

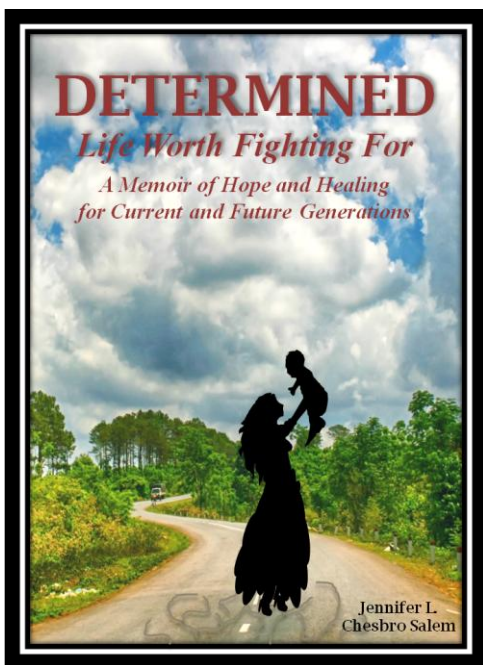
DETERMINED

Life Worth Fighting For

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Jennifer L. Chesbro Salem
Author



Life was moving along successfully for the 33-year-old, when all of a sudden she was blindsided by a cancer diagnosis. She had more life to live, more dreams to fulfill. She had always been led intuitively, knowing what she had to do, and setting about doing it, with determination and faith. These two attributes were her allies as she met this diagnosis head on. She soon came to realize that not everybody was on her side.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

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Life Worth Fighting For

A Memoir

of Hope and Healing

for Current and Future Generations

By Jennifer L. Chesbro Salem

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thrive@truehealthcarenow.com

For privacy reasons,
names and locations have been changed.

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Note to Readers:

This memoir is the author's genuine desire to tell her story as she experienced it in order to invite healing, clarity, and connection, and in doing so, she wishes no harm to those who appear in the work.

This work depicts actual events as truthfully as recollection permits. The dialogue written, although not verbatim, is an accurate representation of the interactions author had with the persons that were part of her story. All persons within are actual individuals; there are no composite characters; and the content and context of the interactions are true. In order to respect their privacy, their names and the names and locations of facilities, have been changed.

The author is not a doctor or any kind of medical professional. The content of this book is for informational purposes only and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

condition or disease. You understand that you should not rely solely on the information contained in this book and that this book is not intended as a substitute for consultation with a licensed practitioner. You should consult a medical professional or healthcare provider in matters relating to your health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

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exceptional results but cannot guarantee that you will achieve the same or similar results. The use of this book implies your acceptance of this disclaimer.

Essentially, all healing and health comes from the Source of all life. The name given to that Source varies around the world. For the sake of simplicity, the author has chosen to use the name 'God' or 'He' in reference to this Source. May the importance lay not so much in the name given but rather, the presence thereof. Lined pages have been added to the back of the book to record the personal reflections you receive while reading.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

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PREFACE

It may not always be obvious. Then the day comes that you become aware of it. The only difference between the day before and the day after is the mental knowing. Your body was responding to it all along.

Must we react in fear? Must we be rushed into making decisions that have long-term consequences that threaten our current and future well-being?

What if we could just pause a moment? What if we allowed ourselves to question what other options there are to restore our health? What if we chose to support our body's innate ability to heal itself?

In that moment, might we actually be able to hear our inner Guidance? What if we learned to trust and follow *that*?

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Every cancer survivor story is different. The problem is that there are *too* many of them. In an age where life threatening diseases, including cancer, are increasing despite medical advancements, something needs to change. Maybe that change begins with us. *Right now.*

The manuscript for this memoir was actually penned over ten years ago upon being diagnosed with cervical cancer and choosing to treat it naturally. I was inspired to revisit it in March 2023 while working on a project. An urgency arose in my heart such that I knew it was time to publish it. It may just help answer the questions just posed.

This is not a “Self Help” book to cure cancer. This memoir is meant to bring forth inspiration *and* information. It is my prayer that it will encourage you that *complete* healing is available, and that it will enlighten you to awaken to the Strength already within you.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

Jennifer L. Chesbro Salem

May 2023

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CHAPTER 1

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The decision, along with its risks, was an easy one to make. We didn't have children to be concerned with. There was no better time, really. There would be no looking back to say "What if?" Packing up, we left and started anew with his family nearby.

But the old stomping grounds kept calling him back. Opening the door to the mobile home was like stepping back in time. After seven years, our life had taken a complete circle to bring us back to where we had once begun.

Success came along with the new jobs once again. Good health kept us active while building our new house. Three years later and we were finally feeling settled. Maybe now was a good time to start our family...

...Within a matter of seconds life as we knew it was being turned upside down. Life or death decisions needed to be made – *now*.

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They were already starting to make them for me.

There are options... right?

There is no time to waste.

Am I prepared for this?

* * *

The topic held a sense of apprehension between my husband and I. On this summer day in July 2010, there was no worry of the discussion's outcome now. I was keenly aware that he was thinking about this more frequently than I, and I was now beginning to consider the possibility.

Every marriage is afflicted by challenging matters, difficult to discuss, some more so than others. For us, the issue was often innocently raised by our friends.

“When are you going to start a family?”

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“When are you going to have children?”

Many of our friends started their families shortly after (or before) getting married. Somehow, in the context of our conversations, we were now obligated to follow suit. It was as though the implied guilt of the possibility of our children not being able to grow up with their children would move us to respond to that area of our lives quicker. As time wore on I simply chuckled and quickly averted the subject. But I was now ready to pursue this part of our life together.

Settling down on the couch with him, I opened my heart.

“I know that starting a family is not a subject we talk about frequently, but I know that it is on both of our minds...”

There was no cause for concern towards the fate of this aspect of our future together.

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* * *

Relocating to and from North Carolina caused a lapse in my annual female exams. Lying there now in August 2010, the nurse practitioner looked up from examining the tissues.

“There appears to be some bleeding on the cervix. May I call in the doctor to observe it?”

A nod of my head granted permission.

He completed his observation of the tissues and stood up.

“There is probably no need for concern while we wait for the test results.”

The much awaited envelope arrived from the OBGYN two weeks later.

Abnormal. *What does that mean?*

“I just received the test results from my pap smear and they are abnormal. As recommended,

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I am calling to schedule a colposcopy for September. What exactly is a colposcopy?”

“This is a procedure that will allow the doctor to microscopically view the tissues and obtain a deeper sampling of cells. There is no need to be nervous. I have experienced this procedure on a couple of occasions. It was painless and everything was fine.”

My menstrual cycle was right on schedule causing the colposcopy to be rescheduled for the next available day in October; my thirty-third birthday. That appointment was cancelled, too, because, well, it was my birthday. A simple call rescheduled it for November 23.

“I will be sitting in the exam room while the doctor performs the colposcopy,” the nurse practitioner informed me.

Removing his gloves, the doctor advised, “The test results are expected in five to seven days. In the meantime, I am going to schedule

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you for an internal ultrasound for precautionary measures.”

A week later, feeling uneasy, I did not want to raise my husband’s level of concern as I waited to go in for the ultrasound.

“I will go into the exam room by myself. I will send the nurse out to get you if there are any problems.”

“Have you ever had an ultrasound before?” the technician asked.

“No.”

Without having had children, the need had never arisen.

“I don’t see anything out of the ordinary. There are no cysts or masses. All the organs, tissues, and blood circulation appear healthy.”

The nurse met me at the door as I was leaving the exam room.

“The doctor just called. He asked that you please stop by the hospital to see him.”

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I returned to my husband sitting patiently in the waiting room.

“The doctor called. We have to go over to the hospital to meet him. The nurse didn’t say, but he probably has the test results from the colposcopy.”

My mind was starting to feel troubled, but my heart remained hopeful that all was going to be well. I was curious as to what was going on in my husband’s mind.

* * *

Checking in at the hospital, my level of awareness was alerted. We did not have a scheduled appointment, but the staff was very much aware of our anticipated visit. Before we could even sit down to wait, we were whisked off to an exam room.

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Walking down the hallway, I began trying to silence the alarms that were quietly starting to go off in my head. I remained optimistic that there wouldn't be *too* much cause for concern.

Opening the door, two chairs stared at us coldly, positioned on opposite sides of the room.

Silence.

The doctor entered. Looking at me, he turned, and acknowledged my husband.

“I'm glad you're both here.”

The alarms in my head began ringing louder. Clearly, the results were not what we were hoping for.

“I wish I had good news.”

Sitting silently, my eyes fixed upon the doctor, I waited intently for his next words.

“The test results reveal cervical cancer.”

I swallowed. There it was. The word nobody *ever* wants to hear. Cancer.

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I couldn't look at my husband. I didn't look at him. Looking at him would cause the dam to fall that was holding back the tears.

In the midst of the ringing, I mulled over in my mind the words just spoken.

Cervical cancer.

Neither of us expected *that*.

Silence.

“You will need a hysterectomy.”

Whoa! What?! A hysterectomy?!

In shock, my head started pounding.

What is that?

I didn't understand exactly what that surgery entailed, but I *instantly* acknowledged that it was going to have an effect on our recent discussion of starting a family.

Maintaining my composure so as not to become a crumpled heap in the chair mustered all of God's strength within me. Sitting, back

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straight, trying to remain emotionless, I reflected upon these words.

Cervical cancer. Hysterectomy.

I bit my lip to keep it from quivering.

“The surgery will remove the uterus, cervix, and lymph nodes.”

Thinking right now became painful.

Questions. Quick! What are my questions?

I relentlessly tried to gather my thoughts in order to ask any question that would come to my mind.

“What stage is it?” I managed to utter through pursed lips.

“The staging will be unknown until they perform the hysterectomy and send the tissues out for analysis.”

What?! Is that right?!

My mind was reeling. I sat emotionless, unable to speak. *You want to remove my uterus and cervix, eliminating any possibility to start a*

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*family, and you don't even know what stage it
is?!*

“I have already called the oncologist to schedule an appointment. He will be able to offer further details regarding the different surgical methods available.”

He paused briefly.

“Do you have any other questions?”

Yes, I have questions! I don't know what they are right now, but I'm sure I have questions!

The alarms gave no way to comprehend what questions I should ask.

With no further questions being asked and his work apparently done, he turned to my husband. In the same monotone voice exhibited throughout our consultation, he asked him one final question.

“How do you feel?”

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How does he feel?! How do you think he feels?!

I turned to look at him for the first time since the doctor's arrival.

“Like you ran me over with a truck.”

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CHAPTER 2

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Rising slowly from our chairs, all I could think was, *How dare you tell me that a hysterectomy is my only option and you don't even know what stage the cancer is at!*

Leaving the exam room, it became extremely clear to me what we needed to do. Before exiting the hospital doors I had already decided what our first step would be. Walking to the car, the decision brought strength and calmness despite the rush of news we had just received.

Waiting for him to unlock the doors, I looked at him.

“I know what we need to do.”

Buckling our seatbelts, I turned to him.

“We need to pray.”

* * *

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It is always nice to have a place you are welcome to visit when the storms of life arise. The leaders of our small church group, Patrick and Katie, had always expressed a welcome at any time on any day.

“Drive to Pat and Katie’s.”

This day, we were taking them up on their offer.

They gladly welcomed us at the door for the surprise visit.

Comforted by a cup of tea, I began sharing with them the appointments that led up to this day. The first tears were shed when I told them the diagnosis.

Patrick was a cancer survivor himself and related all too well to this news.

“Being cancer it is imperative to act quickly and get it out,” he urged.

Katie commented, “In the past you have never really had a burning desire to have

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children. It is possible that God was protecting your heart because He knew that you would be enduring this experience.”

Their responses were based upon their life experiences and beliefs. Despite my inability to make sense of it all, one thing was for sure. My circle of prayer warriors began formation as we concluded our visit in prayer.

* * *

Sleep eluded me that night. My head remained tense from the earlier alarms and pounding as my mind repeated *cervical cancer, cervical cancer*. My eyes were wide open underneath closed eyelids. My nerves were taugth as I lay sleepless, dreading the task that awaited us the following day.

Turning from the kitchen the next morning, I quietly slipped off to the bedroom while my

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husband called his mother. Heartbroken, slouching over the edge of the bed, I wept for him as he relayed the news. My mother-in-law had always looked forward to becoming a grandmother by her son.

Pulling over to run an errand, likely breaking the news to his friends inside, provided me ample opportunity to call my aunt. I found myself not only seeking prayer, but speaking confidently that God was already healing me. I immediately felt His might as my aunt prayed for me.

Arriving to our destination, the smell of freshly baked cookies greeted us.

“Hi, Granddaughter.”

Grandpa contentedly welcomed us from his recliner.

Greeting each of them with a kiss, we joined them, sitting in the living room, facing each other from opposite corners of the room.

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Kicking up my feet nonchalantly, I leaned back comfortably in the recliner.

Always interested in any news we may have to share, Grandpa smiled lovingly.

“How are things going?”

Calmly sharing with them the events leading up to that day, I casually informed them of the diagnosis, as though there was nothing to worry about.

“Please pray for us.”

“I pray for you *every* day.”

Grandma’s assurance warmed my heart.

“And now you have something *specific* to pray for.”

I chuckled, trying to make light of a very heavy situation.

Notifying family and friends was heart-wrenching as I watched them grieve. It was equally humbling to see tears being shed for me.

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Visiting my co-workers to inform them of the news prompted them to lay hands on me. Immediately, God continued to pour forth His strength within me as they prayed.

Exhaustion began setting in with one final visit to make. We would be seeing this couple frequently in the months ahead. Our conversation revealed some alarming news paired with advice.

“You should seek a second opinion. It has been reported that there has been an increased precedence of hysterectomies being performed unnecessarily.”

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CHAPTER 3

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Calling the gynecologist's office that had been recommended to me the night before, I heard the list of doctors working within the practice. I instantly recognized the name of one of her partners as being the gynecologist of a friend. An appointment was scheduled for December 14, which gave me ample time prior to my first oncologist appointment scheduled for December 21.

“Becky, is this the same office as your gynecologist?”

“Yes, it is.”

“I was just diagnosed with cervical cancer and would like to obtain a second opinion.”

“Call them back *immediately*. Explain your situation and see if you can get an earlier appointment.”

I quickly heeded to her advice.

“I just called and scheduled an appointment for December 14. I have recently been

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diagnosed with cervical cancer and the doctor is recommending a hysterectomy. I desire to obtain a second opinion. Do you have any earlier appointments available?"

Checking the schedule, the nurse returned to the phone.

"She can see you tomorrow afternoon at 1:00 pm."

Tomorrow.

My confidence grew. God was indeed aware of my situation and leading me to obtain the care and facts I needed without delay.

* * *

They had been out of town earlier in the week and this news was not something to be shared over the phone. They would need consoling, especially my mother. En route to our

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appointment to obtain the second opinion, we stopped in.

Sitting down, I started the conversation calmly.

“We have news.”

“You’re pregnant!”

This was the same excited response my sister had given days earlier, only to watch her jaw drop as we shared our circumstance.

It was heartbreaking to speak of what could result in that never being a possibility. I was beginning to sound like a broken record, repeating to them what I had told all the others, as I shared the events leading up to that day and the diagnosis.

“The test came back positive for cervical cancer.”

Rising from the couch, my mother rushed to my side, sitting beside me, embracing me, crying on my shoulder.

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Consoling her, I continued.

“We are on our way to obtain a second opinion.”

My father, in his typical light-hearted manner, remained optimistic. My mother was stunned and speechless.

Praying silently, *Please let them witness Your divine hand and my constant faith in the midst of this affliction*, we headed to our appointment.

* * *

One and one half hours. That was the time spent with the gynecologist after being slipped into her schedule the day before.

Dr. Rose carefully reviewed my medical record and test results leading up to the recent diagnosis.

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Attempting to put together the whole picture, she proceeded to ask the typical questions relating to my premarital sexual activity and medical history.

“How many partners have you had prior to your husband?”

“One.”

“How many years ago?”

“Eleven.”

“What were your prior pap results?”

“All normal.”

She began thoroughly explaining the results of the abnormal pap smear and the colposcopy.

I had come prepared to absorb all the information she could provide. My folder was open with questions on one side and pictures of the female reproductive system on the other.

She thoroughly answered every question we had.

Her next words brought encouragement.

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“You have taken proper care over the years to have regular exams. Your overall health seems excellent.”

Then the conversation turned.

“It is unexplainable how one abnormal pap smear could bring about a diagnosis of cervical cancer. I will compare the severity of your scenario in resemblance to that of a triangle. All the abnormal pap smears are at the base of the triangle. They are diagnosed as dysplasia with simple treatments and practically a one hundred percent cure rate. Moving up the triangle, the cases become more severe and the cure rate begins to drop. You are sitting atop the very point of the triangle.”

My internal reaction to that statement surprised even myself.

It was not a response of fear, but rather of confidence. Only God could take what should have been a moment of complete fear in hearing

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those words and respond with a heart of determination.

“The oncologist you are scheduled to see will be able to give you more information.”

Closing my folder, I became settled in the fact that I was not alone in this. God was going to be there with me all along the way.

* * *

Following Sunday morning’s worship service, we proceeded to the altar and were surrounded by the pastors, elders, and members of our church group. Taking a deep breath, I began informing them of our recent news. I prayed for God’s direction and care; that we would stand on His Word; that He would perfect that which concerned me; and that He would work this out for good. Anointing us with oil, the pastor concluded with a prayer. Turning, I

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hugged each individual that encircled us, thanking them for joining us and lifting us up in prayer.

Embracing Frank, he spoke quietly into my ear.

“You don’t have to be so strong.”

I smiled. Inside, I knew it wasn’t me. It was God in me. I felt so free at that moment. My tears were tears of joy as I embraced and comforted *them*.

This group prayer time was in preparation for our oncologist appointment the following day, December 6, the appointment having been moved up from December 21.

In discussing the appointment that evening, my husband’s position was clear.

“We will do what is necessary to preserve your life.”

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CHAPTER 4

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Euphoria! There is just something about singing in the shower!

Each morning was welcomed by whole heartedly listening and singing to uplifting music, making it a time of praise and worship as I lifted the lyrics up in prayer.

This morning, in advance of our appointment with the oncologist, God reminded me that He is all-knowing. I paused to reflect upon the last four years of my life.

He knew the road I was traveling down and He knew what would arise along the way. As surprising as this diagnosis was to me, He reminded me that He was not surprised at all. Because He is all-knowing, He knew that I was going to endure this affliction, and He made sure that I was prepared for it.

* * *

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Dr. Rose had mentioned that the oncologist, Dr. Roy, would be able to relate to our position of being a young married couple with plans for a family in the midst of a life changing crisis. That was certainly the first impression I received.

Dr. Roy concluded a visual exam of the cervical tissues.

“You have cervical cancer.”

I evenly replied, “Okay,” waiting expectantly for him to provide some information we were not already aware of.

“At least that is what the lab results say.”

Looking up from my records, he continued.

“I want to perform a cold knife cone biopsy. This procedure will validate the lab results and determine if the cancer is invasive or pre-invasive. It will also confirm what areas are affected so we can plan proper treatment.”

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His approach seemed far more optimistic and open-minded than merely declaring that I needed a hysterectomy.

“In the meantime, the two of you need to discuss whether or not you want to have children. If the answer is ‘Yes’ that is fine; if the answer is ‘No’ that is fine; and if the answer is ‘We don’t know’ then that will be okay, too.”

“My health is the priority.”

“I agree. That is why you are here. But you still need to discuss it. There are multiple ways to perform a hysterectomy, if needed, and the decision for that surgery will be based upon the official diagnosis and severity as well as your plans for the future.”

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CHAPTER 5

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In spite of the recent whirlwind of appointments, I was feeling sound physically, emotionally, and spiritually leading up to the biopsy scheduled for December 16. I was inspired by the strength I was receiving daily as a result of the prayers of my prayer warriors.

Becoming aware of a slight loss of weight and some lower back aches, I attributed these to the stress caused by the initial shock of the diagnosis. Sleepless nights had finally come to an end. Deep sleep resulted in feeling rested upon waking. I enthusiastically read or listened to music while walking on the treadmill for half an hour every morning.

The onset of my cancer research, in general, explained the significance of the food we take into our bodies, how the body breaks it down, and its overall effect on our cells, which would be an important link in treating the cancer. With

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this insight, I began adjusting my diet to include more fruits and vegetables.

* * *

Notifying others of this ordeal was by far the most challenging task in these days. There were still a couple of people whom I had not told about my situation, yet I knew that they would be able to offer me powerful spiritual support and possibly some physical insight as well.

My friend, Mariam, had shared with me incredible testimonies of the ways God had worked through her in order to heal others via acupuncture and massage therapy. I was curious to know if there was any possibility that my condition could be healed similarly.

“Mariam, Mariam, Mariam!”

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My heart was excited to hear her voice on the other end.

“...I wish I didn’t have to be the bearer of bad news... But wait until you hear about God’s faithfulness thus far...”

“Do you think acupuncture could be a possible treatment for my condition?”

I finally posed my long awaited question, eager to hear her view.

“I would need to see the biopsy results to determine whether or not I could perform an acupuncture treatment without doing further harm. If I am not able to, I can connect you to a doctor who specializes in holistic medicine.”

* * *

Entering the hospital for the biopsy, I became consciously aware that I had never had surgery before, never had a broken bone, never

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had stitches, and was never admitted into the hospital. This procedure was definitely going to be a new experience for me.

Unsure of the amount of time we would be waiting, I opened my Bible so I could rest my mind on heavenly things. The Word of God brought great comfort as I allowed it to fill me with peace and joy each day.

Yesterday I had been anxious to obtain new test results, but as I lay awaiting the oncologist's arrival and prepped for the biopsy, I currently found myself completely relaxed. So much so, that as I lay on the hospital bed I nearly fell asleep.

Opening my eyes as Dr. Roy entered the room, I quickly took notice of his dress pants and nice vest.

“You didn't have to dress up for the occasion!”

He laughed.

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The circumstances of our appointment were not going to quench my humor or dampen my spirit.

As the anesthesia wore off, Dr. Roy stepped into the recovery room.

“The surgery itself took approximately twenty minutes. You may experience some pain, cramping, or bleeding, which is normal.”

“We had made plans to spend Christmas with our family in North Carolina. Are we still able to travel so we can be with them?”

“Yes. You can go to celebrate the holidays there while we await the test results. If you experience any severe bleeding, please call us.”

We scheduled our next appointment for December 29 to obtain the results of the biopsy.

Sleep came quickly that night. Side effects the next day were non-existent.

It was ‘North Carolina, here we come!’

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* * *

Dr. Roy's question still loomed on my mind arriving to North Carolina. *Do you want to have children? If yes, fine; if no, fine; if you don't know, that's okay, too.* The decision of whether or not we wanted to have children determined what treatment method to choose.

The next appointment was casting a shadow over our holiday vacation.

Do I undergo a hysterectomy?

I was feeling rushed to make a decision.

There was only One who knew what I needed to do and what He wanted for our life together. Sitting at the desk, Bible open, I began exploring through the scriptures, hoping to find some answer to what God's will was for us.

There were scriptures relating to children and families but, due to my circumstances, they

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were bringing little to no comfort and were not easing my mind.

It was clear that He is a God of life. But if I chose the hysterectomy, and His will was for us to have children, I have removed that blessing from our lives.

Comfort came in reading the many prayers for and promises of healing. But in seeking a specific answer to *my* question, there was still a pang of anxiety in my heart.

Then I saw it.

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3, NKJV).

There it was. My answer.

It was time to let go of the thoughts of uncertainty of the days ahead. It was time to be at peace knowing that He is in me and with me and completely aware of this situation. There was no need to rush into making a decision. The

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decisions would come as I trusted in Him to lead the way.

The anxiety began to fade.

The following morning my devotional lesson reinforced what God had placed upon my heart the previous night. I was encouraged not to be anxious, that peace would guard my heart, that I could ask for understanding and wisdom, and that I could be confident that God was hearing each and every one of my prayers.

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CHAPTER 6

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It was a recurring cycle: take a test, obtain test result, and receive treatment recommendation. By round three, one would think that the news would be easier to handle. But it was still hard to swallow.

When Dr. Roy came into the exam room he was noticeably preoccupied with a patient in the next room. There was no time for small talk.

“You have stage 1B1 invasive cervical cancer.”

Again, I intently waited for him to continue.

“There are three treatment options available. Your first option is chemotherapy with radiation. I do not recommend this treatment.”

“I will not partake of that treatment.”

“The second option is a radical hysterectomy where we would remove the uterus, cervix, and lymph nodes. The third option is a specialized procedure called a radical trachelectomy which would leave the uterus, but

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would also involve increased risk. This third option can only be considered if you are *serious* about bearing children.”

No questions were posed to communicate the results of our discussions regarding our desire to have children. In continuing with his recommendation, it became clear that it really didn't matter to him if we wanted to have children.

“I am recommending a radical hysterectomy. There are some complications and side effects of this procedure that you should be aware of. These risks include bladder or bowel damage, vaginal problems, blood clots, ovary failure, ureter damage, severe bleeding, infection, pain during intercourse...”

Is this surgery worth the risk?

His lack of sympathy and his apparent hurriedness to return to the patient next door was

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not going to stop me from asking the questions I had come to ask.

“Will a CT scan and/or an MRI confirm whether or not the cancer has metastasized to other organs?”

“No.”

Really?

Believing God would heal me, there was one other question to pose.

“If, when you proceed to perform the hysterectomy, you see that the cancer is not there or it is less invasive than you originally thought, will you continue with the procedure?”

“Yes, in hopes that the tissue taken would show that there isn’t any cancer there.”

Whoa! Stop right there!

My mind was reeling. *You mean to tell me, that you are going to proceed with a hysterectomy, removing my cervix and its cancer, and proceed to remove my uterus and*

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lymph nodes hoping there will be no cancer there?!

This made absolutely *no* sense to me.

“I presume that you will probably have additional questions before proceeding with the surgery. You can schedule another appointment for next week to discuss the surgery in further detail.”

He left the room to return to the patient next door.

We scheduled the appointment and left his office dumbfounded.

Although he was leading me to believe that agreeing with this surgery was a spur of the moment decision, it was not. I was *not* going to be rushed. I owed God, and my body, the favor of taking time to pray, seek out and consider my options, and weigh them out before me.

Getting into the car, my husband shook his head.

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“I can’t believe how strong you are. I can’t believe you didn’t cry in the exam room. I don’t think I would be able to not cry if the tables were turned.”

In spite of my strength during the consult, there was no hesitation in allowing the flood gates to open retiring to bed that evening. Sleep eluded me once again.

Crawling out of bed the next morning, it was time to do some searching. Was a hysterectomy my *only* option?

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CHAPTER 7

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There was one assertion Dr. Roy made that was troublesome. He provided statistics that implied that in spite of undergoing a hysterectomy there was a probability that the cancer would recur. I equated that to mean a death sentence. It was only logical to me to determine what was *causing* the cancer so that *it* could be treated so it wouldn't ever recur. This should be the approach for any illness, including and *especially* for cancer.

* * *

Beginning my research, my father called to discuss the prior day's appointment. I was grateful he had called because I certainly wasn't up to visiting with them that day.

"I have seen a television commercial for MC in Ohio. You may want to give them a call. It looks like they have other treatment options

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available that you may be interested in
considering.”

Since seeing their commercials, the facility had been tossed around in the back of my mind. A former employer went to MC to undergo treatment for breast cancer. She had openly shared her experience, having nothing but praise for them. Dad’s comment was the nudge needed to look into it further.

Browsing their website, there was accessibility for treatments in both “eastern” and “western” medicine all in one facility. There were also additional alternative treatment options available including Chinese medicine, acupuncture, and massage therapy. Thinking about Mariam and the stance I took with my body, I was finally convinced that this was certainly an avenue for consideration.

No time was wasted in placing the first call. Anticipating that I would be leaving a message, I

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did not expect to speak with anyone at length about my ordeal when I called MC at 4:00 that evening. Much to my surprise and delight, I was on the phone for an hour relaying my story and having more of my questions answered.

“It seems as though you would be an ideal patient because you desire a holistic healing treatment which focuses on your whole being - body, mind, and spirit.”

The weight of the day began lifting from my shoulders. By the conclusion of our conversation I had already received medical release forms via e-mail and they were in the process of scheduling me for a three day evaluation. That visit would include meeting with specialists in gynecology, oncology, chemotherapy, radiation, nutrition, naturopathy, and pastoral care. As a team, they would review my diagnosis and prepare their recommendations. We would work *together* to devise my treatment plan.

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While these arrangements were being made with MC, my husband was preparing to leave for work in Virginia. He was going to have to report to work on January 7. I was hopeful that he would be able to attend at least one or two days of my evaluation. Nonetheless, I was assured that God would cause everything to happen in its perfect time.

* * *

January 1, 2011. The New Year's Resolution ringing in the New Year was simple: Healing. There was a continuous conviction that God was performing a healing within my body.

Reading the booklet, "God's Creative Power for Healing" by Charles Capps, emphasized that the Word of God has supernatural power and can be applied to our bodies as medicine. Significant time was spent reading the

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confessions written and the scripture verses
referenced. Much time was devoted to prayer
and to writing four prayers of my own to
meditate on throughout the days.

* * *

There were two people whom hadn't been
contacted immediately following my diagnosis.
The first was Mariam, whom I called a couple of
days prior to my biopsy. The second was
Delores, whom I called on January 3. My heart
had frequently been burdened to share the news
with her because I desired her faithful prayers.
In the midst of my busyness with all the
appointments, I prayed and believed that God
would tell her to pray for me. I finally informed
her of my diagnosis, my desire for holistic
treatment, and my upcoming trip to MC.

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“If you would like, I would be happy to accompany you on your trip in your husband’s absence.”

It was an easy decision to accept her offer. She, too, loved God and was knowledgeable about natural healing versus pharmaceutical methods.

Not only did my conversation with Delores confirm who would join me at MC, but it also revealed an answer to my prayer.

“Jennifer, I have to tell you that God told me to ‘pray for someone with cancer.’ He did not reveal to me who it is, but I know now that it is you. I have heeded to His prompting and am praying.”

Our friendship was a divine connection. When we first met, God helped me to support Delores. Now He was helping her to support me. He knew the very moment that I would notify her of my health concern, and He loved me so

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deeply that He told her to start praying, so He
could receive her prayers also.

That is the remarkable love of God that
shines forth for all of us!

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CHAPTER 8

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Leading up to my visit to MC scheduled for January 6-9, time was spent continuing to study cancer in general. The more I read the less I felt the need for surgery and the more convinced I became that my body could and would heal naturally. Information on one website in particular coincided with all the data collected thus far. Essentially, the cure for cancer is found in your diet - eating the right foods and omitting the wrong foods. Medical research has identified foods that have nutrients and properties that fight cancer and foods that have properties that feed cancer or cause it to grow. Increased intake of the cancer fighting foods helps the body to kill and rid itself of the cancer cells, so long as you also remove the foods from your diet that feed the cancer cells or cause them to grow. Simple and logical.

* * *

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With bright blue skies and roadsides dusted with snow we began our drive to MC. Riding with Delores, my husband drove separately so he could leave for work on the 7th.

I glanced at my phone as it began to ring. Dr. Roy's agitated tone met my ears.

"I have received your medical records request from MC. I do *not* approve of your decision to visit MC."

My jaw dropped appalled at the language he used to state his brash opinion of the medical facility in its entirety which, I felt, held no merit.

"I approve of your desire to seek a second opinion, but I have my own surgeon to recommend."

I did not expect nor appreciate the hostile response I received from this medical "professional."

"Thank you for your concern."

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I ended the conversation without sharing with him the primary purpose of my trip to MC – to obtain support in beginning a holistic treatment plan.

* * *

Hope. That word alone clearly defined the atmosphere that awaited us at MC. In the midst of what could be, and likely is, the darkest time of your life, a glimmer of light shined forth from there. I had never before witnessed people who had such passion for their professions. They were not just performing jobs. They were cultivating friendships. And they were exceptional at it.

The concierge greeted us at the door and introduced us to our assistant. Her smile and joy were contagious. Upon completing the registration process we were escorted to the

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oncology clinic. While waiting for our first appointment with the oncologist, a staff member took our order for lunch. It was both healthy and tasteful.

* * *

Facing the oncologist, she looked up from my record and began without hesitation.

“I am recommending a hysterectomy.”

This came as no surprise due to the prior feedback already received.

“Why are you here?”

“I am interested in taking a holistic approach to my treatment prior to settling for surgery.”

With raised eye brows she was clearly shocked and seemingly offended.

“MC is a *medical* facility. We do *not* treat cancer alternatively. We offer alternative options

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such as nutrition, naturopathy, and pastoral care to counteract the side effects of the medical treatment received whether it is surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy.”

Taken aback by her brazen response to my approach, I remained steadfast in my composure.

“I would like to request a body scan to confirm that the cancer has not spread to other parts of my body.”

She obligingly scheduled me for a PET/CT scan for 3:00 p.m. the following afternoon.

* * *

My husband had remained silent since we had arrived to MC.

Seating ourselves before the naturopath, he suddenly began to share with her what had been on his mind.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“We would like to treat the cancer alternatively due to our age and current family status. The information that we have uncovered in our search for natural healing is concerning. Our bodies are being poisoned by our food sources, water sources, and the environment.”

There was no denial of the claims he was asserting as she conceded to the matter disclosing shocking insight.

“Babies are being born with high toxicity levels because of the pesticides permeating our food supply.”

“He is going to be working away from home for a few months. It seems only logical to us that this is ample time to put a holistic treatment plan into effect instead of rushing into a surgery that may not be necessary.”

“I will work on a plan for you for general cervical health. I will also order a blood test to coincide with the PET/CT scan.”

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

* * *

I was grateful that he was able to partake in part of my evaluation process and witness the MC experience. The room accommodations were very comfortable at a local first-class hotel with a convenient shuttle bus from the hotel to the facility. The hotel hosted a free breakfast daily for the patients and caregivers and also had a separate MC lounge in which to relax. Much thought and care had been demonstrated by MC to make this a comfortable and inviting process during a most tumultuous time of life.

Upon his departure, Delores and I boarded the bus to MC for day two of my evaluation. After meeting with the Financial Department to discuss health insurance coverage, we met with the pastor of the Pastoral Care Department.

“I work part-time at MC in addition to pastoring a local church.”

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Completing a questionnaire for him provided him a glimpse into my faith.

“Here are two books for you. One is for the patient and one is for the caregiver. I recommend you read them. You may find them helpful as you go forth from here.”

Watching a short video regarding hope and how it is found in God and only in God was very inspiring. MC understood the importance of faith and the significant impact it has in the healing process.

“You are welcome to join me in the MC lounge at the hotel for an upcoming Bible study. Here is a list of the days and times. You are also welcome to join us in the MC chapel for worship service on Sunday morning. You can visit the chapel and prayer room at any time. They are open twenty-four hours per day.”

* * *

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Three o'clock in the afternoon could not come soon enough. Fasting was necessary in preparation for the PET/CT scan and the blood work. Going on twenty-four hours without having eaten, any hunger was quenched as I took sixty minutes to consume two bottles of "smoothie" used to aid in the PET/CT scanning process.

Though nervous the night before, not knowing what to expect, I was now at ease lying down. With eyes closed, it was as though I was floating as the bed moved back and forth within the tunnel of the machine.

After undergoing the scan and donating my blood, we promptly treated ourselves to a tasty dinner in the dining room. I had already begun converting to a primarily vegetarian diet and was eating only fruits and vegetables. I had also stopped drinking municipal water and began drinking fresh spring water, compliments of

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Delores. My pH levels were slowly increasing as my body responded to the change in diet. My body was becoming less acidic with each passing day. That was going to aid in helping to kill the cancer cells.

* * *

After waiting all weekend, Monday morning commenced feeling anxious to obtain the test results from the PET/CT scan. Desiring to replace that anxiety with peace, I opened my Bible and devotional.

Praying, a nudge led me to read Psalm 128; verses one through six spoke loud and clear.

“...Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, *your children like olive plants* all around your table...Yes, may you see *your children’s children*” (Psalm 128:1-6, NKJV, emphasis mine).

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Meditating upon this Word, peace began to wash away the anxiety.

Putting on our coats as we prepared to head to the facility, Delores embraced me with a gentle smile.

“I have something on my mind that I want to share with you. I feel it is good news, but I would like to wait until the end of the day to share it.”

* * *

Embarking upon our third and final day at MC, optimism flowed through me. A well-rounded approach to cancer treatment that focused on the body, mind, and spirit was being introduced.

The first appointment of the day was with the Mind/Body Department. They acknowledged the significant impact that the mind and faith

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For plays on the body and its healing. This department's alternative healing approaches offered relaxation techniques, massage therapy, acupuncture, and Reiki.

“Here is a catalog of relaxation CD's. You may be interested in the inspiration set which includes scripture references.”

Our time with Mind/Body helped to ease us into our appointment with the surgeon.

Putting the scan results on the computer screen, he began explaining what we were viewing.

“I do not see anything of concern. There does not appear to be any masses, tumors, or cancer cells making their home anywhere else in your body.”

The imaging technology used to dissect the body in order to look at all the organs was fascinating and compelling.

“Your liver looks very healthy.”

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This was welcome news because the liver is one of the first organs adversely affected when cancer is in the body.

Reflecting upon the images, I sat amazed at how God has created us. Every life is truly a miracle; every breath a gift.

“I am recommending a hysterectomy. I would perform an old-fashioned surgery by cutting down through the midsection versus laparoscopic surgery that involves incisions around the belly button. Regardless of the method chosen, this procedure is a *major* surgery that *cannot* and *should not* be taken lightly.”

The list of complications was much similar to those indicated by the oncologist back home. But he didn't stop there.

“There are also risks to surrounding organs during the surgery as well as the future effect the surgery could have on those organs over time.”

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I was adamantly praying and believing that God would heal me so that this option would *not* have to be considered.

“To date, nobody can, or will, confirm for me the *cause* of the cancer. The gynecologist whom I received the second opinion from presumed it was probably the result of the Human papillomavirus (HPV) though she seemed to be speaking statistically. If such incidence is valid, why have I *never* been offered to be tested for HPV during my annual exams? What do you think is the *cause* of this cancer?”

“Although this form of cancer is rare, it is becoming more prevalent at a younger age and they are not necessarily attributing it to HPV.”

I considered his words carefully.

Stop!

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I cannot proceed with this surgery until I know what is causing the cancer and why my body is susceptible to it.

Returning to the oncologist's office to review the test results, her demeanor towards me had settled.

“I am still recommending the surgery, but I respect your decision to treat this alternatively first.”

Two nutritionists were pleased with the results of my blood work. I was curious as to what affect the recent dietary changes were having in my body. The lab reports revealed all levels were in their normal ranges.

“We will request a Vitamin D panel to confirm that level also. Here is a booklet of food guidelines and recipes. There are some recommended sources of protein supplementation for your new diet.”

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Meeting with the naturopath rounded out our day.

“I work for the oncologist, so I am unable to personally treat your cancer alternatively. However, I do know of a naturopathic doctor in Eastern New York. Contact his office and schedule an appointment with him for further direction. I also recommend purchasing the *Women’s Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine*. Specifically read the cervical dysplasia chapter.”

Enlightening and encouraging, with my next steps revealed, the evaluation came to a close.

* * *

Propping myself up in bed, Delores began to disclose to me the good news that she alluded to in the morning.

“Prior to you telling me about your cancer diagnosis, I had a dream. In my dream I was

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walking along when all of a sudden the road ended. The road began crumbling under my feet. As I began running backwards the road was disintegrating beneath me. I yelled for help repeatedly and angels came to rescue me. I then saw the Father and He handed me a baby. *'A baby? Why are You giving me a baby?'* I exclaimed. I awoke and told my husband about the dream and wondered who the dream was for. I have since come to the conclusion that God has given me understanding regarding your situation.”

Contemplating her dream, it was clear that my road started falling apart as I was faced with the diagnosis and the looming decision for surgery just months after beginning to discuss starting a family. But in the end, God is handing me a baby!

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“I sense that the cancer is small. Remember that dream and the scripture that was revealed to you earlier this morning.”

Hearing of her dream brought conviction that I was certainly in the will of God as I went about seeking alternative therapy, believing that He was going to heal me without surgery.

Laying my head on the pillow, sleep came while reflecting upon the dream and scripture as His promises to me and as a testimony of His faithfulness.

* * *

Returning home from MC, I retrieved the book I had received from the pastor and nestled on the couch. Written with a focus on God, the hope found in God, and dotted with scriptures throughout, it brought about more peace.

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One chapter in particular encouraged me to acknowledge a tragic time in my life, as tragic events can lead to disease due to the mind/body connection.

Closing my eyes, reflecting upon the past ten years, I became mindful of how every year I went about the duty of scheduling my annual female exam. Each year, I repeatedly thought to myself, *Ten years, and I'll be clear*, while awaiting the pap smear results.

I was aware that, statistically, when changing sexual partners, there is a ten year window of time where the body may carry the HPV virus and if the virus is going to cause a problem it will originate within that ten year period. Because I had been sexually intimate with one person prior to my husband, I was counting the years as they passed by. However, on year number ten, I failed to schedule a pap smear and in year eleven, it was abnormal.

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Reflecting upon this, I came to the conclusion that my body was in effect experiencing what my mind had thought and feared about all of those years.

I knew that I had been carrying with me a guilt and shame concerning that prior time of my life. I knew I was forgiven by God, but guilty thoughts continued to plague me.

Until that day.

Humbly, eyes misty, bowing my head, I accepted the freedom from that shame and guilt. I came to understand and accept that I was no longer bound to the past, the shame, or the guilt.

All of a sudden I sensed that I was healed!

In freeing myself of the emotional trauma, I could now receive the physical healing that was mine.

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CHAPTER 9

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My research clearly defined the importance of our diet in its effect on cancer cells and the influence it has on the effectiveness of the cancer treatment that is chosen. Right now, my *diet* was my treatment. By January 19 my organic raw food diet was well under way. Each day brought forth a fresh sense of determination to enjoy the diet, as strict as it was for the time being. The grocery list was comprised of fruits and vegetables identified as having cancer fighting properties. If it wasn't a fruit or a vegetable I didn't eat it or drink it! All flour (including bread and pasta), all sugar (including candy and Grandma's homemade cookies), all dairy, all meat, and all processed and fried foods were eliminated. I experimented with juicing for the first time. The process became a morning ritual that allowed me to enjoy fresh vegetable juice throughout the day. The only other

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beverage of choice was filtered spring water
with lemon.

Losing weight made those around me nervous, but I felt assured that the weight loss was only temporary. Although cancer cells were lurking in my body, I was experiencing energy like never before. My body was undergoing a cleansing process that was ridding it of all the preservatives and toxins I had taken in for so many years.

Reflecting regularly upon the love of God, it became clear that He was imparting upon me the ability to be able to sustain such a drastic dietary change. There was no hesitation to begin. Not once did I question, *Can I do this?* The words, *Will this work?* were not emblazoned in the back of my mind. I did not become dissatisfied, discouraged, or disheartened. I went forward, enjoying the process, with God's favor resting

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upon me as He led me through it. It was now
becoming a new lifestyle.

* * *

Leading up to my first appointment with Dr. Graham, the naturopath from Eastern New York, I began completing a multi-page questionnaire encompassing my medical history, lifestyle, hobbies and interests, dietary regimen, and exercise and sleep patterns. Similar to the mind/body/spirit approach of MC, this questionnaire also focused on our three-fold character. I included specific details about my situation and proclaimed my confidence in believing that God was leading me to my healing through this natural, alternative approach. Two questions in particular caught my attention: “List your three highest priorities in life which come to mind and speak to your heart.

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Where does your health and vitality factor in?"

These questions were given thoughtful consideration before recording my answers.

Sitting before Dr. Graham, I became increasingly aware that the connections I was making were divine appointments. Dr. Graham shared a faith similar to my own and seemed to be a godly man whose faith held a prominent stance in his profession towards those who shared a similar belief.

"Have you been laid hands upon?"

I enthusiastically replied, "Yes, multiple times."

He spoke of the numerous ways in which Jesus healed. He told mini sermons giving Biblical accounts of healing from Hezekiah, Daniel, David, and Jesus. He linked food, nutrition, and healing to Biblical teaching.

God was orchestrating our time together as he provided his dietary recommendations while

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handing me a document titled, “Biblical
Guidelines to Health.” The guidelines provided
Biblical scriptures to correspond with the
alternative healing therapies that he offered.

“Take this pomegranate oil and anoint
yourself with it.”

I was, admittedly, relieved when he
instructed me that I did not need to continue
eating just raw foods.

“You can begin to cook your vegetables,
preferably by steaming. Start to add whole
grains, beans, and lentils into your diet, too.”

In addition to the dietary recommendations,
instructions for sitz baths, deep breathing, and
visualization practices were also given.

“May I pray for you?”

“Yes!”

Closing my eyes, his prayer was directed
toward my health and healing, my service and
ministry, my husband and family.

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As he left the room, I slowly arose from my chair. With clarity and strength of heart and mind and with tears in my eyes, I turned to Delores.

“God is going to heal me *without* surgery!”

Pausing, I took a moment to look back and enjoy the view. I could rest assured that I was not driving blindly on. My road to recovery was a path of hope and trust in God. He would continue to hear my prayers and be in the midst of all the details along the way. He reminded me of His faithfulness as I glanced back to where I had been and how I got to where I was now. I was certain that I would have the strength I needed to press forward and move on to receive what He wanted for me – *complete healing*.

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CHAPTER 10

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Answering the phone, I heard the voice of a receptionist from Dr. Roy's office. It was now mid-January and they were following up with me regarding my trip to MC.

"I did visit MC and have chosen to seek alternative healing treatment and am under the care of a naturopath."

Keeping the conversation short, I did not share any details.

* * *

Visiting with Delores and her husband, the month came to an end on a positive note. Gathering together at the dining room table overlooking the woods, we eagerly opened up our Bibles.

Concluding our time in the Word, we arose from our chairs and stood in a circle. Laying their hands upon me, they started praying over

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me. With eyes closed, I felt Delores move her hands from my shoulders to place them upon my ears. In addition to praying for my healing, she was now praying God's protection for my ears.

A Word of forewarning came.

“Be aware that there will be those who will deny God's healing; a healing which you believe will come by His own hand. They will deny your continuous health as a result of God's healing and the alternative treatment plan He has chosen for you. Despite their words of denial you can expect to hear, they will not be able to diminish the truth of your healing when that time arises nor will they be able to suppress your desire to give God the glory for your healing.”

* * *

The opposition came much sooner than expected. The medical profession was not going

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to respond kindly as I followed God's will in making the decision to treat my cancer naturally.

My hesitancy to disclose to him my intentions during his phone call on my way to MC immediately became clear. The letter from Dr. Roy's office stated that while he knew that I was seeking a second opinion from MC, when his office called to follow up regarding the appointment, he learned that "to date the appointment has not taken place" and that I was "planning to treat yourself with 'alternative' medicine."

What?!

During my conversation with the receptionist, I clearly noted that I *had* traveled to MC and that I had chosen to seek alternative healing and was *already under the care of a naturopath*.

It was due to my "unwillingness to accept" the "standard" form of therapy that he was

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notifying me of “dismissal” from his care. He did offer to continue to provide to me emergency care – for 30 days from the date of his letter, specifically March 4.

I stood dumbfounded gazing at the letter in my hands. Astonished, I was not sure what was more shocking - his false implications, the overall response of his decision to release me from his care, or the timeline he placed upon my healing.

* * *

Dr. Roy’s letter did not cause me to reconsider my decision to pursue natural healing and I continued happily with my natural treatment plan. By mid-February, I was attempting to construct a dietary regimen with adequate calories and caloric breakdown between carbohydrates, protein, and fat. An

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online website helped me to track that information as well as the vitamin and mineral content of what I was eating on a daily basis to ensure I was getting adequate nutrition.

As this new dietary lifestyle was taking effect, a new spiritual routine also began. Our church was in the midst of a 40-day prayer study. Waking in the morning, desiring to start my day in prayer, I could sense a balance beginning to come over my life as I placed God first each day. The fulfillment of life came not from the food I ate, nor the work that I did. The awareness of how He had guided me this far was causing me to look forward to what He had in store for me as He completed His miraculous healing and prepared me for the years ahead.

These thoughts coincided with a card I received a couple of days later which read, “Greater things are coming. Look for them. Expect it and receive all that He has for you.”

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CHAPTER 11

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My third visit with Dr. Graham on March 3 came to an end with a sensible plan of action.

“I would like you to undergo another colposcopy to determine the condition of the cervical cells. This will help us confirm the effectiveness of the treatment you have undertaken.”

Seeking another gynecologist, a friend recommended her gynecologist, Dr. Grey. His being a Christian led me to believe that he may be more apt to accepting and respecting the path of healing I had chosen.

Due to wintery weather, patient cancellations gave him availability for me to be seen that week. Speaking with him briefly on the phone of what had transpired over the last four months he was made aware of the alternative treatment I was using.

In mentioning that the oncologist had released me from his care, it took me by

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complete surprise when he responded that “this country is run by lawyers” and “we no longer have rights to our own bodies.”

“I will consult with you first and if I agree to perform the colposcopy I will do it that day.”

An appointment was scheduled for March 9.

Taking my vitals, the nurse complimented me on my complexion and the natural color of my face. My skin tone had improved significantly since the dietary change.

My time with Dr. Grey began by openly sharing my faith for healing. He was not inclined to be as open. He was choosing his words carefully as he commented on my choice to treat my cancer alternatively.

He agreed to perform the colposcopy. Lying there in anticipation, it did not feel like he had completed the procedure when he rolled his chair back away from me.

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“I am unable to perform the colposcopy. The tissues are still healing from the biopsy. The sutures are still present and have not yet completely dissolved.”

Sutures? I had never been informed of any sutures being used during that procedure.

“Are you aware of the extent of your biopsy surgery?”

“The oncologist did not disclose to me any complications regarding the surgery and because I did not have any side effects afterwards I had no rise for concern.”

“In reviewing the oncologist’s notes regarding the biopsy procedure, there was ample bleeding during your biopsy and added measures were taken to use a chemical to clot the bleeding caused from the cut blood vessels.”

I was disgusted that the oncologist did not find it pertinent to share this information with me regarding the trauma endured by my body.

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“Based on the biopsy notes, I am concerned that any poking of the cervical tissues may cause them to bleed significantly.”

“How long do you think it will take for the tissues to heal?”

“I recommend that you wait three more months before undergoing any retesting to ensure adequate healing time for the tissues.

“Here is the name of an oncologist to consult with regarding hysterectomy surgeries.”

* * *

Meeting with Dr. Graham on March 31, I shared the results of my visit with Dr. Grey. Regardless of the information that had not been revealed to me at the time of my biopsy, I remained confident.

“I am still adamant in my belief that God is going to heal me without surgery.”

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In sharing this position, I also had a confession to make.

“I have overcome the fear of surgery. I have come to accept the fact that surgery is certainly an option that God can use for my healing, but I believe that He is going to heal me by His mighty hand and the hysterectomy will not be necessary.”

* * *

Six days later, I cancelled my appointment with the oncologist whom Dr. Grey had recommended I speak with in regards to hysterectomy surgeries.

My reason for canceling the appointment was three-fold. First, my husband was working out of town; second, Dr. Grey had recommended retesting in three months (June), and I preferred to wait until after that testing to determine if a

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

consult with this oncologist would be necessary; and third, I was not going to allow myself to think about and discuss a surgery I had not yet agreed to have.

“Would you like to reschedule the appointment?”

“I may reschedule an appointment in the future.”

“I do not recommend that due to your diagnosis.”

“I understand.”

Those words were becoming my simple yet polite response.

One week later another letter arrived. This one from Dr. Grey. He was releasing me from his care because I cancelled my appointment with the oncologist and failed to reschedule it. The letter informed me that as a patient I have “certain rights and responsibilities.”

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Not encompassed within the letter was the fact that during our visit he was made aware that I was under the care of a naturopath and thereby *not* ignoring my health condition. He had recommended me to schedule additional testing in three months, which I was inclined to do.

Despite my efforts, the letter read that I had in effect “refused” to follow through with a “health care plan” which is my “right” but it is important to seek care immediately. The letter stated that my decision not to proceed with his consultation for continued care was against his advice and against the “standard of care.” As a result, he was no longer able to provide for my healthcare needs.

I was once again stunned at what I was reading.

Stuffing the letter back into the envelope, his prior comment about us no longer having rights to our own bodies rang in my ears.

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* * *

I knew at the onset that the road I was on was not the typical path taken for healing, especially for that of cancer. I was not ignoring my condition. I had merely chosen to heal my body with natural means. The medical “professionals” were abandoning me. They were denying the use of natural healing as a form of treatment. They were unwilling to partner with natural healing practitioners throughout my healing process.

But I was not alone. I knew Who stood by my side. And He promised He would never leave me nor forsake me.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

CHAPTER 12

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

Although there are those who may frown about the stand I took for my body, there are equally those who have or would like to do the same in their own situations. Josephine shared with me her own story.

“I was diagnosed with having pre-cancerous breast cells approximately ten years ago. My medical doctors immediately pressured me into taking a drug which I did not desire to take. I felt forced to take it. It wasn't long before I began experiencing the side effects. The drug started altering my normal hormone levels and affecting my estrogen level which began causing other problems. I decided to discontinue using the drug against my doctor's orders. I immediately changed my diet and the cells returned to normal. I began seeing a chiropractor/nutritional therapist (CNT) who specialized in women's health.”

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* * *

Meeting with the CNT on April 21, my goal was simple: reaffirm the regimen being taken and obtain any additional information she could provide for my healing. Pulling out her copy of the *Women's Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine* by Dr. Tori Hudson, convinced me I could trust her advice. I had begun referencing it for more than just my cancer treatment. After reviewing the supplements I was taking, she made additional recommendations.

“I encourage you to research Vitamin C, Vitamin D, and Folic Acid. Also contact Dr. Hudson and ask how much Vitamin A was present in the suppositories that she formulated. They are no longer available, but you will be able to compare those with what you are using.”

Being an “M.D.” as a chiropractor, I obtained a script for blood work which I decided

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For
to schedule in mid-May. That would provide ample time for the effects of the additional supplements to be reflected in the test results.

* * *

More clarity came as I learned about the different vitamins. Firstly, the method of healing I had chosen was no different than selecting chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery. I was electing a natural way to accomplish the same desired result – healing. Secondly, I had not relied upon the medical professionals to make my decisions. I was considering the information God was making available to me and made my own decisions. Sadly, that option was not as widely recognized, encouraged, or accepted. Nevertheless, I felt strongly that God chose this method of healing for me and that He was going to bring me through it.

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Reflecting upon the data in the Encyclopedia, I began understanding why Dr. Graham had selected the supplements he had for my healing. A call to Dr. Hudson's office confirmed that her suppositories were no longer available. They were happy to share with me the quantity of Vitamin A found in the suppositories they were currently treating with.

The Encyclopedia also presented another procedure for my consideration. Cervical cancer can be treated by the use of an escharotic treatment. This treatment is a natural form of surgery done by applying a salve to the affected area which would kill the cancer cells. It is a more potent and aggressive form of treatment versus using diet and supplementation which allow the body to create new cells and rid the body naturally of the cancer cells. I decided to keep that treatment in mind as a "last resort."

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A great amount of knowledge had been ascertained over the last months. I needed to be an advocate for my body – physically, mentally, and spiritually – in my desire to not only cure the cancer, but to live a healthy life.

* * *

The blood work results proved satisfactory. All of the cholesterol levels were within the desired ranges. My Vitamin D level was at 68, up from 16 in January. Although medical doctors recommend a level of at least 30, the nutritionists encouraged a level between 50 and 70, especially with a history of cancer. The CNT was very optimistic about my DHEA profile being in its preferred range. DHEA being one of the levels of the breakdown of cholesterol that continues to break down to the hormones.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

One side effect of the dietary lifestyle change was the cessation of my menstrual cycle due to the loss of fat around my abdomen. The body will not ovulate (start the cycle) if it is not capable of carrying a baby. I was going to have to learn how I was going to gain that weight back without jeopardizing my diet or wait to see if my body was going to accept my current weight as my normal weight now.

Dr. Graham reviewed my recent blood work results on May 26.

“I desire for you to schedule an appointment for a follow-up with a gynecologist.”

“Based on my visit with Dr. Grey in March, I anticipate my tissues will be healed from the biopsy.”

My regimen from Dr. Graham continued as did my hope and belief that the cancer would prove to be gone.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

* * *

“You may want to consider contacting them. They recognize the option of alternative healing. They respect my decision to treat myself naturally.”

Delores’ suggestion came after a visit to her gynecologist, Dr. Bunn.

I briefly explained my situation when I called to schedule an appointment with him. The colposcopy would be scheduled after the consult on June 15.

“I was diagnosed with cervical cancer and decided to treat it naturally. I am here to obtain a colposcopy so I can confirm the effectiveness of the treatment. Here is a list of the supplements I have been taking,” handing them to the nurse practitioner.

“I have no opinion one way or the other,” she countered.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

There was no inquiry about my natural treatment plan. There was no negativity expressed towards my decision.

“Your body mass index is a little low for your height. You need to gain some weight. What sources of protein are you consuming?”

“I have been eating beans, lentils, legumes, and nuts. They have replaced my meat and dairy intake. I am not concerned with my weight as I have been holding at 110 pounds for three months now.”

Again I stressed, “I am here for a colposcopy.”

“I will be performing a pap smear. The colposcopy will be performed by the doctor regardless of the pap smear results. A pregnancy test has been performed on your urine sample and it was negative.”

No request for nor any consent had been given for them to perform a pregnancy test.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“There was no reason to perform a pregnancy test. I have not had my menstrual cycle for many months because of the loss of weight due to my change in diet.”

“It is office policy because you have not had your menstrual cycle. Insurance pays for it.”

If I had a say in the matter, I would also have informed her of the lack of physical intimacy between me and my husband during my healing. Because “insurance pays for it” my words would have fallen on deaf ears. I now understood why she was also performing the pap smear unnecessarily.

A new enlightenment unfolded of the connection between the medical professionals and the health insurance companies.

* * *

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

Awaiting my next appointment on June 29 to obtain the test results, I was grateful to be maintaining a state of peace instead of anxiety.

The natural treatment plan had me living a high quality of life, full of energy, as I kept trusting that my body was indeed healing itself from the cancer that had invaded it.

I was trusting in God. I believed He had healed me. But I did not know His timeline for revealing the healing. I had to trust in Him and remind myself that all His ways are for good. I could only see moment by moment, but He saw the whole picture. He was kind enough to prepare me for it, so I could walk by His side throughout it.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

CHAPTER 13

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

My appointment drawing near, I prayed fervently that the test results would be normal. In the innermost part of my heart though, I sensed that those results were not what I was going to see.

* * *

June 27 began much like every other day. But what transpired during that morning will be forever etched in my memory. Standing in the shower, eyes closed, mind clear, head tilted back, the warm water cascaded down over me. I was captivated by the calming water in the darkness of closed eyes, when I experienced what I believe was the healing hand of God.

Standing there in my bareness, eyes closed, I identified the presence of Jesus as I saw him bending down before me, placing his hands around my midsection and bringing them down

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

over my genital area, then raising his hands up to heaven, as if unto God, as though releasing God's healing power over me and removing the cancer from me.

Immediately, clarity came as to the prior uneasiness in my spirit. Because God had *just* healed me, my healing would not appear on the test results that I was awaiting, but it would be evident during my next exam. Just two days later.

* * *

En route to my exam with Dr. Bunn, I began praying another prayer of thanksgiving for God's path of healing He had chosen for me and for His blessings and grace that I had received throughout the process.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“Your blood pressure is only 110 over 78,” the nurse seemingly astonished, “in spite of the circumstances that bring you here.”

Peace.

“Due to patient confidentiality it is not our practice to allow others into the room during a patient’s exam, but if you would like your husband to join you he can.”

Not bothering with small talk let alone a simple “hello,” Dr. Bunn abruptly handed me the pap smear test results upon entering the exam room.

Looking down at the paper, big capital letters glared back at me:

ENDOCERVICAL ADENOCARCINOMA.

In the face of Dr. Bunn’s manner and the test results I was holding in my hands, I was at complete peace having already been comforted by my spiritual experience just a couple of days before.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“What do you want me to do for you?”

“I would like you to perform a colposcopy.”

Lying on the table, hands clasped over my chest, praying silently, I could feel as he poked at the tissues. No pain.

“Are the stitches still present?” my husband inquired.

“No.”

He watched intently as the doctor used three swab sticks while observing the tissues with his microscope. There was no evidence of blood on any of the swabs as they were thrown away.

With eyes closed, completely relaxed and at perfect peace, I kept fervently praying and believing that the doctor would see normal, healthy tissue.

Dr. Bunn rolled his chair back from the exam table.

I sat up.

“I am unable to perform the colposcopy.”

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The obvious question was posed.

“Why?”

“The cervical tissues are healthy and there are no cancer cells visible.”

My heart was elated as excitement flowed through my veins.

Before I could even manage to smile in response to this incredible news, my heart was pierced with his next words of indifference.

“You need to see an oncologist. You need a hysterectomy.”

What?!

In bewilderment my jaw nearly dropped at what I had just heard.

How in the world can you recommend a hysterectomy when you are observing healthy tissues??!!

Trying to quickly gather my thoughts in order to respond, I recalled the discomfort I felt during the procedure two weeks ago. She had

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said, “I am trying to take the pap smear sample from inside the cervical canal.”

With this in mind, I wanted to reaffirm what I had just heard.

“The cervical tissues are healthy?”

“Yes.”

“So the cancer cells are in the cervical canal?”

“Yes.”

He did not offer to do any further testing. He did not propose any other procedures to confirm whether or not there were indeed cancer cells in the cervical canal.

“You need to see an oncologist,” he reiterated.

In the same rigid tone, he began listing off the names of what I call “the group,” my former oncologist being one.

“What’s your plan?”

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

Sitting on the exam table, I slowly turned my head and looked at my husband. I turned back and looked directly at the doctor. Boldly I made my declaration.

“We will go home and pray and decide what we need to do. I feel that I have taken the direction I needed to take in order to be able to maintain my health in the future so that I will not be fearful of getting cancer again. I am not afraid to have surgery. But if it comes to making that decision, then I will be considering MC as a treatment center.”

Grabbing his attention, he quickly glanced up from his paper, aware of the medical facility I was speaking about.

“Where is their nearest location?”

“Ohio.”

“You need to see an oncologist,” unyielding to his position.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

And in the same stiff tone, “I hope your prayers are answered.”

Slipping down off the table, I stood by his side, watching him complete my paperwork. He showed no interest in seeing me again as he (X)’d out the follow-up portion of my medical record and left the room.

* * *

My husband arose from his chair. We embraced. My eyes became misty gazing at him. I fought to keep the tears from rushing forth.

Leaving the office and heading down the stairs I excused myself, going into the bathroom to collect my thoughts.

Standing at the sink, looking in the mirror, I started praying aloud.

“What now God?”

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

His response was immediate. He reminded me to look back and consider the entire scenario.

I reflected back to August 2010. At that time, there was considerable bleeding within the cervical tissues as the nurse took the pap smear sample. She had even made the motion to show me the blood on the swabs. There was no blood on the swabs now. A colposcopy was performed from the abnormal cells that were seen in the tissues. Those same tissues were now appearing normal.

Healing had taken place.

Now we had to determine how we were going to confirm that there were no cancer cells in the cervical canal.

My calmness was returning.

Before leaving the building, I remembered that I had blood drawn during my previous visit so they could test my thyroid level. The doctor

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

had not mentioned those results so I returned to the office receptionist to request a copy of them.

“There probably wasn’t anything of concern for him to discuss.”

Indeed, my thyroid level was normal.

“How about my urinalysis?”

“That is negative also.”

Not all medical professionals willingly share with you your test results unless there is something of concern or you ask. Having become an advocate for my body and health it was my practice to obtain copies of every test result. They are *my* test results and I should have them in *my* possession.

Driving to lunch, my husband was clearly agitated by our visit.

“I feel as if the gynecologist is either hiding something or not telling us the truth about something.”

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

He was just as disgusted as I was that I had to request a copy of my thyroid results in order for me to know what they were and that they also “had” to perform another pregnancy test.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

CHAPTER 14

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

What was my next step? My prayer for our visit with Dr. Graham on July 1st was that he would help to point us in that direction.

Leading up to that visit, I began comparing my current blood work results with prior results. For each location of testing there were different ranges amongst the different labs. There was no set standard of ranges for most levels; each range being based on the average results from each lab. In considering that people typically get lab work done while they are ill or treating an illness, I reckoned that these ranges are influenced by sick people.

In discussing our recent gynecology appointment with Dr. Graham, the more skeptical I became of Dr. Bunn's response to what should have been good news.

"I feel that the gynecologist is not being completely honest or that he is not sharing

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

something he should have been,” my husband declared.

“It’s just my gut feeling.”

I believed this to be the intuitive response he was getting from God.

“Dr. Graham, I need further testing to confirm the state of the cells in the cervical canal. I am concerned about being able to find a facility that will be unbiased and respect the alternative and natural healing approach I have pursued. I want to obtain test results I can trust.”

This was essential seeing that my most recent test results were flowing through the same lab.

“I did make it known to Dr. Bunn that I would consider MC as a treatment center should surgery become necessary.”

“You are already a patient at MC. Based upon your prior experience, it seems reasonable to conclude that they would be open and

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For
accepting of this manner of healing. I
recommend you contact them to schedule an
appointment for further testing.”

There would be no delay as their lab would
be capable of turning around test results in
twenty-four to forty-eight hours.

Feeling blessed by the role that Dr. Graham
had been given by God in my healing, our
appointment ended in prayer once again.

* * *

Exploring my existing condition led me to
what I expected would be the next procedure I
needed to undergo. An endocervical curettage
(ECC) would confirm whether or not there were
any cancer cells in the cervical canal.

Calling MC on July 6, I requested a follow-
up appointment in hopes that they would be able
to perform the ECC.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“We just need to confirm the status of your health insurance before we schedule an appointment.”

A return call revealed, “We are waiting for your COBRA payment to clear so that your insurance will be activated for the month of July. We can then proceed to schedule your appointment.”

Slightly irritated with the delay, I was left wondering what was more important – my health or my health insurance?

* * *

The nurse taking my vitals was listening intently as I discussed my medical history upon our arrival to MC on July 25. She was fascinated by the course of healing I had undertaken.

“You look great!” she remarked.

“Why are you revisiting MC?”

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“I need to undergo an ECC.”

“Are you a nurse?”

My level of knowledge as to what procedure I needed to have done must have surprised her.

I simply shook my head ‘no.’

The physician reviewing with me the notes taken by the nurse was not as enthralled by my healing process.

Next, the naturopath we had met with in January was all smiles and glad to see me. The feeling was mutual. Having her full attention, I began sharing about my appointments with Dr. Graham.

Suddenly, the door opened and the physician stepped in.

“You need to meet with the oncologist *before* meeting with the naturopath.”

My husband and I were taken aback by the disruption, but the naturopath graciously accepted the change of schedule.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“Although you are a returning patient to MC, you are considered a new patient with the oncologist as your former oncologist has resigned. Thus, the order is to meet with the oncologist first with the other departments to follow.”

Because of my continued experiences of being released from the care of an oncologist and more than one gynecologist, I was skeptical of the motive behind this disruption in our conversation.

Due to the reluctant attitude of my prior oncologist here, I began praying that the new oncologist would look favorably upon us and respect my decision to treat myself naturally.

His greeting brought assurance that we were in good hands. He had an encouraging and uplifting demeanor. Taking to his smile, I sensed that there would be no “battle” with him.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“I am seeking to obtain an ECC to confirm my healing.”

“That seems to be the next logical step to take in order to determine what additional treatment may be necessary.”

Not once did he give rise to the word *hysterectomy*. It did not even cross my mind.

After meeting with him, we waited for the naturopath to return to finish our appointment. Unexpectedly to us, a different naturopath greeted us. She was equally excited to hear about the course of treatment I had undergone over the last six months.

“I am very impressed with the dramatic dietary lifestyle change you have endured. I am in agreement with the supplemental regimen you are on.”

“During my most recent visit to the gynecologist, he refused to perform a colposcopy because the cells appeared normal. I

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

am now seeking an ECC so that I can confirm that the cancer cells are not in the cervical canal.”

“I agree that obtaining an ECC is your next step. I am very optimistic about your future test results.”

Walking to the door, my heart was burdened with a question I needed to ask.

“I have been released from the care of my local oncologist and several local gynecologists. I understand that MC does not have a gynecologist on staff. Do you have any recommendations for where I may be able to seek this procedure?”

I was expecting there may be a reputable gynecologist local to MC that we could visit while we were here.

“It is my desire to be seen by someone who would respect my path of healing and my

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

decision to treat naturally. I also need to ensure that the test results I will be receiving are valid.”

She identified with my concerns regarding the healthcare system in my state.

Without hesitating, she gave her direction.

“Schedule an appointment with the Gynecology Department of TF in New Hampshire.”

New Hampshire?

I was astonished. Here I was waiting for her to send us down the street!

“Take some time and visit TF’s website.”

I thought to myself in prayer, *Here we are in Ohio and now You want us to go to New Hampshire?* I knew this decision certainly needed to be confirmed by God.

I smiled and thanked her as she walked out the door.

* * *

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

Returning to the hotel, I attended the Bible study held in the MC lounge. The pastor remembered my initial visit with him in January and was pleased to hear about the path of healing God had chosen for me.

Retiring to my room, I went online to search the TF website. If the website was any indication of what the facility was like, this place was going to be impressive! Locating the Gynecology Department, there was a list of procedures relevant to cervical cancer.

There it was. Endocervical Curettage. The ECC was described as the procedure used to confirm the presence of any cancer cells in the cervical canal.

Reading on, it also acknowledged that the ECC can be done at the same time as a colposcopy.

Interesting.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

Dr. Bunn had never offered it. He hadn't even mentioned it.

Then something caught my eye.

A list of the stages of cervical cancer. Click on the stage and an image appears showing the area of growth for that stage. Within a matter of clicks, I was able to progress through the stages of cervical cancer. I was observing the spread of the cancer as it moved up the cervix, towards the uterus, and finally into the uterus, with each progressive stage.

Stage 1B1 was located at the base of the cervix, at the opening into the vagina. Stage 1B1 was *not* in the uterus.

The uterus that everyone wanted to remove.

Delores' prior remark rushed back to mind, "I sense the cancer is small."

The oncologist had stated that my biopsy results indicated that "the cancer cells went beyond the scope of the tissues that were taken."

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

Because my side effects had subsided since that day, I had maintained a confidence that the biopsy had removed the majority of the cancer cells. These images confirmed my conviction.

Prayers of thanksgiving were expressed regarding this new insight. Completing my search and turning off the computer for the night, I began praying, asking for God's confirmation that it was *His* will that this procedure should take place in New Hampshire.

* * *

Meeting with the naturopath the next morning, my medical team had already discussed my situation. They were in agreement. I should pursue further testing at TF.

Grateful for this next direction, a question was upon my mind from the prior night that I was eager to ask.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“Have you had many patients who chose to treat their cancer naturally?”

My ears perked up when she replied, “Yes.”

What she declared next was even more astounding.

“Cervical cancer is actually one of the types of cancer that is very responsive to natural healing.”

Not the *only* type of cancer. *One* type of cancer.

Praise God! My heart rejoiced! He was continuing to confirm with me what He had known all along as He led me down this path.

“I, too, have been diagnosed with cervical cancer. I was seeing results, but it wasn’t until I changed my diet completely, similar to your dietary regimen, that I was able to rid my body of the cancer cells.

“I do recommend that you visit TF for further testing.”

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

Meeting with the nutritionist put her in awe of the dietary lifestyle overhaul I had undertaken to promote my healing and continued health.

“I wish all of my patients would come to understand the importance of their diet in their healing.”

Before proceeding to lunch, I thanked God for His affirmation of my healing process. I offered, yet again, another request. I was willing, but I was asking that He confirm whether it was *His* desire for us to travel to New Hampshire for testing.

* * *

I desired a smoothie. Call it a celebratory drink for all that God was revealing to me. I stood patiently at the counter, waiting to place my order, smiling at others passing by. Observing a wristband on the lady standing

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

beside me identifying her as a patient, I smiled and greeted her.

“How has your experience been today?”

“It is my first day here. I arrived this morning for the first day of my three day evaluation. I am very happy with the care I am receiving. Why are you here?”

“I am here for a follow up visit. I was diagnosed with cervical cancer and had my evaluation in January. I chose to treat it naturally and am now seeking an ECC to confirm that the cancer is gone. MC doesn't have a gynecologist on staff to perform the procedure, so they are recommending I visit TF in New Hampshire.”

Her eyes lit up as she smiled.

Nothing could have prepared me for what she said next!

“I have just come from there. It is a wonderful place.”

My prayer was answered!

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

God had caused our paths to cross that day in order to bring me *His* confirmation.

I brought the phone number for TF with me in hopes that if God did confirm His will for us to go there we would be able to call and possibly get an appointment within the next day or two and travel from Ohio to New Hampshire directly. Although that was not the case, we were able to schedule an appointment for August 10. The process was simple. I needed only to submit a medical record release for MC to transfer my medical record to TF.

I happily signed my name to the record release form and slid it across the counter. Turning to leave, one of the nurses approached me.

“Has your MRI been scheduled?”

MRI?

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“I did not request an MRI, I am not in need of an MRI, and the oncologist did not request or recommend one.”

I was not willing to ‘have one done’ just because ‘insurance will cover it.’

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

CHAPTER 15

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

Being a country-girl at heart, I took in all the splendors of the countryside as we traveled along winding back roads, besides brooks and streams, and through quaint little towns. We arrived with a couple of hours to spare before our appointment at TF. I had packed a lunch in hopes that, if time permitted, we would find a park at which to dine. Our travels brought us to an overlook point where we sat in the warmth of the sunshine, under bright blue skies, enjoying an absolutely gorgeous day.

* * *

Awestruck. I had never seen anything like it. It was massive. Walking through the doors at TF, I wondered if we would ever be able to find our way to where we had to go. It seemed as though every possible disorder had its own wing. We arrived at the Gynecology Department

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

only having to turn around once! Signing in, I was pleased that the only piece of paper I had to sign was a Privacy Notice. The records from MC must have been adequate enough to not have to require me to handwrite my entire medical history again.

Quiet. In spite of its vastness and the number of people milling around, it was quiet. Making ourselves comfortable in the waiting area, I took my husband's hands into mine offering to pray. We sat, heads bowed, and I whispered a prayer thanking God for the beautiful drive and asking for respect for the healing path that He had chosen for me. I prayed that His healing would be revealed and that, despite the lovely drive, we would not have to return to New Hampshire to obtain the test results.

“What has brought you to TF?” the nurse inquired.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“I am seeking to have an ECC performed. The naturopath at MC recommended TF for the procedure.”

“You could not be in better hands. I would trust the gynecologist with my life.”

Her encouraging words brought a sense of relief and continued confirmation to my belief that God desired us to be there.

She was not in any hurry. I had her utmost attention. Before rushing into performing any procedures, Dr. Sweet took her time to listen to us share with her our experiences over the last nine months.

“Your scan results from MC from January look fine. I don’t see anything of concern reflected there.”

My approach to natural healing for this diagnosis appeared to be new to her. She avidly took notes as I shared the supplements and dietary regimen I was utilizing for my healing.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“Your dietary lifestyle change is noted in your MC record.”

She seemed unfamiliar with the supplements that were being used to boost my immune system in order to fight and kill the cancer, specifically the vaginal suppositories.

“What has your exercise regimen been and how has that affected you?”

“I walk daily on the treadmill for twenty minutes, equivalent to one mile, and feel even more rejuvenated afterwards.”

“Have you undergone a pap smear recently?”

“Yes.”

I did not disclose the results of the test.

“I returned for a colposcopy, but the doctor did not take a sample of cervical tissue because there were no abnormal cells visible.”

A quizzical look graced her face as she glanced at me.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“He didn’t do a test in the canal?”

“No.”

She seemed to be puzzled by his action, or lack thereof.

“The ECC is usually performed at the same time as the colposcopy, *especially* in the case of adenocarcinoma.

“I noticed that you have not had your menstrual cycle for quite some time now. I am questioning the need to perform a pregnancy test.”

“We have abstained from physical intimacy over the last nine months due to my desire to ensure tissue healing, but we did have intercourse since the last pregnancy test. You may proceed with the test.” It was refreshing to have a say in my medical care.

“Have you been tested for HPV?”

That was the *first* time anyone had asked me that. The doctors claimed that the HPV could be

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the cause of the cancer, but no one had offered or suggested for me to be tested to confirm their position.

It was my hope that in light of my healing the virus would be gone. She offered additional insight that warranted having the test done.

“The HPV test is performed on the tissue sample taken by the pap smear with no additional procedure involved. The results of the HPV test will help to determine future treatment. If your pap smear and ECC are both negative for cancer and the HPV is also negative those results would support a better outcome. If, however the pap smear and ECC come back negative but the HPV is positive then there is cause for concern of regrowth of the abnormal cells and cause for future cancer. But HPV can be cured by a strong immune system that is capable of fighting off the virus.”

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She took out her pen and placed a piece of paper between us.

I always appreciate visual aids.

She drew a diagram to portray my condition and described how the ECC was to be performed.

“There are pockets on the sides of the cervical canal where the cancer can hide. The ECC will scrape the canal, but it will not be able to get into these pockets. If the ECC results are to come back negative, it cannot confirm that no cancer cells are in these pockets. This is where the HPV test results become beneficial. If the HPV is negative, there is less cause for concern.”

Understanding the “disclaimer” she was making about the procedure, I believed that if the ECC results were negative, I was trusting God that I was healed in *all* areas, pockets included!

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Our consult time together was beneficial for both parties. We received the respect that we were praying for and she obtained insight into natural healing that she could, if she chose, share with other clients.

There was no discussion regarding the need for surgery or the need to consider surgery. The word *hysterectomy* was never spoken. It never crossed my mind.

Lying on the exam table, I was at peace with the procedures that were going to be performed – an ECC, a pap smear, and an HPV test. Without pain, I felt the typical “pull” of the pap smear as the tissue was removed.

Nothing could have prepared me for the ECC. In no uncertain terms, it was painful! Seated across the room, my husband could see the discomfort I was experiencing and came over to grab hold of my hand. I could feel the color draining from my face. I dreaded the

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possibility of passing out. Focused on my breathing and trying to keep my body relaxed with all my might, I was uttering two words over and over.

“Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.”

My husband commented later how odd it was to hear me say those words repeatedly. Despite the searing pain, I was grateful. Grateful to have an opportunity to confirm my healing - God’s healing.

Following the ECC, she performed a pelvic and rectal exam simultaneously which was also a first. No abnormalities were felt.

She was finished.

I lay there for a few seconds before attempting to sit up.

Sitting up, I took a couple of minutes to get my breath back before stepping down. I had made it this far. The last thing I wanted to do

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was have my legs give out from underneath me and end up in a crumpled heap on the floor!

Having heard me from the other side of the door, the nurse compassionately empathized with me as she too had endured that procedure and knew all too well what I was going through.

Concluding our time with Dr. Sweet, we received another answer to prayer.

“There will likely be a two week wait time for the test results. So you do not have to make a return trip, I can call you with the results as long as you are comfortable with getting them over the phone.”

My husband was quick to respond.

“Once you have been told you have cancer, you can pretty much handle anything.”

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CHAPTER 16

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Walking into the kitchen, I looked at the phone as it rang in the mid-afternoon on August 16.

Caller ID. The moment to choose to pick up or not. It read “TF.”

It must be Dr. Sweet calling with the test results.

The moment I had been waiting for.

Nervous? Not a bit. Shaking? Nope. There was not an inkling of fear as I looked at the phone. Nothing but complete confidence in God and an expectation to hear the confirmation of His healing.

Dr. Sweet warmly greeted herself.

“The pap smear and HPV test results are not yet available. But I do have the ECC results in hand. There is no sign of cancer and no sign of adenocarcinoma.”

Praise God! He had been faithful to reveal His healing.

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“The other test results are expected to be available next week.”

I was not expecting any surprises.

I hung up the phone pleased and content with the news I had received. I stood in awe, reflecting upon the results of the ECC, as I remembered Dr. Bunn’s insistence that despite his seeing *normal* cells he was still recommending a hysterectomy.

* * *

A week had lapsed. A voice message from Dr. Sweet disclosed that my results were in. After a round of phone tag I succeeded in connecting with her.

“I have the results for your pap smear and HPV test. The pap smear came back abnormal, specifically atypical squamous cells of

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undetermined significance. The HPV test is
positive.”

These were *not* the results I was expecting.

“I am having difficulty making a
recommendation. Healing is present. There is no
cancer. But there is a presence of abnormal cells
and HPV. Professionally, I have to recommend a
hysterectomy. But I know that you are not
inclined to proceed with that. You could have
another colposcopy and another ECC done
again.”

“Thank you for the call.”

Stunned.

Slowly walking into the bedroom, tears
began to flow.

Feeling defeated, sitting down on the carpet,
back against the bed, lifting my knees up to my
chin, burying my head, I cried out.

“Now what, God? How could this be?”

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I kept going back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth between my prior pap smear results and these test results. Dr. Bunn had not proceeded with a colposcopy because the cells appeared normal. His pap smear results noted “adenocarcinoma” while my current results showed “atypical squamous cells of undetermined significance.” The ECC came back negative of cancer. And then there was the HPV.

My husband had stepped out to run some errands prior to receiving the phone call. Wiping away my tears and collecting myself, I called him hoping to sound composed.

“Where are you at?”

“I am on my way home. I am just a couple of minutes away. Is everything all right?”

“We can talk when you get home.”

What will I say? How will he respond?

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Taking my seat at the side of the bed, I waited, trying to maintain my composure while starting to ponder this new information.

Clarity was coming. The cancer was gone. The HPV was causing the abnormal cells.

What was the next step?

I rose from the floor as he entered the bedroom. Embracing him, I gave him the test results and shared my thoughts.

I was thankful to have his shoulder to cry on. He was confident and supportive in his response.

“One thing is clear. There is healing. It is now a matter of treating the virus.”

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CHAPTER 17

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It was time to attack the virus that was attacking me. I would have to be more aggressive with my supplements in order to increase and strengthen my immune system so my body could ward off the virus. I decided to continue my diet and “wait it out” until my next appointment in January. It was obvious that my natural healing treatment was not causing any harm; my body just needed more time to heal. God had been faithful to reveal His healing. There was no rush. It had taken up to ten years for the cancer to manifest itself. What was eighteen months of healing?

* * *

Days turned into weeks. Knowing that I needed to schedule my next gynecologist appointment, I kept praying for where to go. I

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wasn't hearing God instructing me to return to
New Hampshire.

Dr. Rose, the gynecologist whom we had
seen to obtain a second opinion, continually
came to mind. No letters had been received from
her. I had not seen her since she told me I was
sitting atop the triangle. She was unaware of my
decision to treat the cancer naturally.

Calling her office, I scheduled an
appointment for an annual exam. I prayed that
she would respect my decision and the method
of treatment I had chosen.

January 31, 2012. Just over one year had
passed since being here.

Taking my vitals, the nurse began her
questioning.

“What was the date of your last menstrual
cycle?”

“February 2011.”

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Looking up from my record, she glanced at me skeptically.

“There is no need for concern. My menstrual cycle stopped as a result of the weight loss I have experienced from my dietary lifestyle change.”

Her quizzical gaze remained.

“I have gained back most of that weight and am holding steady at 118.”

She seemed unimpressed.

Flipping through my medical record, she realized the purpose of my last visit and the diagnosis I had at that time – endocervical adenocarcinoma.

“Where have you received other medical treatment?”

“I have been to MC and am under the care of a naturopath. You don’t have any of those records.”

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I did not disclose that I had chosen *not* to have my medical history forwarded for this appointment. I wanted a fresh perspective. That was then. This is now.

She appeared disturbed and left the exam room.

Dr. Rose walked in smiling and immediately remembered me and acknowledged the circumstances that prompted our first encounter. She listened intently as I shared with her my route of healing. She was in awe at the strides I had taken to undergo a dietary lifestyle change versus choosing a traditional medical treatment. She did not present herself as concerned with the lack of my cycle as it did not become a topic of conversation.

“I am here for my annual exam. I would like a pap smear and HPV test to be performed.”

She turned to the nurse.

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“Please obtain the supplies for a pap smear, HPV test, and an ECC.”

Whoa! I didn't say anything about an ECC!

“I am here for a pap smear *only*. My ECC has already tested negative for cancer.”

She conceded and did not dispute my decision. Clearly, she understood that I had taken charge of the medical care for my body and she was respecting me for it.

* * *

January 31 marked not only the date of this appointment, but also another milestone in this journey - the end of my health insurance coverage. Having been on COBRA coverage since September, the \$700 per month premium had impeded our finances. Our income at the time did not provide us the means to maintain the coverage without sacrificing our needs. After

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

much prayer, I felt confident that this was part of God's plan and I could trust Him to handle this matter. I willingly stopped paying for the coverage. Besides, the route of healing I had chosen - consisting of visits to a naturopath and taking vitamins and supplements - was not covered by insurance. I was grateful that I had it early on, especially during my visits to MC and TF and for all the testing I obtained along the way. But I was relieved to be freed from the bondage of it.

* * *

On February 7, I returned the phone call and requested my test results from a nurse at the nurse's station. I waited expectantly as she pulled my file.

“Your pap smear reported adenocarcinoma and the HPV test was positive. Would you like

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me to schedule an appointment with the
oncologist?”

“No. That will not be necessary. He has
released me from his care. I will contact MC.”

Hanging up the phone, irritation flashed
through me.

Adenocarcinoma? How could that be?

I fervently believed that it *couldn't* be.
Upset and unsettled, I knew I had to pray.

Kneeling down beside my bed, immediately
the strength of God arose within me while I
prayed. This was not about denial. I had cancer.
Had.

This was about trusting and believing in
God and His complete healing. I was confident
that the healing from the cancer had already
been revealed through the ECC. My frustration
was aimed at the medical profession. Would
they try to hide my healing?

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That was not going to happen. I was *not* going to allow the healthcare system or the medical professionals to keep God from being glorified for my healing.

Calling Delores, I discussed my current test results and my initial reaction.

“Would you like me to come over and pray with you?”

I graciously took her up on the offer.

Over the course of our conversation that evening, it became clear the wisdom God had given us regarding the world around us. Due to my experiences within the past several months, it had become even clearer.

Delores got to the point.

“The government wants to have complete control of our lives. As the government works its way into our finances, healthcare, and marriages, the people are being blinded from the Truth.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

They are no longer looking to and depending on God.”

“*I am*. God is *my* Healer. *He* is the Mighty Physician. He is *my* Provider.”

Holding hands, we prayed. Delores could feel God holding us so close to Him that she was unable to release her grip on my hands.

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

CHAPTER 18

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It was time to begin praying for the healing of the HPV. In support of my position, Delores shared of her experience of having had a viral infection that was very active in her body.

"Although the doctors proclaim that it is lying dormant, I believe that God has healed me of it. I am convinced that it will never return. The same holds true for your HPV. God is able to heal you of the HPV so that it will never return. You need to only believe and receive."

In the middle of the night that night, I heard what I believe was the voice of God saying, "Receive."

I awoke in the morning believing that my cancer was gone, the HPV was gone, and my cells were normal. I was receiving God's *complete* healing in my body.

Contemplating the recent test results, I was wondering if it was at all possible that the lab was just carrying down the diagnosis from prior

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

test results. I was at complete peace believing that I was healed of the cancer, yet something was amiss in trying to document it.

While gathering together all of my test results from the time of the diagnosis to most recently, I received a phone call from Dr. Rose with the results of my blood work.

“Everything looks perfect. I do not see any red flags. I placed a copy of the report in the mail for you. I had two pathologists look at the slides. Both concluded that there are cancer cells present.”

“What is the likelihood that these cells could go from atypical to adenocarcinoma in five months?”

“This cancer can be aggressive.”

I was skeptical of her response. It contradicted everything I had read and previously been told. All the evidence seemed to support that cervical cancer is a very slow

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

growing cancer, taking up to ten years to present itself. This certainly seemed to be my scenario. And with my recent dietary change, research led me to believe that the chance of growth of cancer was nearly nonexistent.

“I don’t have any symptoms.”

“You look really healthy. But symptoms for cervical cancer may not present until it is very progressed.

Again, I was skeptical. I had experienced symptoms of light bleeding between menstrual cycles prior to my initial diagnosis and it was only at Stage 1B1 at that time.

Something was just not adding up.

I remained at peace with maintaining my regimen and continued to believe that I was healed while considering what my next step would be.

* * *

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With all my results in hand, I began to review the data. I compiled a spreadsheet of all the blood work lab results to see what changes, if any, had taken place over this period of time.

My white blood cell count (WBC) had steadily declined even up unto the current lab results. That alerted me.

Dr. Rose indicated she did not see any “red flags” yet it appeared as though my WBC was lower than it should be for someone who is fighting an illness, especially cancer. It was obvious that the decline was due to the cancer, and more importantly the HPV. Because the HPV was still positive it was important for me to take strides to increase my WBC. Doing so would help to strengthen my immune system and fight the HPV.

Two observations were made regarding the lab results for the pap smears. My results from the June appointment reflected incorrect dates.

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On my most recent results an additional comment was added to the report stating that I was treating through diet and suppositories but no “gyn oncology.”

Although I believed that God would heal me of the HPV, I also knew that I had a part in maintaining my health. My WBC was the lowest it had been. Actually outside of the recommended ranges. I was puzzled to think that Dr. Rose saw nothing of concern with that.

I took to investigating how I might be able to increase my WBC. Vitamins A, C, and E, all help in supporting the WBC so I increased supplementation of those vitamins. Zinc is also prominent in making WBCs, but is inhibited from easy absorption from plants and beans and so individuals with a primarily vegetarian lifestyle may find themselves deficient. An extremely beneficial non-animal source of zinc is raw pumpkin seeds. Along with those seeds I

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also added two cups of green tea to my daily regimen. My local natural food store prompted me to consider adding more “live” foods to my diet. I explored sprouting and decided it was the next step to the dietary lifestyle change I was sustaining.

With all the reports in hand there was just one more step to take.

It was time to look at all my pap smear slides.

It was clear that healing had taken place. I needed to see how much.

I started by calling the hospital lab that housed my slides from August 2010.

“I desire to view my pap smear slides. How can I proceed with that process?”

“I will need to call you back. We have never had anyone make *that* request before.”

‘*I’m sure not*’ I thought and chuckled to myself.

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Within a couple of days, sitting, facing the pathologist with a microscope between us, he came very prepared for the presentation.

“I have pulled other patient slides that were normal.”

I observed and came to understand normal cell characteristics before looking at my own. In the normal slides the cells were clear, transparent, and the squamous cells lined up in a row.

Switch slides.

I was viewing something completely different. My cells were not normal at all. *All abnormal*. The cells were cloudy. The nucleus of each cell was significantly bigger than it should have been. The squamous cells were no longer in a row, but had moved around.

“Are the samples viewed *before* any purifying is done to remove yeast, bacteria, and molds?”

DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For

“Yes. We always look at them first before purifying. In your case, there was no presence of yeast or bacteria. However, there was a little too much blood present, so we purified the sample to get a better reading of the cells.”

There was one point he kept making while we were looking at the slides that caught my attention.

“We can only identify the cells as being atypical glandular or atypical squamous. The pap smear does *not* diagnose cancer; it is only a screening test for abnormal cells.”

This statement was enlightening considering the other lab had claimed “endocervical adenocarcinoma” (cancer) on my last two pap smear results.

“I probably can’t ask this, but what is your interest in viewing these? What treatments have you had done?”

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“I am treating naturally through supplementation, diet, and homeopathically. I wanted to compare these slides with my most recent pap smear slides. I received an ECC in August and there were no cancer cells present.”

That caught his attention. He tried to remain expressionless, but there was an inquisitive and doubtful look upon his face.

“Was the test done locally?”

That question raised up a *big* red flag for me.

“No, in New Hampshire.”

“Well, keep an open mind because natural healing doesn’t work for everybody.”

He was tactful, but his opinion was clear.

* * *

Two weeks passed when I found myself sitting before another pathologist from a

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different lab ready to look at my most recent slides. I was completely at peace. I knew that I was going to see abnormal cells on the June 2011 slides because God's healing had come upon me after the procedure. But what would the January 2012 slides disclose?

On the June slides the pathologist identified the same characteristics as my prior slides, particularly the enlarged nucleus of the cells.

Switch slides. Now, January 2012.

There it was! Healing was visible! *Very visible!*

The slide was no longer filled with abnormal cells. It was filled with normal cells!

"There are a couple of clusters of abnormal cells," he pointed out.

"Did you purify these samples before placing them on the slides?"

"No. There was no presence of bacteria, fungus, yeast, mold, etc. There does appear to be

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this plant matter amongst the cells. We identified this foreign substance due to the difference in the structure of the cell walls. I think it is fecal matter.”

“I do not believe that to be the case. It is the residue remaining from my herbal suppositories.”

“I would recommend scheduling an appointment with the oncologist.”

I did not inform him that I had been released from his care.

Sincerely, he questioned me.

“What do you plan on doing?”

“It is clearly evident that substantial healing has taken place, so I am going to meet with the gynecologist.”

I did not indicate when. My next appointment with her was scheduled for July. Unless God urged me otherwise, I had no intention of rescheduling sooner.

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I was reminded of my visit with the pathologist a couple of days later. I had observed significant healing when I viewed the slides from January 2012. I reflected upon the pathologist's concern for my well-being. He warned me that I had been diagnosed with an invasive cancer. The cancer had begun to grow into the tissues and was at risk of being spread into the blood and to other areas of the body.

Due to my faith and strong belief that God was going to heal me, I had never really considered the severity of my situation. This was indeed a worst case scenario. I had been sitting atop the triangle described to me nearly one and a half years earlier.

The negative results of the ECC confirmed the divine hand of God healing me of my cervical cancer. In keeping to His faithfulness to answer my prayer for a long, healthy life, He

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disclosed to me the HPV and my weakened
immune system.

As a result of my efforts, I could rest in
knowing that the labs would be unable to hide
my healing. They would instead be witnesses of
the healing. They may never want to
acknowledge that God is our Healer and that
cancer can be healed naturally, but they will not
be able to deny the test results.

* * *

July 31, 2012. Another appointment with
the gynecologist. Would this be the day I had
been so faithfully and expectantly waiting for?

As a self-pay, I was in and out. Vitals taken,
pap smear performed.

A week later, test results.

No abnormal cells were present. No
mention of cancer was made.

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In the words of the gynecologist, “*We have never seen such healing take place.*”

* * *

Continuing to maintain the new dietary lifestyle, about six months later I noticed a weight change in my abdomen after gaining five pounds all of a sudden. I believed that my body would “reset” the menstrual cycle and presumed that this was now happening. Two weeks later I experienced my first menstrual cycle.

Healing complete!

I am well able to bear children!

That is life worth fighting for!

Praise be unto God!

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THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer L. Chesbro Salem, a country-girl at heart, was born and raised in central New York State, USA.

Upon being diagnosed with cervical cancer in November 2010 she was determined to find the *cause* of the cancer so she could be assured she would be *cured* of it. She was inspired to write her first book, a memoir, titled “DETERMINED: Life Worth Fighting For” to both inform and inspire others with her experience of treating the cancer naturally.

She enjoys devoting her time to gardening and reconnecting with Nature. In establishing her own apothecary as an herbalist, she is studying the medicinal properties of plants and their effectiveness against treating sickness and disease, as used in traditional healing practices and as proven through modern medical research.

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