Not Alone

Resource Guide

Collin Baptist Association · Cancer Care Ministry

Choose faith over fear. You are not alone.

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Introduction

If you or a loved one were recently diagnosed with cancer, this booklet serves as a resource to provide support and spiritual encouragement, as well as a guide to point you toward reliable resources to utilize along the way.

Moving chronologically, each chapter describes a step in the journey, from preparation to end-of-life care.

Every chapter includes space to take notes, write down questions, and log important information from your medical team, caregivers, and personal reflection.

Cancer is never easy, but our hope is that this booklet helps point you in the right direction to be able to lean on God during these challenging times.

How to Use This Guide

- Work through seven lessons at your own pace — each chapter matches a step in the cancer care journey.
- Read the lesson content, reflect on the Scripture and survivor stories, then write in the notes pages.
- Use the lined pages to capture questions for your doctors, information from appointments, prayers, and reflections.
- This guide complements the online video series and devotionals — videos are not included in this PDF.

We are praying for you and your family!
Collin Baptist Association · Cancer Care Ministry

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Lesson 1

Preparing for the Journey

When You Receive a Cancer Diagnosis

You've received your diagnosis, and now you have a million questions. Take a moment, take a breath and remember that you are not alone. As you prepare for your journey, here are some of the topics you may want to consider.

Key Points

• Throughout your diagnosis and the rest of your journey, you will be experiencing and coping with a wide variety of emotions — whether happy, sad, guilty, angry or relieved — this is normal!

• There's a lot of misinformation readily available on the internet. Choose reputable, verified sources when you're looking for more answers.

• You are about to receive massive amounts of information from appointments, medical teams, etc. Choose a method to manage the information you receive in a methodical, organized fashion that makes sense to you.

Scripture

Isaiah 41:10

> So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Spiritual Encouragement

Lean on God and let him be your strength during this process. He cares for you and is always with you.

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Lesson 1 — Reflection 1

"I told my husband, and we shed some tears. Then we immediately prayed, and that's when I felt a sense of peace come over me."
— Christina Carter, Breast Cancer Survivor

Notes

Write down questions, thoughts, or information from your medical team…

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Lesson 1 — Reflection 2

"I fell on my knees and cried out to the Lord, and said 'Lord, I don't understand, but I trust you.'"

— Debbie Williams, Pancreatic Cancer Survivor

Notes

What emotions are you experiencing? What do you want to remember from this chapter?

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Lesson 1 — Notes (page 1 of 4)

Use these pages to write down questions for your medical team, information from appointments, thoughts, prayers, and anything you want to remember from this chapter.

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Lesson 2

Selecting Your Team

Choosing People to Walk Alongside You

Now that you've had a moment to process your diagnosis, it's time to choose the people who will embark on your journey with you. From medical teams to support groups, having the right people on your team is essential.

Key Points

• Take the time to evaluate your doctors — not only their medical credentials and qualifications, but how they treat you as well.

• Choose your main caregiver carefully — they will be your advocate, your supporter and your rock throughout your fight.

• Other important people on your team will include friends, family, ministries at church and support groups, in addition to others.

Scripture

Proverbs 3:5–6

> Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Spiritual Encouragement

God has the power to guide you and make your paths straight — even when it comes to medical decisions. Bring God into the conversation as you select your team.

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Lesson 2 — Reflection 1

"It's not how nice your doctor is, how comfortable you feel or how close it is to your house — it's about who is going to help you beat your cancer."

— Carolyn Freeman, Breast Cancer Survivor

Notes

Who is on your team so far? What qualities matter most to you in a doctor or caregiver?

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Lesson 2 — Reflection 2

"I selected my team through referrals, and that continues to this day, with the different doctors I'm involved with."

— Brian Newman, Colon Cancer Survivor

Notes

Who could you ask for referrals? Who else do you want on your support team?

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Lesson 3

Understanding Your Diagnosis

Making Decisions & Learning About the Process

At this point, you may be beginning treatments, exploring additional options and thinking about sharing your diagnosis. As you face these obstacles, you can feel encouraged that many others have walked similar paths.

Key Points

• Don't be afraid to get a second opinion! It might help you feel more confident in your initial diagnosis and plan — it could also confirm feelings that you want to head in a different direction.

• There are many side effects that come with cancer treatments. Some may be unexpected or feel embarrassing, but it's important to share these issues so they can be treated and/or managed as well as possible.

• You'll have to choose when and how you'll share your diagnosis with others. This is a very personal process, and no one needs to do it the same way. Take your time and share as you feel led to do so.

Scripture

Romans 8:28

> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Spiritual Encouragement

Unexpected things — good and bad — are going to happen along the way, but God has good plans for you!

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Lesson 3 — Reflection 1

"One of the major unexpected things is all the blessings that come from this. I was not prepared for that."

— Julie Zimmer, Breast Cancer Survivor

Notes

Who could you share your diagnosis with when you feel ready?

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Lesson 3 — Reflection 2

"God gave me the opportunity, through cancer, to face death, to make sure I had a relationship with my Creator, to draw closer to my Creator — it gave me a witness opportunity."

— Keresa Richardson, Ovarian Cancer Survivor

Notes

What questions do you want to ask your medical team at your next appointment?

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Lesson 4

Fighting the Battle

Approaching the Fight and Finding Support

It's time to fight the battle. That could mean six months of treatments, a series of surgeries or even years of fighting to beat cancer. No matter what your fight looks like, there are a few topics we want to address and encourage you in.

Key Points

• Remember that this fight isn't something you have to go through alone — find a support group, get connected at church and allow friends and family to care for you.

• Your mindset is so important! When you hold onto a positive outlook, you can let go of the things that you can't control and focus on the things you can.

• If you're new to your cancer journey, slow down and try to take one step at a time.

Scripture

Exodus 14:14

> The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.

Spiritual Encouragement

Trust that God cares for you, even in the midst of the battle. He is there for you to lean on, to be your rock in times of pain and struggle.

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Lesson 4 — Reflection 1

"There will be healing, here or in Heaven."

— Keresa Richardson, Ovarian Cancer Survivor

Notes

Where do you need to invite others into your fight today?

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Lesson 4 — Reflection 2

"Keep your focus on the end goal, and the Lord will take you through."

— John Arakelian, Lung and Prostate Cancer Survivor

Notes

What is one step you can take this week without trying to solve everything at once?

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Lesson 5

Appreciating Survival

Staying Hopeful & Keeping Your Head Up

Survivorship is complicated — you might be completely in remission or still battling active cancer. Either way, you are likely making decisions on how to spend your time, as well as your outlook on what you're able to do.

Key Points

• Your cancer has likely changed you in many ways — many for the better. Utilize the growth and knowledge you've gained throughout your journey.

• Every day when you wake up, you may not be able to choose to be rid of your cancer, but you can choose to make the best of the time you have.

• Your survival is purposeful and powerful — you have the opportunity to spend time with people you love and impact others with your story.

Scripture

Psalm 33:11

> But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

Spiritual Encouragement

You have a purpose, and you're alive for a reason. God placed you exactly where you're at, and he is bigger than your circumstances, diagnosis and fear.

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Lesson 5 — Reflection 1

"Sweet times with loved ones. Nature. We just take so many things for granted, and now you look through life with a different lens."

— Dan Schell, Prostate Cancer Survivor

Notes

What are you grateful for today that you may have overlooked before?

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Lesson 5 — Reflection 2

"Keep your eyes on Jesus. Because he lives, we can face tomorrow."

— Debbie Williams, Pancreatic Cancer Survivor

Notes

How might your story encourage someone else walking a similar path?

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Lesson 6

Caregivers

Supporting a Cancer Warrior on Their Journey

A caregiver takes on so many roles — spouse, friend, advocate, helper, sounding board. If you are a caregiver, this section serves as a starting point to understand what's being asked of you and how you can best fulfill your role.

Key Points

• Understand that being a caregiver is more than providing emotional support — it's attending appointments, asking medical questions, helping with physical tasks and many other things the patient might need.

• The patient may not be able to ask the right questions or say no when they want to. You're the one who steps up to make sure concerns are not going unnoticed and the patient has the best care possible.

• Remember, you must take care of yourself too.

Scripture

Isaiah 40:29–31

> He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak... those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

Spiritual Encouragement

Caring for another person isn't easy — when you need more strength than you have, rely on the Lord's strength and his ability to renew your spirit.

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Lesson 6 — Reflection 1

"At times he was so overwhelmed with emotions that it was important to be there... to be a support to him and to encourage him."
— Jan Schell, Caregiver — Metastatic Prostate Cancer

Notes

How are you caring for your own emotional and spiritual needs?

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Lesson 6 — Reflection 2

"I had to advocate strongly within our family and our community to have her pull back and heal in this season."
— Debbie Williams, Pancreatic Cancer Survivor

Notes

What boundaries might help the person you care for rest and heal?

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Lesson 7

End of Life

Facing Difficult Circumstances & Tough Decisions

Although it's something none of us want to face, making end-of-life decisions can be an extremely important part of your journey. If you or a loved one is approaching this stage, consider some of the following.

Key Points

• When you know you're facing end-of-life preparation, make sure to take time to spend with the people you love.
• Have hard conversations as early as possible, so you don't have to worry about it as much later.
• Consider hospice care — this can provide you and your family with support and comfort in the knowledge that you will be as pain-free as possible.

Scripture

Revelation 21:4

> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

Spiritual Encouragement

There is no sadness, no pain and no fear with Jesus in heaven. Invite God into the conversation as you make difficult end-of-life decisions.

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Lesson 7 — Reflection 1

"Just because the end of life on Earth is coming to an end, it doesn't mean that's the end of their living."

— Shawn Tolleson, Caregiver — Lymphoma & Colon Cancer

Notes

What conversations with loved ones feel most important right now?

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Lesson 7 — Reflection 2

"Early on, he made the decision to get on hospice, and it was a blessing to us. They were able to manage his pain, and he was able to get out and do the things he wanted to do."

— Robin Vestal, Caregiver — Brain Cancer

Notes

What questions do you have about hospice or comfort care?

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