

# Mary Wideman

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**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Distribution Center #2076**  
**Laurens, SC**

At the start of 2021, I had a mammogram and they found a lump in my breast. I was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a mastectomy. I'm in remission, but last October I found out that I have bladder cancer. I've had two surgeries — every three months they have to scrape my bladder, and it's painful after each treatment. I'm 56 and live with my twin sister Minnie, who's very supportive, as are my three brothers. The doctors are optimistic but it's scary because the cancer went into the muscle, and I've been a little depressed.

## **I wanted to lose weight because I was on the heavy side.**

My doctors said that would help me. Also, I have neuropathy in both my legs, and I was having problems walking. I started the Thrive Challenge and decided to share my story because I want people to know they need to see their doctors for check-ups and women should have regular mammograms.

## **I started by cutting out red meat, fried food, and sweets.**

I drink water and I eat fresh fruit, nothing canned. My sister does the cooking. She'll make baked chicken or salmon and collard greens with rice and gravy. I've lost 20 pounds and I can walk easier.

## **Moving motivates me.**

Exercising is hard right now, but I walk to my mailbox and back — that's about a mile — and I stretch my arms and legs when I'm sitting down.

## **Reading spiritual books gives me courage and helps me stay calm.**

I really like Start With Prayer by Max Lucado, and When Women Pray by T.D. Jakes. Even though I sometimes feel down, the books help me remember that God is in control and that he is a healer.

## **Every day I pray for other people going through challenges.**

I try not to be focused on myself. I pray for people who are terminally ill and depressed. Giving helps me feel fulfilled. I bought chairs for our church and hats and gloves for people who are homeless. If I were to win the Thrive Challenge, I would use the money to help somebody else. I can't just think about me!

## **I speak to myself in a positive way. I tell myself, "I shall live and not die."**

Life is so important to me. Every breath I take is like a breath of fresh air because I don't know when my last breath will be.



## **At my church, I have a lot of support.**

I join our services on Zoom when I can't go in person, so I'm still there with them. Everyone is praying for me and I feel connected to them, I know they care about me. My pastor, Doris, tells me not to get down. She sends me inspirational quotes, like this one: "Good morning, God is a God of a second chance. He is making all things new."

## **I love listening to gospel music.**

My favorites include "Changes" by William Murphy III, and "You've Been Good To Me" by Zacardi Cortez. Music brings me peace — it's a feeling I can't explain. I don't hear anything else, everything that's worrying me and all my cares are gone in that moment.

## **My friend, Janet, calls me and comes to see me.**

She tells me what's happening at work, she tells me to eat, and she makes me laugh. And she'll tell me about her grandson. She's my co-worker and has been through everything with me. One of my nieces, Naetosha, is a nurse and she'll give me advice. Another niece, Shanice, helps me too. They do shopping for me and for Christmas they bought me some nice nightgowns and a charm bracelet. They take me out for rides to the lake, I love getting out of the house for a breath of fresh air.

## **I never used to think about what life meant. Now, I don't take anything for granted.**

I've been looking forward to 2023 with an open mind. I want to be stress-free and go back to work. I'd love to take a girls' trip to Mexico: having fun, eating good food, seeing how people live, and listening to their voices.

## **I have so much gratitude and I tell everyone I love them.**

You have to show people you are thankful. The joy I experience every time I wake up is unimaginable. I say, "It's a beautiful day I haven't seen before."



THRIVE