



## CAN ONE PERSON REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

This was the question Nancy G. Brinker asked herself as she promised her sister, Susan G. Komen, she would do everything in her power to end breast cancer forever. That promise is now Susan G. Komen for the Cure®, the global leader of the breast cancer movement. As the world's largest grassroots network of breast cancer survivors and activists, Komen for the Cure is working to save lives, empower people, ensure quality care for all and energize science to find the cures.

Thanks to the continued efforts of Komen for the Cure, the five-year-survival rate for breast cancer patients is 98 percent when it is detected early and confined to the breast—but when you consider that globally an estimated 11.4 million women could still die from breast cancer over the next twenty-five years, there is still much work to be done. During that time, what can be done to address the very specific spiritual needs of a woman who has been diagnosed?

## THIS IS WHERE THE HERE'S HOPE BIBLE COMES IN.

By partnering with Holman Bible Publishers, one of the oldest and most respected Bible publishers in the U.S., Komen will benefit from the sale of this special Bible that breast cancer patients,

survivors, and their loved ones can call their own. A Bible that—while including the complete Scriptures—also contains other resources, a broad range of tips, and inspirational stories from survivors and those who have walked the journey alongside them.

## A BIBLE THAT EMPOWERS EACH READER TO KEEP FIGHTING.

You'll discover verses that speak to someone who is having “one of those days,” or learn about the woman who shaved her head so it was *her* decision—not chemotherapy's. We've included a few definitions of some of those new words and phrases you're bound to hear in your journey, plus other how-tos and what-to-dos from those who know. Because every woman's journey is unique, we have included a list of other resources that address additional issues that may affect women during their course of treatment and beyond.

Finally, as this Bible is the effect of a partnership between two of the most recognizable names in their respective fields—breast cancer awareness and Christian publishing—*Here's Hope* serves as a reminder that God has not forgotten this special group of women, individually and collectively. He is with them.

IT IS OUR PRAYER THAT HERE'S HOPE  
WILL SHED NEW LIGHT ON THE ONE  
WHO, THROUGH HIS ULTIMATE SACRIFICE,  
MADE A DIFFERENCE . . . FOR ALL OF US.

# PRACTICAL TIPS

Realize that you are not in control. It's okay to ask for help.

There will come a time you will not think of it every minute of every day.

When diagnosed, give yourself time to grieve. Cry, scream, sulk, disappear for a while.

Keeping a journal helps—not only to chronicle the fight, but sometimes writing out the feelings on the bad days can keep the bad days from becoming bad weeks or months.

Read the Bible daily—did you know there are forty Scriptures on healing?

If you don't feel comfortable with your doctor, find another one.

If you're going through chemo or radiation *stay hydrated!* Keep a large cup of water nearby at all times.

If you have a trip scheduled and then you find out you have breast cancer, don't panic and cancel. In most cases your surgery/treatments can wait until after your trip. Your doctor can advise you on this.

If possible, choose a treatment facility that's close by. But at the same time, follow your instinct and choose where you feel the staff will treat you the best.

After surgery, you can develop lymphedema, a condition where fluid collects in the arm, causing it to swell. Talk to your doctor about how to prevent this condition. It may include avoiding shaving the underarm area due to possible scratches or cuts which may cause infection in the at-risk arm. You may consider waxing before surgery.

***Big word you heard?***

**Aromatase inhibitor:** A hormone therapy drug used to lower the amount of estrogen in the body, so the cancer cells cannot grow.



MEET: SUSAN JETTON

STAGE AT DIAGNOSIS: CAN'T REMEMBER,  
BUT BOTH TIMES EARLY STAGES

AGE AT DIAGNOSIS: FIRST TIME OUT: 49  
SECOND GO-ROUND: 58

CURRENT STATUS: TWO-TIME SURVIVOR

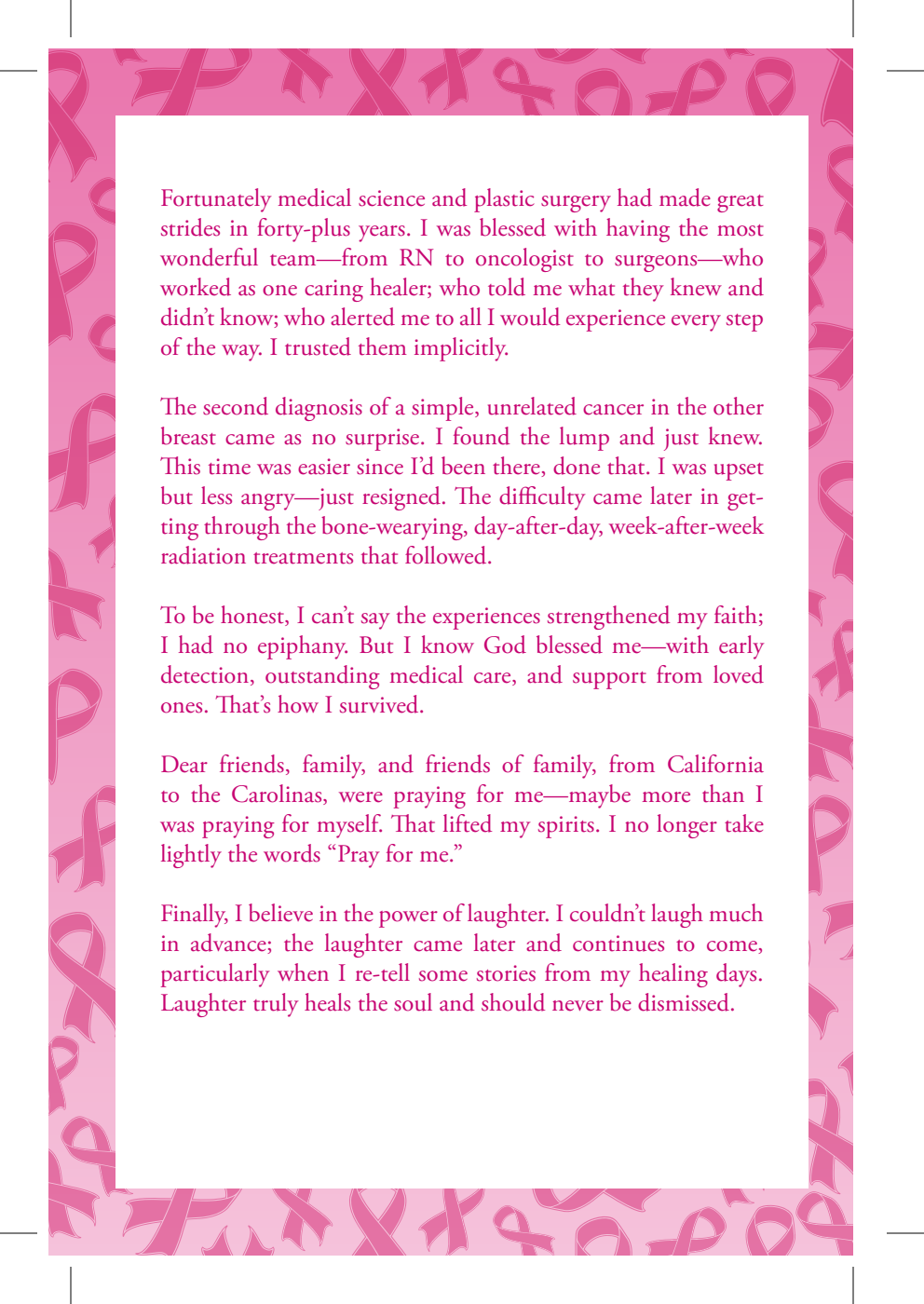
First, I am *not* one of those people who says breast cancer was “a blessing in disguise,” “I’m a better person” for it, or “I’m glad” I had cancer because of all the great people I’ve come to know. I am not better off for having had breast cancer.

Frankly, I would prefer not to have ever had breast cancer. I wish I hadn’t had to meet others battling this disease. And, I wouldn’t mind if I hadn’t had to receive support from Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

My first diagnosis came on my forty-ninth birthday—a rare form of breast cancer. Less than 1 percent of all breast cancers are the kind I had; fewer than five percent of those are malignant. I was in the 5 percent of 1 percent.

I was furious with the world and God: Why had I bothered for years to eat right, exercise, and take care of myself if I got cancer anyway? My oncologist said, “So you can heal easier and faster.” Turns out, he was right.

I was scared. Not of death—I never thought I might die. I was sick, I would have an operation, and I would get well. Simple as that. But I was afraid of losing my breast. I’d be a lesser woman. I had seen my grandmother’s scarred “manly chest,” as she described it after her second mastectomy.



Fortunately medical science and plastic surgery had made great strides in forty-plus years. I was blessed with having the most wonderful team—from RN to oncologist to surgeons—who worked as one caring healer; who told me what they knew and didn't know; who alerted me to all I would experience every step of the way. I trusted them implicitly.

The second diagnosis of a simple, unrelated cancer in the other breast came as no surprise. I found the lump and just knew. This time was easier since I'd been there, done that. I was upset but less angry—just resigned. The difficulty came later in getting through the bone-wearing, day-after-day, week-after-week radiation treatments that followed.

To be honest, I can't say the experiences strengthened my faith; I had no epiphany. But I know God blessed me—with early detection, outstanding medical care, and support from loved ones. That's how I survived.

Dear friends, family, and friends of family, from California to the Carolinas, were praying for me—maybe more than I was praying for myself. That lifted my spirits. I no longer take lightly the words “Pray for me.”

Finally, I believe in the power of laughter. I couldn't laugh much in advance; the laughter came later and continues to come, particularly when I re-tell some stories from my healing days. Laughter truly heals the soul and should never be dismissed.

# HAIR TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

With my second round of cancer, I asked my husband to shave my head the day after I noticed clumps starting to come out. I felt like this time, I had grabbed the bull by the horns and I was in charge of my hair coming off, not the chemo.

My hair fell out exactly thirty-three days into chemo—I was able to keep a very short haircut until then.

After the first day of work with my wig, that was enough! It was so hot and itchy.

My hair stylist advised me to shave my head whenever I was ready—and we'd do it together in privacy.

By the way, a straw hat is not comfortable on a bald head.

When I looked in the mirror after shaving my head, I think that was the first time I felt like a real cancer patient.

Believe it or not, my insurance paid for one wig!!

My dad shaved my head—but not before he shaved it into a Mohawk and took photos.

Not all chemo drugs cause hair loss; talk to your doctor about this.

My husband shaved his head to support me, which was a sweet and kind thing for him to do. We have some great pictures of the two of us.

Try, try to keep a sense of humor about hair loss. It helps everyone tremendously, including the person without hair.

Take care not to expose a wig to extreme heat or open flame. Everyday items like hair dryers, candles, oven doors, or gas cookers can cause real hair to frizz and synthetic hair to melt.

You know, the silver lining is that you don't have to worry about fixing the hair on your head, and you don't have to shave your legs and underarms.

My advice is to have both wigs and scarves, if financially possible, so that there is more of a choice, depending on your mood.

Wear a cotton cap at night. A bare head gets cold, especially in the winter.

If you want your wig to look as natural as possible, buy it *before* you lose your hair, because it's not just the color—it's the texture, sometimes the style, etc.

My stylist told me not to splurge on a real-hair wig, because the synthetic ones were made really well now, with a vented cap and such.





MEET: BARBARA J. CRICK  
STAGE AT DIAGNOSIS: II  
AGE AT DIAGNOSIS: 61  
CURRENT STATUS: SURVIVOR

I was diagnosed in September, and thankfully I was on chemo during the winter months. I love to garden, and thought I would be back at it soon after chemo.

There was a lot of frustration at not being able to do the things I was accustomed to doing. Someone had to clean my house, and I didn't feel like working much. Thanks to the new meds, I was only sick one or two times; however, my white blood count went low and I had to have shots at home for five days in a row each time I had chemo.

During the time I was dealing with cancer, the Lord took care of my smallest needs and wishes. I was peaceful and knew He was beside me. I could feel His presence. Some Scriptures that were meaningful to me were Psalm 55:16–17 and Jeremiah 29:11.

Things are getting better for me, but I had trouble taking my hormonal therapy drugs. I still have problems with my joints and getting up and down sometimes can be problematic. Hopefully that will get better soon.

We have a local chapter of ABC (After Breast Cancer) for breast cancer survivors at the YMCA. They provide counseling, a meeting with a nutritionist, and a personal trainer for four months, at no cost to the survivor. There are also monthly meetings.

No one should go through this alone. I had a wonderful husband and many friends. Most of all, I had the Lord walking with me.

# PRACTICAL TIPS

You can get through this, and there will be a “new normal.”

My doctor made me understand the importance of doing the core biopsy before surgery; that way, we could go ahead and have a plan of how we would handle everything. I am so glad I went ahead and did it, because if not, that would have meant more surgeries.

I was not an information hog; I visited the Susan G. Komen for the Cure® Web site periodically but stayed in the “need to know” information mode. I think that was a way to emotionally protect myself—I didn’t want to know *too* much.

Take care of yourself—get plenty of rest, eat right, and exercise.

Although I first told my surgeon, sobbing, “I want a double mastectomy/reconstruction and a tummy tuck, so I can finally have a fantastic figure,” I ended up choosing a lumpectomy. I’m glad I did. Choosing between a lumpectomy or a mastectomy is up to the individual.

Ask questions at each step. Knowledge is power, and you are your own patient advocate. If you know what to expect and why or how procedures are done, it will lessen your anxiety.

From day one, take someone with you to all medical appointments to write down everything and listen for you—you’re too caught up in yourself, and deservedly so, to really hear what your doctors are saying.

Don't think you always have to put on a brave front! Give yourself a pity party and cry your eyes out every now and then. You'll feel better.

***Big word you heard?***

**Nonpalpable Lesion:** Breast lump or abnormality that cannot be felt but that can be seen on an imaging test (such as a mammogram).

***Gotta laugh***

I'm a nurse and had a few of my patients ask me if I shaved my head to make a fashion statement, or if I was supporting someone with cancer. I found that funny!

My chest looked like a Jackson Pollock painting during radiation. The tattooing of my reconstructed breast was pretty hilarious, too.

## Destroyer

One day last year my mom got diagnosed with breast cancer. The next day my family brought my mom to the hospital. We ate breakfast and lunch at the hospital. Then we went down stairs to get my mom a gift for when she comes out. She was actually finished but we did not know. When we got up stairs, and she had a lot of visitors that told us my mom only asked for us.

When we finally saw her she was excited to see my sister and me. When we gave her the presents she was even more excited. My sister got my mom a breast cancer cup. I got her something very important, a breast cancer teddy bear. I told her the destroyer was coming. I showed up and deleted all of the bad cells and healed her. The Destroyer said we could go home and he flew off.



"Destroyer" was written by 10 year old Jacob Taylor when he found out about his mom's breast cancer.



MEET: ELVINA L. S. LEE  
STAGE AT DIAGNOSIS: I  
AGE AT DIAGNOSIS: 26  
CURRENT STATUS: SURVIVOR

My results came on a bright, fresh, crisp winter day, and the sun was out. I was called into the room, and I went by myself, which I was glad about. The surgeon wanted to tell me the news first, so when I finally heard the news that I had Ductal Carcinoma in situ (DCIS), I was able to gather my thoughts without thinking how the other person was feeling.

He gave me the treatment options, which included a mastectomy, but he would not need to remove any lymph nodes. Chemotherapy was not necessary. Radiation was not an option. The consultant then discussed the type of cancer I had, and the mastectomy procedure. As I collected my thoughts, I thought about “work”—I had just started my job as a nurse, then the other thought was that I wanted the cancer out.

I had my mastectomy.

I later found out people were praying for me, the church was praying for me (which was so nice to hear), and I believe helped in giving me the strength for this journey. God truly hears our prayers.

With all the tests, surgery, appointments, and recovery, I felt as though I had lost a whole year of my life. However, God knows exactly what He is doing, and it is during this time where I have learned how truly wonderful God is. There is no way I would have found that out, nor developed this

relationship with Him, had I not developed breast cancer. He gave me strength, peace, knowledge, and wisdom to go through this journey . . . and I am still going through this journey.

Five years later I was diagnosed again with an invasive carcinoma; I'd found a lump, which had appeared above my mastectomy scar line. Once again I had to have surgery. I am now on medication (once again) for two more years. God has been awesome throughout this experience; and, even though getting cancer again was disheartening, I have experienced Jesus all over again, and I "know" him more—and He has become more real.

My motto is no matter what, I am going to trust Him and keep clinging to Him. I remind myself of the promise in Romans 8:28: "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose." It's one of my favorite verses in the Bible.

God has done many great things in my life—He is my Father, Friend, He is my God, and He knows exactly what He is doing in my life. Even though I do not know where my life is heading, I know the one who knows my future—and He has a great plan for my life. Every life has a purpose—God planned it that way.

God may have allowed breast cancer to come into my life, but I must trust Him, enjoy the journey, and learn from it. I continue to pray, read His word, and spend time with Him everyday. I have faith in God. My life is in His hands, and His ways are perfect.

*Elvina L. S. Lee is the beautiful soul behind Sunflower Ministries, a Christian- and online-based breast cancer support group for women in the United Kingdom. Her Web site address is [sunflowerministries.org](http://sunflowerministries.org).*

# FOOD— GLORIOUS FOOD AND OTHER GUILTY PLEASURES

Every now and then I treated myself to a juicy cheeseburger.

Vanilla wafers. For some reason, post-multiple-surgeries, they were one of the few things that still tasted good.

Chocolate—enough said!

I treated myself to a big, messy, chili-cheese dog from Dairy Queen after each of my radiation treatments.

Pamper yourself—massages, manicures, pedicures . . . just for YOU!

My parents took care of me—since I was unable to work, they made sure I had no worries.

Ice cream—and lots of it.

I received some very generous Starbucks gift cards, so when I started my daily radiation treatments, I ended up treating myself to a latte and blueberry scone a couple of times a week. I'd read the paper and catch up on e-mail.

On the day I was diagnosed, my husband and I went to the mall where I splurged on a name-brand purse. Some women love shoes. I love purses.

I craved comfort food. Things like mashed potatoes and ice cream.

Vanilla yogurt still tasted good and was about the only thing that did.

The chemo caused my taste buds to go, but ice cream and soups helped.

I craved protein, so I ate many eggs. Eggs were so good on my stomach!

In the hospital after surgery, the only thing I ate tons of were old-timey, fruit-flavored popsicles (cherry-flavored ice). Continued eating them over anything else for days after I got home.

I took a long, hot bath each day . . . soooo nice.

Potato chips and French onion dip. It's best to give in, and then find a proper balance with the rest of the day's food.

Banana bread was easier on my system.  
I had to force myself to eat even a cracker!!  
Gotta love the chemo diet.



# THE GOOD, THE BAD...

*“But I call to God, and the LORD will save me. I complain and groan morning, noon, and night, and He hears my voice.”*

—Psalm 55:16–17

Go out to lunch with a friend and talk about anything and everything that has nothing to do with cancer.

A lady in my Bible study bought me a notebook labeled with the months to keep up with everything.

A friend of mine planted flowers in my front yard.

My work crew threw me a “Pink Party” before I left for medical leave.

I truly appreciate having special parking in front of the radiology center. I am so exhausted each day; it is amazing how big the little things seem to have gotten.

The people who don't act any differently around me—it sounds small, but it isn't—helps me feel normal. And that can be a very big deal some days.

When everyone starts telling you their own, individual tales of woe, horror stories about others, or when they say really, really stupid things to you, remember your real friends really do mean well,

but probably don't know how to react. For everyone else, pay no attention to them.

Waiting for surgery was horrendous because of the uncertainty of it; and slogging through weeks of exhausting daily radiation was really difficult.

My oncologist would say, "You poor thing, you're so young." It's meant to be sympathetic, but I'm not a "poor thing." I'm a survivor.

There will be people whom you don't know well who think they can ask all kinds of personal questions.

A coworker saw me eating a small candy bar at lunch. She told me she thought sugar was not good for cancer patients (what!?!). I felt like screaming, "Just shut up!" I knew she meant well, but that was not what I wanted to hear at the time.

Sometimes the food people bring doesn't look or taste good, or they may bring something that your doctor has recommended that you avoid.

## ...AND THE UGLY

*The LORD will fight for you; you must be quiet. —Exodus 14:14*

I was surprised by the number of people who get a vicarious thrill out of standing next to trauma. It was not a good discovery.

“Chemo brain” is the worst—it has been more than a year, and my head still is not right!

When someone is saying too much, the only thing you can do is try to change the conversation; when they're being nosy, just say, “I really don't want to talk about it.”

Some days there isn't anything you can do about anything. And you have to accept that.

I still have those days when I've got on the wrong bra or the wrong sweater, and I can see the difference in the two sides of me. I usually change clothes.

On my “ugly” days I make a point to put on make-up and wear my wig. I also buy new clothes.

I know this will sound crazy, but the one thing I prayed for was not to lose my eyelashes. I knew that as long as I had them, I could always wear my make-up. I kept my eyelashes for almost six months (I had chemo for one year).

After losing my hair I had many days I felt less attractive. I'd spend entire days in my gown, bald with no makeup. It happens.

On my many “good” days, I'd throw on a T-shirt, shorts, and ball cap and run errands—it's just too hot in the summer to wear your wig every day.

Even now, with my hair still very short, I have many people tell me I look “cute,” but I don’t feel pretty.

Wondering “why me?” has to be the worst.

It seems everyone has an anecdote about surgery gone wrong, cancer killing, an unsanitary hospital, or their own personal medical situations. And too often, they want to share it with you. Hated it!

### ***Gotta laugh***

I was out in public in the summer heat. I chose not to wear a wig or hat most of the time. A little boy (about five) came up to me and said, “It’s okay, my uncle wears his hair bald, too!”

I was in a department store and had a hat over my wig. When the hat came off, so did the wig!



NAME: SUZIE BLAIR  
STAGE AT DIAGNOSIS: I  
AGE AT DIAGNOSIS: 38  
CURRENT STATUS: SURVIVOR

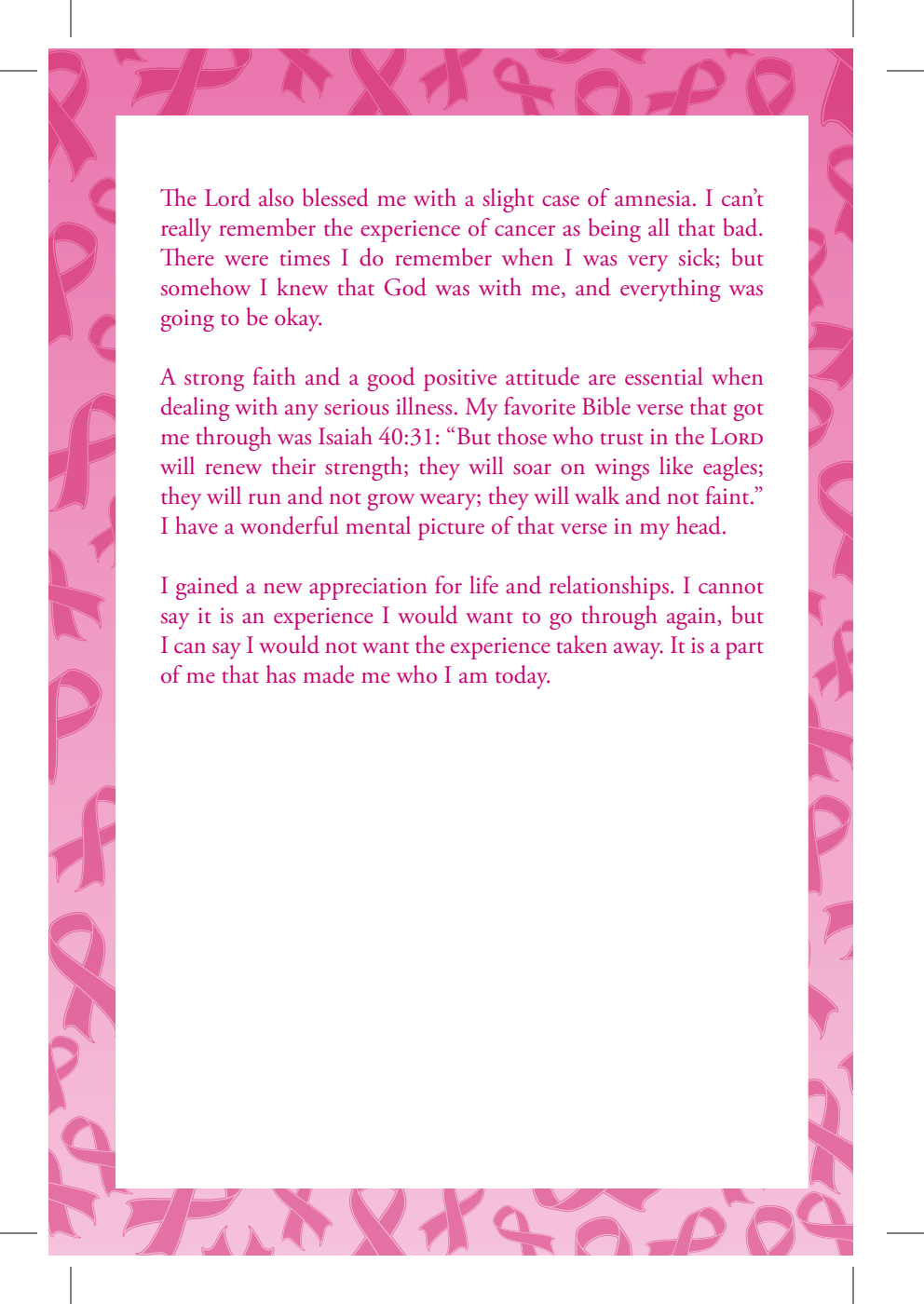
I found a lump in my left breast on a Saturday morning, the week before Christmas. I was in my doctor's office at 8:00 on Monday morning.

I decided that if it was cancer, I wanted it to be taken care of when they did the biopsy, not to schedule surgery later. My surgery was scheduled for early morning, and I woke up in the afternoon in recovery. When I saw the clock, I knew what had taken place—no one had to tell me.

My husband Carl was right there with me: every doctor visit, every chemo treatment, and everything else in between. He was a real trooper. I could not have done it without him.

At that time our church had televised services. I planned to drop out of choir because I did not want to wear my wig. I also felt that the scarves did not look right if I were seen on television. The music minister asked that I continue in the choir if I felt like it, because he felt it would be an inspiration to people at home who could not be there. As a result, I continued to sing in the choir.

We had many wonderful friends, family, neighbors, and church family members who stepped in with food, childcare, etc. Let people take care of you. That is their way of showing you love and is their gift to you. If you take that away from them, you and they both will miss out on a blessing.



The Lord also blessed me with a slight case of amnesia. I can't really remember the experience of cancer as being all that bad. There were times I do remember when I was very sick; but somehow I knew that God was with me, and everything was going to be okay.

A strong faith and a good positive attitude are essential when dealing with any serious illness. My favorite Bible verse that got me through was Isaiah 40:31: "But those who trust in the LORD will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint." I have a wonderful mental picture of that verse in my head.

I gained a new appreciation for life and relationships. I cannot say it is an experience I would want to go through again, but I can say I would not want the experience taken away. It is a part of me that has made me who I am today.

# PRACTICAL TIPS

*Be strong and courageous; don't be terrified or afraid of them. For it is the LORD your God who goes with you; He will not leave you or forsake you. —Deuteronomy 31:6*

The biggest thing for me was to take the anti-nausea meds before I needed them. Don't be a hero. The meds are there to help you, and if you stay ahead of the pain, it makes daily life much easier.

Ask your doctor about using deodorants with alcohol or fragrances. They might cause irritation to already sensitive skin when undergoing treatment.

Stay focused on your “regular” life. Keep other appointments, maintain daily activity, and keep in touch with others. I didn't allow myself to have pity parties or slack off in other areas of my life just because I had a “good excuse.”

A hand-held shower nozzle and a shower chair can help.

It was very important to me that all of my treatments take place in the city where I live. Radiation treatments are quick but daily. I did not want to drive forty-five minutes for seven weeks to have a five-minute radiation treatment each day.

Stock up on books and movies that you can lose yourself in.

Don't underestimate the importance of your pets to the healing process.

Breast cancer can also take a financial toll. I dealt with all the bills, rebuttals with the insurance company and healthcare-spending company, and watched the mailbox for my employer's short-term disability checks, which were slow to arrive.

I took a shower every day. I also read somewhere to make a point of getting dressed daily. On my weakest days I waited to take a shower once my husband came home from work.

Try a catnap, thirty minutes or less (waking up groggy usually means you've napped too long).

My oncologist provided me an anti-nausea pill to take as-needed. I learned to never leave the house without it.

I would walk with my husband in the evenings if I felt like it.

***Big word you heard?***

**Ductal Carcinoma In Situ:** A noninvasive breast cancer (also called "pre-invasive breast carcinoma" or stage 0 breast cancer) that begins in the milk ducts of the breast. The term *in situ* means "in place."





MEET: JUDY ARTRIP  
STAGE AT DIAGNOSIS: IIA  
AGE AT DIAGNOSIS: 52  
CURRENT STATUS: SURVIVOR

A couple of weeks prior to my diagnosis, I had watched a science program on television. The program's focus was the new galaxies that were being discovered by astronomers. I recalled Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning, God created the *heavens* and the earth." I was in awe, realizing God was certainly capable of creating way more than I'd ever imagined.

My first chemo treatment was probably when I felt the most vulnerable. I was lying down on the exam table, staring at the ceiling, waiting for the doctor to see me. I asked God to give me a Scripture at that moment, attempting to pull from times of intermittent Scripture memorization. I could not recall *any* Scripture except Genesis 1:1. In my conversation with God, I complained, "Hey, can't You bring to my mind something besides that?! Come on . . . I need some encouragement here!" Still, nothing.

Before long, it hit me. I realized that God was telling me, "Judy, don't you think that if I'm capable of creating the heavens and the earth, I'm also capable of taking care of you?" God was reminding me that not only was He the God of the vast and the big, He was also the God of my daily life, including my very personal journey with cancer.

# FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND COWORKERS

If you choose to tell coworkers about your diagnosis, you may want to talk with them in smaller groups of one to three people, to make conversation and questions easier. It can help to have the conversation in a comfortable, yet private area.

Remember this will affect your entire family. Hats off to my husband, who took on extra house duties. I made sure to give him time and space to express his fears and concerns.

We involved the children in everything, according to what was age-appropriate.

Try to keep things as normal as possible for your children.

There was an opportunity for parents to eat lunch with their child at school. I'd just had my mastectomy, and there was no way to make it look like I had anything "up there," because the incision was still healing. So I threw on a big t-shirt and jacket and went with a smile on my face. Even though I wasn't comfortable, my son was so proud to have me there! I would do it all over again just to see his face light up like it did.

When I was diagnosed with breast cancer, we took the kids to Sonic and sat in our minivan and told them I was sick, and guess what? I know this is going to sound crazy, but one of the medicines that Mom has to take is going to make me bald! They stared at me, but then we all had a good laugh at that idea.

When the time came, we asked our children if they wanted to be involved in shaving my head but they weren't interested.

The evening my husband shaved my head for me, we went out to dinner as a family. It was good for me to begin to face the stares and to make a statement to the kids and to myself that things were now a new normal.

One of my "been there, done that" friends told me to set a goal for the end of my treatment. For her, it had been her son's graduation. For me, it was a special vacation, which we'll take when my hair grows back a bit and my energy is restored. By the time this makes it to print, we will have taken that vacation!

I got permission from my oncologist to bring my boys and my niece (ages thirteen, twelve, and ten at the time) in for one of my appointments. I wanted them to see that it was not a scary place to be. They saw where I got my chemo treatments, although they weren't allowed in that area. I didn't feel like my daughter (who was five) would benefit from being there.

I wrote a note to each of the children's schoolteachers, telling them about my diagnosis and treatment, so if any of the kids wanted to talk or if they acted differently, their teachers would understand why.

Some patients have no choice but to continue working throughout their treatment. Thankfully several laws protect you from losing health insurance coverage if you lose your job, change jobs, or need to take time off during your breast cancer treatment. Visit [komen.org](http://komen.org) to learn more.

When your health has returned and you are strong again, get involved. Reach back behind yourself and help pull someone through who is now where you once were. You will be surprised how much of a blessing you and those that you do help will receive.

***Gotta laugh***

One time I tipped my wig at someone and nearly made them drive off the road.



MEET: MICHELE MARIE FARLEY  
STAGE AT DIAGNOSIS: II B IDC, GRADE II,  
ER+, PR+, HER2-  
AGE AT DIAGNOSIS: 39  
CURRENT STATUS: SURVIVOR


The first time I learned I had cancer I was twenty-two. We had just married, and it took nearly a year to be diagnosed as having Stage IIIS Hodgkin's lymphoma.

All I felt was fear. It kept me awake at night for years; I cried in fear during the day. I trusted God with my eternal security, trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection as my assurance to be with Him eternally; why couldn't I trust His plan enough to not fear the life I was living now? It took a long time until I began to be able to turn my life over to Him, day after day, recognizing His good authority in my present life.

After seventeen years of marriage, I was then diagnosed with breast cancer. I was absolutely shocked. "Do you know anybody else who has had two cancers?" I asked each of my doctors. I didn't get many yeses.

Is it possible to survive two cancers, much less the treatments for both of them? In no time that fear was back in my life. I could not stop crying. I cried for three days, and sporadically for two weeks. Two cancers?

After I lifted my head and dried my tears, one of the first things I realized was that there was an abundance of information for breast cancer patients. A lot. Almost too much.



Another thing I quickly realized was just how easy it became to say the word “breast.” I had never, ever said that word in public. Now I was surprised by it coming out of my mouth in almost every other sentence, sometimes to people I had just met. I was also surprised at how many women lifted their shirts to proudly show me their reconstruction. Just a couple of things I hadn’t anticipated when beginning this new part of my journey.

Fear. I allowed it to stay with me for a couple of weeks before I demanded that it leave. I began asking friends to pray because I knew that not only was fear paralyzing, it was also something the Lord didn’t want me to wrestle with. He wanted me to conquer it through Him.

A friend mentioned a verse from Psalm 139, and I quickly grabbed hold of nearly the entire chapter and made it mine. In this chapter David recognized that life is full of challenges, but he was up for them since he knew he could trust God. I trust Him, also. He is searching me and knows my anxiety about fear and cancer and whatever else is on my path, but He is thinking about me with precious thoughts and will lead me all the way to eternity.

# PRACTICAL TIPS

*The LORD gives His people strength; the LORD blesses His people with peace. —Psalms 29:11*

Having a strong faith will be your greatest help. I serve a God whom I trust and I know He doesn't allow anything into my life that He doesn't promise to walk through with me.

If you have dental work or a cleaning that cannot wait until after treatment ends, you should go to the dentist before chemotherapy begins.

Get and keep copies of pathology reports, treatment plans, etc., and make sure you understand what everything means. I had to track down a former oncologist and find my records in a storage facility to determine the amount of a certain drug I had been given in my Hodgkin's chemo treatments to make sure the breast cancer chemo drugs didn't damage my heart. As it turns out, I had been given the highest amount possible and am not allowed to take any more of that particular drug.

I had complications with low white blood count, so my doctor recommended extra iron and vitamin B-complex supplements, which really did help.

Learn about lymphedema. It can develop as a result of surgery. If you develop it, find a trained lymphedema therapist. Do not ignore symptoms. Visit [komen.org](http://komen.org) to learn more.

Hot flashes are sometimes miserable. I'm going on three years with them. Wear layers; have something with you that you can use as a fan; get up and walk around when you feel one coming; drink cold water.

I've found that if I drink a cola every day I have fewer hot flashes. Other women say if they have caffeine, the flashes are worse.

Try to cluster medical appointments so you aren't running out to another doctor every day.

Just take everything one step at a time. Get through today; don't worry about getting through tomorrow.

Exercise definitely helps lower the number of hot flashes I have each day. Mine are worse in the summer than in the winter.

Sleep in. Sleeping in is such a treat. If it was my "good" week, I'd spend mornings on my back porch reading the newspaper, reading Scripture, journaling, watching the birds, etc.

If I wake up because of a hot flash, I throw off the covers as fast as possible, and flip over my pillow to the cool side. Also, positioning the pillow so that the back of my neck is exposed helps greatly.





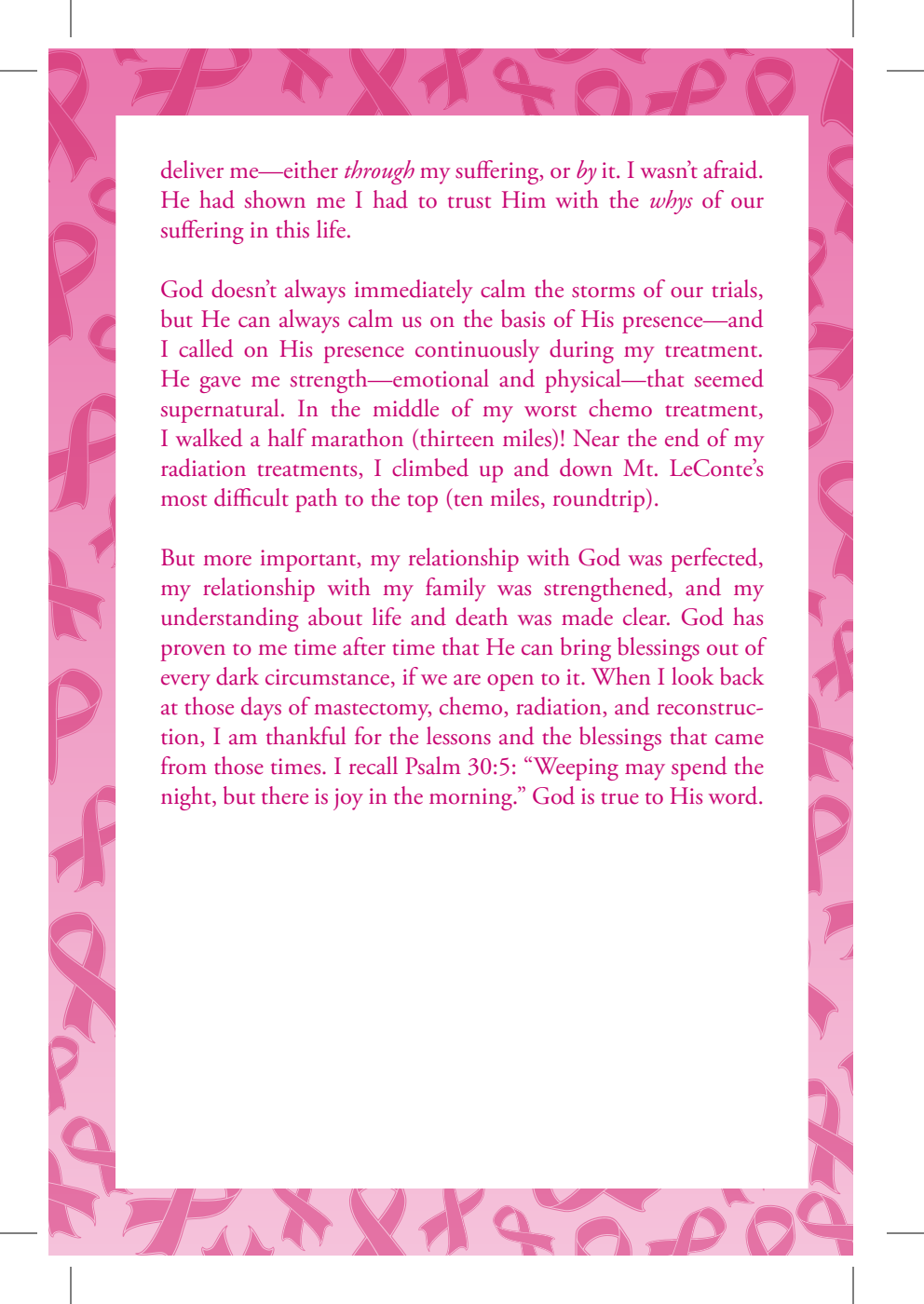
MEET: VERNA WYATT  
STAGE AT DIAGNOSIS: DIDN'T WANT TO  
KNOW—FIGURED “IT IS WHAT IT IS”  
AGE AT DIAGNOSIS: 52  
CURRENT STATUS: SURVIVOR

Even though I was raised in the church, I never really took Jeremiah 29:11—and so many more—to heart until I was about forty years old. I believed *I* was in control of my life and my destiny. My understanding of God was very immature, and my relationship with Christ was superficial.

I didn't think so at the time—oh no. I thought I was *very* spiritual. But God was about to take me on a journey that would turn my world upside down. It was not a journey I wanted to take, however. He pulled me along, with me dragging my feet all the way.

When my nine-year-old son was diagnosed with a brain tumor, I was in so much pain, I couldn't even pray to God—but He was in control, and He carried me through that period of suffering, even though I didn't realize it at the time. Three years later, my beloved best friend, who was also my sister-in-law, was sexually assaulted and murdered. I was furious. How could my heavenly Father let me experience such pain? In spite of my anger, God did not desert me; with each trial He prepared me for the next.

So when I was diagnosed with breast cancer on Valentine's Day, God had equipped me for the nightmare to come. That period of suffering was difficult, but I had an incredible peace that grew even stronger through the experience. I knew God would



deliver me—either *through* my suffering, or *by* it. I wasn't afraid. He had shown me I had to trust Him with the *whys* of our suffering in this life.

God doesn't always immediately calm the storms of our trials, but He can always calm us on the basis of His presence—and I called on His presence continuously during my treatment. He gave me strength—emotional and physical—that seemed supernatural. In the middle of my worst chemo treatment, I walked a half marathon (thirteen miles)! Near the end of my radiation treatments, I climbed up and down Mt. LeConte's most difficult path to the top (ten miles, roundtrip).

But more important, my relationship with God was perfected, my relationship with my family was strengthened, and my understanding about life and death was made clear. God has proven to me time after time that He can bring blessings out of every dark circumstance, if we are open to it. When I look back at those days of mastectomy, chemo, radiation, and reconstruction, I am thankful for the lessons and the blessings that came from those times. I recall Psalm 30:5: “Weeping may spend the night, but there is joy in the morning.” God is true to His word.

# A PSALM 139 DEVOTIONAL

*by Michele Marie Farley*

## *Verses 1–4*

He knows me, He understands me! He knows where I am, what my schedule is; He knows my thoughts and how I feel it is unfair that I have had two cancers. He knows that I am scared of the fear, of the cancer, of my future. He knows me completely.

## *Verses 5–6*

He is securely hedging me, protecting me. I picture a private backyard with a beautiful hedge surrounding it so no one can see in. I've always wanted a backyard like that. And not only is He surrounding me with His protection, His hand is on me, protecting me from above.

## *Verses 7–12*

Thankfully, I cannot get away from Him. He brought me light in the night; He helped me concentrate on others who needed Him but who didn't know Him. He consistently focused my thoughts on everything positive about my life. Sure, I grumbled and complained, mostly to my husband, bless his heart, about hair loss, hot flashes, weight gain, sleep loss, chemotherapy, radiation, future surgery, and that blasted cancer sword over my head, but He helped me and enabled me to focus on the light in the dark. He is my light in the dark.

*Verses 13–16*

*Oh my goodness!* was my thought, when I first read this verse after the breast cancer diagnosis. “He planned it!” Of course, for nearly all of my life I had believed God created me, planned my life, set the course, and guided me throughout, but this time it truly hit home with me that He really did plan this (these) cancer(s) from the beginning. As I was being formed, before birth, He purposed that my body would someday have these cancer cells that would multiply. It was part of His plan for me! Wow. In my student days, grown-ups would unknowingly confound me by saying, “Find His will for your life.” Just how was I supposed to find it, as if there is only one thing in my life that is specifically His will for me? Very confusing. But now I say I can definitely relax in the fact that at least this was specifically His will for me, this cancer journey.

*Verses 17–18, 23–24*

No matter where my journey leads me in life, God is thinking precious thoughts about me. Precious! There’s nothing negative about precious thoughts. And there are so many of them! He is with me, I am with Him. I like how the Psalm ends.

# LESSONS LEARNED

*For nothing is impossible with God.*  
—Luke 1:37

With each chemo/radiation visit, I received a return appointment printout. I pinned that paper to my calendar. If a question popped up that could wait until my appointment time, I'd jot it down on the printout. That paper went with me to each visit so I'd remember what to ask each time.

If I had chemo on Tuesday, I'd make a point to get out of the house on Saturday. I was often weak and would return home frustrated at my lack of energy, but it was good to get out of the house.

With two cancers in my history, there's concern that my body may continue to not fight off other cancers; only God knows my future. I prayed, and continue to pray, for peace that surpasses all understanding. I pray no matter the outcome of this cancer journey, whether I am to be an example of how to live with a cancer history or how to die from cancer, that I will have God's peace and joy on my journey.

Initially, my biggest concern was the thought of losing my hair. After being hospitalized with a potentially serious chemo complication, I realized that was the least of my concerns.

If the information isn't volunteered, *ask!*

Seek out friends who have already been through this—and make new friends who have been or are going through this. Tremendous support!

It was an unspoken rule among my friends that any discussion of my situation was to be initiated by me; it gave me a sense of control, compartmentalizing it to just a section of my life, and didn't empower it to *be* my life.

I wish someone had told me that recovery takes much longer than just completing chemo.

I wish I'd been told that even if I was able to be up and about at home, I was not going to be able to resume normal days and activities. (This was after eight hours of a mastectomy and reconstructive surgery.)

Some things I was glad to not have known about in advance.

For more information about Susan G. Komen for the Cure®, breast health, or breast cancer, visit [komen.org](http://komen.org) or call 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636).

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## **BreastCancerTrials.org**

Search for clinical trials recruiting people with BRCA or other genetic mutations. [breastcancertrials.org](http://breastcancertrials.org)

## **National Cancer Institute**

Information on breast cancer risk, integrative and complementary therapies for people living with cancer, clinical guidelines regarding diagnosis, treatment guidelines/options, and lymphedema, plus a Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool. [cancer.gov/cam](http://cancer.gov/cam)

## **State Cancer Legislative Database Program**

Find out if your state has legislation requiring coverage for prophylactic mastectomy. [sclld-nci.net](http://sclld-nci.net)

## **YWCA**

Provides breast cancer education and screening to women who lack access to health services. [ywca.org](http://ywca.org)

## **National Comprehensive Cancer Network**

Guidelines on breast cancer diagnosis. [nccn.com](http://nccn.com)

## **American Cancer Society**

Find a list of state laws on insurance coverage of clinical trial costs, a guide for families and caregivers on giving good cancer care at home, financing issues, and more. [cancer.org](http://cancer.org)

## **Dirline**

Find a local health care organization or center offering integrative and complementary therapies. [dirline.nlm.nih.gov](http://dirline.nlm.nih.gov)

## **National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship (NCCS)**

Find the publication, *Teamwork: The Cancer Patient's Guide to Talking with Your Doctor*. [canceradvocacy.org](http://canceradvocacy.org)

## **Fertile Hope**

Provides financial aid to women with breast cancer whose insurance will not cover fertility treatment. [fertilehope.org](http://fertilehope.org)

## **The Wellness Community**

Provides support to people living with cancer and their families. [thewellnesscommunity.org](http://thewellnesscommunity.org)

## **America's Health Insurance Plans**

National directory of health insurance plans and information on types of coverage. [ahip.org](http://ahip.org)

## **Association of Community Cancer Centers**

Find the publication, *Cancer Treatments Your Insurance Should Cover*. [acc-cancer.org](http://acc-cancer.org)

### **Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization**

Financial assistance for wigs, prostheses, and mastectomy bras. [y-me.org](http://y-me.org)

### **Corporate Angel Network**

Air travel assistance for people living with cancer. [corpangelnetwork.org](http://corpangelnetwork.org)

### **Sisters Network**

A national African-American breast cancer survivors support group committed to increasing local and national attention to the devastating impact that breast cancer has in the African-American community. [sistersnetworkinc.org](http://sistersnetworkinc.org)

*Many of these and other resources can be found at [komen.org](http://komen.org).*

The stories and practical tips shared in this special Bible are based on personal experiences of breast cancer survivors. Susan G. Komen for the Cure® does not endorse or make any warranties or representations with regard to the accuracy, completeness or timeliness of any of the statements or tips provided within this Bible. For more information about Komen for the Cure, breast health, or breast cancer, visit [komen.org](http://komen.org) or call 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636).