

# Jamie Buckingham: An overcomer and achiever of huge proportions

I lost one of my best friends Monday. Actually I was prepared for it — the dread disease of cancer had eaten at him for a year and a half.

Throughout the ordeal he remained upbeat and hopeful, wishing and believing that God would cure him. It was not until four weeks ago that he started to physically decline, but he was always mentally agile and his will to survive was strong.

Even when he was taken to the hospital over the weekend with little pulse, he told the doctors, "I want to live." All of his friends expected no less because Jamie Buckingham was an overcomer and achiever of extraordinary proportions.

I can count on the fingers of one hand the few people I have met that I know for certain were a man or woman of immeasurable love. Jamie was such a person. He radiated his faith because it was so real — he simply loved the Lord and loved others . . . and did something about it.

He was a great storyteller, whether in conversation or the pulpit or in one of his 47 books. He reached his audience because he was candid about his failings and weaknesses — character flaws — just like ours. Jamie would clearly explain a spiritual principle by using his own shortcomings as the example and teach us what he had learned from the experience. In



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that way, learning how to live became real because he was so real.

Jamie's faith was none of this fake kind of religion where a preacher's agenda is more important than God's. He was a man who was psychologically healthy and happy and content with himself.

But Jamie burned with a driving ambition to reach out to others. Under his prodding to try to imitate Christ, his church now has a ministry that is alive on the streets of south Melbourne to minister to the poor and least privileged in society. He also created a hospital for wounded pastors where they could be nurtured and restored, and he was so effective because he, too, had been a wounded pastor.

Few have the gift of both the spoken and the written word as Jamie Buckingham did. When he talked you wanted to listen because

you knew he would teach you something important and true. When he wrote, the words formed clear pictures in the mind's eye, instructing and cajoling and nudging his reader with no small degree of discomfort. But the reader or listener wanted to learn because the point was made by a man whose self-deprecating humor made him seem all the more real.

In life Jamie achieved much. Five of his books sold over a million copies and one book surpassed an astonishing several million copies.

But in death he achieved more. He met his Maker confidently and expectantly and declared that he praised God not in spite of, but because of the cancer.

He leaves a wonderful legacy for us all. He leaves a large family united and nurtured in love. He leaves a partner and wife who shared his dreams, never gave up and realized them.

Why do good people have to die in their prime?

I don't know. But I do know that God doesn't see things as I do because He sees the beginning and the end. From God's perspective, Jamie's snapshot existence on planet Earth was to end and his life in the Heavenlies was to begin.

I wonder what exciting stories he is sharing with the angels.

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