



Broken Bow resident writes Bible study for cancer patients

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By MADOLINE MARKHAM



Author and Broken Bow resident Karen Allen with her Bible study, *Confronting Cancer with Faith*, and CD, "The Comfort of His Holiness." Photo by Madoline Markham.

After 25 years of doing cancer research at UAB, Karen Allen found herself as a breast cancer patient in Kirklin Clinic. The experience was certainly not what she expected when she prayed for God to grow her faith, but the eight-year survivor has used her trials to form a ministry to encourage others.

"Each cancer experience is unique, but the theme is still the same because God doesn't change," she said. "You are not alone even though you feel so alone. God enters the path with you, and for me that gave me supernatural peace and joy in the midst of crisis."

In 2010, Allen, a Sylacauga native who has lived in Broken Bow for the past 26 years, published [*Confronting Cancer with Faith*](#), a Bible study for cancer patients, survivors and co-survivors, as well as anyone who wants to learn how to better minister to someone going through cancer treatments.

"It's not just my story," she said. "It's my story integrated into Biblical parallels and relevant scripture."

It was writing email updates during cancer treatments that first made Allen realize she could be a writer; friends who received the updates told her she should encourage others through her writing.

"People I knew said the emails inspired them," she said. "I didn't know it at the time, but the people I sent it to were forwarding the emails to many other people."

Allen realized there were a lot of books on cancer on the market, but she and her pastor at First Baptist Church found there was no Bible study to offer spiritual encouragement for cancer patients.

“To me it was unbelievable that there wasn’t one written already,” she said.

A few days after her last radiation treatment, she boarded a plane for a trip to Alaska and finished writing her journal, a written record of all the incredible things she had experienced daily during her treatments. Somehow en route, she and her husband lost their tickets, passports and the one thing she couldn’t replace: her journal.

“That journal was such a part of me,” she said, “but I rationalized that whoever found it would be blessed. I learned I would have been reliant on that journal to recall memories and circumstances, but I needed to rely on God and not my journal.”

And so Allen began writing a Bible study without her journal. It was a slow process, taking three and a half years start to finish. Her mom read each lesson as she wrote it, which Allen said was a way to build their relationship.

“She kept saying, ‘Gosh, I never knew you went through that,’” Allen said.

Allen wrote the 30 lessons independently of one another, dedicating each to someone in her own life or another cancer patient who’d lost their battle or a survivor, until the very end when she compiled them.

“When I put them all together after three years, it all fit together like puzzle pieces,” she said. “It only took 11 minutes. That was further affirmation that it was not of me but of God.”

Recognizing the importance of music to her healing journey as she worked on the Bible study, she also developed a CD of contemporary Christian songs that helped with her healing process. As the CD jacket explains, each song is a step to “true comfort in his holiness.” Allen accepts email requests for a copy of the CD, which costs \$5.

Since publishing the book in 2010, Allen has gotten emails from people across the country, from both theological scholars and people who, like her, had no theological training.

“One woman was brought to salvation through the study,” she said. “That just touches me that she and her husband grew closer and leaned on God through her illness. It was extremely humbling to me.”

The book has been sent to other countries, and Allen is currently talking with a man in Slovakia who wants to translate it.

Broken into six weeks of lessons, with five lessons per week, Allen recommends the book for individuals, families, small group, cancer support group or anyone who is interested. It’s not gender or breast-cancer-specific.

Allen has led large community studies and small groups through the book. She speaks on using your crisis to grow and give God glory and said she would love to help kick off a small group study.

Today, Allen is writing a Christmas play for fun and stays active with mission work in Northeast India, mentoring women, speaking and singing. She also continues to spread the word about *Confronting Cancer with Faith*.

“I keep marketing the book because I know there is hurt out there from cancer that is not being met,” she said. “It’s about developing a ministry of encouragement for difficult times, not just to get through it but to grow through it and use it. It requires discipline every single day.”

Confronting Cancer with Faith is available locally at Barnes and Noble at The Summit, Family Christian Stores in Inverness, Cokesbury in Vestavia, The Carpenter Shop in Vestavia and Briarwood Presbyterian Church Bookstore. For more information

on the book, visit <http://280living.wordpress.com/2011/09/28/broken-bow-resident-writes-bible-study-for-cancer-patients/www.confrontingcancerwithfaith.com>. To contact Allen, email Karen@confrontingcancerwithfaith.com or call 991-8618 or 862-0412.