



## Who is God When Life Stinks?

### Valentine's Day

I am crazy in love with my husband – and I regularly explain to him (perhaps to remind myself!) that it was his crazy insights on life that first so intrigued me to get to know him better. When I first met Bob in college he was “big man” on campus. Not only was he the star basketball center, but he stood an amazing 6’ 8” tall! That meant I had finally found a guy I could literally look up to – even when wearing heels. (I am 6’1” in flat feet.)

It was Bob’s unusual approach to life, not only his height, that kept my interest. He never was predictable, always full of surprises and his outlook on people and events was both incredibly perceptive at times yet often light-hearted. He so easily made me laugh – at myself, at life, and even good-naturedly at him!

Bob’s description of me would be that I am fiercely independent, capable and smart! All through school and college, Bob enjoyed life more than he enjoyed studies, so he could never comprehend how I would devote so much time to homework – when life held so many other options!! Through all these years of marriage, we have not yet figured each other out (although Bob says that whenever I get close, he changes!) but we surely have enjoyed the way our lives are stretched and enriched by seeing life through each other’s eyes. A deep love for each other also pushes us through those times when our differences cause some noisy clashes!

For people in love, Valentine’s Day can be a fun day, ranging from light-hearted reminders of love for each other to heavy expectations of what our kids would call “mushy” or romantic demonstrations of that love! Bob always said that he didn’t need a special day to remind him to show love to me (ahhhh!) but we usually found something about the day to add a fresh spark to our love for each other.

For those who don’t have a “special someone” to share the day, Valentine’s Day can be tense and hurtful. One year our teen daughter and several of her girlfriends made t-shirts with “Lonely Hearts Club” lettering, so that at high school (where girls love to flaunt what they received from their boyfriends) they would feel some comradery in their singleness!

This Valentine’s Day found me by myself - Bob was out of town for a training (*I felt flattered that Bob had lodged a complaint with the organizers about their choice*

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*of training dates!*) Rather than eat dinner alone, I made plans to have a light supper at a chic little restaurant in town together with my friend Nancy, as her husband also was out of town that week.

Nancy and I had met years earlier when we worked together, and became quick friends. We instantly discovered a shared love of life and laughter, and a tendency to “think outside of the box”. Both of us had experienced recent physical challenges with health complications, but we were determined to not let that interfere with the joy of life. Nancy had constant pain in her shoulders and back, and knew most of the local physical therapists by name from visiting so often! But she always had a smile, a twinkle in her eye and a concern for others. I loved her giggle – it was contagious and made our times together fun and memorable, regardless of the circumstances. Our friendship had included times together as couples, but also fun girlfriend outings to the movies, talking for hours over a cup of tea or comfortable times together out for lunch.

This evening at the little restaurant though, felt a bit awkward – two ladies sitting together in a room full of couples celebrating their love for each other. We tried to ignore the reminder that our husbands weren’t here, and we sat quietly talking about the events of the day. Much was on our minds, as the day had been a stressful one.

The stress came from recent events in both of our lives. Earlier this day, we had gone together to the radiologist’s office for my appointment – the same office I went to by myself every year for annual mammograms. The reason for my appointment this day was for a biopsy– a lump had been discovered in one breast just the week before during my annual well woman exam. I thought “probably no problem” about the lump, because my younger sister had a similar finding and it turned out to be a cyst. However, another one of the six girls in my family had already experienced breast cancer, followed by a lumpectomy, radiation and five years of medication. We all knew it was imperative to find out more about this lump that had invaded my body, so we quietly but calmly had gone today to take the first step to getting answers. Nancy came to be my support.

Nancy’s life was facing uncertainty also, and as we sat in the radiology waiting room, she updated me on the job search for her husband, or rather, the lack of results in the job search. He was out of town this week earnestly following up on some possi-

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ble leads. His very successful position had just been eliminated, and the job market was tight, as was the housing market. Moving out of state was likely, and that carried many unknowns.

Pulling out our reading glasses in the restaurant (and reflecting on how quickly age catches up with us), we both tried to focus our eyes and our minds on the menu and what to order. Although our hearts were heavy, we pushed those concerns aside to enjoy the tasty choices for our palates and our stomachs.

We were expecting our waiter to come take our order, but instead we were interrupted by a different waiter silently placing long stemmed roses in front of each of us. Startled, we looked up and around the room. No one else was receiving roses, so we glowed for the moment thinking this was something arranged by our out-of-town husbands.

We, of course, needed to know more! Why did WE get roses, and no one else? Who were they from, and did we have secret admirers?! The waiter offered only a brief explanation... Apparently the attentive restaurant owner had seen an opportunity to lift the countenance of two weary looking ladies, so he directed the waiter to bring the roses to our place. Looking around, it became humorously obvious that in this room, filled with starry-eyed couples dining together, Nancy and I looked quite forlorn. We touched the gentle petals of the beautiful flowers, looked at each other and giggled out loud, a healing sound in our stressful times of concern.

Valentine's Day has traditionally become a day to celebrate bold assurances of love. But this evening was filled with great uncertainty and questions. What would the biopsy report reveal? (It would be a week before results - don't you hate the waiting?) Where or when would a job open for my friends? Would our prayers be answered quickly and to our expectations, or would we face long waits for answers and more challenging times ahead? We had both already faced many difficulties in our lives, but today's concerns about jobs, moving, and possible cancer still loomed large. Frankly they intimidated us. There were no answers yet. No "quick fixes" in view.

We sat together in the restaurant as our dinner was presented. The delicious

smells of freshly-prepared entrees mingled with the delightful fragrance of our long-stemmed roses. Through the unexpected kindness (or pity?) of a restaurant owner we were reminded that God is infinitely resourceful when He wants to remind us of his love. He can speak his love into our lives, whether we are single, married, or down-hearted, even through the simple gestures of a stranger. God was quietly giving us his assurance that despite the unknowns and difficult days ahead, we could rest confident in the never-changing truth that **God loves us!**

“GOD IS LOVE.”

It would be a timely reminder for the events ahead ....

**Here is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.**

I John 4:10

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