

***Losing Susan: Brain Disease, the Priest's Wife  
and the God who Gives and Takes Away***

By Victor Lee Austin  
(Brazos Press, 2016)  
150 pages

I must confess that as I read this story, my eyes grew teary, and my heart swelled and broke. It is a profound story of love and loss, grace and strength, suffering and endurance. This book moved me in ways that I cannot quite explain.

The inside of the book jacket which describes the content of this book says it best: "This is the story of Susan – a wife, mother, Christian believer, lover of children, writer of stories, and woman of extraordinary intellect. Susan was diagnosed with a brain tumor in her late thirties. Although it was successfully treated, the process led to her slow, unending decline. In this powerful narrative, Victor Lee Austin weaves together autobiographical details and profound theological insights to show that we are called to turn to God in the face of suffering."

And a powerful narrative it is indeed!

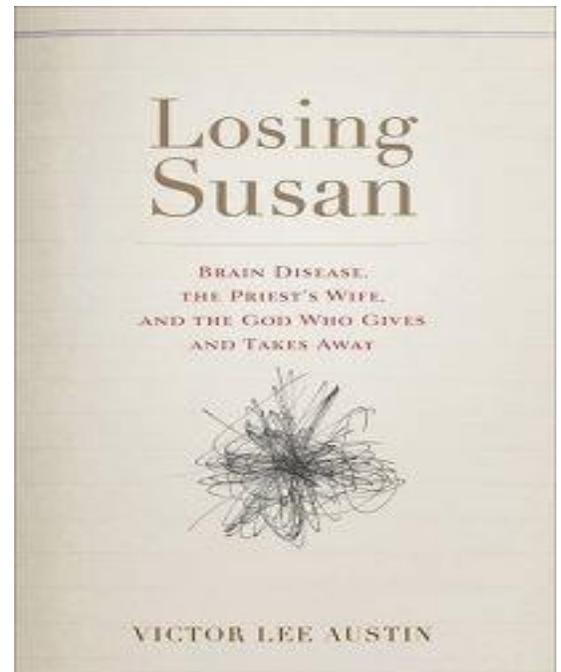
This book helped me to realize some things about my journey of caring for my loved one who has been ill so often in this past decade of my life. He reminded me that my wife and I are not the only ones who suffer the pain of a chronic, degenerative illness and who struggle with issues of life and faith as a response. So many times, when going through the fire, you think you are the only ones who go through hard times. Austin reminds us that we are not alone on the journey.

The book reminded me how precious this life is, whether long or short, healthy or sick, rich or poor. This life is valuable and can teach us so much if we are willing to engage the process of living under all of our circumstances. He reaffirms that I can experience life even when facing the incredible tragedy of illness and death.

One of the magnificent highlights of this book is the reminder that God is always present in the unfolding story of life. He speaks at just the right moment; he imparts strength just when it is needed most; he provides comfort when the tears begin to fall. God is often the unseen character that is involved in our stories, good and bad.

On a personal note, this book helped me to cherish the incredible person my wife is and who she has been in my life. Instead of seeing the caring of my wife on the journey of her illness as a burden, the book helped to see the joy in the journey. I am blessed to have my wife in my life and even more blessed to be her friend, companion, helper, and husband!

The author writes this about midway through the book:



I look back on the things I had done and had a regretful feeling that I had fallen short, that I hadn't done as good a job as I could have. At times, I still have these feelings. I don't feel an utter failure, of course; I can also see that I've done some good. But it's never simply black or white; it's always in between. Mixed in with the good there is always a lot of me falling short.

Yet, wrapping around all the ambivalence of my care for Susan, there is the unseen character of this book, the one who sends grace ahead of me.

In my journey, I thank the One who has sent grace ahead of me as well! I hope that you can recognize the God who is sending grace before you also!