



Breast Cancer Survivor

Ten Survival Tips/ Part 1 of 2
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In Chinese, a crisis is expressed in two characters: danger and hidden opportunity. As a breast cancer survivor, I have faced many challenges, but God has revealed to me opportunities that translate into incredible blessings. I share some suggestions below for those struggling with this disease.

1. Ponder scriptures

Psalm 119:105 states, *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.* Let biblical passages illuminate pathways for healing and reveal any encroaching thorny thickets. Use verses as your penlight to avoid stumbling around in the darkness. When I joined the ranks of breast cancer survivors, I clung to Psalm 23 for solace. During chemotherapy I reflected on how God was comforting me as I walked through my own valley of the shadow. Review the list of common emotions in the front or back of your Bible to locate verses that speak to particular sentiments, such as worry, weariness, or fear. Gideon Bibles found in many hotels contain these sections to ease the troubled traveler's mind.

2. Pray unceasingly

One of my childhood treasures was a book entitled *The Lord's Prayer*. Each page was inscribed with a verse from Jesus' model prayer in Matt. 6:9-13. Bright illustrations of kneeling children with uplifted hands accompanied each verse. I was captivated by the images. Although as a child I was not yet ready for Jesus' heartrending prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, this picture book was early preparation for a more mature prayer life. Prayer is a powerful tool. Like African prayer warriors

thriving in the midst of deprivation, during my treatment I lifted prayers to the only One who could take away troubling emotions and side-effects. Lying in bed, I visualized my pallet being lifted to God through the roof in a reverse move from the paralytic brought from the roof to Jesus for healing in Mark 2. I strongly felt God's healing warmth as I prayer-walked upward to meet Him.

3. Treasure fellowship

As a cancer survivor I most assuredly relished the cards, hugs, prayers, and empathy of friends. The blessings of others that dispelled my pouts through bouts of cancer were crucial to healing. Hebrews 10: 24-25 says: *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Fellowship can include simply listening, sharing a meal, or offering a Bible study to encourage camaraderie and spiritual enrichment. My husband and I were blessed by the insights shared at our home Bible study during my cancer treatment.

4. Make church attendance a priority

Ideally, the breast cancer survivor should attend a local church, for reasons extending beyond congregational worship. Shortly after I was diagnosed with cancer, members of a former church we attended rallied around me in prayer for healing. Their love transcended church membership, and coalesced with that of members of our new church. These compassionate individuals provided needed meals and child care as well as spiritual support, something I would have missed had I not attended church.

If your breast cancer has left you home-bound or residing in a facility, you can find other options to connect with a church. Ideas include listening to a radio station offering Bible studies and uplifting choir or praise music, watching a Christian worship service on TV, or enjoying sermons from a visiting pastor.

5. Obtain Biblical counseling

Counseling from a biblical perspective can address many issues with which breast cancer survivors struggle, including guilt, anger, and non-forgiveness. Proverbs 15:22 tells us: *Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.* I sought counseling from a local church and a crisis pregnancy center for issues arising from the cancer diagnosis. If these resources are not available, on-line tools are at the disposal of the computer literate. Some people prefer the anonymity of e-mail counseling. Focus on the Family (at (800) A-FAMILY) provides referrals for telephonic counseling sessions.

From a different perspective, those dealing with cancer survivors should not assume that such survivors can perform all tasks, regardless of their outward appearance. Because of lymphedema that developed in my arm after lymph-node removal and radiation, I do not lift or carry heavy items. I make others aware of this limitation, since it is not obvious. Conversely, one should not place artificial limits on cancer survivors. For example, during cancer treatments I kept up my regular aerobic exercise. I continued my work as an attorney in a high-intensity environment, although I did revert to a part-time schedule for a season. I painted landscapes. While this amazed some people, it is not uncommon for cancer survivors to adhere to old routines for a semblance of normalcy. The bottom line is to endeavor to delve into what makes a person tick before reaching conclusions. These are some ways I found to fend off the breast-cancer blues. I pray that those facing the crisis of breast cancer will find hidden opportunities and blessings, and hear the Savior say at the pearly gates of heaven, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

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