



AN INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP JACKSON

Q: You practiced law for many years. What made you quit practicing to do full time ministry?

Bishop: I enjoyed the practice of law, but it didn't give me the deep satisfaction of ministry. Frankly, when I was called into ministry in the middle of law school, it started an immediate struggle over whether I was where I belonged. I actually quit law school for a week, but shortly realized that was a bad decision. God wanted me to finish what I started. Still, that sense of being torn in two directions never went away.

Q: Do you think that you were supposed to go to law school?

Bishop: Yes, I do, but it's interesting. I still don't think I have a full understanding of why I was supposed to go to law school. From time to time I get little insights, but there is always the feeling that there is something more to it that hasn't yet been revealed.

Q: Do you think you will ever return to the practice of law?

Bishop: I doubt it, but I do consider studying for the bar exam in Virginia. I was licensed to practice in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. I had already quit practicing when I moved to Virginia in 1998. But the bar exam is a big commitment, and I haven't yet come to the kind of conviction that would compel me to make that sacrifice. I get a lot of legal questions from church members and family. Sometimes I think it would be nice to be licensed to do things that may need to be done. I also know that if I am licensed to practice, people will expect more of me as a lawyer than I have time to give. That gives me pause. Maybe I am better off not being licensed to practice law.

Q: But you do teach business and commercial law at Strayer University, so you are still involved with the law to that extent.

Bishop: Well, that's the best of both worlds for me. I love to teach. It's my passion. I spend a few hours a week in the classroom, help my students in whatever way I can, and then I'm done. Having clients is a very different thing than having students. So, yes, I do have an awesome respect for the law, and I enjoy teaching it.

Q: When one reads your bio, you wonder how one person could do all the things you've done – run a radio station, been a local and national radio talk show host, practiced law, pastoring a churches, and at one point you were doing all that and teaching Administrative Law in the Graduate School at Northeastern University in Boston. And now you are pastoring two churches, 500 miles apart, and teaching law at Strayer. How do you manage to do so many things?

Bishop: I am grateful to God for the gifts he has given me. I have been blessed with an enormous amount of energy and I have more ideas than I can possibly implement. I try very hard now not to allow my energy and ideas to make me lose focus. I am committed to one thing – aside from my wife and family. That is building EFM into what God ordained it to be. Until I leave this earth, that is my mission, to build EFM into a worldwide ministry reaching souls for Christ and transforming people's lives.

Q: Let's get into something that's a little sensitive. It's not an exaggeration to say that you have been controversial at times...

Bishop: Controversial only if one does not understand a Biblical worldview...



Q: Let me be more specific. When you were based in Boston, you stirred quite a bit of controversy for two reasons: your stand against the gay rights movement and your refusal to be a kind of racial leader or a civil rights leader of some kind.

Bishop: Well, anyone looking for that kind of leadership is not looking for me. But let me be clear. I have nothing personally against the people who are caught up in that. I pray for them. I really do. But I believe that what they offer as leadership is bad for our country and bad for African Americans. For example, I view Farrakhan as a very destructive figure. But all of them and their ilk are living in a bygone era. The focus of attention on the development of the black community needs to be on strengthening the family, re-igniting a passion for education and taking responsibility for one's own life. There is a generation of leadership in the black community that sees itself and wants black people to see themselves as perennial victims. I don't believe in "victimology". I believe that a child of God is a victor, not a victim. Plus, I don't see myself as a "black" leader, but a leader of people. Mind you, I am very proud of my African heritage. My great grandparents – Gabriel and Eliza Jackson – were slaves right here in Virginia, in Orange County. But I don't wear that background as a badge of victimization, but of strength. I am who I am because of who God made me, not because of what happened to my ancestors. I am not obsessed with how I got here, but grateful that I am a citizen of the USA. I enjoy opportunities that are the envy of people around the world. That's not controversial. It's just Christian optimism and Biblical wisdom and a healthy patriotism.

Q: What about the homosexuality controversy?

Bishop: Before we get to that, let me say one more thing about this whole issue of the approach to the problem of race and racism. I do not believe that racism is the problem. Sin is. Racial division is a symptom of a much larger disease, the sinfulness of the human heart. Notice that in African countries where you have racially homogeneous populations, violence and civil wars erupt over tribal differences. In Ireland where you have a racially homogeneous population, violence erupts over religious differences. People are very creative at finding reasons to divide from one another and hate one another. If race is not available as a reason, they find something else. One side will try to dominate and if possible enslave the other. That is not a problem of racism or as the racial leaders like to couch it – "white people". The problem is the sinfulness of the human heart, and it's universal. How can a Christian leader propagate hatred against white people by blacks or vice versa when the Bible says "we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this world"? It is talking about spiritual forces, not a racial group. In light of that, the rhetoric of many of our so called "black leaders" should be seen for what it is - racial demagoguery.

Q: You have been attacked as homophobic and bigoted toward homosexuals. What about that?

Bishop: I know that I cannot please God if I hate people, regardless of how much I disagree with them. So let me say, I don't hate anybody. I refuse to. I love even the people with whom I vehemently disagree. Now I am not naïve. I know most homosexuals won't accept that because in their thinking, disagreement with their lifestyle proves you hate them. So basically I have to take the position that I don't care what they think about me. I have to please God, not man. I wish my opposition to homosexuality, abortion, gambling or any other societal sin could be seen as sincere and principled by those who disagree. But it didn't work that way for Jesus and He was perfect. It certainly is not going to work that way for me as a flawed human being. I don't care how much society embraces homosexuality as normal, the Bible teaches that it is not and I believe the Bible, not the opinions of social commentators. Therefore I oppose homosexual marriage and civil unions. I oppose teaching homosexuality to children in public schools. I oppose handing out condoms as a solution to AIDS. God has not changed. The Bible has not changed. I will not change and neither should any Christian. Having said that, I will defend a homosexual's right to be treated with respect and dignity as any human being should. I would stand against anyone who seeks to persecute or do violence to homosexuals. That is as much sin as homosexuality itself, and I will have no part in harming people. I do distinguish the individual homosexual who needs forgiveness and compassion, from the Gay Rights Movement that seems bent on devolving the culture into a perverse sexual anarchy. I will fight that with every fiber of my being by every spiritual, legal and political means available.

Q: We've talked about your legal background and some of the controversy you've engendered by taking Biblical stands. Let's end with some discussion of ministry.

Bishop: Great. I don't live my life based on what I am against, but Who I am for.



Q: Tell us then about your view of ministry.

Bishop: If people read our vision and mission statement, both of which are on our website, they will get a good sense of how I view ministry. I love God. I love people. And I want to be a blessing to them. I believe that God is interested in every area of life. Therefore, in my view, ministry must respond to every area of life. The first and most fundamental need of the human being is a relationship with God. Once that is established, then people need to grow and develop and experience what God has promised in His word. I believe God wants people to have happy, well adjusted families where husbands and wives truly love each other, and the children are loved and cared for by a Mom and Dad. He wants us to be physically healthy, and provides both supernatural healing and instructions for the proper care of our bodies to give us long and fruitful lives. He wants us to be emotionally and mentally healthy and at peace within ourselves. And yes, God wants us to be financially prosperous so that we can experience the best life has to offer.

Q: Would people be right to call you a prosperity preacher?

Bishop: No. I don't like that term because people think that translates into "money preacher". The Bible uses the word prosperity many times and it is part of God's promise to His people. Being out of debt and having abundant finances is part of that, but only part. Biblical prosperity is having a life that is whole, healthy and purposeful on all levels. A prosperous life is a life that pleases God. The Bible says in Psalm 35, verse 37, God "takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servant".

Q: Do you mean Christians should have perfect lives?

Bishop: That's impossible in this world. As I said early in this interview, the world is full of sin and imperfection and that "fallenness" is going to touch us all. I would say Christians should live "overcoming" lives. There will be challenges. There will be problems. But the scripture says this is the victory that overcomes the world – our faith. So we are tempted, challenged, tried, but we overcome. I consider it my primary task in life to teach people how to live victorious lives through Jesus Christ and His Word. Joshua 1:8 is our foundational text as a ministry. "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Q: Bishop Jackson, this has been a great interview. Those who read this will learn a great deal about you. Are there any final thoughts you want to leave the readers with?

Bishop: Yes. I want people who read this interview locally in Boston or Chesapeake, where we now have churches, to know that we have a great vision and we are asking Christians who want to be part of doing something great for God to join us. I promise you this. We will minister to you and teach you and help you find and fulfill your destiny. Your background, ethnicity or race does not matter. We would love to have you as part of our church family. And for those who want to join us but reside outside the areas where we have churches, we have an associate membership which allows a person to plug in even from a distant location. God may even call some people to relocate to be with our ministry. Or if you have a primary membership at another church, but feel God is calling you to help us, Associate Membership is also available. Just call us or email us for details. All are welcome.

Q: Thank you Bishop Jackson. It has been extremely interesting and enlightening.

Bishop: You're quite welcome. God bless you.