I saw something that made me take notice. As we all sat in our pews, a distant cry was heard from behind us. Now, our congregation has been blessed with lots of new babies---(along with holy ground, I think we are built on fertile ground:).

My point is that with so many babies around, you would think it would be difficult to tell the cries apart. A cry is a cry ...right? Well, no, not at all. As I sat behind this new mom and dad--as soon as the first whimper of a cry was heard, this Dad looked at the mom raised his eyebrows and she gave a nod of agreement. The dad got up and returned with his young baby still sniffing from his latest cry. I smiled and found it fascinating that this dad and mom could discern their own baby's cry for them from among all the other cries that come from the nursery.

There is an amazing parallel there that we should not miss. Our heavenly Father hears when His children cry too. Among all the noise and chaos in the world, our cries for help come through to Him loud and clear. Recall **Matthew 7:11---**"If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

Whether it's cancer, loss of job, fear of the future or other worry, we have certainty that just as we hear and take care of our own children, when we cry out to our Father, we can be certain He hears us and will comfort and give us peace if we trust and believe in Him.

God Bless!

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### **Give A Little---Get A Lot!**

Based on a true story.....Her husband walked out on her, leaving her a single mom with two boys, Ben (11) and Thomas (3). With no support from the dad, she struggles to pay the bills. That's just the beginning for this life weary mom. Thomas has been "acting out" in school and she's had to attend meetings with the pre school teachers. The temperatures outside at night have been in the teens and she has no heat in her home. With a myriad of her own illnesses to deal with, she often forgoes her needed medication to pay bills and provide for her two boys.

She feels like throwing in the towel, but she can't, she won't. Too much is on the line. She buys one present for each son every Christmas, but always sets aside a small amount for the boys to use to buy a present for someone else who is in need. She wonders if she's doing the right thing, if she's making a difference in these boy's lives. She explained to Ben that Christmas might be slim this year. Ben turns to her and with a bright smile and understanding eyes he says, " That's okay mom, Christmas is about the family and we'll be together and that's what matters." She smiles and turns her head to conceal the tears flowing down her cheeks. Thank you God, thank you for that...I needed that so badly she whispers in prayer as she dries her face and readies her smile.

We all have struggles. When our health fails, we turn inward and focus on ourselves too much. When we focus on helping others, we suddenly forget about ourselves. Look around this week and I guarantee there is someone that is struggling that you know. Call them, drop them a gift card in the mail, have a gift delivered to their house anonymously, take them to lunch, just do something. Be a servant and be a friend....it's amazing what you get when you give all you can! God Bless!

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### **Might As Well Laugh As To Cry!!**

The title to this entry is a line from a grandmother of one of my good friends who is going through a tough time in his life. He is facing a really tough situation, but whenever I see him, he is smiling and keeps a good attitude. I asked him how he does it and he cited his faith, friends, keeping busy, and this motto from his grandmother that sticks with him every day. We aren't promised things will be perfect in this world, but we can still have joy and our attitude makes all the difference in the world.

I'm reminded of Proverbs 23:7 where it says...."As he thinks in his heart, so is he." What we think affects our lives. You can change your life by changing the way you think. No matter how bad our situation is, we still have so many things to be thankful for and no doubt we know someone who has things much worse than we do.

If you are thinking about good things, then you can't think about bad things....your mind can only hold one thought at a time. It takes some training of the mind, but eventually it becomes easy and second nature. Pay attention to your thoughts the next time you are in a conversation. Are they negative or positive? Make a conscious effort to only say positive things. You will find that not only will you be happier, but you will notice others will seem happier around you and your effect on their lives can be greater. Remember no one likes to hang around a "Debbie Downer." For those of us who have or are enduring a cancer diagnosis, this is especially true. We MUST look for the nuggets of positivity and dwell on those thoughts.

So, around this hustle and bustle holiday time, make the effort to think and be positive. You'll be amazed at the results. Like a ship's rudder, attitude is a small thing that makes a huge difference!!! God Bless!

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### **Lean On Me!**

Our preacher told a story at our worship service on Sunday that was very inspiring. He had recently visited the Redwood Forest in California and witnessed the magnificent redwood trees. He told of how he'd never seen a tree that large. In the South, we treasure our precious oak trees, but they pale in comparison to these redwoods. We love our oaks because they seldom get taken down by one of the frequent southern thunderstorms due to their deep root systems. By contrast, our preacher learned that these colossal redwood trees in California have a shallow root system, yet they stand undisturbed for many years. That seems very contradictory to all that we've been taught about the strength of trees. However, the difference is that the shallow redwood roots intertwine and gain strength from their fellow redwood trees. It is as if the trees are holding hands to face the world. This strength has allowed them to persevere through many years.

I thought that was a great analogy to the importance of leaning on one another. Leaning on one another during cancer or any stressful time in life is paramount to coping and survival. It also reminded me of another great friend of mine whose cell phone plays the song "Lean On Me" when you call him. Everytime I hear that song, I say , "you know what, he means it too!" So, I encourage you all to be like the redwoods and be like the song and BE someone to LEAN ON!  
God Bless!



### **A Peanut Butter Sandwich I'll Never Forget**

Recently, my 9 year old and I went to a water park for the day. Have to admit, although it was a scorching hot day, headed to a water park I had already visited countless times was not high on my list. However, I agreed to go thinking I would just "gut" through it. Boy, was I wrong. My little 9 year old said things that I will never forget. The first thing he said came after we had been in the park for a couple hours. We were waiting in a particularly long line, he looked up and asked me if I was having fun. I looked at his face and said ABSOLUTELY, and he just beamed. Knowing that he was concerned about what kind of day I was having was touching.

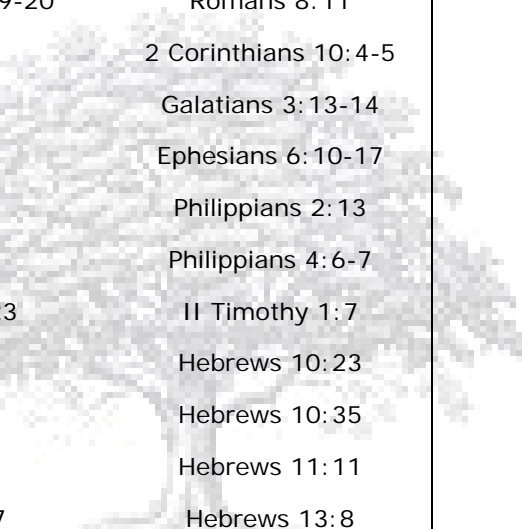
Then, being the frugal dad that I am, I had packed some peanut butter sandwiches for lunch. We had our hands stamped for re-entry, and headed to our vehicle to get the cooler of sandwiches and chips. As we sat down eating our peanut butter sandwiches, it was quiet when all of a sudden, he looked up at me and said, "Dad, I like having lunch with you." That small statement of his made this almost 40 dad full of pride. I thought... wow, how awesome is that. I will never forget that day and that great lunch I had with my son. A day I was dreading turned into one of the BEST DAYS I've ever had.

It's often the little things in life that can bring us the most joy. Take time to appreciate the sunshine, the smell of a sweet flower, the crisp autumn nights, and the ability to see. There are blessings all around us. You never know when a simple act can become one of your best days. Peanut butter sandwiches always bring a smile to my face now. God Bless!



# Encouraging Scriptures

**Good Scriptures to read in times of Sickness**



Exodus 15:26	Mark 11:23-24
Exodus 23:25	Mark 16:17-18
Deuteronomy 7:15	John 10:10
Deuteronomy 28:1-14, 61	Romans 4:17-20
Deuteronomy 30:19-20	Romans 8:11
I Kings 8:56	2 Corinthians 10:4-5
Psalms 91:16	Galatians 3:13-14
Psalms 103:3	Ephesians 6:10-17
Psalms 107:20	Philippians 2:13
Psalms 118:17	Philippians 4:6-7
Proverbs 4:20-23	II Timothy 1:7
Isaiah 41:10	Hebrews 10:23
Isaiah 53:4-5	Hebrews 10:35
Jeremiah 1:12	Hebrews 11:11
Jeremiah 30:17	Hebrews 13:8
Joel 3:10	James 5:14-15
Nahum 1:9	I Peter 2:24
Matthew 8:2-3	I John 3:21-22
Matthew 8:17	III John 2
Matthew 18:18-19	Revelations 12:11
Matthew 21:21	

Laughter is  
the Best  
medicine



## ***Wanted***

A group of elementary school students were on a field trip to the local police station. Several of the children were fascinated by the wanted posters on the wall.

Little Billy raised his hand and asked the police officer giving them the tour who the people on the wall were.

“Those are pictures of criminals we are looking for,” answered the policeman. “We call those wanted posters.”

Little Billy looked puzzled. His hand shot back up into the air. “Well,” he wondered, “why didn’t you just keep them when you took their picture?”

## ***The Watermelon Patch***

There was a farmer who raised watermelons. He was doing pretty well, but he was plagued by local kids who would sneak into his patch at night and steal watermelons.

After some careful thought he comes up with a clever idea that he thinks will scare the kids away for sure. So he makes up a sign and posts it in the field. The sign says, “Warning, one of the watermelons in this field has been poisoned.”

The farmer goes to inspect his field the next morning and finds a new sign that says, “Warning, now two of the watermelons in this field have been poisoned.”

# Christ Over Cancer

## ***My Summer Vacation***

Summer was over and the teacher was asking the class about their vacations.

She turned to little Johnny and asked what he did over the Summer. "We visited my grandmother in Minneapolis, Minnesota," he said.

"That sounds like an excellent vocabulary word," the teacher said, "Can you tell the class how you spell that?"

Little Johnny thought about it and said, "Come to think of it, she lives in Ohio."

## ***Pa is Gonna Be Mad***

A farm boy accidentally overturned his wagon load of corn. The farmer who lived nearby heard the noise and rushed right over.

"Hey Willis!!" the farmer yelled. "Forget it for now. It's dinnertime. Come eat with us, and then we'll come back and I will help you turn the wagon back up."

"That's mighty nice of you," Willis answered, "but I don't think Pa would like me to."

"Aw, come on," the farmer insisted, "you have to eat! We'll get back to the wagon soon."

"Well okay," the boy finally agreed, and added, "But Pa won't like it."

After a hearty dinner, Willis thanked his host. "I feel a lot better now, but I know Pa is going to be real upset."

"Don't be foolish." the neighbor said with a smile. "By the way, where is your Pa?"

"Under the wagon."

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### ***Mischievous***

A couple had two little boys, ages eight and ten, who were excessively mischievous. The two were always getting into trouble and their parents could be confident that if any mischief occurred in their town, their two young sons were involved in some capacity. The parents were at their wit's end as to what to do about their sons' behavior.

The parents had heard that a clergyman in town had been successful in disciplining children in the past, so they contacted him, and he agreed to give it his best shot. He asked to see the boys individually, so the eight-year-old was sent to meet with him first. The clergyman sat the boy down and asked him sternly, "Where is God?"

The boy made no response, so the clergyman repeated the question in an even sterner tone, "Where is God?"

Again the boy made no attempt to answer, so the clergyman raised his voice even more and shook his finger in the boy's face, "WHERE IS GOD?"

At that, the boy bolted from the room, ran directly home, and slammed himself in his closet. His older brother followed him into the closet and said, "What happened?"

The younger brother replied, "We are in BIG trouble this time. God is missing and they think we did it!"

# Christ Over Cancer

## ***Cell Phone Gift***

Bill bought his beautiful blonde wife, Sherry, a cell phone for their first wedding anniversary.

Sherry loved the gift, and watched intently as Bill explained all the features on the phone.

The next day, as Sherry is having her hair done, her phone rings. It's Bill. "Hi hon," he says. "How do you like your new phone?"

"I just love it. It's so small and your voice is clear as a bell, but there's one thing I don't understand. How did you know I was at the beauty parlor?"

## ***I'm not moving***

On a plane bound for New York the flight attendant approached a blonde sitting in the first class section and requested that she move to economy since she did not have a first class ticket. The blonde replied, "I'm blonde, I'm beautiful, I'm going to New York and I'm not moving."

Not wanting to argue with a customer the flight attendant asked the co-pilot to speak with her. He asked the woman to please move out of the first class section. Again, the blonde replied, "I'm blonde, I'm beautiful, I'm going to New York and I'm not moving."

The co-pilot returned to the cockpit and asked the captain what should he do. The captain said, "I'm married to a blonde and I know how to handle this."

He went to the first class section and whispered in the blonde's ear. She immediately jumped up and ran to the economy section mumbling to herself, "Why didn't anyone just say so?"

Surprised, the flight attendant and the co-pilot asked what he said to her that finally convinced her to move from her seat. He said, "I told her the first class section wasn't going to New York."

# Christ Over Cancer

## ***What Day Is It?***

“What’s the date today?” asked the blonde riding on the subway.

“I don’t know,” replied a fellow commuter. “You’ve got a newspaper in your hands ... why don’t you look at the date on it?”

“Why, that won’t do any good,” the blonde huffed. “It’s yesterday’s paper!”.

## ***Deadly Lunch***

An Irishman, a Mexican and a blond guy doing construction work on scaffolding on the 20th floor of a building, stopped to eat lunch.

The Irishman said, “Corned beef and cabbage! If I get corned beef and cabbage one more time for lunch I’m going to jump off this building.”

The Mexican opened his lunch box and exclaimed, “Burritos again! If get burritos one more time I’m going to jump off, too.”

The blond guy opened his lunch and said, “Bologna again. If I get a bologna sandwich one more time I’m jumping too.”

Next day, the Irishman opens his lunch box, sees corned beef and cabbage and jumps to his death. The Mexican opens his lunch, sees a burrito and jumps. The blonde opens his lunch, sees the bologna and jumps to his death.

At the funeral the Irishman’s wife is weeping. She says, “If I’d known how really tired he was of corned beef and cabbage I never would have given it to him again!

The Mexican’s wife, also weeping, says, “I didn’t realize he hated burritos so much.”

Everyone turned and stared at the blonde’s wife. “Hey, don’t look at me,” she said. “He made his own lunch!”.

## Christ Over Cancer

### ***What Do You Have?***

A man walked into a doctor's office and the receptionist asked him what he had. He replied, "I got shingles."

She said, "Fill out this form and supply your name, address, medical insurance number. When you're done, please take a seat."

Fifteen minutes later a nurse's aide came out and asked him what he had. He said, "I got shingles."

So she took down his height, weight, and complete medical history, then said, "Change into this gown and wait in the examining room."

A half hour later a nurse came in and asked him what he had. He said, "I got shingles."

So she gave him a blood test, a blood pressure test, an electrocardiogram and told him to wait for the doctor.

An hour later the doctor came in and asked him what he had. He said, "Shingles." The doctor gave him a full examination, and then said, "I just checked you out thoroughly, and I can't find shingles anywhere." The man replied, "They're outside in the truck. Where do you want them?"

### ***Doctors Duck Hunting***

Five doctors went duck shooting one day. Included in the group were a GP, a pediatrician, a psychiatrist, a surgeon and a pathologist.

Soon, a bird came winging overhead. The first to react was the GP who raised his shotgun, but then hesitated. "I'm not quite sure it's a duck," he said, "I think that I will have to get a second opinion from a specialist." By that time, the bird was long gone.

Another bird appeared in the sky. This time the pediatrician drew a bead on it. He too, however, was unsure if it was really a duck in his sights. Besides, it might have babies. "I'll have to do some more investigations," he muttered, as the creature made good its escape.

## Christ Over Cancer

Next to spy a bird flying was the sharp-eyed psychiatrist. Shotgun shouldered, he was more certain of his intended prey's identity. "Now, I know it's a duck, but does it know it's a duck?" The fortunate bird disappeared while the fellow wrestled with this dilemma.

Finally a fourth fowl sped past and this time the surgeon's weapon pointed skyward. BOOM!! The surgeon lowered his smoking gun and turned nonchalantly to the pathologist beside him. "Go see if that was a duck, will you?"

### ***The Rookie***

A rookie police officer was assigned to ride in a cruiser with an experienced partner. A call came over the car's radio telling them to disperse some people who were loitering.

The officers drove to the street and observed a small crowd standing on a corner. The rookie rolled down his window and said, "Let's get off the corner."

No one moved, so he barked again, "Let's get off the corner!"

Intimidated, the group of people began to leave, casting puzzled glances in his direction. Proud of his first official act, the young policeman turned to his partner and asked,

"Well, how did I do?"

Pretty good, " replied the veteran, "especially since this was a bus stop."

## Christ Over Cancer

### ***The Train Ride***

The blonde wife came home from her first day commuting into the city.

Her husband noticed she was looking a little pale and asked, "Honey, are you feeling all right?"

"Not really," she replied. "To tell you the truth, I'm a little nauseous from sitting backward on the train."

"Poor dear," he said. "Why didn't you ask the person sitting across from you to switch seats for a while?"

"I wanted to, but I couldn't," she replied. "There was no one there."

### ***Heads or Tails***

The blonde reported for her university final examination, which consisted of "yes" or "no" questions.

She takes her seat in the examination hall, stares at the question paper for five minutes, and then in a fit of inspiration takes her purse out, removes a coin and starts tossing the coin and marking the answer sheet - "Yes" for Heads and "No" for Tails.

Within half an hour she is all done while the rest of the class is still sweating it out.

During the last few minutes, she is seen desperately throwing the coin, muttering and sweating.

The moderator approaches her and asks what is going on.

"I finished the exam in half an hour. But I'm rechecking my answers."

All jokes from [www.funnycleanjokes.com](http://www.funnycleanjokes.com).

## Other Resources

American Cancer Society

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

1-800-ACS-2345

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

[www.lls.org](http://www.lls.org)

1-888-560-9700

MD Anderson Cancer Research Center

[www.mdanderson.org](http://www.mdanderson.org)

1-877-MDA-6789

Mayo Clinic

[www.mayoclinic.org/cancer-education-rst/](http://www.mayoclinic.org/cancer-education-rst/)

507-266-9288

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

[www.mskcc.org](http://www.mskcc.org)

212-639-2000

Johns Hopkins Hospital

[www.hopkinsmedicine.org](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org)

410-955-8980

Vanderbilt Univ. Medical Center

[www.mc.vanderbilt.edu](http://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu)

615-322-5000

UAB Medical Center

[www.health.uab.edu](http://www.health.uab.edu)

800-UAB-8816

Cancer Treatment Centers of America

[www.cancercenter.com](http://www.cancercenter.com)

800-268-0786

National Cancer Institute

[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

