

# Christmas

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THE MAGAZINE ON SPIRIT-LED LIVING

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Page 13

**Gene Lilly  
Healed Of  
Multiple  
Sclerosis  
And Diabetes  
And Jumping  
For Joy**

Page 15

**Frances Hunter On  
Be A Mountain  
Mover**

Page 16

**Oral Roberts  
On God Is  
At Your  
Point Of  
Need**

Page 23

**When There's  
A Will, There's  
A Way**

Page 20

**1976: The Year In Review**

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The background is a close-up photograph of a wooden surface, likely a door or a chest, with a prominent grain. A circular metal fastener is visible near the top center. Below it, a heart-shaped metal piece is mounted, which is glowing with a bright yellow light, creating a starburst effect. The text is overlaid on this image.

## Ever try to put God in a box?

It's easy to attempt to so thoroughly analyze God and His power that we decide we understand everything God can do, and we put Him in a box. We do it with doctrines. We say that God healed 2,000 years ago, but He won't do it today. Or, we believe God will save you only if you belong to our church, and we fail to see we are limiting God.

Other times we box God in merely by our lack of belief. Intellectually we know, for example, that God will supply our needs, but we just don't believe He will come through for us when we need Him to. We forget God is omnipotent, all powerful and that He wants to intervene for us today no matter how large or small our need may be. It's as if we believe He's all boxed in and unable to help.

Well, prepare to have your faith ignited. The articles on the next few pages, and the "For Women Only" column on page 10, tell about people who learned first hand what every believer needs to know: God can't be boxed in. He can't be limited!

# "WHAT YOU NEED IS A JESUS OVERHAUL"

Gene Lilly was a cripple slowly dying of multiple sclerosis, sugar diabetes and other ailments. Today, he's a new man, completely healed by the power of God and now he ministers to others. His secret: He stopped limiting God! **By STEPHEN STRANG**

The night Gene Lilly was healed, he left his wheel chair and walker home.

Why would he need them? he reasoned. He'd walk out of the meeting that night a totally well man. He knew it.

It didn't matter that he'd been a cripple for 19 years — the victim of multiple sclerosis since age 15. It didn't matter that doctors don't know a cure for the disease that has been called the killer of young adults.

Nor did it matter that the very fact he was alive to attend the "miracle service" that December night in 1973 was a miracle in itself. Doctors had told him in 1954, when he was an Indiana farm boy, that he wouldn't live to be 18.

But that night, Gene Lilly had faith to be healed. He phoned the Hilton Inn next to Walt Disney World just outside Orlando, Florida, and found out there were no stairs. His wife and son could help him get inside.

So they did. They parked the car and half dragged, half carried him into the huge ballroom. That wasn't an easy task. Despite the fact that he had withered legs, Gene Lilly weighed a hefty 247 pounds — and carrying him was about all his tiny wife, Phyllis, or 13 year-old-son, Doug, could do.

The Hilton Inn ballroom was crowded that night. About 1,400 people had come to hear Charles and Frances Hunter preach and pray for the sick.

Gene had read their book, *"Since Jesus Passed By."* The faith-building message ministered to him, and he decided that if anyone would have faith to see him healed, the Hunters would. He determined to visit their meeting the next time they spoke in the area.

It wasn't as if faith had bloomed full grown in his heart. Gene Lilly had lived most of his life with little or no faith . . . except that somehow God cared for him.

He thought back that night to how his feeble faith in God had given him something to hold on to when he was told he would not live to be 18. He remembered an attractive young secretary he met in the hospital. Her case didn't seem nearly as bad as his. He had lain unconscious for

**BEFORE:**  
In 1962,  
Gene Lilly  
could get  
around only  
on a walker.  
(right)



**AFTER:**  
Since his  
total healing,  
Gene ministers  
to thousands  
around the  
country.  
(below)



a month, and the doctor said if he ever walked again, it would be an act of God. He eventually pulled through, but she died two years later.

"There was no one in her family who was a Christian," Gene recalls. "It seemed she didn't have anything to hold on to the way I did.

"I didn't know anything about healing, and I sure didn't know anything about the scriptures on healing, but I felt definitely that God would answer my prayers. Yet I didn't really know how to pray. The only thing I could say was, 'Lord, just give me strength. Just help me, Lord. Just give me strength.'"

The people in Gene's church prayed, too, but their prayers were along the lines of "Lord, if it be Thy will, heal him." Or, "Lord, make him comfortable."

There prayers were sincere, but just as ineffective as Gene's.

But Gene kept praying. Every morning, it was the same prayer: "Give me just

enough strength to get through today."

Gene managed to make it through high school, and married a schoolmate, Phyllis, over the objections of Gene's mother who warned her against marrying a cripple.

He also survived several severe relapses of multiple sclerosis, or MS as it is frequently called.

MS is a disease with cyclical symptoms. A victim will be better for awhile, then be unconscious or bedridden for months. Once, Gene's muscles went into such spasms that his leg muscles drew him up into a ball. He lost all control of his limbs. His doctors feared the spasms would actually tear his joints out of their sockets.

MS strikes the muscles, especially the legs, rendering them almost useless. Sometimes death comes quickly, sometimes a victim will suffer for years, but MS always kills its victim. There is no known cure.

When Gene was not bedridden, he could get around with a cane or walker by "thinking" each step. But it might take him an hour of "thinking" each step to move a few hundred feet.

As the years passed, Gene became involved in one business venture after another. People would pity him and help him get started. Then, when the business failed, Gene could use his disability as an excuse. People would say, "Well, Gene would have made it if he were well."

Gene became a diabetic, and suffered from high cholesterol and other ailments. As his physical condition deteriorated, so did his spiritual life. At one time, Gene decided God wanted him to be a missionary to Kenya after hearing a missionary from Africa share the need for workers. He and Phyllis began to make plans, but well meaning church friends warned him not to go. They said he'd get to Africa and die because he wouldn't have adequate medical attention.

Today Gene believes that God wanted to put him in a position where he would have had to believe God for his healing by not being able to have medical attention. But the doomcriers had their effect, and whatever faith was beginning to

**Continued on next page**

# IMPOSSIBLE MIRACLES

by Charles  Frances Hunter

## IMPOSSIBLE MIRACLES

by Charles  Frances  
Hunter

### Is God Really Real?

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Continued from previous page

grow in his heart was plucked up. Gene and Phyllis abandoned their plans. They just didn't have the faith to either believe God for Gene's healing or to overcome the negative reaction to their missionary plans.

The next decade was a time of moving from one city to another, from one job situation to another. For a time, Gene got entirely away from the Lord. He realized his error one day when watching an Alabama preacher on television and repented.

That night, at the Hilton Inn, Gene thought of how he had unsuccessfully tried to pastor a small church, but that he had no power in his life and his church was dead. Then he asked God to give him power and he remembered how he began praying one day in some jibberish. He continued praying this strange way for more than a month before someone told him that what he had was the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

That began a time of spiritual growth as the Lord finally led Gene and Phyllis from their home in Phoenix, Arizona, to Orlando.

Their first Sunday in this Central Florida city, they attended Calvary Assembly with some Methodist friends.

"I'd never seen so many people in one church in my life," Gene recalled later. "They were clapping their hands, praising the Lord, and singing like I had never heard before!"

The pastor of the church, Roy Harthern, is a native of Great Britain whose dynamic pulpit charisma is surpassed only by the power of his message.

"If you're sick, the Lord will heal you! If you're broke, the Lord wants to prosper you! If you're lost, He wants to save you," Pastor Harthern preached that day.

That was powerful preaching for Gene. He'd never heard anything like it. He was used to ministers who gave timid homilies about meaningless generalities rather than preaching the Word of God.

That week in his devotions, he read Jeremiah 32:27: "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?"

Could it be, Gene thought, that God was trying to tell him something? Could it be that God was able to do more than he gave Him credit for? If so, why couldn't he understand the problem?

The answer came the next Wednesday night. This time Pastor Harthern preached on Proverbs 4: 20 to 22.

"My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they ARE life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh."

When he heard that, Gene wanted to stand up and shout "Hallelujah!" His problem had been diagnosed. He'd been sick for 19 years, and never realized that the Word of God was "health to all their

flesh." What he needed was more of the Word of God. That in turn would give him more faith.

He began devouring the Word, and found the following verses:

"He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." (Psalms 107:20)

"Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . Who healeth all thy diseases." (Psalms 103:1,3)

"And with his stripes, we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

"By whose stripes ye were healed." (I Peter 2:24)

Gene began to realize that God was capable of more than he'd ever thought before. He began to see, through the Word of God, that he could be healed. And when he heard the Hunters were having a miracle service, he just *knew* he'd be healed.

The service that night was wonderful. People sang and praised the Lord. People all over the audience were healed. One man a few rows ahead of him was healed of deafness.

Gene wondered when he would be healed, too. The service continued, and the Hunters prayed for many people, but nothing happened to him. The service ended — and he still wasn't healed.

"But I knew this was my night to be healed," he said to himself.

"Could I have been wrong? No. Jesus said it in the Word, and I believe it."

Still the service ended. Then Frances asked anyone who still needed ministry to come forward. Gene dragged himself forward by hanging onto each row of chairs and told Frances what was wrong with him.

You have to know Frances Hunter to understand what happened next. She's a large, forceful woman who wasn't saved until she was 49 years old. Since then, she has achieved a freedom in the Lord and a total dependence on Him in ministry that few Christians ever achieve.

When Gene gave a brief rundown of his many illnesses, Frances threw back her head, threw up both hands, and said: "Praise Jesus!"

Gene thought she must have been the hardest-hearted woman he'd ever met. Literally dying, he had humbled himself to come forward for help, and received this kind of reaction. She simply didn't understand the severity of his need.

What she said then, "You need a Jesus overhaul," astounded Gene even more: She placed both of her hands gently on the sides of his head and said, "Jesus, overhaul him."

That was what ignited his faith. Frances didn't limit God. Neither would he. She was the first person to pray for him who didn't limit God at all.

When Frances touched him, Gene fell backwards. Some call it going down under the power. Others call it being slain in the Spirit. Whatever it is, Gene believes he was healed while he was flat on his back.

Continued on page 28

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# What You Need Is a Jesus Overhaul

Continued from page 14

It was as if God was performing surgery on his spine as he lay there, he recalls.

"It was like God had a blowtorch on the scar tissue on my brain at the back of my head and it was burning. There were waves of light that went over me. Then it was like my spinal cord was a piece of rubber and someone took it and shook it and it flopped around."

The first change he noticed was that his shoes pinched him. His feet had been so numb he never knew his shoes were too small for his feet. Then feeling began to come into his leg, then his arms. Finally he stood up, which is the most difficult thing for an MS victim to do. This had to be a great healing!

"Then I started to walk!" Gene writes in his testimony, *Victory Over MS*. "I started walking back unassisted to my seat without holding on to anything or anyone. I began straightening up. Every step I took I got stronger. I knew God's Word is true. He HAD HEALED ME!"

Since then, Gene has completely recovered from MS and diabetes. He visited his doctor, E. Randall Horton, of Sarasota, Fla., who confirmed his healing. Dr. Horton later signed an affidavit at Gene's request that said in part: "It is our clinical impression that he has been completely cured both of his diabetes and multiple sclerosis."

Gene's pastor, Roy Harthorn, also said: "I knew Gene Lilly when he could not walk without the aid of a walker. Physically, he was a pathetic sight. I know Gene Lilly today . . . and his experience is a testimony that God still heals."

But Gene's story doesn't stop there. In fact, he looks at the date of his healing — Dec. 13, 1973 — as a sort of birthday.

"I had wrecked one body in 34 years," he says. "It was as if God had given me another body, a whole new start."

He began telling everyone who would listen about his healing. He testified to churches, prayer groups, and individuals.

Gene says now that he knew first-hand God would heal and that he had a responsibility to share that with others. People began asking him to pray for them. He did and many were healed.

Praying for people is easy, Gene says, Jesus didn't ask him to heal anyone. (Of course he has no healing power.) All Jesus wants him to do is to pray for people. Jesus promised to heal them.

"It says in Mark, Chapter 16, that these signs shall follow those who believe . . . they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

"I believe it," Gene says.

By April after his healing, Gene was getting invitations to share his testimony in Phoenix. But he didn't have any money to go out there. In fact, his family was so broke, they had to live with

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friends and rely on gifts of money to just get by.

When Gene left for Phoenix, he had only \$17. He gave Phyllis \$12 and took \$5 with him. But Gene likes to say he began his ministry in a \$65,000 vehicle just the same — it was a Greyhound VistaCruiser.

In each meeting, the message Gene delivered was the same. Gene would tell in his simple, straight-forward manner what Jesus did for him. People responded to that message.

His country dialect, homey expressions, and lack of seminary training seemed to add to rather than detract from his message: "God healed me; He can heal you or meet any need in your life, if you don't limit Him by your own lack of faith."

In the three years since his healing, Gene's ministry has grown from an operation in which he got by on a few dollars to where the ministry costs tens of thousands of dollars each year. But even today Evangelist Gene Lilly doesn't think of himself as a professional minister.

He's merely a man who has seen the power of God demonstrated in his own life, and he shares that fact with others.

Gene's Love of Jesus Ministries, Inc. in Orlando, Florida, is now chartered as a non-profit corporation in the U.S., Canada, and the Cayman Islands. The ease with which the ministry was chartered is a miracle to those familiar with the bureaucracy in those nations.

Gene has ministered in a score of states, Canada, Cayman Islands, and Israel, and he plans a trip soon to the Philippines.

He has spoken on national television, authored several magazine articles, co-authored two books — *Victory Over MS* and *Don't Limit God* (the latter with Charles and Frances Hunter) — and he will soon publish a third book on forgiveness.

The growth of Love of Jesus Ministries has come as he is open to share as the Lord leads, because he has never sent out a letter soliciting a meeting, or used some of the high-pressure tactics to get meetings that some evangelists have been known to use.

"We just praise God for the way the ministry's growing," Gene said recently. "We know the Lord is doing it, because we couldn't have accomplished all this ourselves. We were broke, and had failed in so many things.

"But thank God He doesn't use us based on what we've done in the past. It's not based on our past record. It's based on God. There is no limit to what God can do in our lives if we are yielded to him."



**Stephen Strang is editor of Charisma Magazine and is on the staff of Calvary Assembly in Winter Park, Florida.**



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