



DEAR GOD, THEY SAY IT'S CANCER!

—by Aldyth Thomson

I have lived in Ghana, West Africa, for the past five years until May 2010 when we moved to Zambia. We moved to Ghana because of my husband, Ian's, job. Because we were going to Ghana, I went for

that I would have to go through the chemotherapy and radiation without him.

Afraid and alone

I would love to tell you that I was very

people got cancer...not me. But then I remember thinking, "Why not me? Why should it happen to other people and not me?" I was even in too much of a state to be grateful to God at that point that the good news was that the cancer hadn't spread to the lymphatic system. In fact, if we hadn't been going to Ghana, I don't think that I'd have gone for a mammogram at that time and I only had about six months, maximum, before it spread under my arm to the lymph glands.

God works all things for good

What was even more amazing was that Ian had been retrenched six months previously, and unless he'd been retrenched, we wouldn't have gone to Ghana, and therefore had those medical tests. It has been absolutely amazing to me how God works

a full medical check-up, and this included a mammogram. To my horror, I found out that I had stage 2 breast cancer and was facing surgery, chemotherapy and radiation! By this time it was only about two weeks before Ian was due to leave for Ghana. He would be with me when I had the surgery, but it was with a sinking heart that I realised

brave and 'just knew' that God was going to come through for me, but I can't. When I sat with Ian in the oncologist's office 10 days after the surgery, and she started to go through the list of side effects my chemo would have, I started to cry, and cried on and off for two days. I couldn't believe this was happening to me! Other

I would love to tell you that I was very brave and 'just knew' that God was going to come through for me, but I can't. I cried for a good few days after the news.

As Christians, we often face trials and tribulations. God did not say He would take away all pain, but He has promised to be with us.

all things together for good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

The cloud of chemotherapy

What scared me the most was the chemo (almost more than the thought of death). I couldn't sleep and my last thought at night, and my first thought upon waking, was "chemo"...like a huge, black cloud pressing down on me. I don't think I've ever felt so isolated before. I have a very caring family and wonderful friends, but the more they tried to encourage me and say that it would all be okay, the more desperate I felt, because how did they know I was going to be okay? They weren't the ones facing chemo! And what did any of them know about cancer anyway?

Finding comfort from the Lord

Sometimes, I've found, you just have to hear from God for yourself, as nothing else can bring you any comfort and peace...the kind described in Philippians 4:7 where it says, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard (garrison) your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus".

Sometimes, I've found, you just have to hear from God for yourself, as nothing else can bring you any comfort and peace...the kind described in His Word.

One of the things that really concerned me was the fact that my oncologist had told me that 10% of people who had my type of chemo were left with permanent heart damage. She said that they didn't know why and had no way of predicting which patients would be affected in this way. In desperation, two days before Ian was due

to leave for Ghana, and four days before I was due to start chemotherapy, I shut myself in my bedroom, knelt next to my bed with my Bible open, and begged to God to speak to me.

My eye fell on Psalm 121:7, "The Lord will keep you from all harm - He will watch over your life." The words leapt off the page - I just knew that God was telling me that my heart would be okay and wouldn't suffer any adverse effects from the chemotherapy! God's comfort and peace was so real and His voice so clear, that my tears dried...for good.

Not ready for the change

Although I knew my heart would be okay, I was still desperately afraid of the actual chemotherapy and wondered anxiously exactly how sick I would be. I had heard such stories and was actually quite unable to look up and read anything about cancer on the internet.

People told me to read Lance Armstrong's book, 'It's Not About the Bike', but every time I peeped nervously into it at one of the bookshops, I'd slam it

shut thinking, "I'm not ready for this... too much information!" (I did read it a year or two later and really enjoyed it.) The night before my first chemo, I went into my bedroom and again asked God to speak to me. This time my eye fell on Isaiah 41:13 "For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says >

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Reduce your cancer risk

10 million. That's how many cases of cancer are diagnosed worldwide each year. Now consider this number: 15 million. That's how many cases of cancer the World Health Organisation estimates will be diagnosed in the year 2020, a 50% increase! Below are simple tips to reduce your risk for cancer:

- Pray over your food and consecrate every meal
 - Eat your fill of broccoli, but steam it rather than microwaving it
 - Buy organic foods, free of pesticides
 - Make a batch of fresh lemonade. A daily dose of citrus fruits may cut the risk of mouth, throat, and stomach cancers by half
 - Toast some Brazil nuts and sprinkle over your salad
 - Add garlic to everything you eat
 - Regularly consume blueberries
 - Sprinkle onions over your salad. A diet high in onions may reduce the risk of prostate cancer 50%. But the effects are strongest when they're eaten raw or lightly cooked
 - Men need to consume cooked tomatoes, or tomato sauce, as this contains lycopene, a prostate-cancer fighting ingredient
 - Avoid char-grilling or burning meat, as this is carcinogenic
 - Cut out high-fat animal protein
 - Consume lots of filtered water
 - Take a multivitamin every morning
 - Pop a calcium supplement along with your Vitamin D
 - Get 30-minutes of exercise daily
 - Get about 15 minutes of sunlight on your skin each day
 - Many dry cleaners still use a chemical called perc (perchloroethylene), linked to kidney and liver damage. If you do dry-clean, remove them from the plastic and air them.
- See www.cancer.gov/



Aldyth (above right) with friends during her treatment

to you, *Do not fear; I will help you.*" (What I didn't know that night, was that the needle used to administer the chemo would always go into the back of my right hand!) This time that overwhelming feeling of fear and helplessness lifted and for the first time I felt able to cope.

God takes detailed care

On one occasion during the radiation treatment I'd been really scared by a particularly gruesome cancer story that someone in

phone call at that precise moment? Well, of course, I burst into tears and told him what had happened and he prayed with me right there - the fear lifted and I felt comforted.

My life today

It's now five and a half years since my cancer diagnosis. My heart is fine and my health is good. The years in Ghana were some of the happiest of my life, and I was able to really rest and recover there, in a way I wouldn't have done if I'd still

The Lord encouraged me directly through His Word:
"For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you."

the waiting-room had thoughtlessly told me. For the first time since I'd started treatment, I felt weepy and terrified again. While I was driving home from the hospital that day, my cell phone rang. It was my father, phoning to find out how I was. I knew he had enough on his plate worrying about my ailing mother, so as usual I told him that I was just fine. "No, Aldyth," he said, "I was praying for you today and I felt compelled to spend some extra time in prayer for you. Something is wrong and I want to know what it is." Can you believe that during all those months he should have made that

been teaching in Johannesburg. God had known what was coming and had lovingly arranged the circumstances of my life for the good. And the wonderful thing to remember is that there are no favourites with God - He cares about the circumstances of your life too! ■

ALDYTH THOMSON *co-founder and organiser of Beauty for Ashes Womens' Conference. For more see: www.beautyforashes.co.za*



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