



Who is God When Life Stinks?

I Think I Should be Screaming Now?!

Bob's stretcher was whisked away down to the operating room and I was left sitting at the CICU desk, with two stunned, nurses-in-training still at my side. The other nurses had begun their early morning shift change, and needed me to leave the pod. Graciously, they arranged to take me to a small conference room next to the waiting area on the CICU floor.

It was a tiny room. Impersonal. Nothing on the plain white walls. Straight-backed plastic chairs lined the sides of the room. A long rectangular table was in the center.

For an awkward moment, the nurse-in-training and I stared at each other. What now?

How was I supposed to act while I waited alone in this stark room for the announcement of a heroic but futile surgery on my husband as they ripped open his chest again? What could I possibly do or say?

Shouldn't I be screaming in panic now, or begging God to rescue my man from almost certain death?

Strangely, I did not feel the need to do ANYTHING. (This is definitely out of character for a problem-solving, solution-seeking personality like mine!) No tears fell. No screams came. My body was still shaking, probably from the shock of that final good-bye kiss on the cheek of my husband's lifeless, rigid body as they rushed him out of the room!

I pulled the light flannel blanket tighter around my shoulders, and an unusual blanket of trust began to wrap around every fiber of my body and mind. It happened so profoundly. I surprised myself with the calmness of my attitude.

Over the past several months, my own health crisis with cancer had begun a painful "surgery" on my inner heart's "control issues". God was slowly stripping away my need to be in charge, to always have solutions. With cancer, I had found a task that was beyond my ability to fix, or organize, or plan for. God kept reminding me daily – often gently, but sometimes forcefully - that **He did not need MY suggestions or my help.**

Instead, He simply wanted my trust. He wants me to believe that He loves me, despite the circumstances. He desires my love to be for Him first. With love for God first, the passion for life and the adventures He sends will follow.

I should feel bewildered. Instead I felt blessed. Grateful to be in the best hospital for

miles around. I should feel agony. Instead, I'm amazed that Bob had survived the ambulance ride here. Instead of being tortured with worry, there is an incredible thankfulness for a doctor who said "there is nothing I can do" and then miraculously changed his mind and rushed Bob into surgery! Could it be that God had already been at work to suddenly change the doctor's mind?

I feel a certainty. Not that Bob would live. In fact, I was quite aware at this time that in any moment from now, I could be a widow, with cancer, sitting alone in this small, windowless room. No, the confidence was not in WHAT would happen, but in WHO was there. God was with me. The cancer tumor in my breast could not change that truth. The clots filling Bob's arteries and blocking all blood flow to his heart, brain and other organs could not contradict God's love. Death would not be able to thwart God's perfect plan for our lives.

What an odd moment. Why didn't impending death bring a hysterical reaction with fearful cries? What caused this overwhelming sense of calm?

As I sat down in one of the rigid, plastic chairs of this private little waiting room, I saw out in the hallway my friend Dorothy arriving. Before the nurse quietly took her exit, I warmly thanked her for staying with me. My friend had arrived to help me with the sorrow of this day.

**"O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?"
I Corinthians 15:55**

From: Sue V. (Ruth's sister)
Date: Tuesday, July 10, 2007
Subject: 8:15 a.m. update—Bob Bell in O.R.

Dear family,

Ruth called from the hospital around 7:30 a.m. and asked me to give the family updates. I just called the hospital - Bob is in the Operating Room right now - let's continue to pray for a miracle, if that is what God wills. And pray for Ruth and the children. The hospital told me to call back in an hour, so I will give you an update then.

Crystal is driving from Orlando to the hospital. Becky is looking for a flight from Connecticut to Orlando, and I am looking for transportation for her to the hospital when she arrives. Bob and Elizabeth just arrived back in NH at 2 a.m. this morning (from Ocala, I think).

I will be home all day so that I can make and receive the phone calls and relay information about Bob from the hospital and from Ruth.

Love

Sue (Ruth's sister)

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