

Martha Clifton

It was June 2009, and I was having my annual physical, when my doctor detected a place in my right breast that she didn't feel good about. I had just had a mammogram 6 months before that was clear. One week later, on the day before my 8th wedding anniversary and 3 days before my 50th birthday. I was diagnosed with stage 1 invasive lobular breast cancer. Jay and I were in shock. It was so hard to tell my mother, who was already so worried about my sister-in-law Kathryn, as she had been diagnosed with breast cancer 3 months prior, and was in the middle of chemo treatments. I felt so horrible having to give such scary news to the people that I love. I can remember how I kept apologizing for it.

From the moment we learned the cancer news, it was like we were on a runaway train. I have another comparison... Do you remember when you were a child, and would be at the beach and get knocked down by a wave, and would panic trying to find which way was up? Well that was ME!

Jay and I immediately knew that prayer and God's strength would be where we went for guidance. It was just a given. There were so many decisions to make and we knew this was far bigger than the two of us.

In the days to come we found out that I was also HER 2 Positive, estrogen and progesterone positive. Being diagnosed as a triple positive, I chose to draw assurances that we had several angles from which to attack my cancer.

An element of my job is being a special projects manager. My approach to this battle became something that I treated as one of my biggest projects I had ever tried to manage. I began to treat doctor appointments, as often as possible, like a business meeting. Jay and I would always prepare with our list of questions. He went with me to every appointment I had.

I opted for a bilateral mastectomy with reconstruction, which I had in July and began chemotherapy and Herceptin infusions in August. I did not have to have radiation. I had 6 chemo treatments lasting 18 weeks and 52 weeks of Herceptin infusions.

I was not without a list of complications throughout treatment. I had 8 surgeries in 18 months due to infections etc. It is important for me to share with you, that through my journey, I have grown so much and my marriage has grown so much. I have met so many people fighting their breast cancer battle and it is so important to me to offer them encouragement and support.

I am stronger than I ever imagined I could be. 7 years later, I am surviving and surviving is winning!