

God Gave This Man a New Heart—Literally

On Feb. 2, 2006, my husband woke up with flu-like symptoms. Jon was weeks away from turning 33 years old, and because he was typically strong and in great health, we thought nothing of it. As things got worse that day, however, he went to our primary care physician. Not only was Jon getting weaker, he was also experiencing abdominal pain that was steadily increasing in intensity.

The doctor suspected appendicitis and sent him to the lab for further tests. According to the tests, Jon's white blood cell count was extremely high, and the doctor confirmed there was some kind of significant infection in his body. I was summoned to leave work and drive Jon to the emergency room at St. Joseph's Hospital in Hot Springs, Ark., where his appendix could be removed if necessary.

By the time we reached the hospital at 7:30 p.m., Jon was vomiting blood, and his abdominal pain was unbearable. Immediately the emergency room staff began a series of tests to determine the cause of the problem. As the medical team reviewed test results and discussed possible scenarios, Jon grew steadily worse. His pain increased, and the vomiting became more severe.

The doctor on call that evening surmised from the lab results that Jon had experienced a heart attack. Yet when a cardiologist was called in to examine Jon, an echocardiogram proved Jon did not have a heart attack but was experiencing myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle usually caused by a virus attacking the heart. I was told the volume of blood being pumped through Jon's heart was between 10 and 15 percent. In a normal heart, the rate would be 70 percent—with less than 20 percent considered terminal and a

reason to admit the patient to hospice care.

"You must know," the cardiologist told me, "that your husband's heart might stop beating at any time. He might not make it through the night."

Even though the cardiologist had already diagnosed Jon's condition as myocarditis, to cover all the bases he ordered a heart catheterization. Sometime before midnight, Jon went into surgery to have a catheter inserted into the wall of his heart.

The man who returned from the surgical unit looked like a corpse embalmed and lying in a casket. Jon's color was gone; his eyes were closed; he had no movement. My heart was gripped with fear because it was obvious Jon was dying. From the time we had answered the alarm clock at six that morning until midnight, my husband had deteriorated from a strong, energetic, happy father and husband to a near lifeless corpse. It was too much for me to handle.

Thankfully, Jon's dad arrived at the hospital, and we joined hands by Jon's bed in the intensive care unit and bombarded heaven with our prayers. Nurses worked feverishly around us to make Jon comfortable, but we didn't move. We stayed by his side. We prayed audacious prayers in the Spirit, and we prayed with our understanding. We were desperate to connect with God for a miracle of biblical proportions.

I am a very normal person; I admit to wondering if I would soon be making funeral arrangements. But I also knew this problem was not too great for God. While I was trying to stand in faith, I was also battling fear and unbelief. After all, the doctor had said Jon would likely not live through the night, and wasn't the doctor an expert in these things?

By morning Jon was still with us, but his heart was so damaged he was given very little hope. The ongoing side effects—including his kidneys being in crisis—continued to

make matters worse. Every shred of bad news pushed me to a new low; I found myself clinging to faith for this situation.

The next few days were very dark ones. At night, Jon would get extremely confused, ripping out IVs and tubes. He gained so much fluid he could barely turn himself in bed, much less stand up.

But despite his mental confusion, Jon still talked about the Lord. It was as if he was confused about everything but God. I could tell his heart and mind had zeroed in on the only One who could help him, and his confidence was high. His faith through the whole thing was absolutely amazing.

I, on the other hand, was reeling from the constant flood of negative reports. I was told Jon would not survive and that if he did survive, he would be disabled for the rest of his life. I was told his prognosis was terminal without a heart transplant.

News of Jon's ordeal spread quickly. Our church, which is full of prayer warriors who believe strongly in the power of prayer, launched into fervent intercession for Jon. Prayer chains were activated throughout the region. Our petition was a simple one: We were asking God for Jon's total and complete healing, nothing less.

As the days passed, Jon continued to cling to life, despite his body having accumulated 50 pounds of excess fluid. The cardiologist set a goal to reduce fluid by 1 or 2 pounds per day, but his doctor admitted nothing curative could be done at this point.

Friday, Feb. 10, however, brought something remarkable. It was as if we had punched a reset button and everything was different. Jon's mind seemed to clear and, to my amazement, he astounded us all by walking to the bathroom—something that was impossible 12 hours earlier.

Over the weekend, he made steady advancements. Between that Friday and Sunday, he lost 48 pounds of excess fluid. His body dumped fluid so quickly, he was taken off all diuretics. His heart began to work well enough to flush his kidneys, and other functions in his body suddenly began to work. This was nothing less than a touch from an audacious God!

The cardiologist came in on Monday, astonished, and ordered another echocardiogram to see what was going on. After the test, he said, "I had to go back and look at the echocardiogram from last week because this doesn't even look like the same heart!"

"Praise God!" I said.

"Well, that's who did this," the doctor replied.

The next day the doctor told me Jon's improvement "was nothing short of a miracle." Even so, he wanted to observe Jon a few more days. Those days passed quickly and without complications. Jon was discharged to go home on Wednesday, a day before his 33rd birthday.

As best we could, we made Jon take it easy for the first week or so because we didn't want him to overdo it and perhaps have a setback. Yet his strength and stamina returned quickly, and within a couple of weeks he was doing what he loved to do: riding his horse.

In May, three months after his ordeal, Jon returned to see the doctor, who conducted another echocardiogram and said Jon's ejection fraction was now a perfect 70 percent. Jon went home to help load 100 square bales of hay onto two trailers and then unloaded every one of them by himself and stacked them ceiling-high in the shop.

Since then he has required no heart medications at all. In fact, prior to the incident, he had been on high blood pressure medication for five years, but God healed him so

perfectly that his blood pressure is normal too! He doesn't even require a low-sodium diet.

Was all this the result of prayer? I believe so! If we ask God to increase our faith, He will do it—but He may use very dramatic means to do so. I believe Jon experienced an event that challenged His understanding of God and allowed God to show Himself strong on behalf of His child. Realizing that He was with us through every step, holding on to us, changed us in ways we cannot explain. God is dearer to us now than ever before.

*This article is adapted from The Audacity of Prayer by **Don Nordin**. Don is the pastor of CT Church Houston (), a congregation with more than two thousand people in weekly attendance. With a focus on training leaders, he travels extensively as a speaker in revivals, camp meetings, and conferences. He lives with his wife in Houston, Texas.*