



Candace Cameron BURE

By Lisa A. Rice

Shining in Hollywood and at Home

Boycott that film!” “Take back the land!” The early days of Christian ministry to Hollywood were often marked by harsh mandates like these, so it’s no wonder that media moguls grew weary of church-goers and dissatisfied Christians inside and outside of their ranks. Fortunately, over the years the Body of Christ grew more sophisticated in its efforts to reform the entertainment culture ...

and over the past couple of decades, believers have found the greatest success with the gentlest of tools—like grace and winsomeness.

It is with such a spirit that one of America’s most beloved Hollywood sweethearts is seeing her influence for Christ grow. After years of committed service as a stay-at-home mom, Candace Cameron Bure has made the plunge back into the wide world



of television, a little older and wiser for her new adventure.

The Stay-at-Home Years

Best known for her eight-year run as D.J. Tanner on ABC's sitcom *Full House*, Candace could actually be spotted over the last ten years not on fancy TV sets or recording studios, but frequently with three adorable children in places like Whole Foods, the skating rink, the tennis courts or the elementary school. Married to the recently-retired, famous Russian NFL hockey player Valeri Bure, Candace has lived quite intentionally when it has come to personally caring for her children in their South Florida home. She shares:

“A while back, God refocused me on all the things I didn’t know were so important. Career wise, there was a point where the door wasn’t opening, and through this God was saying, ‘You need to stay home with your kids.’ I’m glad I did. It’s my children’s eternity that’s at stake, and that’s far more important than anything else I could do. It was such a



privilege to stay at home. As hard as it was to cook, clean and have limited adult conversations, I wanted to train my kids in the Lord. I think of the magnitude of it ... what God gave me with these kids.

“Our society says, ‘Work! Make money! The career is great! But stay-at-home moms, you’re not so cool. Get going.’ But they’re wrong. I thank God, Who alone is able to keep our hearts in the right place.”

Finding Faith

At least some of Candace’s contentment with and commitment to mothering at home came from her own parents—a mom who stayed home with Candace, Kirk and their two sisters, and a father who was a middle school teacher.

Candace and Kirk began doing commercials around the same time, but their folks made sure they stayed grounded. “Many parents had stars in their eyes,” Candace recalls, “but my parents could easily say “no” to us. They basically said, ‘Have fun acting, but you can’t have all the other stuff that goes with it or you’re out. It’s over.’ We knew they meant it.”

Though their mother was a believer and taught the children biblical principles like the Golden Rule and kindness, their father didn’t want anything to do with religion. The Cameron parents had a troubled marriage and separated when their children were young teens.



The Bure family, Valeri, Natasha (11), Candace, Lev (9), and Maks (7).

Barbara Cameron tells their story in the book, *A Full House of Growing Pains*.

However, when Candace was twelve, a friend invited her to church, and that same year she prayed “the sinner’s prayer.” “My life wasn’t changed or transformed, however,” she shares. “I truly believed that if I was a good person, everything would be okay. Not until I was in my early twenties did it become about a relationship with Christ.”

A Brother’s Example

It turns out that her big brother had a great deal to do with his sister’s spiritual hunger. “Kirk and his wife, Chelsea, were slated to star in *Left Behind*,” Candace recalls, “and Chelsea sent me the book. In it I saw how the character Bruce Barnes got left behind (after the rapture). I thought, *how could a pastor get left behind?* This question kicked off my faith.

“Kirk then sent me *The Way of the Master* by Ray Comfort, which explained that salvation is not just about being good and doing good ... or just about mercy and grace. He shared that God is a judge, there is a hell and there are consequences to our sin. That’s what made me understand and want to walk in God’s righteous path and not keep assuming I’m fine because I think I’m good.”

A Household of Faith

At the age of 18, Candace met the man with whom she would share her life. “We met at a celebrity, charity hockey game,” she says, “where I found out that he used to watch *Full House* to learn English ... so I had been teaching him English!”

During the early years, neither Candace nor Valeri was a true convert, but as Candace’s faith grew, she started praying every day for her husband’s salvation. “God showed me it was in closing my mouth that he would be won. I was talking about God so much I was turning him off—big time. He said, ‘I don’t want you to talk about God. If I want to know something I’ll ask you.’

“I focused on God’s promise in I Peter 3:1 and worked through some really good Bible studies like *The Excellent Wife* and *Created to be His Helpmeet*. Soon my husband could see the changes Christ had worked in me. Finally, he said, ‘Maybe there’s something to all

this.’” Candace and Valeri are grateful that God has now brought their entire family into the faith, including their children: Natasha (11), Lev (9) and Maks (7).

Edging Back onto the Set

Because Valeri has retired from the NHL and is able to stay home with the children, Candace is now free to consider more projects. Jumping back into entertainment, Candace more recently appeared in Disney’s “That’s So Raven” and “The Wager” with Randy Travis and co-hosted “The View.” Candace was a natural for the recent Hallmark TV movie, *Moonlight & Mistletoe*, which is rated as the #3 all-time most-viewed Hallmark movie.

“I absolutely loved working with the Hallmark channel,” Candace says. “They really do produce quality family entertainment, and that’s where my heart is at. They have that good, wholesome, simple stuff you love to watch with your family.”

“Make It or Break It”

Candace’s latest adventure is with ABC Family Channel’s new sports-centric series, “Make It or Break It”, a teen drama that focuses on the cutthroat competitive world of Olympic-caliber gymnasts and their families. Candace plays Summer, fiancé of Steve, the father of Lauren, one of the gymnasts. Their relationship causes conflict with the self-centered Lauren. “It makes for a crazy dynamic,” Candace says, “because Summer really likes this man, and she does everything she can to make it work ... but Lauren is just nasty.”

Candace, now 33, says she relishes playing an adult role. “I feel like a real grown-up now ... well, on TV at least.” She says she was instantly attracted to the role because of the series theme and the potential for playing out the richness of her character.

“When ABC Family Channel called me in February and asked to set up a meeting, I was thrilled not only because of the network itself, but with the immediate connection to the show,” Candace says. “It’s based on competitive gymnastics—four girls training for the Olympics—and I’ve been in the sports world for 13 years.”

Even more meaningful than the sports connection, Candace says, was the fact that she had the opportunity to persuade the show’s producers to make her character morally conservative.

“Because my faith is so important to me,” she shares, “certain things I will and will not do, or promote; and even though I’m acting, I have some boundaries as to what I’ll endorse. A lot of those factors played into the role of Summer. The producers didn’t come to me with a Christian character in mind, but when we discussed it they saw that making her (Summer) a Christian would



Candace plays Summer, fiancé of Steve, the father of Lauren, one of the gymnasts.

give the show another dynamic that would add richness.

My character is the one Christian voice in the show, and one of the main benefits for me is to be a positive, conservative, Christian voice. It’s very exciting and rewarding.”

Walking Out the Call

Incidentally, Candace’s brother, Kirk Cameron, is walking in the same calling as his sister—to be a credible, winsome voice of truth and love in Hollywood. With his recent starring role in *Fireproof*, few can doubt that the Camerons are a family of influence. “I’m thrilled about how the church rallied around that film,” Candace says, “and the ministry that’s been had because of the movie, book and DVD is powerful.”

Both Kirk and Candace have made time to give in numerous ways to various charities. Candace now supports the Sheraton House, Compassion International, Children’s Hunger Fund

and National House of Hope. One of her favorite charities is called Skip1.org. Coming under the umbrella of The Children's Hunger Fund, Skip1 feeds children around the world.

"Hunger is not a problem we can't fix," Candace says. "This ministry encourages you to skip something ... like your latte in the morning ... a manicure ... a car wash ... so instead of spending that money, you donate whatever you would have spent to skip1.org online. One-hundred percent of the money—which is unheard of—goes to feeding children. All the start-up costs, shipping, etc. have already been covered by private donors."

Candace also continues to travel the country speaking at various churches, colleges and outreach events. "It's super-important to me to share my faith, my testimony, and I do so at conferences like Extraordinary Women and Women of Joy. I also have a new t-shirt line that just went up on my web site, and I'm getting a great response to the message on the shirts."

Children Still the Center

Despite her re-entrance into movie and TV fame, it's clear that Candace's heart is still with her family. As a matter of fact, she brings sixth-grader Natasha with her to the studio, where her daughter can take in everything on the set.

Mom says, "I'm freaking out because Natasha is going to middle school ... It just feels like she's not old enough!" Even scarier, perhaps, is the fact that Natasha is very interested in acting. "She just went on her first commercial audition and booked it!"

Candace says. "It cracked me up. We're going to let her try things like this, but we'll keep a close eye on everything she's doing."

On the set with her mother, Natasha sits next to the director, who often lets her call "action." "She wants to come with me every day," Candace says, "but I say, 'Aren't you bored?' She says, 'No Mom; I love it!' I must admit, I do too."

Candace and Valeri also spend time in sports activities. Seven-year-old Maks is now following in his father's footsteps and learning to play hockey. "Valeri would be happy not to put his skates back on," Candace confesses, "but he'll have to as long as Maks loves it." Natasha and Lev are also playing tennis, some of which Valeri coaches.

Pursuing Fitness

The whole Bure family has always been involved in fitness—not only with their sports activities, but with eating wholesome foods and teaching others to do the same. "I just signed a publishing deal for a book on healthy living that will come out in the summer of 2010." "Candace says, "I share my personal experiences with weight struggles and how to ultimately live well by making the connection with your body, soul and spirit. That's only found when centered in Christ."

Though Candace might not be known for the exciting drama other stars live,—multiple divorces, addictions and weekly "dirt" in the tabloids—she is known for her gentle appeal and her heart for the family. Whether it's at the hockey rink with seven-year-olds, on the tennis court with teens, in the conference rooms of major television studios or writing a healthy living book, it is clear that Candace and her family are intent upon letting their lights shine as they gently and winsomely cultivate their influence for Christ.

For more information on Candace—her new series, ministry, speaking events or T-shirt line—please visit www.candacecameronbure.net.



Go to www.candacecameronbure.net to purchase Candace's T-shirts.

