



Project HEAL

Health through Early Awareness and Learning



A SPIRITUAL GUIDE TO BREAST
CANCER AND SCREENING



Get the Word Out on *Breast Health*

The next time you're at a church service, look around you. Did you know that one out of eight women sitting in those pews might get breast cancer? That's a woman's risk—about one in eight. It used to be that we didn't talk about breast cancer. But, we're talking about it more now. Talking to the women in our lives, getting the word out on breast health. Knowledge is power. It is important that the church does all it can to help women help themselves.

African American women are at higher risk of dying from breast cancer than other women. This is because too often the cancer is found later, after it has spread. Too many of us are not **doing our monthly breast self-exams, getting regular breast exams by a doctor or nurse and** getting regular mammograms (an x-ray picture of the breast that can find lumps before we can feel them). If we do these things, we have a good chance of finding problems earlier when they are most easy to treat. Many women wait too long to see the doctor if they do find a breast lump. We may be afraid to talk about or learn more about breast cancer. But remember—most breast lumps are not cancer. And finding breast cancer early is the most powerful tool we can use to fight this disease.

I can do all things through Christ which
strengtheneth me. Philippians 4:13 [KJV]

We know God will take care of us. But you have to help yourself, too. God has given the doctors knowledge and technology. This is a true blessing that comes from God.

African American women who catch the cancer early are getting treatment, surviving, and living full lives. Some of these women may even be sitting next to you in the pew, or a few rows up ahead. They may have already given a testimony of their experience. Or maybe they have not yet shared their story.



What I Know Now

WOULD I LIKE TO GO BACK TO BEING 20 AGAIN? Only if I knew then what I know now!

Oh, yes. When I was in my twenties, I didn't go to church. My spiritual health wasn't strong. And, I felt like I was looking for something. Not satisfied with my life. One Sunday, my aunt asked me to go to Friends and Family Day at her church. So I went and sat through the service. Afterwards, I felt better—more peaceful. I went again the next Sunday. Now, it's Sundays that get me through the week. I come to church to nourish my spirit.

We please God for being concerned about our bodies, our minds, and our spirits. To keep my mind sharp, I read and talk to friends

It's like a balance. You've got to have all three: body, mind, and spirit. When these three parts are at their best, I am whole, and I feel great.

and family about important matters. Part of keeping my body healthy means I go for my well woman exam (a check-up, clinical breast exam and pap test) every year. Now that I'm in my forties, I go for my mammograms every year, too.

She girds herself with strength and
strengthens her arms. Proverbs 31:17 [NKJV]



Know Your *Family History*

FAMILY REUNIONS ARE A SPECIAL TIME where we get the whole family together. There's plenty of good food and good company. We tell stories until the sun goes down. Whether at your reunion or just at the dinner table tonight, take the time to talk with the women in your family. There's an opportunity to share or learn your family history of breast cancer.

Has your mother, sister, or daughter had breast cancer? Did they have it before the age of 50? If the answer to either of these questions is yes, tell your doctor. He or she may say you need to have a mammogram before you turn 40. Talk to your doctor to find out for sure.

It's up to you to find out your family history. Remember that even if breast cancer is in your family history, it doesn't mean you will get it. Most women who get breast cancer don't have a family history. But every woman is at risk, and the risk gets higher as we get older.

As you go, Spread the Word

RICH IN OUR HERITAGE IS EACH GENERATION HELPING and passing wisdom down to the next generation. Picking up groceries for your grandmother, carrying your mother to church, or taking your aunt to the doctor. Taking care of our family is deeply rooted in our culture. These are things they know they can depend on you for. **But do they know that women at age 40 have the option to start annual mammograms?**

As you go, spread the word to each generation. Tell grandma that she still needs a mammogram every year. Tell mama that because she's over 40, she needs to have regular mammograms, too. **Tell daughter that because she's a woman she should know how her breasts normally look and feel so she could tell the doctor if something changes.** Support the women in your life and set a good example by doing the things you need to do for your own breast health. Share this information with them like a good family recipe. Keep the cycle going by spreading the word from grand-mother to grandchild. Generation to generation, we tell the story.



All women should be familiar with how their breasts normally look and feel. If you notice any changes like a lump or thickening, pain, swelling, a discharge, or a change in shape, color, or texture, see your doctor right away.

A mammogram can find a breast lump before it's big enough to feel. At this stage, breast cancer treatment is most successful.

Use the free will and good sense that God gave
you—**get your mammogram every year!**

*American Cancer Society Guidelines

If you are age... What to do...

40–44

talk with your doctor about the
option to begin yearly mammograms

45–54

mammogram every year

55+

can switch to mammograms every
other year OR
continue mammograms every year

What WISE Women Know About *Breast Health*

BERNICE AND MARILYN GREW UP TOGETHER, and they shared everything. After high school graduation, they went their separate ways. At their 20-year reunion, they met again. When they got talking, they found that they have very different views on taking care of themselves. Look and see what they had to say.

**If we are not of good
health how can we be a
blessing to anyone else?**

For all the reasons not to have a mammogram, there are stronger reasons why women should. Do it for yourself. Do it for your family. Remember

that God gave you your body as a gift, and we must be stewards of that gift. Don't let embarrassment, shyness, or fear keep you from taking care of yourself. Having a mammogram could save your life. Ask questions, get help, and take charge of your faith.

**Or do you not know that your body is the
whom you have from God, and you are**



Bernice

"I just don't have enough time to get a mammogram."

"I hear mammograms are really painful."

"What I don't know won't hurt me."

"I can't afford to have a mammogram."

"I have heavy breasts, and I feel funny about having a mammogram."

"I'm afraid of what I might find."



Marilyn

"There are things I always make time for."

"It's not painful, it's more like a discomfort, and it only lasts a few minutes."

"What I don't know could kill me."

"I can't afford not to have a mammogram."

"I haven't got anything the nurses and technicians haven't seen before."

"What's scary is when I don't have the knowledge!"

temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you,
not your own? 1 Corinthians 6:19 [NKJV]

Faith Gets You Through

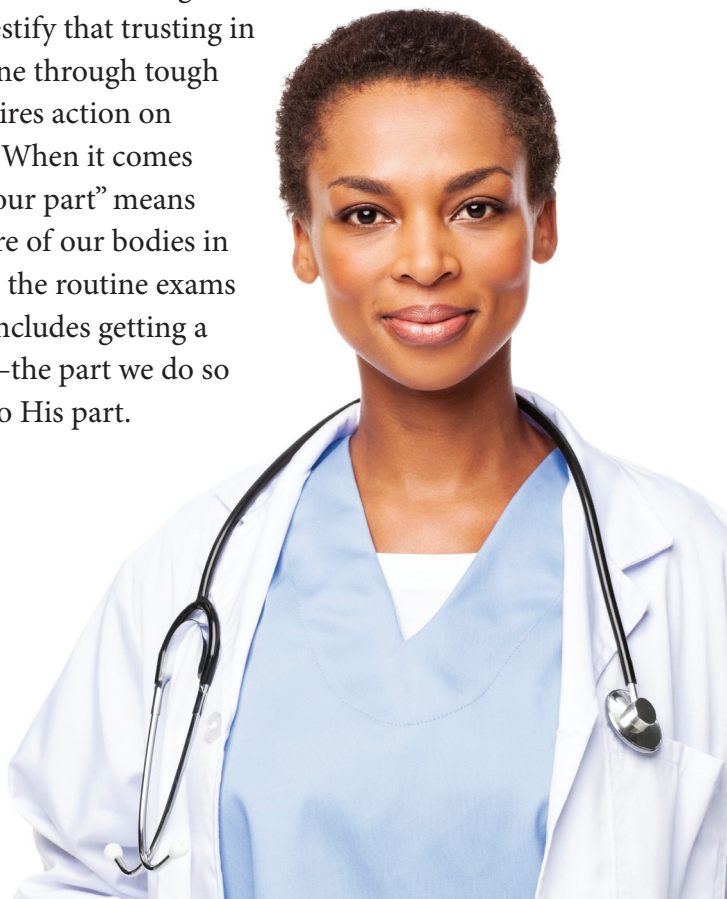


WE KNOW FAITH CAN WORK WONDERS. Faith gets us through the good times and the hard times. Faith can even help you at your mammogram appointment. You know that God will carry you through this, too. When you have faith, it helps you stay calm through the exam. That makes it go easier. It's normal to be a little nervous about the mammogram. But in a few minutes **you will have taken the first important step towards better breast health.**

For we walk by faith, not by sight.
2 Corinthians 5:7 [NKJV]

God Said He'd Feed Us But He **WOULD NOT** *Set the Table*

TO HAVE FAITH MEANS TRUSTING that God has the perfect plan for you. Your personal relationship with God has gotten you through some of life's challenges. You can probably testify that trusting in Him to carry one through tough times also requires action on one's own part. When it comes to our health, "our part" means that we take care of our bodies in general and get the routine exams we need. This includes getting a mammogram—the part we do so that God can do His part.



Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Psalm 100:3 [NIV]

How Will I Pay for a MAMMOGRAM?

IF YOU HAVE MEDICARE: Women age 40 and older can get a mammogram every 12 months. A baseline mammogram is available for women ages 35–39. You pay nothing for the test if your doctor accepts assignment. For more information visit <http://medicare.gov> or call (800) 633-4227.

IF YOU HAVE MEDICAID: Your mammogram should be covered. Call (877) 267-2323 to find out for sure.

FOR LOW-COST MAMMOGRAMS:

- **American Cancer Society**
 - To find free or low-cost screening and resources near you visit <http://www.cancer.org/treatment/index>
 - Or call the American Cancer Society at (800) 227-2345.
- **Maryland Residents**
 - Prince George's County residents call (301) 552-7774
 - Baltimore City residents call (410) 350-7191
 - Other Maryland Residents: (800) 477-9774
 - Or visit http://phpa.dhmf.maryland.gov/cancer/Pages/bccp_home.aspx
- **Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. Residents**
 - Visit <http://cancer.howard.edu/patients/screening.htm>

<http://bit.ly/CHAMPLab>

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SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

