



## Who is God When Life Stinks?

### WHOSE FACE?

Our daughter Becky was living in Connecticut at this time and, when she heard of the complications of Bob's bleeding, had flown to Florida and joined us while Bob was still at the local hospital. Our youngest child, Crystal, also came up from her university located ninety miles south of our home town. Together they helped listen to doctor reports and started a notebook with records and sketches of some of the challenging details in each new emergency for Bob. Our son, Bob, living in New Hampshire, was helping to send email updates to the many supportive, praying friends and family.

Now that Bob was moved 45 miles from our home to the university hospital, we were not certain how to accommodate all of us travelling, sleeping and eating. Bob had been concerned about taking care of his three "girls" and told me to look into an inexpensive hotel in town for a few nights. Unknown to me, a friend of ours contacted one of the churches in this university town and discovered they had an apartment that was sometimes available for short term rental. It happened to be available for only this Friday and Saturday nights. This was good news, as it now was announced to us by hospital staff that TONIGHT (Friday) Bob would have emergency open heart surgery and a pulmonary embolism (retrieving blood clots from vessels heading into the lungs).

Our new heart surgeon had explained that several blood clots were visible in the arteries leading into his lungs and heart, in addition to the one swinging into his heart valve with every beat. In order to remove these, and the filter, Bob's chest would have to be cut open and his sternum sawed apart (this is done with some heart repair surgeries). Additional danger was involved as his body would be chilled and put on a heart and lung bypass. With all of these efforts, it was still uncertain if the clots could be safely retrieved. We were notified that any clot breaking loose would stop the heart and end Bob's life!

### **Life and death were staring at us... which would God choose??!**

As we were thinking over the severity of this scheduled surgery, into Bob's tiny cubicle came a stream of visitors—probably breaking all ICU rules! We were still new to this hos-

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pital and didn't know the routines, and we're not sure how everyone was allowed to enter through normally very strict check-in points. Two of Bob's work colleagues arrived, then our Sunday School teacher and his wife, an assistant pastor and his wife, and Ruth's sister and brother-in-law. TEN of us huddled around Bob's bed, with the curtains pulled tightly behind us, hitting us in the backs.

But curtains could not block the sounds of upbeat conversation and laughter coming from our pod! Bob's best coping is done with humor—and our friends joined right in. The surgery could not be attempted until Bob's partial lunch was fully digested, because of the anesthesia he would receive. Then, additional waiting time was added because the heart surgeon was called into another emergency situation. So we all just stood at the bedside, talking, joking, and eventually praying together for Bob's surgery, his surgeon, and his life.

Our daughters had gone out to get food, and to settle their things into the rented apartment which was about 15 minutes away. They promised to return when I needed them. It was 8:30 p.m. when the attendants finally came to wheel Bob away.

**We needed to kiss good-bye, and we knew this could be the final one.**

In our hearts, we wanted God to bring us back together! We loved being partners in this life here on earth. Our deepest desire, though, was that **WHATEVER** the outcome, God would work for his purpose and his glory.

Laying on his hospital gurney, ready to roll out the door, Bob looked me in the eyes lovingly. His words rang clear and strong as he said two words, "No regrets". What great hope was in that sentiment! If I had to face life alone, without my husband, it would be his parting gift to me that I should not look back with regret, but with sweet memories of happy times, and hard times—times we shared together in love for each other, for family and for God.

Bob was wheeled away from us to head to surgery and our friends offered to stay with me and wait. We had been warned that Bob should be approximately 8 hours in the oper-

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ating room. At this point, my tiredness was mixed with a confidence that Bob was in good hands—and I knew that my body needed to rest for whatever news would be announced in the coming hours. It would be best to head to the apartment and try to sleep.

As the girls and I stretched together across the bed in the apartment and tried to rest a bit, Bob lay on the bed in the operating room with a profound sense of peace. He has a love for all types of technology and was delighted to find a large plasma screen in the operating room, broadcasting his vital signs. It reminded him that his favorite baseball team would look great on that screen! Then, looking closer, he read his blood pressure numbers, his pulse and his heart rate. Each measurement was NORMAL—not elevated as would be expected for someone who is facing life-threatening surgery! As the anesthesia was applied, Bob smiled to think about his post-surgery options.

“When this is over,” he reflected, “I will wake up to see Ruth’s face, or Jesus’ face! Either one will delight me—it’s a win-win!”

Four hours later the phone would ring at the apartment—and the doctor’s assistant announced that the surgery was proceeding well, with clots removed. It would be another three or more hours before Bob’s body would be stitched up, warmed up, and brought back to the CICU. All the medical advice had warned us that for the first 24 hours after surgery Bob would be non-responsive. Determined that I still wanted to be there when he returned to the ICU, I left the warm apartment at 4:30 a.m. to head out into the night air and drive to the hospital. I wore a bright blue shirt, just in case Bob would break all expectations and open his eyes. I wanted him to see it was not just medical staff dressed in scrubs at his side, but ME!

I was definitely not prepared for all the many tubes, wires, drains, pumps, and dye stains on Bob’s naked, uncovered body. As I cautiously walked in, a male nurse was working feverishly to address all the details of Bob’s post-op care. It was only for a quick five minutes that I was allowed to stand by his side and take in all the efforts being made

to bring my husband back to alertness. Bob's eyes opened slightly, but no acknowledgement yet, as he was still under the influence of anesthesia. I wandered alone down the quiet hallway to rest in the waiting room until another five minute visit at 5:30 a.m. and another at 6:30. By then, it was encouraging to see that Bob was beginning to stabilize, and was resting, but obviously this would be a long process. I decided to return to the apartment and my sleeping daughters. As I crawled into the bed, my tired body was grateful for the promise of a few hours of sleep.

It would be awhile before Bob could acknowledge that he was waking up ALIVE! I was eager to be rested and get there to greet him when he did!

**Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God.**

### **I Corinthians 10:31**

From: Bells  
Sent: Sunday, June 17, 2007  
Subject: From bad to worse

Every 2 days, events turned worse for Bob in the hospital (13 days now) but instead of fretting over the traumatic events, we kept looking for where we saw GOD SHINE in the details.

For example:

When in the ER for swollen ankle, the Emergency Dept doctor ran EXTRA tests on Bob's chest that showed small lung clots (an x-ray had already been taken and showed lungs were "clear")

When inserting a filter in Bob's groin area to prevent more clots in lungs or heart, they discovered additional clots in his right groin.

When Bob bled out into his abdomen due to blood thinners, it was the follow-up CT scan that disclosed that the filter was traveling to his heart

When the heart surgeon in Ocala said "I don't know what to do"(as he had NEVER seen this), our nurse friend just "happened" to stop by the room to say she would contact a doctor she formerly worked for at University of Florida in Gainesville (1 hr from here) When they transferred Bob to Shands Hosp. at UF and did tests to see how far the filter had moved, they made the discovery of potential life ending clots in his heart.

When doing heart surgery, they were able to also remove clots in the pulmonary arteries, heading straight for the lungs.

So. we are now back to the initial clots in his legs - which are still there and need to be addressed - as soon as he heals from the 7 hr. open heart surgery and when all the tubes can be removed from his neck, arteries, heart, throat, bladder, etc! So please keep praying wisdom for the doctors and continued strength for us.

WOW! Yes, life can be tough, but GOD is PRESENT!

Tonight (Sunday) Bob is alert, though tired, sore but ALIVE and grateful!

Love you all and thank you for praying! (and calls and cards, and patience!)  
Ruth

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