



Who is God When Life Stinks?

“S”-“U”-“C”--

When I returned to the hospital CICU, it was uncertain what to expect! We knew that many people were praying for Bob and we were extremely grateful and in awe that he had survived the surgery. Bob’s eyes had opened slightly already, but he did not show any recognition of me being there in the early morning hours after his surgery.

Would his brain be okay? When could he begin to talk? How long would his wrists be tied to the bed? That probably disturbed me the most, as the straps holding down his wrists made him appear to be a “threat”. But I was told this was simply a precaution for all patients with the breathing tube, because their reflexes caused them to try to yank out the tube that went long down into the throat.

We were greeted in the ICU by a smiling nurse—eager to tell us that Bob had asked for a pad of paper already and was trying to write simple questions. How promising that sounded! The nurse explained that Bob was apparently in extreme pain in the groin area, and showed me a large incision that had been cut for the heart lung bypass apparatus. Bob had not known about that, and seemed dismayed at the unexpected pain in this area. At least I could understand why that would be so upsetting to him. It was clear from all the tubes, wounds, and wires that Bob must feel very uncomfortable in many other ways also.

Now as I leaned over to kiss Bob’s forehead, he started banging the bed with his hand, wrists still bound to the bed. I knew Bob couldn’t talk, so felt worried that something was very wrong. In fact, this appeared to be spasmodic-type behavior, the repeated banging of his hand, the questioning look in his eyes. I sucked in a deep breath and tried to figure out what was going through my husband’s mind to cause this behavior. Looking more closely, I noticed that his fingers seemed to be drawing shapes on the bed sheet.

“Oh, boy, what is this about?” I worried. Then, I recognized letter shapes. “Wait! After this type of surgery patients are supposed to take at least 24 hours to respond and to

recognize.” Already Bob has been trying to write on a clipboard for the nurse, and is now spelling. I recognize the letter “S”, then a “U”, and a “C”.

Prior to our move to Florida, Bob worked every day with criminals. As a probation officer, he often interviewed or conferenced with people who used swear words continuously and without caution. Yet never, in twenty five years of his work, had I heard him bring home any coarse language. I often wondered how he could filter out all that conversation from his mind, and recognized that it took a great deal of determination and discipline.

Now, just recovering from anesthesia, perhaps he wanted to tell me how badly this all felt, and was spelling a word he normally would not use, but was easy to recognize - this “S-U-C-K-S”!

Wait—another “C”, “E”, “S”, “S”. Bob is asking me whether the surgery to remove the filter and life-threatening blood clots was a SUCCESS!

“YES, yes!” I am delighted to let him know. The surgeon was able to even tease out all the smaller clots from the pulmonary arteries and felt confident that Bob’s chances for physical recovery were excellent! Now, after seeing Bob’s alert mind, and eager attitude, I too felt confident in his mental recovery as well.

In the next few days, Bob raced through recovery. By day two after surgery, he agreed to let me head back for a friend’s wedding, especially since our daughter Crystal was one of the bridesmaids. I attended just the wedding, but happily reported on Bob’s successful surgery to all who asked. I said good-bye to Becky, as she would head back to Connecticut that night after the wedding reception. Crystal had commitments to travel to Thailand the following week on a missions trip, so she would return to her apartment in Orlando to get ready for her two week travels.

I wanted to be near Bob during these days of recovery, and from our daughter-in-law in New Hampshire we learned of a relative-of-a-friend, who offered their guest room to me. It was a twenty minute drive from the hospital, but it was a homey, welcome place for my tired body late at night when I left the hospital. Each morning I would load up my bag,

not knowing if I would need to return to their hospitality again. Although the surgery had been successful, we did not know when Bob's discharge would be, as it depended on his blood thinning medications. My work schedule was flexible, since it was summer time, but I tried to head home some nights to do laundry, repack, catch up on work, and return as soon as possible to the hospital.

Bob would continue recovery in the university hospital for 13 days total. This was in addition to the nine days previously at our local hospital. It seemed like a very looong 22 days ago that Bob entered the ER for a swollen ankle. And it seemed like forever ago that I had started on the cancer alternative treatment. Every day, whether travelling, working, or at the hospital, I had faithfully been taking the frequent doses of this alternative medicine.

Then it struck me! We had expected to choose surgery for the cancer tumor in me, and had been disappointed when God directed us away from that. With all the anxiety about choosing which treatment would be best, we had no idea that two months later, Bob would be hospitalized and need life-saving surgery. My own surgery would have put me in stitches, radiation, chemo or just at a time when I desperately needed to be with my husband. Instead, I was feeling strong and healthy (although tired of hospitals and of waiting for reports).

Amazing!

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31

From: Bells
Sent: Tuesday, June 21, 2007
Subject: "We are blessed"

I wish we could just phone each of you to express in person our thanks for the prayer and care you have shown to us. Exhaustion has worn my voice to "raspy" at best this week, so we have spent a few quiet days "recharging".

Our family giggles at memories of long car trips with Bob. He was always a great driver but didn't like to "waste time" en route to our destinations. So.... the three children and I knew that when he stopped the car to refuel, this was our limited opportunity for restroom breaks. Bob always teased that if the car tank was FILLED before our bladders were EMPTIED we just might be left behind.

After the dizzying pace of travel through our past 18 days of 2 hospitals, 6 different room assignments, 10 days of ICUs, changing diagnoses, dozens of doctors and medical staff, we have needed a PAUSE TO REFUEL!

After the surgery, Bob has been real uncomfortable (to be expected with open heart surgery). However, his leg with the clot has continued to swell. The physician has ordered continued bed rest with hopes that the Coumadin will soon thin his blood to appropriate levels. This can take a few or many days.

For the first couple of post-surgery days, I found hot tears streaming my cheeks each time I looked at Bob - tears of exhaustion, gratitude for God's protection, and empathy for Bob's discomfort. Crystal drove up from Orlando last night to sit with Bob so I was able to return home to Ocala for a nap, check in at work, and repack for a few more days.

I am feeling fresher this morning (in a good sense) and will leave ASAP as Bob is counting on my help. We're going slowly as we resume this journey and appreciate how y'all are cheering us on.

As Bob said from under his oxygen mask just hours after surgery..."We are blessed!"

Love,
Ruth & Bob Bell

PS I have misplaced my cell phone (must have had "stuff" on my mind!) and am using Bob's.

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