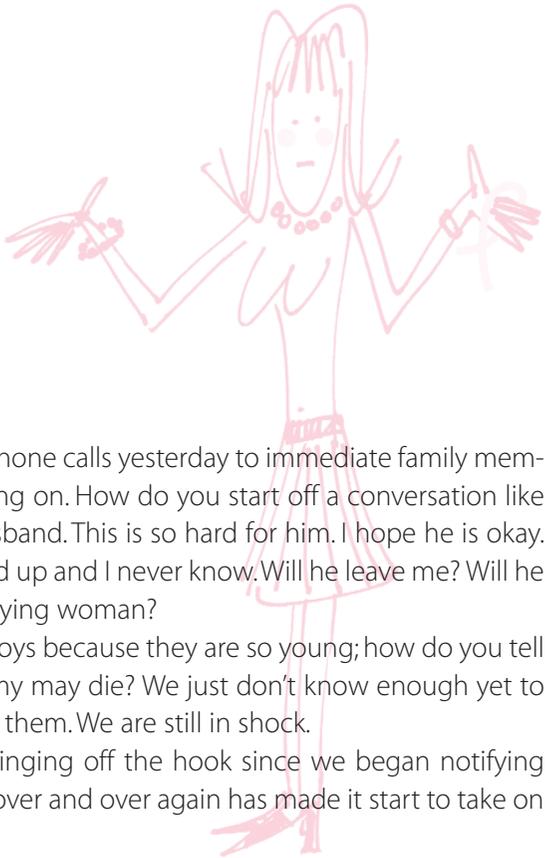


Special Delivery

November 11



Stone began making phone calls yesterday to immediate family members to explain what is going on. How do you start off a conversation like that? I worry about my husband. This is so hard for him. I hope he is okay. He keeps feelings all bottled up and I never know. Will he leave me? Will he want to stay married to a dying woman?

We have not told the boys because they are so young; how do you tell a 3-year old that his mommy may die? We just don't know enough yet to even begin explaining it to them. We are still in shock.

The phone has been ringing off the hook since we began notifying everyone. Telling the story over and over again has made it start to take on a sense of reality.

My stepmother Robbi, who lives about five hours away, began packing last night to come to our house. She wants to be with me when I go see the doctor tomorrow. I want her to be there too, in case I miss hearing something important.

I think about my own mother. She died a year earlier and I need someone to rush to my side and hug me as a normal mother would. A mother who would drop everything to support me and take care of the kids while I go to hundreds of appointments and have numerous surgeries, procedures and treatments. I have never known what it is like to have a caring mother like this and right now I wish more than any other time in my life that I did know that feeling.

Since my mother's death, my aunt (her sister) and I have grown very close. She lives two hours away so I call to tell her. She seems to take the

news too easily. "Let me know if I can do anything," she says. "I hope everything goes well tomorrow. Keep me posted." I get off the phone feeling so empty. If she had called me to tell me she had cancer, I would have rushed to be by her side. At least at this moment I think I would, because that is what I need. I want her to be there by my side and hugging me. Why is she not concerned?

People react so differently and I am only beginning to get a dose of reality. I will soon learn a very hard lesson of who my true friends are and what true unconditional love is all about. It seems that the stronger you appear the less those around you will offer help. They assume that you are strong enough to handle whatever may come your way and feel they are inadequately equipped or not strong enough to offer any further help. Alternately, when you tell people you specifically need them, some will willingly volunteer while others will decline.



My stepmother Robbi arrives; it is wonderful to have her here. She enters the house and immediately hugs me and wants to know what we are facing. She needs the facts. I explain to her that I won't know anything until tomorrow, so we just talk. It does not take long though, for exhaustion to set in since I have talked so much lately. I shut down—I cannot tell anyone else; the callers will just have to talk to Robbi or Stone.

At dusk, a deliveryman arrives at my door with a bouquet of flowers from an office acquaintance. I thank him and close the door. They are absolutely beautiful, yet I am immediately filled with rage over these flowers. I turn and glare at the flowers. I don't understand the emotion, but there it is. Rage. Everybody better hide because this Southern woman is mad.

In my mind, I immediately associate these flowers with a death sympathy gesture. I know that is not what they are intended for, but the fight in me starts at that very moment. I blurt out, "Ain't nobody dying 'round here!"

Everyone around me at work, my friends and maybe even my family, must think I am going to die. I think it too many times myself, but I don't want any sympathy; I want support and hugs and laughter. Do they not know whom they are dealing with? Do they not know that Grace is a fighter and wins at everything?



I have always been sensitive to what people think of me, and right now I am infuriated. I will not die. I will prove them wrong. I will win at this and I will conquer breast cancer.

Flowers are for births and deaths, so these flowers will represent the birth of my new fighting spirit against cancer. Thank you, friend. She has no idea that her flowers intended for comfort would spark the fighter inside me. I begin to appreciate these flowers because they inspire me to stop feeling sorry for myself and start retaliating. This will be the fight of, and for, my life.

“...the battle is the LORD’s....”

1 Samuel 17:47

Emotions in check? Yes.

Brain in order? Yes.

Knowledge in my pocket? Some of it.

Ready? Almost.

I turn in for the night and ask God for protection. Suddenly it is quiet and still—there is not a sound in the house. Alone with my thoughts, I realize that my rage has subsided and I have finally calmed down.

Unable to sleep, I eventually get up to check on the children. They are breathing and are so beautiful. Thank you God for the most perfect children. Please forgive me for not spending the time with them that I should have.

I wander around the house. I see the flowers again—a reminder to me of the fight I am committed to win. The race to be won with strength I don’t have. I fall onto the couch and cry quietly so I won’t wake up my family.

It is in that darkest hour that I recognize that the world no longer offers me HOPE, that everything I thought was important is now meaningless, and all the FAITH I had was in the things of the world.

I suddenly find myself thinking about Dr. Phil McGraw, the television daytime talk show host, when he asks his guests, “How’s that working for you?” Well, Dr. Phil, it is not working for me at all.

It is at that moment that I look up to God for GRACE. I am searching for you, Lord. Please hear my cry. I need your strength to carry me through this.