My Dear Joan,

The hour is exceeding early (or should I say it is exceeding late?), and with sleep eluding me -- since listening to your telephone conversation last night -- I decided to write to you.
I prayed into the late night hours for you. For Rick, too. But knowing Rick as I do, since he and I were raised together, along with our other two brothers and one sister, I feel secure (and safe) in saying that Rick will "surface" above this a bit more rapidly than you. You and I, dear Joan, are super-serious about everything in life, wanting all things to run smoothly and go well at all times, be it in our home, in our outside relationships or our church. And when life throws some nasty "curves" our way -- which it will and it does -- we become so grief-laden that we scarcely know what to do.

We want (so desperately) for everybody to love each other and to be a peacemaker. But you know as well as I that, so long as the world stands and remains, there will be troublemakers; those who seem to take a special delight in keeping the proverbial pot boiling and the waters churning. This is a sad thing, and it is grievous to God and a real hindrance to the cause of holiness and righteousness.

I know you are burdened greatly over the rapid turn of events and the twist of circumstances since the death of your godly pastor. Too, I know you are greatly troubled and deeply concerned over what has happened and taken place in the church, and rightly so. God and the world do not co-exist. When the world comes into the church, the blessed Spirit takes His departure. The things which God forbids will forever be forbidden, no matter who says otherwise. And, frankly, dear Joan, I would be frightened beyond words if I were the instigator and perpetrator of immodest dressing and worldly attire. And especially so, knowing that I was the cause of dividing the church body and creating a fractious spirit among them.

My heart aches for you. This is putting it mildly, but aches expresses my deep, inmost feeling for you. Without a doubt, this additional burden is a double-plural grief and heartache for Rick and you, since having laid Laressa away only four months and sixteen days ago. Literally, I hurt with you. But it won't last forever; the morning will come.

You asked me the "why" of so many things, dear Joan -- Why did the Lord take Laressa and not heal her? Why did our spiritual and Spirit-filled pastor have to die when he wasn't even sixty and the Lord was blessing his ministry greatly, giving us souls finding God? Why doesn't our present pastor preach against sin -naming specific sins instead of generalizing? Is he afraid of the people? The board members, perhaps? Why do we never get a real sermon? Why, always, with scarcely ever any exception, do we get only a
fifteen-minute sermonette instead of something from the Word to stir us and feed our souls and make us eager to go back to hear more? Why? Why?

I wish I had the answers, my dear; but I don't. I only know one thing, and to this my spirit and soul clings -- God is still God and He will be God forever and aye. He is His own interpreter. When this world ceases to exist and time is no more, God will still be God -- the Eternally Existent and Everlasting God. Forever and always, He will be God!

Oh my dear, dear Joan, latch onto this. Cling to it. Embrace it with all your might and your will -- God is still God. Yes, in spite of our myriad unanswered questions, He is still God. In spite of our painful grief and unspeakable sorrow and pain, He is still God. In spite of our disappointment, heartbreak, and heartache, He is still God. He remains the same; ever and always, the same -- changeless and unchanging; caring and compassionate; just and holy and righteous, hating and loathing sin -- all sin. God is God! Bless His holy and righteous name forever and ever.

You mentioned about friends -- on both sides, you said -- wanting you and Rick to take sides with them. (Isn't it sad when those who profess to love the Lord create "sides"?) My advice? (You asked for it.) Don't do it! Take sides, I mean. No matter how pressured you are, dear Joan, don't become involved in church trouble. Not for anyone nor either side. Church troubles create only more trouble as those who call themselves Christians become entangled and involved in it. I learned this the hard way years ago, my dear, thinking God needed my help in a critical church situation. But oh, how wrong I was!

Believe me when I tell you that our All-Wise God knows better by far how to run His church and solve her problems than the wisdom of a thousand Solomons. Our problem is that we fail to "Be still and know that [He is] God." We rush in like fools, failing to heed the "Be still and know . . ." injunction. We fast and cry and pray, and pray and fast and cry, but we don't obey His "Be still, and know that I am God," and always we make a mess of things.

We are zealous for the cause of right and righteousness, wanting God's cause vindicated; not wanting to "let God Down." Oh, how foolish we are! God is God. He needs no defense. He is God whether we stand or not; whether His cause is vindicated or not. Nothing changes God; neither man nor situations nor circumstances nor crisis. He is God. He said, "I change
not." What a glorious thought! My soul is blest, dear Joan. Hallelujah! This God is our God -- yours and mine. No matter what, He will always be God.

   Before I close, I want to share several scripture passages with you. They were such a blessing to me recently. Lamentations 3:22-26: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassion fail not.

   "They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

   "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

   "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

   Also, Job 17:9, Joan, "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

   I thank God for you and for your wonderful Christian witness, both verbally and by your day by day consistent walk with the Lord. Stay victorious, Joan, over people and situations and circumstances, and remember always that God is God! Amen and Amen!

God bless you, my dear. I love you.
Prayerfully,
Your sister-in-law, Denise

   P.S. You mentioned that the special prayer meetings have all been cut out now and that, instead, Saturday nights have become a get-together social night. Oh, my dear, I feel for those of you whose hearts cry out for revival and who abhor and loathe worldly programs in the church. God, too, hates these things in His church. But Joan, whatever you do, do not allow bitterness -- not even one small seed of it! -- to seep into your heart. Plead the covering Blood if you sense even one tiny amount of it creeping in. Ask God the Holy Ghost to wash it out and to keep your heart cleansed. Cleansed! Keep your heart tender and sweet with Heavenly honey by keeping the line to Heaven open and free from anything that would obstruct. In simple language, pray, pray, pray -- until you know you have made contact with the Pentecostal skies and until you can leave everything in His hands, knowing, indeed, that God is still God.