

Investigative Panel Declares Todd Bentley Disqualified From Ministry

A panel of Christian leaders investigating accusations against Todd Bentley has released a statement today, Jan. 2. In it, they declare Bentley to be disqualified from ministry. Meanwhile, Bentley is starting up a new ministry for 2020.

Dr. Michael Brown assembled the panel in September 2019 after revivalist Stephen Powell accused Bentley of “sexual misconduct” involving male and female interns. Leaders on the panel included: Dr. Joseph Mattera of Resurrection Church, Dr. James W. Goll of God Encounters Ministries, Dr. Jane Hamon of Vision Church, Bishop Harry Jackson of Hope Christian Church and Dr. Don Finto of Belmont Church.

The statement outlines the opinion of the board after about three months of investigation, during which an investigator gathered testimonies from witnesses.

Brown says the investigator compiled a list of 60 questions. Although Bentley initially agreed to answer them, Brown says, he did not follow through.

“Todd required the investigator to submit the questions through his attorney, after which he ceased communicating with Dr. Brown or the investigator,” Brown says.

The testimonies the investigator compiled include numerous firsthand reports that date as far back as 2008 to as recently as 2019. Other reports go back as far as 2004. Accusations include adultery, sexting (which Brown says included nude photos or videos), vulgar language and substance abuse.

“Sadly, we see no signs of true, lasting repentance,” Brown

writes.

He says some of these immoral activities involved people under Todd's spiritual oversight, including interns, staff, team members and other individuals he was ministering to, "making these violations all the more serious."

Although the panel acknowledges it has no legal authority over Bentley or his ministry, its members advise that the revivalist be removed from ministry and stripped of his ministerial credentials.

The possibility of public ministry in the future, though, is not off the table.

According to the statement, Bentley should not be put back in public ministry until he has spent several years exemplifying genuine repentance. This repentance must include "the breaking of these long-term, sinful habits; public acknowledgment of his sin, without equivocation, including asking forgiveness of those he sinned against; and submission to local church leadership until trust had been rebuilt."

The panel advises, though, that Bentley never again lead his own independent ministry. Instead, if he is to publicly minister again, he should do so under the umbrella of another leader's ministry, the statement says.

Bentley doesn't seem to agree. On Dec. 31, 2019, he announced a new school of ministry starting March 2020. Bentley says in a video that he will start equipping students with his own curriculum.

"I'm gonna be more hands-on in this school, and I am having even the guest speakers that we have in our school in 2020, starting in March, they're gonna be teaching my curriculum on healing and prophetic and supernatural and power evangelism," he says.

The school will hold about 25 students and will focus on supernatural ministry.

Bentley's goal for the new year, according to his Facebook page, is to let go of "negative and unbiblical processes and accusations! God, my family, community, and my wife! Blessings. #LettingGo."

While he does not expressly state what these negative and unbiblical processes and accusations are, the post went live about 30 minutes after Brown posted the panel's statement.

Read the panel's statement in full below:

Official Statement from the Leadership Panel on Todd Bentley, January 2, 2020

As followers of Jesus, we delight in God's mercy and grace and believe in the power of restoration and forgiveness. At the same time, we recognize that God's Word holds leaders in the Church to high standards, since they serve as representatives of Christ himself. The question before us is this: Does Todd Bentley, founder of Fresh Fire Ministries, live up to those standards? Is he qualified to be a recognized leader in the Church?

The signers of this statement are leaders in ministry who were asked to review a matter that invokes these beliefs and to judge the fitness of a person for ministry according to biblical standards and the leading of the Holy Spirit. In conducting such investigation there are limits on what can be known with certainty, but we look carefully at long-term track records and the accumulated testimony of many witnesses.

The opinion we have reached here is theological, answering the question: Does Todd Bentley, founder of Fresh Fire Ministries, live up to the high standards required of those who serve as representatives of Christ? Is he qualified, according to our understanding of biblical standards, to be a recognized leader

in the Church?

As part of this process, we sought to hear Todd's side directly, but he declined to answer a list of 60 questions compiled by the investigator after initially agreeing to respond. (Todd required the investigator to submit the questions through his attorney, after which he ceased communicating with Dr. Brown or the investigator.)

Based on our careful review of numerous first-hand reports, some of them dating back to 2004, we state our theological opinion and can say with one voice that, without a doubt, Todd is not qualified to serve in leadership or ministry today. There are credible accusations of a steady pattern of ungodly and immoral behavior, confirmed by an independent investigator's interviews dating from 2008 up through 2019, along with other testimonies dating back to 2004. And while we only took into account first-hand reports, there are many other second and third-hand reports repeating the same accusations, often from people in different parts of the country (or, world) who had no connection between them, other than their interaction with Todd.

We love Todd and believe that he has been supernaturally gifted by God, and our highest joy would be to see Todd coming before God and the community of believers in humility and repentance, openly desiring help to get his life fully healed and surrendered to Jesus. Sadly, we see no signs of true, lasting repentance. Instead, we see a steady pattern of compromised behavior, including credible accusations of adultery, sexting (including the exchanging of nude pictures or videos), vulgar language, and substance abuse.

And, to repeat, these charges have been brought by numerous witnesses over a period of roughly 15 years, right until 2019. Even more importantly, many of these activities have involved people for whom Todd was spiritually responsible (interns, staff, team members, individuals he was ministering to),

making these violations all the more serious.

In our view, this disqualifies Todd from public ministry until such time that he has demonstrated true, lasting fruits of repentance, which would include: the breaking of these long-term, sinful habits; public acknowledgment of his sin, without equivocation, including asking forgiveness of those he sinned against; and submission to local church leadership until trust had been rebuilt. This would likely take a period of years.

We also recognize that formal ordination into the ministry amounts to a recognition by other leaders of a candidate's qualifications to serve as a leader in the Church. We therefore recommend that Todd's current ordination be rescinded until the process of repentance and restoration, described above, has taken place.

It is also our opinion that, while it is possible for Todd to do public ministry again in the future, at no point should he lead his own ministry. Instead, if he was truly restored to God and in submission to godly authority, he could serve in another leader's ministry. But we believe it would be unwise and even potentially dangerous for him to lead his own ministry again.

Unfortunately, what's missing in the modern church is often the combination of relational and organizational accountability, which would ensure each minister's ability to navigate turbulent emotional, organizational, and spiritual waters. We pray that Todd would find such relational and organizational accountability, and it is our hope that this will become the norm, rather than the exception, for other leaders in the days ahead.

We recognize, of course, that we have no legal authority over Todd or his ministry, nor do we seek to have such authority. Rather, as elders in the Body of Christ who have been asked to judge righteously, and in the fear of the Lord, we make our

viewpoint public, praying that this will help bring confidence and hope to those who have been sinned against as well as encourage deeper accountability in the Church.

We pray for God's best for Todd and his family and encourage them to seek out godly help with the hope that their lives may be fully restored in God.

Dr. Brown will be issuing a separate statement outlining the process to this point, and we encourage you to direct all questions to him. May 2020 be a year of redemption, restoration, and hope for the Body of Christ.

Dr. Joseph Mattera, Overseeing Bishop of Resurrection Church, Brooklyn, NY, and Convener of the US Coalition of Apostolic Leaders

Dr. James W. Goll, Founder of God Encounters Ministries, Franklin, TN

Dr. Jane Hamon, Co-Pastor, Vision Church @ Christian International, Santa Rosa Beach, FL

Bishop Harry Jackson, Senior Pastor, Hope Christian Church, Beltsville, MD, and Presiding Bishop of the Ambassadors of Hope Fellowship of Churches

Dr. Don Finto, Pastor Emeritus, Belmont Church, Nashville, TN, and President and founder of Caleb Company {eo}