

# THE JOURNEY

A Testimony of God's  
Faithfulness Through My  
Battle with Breast Cancer

Kimberly Kirk

*Copyright © 2008 Kimberly Coles Kirk  
[www.kimberlykirk.com](http://www.kimberlykirk.com)*

I dedicate this book to my precious husband Gary, who  
walked with me every step of this journey, and was an  
incredible source of strength and encouragement.  
Thank you, Honey – I love you!

## *Special Thanks*

*To Andrew and Alexa...  
You are the best and I love you dearly.*

*To my wonderful family...  
Your love and support overwhelm me.*

*To my prayer warriors...  
Words cannot describe what a blessing you are.*

*To Kim and Henry Novorski...  
Love the covers! Thanks for all your help.*

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from  
The New International Version.

HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ®  
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society  
Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.  
All rights reserved.

THE LIVING BIBLE (TLB)  
Copyright © 1971.  
Used by permission of  
Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.,  
Wheaton, IL 60189.

THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION (NKJ)  
Copyright © 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc.  
All rights reserved.

*The picture of the author which appears on the back cover was taken by  
Kim Novroski Photography.*

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

On January 25, 2008, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Three days later, as I awakened in the morning, the Lord whispered to my heart that I should keep a journal as I walk through this trial. This book is that journal, which is a combination of personal entries and emails sent to keep my prayer warriors updated on things the Lord showed me along the way. It is not a story about my cancer but rather it is about God's faithfulness through it. My struggle is merely the backdrop which sets the stage for our precious Lord to do great and mighty things. Be encouraged in whatever you are facing. God is there and He will carry you through and bless, challenge, encourage and shape you in ways that are *immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine* (Ephesians 3:20).

*For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*  
*Jeremiah 29:11*

## THE DIAGNOSIS

*He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is secure, he will have no fear.*

Psalm 112:7-8



It was November, 2007 and I was due to get my annual mammogram. Because of many different factors, some within and some outside of my control, I was unable to get an appointment in 2007 so I scheduled one for January 2, 2008. It is such a good feeling when you are walking out of the place where they have taken your mammogram, knowing you don't have to do that again for another year – at least most of the time that's how it works. The next day, I received a call from my primary care physician telling me that they discovered a cluster of micro-calcifications which looked suspicious, and I needed to go back and have another mammogram done with greater magnification in that area. I was able to schedule it for January 10, along with an ultrasound.

That day came and I was walking in the peace of God, until after they did the test and said, "You can get dressed then the doctor will be in to see you." Although I have no medical training whatsoever, I know that a nurse can tell you that everything is okay but only a doctor can share if there is a problem. In that instant, my heart sank yet I felt God's presence and a reminder from Him that He was in control. The doctor told me that he felt this cluster should be biopsied because it could show that there is something more going on in that area. As I walked out of the facility, I called my husband on my cell and with tears of shock, told him what I had just heard. I got in my car and was able to hold it together until I got home. My son Andrew, who was still home with us on his Christmas break (he is a freshman at West Chester University), was the next one to hear the news and he responded with disbelief. I assured him that God is in control – whether this is nothing or it is something – and that He would carry us through whatever lies ahead.

I immediately called several family members to let them know what was going on, and sent out a prayer request to my prayer team and also to my church family. I was encouraged by what I heard from so many – that micro-calcifications are benign 90% of the time. I liked going into that biopsy with those odds, and God kept my heart at rest as I met with the surgeon then had the biopsy done only days later. On January 23, I got a call from my primary care physician telling me that I have something called DCIS. He told me that there are different options on how to handle this, it is very controversial, that they would want to be very aggressive because of my age (I am 43 which is very young to get something like this) and that this would *change my life but not dramatically*. Although I was in shock, I had a peace and a real sense of anticipation about what God was going to do through this. Below is the email I sent out after hearing these things...

*BIOPSY UPDATE*

*Sent: Wednesday 1/23/08 11:03 AM*

*Well, since I didn't put PRAISE in the subject above, you may have guessed that my biopsy news isn't the greatest - but it isn't the worst either. Here's the deal. I have something called ductal carcinoma in-situ (DCIS) and it is something that needs to be dealt with. As far as what to do next, that's where things get a little tricky. He encouraged me to go to WebMD and do a little research... although he warned me not to freak out when I do! ...*

*I am at peace and KNOW that God is in control and that this - whatever it turns out to be - is part of His plan for my life. My doctor said that this will change my life although not dramatically. Guess I'll know what that means in the days and weeks to come.*

*I covet your prayers for continued peace for me and my family and – most especially – for wisdom for what to do next. God's will is all I want – I know He will make it clear in His time.*

*Knowing you're going through this with me means more than you could know. I will be sure to keep you posted each step of the way. <><*

... I went online to do some research. I had such mixed emotions – wanting to know what it was and how it was treated, yet fearful of what I would find. The first sentence of the second paragraph I read mentioned *mastectomy* and when I saw that, I felt sick to my stomach. You never hear about them anymore – at least I hadn't – and I didn't even realize that they still did them (although about a year ago I did have the privilege of praying for someone who went through it). I've heard women with breast cancer having surgery which I always assumed was a lumpectomy but now, I wonder how many have faced breast removal.

After seeing *mastectomy*, I couldn't wait to read the other options for treatment yet my internet froze which never happens! I must say, I wasn't happy about that. I tried to get it working again but to no avail, plus I had to run out and pick up my daughter's prescription. I remember that car ride, the way I felt and how I spoke with the Lord. I was upset and angry with Him for leaving me with *mastectomy*, until I began to get a sense in my spirit that this surgery is something He was starting to prepare me for. I can't say that I was happy about it, but it did come with a strange sense of peace.

When I arrived home, I was able to connect to the internet and in doing more research, realized that there really are only two options although in some ways, things became less rather than more clear as I went online. ...

On Friday, January 25, I had an appointment with my surgeon but before we left home, I had a wonderful quiet time with the Lord. I have been reading through Psalms and II Samuel and God greatly blessed me that morning...

*"Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath. Selah (Psalm 39:4-5)*

As I read this, I had such a peace, such a sense that God is in control and that my life is in His hands. I don't know the *number of my days* but neither do the doctors. No test or diagnosis or surgeon's opinion could in any way alter the *span of my years*. It was so refreshing to be reminded of this truth as I face the battle ahead. Then I turned to the book of II Samuel and read...

*In the course of time, David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and he took Gath from the control of the Philistines. (II Samuel 8:1)*

This absolutely blew me away! The phrase *In the course of time* touched my heart in such an amazing and comforting way (there is more on this a little later).

*The LORD gave David victory wherever he went. (II Samuel 8:14)*  
Reading about how God had given David victory helped me remember that I can claim the victory in Christ! I do not know what that will look like in my life, especially in light of what I am facing, but the battle has been won and as a child of the King, I share in the victory! God had certainly prepared me for my appointment with the surgeon!



UPDATE

Sent: Saturday 1/26/08 11:32 AM

Dear Ones,

Thanks you so much for your prayers as I went to the surgeon yesterday morning. Although there was some apprehension, I was mostly at peace. ...

He explained my situation yet shed some new (not so great) light on it. He told me that although I have DCIS, which is traditionally contained, there are micro-invasions which spills what I have into the realm of cancer - meaning I will need to have a PET scan, MRI and lots of other tests to make sure there's no other cancer in my body (plus see an oncologist even though it is in the early stages). He laid out my two options (lumpectomy with six to eight weeks of radiation or breast removal - which to me, sounds much nicer than "mastectomy!"). He said there is necrosis in the cancer cells which means it is more aggressive although they are estrogen positive which is a very good thing.

He did not give his opinion about which treatment option he thought I should take, but shared that my mammogram shows that there is a small cluster of micro-calcifications near the ones they biopsied and that if I would decide on the lumpectomy, the first thing I would need to do would be have that biopsied (stereotactic - like the one I had on Monday) and if that is a problem, then I would absolutely have to have the mastectomy. Whew - lots to handle.

As soon as I arrived home, I called my primary care physician and was able to get him right away. He agreed with everything the surgeon said and when I asked him what he thinks I should do he said, "I think you should go out of town and get a second opinion." Music to my ears!! He asked me if I had any place in mind and I immediately mentioned Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia. Not only are they experts, but that is where my Mom went for her melanoma surgery a couple of years ago, and they were wonderful. He said he likes Fox Chase and would start making phone calls (insurance stuff).

When I got home from West Chester with Andrew, there was a message on my machine saying that I should receive a call from Fox Chase by Wednesday to set up an appointment.

We are all trying to process all of this and God has been very gracious. As Gary and I were driving home from my appointment with the surgeon, we had the Christian radio station on. It was very low and I wasn't really even listening to it, as I was lost in my own thoughts, but as we approached our house, I heard these words over the airways - "No matter what you are going through - Jesus is there." Gary and I just looked at each other and I began to weep, knowing that was a message from God to me, reminding me of what I already knew but desperately needed to hear.

I would ask you to continue to pray for wisdom, although I believe the Lord has shown me (us) the direction He wants me to go. Continued peace for all of us and that things would move along quickly with Fox Chase.

*Your prayers, love and concern overwhelm me. I do not feel like I am going through this alone which is more of a blessing than I could ever explain. God continues to bless, direct and encourage me in so many big and little ways, and I felt His leading to begin writing these things down - as a testimony of His sovereignty and grace, and as an encouragement to me (and perhaps others as He leads) on my down days (which I know will come).*

*In the Palm of the Master's Hand <><*