

the last word

Spiritual Giants

by Jamie Buckingham

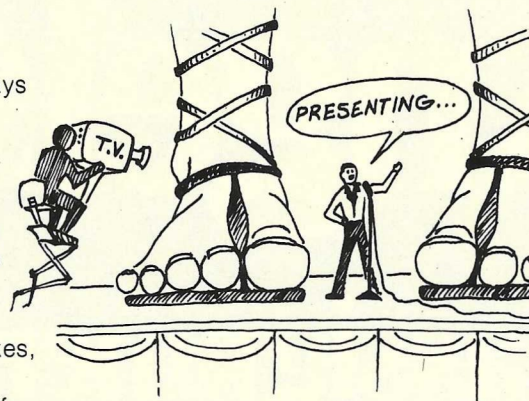
There's a lot of talk these days about "spiritual giants." Pick up the publicity brochure from any of the dozen or so Jesus rallies around the nation and you'll see the same pictures in all of them. These are the modern "spiritual giants." Dressed in seven-league boots, they stride from the salty Gulf to the Great Lakes, march from the rolling hills of Pennsylvania to the sunny climes of California—spreading the Gospel in word and song.

They are a necessary breed—these spiritual giants. And despite their sometimes rhinestone-like behavior, they seem to bless a lot of people.

Sometimes they go electronic and appear on our TV screens. Dressed in powder blue with carefully sprayed hair, the electronic giant interviews people who have been delivered from drugs, witchcraft, or had exciting careers such as putting their heads into lions' mouths.

Spiritual giants also distribute cassette tapes by the millions. These are mixed blessings as they rain down upon us as the hail fell on Egypt. To some they are the bread of salvation, their only hope of surviving in a dry, thirsty desert of humanism. To others they are the false prophets of the day, leading people up every conceivable (and some inconceivable) path of deception. You name it, and your friendly spiritual giant will have it catalogued in his tape library: Faith; End Times; Prosperity; Angel Visitations—even the secrets of the pyramids. Recently a friend sent me a tape containing the croaking of four thousands frogs from all the swamps of the world. She thought it would be good to use as background while I preached my sermon on "Frogs, Princes and Watch-out-for-warts."

Spiritual giants also write books, magazine columns, and autograph their wares at the annual Giant Conventions sponsored by Christian bookselling, press, and radio



associations. There these spiritual heavyweights stride slowly down the aisles much as a huge whale (or shark) might glide through the thousands of other fish in a tank at a seaquarium. They seem unperturbed by the booths containing Jesus T-shirts for your dog, press-on rhinestone crosses for the seat and knees of blue jeans, and other stuff affectionately known as "Jesus garbage."

As speakers, most giants are very busy—booked far into the future. Many have their own agents—perhaps one of the well-known West Coast firms such as Spiritual Giants, Inc., Hulks for Him, or Amazing Amazons (for female giants).

Now, having written all this, I have to confess I have a problem. You see, I sometimes speak at Jesus rallies (far less than I used to since I started writing stuff like this, by the way), sometimes wear powder blue on TV (no hair spray, however; it makes the flies stick to my bald noggin), write books, and even join the money changers at the conventions. Besides, nothing makes me swell to giantism faster than a comment by some fan that he always "reads the Last Word first."

Giants, you see, not only have big heads—but big feet. They use them to stomp all over those closest to them. As you may know, giants are notoriously clumsy—and sometimes quite ponderous. Therefore, even though a man may have an enormous prayer life, an immense missionary vision, be a colossal

teacher, demand a huge honorarium, or even be a prodigious writer—he may best be remembered by those near him as a lumbering, insensitive hulk.

All this comes to mind as I think of that introduction by my dear friend as his "favorite spritual giant." Though I genuinely wanted to be humble, I loved the sound of it. Even after I boarded the plane on the way home I sat there savoring the sweet sound of the words.

I chatted briefly with the woman sitting next to me on the plane and then buried myself in a book. Unlike the apostle Paul, who never quite made it, I had finally arrived at my rightful place in the Kingdom. After we were airborne I felt a tap on my arm. The woman next to me handed me a note.

"Dear Spiritual Leader: I need your advice. I know a lady whose husband had been gone from home five days and when he came back he wouldn't even talk to her. He just sits and reads books. At night he reads books. He goes in the bathroom and reads. What advice should I give my friend? Can you help?"

I hastily penned an answer.

"Dear Beautiful Woman: Tell her she has three choices. (1) Find a handsome man and talk to him. (2) Go to sleep and hope her bum of a husband will be finished reading when she wakes up. (3) Kick the big dope in the leg and make him talk. Your Friendly Spritual Giant."

The woman next to me—my wife for 25 years—read the note and kicked me sharply in the shin.

The problem, you see, is we equate spiritual greatness with big shot-ism. And that's sad. Press releases and flowery introductions are a poor shield against the fiery darts of the enemy. Praise God for shepherd boys (and wives) who still pick up smooth stones to slay the giants of ego who still inhabit the land.

Camels are not the only ones who have problems getting through needles' eyes—so do giants. ☪