

Judah Smith Points to Charismatic Movement Momentum

Judah Smith, author of the best-selling *Jesus Is: Find a New Way to Be Human*, is the lead pastor of The City Church in Seattle, the fourth largest-growing church in the nation. His late father, charismatic pastor Wendell Smith, founded the church in 1992. In this exclusive interview, Smith talks about the charismatic movement, his church's role in culture and more.

Charisma News: How do you see the word *charismatic* changing today?

Smith: I see it probably, in a sense, becoming more and more prevalent. By prevalent, I mean people are more and more open to it. I think the actual term *charismatic* has been misinterpreted, misunderstood and in some cases not known, not even heard of. In the era we live in, the great thing is people aren't getting hung up on these technical terms as much as they are getting really caught up in the person of Jesus and in the simplicity of Scripture.

What I know about the charismatic movement and all that is charismatic is beautiful and wonderful, and I'm excited because I see a generation that maybe will never know the word *charismatic* but will know the person of Jesus and the gifts of the Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit. I think that's what's exciting to me. In the era we're living in, maybe some of the technical terms won't be as known, but the expression and living out the Scripture will be very realistic.

Charisma News: Does The City Church still emphasize certain "charismatic" elements?

Smith: Yeah, we do. Absolutely. Always will. A lot of it is the vernacular changing or vocabulary that's changing. People are functioning very similarly; the gospel remains the same.

But its packaging, its delivery is changing, and I think that's what people—I hope—won't misunderstand. A new era and generation of leaders and communities and churches, but the gospel is remaining the same. The expression of the Holy Spirit is the same. I think the vernacular and vocabulary are changing. And I think in a lot of ways that's exciting.

Charisma News: What do you see as the biggest challenge facing the body of Christ today? And how can we tackle it?

Smith: To me, the great challenge has always been and will always be keeping Jesus the main thing—keeping the main thing the main thing, keeping the big deal the big deal—and not getting caught up in the peripheral. I think that continues to be the challenge in an era that's so distracted by media and so distracted by a fast-pace society, culture, entertainment. I think it's imperative that we keep it clear, keep it simple and really make it about Jesus.

Charisma News: There's a lot of talk about the church remaining relevant, yet the church can't compromise the truth in the process. How do you strike that balance?

Smith: I kind of feel like the gospel's nature is beyond relevant, in terms of the nature of the gospel is prophetic. It's very much transcendent, in terms of the discussion of relevance. Relevance may deal with the vernacular, the vocabulary, and I'm all for that. I think there are certain words and terms, and not so much biblical vocabulary. I believe in the fullness of Christian Scriptures and their choice of words. I feel like we've got to stick to the ancient truths. We've got to stick to these beautiful mysteries that we hold so dear, and I think they are by nature prophetic. The gospel supernaturally keeps us relevant. It's amazing that way.

Charisma News: What's your favorite book in the Bible, and why?

Smith: First and Second Timothy. I relate a lot to Timothy. I find myself a lot in Timothy and the things that he goes

through. I find great comfort in Paul's writings to Timothy. It feels like he's writing right to me. That's the key when it comes to Scripture: finding yourself in one of the biblical characters and really identifying with them and gleaning from that.

Charisma News: As one of the fastest-growing churches in the nation, what do you think is your responsibility?

Smith: I think our greatest responsibility probably starts at home. I think really living like Jesus and loving like Jesus and loving our kids, loving our wife. I think good preaching, good leading, good loving comes from good living, and I think looking more like Jesus in everyday, average, ordinary scenarios. I think that will always be our greatest responsibility. I pray that the church and leadership—serving, preaching and leading, all of it—is an overflow of a life well lived.

This is Part 2 of a two-part series. [Click here for Part 1.](#)