



Who is God When Life Stinks?

Less Stress?

June 6th. The school year has ended. Ahhh—it always brings a sigh of relief when the busy schedule lightens up a bit. I love my job, and love the excitement every day brings, but it is a VERY fast-paced schedule with lots of demands. Since the cancer diagnosis, many other stresses had been added into our lives beyond our jobs. What could we do to allow for LESS STRESS?

During each summer, curriculum has to be planned, staff hired, calendars printed and mailings prepared. Also, usually at this time of year, I am finishing up school details while packing to fly overseas—to be out of country for five weeks! It is a stressful mix, but one that I've always enjoyed!

For the past five summers it has been my privilege to work as director of a program for international teachers, who earn their Master's in Education degree by attending intensive courses in either Europe or Asia for five weeks each summer. (This is a great program that allows teachers to commit to concentrated courses during their summer break.) I love the excitement of travelling to other countries, but the adventure can be stressful with new languages, navigating around new cities and cultures and encountering LOTS of unknowns.

However, the most endearing part is that I meet and come to love these many courageous, international teachers who study together. It is a privilege to discover from each summer the various, unexpected ways that God uses me to help them and the professors as they all study in foreign cultures and unfamiliar environments. (For example, one summer a student from Brazil was bitten by a German-owned dog. I had the challenge of making a report to the very stern-faced German police, when I do not know the language. I discovered the word for “dog” and used a lot of sign language and sound effects!)

But travel for me has been canceled this year - due to the uncertainties of the cancer treatment. Instead, my calendar is dreamily marked with many sporadic days off. Bob and I are excited about our plans to both take Fridays off, and we look forward to enjoying long weekends together. Perhaps we will even get the garage cleaned this summer!

My health is doing well. The alternative cancer medication actually boosts my immune system, in effort to help it naturally destroy the cancer cells. I feel energetic and hopeful. I plan to rest and stay “stress-free” as both are important for my body in fighting

the cancer.

Then a phone call comes at my office. "I'm headed to the hospital Emergency Room. Can you meet me there please?" Bob and I had just spent a delightful Memorial Day holiday with our grandkids and family in New Hampshire. Bob had flown home ahead of me to return to work (as he did not have many vacation days). I stayed an extra few days and spent many sunny hours outdoors playing with the little ones.

Bob had been bothered by a swollen ankle for weeks. It began with an injury in January, then subsided. After he jumped off a falling ladder in late March, it flared up again. Recently, Bob was unable to get the swelling to reduce. In fact, the swelling had spread up to his calf and knee. When Bob returned from vacation, he called for an appointment. His family doctor was ready to leave for vacation but agreed to see Bob at 8:00 a.m. this Monday morning. With some degree of alarm, the doc immediately sent Bob for an ultrasound, and from there he was told to report to the ER.

Bob's phone call to my office caught me by surprise! We are not easily alarmed, so I decided to just accept this as the doctor's precaution before he went out of town. But it was amazing how quickly Bob was processed through the emergency room paperwork (ahead of others who still sat there in need). When we had a moment to chat, Bob said he suspected this may be either a hairline fracture in the ankle or a blood clot. I knew fractures are minor, and blood is supposed to clot, so neither seemed especially worrisome. We never had experienced problematic blood clots or known anyone who did. (Since this time, we have met a great number of people with clotting problems.)

Tests were run, and it was determined that Bob did have a blood clot behind his knee. Bob had also mentioned to the staff his on-going congestion problems, so a chest x-ray was ordered. The results quickly came back, and everything appeared fine. However, one persistent ER doctor seemed not satisfied with the tests and decided to stretch beyond the normal protocol. He ordered a CAT scan with contrast for a better look.

Soon, breaking into our tiny little ER room came the explosive news that "both lungs have clots in them! If clots continue to break off from their location in your leg, this could happen again and clog your heart." (We learned that clots had already passed through the heart before reaching his lungs.)

Suddenly, the situation with the clots had become life-threatening and the scramble began for how to proceed. As we sat in surprised silence, paperwork was processed to ad-

mit Bob in to the hospital. However, no regular rooms were immediately available and Bob would have to stay in the emergency department for now.

It was “almost” comfortable for Bob that night, as he waited to be moved to a regular floor. During the ER morning medical rounds, they eagerly told us about a special filter that could “trap” any future blood clots that might break off and travel en route to the heart. This type of filter was routinely placed in the large center vein (vena cava), where blood is carried to the heart from the lower extremities. We hesitated, as it sounded quite invasive, and we had very little information. But we received many assurances of how simple and successful this procedure always is! We also were impressed again with the severity of how deadly the damage could be if more clots headed to the heart or lungs.

As Bob agreed to the procedure, he quite casually, yet very seriously asked, “Does the filter come in extra-large?” It’s a standard question for Bob to ask in any medical procedure or prescription dosage - his six foot, 8 inch frame typically requires larger doses. However, his question was dismissed by the medical staff present as totally irrelevant.

Little did we know then, that our dreamy summer plans of days off together, and the prospect of a clean garage, would soon become extremely irrelevant also!

**For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. Plans for good and not for evil.
Plans to give you a hope and a future!**

Jeremiah 29:11

From: Bells
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2007 10:11 PM
Subject: A soaking rain...

Florida has been in need of some soaking rains - and apparently God believes that Bob & I are in need of additional "watering" also to help us grow!

Today Bob was taken to the Emergency Room with a blood clot behind his knee. He had gone to the Dr. for a swollen ankle, which keeps recurring even though the injury to his ankle occurred 8 weeks ago. The doc was leaving town today, so we are thankful he examined Bob first thing this morning, ruled out a fracture of the ankle, and then ordered several tests.

He was then referred to the ER where many more tests were run – including a chest x-ray to see if the clot had travelled to his lungs. When I left to pick up some supper, the report came back that the lungs were clear.

BUT. when I happily returned with food in hand, Bob said he had some "new news" to tell. The ER doc was determined to check Bob's lungs further, and ordered a CAT scan with contrast. THANKFULLY, he did so as they found further clots in each lung.

Now. when you are 6'8" tall, the distance between a clot in your knee and the travel to your heart is a looong trip! However, the distance between lungs and heart is much more threatening in my mind!

Tomorrow, a filter will be inserted in Bob's groin to "catch" the leg clot from travelling to heart or lungs, and he'll continue on Heparin IV to thin the blood. They are predicting several days in the hospital.

THANKS for your prayers for us! We understand God sends showers of trial and blessings at the same time, and we are finding MUCH to be thankful for. However, knowing that our friends are covering us with prayer in the storms sure does bring comfort. Have to admit, I felt a few drops of moisture on my cheeks at the news of double lung clots:(

Love and prayers for y'all also,

Ruth (& bed-ridden, computer deprived Bob!)
Regional Hospital, Ocala, FL

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