

## By Jackie Buckingham



Jackie Buckingham is a homemaker and mother of five from Melbourne, Florida.

**I**t may not be fair for me to comment on Jeannie's story. My husband, Jamie, has been working with her on her book for almost three years and we have come to know and love Jeannie, Mickey and Kim.

They have visited in our home in Florida, and we have been with them in Tennessee. It is beautiful to see how God is moving in their lives, continuing to restore the years which the locust once ate.

From my personal perspective, I agree that love is something you do. While Jeannie's experience is much different than mine, her conclusions are the same.

Jamie and I discovered this a long time ago. Love is not a feeling with goose bumps and all that. It is much deeper. It deals not with feelings, but with commitment—and relationships.

There have been times in our marriage relationship when the feelings of love disappeared completely. During these times I have shouted at my husband "I hate you." It was the only way I could express myself for the hurtful things he had done to me.

Several years ago, as we gradually started climbing the hill of mid-life, both of us realized (separately, not together, for we were not communicating very well back then) that to continue on would lead us to even more misery. Since finding another partner to marry was out of the question, we had no choice but to stick it out. This led us both to deep spiritual decisions—without the other knowing it.

I decided I could no longer direct Jamie's life. If he was the head of our home, as the Bible said he should be, then I simply would have to recognize that. That meant I would take my hands off the controls of his life.

Jamie never responded to my controlling nature anyway. In fact, that was the one thing about me which aggravated him most.

"You're just like my mother!" he said with regularity. "Always telling me what I can or cannot do. Always prying. Always trying to run my life."

He was right. Even though I justified my prying (since he was keeping a lot of things hidden from me), I knew I needed to turn it loose.

One night I told him, "I am taking hands off your life. But remember, you are the head of this house and you are responsible for me and the children. Wherever you lead us we will follow."

While I was reaching this decision, Jamie had made his own decision. He had decided that despite my unlovable traits—my suspicious nature, my controlling spirit, my critical attitude—that he was going to love me as an act of his will. He admitted the "feeling" was gone. He was no longer "in love" with me as he was when we dated back in high school and college. Even the desire to be with me had faded. From an emotional perspective, he would much rather be around other people than me.

But, he told me, as a man of God he was going to love me as Christ loved the Church.

I didn't understand that then. In fact, that made me angry. I wanted him to be "in love" with me—as I was in love with him.

But, together, we said we would do what God commanded—I would submit. He would love. If the feeling returned, then we would take that as a hallelujah bonus.

I am sure the modern feminist is offended by this. And the liberal theologian would probably scoff at it. But we realized that because we belonged to God, we had no choice but to obey His command.

As a result something else happened. We are once again "in love."

The problem is not always the rebellious wife. In the Riley situation, Mickey, too, was to blame; as is any husband who runs from spiritual responsibilities.

All I ever wanted from Jamie was for him to become the priest in our home. To cover me spiritually. I suspect had Mickey taken that place when he and Jeannie were first married, the divorce never would have happened.

However, even though he did not understand the principle, he did the right thing when Jeannie rebelled. He turned her loose. And in the "loosing" he freed her for the Holy Spirit to go to work.

While Jeannie and Mickey experienced a miracle of reconciliation, the real lesson from her story is at a different level.

Divorce does not always have to take place, even if the wife becomes famous and is the breadwinner. True, a rebellious wife can force it. But if the husband takes his place as the spiritual head, chances are much better happiness will follow. ↵