

Benny Hinn Admits 'Friendship' With Paula White But Tells TV Audience It's Over

Evangelist Benny Hinn recently admitted at a crusade in Oakland, Calif., to having a "friendship" with fellow minister Paula White while he's still married after a tabloid pictured them holding hands in Rome on July 13. But the well-known healing minister says the relationship is over.

"A friendship did develop," Hinn said of White in Oakland on July 30. "Hear this: No immorality whatsoever. These people out there are making it sound like we had an affair. That's a lie."

Hinn invited his daughters Natasha and Eleasha on stage in Oakland and asked the crowd to pray for him, his estranged wife, Suzanne, and their four children. He said he and his wife had problems in their marriage for years and "could no longer exist in the same house."

Hinn's wife, Suzanne, filed for divorce in February after the couple had been separated for years, but it has not been finalized.

Hinn aired segments from the Oakland crusade and made additional personal comments on his *This Is Your Day* program on TBN Aug. 5, the day after his 31st wedding anniversary. A ministry executive said the program will air on other networks this week, including on Daystar Friday.

Hinn told the crowd in Oakland that the Vatican made him a Patron of the Arts and invited him to visit Rome. He said patrons are asked to find donors to help maintain the

Vatican's art collections, and he wanted White to become a donor.

"I let her come with me to Rome so she can donate money," Hinn said. "That was stupid on my part. And for that I do ask forgiveness."

The *National Enquirer* published photos in its Aug. 2 issue of Hinn walking hand-in-hand with White in Rome. The article, which released July 23, claimed the two spent three nights in a five-star hotel Hinn booked under a false name.

Hinn said in Oakland that he and White found "common ground" after she appeared on *This Is Your Day* in late May. White and her ex-husband, Randy, went through a public divorce in 2007. She now leads the Tampa, Fla., church they founded, Without Walls International Church, and has her own national television show called *Paula Today*.

He said he and White were never alone in Rome, but claims he ended his friendship with her after the tabloid report was published. "I said, 'Paula, we can't even be friends right now.'"

Hinn admitted that he contributed to the demise of his marriage by putting ministry over his family. "I was so busy in the ministry, I was so caught up with the ministry, I forgot about my family," Hinn said. "That's probably what broke the whole thing up."

He said he often preached that ministry comes first, acknowledging that he knew that teaching hurt his children. "You know what? It's wrong," he said of the teaching. "I'm here to admit I was wrong because the call of God first should touch the family. If you have no family, you can't go on anyways."

Hinn admitted he and his wife had "challenges" but said he didn't expect her to end the marriage.

"We had troubles for a long time, and I would ask her often, 'Would you ever divorce me?'" Hinn said. "She said, 'Never because I fear God too much.' She said, 'My covenant is with God, not you.' And I guess she could no longer handle it. One day she did it to my shock."

Hinn said it's painful to talk about his marital problems, noting that he and his wife were separated long before the divorce filing.

"We've had to be very quiet to protect the ministry, the work of the Lord," he said. "But sadly when you are a public person, everything you do becomes public."

"I don't care how strong you are," Hinn added. "I don't care if the anointing of God is mighty on you. Nobody wants to be alone. I don't care who you are. I am a human being just like you."

Hinn said he is "still focused on the Lord's work," adding, "I'm going to go on serving Jesus with all my being, and whatever the future holds, that's His business."