

God said, "No."

40 years ago, this month I was recovering from major surgery. What had happened was something I had not envisioned happening. I was careful, I had my examinations on a regular basis. I was under the care of an excellent doctor. I had my screenings, my mammograms. I was a model patient. But this lump did not want to go away. It had started the first week in December. I felt the lump on my self-examination. I waited a few weeks for it to go away and it did not. I called my surgeon to have it checked but it was Christmas week, and he was on vacation. I had to wait until January. I made the appointment and a mammogram was ordered. I waited for another check up with the Doctor, and as he walked in the room, I stated that this lump needed to come out. He looked relieved (I had a history of arguing with the doctors.) We scheduled a time for the minor surgery, and I had the mammogram. I went in for the minor outpatient surgery and the doctor came in and said he had received the results of the mammogram, and it was negative. I breathed a sigh of relief but went ahead with the minor procedure. When they woke me up from the surgery the doctor was waking me up to tell me the examination of the lump was positive, and I had cancer. I told him I was surprised, and he said he was too. He met me in the area downstairs where I still was on a stretcher and had my family waiting. He told them what was happening, and we discussed what the next procedure should be. I was to have a modified radical removal the next Monday (this was Thursday) I prayed that it had not spread to the lymph nodes. I had the surgery, it had spread to the lymph nodes, and I had to have Chemotherapy. I saw the oncologist and he said three months of chemo; I thought no problem! I had three months, and he said, six will be better. So, I had 6 then at the end of 6 he said 9. I did 9 when at the end of 9 he said 12, I said no. I felt like a yo-yo being bounced around. He accepted my no, and I stopped. I knew my limit but if he had said a year in the beginning I would have accepted it. I was still working full time but having to take sick days the day after receiving chemo and it was taking longer and longer to recover, and I was having typical reactions to the chemo. During this time, I had prayed for my strength to accept whatever came, for the strength of my children and those I loved. I received God's blessings in abundance and thanked him for his care, I have thanked God since for his care and his blessings. In the next few years after the surgery and recovery, God blessed me with three grandchildren. Now I have three great grandchildren, and I am indeed blessed. God will be with us no matter what life brings. He will strengthen us in our weakest times, bless us in the times we feel alone, bring us peace on those days when the storms of life surround us, and we know he is there. I thank God daily for the 40 years he has given me to know my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. What a blessing he gives us when we surrender our needs, our sorrows, and our hopes and decisions to him. Thanks be to God. I had cancer and God used it to bring me closer to him. He took a self-sufficient, independent woman and took her out of the darkness and held her and I am forever grateful.

Psalm 30:11-12 You turned my wailing in to dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.

Dear Lord, we thank you for those times you are with us in our sorrows and in our joys. We thank you for our blessings, the blessings of children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. How honored we are to have these blessings in our lives. May we always remember they come from a good and loving God. We ask Lord that you be with those who know grief and sorrow, may they have joy and blessings in their lives. Be with Pastor Don and his family. Keep him and his family safe as they serve you and your children. Be with our church Lord, may we remember it is yours. Be with us in all we say and do so others will know we are your children. Be with Pastor Albert as he prepares for his move. In Jesus most holy name we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson