



## Who is God When Life Stinks?

### When Love Fills the Room...

My wise friend, Dorothy, had been on the phone while en route here, calling our pastor and friends. I was glad Dorothy had arrived. She and I are prayer-partners and joy-sharers. We see each other only seldom, but it's a friendship that goes deep and sometimes doesn't even need words. Just a hug or a shared giggle can say it all!

Soon the room began to fill. Pastors, co-workers, SS teacher and friends had dropped everything to come and sit. Busy people. Important jobs. But they had cancelled their day's responsibilities to come here. The pastor and missions director from the church where I work had been with us last night, and were back again this morning. Our Sunday School teacher and wife, our senior pastor and his wife, and other church friends arrived. A former co-worker of Bob's (I'm still not sure how he heard the news). One of Bob's current co-workers immediately came to spend the day and keep his boss and others updated on Bob's condition. A young family with their home-schooled pre-teens. Our daughter and friend arrived after driving three hours from her college campus. Other friends stopped in and out. My sister-in-law (our only family in the area) arrived.

In my pain, they brought companionship. In the tension of waiting, they carried friendly conversation. They filled the sterile, bare room with chatter and an amazing presence of silent prayer.

My burden was now spread out on shoulders of dozens of friends. As the load on me lightened, the exhaustion of the night settled in. Kind friends gave up their rigid chairs so I could lay across them to rest. They kindly cushioned the chairs with the thin hospital blankets, and told me to sleep. But my mind was full with thoughts of this almost certain, futile surgery for Bob. Sleep would be impossible right now!

Instead, I closed my eyes and listened to the **sounds of love**. Bob's tech-loving friend was talking with our computer-illiterate friend. I smiled to know it was God's love that spanned this "communication gap". Our daughter and friend were retelling their recent missions trip adventures in Thailand. With eyes still closed, I listened to their youthful, enthusiastic voices recall the blunders and encounters of two young Americans in another culture. Giggles and gasps came from their listeners. My sister-in-law's sweet Southern drawl was music to my ears, as she hospitably introduced herself and became acquainted with people in the room that she did not already know.

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Some friends brought in food. Some offered pillows. Others left the room for prayer or phone calls. But every person that came and went left a mark on my emotionally vulnerable heart. It was the mark of LOVE IN ACTION...

Love that goes beyond words.

Love that leaves important responsibilities and drives many miles just to give a hug.

Love that sits and waits.

Love that shows itself friendly to others in the room.

Love that buys special organic food for me and then keeps loving even when I don't care to eat.

Thank you, God for sending me Your love through the tender hands and feet of these dear, precious friends. Thank you for the strength their love brings to my heart and even to my tired body. I had no idea, on that warm summer day of July 2007, how much strength would be needed through many months ahead. These friends, and more, would fill our lives and give us love through the rest of this summer, fall, winter and beyond...

**“Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.”**

**Galatians 6:2**

From: Sue V. (Ruth's sister)

Date: Tuesday, July 10, 2007

Subject: 9:15 a.m. update—Bob Bell still in O.R.

Dear Family,

I called the hospital at 9:15. Bob is still in OR. They put me through to Ruthie. She says Bob had flat-lined, and the doctors are trying everything they can to save his life. With the blood thinner, it makes the surgery more dangerous. Ruthie says Bob may still be in there for a long time, but I'll keep checking with the hospital every hour or two and send you updates. God can do a miracle, so let's keep praying for that.

Ruthie's pastor is with her now. Please pray for God's grace to continue to uphold Ruthie.

Love,  
Sue

From: Sue V.  
Date: Tuesday, July 10, 2007  
Subject: Bob Bell still in O.R.

10:45 a.m. I just talked to the hospital. He told me the operation is a long complex procedure, and there would probably be no updates for at least 2 to 3 hours. I'll check back in a couple of hours, but will likely not send you an update again until I hear of any change.

Love,  
Sue

From: Sue V.  
Date: Tuesday, July 10, 2007  
Subject: 11:00 a.m. update – Bob Bell still in O.R.

11:00 a.m.  
I just talked with Elizabeth, who had talked with Crystal, who is now at the hospital. They took out lots blood clots from his lungs. That part of the surgery is now done, but it will be several hours till they finish and know if Bob will pull through.

Love,  
Sue

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