



Design For Ministry™

Depth Perception

15 April 2002

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My wife's battle with cancer is now well into its third year. During this difficult period we have been victim to more generosity than we've ever been able to commit in both our lifetimes. Whether it was a monetary gift, being surrounded in a circle of prayer, a sincere "how are you doing," a bouquet of sugar cookies baked into floral shapes, a timely phone call, or the many e-mails we call *e-ncouragements*, we've learned to count ourselves among the most fortunate of people.

Judaism teaches the principle of *tzedakah* (righteousness/justice). In his book *The Kabbalah of Money*, Rabbi Nilton Bonder describes engaging in *tzedakah* as participation in the celestial economy. For example, by being a business person who charges a fair price and demonstrates excellent customer service as a matter of integrity, I not only do a good business here on earth, I store up assets of goodwill and grace in God's account -- grace I might need to draw on in a time of crisis. Having been married to Lorie for nearly eighteen years, I am qualified to testify that this is the manner in which she lives. During our time of need we received vast withdrawals from her stores.

Our experience leads us to mourn for those who do not have a community of family or friends such as ours. Perhaps they are victims of incredible cruelty, or perhaps it is a lifestyle choice that leaves them bereft at the inauguration of suffering. So many are abandoned at the time of their greatest need. So many are treated with prejudice or callousness so that physical illness becomes but one item on their long and continuing list of anguish.

Living with cancer is unimaginably hard. Every case is unique because of the person, their family systems, and their unique set of choices and experiences that come with them. Everyone who faces it is in a unique territory that no-one else can fully perceive. How awful it must be to enter that territory with no traveling companions, multiplying and far reaching concerns, and the echo of rejection as loved ones walk away!

Jesus tells us that those of us who mourn will be comforted. Whether we mourn our disease or the *dis-ease* of others and the additional suffering they inflict on us, this is a wonderful promise to know. What we must realize is that this comfort often happens at the hand of others, and that their ability to comfort us exists in proportion to our having lived others-centered lives from the beginning.

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-mark