

SECTION ONE

DIAGNOSIS

We lay in bed in shock. What had happened to our secure world? Richard had Multiple Myeloma, cancer of the bone marrow. The prognosis was very poor. Where was God now? Was He still good? Was He still in control?

I am writing this now, ten years after Richard died. I found his journal and read it with great appreciation because he had left a record of his feelings during those last four years. I too had kept a journal. It is these two sources and my memories that are included in this writing.

It started in December, of 1988, with sharp pains near Richard's right shoulder blade. Then in February, while wrestling with grandchildren at Mammoth, he injured a rib. Later another rib snapped while he was playing golf. One day while trying to straighten out a metal garbage can, a rib snapped. He tried to ignore these symptoms, not wanting to bother a doctor. Months later, (August, 1989) because of more injury and a nagging wife, he finally decided to see the doctor.

Speaking of the doctor Richard wrote in his journal:

He appears concerned. He says it looks like a part of my rib is missing. I joked about that missing rib being Mary. Wasn't she taken from my rib?

In consultation with other doctors, it was decided that Richard should have X-rays and a bone scan. After receiving a call from the doctor, Richard wrote:

I was preparing a message on the life of Peter, who seemed to have lost hope, doubtful that there was any future for him in the Lord's service. It was at this time that the doctor called, they suspected multiple myeloma. I asked if it was cancer, and he said, "Well, yes, it is a form of cancer." I glanced at the title of my message -- 'Something to Live For.

At lunch we talked and laughed. I had read 1 Chronicles 29:11-17 that morning. My journal tells my feelings:

Lord here we are - all Yours. I want Your will and so does Richard. Our desire is to glorify You through whatever it is You want us to go through. In fact Lord, I look forward to this, to be able to trust You in a situation that we have never had in our life before. I look forward to the things You will teach us. I ask You to help me to make the right choices especially during the discouraging times, if there are those times. I want You to be first in our lives and we want others to see YOU. Thanks, Lord, first for Yourself, then for Your plans and also for Your help. Thanks Lord for allowing us this privilege.

Later Richard writes:

All sorts of thoughts are racing through my mind. The possibility of dying is very real to me. My first thought is for Mary. Somehow I want to make it as easy as possible for her. 'Lord, give Mary grace to handle whatever comes.' Allow me the privilege of providing for her adequately. I wonder what it's like to die.

At 4:05 AM one morning I woke and wrote:

Last evening we took the two dogs, for a short walk, came back and sat on the swing. Since we found out about the cancer we have talked about a lot of things, including death, finances, my remarrying, Richard seeing loved ones that are already in heaven. I feel like I am living a play and that I will step off the stage soon and go home to my real life. I do hope that my peaceful, calm, adventuresome spirit is real. "Lord I want to be REAL through this. I don't want to live a lie or live as I feel I have to. I want to feel your presence. I want to have my joy in You. I want to have a thankful spirit. Lord, help me to be REAL." 2 Chronicles 7:3b reads '. . . they worshiped and gave praise to the Lord saying, Truly He is good, truly His loving-kindness is everlasting.' I want to be able to say that. I thought of the Lord Jesus knowing that He was going to die and He waited and so must we.

Richard continued to preach. On the Sunday before Labor Day his message was on Joy, a fruit of the Spirit. His journal:

I had unusual liberty and power. God seems to have used the message in many lives. I spoke of joy in times of trial, even welcoming the trial because it gives us the opportunity to grow (James 1:2-4). Spoke of joy as being the cheerful assurance that everything is really okay because our circumstances, whatever they are, pleasant or unpleasant, are meaningfully rooted in the sovereign plan and purpose of God. Now by God's grace I need to live what I am preaching. God, help me to model before my people implicit trust in your sovereign plan and purpose. May they see the reality of Your presence and sustaining grace in my life.

Later, one morning Mary woke before dawn:

I reached out in bed to feel Richard, knowing he may not always be that available. He pulled away. Probably he thought I touched him accidentally or maybe it was an automatic response in his sleep. I wonder what the future will hold? I am down today. I asked myself some questions, 'What about the responsibilities of this house? What about the money we need for this house and for the bills that will come because of this illness? Lord, we have no one else to help us. You are the only answer. Help me to feel Your presence. Help me to remember that You have the answers, the wisdom that we will need, and also the funds we will need. You know what I will need if You take Richard to Yourself soon. You know what we will need if this is a long drawn out affair. I ask You for relief for the pain that he has even now

The need for treatment was being discussed. Richard wrote:

I'm waiting for the doctor to call. We finally called him. The results were not back from the lab in Texas. He mentioned a doctor in Arizona who had worked with myeloma and has the latest techniques. He talked of us flying there to see him when all the facts are in.

Mary was thinking: "There are times when I want the world to stop so that I can concentrate on this problem and not have anybody bother me with their problems. I want to be left alone." But

I had to remind myself, that the world would not stop while I hurt, and that I had to get on with life and make daily adjustments. I return to my journal:

I am concerned for coming changes in my life. Not only the financial but of not being a 'somebody' any more. I will not be the wife of Richard Strauss who gets invited to so many places to speak, who has this large church in southern California. The man who has written books, spoken to missionaries all over the world. I enjoy being his wife and being in the know. We were just ordinary teen-agers that fell in love, married, and fought, as many couples do. We had children, grandchildren, and many opportunities for ministry. You have been so good. I now have a choice. I can fuss and fume about what I will be missing or I can be thankful for what You have done and allowed us to have. I can mumble and complain or I can chose to be excited about the future you have for me, even if I am to be without my husband. Others have done it, why not me? Thanks Lord for loving me. Help Richard and me to glorify You now in all that we do and say. Help us to live what he has preached and we said we believed these past thirty-one years in the pastorate."

Richard's journal on September the seventh, 1989:

Dr Allgood's office called by 1:30 p.m. with the report, that the test was positive. There is no doubt. I definitely have multiple myeloma, cancer of the bone marrow.

It was at this time that Richard's mother died. He wrote of the struggle as he prayed at her funeral:

I handled it well until I began to talk about heaven where there will be no tears, no sorrow and no pain, and where we will be reunited with loved ones. The thought passed through my mind that I could see the Lord and Mother, very soon. I had to pause to get my composure, then I wrapped it up rather quickly.

That afternoon after the service, we told Richard's Dad about Richard's cancer and the diagnosis.

It never ceases to amaze me how the Lord supplies grace when needed. As I look back on the situation, I know it was God's gift of grace that got us through.

One morning I was reading Daily Bread. "For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you." What was the Lord saying? "Are You, Lord going to add days to Richard's life?" I wrote in my journal:

Can we, in faith, say this? Can I believe it for Richard? There is such a fine line between believing and being presumptuous. I am not sure how to tell the difference. Lord, You know I believe that You can heal. What I don't know is if that is Your perfect will for us at this time.

To this day I still wonder what application of that scripture I could have applied to our lives at that time.

SECTION TWO

TUCSON

A few weeks after the diagnosis we met with Dr Allgood who told us that he was calling a doctor at the University of Arizona Cancer Center in Tucson to arrange for a consultation. He mentioned new techniques for treating multiple myeloma including a bone marrow transplant. The doctor in Tucson would be the one to make that decision.

Richard felt it was time to tell the church staff and board. I went with him. He talked about the disease and treatment in Tucson. We wanted them to know of the situation. It was a very moving and meaningful time. We again felt their love and support. Richard's journal reads:

One prayer included Isaiah 41:10, one of my favorite verses, but which had not yet come to my mind during this time. "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Fear of the pain is probably the most negative thing that goes through my mind, but I cannot dwell on it. It may never come. And if it does come, God's strength and grace will be there to greet it. I have nothing to fear.

Preparing to leave for Tucson Richard wrote:

I felt angry when I was talking to the Lord this morning - not angry at the possibility of His taking me away, but anger at the apparent manner by which He's going to do it. It's that pain thing again. It keeps coming up. When the time comes, He will be there to help me through it.

The plane to Tucson was on time and the rental car was waiting for us. On our way we had a funny experience and it was good that we could laugh at ourselves or this episode would have been a disaster. We had stopped for hamburgers and ate them in the car to save time. Have you ever driven in the dark trying to eat a hamburger with gooey lettuce, tomatoes and pickles? Well we did, and by the time we finished Richard had as much gook on his pants as he managed to eat. We laughed a lot about the mess and when we got to the hotel I worked at getting out the stains. They were the only pair of pants Richard had brought with him, so during that night I got up at frequent intervals moving the pants around out on the chair on the patio to get them in the best position to dry. If they had blown away I am not sure what we would have done. Richard slept well that night and by morning the pants were dry enough for him to wear.

We liked Dr. Durie, he has trained in Edinburgh and was world renowned for his work with multiple myeloma. He showed unusual concern for us and explained things patiently and thoroughly. He was going to be leaving Tucson to take the chair of hematology at a hospital in London before the end of the year so he could not continue to be Richard's doctor. Richard wrote in his journal:

I guess that's so we will keep our trust in the Lord and not in a doctor." He explained that patients with my disease have an average of 4 years life expectancy after diagnosis. But he has 20 patients who are still alive after ten years. It takes three to six months for the prescribed procedure to work. If pain becomes a problem, they can direct radiation to the specific spots to reduce it. But I should be able to live a relatively normal life

during the period my IGA levels are normal. The only dangers are: 1) Brittle bones, so I am not to lift anything heavy or do anything that might strain my bones. 2) The danger of bacterial infection.

I loved to travel with Richard. I had him all to myself. I think that is one of the things I miss the most since his death. I can never again get into the car with him, close the doors and know that he belongs only to me. We could talk, listen to the radio or tapes, be quiet, and even argue without interference. I liked that and I miss it a lot.

SECTION THREE

ESCONDIDO

Richard worked six to seven weeks ahead in his message preparation. He was highly disciplined in his study habits, and he planned ahead so that the worship pastor could build the whole service around the message. Once he got ahead, it was not a problem to stay ahead. On Saturday before he was to give the message, he would get it out and go over it. I was always amazed at the way the Holy Spirit prepared the right message six weeks ahead. He would manuscript his messages. This worked well, especially since he was giving four messages a weekend. He would take his whole message into the pulpit, and this kept his mind from wandering or getting confused as to what was said in what service. It became a part of him, and he delivered it with power from the Holy Spirit. We all saw that, especially when he was taking his chemotherapy. I look back now and wonder how he was able to preach when he was on 180 milligrams of morphine. He missed only one Sunday because of illness. God's grace was all that we could ever imagine during this time.

During these weeks, some days were very difficult for him. Some were harder than others. On one of the bad days he wrote:

I felt down this morning. Sobbed audibly for the first time. It seems that there were a couple of reasons for it. For one thing, Mary and I had a few tense moments last night. I felt that she was irritable and angry with me without any reason. It seems more difficult to handle that, than to handle the knowledge that I may be dying of cancer. But I know that the Lord doesn't want that to get me down. She has a right to her weak moments. None of us is perfect. I don't want to put that kind of pressure on her. And besides, maybe there was something in what I said, or the way I said it, that sounded critical. Lord, help me to apologize quickly when there is even a slight chance that I may have projected the wrong attitude, and help me to assure Mary quickly of my love and appreciation for her. Help me to become more Christ like through this experience. Sharing with her my feelings and holding each other while we cried was therapeutic. I feel much better now.

As I have gone through Richard's journal, I continue to be amazed at his thoughts and how quickly he turned to the Lord during the difficult times. It was not just talk. He walked what he taught. His desire was to be Christ like and he worked at growing in that area. His journal continues:

The second thing that may have accounted for my discouragement this morning is the interminable character of a terminal illness. It's always there! My first thoughts as I got out of bed were, 'Ok, Lord, now I know what it's like to have cancer. Now I can minister more compassionately to people with cancer. Now You can take it away from me.' But it isn't necessarily going to happen that way. This is something that I am probably going to live with the rest of my life -- however long or short that may be. But God has grace for that: "As your days, so shall your strength be."

It was Sunday September twenty four, 1989, the day we were to update the congregation on the events in our life. Again, let's turn to the journal and hear from Richard:

I didn't sleep well last night. The 'so called euphoria' from medication seems to be nothing more than a caffeine high that keeps me awake. But the Lord provided the strength I needed for the day. I didn't feel particularly tired after preaching three times. A message on peace. God's peace is real.

I remember that Sunday very well. I went to all three services, instead of one. I wanted to be there and pray and watch the response of the people. I remember being very proud of my husband and the way he depended on the Lord for his strength.

That evening Richard and I were to share the story with the congregation. We had no idea what the response would be. We both took naps and then pulled our thoughts together for that service. We had an overhead or two, showing Captain Chemo fighting cancer cells, to illustrate what was and would be happening in Richard's body.

Back to Richard's journal:

Mary and I shared what we know of the disease, how we discovered it, what the human prognosis is, and how we are feeling about it.

We received many cards and letters, Richard's journal reads:

There are many expressions of gratitude for the ministry through these many years, telling how God had touched lives and healed their families. It was very emotional. We feel like crying every time we open the mail. We never had that experience before (except when opening some bills!!!).

Richard sense of humor continued throughout his illness and that was a big help as we faced the unknown future.

For two years we had enjoyed living in Valley Center on four acres of large oak trees and over forty fruit trees. Richard enjoyed being a "gentleman farmer." I knew that Richard would not be able to do outside work much longer so I wanted to move back to Escondido. I also wanted to have memories in the house that I would have to live in, if the Lord took Richard before me, and it certainly looked like that was what would happen. I enjoy memories and even though they are hard at times, they are also very comforting to me. So, I had been house hunting. Richard hated the thought of leaving his special "ranch," but he agreed that we should look around.

As time went by Richard began to see that it might be a good idea to move back into Escondido. He writes:

While driving home yesterday after church, the thought occurred to me that this long drive is something that adds stress to our lives that we do not need right now. Furthermore, the upkeep is more than I can handle, and will certainly be more than Mary can handle should the Lord decide to take me home. The house we found in Escondido is looking better all the time.

On my part it was a relief to have Richard consider buying that house. Richard's journal's continues:

Sometimes I think I'm crazy for thinking about moving away from here. It is such a lovely place, and I enjoy it so much. But it makes more sense to be closer to the church, to doctors, to stores, etc. Just about an hour after we signed the papers, we opened the mail, and there was a letter from Robert Graham. Along with other kind comments was this: "as the weather grows colder you may wish to continue your swimming in the enclosed heated pool on our place. You simply park on the drive, enter through a glass door and, if at night, turn on the lights. No one would intrude." It seemed like confirmation from the Lord that we had done the right thing in listing our house.

Again we saw the hand of the Lord. When we decided to buy the house neither we nor the Grahams realized that the property touched our property. Later, Robert Graham put in a gate making it possible to walk to the pool.

We had a funny thing happen later that day. Richard describes it:

During the afternoon I noticed a squeaking noise when I walked. It seemed to be in my knees. I had heard it before when coming down the stairs and thought it was the steps squeaking. But now I hear it whenever I walk, and especially when I bend both knees. Could it be something related to the cancer? I was bending my knees up and down and they were squeaking away, and Mary and I were laughing so hard we could hardly talk. I took my shoes off and it continued. Finally I took my pants off, and it stopped. It turned out to be my belt. What fun!

One night in October we had guests for dinner who brought a health product for Richard to take. His reaction was:

This is a vile tasting liquid that leaves a horrible after-taste. What to do about products people want me to take is becoming an increasing problem. 'Lord, I need wisdom regarding all this stuff. I don't want to offend people, but I surely don't need to keep pouring all this stuff into my body. What would be of value and what wouldn't? You promised to guide me, and I need guidance in this specific matter.

Richard injured another rib. From his journal:

I came home this evening after being at the church all day and sat down in my blue recliner to eat a burrito while I watched the evening news. I accidentally knocked my glass of water off the arm of the chair. I reached over quickly to pick up the ice cubes and injured another rib just pressing against the soft arm of the chair. The softness and brittleness of my bones seems to be the major problem I have to contend with at present. The pain restricts the positions I can lie in during the night when I sleep, and it keeps me a little on edge during the day trying not to injure any more. And it takes so long for it to feel better after I have injured one!

During the following months Richard had two series of chemo. My life was full trying to keep as much stress as possible away from him. This included normal household activities and entertaining the guests that were coming to see Richard. I enjoy being busy, but I was overwhelmed. And my journal tells the story.

Lord I am concerned about a few things. First, I feel a lack of time with You. I have not been able to journal because I feel so rushed and hurried. In fact I even feel guilty sitting down to spend time with You. Second, is money. Where is it going to come from for the new house and the medical bills? Third, I want time with Richard. Pressures from this house and the church, mostly this house, does not allow us time together. I feel that we need that, especially now. Then the fourth thing is the lack of sleeping space at the new house. It is going to be hard to be hospitable. There isn't even enough room for our family. I struggle with my discontented spirit especially in the area of money. Why am I not grateful for what I have? You have given us so much - more material things than I need or even want. Richard's books are in print. They may not be best sellers, but there are many writers that do not have any in print. Where is my JOY? It is to be in the Lord, I have so much, and You are good. Why do I struggle so? I feel like people want me to give and give and yet I am tired, Lord. I want to be a willing servant. It is tough. Is it because I am not abiding at this moment? Lord help!

I look back on that time and I do not believe that my feelings had anything to do with my closeness to the Lord. I think I was emotionally worn out.

Wednesday, December the thirteenth was to be one of the most exciting days of our lives. Richard went to the church after dinner. He writes:

When I returned to my study about 6:00 p.m. I received the surprise of my life. Our children, Steve, Marcia, Cara, Mark and David were sitting in my office waiting for me. I was stunned. I cannot even begin to describe my feelings. It was like a dream, like it couldn't possibly be happening that my eyes were deceiving me. I hugged them and cried for joy. Somebody in the church, who wishes to remain anonymous, paid to fly the whole family home from Ethiopia for Christmas. We drove home where we sang Christmas carols outside the front door until Mary heard them and opened the door. She was every bit as stunned and overjoyed as I was. Lord, you are so very gracious and good to us. You continue to do abundantly more than we can even dream that You will do. Thank you for Your kindness to us.

I remember that night very well. Richard's secretary and her husband came out to the house with some candy, that was their excuse, and I was talking to them when I heard caroling. When I opened the door, and saw the family, I went bonkers. I screamed and jumped up and down. I believe in expressing joy physically. It was wonderful.

The next day our third son and his wife were arriving from Scotland. We knew they were coming, but they didn't know that Steve and Marcia were home. We decided to borrow a van and all go up to the airport in Los Angeles to surprise Mark and Roxanne. At the gate Steve, Marcia and the kids fell in behind us talking about people coming home for Christmas from

Scotland and Ethiopia. Before they saw them they recognized their voices and turned around in utter disbelief. They were just as stunned as we were. We went to bed that night very contented.

Monday the eighteenth of December we packed the car and went up to the Los Angeles area. We went in a borrowed van, so that we could all be together. Our destination was a motel close to Knotts Berry Farm and Medieval Times. We had dinner at Medieval Times (an attraction where you are served dinner without any utensils and your entertainment is jousting and fighting between knights). It was a lot of fun. Our motel accommodations that night were girls in one room and boys in another. A quote from Richard's journal:

Had a marvelous time. I almost forgot that I had cancer.

We spent the next day at Knotts Berry Farm having a wonderful fun day. We ate our evening meal at their restaurant and then returned to our home in Valley Center. It was on the grade into Valley Center that Mark, Steve and Marcia's second child, woke screaming in pain. After arriving at home Steve and Marcia took him to the hospital where they found out that his eardrum had burst. Richard had an interesting note in his journal concerning grandchildren.

Grandchildren are fun most of the time, but I'm understanding more and more why God gives children to us when we're young. They can wear a body out.

Our days were busy with shopping and trips of all kinds. Roxanne was having an eye problem. She went to the doctors and found out that her retina was almost detached. We were thankful it was caught early.

When Mike and Julie arrived the night of the twenty-second, Richard said:

Now the family circle is complete. I can't think of anything I enjoy more than having my sons and their wives around me, just sitting around the table together, talking, laughing and enjoying one another. God is soooooo good!

Months passed, it was a long and difficult time. I wrote in my journal:

This is taking constant dependence on the Lord. We also know that God's will is 'life' as long as He gives it to us. Help me to be what Richard needs, Lord. Lord, I want Your will not ours.

My journal entry for the next day:

Richard woke feeling discouraged and said, 'Today I feel like I'm not going to make it.' We talked a little and he said that one of the things that bothers him is thinking about me re-marrying. He said, "I find I don't want you to re-marry." That was very interesting to me.

I was very pleased that he would share with me those, hard to admit, feelings, trusting me with his deepest thoughts. He was being honest, and I loved him for that.

The next day I was asked what the Lord would do with me - if Richard dies. I didn't even want to think about that; I pushed it out of my mind. I didn't care what the Lord would do with me after Richard died. I didn't want him to die, and I wasn't about to speculate about my future. In my journal I wrote:

I pray that I will be the support that Richard needs. I want to be his comfort, his peace and his strength. I pray that I will rely on You to show me what Richard needs in a wife now. Help me hold my tongue, to think before I speak or act. Help me to be gentle and sweet.

Richard's journal for April second 1990, was not an encouraging entry:

Saw Dr. Allgood today for chemo. He reported that the X-rays from Tucson showed some further deterioration in my bones - especially in the skull and upper left arm. That accounts for the pain I have been experiencing in my left shoulder. The doctors want me to begin giving myself interferon, three shots a week, in addition to the chemo. It is a relatively new drug that helps the immune system fight disease. I can give myself the shots in the leg, but Mary will have to do it in the arm and buttocks. She isn't looking forward to that.

That was the understatement of the year. I never wanted to be a nurse. The smell in hospitals used to make me feel sick, and now I was suppose to give shots. I not only asked the Lord to help me learn to do that, but I also asked the Lord to help Richard handle my ineptness. I began practicing on grapefruits and oranges.

I am so grateful that we could laugh during this illness. Richard explains my efforts:

Mary gave the shot for the first time. The instructions were to put the needle in at a forty-five degree angle. She did that all right, but then she turned it up to a ninety degree angle after it was in. Fun, fun, fun. It wasn't too bad, and we laughed a lot over it. There have been no other side effects from the interferon since that first night. Amazing!

One area of our lives that was affected by serious illness was intimacy. Early in our marriage I had struggled with the sexual side of marriage. I had much to learn in regards to men and the way God made them. Those of you that have read, "WHEN TWO WALK TOGETHER" will probably remember the chapter entitled, "Sex, sex and more sex." Richard had to become my teacher and he did his best to understand and work with me in this area. Most of the time he was very patient with me, and we developed a very good sex life. He was not prepared for what was going to happen next. Let me quote from his journal on August seventeenth:

I tried to make love with Mary and was impotent. That's the first time in my life I ever had that problem. It leaves one feeling inadequate and humiliated. But it certainly helps me sympathize with others who have the problem regularly. The doctor says it's probably the result of the sleeping pill I must take while I'm on the chemo. The effect lasts for awhile after a person stops taking it.

If I remember correctly that was the only time when Richard tried to make love that he had that problem. Of course, as he got sicker we were not as frequent in making love. I do remember

telling him that was one area in his life that he would never give up. We used to laugh because it seemed that he could be feeling pretty sick and yet he still wanted to make love. I think it was very important for both of us to be close and intimate as much as possible during those last few years. I thank the Lord for the growth that I had in this area and for a husband who loved me and helped me and never made me feel inferior.

In October, 1990 Richard had another treatment then we took off for a two day board meeting in Dallas. Richard appreciated his relationship with the seminary and the prayer support of the other men on the board.

I was happy to be able to go with Richard for this meeting. Normally I would not have gone with him, but the travel was easier on him if I could go along. This also gave me a chance to visit with a few friends from the seminary. It was good for the two of us to be together as much as possible. Richard needed me now in a way that he never needed me before. He was not able to carry anything heavy because of the myeloma; therefore when we would get to the baggage carousel I would be the one to gather the luggage. This would embarrass him and he would stay in the background so that no one would know that we belonged together. I thought that was funny and teased him because he couldn't get along without me. I was the strong one at 4' 11'' weighing 96 lbs.

November the sixteenth - a day of surprise for Richard. He had not seen our new grandchild, so I planned a trip to San Francisco. It took much planning and help from a lot of people: Someone to speak on Sunday; keeping the bulletin away from him (the print shop printed up a fake bulletin for him); hiding the Friday newspaper so that he could not see who was preaching (He was not happy when he could not find the paper); plus other details that had to be worked out. On Friday evening we had dinner in San Diego with two couples, who were in on the secret. After our dinner one man told us that he had to stop in a motel to see a friend that was in town to deliver a package for him. When we arrived at the motel our friend insisted that we all go up to the room to meet his friend. Richard reluctantly went up. After entering the room and seeing our luggage, he realized that we were spending the night there. He always enjoyed getting away to a motel. He didn't have any idea that I had something else planned. After breakfast we watched a movie on TV called She's Having a Baby. It could not have been better if I had planned it. After it was over I asked Richard if he would like to go and see our new grand-baby, Zach. He asked me, "when" and I said "Right now." I then produced two plane tickets to San Francisco. I told him that the van was due to leave in 20 minutes. He protested telling me that he had to preach the next day. It was then that I told him of all the secret planning. Richard's journal reads:

She had arranged the whole thing behind my back and taken care of every detail without my knowing a thing about it. It was a fantastic surprise – and very creative!! I don't think I've ever been so excited.

Richard was easy to surprise because he was naive in certain areas. I used to say that I could carry a cake in front of him on his birthday, and he would still not have any idea that we would be doing anything special. Anyway, it was a great weekend. We both were surprised when Mike, Julie and baby Zach met us at the airport. Richard wrote:

It's difficult for me to express the emotions that overwhelmed me as I held my grandson. Maybe it was because I didn't have the opportunity to hold my other grandchildren when they were that tiny. Maybe it was because I'm not sure whether I'll get to hold another. But for whatever reason, it was a very tender time for me. I have a wonderful wife who thought up the idea for this trip and worked out all the details. And I have a wonderful Lord who made it all possible.

It is good for me to read the above about his thoughts concerning me. Because of the hard times early in our marriage it gives me joy to know that we, with the Lord's help pulled our marriage together and that gave us many good years together. How thankful I am that we didn't give up or that we were not content just to stay together. We knew God wanted us to stay married, but more than that, we knew that God wanted us to have a good healthy marriage. It took hard work and many tears, but it was worth it. I especially say that now that Richard is in heaven and I am left with the memories.

Richard amazed me and still does, as I read his journal. I am reminded of his complete dependency on the Lord. When he prayed, he prayed in faith believing that God answered his prayers. James 1:6 comes to my mind – to ask in faith, believing, not doubting. I try to practice that in my life. I think that too many times we ask for God's wisdom, and when He shows it to us, in whatever way He chooses to show us, through a thought, a word from the pulpit, or a friend, we dismiss it, and it could be that we have missed what God is trying to say. I am a strong believer in asking and then expecting and accepting an answer.

On the twenty second of December, 1990 Mike, Julie and Zach arrived for the holidays. Our Christmas was good with our son Tim and Lois joining us. It had been a challenging year.

As I said when I started this year it was one of travel, treatment and trust. On December thirty-first 1990 we had our annual New Years Eve party with a few of our friends. We had no idea what 1991 would hold, but as the saying goes, "we know the One that holds our future."

Richard was facing the unpredictable nature of cancer. Things could be good one day and very bad the next. Living with this reality is wearing on a person. Human beings are frail in body and mind. I think he wanted to be above his humanness all the time. That was not to be. In fact I don't believe anyone can live here on this earth without our humanness coming through often. Sure we have the Holy Spirit in us, and He has the power to help us to live through the circumstances victoriously. Being human is not sinful, resorting to grumbling, complaining, doubting, etc. is. That's when we ask the Lord for His help and His forgiveness. It always amazes me that we believers, who say we look forward to seeing our Lord, almost always dislike the thought of dying and most of the time fight it. I realize that it is the people we leave behind, the process of dying, the missing of loved ones, fear of the unknown and other things.

I look back on my journal during this time and see that I was going through some hard times. I wanted to die because of my feelings relating to people. I didn't want to be bothered with the constant pressure from having people in my life; not family or close friends but people that needed, or felt like they needed, some attention or care from their pastor's wife. I didn't want to take time to be with them. I didn't want to be nice. I wanted to isolate myself, to run away, to

go to heaven so that I wouldn't have to sort out what was going on inside of me. Worse of all I wanted to be miserable. I didn't want to change.

Our anniversary was approaching. We left for two nights to go to Big Bear Mountain. On June nineteenth, 1991 he wrote:

Today is our thirty seventh wedding anniversary. Even though I am feeling pretty well, I sometimes wonder how many more anniversaries we will have together. Will we make it to forty? I hope so. We spent two days at Big Bear (a Christmas present from our kids). It was a nice, relaxing time, but for some reason, it didn't seem to draw us closer together as some of our previous get-away's have done. Maybe it just wasn't enough time.

Richard's hope of a fortieth anniversary together didn't happen. Richard died three months after our thirty-ninth wedding anniversary. I, too, wish that we had made it to our fortieth.

Richard kept trying to live as normal a life as he could. He never gave up. Yes, he was discouraged at times. He even thought of suicide as recorded in his journal:

Whenever the thought of suicide comes to my mind, I think of the immense hurt and pain I would inflict on countless numbers of people if I ever did such a stupid thing. However much pain I must bear before this thing is over will not begin to match the pain I would cause others by such an act. God, give me grace to keep trusting You no matter how much I may hurt. Don't let me do anything that will harm others or cast a shadow on Your name. You have promised that Your grace will be sufficient and I'm counting on it.

Does it shock you that a person who is studying and teaching God's Word would struggle again with thoughts of suicide? I think that many Christians think about it. I know that there have been times in my life when that thought crossed my mind. What we must remember is that we can have the peace of God.

On May fourth Richard was fifty-nine. We wondered if he would make it to sixty. The two former pastors of our church had died before either of them reached the age of sixty and I was wondering if Richard was going to outlive them. We had a Mexican dinner party with four other couples and it was a good night in spite of Richard's fever and pain.

On May eighth, 1992, I wrote a question in my journal:

Why do I not pray, to insist on healing for Richard? I know God can do it. I know that He has the power and ability to heal. I know that He has the knowledge to heal. I know that He is all wisdom. I know that God is able to heal. What I don't know is, if it is His will to heal Richard. We both want His will. Richard is tired of being sick. Lord, what will bring You the most glory – healing here on earth or healing by going to heaven.

SECTION FOUR

LITTLE ROCK

A man in Pennsylvania who also had multiple myeloma, heard about Richard. He called to tell us about a Dr. Barlogie in Little Rock Arkansas who was doing some “cutting edge” work on myeloma. He had been treated there and suggested that Richard ask his doctor to look into it. As only the Lord works, there “happened” to be an oncology convention coming up in San Diego and thousands of oncologists would be there.

Our doctor went to that convention, found Dr. Barlogie, and explained to him about Richard’s situation. His response was, “Send him over.”

So we made the arrangements to go to the Arkansas Cancer Research Center in Little Rock. If they found Richard eligible for the procedure, then we would return for about a month.

About a year before this, Richard, had received a call from a lawyer in San Diego, who had multiple myeloma. When he called her, to his amazement, she had received a stem cell transplant, in Little Rock, by Dr. Barlogie. Richard wrote in his journal:

It seemed to be further confirmation that this was the direction the Lord wants us to take. I don't want to get my hopes too high, and my expectations are certainly not in any human doctor. I am waiting on the Lord, and my expectations are in Him (Psalm 62:5). I am confident that He is going to do what is best. But the unusual way all this came together seems to be more than coincidental and we are excited about the potential of improvement and extended life.

In June, 1992, we flew to Little Rock. Richard’s brother, John, and his wife had driven over from Oklahoma City and met us at the airport. They drove us to the motel. He stayed for a few days. It meant a lot to us to have them make this trip to help us begin this new adventure.

The five days in Little Rock were days of one test after the other. They put a catheter, beneath the skin just below Richard’s collarbone, and I learned how to take care of that. It was much easier to insert the chemo in this way than by giving shots and IV’s.

After returning to Escondido, Richard wrote:

We are home from Little Rock. It is an amazing place. I am in the program, which is designed to lead up to a bone marrow transplant and peripheral stem cell transplant. I have learned that stem cells are actually baby bone marrow cells, or “seedlings,” which will eventually become bone marrow.

We were warned about side effects. Richard did not have any of those. There were a few times of depression, but nothing that he was not able to handle with God’s help. I tried to prepare for the times of Richard being obnoxious, but it never happened. I figured that if he was, it would make up for the times that I had been, and still could be obnoxious. The Lord only allows into our life what we can handle, maybe the Lord knew that I would not be a very good nurse, and so He had very little come into my life that I considered really difficult. I’ll go on with the journal:

When I return to Arkansas It looks as though this whole process could take up to a year – and it doesn't look to be a very pleasant year. They are talking about an average of three years remission as a result of the treatment. I'm not sure it's worth it all, but this seems to be the direction the Lord has led, so we are going to move ahead. If it works and He keeps me around a while, it will probably be because he has further ministry for me here. If He takes me home, my ministry will be to serve and worship before His throne, and that will be much more exciting. I know He will do what is best. I'm so grateful that my life is in my Lord's loving and powerful hands. I can't lose whichever way this goes. But my greatest desire is to give glory and praise to Him, whatever He decides is best.

On the nineteenth of June, 1992, our thirty-eighth wedding anniversary, we went out to dinner with friends and then to see a play. Although Richard was not feeling well he did his best to keep life as normal as possible. I appreciated that, and I loved him more for thinking of me even when he was not at his best. I also felt that it was good for him to get out and to try to take his mind off of his cancer, if that was possible.

We knew that during this treatment his hair was going to fall out. I suggested that we take a vote from the congregation as to whether he should go bald or wear a wig. For some reason, Richard didn't think that would be a good idea.

After completing the first series which included fifty treatments on various parts of his body Richard writes in his journal:

The big news is HAIR! It started to fall out last Friday – sixteen days after the beginning of VAD, and today it's just about gone. This morning, Mary gave me a butch so as to make it easier to clean up the hair that's left after a bath or shower. But I look bald for all practical purposes. Shortly after returning from Little Rock we ordered a hairpiece from The Big Wig shop on Grand Ave. I have it now, and wore it last Monday when Mary and I went out for the afternoon, just to see what it is like. The color matches quite well, and it looks like me from the back, but not from the front. The lady at the shop trimmed it as close as she could without the net showing through, but it still doesn't look like me. I'm sure people will get used to it. I plan to wear it Sunday to preach.

The people at the church were very gracious about Richard's wig. He writes:

I have worn the wig for two Sundays now, and the people seem to be handling it all right. The only comment I get is that it makes me look younger. The Lord continues to be gracious in allowing me to continue ministering the Word. It seems that no matter how poorly I am feeling, He gives the strength and stamina I need for the services, and people say that it is not obvious that I am feeling poorly. What an evidence of GRACE!

Richard was right. His preaching never suffered during his illness. He had talked to his board of Elders and wanted them to be aware that he would step down from his pulpit ministry if and when they felt he should do that for the sake of the church. The Lord spared us from that happening because of God's timing in taking him home

The next month was busy. I was hurting as I saw Richard hurt. I wondered if death would not be better than what he was going through. I didn't like to think of the hard road ahead of us - the treatment, the pain, and the uncertainty of this whole thing. I didn't like all the decisions that would have to be made. The best part of this illness was the way it made us depend on God. We couldn't live in the future. We had to live one day at a time. We had to draw on God's grace constantly.

Richard was looking forward to the trip to Little Rock. He wanted relief from the pain and he hoped that Little Rock and the treatment that he received would give him some relief. Richard writes:

The flight to Little Rock was uneventful, though somewhat difficult with all the carry-ons to juggle, and so much pain. Mary did practically everything. What a trouper! I don't know what I would do without her. I love her so very much and appreciate all she does to help me. Now we are here, and a new chapter in our lives is about to begin.

And so we enter a new period of our lives. One that would be difficult in many ways. It would draw us closer to each other and to our Lord. It would also begin a new era in which we would see the Lord control our lives and the lives of our children in unusual ways.

We had never walked this way before. What would this be like? Would we be able to cope with all the strange new events that would enter our lives? What would this do to our marriage? We had many questions, but not any answers. The Lord promised us that He would be with us and that was our only stability.

We moved into the motel near the hospital.

At the hospital, the day was filled with a number of different tests for Richard including a bone marrow biopsy.

The results showed that Richard's plasma cells in his bone marrow were at 40% and that was too high to do a bone marrow harvest. Richard's journal reads:

I admit to being discouraged. That was to be the first major event of this protocol, and the first thing that could go wrong did go wrong. The Lord is still teaching us that our lives are in His hands. That He is in control of everything and that He does what He pleases. 'Just trust Me.' Is His continual Word to me.

Two days after we arrived, Richard entered the hospital where they started the high dosage of cytoxyn. That was one full day of IV with a variety of possible side effects. He did very well on the chemo and was scheduled to go back to the motel, but he had fever which delayed his return by a day.

Throughout all this period of waiting the Lord continued to say "Trust Me, and wait on Me."

We found out from the hospital that Richard had lost two and a half inches in height from the degeneration of his back bone. He had to have his pajamas shortened, also because of the chemo

he had gained inches around his waist. That meant that he needed new pants for his change in size. The motel was close to the mall so I was able to do some shopping. That was a nice diversion for me. It was also a good way for me to get in some extra walking and at times to buy our meals from the quick food places in the food court.

A night later, Richard's temperature started to rise. We talked to the doctor, and he told us to allow a half hour for it to decrease. If not, we would have to return to the hospital. We prayed together. The next time I took his temperature it was lower. We were thankful.

The telephone was usually a blessing while we were in Little Rock, but there were also times when I wanted to pull it out of the wall. It seemed to ring at the wrong time. It would ring when the nurse was there working with Richard. Or I would be in the bathroom helping Richard to bathe, or I would be taking a shower. I didn't want to let it ring because if it was long distance, they had already paid to speak to the motel operator and I didn't want them not to talk to us. Besides, we appreciated the interest and the concern. I began to realize that even these interruptions were from the Lord, and this was another area where I needed to trust Him. I also learned that there were times when I did have to let it ring.

We had lived in the motel during the last weeks of December. A new year was ahead of us. Richard was in the hospital. So 1993 began with my daily walk to the hospital. Richard was in the middle of treatment. This was not the way we planned our life, but evidently it was God's plan for us. Knowing that gave us confidence that we were where we should be, and that our Lord would give us the grace for whatever lay ahead. Neither one of us had any idea how this year would progress. I am glad that the Lord doesn't show us the future. His desire for us is to trust Him, be dependant on Him, and to do that one day at a time.

On the fourth of January, after three days of Richard receiving, by way of IV's hydration fluid and high dosages of Melphalan (chemo with unpleasant side effects), he was ready for the transplant. It was over in half an hour.

That morning I had read a little poem in Daily Bread that I memorized. It said, "O' Lord, give me the grace to be content with what You give to me! No! More than that, let me rejoice in all You send me – it's Your choice." I knew that I was not very good with sick people and so I prayed that the Lord would help me to be compassionate and Christlike in dealing with all people, especially sick people. My journal tells of my thoughts that day:

In myself, Lord, I don't like sickness and what disease does to people. I don't like that multiple myeloma destroys a person's body. I accept it, but Lord, help me to rejoice in it. Help me to show love to Richard even though I don't feel loving. Am I angry? I don't feel angry, but who knows. Lord, help me to be honest with myself and others. Help me to be honest when my honesty helps others, not when it hurts others or hurts Your name.

On the fifth of January 1993, Richard was released from the hospital to go back to the Motel and be treated as an outpatient for the rest of the procedure, as long as there were no complications. That night went reasonably well for Richard except for some nausea. The next day we saw the doctor. They hooked Richard up to a battery powered pump that administered a drug called

Acyclovir around the clock. They also hooked up a five day anti-nausea infusor which definitely helped to reduce the nausea.

After the transplant was completed I wrote in my journal:

Richard had a rough day yesterday. His mouth is hurting very much. In the evening he was nauseated a lot. We prayed together and the Lord got him through the night. Today I had a time of wondering 'is this worth it, Lord. What glory will You get from this? Do we have a ministry after this? If we do what will it be? I know that we must live one day at a time and that is all we can do. You don't tell us the future, do You, Lord? So I put it back in Your hands, Lord, and I will trust and wait.

We had been told that the tenth day after the transplant the patient slowly does a turn around and from then on each day goes a little bit better. That was true with Richard. He was still having some difficulty with swallowing, but they were able to remove the anti-nausea infusor and for that he was grateful.

On January nineteenth Richard was officially discharged and so we made reservations to fly home.

Months passed. It was the day after Easter

Richard's journal entry:

The doctor finally called, nearly three weeks after the special blood test. They informed me that I have an infection and will need to take a drug called gancyclovir intravenously for two weeks, an hour IV each morning and another IV each evening. Palomar Pomerado Home Nursing Service came out to administer it for the first three times until Mary learned how to do it, and she has done it since (very well, I might add). The drug has all kinds of potential adverse side effects, but after a full week I have not had any at all. Thank you Lord, for Your kindness in sparing me those side effects.

I must tell you the story about administrating this latest drug. After they put in the triple lumen catheter and gave us the drug, I thought that I was just to put the drug in the catheter with one quick shot. I was trying to figure out how to do that and I could not make it work. I called my neighbor, who is an oncology nurse, to come and help me. When she came to the house and saw what I was trying to do she informed me that this drug would take an hour to put in intravenously. That was when we realized that no one had given us the complete instructions. I guess everyone thought that I knew what I was doing. We laughed about that and wondered what would have happened if I had been successful and had given Richard the medication all at once instead of doing the slow drip. He may have entered the presence of the Lord quicker than he actually did. We were learning together, and I am glad that we both had a sense of humor.

Richard seemed to be feeling better each day and he was getting stronger and also cutting down on his morphine. He wanted to get back to driving the car. I had a sixtieth birthday party, for him with a few of our closest friends. This was a big event, since no other senior pastor of EFCC had lived to the age of sixty.

Time was passing and summer was here. Richard was to be the speaker for a week at Forest Home in July, 1993, and our four sons, their wives and children were all able to be with us.

Richard's journal reads:

We talked and played games in our cabin in the evenings after the meeting. And while we spread out in the dining room much of the time, we did all sit together at one table for several key meals. The Lord was so very gracious in allowing us to have that time together.

Family was very important to Richard, and this time together was especially meaningful to him, but now as we look back it has special value for all our family. Our God, the controller of everything and the one that delights in giving good gifts, knew the future, and He was planning our days and remaining time together here on earth.

Richard's journal reads:

Now my mind is on Little Rock and the imminent transplant. While I do not look forward to the unpleasantness of the treatment, I am getting anxious to get on with it. I seem to be hurting more each day, especially in my ribs and back. And now there is another interesting development - my voice is getting considerably weaker and higher in pitch. I don't know what it could be, other than the general deterioration of my body caused by the Myeloma. I'm praying for the strength to get through this weekend and am thankful that this is the last time I will be preaching until after the transplant. We leave early next Tuesday for Little Rock.

Neither Richard, nor I, at this time, had any idea that the next Saturday and Sunday would be the last time that he would ever speak at EFCC. I later heard from a few friends that they did not expect him to return. We arrived in Little Rock in August and settled in our motel. I was feeling down and I wrote:

I am feeling stressful and anxious about this whole thing. I wonder what will happen - health, money, future of our lives together, and the church, among the many other changes taking place. I am thinking that if I get cancer, I will think long and hard about getting treatment. It depends on the cure rate and the treatment. With Richard's cancer there is no cure, when the cancer is this far advanced, just a slow death. We did have a great time with our family this summer at Forest Home. Psalm 121 was the reading in Daily Bread for today and it is an excellent word from the Lord. He is the One I must trust. I do trust, but I don't like what we are going through. But the Lord tells me to be content, to rejoice, to be thankful, to be kind. They are commands and I am to make a choice - obey or disobey. If I want to do God's will I will chose to obey.

My journal continues:

August twentieth: "Daily Bread 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10 God's grace is sufficient. Today we learned that we have to put off the treatment for at least a day. This is hard to hear

because the cancer is moving and destroying bone. It seems to be doing that especially in Richard's head.

I wonder if that was what was happening to Richard's voice and would the myeloma have eventually destroyed his voice. We had been told that the myeloma was in the base of the neck and that if it broke through then it would affect the facial muscles etc.

These have been very hard days. Richard is hurting more and more. I am getting impatient with the hospital and the doctors. I wonder does anybody really care about us?

We finally had the schedule for Richard's treatment. He entered the hospital for total body radiation: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday - three times a day. They took him from the hospital to CARTI (the radiation center) for each treatment. It was very hard for him. On Friday September third he had the stem cell transplant. Maybe we would be able to be back in Escondido by the eighteenth. On September nine I wrote:

I went to the hospital believing that today would be the turn around day and things would start getting better, but that wasn't to be. When I arrived Richard was struggling to breathe. His body was shutting down. I had called the four boys when I had heard about his breathing problems, and now I called them again telling them of the move to MICU.

During the process of Richard's move to MICU a new doctor entered our lives. I mentioned that I had a son that was a missionary pilot, and his eyes lit up. Later when I questioned him about his response he told me that he was a Christian and was interested in Medical missions. What a reminder to me that the Lord puts his people where He wants to use them. I tried to sleep as I waited for Tim and Lois to arrive. I prayed for the Lord's will. I knew the people in Escondido were praying and their many phone calls encouraged me.

Lois and Tim arrived at the motel. We made a trip to the hospital.

Richard's kidneys were beginning to shut down, and then I knew the time could be very short. I called the other three boys. They all made plans to fly to Little Rock. Although they did not consult each other Mark and Mike met in Dallas and took the same plane to Little Rock. Steve flying in from Chicago arrived within twenty minutes of his brothers. A Sovereign God plans for us in ways we never think about. They arrived at the hospital about 4:40 p.m. Each of the boys had some private time with their Dad. We believe that Richard knew that they were there. He wasn't able to talk, but he did squeeze their hands. Our main discussion that night was "do we take him off the ventilator?" and "if we decide to do it when should we do it?"

What a hard decision! Richard and I had talked about a time when this may have to be decided. I found it was easy to talk about, but when the time came, it was another story. When Richard and I had talked we said that neither of us wanted to be kept alive on machines. I had decided to put Richard on the ventilator when the doctors had told me that he would not make it if I didn't and I had wanted the boys to see their dad. Now that the boys were all there, should we take him off the ventilator and let God make the final decision? We had a family discussion. The boys, especially one, were reluctant to take their Dad off the ventilator. I explained that their Dad and I had talked and this was his wish. They weren't as sure as I was. After all, they were not with

us when we had talked. Richard and I both knew that to be with the Lord was much better than to remain here. We enlisted the help of our new friend, the doctor. He agreed to be in on our discussion and to give us his medical view. While we were talking, we were interrupted by the head of the transplant team, and he was very upset that we were even considering taking Richard off of life support. He informed me that I was giving up, and he didn't like that at all. I tried to explain to him that we had a powerful God and that He could keep Richard alive with or without the life support if that was His desire. I explained to him that death was not the end for us and that if Richard died he would immediately enter the presence of God. I also talked about the financial burden that this would become. I acknowledged that it didn't sound very loving or kind, but that was the practical side of life. Would our insurance pay for all this? I think he could have assured me not to worry about the money, if he was really interested in helping. But he didn't. I began to feel that Richard was just a research project, not a person with a deep need. When we went to bed that night, the decision not to put Richard on kidney dialysis was made. Tim was helpful with this decision because he had worked at a kidney dialysis center for a short time while attending school. We also decided to keep Richard on the ventilator for another two or three days. I remember thinking that waiting another day or two before we disconnect the ventilator, would not be a mistake.

I woke about 2 am the morning of September eleventh. My mind was very busy. I thought back to what we had been discussing the night before, and then my mind went further back to some of the things that Richard and I had talked about. We had decided that we would not use a ventilator to keep either one of us alive. In Richard's situation we wondered when is "enough, enough." Then I thought "why am I trying to keep Richard alive? What does the future hold for him? Humanly speaking there is no cure for multiple myeloma. The bones continue to deteriorate and break very easily." Richard had broken a collar bone turning over in bed. "The slow death from myeloma can be very, very painful." It was while those thoughts were going through my mind that I heard (not audibly) a voice say, "Who are you thinking about, Mary?" You are trying to please the boys, and trying to keep a doctor happy, but you have forgotten Richard's request." That was true. If God was all-powerful, couldn't He keep Richard alive, as I had told the doctor, without the ventilator? Did I believe that? As I lay there in bed I gave Richard back to the Lord and said, "Lord I need Your guidance. If You want us to take him off the ventilator, then in the morning have all the boys agree." I fell back to sleep until about 5:30 am. When I woke I found myself praying again, "Lord show us Your will."

Lois and I were at the hospital early the morning of the eleventh. One look at Richard told me that he was not doing any better. In fact he looked worse. He was not producing much urine and what he was producing was dark brown, his stomach was extended, his whole body looked swollen, and he wasn't as mentally alert as he had been the day before. The last few times that I had been in with him alone he seemed irritated with me. He couldn't talk because he was on the ventilator, and I wondered what was going on in his mind. As I thought about that later, I wondered if he was irritated because I had him on the ventilator rather than letting him go into the presence of his Lord. I remember asking the Lord to pass on to Richard my dilemma and to forgive me if I was undecided. I often find comfort in asking the Lord to pass messages on to Richard. I am not sure if that is theologically correct, but if it isn't, it sure helps me, and the Lord understands.

The boys were slow in getting to the hospital. They were enjoying being together, even under these circumstances, and they decided to walk to the hospital so that they could talk. When they did arrive they looked at their Dad and all agreed that it was time to remove the ventilator. While I was waiting for the boys to arrive, I met a woman whose husband was on the same program as Richard. He was a day ahead of him in the program. This man was doing fine and proceeding according to plan. "Lord, why are You working it out this way. This is not fair." Those were some thoughts that quickly entered my mind. Then I reminded myself that God decides what is fair and that Richard was ready to meet His Lord. Maybe this other patient needed more time here on earth to get to know Him.

After we made the decision to remove the ventilator, we had to get the approval of the Doctor. It seemed forever for the doctor to come and check Richard. When he finally arrived and we all had a chance to get together we asked what was the chance of a recovery. He said about 5%. That gave the boys hope, but Lois and I saw it differently. We thought 5% is not enough to keep him on the ventilator. We learned what was involved in taking a person off the ventilator. We were told that they would take him back up to his original room and have morphine ready so that he would not struggle with the pain and his breathing. They told us to go and get some lunch while they did the necessary preparation. Before we went to lunch we prayed for the Lord's will. It was a very close, precious time. I was thankful that at least one of the girls was there with me.

We went down to have lunch, and Tim prayed that Dad would die quickly if that was the Lord's will. Just about the time we finished eating, a woman from the transplant team came into the lunch room and looked at us and said,

"He's gone."

This was the same woman that when questioned agreed that she would not want to be on the ventilator, and she thought that we were making the right decision. We dashed up to Richard's room, disappointed that we were not there at the time of death. Tim was angry, and we all felt like God had let us down. It didn't take us long to realize that God had answered our prayer. Richard didn't linger, and we were sure that we had made the right decision. We later found out that Richard died within a few minutes after they removed the ventilator. When I complained to the Lord that I had wanted to be in the room when Richard went into His presence, He gently reminded me, "Mary, we walk by faith, not by sight."

That has been a comfort to me whenever I think of those last moments of Richard's time on earth. For my benefit I had hoped to see some visual manifestation that Richard saw the Lord before he died, but that was not God's plan.

We prayed, we cried, and then we made the final arrangements for Richard's body to be returned to Escondido after an autopsy. We realized that Lois had left her purse in the cafeteria when we dashed out. She found her purse, but forty dollars was missing from her wallet. Sad, but a reminder that the world is a sinful place and Richard was now out of this world and in the Lord's world. What a joyful time this was for him.

We made many phone calls and went back to the motel to make preparations to leave the next day for our different destinations. Mark and I would be returning on the same plane. That was a comfort to me because returning alone would have been very difficult.

I woke the morning of the twelfth and opened my Bible to 1 Chronicles one. This was the Daily Bread reading for the day. It was the genealogies of Adam to Abraham. I thought, "Lord, I don't need this I want some comfort." Then I realized that the comfort was what the genealogies are all about. Life goes on and Richard's life would go on in his sons and their children. That is comforting. Someday I will be united with Richard, and he in turn will introduce me to the Lord.

The next day, on the way home, we had a little excitement as we landed. The plane almost turned on its side as we approached the runway. There were emergency vehicles on both sides of the plane when we landed. For a moment I thought that I might see Richard a lot sooner than I expected.

On the seventeenth I wrote:

I have sorrow and pain, but yet there is also an excitement about this new adventure that God has for me.

The twenty-first, 1993, was the day of Richard's memorial service, and the extended family had arrived to be with us. My journal entry:

I miss Richard. I miss him in bed with me - just looking over and seeing him there.

Our times of intimate talk and decision making had already gone because of the seriousness of the illness, but I had expected to have that restored before he died, but that was not to be. I do wish that I could have had a long talk with him before he died, but God's timing is always perfect. For Richard's sake, this way was the best. Our God of mercy gave Richard a merciful death.

I continue in my journal:

Lord, I do look forward to You being my husband, as You promise in Isaiah. I want an intimate relationship with You. I love You Lord. Help me to be what YOU want me to be.

There were approximately five thousand people that attended Richard's memorial service. It was a tribute to a man that loved and served God.

Richard is buried on a little hillside overlooking Escondido, the city where he ministered for twenty-one years. The verse on the grave marker is Psalm 34:3, "O magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together." That continues to be my prayer as I wait for our reunion in heaven.