

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN *By John Freeman*



John graduated from Open Bible College in 1969. He and his wife, Mary Ann, have two married sons, six grandchildren, and one great-grandson. The Freemans have served as pastors at First Church of the Open Bible in Mansfield, Ohio, for the past nine years.

How do you communicate a miracle? Recall the times you have awakened from a vivid, all-so-real, multicolored dream. As you try to describe the experience, some events and images come immediately to mind with the clarity of a real-life happening. Other events defy description. My gift, my miracle came with fearful, life-changing implications and awesome brilliance.

Everyone at the church was excited over the dramatic and quite extensive changes in our church building. People were thrilled with a new platform, new carpet, new seating – even new multi-media capabilities. All was good except for my poor, aching back. Of course, I thought I had done too much physical labor. Instead the greatest test of my life was starting.

The doctor's words were, "You have advanced cancer and it has wrapped itself around your spine. We need to operate immediately to repair your back. After that we can address the cancer issues."

Have you ever considered confusion to be a blessing? I was so stressed about the negative effects on the church I didn't have time to worry about my own precarious situation. I thought, "The church is doing fantastic. I'm not Lord, what's going on?"

Of course, I was fearful for Mary Ann, my loving wife of nearly 40 years, my two grown sons and their families, and my family of believers. How would they do without me?

The next few days are a blur. I was rushed to James Cancer Center by ambulance for immediate surgery. Dr. Tom Kovack, Don and LeeAnn Frye's son-in-law, attended the surgery, praying in tongues over me throughout the operation. (The Fryes pastor Springdale Open Church in Springdale, Pennsylvania.) I experienced massive blood loss, the rebuilding of my spine, the removal of most of the cancer (but not all), wracking pain, heavy medication, and nightmares. Visitors came and others called, all praying for me and for my family. Days turned into weeks, with

chemotherapy, rehabilitation, nausea, exhaustion, and faith that God would heal.

God, are you there? Do you hear our prayers? Why did I have to go through all this? Am I going to be healed?

One day I was all alone, swimming in a hotel pool for therapy, when a man entered the pool and began to talk to me. He said he was a trucker and had just pulled off the interstate to come into the hotel for a swim. He asked about the huge scar on my back and then he began to talk to me about my life, my cancer, and my healing. He told me that God was going to completely heal me from cancer – not for my wife and family, not for my friends or church, but for Him. He told me that my work on earth was not finished and I was to continue



John and Mary Ann gather with their children and grandchildren

my ministry.

We swam for awhile and then he left. After my swim, I went to the front desk to inquire about "the trucker that had just left." The clerk looked confused. She told me that they don't have parking for trucks and they don't allow people from the interstate to just walk in and swim. She had not seen anyone arrive or leave. Could this have been an angel sent by God to encourage me (Hebrews 13:2)? I firmly believe so.

That was seven years ago and today I am still completely cancer free. All my tests come back normal. My doctor uses words like "miraculous" and "unbelievable" to describe what has happened. In his 30 years of oncology, he has had only two others survive longer than me with Stage IV Multiple Myeloma.

That is because God is the Great Physician and Healer. Am I an exception? Is God's healing for only a few? No. We know that He is the same "yesterday, today, and forever." We know His Word is true and is for everyone. My wife said that when she was praying, she told the Lord that she was hanging onto His garments, and even if He had to drag her all over heaven she was not letting go until I was healed.

That's what it takes: faith that won't let go. He healed me and I know He will heal you, too.

