

Like Oil and Water

by Kim Hunt

"So, should I start over?" The doctor asked. I had just walked back into my husband's hospital room. Steven nodded. Very graciously, the doctor continued. He reviewed my husband's illness, pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, and reminded us that this kind of illness only occurs when the immune system is broken down. AIDS was a possible culprit and he was here to give the results of my husband's HIV test. "Your test was positive. And because you have this pneumonia, you have AIDS."

The doctor was very gentle in explaining my need to be tested, the new treatments available, and the local organizations that assist those living with AIDS. I heard him—in the background of my thoughts. "My husband has AIDS. Lord, what does this mean? What do we do? How do I keep my heart from shattering?" I had been a Christian since I was 5 years old. I always remember the Lord with me, even when I made wrong choices or questioned His ways. My husband and I knew that God had given us to each other. We each heard Him specifically say, "this one is for you," without the traditional dating experience. Our wedding was blessed. All needs and desires met. In our first year, we learned to communicate—no holds barred. We were knit together, unlike any marriage I had ever seen. I knew God had blessed me over and abundant of what I had asked in a husband. Despite our differences, I was at home; with him—Steven—lover of my soul.

"How could this be happening?" I thought. I knew God had brought us together. There was no denying it. Yet, I didn't understand how He could have let this happen. I could not figure it out. It seemed we were led to be married and make a variety of future plans. How could we be hearing the Lord and experiencing AIDS? Why would He put us together, then allow AIDS to happen? In my thinking, future and AIDS were like oil and water. There was no way they could successfully blend.

Upon the doctor's recommendation, I was tested. The results—positive for HIV. In those lo-o-ng 2 weeks before the results, I had prepared myself for the "what if" of being HIV positive. But I had not prepared myself for what the doctor said about my status: AIDS, due to a below 200 Cd4 count. I thanked him for calling, hung up the phone and lay on my bed. My husband put his arms around me and we stayed there for long time.

The next several weeks were an ever-changing climate of thought and emotion. I did have some physical symptoms, such as fatigue and recurrent yeast infections. But my biggest battle was in my heart and mind. My heart was broken. I questioned God over and over. I cried. I feared. The future seemed stormy and unstable. I was afraid Steven would die and leave me here alone. I was sad. Memories flooded my mind. I would remember myself as a young person, not knowing this would happen. It felt like I had lost any remaining innocence, any purity. I felt the shame that comes with being HIV+. I couldn't tell just anyone what was going on (especially since I worked in a daycare). My husband and I didn't have an "acceptable" disease. We had AIDS. Some family members and friends were unsure how to treat us. Some didn't know how the disease was contracted and feared casual contact. Some interactions with others were painful... angering. Yet, when I questioned God, when I screamed at Him, when I cried to Him, and when I was broken before Him, He would speak to me. He continued to soothe my shaky heart with His words. Through all the turmoil, He held me up.

One of the first things He said to me was a promise I have held as my "banner cry." I had asked the Lord what was He saying about this whole experience. "Psalm 118" jumped into my head. In looking it up, I was immediately drawn to verse 17. It states "I will live and not die—I will stand and declare the works of the Lord forever!" I wept. I do not know that many scriptures by way of their book and verse title. Usually I have to look up a phrase in a concordance and then find it in the Bible. Rarely ever do scripture titles "jump" into my thoughts. I knew that this was the Lord, my Father, speaking to me, His frightened child.

The Lord also spoke through others directly to us. One evening, Steven went to a special service our church was having. Not knowing our situation, one of the ministers walked up to Steven and began to declare, "Life!!! The curse of death is broken! Life!!! Take this home and speak to the whole house: LIFE!!!" The minister repeated this blessing several times. Steven brought this word home to me. The bit of faith and hope I did have amidst the fear and doubt, was strengthened. The Lord continued to minister to my heart. He reminded me of the story of Abraham being asked to sacrifice Isaac. God commanded Abraham to surrender his promised son. This one who would be the beginning of a great nation was about to be killed by his own father. Would Abraham trust God enough to give up Isaac? How would God keep His promise if Isaac died? Abraham and Isaac walked up the mountain. Isaac kept asking, "Father, what are we going to sacrifice?" Abraham would reply, "the Lord will provide a ram." The Lord did provide a ram and Isaac did not die that day. In replaying this story, the Lord asked, "are you willing to give him (Steven) up? Are you willing to sacrifice him to me?" Broken again, I had to do it. There was nothing I could do about the illness. I couldn't hold on to Steven. I couldn't keep him from dying. I had held him in my heart so tightly. I was afraid he would die. Yet, to have peace, I

had to let him go. That act of surrender was a turning point in my thinking about AIDS and our future.

I let go of the little control I had. I started looking up scriptures about life. My life was in the Lord, despite AIDS. I was still in Christ. That did not change because I was now diagnosed with a terminal illness. I could rest in the Lord. I didn't have to fear death or the future. I put Christ back on the throne, as King of my life. AIDS was a situation in my life, not the King of my life. No matter how much effort I had to put into taking care of myself, I was determined to allow Christ to rule me, not AIDS. Christ came to the forefront, over AIDS. Putting those 2 words, 'AIDS' and 'future' together does not seem ridiculous now. Steven's had his share of indicator diseases. I've had more minor illnesses. Steven decided to stop taking the prescribed medications that were making his quality of life miserable. I continue to take those prescribed for me. In all of the conditions surrounding our life the past 2-½ years, the Lord gives His peace, including the desire to fulfill the vision for our family and business.

Neither Steven nor I had any children. We knew the Lord designed us to be parents. We each contemplated for over a year, "should we or shouldn't we?" When one of us would think, "YES!" The other would think, "NO!" Finally, we were in agreement. On July 1, 1999, the 2 year anniversary of my positive HIV test, I learned I was pregnant. This year on January 7, 2000, Tristan Jude ("clamorous praise") Hunt was born. He is a beautiful, healthy baby boy. As of this writing, he has been tested for HIV twice and both results were negative. Steven released his first CD this year on April 21, with a concert celebration. He also started Royal Priesthood Music and wrote and produced his own music, this has been his passion for years. (Steven's CD may be purchased through First Stone Ministries.) This year, that 'baby' was born also. Steven has been well for quite a while. Medically speaking, I have ceased being in the AIDS category since last fall. My Cd4 count is about 300 and continues to rise. I continue to grow in faith and hope and understanding of God's will. It is "in Him we live, we move, and have our being," not AIDS.