

Updates from Jo Leder

May 31, 2010

Hi everyone.

First of all I'd like to thank you for all the prayers. We definitely feel your support. We would appreciate it if you would continue praying for us for the next couple of months while we go through the treatments. (If everything goes well I should be done treatments by the end of the summer.) These last 2 1/2 months have gone by quickly so I am hoping that the next 3 months will go quickly as well.

I am feeling very good now but still doing stretching and strengthening exercises for my shoulder muscles.

We saw the oncologist last week and they confirmed that there was no cancer in the lymph nodes, my tumor was a stage 2 since it was larger than 2 cm (3.6 cm), and it was estrogen receptive (which means I need to go on hormone therapy for 5 years after I am done chemo) and it was very aggressive and invasive (3/3). My first intravenous treatment of TC will be on June 1 at 8:15 am for about 4-5 hours (They do this slowly so they can monitor how you are doing.). I will be having 4 treatments and they will be 3 weeks apart so long as my blood work the day before each treatment is ok. (At this time I don't have any other dates booked.) I have to go on high doses of steroids for 3 days each treatment (day before, day of, and day after) which MAY cause some problems with my blood sugars for a few days. We have figured out somewhat how to deal with this, but until we know how my body will react, treatment for this will be mostly reactive.

Since hair loss is a high possibility I have already invested in a wig. I'm going to try being a brunette for awhile. The Cross lends wigs out so you can exchange them whenever you want to change. I figured if I need to wear a wig then why not have a little fun with it. If I don't lose my hair then so much the better. Muscle aches are also common with this treatment so I will try to stay as active as possible and have plans to join CURVES for at least a couple of months. (Exercise is supposed to make you feel better during treatment but also has some power of deterrent for the cancer coming back.) Since we are supposed to cover up from the sun (your skin is very sensitive to the sun during chemo) Henry is busy building a sun porch off the east side of our house so I can at least be outside without wearing long sleeves and pants all summer. Since I am not in menopause yet, chemo will put me into menopause and I'm pretty sure that it would then be permanent.

There are a lot of side effects but even the Cross said some people have no side effects. I am praying that I will have no or at least minimal side effects. At this point it is probably best just to move ahead. The hardest part is not knowing what to expect. I am thankful to know that God knows and loves me and will give me the strength to walk through this process and that He will walk through it with me. I don't know how people go through struggles without the Lord. It is such a comfort to know that I can give him all my fears and anxieties and in exchange I get His peace and love. Sounds like we get the better end of it. Hopefully during this process I will meet some people for whom I can pray and encourage with the same encouragement that He gives me.

Tobi has been great with all her medical knowledge, but it has been awesome to have her companionship through all this. (Due to her work schedule she has been around a lot.) Anyways we will keep in touch and let you know how things are progressing. Love Jo and family

June 7, 2010

Hi everyone, I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior. May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. (1 Peter 1:2-3) I am writing this on my 2nd day after my 1st chemotherapy treatment. I woke up at 6:00 am feeling fine, (so keep up the good work, God is answering your prayers in very miraculous ways. To Him be all the glory.) I had a chat with the Lord and decided I actually needed to start writing down some of what I have learned. Since I don't know how to BLOG it is totally up to you if you want to read this or not. Today is my 6th day and I am still doing well with a few minor side effects that I am trying not to give too much attention to at this time.

JO'S BLOG: My Spiritual Journey

The events of the last 2 1/2 months have been very quick, from finding a tumor to starting chemotherapy. I can only see God's hand in this. From the beginning I have decided to have 2 sources. I will listen to my doctor and the team of doctors and nurses assigned to me who deal specifically with my treatment and then my other source is the Word of God. I am not trusting in science to heal me, but I am putting my trust in God as my Healer. (God may use science as part of the conduit for my healing, but I know that God is my Source for healing.) I would have loved not to have to go through chemotherapy, but praying about and consulting with my family, we have come to the decision that I am cancer free and that the chemo is just part of the process I need to go through, but then I will be done! I am still believing for supernatural things to happen in my journey and I can also say that I will gladly partner with others in their belief for a miracle for themselves. I read in Bill Johnson's book (When Heaven Invades Earth) that whenever God promises to be with you that then there is always room for the supernatural to happen. That is what I am trusting in because I definitely know that God is with me. I am normally an information person and want understanding but I remember something Susan said when she taught us about the colors in personalities. She said that normally we have 2 strong personality traits and that when the one aspect gets us in trouble then the other part will come in as a shining white knight to

rescue us. Normally I would trust in the power of understanding and knowledge, but now I am making a conscious choice to trust in the power of my relationship with the Lord. Watchman Nee talks about how so many people allow a passive will to control them. I am making conscious choices to bind myself to the mind and will of Christ, to keep surrendering what I think my life should look like and to put my trust in Him despite the circumstances, to take the fears and lies quickly to the cross and to know that the same power that raised Christ from the dead lives in me. I know that before I got the Baptism of the Holy Spirit I was afraid of the power that would come with that, but now all these years later I am disappointed that I haven't seen more manifestations of that power in my life. I believe the world needs to see that power in our lives.

I also read in Bill Johnson's book (When Heaven Invades Earth) about a man who was convicted of a crime, but before his sentencing he came to know the Lord, which resulted in a dramatic change in his life. The judge recognized his change of heart, but still felt the man needed to serve out 8 months in a maximum security prison. This man's church then commissioned him as a missionary into the prison and within 8 months 75% of the inmates were saved. I have never thought of myself as an evangelist. I have always thought my ministry was in the church, but I realize that the Bible says GO to all of us. At this point I have given up all my ministry positions in the church which means surrendering what I think I need to do and letting God take me somewhere else. It seems a little scary, but it also feels like an adventure. In the book Wild at Heart, it says every woman wants to be known as a beauty and wants to go on an adventure with the One she loves.

Henry had a lot of why questions and so one day as I was reading my devotional by Oswald Chambers (I love his stuff even though sometimes I need to read it 5x before I get it) I found an answer. He said we experience difficulties in our lives because God has to answer the prayer that Jesus prayed, that we would be one as He and the Father are one. Sometimes we get so busy with life that we forget why we are really here, which is to have relationship and know the Father and to bring glory to His name. Being one with Jesus means that we need to become His Bride, which is a whole preparation and purifying time. At The Fresh Wind Conference Melanie sang a song from Merchant Band called More Than Ashes. The chorus says I am the rose, I am the lily, I am Yours, I'm Your beauty, there's gonna be a wedding, it's the reason that I'm living, to marry the Lamb. I have had a number of words spoken over me about that there is going to be a wedding, so that gives me hope that I am on the right track in pursuing and knowing God and not just doing for Him. To be perfectly honest I have been dissatisfied with my relationship with the Lord. I am always looking and wanting to pursue a more intimate relationship with Him, so this situation may be what God will use to bring me to this deeper level.

One of my frustrations has been in not having one specific rhema word to hang onto, but I have realized some things. We heard on the radio one morning that we need to look at the promises of God and then apply them to our circumstances and not the other way around. It's all about focus and perspective. A new friend I met said that the verse that says God will turn all things to good for those who love Him means that God doesn't take the bad and turn it to good, but He takes His good stuff (gifts and fruits of the Spirit, His armor, love, peace, etc.) and gives it to us and totally disregards the bad. We focus on our circumstances and we need to have God's perspective on it. He loves us and has a good plan and purpose for our life even when we don't understand it. I also realized that as God gave fresh manna to the Israelites 6 days a week that He can and will do the same for us, so each day we can get a fresh and new word specific to that day. Sometimes all we get is one step at a time, as it says in Psalm 119 His word is a lamp unto our feet and light unto our path. (This was the motto of the Christian school I attended for 12 years.) I also realized that every day of manna brought them one day closer to their day of deliverance from the wilderness into the Promised Land. That is one thing I am trying to learn: rest. God promises us rest. I always remember Heidi Baker, a missionary to Mozambique, who said that you need to go, as Jesus did, to spend time with the Father each day before you greet the mobs or they will kill you. Everything we do in life needs to come from that place of rest.

Pastor Vic had a vision on Sunday morning. He saw himself on a precipice overlooking a valley where there were 3 groups of people. One group was sitting around a fire eating and getting strengthened, the other group was honing their weapons getting ready for war and the third group was worshipping the Lord. He said we were on the verge of a great move of God. I wondered which group I belonged to, but as I thought about it more I realized that at different times I am in all 3. I am being strengthened and feeding on the Word, so that I can go out to war and that I can use all the tools that God has ready for my disposal, but this must all come out of the experience of knowing my God, so that I don't follow my own religious zeal, but that I only do what the Father is doing.

Through this experience I am learning that we all go through the same thing, but it just shows up differently in our lives. Some of you struggle in your marriage or other relationships, worry about finances, disease or mental illness, infertility, unsaved family or friends, waiting for prodigals to come back, etc. As I see it, we basically have 2 choices: do we run to God and His loving arms? Or do we try and figure it out ourselves, independent from God? I am choosing to run into God's loving arms because I know that He is my only hope in time of trouble and that I am accepted in the Beloved. What are you going to do?

His mercies are new each morning to help us with the day ahead. We have a plaque in our bedroom, which I read most mornings, which says: this is the day the Lord has made, so let us rejoice and be glad in it. The day may not always bring the greatest things, but we can put our confidence in the One who made that day. He will never leave us or forsake us and nothing can separate us from His love for us, His children.

June 21, 2010

Hello everyone.

Your prayers are definitely being answered, so please continue to pray for me and my family. My first treatment has gone by very well. Praise the Lord!! I have had NO documented side effects, just some minor irritations. So I am 1/4 of the way through. My second treatment will be on Friday, June 25 at 10:15 am, after I get the okay from my blood tests on Thursday afternoon. I am praying that the second round will go as well as my first round. (Sounds like a boxing match, well I guess in a way it is.) At least I have a better idea of what to expect.

I have lost most of my hair now. It started a couple of days ago and it has come out very fast. It's weird to wake up and see no hair (well at this point very little) on my head; makes you realize how much you take certain things for granted. I have purchased a wig since my head doesn't seem to look very attractive in hats. Our sun porch now has lots of shade and even some new garden furniture in it, so we can all enjoy the outdoors together. Please feel free to call or email or even stop by for a visit.

Blessings to you all, Jo

July 14, 2010

Hi everyone, it is getting time for round 3. The days scheduled are July 14 for lab and doctor's visit and then July 15 at 9:00 am for my chemo. Round 2 went okay until this past Wednesday when I had an allergic reaction which has resulted in a bad case of hives which are very itchy. I am taking Benadryl to keep the itching at bay, but it is still not gone. I don't know what that will mean for this next round, since I'm not sure what actually caused the allergy; hopefully they will be able to figure it out, since I don't want to go through this again, if possible. I would still appreciate your prayers for this next go-around. In some ways it is becoming harder emotionally than it has before. I just went to the doctor and got the go ahead for chemo for tomorrow. They took me off my antibiotic (which I take for 7 days as a precaution) and have put me on 2 different doses of antihistamines to keep the allergies in check. They are not sure what caused the reaction so that is why they are doing 2 different things to figure it out. I heard a song at least 3x today and it says God works all things out for our good so I am choosing to believe this is for my greater good even if it makes me uncomfortable. I am half done my chemo and looking forward to the end of it but must remember to take one day at a time. Thank you for your prayers. They definitely help. Blessings from Jo