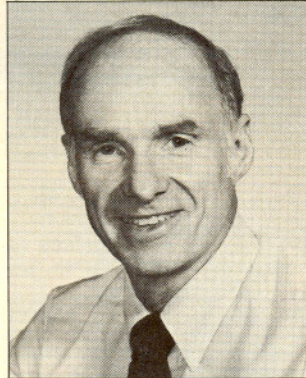


# Against All Odds

By Jamie Buckingham



Jamie Buckingham is an award-winning columnist and editor-at-large of *Charisma*.

Our other four children seemed normal. Their grades were above average; they had good health; they got along fine with their playmates.

Tim was different, however. In many areas he excelled. He could run faster, stay underwater longer and climb trees higher than all the others. He was remarkably coordinated with amazing reflexes and a deep instinct for doing the right thing. He made friends with every kid in the neighborhood—especially those who were handicapped or had problems. And animals. He could talk to them. When they talked back, he understood.

But he couldn't read.

By the time he completed his first year in school we knew something was wrong. We had enrolled him in a Christian school where he repeated first grade. It was a disaster. He was no further along than when he was in kindergarten.

We had him tested by the school psychologist. Although he had a high IQ, the tests indicated he had certain learning disabilities which hindered him in reading and writing. He gave us a term which we've lived with ever since: *dyslexia*. It's a Latin word which means "can't read."

We put him under a reading specialist, had him tutored, sent him to expensive clinics, even put him in corrective glasses for a year. We enrolled him in a class where he spent agonizing hours putting pegs in holes, walking balance beams and crawling under ropes stretched low to the ground.

We finally took him to a Kathryn Kuhlman healing service. Nothing seemed to be working.

We put him back in public school but the teachers did not seem to be able to do much with him. A dear friend arranged to have him leave school for a few hours each day so she could tutor him privately, but progress was slow. The public school merely advanced him along with his class even though he could barely read and write.

I remember the afternoon he came in from school, ran through the house and went straight to his room. I followed him down the hall but he had locked his bedroom door. When I opened it with a key I found him in bed, his bright orange bedspread pulled all the way up under his chin. Two small peaks at the foot of the bed told me he had not even taken off his shoes. He lay staring at the ceiling, his eyes brimming with tears.

"I don't want to go back to school anymore, Daddy," he sobbed. "I can't read the stuff the teacher puts on the board and she fusses at me."

I understood. How many times in my life—when I had been criticized for failure—had I wanted to do that: climb into bed with my clothes on, pull the covers up to my chin and sob. But I was a grown man. All I could do was share his feeling of desperation.

When he was in the fourth grade I realized I could not de-

pend on anyone else to help him. It was up to God. And me.

My part was to pray.

God's part was to heal.

Gradually I came to understand that while God could heal him instantly, He had more in mind. He wanted to teach me how to pray for my son—and He wanted my son to learn how to receive my love and appreciate my prayers.

For the next 10 years I never missed a night, if I was home, going into his room when he went to bed, sitting on the side of the bed, and talking and praying with my son.

The talking was important. I wanted him to know, regardless of the fact he had a problem,

that his mom and dad—and his brother and sisters—were proud of him. We did not blame him for his problem nor did we see him as different from the other children. In our eyes he was simply our son. If he'd had a bad day, or if we'd had to spank him for misbehavior, I encouraged him before he went to sleep. I wanted him to know he was loved, needed and appreciated in our family. I wanted the last thoughts that entered his mind before he went to sleep—the thoughts which would influence his subconscious during the night—to be positive thoughts.

But even though it was our loving encouragement which kept him well-adjusted socially, it was our prayers which brought the healing.

He finally finished high school, thanks to a splendid teacher who took him on as a special project. Even so, he was only reading at a fourth grade level when he graduated.

A hard and willing worker, he got a job as a laborer and married his high school sweetheart. One evening he stopped by the house. "Dad, I'll always be a common laborer unless I go to college like the other kids in the family. I want to go to agriculture college and learn to work with animals."

All the odds were against him, but Jackie and I encouraged him. So did his wife, Kathie, who said she could read his books to him in the evenings. He picked the college and, with Kathie's help, filled out the application blanks. He needed a full year of remedial work before starting on credit subjects. It was a massive struggle, mastering difficult texts in horticulture, animal anatomy and farm management. But he persevered—and God answered prayer.

When he graduated last fall he was reading at college level.

Today he holds a highly responsible job as a ranch manager in Forsyth, Georgia. When we visited him recently he took us through the pasture, pointing out various cattle, calling some by name. His two little boys—T.J. and Dusty—rode with us in the back of the station wagon, giving a running commentary on fertilizers, artificial insemination and feeding programs.

Tim's 26 this month. Proud of him? You bet! And we're grateful to a loving God who answers the prayers of parents for children. ■