

## Let God Be God

It was late at night and my 18-month-old son was sleeping peacefully in the next room. This was the moment I'd dreaded ever since my fiancé told me he was joining the Air Force. Now that man was my husband, the father of our child, and he was leaving on his first deployment.

I don't know what sound came out of my mouth when he shut the door behind him, but my heart was screaming. It was a kind of sadness I hadn't felt before. He would be gone four months. It would be just my son and me, with every day the same. Weekends would just be another day, instead of something to look forward to when Daddy would be home. But that wasn't all of it. A part of my grief had to do with the fact that I was preparing myself for the possibility of having just said good-bye to him for the last time.

I slept fitfully for an hour or two, and then was awakened by "the sound of freedom" as folks who live near Air Force bases call jet noise. I looked out the window and could see the line of red blinking lights heading off into the distance – off to war. I was proud of my husband and what he would be doing for our nation. Mixed in with pride, though, was the feeling that a piece of my heart was being pulled further away from me with each blink of red light. I wished I could reach up, pull that blinking light out of the sky, put it back in my chest, and have my family back together in the morning. But I couldn't. My emotions didn't quite know what to do. I was frantic, emotionally exhausted, and nauseated.

The raw emotion of that night gradually wore off over the next few days, and my son and I fell into a routine that was a bit simpler and more predictable than when there were three of us. My son was never one for long naps, so each day when he went down for his afternoon nap, I sat down with my Bible. The dishes on the counter, the bills that needed to be paid, and the lawn that needed to be mowed – these would have to wait until later. My time to myself HAD to be my time in God's Word. My lonely heart longed for God. I prayed with the psalmist, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." (Psalm 119:18) The promise God spoke to the Israelites through the prophet Jeremiah was one I claimed as my own: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13)

With all my heart I did seek God as I dug deeply into his Word. He kept his promise and allowed me to find him in the truths he revealed to me. I was convicted of my sinfulness and comforted by the abundance of his forgiveness in Christ. I was reassured that he was with us every moment. His powerful hand of protection and provision was over us, and his gentle love surrounded us. Everything that was happening was bringing us closer to him with the ultimate goal of eternity in his presence. He led me to trust that whatever the path he chose for us, it would be a blessed one.

Sometimes being alone, we feel a more urgent need for God than when we are surrounded by friends and family. Without my husband around I felt more vulnerable. Sensing my dependence on God more acutely, I saw his hand in everything. I knew that the emotional strength to make it through each day

came from him. Every week that went by without some sort of problem with the car, or house, or computer was a gift from God. I saw God's kindness in the kindness shown to me by others. Every failure or extra challenge was a chance for God to show his grace was sufficient for me, for his power is made perfect in weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9) He was on my mind in a more immediate way. I was much closer to praying continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17) than I had ever been.

As the weeks and months went by, my husband and I kept in touch, mainly by email. Once a week we were allowed a 15-minute phone call. We sent packages. If a letter arrived in the mail without a stamp on it (outgoing letters are free for deployed service members), it made my day. Nowadays, who has the privilege of getting handwritten love letters from her husband?!

I missed him intensely, and yet I felt less and less alone. God was supplying all that I needed by his grace and mercy. There was peace in my heart. With my husband on the other side of the world and only phone calls, emails, and occasional snail mail to connect us, I learned to let God be God, instead of expecting my husband to fill the God-shaped hole in my psyche.

It became clear to me that I had been committing idolatry – making my husband my God. I realized there had been times that my husband was not living up to my expectations because my expectations could not be fulfilled by a mere human being. God had given me the blessing I had prayed for since I was a young girl – a wonderful husband. I had selfishly taken the gift and made it my focus, in a sense turning my back on the giver. By the blood of Jesus my Savior, my God didn't abandon me when I had dethroned him in my heart. It was his desire to turn me back toward himself and shower his grace and mercy on me. This he did, through his Word.

Finally the day came when our family was reunited. My husband arrived on a commercial flight. We brought a copy of his orders to the ticket counter and received a pass to allow us to go through security. There wasn't a lot of fanfare, but we wouldn't have noticed it anyway. All that mattered at that moment was the three of us – together. That day was just as joyous as the day we were separated was painful.

Now, with God in first place and my husband where he belonged as the head of our household, we could move forward with our lives as a happier, spiritually healthier family.

*"The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy."*

*(Psalm 126:3)*

### Prayer Suggestions:

- Is there something or someone you have allowed to take the place of God in your heart? Confess that to him.
- Thank God for the challenges in your life that have brought you closer to him. Thank him for reaching out to you in spite of your sinfulness.



- Is there a challenge or trial you are enduring right now? Ask God to use it to strengthen you and bring you closer to himself. Ask God to help you make time to be in his Word, and ask the Holy Spirit to work in your heart through that Word.

Written by Tracy Siegler

Reviewed by Professor-emeritus David Valleskey