

Shane Varga Update: My Own Words
by Shane Varga, 5-15-09

The last several weeks can be summed up by saying it has been filled with struggles, ups and down, learning experiences, and life lessons. For those of you wondering what chemo feels like, I will tell you what it feels like to me. The day of chemo is not really that bad at all. I don't get real nauseous or tired the day of chemo, but the next few days get progressively worse. Try to imagine the worst hangover you have ever had. Think of the way your stomach felt sour, unsettled, and irritated. Multiply the severity of that by about 5 and that is what the next 2-3 days feel like to me all day long. Keep in mind that this is WITH 4-5 drugs in my system for anti-nausea. I do get several hours of relief throughout the day, but I never know when it is going to happen for me. At these times I take advantage of it by eating as much as I can and anyone who knows me knows that my ability to consume large amounts of food can be pretty impressive. This has actually helped me to gain 2lbs since my treatments began.

The side effect that is the worst for me is fatigue. I would describe my fatigue as the energy level one would have with a severe case of the flu when your dehydrated and possibly considering going to the hospital for fluids because you feel so drained. However, that is not how I feel because my fatigue is not a tired, I was trying to give you an idea of the energy level I have to work with for that same period of 2-3 days after my chemo treatments. The fatigue I feel is one that I can only describe as coming from the inside out. It is an inner fatigue that you can feel down to your core. You can literally feel it in your bones. It is beyond and different from the feeling of exhaustion. Think of a battery that is very low. You cannot recharge it, you just have whatever is in it to work with. This does get better after about 5 days and the nausea does as well. However, if you think of my energy like the battery I described, if I was full before this started (even though I still had cancer) even on my best day I only have about 40-50% of that energy to work with. So, I can wake up strong and feeling pretty normal, but everyday tasks wear me down quickly. No more heavy lifting, running for distance or speed, or strenuous activities. I can probably do those things, but it is not worth how my body will recover. The next 9 months (6 months of chemo and 3 months more to get it out of my system) will just be an adjustment in which I have to accept I am not the same person I was before this started. Having said that, I still exercise because it is important, but my workouts are extremely light and more for maintaining and getting my heart rate up compared to muscle building and endurance training.

I don't say these things so that people will feel sorry for me or for pity, I only share my struggles because of the curiosity of those of you who are lucky enough to not know anyone who has gone through this before. Treatments are different for everyone depending on what type of cancer you have all the way down to how much you weigh. The next thing I am going to say may be difficult to understand and I really hope it is not misunderstood. If God gave me the choice right now to either go through this or have it taken away, I would choose to have cancer every time. I would go so far as to say I am GLAD I have cancer! Why? I say this because it will change me as a man and more importantly with my walk with Christ. Not only will it make me a better, stronger, changed man, but it will also change those around me. So, don't feel bad one bit for the discomfort I deal with because to me it is worth it. My suffering will be my blessing when this is all over. It is the prayers, encouragement, and strength that I draw from those of you who care enough about me to read this that makes it worth going through this. If my situation can in any way motivate anyone to be a better person, then how can I say this isn't worth it? The positive change it has already brought to some of my family and close friends has been amazing. I have had several people tell me they don't pray, but they are for me. Just experiencing that takes me back to my

comment about if this could be taken from me would I choose to. It would almost be selfish of me not to go through this based on the changes it has already produced.

In closing, I would say that I have had to be very mentally strong and positive through this. It has allowed me to view my situation as an opportunity rather than poor me I have cancer. I have never been closer to GOD in all my life and I would not trade that for anything I would ever have to go through. He has brought me the support I need through all of you and given me strength that I didn't have. The one thing I want everyone to please take from this is the following You don't need a positive mind only to beat Cancer. It can be applied to every struggle in life. When you have a disease you are forced to think positive because if you want to win the fight you have no other choice. However, it can be used to better every situation from depression to addiction and even relationships with others. We all have a choice and I will leave you with this. The way we think does alter the way our cells in our bodies react. Whether or not my negative and pessimistic thinking over the years contributed to my cancer in any way, I will never know. Bottom line is be good to each other and yourself!