

Why Are Christians Throwing Stones at Bishop Juanita Bynum?

Juanita Bynum has been through hell and back—and now Global United Fellowship (GUF) is promoting the controversial prophetess to full-blown bishop status.

It's no great surprise that her spiritual elevation is stirring a Christian hornet's nest, but are believers being mean-spirited or just discerning?

In case you're not familiar with GUF, it's a Christian fellowship that embraces churches, ministries, fellowships and pastors who acknowledge, accept and submit to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. GUF believes there is more that unites Christians than divides them.

Ironically, Bynum's appointment is already driving division. Although the group's mission statement is to "foster biblical unity among believers as one body in Christ," some onlookers are gravely concerned about the appointment, given her history and what Paul wrote in 1 Tim. 3:2-5:

"An overseer then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, sober, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach; not given to drunkenness, not violent, not greedy for money, but patient, not argumentative, not covetous; and one who manages his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence. For if a man does not know how to manage his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?"

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"Is there any doubt we are in the last days? The great falling away is happening before our eyes," one commenter wrote on a Christian news site. "Homosexuality has infiltrated the church. Between 50 to 90% of Christians (sic) men are watching porn. The wheat is being separated from the chaff."

Many of the comments were too harsh, accusatory or unhelpful to republish. Suffice it to say that a peppered history that includes homosexual encounters with women, speaking at an ordination service for a gay minister, alleged breaches of contract and divorce has some second-guessing Bynum's appointment as bishop.

Bynum divorced her second husband, Bishop Thomas Weeks, in 2008, about a month before their sixth wedding anniversary. It seems, though, she had good reason. Weeks earlier that year pled guilty to aggravated assault for pushing and kicking Bynum in the parking lot of an Atlanta hotel.

Bynum has taken plenty of flak over the years. She's also been the subject of rap songs calling out prosperity preachers, along with Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer, Creflo Dollar, T.D. Jakes, Benny Hinn, Paula White, Fred Price, Kenneth Copeland, Robert Tilton, and Eddie Long.

"Jesus is not a means to an end," Shai Linne raps in his song "False Teacher\$". "The gospel is He came to redeem us from sin, and that is the message forever I'll yell. If you're living your best life now, you're heading for hell."

In 2013, Bynum—who was once a regular on TBN and has had gospel music hits and best-selling books—was arrested. I wrote about that in my column, *Why Do So Many Televangelists Land Themselves in Jail?*.

The case involved a judgment that ordered her to shell out \$140,000 to ALW Entertainment. Apparently, she did not follow through on a commitment to perform in a play ALW was producing. She later said she was "wrongfully detained" and

her accuser backed down.

Bynum has lived a stormy life, with ups and downs and downs and ups. Many will not let her live it down, but the GUF has embraced her.

How do we apply the truth in 1 Tim. 3:2-5 to situations like this? Is the blood of Jesus sufficient for a peppered past and all the scandals that went along with it? How do you judge true repentance? Is there a double standard for recovering from scandals for women in ministry? Should Christians really be throwing stones at Bynum?