

A Tribute to Father and Son

BY MICHELE BUCKINGHAM

In this issue, columnist Mark Buckley, senior pastor of Living Streams Christian Church in Phoenix, Arizona, offers a moving tribute to his teenage son, Matt. Matt would have started his senior year in high school this month. Instead, this past June, a tragic accident on the Salt River took his life.

Mark Buckley is a special man of God. During my father-in-law Jamie's fight with cancer, many people from around the country called me to ask, "How's he doing?" I never got tired of answering that question because I knew the people who asked loved Jamie and were praying for him. But Mark went further. After asking "How is Jamie?", he would always follow with, "And how are you?" I would tell him. Sometimes I was up, sometimes I was down. Mostly I was under a lot of pressure. I was attempting to manage a magazine, a home and a family—while my heart was breaking. Mark always ended our conversations by praying for me. And afterward, I'd find I had just enough strength to go on.

After several traumatic days for the Buckleys, Matt went to be with the Lord. Matt was in God's presence—but those left behind, those who loved him, were just beginning the most difficult journey of their lives. I knew what that was like.

I was surprised when Mark called within a few days. "I want to thank you and your family for praying," he said. We talked for a while—two people who had only recently become acquainted with deep grief. We said we'd have to



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get our families together one day and share more about the things we'd experienced. Then it occurred to me that I knew of at least one

small way in which God had provided grace for Mark's circumstances.

Mark is a sensitive pastor and an excellent columnist. He writes with wonderful self-disclosure, always willing to lay his life down (on paper) for the benefit of the church. And on top of that, he never fails to meet a deadline—and a new deadline was coming up.

"You know, Mark," I reminded him, "for the last issue of the magazine, you wrote two columns and gave me the choice of picking which one to publish. That means I have an extra column on file. You don't need to think about writing something for the September issue."

He seemed grateful. There was so much on his mind, so many things to work through—so many memories.

As I began preparing the issue, I took out Mark's hold-over column. As usual, it was well-written and thought-provoking. But before I could edit it, my fax machine rang twice and began whirring.

When it stopped, I tore off the pages. And with tears in my eyes, I read Mark Buckley's new column—a tribute to his son. You'll find it on the last page of the magazine. ■

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