

To Die Is to Gain

By Bob Larsen

It was May 1978. My wife and I had a 20-month-old son, and I found I had a sore left arm that had become swollen. I was 29 years old and not much on going to doctors, so I just figured that it would get better by itself. My wife, our son, and I went on a trip to a wedding and were gone for about five days, but when I got home, my arm was still swollen. I went back to work, and when my boss saw the swelling, he called his doctor. My boss handed me the phone, and the doctor told me to get to the ER right away. They checked me out and called my doctor, who came to the hospital. My doctor said that I had a blood clot in my chest. He also made it clear to me that I could die if it broke loose. He called my wife and told her the same thing. I was admitted to the hospital, and they put in an IV to receive blood thinner.

When I realized that I might die soon, I had mixed feelings. I did not like the idea of leaving my family, but I also had a feeling of excitement, thinking that I may see the Lord face—to face in a short time. A pastor came to visit the next day, and when I told him about those feelings, he said, “That’s what the Christian life is, to know you have just 24 hours left to live, and you don’t have to change anything.”

The next day, I was brought to a room where they ran dye through my system so they could see what was going on. After that test, I was told that there was no danger of death, because the blood clot was so firmly embedded, that it couldn't go anywhere. I had to stay in the hospital for a total of about eight days to be treated with blood thinner in an IV that would thin my blood and work on eroding the clot. On the third day, the nurse woke me in the middle of the night. I was covered with blood from one end to the other. The nurse said that in my sleep, I had pulled the IV out of my arm. She took my temperature and said that it was down to 92 degrees. She then said to me, “I made my rounds early. I don’t know why.” If she had waited much longer, I probably would have been dead.

I saw so clearly, once again, how fragile life is and how God was working in my life and taking care of me. This entire experience was a great lesson to me. I learned what it is like to be staring death in the face, and I was reminded of how God is taking care of every detail in my life. What about you? What if, at this moment, you found out that you were going to die in 24 hours? Would you have to change anything?