

‘Power Team’ Founder Jacobs Divorces

John Jacobs, founder of the world-renowned strongman evangelistic ministry The Power Team, has divorced his wife of 16 years, Ruthanne. The Jacobs have one son, Trey, age 3.

Standing 6 feet 3 inches tall and weighing more than 300 pounds, Jacobs was a leading youth weight lifter when he founded The Power Team 22 years ago. Since then, team members have used feats of strength such as bending iron bars and breaking baseball bats with their bare hands to present the gospel at more than 10,000 school assemblies. They have taken part in hundreds of evangelistic crusades in churches across the United States and overseas.

Jacobs said in a statement that the divorce, finalized in May, stemmed from irreconcilable differences.

“I repent and apologize for the sin of divorce to the body of Christ,” he said. “There was nothing about this divorce that had to do with a sin problem. Divorce was my last choice. I was in personal counseling for five years, and I’m sorry there was nothing I could do to avoid it. Anything else is a lie.”

Ruthanne Jacobs declined to comment, citing a confidentiality agreement in the settlement. But a close friend who asked not to be named told Charisma that Ruthanne did not believe in divorce and had wanted to keep the marriage intact. She was “devastated” by the divorce, the friend said.

Three men who served as an advisory council to Jacobs—a panel they said Jacobs had assembled during his divorce proceedings—said in a statement that they resigned from the position “when we felt we could no longer be effective in this assignment.”

The men—Bill Purvis, senior pastor of Cascade Hills Baptist Church in Columbus, Ga.; Lawrence Kennedy, senior pastor of The North Church in Dallas; and Larry Jones, president of Feed the Children International based in Oklahoma City, Okla., said: “We are all deeply sympathetic with the Power Team and the effect of this divorce. This is another ‘wake-up’ call to all Christian leaders who are being greatly blessed and used by God.”

Since the Jacobs’ divorce, more than a dozen former members of The Power Team—whose recent advertising proclaimed “a message that strengthens and restores the family”—have left the ministry to start their own strength evangelism group, Team Impact.