

Bravo for Kenneth Copeland's Handling of Ambush Interview

As a journalist, I understand the media game. So when I saw how *Inside Edition* did an ambush interview with evangelist Kenneth Copeland several months ago—and how the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and Fox News online picked up the story—I felt I needed to share my opinion. In my view, it was the “same old, same old” journalistic treatment of successful media ministers. At the same time, I believe other Christian leaders should stand with Copeland and let him know we believe he handled the situation well.

Copeland could have closed the door and driven off, and some ministry leaders would have done that. Instead, he answered the reporter's questions and talked about spiritual warfare, the Abrahamic covenant, the number of people who have accepted Christ through his ministry and the millions of dollars they give to the poor. He showed respect and love to the reporter, even praying for her by name. Of course, the media that picked up the story reported none of that and instead only focused on his use of a private airplane.

Copeland can speak for himself. He doesn't need me to speak for him, and no one from his ministry asked me to defend him or give my insight on how the secular media covers ministries. In my opinion, this type of journalism is so predictable I could write the story and leave the names blank. I saw this same thing four decades ago when I worked in secular journalism.

On my podcast in June, I share my unscripted thoughts about the integrity I've seen in Copeland and his ministry going back 40 years to when I first interviewed him in 1979. (Visit to listen to my podcast.)

Since that interview 40 years ago, I have watched Copeland conduct his life and ministry with integrity. He has consistently preached the gospel, winning as many as 122 million people to Christ, according to what he said in the interview. His ministry has also given millions of dollars to help the poor—something they couldn't have done if they weren't as big as they are.

Every person I've ever known who works in Copeland's ministry is of high caliber, ethical and honest. I feel at peace with the way the ministry conducts its affairs—to the extent that I support them financially each month out of my own pocket.

But the reporter didn't focus on those good qualities. She focused on one quote from several years ago in which Copeland said he bought his own private plane so that he didn't have to fly "in a long tube with a bunch of demons." Those who know Copeland immediately realized his comment was purposefully a little tongue-in-cheek. And Copeland made it clear he wasn't referring to people when he was talking about demons. On the contrary, he emphasized how much he cared about people. Instead, he was talking about the spiritual atmosphere of a public place.

To put it into perspective, he could have said the same thing about Greyhound buses. How many people choose to buy their own cars instead of riding a public form of transportation, despite the lower cost of a bus ticket? We don't question the motives of people who buy their own cars, yet we question the motives of an evangelist who would prefer to fly in his private plane to minister around the world instead of using a public airline.

Although the *Inside Edition* reporter had no business asking Copeland some of the questions she did, I believe Copeland was still very gracious with her. When she told him that both her grandfathers were poor preachers who would've been appalled at Copeland's lavish lifestyle, he responded with a smile and

thanked God for faithful preachers like them.

The bottom line is that this kind of skepticism and criticism is rooted in jealousy. Unfortunately, there are many people who are jealous of successful ministries. I've witnessed the same kind of jealousy in the publishing business and in the media. I've even come to expect this kind of criticism from the secular media, but it's disheartening when it comes from other Christians.

It's also discouraging to see how few believers came to his defense after the interview came out. Thankfully, James Robison spoke up in his defense. But whenever this happens, we must speak up if the criticism is unjustified. If believers don't defend their own ministers, the secular world will continue to misconstrue and even demonize our words.

I encourage you to speak up in defense of Christian leaders when the secular media berates and accuses them. Be the one who is willing to say that biased ambush journalism is wrong. If you don't, who will? {eoa}

Stephen Strang is the founder of Charisma and CEO of Charisma Media. He is author of the best-selling book *Trump Aftershock* (FrontLine/Charisma House). Follow him on Twitter (@sstrang), Facebook (stephenestrang) or Instagram (stephenestrang).

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