

Cherish Today



We Are Never Promised Tomorrow

by Kelly Stanley

In July of 2004, at the young age of 34, I was diagnosed with invasive intraductal carcinoma. Not having an immediate family history of breast cancer, I was quite shocked at the diagnosis. I remember when I found the lump in my breast I knew immediately that it was cancer. However, I can say that this was a time in my life that I truly experienced the peace of God that passeth all understanding. I have to admit that I never had this scheduled into my long term plans. While being happily married to a wonderful husband, having 3 beautiful children and a wonderful career in pharmacy, I just did not have time to fit this into my busy schedule. I remember telling the surgeon during the scheduling for my bilateral mastectomy that the Thursday she had open to do my surgery would be great because it would give me time to recover over the weekend and get back to work the following Monday. She laughed and thought this was quite funny considering the recovery time of the surgery would take at least a month. Boy did I have a lot to learn.

There are some special people that greatly impacted my recovery. I would like to thank Cindi Maddox, who brought me a different soup every Monday night during the six months of my chemo treatment, Holly Wilkins for always taking care of

my kids when I needed her to; Lori James for being my sounding block and encourager on the days that I felt so bad; Don and Sue Stanley, my in-laws, for always being there for me not only during my battle with cancer, but on every occasion; my sweet sister, Susan Hathcote, for being my best friend and for shaving her head when I lost all of my hair to show her support and love for me; my mom and dad who painfully had to see their daughter suffer through the sickness of chemo treatments - they were so strong and brave, and courageously took me to most of my numerous trips to UAMS, My friend Callie Pigg for her special friendship and all of her help; my precious little children, Morgan, Sophia and Andrew who understood when their momma was absent for most of their life that year, and they were such troopers trying to keep their positive attitudes when I was so sick. But most importantly to my husband who said when I was so sick in the bed one day that "The worst day he could ever have with me would be better than the best day he could have with someone else," I say, thank you Scott... for loving me during those dark days and for being my soulmate and best friend and giving me the encouragement to fight through those long months.

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After my first surgery, I was back on the operating table in two weeks to have my lymph nodes removed due to a positive node that was found in my first surgery. It wasn't too long after that that I began my journey of chemotherapy treatments every 2 weeks for 12 treatments. I never thought that I would be sitting in that cold chemo room at UAMS watching the red Adriamycin run into my veins. Only a few short years ago, as a student in Pharmacy School at UAMS, I had made the same medication for patients who were sitting in that same chair just like me. It was a very long 6 months. I experienced a lot of nausea and over all muscle pain during the treatments. There were many times that I was in the bed unable to move for 8 to 9 days. Yes, I did lose all my hair, but how easy it was to get ready, with no legs to shave, no hair to fix - I just threw on a ball cap, drew on some eyebrows and put on lipstick and I was ready to go. But today I have a full head of hair and as a Survivor of Breast Cancer! I know that the success of my recovery was due to the many prayers that people of this community continually lifted up for me and the loving support of my friends and family, and, most of all, from the grace of God. Psalms 34:19 says that, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." I have thought many times what an opportunity God had given me to share my testimony with others and to be an example of what God can do in someone's life.

F-stands for the Father in Heaven who never leaves your side. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God led me to finding my cancer early and held me in His hands all through my surgeries and chemo treatments. The Bible says in Philippians 4:19, "My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

A- stands for the Attitude you choose to have when you face trials in your life. Your attitude will so often determine your outcome and resilience you have in the obstacles that you encounter. I chose to find my security in Jesus Christ and allowed His positive attitude to be reflected in me.

I- stands for the Incentive to fight!! Whatever mountain is placed before you, climb it with the motivation that God will provide for you. When I looked into the faces of my 3 children, I knew that I had to fight. I had never been a quitter and I was not going to start now.

T- stands for Trust. You see when you are faced with something like this there is nothing more comforting than to know that you don't have to rely upon yourself but that you can trust in God Almighty. Psalms 56:11 states, "In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid."

H- stands for the Hope we find in the loving arms of God. I knew that whatever the outcome with my cancer, that God was in control and that His plan was and is the very best.



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We are all given challenges and obstacles to overcome everyday, and you may never know who is watching you to see how you handle yourself. What you do with your outcome is what is so important. In Psalms 89 it states that, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth I will make known thy faithfulness to all generations." This is my desire: to take the opportunity to share the mercies that the Lord has bestowed upon my life, whenever I have a chance. Even though this was a very difficult time in my life I did learn a great deal. The word that became so dear to my heart and echoed through my entire battle with cancer is FAITH. It was once said by Martin Luther that, "Faith is a living and unshakeable confidence, a belief in the grace of God so assured that a man would die a thousand deaths for its sake."

There are many different meanings for the word faith: reliance, confidence, assurance, belief, trust, etc. However, I would like to tell you what faith means to me. Let's begin with the first letter:

The Bible says in 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." You see, your life doesn't have to be afflicted with a major disease like cancer for you to have your faith strengthened or for you to take the opportunity to share what miraculous things God has done in your life.

As you know, *we are never promised tomorrow*, but we are assured the peace that God is in control of our life and He wants the very best for us. Therefore, we should live each day to its fullest. I have learned over the last few years that what I thought mattered in the past are really insignificant compared to the short time that we are here on this earth. So, in closing I would like to challenge you today to call that family member you haven't talked to in a while or write a note to a special friend to say thanks for all they do, or tell your kids and spouse how much you love them and how proud you are of them. But most importantly, thank God for the blessing of life that He has given to you. 