



Who is God When Life Stinks?

Bleeding to Death

Three days before Christmas an urgent phone call came to our home. Bob was bleeding out again...

Our kids and grandkids had arrived from out-of-town, and so had my sister Sue. We were hanging out at home this evening, resting from an earlier visit with Bob.

The delicate flap surgery and skin graft had been completed by the plastic surgeons to fill Bob's huge chest cavity. He had joked with the doctors and asked if they had arranged anything there that would improve his golf swing?!? He teased the family by asking if he looked "beautiful" now, after having plastic surgery!

But in spite of the humor, Bob was in incredible pain. The wound VAC was back in place and the medical staff was very concerned about Bob's bleeding. That first night after surgery, nurses and I stood by his bed all night long, adding bigger and bigger bandages to the seeping wound. We kept layering gauze on top of the thigh (the host skin graft area) where oozing blood kept pouring out of the dressing.

Bob's blood was too thin again, and his nurses tried to convince the plastic surgeons of the serious complications Bob often had. But, since this was their first encounter with Bob, they dismissed it all without much concern.

By December 22, Bob was again in critical condition. My sister took the phone call at our house and told us all that Bob was headed to the ICU. My first reaction was to correct her. "You must be confused", I argued. "Why would he be there?" I had just recently left him resting in his room.

"Bob wants you to head up there right now", my sister stressed.

My precious family saw the shock in my eyes and they agreed that our son, Bob, would take me up and stay with me as long as needed that night.

By the time we arrived, Bob was in the ICU unit bed, with two male nurses at his side. One was hooking up several units of blood for transfusion. The other was holding two JP

bulbs, with tubing attached to the inside of Bob's belly, draining blood from his surgery site.

But what a sight this was! The nurse was feverishly working to quickly empty each bulb receptacle of blood before it would overflow. Bob's blood was oozing out faster than the transfused blood was entering in!

"Your husband will bleed to death", the medical resident bluntly explained, "unless we can thicken the blood to slow down the bleeding." He explained that some vessels in the belly must not have closed off properly from the muscle flap surgery. They would probably have to re-open Bob's incision to clean out and clamp down on the bleeders.

But first, he would need transfusions, plasma and lots prayer to help stabilize his at-risk bleeding body.

As the deep red blood repeatedly filled the drain bulbs in the nurse's hands, I looked with loving eyes at my sweet, patient, bleeding-out husband. We had done nothing special to deserve God's incredible love and constant presence with us through all these troubles. God had so graciously held us up, and kept us together. God had walked with us through each trial and triumph so far. This new crisis was one more opportunity to surrender to God's plan for our lives – whatever it involved.

The nurse opened a small conference room for me and my son. It was tucked away in a corner down the hall, and had a table and a rickety, pull-out cot. It was nothing fancy, but we could get some rest, and the staff knew where to find us if things got worse. The day had been long and we would have to wait longer still for Bob to stabilize. After that, decisions would to be made about more surgery to clamp down at the source of Bob's leak.

Our son sat at the table and worked on his computer, while I tried to settle into the wobbly cot for a few hours of sleep. Then we switched.

With Christmas just three days away, my mind drifted back to our promised Savior, born over 2000 years ago. His entrance in the cool, Israel night was not fancy, or perfect, or well-announced. But God had a very important message for us when he announced his son's

name – “Immanuel”. It means “GOD WITH US”, and that truth had changed our lives. Our Savior not only died for our sins, but he lives with us each day of our lives.

Yes, there was a Presence with us here in this tiny conference room, with Bob in the ICU bed, and with our family at home. This powerful Presence, of the Almighty, Holy God, brought peace to our hearts and sleep to our bodies. Life, or death - we would choose to rest in his love.

**"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" —which means, "God with us."
Matthew 1:23**

Date: Thursday, December 20, 2007 10:02 PM, CST

From: Becky Bell

Please be in continual prayer for Bob (Dad) and his physical healing. Dad has continual problems with bleeding at incision points. This bleeding is most likely a result of being on blood thinners to ease danger of clotting again. Today, he is bleeding from the area on his thigh that had skin removed. This skin had been removed to use as a graft over the hole in his chest after removing the infected ribs, etc.

Thank you for your prayers for his healing & wisdom for us all this Christmas season. Friday, I am flying to FL to meet my sister. We will join the family (Dad will stay at the Hospital, while Mom, Bob & his family at house in Ocala, Aunt Sue is at a hotel).

I love my mom & dad,

Becky

Date: Saturday, December 22, 2007 3:30 AM, CST

From: Bob Bell IV (son)

We are at Shands hospital awaiting another surgery for Dad. He was doing well after the last surgery, but then started bleeding internally. They have stopped his blood thinning medication and are preparing for another surgery, targeting the area where the abdomen muscle was, to "patch the leak". The surgery will probably happen in the next few hours (likely before most of you will read this).

Date: Saturday, December 22, 2007 5:20 AM, CST

From: Ruth Bell

I'm sitting in Shands ICU and thanking God for praying friends! Bob started bleeding today from inside his belly - probably from the site where the muscle

was detached to use earlier this week as a flap up over his open chest area. By the time I arrived tonight, he was being moved to ICU, with dire concern for his loss of blood, blood pressure and heart rate. Many of his former nurses and doctors came by to immediately care for him (God is so good to provide excellent care here at Shands) but it has taken about 10 hours and 4-5 units of blood plus plasma units to stabilize him.

We are waiting now for the surgeons to decide if/when they will open him up to clean out that area. These surgeons are ones I have not met, so I am staying awake for when they come by. Will you please join me to ask for GOD to be working through whomever makes the decisions, and to put His hands on top of the surgeons and nurses?

THANK YOU! One nurse opened an conference room with a cot for our son Bob4 and myself to wait. I slept a few hours, and finally talked Bob4 into taking his turn to sleep (he's snoring next to me now:) Bob was excited about the family all arriving for Christmas, but this is certainly a challenging way to be together.

Just remembering a precious name - Emmanuel - that we refer to often this time of year. "God with us" - Wow! We couldn't do it without that truth.

Love you all, Ruth & family

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