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Monday, January 17 2005

Vol 18 No.007

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... Faith ...

My relationship with T. B. Joshua - *Oyakilome*

The name Pastor Chris is synonymous with miracles. Why the emphasis on miracles?

I do not lay emphasis on miracles. There are people who say that I preach miracles, but I do not preach miracles. The truth is that, when Jesus came, He did not lay emphasis on miracles, but more than two-third of his ministry was on healing the sick. Why? Not because he preached healing, but he came to heal. Now, I have a message that certainly heals people. You can not hear that message and remain sick, poor or dejected. It would bring you hope and life. So I do not emphasize miracles. I emphasize the living Christ and when I do that, the divine power of the Holy Ghost follows the message, and of a necessity, there will be healings and miracles. How can you believe in God without having miracles? God is a supernatural being and if he is real, there must be supernatural acts and responses. So the miracles are there to prove his existence, his presence and his message. In fact we do not necessarily heal the sick to prove it. It is his presence that proves it. So I do not preach miracles or emphasize miracles. I emphasize Christ and the miracles have to follow. They are like your credentials. If you preach Jesus Christ and he sent you, he will back up your claims. Now if he doesn't back up your claims, you have to find out whether or not you are called. So those miracles are given by Jesus to confirm that he sent us. So he is the one actually performing these miracles.

Are these miracles real? Many believe that it is either a means of taking advantage of people who are distressed and desperate for solutions, or a means of diverting people's attention from the challenges of living in a real world to the pursuit of a utopia that is really non-existent. What is your position on this?

Miracles are real. It is like saying 'I do not believe that man can land on the moon', just because you have not been there. Some people have been there and they have come back with reports and we believe them. And today, we are planning a lot of things on earth based on their findings.

There are those who also ask us to prove the miracles. The question is, do they really believe there was a Jesus at all? Did Jesus perform miracles? Historical accounts show that he did. The bible proves that he did. If these questions were posed by non-Christians, I will not be concerned about it. They do not believe anyway, and that's why we are preaching to them so that they can believe.

But when questions like these are posed by Christians, it becomes disturbing. It's a stupid question for a Christian to ask. A Christian asking if miracles are real? No, they don't believe in Jesus. They believe Jesus was raised from the dead and he is in heaven. Where is heaven? If he was raised from the dead, that was a miracle. Ok! If Jesus performed miracles and he was raised from the dead, then what is he today? Has he changed? Does he still have the power? If he doesn't have the power, was he robbed of it? Is he more powerful today than then? Or is he less powerful, or the same? If he is less powerful, then we which means, the miracles he performed then must be real. Now if those miracles can no longer be performed, then it means that he left us worse than when he came and there is no reason for that since he brought us salvation. Salvation is a miracle. So if the miracles are not real, salvation is not real. So anybody who says he is born again is lying to himself because to be born again is a miracle. Many of these folks believe that they have received the Holy Spirit. Where is the Holy Spirit? Can you see the Holy Spirit with your optical eyes? No! Is there such a Spirit? Yes! If the Spirit is true and real, then his acts must be true and real. So, these miracles are true and real. They are as real as the Holy Spirit because He does them.

There is the issue of people falling down when you touch them or blow some air on them. Why do people fall when Pastor Chris touches them?

Why do people fall when Pastor Chris touches them? Wonderful! First it is important for us to realize that the power and the glory of God is more than man can accommodate. When the glory of God overwhelms a man, he cannot stand it. It is a sign from God that proved His presence. I do not have control over it. He gave me that power as a sign to the world.

Within the last three years, there has been a lot of controversies surrounding Pastor Chris: from your association with Prophet T.B. Joshua which led to your split with the mainstream Pentecostal ministers in the country to issues of large donations to the ministry by members who purportedly defrauded their organizations and then the ban on miracle programmes by the National Broadcasting Commission. Your silence at every point gives the impression that you love controversies. How true is this assumption?

It is not true that I love controversies. Jesus was a controversial figure and his ministry was controversial, not because Jesus loved controversies or that he sparked off controversies but because the people thought and acted differently from God's ways of doing things and so Jesus could never agree with them; and that is where controversies begin - disagreements. So these so called controversies were not things that I sparked off, nor is it that I enjoy controversies. Then why was I silent? Because Jesus did not need to respond to his critics! So, I have found no reason to respond to them. One thing you need to know about your critics is this: no great man ever criticised a lesser man, reason because only lesser men criticise greater men.

And that immediately suggests that the one who criticises you deserves no response.?

That is the reason why I have not thought of responding to them.

How did your relationship with Prophet T.B. Joshua begin? Rev. Chris Okotie said then that T.B. Joshua recruited or ordained you into his cult way back 1986. What is the true account?

Remember in 2001 a lot of ministers including Pastor Chris Okotie, Bishop Mike Okonkwo and Pastor Tunde Bakare did say things along that line. The truth is that they were all wrong. They were getting information from the wrong sources, and it is unfortunate that they believed their wrong sources; incidentally none of them asked me intelligent questions. I hope to write a book on the episode someday. I have so much to say about all that transpired, maybe for the future. It was an interesting period, but the truth is that what they said was not true. I was surprised when the fact that I related with Prophet T.B. Joshua, sparked off controversies. I was very surprised. You wonder why? Because I related with a lot of folks and nobody said anything, so I wondered why they got so mad about this one.

Probably because it has to do with Prophet T.B. Joshua; a man whom most ministers believe is involved in occultic practices?

I was surprised that they all said that. Remember that Jesus visited non-followers, non believers and he was criticized by the religious folks of his day. They said Jesus could not be a prophet of God because he ate and drank with sinners. I thought if I related with anybody, it shouldn't be a problem, even if he was a sinner. There was no reason for that. After all everybody needs the gospel. So from that stand point I was surprised at their response. It was the wrong response anyway. I remember that I made a tape then, called 'Truth on Trial' and there I said, "Just because you hate somebody does not mean I have to hate with you". When Jesus related with sinners, they did not change him. So, no matter what they thought T.B. Joshua was, my relating with him shouldn't have been expected to change me. So, it was very wrong for anyone to have interfered.

They said he was of the devil.

Well, that is between them and God.

How exactly did you meet T.B. Joshua?

It was in 2001 that I met him or spoke with him for the first time, contrary to the assertions of the PFN leaders. He called me on the phone. He had been watching our programme on television with some of his visitors, and there was this episode of a little girl who was born blind, who received her sight at our crusade. He said he was moved by the miracle and decided to call me. That was our first contact. After that, we spoke several other times on telephone. At that time, I had only seen maybe two or three of his programmes on TV. I did not know much about him at all, and so when he spoke with me on the phone, we exchanged pleasantries, and made references to what we were doing.

In the process of time, on a particular Wednesday, several weeks after we had been talking on the phone, he called me on the phone and requested that I joined him in ministering to a particular man that was coming from Holland, during a special service that night. I said we'll be having a service and he said his service was going to be all night long. I was going to finish mine about 9 pm and his was going to be all night, so I said alright, how long is it going to take me to get to where you are?' He said it's about 30 minutes, half an hour. I said ok, 'if I get out of here around 9 o' clock, I'll be there by 9.30. I'll try to make it'. I went there with several people. We met for the first time, face to face then, and went into the congregation and he introduced me to them and I greeted the people. Of course a lot of them had been seeing me on television and so they were excited to see me come to their church. Shortly after I greeted them, I went with him to the healing section. We got to the healing section; he started out ministering to them while I was waiting because I was only going to join him in ministering to the foreigners based on his earlier request. When we got to the section where the foreigners were, most of whom were from Holland, we both ministered to the man who was sick of multiple sclerosis. I believe his name was Jan Westerhof; that was about it.

Now you must realize that before I met with T.B. Joshua, I'd been holding crusades and healing services for years. This was 2001 and by then I had held many crusades with thousands of people and we already had our programme, Atmosphere for Miracles, where we showed testimonies of people who were getting healed in our meetings. So healings and miracles were not new to me. When I met with him, of course I was excited, glad to see someone who was interested in the kind of things that I was doing.

When these controversies came up, when these pastors, Pastor Chris Okotie, Bishop Mike Okonkwo and Pastor Tunde Bakare got on television and began to say a lot of things, I actually had to maintain an association of sympathy with the man. There are so many things I have to say like I told you, but these are all leaders in the church and I wouldn't want to say things that would make them unhappy with themselves or even make members of their congregation unhappy with them. I do not think that is my responsibility. So I would not want to go into certain details.

Did you at any moment think that your detractors were right and you wrong? After all you were the only man on your side of the divide?

I knew they were wrong all the time. Maybe I should define something, because the issue was not T.B. Joshua.

"They tried to make him the issue. He was not the issue. And I can prove that. The reason I said they tried to make him the issue is this; the president of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, PFN, became the Vice President of the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, of which the Synagogue Church headed by T.B. Joshua is a part, Cherubim and Seraphim is a part, Celestial Church of Christ is a part and many other groups. In fact, he became the de facto Vice President of the Synagogue! And nobody said anything about it. There could be no better endorsement of T.B. Joshua from the PFN than that. If you could fraternize with all these groups as their Vice President, doesn't that say something, if indeed any of them was really of the Devil? Imagine Paul the Apostle as the Vice President of an occultic group? The point is T.B. Joshua was not the problem. They used him as the reason for their actions which were based on their wrong spiritual perceptions.

Flying high in the new year(3)

David Oyedepo

Hello Reader! Last week under this topic, I told you that light, which is knowledge from God's Word, is what will engineer your colourful flight to the realms of excellence and distinction in your business, career and family this year. Once you have adequate light, there is no challenge of life that you cannot shatter and overcome in your family.

Today, I want to share something with you that will enhance your study of the word of God and guarantee your possession of such powerful light that will put you in total command of the affairs of life. It is the art of Meditation.

It is in the process of meditation that God's Word takes root in you. Jesus Christ described the Word as the seed in the parable of the sower. In Luke 8:11, He said: Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. This seed cannot germinate and grow until it is given the conducive atmosphere and all requirements are met in meditation.

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines the word "meditate" as, "to think seriously or deeply; to fix and keep the attention on one matter, having cleared the mind of all thoughts... to plan or consider carefully." In order words, it means "to think through."

As you think on the Word of God concerning your high flight this year, the seed will begin to take root and germinate. The Word is a seed. Like natural seeds, the seed (the word) has enough life in it to produce results. It is the living Word. Have you seen a natural seed, properly planted and tended, that did not germinate, grow and produce fruit? It is just the same with the Life Seed. It just must produce. It produces after its kind. But it will not produce until it is given the attention necessary in meditation.

Meditation can be likened to incubation. In the natural, when a hen lays its eggs and is ready to hatch them, it takes some time to sit on the eggs. During this period, the hen provides the necessary atmosphere that would make it possible for the eggs to hatch into chicks. What the hen does during that process is incubation. It is providing the heat and the warmth required by the eggs to move from egg stage to chick stage. This cannot happen unless the incubation is done.

If you have seen a hen in this process before, you will notice that it is usually very patient. It sits on the potential chicks until the conditions are all met for hatching. The eggs have the potential life of chicks in them but cannot hatch until incubation is done. It is a natural law that when this incubatory law is fulfilled, the hatching must automatically follow.

If you too meditate on God's Word, it must definitely "hatch" out to your success. When the seed of success is sown into your heart, and meditation is fulfilled, it must definitely take root, germinate, grow and produce success fruits.

The Word of God produces after its kind. If you want it to work for you and your family, fulfill the conditions. It is only when you meditate on God's Word that it gains effectual entrance into you. You hide it in your heart. You ponder on it day and night. You give yourself to serious thinking on it. You clear yourself of all other thoughts and focus on it.

If your most urgent need is financial miracle, locate the scriptures, books, tapes and other materials that would boost your knowledge of God's ways for a financial breakthrough. If you need physical healing in your family, get busy with scriptures, books and other materials that deal with the subject. The Bible is a solution book. It has answers to any situation that would ever confront you in life. However, only those who will settle down to deep meditation will benefit from the treasures in the Holy Bible.

In order to rightly meditate on the scriptures, you have to be connected to the Almighty God whose Word you want to meditate upon because only He can reveal His Word to

you. You get connected by confessing and accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. That is how to be born again.

If you are not born again, you can do so now by saying this prayer: "Lord *Jesus, I come to you today. I am a sinner. I cannot help myself. Forgive me my sins. Cleanse me with Your precious blood. Deliver me from sin and Satan, to serve the Living God. Today, Lord Jesus, I accept You as my Lord and Saviour: Thank You Jesus for saving me: Now I know I am born again!*"

Come and fellowship with us at Faith Tabernacle, Canaan Land, Ota, the Covenant home of Winners. Our services hold on Thursdays (5-7p.m.) and Sundays (7-10a.m.). God bless you as you come!

Every exploit in life is a product of knowledge. For further reading, you can get my books— Success Buttons, Understanding Divine Direction and The Force Of Freedom.

I know this teaching has blessed you. Write and share you testimony with me through: Bishop David Oyedepo, Faith Tabernacle, Canaan Land, Ota, P.M.B. 21688, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria; Or call 7747546-8; Or **E-mail: bishop@livingfaithchurchworldwide.org**

Happy Home series

Jossy & Joy Nkwocha

Count your family's many blessings!

Many families are always busy asking for one thing or the other from God. They ask for journey mercies. They ask for daily bread. They ask for promotion at work. They ask for husbands for their daughters. Indeed, they ask for all manner of miracles. For a child of God, asking for God's blessings is quite legitimate. In Mathew 7:7, the Bible says: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you."

Unfortunately, many families are only good at asking and receiving, but never remember to thank God for what they have received. Such families are never happy. Many families are like Oliver Twist. They always ask for more, and more...and more! Lack of contentment and ingratitude are two dangerous spiritual diseases that have destroyed many homes and marriages. Some families don't even believe they have received any God's blessings, maybe because they have been facing one problem or another.

Today, as we are gradually entering the festive season of Christmas and New Year, let us count our family's many blessings this year. Let us take you through stanzas 1 and 2 of the popular hymn titled "**Count your blessings, name them one by one!**"

When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,

When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,

Count your many blessings, name them one by one;

And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Chorus: ***Count your blessings, name them one by one;***

Count your blessings, see what God hath done;

Count your blessings, name them one by one;

And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done!

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?

Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?

Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly

And you will be singing as the days go by!

This hymn appeals to you to count your blessings; the many blessings you have received from God since the beginning of this year. Most importantly God has kept you alive and maybe healthy. God has continued to provide daily bread for you and your family. God has continued to save you from many perils and dangers. God has continued to guide and protect your family from accidents; from diseases and sicknesses. God has blessed your marriage with children.

Count your blessings and name them one by one! Take time and visit the hospitals, especially orthopedic hospitals. You will weep for some patients because of their conditions. Here you are, healthy! Take time to reflect on the situation of some couples who don't have children after 8, 9 or 10 years of marriage. Here you are, blessed with children! Take time to look at those who are homeless and those who are ever hungry of what to eat. Here you are, living comfortably under a roof and not in want of what to eat, at least today!

Count your blessings and name them one by one! Go and read Psalm 107. It teaches us how to be thankful to God. It begins by saying: "***Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures for ever.***" It ends by saying: "***Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord.***" Consider the many things God has done for your family this year.

Do you want to be happy in your marriage and home? Simple: Be grateful to God every day for what He is doing for you. Count your many blessings and name them one by one. Find time to take stock of what God is doing for you. You will indeed be amazed at the wonderful blessings you have received.

Many husbands and wives are only interested in what God has done for their neighbours and friends. They end up being envious and jealous of such people. We are currently reading a book titled ***The Impossible is Possible*** by John Mason. He devoted a chapter to the need to count our blessings. He says: Replace regret with gratitude. Be grateful for what you have, not regretful for what you don't have. If you can't be thankful for what you have, be thankful for what you have escaped." He quoted Francis Schaeffer who said: "The beginning of men's rebellion against God was, and is, the lack of a thankful heart."

Do you want a happy home? Learn to count your blessings! Get a copy of our book titled ***The 21 Biggest Problems in Marriage and Their Solutions*** (Vols 1 & 2). In Lagos call 0802-300-0003 or 0803-313-0049. In Abuja call Juliet 0805-537-3007; in Owerri, call Ada 0803-708-0754 or Modotel Hotel.

Weapon of prayer

Evang. C.C. Ozurumba

When serious challenges come our way as a nation, we need to examine the problems in detail and identify the ways and means of finding solutions to such challenges.

Even the least informed person in Nigeria today is conscious of the fact that there is much trouble in the nation. Both the rich and the poor are stressed to zero point. Both the masses and leaders in positions of authority at various levels of governance are going through serious pains, in a country flowing with milk and honey.

Given the fact that we are exceedingly blessed by God in human and material wealth, what then is responsible for the suffering of the people—both the poor and the seemingly rich who are nothing but future bankrupts? We should re-examine the foundation of our societal norms.

Let us remember that God created us as the largest and richest black nation on earth and planted us in the most resourceful environment on earth. The scriptures say that God does everything for a purpose. "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will." (Ephesians 1:11).

How do we live our lives as citizens of Nigeria? Are we living in line with the purpose and counsel of God's will? When God came down to examine the life-style of prophet Job, He asked the righteous Prophet: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?... who determined its measurements?" Whenever a people or a nation goes astray and begin to suffer in the midst of abundant resources in the nation, certainly, the foundation of the people's life-style has crumbled and the people are exposed to undue penury.

Today, God is saying to us: "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). This statement from God has been misunderstood by most of us for too long. God is saying that the righteous believer in our Lord Jesus Christ should not fold his or her hands and watch the destruction of the foundation on which we are standing. Such platform is necessary for our existence- without a foundation which is stable and solid we cannot effectively fulfil the purpose of our existence. The rich members of our community cannot enjoy their wealth in an environment whose foundation is at the verge of destruction. But God is chastising us. We should not rest and watch without working on the sinking foundation of our lives.

We should take example from this prophetic text: "For Zion's sake, I will not hold my peace; and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest." (Isaiah 62:1). We should accept the fact that we are not doing what we ought to do to tackle the corrupt practices in our nation. For every naira stolen by men in authority, there is a number of distinguished witnesses who prepared the relevant vouchers for siphoning the money, but none of the permanent secretaries, directors of finance, accountants or cashiers would raise alarm to the nation about such acts of wickedness. We all hold our peace and become partakers in other men's sin.

The Bible says that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12)... "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal or physical, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds." (2 Cor. 10:4). We should prepare ourselves as one man and engage in prayer as a weapon of warfare against the forces of darkness and corruption which has held our nation bondage for many years. We must go into the realm of the spirit and break down the demonic altars of Baal which has held the people hostage. (Judges 6:25-28).

•For Prayers and Counselling, E-mail: [Heart of God93@yahoo.com](mailto:HeartofGod93@yahoo.com).

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