

Give Us Your Feedback: Is Celebrity Christianity Dead?

Here's your chance to shape the direction of Charisma in 2010. We really do care what you think.

An impressive collection of framed covers of *Charisma* decorate a hall around the corner from my office. Visitors often stop to admire the nostalgic lineup, which includes a 1975 issue featuring healing evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman and a 1978 cover of South African theologian David du Plessis. These magazines offer a panoramic view of the history of the charismatic movement—warts and all.

I'll admit that sometimes I wince when I walk down this hallway to get coffee—and I cringe even more when I sort through my stash of old magazines. As much as I love to remember the old days—and to appreciate the spiritual giants we featured at times—it is painful when I realize that some people we wrote about did not finish well.

"Has the egotistical behavior of America's limousine-driving prosperity preachers nauseated us to the point that we are actually rejecting that entire scene?"

Most of the Christian personalities we have profiled over the years still inspire me. My personal favorite of all time was the cover story we published in 2005 about Brother Andrew, global champion of the persecuted church. I'm also very proud of the cover stories we wrote about Christian heroes such as Episcopal renewal leader Dennis Bennett; Mark Buntain, pioneer missionary to India; author Catherine Marshall; Freda Lindsey, leader of Christ for the Nations; revivalist David Wilkerson; Bible teacher Derek Prince; Vineyard founder John Wimber; Ed

Cole, founder of the modern Christian men's movement; evangelist Reinhard Bonnke; Franklin Graham, leader of Samaritan's Purse; Messianic leader Joel Chernoff; and Charles Blake, presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ.

Yet when I look through the list of personalities we have focused on during our 34 years of publishing, there are some embarrassments. More than a dozen of them had highly publicized moral failures years after their ministries made them famous. A few of them went to jail, either for tax evasion or for other forms of fraud. Some lost their ministries because of spiritual abuse.

In recent years my staff and I have had long discussions about how to profile Christian leaders without setting them—and us—up for disappointment. We think our subscribers enjoy reading about people who have been successful—pastors, musicians, authors, athletes, businesspeople or missionaries. Yet we are less prone to do such profiles these days if we think there is any chance a celebrity might do something crazy two years from now.

We want to ask you to join in our discussion.

We are currently mapping out our editorial plans for 2010. Not all of our covers will focus on personalities because we know there are key moral and cultural topics that need our attention. But we are planning to feature up to six people on our covers next year.

A few weeks ago I stirred the waters a bit by asking this question on Twitter. The feedback was fascinating because more than half the people who replied said they didn't want to read about a celebrity at all. Several people said they wanted to read about the faceless persecuted Christians who suffer for Christ in places like Pakistan or Afghanistan. Others said we should write about unknown ministers in the United States who feed the poor, run homeless shelters or fight child

trafficking.

Of those who suggested a real celebrity Christian, the most votes were cast for California pastor Rick Warren—who is known as being a champion of the little guy. Many suggested evangelical leaders who are not even directly identified with the charismatic movement—people such as Atlanta pastor Louie Giglio or Southern Baptist soul-winner Perry Noble.

Is there a significant sea change happening in our movement? Has the egotistical behavior of America's limousine-driving prosperity preachers nauseated us to the point that we are actually rejecting that entire scene? And have the excesses of our movement driven people away from flashy preachers and back to evangelical churches that don't focus on the charismatic experience?

I'd like to hear your opinion. Where do you think our movement is headed? Are there Christian personalities you really would love to read about? And do you know of "nameless," unsung heroes in your local community who are serving Christ in obscurity but who deserve attention?

Please let us hear from you. We'll be compiling your feedback and using it in our planning sessions over the next several weeks.

J. Lee Grady is editor of *Charisma*. He is ministering in Africa this week. You can give Lee your feedback about *Charisma's* 2010 covers by leaving a comment below, or you can send him a message on Twitter at leegrady.