

BUCKINGHAM REPORT

AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE &
EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S CHRISTIAN LEADERS



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HELPS FOR HEALING

The diagnosis of cancer left me feeling totally helpless. Even prior to my miraculous healing, however, I discovered help was on the way. It came in several forms.

• **Prophetic words.** I deeply appreciated all the wonderful “get well” cards from my friends. I even appreciated the letters saying, “If this is your time to die, I’m praying you’ll die peacefully.” (Thank God, I only got three of those, although my wife hints there were more that she fielded and kept in her glove.) But what I cherished most were those genuine words of prophecy God was giving to people in my behalf. I knew that love, as much as I needed it, would not heal the cancer. Thus, when the prophetic word came, I embraced it.

Every day someone would call or write. “As I was praying for you, God spoke and said...” Or, “Last night God woke me up and said, ‘Go tell Jamie...’” Sometimes it was a scripture that God had quickened to someone as they were praying for me. Sometimes it was a direct revelation about my situation. However the prophetic word came, I clung to it like a life preserver in a stormy sea.

In fact, the word for me to have surgery—even after the doctors had declared the cancer inoperable—came from God through a man I had never met personally. Ralph Johnson, a medical doctor (God knew I would probably not listen if it came from a layman), drove 200 miles across the state, intending to encourage me to take treatment. Instead, when he walked into my house he heard himself declare: “God is saying ‘surgery.’” He later told my church that never in his career as a cancer specialist had he advised surgery when other experts had said it was impossible.

One of the groups praying for me was the Community of Jesus on Cape Cod. The community members committed to pray for me daily. On the day of my surgery, they prayed—as my own church did—around the clock. Mother

Judy Sorenson, who leads the semi-monastic community, sent me a little three-ring notebook so I could keep record of the prophecies and scriptural promises God gave them as they prayed. Almost every day until I was healed, I received “words” through the mail to enter in the little book. These were written in beautiful calligraphy—with accompanying artwork.

Some of these were words from the Bible—many of which came as they observed the ancient prayer vigils of vespers, matins and prime. Others were prophetic revelations about my situation. That little book, to which I added the many other words that came from home and around the nation, remains a prized part of my ongoing devotional life.

• **Life-giving Testimonies.** Another lifeline came in the form of testimonies from those who had walked a similar path and been healed.

One of the first books that was handed to me following my diagnosis was Dodie Osteen’s *Healed of Cancer* (see the excerpt reprinted in this issue). My wife, Jackie, and I read it over and over. As we did, our faith was increased and the light of life began to outshine the shadow of death.

Frances Hunter then sent me—by overnight express—the rough draft of the first chapter of her latest book, *Healing: Receiving and Maintaining It* (Hunter Books). While her experience was different from Dodie’s, the result was the same. Both were divinely healed of “incurable” diseases.

Jack Taylor, who the year before had almost died with complications following open-heart surgery, called many times, often with a strong prophetic word. If Jack could survive, so could I. It was Jack who taught me to laugh at the devil’s lies that I was going to die.

A number of people called or wrote letters, sharing their testimonies of miraculous healings. I needed these almost as much after I was healed as before. Once you've experienced a miracle, there is a tendency to think you're the only one in the world who has ever received such a wonderful gift from God. Hearing from others increased my faith about God's marvelous ability—and unrestrained grace.

Dick Champion, editor of the *Pentecostal Evangel*, sent me a remarkable letter that parallels my own healing:

"Almost 15 years ago...the doctor detected something in my abdomen, had me come back in a few weeks and then put me in the hospital for tests. Those tests indicated a cancerous tumor in the right kidney. Surgery successfully removed the kidney and the tumor. I had no further treatments.

"A few years ago my doctor...told me that never before or since had he found a tumor on the kidney through a routine examination—as he had in my case. We both believe the Great Physician had His hand in the matter...

"If you had the kidney removed, be assured that the Lord has provided a spare and that you will not notice the difference. And the Lord can also continue to take away the fear of any future problems. A few years after my surgery, people would come up to me solicitously and ask how I was. The Lord had so removed the fear that I wondered why they were asking!"

A Roman Catholic medical doctor in Phoenix called. Six months earlier he had gone through a similar situation. From a medical and spiritual perspective, he told me what I could expect as I recuperated. His call came one afternoon in the midst of a small battle I was having with depression—a new experience for me. After talking to him I realized the depression was gone. His testimony, together with the testimonies given me by so many others, has bolstered my faith in God's healing—and His keeping—power.

• **Healing Scriptures.** But of all the helps, nothing matched the power of the Word of God.

A woman from John Hagee's Cornerstone Church in San Antonio wrote a lengthy letter verifying her healing from cancer. She also sent me a tape of someone reading the healing

promises of the Bible. Other friends around the nation sent me tapes of men and women reading scriptures on healing. Jackie and I listened to Terry Law's two scripture tapes called *Receive Your Healing* (Terry Law Ministries). We were blessed by similar tapes by Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland—all powerfully anointed by the Holy Spirit. An old friend from the days of the Tennessee-Georgia Christian Camp, Jimmy Johnson, sent me several of the Rapha Ranch subliminal tapes on healing to be played as we slept. (Bless his heart, Jimmy also sent me a tape player.) We supplemented these during the day with scripture chorus tapes—the Bible set to music. We saturated ourselves with the Word of God.

In addition, whenever we drove any place, or on those plane rides to and from the M.D. Anderson Cancer Clinic in Houston, Jackie read the healing scriptures from the Bible to me. If we weren't interceding for those we knew were praying for us, we were listening to the Word.

Jackie took the healing verses, wrote them on yellow sheets of paper and pasted them on the walls of our bedroom, bathroom and kitchen. When I woke up in my hospital room following surgery, I found she had plastered the walls of the hospital room with those same scriptures.

The Word brought faith. Faith brought healing.

• **Battling Fear and Depression.** This was new territory for me. As my 93-year-old mother described it, "a land that has no trails." Each step we took had to be directed by God. The strangest battle came after my healing—the battle with fear and depression. I had always looked on these two things as a disease for wimps. Real men, I had said arrogantly, don't get depressed. All you have to do is grab your bootstraps and pull up.

Sure, I had been frightened many times. Once when I almost stepped on a rattlesnake while rock climbing in the California desert. Another when caught in a rock slide on the side of a steep mountain in the Sinai peninsula. Another when the engine on my little Bellanca quit while I was flying over the mountains of north Georgia. (That time it was simply a matter of manually switching to my reserve tank and hitting the starter button. There's nothing that will get a pilot's attention like silence in flight.)

But facing a life-threatening disease is like taking a blow in the solar plexus from Mike Tyson.

It may not show up on the outside, but inside everything is messed up. Surgery itself weakens the will. And cancer surgery is even worse. I was a prime candidate for Satan's whispers: "It's going to come back. Feel that knot in your tummy? It's back already!"

Even after going back to my surgeon 10 weeks following the operation and undergoing extensive tests which proved I was, indeed, healed, Satan kept trying to pull me down. "Nobody escapes cancer. You may have squeezed through this time, but I'll be back with seven worse devils."

I understand now why, when my friends at Wycliffe Bible Translators sent out a prayer request on their worldwide network, they asked the missionaries to pray Isaiah 26:3 for me: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." That's what I needed—to keep my mind fixed on God and His Word.

As Dodie Osteen discovered, while the heart may be filled with faith, the mind becomes the devil's playground—particularly at night. Depression, like an evening fog, would settle in—obliterating all God had done, hiding His wonderful promises. I never caved in. But it was often there, especially when I heard reports of others—some dear friends—who were dying or had died of the same thing God had delivered me from.

Help for the depression came in two ways. One was the prayers of my wife and close friends who sensed when the fog was settling and entered into spiritual warfare on my behalf. In those times—and they seldom lasted longer than a few minutes—my wife would start a barrage against Satan with the Word of God. He *always* fled when hit with that kind of artillery.

As we enter these last days, and the enemy comes in like a flood, pastors must encourage their people to raise God's standards. Help will come—regardless of the "helplessness" of the situation—through prayer, prophecy, testimony and the Word. Through these, each will find "health to your body and nourishment to your bones" (Prov. 3:7-8).

CULTURAL CHRISTIANITY

In a July editorial I asked our readers prayerfully to consider making donations to a fund that would provide *Ministries Today* to poor pastors in the

African nation of Nigeria who are constantly writing to ask for literature. I mentioned that one Nigerian pastor went so far as to say he had found a back issue of the magazine and preached from it to his congregation. By that I assume he meant he used material from the columnists and writers.

The only response we received to that appeal (by only I mean *only*) came from Wayne Kitchie, pastor of Lighthouse Gospel Church in Piraeus, Greece. He wrote:

"I was grieved to read that an African pastor read *Ministries Today* to his congregation 'for more than a month as his sermon.' Should we send more magazines to replace the preaching from God's Word every Sunday? Five years from now, would you want people to be full of the words of *Ministries Today* or the Word of God?"

"As the pastor of an African church, I see power and conviction among them that is rarely seen in America. We have sent a couple off to the better Bible schools in the States. The sad result is that they gained more knowledge but lost their fire of conviction and their moral standard was lowered. Africa does not need this kind of Christianity. Rather, let us humble ourselves and import more African speakers to challenge and exhort [Americans] with the power of the miraculous, living Jesus.

"What concerns me in your editorials is the focus on stimulating the mind and reason at the cost of simplicity, conviction and exhortation.

"So, in response to your 'magazines for Nigeria,' unless you cry out for power and greater conviction in your magazine to stir us on in the Lord, then I must agree with Don Dunkerley in the Soapbox column in the same issue: 'Missionary, Go (Stay!) home.'

"God, please bless America."

Pastor Kitchie is sounding a note often heard from those who spend their lives ministering in Third World nations—a note that we Americans desperately need to hear and heed. Our plea to send magazines to Nigerians was not to replace the Bible—but to supplement it. However, since his was the only response from our readers, it seems obvious God did not want us to further spread our American cultural Christianity among African pastors. As a result, we have canceled the project. At the same time, we are taking a long look at exactly what we—and other Americans—

are projecting to the Third World church.

CHRISTIANS FROM A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

Sometimes we can learn more about ourselves by looking in from the outside than we can by continually looking in from the inside. That's the reason I like to step outside myself on occasion and see what kind of image I'm projecting to someone like, say, a Jew.

One of the best "mirrors of the Christian image" I've read in a long time came from my dear friend Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein of the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews. He sent me a copy of a newspaper column by Si Frumkin, who is a California Jewish activist. Si writes:

"It all began in February when I was looking through sheets of unclassified State Department reports and one, a teletype from Moscow to Washington, caught my eye. It told of an orderly demonstration by about 400 Pentecostal Christians in front of the U.S. embassy in Moscow. It seems they and several thousand others were caught in a bureaucratic nightmare. In the past, under a hush-hush mutual arrangement between Israel, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., Christians would leave the Soviet Union on Israeli visas, travel to Vienna and drop out there to continue on to the U.S. In October 1988, the U.S. changed the rules...causing waits of up to three years.

"As a result, nearly 6,000 Soviet Christians who had received Israeli visas and had turned in their Soviet documents to do so were in deep trouble. They had given up their apartments; their children had quit school; they had no food, no jobs, no money. They met with U.S. embassy officials and were told there was nothing that could be done.

"I was surprised there had been no mention of this in the media nor any visible reaction from American Christians. I thought if I could inform a few Christian leaders of what was happening, the problem would be solved.

"I couldn't have been more wrong!"

Frumkin goes on to tell how he contacted numerous Christian leaders, including Bob Schuller and Billy Graham. Graham did not answer and Schuller wrote him a form Valentine letter and invited him to tune in to the "Hour of

Power."

"By now," Frumkin continues, "I was getting more and more disgusted—apparently Christians didn't much care what happened to other Christians—and I wrote an article about the sorry mess, thinking there was nothing else that could be done. Again, I was wrong. This was when things started happening—and ironically, it was concerned Jews that made them happen.

"Dean Hughson, a friend, a Soviet Jewry activist and fellow troublemaker in Arizona, read my article and recalled that he had heard of an organization that worked to improve ties and communications between Jews and Christians. Dean located the address—in Chicago—and wrote them asking for help. Within days the president of the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, Orthodox rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, called me to ask for more details and I faxed him all I had. Within a few more days, Rabbi Eckstein contacted, among others, the office of Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, which in turn contacted the White House.

"On July 18, Special Presidential Assistant Doug Wead, in a letter to CBN, declared himself to be "appalled and shamed" and promised quick action in airlifting out the first 500 and a speedup in processing the rest. [Note: Wead has since been replaced in a shakeout of Christians on the White House staff.]

"The first 300 arrived in Chicago on September 21, another plane arrived the next week, and the nearly 5,700 remaining will be liberated before January. Furthermore, the total number of refugees allowed to enter the U.S. will not be reduced by these 6,000—they are a bonus.

"The term 'Righteous Gentile' is now part of our language—it means someone who saved Jews when they were in danger. I suppose by this definition Dean Hughson, Rabbi Eckstein and myself are 'Righteous Jews.' But I would rather be called just a Jew, without the qualifying adjective. I would like to believe that what we did wasn't extraordinary or unusual—just the Jewish way of caring and helping those who need our help."

Shalom!

