

"I'm sorry to tell you that you have cancer." The call from the radiologist on October 10, 2014 with the biopsy results confirmed what I had already discussed with God ten days before. While sitting in the waiting room for the ultrasound and diagnostic mammogram on the suspicious lump found by my doctor I prayed, "Lord, this is not a battle I want. But, if it is your will, I will fight it. Please help me to find your glory in it."

The situation was so surreal... I was 42 years old. I had finally found the love of my life and fallen head over heels for him and his four boys (the boys' mom had beaten breast cancer eleven years earlier at the age of 27. I was gutted to be bringing this fear back into their lives. I never could have imagined what a blessing they would all turn out to be for me through this fight.) I had just signed papers to sell my house as he and I were preparing for our future together. I had recently accepted a new position with my company that was a perfect fit, and had recently attended a health and wellness program that had me feeling more physically and mentally healthy than I had in a decade or more. I was truly on top of the world. I loved my life.

I NEEDED A PLAN. I was immediately scheduled to meet with a general surgeon in Erie. Unfortunately, I left that appointment incredibly frustrated and knowing no more than I did when I went in... I had an approximately 4-5 cm. grade 3 triple negative invasive ductal carcinoma (the radiologist had already told me that much) and that I was going to have to "throw the kitchen sink after" (Dr. Google had already given me that info). I left with no plan, but thankfully his office was able to schedule me for a PET scan.

My partner, Kerry and his former wife encouraged me to see the surgeon she had used at in Pittsburgh. I went to see him a week later. He reviewed all of my information and recommended I have chemotherapy before surgery due to the aggressive nature of my tumor. To my absolute shock, he called the head of the medical oncology department and asked her to see me right away because I was from out of town and needed a plan. The medical oncologist, made herself late for a speaking engagement to see me. I was whisked down like a VIP. She was remarkable. I left her office with the plan I so desperately needed. And I knew the Lord had brought me to where I needed to be.

The next couple of weeks were a blur as we prepared for me to start chemotherapy... I had MRI, EKG, port placement surgery, head shaving with my hairdresser (which one of our boys, Justin, did with me). I had four rounds of AC, followed by four rounds of Taxol. Before my first infusion, I felt strong. Ready. Until the nurse came into the room donning a semi-hazmat suit in order to administer the Adriamycin... There's nothing quite like realizing the nurse has to protect herself from the medicine she is about to inject to a port that goes directly to your carotid. Yikes!

It was toward the end of my chemotherapy treatments, in February 2015, that I attended my first Linked By Pink meeting. Everyone was so friendly and knew the language I was speaking. It was a social engagement, and I had a nice time. But, being in the thick of my treatment, I wasn't really up to attending many meetings. I joined the online

group and appreciated all of the support and ability to share in what others were experiencing. This is truly a supportive, honest, open, and caring group of women.

In April, after a bit of a fight with my breast surgeon, I had bilateral mastectomies with tissue expander placement and fills for reconstruction. I had prepared myself for how I would look by looking at a lot of pictures online. I can say the surgery was relatively easy for me. The hardest part was being bored at home before I could return to work. Thankfully, through all of it, I had the support of my amazing family and a group of wonderful friends and coworkers who named themselves "Patty's Penguins" to support me every step of the way.

In July, I began radiation therapy. I was scared. Radiation was something that had severely damaged my grandfather when he had it for prostate cancer many years before. It was something that some people in my life discouraged me from doing, calling it "over treatment" because I had no lymph node involvement and had had mastectomy surgery. But, I believed and still believe in my doctor's recommendation that because my tumor had grown into my pectoral muscle and I had a very narrow margin, it was the right thing for me to do.

Now, nearly one year later, I'm still learning that my timing and God's are not always in sync. I'm physically weaker than I expected to be at this point in time. And, I recently was hospitalized and lost one of my breast implants due to complications from the radiation therapy. But through it all, I continue to experience the faithfulness and amazing love of my God, my family, and my Linked By Pink friends. I am truly blessed.

~ Patty Reynolds
Edinboro, PA