

COVER STORY: Benny Hinn Addresses Recent Criticisms

Benny Hinn has enjoyed seasons of effective, successful ministry, and endured seasons of turbulence. To be sure, he has cut a bold figure across the evangelical and Pentecostal landscape over his nearly 50 years in ministry. As his jubilee year approaches, Hinn once more finds himself on the sharp end of a fresh batch of criticisms, few of them especially unique from the last time *Charisma* sat down with him 31 summers ago in the August 1993 issue. As Scripture teaches there's nothing new under the sun, Benny Hinn recently visited the Strang Report podcast to address recent criticisms, how he addressed sensitive times in the past, and his view of the future as he enters the latter phase of his ministry career.

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CHARISMA: When people hear about you for the first time, or come across a sermon of yours, what do you want them to know about you? Who is the real Benny Hinn?

HINN: The real Benny him wants to finish better than I began. The real Benny Hinn wants to know the Bible better than I've ever known it. And the real Benny Hinn wants Jesus, to intensify His love in me for Him with His fire. My real cry is, "Lord, I want to be accepted on that day." That's all that really matters to me. That's the real me. People don't know that about me. But that's the real Benny.

CHARISMA: Why do you think that a lot of people don't know that?

HINN: I don't talk about it much. They see clips from crusades, TV programs, old clips from *This Is Your Day*, they make up their own conclusions. I think that's why. But when I started in ministry, it was a very simple beginning. And I want to finish with a simple finish.

CHARISMA: Talk to me about the Gospel, in your own words, what is the Gospel? Why is the Gospel so important in this hour?

HINN: The gospel is simple. God so loved the world, He sent His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have life eternal. Jesus came to this world, God in the flesh, died on a cruel cross, shed His blood for our salvation, rose from the dead on the third day, ascended on high. And today is seated at God's right hand and one day He'll return as King of kings and Lord of lords, and we who believe in Him—not about him, *in* him—will have life eternal.

Today the message you hear is "that": I believe *that* Jesus came, believe *that* Jesus died, *that* He shed His blood, *that* He rose from the dead. Well, so does the devil. But to live, to believe *in* means trusting Him with your life, trusting Him with your soul. Trusting Him to save you. The devil does not believe in God because then he'd have to trust Him. And he doesn't. He believes *that*. But not *in*. And a lot of people today are preaching messages *that* Jesus came, *that* Jesus died, *that* Jesus rose from the dead. And it's giving a lot of people false, not real, hope of salvation. Jesus is our salvation and we have to trust *in* him. Surrender, totally and spiritually, to Him. And that's what I believe.

CHARISMA: You held miracle crusades, and a lot of people come to see miracles, usually healings. I've heard you say that the greatest miracle is salvation to change lives.

HINN: That's correct. It is the greatest miracle because what else is greater than that? When people are healed, sometimes that doesn't last long. Salvation is Jesus Himself. We have to

receive Him. It's not about heaven, it's about the Lord.

One of the pastors that used to work with me once asked me, "What do you want from the Lord when you're gone?" I said, to see His smile. That's all I want, just to see Him smile, because He is my reward.

CHARISMA: How important is the Word of God in the life of a believer? And how has the Word of God impacted your own life?

HINN: Without the Word of God we will perish. It's our life—God's Word is life. God's Word is Him, He is the living Word.

I've always loved the Bible, since I was a little boy. Because I lived in Israel, it wasn't mandatory in school to read the Bible. I actually copied the New Testament by hand, and this was before my salvation. I was an altar boy and after I got saved, the life of God came into my soul and being and spirit, and it was an amazing time in my life.

Now, at this stage in my life, I've decided to begin reading the Bible three times a year. And then I decided to learn Hebrew. I did speak Hebrew when I was living in Israel and I wanted to learn Hebrew again. So, I went to Hebrew University online. I read my Bible now in Hebrew every morning, and it's really changing me because the Hebrew language is so deep. It's hard to describe the depth of it. There's living water in it, I guess is the only way to say it. It's just very alive, it hits you really hard and beautifully, too.

I would say that anyone who does not read Scripture is in danger of being destroyed, especially in this time. Because without the Bible, we have no protection. We have no longevity. And now, longevity is, I've been in ministry 50 years this year, I think that's a testimony itself.

CHARISMA: You have been following Christ for decades. As you reflect on those years, do you have any regrets?

HINN: Absolutely. I'm a human being. I've made mistakes. The two things I regret most in ministry, I was not too wise a number of times with prophecy. I had guests come to the crusades that, I think, brought harm to not only people's lives, but also to my own reputation. Because their prophecies were not really a prophecy. They went outside the borders of redemption. Prophecy is for edification, exhortation and comfort, but it must be within redemption. And when people go beyond that, we should not allow that. I allowed it and then I stopped it, but that was years ago when I stopped.

There were times when I thought God had showed me something that He wasn't showing me. And I spoke it out. But in 1 Corinthians 13, we see very clearly that we all prophesy in part. That means we don't see the full picture. I wish I could go back and fix it, but sadly there were some prophecies I gave that were not accurate or from the Lord. And for that I asked people to forgive me. It's sad when people focus on the times you missed it. But that's just the way it is.

And the other one is prosperity. And that's been a very difficult one for me. When I started, ministry was simple. And then the ministry grew. I was invited to go to what they called Praise Advance, and I think that's when my troubles began. But sadly, you get in a place that becomes difficult, you don't know what to do and how to get out of it. So, I came to the conclusion in 2019 that I did not want to be a part of the gimmickry of it. And I still stand by that. But sadly, a few times I let pressure get the best of me. For that, I'm very sorry. Because of that pressure, I said and did things I should not have, and for that I am sorry. And I ask people to forgive me for that. I'm striving with all my heart to be as biblical as possible with that.

And frankly, you know, I'm kind of at the end of my road, but right now my focus is the Lord and only the Lord. And if I may have to raise funds for our ministry, I will do it as biblically as I know how.

If it's not about the Lord, I want nothing to do with it; it has to be about Jesus and the Gospel. I want that teaching to be about Jesus, and only Jesus and the Gospel. Because the heart of prosperity has to be the gospel through biblical prosperity. And that is what I will strive to do for the rest of my life.

CHARISMA: Looking back on your life, if you were able to give advice to an 18-year-old Benny Hinn, or really to any 18-year-old, what would you tell them, knowing what you know now at this stage in life?

HINN: I would say three things. Number one, build a reservoir of the Word of God in your heart. So, when troubles come, you'll know what to do. Number two, cling to the Lord with all your mind, and only the Word within your heart can help you cling to the Lord. And number three, make sure you know your call before you get into ministry and stay within your call.

So, the most important thing that any young 18-year-old can really do is know the mind of God. And the Bible is really clear in Psalm 119, about how does the Word of God help us live holy? And this is when prayer becomes real in our life, because the Word of God is in us.

I pray the Lord will give His precious people hunger and desire to learn Hebrew because there's such depth in it, it is life changing. But let's begin knowing the Word of God in English, first.

CHARISMA: Let me ask you about success in ministry. What does that look like to you?

HINN: If Jesus is glorified, that's success, because His presence in our life is what brings results to the kingdom. This is why souls are saved. Bodies are healed. Lives are changed. He is liberty in you and through you. And I think about a lot of precious people that have touched my life, from Kathryn Kuhlman to Corrie Ten Boom; David DuPlessis and

others. They really walked in that freedom that God's presence gives. And just to be around them, was liberating. For me as a young Christian, I remember hearing Corrie in Holland when I was 20, and when she came on that platform, the atmosphere changed. And suddenly, I felt like I was in heaven. I was liberated. And DuPlessis, who I think is one of the greatest men that ever lived. I went to Singapore once when I was in my early 20s. That sweet man was talking about the power of forgiveness. I'll never forget the impact it had on my life. And that, I think, is what success is. It's not about numbers and crowds and money and all that. It's about the Lord in someone's life. What more can we ask for? He is all in all to us.

CHARISMA: There have been points in your ministry in the past where you have apologized for some things, or answered critics. In fact, I did an interview with you in 1993, and then in 2019 I did a podcast with you about the whole issue of prosperity. So, my question is—you understand that people might be a little doubtful when you've already apologized—what would you like to say to those people who might be doubting what they're hearing?

HINN: Well, we have to grow. We have to change. And sometimes change is slow. And it's not easy to change at times, with some things. But, the older I've gotten, the more serious I've become about how I will finish. Sadly, our humanity fights us, this body fights us. You really want to fulfill what you say. Things happen that don't help you fulfill it, then you try again.

The most important thing is, how will we finish the race? That's what matters in life, and that's what I'm focused on.

CHARISMA: What things have you put in place to move forward in a way that you desire, especially as you enter the final season in your life and ministry?

HINN: When I started in ministry, the Lord sent wonderful people my way, who really helped me in my beginning. A lot of these people are gone now, and with the Lord. And the Lord has been so gracious to me that recently the Lord has sent some others to help me finish well. I think we need to put in place in ministry to be answerable to individuals we trust and respect in the Spirit. And that's what I've done.

CHARISMA: And finally, what is burning in your heart, as you enter the latter season of your life and ministry, what can we expect from Benny Hinn?

HINN: That's a wonderful question. What's burning in my heart is one thing. Jesus.

I had a vision years ago. In my vision, I saw myself as a disabled person. And I saw the Lord standing across the way, tall and wonderful, beautiful, wearing a white robe, with His arms outstretched toward me. And He said, "Come." That's all He said, was, "Come." Now, I'm on my knees in prayer, outside the vision, and I said, "Dear Jesus, can You help him?" Because I'm looking at the Benny Hinn in the vision. And suddenly, the Benny Hinn in the vision began to walk with difficulty, slowly, and the Lord began to move toward him in the same way, slowly. And suddenly that Benny Hinn came closer and closer and as he got closer, he got straighter and straighter, freer and freer. And then suddenly, they both came together. And when the Lord put His arms around that Benny in the vision, something amazing happened. That Benny disappeared in Jesus. And I came out of my vision. I believe that's my end.

CHARISMA: I want to give you the last word.

HINN: In this world, Jesus said, "You shall have tribulation," and we will be persecuted. But if we focus on that, we will not succeed. We have to look up. This is a must for all of us. Not to pay attention to the persecution and trials of life. We

just focus on the Lord. Really, that's all.

And there are people today I'm sure who are going through some problem. That's just a part of life. And you grow in the valley, not on the mountain. We have to keep our eyes on the Lord.

This world is getting darker and darker, more and more dangerous. Without the presence of the Lord, daily and continually in our life, we will not survive. And I believe only His Word enables us to know Him like that. And I don't mean just reading the Word of God, I mean really knowing it, living it. That will give us great peace. That's the secret.