

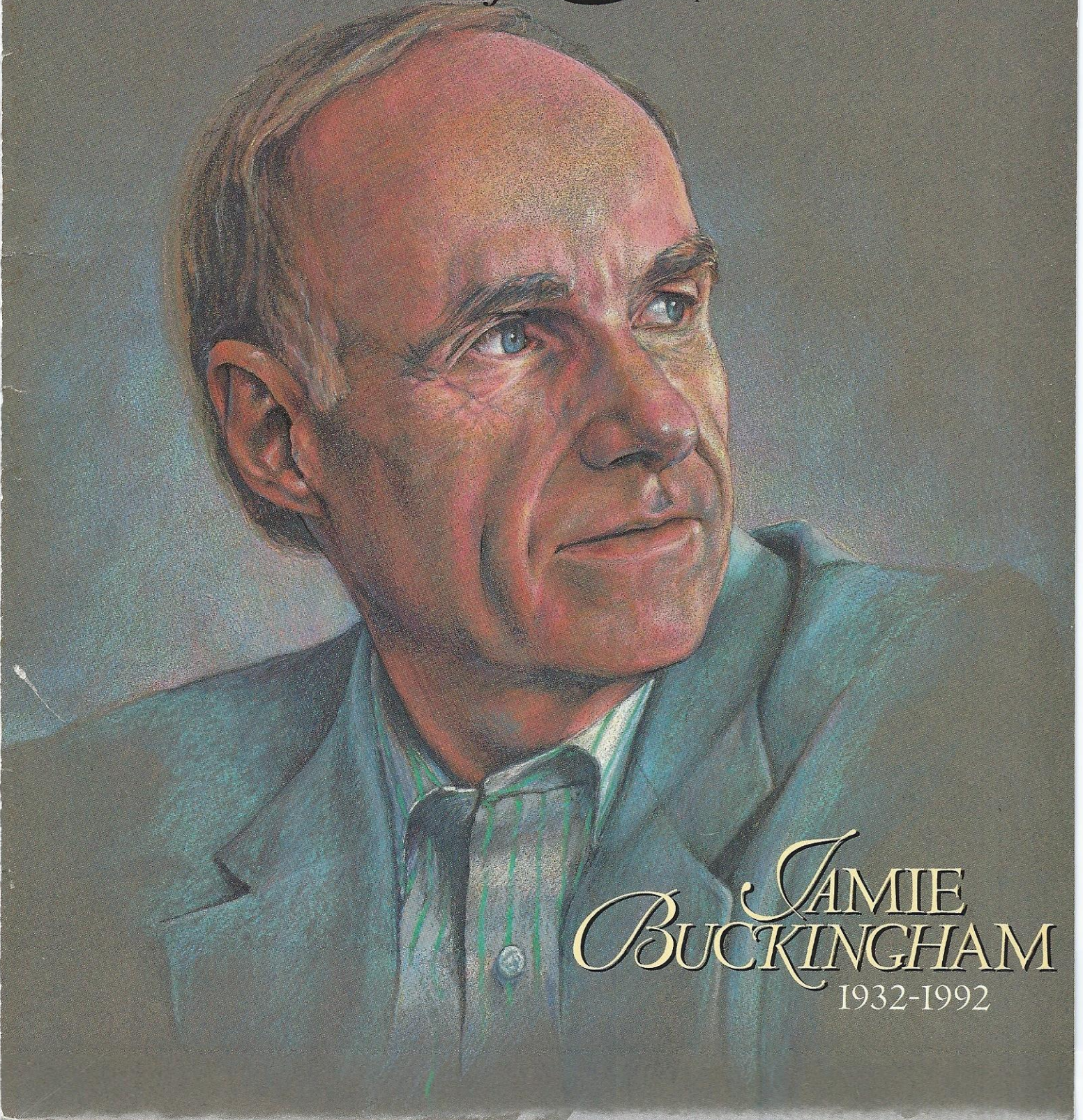
The Magazine About Spirit-led Living

# Charisma

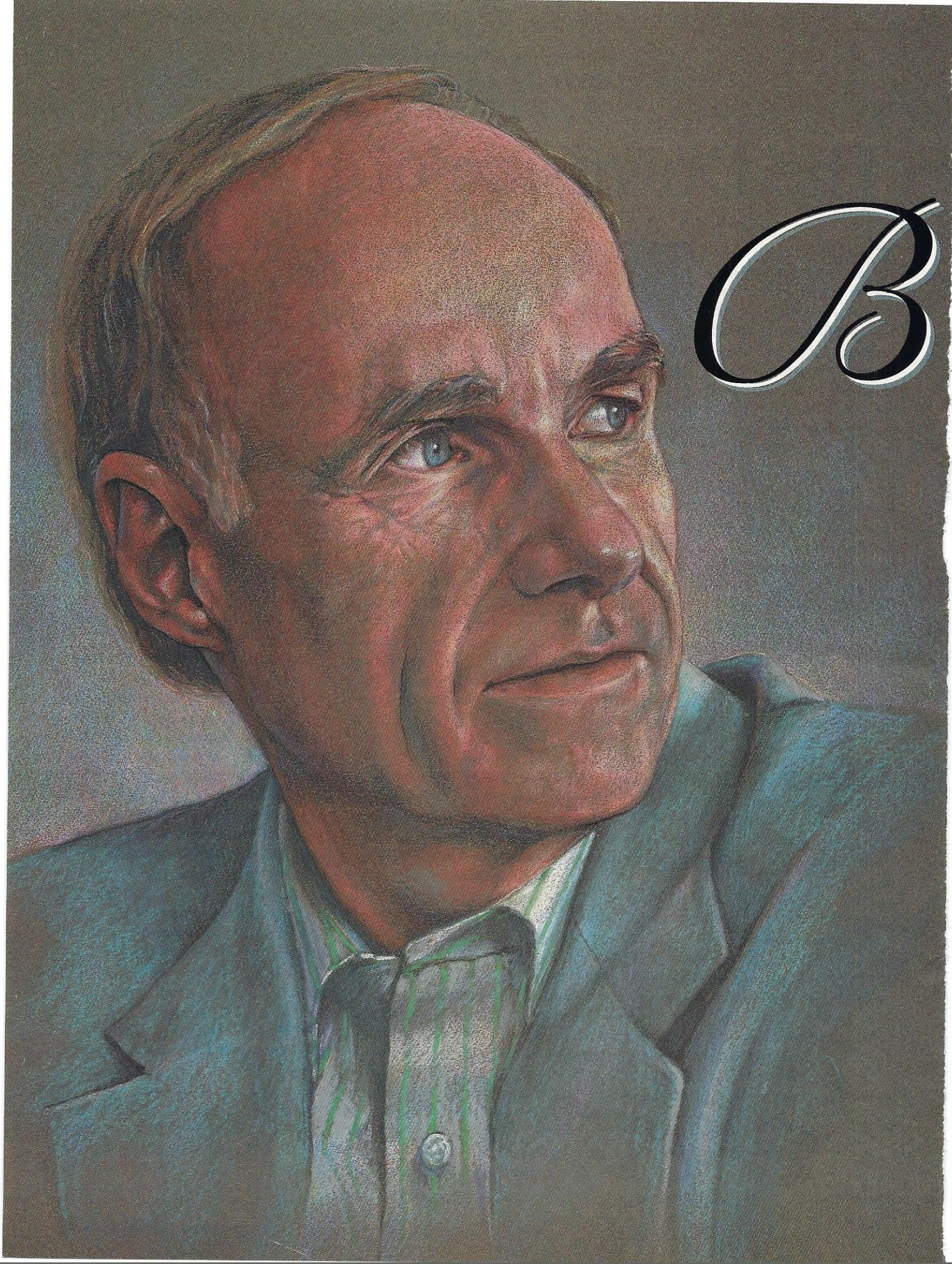
& Christian Life

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JAMIE  
BUCKINGHAM  
1932-1992



A Special  
Tribute

# 1932-1992 JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

## Prophet With a Pen

For a quarter century, his words gave shape, substance and honesty to the charismatic movement. Whether he was poking holes in religious balloons or poking fun at himself, his stories had a way of bringing us face-to-face with Jesus. Others may take up his mantle, but no one will ever take his place.

His parents named him James William Buckingham II, but everyone just called him Jamie. Born on March 28, 1932, in Vero Beach, Florida, he was educated at Mercer University (A.B.) in Macon, Georgia. After graduate studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.R.E.) in Fort Worth, Texas, Jamie became a Southern Baptist pastor. But by 1967, he had been fired twice and was disenchanted with ministry.

"I was in terrible despair," Jamie once said of this painful time. "I didn't know where to go or what to do." Desperately searching for God's direction in his life, he saw an advertisement in *Guideposts* magazine announcing a writers' workshop. The ad invited manuscript submissions, so Jamie dashed off a piece, submitted it, and was invited to the conference.

That week, editors John and Elizabeth Sherrill concluded that his was a "major talent." They recommended Jamie to Dan Malachuk of Logos publishing company (later Logos Fellowship International), who persuaded him to write the story of converted gang warlord Nicky Cruz. Jamie was hesitant; he thought he knew nothing about book writing. But when he sat down at the typewriter, he later recalled, "everything came natural. From the moment I got into the project, I knew I was going to do this for life."

The result: Jamie's first book—*Run, Baby,*

*Run*—was a best-seller, catapulting both Nicky and Jamie into international fame.

That writing project did much more, however, than simply launch Jamie's writing career. While doing research for the book, he attended a Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship meeting in Washington, where he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Soon he was occupying a prominent place in the emerging charismatic movement as a popular speaker and author.

During his 11-year relationship with Logos, Jamie helped introduce many of the charismatic leaders of the day to a wider audience: Dennis Bennett, Bob Mumford, Harold Hill, Merlin Carothers, Iverna Tompkins and Judson Cornwall, to name a few. He edited the *Logos Journal* for a time and wrote 14 books for the company, including the best-sellers *Shout It From the Housetops* (1972), written with CBN founder Pat Robertson, and *Daughter of Destiny* (1976), the story of Kathryn Kuhlman.

Jamie also served on the original board of directors for Logos, alongside such charismatic leaders as David du Plessis, Bob Slosser and Gen. Ralph Haines. When he recently looked back on that time, Jamie reminisced: "Those were the golden years of the charismatic movement. We would meet quarterly, planning world conferences, discussing book publishing and trying to figure out where the Holy Spirit was going. When crises arose in the kingdom—such as the shepherding crisis or the fuss over charismatics rebaptizing Episcopalians—we served together on 'summit committees.' We never did settle any of the crises, but the fellowship was sweet."

Meanwhile, Jamie was becoming one of the most widely read Christian authors of our



Jamie and Jackie with the Buckingham clan at the Palm Bay homestead they call Hebron.

time. He wrote or ghostwrote 47 books that sold a total of more than 34 million copies. An excerpt from his book *Power for Living* (A.S. DeMoss Foundation), inserted as a booklet in the April 1985 issue of *Readers Digest*, resulted in tens of thousands of conversions to the Christian faith.

One writing project that took Jamie around the world for two years of research—*Into the Glory* (1974)—also introduced him to a mission field that won his lifelong support: Bible translation. This intriguing story of the Jungle Aviation and Radio Service, an arm of Wycliffe Bible Translators, began a lasting friendship between that ministry and the Buckingham family. Last year, Wycliffe's U.S. board of directors honored Jamie and his wife, Jackie, with lifetime membership.

In 1979, editor Stephen Strang invited Jamie to become a columnist for *Charisma*, where his articles and popular Last Word column won several awards from both the secular and Christian press. He took over as editor-in-chief of

*Ministries Today* in 1989 and turned the magazine into an award-winning publication with a growing circulation.

Convinced that America has "raised a generation that doesn't like to read," Jamie added to his publications in print several series of videotaped Bible teachings, including *The Journey to Spiritual Maturity*. These videos, filmed in Israel and the Sinai, reflected his life-long love affair with the lands of the Bible, which he visited two dozen times. He led a number of tour groups to retrace the steps of Jesus in Israel and also made seven camping trips in the Sinai wilderness to become more familiar with the life of Moses.

Jamie loved not only Israel, but the Jewish people as a whole. His dear friend Yechiel Eckstein, president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, called him "my rabbi."

Despite Jamie's success as a writer, editor and speaker, he never lost his love for pastoral ministry. In 1967, the same year his writing career was launched, he founded the Tabernacle Church, now a

2,000-member nondenominational fellowship in Melbourne, Florida. His multiple careers complemented each other well: "If I cut myself off from this church," Jamie once mused, "my writing would dry up and I'd have nothing to say in my traveling ministry."

According to John French, a close friend and the producer of Jamie's video teaching series, Jamie had a great burden to build a loving Christian community that "reflected his own ability to love and accept anybody as they were." That goal was clearly realized: Under his leadership, "the Tab" has cultivated a vibrant, caring fellowship with outreach to dysfunctional families and the poor and homeless. In connection with the church, Jamie also created a refuge to nurture and restore hurting people—a ministry in which he was effective because he himself had been a wounded pastor.

Yet Jamie's hand was not extended only to hurting people; he reached out to quarreling people as well. In the last installment of his *Charisma* magazine

## A Special Tribute

column published before he died, he noted: "Most of my adult life, it seems, I've been trying to build bridges between people who don't want to come together." Having gained the respect of Christians from a variety of backgrounds—Pentecostals, charismatics, evangelicals, Catholics, historic Protestants—he stood in a unique position that allowed him to understand conflicting viewpoints, point out common ground and challenge misunderstanding and prejudice. Jamie concluded: "There

is no higher calling."

Len LeSourd, former *Guideposts* editor and Jamie's long-time friend, recalls seeing Jamie's bridge-building skills when he accompanied him on a trip to Jerusalem in 1982. The day they arrived, a Baptist church in the city was firebombed and completely destroyed. The next morning, Jamie led an intercessory prayer walk through the streets to the ruins of the church, where

he preached a sermon on reconciliation to the Jews, Christians and Muslims who had gathered there. Says LeSourd: "That was the theme of his life. His gift was to reconcile people."

Of all his accomplishments, however, Jamie took the greatest pride in his role as patriarch of the Buckingham clan. Healing ministers Charles and Frances Hunter, calling the Buckinghams "the closest-knit family

# A Year that Would Change His Life

My memories of Jamie Buckingham start back in 1967. Dismissed from a Southern Baptist church in South Carolina, Jamie had returned to his home state of Florida, gathered together a few friends and supporters, and started the Tabernacle Church. Married with five children, he was desperate to rebuild his life.

At that time, I was executive editor of *Guideposts*, the inspirational magazine published by Norman Vincent Peale. John and Elizabeth Sherrill, ghostwriters for David Wilkerson's *Cross and the Switchblade*, were editors with the magazine.

In the summer of that year, Jamie responded to a *Guideposts* ad asking for manuscripts from aspiring writers. Authors of the 20 best articles would be invited to an all-expenses-paid writers' workshop that October in Rye, New York. When Jamie sent in an article, one of 2,000 submitted, he had no idea how it would dramatically change his life.

Jamie was chosen for an article he wrote on Tom Smoak, an Air Force pilot who parachuted from his burning jet bomber over Little Rock, Arkansas. About the fifth day of the workshop, I received a call from John Sherrill, who had been working with Jamie: "Len, we have a major talent here in Jamie Buckingham."

During that workshop, Logos publisher Dan Malachuk approached the Sherrills about writing the story of Nicky Cruz, the gang leader whose conversion was described in the Wilkerson book. The Sherrills declined, but they later pulled Jamie aside and encouraged him to take on the project.

"I'm just a preacher," Jamie argued, "not a writer."

Despite his initial reluctance, Jamie accepted the assignment to write his first book—*Run, Baby, Run*—which would eventually sell more than 8 million copies. In the next 24 years, Jamie would write more than 40 other books.

Richard Schneider, now senior staff editor of

*Guideposts*, also was selected to attend that 1967 writers' workshop. He recalls embarking on a night journey by subway to Brooklyn with Jamie and four female writers to attend a Nicky Cruz rally. For those young writers—all six from non-Pentecostal backgrounds—seeing hundreds of foot-stomping, hand-clapping, praise-shouting charismatics was mind-blowing.

That's the reason Jamie was so wary about attending a Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship meeting in Washington, D.C., a few months later to do further research on the Cruz book. During the praise-and-prayer time at that meeting, however, Jamie heard this prophecy: "I have sent you and anointed you to preach. I shall never leave nor forsake you...You will be great in the kingdom of God because it is My Spirit that leads you. The task is great and many are lost, but in My Spirit you shall overcome."

"I was indeed overcome," Jamie later said. "After the prophecy, I stood trembling, choking back tears. I had the awesome feeling that this was God's message to me alone, the skeptic."

After the message, the speaker called those who wanted to be "baptized in the Spirit" to come forward. Feeling uncomfortable, Jamie tried to leave, but couldn't because hundreds of people were milling around the front. He sat down, put his head on the back of the chair in front of him and cried. "I felt like all the dams inside me had burst, and I was being flooded from within," said Jamie.

"I struggled to hold on to all the things I considered precious—my pride, my ego, my agenda. When a man put his hand on my head and prayed, something snapped loose inside of me. For a split second, I wondered if I was going to die. Then I didn't care anymore. A great peace swept over me, as though God had taken His hand and wiped away the tears."

Jamie's journey toward becoming a major voice in the charismatic movement had begun. —Leonard LeSourd

we have ever seen," observed at Jamie's passing: "The world may remember him for his writings, but forever we will remember his family relationships, unbeatable anywhere except in heaven."

The Buckingham clan Jamie left behind includes his wife, Jackie; his mother, Elvira; five married children—Bruce, Robin, Bonnie, Tim and Sandy—as well as 13 grandchildren. The youngest grandchild was dedicated to God at Jamie's memorial service in Melbourne as a fitting sign that his heritage lives on.

In June 1990, Jamie was stricken with cancer of the kidney. The diagnosis—"inoperable and incurable"—caused Jamie to re-evaluate his priorities and to ask God for a "second chance." The story of his second chance is described in his book *Summer of Miracles* (Creation House). His healing, Jamie said, left him with a "dual status": "one foot in heaven and the other on earth."

Late in 1991, Jamie was diagnosed with cancer of the liver, and in February his strength began to fail. He died, appropriately, surrounded by his family, who released him to God singing the praise chorus "I Will Enter His Gates." At 3:30 p.m. on Monday, February 17, Jamie began a new chapter in his life.

Having detested neckties and formal dress, Jamie was buried in his favorite attire: cotton drawstring pants, polo shirt and stocking feet. Having spurned extravagance as well, he was placed—according to his previous instructions—in the least expensive casket that could be found. In death as in life, Jamie was, above all, unpretentious.

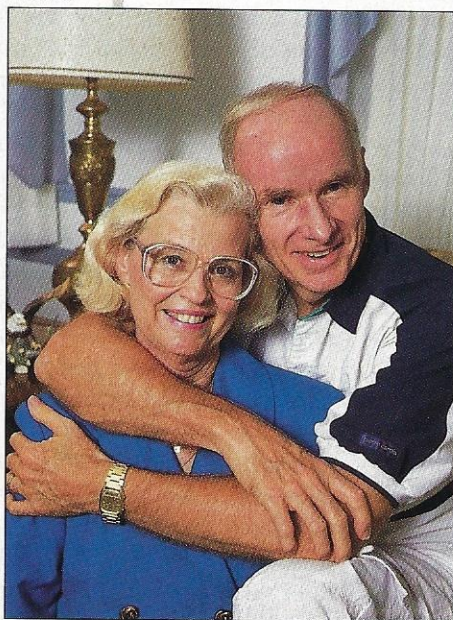
Perhaps the words of Bible teacher Bob Mumford sum up best Jamie Buckingham's life and legacy: "He was a prophet with a pen. May the Lord give us others who will challenge the status quo and live in that inexorable tension between Christian charity and the need to know the truth. We needed him, and we will need others like him." ■

Compiled by the editorial staffs of *Ministries Today* and *Charisma*.

# MEMORIES OF JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Not long after Jamie and I worked together on my first book, I found out the only reason he had agreed to write it: The day he interviewed me he saw a hole in the bottom of my shoe. He never was impressed by glitz and glitter, but he figured that if a former Baptist minister couldn't afford to have his shoes repaired, he must be for real.

**Pat Robertson**  
*Christian Broadcasting Network*



**Jackie and Jamie Buckingham**

Years ago as I heard Jamie speak at a writers' conference, I thought, "Why is Jamie telling these negative things about himself? He'd do better if he'd leave these bruises covered."

Later, I came to appreciate that this very quality, so characteristic of Jamie as he spoke and wrote, was what en-

deared him to millions: He told it like it was.

**Freda Lindsay**  
*Christ for the Nations*

Jamie was the most unconventional man of God in his manner of dressing I ever knew. Where most ministers of the gospel dress in coat and tie or a church robe, Jamie was most likely to show up to speak in sneakers, a pair of cotton pants and a short-sleeved shirt with the collar open.

In his dress, Jamie was unpredictable. But when it came to giving the Word of God or writing in his own inimitable style, Jamie was totally predictable.

**Oral Roberts**  
*healing evangelist*

Jamie spoke for us all. His candor, humor and, above all, his integrity made his commentaries extremely valuable for his contemporaries. He spoke also to future generations. It is a certainty that his comments on the various goings-on among Pentecostals and charismatics will be quoted by future historians to the end of time.

**Vinson Synan**  
*church historian*

O Jamie, my brother, you were, for me and countless others, a shining manifestation of God's presence on this earth. You were a Christian; I, a Jew. You, a pastor; I, a rabbi. But rarely in my life have I felt so close to someone. You were my

rabbi, Jamie—you taught me what it means to love, indeed, to love as Jesus loved.

**Yecheil Eckstein**  
*rabbi*

In his writings and in his spoken messages, Jamie made me feel somewhat uncomfortable...as if I were looking at myself in a full-length bathroom mirror with precious few clothes on, with a heavy light immediately overhead.

**Karl Strader**  
*pastor*

Reminiscing on Jamie's life and ministry is like walking through a magnificent museum where marvels of accomplishment shine in seemingly endless array. When the history of our era is written, Jamie Buckingham's place will most certainly be noted with distinction—and with praise to God.

**Jack Hayford**  
*pastor*

I first met Jamie to talk about doing a book on JAARS, the technical and aviation arm of Wycliffe Bible Translators. "Why do you want this book written?" he asked.

I told him about my desire to get the Bible translated into every language of the world. "We need pilots, translators, airplanes and funds," I said. "I believe we can develop interest, support and personnel through a good book."

Jamie hesitated, then said: "Well, at least

you're honest. But that's not why I write books. I write to bring glory to God, to point people to Jesus, to build bridges in the kingdom—not to promote things."

I realized I had ground-looped. But Jamie was a gracious teacher, and he wrote the book anyway. He and Jackie became faithful co-workers in the task of Bible translation.

**Bernie May**  
*Wycliffe Bible Translators*

In my first conversation with Jamie, he told me story after story of baptismal mishaps and pastoral bloopers until I laughed with tears. Jamie was always nearly irreligious. Well, let's say that he hated religion but loved Jesus.

Jamie was also an adventurer. He made adventurers of us all. Pressing ahead, looking back, saying, "Come on. Don't be afraid. There is more of Jesus out here, beyond what we have seen!"

**Doug Murren**  
*pastor*

Jamie was no religious celebrity. In fact he despised superstar ministry. The intentional informality of his dress spoke volumes about his approachability. Jamie thought neckties were demonically inspired instruments of torture. I loved him for that!

**Michael Williams**  
*pastor*

The ministry of Jamie was the epitome of the "ministry of reconciliation" in the body of Christ. He held the esteem of the conservative, evangelical circles. He was universally received by the Pentecostal church. He challenged and helped direct the growth of charismatics. He won the confidence of institutionally minded Christians as well. Through taking the

confessional approach to ministry and daring to be vulnerable, he revealed deep psychological insights into the meaning of "the way of the cross" and opened the doors through which the hungry hearts of the multitude can be fulfilled.

**Tommy Tyson**  
*evangelist*

Jamie was a gifted man with a lot of energy. His days were packed with kingdom activity. What impressed me most, however, was his humble transparency. He didn't pretend to have all the answers, and he was open about his faults.

**Mark Buckley**  
*pastor*

Jamie urged me to take serious the craft of writing—to keep practical and to speak the truth in love. He admonished me to speak prophetically to the plight of African Americans. We will miss his candor, his mind, his courage and his earthly pilgrimage.

**Leonard Lovett**  
*seminary professor*

Jamie combined truth and love as well as any Christian I've ever met.

**Father Michael Scanlan**  
*Franciscan University*

When Jamie talked you wanted to listen because you knew he would teach you something important and true. When he wrote, the words formed clear pictures in the mind's eye, instructing and cajoling and nudging his reader with no small degree of discomfort. He reached his audience because he was candid about his failings and weaknesses—character flaws just like ours.

I wonder what exciting stories he is sharing with the angels now.

**Bill Nelson**  
*former U.S. congressman*

During one season of misunderstanding and often unnecessary attacks on my ministry, Jamie wrote an article in which he referred to me and concluded, "If I had to be burned at the stake, I would just as soon go with Bishop Paulk as anybody I know."

**Earl Paulk**  
*bishop*

I'm not sure I ever gave anything to Jamie, but he sure made a difference in my life.

Jamie was gifted of God to reach beyond his grasp. He would be pleased to know his mantle of inspiration and example is being taken up by more than one who came into the kingdom because of the words he wrote.

**Dan Malachuk**  
*publisher*

The first time Jamie Buckingham came to our church, I introduced him to our congregation as one of the world's foremost Christian authors and original thinkers, along with other profuse hyperbole. After my august introduction, the congregation of thousands was sitting on the edge of their pews, waiting for divine revelation that should be engraved in granite for posterity.

Without hesitation, Jamie boldly declared, "I have a slogan over my word processor that says, 'Whom the Lord loveth He shakes the hell out of!'"

After the congregation got off the floor, they began laughing...and in that moment fell in love with this unorthodox apostle of the charismatic movement.

**John Hagee**  
*pastor*

The energy Jamie possessed always astonished me. When he was at our house, the light under his door stayed on until late at night and

was on again early in the morning. He regularly packed a day and a half into a single day, an astonishing feat.

Jamie used to say the Lord told him he would live to be 100. It's possible, of course, that God didn't tell him that—Jamie could mishear God with the rest of us. But somehow I don't think he misheard God. I'm convinced Jamie, perhaps like none other, packed a century of life into 60 years.

**John Sherrill**  
*writer and editor*

Jamie had one of the more unique ministries of the 20th century: He was a pastor and elder to the whole church. He was a true Christian statesman who left the church and the world better than he found it. He did not follow trends; he started them and gave courage to many others to boldly follow their vision. Few will be missed by the whole church more than Jamie.

**Rick Joyner**  
*prophetic minister*

The church of Jesus Christ across all denominational lines needs to receive a fresh outpouring of the very life and love of God. Jamie demonstrated this reality in his brightest moments and in his darkest hours. Jamie helped focus my attention on Jesus alone.

**James Robison**  
*evangelist*

Jamie never failed to write and speak with great humor or poignancy—but the startling constant was his clarity. You might be chuckling or crying, but you always understood the point he was making. He saw God everywhere and in everything, and that delighted him. He just had to tell stories about it.

**Bob Slosser**  
*writer and editor*

For me, the kindest thing Jamie ever did occurred during a writers' conference. At 5 a.m., I learned that one of my close friends had just died. I was bereft. But I knew the conference was supposed to go on.

When Jamie heard I intended to continue as planned, he shook his head. "I know you feel up to it," he said gently, "but I also know what can happen: You'll be in the middle of something, and suddenly you'll be overcome." He put an arm around my shoulder. "Let me take your lectures today, and you can have mine tomorrow."

We'll miss you, Jamie.  
**David Manuel**  
*author*

Jamie and I were in Israel shooting video Bible teachings. One shot he wanted was blocked by a barbed wire fence protecting an abandoned, yet still live, mine field. Somehow he made his way through the fence. I shouted at him: "We can't afford to lose you, Jamie. We have too much invested in you."

Being Jamie, he went right ahead. To appease me, he would throw a large rock out in front before he took each step, as if that would do any good. But he got the shot, one that helped make that particular series unforgettable.

That's the way it was with Jamie. He took whatever risks were necessary to get the shot, and often got shot at because of it. But we all benefited as he led us bravely into areas that we otherwise would never have explored.

No, we still can't afford to lose him. But not because of what we have invested in him. It's because of all that he has invested in us.

**John French**  
*Community of Living Water*