



## Who is God When Life Stinks?

### DYING ...

Laying open on the nurse's desk, was my beeping cell phone. My battery was dying and I definitely needed it to last a few more minutes. My lonely wait in the deserted hospital hall had been interrupted by the urgent message that *it was time*... "You need to call family NOW!"

The expectation probably was that I would place phone calls from my hallway solitude, but the cell phone had very little battery left, and I knew it would soon die. I remembered that there was a phone at the nurses' station in the CICU and asked if I could come in and call from their phone on the desk.

Instantly erased from my memory were any phone numbers of family and friends! In order to have these family and emergency phone numbers, I needed to copy them off my cell phone directory. I prayed for the cell battery to hold on! A young nurse-in-training sat at my left hand and another on my right—they were assigned to watch over me in this time of loss and death. Also at the desk, to my right, were monitors for each of the six beds in this pod—displaying each patient's vital signs and heart rates.

Slowly and deliberately, I first chose the number of a local friend who might be able to leave her family in this early morning hour to walk me through the coming grief-filled moments. "Bob is dying"... I heard the words calmly escape my lips. It's not a phrase you practice or prepare for, so the composure in my voice surprised me. It would take 50-60 minutes for her arrival, and slowly I began calling down the list of our family members, all who live out of town.

I could not see Bob's bed from where I sat. But I was aware of the sounds and lines on the monitor with his bed number. I began to dial our son, who had just returned with his family to their home in New Hampshire that night from visiting with us here in Florida. The phone rang next to his bed, and his groggy voice answered. Just as I started to talk to him, the monitor next to me, corresponding to his dad, began to beep urgently and long. I looked at it more closely—fluctuating lines and rhythms were gone and replacing them was one long, solid flat line.

Quickly I understood the situation. Although probably in shock, I calmly explained to our son, "I'm calling to tell you ...your daddy is gone". His groggy greeting turned instantly into heavy sobs and I promised to call him right back.

Across the table from me now stood the heart surgeon. Unknown to me, a big, strong male nurse was heading the CPR efforts on Bob at this time. Twice, the heart surgeon

moved toward this nurse, and the CPR team, to say it was time to stop efforts. Instead, something or Someone kept the CPR work going, and a heartbeat reappeared.

Now as the surgeon was across from me a solemn look was on his face—he was examining the data. My husband and I had confidence in the skill of this surgeon and had been touched by his compassion in Bob’s earlier surgery just three weeks ago. By now my body was shaking, but my voice remained calm. Looking into his eyes, I inquired, “Doctor, is there anything more you could try?”

“No”, his heart-felt reply came. “He will not survive surgery”. Gently he stood and walked around the desk toward Bob’s bed—this time to end the CPR efforts for certain. Within just two minutes he was back, behind me now with his hand on my chair. He turned my chair around so that I could look straight into his face.

“I am going to operate” were his serious words, followed by a question. “Do you understand?”

Bob had made it very clear to everyone during his hospital stay that I was his “voice” when he could not speak. “Yes, doctor, I understand. But please know that Bob would want to be a whole man.” Realities of brain impairment and life quality were unspoken but understood by both of us.

Neither Bob nor I desired to play God by demanding heroics that rob would all essentials of healthy life. Nor did we want to insist that God follow our plans. We knew to trust that HIS plans are often not understood by man.

As Bob was rushed out the door the team leader demanded I be called over. “She needs to kiss him *one last good-bye*”... and I did.

My heart should be panicked, but instead was filled with gratitude. Our young nurses-in-training rubbed my back as I smiled through my tears. “Thank you God, for a husband who loved me so well”. I was speaking out loud, with gratitude from the bottom of my heart. The nurses looked at me with saucer-sized eyes as my voice repeated over and over my gratitude for God’s goodness to us through 30 years of marriage – remembering the fun, the laughs, the love and friendship shared.

***God had shown us so much of his love and care over the years, and He did not need me to beg for more!***

**For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**Romans 8:38-39**

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