

Rev. Jamie Buckingham dead at 59

By Lenore Beecken
FLORIDA TODAY

Jamie Buckingham, founder and pastor of Tabernacle Church in Melbourne, died Monday. He was 59.

"In his field, he was tops," said Peter Lord, pastor of Park Avenue Baptist Church in Titusville and a friend of Buckingham's for 25 years.

"As a person and as a friend, he was A plus, too. He was the kind of person who would receive people from different strains of Christianity and make them feel comfortable and accepted."



BUCKINGHAM
in 1987

Buckingham fought cancer for the last 1½ years, beating several types during his battle, said his eldest son, Bruce.

First came surgery to remove one kidney, and the good news that other areas doctors thought were cancerous were not, he said. Round 1 went to Jamie.

"We believe God had brought healing to his body," said Bruce's wife, Michele, who worked with Jamie on a magazine.

Then came Round 2, the battle of the spine. Again, he won. Ditto for Round 3, a tumor on his lung.

It wasn't until his latest bout, which started in December when doctors found one-third of his liver was cancerous, did he begin feeling sick, Michele said.

"Throughout it all he was very healthy," Michele said. "He continued to preach and write. Unless someone told you he had cancer, you'd never know it. He didn't consider himself sick before."

Radiation treatment killed the cancer but left Buckingham with a severe case of radiation hepatitis, Bruce said. "It zapped every ounce of strength he had in his body. We kept him at home, keeping him comfortable as long as we could."

Late Saturday afternoon, Buckingham entered Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne. He was at peace when he died about 3:30 p.m. Monday, Bruce said.

"He had a lot of time to prepare for that. We had 1½ years of life that we should not

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have had," Bruce said. "He fought death as long as he could, physically, yet his spirit realized this truly was not death, but it was life everlasting."

Sam Murrell, pastor of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Indian Harbour Beach, said those who knew Buckingham will remember him as a loving person, one who really cared for people.

"It's hard to even fathom living in a world without Jamie just because of the impact he had on so many people's lives through his books and magazine articles," Murrell said. "He was a man that I personally found to be a transparent man, a man who loved the Lord but was willing to let you see that he had warts and that you could work through your problems and difficulties."

Buckingham, a Vero Beach native who has written more than 35 books — including his last hardback book, *Summer of Miracles*, which chronicled his battle with cancer — founded his church 25 years ago.

Bruce Buckingham said the 1,500 to 1,800 churchgoers who pack Tabernacle Church each Sunday will remember his father because of his message: "God is faithful and God loves us and we are his children."

As for Bruce, he will remember his father as the person who most influenced his life: "If it weren't for him, I just don't know where I'd be right now."

He recalls one special moment in many, three special words that helped him decide it was time to move from Washington, D.C., back to Florida: "Come on home," his

father said.

"I think that's what God told him today," Bruce said Monday night.

Buckingham also is survived by his wife, Jackie; his mother; three daughters; and one other son, Bruce said.

A memorial service will be held at 7 p.m. Monday at Tabernacle Church, 1619 Ferndale Ave.

Brownlie and Maxwell Funeral Home in Melbourne is in charge of arrangements.

The family requests no flowers. Donations may be made to Hebron Ministries, 3905 Field Road N.W., Palm Bay, 32907.