



An Interview With Jamie Buckingham

EVELYN BROCK

BROCK: Mr. Buckingham, how do you account for the tremendous popularity of your book *RUN BABY RUN*?

BUCKINGHAM: I think two things are involved. First, the thrill of the story itself. It's one of those ideas "whose time has come", in that it appeals to a generation of lost kids. Even kids who do not identify with Nicky Cruz's violence do identify with his lostness, or with his lack of parental relationship, and nearly all of them share his hope of finding a new and better life. That's one reason for its acceptance.

The second reason, I think, is simply the anointing of the Holy Spirit. From the very conception of the book, it was immersed in the Holy Spirit. I became so aware of His anointing that during the writing I would find myself weeping as I sat typing. With this aura surrounding the book, just as the Spirit dealt with Nicky, it was bound to succeed, because the work was His from the start.

BROCK: We'll come back to your books in a moment, but I'm eager to know your answer to this question: what do you see as the role of the "house church" and its relationship to the establishment church? Do you foresee conflict, as the house churches increase?

BUCKINGHAM: We are in the middle of this situation here in our church. Our once-institutional church has become UNinstitutional to the extent that we don't have a "membership", or a formal organization, or even a budget! And we are not denominationally connected any more.

BROCK: Give our readers a little background, please. What WAS your affiliation formerly, Southern Baptist?

BUCKINGHAM: Yes, Southern Baptist, and our 150 members were largely of Baptist tradition. But when I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, we began to move into home meetings; we decentralized.

BROCK: This was three years ago?

BUCKINGHAM: It began then. Our Sunday School Classes began to be held in homes, and not always on Sunday. Some were in the evenings; and the church itself began to move into small home meetings. We found this was the one way we could really evangelize, in small groups. After a while, we began gradually to come back together, and now we have a group about four times the size it was originally.

BROCK: Then you dropped your Southern Baptist affiliation?

BUCKINGHAM: No, we were dropped BY the local Baptist Association when we dropped the name "Baptist" from our church name. We WANTED to remain in the Association and Convention, for ministry, but they dropped us.

BROCK: So now you are not "Baptist" in any formal way?

BUCKINGHAM: Not formally, nor actually, for our group contains as many former Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, and others, as our former Baptist group.

BROCK: Do you see this as a pattern for other institutional churches?

BUCKINGHAM: Not necessarily. I am REAL strong always in pointing out that God deals with each church individually, just as He deals with each person individually. Each church and each person will have to learn the will of the Lord INDIVIDUALLY. I do feel that there is a strong rebellion against the institutional church hierarchy, which gives rise to the growing number of home-based churches. That's one reason. But the other factor is a strong desire to get back to the basic idea of the New Testament plan for the church. . . .

BROCK: A real body ministry?

BUCKINGHAM: Exactly. The early church WAS conducted mainly in homes, not in church structures.

BROCK: Would you say it's almost impossible to have a genuine body ministry in a tremendous group?

BUCKINGHAM: Almost. But I have seen it happen. It is happening often in ours, in a group of four or five hundred.

BROCK: But you had to go through the other steps first?

BUCKINGHAM: HAD to! Because the people had to be prepared. Now, we are having tremendous numbers of visitors, sometimes driving hundreds of miles, to be in our services. Many of these visitors don't fully understand the meaning of body ministry, so our home meetings continue to grow, all of them.

BROCK: Are they your main teaching ministry?

BUCKINGHAM: Teaching, fellowship, but mainly MINISTER-

ING to each other's needs as Christians. When we all come together in the church building, it is mainly for worship, for praise and singing together.

BROCK: Some establishment pastors actually discourage meetings outside the church building. They seem to mistrust them. What would you say to such pastors?

BUCKINGHAM: This is basically because they see them as a threat to the institution. I know, because I've BEEN there. I worked in large institutional setups for years and I know something of the threat these men feel. If anyone started something that was not of my doing, or not proscribed by the denomination, I would say "if you have the meeting in the church, OK, but if you hold it outside, we cannot approve it since it is not church oriented." Of course, I had a false concept of the New Testament church. It's not a building, but PEOPLE and GOD.

BROCK: Your church is somewhat unique, in that you, as pastor, were Spirit-baptized. You took the leadership. What would you say to a Spirit-baptized lay Christian . . . inside a traditional church. . . . When, if ever, would he find it advisable to leave his church and unite with a nondenominational group?

BUCKINGHAM: My advice invariably to a Christian who receives the baptism is: STAY with your church until you are forced out! Stay, and try hard not to make trouble. Try and exert great wisdom and tact in HOW you witness about your new experience with the Lord. But remain as a witness unless and until you are forced out by officials of the church.

BROCK: The way Pat Boone was?

BUCKINGHAM: Yes. I can't justify people, having received Christ in a church, and having been ministered to by a church for years, just suddenly jumping out of it. This is the great mission field of America.

I feel something else strongly. For several years, I was actually fighting the establishment church, as though it were dead. I had a good Methodist pastor say something to me recently I want to remember. He said, "Brother, maybe we're not dead. Maybe we're just ignorant. We need somebody to bring us the light." I think he's right.

BROCK: Do you think a person's rejection, or scorning, of "speaking in tongues" may actually prevent his yielding to the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

BUCKINGHAM: I sure do. I personally do not feel that the manifestation of tongues is necessarily an initial proof of receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. But I do feel that if a person has hang-ups about tongues, then he simply cannot receive the Holy Spirit, because he cannot receive all God has for him, which includes ALL the manifestations or gifts. If he says, "I want the Holy Spirit, but I will not take tongues," this is the point at which he has to say, "OK, I will BE God's man, or God's woman."

BROCK: This is a hang-up for many people.

BUCKINGHAM: I was in this area for years too. I personally

did not receive tongues for two and a half years AFTER I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. But I KNEW I had been baptized and I KNEW tongues would come.

BROCK: And you never rejected or scorned tongues after your baptism?

BUCKINGHAM: NO, although I sure did beforehand. I finally reached the stage where I was wishing and praying for tongues, and knew that God in His own good time would lead me into that area.

BROCK: Back to your books. Do you think *BEN ISRAEL*, written with Arthur Katz, will have the popular appeal of *RUN BABY RUN*?

BUCKINGHAM: Probably not. It was written for a much more limited audience. *RUN* was written for teenagers, their parents, and those who work with youth. *BEN ISRAEL* was written as a message of redemption and atonement for the twentieth century intellectual Jew. It's a self-limiting audience. However, we do find an amazingly large number of readers are being touched by its message of redemption. This message is gloriously alike for Jew and gentile, for Greek and Hebrew, just as Paul says.

BROCK: How about *THE LONELY NOW* . . . what readers is it attracting?

BUCKINGHAM: A second book is seldom as popular as the first. But the message of *THE LONELY NOW* is so tremendous, it should attract the same readers. But it is also attracting another group . . . parents of youth. The answers to the letters are answers parents need to know. Incidentally, Dan (Dan Malachuk, of LOGOS INTERNATIONAL, PUBLISHERS) told me this week that he had just received an advance order for 15,000 copies of *THE LONELY NOW* from Sweden.

BROCK: Into how many languages are your books now translated?

BUCKINGHAM: *RUN BABY RUN* is in, I believe, twelve. And it is right not coming out in comic book form, to reach even younger readers.

BROCK: Tell us about your biography of Pat Robertson, *THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD*.

BUCKINGHAM: Basically, this one will attract Christians. We did not aim it at the unsaved. It is a tremendous missionary story. Pat Robertson's life ranks along with that of C.T. Studd, as told by Norman Grubb, and that of Livingston. Robertson was another great missionary pioneer, who gave up everything and stepped out totally on faith. It is a real rebuke to all lazy easygoing Christians.

BROCK: What other books are in the works?

BUCKINGHAM: Little right now. Oh, let me take that back! I was just on the phone to Hubert Lindsay (we call him "Holy Hubert") in California. He and I are working on a book titled *BLESS YOUR DIRTY HEART*.

BROCK: I love that title. Will it be out of the LOGOS house?

BUCKINGHAM: Yes, it sure will. It should be ready early

next year.

BROCK: How on earth can you write so much and still have a fulltime ministry as pastor of a growing church?

BUCKINGHAM: Simply because we have a unique church of spiritually mature Christians. They see my writing as one of the missionary thrusts of the church, and they encourage me to give as much time to it as I feel the Lord tells me to spend.

BROCK: Because it's what a church OUGHT to be, all "of the priesthood?"

BUCKINGHAM: A real body ministry. They don't leave it all to the pastor. We do no door-knocking evangelism. We don't NEED to. A spirit-filled Christian is, by his very nature, an evangelist. When you have three hundred or so of these turned loose in a community, things happen, and the pastor doesn't have to do it all. Same with all the other ministries: faith, counseling, healing, the laying on of hands, teaching, wisdom, helping those in doubt. The people seldom call me. They call each other. The Lord speaks this way.

BROCK: Sounds like a REAL church.

BUCKINGHAM: It's an exciting sort of thing!

BROCK: Back to the drug problem . . . do you anticipate a crisis in this country when many of our boys return from Vietnam addicted to drugs?

BUCKINGHAM: I think the drug problem is going to pass. We may always have hard drugs in the ghettos. But I think, as a popular thing, the emphasis on pills, LSD, Speed, and the like will diminish sharply. I feel that young people are "turning on" to Jesus Christ in a tremendous way. I can sense, I can almost SMELL, the essence of revival wherever I go among the youth of America. Oh, there is going to be a tremendous battle! But for the first time, I see evidence that Jesus has the upper hand. We are finding here in Florida that many of the soldiers just back from Vietnam are immediately confronted by Christian young people who have had a valid experience with Christ, and they are telling these boys that drugs are not "where it's at". Jesus is the natural "high". And the young men are rapidly coming off drugs and into a real salvation experience with Jesus, and telling others. I think we are in the opening phases of a real spiritual revival.

BROCK: The revival seems to be led by youth, doesn't it?

BUCKINGHAM: Young people are certainly in the front lines. But I also believe that the charismatic Christians have been preparing for this for many years. Of course, I have some internal fears that basic charismatics may get left behind . . . at least some of them, because there is a natural tendency among adults to want to institutionalize everything.

BROCK: The same mistake the oldline denominations have made?

BUCKINGHAM: Exactly . . . to want to "box in" everything. This "boxing in" of God's Spirit is a threat. It happened early in this century among some of the charismatics. That is why there has to be a fresh new outbreak of His Spirit today.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1971

BROCK: Isn't this what David du Plessis is saying right now, especially in his new edition of THE SPIRIT BADE ME GO?

BUCKINGHAM: Yes, this seems to be David's basic teaching. He's lived through the whole metamorphosis. He's qualified to speak, because he is a Pentecostal, and has lived with this for years, all over the world.

BROCK: Do you want to talk about any of your other books before our tape and space run out?

BUCKINGHAM: Yes, I do want to mention my enthusiasm for the way our two sex education books are being accepted. These are *COMING ALIVE* and *YOUR NEW LOOK*. I am happy that they are being used by the traditional churches, many of which rejected other sex education books. You know, almost nothing had been written for the very young, those in Junior high and upper elementary grades, that was both biologically accurate and spiritually sound. We felt, Dan and I, that we HAD to begin to combat the very amoral sex books offered in the public schools. We feel that you cannot teach the facts of life without the One Who IS the Life.

BROCK: Do you sense a slight diminution of sex emphasis? Older youth say they are getting bored with sex.

BUCKINGHAM: They may be, but so long as pornography is a legitimate business, and an extremely profitable business, I think it will continue to thrive, especially in the cities. It's the lust for the "fast buck", of course. And although huge numbers of young people are turning to Christ and away from pornography in all forms, I see America as a whole becoming more and more debauched. There will HAVE to be a sharper separation between Christians and nonchristians, a real return to the Christian family as the center of morality and training, where the parents and the children study and pray and talk together about life problems.

BROCK: As orthodox Jewish families have always done?

BUCKINGHAM: Exactly! From the very beginnings, the Deuteronomy teachings were meant for all believing families, families of today, just as much as they were meant for the Jews of 4000 years ago.

BROCK: Where the father is the spiritual head of the household?

BUCKINGHAM: Amen and amen! This is where Christians and Jews can get together profitably.

BROCK: One final question. How can I get all this into one article?

BUCKINGHAM: I'm very glad that's YOUR problem and not mine. ◀◀◀

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