

August 5, 1975: Charisma Is Born

Forty years ago today the first 32-page issue of *Charisma* magazine came off the press. If you read the August issue of *Charisma*, my last two Strang Reports or looked at our website, you know we are celebrating the magazine's 40th anniversary.

Years ago we chose Aug. 5 as the "anniversary date." We'd been working on the first issue for a couple of months, so when did it begin? We decided it was the day it came off press, even though the August/September issue was five days late!

A few times we've done something special on the date. This year we decided to celebrate all month long online and conclude with a reception at our headquarters on Aug. 31. (If you want an invitation, let us know).

In our August issue we featured "40 People Who Radically Changed Our World." We are featuring two of them online every day. Today it happens to be Derek Prince and Kenneth Copeland. Because today is the actual anniversary, I decided to send this out to my own newsletter list and give you some background on my relationship with these two men whom we considered among the 40 key leaders we've covered in the past 40 years.

Derek Prince had a great influence on the entire charismatic renewal and on *Charisma*. He was a part of the controversial "Shepherding Movement," also called the "Discipleship Movement," which *Charisma* covered in the early days. My late mentor and friend Jamie Buckingham was one of the leaders who criticized that movement because he felt it was imbalanced in how they "discipled" or "shepherded" their followers. However, he had great respect for Derek Prince himself.

The five leaders including Prince had banded together to

provide accountability and covering for each other. But their teaching on discipleship gathered them many followers and many detractors. Prince and the others decided to go their separate ways in the early 1980s, partly as an attempt to correct whatever abuses there might have been.

Derek Prince had a long and respected ministry long before the Discipleship Movement started. After it disbanded, he continued to have a respected ministry. It was in that later era that I got to know him primarily through Jamie Buckingham. Prince continued that relationship with me and *Charisma* after Jamie's death in 1992, until his own death a decade later.

Prince's teaching on deliverance and on God's plan for Israel shaped our editorial paradigms. I held him in high regard and showed my respect several years ago by visiting his grave in Jerusalem.

The other person we feature is Kenneth Copeland, who called me last week to congratulate me on *Charisma's* anniversary and to recall the ways we've interacted over the years. He even sent a nice video greeting, which you can view [here](#).

Copeland's ministry began a few years before *Charisma* and by the time I wrote a cover story on his ministry in 1979, he was considered a successful up and coming ministry. His teaching on faith influenced me, which I share in the article I wrote.

In 1981, I was privileged to travel with him on his first international meeting to the Philippines. In fact it was about the time *Charisma* became independent from Calvary Assembly.

He had received a prophecy that 50,000 would be saved and that the Philippines would be changed. Also, Oral Roberts prophesied that Copeland himself would be changed. The ministry wanted coverage on the crusade and offered to pay my expenses to accompany a group of Americans who went on the trip.

Their offer to provide my travel expenses was the only way I could go because at that point we didn't have a budget for international travel. I knew it would be a good story and I'd never been to the Philippines. However, as a journalist, I wanted to not be beholden because they paid for the trip. The ministry graciously agreed that there would be no strings attached. That's good, because when I got to the Philippines, I could see that while they may have expected huge crowds, they weren't there.

As a Christian, I believe in prophecy and miracles. As a journalist, I had to report the truth. It created quite a dilemma for me. Did I sugarcoat what I saw? At the same time, I made the trip as his guest, I respected his ministry and we had reported favorably on Copeland in the past.

Jamie Buckingham helped me sort out how to cover it. On one hand there was a prophecy that 50,000 would be saved. It was even printed ahead of time in a mailing Copeland sent out, so there was no denying it. The director of the Araneta Coliseum (the sight of the famous boxing match "Thrilla in Manilla" in 1975) said there was a cumulative total of 34,000 adding the attendance each night measured by people going through turnstiles.

As I reread the article this week preparing for our anniversary article on Copeland, I could see Jamie's fingerprints on my article. He was a seasoned writer who had no fear of offending leaders he felt were wrong. I was barely 30 years old, still trying to figure out how to be a Christian journalist in a community of believers where the press was often despised.

My 34-year-old report was remarkable on its detail. I obviously interviewed many people and reported what I was told.

I ended it with a quote from Gloria Copeland who said "Many of

the people told us that now that they show they are in Christ, they'll never be the same." That was what Oral Roberts prophesied.

Then I wrote—and here's where Jamie helped—It would be easy to end the article here ... But there is more that needs to be written"

"First, I believe Kenneth Copeland is a man of God. ... I also believe that despite the tremendous success of his ministry that God is forcing him to change. Thus the Manila meeting may have indeed been a watershed—not only for the Filipinos as was prophesied ... but for Kenneth Copeland and the team."

There was more, which I've left off for space reasons. But we are republishing the entire article online and I believe you'll enjoy reading it. In spite of the apparent inconsistencies at the time, I think time has proven that he did indeed plant an "indestructible seed" considering the great growth of the church that is taking place in the Philippines today.

If Copeland was offended by the questions raised by my article in 1981, he never said it. I served with him for a number of years on Charismatic Bible Ministries, founded by Oral Roberts. He has always been gracious. In fact, I interviewed him about some of these questions back at the time and his answers showed how he grappled with some of the same questions.

Over the years, Copeland's ministry has continue to grow and is one of the largest and most respected television ministries in the country. He has showed great integrity over the years and when our editorial team grappled with who to include in our "40 People Who Radically Changed Our World," we had to include him.

Over the years there are many behind-the-scenes stories like this. To me, this is one of the most memorable because it was

difficult for me to know how to cover it. Writing about our anniversary gave me a reason to tell this story and to reiterate my great respect for Copeland.

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