

BENEFIT

tion would not be effective against his type of cancer.

"I really had peace with my decision. All of those following days I experienced a peace with the Lord that I just can't explain. I never want to lose that. I don't care what happens to me, I don't want to lose that experience."

So the broad-shouldered preacher subscribes to the one-day-at-a-time routine.

"I have the same number of days that I've always had, but I have a different perspective. The things I used to worry about, I don't worry about anymore."

Ewing decided to give up pastoring Houston's Royalwood Baptist Church because he didn't want to hold back the congregation's work.

Since that time friends in Harris and Navarro counties have been rallying to his financial assistance. Those efforts continue in Blooming Grove Saturday evening with a Ewing-benefit barbeque dinner at 5 p.m. followed by an auction at 7 p.m. Both events will be held at the First Baptist Church.

Ewing faces the near future, and that of his family, with a quiet resolve.

"I need a place; my family needs a home ... they need a 'home base.' There needs to be a place where the family can always come back and live ... if they have to. I have ministered to a lot of young people, and just during the past two weeks some have been by my house. Their mommas and daddies are living off somewhere; they've run off, and I've thought, man, is there no home base ... is there no place that you can come back to?"

Ewing wants to bring his family to the place of his roots ... the heart of Navarro County. More specifically that means the small frame home of his father in the Dresden community, south of Blooming Grove.

"Daddy (Lewis Ewing) has to have somebody; my kids need a base; my family needs a place to live," the former minister said.

Friends hope that the Saturday dinner and auction will give significant support to the proposed 1,200 square-foot addition to the Lewis residence. In view of present day building material costs, the Verlan Ewing benefit committee believes that add-on costs will reach or exceed \$20,000, even with donated

labor.

The 43-year-old Ewing looked at his 85-year-old father and called him "a good man ... a man of integrity," but also a man who can no longer live alone. The elder Ewing lost his right hand in a cotton mill accident many years ago. More recently he cracked a bone in his left arm in a home accident.

Now the cancer-stricken family hopes to meld three generations of Ewings at Dresden ... and Verlan Ewing says he "hunts for words" to express his gratitude to friends.

"I don't believe that I have ever felt as out of control of my life as I have in the past year. But God's hand is like a river that sweeps me along. So my life is out of my control, but it's in His control ... and that's what He's taught me.

"I have learned through this experience that God uses people to bless your life, and He has certainly used the people in my life to be vessels of His mercy towards me.

"The best things in life are not 'things'; the best things in life are people. So when that doctor tells you that you've got a terminal illness, you know that every day when you wake up you've got the sentence of death on you," Ewing said.

"I'm appalled today at the number of people who give no consideration to how they are going to die; what they are going to do before they die; that they surround themselves with 'things'. We surround our lives with things instead of people ... and in the end we need people, not things."

Tax deductible gifts may be sent to the Verlan Ewing Benefit Fund, c/o First Baptist Church, Blooming Grove, Texas 76626.