

Spirit-Filled Pastor Miraculously Healed of Incurable Cancer

On April 5, 2014, Leon Freitag received a death sentence. He was diagnosed with pleural mesothelioma, an incurable cancer caused by exposure to asbestos. "The doctor told me to gather my family, because I had 12 to 18 months to live," Freitag recounted. "According to the doctor, I had no hope of survival."

Freitag, who has served as superintendent of the North Dakota District Council of the Assemblies of God since 1999, had little time to absorb this life-changing news. He was in the midst of preparations for district council, which would begin two days later.

News of Freitag's illness spread quickly in North Dakota, where Assemblies of God ministers and members are closely-knit like a family. What was going to happen to the soft-spoken, gentle spiritual leader who was known for his love for people and his passion for soul-winning? Would he live? Would he resign from office?

Freitag responded to the news of his cancer by committing himself to live out his faith in front of the people he served. With tear-stained cheeks, he told the crowd at district council that he was believing God for a miracle. He intended to serve out the remaining year of his term, and he viewed his suffering as an object lesson for those around him.

For decades, Freitag had preached that the current generation needs to witness miracles, just as previous generations of Pentecostals did. "My heart aches because we don't see many miracles in our churches anymore," he told attendees at the district council. He viewed his cancer as an opportunity to

demonstrate faith through suffering: "If I have to walk through this valley in order to stir up faith to believe in a miracle, it's worth it."

Freitag's declarations of faith were tempered by an acknowledgement that God does not always heal. "I don't know what the outcome will be," he told the ministers. "Hebrews 11 is clear—some He delivered, some He didn't."

One of Freitag's sons sought out the nation's foremost mesothelioma specialist, who practiced medicine in Boston. He had a six-month waiting list. Through much prayer and a series of opportune coincidences, the specialist agreed to see Freitag in one week. He confirmed that Freitag had no hope of recovery—just a small chance of extending his life. He prescribed a robust cocktail of chemotherapy in four treatments. The doctor stated that, at best, the chemotherapy might shrink the tumor by 40 percent.

The chemo treatments were emotionally and physically devastating. Freitag continued to fulfill his administrative duties, but for eight months he was not strong enough to preach or travel.

The prognosis went from bad to worse. The doctor informed Freitag that, in addition to his chemo treatments, he needed to undergo surgery to remove large and dangerous tumors on his lung. The surgery was scheduled for August 21, 2014. The day prior to surgery, Freitag underwent a pre-op exam and had final X-rays taken.

During the pre-op exam, Freitag's wife, Dianne, had been witnessing to the doctors and nurses. "We're praying people," she said, "and we believe that when the surgeon opens my husband up, that you'll find that God was already there."

A miracle did happen between the pre-op exam and the operation. On the operating table, the doctors discovered that the tumors had shriveled up and died. In one day, the tumors

had shrunk by 80 percent and the remaining cancerous tissue was dead.

The doctor was dumbfounded. In all of his years of treating mesothelioma, he had never seen something like this happen. He cleaned out the tumors and sewed Freitag back up.

Seven months later, Freitag has now resumed his full ministry schedule, including preaching and traveling. The specialist in Boston recently declared him to be cancer-free, not just in remission. And this month, in an emotionally charged district council, Freitag was re-elected as district superintendent with 98 percent of the vote.

"I'm so humbled by what God did," Freitag noted. "I now view every day as a gift." The experience with cancer has also changed how he relates to people. "It's changed me from the inside out," he explained. "When you're sick, you don't care where you live, what you drive, or about your job title. I've rearranged my schedule so that I spend more time with family and with my pastors."

Freitag believes the world needs to see the reality of a miracle-working God. And he hopes his testimony might be a catalyst that inspires faith and evangelism in North Dakota and beyond. "I'm looking for church planters with a heart for evangelism," he states.

It is impossible to miss Freitag's passion for North Dakota, which has a booming economy and endless ministry opportunities in its oilfields, rural areas, and cities. The number of Assemblies of God adherents in the North Dakota District grew by 43 percent from 2009 to 2013. By Freitag's reckoning, that is just the beginning.

"Everybody has a story to tell," he shares. "If we each tell our own story to others, that opens the door to evangelism."

God walked with Leon Freitag through a difficult valley, and

now his life is a miracle that testifies to God's glory and goodness.