



Who is God When Life Stinks?

Weeping that will not Stop

It was a quiet, three hour ride to the beach—the four of us sisters were each lost in our own grief. Martha and Beth were not with us, but had urged us to stay together and still travel to the beach condo. Our plane tickets to our own homes could not be changed, so we finally decided that we needed to help each other process the horrors of what had just happened.

After checking in, we entered the condo and were pleasantly surprised. It overlooked the Atlantic Ocean, and also had available a combination of several lovely, large pools. The two bedrooms were perfect for the four of us (the other two sisters would have been sleeping on pull-out sofas). The events of the day had wearied us, and I asked if it was okay for me to take a nap.

“Of course,” my sisters replied. They busied themselves with unpacking, exploring the kitchen, and other rooms.

Then, as soon as my head hit the pillow, it all broke loose. An uncontrollable sobbing began from the deepest parts of my soul and body. It was a torrent of disappointment, grief, exhaustion and even fear.

Yes, I was disappointed that God had not come as a rescuer in my brother-in-law’s life. I wanted Dave to still be there as Husband to my sister and Daddy to their wonderful nine children (and grandpa to four, with more to come)! I knew that God certainly has the power to work miracles... we had witnessed so many miracles in Bob’s life! We were grateful for the many people who had pointed to God’s amazing power through Bob’s story. Surely, God could have chosen to write Dave and Martha’s story this way too, but he did not.

Sobs shook my body and would not stop. They were for my sister’s grief, my own, but also for so many faces and families I had seen in the hospital. There was the family who sat all night in the CICU cubicle next to us, watching their family member draw one last breath. The woman I met in the waiting room, who let me pray with her, was grieving as she waited and hoped for a heart transplant for her young son. There was a family somewhere out there who, days later tragically lost their own child, and had given his heart to this woman’s son. A twenty-five year old mother of our preschool student at my school, who lay in the same hospital as Bob, was dying of throat cancer. A man who had heard

the story of God's miracles in Bob's surgery, and set his life right with God, was dying of brain cancer. The cancer tumor in my body, with daily medication, and experiencing unremitting stress, was always present as a constant reminder of the uncertainty of life.

The sobs shook my body in such a violent way that my sister Lois came to sit by my side and stroke my hands. Lois had been through her own challenges of cancer, surgery, chemo and radiation. She had also walked through difficult relationship challenges in her early married life. As a result, Lois carries a huge heart of tenderness toward the hurting, and God brought her to my side to just sit. Do you know how much it means to have someone who understands your hurt, just sit with you silently, and make no demands?

The crying continued. **Not letting up.** But perhaps **letting go** some of the exhaustion that had built up in my body through the grueling pace of daily emergencies and so much unknown. God had sustained me and there had not been time to cry. Every day had many new challenges and there was no "time off" from important decisions. Yes, I had shed tears some nights as I climbed into bed, or a few times at Bob's bedside, but apparently that was a just a little bit of overflow from what had been building up inside.

It all came out now. Even the fear, that had so amply been destroyed by watching the powerful hand of God each day in Bob's life, tried to resurface. It was God's gift (and answered prayer) that had allowed me to focus on the victories of each day—the tiniest improvements in Bob's health, some person that we were able to encourage, a payment made toward medical expenses, the many loving gestures shown us by staff and friends.

But fear always lurked in the corners—wanting to overshadow the evidence of God's love. These were legitimate fears... could the cancer still be growing in me? Might God still be planning to take Bob's life, just as he had taken Dave's?

"Yes", and "yes" were the answers to those very real fears. But Lois was modeling to me the one truth that had become most precious to me since my diagnosis with cancer. "Perfect LOVE casts out fear". Lois' unconditional love for me, joining me on the edge of my bed, as my face ran with messy mascara, and my heart broke with a multitude of concerns, was evidence that GOD'S LOVE was present, even in this most devastating of times. (Don't you think it quite kind of God that of all people, Lois, my breast-cancer-survivor sister, was the one to be with me at the time of my breakdown?!)

Janna was in the kitchen, beginning to prepare one of her incredibly delicious stocked-full-of-health meals. Sue, our capable, organized, big sister, was making sure that all the

details of our accommodations were arranged properly. I was in good hands with my sisters here. Tomorrow we would wake up to deal together with our deep sense of grief over Dave's sudden death, and Martha's searing pain. For now, though, I needed to lay still and rest.

Grateful, and drenched in tears, I fell asleep.

**His favor lasts a lifetime!
Weeping may last through the night,
but joy comes with the morning. Psalm 30:5**

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