

Survival and Hope Life After Cancer



Sherri Pickett, 44
DIAGNOSIS: BREAST CANCER

The Basics:

- **Residence:** Apple Valley
- **Occupation:** Unemployed; formerly a substitute teacher
- **Family:** 7 children – daughter, Kamrien Proctor, 21; son, Lawrence Pickett, 18; daughter, Kelsey Pickett, 15; daughter, Kyla Pickett, 13; daughter, Katrina Pickett, 10; son Jonathan Pickett, 8; son, Matthew Pickett, 5
- **Hobbies:** Doesn't do a whole lot for herself – whatever her kids are involved in
- **Philosophy:** Ultimately, God is in control. Just try and live every day to the fullest.

By Alberta Hale Crigler

In 2015, Sherri Pickett decided to leave her substitute teaching job in Barstow and move with her seven children to her ex-husband's home in Apple Valley, hoping to reconcile their relationship.

But a scant five months later, she discovered a lump in her right breast.

"That was in January 2016, Pickett said. But I didn't get a diagnosis until July 5.

"I did not have medical insurance, so I had applied for insurance through Covered California. Since I was unemployed, I qualified for Medical. Everything is really slow with Medical.

Following a series of procedures and referrals, Pickett finally had a diagnosis: breast cancer.

"I told my ex-husband and then we told the kids. I told them that there would

probably be some changes. But he said 'no, we're going to try and keep everything the same.' That is what we tried to do," Pickett said.

During her treatment, Pickett continued trying to do all of her mom duties, including taking children to and from school, shopping, cooking meals, and trying to keep life unchanged.

"At my second treatment, a nurse said I probably shouldn't be doing all that" she said.

"I think my kids didn't really see the seriousness of it because I was still trying to be mom as much as I could," she said.

"Before I started the chemo, I had lost 11 pounds. I was scared to death. I thought I was dying, but it was just stress."

The treatments took their toll. "First, they did chemo, six rounds every three weeks to shrink the tumors," Pickett said.

"I went by myself for the first



chemo. I had called prior to ask would I be able to drive myself home. I went at 8 o'clock. I ended up being there until 5 o'clock. And then I couldn't drive myself home. I wasn't sick but I did not feel well enough to drive home.

"My hair started coming out after the first treatment." In addition to fatigue and nausea, "my only other side effect was chronic diarrhea. I was living on boiled eggs, bananas, and apple sauce.

Pickett had a mastectomy on Feb. 13, and her pathology report indicated she had two different kinds of breast cancer. "I get confused (about

the results), but one for sure was HER2 positive," which meant her chemo continued for a year.

"I had 33 treatments of radiation. It wasn't so bad. Obviously going five days per week – it made me really tired. I was here with my kids and I had to take them to school and pick them up and all other kinds of things – I had to just push through it.

"In the very beginning I was hoping and praying for healing. At first, I thought the biopsy would say it wasn't cancer. Then, I hoped the chemo would make it completely disappear.

When it didn't, "I was kind of disappointed," Pickett said. "I

“The reality of ‘I am going to have my breast removed’ hit me like a ton of bricks.”

said, ‘OK, God, what happened? Didn't you get the memo?’

"There are some people that are miraculously healed, but that wasn't in His will for me. There had to be some purpose that I had gone through all that.

"The reality of 'I am going to have my breast removed' hit me like a ton of bricks. That is when I started telling more people.

Pickett has two friends she credits with helping her a lot. "Diane House helped provide meals and went with me when I got the biopsy done," she said. I called her a lot because of having anxiety; I just needed to talk it out to calm myself down.

"My friend Nikkia Ivory flew all the way from Maryland to come and pamper me while I was going through chemo. She wanted to take me for manicures and pedicures, and I had filed mignon for the first time."

Pickett joined a support group at St. Mary Medical Center. "I found the most helpful information from a support group," she said. "There is so much that the doctors don't tell you. Some of the things you don't even know to ask."

Pickett knows recurrence is a possibility, too. "At least one or two of the ladies in the

Caregiver Perspective



Not every cancer patient has someone to act as their caregiver.

"It changed my relationship with my ex-husband," Sherri Pickett said. "It made it worse."

"It was the first time we had ever prayed together, but I don't think he knew what to do. It put more strain on an already struggling relationship.

"Working was his coping mechanism in order to avoid what was going on – and that's what he did. He worked in Barstow and would leave here at 6:30-ish and then wouldn't come back home until 8 or 9 o'clock at night.

"He left (moved out) when I was going through radiation."

Post-surgery, Pickett's older children helped her. But she was not willing to ask anyone else for assistance. Now she says that was a mistake.

"It was like a big secret," Pickett said. Most people that I knew didn't know. I don't know why I was trying to keep it a secret.

support group had it come back," she said. "You are supposed to have a positive outlook, but it is still in the back of your mind.

Pickett says having cancer "makes you look at life differently." Now she believes in "not putting things off. I am trying to treat people differently – being more attentive to others' needs and trying to communicate more with people," she said.

She recommends people "try to be more patient, to be slow to anger, just to try and be calmer. Do not get so upset about little things that don't matter. Really look at the bigger picture."

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