

# Tammy Faye Messner Finds New Role in Ministering to Gay Fans

**To her Christian critics, the former TV host says the church should be a 'hospital,' not a 'courtroom'**

The former co-host of the controversial PTL Television Network, Tammy Faye Messner, has been enjoying a burgeoning ministry to homosexuals.

Once adored by viewers of the electronic church, Messner now appears at gay-pride events nationwide, such as a Tammy Faye look-alike contest held in Washington, D.C., recently where she was "surrounded by men in falsies and pancake makeup to upstage," as a National Public Radio report pointed out.

In a recent interview with Charisma, Messner described how her new work began. After she and then-husband Jim Bakker lost their ministry and he went to prison for defrauding viewers of millions of dollars, Messner began a church in Orlando, Fla.

During this time, a self-confessed homosexual wrote to Messner and sent her \$10,000 to use as she wished. Years earlier, the gay community had realized Messner's concern for homosexuals when she had interviewed a man who had AIDS. "I told the church that they were created to love people with AIDS, not shun them," she said.

When Messner filed for divorce from Jim Bakker, she gave up her Orlando church and as a result had no income. However, she still had money in reserves and with the help of a girlfriend was able to find a place to live in Palm Springs, Calif.

Messner subsequently was contacted by a homosexual fan of hers, Joe Spotts, who told her that gays all over the country loved her and would like her to start working with them. Would she consider doing that? he had asked. Messner said she agreed to do so after she had prayed about the request.

"I felt that God was opening up an avenue of ministry with which I was totally unfamiliar. He was expanding my ministry," she said.

"How can you not love people who have treated you so kindly at the lowest part in your life?" Messner added. "I'm just trying to give back to them. then there's a God who loves them and cares for them. I told them there's a better way nothing can give you peace except Jesus."

Spotts continues to have a close working relationship with Messner. He emphasized that Messner is not sanctioning the so-called gay lifestyle but added that she isn't condemning gays either.

"All she wants to get across is that God loves you," he said.

Messner admitted she does not specifically address the issue of homosexuality being a sin when she talks to groups of gays. "I leave that up to the Holy Spirit because unless He speaks to them, they won't change anyway," she said.

Alan Chambers, executive director of Exodus International North America—an ex-gay ministry organization—agreed. "[Messner] is right. The Holy Spirit is the one who convicts us of sin," he said.

However, Messner said if someone comes up to her and asks her if homosexuality is a sin, then she tells them that “it’s best not to take a chance with your soul.”

“If you have a what you’re hearing from God and read the Bible,” she said.

“If when asked point-blank [Messner] never says homosexuality is a sin, then there is a danger in that,” Chambers cautioned.

Spotts said the value of Messner’s ministry is that she “gives people who have spent a lifetime with an arm’s-length relationship with their respective churches—and by extension, God and heaven—[a chance to realize that] ‘God does love me, and I can’t shut Him out of my life.’”

Messner is known for her use of makeup and fashion and an overall outrageous appeal. Could that be why homosexuals are drawn to her? Chambers said the gay community “loves a diva, and Messner can use that effectively.”

In addition, Chambers added, Messner is viewed as “an outcast of the Christian community.”

“No one holds more credibility in a community of outcasts than an outcast herself,” he noted.

For those who criticize her work with gays, Messner had a quick response: “I thought the church was supposed to be a hospital and not a courtroom.”

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