

One Heart, One Awesome God

Steve Thompson celebrates his first Christmas with his “new” heart

By Jo Schloeder

For Christians, the words “He died for me” evoke images of the unconditional love that God displayed for us when He offered up His only son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins. But to Steve Thompson, those words have a double meaning. You see, Steve Thompson is a living, breathing miracle of God’s love, but it took the death of yet another man (or perhaps a woman) for Steve to be here today. And for elders Steve and Ellen, there’s no mistaking it – they know God used these circumstances to fulfill His plan for Steve’s life.

It’s a long and emotional story – one that can make even the most hardened heart soft.

Rewind to 14 years ago: At the age of 39, Steve has his first of three heart attacks. The next attack waits ten years, but the third comes only five weeks later. There are multiple surgeries to implant stents and alleviate blockage, but in October 1999, Steve retires from his full time job. Then, a short time later, he has one of his first God experiences when he goes forward for healing and feels the touch of God through Pastor Ronda’s extended hand.

“Pastor Ronda was walking up behind me as Pastor Dewey was praying, she had her hand out toward me, and before she even got to me to put her hand on me I could feel the heat. And when she touched me I knew I was going to be healed. I didn’t know how or when, but I knew it,” Steve said.



Steve and Ellen Thompson, six months after Steve received a “new” heart.

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For the next couple of years, Steve and Ellen enjoyed the grace of God – traveling, surfing and loving their lives together. But, in November 2003, Steve came down with pneumonia and his health began to deteriorate. By March, it was evident that Steve’s heart had endured all it could take, and Steve would need medical intervention to keep things ticking.

“In the beginning of March, I prayed, ‘Lord, I know you can heal me, whether by touch of your hand or by some doctor,’” Steve recalled. “Then, in mid-March Bob Barbella came up to me with a Word from God.”

Steve chuckled as he recalled Bob’s timid approach, since the two were not necessarily close friends and Bob, who was unaware of the severity of Steve’s condition, wasn’t accustomed to passing on God’s messages to acquaintances.

“But he said God told him to tell me ‘It will be alright,’” Steve said.

What took place over the next month was not supposed to happen – at least not by man’s timetable. After receiving a pacemaker on April 6, Steve went to the University of Pennsylvania hospital for an appointment with a specialist... an appointment that normally takes several weeks to get, but with God’s intervention, Steve got in in just a week.

“The cardiologist, Dr. Koa, switched the numbers – he

thought he was calling my doctor, but somehow called my home phone. So we spoke and he had me come in the next week,” Steve said. “When I got to the hospital the nurses wanted to know how I got the appointment. It normally takes a month to get one and another six weeks for the test results to come in before he’ll see you.”

Steve knew God arranged the appointment. But what he didn’t know was that on that same afternoon, Good Friday, Dr. Koa would advise Steve to check in to the hospital right away, which was definitely not part of Steve’s plan.

“When he told me to stay I started to say, ‘No, I’ll be back Monday’ when God spoke to me and said, ‘I am giving you what you prayed for and you’re turning it away.’ So I stayed,” he quipped.

The next several days were a whirlwind of God times like that.

...Like when Ellen prayed that she wouldn’t have to endure waiting alone, and God placed Kathy Foch of Calvary Chapel, Philadelphia, in the same waiting room. Then, Ellen was overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from our Pastors and from all of their brothers and sisters at Shore Christian Center.

...And the night in the hospital when Steve heard the sirens and gongs going off, and knew someone was “crashing,” only to realize it was him. That night, he had a calming near-death experience and God spoke to him in the same words he spoke through Bob Barbella a few months earlier, “It will be alright,” the Lord told him.

...And, when in most cases patients wait months and even years for a donor, Steve Thompson went from being number two on the transplant list to receiving a heart in only 12 days... on Ellen’s birthday. And it was a perfect match.

“What should have taken three-and-a-half months to over a year was done in 20 days,” he said, marveling at the awesomeness of God.

But the story continues: A short time after receiving his new heart, Steve suffered acute rejection and was hospitalized again, and it was at that time that Steve and Ellen found out the “real” reason God put them in these extreme and faith-challenging circumstances. During that hospital stay the staff introduced him to a young man who was waiting for multiple transplants and suffering from deep depression.

“David was waiting for a heart and lung transplant, and they brought him into my room and we talked and God gave me the words. All it took was five minutes and I saw hope in his eyes where there was

none,” Steve said. “When we left, Ellen looked at me and said ‘Now you know why you were here.’”

Steve and Ellen subsequently met David’s family and have become close friends, sharing with them the message of God’s awesome love. David did receive his heart and lungs, and has since spoken before the Eternity Youth Ministry. He has a purpose for living and has given his life to the Lord.

Today, Steve and Ellen admit that their story is still unfolding, as God opens many doors for them to share their experience and share with others His total and unconditional love. Though they look forward to whatever God has planned, they think perhaps their next opportunity to share His wonderful message of love and salvation will come in April, the one-year mark. For it is only after one full year that Steve will find out whose heart is beating in his chest, and be able to thank the donor’s family for the ultimate sacrifice that their loved one paid... and to tell them about the ultimate sacrifice our Lord and Savior made over 2000 years ago.

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The newsletter for the members and friends of Shore Christian Center Church

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