



Addie Smith
Breast Cancer

In 2003, while preparing to take an exam, I accidentally hit my chest with a textbook. As I examined myself later, I noticed a quarter-sized lump in my left breast. A strange feeling surged through my body; I knew something was wrong. Even though I had received a 'clean bill of health' two months prior, I knew I had to make an appointment. I scheduled an appointment with the Indianapolis Breast Center and had a mammogram, needle aspiration, core biopsy, and an ultrasound.

On Feb. 19, 2003, the doctor called and said, "I'm sorry Addie, but it's cancer." Right then, I went into a daze. I laid in bed, in shock. I thought, 'I am too young for breast cancer. No one in my family had breast cancer. So, how is this possible?' I went on to tell my husband and mother. They did not believe me at first. I just cried and cried; asking my husband to hold me. All I could think about was that I would end up like my brother who died eight months after receiving his Lymphoma diagnosis.

Cancer has been an eye-opener for me. I've realized life is too short. We need to make the most of every day. When I was diagnosed, I felt like I had no control. I realized that the only one I could truly turn to who had control was God. I prayed a lot. I believed God was going to heal me. I believed it so much that after my lumpectomy on March 19, 2003, I awoke asking, "Do I have cancer?"

The doctor informed me that I did indeed have cancer, and it was stage 2, grade 3 ductal carcinoma. I had an aggressive cancer. Therefore, I needed aggressive treatment. I ended up with eight courses of chemotherapy, followed by 33 rounds of radiation, and a second surgery. I was scared, but I didn't give up hope. God placed in my heart, "This too shall pass." I held on to those words. I would also always sing and pray. God, along with my family support, kept me going.

I feel God let me go through this experience for a reason, to help other women

become more proactive in their own health. African-American women are more likely to die from breast cancer than other races. I learned of a national organization that focuses on African-American women and breast cancer called Sisters Network Inc. In 2007, I launched an affiliate, Sisters Network of Indianapolis. It is my hope to educate and raise awareness about the devastating impact cancer has in the African-American community.

Being diagnosed with cancer has taught me to be thankful and live one day at a time. I would tell someone who has cancer, "It is not as bad as you think." Don't worry about the side effects of treatment; hair does not make you. There is medication to help with sickness and there are clinical trials you could join that could be beneficial to you. Always remember, "This too shall pass."