

5 Reasons Creflo Dollar Shouldn't Buy a New Jet

Last week Atlanta-based prosperity preacher Creflo Dollar announced to the world that he needed \$65 million to buy a new Gulfstream jet. He asked 200,000 of his followers to donate \$300 each so he could ride in style. He told his audience that the plane was needed so he could “continue reaching a lost and dying world for the Lord Jesus Christ.”

A few people dug into their wallets to send Dollar the needed cash. The rest of us started feeling sick to our stomachs.

By this week, after the blogosphere blew up with angry reactions to Dollar's outlandish proposal, his public relations firm announced that “Project G650” had been placed on hold. Dollar reluctantly caved to public pressure and decided that, for now at least, he will have to be content to either charter a private jet or—heaven forbid—fly first-class on a commercial plane.

I am not sure which is crazier—that Dollar insisted on being treated like the king of a small country, or that his church-owned PR firm didn't realize this inane fund-raising plan would backfire. Hello? Welcome to the year 2015, a time when Christian people are smart enough to smell a religious scam before they get bamboozled.

I hate to even give this scheme any attention, but there are naïve Christians who don't realize when they are being taken to the cleaners by a man who claims to speak for God. Rev. Dollar and those who follow him should be ashamed that he has dragged the name of Jesus through the mud and made all Christians look greedy and egotistical.

Here are the five top reasons why I would never give Creflo Dollar money for a private jet:

1. Private jets are a foolish use of donor funds. The Bible calls us to be good stewards of God's resources. Private aircraft cost an exorbitant amount of money compared to commercial flights because the owners must provide service and upkeep on the vehicles. If a preacher insists on renting a private jet, the cost to fly from Fort Lauderdale to New York would be in the ballpark of \$59,000, compared to a \$652 ticket on a commercial plane. People who own private jets spend as much as \$4 million a year just on maintenance.

2. Ministers shouldn't use donors to boost their egos. So why would any preacher need his own plane? They can give you a litany of reasons: Time saved, hassle-free travel, no worries about lost luggage. But the real reason is obvious: It makes them look good. It's all about image. It reveals a pride problem. And the Bible says: "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6b). If someone needs to fly to the most remote village of Borneo, and there are no commercial planes, then I can understand the need for a private plane. But Rev. Dollar is not going to Borneo. Usually he is flying to his satellite church in Brooklyn, New York. (Delta has a round-trip ticket for \$337 from Atlanta.)

3. Ministers who demand luxury deny the core of the gospel. Rev. Dollar has been known to twist the gospel in the past, proposing that Jesus was independently wealthy. Dollar invented this gospel to make it easier to build a case for his own wealth. But the prosperity gospel has become a hollow message in our generation. We are confronted every day by the reality of poverty and suffering in our world, and we know that true followers of Christ are called to give and share, not take and hoard. We also know that a preacher who gets rich off of the offerings of poor people is involved in exploitation.

4. The world doesn't need a message of greed. The prosperity gospel was popular during the 1980s, when many Christians in the United States were riding the wave of American capitalism.

But most of the get-rich preachers of that era either landed in jail or fell morally, and we reaped a whirlwind of bad fruit. We were supposed to learn a lesson from that failed experiment. God blesses us not so we can become selfish consumers but so we can become selfless channels of His blessings to others.

5. Jesus rode a donkey. When the Son of God was about to be presented to the city of Jerusalem as the promised Messiah, He didn't raise money to buy a gold chariot drawn by Caesar's best horses. He rode on the back of a rented donkey, the transportation of a poor man. He didn't require a first-class seat or a luxury vehicle.

Jesus humbled himself. He lowered the bar and invited all of us—especially those who call themselves ministers of the gospel—to model servanthood.

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