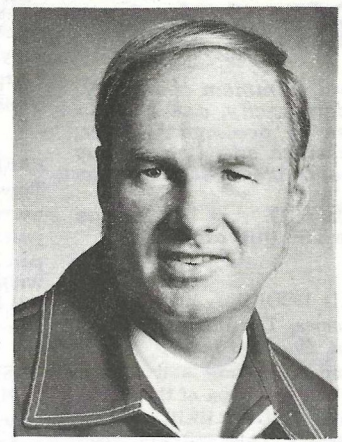


THE LAST WORD...

Jamie Buckingham



SEVERAL YEARS AGO I installed an underground sprinkling system in our yard. Contrary to California propaganda, it does not rain all the time in Florida. But without water the grass dies, and a sprinkling system seemed the only way out.

Unfortunately, plumbers in our town are rarely available. They have a busy schedule racing sports cars, tending their yachts, and flying to Acapulco. I was stuck with installing the sprinkling system myself.

With the help of my children, I finally managed to dig up the yard, lay what seemed to be endless miles of plastic pipe, then, using an abundance of tape, glue and clamps, got the thing hooked up. Like repairing a locomotive that is underway, the job was technically interesting but not much fun.

A friend gave me a rebuilt three-quarter horsepower pump which I hooked to a pipe that ran into the lake in our backyard. And presto, we had water on our lawn.

But something was wrong. The water was not evenly distributed and unless we had a strong east wind, a portion of the yard never got wet. Besides, the pump kept breaking down.

Last month, after three years of fiddling with the thing, I went out and bought a brand new two horsepower pump. I spent most of a Monday running a larger intake pipe out into the lake and installing the new pump. Then came the moment of truth as I stepped inside the back door and flipped the switch. The pump whirled

into life and we had water. I mean we really had water.

Where my old system—held together with glue, rotting tape, and rusty clamps—had been sufficient for the three-quarter horsepower pump, it was totally inadequate for the big new pump exerted more than twice the pressure. Water squirted everywhere. Underground connections burst loose and erupted in the yard like geysers, blowing dirt and grass up with them. Tape peeled off exposed connections, sending out streams of water. Tiny pin holes in the pipes, unnoticed before, suddenly opened to spray water in all directions. Loose sprinkler heads were thrown high into the air as water roared upward in gushers. Flaws, blemishes and defects which had remained unnoticed were suddenly exposed as the new power surged through.

I guess I should have expected something like this, for the same thing happened to me several years ago. I had sputtered along on low spiritual power for almost twenty years, when suddenly I was filled with a new power—the Holy Spirit. Talk about leak, I looked like a sieve.

Someone once asked Bob Mumford

what was the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. He answered in one word. "Problems!"

Charismatics often give the impression that once a person receives the Holy Spirit all his problems are solved, his tendency to sin removed, and from that time on he moves from mountain peak to mountain peak. Well, that's partially true. But contrary to what is often taught, we don't get from one peak to another by floating on clouds. The only way we get there is by tumbling head over heels into the valley and then being lifted, by the grace of God, to the next peak.

I was shocked, after receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit, to find I was capable of violently losing my temper (on more than one occasion I smashed things against the floor in a fit of anger), was afflicted with lust, and occasionally even tempted to renounce my faith. Now I understand that the surge of power was exposing my defects and flaws, causing me to leak all over the place—often in front of everyone.

I am sure that such leaking caused many of my friends to say, "If that's the way Spirit-filled people act, I don't want any of it." That's too bad, but I knew that despite my obvious faults, I was being changed. For the first time in my life I began to look at my defects not as problems, but challenges.

Six months after she received the fullness of the Spirit, a young housewife found herself back in the

valley of depression. In a moment of weakness she gave way to an old temptation. By the time I saw her she was convinced she had sinned away her salvation. Much of her guilt and self-condemnation came from incomplete teaching by others who had shared only the victories of the Spirit-walk, rather than the constant struggle of being knocked down and letting God pick you up.

Unfortunately, many of the books being written today by charismatics leave the impression that walking in the Spirit is constant victory. As a result, unbelievers tend to discredit the entire testimony of God's provision and miracles simply because the writers are unwilling to admit that even after spirit baptism their lives were still a jumbled mess. How determined we are to defend God (and incidentally, keep our image polished).

It seems this may be part of the controversy that is swirling around the book, *Like A Mighty Wind*. The book is a collection of stories from the Indonesian revival compiled from talks given in the United States by a young Indonesian evangelist, Mel Tari. The stories he tells are thrilling—resurrections from the dead, water turned into wine, walking on water and clothes that never get dirty. Sadly, the stories are not fully documented, leaving room for skeptics to dispute their validity. Charismatics, who have experienced similar miracles, have no trouble believing the book. However, because the book fails to give equal space to the defects and defeats in the Indonesian ministry, many believers are having a hard time accepting its credibility.

Stanley Mooneyham, president of World Vision and an expert on the Christian move in Asia, wrote in World Vision magazine (Sept. '72) that he could not endorse Tari's book (even though a statement from him is quoted in the foreword). Mooneyham justifiably points out that from reading the book people are apt to get the impression that miracles are daily occurrences even now all over Indonesia, when they are not. This is tragic, for such miracles actually took place (and in fact, are taking place all over the world). However, because the book fails

to mention the other side of the ledger—the leaks—many find it hard to swallow.

I had to face the same conflict when writing *Shout It From The Housetops* for Pat Robertson. Although the book is a record of miracle after miracle, it closes with a dramatic situation where Pat listened to false prophecy and nearly undid all that God had been doing. Friendly critics, reading the final drafts, urged me to delete the final chapters. "Let the book end on a note of victory," they said. The temptation was great to rush to the defense of the Kingdom by simply not sharing everything. But Pat and I both determined that ultimate victory does not rest in man overcoming problems, but rather in God using defective men to accomplish his purpose.

Anyone in the communications field, whether writing or speaking, has a divine obligation to be agonizingly accurate. As Oliver Cromwell once told the artist commissioned for his portrait, "Paint me as I am, warts and all."

There is a constant temptation to gloss over the defects and failures, relating only the victories. But the walk in the Spirit is a balance of falling downs and getting ups, darkness and light, valleys and mountain tops, sins and saintliness, defeats and victories. Every life and every ministry is full of leaks. Credibility can only be achieved when we tell it all.

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