

# Chosen Vessels



*“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”*  
*2 Corinthians 4:7*

*Autumn 2011*

## About Sue

*By Betty Giles*

There I was! Attired in the “fashionable” hospital gown provided, I waited for my first radiation treatment following my breast cancer surgery. As I walked to the waiting area, I’m afraid my mind was more on whether I was wearing my gown correctly, so as not to reveal too much, than it was on II Corinthians 1:3-4, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God”.

But there sat Sue, also waiting for her radiation therapy. It was easy to converse with her. She just had four treatments left, and this was her third bout with cancer. Her parents were dead, but she had a sister, Sharon, living in the area. Though never having married, she was engaged. I noticed that she was shy, but smiling and friendly, in spite of the fact that she was in a lot of pain. During our conversation, she said she was afraid to die. That opened the floodgates of opportunity as I said I was not afraid, and I would love to share with her why.

The last day of her therapy I decided to buy a rose and a birthday card for her, even though her 54<sup>th</sup> birthday was two weeks away. When I arrived in the waiting room, Sue was not there. So I left her card and rose on the chair where she usually sat. When I returned from my radiation, she jumped up and thanked me and said she had something for me too. I was overwhelmed when the “something” turned out to be a large Willow Tree Angel and a medallion that had my name on it and said “Each day and all night through, a Guardian Angel is watching over you”. For once, I was speechless!

I wrote a thank you note to her, because I felt I had not adequately shown my appreciation for such a generous gift. I gave the note to Christine, one of the radiation technologists, who was originally from Hornell, by the way. I told her, “I know you can’t give Sue’s last name or address to me, but could you please mail this for me?” As I was leaving that day, Christine came running with the note containing Sue’s address. She said people going through cancer “weave a web of support for each other,” and she was sure Sue would not object if I had her address.

That led to Sue sending me a Christmas card and a note saying she would like to get together. Due to the seriousness of her illness, it was March 9<sup>th</sup> before we scheduled a time for her to come to our house for a visit. When she didn’t arrive, I called, and her boyfriend, Jim, answered. He said he had tried to call but couldn’t find my number. Sue had a severe headache and was still in bed. At that point I felt I needed to put feet to my prayers, so I went to Wegmans and bought soup. She had told me where she lived with Jim, so I took the soup to his house. And that is how I met Jim. I gave the soup to him and told him I was praying for both Sue and him. He was obviously concerned about Sue and cared deeply for her.

Sue finally came to our house three times. She had said not to overwhelm her with information, because her concentration was poor, so I tried to focus on simple concepts, having her read passages from the Bible and then explaining how we could relate those verses to our lives. Because it was close to Easter, it was a

perfect time to explain the sacrifices that only covered sin from the Old Testament, and then show how Jesus, God's Son, came to earth to become the perfect, sinless sacrifice for everyone, once for all. On her third visit, April 1<sup>st</sup>, the day before Good Friday, Sue accepted Jesus as her Savior. She said she hoped April Fool's Day was not a bad day to make that commitment. I assured her every day was a good day to become a child of God.

Although I had great hopes of discipling her that was the last time Sue was well enough to drive the short distance to our house. She and Jim were married the last Saturday in June in a park in Canandaigua with just two attendants. She and Jim did visit, and I have grown to admire and respect Jim for his love for this shy and innocent woman. I talked to Sue on the phone and wrote notes of encouragement, but my prayers that she would be able to grow spiritually and learn to trust the Lord more were not to be.

In December, Jim called to say the Cancer Center had determined the bone cancer was spreading and chemo was no longer helping. They had called for Hospice to come. I visited Sue on her 55<sup>th</sup> birthday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>. Jim asked some penetrating questions. Who would meet Sue when she arrived in Heaven? How was it decided if you were good enough to go to Heaven? I certainly didn't let the second question go unanswered. I assured him no one was good enough to go to Heaven, and that was why Jesus came to earth to die for our sins and then returned to Heaven to prepare a place for all those who accepted Him as their personal Savior.

I assured Sue I would return, but with family visiting I had not been able to. On New Year's Eve, Jim's broken voice announced that Sue had passed away a few hours earlier. I cry as I write this, feeling confident that Sue knows now who would greet her in Heaven and that she is learning to enjoy God's love and presence as she forgets the pain she suffered on this earth.

There was no funeral, just a graveside service. I asked Pastor Max, the Hospice Chaplain, if I could speak. There were only 11 people present, but I shared my assurance with them and why I believed Sue was in Heaven.

Sue did not have a happy life. Her mother was an abusive alcoholic. As a child, she would run to her room and hide to avoid her mother's wrath. Sue lived with two different men, before she met Jim, and at least one of them was cruel to her. She shunned commitment in relationships and felt she had no friends. She was uncomfortable in crowds.

But Sue had an impact on my life. I learned to be tolerant of those who were different from me. I learned not to judge, but to love her for her honesty and her potential as a child of God. I tried to see her as God saw her: **"For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart,"** -- I Samuel 6:7c. Sue never went to church, didn't read the Bible that I got for her, and she said she only prayed sometimes. When she accepted Jesus as her Savior, was she sincere or was she just trying to get a room in Heaven instead of a place in Hell? I don't know for sure. God does, and that is all that matters. God arranged for us to meet, and I thank God that I was able to share with her how much God loved her and how Jesus paid for her sins when He went to the cross.

Is all of this coincidence? I do not believe so, but I do believe the "rest of the story" is still to be written. I shake my head in amazement at how God works, not in our time or in our way, but in the way He knows is best. Is all part of God's design? Oh yes, this is God's plan, and I encourage you to be prepared for God to give you the privilege of being His messenger to someone when you least expect it, even if you are wearing a hospital gown.