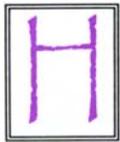


How Big Is God?

by DEBORA M. COTY



How could *so* many things go so wrong?" I wondered as the taut leash dragged me behind my dog like a water-skier behind a boat. I

replayed the events of the past three days in my mind as we trudged along the deserted, late-night street.

It was supposed to have been a rejuvenating spring vacation, a break from our high-stress lives for much-needed refreshment of the mind and body. With expectations high, my family left our home for the 10-hour drive to my in-laws' remote mountain cabin.

The altitude combined with the chill of the early spring evening caused us to reach for our coats as we arrived at the small, wood house perched on a ledge of the mountain. My daughter, Christy, and I removed dusty window coverings as my husband, Chuck, began the tedious process of de-winterizing the plumbing. As he labored to get the well and pump in working order, a pipe under the sink began gushing water into the kitchen. Racing to stymie the flow, Chuck dove into the low cabinet while Christy and I used every available towel to fashion a dam across the kitchen doorway to contain the spreading pool.

After hours of work, we threw the sopping towels into the old washing machine and a drenched, shivering Chuck headed for the hot shower. A startled yelp soon resounded from the bathroom. The hot water had suddenly ceased, leaving him lathered up with only

frigid mountain spring water in which to rinse.

Heading for the outdoor storage room that housed the washer, dryer, and hot water heater, I waded into a newborn creek that was cascading down the gravel driveway from the overflowing washer. The decrepit machine had given up the ghost with most inopportune timing. Simultaneously, a burned-out coil in the hot water heater left us with only ever-so-stimulating icy water for bathing and dishes.

The next morning, which dawned gray and overcast, Chuck made the long trek down the narrow, winding road to the nearest town. After ordering a new washing machine and collecting multiple purchases at the hardware store, he made his way back up the mountain. With deep purple bruises covering his hands from repeated attempts to remove the old heater coil and install the new one, he finally concluded that the clerk sold him the wrong size. Back down, down, down the mountain to the store. Up, up, up the steep, twisting road, only to find that this, too, was the wrong coil.

Before we could formulate "Plan C," the phone jangled, bringing the devastating news of a death in the family back home. As we hastily repacked the car for the long drive home, I eyed Trigger, the timeworn



four-wheeler in the corner of the carport. It seemed to be calling my name.

"They can spare me for one quick ride up the dirt trail," I muttered to myself while looking at the neighboring mountain with longing. "At least this vacation won't be a total loss!"

Donning a helmet and wind-breaker to ward off the thickening mist and brisk wind accompanying an incoming cold front, I sped off for my harmless adventure. Two hours later as I slid on my cold, wet backside down the sodden embankment above the cabin, it didn't seem quite as harmless. The ATV had coughed to a slow death while descending a rocky creek bed, leaving me stranded in the unpopulated woods. Feeling very small in the large forest, I saw no choice but to desert poor Trigger and take off on foot. Trying to ignore the pain in my knee from recent surgery, I followed indistinct trails and furrowed shortcuts through soggy underbrush until finally catching sight of the cabin, where my worried family kept watch.

Unable to reach the four-wheeler by car, we drove up the winding dirt road as far as possible and then I painstakingly led Chuck up the slippery creek bed to the site of Trigger's last stand. He managed to coax the sputtering machine into half-running, half-coasting downhill to the road. Hours later, we were able to wearily turn our loaded car onto the highway toward home.

The jerk of the dog leash from my hand brought me back to the present. Our "Murphy's Law" trip had left me with a hollow feeling inside that was as oppressive as the cold mist on that isolated mountain.

Life itself seemed so big, so overwhelming. Why did I feel like I was in it all alone? Where was the presence of God when it seemed that everything was going wrong?

I threw my head back in sheer exhaustion, training my eyes on the

vast, moonlit heavens. The stars were points of radiant white light stretching out toward every horizon. The velvety black heavens seemed unfathomably deep, infinitely wide.

Then, I heard an unmistakable inner voice ask, "How big am I?" Reflexively, I responded as I had many times when my toddlers had asked the same question. Spreading my arms out wide, I answered aloud to God, "Soooo big!"

The truth of that simple statement rang crystal clear in the motionless night air as I felt the nearness of the God of the universe wash over me like invigorating summer rain.

"Soooo big!" I repeated, louder this time, recognizing that I meant it. The realization that I was in the same physical position of vulnerability and ultimate submission in which Jesus was nailed onto a

cross crept into my consciousness. I felt a tear trickle down my cheek.

Standing there in the stillness of the darkness with my arms outstretched and face turned heavenward, a sense of certainty emerged within me that God, who gave His only Son to die on a cross for all mankind, was big enough and powerful enough to take care of my little life. Galatians 2:20 suddenly became very meaningful: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

There will be other journeys in this life, some good, some bad—but all endurable, as long as I can hold onto the simple but profound truth that even when things seem out of control, God is indeed "soooo big!"

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