

No More Monkey Business in the Ministry

In this day of compromise, we must restate the obvious: God requires leaders to play by the rules.

Almost two years ago a dynamic preacher from a growing church in the Southeast was caught in adultery. His distraught wife talked with the “other woman,” an exotic dancer from another country, and shared Christ with her. Meanwhile a small group of pastors “covered” the situation and hurriedly sent the embarrassed pastor to a few weeks of counseling. In the end, the pastor and his wife divorced and members of the congregation who didn’t have all the facts blamed her for the breakup.

Today this pastor is still in the pulpit—although his preaching has a hollow tone. Some members of the church left when they learned of the pastor’s unfaithfulness. Yet many others stayed because they felt they shouldn’t judge the pastor for his sin.

The Tragic Scandal of Greasy Grace

This week’s announcement about evangelist Todd Bentley’s hasty remarriage and restoration is sending a confusing message to the church.

I groaned when I learned early this week that Canadian preacher Todd Bentley, leader of the controversial Lakeland

Revival, had decided to divorce his wife, Shonnah, and marry his former ministry intern, Jessa Hasbrook. The news surfaced after almost nine months of silence and speculation, during which time the board of Bentley's Fresh Fire Ministries in British Columbia publicly scolded him for committing adultery.

In a statement released March 10 by Rick Joyner, the popular author and minister who is overseeing Bentley's restoration process, we were told that (1) Bentley married his new wife several weeks ago and moved to Joyner's base in Fort Mill, S.C.; (2) Todd and Jessa agree that their relationship was "wrong and premature" and that it "should not have happened the way it did"; (3) Bentley will remain out of public ministry while he seeks healing; and (4) Joyner will oversee the healing process with input from Dallas pastor Jack Deere and California pastor Bill Johnson. [\(Read Rick Joyner's response to this column.\)](#)

Reclaiming Genuine Apostolic Anointing

The Bible tells us there are both true and false apostles. Let's learn to discern the difference.

For many years traditional denominations taught that the ministry of the apostle passed away after the New Testament era. It was assumed that the only people who served in apostolic roles were early followers of Jesus who witnessed His resurrection. Cessationists (those who believe that miracles stopped after the canon of Scripture was completed) believe that healing, deliverance, prophecy and all other supernatural phenomena ceased and that apostles are no longer

necessary.

But as Christians in recent years began to experience the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, church leaders and even some theologians began to teach that the gift of apostle is vital if we hope to advance the gospel in our generation. The logic makes sense: If we still need pastors, teachers and evangelists (all part of Jesus' five-fold ministry mentioned in Ephesians 4:11), we also need the apostles and prophets who are listed in the same passage. The Bible never says these functions were discontinued.

Why the British Aren't Boarding the Atheist Bus

British atheist Richard Dawkins wants to stamp out Christian faith in England. But that faith is still very much alive.

When I arrived in London last week I fully expected to see one of the city's celebrated "atheist buses" racing past Gatwick Airport on its way to Victoria Station. I had read about how Oxford University professor Richard Dawkins, author of the book *The God Delusion*, helped raise more than 140,000 British pounds from donors in January to plaster the city's famous double-decker buses with signs that read: "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life."

Dawkins, who has publicly compared religion with the smallpox virus, is quite evangelistic when it comes to his doubts. But his London bus experiment was a dud, if you ask me. Early 2009 was not a good time to mount an atheist campaign. With British banks in crisis and companies laying off workers all over the

U.K., most people would prefer to believe divine help is a possibility. “There’s probably no God” is a depressing message to share with anxious Londoners who are weathering the Great Recession.

Staying Pure in a Fornication Nation

You don't have to compromise with our sex-saturated culture. By God's grace you can stay in the sexual safety zone.

There were some raised eyebrows last week on the campus of Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla., when I hosted a special meeting—the day before Valentine’s Day—on the subject of fornication. That’s not a word you normally associate with a lecture topic, but hey, I had to get attention. And since the hormones on most college campuses are as dense as Florida humidity, I figured the kids would be all ears when I attacked the subject.

I was right. At times you could hear a pin drop in the auditorium, especially when I talked about how most American young people aren’t even sure how to define sexual activity anymore. (Today’s college seniors were nine years old when President Clinton tried to redefine sex during the Lewinsky scandal.) At other times the students burst into nervous laughter, especially when I told how I gave my son-in-law a lecture about sexual boundaries in front of 700 of his classmates when he was dating my oldest daughter.

Fire In My Bones

Don't Get Brainwashed!

In January I spent four days preaching at Emmanuel College, a Christian liberal arts school in Georgia. I love speaking to college students because they are spiritually hungry, they love passionate worship, and I can preach in jeans without offending anyone.

On the third night (after a young man got saved and delivered from drug addiction—*yeah God!*) I told the kids I needed to get brutally honest. They gave me permission to shoot straight. Because I genuinely care about them, I warned them about four lies they must confront.

Every Christian in this country must learn to dissect these lies using the Word of God. The devil is working overtime today to gain control of our nation's soul. This is not a time for Christians to be squishy in their faith or spineless in their convictions. We must plant our feet on the bedrock principles of the Bible and oppose each of these lies:

1. Hell does not exist. Jesus preached about hell more than anyone in the Bible. His words dripped with love, but He didn't soft-pedal when addressing the eternal consequences of sin. The true gospel is a double-edged sword that offers both the "goodness *and* severity of God" (Rom. 11:22, emphasis added). That's why hell is one four-letter word we should use more often—not to condemn people but to warn them that mercy has a time limit.

The world rejects the concept of hell because it's too exclusive. Our Oprah-ized culture insists that everyone deserves a warm and fuzzy life free of consequences. But if we

truly love people we will explain that hell is not a metaphor—it is a real place of dreadful separation from God that sinners choose when they reject Him.

2. God didn't create the world. 2009 is the 150th anniversary of the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, so you can be sure the scientific community will bombard us this year with more "proof" of this sketchy theory. The mainstream media and academia insist that evolution is pure fact. Anyone who dares to challenge it is considered a religious idiot.

The world does not want to believe in a Creator because if He is real, then He has ultimate authority over His creation. On the flip side, man has no moral responsibility if he crawled out of a primordial soup, grew fins, then legs, and then became a talking ape. Evolution is not really about science at all—it is about rebellion against God's rule over us.

3. All religions lead to God. This isn't a new lie, but it is enjoying a revival today. The doctrine of universalism—which states that all people will ultimately gain salvation and enjoy heaven—has become the religion of the masses.

Even some charismatic and Pentecostal preachers such as Carlton Pearson of Oklahoma and D.E. Paulk of Atlanta have abandoned biblical orthodoxy to embrace this heresy. They are now on a crusade to rewrite Christian theology—and they have allies in some mainline denominations (such as the Episcopal Church) where the authority of Scripture is denied.

Christians who embrace universalism are like the neutered prophets of Baal in Jezebel's court. They preach a powerless message that can't change anyone. We must arise in the spirit of Elijah to prove to the world that the one true God answers by fire.

4. Man can redefine morality. Leaders in media, politics, education and entertainment are plotting the overthrow of

conventional morals. They want a hedonistic world with no rules and no guilt. This was most obvious when *Newsweek* published a recent cover story brazenly claiming that the Bible approves of same-sex marriage.

A lying spirit has invaded many mainline churches and is convincing weak Christians to change their views about homosexuality, abortion and fornication. Evil is called good while those who stand for the biblical values of purity and traditional marriage are labeled bigots. If we ignore these lies they will engulf us.

We cannot be silent on the issues the devil is attacking. If you are wavering in your faith on any of these four fundamentals, get honest about your doubts, repent of your lukewarmness and get your mind renewed. Don't become a brainwash victim.

J. Lee Grady is the editor of *Charisma*.

Strange Fire in the House of the Lord

We need to be careful. Current fads involving angels, ecstatic worship and necromancy could push us off the edge of spiritual sanity.



No one fully understands what Nadab and Abihu did to prompt God to strike them dead in the sanctuary of Israel. The Bible says they loaded their firepans with incense, ignited the

substance and “offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them” (Lev. 10:1, NASB). As a result of their careless and irreverent behavior, fire came from God’s presence and consumed them.

Zap. In an instant they were ashes.

Challenging Oprah in the Gay Debate

Last week Ted Haggard’s wife, Gayle, dared to defy the high priestess of America’s new morality.

Last week former Colorado pastor Ted Haggard hit the talk show circuit to promote the new HBO documentary about his fall from grace, *The Trials of Ted Haggard*. I’ll admit I wasn’t too excited about Haggard going public with the story of his relationship with a male prostitute, but there was a bright spot amid the awkward interviews. When Ted and his wife, Gayle, appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* Jan. 28, Gayle dared to defy Oprah and her audience.

How Revival is Transforming

the Largest Hindu Nation

Christianity is growing rapidly in the world's largest Hindu nation. Charisma looks at how the Holy Spirit is changing lives in India.

A few years ago on a hot, humid evening in Warangal, a city in southern India, about 8,000 locals gathered in a giant sports field while what seemed like 100,000 insects buzzed in the night sky. Most of the people were Hindus, but this did not stop them from visiting a Christian event hosted by a local evangelist, Harry Gomes, who is based further south in the city of Coimbatore.

As the dark-faced crowd gathered, billowing saris sparked a riot of turquoise, pink, saffron, green, aqua and red. The women in these flowing garments reclined on a huge piece of yellow fabric that covered half a football field. Men sat in white plastic chairs or stood near the edges of the field, where towering floodlights bathed the scene in a harsh glow.

Gomes, who has sponsored more than 200 outdoor evangelistic crusades in India since he began his ministry in 1996, was seated on the stage with his head bowed, oblivious to the noises from the audience or the blaring music coming from a praise team standing next to him. Accompanied by a drum machine and synthesizer, four women from Gomes' Bible college sang Indian choruses in Telugu-one of 29 major languages spoken in India today.

After a litany of announcements and more songs, an Indian minister in a black suit announced it was time for Gomes to preach. The restless crowd settled down while the dark clouds grew menacing. The bugs provided a strange soundtrack, crackling and sizzling as they hit chairs, sound equipment and light bulbs.

A small rug was rolled out on the stage, and Gomes knelt on

it, clutching his Bible in one hand and a microphone in the other. In his deep, resonating voice-obviously created for preaching-he began his brief sermon, all in perfect Telugu. (Gomes also speaks Hindi, Tamil and other Indian languages.)

After the sermon the action began. Still kneeling, Gomes began to recite a list of sicknesses and ailments. Arthritis. Tumors. Blindness. Heart problems. Skin disorders. People in the crowd began to stand. To the left of the giant stage, a woman-obviously demonized-began to scream. Two members of Gomes' ministry team ran to help her.

Gomes kept his eyes shut throughout his 15-minute prayer for the sick. He does not lay hands on people in his meetings but simply prays that Jesus Christ will reveal Himself to the Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims who come to hear him.

"It is Jesus who does the healing," he told *Charisma*. "We only need to believe and pray."

So far, about 12.4 million Indians have come to Christ in Gomes' meetings, but that is a small number compared to the total who have embraced Christianity in India in recent years. This nation of more than 1 billion people is on the verge of a spiritual upheaval.

New Testament Miracles

For Gomes and other church leaders *Charisma* interviewed, miracles are fueling much of the church growth in India.

Just ask Meshek Manepally, 46, a shop owner from a town in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. In late 2007, while attending one of Gomes' events in Pratipadu, he collapsed and began foaming at the mouth. His family had no idea what was wrong with him, but they panicked when he stopped breathing. His skin turned darker and his body became stiff.

Manepally's son, Varaprasad, loaded his father in a three-

wheel car to take him to a hospital. But while the family waited to maneuver the vehicle out of the crowd, Gomes' staff alerted him to the problem. He walked over to the car, crawled inside and prayed for the man.

Within a few minutes, Manepally was revived, and his son committed his life to Jesus after witnessing the miracle.

Said Manepally: "They told me, 'You were dead but now you are alive!' " His wife, Laxmi, said people in their village who heard about the resurrection spread the news. "For 10 days they came to see him. They treated him like Lazarus in the Bible," she says. "They told us, 'Your God is the true God.' "

Evangelist V.A. Thampy and his wife, Mariamma, witnessed a similar miracle 10 years ago in another village in Andhra Pradesh. A Christian woman named Maria had died, and locals would not give her a proper burial because her family had no money. She had been dead two days, and ants were crawling all over her corpse.

"She was ice cold," Mariamma says. "But after we prayed for her she came back to life. She still has the scars from the ant bites on her body. But she travels with me now, telling the story of what she saw in heaven while she was dead."

The Thampys, who lead an evangelistic ministry called New India Church of God, say signs and wonders have triggered thousands of conversions since they began their work in the southern state of Kerala in the late 1960s. Despite waves of persecution from Hindus and traditional Orthodox Christians, they have planted more than 2,000 churches in 23 Indian states and seven other countries.

"One hundred percent of Indian people are sick and possessed by demons," says V.A., who started his ministry by preaching from a coconut tree. "When we preach the gospel, they are instantly healed."

“Most Indian gurus are possessed by demons,” Mariamma adds. “When we pray for them the demon manifests and comes out. We have many former gurus in our churches today, including one who was deaf and dumb and was healed.”

Similar outpourings of miracles have occurred in Punjab, in far northern India near the Pakistani border. Pastor John Howell, 62, has planted hundreds of churches in villages there—often after an instance of healing. In one town near Firozpur, south of Amritsar, about 50 curious Hindus attended a church service held outside the tiny home of an 18-year-old woman who was healed a week earlier of an incurable heart condition.

“After she was healed, her parents threw away their Hindu idols,” Howell says. “Now everyone in this village is visiting the church to see her.” That church, planted in 2006, grew to 75 members after the first week—in a region where Hindus enforce strict laws about food, sacred cows and proper worship.

Miracles are not always welcome in India. On more than one occasion, Hindu radicals insisted that Gomes prove his healing power. Witches and Hindu priests also have opposed him.

In one town religious fanatics registered a case against him, claiming that he was practicing medicine without a license. “But on the very first day of the crusade,” Gomes says, “the Lord healed many crippled people and they started walking. The police who witnessed this ended up asking for prayer.”

A Legacy of Persecution

It’s no surprise that India is a dangerous place to preach the gospel. (Many historians say the apostle Thomas was either lanced or stoned by angry locals after he landed in Kodungallur, in the state of Kerala, in the first century.) The Pakistani terrorists who bombed hotels in Mumbai in

November 2008, killing 173, reminded the world that religious and political tensions are seething under the façade of India's booming economy and technological progress.

The Mumbai incident captured headlines around the world. But the media paid little attention to the religious violence that erupted in late 2007, and again in the summer of 2008, in Orissa, an economically depressed state in the north central region where Christianity has been growing rapidly.

One of the most widely publicized incidents of martyrdom in recent history occurred in Orissa. Australian missionary Graham Staines, who worked with Indian lepers, was murdered there in 1999 with his two young boys. Crazy Hindu militants set Staines' vehicle on fire and burned the three alive.

Hindu mobs, energized by the radical Bharatiya Janata political party, went on more rampages last year-burning churches, leveling homes, raping nuns, and, in some cases, cutting Christians to pieces with machetes or burning them alive. As many as 118 died in the recent Orissa attacks, and local government officials were slow to quell the unrest. The violence spread to other states, including Karnataka and even Kerala, which has India's largest Christian population.

John Dayal, an Indian activist who founded the All India Christian Council, says what happened in Orissa is part of a 50-year hate campaign waged by nationalistic Hindus who draw inspiration from the Nazis of Germany. They believe India is a Hindu country, and they will go to any means necessary to defend the Hindu caste system-which keeps poor people locked at the bottom of society.

"The violence in August and September 2008 has been the worst in our 2,000-year history in India," Dayal says. "More than 50,000 [Christians] were homeless and more than 30,000 were hiding in forests, chased like animals by fanatics who were forcing them to become Hindus or die."

Why the harsh violence? Indian church planter P.G. Vargis told missionary journalist John Lindner in August that the attacks against Christians were retaliatory strikes-aimed at wiping out the churches in Orissa because of extraordinary growth in recent years. Vargis said that when his ministry, the Indian Evangelical Team (IET), first went to Orissa there were hardly any evangelical churches there.

"Today it is difficult to travel 50 miles in this part of Orissa without encountering an IET church," Vargis says. "As of 2007, we had planted more than 1,000 pioneer churches in Orissa."

Other church leaders confirmed that the number of Christians has grown exponentially in Orissa, and they accuse the Indian government of hiding statistics. "Orissa was once completely unreached, but today as many as 28 percent of the people are Christians," one pastor told *Charisma*.

Jeet, a 29-year-old pastor, knows what it means to be persecuted for his faith. He grew up in Orissa's capital, Bhubaneswar, but his parents kicked him out of his home at age 17 when they realized he would no longer make sacrifices to a Hindu snake god. He finally admitted that he had converted to Christ through the influence of a friend.

Jeet's father told him he could return home when he was ready to renounce Jesus. The young man has not been home in 14 years. He started a church in a nearby village, and he has a goal of evangelizing the 56 unreached tribes in the region. He has been threatened numerous times by Hindu mobs.

Says Jeet: "They tell me, 'There is no need to preach Jesus here! We are all Hindus!' And I tell them, 'It is the commandment of Jesus Christ that I preach to all people!'" "

Larry Derstine, an American who has ministered with his wife in north India since 1989 (and was forced to evacuate in September because of the Orissa violence), said almost all

Christians he knows there have been persecuted. It is simply the price they pay to follow Jesus.

“They are resilient,” he says of these brave believers. “They are crushed, but they bounce back. We give them just a little bit of training and they go a long way.”

Dismantling the Caste System

Christianity is unraveling a foundational tenet of Indian culture-the idea that people are categorized by caste. Hinduism teaches that there are four castes-Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (rulers), Vaishyas (merchants) and Shudras (laborers)-and that below these people are the Dalits, also known as the “untouchables.”

Today the gospel is extremely attractive to these 360 million Dalits, who for centuries have been denied social privileges, including access to water. The poorest of the poor, they have been told they are less valuable than animals. Although discrimination based on caste has been officially outlawed in India, most Dalits still lack educational and economic opportunities.

Radical Hindus want to keep Dalits in their place to preserve traditional social order. But in recent years, hundreds of thousands of Dalits have found Christ-and in the gospel they discovered the self-empowerment, personal liberty and human dignity that Hinduism denied them. As the Dalit Christian movement grew, radical Hindus tried to prevent conversions.

Indian missions strategist Joseph D’Souza, director of Operation Mobilization in Hyderabad, says the amazing trend of Dalit evangelism is single-handedly transforming his nation. “The Dalit struggle for freedom is gaining strength, and their oppressors do not want them to go free,” D’Souza says. “India will soon go through a massive spiritual change, and this will match what God is doing in China.”

D'Souza also directs the Dalit Freedom Network, which has raised global awareness of Dalit oppression. He says church growth among Dalits is not only upsetting upper-caste Hindu extremists but also some Christians in the south of India who are "caste infected." Some Christians, he says, "do not see that the gospel and caste cannot go together."

Throughout India today, growing Pentecostal and charismatic churches are trumpeting the biblical idea that all people are created equal. It's a radical concept in this ancient land shaped by caste values.

"In Christ there is no Brahmin or Dalit, literate or illiterate, no rich or poor," says Shekhar Kallianpur, pastor of the New Life Fellowship in Mumbai. A former Hindu Brahmin himself, he was converted to Christ 30 years ago and is a thorn in the side of Hindu extremists.

Says Kallianpur: "A Dalit's decision to follow Christ brings the kingdom value that there is no Greek or Jew, Brahmin or Shudra, black or white, but we are all one in Christ. This powerful transformation, spread through word of mouth, has become a major movement in our nation."

Paul Thangiah is pastor of the 15,000-member Full Gospel Assembly of God Church in Bengaluru (Bangalore), India's third most populous city. He compares the caste system to the problem of racial prejudice in the United States and believes the Indian church is overcoming it.

"Caste has strong and deep roots in the very being of India," Thangiah says. "But Pentecostal churches in India, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, do not support or encourage the caste system. The gospel transforms people from different castes into one caste."

A Bright Future

Secular economists and politicians agree that India is doing more than just producing Bollywood films and taking technology jobs outsourced from the United States. Its upwardly mobile population, entrepreneurial spirit and democratic ideals could turn it into the world's next superpower.

And while many of the world's developed countries have negative birth rates, India is one of the youngest nations on the planet-with 47 percent of the population under age 20. That's what prompted Indian-American evangelist Sujo John, 34, to launch an ambitious church-planting strategy that will, beginning this year, target youth in the major urban centers of India, including Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai and Calcutta.

"These young Indians will be very dominant in world affairs," says John, a native of Calcutta. "They really don't hold to their parents' faith. They are saying, 'We have tried everything and we are empty.' Soon I believe there will be an army of Indian young people who will go to the ends of the earth with the gospel."

Pastor Kallianpur agrees. "We have a prophetic word over this nation that India will be a platform for the glory of the Lord to the nations," he says. "Hinduism was born here. Buddhism was born here. Sikhism was born here. Jainism was born here. New Age was born here. All these religions went to the nations. Now the time has come that India will proclaim the message of the Ageless One to the nations."

D'Souza believes India will demonstrate "the full transformational power of the gospel" in coming years, particularly as the struggle for Dalit freedom gains strength. He says that there are four "waves of the Spirit" that the Indian church is riding: (1) the wave of proclamation (aggressive evangelism); (2) the wave of compassion; (3) the wave of signs and wonders; and (4) the wave of social justice.

Churches and ministries that embrace this four-pronged gospel “are the ones that are growing in India,” D’Souza says. “Those that try to box God in their own world are not growing.”

Perhaps D’Souza and other Indian leaders will eventually bring their message to the American church. One thing is certain: Indians make up one-sixth of the world’s population, and they are a force to be reckoned with. Before it is all over, the spiritual explosion happening on the other side of the world will affect us all.

J. Lee Grady is the former editor of Charisma. He conducted interviews for this article during visits to the Indian states of Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Bihar.

Praise Him in the Meltdown

Learn how to fight discouragement in times of adversity.

☒ Last year was not an easy year. On the national front we endured a divisive presidential campaign, a mortgage crisis, soaring gas prices, low consumer confidence, renewed tensions with Russia, bank failures, layoffs, selloffs, buyouts, bailouts and meltdowns—plus a storm that almost wiped Galveston off the map.

It was also a tough year spiritually. Moral failures and divorces among Christian leaders have left many disillusioned. Politics has bitterly divided the church. Ministries have had to cut back because of the economic downturn. Some of my friends are joking about buying “I SURVIVED 2008” T-shirts.