

Popular Charismatic Pastor-Turned-Marijuana Smuggler: 'I Fell Off the Way'

Charismatic pastor John Lee Bishop was sentenced Monday to five years in prison for smuggling marijuana from Mexico to the U.S. up to 20 times.

"One hundred percent, your judgment is what God wants," Bishop told the judge. "I fell off the way. But my God has never forsaken me."

Bishop, former pastor of Living Hope Church in Vancouver, Washington, was arrested almost a year ago after a U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer stopped him and found marijuana hidden in Bishop's wheel well. When police searched his car further, they found a total of 105 packages of marijuana in secret compartments. The 55-year-old pastor pled guilty to charges of drug smuggling earlier this year.

Court filings allege that Bishop's wife, Michelle, and son, David, were also involved in smuggling the drugs when the family lived in Mexico. *The Columbian* reports that the couple spent the money on cruises and trips to theme parks.

At the height of his popularity, Bishop was known for his dramatic flair in preaching, which one time included bringing a live Bengal tiger on stage. He wrote two books that contained forewords by Pastor Rick Warren and evangelist Ruth Graham. Bishop shocked the Christian community, though, when he turned to alcohol, had an affair with his assistant, abused prescription drugs and moved to Cabo San Lucas, where his marijuana-smuggling career started.

Bishop told the court that he will do all he can to "bring hope and life into every prison I come in contact with and to

do good," according to the News Tribune.

He is now back to preaching, but this time it's to five inmates in a prison Bible study.