

Standing Together

BY JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

When you're frightened, alone and in a strange city, nothing can match the strong, loving arm of another Christian brother around your shoulder.

In late July, Jackie and I flew to Houston for my first appointment at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Clinic. Less than three weeks before, I had received what sounded like a death sentence from the local doctors. My church had rallied in prayer and physical support in a powerful way. My family surrounded me. I felt loved and protected.

But as much as I wanted to stay home during this time, God wanted us to go to Houston—first for consultation, then surgery. The cancer had been declared “inoperable.” Surgery would be “life-threatening.” But God had said go. I was apprehensive and, yes, a little frightened.

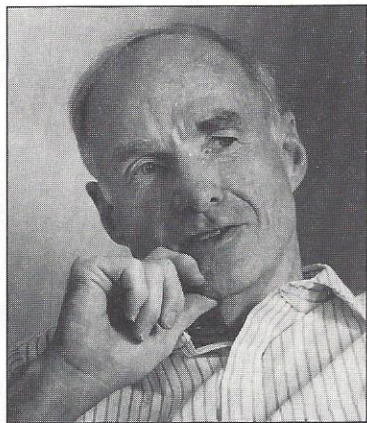
Some Houston friends—Frances Hunter and John Osteen—had called. They were praying. But I needed someone to lean on—physically—during those crisis hours. It was a lonely sensation.

Although I'd flown into Houston many times, this time was different. I was going to a strange hospital where things that I could only imagine might happen. I just didn't want to be alone.

I prayed. God said call Michael Williams, a black pastor in Houston. I had met Mike only once. “Just ask him to pray for you,” the Lord whispered.

Mike's response? “What time do you arrive? What airline? I'll meet you.”

A great weight lifted. We would not be alone. He not only met and ministered to us, but his secretary sent fruit to our hotel room. I wound up preaching to his wonderful congregation at Joy Tabernacle, who shouted in agreement for my healing and prayed until I was stretched out flat on the floor under God's mighty



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power.

Quickly other pastors entered the picture. Curry Juneau from Quail Valley Church—whom I had never met before—learned I was in town. He insisted on taking us back to the airport, then

meeting us the following week when we returned for my surgery.

Curry and his wife, Beverly, showed up at the hospital at 6 a.m. the next morning before surgery. Jack Taylor (who walked with us every step through this shadowed valley) had flown down from Fort Worth. They sat with my wife, daughter and sister during the seven hours I was in surgery.

One of the first faces I remember seeing as I awoke in the surgical intensive-care unit was John Osteen bending over me. He was grinning and praising God. The cancer was gone. Later John and Dodie made a special visit.

Frances and Charles Hunter, who had called so frequently, showed up in my hospital room the day after they returned from Central America. They were dressed in matching pink. Frances laughed. “You had nothing to worry about. If the surgeons had not gotten all the cancer, we would have killed the rest of it in Jesus' name.”

John Morgan, pastor of the huge Sagemont Baptist Church, came by the day after he returned from Africa. “If you have any problems with your flight home, I have a Continental airline executive in my church...”

Looking back, I realize I had feared leaving the covering of my church to go to a strange city—only to discover an amazing truth: His church is everywhere.

—Jamie Buckingham

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(407) 725-4206 Office • (407) 729-8707 FAX

ADVERTISING OFFICES: 600 Rinehart Rd • Lake Mary, FL 32746
(407) 333-0600 Office

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