

The Last Word

JAMIE BUCKINGHAM



GO NATIONAL

I keep having to remind myself that *achieving* is not nearly as important as *trying*. The reason I have to keep reminding myself, is I do a lot more trying than I do achieving.

About four years ago I woke in the middle of the night having heard what I knew was the "voice of God." It was time, the voice said, to syndicate, on a national scale, the weekly newspaper column I had been writing for my hometown paper—*The Vero Beach (Fla.) Press Journal*.

All signs were "go." As a roving editor for *Guideposts*, my name appeared on the masthead of the largest religious magazine in the world. Besides that, my weekly column had just received a first place award from the Florida Press Association as the best in the state. I was sure America's newspaper editors would be eager for my byline.

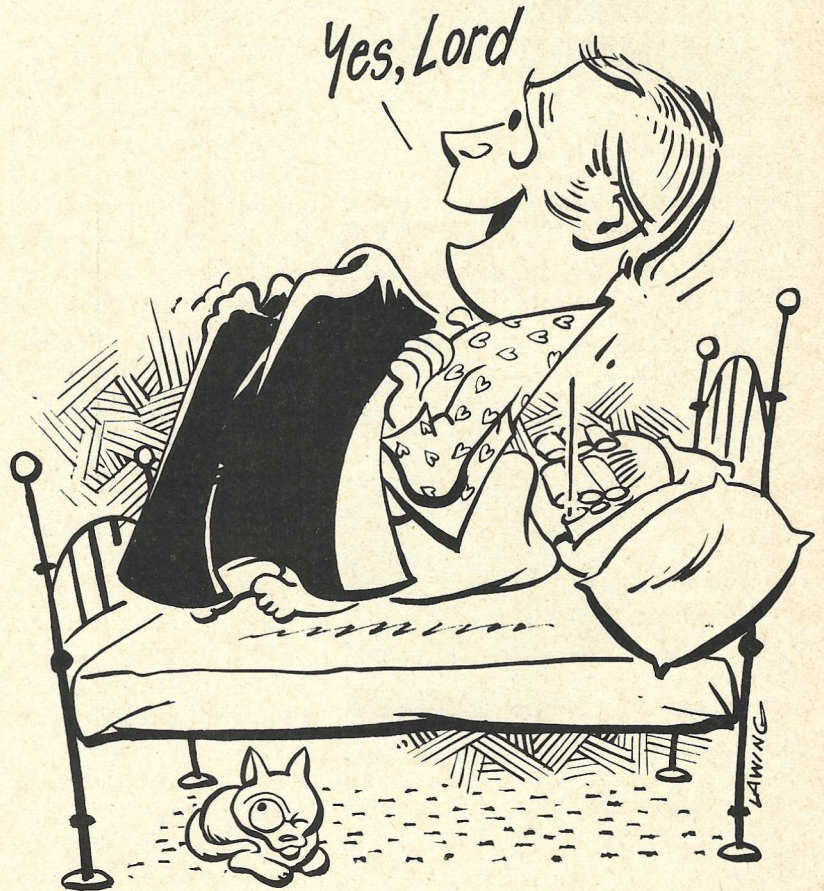
The next day, as I began making serious plans, I saw this could be God's way to get our financially strapped family out of debt. I would offer my material, not to the large daily papers, but to the more than 5,000 weekly newspapers in America—all of whom needed good writers. Besides this, I

would give them a deal they couldn't refuse and offer my stuff for the ridiculously cheap price of \$5.00 per column. If only ten percent of the papers in the nation bought it—that would

amount to \$2,500 per week. A fortune!

The elders of the church agreed this was God's will. They were especially excited when I told them I would soon

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be able to support the church; rather than having the church support me. My fellow editors urged me on. My wife and children saw this as an opportunity to keep me home. Besides, this would be a family business. I could put the kids on salary: preparing the mail-outs, licking the stamps, and counting the money as it came rolling in.

I tried the big syndicates, but none of them were interested. That didn't dampen my spirits, however, for they would have taken half the loot anyway. Undaunted, since God had spoken, I determined to submit my material di-

rectly to the nation's papers myself.

I drained our children's educational account and spent more than \$1,500 additional money sending camera-ready samples, complete with stamped, return-addressed envelopes and a contract, to the 5,000 various editors. After six weeks of unbelievable hard work, two papers had accepted my offer—and one of them was so cheap they would pay only \$2.00 a column.

Three weeks later, these two dropped me. Broke and humiliated, I was a total failure as a syndicated columnist.

I wish I could report, four years later, that I was now America's favorite syndicated columnist. That God had taken my failure and turned it into a marvelous victory. But I can't. Instead, the dream seems to have died in its place. I have a deep sense of satisfaction in doing what I am doing, without asking for more.

I have, however, arrived at some interesting conclusions.

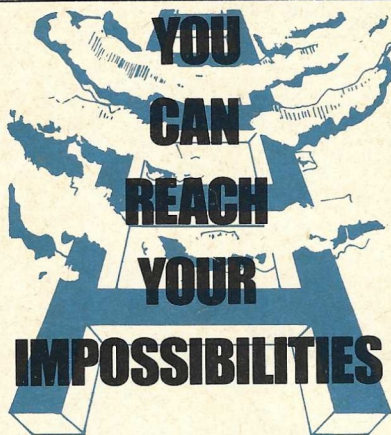
First, don't pray for humility unless you are prepared to be humiliated. That seems to be God's choice way to hurry up the process. I should have known this, after all, for when I had earlier prayed for patience I received, you know . . . tribulation.

Also, I am now thoroughly convinced that achievement is not nearly as important as obedience. In other words, it's better to strike out than to sit, huddled fearfully, in the dugout, unwilling even to come to bat.

It's much like Peter's experience in water walking. Every sermon I've ever heard on that subject deals with Peter's failure. Poor guy, if he had only kept his eyes on Jesus he never would have gone under. Good point. But at least he tried. The other fellows in the boat were all quaking behind the gun-wales. The passing of the test, it seems, lies not in our ability to imitate Jesus, but in our willingness to try.

God does not intend for us to walk on water as a way of life (although there may be times when that is necessary). Instead he simply wants us to obey—and run the risk of being called a fool and a failure in the eyes of the world.

The crown of righteousness fits on a wet head just as easily as it does a dry one.



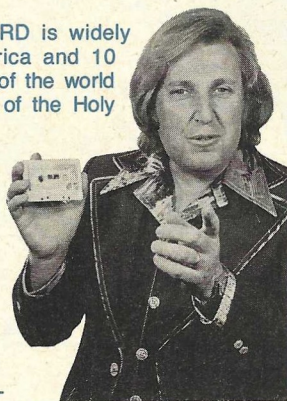
"You may think that you are nobody, but God's Word says you are somebody."

"Man's impossible situations are God's chance to work miracles and change the 'impossibilities' into realities."

"God can change your discouragements to joy in Jesus Christ."

DAVID BARNARD is widely known in America and 10 other countries of the world for his ministry of the Holy Spirit. Presently he is the founder and pastor of the HOLY SPIRIT CENTER in San Francisco, one of Northern California's fastest growing charismatic churches. He has

recently ministered in Eastern Europe and South East Asia and has had wide experience in the development of the Christian home. This month's special tape, "You Can Reach Your Impossibilities" is being offered at the low price of \$3.50.



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