



# Testament

**F**or a quarter century, Jamie Buckingham's wit and wisdom led his readers in breakneck pursuit of the kingdom of God. Pressing ahead, looking back, he beckoned us onward to experience more of Jesus.

*Before his death in February 1992, Jamie prepared his Last Will and Testament. His final words leave such a remarkable legacy that his loved ones thought it fitting to share his testament with his readers. In death, as in life, Jamie looks back and beckons us onward and upward.*

I can remember sitting in an airport lobby one day, looking at all the people sitting around me and suddenly realizing I was judging them by their physical appearance. Some were short, others tall, some deformed, some with big noses, others with buck teeth—and all these factors influenced whether I liked them or not.

The shock came when I realized they were probably judging me exactly the same way.

Yet the real me (or the real them) actually has nothing to do with the way I look. The real me is not a body—it's a spirit. And that spirit, the Bible says, just

Jamie Buckingham's

Last Will and

Testament gives a

moving perspective

on life in the

hereafter and life

here and now.

By Jamie

Buckingham

happens to be housed in an earthen vessel—a vessel that has now returned to the earth.

But my spirit—the real me—is still alive. In fact, I am more alive now that I ever was when I was confined to that aging, uncooperative body I lived in all those years.

My spirit is alive because of something that happened almost 2,000 years ago on Mount Calvary in Jerusalem. There the Son of God laid down His life, paying the price for my sin and rebellion and opening the door for me to have eternal life with the heavenly Father. Sin kills, but when Jesus died for me, He paid the price—enabling the real me to go directly into heaven to be with Him.

When I was 21 years old—on an island in the middle of Scroon Lake in New York state—I committed myself to Jesus as my Lord and Savior. At that time I was born again and became a joint heir with Jesus in the kingdom of God. My old body looked and often acted the same, but inside I was a new creature.

Yet even with this new birth, my old body still tried to control me. My priorities and purpose in life had changed, but



because of the influence of this body I lived in, I was more often wrong than I was right. The drives and passions of the flesh often overwhelmed my spirit. I wanted to serve my heavenly Father, but I was grossly ineffective. I had the will, but no power.

Then on a February night in 1968, on the third row of a crowded ballroom in the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., God answered the cry of my heart. In a sovereign act, He filled me with His Holy

Spirit. Along with this filling came not only the power to "do the works of Jesus," but a new character of love, joy, peace, patience, freedom and self-control. My old body still looked the same, but now it was, in reality, the temple of the Holy Spirit who lived within.

Even so, there were many moments of defeat. The body was not dead, it was just coming into submission. And on regular occasions, even years after Jesus baptized me in His Spirit, my body

would rise up, sneer at my spirit and attempt to take control.

You remember all the things I did to try to bring my body into full submission: losing all that weight, violent exercise, afternoon and evening basketball games, long periods of fasting, and so on. Yet the battle between my body and the real me was never over. I knew there was still one more step necessary before my spirit could soar free—a step I have now taken. The world calls it death. God calls it freedom.

I used to wonder how I would die. Would it be in a flaming crash as an airplane hurtled out of the sky? Would it be in some kind of ground accident? Would one day this old body, in a last-ditch attempt to take control, just stop functioning? Would it be a martyr's death at home or on some foreign soil? Or would I, like my beloved earthly father, live a long and useful life and then, like Enoch, simply walk on home with God one evening?

I guess we all wonder about such things, don't we? Yet the method of death is incidental. Whether the body is in one piece or a thousand, or whether the body is lost or is gently laid to rest in home soil, all that makes no difference. For the body is but the house—and a rather leaky one at that—where my spirit and soul lived.

We would mourn if our old house burned down, taking with it all the memories of a lifetime; yet we would rejoice too, if all the children escaped safely. So rejoice with me that I have escaped my old house. For as a house is not a home, so my body was not me.

The real me is still alive—living because Christ lives and has brought me into the very presence of God. This does not mean I have forgotten you. Indeed, I am now in a position to intercede for you in a way I could never do before.

Now I am able to have face-to-face contact with the Father since I have at last escaped this body and can soar, free, into the high adventure of heaven's way. And one day, because you too have Jesus, there will be a great uniting. *Wow!*

Everything I leave behind is temporal. I start by leaving my body, which shall return to dust. Rest in peace, old body. I will come back and visit you one of these days when I return with my Lord and reigning King, Jesus.

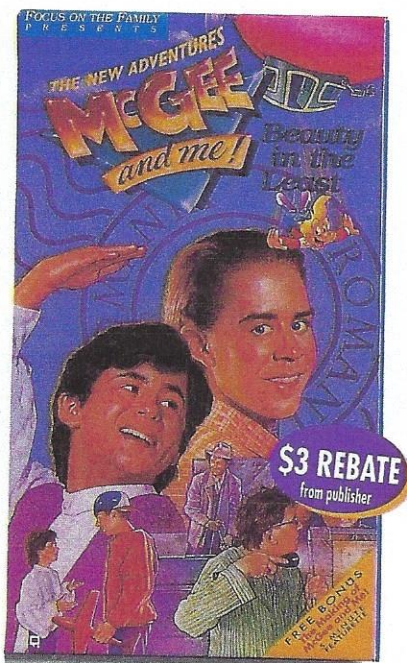
I leave my money, the thing my body

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worked so hard to earn. Poor body, it never did really understand that money is but God's gift.

I leave my physical belongings. These things, too, were all body-related. My body needed clothes to dress itself in, a house to live in, a car to ride in, and lots of "things" to keep it comfortable and lazy. Poor body, as much as I told it, it never would believe that all these things are subject to moth and rust and that one day the real me would leave them all behind and inherit a heavenly mansion.

I leave the results of my ministry plus a few written words, intended to help people who are on their way to something better. Although this ministry will continue for a season, it too will one day fade away. For as King David discovered, the only generation we really influence is the one in which we live.

Only the Word of God abides forever. And my words, both written and spoken, are very lackluster when compared with His brilliant utterances.

I leave a heritage in my children, my friends and those who looked to me as their earthly shepherd. Yet the greatest satisfaction of even this is that one day they too shall leave all and join me in the kingdom. Hallelujah!

Time and again, while on earth, I read Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15: "Flesh and blood can never possess the kingdom of God" (see v. 50). Now I know the reality of that. Rejoice with me for I have at last shucked off the old body and I have been clothed with immortality. "Death is swallowed up in victory... Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (vv. 54-57).

I have not left you, dear ones. I am still here, only living in a different dimension—the kingdom of God. I am with God, yet God is with you, and therefore I am here also. Listen, and occasionally you will hear me laugh and sing.

Children, remember when you were little how you would often get afraid at night and climb into bed with your mother and me? We would snuggle you in between us, laugh with you, sometimes pray with you and let you go off to sleep. Then during the night I would pick you up, still sleeping, and take you to your own room where I would gently tuck you in your bed. The next morning you would awake with the Florida sun

streaming through your window, and realize you were in your own room.

Death is like that. No matter what fear may accompany the actual process of dying, the Father's loving arms are always around you. And during the time when we fall asleep, He gently moves us from this body to our mansion that's been prepared through the death of Jesus Christ. Others who do not know our Father as we know Him may fear that process. But I welcome it. And I want you to welcome it also.

Now in this Last Will and Testament, I leave behind a few mundane things. All of them are temporal. And if you have any sense, you'll be satisfied to be content to use them wisely and then, just as willingly, leave them behind also. Perhaps you'll add to what I leave. Perhaps you'll use it all up. It makes no difference as long as you do all to the glory of God.

The one thing I do leave that has eternal value is this verse from 1 Corinthians 15: "Therefore, my beloved

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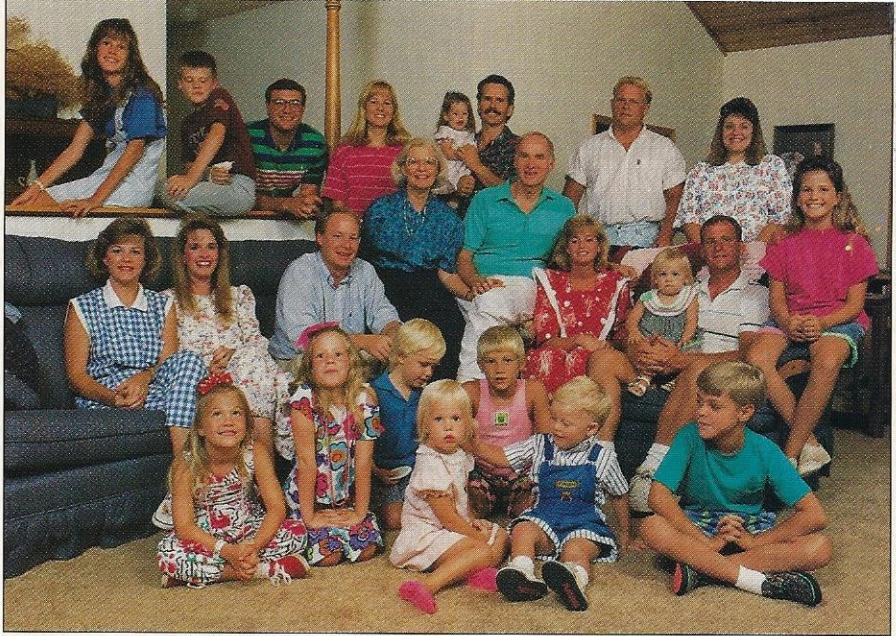
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ones, stand firm and immovable, and work for the Lord always, work without limit, since you know that in the Lord your labor cannot be lost" (see v. 58).

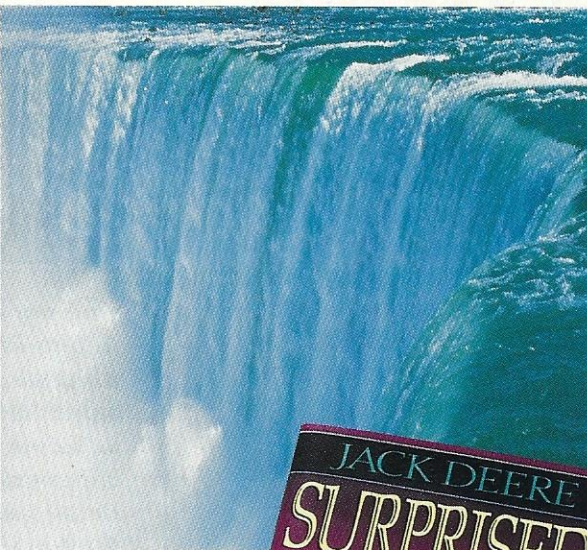
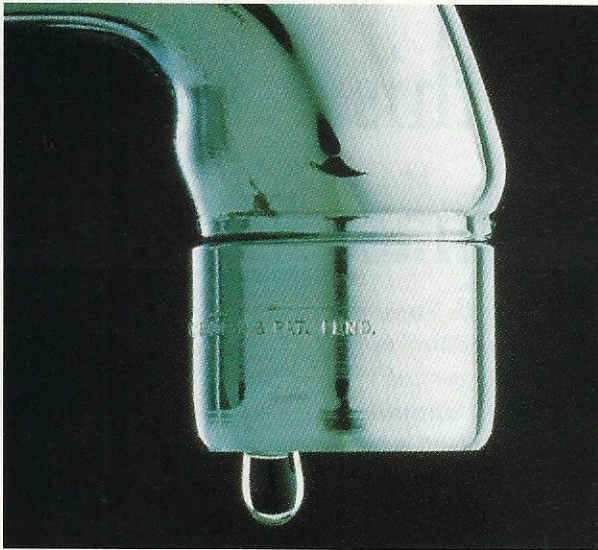
I am now with Jesus. And I look forward to your arrival, coming to Him as I did, with empty hands but a heart full of thanksgiving for His love and peace. ■

Awarding-winning writer and editor **Jamie Buckingham** passed away February 17, 1992. In addition to pastoring the Tabernacle Church in Melbourne, Florida, he was one of the most prolific authors of the charismatic movement, writing or co-writing more than 40 books. Jamie is survived by his wife, Jackie, five married children and 13 grandchildren.



*Jamie and wife Jackie with the Buckingham clan in 1991. Daughter Bonnie is on the far left on the couch.*

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