

dollars?" I said jokingly.

"Well, I am not 100% better yet, so you have to wait a bit longer for your million dollars." He answered.

He then quickly got a hundred-dollar bill from his pocket and thrust it into my hands. I was taken aback.

"Oh no. I was just joking with you." I really felt embarrassed.

"You should take the money. I was the witness, remember?" Mrs. Brown insisted.

Knowing that they were pensioners, I could not possibly take that money from them.

"Mr. Brown, please do me a favor. I want you to take your wife out tonight and treat her to a nice restaurant of her choice to celebrate Thanksgiving." I had to do some quick thinking.

Mrs. Brown gave an approving smile. The husband then put the money back in his pocket.

As they were leaving my office, Mr. Brown waved at me and said, "Thanks a million."

Through their gratitude, Mr. and Mrs. Brown showed me the true meaning of thanksgiving. 

Anxiety and Faith

Jone Gallagher

In our very active retirement years my husband and I have expressed our appreciation to God for the health and strength that permit us to do the work we enjoy at home and at church. When our doctor suggested my husband have a treadmill test, because it had been so many years since he'd had one, we agreed.

On Monday Harold went for his treadmill appointment, which we thought would take a couple of hours. My mind knew there was a possibility the test could show something irregular, but I didn't dwell on it. I was not emotionally prepared for Harold's call saying the treadmill was abnormal and the doctor wanted him to check into the hospital to have an angiogram. As I drove to the hospital my thoughts were racing. I questioned the doctor, "Isn't there any less invasive procedure that will give you the

same information?" "There didn't seem to be. He told us about the different possibilities for treatment depending on the amount of blockage they might find: angioplasty, a stent, which has a better chance of lasting results than the angioplasty, or bypass surgery. We were quite stunned. As I told the doctor, "You have to understand, we've spent the last fifteen years of our lives trying, through disciplined diet and exercise, to avoid this." We agreed to the angiogram the next day, and Harold and I made the commitment, as we try to do in everything, to trust God in these circumstances.

I called our kids that night to let them know what was happening. The next day the angiogram showed the disappointing results: severe blockage, bypass surgery would be necessary. The results were very difficult for me to accept. The angiogram was on Tuesday,

the surgery was scheduled for Friday. They kept Harold in the hospital, hooked up to a monitor. I'd stay with him until I had to leave at night. Before leaving we'd pray and read through scriptures that comforted us both. The night before his surgery, I spent the night at the hospital. We were both able to sleep that night.

The next morning, as he was ready to go into surgery, I read the same scriptures to him: from Psalm 16; "Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure " from Psalm 18: I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." from Psalm 73: "Yet I am always with you. you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? and earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

My stomach churned in those days before the surgery, and I thought at one time, "I shouldn't be driving, I'm so unfocused." Added to the anxiety were the thoughts, "Faith and anxiety don't go together. I shouldn't feel this way. One day as I struggled with my confused thoughts I said to God, "Lord, I love you. You know my head and my heart are fully committed to trusting you. I don't seem to have any control over my churning stomach." What a relief In my weakness once again I became aware of his

strength.

I'm writing this two weeks past the surgery. It went smoothly, so has the time since. We know the recovery will take time and patience, but the anxiety is gone. We have been touched by God's graciousness during this time, expressed in the support and love of our family, in the prayers of many friends, through our Christian neighbors who started a neighborhood prayer chain, through cards and telephone calls, and thoughtful expressions of caring. The hospital allows their chaplains to be in the operating room, and two times during Harold's surgery the chaplain came to me and told me what was happening and that everything was going well. The last time he said, "The doctor's finishing sewing the grafts and will be talking with you soon. Everything is fine." What a tremendous difference this made.

Even now you may be in a situation where you're trying to reconcile faith and anxiety. Please think of the words in Psalm 103, "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust." Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. If there is a sin that is coming between you and God, confess in to him so that you may receive forgiveness. Commit you way to him, Tell him you love him. Then trust him with your feelings as you trust him with whatever burden you may be carrying. Peter tells us, "Cast all your anxiety on him (Why?) because he cares for you." Thank you, Lord, for your understanding love, compassion, and acceptance. In my weakness may your strength be shown. 