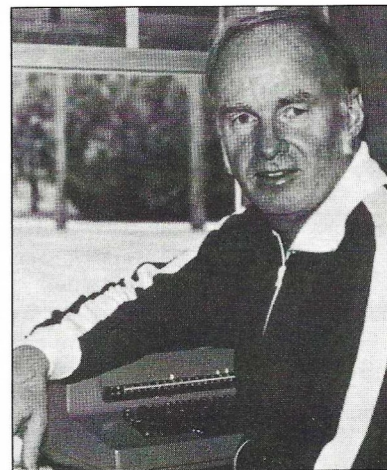


Noted author and
pastor **Jamie Buckingham**
talks with us about
criticism, stress,
discouragement, weight loss,
his devotional life, and his
most embarrassing moment.

Learning from Mistakes:

An interview with
**Jamie
Buckingham**



People of Destiny: *Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the Church? What are some of the significant trends that you see affecting the future of the Church?*

Jamie Buckingham: How can you be anything but optimistic about something God himself set in motion and promised that nothing—not even the full force of hell—could prevail against? The institutional church, of course, will continue to die. But the body of Christ is not only resurrected, it is alive and well all over this world. I am not one of those who feels God is giving “new revelation” to the church. I don’t believe there is any new revelation. There is simple illumination on old revelation—revelation which I believe is already contained in the Bible. All we’re doing is getting a little bit smarter—finding out what God has been saying all along. Therefore the concept of “trends” does not really apply. People talk of

trends toward holiness, trends toward unity, trends toward the supernatural—but these have been with us all along. If we “draw nigh” to God—then I believe we’ll experience everything—and more—that the early Church experienced.

People of Destiny: *A major battle for many Christians, especially in leadership, is discouragement. Does Jamie Buckingham ever face discouragement? Why? What do you do to overcome it?*

Jamie Buckingham: Sure! We all get discouraged. But I don’t stay discouraged. I have learned, across the years, that God can be trusted. It may rain today—but the promise of sunshine tomorrow is true. I’m a “rainbow man.” I have lived long enough to know that truth—even though on the scaffold—sways the future. God is in his heaven and all is right with the world. God’s people, in the long run, will prevail.



I tried for 25 years to lose weight. Then two years ago I finally made a decision not only to lose it, but to totally change my lifestyle.

What do I do to battle discouragement? I remember. I go all the way back to the children of Israel facing the sea—and I remember. I remember how nobody has been able to stop the plan of God. I remember what he did for me after I utterly failed him. So, when I'm discouraged I take a walk back through history—back through my own life—and I return to the present in triumph. I have a little note in the front of my Bible which says: "I cannot turn back, for I have entered into an irrevocable contract with God. I have committed my life to Jesus Christ and he has given me eternal life."

People of Destiny: You maintain a very full schedule. How do you maintain a consistent devotional life?

Jamie Buckingham: Pressure keeps me on my knees. In fact, it drives me there. I'm under constant pressure from deadlines. There is no way to meet these in my own strength—and remain creative and original in my communication and ministry. My publishing deadlines for my books, for *Charisma* and *Ministries* magazines, the pressure of producing the *Buckingham Report*, preaching and teaching several times a week, the constant crises which appear in ministry and in my own family relations—all these have a way of forcing me into a constant dependence upon God. That means I must have a daily relationship with him in prayer. Because of my hectic schedule, I've given up saying I'm going to pray every morning from 5 until 6 A.M. Just like we gave up on having a "family altar" when the kids began to drive. I wish, often, that I could spend more time in spiritual retreat. Recently I've been teaching Richard Foster's outstanding book, *Celebration of Discipline*, to our church. Again I have been struck with the necessity of finding—no, making—time for prayer, study, solitude. Since my schedule changes daily I have to create those times in an airline seat flying coast-to-coast, in early morning "alone" times, or in long walks on the beach. The

important part is this: Apart from God I am like a branch cut from the vine. I have no choice but to rely on him constantly.

People of Destiny: What have your mistakes taught you that you would like to pass on to others so we can learn from them?

Jamie Buckingham: As I look back on my life—from my perspective—it has all been a mistake. I stopped playing the piano when I was in the 8th grade because I wanted to play football instead. That seemed like a mistake. I married against my parents' wishes. That seemed like a mistake. I got involved in an adulterous affair early in my ministry and was removed from my church. That certainly seemed like a mistake. After I was baptized in the Holy Spirit I acted arrogantly and caused my denomination to take action against my church. That seemed like a mistake. Yet, from God's perspective, none of that was a mistake. In fact, I, too, am now beginning to understand what David meant when he said, "even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, or darkness is as light to you" (Ps. 138:12). Every one of those "mistakes" has worked for good in my life. That's what I've learned from them.

People of Destiny: Some of these "mistakes" sound very serious. Are you saying they are merely errors in judgment? How have you learned from them?

Jamie Buckingham: Sin, basically, is an error in judgment. I don't think people fall into sin. I think they willfully walk into it. In my own case, these were judgment areas, but they were areas that I had deliberately chosen to do. They were more than mistakes, they were sins.

Sin is missing the mark. It is pointing in the right direction but having your sights just a little off. I believe Satan attacks us in our gifted area rather than in our weaker areas. In my

own case, I have to keep a close guard on my gifted areas.

For instance, I have a very high motivational gift of mercy which gets me into trouble especially when it comes to women. When a woman begins to cry, I want to put my arm around her and that has gotten me into a lot of trouble. Therefore, I have learned to keep my wife with me because she has a very motivational gift of prophecy. She discerns things in the spirit, so she can become a safeguard for me. She can very quickly tell if I am off the track. So, what I have done is surround myself either with my wife or the covenant group that I belong to, to protect me in my weak areas.

The majority of mistakes I have made, I have made because I have gone against the counsel of wise people around me, the people that I am supposed to be in submission to, or against the counsel of my wife. So I have learned over the years to regard very highly the counsel of brothers that I have submitted myself to.

People of Destiny: What do you do to relax? Tell us a little bit about the personal life of Jamie Buckingham.

Jamie Buckingham: Ah ha! Now you're prying. I read constantly; not "religious" books, but books about life—both real and fanciful. I read the American poets—Longfellow, Bryant, Whittier and others—for inspiration. I read them out loud, the way they should be read. I read novels for relaxation—and to study style. Spy novels. Intrigue. I've read everything Robert Ludlum, Jack Higgins, Ken Follett, Richard Forsythe and Arthur Hailey have published. I play racquetball at least three times a week. Hard and fast with a lot of enthusiasm and sweat. I work in my big yard on my 15 hp diesel tractor. I play with my grandchildren. I make love with my wife. I pray in tongues. I'm a very relaxed guy.

People of Destiny: Over the years, what are some of the criticisms that have been leveled at Jamie Buckingham? Have they been fair? What is your response to them?

Jamie Buckingham: I wrote an entire book about this called *Coping With Criticism*. Perhaps the most constant criticism is also the thing I am most often complimented for—that I am outspoken and transparent. The criticism I usually hear is, "Well, I know what you're saying is true, but..." Christians believe in the truth, but they don't like to hear it. Not "raw" truth, that is. I respond by smiling—and sometimes giggling. I'm having too much fun with life to start acting crabby, just because someone else is crabby.

People of Destiny: In light of your significant weight loss, what advice would you give to individuals who are also battling with this problem?

Jamie Buckingham: I tried for 25 years to lose weight. Then two years ago I finally made a decision not only to lose it, but to totally change my lifestyle. I've done that. I took off 60 pounds and have kept it off. I weigh today 20 pounds less than I did when I graduated from high school with an athletic scholarship. Advice? Jackie and I did it together. We let nothing—absolutely nothing, (including the possibility of losing friendships)—interfere with our set program of losing weight. We set goals and steadfastly moved toward them. Since then we have radically changed our lifestyle—including our eating and exercise patterns. Besides that I do daily inventory. The first thing I do on arising is to take off all my clothes and step on the scales. If I am not at least one pound under my maximum weight of 168 I do not eat that day, regardless of

THE ONE MINUTE PASTOR

BY BOB COHEN

The *One Minute Manager*, *The One Minute Parent*, *The One Minute Mother*, and *The One Minute Father*. As a busy pastor, I must confess these titles did intrigue me. With a new church in a new city, a new house and a new daughter, I thought I'd found the answer to my time management needs. After having read *The One Minute Manager* I resolved, "I will be the 'One Minute Pastor.'" Here's my plan:

■ **Mornings**—Rise at 5:30 A.M. and gulp down an Instant Breakfast. Then off to my study for my One Minute Quiet Time. Of course this includes One Minute of Prayer and Intercession followed by One Minute Bible Reading, One Minute Meditation and One Minute Application. Now to One Minute Sermon Preparation for Sunday's One Minute Message following One Minute Praise and Worship.

Time for lunch. I'll tell my secretary I'll be back in a minute and head off to the local fast food drive thru. There's a new one in town that you can drive by at 35 mph and they throw the food in the window if you've called ahead.

■ **Afternoons**—One Minute Counseling will begin my afternoons. This is followed by One Minute Dictation. But overnight express mail will not get my letter to its destination on time—send it ZAP mail! One Minute Discipleship and One Minute Leadership Training finishes off my full day at the office. Now I'm heading home for the evening. Of course my car will do 0–60 in five seconds—how useful! I'm home in 60 seconds.

■ **Evenings**—As you might have guessed, our family dinner hour has been shaved by 59 minutes. Before putting the children to bed we have One Minute Family Time; you see, One Minute Fathering is all there's time for. With the children asleep—I can now relax. As the One Minute Husband, of course my wife is entitled to some time with me. After One Minute Conversation, I'm ready for some television. A remote control switch is essential here so as not to waste time getting up to flip through the channels every minute or so. In a minute I'm ready for bed. It's been a long, full day.

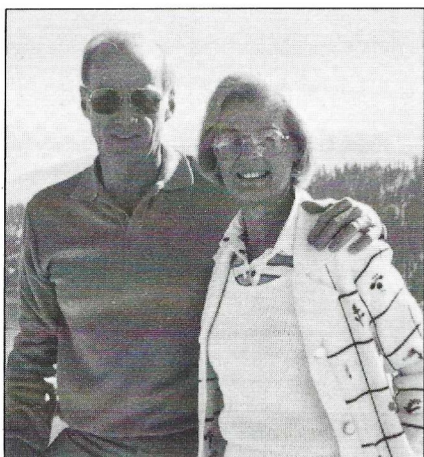
After all, it's not the quantity but the quality—right? Have I gotten caught up in the maddening pace of this generation? What was it that the prophet Daniel wrote in chapter 12: "Even to the end: many shall *run* to and fro." Didn't Jesus once ask the disciples, "could you not watch with me for an *hour*"? What does this all mean?

I guess there really isn't any way to be a One Minute Pastor. Being a Christian takes time. We all have the same amount of time each day. Spend or invest—the choice is ours. It was said of Jesus that, "He did *all* things well," but Jesus himself said, "I only do that which the Father tells me to do." The Father is telling us to grow in prayer in this hour. And One Minute Prayers lead only to One Minute Revivals. □

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what meals I am forced to attend. Anyone who is determined can do it.

People of Destiny: So many people seem to struggle with stress in today's society. Do you experience much stress in your own life? What practical insights would you pass



Jamie with his wife Jackie.

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on to others to help us not merely cope with stress but walk victoriously?

Jamie Buckingham: To my knowledge I experience almost no stress. I work out much of my emotions on the racquetball court. I confront immediately when there is a misunderstanding with my wife, a staff member in our church, or one of my editors or publishers. As a professional writer someone is always editing my work (either because they're paid to or because they want to prove me wrong), which makes it mandatory that I receive criticism easily. The majority of people I know who are under stress are those who have some cause they have to defend, or who think of themselves more highly than they ought. I don't have to defend anything—not even the Gospel. And, I've been wrong so many times it's easy to look upon all men as better than I am. Contrary to much opinion, hard work does not cause stress. It is a cure for most stress. Stress is caused when we have a split focus, are living a double life, or are afraid of truth.

People of Destiny: Many people envision themselves as productive writers. What tips would you pass on to aspiring writers in the body of Christ?

Jamie Buckingham: Writing is a gift. It is not something which can be learned. The gift of writing is like the gift of singing. Either you've got it or you don't. If you have it, then it can be polished, improved on, and helped by training and experience. If you don't have it, no amount of training will make it happen. How do you know if you're a "gifted" writer? Simple. The same way you know if you're a gifted singer—people like to hear you sing. In fact, they'll even pay money to hear you. Of course, if you don't sing, no one will ever know. If you don't put words on paper and pass them around, you may wind up like one of those poor fellows in "Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard"—"a flower...born to blush unseen." Catherine Marshall once told me that the only way to write is to put your fingers on the keys of your typewriter. That's writing. Everything else is publishing. It takes both if you're going to get your writing to others. As a writer, I have some gifted publishers. But their calling is not the same as mine. I am called to put words on paper. They are called to distribute those words to others. The distinction is critical.

People of Destiny: What has been one of the most embarrassing things that has ever happened to you in your Christian life?

Jamie Buckingham: Probably the time, as a Baptist minister, I conducted a water baptism service one Easter Sunday morning. We had a baptistry located high above the choir loft, looking out over the church sanctuary. My plan was to baptize at the beginning of the service, then rush down to the platform while the congregation was singing a hymn and conduct the rest of the service. That morning I wore my new waders—huge rubber boots which came up to my chest, held in place by suspenders. I sloshed out into the baptistry overlooking the congregation. The last person I baptized was a most portly woman. When I lowered her beneath the surface, she displaced far more water than I had anticipated. The overflow rushed into my waders—filling them to the brim. When the woman came up the water went down—leaving me standing in about 400 pounds of water filled boots. I was rooted to the spot and couldn't move. I finally had to lower my suspenders and crawl out of the boots in front of the entire congregation—in my underwear. It was an unforgettable Easter service.

People of Destiny: At the end of your life, what do you want to be remembered for?

Jamie Buckingham: Several years ago I wrote down why I felt God put me on this planet: "To impart the Holy Spirit to the generation in which I live." My one desire is to fulfill what he asked me to do—for his glory. □

Jamie Buckingham is one of the most widely-read Christian writers of this generation. A former Southern Baptist pastor, he is founder and continues as senior minister of the Tabernacle Church in Melbourne, Florida.

He is an award-winning magazine and newspaper columnist and has served in editorial positions for *Guideposts* magazine and *Logos Journal*. At present he is Editor-at-large for both *Charisma* and *Ministries* magazines. Also called "America's foremost Christian analyzer," he publishes an in-depth critique for senior Christian leaders in the form of a twice-monthly newsletter entitled *The Buckingham Report*.

Conservative estimates put the sales on Jamie's 36 books at 20 million. Familiar titles include *Run Baby Run* with Nicky Cruz, *Shout it from the Housetops* with Pat Robertson, *Tramp for the Lord* with Corrie ten Boom, as well as a biography of the late Kathryn Kuhlman, *Daughter of Destiny*. His own semi-autobiographical works such as *Risky Living*, *Coping with Criticism*, and *Where Eagles Soar* blend humor with spiritual probing. Last year the Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation distributed more than nine million copies of his latest book, *Power for Living*.

He and his wife, Jackie, are both natives of Vero Beach, Florida. They have been married 30 years, have five children, five grandchildren, and live in Palm Bay, Florida.