

False Reverend Attacks Kenneth and Gloria Copeland

I had never heard of John Oliver until yesterday.

Call me sheltered, but I don't waste my time watching junk on television when I could be making intercession, reading the Word, worshipping God, preaching the gospel, healing the sick or casting out devils.

But when my spunky assistant (she'll like that I called her spunky) sent me a video with the subject line "So John Oliver did a segment on televangelists" I didn't know who Oliver was—but I knew it couldn't be good.

I now know that Oliver, a satirist who has taken on the name "Megareverend" and "CEO of Our Lady of Perpetual Exemption" is the host of *Last Week Tonight*. He aired what could be best described as an exposé on preachers like Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Creflo Dollar, Mike Murdoch and Robert Tilton.

Oliver zeroed in on those he identified as "prosperity" preachers who believe God for healing and high-end airplanes. Oliver also called out DayStar, TBN and Inspiration Ministries (he didn't mention) for airing the televangelists before he explained how he launched his own false church to demonstrate how little IRS accountability exists for houses of worship collecting tax-free donations.

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"If Robert Tilton, Kenneth Copeland and all these pastors can get away with it and we get stopped, truly we have witnessed a (expletive) miracle," Oliver said, after showing a sequence of preachers taking up extravagant offerings on television. One by one, he mocked the preachers' concepts of "seed faith" and

suggested they were predators.

I understand the concern about so-called prosperity preachers. There is plenty of financial abuse in the church. Some time ago I was on a television program where one of the other guests promised God would break generational curses if viewers sowed a significant seed. Another preacher had a word about Luke 6:38 and said God would bless them mightily if they would release \$, \$638 or \$6,308. I stood up, by contrast, and called the nation to repent. Suddenly, to my amazement, the shouting and dancing stopped.

No, I don't endorse manipulative sermons with the sole purpose of wringing pennies (thousands of them) out of your pocket. I see the abuses. But I do believe in the concept of seed faith. I do believe God wants us to prosper and be in health even as our soul prospers (3 John 1:2). I do believe in supernatural debt cancellation. And I don't believe we should mock so-called prosperity preachers, even if we don't believe they hear from God. Nor do I believe we should insinuate that God is cursing at them, as Oliver did.

Oliver used some extreme examples—and some of them were so far out of context that they manipulated reality. He also showcased people who were hurt because they (or someone they loved) didn't get the miracle they believed for when they sowed into the Copeland's ministry. But I've never heard Kenneth or Gloria Copeland promise anyone that if they sowed enough money God would heal them, as Oliver hinted.

So, again, I am wholeheartedly against the prophets who charge money for a prophetic word and the prosperity preachers who manipulate for money. I was once in a meeting where a prophetess offered an anointed breakthrough prayer shawl for a \$1,000 seed and urged people to run to the altar. That's just shameful. I walked out the side door of the hotel banquet room, through the kitchen and onto the streets of Philadelphia immediately and never looked back. Preachers who sow to the

flesh will reap from the flesh (see Gal. 6:8).

That said, we have to be careful not to paint everyone who believes for an airplane or sows a seed to get out of debt as a heretic. Yes, Oliver exposed some excesses, but he went overboard with some of the examples he cited. In any case, I don't believe we should mock anybody. I despise the mocking spirit. And I know that God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, that shall he reap (see Gal. 6:7).

Of course, Paul the apostle said, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things. Yet he himself is not judged by anyone" (1 Cor. 2:14-15). I exhort you to be discerning. Don't fall for the financial hype. Be obedient to the Holy Spirit in your giving rather than receiving pressure from man—and don't mock what you don't understand.

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