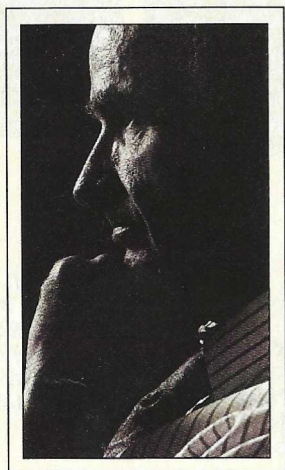


Last summer, Jamie Buckingham received a diagnosis of death. But the support of family and friends helped him believe God for a miracle.

Faith for the Journey

*By
Jamie
Buckingham*



The last Friday of June 1990, Jamie Buckingham sat in a doctor's office and received news that would radically change his life: Cancer of the left kidney. Untreatable. Inoperable. The diagnosis seemed to be a black-edged death certificate.

Until God took over.

The remarkable story of Jamie's healing is told in Summer of Miracles (Creation House). In these poignant passages, he describes the dramatic events that began his season of miracles.

Friday evening, after I received the shocking news, the family gathered. My wife, Jackie, and I live in a wooded section of Palm Bay, Florida. Our two sons and three daughters—all married with children—live within 10 minutes of our home. When the family gathered, there was a total of 24.

We piled into the den. The two infants were put to bed upstairs. The rest

of the grandchildren sat on the floor. The others were seated on the couches or in

the big beanbags on the floor. I outlined, as accurately as possible, what I had been told by the doctor.

Sickness was a stranger to our family. With the exception of some complications with pregnancies, normal childhood diseases and Jackie's bout with breast biopsies, no one in the family had ever been sick. None of the boys had ever been in a hospital. Nor had I. I wasn't even born in a hospital. I had been birthed in the second floor of a





garage apartment in Vero Beach. Now that journey seemed almost over.

For me to sit in our den on that June night, in the middle of what seemed to be a perfect family setting, and talk of death was like announcing the intrusion of a dragon into Camelot. The reaction on the part of my grown children and their spouses was instant—and uniform. My oldest son, Bruce, took the lead.

“Dad, there’s no way we’re going to let Satan do this to you. Cancer is evil.

We will fight it with the weapons of spiritual warfare until it is gone and Satan is driven from your body and from this property.”

Our youngest son, Tim, the cowboy in our family, approached it at another level. “You’re not going to give in to this, are you? Or don’t you believe all that stuff you’ve been preaching all these years?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, does God heal or not?”

You’ve written all those books on miracles and healing. Do you really believe it, or should we all just stop going to church?”

“Hey, that’s not fair.” It was Sandy, the youngest daughter. “The doctor’s just told Dad he might die.”

Bruce reacted. “No, it is fair. That’s what it’s all about. Either God is who He says He is, or we’re all a bunch of fakes.”

My three sons-in-law were equally adamant. All are mature Christians, active in our church. They were stunned but reacted with positive support and deep faith. The five young women—all of whom I love equally—were fighting back the tears. But no one flinched.

“We need to pray,” my oldest daughter, Robin, said. “We need to do it now. The children need to join us.”

Involving the children in prayer, I was to discover later, was a powerful—perhaps the most powerful—secret to healing. It was to happen time and time again, both in my presence and apart from me. It would involve not only my own grandchildren, but all the children of our church.

I sat cross-legged in the middle of the floor. Everyone hunkered around—straining to lay their hands on me in the middle of the prayer pile.

Everyone prayed out loud. Some in tongues. Some with weeping. Some with strong, authoritative voices. I stopped trying to listen as the tears began to flow. It had been years since I’d cried. Now the tears flowed freely—tears that, even as I write this almost a year later, are still flowing.

We slept little that night. Lying in bed on my back, my hand in Jackie’s, I listened as she prayed—her voice often choking. I felt the tears spilling out the sides of my eyes, running down my cheek and soaking the pillow. My relationship with God was a simile of my relationship with Jackie. We enjoyed occasional times of brief and exciting intimacy. But to give all my devotion to God—or to my wife—might mean losing the thing I cherished most: my self-will, the power to sit in the captain’s chair of my ship and call all the shots in my life.

Now that most cherished factor of life had been snatched from me. The cancer in my body was in control. In my unwillingness to turn my life totally over to God, another force had sneaked in and taken the helm—assigning me to the ship's dungeon, where I would die a miserable death. Yet, despite this shift of control, my wife was still there, squeezing my hand in the middle of the night, pouring out her intercession to God on my behalf.

What a fool I'd been to neglect her.

What a fool I'd been to neglect Him.

The first week in July, the phone calls from around the nation began. Years before, I had written Pat Robertson's biography, *Shout It From the Housetops*. Pat had remained a friend. Now Pat had gone on the air to ask the Christians of America to pray for me. The results were awesome.

Paul and Jan Crouch also issued a nationwide call through the Trinity Broadcasting Network. Christian radio stations all over the country picked it up, asking their listeners to pray. A massive base of prayer was forming as people around the nation—most of whom I did not know—began interceding, asking God to heal me.

Two more things of great significance happened that week.

First, copies of Dodie Osteen's little book *Healed of Cancer* arrived in the mail, sent from two different friends. Dodie was the wife of my old friend John Osteen, pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas. John had preached the night—22 years before in Washington, D.C.—when I had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I had met his wife a number of times but did not know of the wonderful miracle she had experienced.

I devoured the little book the hour it came—reading it through before lunch without stopping. It told how she had been diagnosed with a fatal liver cancer and sent home to die. Instead she had fought, prayed and filled herself with the Word of God. Instead of dying she had lived—and was still living abundantly. The second half of the book contained some of the healing scriptures that had helped her.

The second significant event was a visit from our old friend Wylene Hughes. Wylene, a former secretary at our church, had been part of our lives for more than 20 years.

"Five years ago," she said, "Ed Gray was dying of cancer."

I knew Ed and his wife, Flo. They used to attend our church before they retired and moved to the mountains of north Georgia.

"The doctors told Ed he didn't have a

chance. He went to the Bible and indexed a bunch of healing promises. He wrote them down and claimed them for himself. On the basis of the Word of God alone he was healed—and remains healed."

She handed me a stapled sheaf of papers. "Last year Ed sent me all those verses. I didn't know what to do with them. Now I've typed them out and personalized them for you: 'I am the Lord who heals you, Jamie.'"

She reached out and kissed me on

the cheek, and she was gone.

Those scriptures, along with the ones in the back of Dodie's book, would become our spiritual meat and drink—our life source. In fact, they still are.

Friday morning, July 6, at 7:00, Jackie and I pulled up in front of Holmes Hospital. We took the elevator to the fourth floor where the nuclear medicine department was located. The

technician gave me a shot of radioactive liquid and told me to report back for the bone scan in two hours, after the isotopes had spread through my body.

We were back at 8:30 a.m. In the waiting area were Laura Watson and Suzanne Hitt, part of my church's intercessory prayer team that had committed to pray for me while I was taking the test. Others, they said, were downstairs in the chapel.

It was like a dream, like flying in the fog. I was there, talking, listening, but I seemed to be somewhere else, too. I tried to focus in on the ladies' conversation, but earthly things just didn't seem important—even when the talk centered around prayer.

The nuclear technician was at the door. They were ready. The scan would take about 40 minutes, she said. I lay on my back on the table as the scanner slowly passed over my body, starting at my head and moving down to my feet.

The scanner produced a steady ticking noise as it passed slowly over my body. Someone had told me that if the ticking increased, it was a sign the scanner had discovered a "hot spot"—a place where the cancer may have invaded my bones. I decided not to listen, quoting over and over, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isa. 26:3).

"OK, time to get up." It was the cheery voice of the technician. I had fallen asleep on the table. Smiling to myself, I sat up and slid off the table.

So that's what perfect peace is—going to sleep as the storm rages around you, I thought. A mental picture of the scene described in Mark 4—Jesus asleep in the stern of the fishing boat as a storm raged across the Sea of Galilee—flickered through my mind. "Thank You, Lord!"

"We need to take a gamma ray scan," the technician said. "There is an area in your left side that is blurred. We want to see what shows up on the other scan."

Again I wasn't there. I heard her words, but it didn't make any difference. Under other circumstances, I would have felt the panic building in my stomach and throat; but I knew Jackie, Laura and Sue were in the waiting room praying for me. Others were praying: my children and grandchildren; those down in the chapel; many at the church office and around the community; friends around the nation. Why should I fear?

Waiting for them to set up the gamma ray scan in the room across the hall, I noticed a feeble-looking man lying on a gurney in the hall. I walked over to him. He was a mere shadow, just bones covered by jaundiced

skin. One leg had been amputated, and he had tubes running out of his body into bottles suspended on poles above the stretcher. I looked into his emaciated face. He was Oriental. Totally uninhibited, I reached out my hand, placed it on his fragile shoulder and started praying in the Spirit. Quietly.

"He can't understand you," a nurse said as she stepped out of a nearby doorway. "He speaks only Korean."

"It's OK," I winked. "I wasn't praying in English."

I looked down, and the old man was smiling, great tears flooding his eyes. With one bony hand he reached up and touched my arm. He nodded. He may not have spoken any English, but one thing was certain—he understood.

I squeezed his shoulder gently and went into the room where I was to have the next scan. The technician stood me against a drum-shaped piece of

equipment that would take pictures of my hip and kidney area. I could see the vague shapes flashing on a large monitor across the room. When it was over and I started out of the room, I noticed an older woman sitting in a wheelchair just inside the door. Her head was drooping. She was in obvious pain.

"May I pray for you?" I was astounded at my boldness. Never before today had I approached a total stranger and prayed for them. Yet within the last 10 minutes I had done it twice.

She slowly raised her head. "Are you a priest?"

"No, just a follower of Jesus."

"Oh! Yes, please. I hurt so much."

I put my hand on her head and prayed softly. "Lord, in obedience to Your command to lay hands on the sick..."

"Oh!" She flinched under my hand. "What was that?"

"What was what?"

"I feel so much better."

I reached down and kissed her cheek then headed toward the waiting room. Something—Someone—had taken control of my mind and body. I was not doing natural things. I had often wondered what it would be like to move through a hospital like this, laying hands on the sick and praying for them to be healed. Now it was happening; only it had taken my own sickness to get me here. I felt I was the point of a spear—the shaft being the prayers of all those who were interceding for me. I was compelled, moving here and there at the direction of Someone else.

That afternoon, my doctor called. The bone scan, he said, was negative. The cancer was stage three. It had spread into my lymph glands and possibly other vital organs but had not spread throughout my body. He said he would set up an appointment with an oncologist—a cancer treatment specialist—Monday afternoon.

That night, Oral Roberts called. I was lying in bed, weary from the day's activities. Jackie handed me the phone and sat down beside me, praying softly in the Spirit while I talked. Oral was weeping. Partly for me, partly because he was in pain in his

shoulders. We talked for almost an hour. He wanted to pray for me, he said, but before he could do it he needed for me to pray for him. "I've spent my life praying for people to be healed. Now my shoulders are worn out from reaching out and laying hands on millions of people. Tonight I need strength. No one knows just how much I hurt."

After we hung up, I asked Jackie to hand me a pad and pen. I jotted down the most significant things he had said:

"Medicine and prayer are not in conflict. Submit to your doctors as unto the Lord, but seek Him at every place of decision. Doctors hate disease more than most Christians do."

"God has given me faith to believe this is not your time to die. But I cannot give you that faith. The Holy Spirit will have to give it to you."

Jackie looked at what I was writing. "Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit," she read. "I have faith. Now it is time for you to receive it also."

"But how do I get it? I've had faith to believe for so many others. But how do I get faith to believe for myself?"

I could feel the tears welling up in my eyes.

She reached over and squeezed my hand. "It's a gift, and God wants to give it to you. All you have to do is ask for it."

She was right.

"Lord," I prayed, "You said You would give good gifts to those who ask. I have received many gifts from Your Spirit—now I ask for faith, faith to believe Your Word."

"It's yours," Jackie whispered. "It will flood in on you like a mighty river, washing away all doubt. Your streambed may be dry right now, honey, but there is a flood on the mountains. Soon the channel will be full. Just wait and see."

Saturday morning, we went fishing. Gene Berrey had called the night before and asked if we wanted to get out on the water for a few hours—just for a change. All we had to do was drive across the causeway, join Gene and Jane in the boat, motor out to one of the little islands in the Indian River, and we would be in another

world. It sounded good.

Florida had just passed a new law requiring a license for all saltwater fishing from a boat. Jackie and I stopped by a tackle shop on the way to Gene's house to purchase the license. When we got to the Berreys' home, Gene asked to see my license.

He looked at it, grinned, then reached out and hugged me.

"What's that for?" I asked.

"You've just been told you have

incurable and inoperable cancer, and you go out and buy a one-year fishing license. That's faith."

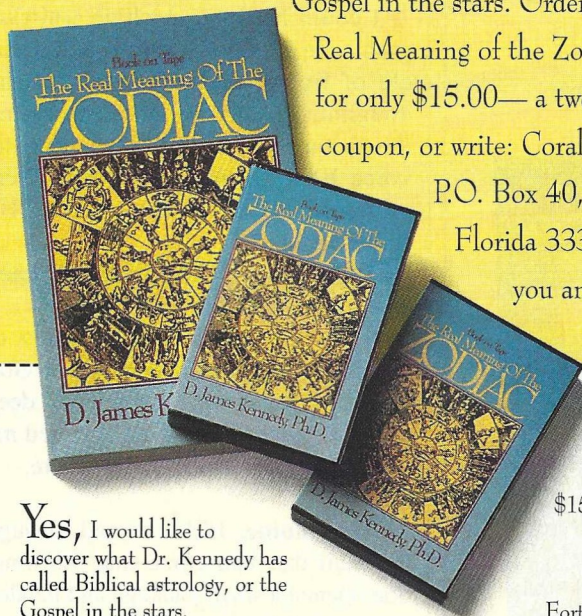
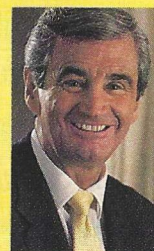
Suddenly I realized the option I had been given at the tackle shop. The clerk had asked if I wanted a 30-day license or the one-year license. It had never crossed my mind that I might die. Without thinking, I had bought the one-year license. Now Gene had called that "faith." God was already answering my prayer. *Continued on page 58*

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That afternoon, Jackie and I once again made our way through the long corridor of the ground floor of the hospital. It was quiet. I rang the little bell at the desk in the radiology reception room, and a man finally came out. "Come on back. They're ready for you."

Once again I was lying on the table, my arms over my head, an intravenous tube in my arm pumping special liquid into my system to help the machine see the contrast between the diseased parts and the healthy parts. The table was moving slightly, and I could hear the voice of the technician as the machine made pictures of my lungs.

"Breathe...Don't breathe...Breathe."

Then I heard another voice. Clear. Distinct. I was not a voice like the technician's. It came from a different source. It was not audible through my ears, but it was as clearly understood in my mind as if it had been spoken. It was the voice of God.

"What Satan meant for evil, I will turn to good."

The table moved slightly. The technician's voice sounded again through the speaker inside the CT scan machine.

"Breathe...Don't breathe...Breathe."

I could hear the machine whirring each time I held my breath and a circle of lights inside the hole of the doughnut flashed around, indicating the picture was being taken. But the voice I had heard in my heart overpowered all other sensations. He spoke again.

"Now you will see My mighty hand at work in your life."

It was the first time, in the midst of all this crisis, that I had heard God speak. I knew it was He. I felt joy, deep joy, and peace. He had not deserted me in my time of trouble. He was there.

Back home, Jackie sorted through the mail that had come that morning. She opened a small package and handed me a small, loose-leaf, six-ring binder with a number of blank pages and three pages at the front with writing.

The cover was hand-painted with the inscription "Words and Promises for You."

The front page was a note from the Mother Superior at the Community of

Jesus, a community of Spirit-filled people located on Cape Cod: "On the next two pages are two words of Scripture received for you this past Sunday—which we thought you might like a copy of. We're sending them along in this small notebook and would like to send others in the coming weeks. Our prayers are with you."

It seemed innocuous until I turned the page. There, in beautiful calligraphy, were the words from Psalm 118:17: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." Under it was a notation: "Received by a sister in prayer on Sunday, July 1." It was the same verse God had given to Jackie that same day.

Other pages were to be sent to me—32 in all. Some were prophecies, some were scriptures the Lord brought to mind as these precious people prayed for me—often through the night hours. I entered all the pages in the little book, along with the special words God would begin giving me the following week. But none was more precious than that verse from Psalm 118:17, which was to be the verse I would hang my life on as we walked step-by-step into the mysterious summer. ■

Jamie Buckingham is the pastor of Tabernacle Church in Melbourne, Florida.

The complete account of Jamie Buckingham's journey of faith is told in his latest book, *Summer of Miracles*. The dramatic story of his healing can be purchased from Creation House for \$14.95 plus \$2.50 for shipping and handling. Also available is a cassette tape of Jamie reading Scripture selections that helped in God's healing of his cancer. The cost for the tape is \$9.95, and there's no shipping and handling charge if you also order the book. (Florida residents please add sales tax of 90 cents for the book and 60 cents for the tape.) Send your request and check to: Creation House, 190 N. Westmonte Drive, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714.