



## Who is God When Life Stinks?

### My Amazing Sisters

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I sit beneath a huge oak tree as I write this chapter. The clear sky is an exquisite, bright blue. Spanish moss drapes the large live oaks in this quiet park, and they wave gently in the welcome breeze. Here between azalea bushes ready to bloom, and newly planted, early spring flowers, it is easy to worship God. No problem feeling his presence. It's easy to have confidence in his love.

What about times when our lives are NOT beautiful? When the ugliest tragedy, or even the nuisance disappointments knock on our doors, is God still loving? Is he always with us and able to design his perfect plan?

It had been our privilege to answer "YES!" to these difficult questions. But the most horrible of challenges to our faith still lay ahead.

These had been eight harrowing weeks since Bob first entered our local hospital. NEVER could we have imagined the many life-threatening emergencies and daily complications. Yes, God kept showing his power and love. And yes, he had given me strength beyond expectation.

It was now almost the first weekend in August, and I had months earlier purchased airline tickets for a mini-reunion with my five sisters. We live from coast to coast across the United States, and at times, even out of the states. So it takes lots of planning and determination to get us all together. Could I still go to this weekend that had been planned months ago? What about Bob?

We talked to the doctors after Bob's groin wound seemed to stabilize. The doctors agreed that they would NOT be authorizing Bob to get out of bed any time soon. He would be resting and monitored. Bob said, "YES!", he wanted me to go. In fact, he urged me to take this time to get away, rest, laugh, enjoy my sisters and time at the beach. He said it would be "good medicine" for my weary body and mind. It seemed extra important for me to have some time away—considering the constant threat of the breast cancer spreading further in my body from this toxic, stressful pace of life at the hospital. So, with hesitation, I arranged for friends to check on Bob each day while I was away and kissed him good-bye.

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Our “girls weekend” was to begin at my sister Sue’s house. She lives in North Carolina, and once everyone arrived, we had plans to travel a three hour drive to a condo on the beach. Everyone was excited for several reasons. It would be time away from daily responsibilities. It promised sun and fun. But most of all, we looked forward to time together!

As sisters, we carry a mutual respect for our many differences and abilities. Mom and Dad had raised ten children, plus occasional foster kids, and they encouraged each of us to find our God-given abilities and to enjoy using them for God’s glory. My brothers had become successful business men, engineers, artist. Best of all, they were fun, admirable and godly men.

But my sisters have become the women I admire most in this world (in addition to our mom). You will appreciate the treasure of our weekend together better if I fill in some details—a.k.a. “brag” on my sisters!

Sue is the oldest sister (we have one older brother) and was a “big-shot” at IBM for many years—instructing all the engineers about that technology. She humbly stepped down from that highly paid (and high stress) job after 25 years to teach at a missions school in Europe. She then served as a school principal in Russia under terribly difficult circumstances. Now, she serves in the administration of her mission board, and travels around the world to train, inspire, and oversee. Lois is next in line, and she is my co-cancer survivor (oops, not sure yet about MY survival status, but Lois was now six years cancer-free!). Lois lives in New Mexico, and has worked on many national, high-security projects there. We don’t know the detail of those projects, but we do know to be proud of her amazing ability to keep learning and problem solving, and helping to protect our country.

Janna and her husband recently finished home-schooling and then putting all three of their children through college (their son went to the Air Force Academy). One daughter and her family is in Africa, one teaches school in the States, and their son is deployed overseas. Janna’s blood pressure has been a serious health issue, but you would never know because of the way she and her husband, Bob, are always serving others. Janna’s culinary skills and hospitality draw people to their home all the time. In fact, one week after our reunion here, they would be moving to the Dominican Republic. Bob was invited to serve as chaplain to a Christian school there, and Janna would continue using her gifts in the lives of teachers and students.

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Martha is younger than me by two years. (In fact, we are all approximately two years apart in age.) She and her husband, Dave, live in Colorado and have been homeschooling NINE amazing children. Three had married by now, and the two married girls each had a couple of little ones. Still at home, or in college, were the remaining six children. Martha is a registered nurse, a runner, and tremendously fit. (You'd never guess she has nine children.) Together with Dave, they have a huge garden, bake their own bread, hike mountains, and so much more.

Beth is the youngest sister and lives in Oregon, although she, too, had taught overseas for several years. Two of her three children were in college and Beth was continuing to volunteer 20 plus hours a week in her church's children's ministry. It is a very large church, membership around 4000, and Beth basically was in charge of the full children's program. Beth always finds enough energy to volunteer at more places in one year than most people do in a whole lifetime.

Now, perhaps, you understand my admiration for these ladies. Incredibly, whenever we get together there is no competition, no bragging. Mom and Dad had always modeled humility and Dad warned us many times to "never blow your own horn!".

So, between airport runs, and sharing bathrooms and beds at Sue's house, we eagerly began to catch up on each other's lives. By Sunday morning, everyone was in town and rested. It was humorous for me to note our early morning activities. The two oldest sister woke early and **sat** on the porch, sipping their coffee and chatting quietly. The next two (Janna and I) slipped on our sneakers and headed out for a morning **walk** and talk. Then, zipping past us came Martha and Beth, sweaty and chatty as they **jogged** along. We were all different in ages, and skills, but we all shared the same love for life and for each other!

We ate a delicious, quick breakfast together but then we lingered at the table a few extra minutes, savoring our cups of tea or coffee. It was almost time to pack the car with food, beach chairs and luggage, yet we seemed in no hurry. It was delightful to realize that we had already left our fast-paced lives behind and were quickly adapting to this relaxing time with each other. For me, it was a soothing ointment to my weary heart and mind.

How wonderful to look ahead to a few more days like this at the beach condo!

**Then Jesus said, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile." Mark 6:31**

From: Sue V.  
Date: Wed, May 30, 2007  
Subject: We're booked on the beach!

Dear Sisters,

We are now booked into the Fairfield Ocean Boulevard Resort in North Myrtle Beach! The hotel is ON the beach, has 2 bedrooms and 2 baths, with one king in one bedroom, 2 doubles in the 2nd bedroom, and a sleeper sofa. I asked for a rollaway (figuring two could share the king) but they have none. But we'll figure that one out later.

Regarding arrivals, Lois is coming in to Charlotte (CLT) on the 3rd. Martha may be also (Martha, you can fly just as cheap to and from MYR on Aug 5 and 8, if you need to be in Golden the 9th - but we'd surely miss you that last night). Janna and Ruth, are you driving up together (is either of you healthy enough to do that)? It is a few miles shorter from Florida to Myrtle Beach than to Waxhaw. If you are NOT driving, I will need to figure out something car-wise, so please give me a heads up as much ahead of time as you can. Beth, just let me know when you know what your travel plans are and we'll work with them.

We will probably leave from Waxhaw toward North Myrtle Beach around noon (or maybe before - I asked for early check in, but no guarantees) on Sunday. We'll drive back on Thursday August 9 as early as necessary to get people to their flights out of Charlotte.

**It's going to happen. YIPPEE :-)**

Love  
Sue

**From:** Lois L.  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 28, 2007 9:31 PM  
**Subject:** Sister's Weekend

Hi All,

Well, a lot has happened since our last email. Thank God that Bob Bell pulled through his ordeal and open heart surgery. I'm sure he's got a long road of recovery ahead and Ruth doesn't know yet what she is facing, but last time I heard from her she said "Can't wait until the Sisters Get Together". So, I thought I would match her optimism and book an airline ticket before they get any more expensive. I realize anything could happen between now and then, but it would be really great if it works out to see all of you again.

Love,

Lois

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