

My name is Amanda Lael and I am a Breast Cancer Warrior. I was diagnosed with Breast Cancer this past February (Feb 9th to be exact) and I was 39 soon to be the BIG 40 in August. I always heard that your health and body change at 40 but WOW was I surprised when I heard the diagnosis.

I noticed a change in one of my breasts after a shower one evening. It just so happened, I had an appointment that following week already scheduled for a physical with my primary care physician. I had him examine me and even though he could not feel a lump, he scheduled me for a mammogram immediately. Thank goodness he was proactive and pushed for this, as where my tumor was located NO ONE could feel it.

I had a Mammogram on Feb 4th where they immediately saw the lump that was causing my nipple to invert and they scheduled me for a biopsy that Friday on Feb 6th. I found out the results on Feb 9th.

I was diagnosed with Ductal Carcinoma, stage 2, grade 1 and my receptors were hormone driven. I

was ER and PR positive which meant that my cancer was caused by too much estrogen in my body.

Words cannot describe how I felt before I heard my results from the biopsy. I am a control freak and I was still trying to control the outcome and my situation. I was anxious, mad, hurt and unresponsive until I got down on my hands and knees on Feb 9th before I went in for my results---and I Gave it to God and put my



situation and outcome in his hands. Only those that have felt his peace and presence can attest to the feeling that I felt when the Radiologist told me that I had CANCER. I felt a PEACE come over me that I have never felt before. My husband even turned to me and said---“are you okay, you aren’t crying?” My immediate reaction was “I am going to be fine---God has this---let’s get on with this and talk about my options.”

Moving forward, I met with several MDs and got several different opinions. God guided my path to amazing Surgeons and Doctors and led me right to where I needed to be. I opted for a double mastectomy and was amazed when I found out that I was a candidate for direct implants directly following the mastectomy. I wasn’t even aware that this was an option, which allowed me to bypass the more traditional procedure of reconstruction that involves spacers. I also did a series of Genetic Testing. Not only did I test negative for the BRCA 1 and BRCA 2 genes, I also tested negative for the other 17 genes that can be linked to Breast Cancer. I also had NO family history of breast cancer in my family so honestly Breast Cancer was the LAST thing that I felt would or could ever happen to me.

On March 12th I had my Double Mastectomy and Direct Implant surgery. I also had a test done called the Oncotype DX test that helped determine what type of treatment I needed. The Good Lord directed my path to the right doctors, the right options, and helped me make my decision on the treatment I would pursue. I luckily did not have to do chemotherapy but did follow my physician’s guidance and was treated with 30 treatments of radiation. I truly was in the Great Physicians’ hands throughout my surgery, radiation treatments and healing process. Luckily in HIS care I had no side effects or issues with my treatment and my faith and trust in HIM kept my spirits up and helped me maintain a positive attitude. People would say “WOW, how do you stay so positive”? My immediate answer was GOD. I have 5 to 10 years of endocrine therapy and hormone suppressant that I am now 8 months into, and trusting that God will get me through this also.

I was very fortunate to have an amazing support system during this journey. My husband was so supportive, loving, caring and JUST GREAT through everything.

He was also so strong for me and our children. I could not have made it without him by my side each and every step of the way. I also had amazing support from my parents and my husband's parents who held it together for our children and were there for us whenever we needed them. Not to mention the love, support and help that I received from our extended family, friends, my "work family" and church family at Mountain View Baptist. It was truly astonishing all the people that I had pulling for me and praying for me each step of the way.

This has definitely been a life-changing event. When something like this happens it makes you step back and realize what is truly important in life. It makes you look at everything in your world differently. I cherish every single second I have with my children, I stop and sit on the porch and listen to the rain, I put my phone down when I walk in the door after work and devote time to my family, and I feel that the love between myself and my husband has been strengthened. But most importantly my relationship with God was taken to a LEVEL that I never imagined. I was a Christian, a good person, went to church, volunteered in church, etc. but my relationship with God now versus before this happened to me is incomparable. I thank GOD every day for changing me even with all that I went through.

I have learned so much personally and medically through the journey I have been on since February. No one ever knows why things like this happen. But I am not going to dwell on the whys and what ifs. I plan on sharing the knowledge that I have developed from this "bump in the road" and sharing what I have learned with other women facing the same situations. I also want to be able to share my "testimony" to everyone I come in contact with and share the strength, peace and hope that God has given me to make it through.

Several things I would like to share with other women are to not rush into the first option that is presented to you and get second or even third opinions. I also want to share what I have learned about Breast Cancer and how we can change our diet, omit certain foods from our diet, and take cancer fighting supplements and antioxidants that we can incorporate to do our part to help the cancer from

coming back. I am very passionate about this and want to share what I have learned with other women.

But above all I want to share my Testimony of faith to others. I want to share how God has helped and guided me through my “bump in the road.”

First of all, I want to urge anyone facing a trial or bump in the road to turn their problem over to God. Put your trust in HIM and know that he is in control. One verse I like to share that relates to this is 2nd Peter 3:9: “Cast all your cares upon him for he cares for you.”

Secondly, I want to share that when you TRULY turn your situation over to God, you will feel the PEACE that I described earlier. The Peace that surpasses all understanding that only God can give to you. A verse that I like to share that represents this peace is: “Thou will keep him in perfect Peace whose mind is steadfast on thee” Isaiah 26:3.

And lastly, once you give your situation to Him—TRUST that he will give you the strength to get through it. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” Philippians 4:13.

I am not sure why Breast Cancer happened to me. Even though I worry and do get scared from time to time about my cancer returning, I have PUT MY CANCER IN GOD’S HANDS and know that he is in control and will help me through whatever comes my way. I am not going to look in the “rearview mirror” and dwell on everything that has happened to me over the past year, but I am going to look through the large front windshield at what lies ahead of me and ALL that God has planned for me.

I plan on starting a Faith Based Cancer Support Group for Women in May and I am also working closely with Susan G. Komen as a Face of Breast Cancer for Catawba County this year.