

Jakes Movie Attempts to Duplicate the Success of Gibson's 'Passion'

On the heels of Mel Gibson's myth-smashing success, *The Passion of the Christ*, comes the T.D. Jakes film, *Woman, Thou Art Loosed: The Movie*. Gibson's *Passion*, which has already taken in more than \$600 million in theaters around the world, was rated R for intense scenes of violence. Jakes' movie has the same rating for intense language and subject matter, including child rape, drug use, domestic violence and murder.

Bishop Jakes defended the film's R-rated content. "The Bible is violent when Amnon rapes his sister Tamar," he told *Christian Retailing*, a magazine circulated to the nation's Christian bookstores. "The woman caught in the very act of adultery and dragged before Jesus is R-rated. Those are tough scenes. Too often Christian films fail in the court of the world's opinion because they fall short of what the world knows to be true, and audiences reject them as idealistic and preachy."

Bishop Jakes has shown the film privately to church groups in small and large venues in Atlanta, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Detroit, Milwaukee, Cleveland and Baltimore, and, like Gibson, Jakes has attempted to ramp up interest among churchgoers in advance of today's release date. It opens in 500 theaters.

The movie stars Kimberly Elise [*John Q*, the remake of *The Manchurian Candidate*] as a young woman on Death Row searching for hope in prison after a lifetime of violence. The cast also includes Loretta Devine and Clifton Powell, and is directed by Michael Schultz. The movie is based on Jakes' bestselling book by the same name.

Like Gibson, Bishop Jakes wants pastors to come together to rent out theaters for their congregations, and he is counting on church people to understand that the film's grittiness is a way to reach both young and old moviegoers today. Again, like Gibson, Jakes, casting director and producer Reuben Cannon and others have privately financed the film on a budget that is reportedly far less than that of *The Passion*.

"Mel Gibson proves to us perhaps the next frontier of evangelism may be the movie theater," Bishop Jakes told an audience of about 60 church leaders during a screening at the Cleveland Museum of Art in Cleveland. "We have to start thinking outside the box."

Thomas D. Jakes, the author of 27 books, has achieved a reputation in some circles as the nation's most dynamic preacher. He regularly fills some of the country's largest stadiums with worshipers. A *Woman, Thou Art Loosed* symposium in Atlanta's Georgia Dome in 1999 set national indoor attendance records with 84,500 attendees and an additional 20,000 in overflow.

Bishop Jakes has also garnered a reputation as an astute marketer who racks up high book sales. (*Woman, Thou Art Loosed!*, the book, has reportedly sold more than 2.5 million copies to date.) He pastors the Dallas-based The Potter's House church, which Christianity Today called "one of America's fastest-growing mega-churches," with a membership hovering around 30,000. His new film was first a Sunday school curriculum that became a national conference, a best-selling book, a play and a Grammy-nominated CD. The bishop appears as himself in the film, adding acting to his credits as a singer, songwriter, author, broadcaster, pastor and other titles.

In January 1999, the *New York Times* named Bishop Jakes "one of the top five evangelists most frequently cited by scholars, theologians, and evangelical leaders to step up the international pulpit behind the Rev. Billy Graham." *Time* magazine featured him on a September 2001 cover and named him "America's Best Preacher."

Apparently, many church leaders like what they have seen in *Woman, Thou Art Loosed: The Movie*. (The title is a reference in Luke 13:12 to a statement Jesus made to a woman who "had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years.") Several pastors have praised the film, and it won prizes at the Santa Barbara Film Festival in California and the American Black Film Festival in Miami. Some press reports have also lauded the film.



Bishop T.D. Jakes plays himself in *Woman, Thou Art Loosed: The Movie*, as he counsels the troubled Michelle (Kimberly Elise).

Legal Briefs

Christian Groups Boycott Procter & Gamble

Two Christian groups are urging a boycott of Tide detergent, Crest toothpaste, and Pampers diapers, three of the best-selling items produced by Cincinnati-based Procter & Gamble. The American Family Association and Focus on the Family say the company is implicitly supporting same-sex marriage because of the company's attempt to repeal Article 12, a 1993 charter amendment that bars the Cincinnati City Council from enacting or enforcing protection to homosexuals.

"For Procter & Gamble to align itself with radical groups committed to redefining marriage in our country is an affront to its customers," Dr. James Dobson said.

Procter & Gamble responded by saying it is supporting tolerance and respect as opposed to endorsing any lifestyle or sexual orientation. It added Article 12 makes the region look bad and discourages prospective employees from coming to the area.

However, Don Wildmon's American Family Association has issued an e-mail to supporters that purports to show a Procter & Gamble ad (in fuzzy focus) depicting two men in bed after a sexual encounter. The ad, which promotes Downy Wrinkle Releaser, is captioned with these words: "You were more concerned with taking them off than folding them up." The idea suggested is that the two men just could not wait to get into bed to have homosexual sex. The ad apparently ran in a homosexual publication called Xtra. (Sources: *New York Times*, *Cincinnati Post*, *AFA website*)

(Continued on page two)

Kingdom Briefs

Rally for Marriage at the National Mall

Those who feel strongly that the institution of marriage should remain a union between a man and a woman have an opportunity to express their support by attending a rally at the National Mall in Washington D.C. The rally is set for Friday, October 15, from noon to 3 p.m. For further information, contact Mayday for Marriage at (866) 928-5887, or go to the website at www.maydayformarriage.com. The website offers information on trip planning and hotels. On September 15, the organization held a Day of Fasting and Prayer for the rally. Rally literature asks, "Will You Stand Up for God? Right now the institution of marriage is being attacked ... the question is, what will you do?"

(Continued on page three)

What's Inside?

- Crouch to Continue to Lead Trinity Broadcasting – Page 2
- Ten of Business Week's Top 50 Givers – Page 3

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Crouch to Continue to Lead Trinity Broadcasting



Trinity Broadcast Network founder Paul Crouch will reportedly stay on as president of the network despite allegations that he was involved in a homosexual affair with a former employee. Network officials said Crouch would continue "God's call," according to a report in the Los Angeles Times.

A statement by the network also denies the allegation, and charges that "the scandalous claims leveled against him are false."

The officials also said that Crouch had received support from Christian leaders around the nation. According to Crouch's eldest son, Paul Jr., "Most of the e-mails and calls have been very positive." Among some of those who have contacted

the network have been author Josh McDowell, Doug Wead, a one-time advisor to former President George H. W. Bush, and singers Pat Boone and Carman. Paul Jr. said the network had received unsolicited backing from dozens of Christian leaders who called or e-mailed their support.

TBN, under the direction of Crouch and his wife, Jan, began in 1973 and has grown to what is called "the world's largest Christian television network." Its broadcast is carried on more than 6,000 television and cable stations throughout the nation and around the world and is viewed in millions of homes. The programs are beamed from 46 satellites circling the Earth, and are translated into numerous foreign languages at its International Production Center in Irving, Texas.

The network produces far more original Christian programs than any other religious network and is a leader in the production of major Christian movies and children shows.

The Times reported on Sunday, September 12, that Crouch had been involved in a legal battle with a former employee who alleged that in 1996 he had a homosexual affair with Crouch. The paper reported that Crouch paid \$425,000 to the former employee in 1998 to keep the allegations silent, but the man wrote a manuscript last year detailing his allegations. Crouch then sought and received a restraining order, which prevented publication until a private arbitrator could rule as to whether the manuscript violated the agreement. The arbitrator ruled in Crouch's favor, but by then The Times had learned of the agreement. The following is the full statement issued by TBN:

The recent article in the Los Angeles Times reporting a story that Dr. Paul Crouch, the founder and president of Trinity Broadcasting Network, was allegedly involved in a wrongful termination and sexual harassment case in 1997 is deplorable and the scandalous claims leveled against him are false.

The accuser is a convicted felon and longtime drug abuser who has been imprisoned for years for serious crimes ranging from child sexual molestation to using illegal drugs such as crack cocaine. The accuser became involved with TBN through a drug rehabilitation program conducted on TBN's property. Upon his successful completion of the program, TBN gave him a chance by offering him employment.

Although the accuser fell back into drug abuse on more than one occasion during his employment, TBN extended grace to this man and kept him employed while he continued to seek rehabilitation and counseling. Finally, after being arrested for yet another drug related violation, he was found guilty of violating his probation and was returned to prison for a year. Upon his release from incarceration in 1997, he again sought employment with TBN and when TBN declined, he threatened to sue TBN by alleging wrongful termination and sexual harassment, directing his most salacious allegations towards Dr. Crouch personally.

In an effort to address this matter in 1997, Dr. Crouch sought the advice and counsel of some trusted advisers, attorneys and spiritual leaders. The consensus viewpoint was that it would be better for TBN and Dr. Crouch to reach a financial settlement rather than to fight the accuser in court. This course of action was deemed less expensive and would avoid the bad publicity, time and effort that it would take to fight the false claims. Dr. Crouch reluctantly agreed to this advice with the understanding that the accuser would go away and leave both he and TBN alone forever. The importance of the settlement does not rest on the money paid, but rather on Dr. Crouch's vehement denial of the allegations made against him as well as the agreement of the accuser to keep confidential and refrain from repeating his false claims and accusations. Most importantly, at no time were ministry funds used in any portion of this settlement.

In violation of his agreement, and in an attempt to extract yet more money from TBN and Dr. Crouch, in late 2003, the accuser threatened to shop an autobiographical manuscript to the media should TBN and Dr. Crouch not agree to buy the manuscript for an exorbitant sum of money. Rather than even contemplating a second round of what Dr. Crouch considered extortion, and with the support of his present advisers and attorneys, Dr. Crouch and TBN fought the accuser in court where the accuser and his false claims were soundly defeated.

It is this litigation that is covered in the Los Angeles Times story. Dr. Crouch and TBN's only regret is that they did not take swift legal action to defeat these false claims seven years ago. Having not done so then, they have done so now.

It is a reprehensible fact of modern life that public persons like Dr. Crouch are targets of such dishonest, false and scandalous claims. The lifelong ministry of Dr. Crouch has been to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world. The good works of TBN are what define Dr. Crouch and it is this work that will continue to define him. As such, Dr. Crouch will continue to respond to God's call on his life as president of TBN, bringing to bear his own personality, integrity, enthusiasm and talent.

We request that all of TBN's partners and supporters pray for Paul and Jan as they weather yet another attack on their ministry and personal lives. This storm too will pass and as the scriptures most aptly proclaim, "Greater is He who is in me, than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

Legal Briefs

Continued from page one

L.A. County Considers a Seal Without the Cross

Perhaps as a sop to Los Angeles County's angered Christian community, the goddess Pomona has disappeared along with the embattled cross from the redesign of the county seal. As reported here in July, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted to redesign the logo after the American Civil Liberties Union threatened to sue over the use of a religious symbol in a government emblem. The board disdained a passionate plea from about 1,000 protesters not remove the tiny cross from the 47-year-old seal. Though largely Christians, the protesters cut across ethnic, cultural, religious, social, political and economic lines. Some of the protesters were Jewish, and a former member of the ACLU also spoke against the move. The protesters

contended, among other things, that the cross was part of the state's history, an implantation by Spanish missionaries who built missions up and down what would later become the state of California. Three of the five supervisors would have none of it, and demanded that the seal be changed. A petition to restore the cross is being led by David Hernandez, an insurance adjuster who is a candidate for the State Assembly. His petition would place the issue on the November ballot. Several people were not pleased with the new design, among them Los Angeles City councilwoman Janice Hahn, whose father, Kenneth Hahn, designed the seal in 1956. "I'm horrified," she said. "They caved in and removed the cross, but they never had a mandate to redesign the county seal." ACLU attorney Ben Wizner differed in his opinion. He applauded the new design, calling it more inclusive and even "pretty." (Source: **Los Angeles Times**)

Ten of Business Week's Top 50 Givers

- 1) Microsoft co-founder **Bill Gates** and his wife **Melinda** topped a recent Business Week list of The 50 Most Generous Philanthropists. Gates gave or pledged \$22.9 billion to health and education causes from 1999 to 2003. The couple's net worth was put at \$46 billion. Percentage of wealth donated: 54 percent.
- 2) Intel co-founder **Gordon Moore** and his wife **Betty**, from 1999 to 2003, gave or pledged \$7 billion to conservation and education causes. The couple's net worth is estimated at \$5 billion. Percentage of wealth donated: 144 percent.
- 3) Investor **George Soros** gave or pledged \$2.4 billion between 1999 and 2003 to causes that promote an open and free society. His estimated lifetime gifts were believed to be about \$4.7 billion. His current net worth is around \$7 billion. Percentage of wealth donated: 68 percent.
- 4) SunAmerica founder **Eli Broad** and his wife **Edythe**, from 1999 to 2003, gave or pledged \$1.5 billion to public education, the arts and science causes. Their estimated lifetime gifts amount to \$1.5 billion. Their current net worth is about \$3.8 billion. Percentage of wealth donated: 39 percent.
- 5) **James** and **Virginia Stowers**, from 1999 to 2003, gave or pledged \$1.3 billion. The American Century founder supports issues dealing with biomedical research. Their estimated lifetime gifts total some \$1.6 billion. Their estimated worth is about \$575 million. Percentage of wealth donated: 271 percent.
- 6) Dell founder **Michael Dell** and his wife **Susan**, from 1999 to 2003, gave or pledged 1.2 billion to children's health care. Their estimated lifetime gift is about \$1.2 billion, and their current net worth is about \$13 billion. Percentage of wealth donated: 9 percent.
- 7) **The Walton Family**, owners of WalMart, gave or pledged \$750 million from 1999 to 2003. The cause they supported most is education. The family's estimated lifetime gift totals about \$1 billion. Their current net worth is \$108.4 billion. Percentage of wealth donated: 1 percent.
- 8) CNN founder **Ted Turner** gave or pledge \$664 million from 1999 to 2003. The causes he supports most are health and the environment. His estimated lifetime gifts total \$1.3 billion. His current net worth is about \$2.3 billion. Percentage of wealth donated: 57 percent.
- 9) Eli Lilly heiress **Ruth Lilly** has given or pledged \$560 million to poetry, libraries, and cultural causes, from 1999 to 2003. Her estimated lifetime gifts total \$740 million. Her current net worth is about \$1 billion. Percentage of wealth donated: 74 percent.
- 10) Real Estate tycoon **Donald Bren** has given or pledged \$402 million from 1999 to 2003. His favorite causes include education and the environment. Estimated lifetime gifts come to \$412 million. His current net worth is about \$4 billion. Percentage of wealth donated: 10 percent.

(This list was compiled from New Man magazine.)

Kingdom Briefs

Continued from page one

Hayford to Lead Foursquare Church

Jack Hayford, founding pastor of The Church on the Way in Van Nuys, Calif., and founder of The King's College and Seminary, is assuming leadership of the Foursquare Church. Hayford, 70, was elected president of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel during the church's annual convention in San Francisco in June. His term will last five years. (Source: **Ministries Today**)

Day of Prayer for Jerusalem to Be Launched

What may become the largest prayer initiative in history for the nation of Israel will be launched on Sunday, when 70 nations join in the Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem. The concept is the brainchild of Robert Stearns, executive director of Eagles' Wings. Believers in 70 nations are expected to take part. Stearns unveiled Eagles' Wings plan, called the Jerusalem Project, which calls for the day of prayer on the first Sunday of October every year until the Messiah returns. EW is enlisting support from 20,000 churches in the United States, and backing an astounding grassroots prayer initiative of 50 million believers from 70 nations. (Source: **Ministries Today**)



Street Named for FAME's Rev. Cecil 'Chip' Murray

Though Los Angeles' First African Methodist Episcopal Church (FAME) will soon lose its well-respected pastor to retirement, a nearby street will always bear his name. The city voted to name a portion of West 25th Street Dr. Cecil L. "Chip" Murray Circle. Murray, who has reached the mandatory retirement age of 75, has headed FAME for 27 years. After arriving from Seattle in 1977, he found a congregation of about 300 older members, but during his tenure the membership rolls spiraled to about 17,000, accommodated by three services every Sunday. The church is well known for its social and political activism and celebrity attendants. (Source: **Los Angeles Times**)

Gene Scott to Undergo Cancer Surgery

California television minister Gene Scott has undergone prostate surgery at UCLA Medical Center. The 75-year-old minister, known for wearing hats and chomping cigars while holding audiences spellbound while teaching, reported that the cancer had spread to his bladder. Scott informed worshippers of his planned surgery during a telecast. He had previously declined to have surgery, saying he wanted to "give God the first shot" at healing him. (Source: **Los Angeles Times**)

Cottonwood Christian Center Breaks Ground

After a five-year battle with the California city of Cypress, Cottonwood Christian Center has finally broken ground in the city to build a new 3,500-seat sanctuary and other buildings on a 33-acre campus. The struggle to build began in 1999, when Cottonwood bought 18 acres at a different site in the city. However, that property was in a redevelopment zone, and the city denied the church plans to build. A national debate ensued and religious leaders across the country rallied behind Cottonwood. A federal judge in 2002 put brakes on the city's redevelopment plans, which eventually led to a settlement between the parties in which Cottonwood agreed to sell its site for \$18.8 million, a \$5 million profit. The city also agreed to approve the church's plans on a parcel of what had been the Cypress Golf Club. The church has 5,000 members, and its services are broadcast to more than 100 countries. (Source: **Los Angeles Times**)

On the Trail of Good News

Hey, we're sniffing around for news and other uplifting information that might appeal to our national audience. If you know of a unique Christian business, ministry or personality, or of something happening on the news front, give us a heads-up. You might want to send a clipping from your local newspaper or invite us to track down a story from the details you provide. Remember, all our stories are Christ-based and nationally oriented, though they may cut across entertainment, business, lifestyle, political or other lines. E-mail us at newsletter@tkog.biz or mail us your clippings at The Kingdom of God, P.O. Box 1147, Claremont, CA 91711.