



Who is God When Life Stinks?

Big, Strong Men

Here we are again...the ambulance is pulling up at our local hospital's emergency entrance. As the ambulance attendants very quickly wheel Bob in, this time I am intensely aware of Bob's seriously grave condition and the obvious reason for alarm. How comforting it was to see in the hallway our SS teacher Gary, who had arrived, as well as our EMT friend! I needed these friends to join my efforts to advocate for quick medical action!

For many years, Bob and I had lived in Philadelphia... first attending college downtown where we met, and then living in a low rent area of town after we married. The streets in these parts of town were dangerous, and although I have never been easily scared, it clearly would be foolish to walk around alone at night.

Remember though, that my "date" during college days was a 6'8" tall, muscular, athletic young man! Bob and I didn't have a car when dating, or much money, so we often got together to just walk and talk. We would leisurely stroll along the streets, enjoying the many historical aspects of downtown Philly. These lovely sights were mingled with NOT so desirable corners and alleys. As long as I was walking beside my big, strong man it never worried me what sections of town we were in. (I giggled years later when learning that even his basketball friends felt this same way while walking around town with him!)

But my strong, muscular man had just had his chest cut wide open four weeks ago, and his strong muscles were now compromised from so much restriction to bed rest. He was barely breathing next to me as he lay on his narrow hospital stretcher in this tiny ER room. The ER doctor was frantically trying to figure out how to restore Bob's breathing, but was not having much success. The danger here was very real, and I was worried!

Just then, into our room walked our neighbor (who had come into our house while Bob lay there collapsed) with the pastor and another coworker of mine. As they joined Gary and our EMT friend, strength entered my heart. I now stood surrounded by the wisdom and spiritual strength of these five godly men. We talked together as Bob drifted in and out of awareness. In the few minutes when Bob was alert, he managed to dish out some teasing and quips. As we tensely waited for medical staff to make decisions, Bob opened his eyes at one point and complained about the glare coming from the foot of the bed—a quip directed at the bald spot on the head of our SS teacher Gary, who was standing there under the light!

The emergency department physician had no knowledge of Bob's case, so our friends helped me carefully explain to him the recent life saving surgery at the university hospital where the travelling filter was removed—the same filter that had originally been placed in Bob's chest by THIS hospital. It was clear to me, and perhaps to our friends, that not much was being done for Bob. The clots were blocking blood flow to his heart, and his blood pressure kept dropping... and dropping. Intravenous dosing of neosynephrine worked to raise his pressure a bit, but the whispered tones indicated that it was not enough. Was there anyone who would know what to do?!?

At one point of Bob's alert moments, the pastor bent near Bob's ear and asked, "Is there anything you need me to do?" Bob immediately remembered the physician at this pastor's church, who had previously called Bob during his first hospitalization here, and had also stepped in later, at our request, to consult on several issues.

"Yes, Pastor, please call Dr. A. and ask him to come in right away!" Perhaps Bob did not realize that it is not normal protocol to call a physician, who is not assigned to your case, in the middle of the night, out of their home. Or perhaps Bob DID realize that without additional medical advice, he would not survive the night here at this hospital. We already knew that the hospital staff would be insulted if we rejected their assigned doctor. They had stated, VERY FIRMLY, that they would NOT authorize Bob to move to the university hospital because of his dangerous, unstable condition.

How grateful we were to see this physician friend of our pastor arrive! We waited as he diplomatically cut through the politics of "who's in charge here". He discussed Bob's case with the attending doctors, watched the blood pressure continue to drop, and looked worried about the continued doses of neosynephrine.

Within about thirty minutes, Dr. A. took me aside. "Do you realize", he said, "that Bob is not stable enough to travel on an ambulance to the other hospital?" I shook my head in agreement. "You also need to know that if he stays here any longer, he will not survive the night." These honest words of our physician friend, who had so kindly come to Bob's aid several times before, should have caused me to panic, but incredibly I did not! I had prayed for wisdom, and God had surrounded me with a circle of men who were praying silently and watching closely. Now, into this circle had entered a man of incredible medical knowledge and wisdom, and he was asking me to make a decision on the options.

“Do you want to take the risk of moving him right now?” he asked. It was my decision to make, as it would be medically unethical for a physician to recommend transport. “What do you think I should do?” was my concerned reply. I had a sense of urgency and a determination that God was going to **keep his promise** and give me the ability to decide correctly.

This physician reminded me of Bob’s first ambulance delivery to the university hospital, when the filter and blood clot had been dangerously perched on his heart’s edge. His comments were meant to remind me that with God, sometimes imminent dangers are held off, if that is God’s desire.

“Please, Bob needs to go!” I answered with conviction. Everyone in the room recognized the uncertainty of moving Bob, and the ER physician still strongly disagreed. But, with quiet determination, our physician friend completed the paperwork for transport. As we waited for the ambulance crew to arrive, I hugged and thanked the big, strong friends who had stayed by my side during these last few precarious hours. It would now be my private journey to travel the 45 miles with my husband, as the ambulance sped in the dark night to the university hospital.

As they pushed Bob out the door on the stretcher I asked the EMT staff, “Where can I sit?” By now I was totally exhausted, both physically and emotionally. It was hard to imagine that just TODAY, I had already taken Bob up to the university clinic and back home. Then I had driven to Orlando airport (3 hours round trip) to say “good-bye” to our precious children and grandchildren, returning home just in time for this new crisis.

We had already come by ambulance ride to this local hospital, and now were making a desperate attempt to drive to the highly specialized emergency department of the university hospital.

The driver of the ambulance said I should sit up front with her, but she was sternly corrected. “In this situation,” the other EMT member said, “his wife should be sitting in the back.”

Ohhhhh. Now it was very clear. My husband **was not expected to arrive alive** at the hospital, and I needed to spend the last few minutes of his life next to him.

My seat was past the head of Bob’s stretcher, and the EMT member was by his side. IV’s were hung, and sirens started. As we rushed through the dark night, my thoughts

went directly to the answers to prayer we had already seen. Strong, capable helpers were there when we needed them. A call by the pastor to his physician friend, who could cut through the red tape was sending Bob to potential help. An EMT worker, carefully bending over my husband in the ambulance, had been sensitive to my need to spend a few final moments seated nearby my husband.

“Thank you, God, for your wisdom. So much has happened today already. With all that may still happen, I really need to get a few minutes rest.” With that thought, I leaned my head against the side of the ambulance wall. Supernaturally, a calm of rest settled my anxious body and for the 20 minute ride, in a speeding ambulance, I succumbed to a cautious, light sleep.

**And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

Philippians 4:7

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