

For Jamie Buckingham, Life in the Spirit Was Risky Living

Yesterday we wrapped up our month-long celebration of *Charisma's* 40th anniversary. It was a lot of fun to dig back into our archives and to be reminded of great material we previously published that can be introduced to a new generation of readers.

Some of the best material is from my longtime friend and mentor, Jamie Buckingham. It's right that I pay tribute to this great man, leader and author who played such a pivotal role in my life and in shaping not only *Charisma* magazine, but the media company that has grown out of it.

During his lifetime, Jamie played a monumental role in the charismatic movement. Many considered him the "conscience" of the movement in that he constantly challenged, exhorted and taught. His books sold more than 40 million copies during his lifetime, yet he was probably best remembered for his columns first in *Logos Journal* and later in *Charisma*. He wrote for us for 13 years before his untimely death at 59 in 1992.

In going through past issues, I came across a marvelous feature by Robert Paul Lamb about Jamie that we ran in October 1978 titled "The Last Word on Jamie." In 1992, we published a special tribute to him when he passed away.

We recently reprinted a couple of them titled, Jamie Buckingham: Healing Life's Hurts, Jamie Buckingham: Real Power Runs Deep, and Remembering Jamie Buckingham for a new generation that did not know his wit and wisdom, or his humor. An example of his humor is a favorite quotation that became the title of one of his books: *The Truth Will Set You Free, but First It Will Make You Miserable*. He sometimes wrote humorous columns. One that stuck out in my mind was how he was

sure his washing machine had a “sock-gobbling demon” because no pair of socks came out of the wash complete. (Of course, he made fun of those charismatics who saw a demon under every bush or, in this case, in every washing machine.)

You can find all of Jamie’s *Charisma* columns at .

I have many memories of Jamie. Before I ever met him, I got to know him through his books. *Risky Living* probably had the greatest impact on me personally. The first time I visited his home in Melbourne, Florida, in 1978, he offered me the editorship of the leading charismatic magazine of the day, *Logos Journal*, which ceased to publish in 1981. I told him I had a vision of my own and couldn’t accept his offer. He said he was hoping I would say that, but that he had been directed to offer me the job. Then he asked how he could help me make *Charisma* succeed.

Over the years, he became my mentor and friend. His column in *Charisma* gave us credibility in our early years, and it may have made the difference between our success and failure. He also helped us navigate a lot of changes, including becoming an independent publishing house in 1981, separating from the church where we started.

After his death, we missed him so much that, rather than remove his column from the magazine, we reprinted what I considered to be the best columns—one from each of the 13 years he wrote for us.

When Jamie died, we named the large meeting room in our headquarters building—which we use for staff meetings and business functions—“Buckingham Hall” in his honor. On weekends, it has served as a “church incubator” every Sunday since the building was erected. Today it is used by Lake Mary Church, which holds three services that total 600 in attendance.

Jamie would be proud of a church that is thriving in a place

named after him because he was, first and foremost, a pastor. In the late 1960s, His Tabernacle Baptist Church in Melbourne exploded after he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Of course, the Baptists gave him “the left foot of fellowship” (as he used to say) and the name Baptist was dropped.

People from miles around drove to hear Jamie speak. He was very good. He also took compassion on many leaders in need (usually that meant they had committed adultery and were thrown out of their church), ones that showed up on his doorstep with few choices. This great man helped to restore them.

Jamie also had two other “lives”—he was a leader in the body of Christ not only as an author but also as a popular conference speaker. He began taking me with him to leadership meetings where an older generation discussed the problems of the day. It was a great learning experience for me, a man barely out of college.

And of course he had his literary world, which included friends like John and Elizabeth Sherrill and Len LeSourd (and his wife, author Catherine Marshall), whom he got to know through *Guideposts* magazine. I was also a part of that world. (Jamie’s biographies included writings for Kathryn Kuhlman, Corrie ten Boom and Pat Robertson, to name a few)

His legacy lives on through his family. I’ve never seen such a close-knit family. Several of his five children actually have homes on the nearly 20 acres he owned in Palm Bay. They call it the Buckingham compound. His grandson T.J. (that stands for Timothy Jamie) is building a new house there—23 years after Jamie’s death.

His oldest son, Bruce, is carrying on Jamie’s legacy now that he’s retired as the “voice of NASA,” at Kennedy Space Center, located north of Palm Bay. (He’s the one who would say on TV, 10-nine-eight-seven-six ... before each space shuttle launch.)

Bruce has launched Risky Living Ministries Inc. (named after Jamie's book that meant so much to me).

"We are dedicated to preserving and promoting the written and recorded teachings of Jamie Buckingham," Bruce told me in an email. "The ministry has gotten an amazingly favorable reception from the folks who knew him and many who didn't (until now).

"The biggest chore is converting and editing his sermons. I have compiled a collection of about 850 cassette recordings of his teachings. Some I already had. But most—by far—were sent to me by people from all over the world who had been holding on to them for some reason. Now we know why. So far, I have converted nearly 100 of Jamie's audio teachings and they are now available on line. I urge you to check out this resource at .

T.J. Buckingham is the family member I've kept up with in recent years. He looks just like Jamie. I remember when he was born. He's older now than I was back then! Today he is the pastor of Calvary Chapel Melbourne in Viera, Florida.

"I have been using a lot of his works as seed thoughts for my new role in ministry. I just took over as their new pastor this past March," T.J. told me in an email. "I am actually getting ready to start a teaching series on *Bible People Like Me* (One of Jamie's books and video devotional series filmed in Israel).

"Risky Living Ministries is making Jamie Buckingham's ministry materials available at no cost," Bruce said. "The only exception is when a paperback book or an e-book is ordered, and then the price is set as low as possible. It is our pleasure to make Jamie's materials available to the world again."

Life moves on. But I still miss my friend and felt that I should focus on him and his writing, as well as to show some

videos of his teaching, hoping that they would relate to people as much today as they did when he was alive. I hope someday someone will pay tribute to me saying I impacted them by a tiny fraction of how much Jamie Buckingham impacted my life.

Final note: If you have a memory of Jamie or were impacted by his writings, please leave a comment. If you know someone who appreciated Jamie, send them this newsletter. Or if you know someone who you think would like being introduced to his wit and wisdom through this website, please forward this to them.

Steve Strang is the founder of Charisma and CEO of Charisma Media. Follow him on Twitter or Facebook [stephenestrang](#).