

Remembering Jamie Buckingham

How the charismatic leader's impact remains 20 years after his death

For a quarter century Jamie Buckingham was the conscience of the charismatic movement. Through his many books, speaking engagements and his monthly “Last Word” in *Charisma* for 13 years, he called things as he saw them. Now, two decades after his death, we reflect on the spiritual giant he was and his genius as a writer.

Jamie received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1967 at a Full Gospel Businessmen's convention while researching for his first book, *Run, Baby, Run*, co-authored with Nicky Cruz. Jamie had been a Southern Baptist, but two devastating moral failures left him wounded, humbled and aware he needed the power of the Holy Spirit in his life. He was always open about his own failures in his sermons, columns and books such as *Risky Living*, and that transparency drew people to him.

Only Jamie could write about a “sock-eating demon” in his washing machine and make a spiritual point. Or tell how God had to essentially give the Israelites a laxative in the Sinai Desert to “get Egypt out of them.” He loved the Sinai and made several pilgrimages there. In 1979 I climbed Mount Sinai with him (he scaled it six times). It wasn't only a wonderful experience; Jamie transferred to me his love for Israel, which I have to this day.

No big ministries were beyond having Jamie prick their pompous religious balloons. He was concerned with the extreme fundraising and big egos on Christian TV, which he warned was bound to collapse. And so it did with the PTL scandal of the 1980s, followed by Jimmy Swaggart's scandal a couple of years later. When the church was reeling from those scandals, Jamie's voice was a voice of reason—as shown in a powerful

cover story he wrote for us after the PTL empire collapsed called "God Is Shaking His Church."

Jamie entered my life when I was in my late 20s, struggling to make a small church magazine succeed. While others helped, it was Jamie agreeing to write regular columns in *Charisma* that put us on the map in the early days. But more than that, he became my mentor, friend and in many ways our spiritual "covering" in the way that Jack Hayford is today.

For several years I'd drive 80 miles to Melbourne, Fla., once a month to have lunch with Jamie and spend hours dreaming, strategizing and problem-solving. He'd challenge me to think bigger and to believe God. He posed a question that he probably heard somewhere but that was nonetheless life-changing for me: "What would you do if you knew you could not fail?"

Jamie was excited about ministry and life. Aside from his own books, he wrote for and hob-nobbed with big names such as Kathryn Kuhlman, Pat Robertson, Dennis Bennett and David du Plessis, yet still befriended unknown people like me. He built a great church in Melbourne, traveled the world and was a prolific writer. He always said he wanted to live to be 100.

But at age 58 he collapsed while playing racquetball. At the hospital they found he had cancer of the kidney. After his kidney was removed, it seemed the cancer was gone, and during the process something wonderful happened, which he recounted in *Summer of Miracles*. And in one of his last columns, he wrote: "Having tasted from the sweet spring of intimacy with God, we will never again be satisfied with lapping from Earth's polluted puddles." Tragically, the cancer came back with a vengeance, and weeks before he turned 60, Jamie went to be with the Jesus he loved.

That was Feb. 17, 1992. Now, 20 years later, we honor him with a monthlong tribute on the website of the magazine he not only

edited during the last few years of his life but was also instrumental in helping to start: *Ministry Today*. Every day we'll have something new either from or about Jamie. You can write your own tribute or reflections about him and what his life meant to you by going online to .

Few readers had the opportunity to know Jamie as I did. But you can still be influenced through his writing, which lives on. One such memorable line is in *Shout It From the Housetops* and challenges us all: "Attempt something so big that without God it is bound to fail."

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