

# The Last Word

## JAMIE BUCKINGHAM



Writing this book on inner healing,\* which deals with the need for transparency through honesty, has stirred up a lot of unhealed areas in my life.

What charismatic, freshly catapulted into a new dimension of personal honesty—only to be badly stung by the sharp reactions of those still bound in tradition—has not wanted to cry out with Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*: "Take note, take note, O World, to be direct and honest is not safe"?

Iago was right, of course. Honesty can get you killed—or kicked out of office. The honest man is a threat to all those around him who are not honest, be it politics, business or the church. It's one thing to tell the truth; but to "let it all hang out" is more than most folks can stand.

Last year some old friends arrived at our house on a Sunday afternoon. Traveling with them was the man's mother who, although a staunch church member, was totally uninitiated when it came to attending our free-wheeling Sunday night service. In fact, it was almost too much for her.

Our friends reacted well. They had been in "body life" meetings before. The hugging, happiness, and hand-clapping didn't seem to bother them. But the mother, an older woman who was a member of a very sophisticated northern church, sat through the two-hour service with a look of stark dismay on her face.

The initial shock came when she entered the building and found the people—instead of sitting coldly in pews staring forward and listening to



solemn music—milling about, laughing, talking and hugging one another. I couldn't help but sympathize with her, for many times, in my days of formalism, I had wanted to mount the pulpit before the service and shout, "Stop all that loving; it's time to be religious."

There were other problems. Besides being the only woman in the building wearing hat and gloves, she had to sit beside a burly young man with a huge red beard who was dressed in overalls and shaking a tambourine.

This was church?

But it wasn't the clapping, prophecy

or spontaneous testimonies that bothered her most. It was the honesty.

About halfway through the service there was a call for ministry. "If there are any here with great burdens, we want to pray for you," the presiding elder said. "Perhaps you're not able to get along with your husband or wife. Maybe you're out of work and filled with fear. Perhaps you're depressed, sick, or unable to cope with life. Are you bothered by evil spirits? Are you being tempted sexually? Have you even considered suicide? If so, then stand up and let the body of Christ

*please turn page*

\* *Risky Living* by Jamie Buckingham, Logos International 1976.



gather around you, lay on hands and pray."

More than half the congregation stood. The rest reached out to touch, and entered into a time of free, vocal prayer. Some of those standing responded with tears, others with laughter. One or two even shouted as they received deliverance. Others just stood silently, accepting by faith what God had promised.

After the service, as we sat around our dining room table munching crackers and cheese, the mother finally spoke up.

"Ah . . . that was an unusual service tonight."

"Not really," I said casually. "Although I guess it was different from an ordinary service in your 'First Church.'"

She searched for the proper words. "Was that usual—all those people standing up for prayer like that?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," she said, a bit bolder now, "I can't imagine my pastor ever asking people to admit they couldn't get along with their husbands, had sexual temptations or were considering suicide. We just don't do things like that in our church."

"What if he did give that kind of invitation?" I probed.

"Oh, no one would dare stand up," she said quickly.

Then she delivered the *coup de grace*. "You must have an awful lot of sick people in your church."

I could feel my face growing hot. But I choked down the cutting retorts and sat thinking, silently. She was right. We do have an awful lot of sick people in our church.

But so does every church. The difference is honesty—and people who run the risk of condemnation by admitting their need, and asking for help. But after all, are churches supposed to be resorts for saints, or hospitals for sinners?

The villain Iago concluded, under Othello's prodding, that honesty must be steeped in wisdom "for honesty's a fool and loses that it works for."

Granted, there are some things better left unsaid. That's the wise part of honesty. But true healing comes only when we become transparent—even if we have to die in the process. ☪

A New Book  
Jamie Buckingham's personal testimony

# RISKY LIVING

## Keys to Inner Healing

Jamie Buckingham explores inner healing, illustrating spiritual principles with personal anecdotes. In this book, Jamie is vulnerable, revealing his ambitions, his hopes, his failures, and sharing the incidents that are part of an experiment in "risky living"—submission to an on-going process of inner healing. Jamie is the author of "Into the Glory" and co-author of "Run Baby Run" and other best-sellers.

\$5.95

Hardcover

\$3.50

Large paperback

At your bookstore  
(If ordering by mail, add  
25¢ for postage  
and handling)

**LOGOS**  
INTERNATIONAL  
Plainfield, N.J. 07060

