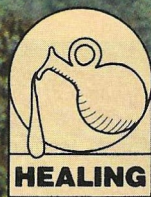
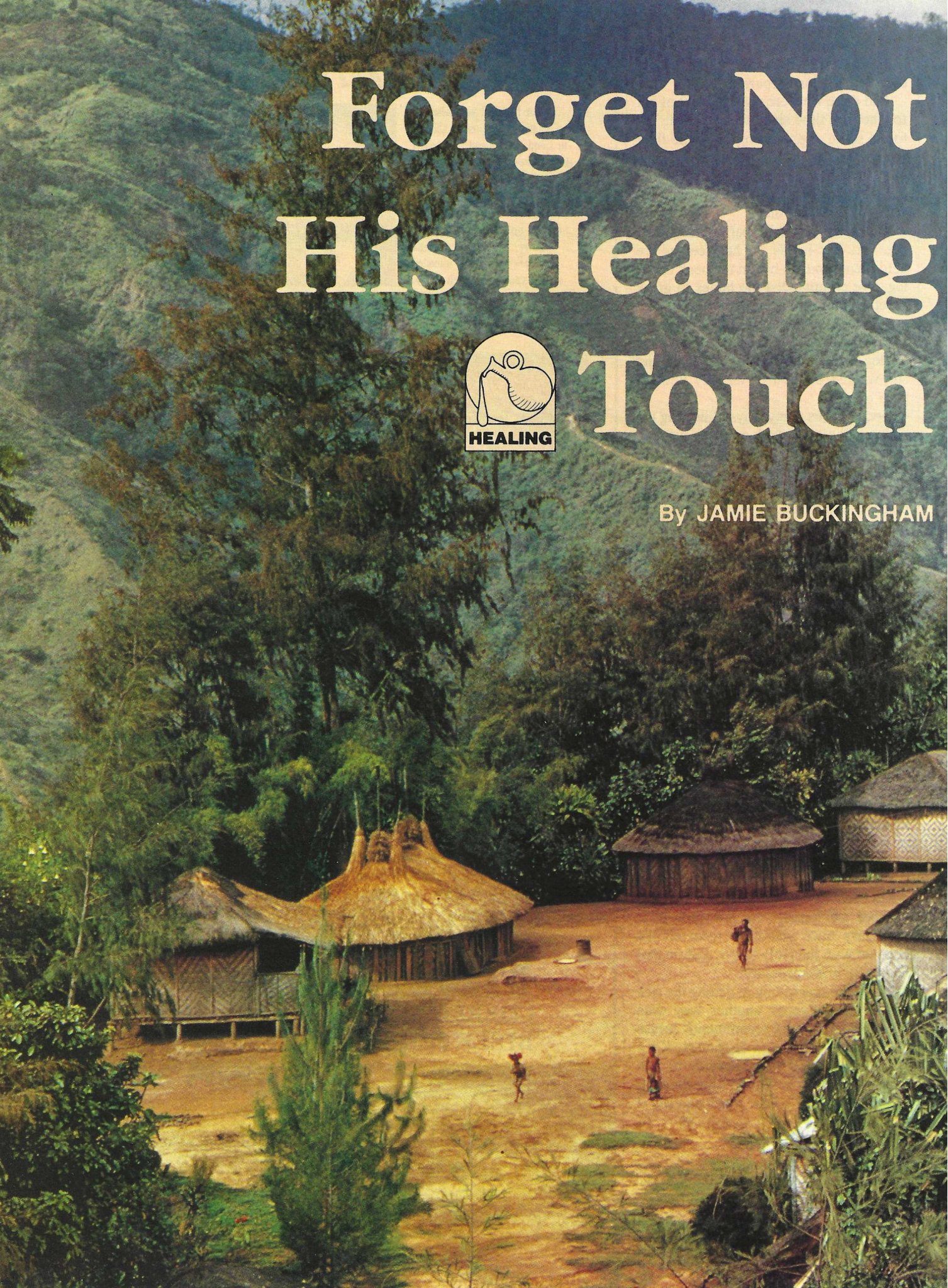


Forget Not His Healing Touch



By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM





God's people are being ridiculed. Physical healing and the raising of the dead are being scorned. The gifts of the Spirit are being sneered at. How easy it would be to get caught in the emotion of the moment, to withdraw from Christ and say with a cowardly Simon Peter, "I never knew Him." But we need to pause and remember what God has done.

One thing I remember unfolded on a hot, soggy morning three years ago. I was walking down a jungle path in the province of Irian Jaya, Indonesia. I had flown into an isolated mission compound there five days before to conduct a Bible conference for Wycliffe Bible Translators. We were 400 miles from the nearest settlement, in one of the deepest tropical jungles on earth.

It had rained the night before and the path was spongy under my feet. I was on my way to the meeting house located on top of a rise overlooking the lake—a lake which had been formed during a huge earthquake a few years before. That morning I was to teach on God's healing power.

I rounded a curve in the path. Ahead of me was the small mission compound consisting of a number of modest wooden

I was running late. The compound seemed deserted, meaning the people had already gathered on the hill for the meeting. Suddenly I heard screaming—a high, wailing shriek of terror. It filled the jungle and echoed out across the lake.

I looked toward the wooden boat dock extending out into the lake. The cry seemed to come from there.

Then I saw her. An Indian woman, one of the Bauzi tribespeople who lived across the lake. Running up the path, she was dressed only in a ragged loin cloth. In her arms was a small child—his limbs akimbo, his head lolling and bouncing. His mother was heading directly toward me—her head back, her eyes wild, her mouth open and uttering terrible, animal-like screams of terror.

Suddenly she turned, climbed the steps of the tiny infirmary which was just to my right, and collapsed on the porch—holding her child and moaning, looking wildly in every direction.

I raced to her. The naked child was convulsing, his little brown arms jerking turbulently, his mouth covered with white froth. His eyes, when the lids bolted open, were yellow like the tiger-eye stones I had purchased the week before in Jakarta.

I pounded on the door of the infirmary.

**While some people mock God and His power
to heal, there's a little boy in Indonesia
who knows what God can do.**

residences—most of them with palm-thatched roofs. In the middle of the compound was a long, low dormitory which combined as a dining hall. To my left, on the hill, was the meeting house. Below it was the building where the translators met with their Indian informants as they worked on Scripture translation. Just ahead was a one room infirmary.

During the Bible conference week a doctor—a tough old Australian woman—had been flown into the compound to give annual treatment to the missionaries. Aside from an ancient Indonesian doctor in Jayapura, 400 miles away, she was the only doctor in the province; and she came from Australia only a few weeks each year.

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She opened the door and took a long look at the pathetic sight on the porch.

The doctor shook her head. "There's an epidemic of spinal meningitis in the Bauzi village. I can give the child an injection, but nothing will stop the virus. His chances of living are slim."

I looked down at the mother. She was sitting cross-legged on the wooden porch, cradling the infant in her arms. She was silent now. Resigned. Her big eyes were looking up, back and forth between the doctor and myself. Pleading!

I thought again of my topic for the morning. I was to speak to the missionaries, encouraging them to be God's agents in the jungle—not just to translate the Bible but to bring the presence of God's healing power into this land of darkness and demons.

"May I pray for the child?" I asked the doctor.

She shrugged. She was a wizened old agnostic—hardened by years of seeing the helpless die.

"The disease is highly contagious," she said. "You've just come from the protected culture of the States. You have no built-in immunity as I have. If you pray, keep your distance or you, too, could die."

I shuddered and backed up two steps to the side of the porch. I remembered my friend Adger McKay, who three years before had contracted cerebral malaria while on a mission trip to Africa. A week after he returned to his home in Montreat, North Carolina, his brain began to swell. The doctors were helpless. He died five days later. Had McKay contracted his disease by doing what I was about to do? If God had not protected him—or healed him—how could I expect Him to protect me, much less heal this jungle baby?

Then the thought of my topic raced through my mind. "They will be able even to handle snakes with safety..." Jesus had said in Mark 16:18 (LB), "and if they drink anything poisonous it won't hurt them." All that had been said in relation to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel." What gospel? The gospel of a God who cares. Who heals.

What, I asked myself, would Jesus do in this situation? Would He who touched the lepers refuse to touch a highly contagious child?

I knelt on the porch beside the terrified

mother. In crude sign language I signaled what I was going to do. She nodded, her eyes still darting about. Holding my breath, I reached over and put both hands on the little boy's twitching, naked body. His skin burned like fire. I began to pray the only way I knew to pray in such a situation—using the prayer language the Holy Spirit had given me a number of years before.

"We don't even know what we should pray for, nor how to pray as we should; but the Holy Spirit prays for us with such feeling that it cannot be expressed in



Buckingham will never forget the scene: A mother rowing across the lake with her son which he had prayed for.

words...and the Father who knows all hearts knows, of course, what the Spirit is saying as He pleads for us in harmony with God's own will" (Rom. 8:26-27).

I felt the heat subside under my hands. Was I imagining it or was it really happening? The shivering and jerking in the child's muscles lessened. That was not my imagination. I could see it with my eyes. The child lay peaceful in his mother's arms.

Behind me I heard the old doctor mutter, "Remarkable!" She then knelt and gave the child an injection in the hip. I stood. Weak.

The doctor went back into the little room and emerged in seconds. "Hold out your hands," she commanded. I obeyed and she poured an alcohol solution over them. Again she muttered, "Remarkable!"

I glanced at my watch and realized the meeting on the hill had started. I took a final look at the mother and child. She was cross-legged on the bark floor, rocking gently and moaning. She had no idea what had happened. I wondered if I comprehended it myself—who can fathom the ways of God? Who knows

what wonderful, mysterious things happen in the realm of the "heavenlies.?"

Later that morning, as I shared with the missionaries, I broke and wept. I was embarrassed for crying, but some of them cried with me. They were out there—giving their lives for these people. This child was their child too. This woman their sister.

On the days that followed, at the morning and evening meetings, reports were brought on the condition of the child. At first there was no change. He was comatose in his hammock in the lit-

tle hut on stilts. Then a report came that the mother had brought him back to the doctor, the child resting in her lap as she paddled her little dugout canoe across the lake. His condition had improved. He was going to live.

In these days when everything sacred is questioned, everything holy is suspect—at least to the secular media—it would be tempting to push such a memory out of mind. I can almost hear a chorus line joining Simon Peter in saying, "I never knew Him."

But we have known Christ. For every fake healer who is exposed, for every

false miracle which is revealed, there are thousands of genuine healings and miracles to which we can all testify. True, there are excesses. There are frauds. Under the glaring searchlight of the press many fakes have been exposed. For that we should give thanks. If we don't police our own ranks, the media and the government will do it for us.

Last year James Randi, a magician, suspecting a certain television "faith-healer" was a fraud, attended one of his crusades armed with an electronic scanner. He and his team of detectives discovered the evangelist's wife, who was interviewing the sick prior to the service, was wearing a hidden microphone. As she interviewed those who had come early, the information was transmitted to a control booth by radio frequency. Later, when the evangelist came on stage, she transmitted this information to him—from the control booth—via VHF radio which he received in a hidden earphone.

"Hello, Petey. I'm talking to you. Can you hear me?...I have a hot one for you. Robert Kaywood. He's got a chest condition that needs surgery. His veins aren't

formed. He prays that God will heal him today."

Later she came back on the air. "She... no, she should be there on your right side. No. That's not her. In the blue... Oh! That might be her. OK. She lives at 4267 Masterson, and she's praying for her daughter, Joy, who's allergic to food...."

Several weeks later Randi was on the Johnny Carson show talking about his findings. Later, in an exclusive story given to *Popular Communications*, he gave details. Many Christians were shocked—and embarrassed. A non-Christian had exposed one of us. However, if God's people won't police the kingdom, He'll use whomever He can.

There are frauds and fakes among us. There are those who "blab in gibberish." There are those who fake "going under the power" for the sake of notoriety. There are "healers" who proclaim miracles which simply will not stand up under medical investigation.

However, one of the first things I learned when I was filled with the Spirit was this: For every real gift there is a counterfeit. I also learned Satan only counterfeits that which is of ultimate value. A financial counterfeiter does not counterfeit Monopoly money. He only counterfeits the real thing. Nor does he counterfeit that which has little value. No counterfeiter would spend time manufacturing fake \$1 bills. He puts all his energy into counterfeiting bills of higher denominations. Thus, when I hear of fake tongues, miracles, prophecies and healings, I rejoice. That only means the genuine article is in existence.

In the midst of a world which seems to have gone mad in its revelation of the counterfeit, God's people need to pause and remember. We need to remember the genuine miracles. We need to remember the touch of God on our lives—and on the lives of our loved ones. The fact that there are those who, like Simon the magician, use the gifts for money should not deter us from the fact that God's supernatural power is real. God's people must not believe the lies being told that all miracles are fakes. God is still alive—and still healing.

Tucked away in the file of my mind labeled "precious memories" is a scene on the dock my final day in the jungle. In an hour I would climb into the Helio Courier aircraft and take off from the dirt airstrip to begin my five-day journey out of the Orient back to my home in Florida. It was early morning, the sun just rising out of the east over nearby Papua New

Guinea. I had walked out on the dock to take one last look at the area when I spotted the canoe coming across the lake from the Bauzi village.

I watched as it grew closer. There were three people in it: an old man in the stern and a younger woman in the front, holding a child. I walked out on the end of the dock. It was the same woman and child I had prayed over. I knew from the missionaries the old man was her uncle with whom she lived. As the dugout approached the woman saw me. A great smile spread across her face, revealing

her brown teeth, stained with beetle nut juice. She put down her paddle and picked up her child—holding him up for me to see. The little boy, brown and naked, smiled also. They beached the canoe and started up the hill, perhaps going for provisions from the commissary. I stood for a long time, looking out across the lake, and then headed for the airstrip and home. ■

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