

INTERVIEW / BOB MCKEOWN WITH JUSTIN PETERS

LET'S START BY TALKING ABOUT LAST NIGHT. WHAT KIND – LOOKING AT IT NOW, WHAT DID THAT EXPERIENCE TEACH YOU?

I didn't really see anything new last night, but every time I go to a Benny Hinn crusade, I go through these, this curious juxtaposition of emotions. Never do I feel such anger and such sadness at the same time because I see how God's word is being twisted and perverted.

But at the same time, I look around me and I see people that are devastatingly handicapped. Last night, I saw a man laying on a mat who was too sick with cancer barely to even lift his head, and my heart breaks for these people.

Same time, I'm angry at what Benny Hinn is doing by twisting God's word, so that rather than the word of God being a source of comfort and strength to these individuals that are suffering, he twists it so now it stands in judgment over them. So.

NOW YOU SAY YOU FEEL ANGER AND SADNESS, BUT TO HEAR PASTOR BENNY HINN TELL IT, AND MANY OF THE PEOPLE WHO GET UP ON STAGE AND CLAIM THAT THEY HAVE BEEN HEALED OF SOMETHING, THERE'S HOPE, THERE'S JOY, THERE'S FULFILLMENT. THERE'S FAITH.

Right.

WHY WOULD THAT MAKE YOU FEEL ANGRY AND SAD?

Well, cause only for a few does the faith and hope come, and even at that, it's only temporary. But for the vast, vast majority of people that are sitting in the back on the floor in these wheelchairs, they never get out of the wheelchairs. It's always people that have a bad back or a ringing in their ears or fibromyalgia. I'm amazed –

WHAT IS FIBROMYALGIA?

I'm not a doctor, but I do know a couple of people with fibromyalgia and you wouldn't know that they had it unless they told you. So fibromyalgia is a very common disease that seems to be healed at Benny Hinn crusades because it's not something that's readily visible. It's not something like what I've got, or it's not severe multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy.

You know, where are the amputees? Where are the children with Downs Syndrome, you know, where are these people? Why don't they get up on stage? They never do. It's always people that have some kind of an illness that's not readily visible. But for most people, when the show's over and the lights go out, they leave in the same wheelchair that they came in on.

And they, they are left with devastation, by Benny Hinn's own teachings, he leaves them physically and spiritually devastated?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

Well, one of my biggest problems with Benny Hinn is he equates salvation, which is the most precious gift that a Christian has, and healing. In a Miracle Crusade in 2002, he said it's just as easy to be healed as it is to be forgiven. Healing and salvation should never be separate.

Now, for the person that is sitting there, listening to him, this man who claims to be one of God's greatest spokesman, for a person that's in a wheelchair or otherwise afflicted and they hear this, and then the show is over and the healing has not come to them. Now not only do they have to struggle with their illness, but now they worry about their own spiritual shortcomings.

SO IN OTHER WORDS, IF SOMEONE LEAVES WITH THE SAME CONDITION THEY ARRIVED WITH, IT MUST BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE, THEY DON'T HAVE FAITH.

That's right. Because if you begin with the premise that it's always God's will for a person to be healed, and healing does not come, then at some level you've got to ask, well whose fault is it? By definition it can't be God's fault because he's perfect.

So the only other person to look to is the afflicted. It must his fault because he didn't have enough faith or he didn't give enough money, or maybe he's not even saved, which to me is the worst possible use of scripture that I can imagine, to turn it around and make somebody believe that the reason they're sick is that they don't have salvation, which for the Christian is the most precious gift of all. And it breaks my heart to see people leave, doubting their very salvation, simply because they're sick.

THESE ARE CALLED MIRACLE CRUSADES, BENNY HINN'S MIRACLE CRUSADES. HE IS QUITE EXPLICIT AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM, YOU WILL HAVE YOUR HEALING TONIGHT. HE SAYS TO TENS OF THOUSANDS.

Right, right.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT ANYONE AT THAT CRUSADE YOU ATTENDED LAST NIGHT... IS TRULY MIRACULOUSLY...?

Bob, I didn't see it last night. In the research that I've done with some Christian watchdog groups, they tell me that they have never seen a documented, airtight case of a miraculous healing. That having been said, I do believe in miracles. I do believe that God still heals today. But it's certainly not always his will for a person to be healed.

But given the fact that at any given crusade, you have 15 to 20,000 people there, the vast majority of whom are honest, good, bible-believing Christians that really love the Lord, it would be surprising to me that God would not heal some at a crusade because I do believe that God still heals today.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE PEOPLE WHO GET UP ON STAGE WITH BENNY HINN ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN MIRACULOUSLY HEALED?

No, I don't. It's possible some, but I, I'd say the vast majority are not.

WHY NOT?

Because I've talked to many of them, people that have been on stage and then come back, and I've followed them, talked with them. Done follow-up with them. I've gotten names and phone numbers and called them. And when I call them, to a person, every one I've talked to is still suffering from the same malady that they had when they went up there, or when they went to the crusade.

It's a temporary state of euphoria. The body can do amazing things when one is in a state of high emotion. When you have adrenalin pumping through out. It's a matter of mind over body. And for a while, you can make yourself believe that you are healed, and you feel better for a little while, until the euphoria subsides, a new day dawns and the symptoms almost always reappear.

ONE GETS THE IMPRESSION ATTENDING A BENNY HINN CRUSADE THAT FIRST OF ALL, THERE'S AN ORDER OF EVENTS THAT RARELY VARIES. SECONDLY, THAT ALMOST EVERYBODY WHO'S THERE KNOWS WHAT'S SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN.

Right.

IS THAT A FAIR APPRAISAL?

Absolutely. It's highly scripted – highly scripted. And there is a level of expectation there, from the time the gentleman comes up and begins to open the show, they create this atmosphere of expectation.

Miracles are promised. Miracles will happen.

And when you're in a closed environment with 15 to 20,000 people around you, singing praises and lifting hands, and the lights are dimmed, a very controlled environment, the excitement is almost palpable

and you can feel it. So it is very controlled. And when people expect something to happen, for a while many can make themselves believe that something has happened, when in effect it hasn't.

SO THOSE WHO LINE UP TO GO UP ON STAGE ARE EXPECTING WHAT, DO YOU THINK?

Most of those that line up, hoping to get up on stage, claim to have been healed, and so they expect to go up on stage and give a testimony of what the Lord has done for them or what they believe the Lord has done for them. And Benny Hinn will slay them in the spirit, which is completely un-biblical, but it makes for good television.

YOU SAY UN-BIBLICAL. THERE'S NO SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THAT KIND OF SWOONING WHEN THE POWER OF THE LORD IS ALL AROUND YOU?

Not the way Benny Hinn does it. Now there are examples in the Bible, when people will be in the presence of God and they will fall down, face forward, and worship. It happened to John in the Book of Revelation. But interestingly, any time in scripture when somebody falls backwards in God's presence, they always do so in judgement.

And so what we see on a Benny Hinn crusade, with people being slain in the spirit and falling backwards, that is, that is not something to be proud of at all because that – anytime somebody falls backwards in scripture, it's always in judgement.

WHEN YOU SAY IN JUDGEMENT, HOW IS THAT DEFINED?

They have committed sin against God. God is bringing judgement upon them for one reason or another. Happened to Ananias and Sapphira in Acts, Chapter 5, when they were slain in the spirit. But the problem is they were slain and they didn't get back up. They were stone-cold dead.

In the Gospel of John, when the officials and the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, Gospel of John tells us that many of them fell backwards. But are we to suppose that these men who came to arrest Jesus were believers in Jesus? Absolutely not. This was done in judgement over them.

NOW WHEN YOU SEE THOSE PEOPLE FALLING LIKE BOWLING PINS ON HINN'S STAGE, ARE THEY TRULY OVERCOME BY SOMETHING? ARE THEY PHYSICALLY UNABLE TO STAND UP?

Some, some are, but I think for the most part, they aren't. Now I've been slain in the spirit. I don't mind telling you that. When I was 16 years old, I went to see a faith healer for the very first time, and at this point I believed in it and I didn't know any better.

I was slain in the spirit because I had seen everybody else in the room being slain. And when the faith healer asked me to stand up and I do so, and she touched me on the head, subconsciously, I fell backwards. But looking back on it, there was nothing spiritual about it at all. It was simply because everybody else did it, so subconsciously I had this expectation that I should do the same thing.

And if I did not fall backwards, if I remained standing up, when everybody else had fallen, then I would have looked very un-spiritual indeed.

SO WHEN BENNY HINN, AS HE HAS DONE, TOUCHES PEOPLE, BLOWS ON THEM OR FLICKS HIS COAT JACKET AT THEM OR WAVES HIS ARM TO THE CHOIR AND A HUNDRED PEOPLE FALL OVER, IT'S A KIND OF MASS HYPNOSIS THAT'S GOING ON?

In a sense. It is the power of suggestion and the effect of group dynamics. Have you ever been in a room full of people, maybe watching a movie or television show and something happens, and people throughout the room laugh? When you're in a group setting, things like that tend to be more funny. Whereas if you had been by yourself, chances are you probably wouldn't have laughed. But since everybody else in the room began to giggle, you did too. And so it's the same dynamic that's at work.

SO CALL IT POWER OF SUGGESTION, MASS HYPNOSIS. MIGHT IT ALSO SIMPLY BE THAT PEOPLE KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING, THEY SEE IT ON TV, EVERY DAY, WEEK AFTER WEEK, AND WHEN IT COMES TIME FOR THEM TO PLAY THEIR PART, THEY DO?

That's exactly right. That's exactly right. There's nothing biblical about it anywhere, and it is simply the effect of peer pressure, what, what is expected of one, and the effect of group dynamics.

NOW YOU KNOW, IF YOU LISTEN TO BENNY HINN AWAY FROM HIS CRUSADES, HE HAS BEEN VERY SPECIFIC ON OCCASION TO SAY I DON'T HEAL ANYONE. IT'S GOD WHO DOES THE HEALING. I AM JUST A CONDUIT, A VESSEL. IS THAT THE WAY HE PRESENTS HIMSELF AT THESE SERVICES?

To his credit, yes, at least in recent years. And he said that last night, that I'm not the one that does the healing, God does it. And he is correct on that account. However, even though he gives lip service to orthodoxy in this sense, clearly the expectation among the people that follow him is that he is a uniquely gifted individual that God does work through on regular occasion.

And that's what people come. That's why he can pack out coliseums, night after night. People don't come to hear a gospel message preached. They come to see miracles. And yes, he gives lip service to the contrary, but he knows the public perception of him and he feeds that.

HE SAYS HE NOT ONLY SPEAKS TO GOD, HE SAYS GOD SPEAKS TO HIM. HE SAYS HE'S SEEN GOD. HE SAYS HE CAN TELL YOU WHAT HE WAS WEARING.

Oh yeah, yeah.

IS THERE ANYTHING IN THE SCRIPTURES TO SUPPORT THAT?

Well, many times in the scripture we have theophanies, when God appears to individuals. However, I don't think that that is still happening today, like it did in bible days. But God seems to speak to Benny Hinn more than he did to Moses, and that is how he buttresses his own spirituality.

He claims to have this direct pipeline to God, and God speaks to him and so therefore whatever Benny tells people that God told him, people believe it and he lifts himself up on this pedestal, maybe not by direct admission. But what he's doing, he's lifting himself up on this pedestal so that people will look to him as God's spokesman.

The problem is, is that much of what God seems to tell Benny Hinn directly contradicts the scripture. Benny Hinn is always giving these wild biblical interpretations, wild prophecies. For example, Benny Hinn has claimed under divine inspiration that God told him directly that there are nine members of the Trinity, which is completely heretical.

He has taught that women were to give birth out of their sides, which that's not particularly heretical, that's just stupid. But, but people believe it. He's prophesied that on New Year's Eve 1989 that the east coast of the United States would be ravaged by earthquakes in the 1990s, that there would be a woman in the White House, that by 1994 and '95, no later than that, in his words, God would destroy the homosexual community of America with fire.

THESE ARE ALL THINGS THAT HE IMPLIED AT LEAST, OR EVEN SAID THAT GOD HAD TOLD HIM.

Absolutely.

...HIS RELATIONSHIP.

He said that God told him these things directly. In fact, when he made these prophecies, he was in a trance, making it appear that God was speaking to him at that moment, directly through. And Benny Hinn was just the medium through which God was speaking.

SO WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF ALL THAT? DID HE TRULY BELIEVE HE HAD RECEIVED THESE MESSAGES FROM ABOVE?

I think there's two possibilities, Bob. Either one, if he did truly believe it and he was being influenced by some kind of spiritual forces, they were not godly spiritual forces. He was in contact with some type of demonic forces, which is a very real possibility.

I think the more likely possibility though is he was just making it up. He was trying to lift himself up and make himself appear to be as this great spokesman of God, this medium through which God speaks. And when he does that, he gets other people to follow him and look to him for direction, look to him for how to interpret the scriptures, look to him for the meeting of their physical and spiritual needs.

BECAUSE OF THIS AURA THAT IS AROUND HIM, THE WHITE SUIT, THE ARRIVING ON STAGE TO 'HOW GREAT THOU ART,' ALL THAT YOU'VE DESCRIBED, ARE THERE PEOPLE WHO THOUGH THEY MAY NOT TRULY THINK THAT... WOULD WANT TO GET CLOSE TO HIM AND HOPE THAT THEY WILL BE....

Sure. Oh yes. In fact, last night, at the crusade, he began by preaching a salvation sermon, which I had no problem with. In fact, everything he said last night, when he presented the Gospel, I agreed with. And he gave an altar call for people to come down and accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

Well, I do that. But I noticed that several of the people that I had talked to personally and I knew were already believers went down, and these were people in wheelchairs. They went down at the altar call.

When they came back, I asked a couple of them. I said, why – you went down to accept Jesus. I thought you were already saved.

And this one lady sitting next to me, she said, oh I am saved, but I was just hoping maybe I might get healed by going down and getting close to the stage. It's a heartbreaking thing.

LET'S SET ASIDE HIS – LET'S SET ASIDE THE MIRACLES FOR THE MOMENT AND TALK ABOUT THE OTHER ASPECT OF THE BENNY HINN MINISTRY THAT'S INESCAPABLE, AND THAT IS MONEY.

Right.

AGAIN, ONE GETS THE IMPRESION AT A CRUSADE THAT THE MOMENTUM IS INTENTIONALLY BUILDING TO A COUPLE OF DIFFERENT POINTS, BUT ONE OF THEM IS THE COLLECTION.

Right.

FROM WHAT YOU'VE SEEN, IS THAT A FAIR ANALYSIS, THAT THESE SERVICES ARE CONSTRUCTED FOR MOMENTUM TO BE GATHERING AND THE EMOTIONAL TEMPERATURE RISING JUST WHEN THEY SEND OUT THE COLLECTION BUCKETS?

Absolutely. And if you'll notice, the collection of the money always happens right before the healing section of the service begins. And Benny Hinn will say things like, those who sow bountifully will reap bountifully. Those who sow sparingly will reap sparingly. Which is scripture, by the way, but he takes it out of context.

The implication is, is that if you are here tonight and you need a miracle from God, particularly if you're severely handicapped or have a terminal illness, you had best dig deeply cause the bigger miracle that you need, the bigger monetary seed that you need to sow, to receive that miracle.

HE'S TALKING ABOUT SOWING THE MONETARY SEED TO HIM, TO BENNY HINN'S MINISTRY ?

Right. Absolutely. Right.

AND OFTEN HE MAKES THAT TRANSITION SEAMLESSLY. IT'S SOW YOUR SEED TONIGHT, CHEQUES, CASH OR FILL OUT YOUR CREDIT CARD INFORMATION.

Right. At times, Benny Hinn will give lip service to saying that no, you can't buy a miracle, which is true obviously. But clearly the implication is, in effect, in effect, you can buy a miracle. The more money you give to his ministry, the better chance you have of being healed.

NOW HE IS ADAMANT AT ALMOST EVERY SERVICE I'VE SEEN THAT ALL THE MONEY YOU GIVE TONIGHT WILL GO TO CONDUCT GOD'S WORK. NOT A PENNY WILL BE SPENT ON ANYTHING ELSE?

Right.

HOW DO YOU INTERPRET THAT?

Well, my question would be how do I know that? All reputable evangelists have joined the Evangelical Council of Financial Accountability, which just makes sure that in your evangelistic ministry, everything is on the up and up. All your reputable evangelists are members of it. Billy Graham certainly is, Franklin Graham.

Benny Hinn refuses to join it. So his, the monetary dealings in his ministry are very well hidden and nobody really knows where the money's going, and that's the problem. There is no accountability in his ministry.

WELL SOME OF IT'S OBVIOUS. HIS HOUSE, FOR EXAMPLE, WHICH IS TECHNICALLY HIS PARSONAGE AND THEREFORE PAID FOR COMPLETELY, DOWN TO THE ELECTRICAL BILLS AND THE PROPERTY TAXES, BY THE MINISTRY, PAID FOR BENNY HINN.

Right.

DO YOU BELIEVE, AND FROM THE RECORDS WE CAN FIND, THAT HOUSE IS WORTH IN THE VICINITY OF \$10 MILLION TODAY. IT'S A 3-YEAR-OLD HOUSE. DOES THAT STRIKE YOU AS AN APPROPRIATE USE OF MONEY GIVEN FOR GOD'S WORK?

No. No. The Bible says to avoid all appearances of evil. That certainly does not look good, even on the surface of it. Interestingly, about ten years ago, Benny Hinn said people, preachers that live in big cars and – live in big homes and drive big cars ought to reexamine their calling.

That was one of his temporary forays into orthodoxy. But he – you know, and when a new day dawns he, he goes back to his fancy cars and big homes. But it certainly does not look good. It is not becoming of a, of a professional minister of the Gospel. Billy Graham certainly doesn't have a home like this.

BENNY HINN HAS BEEN QUOTED AS SAYING, WHERE IN THE SCRIPTURES DOES IT SAY I HAVE TO DRIVE A HONDA?

Right.

IS THAT A PLAUSIBLE RESPONSE? WHERE IN THE SCRIPTURE DOES IT SAY BENNY HINN OR SOMEONE LIKE HIM HAS TO BE A POOR MAN?

The scripture doesn't say that we should be poor. However, in Mark, Chapter 10, Jesus did tell his disciples that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. So material wealth is not necessarily a sign of God's blessing. Neither is it necessarily a, a sign that God is not in favour of you – is not blessing your efforts.

The fact of the matter is, is that not many people have the spiritual maturity to handle wealth and so it is not something that God bestows very freely. But Benny Hinn certainly does not have the spiritual maturity to handle it.

SOME CALL IT THE PROSPERITY DOCTRINE, WHERE THE MORE YOU SOW, THE MORE YOU'LL REAP AND YOU'LL BE REWARDED WITH FINANCIAL MIRACLES IN YOUR LIFE... FINANCIAL HEALING THAT TAKES PLACE. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT'S A VALID PHILOSOPHY?

No, I don't, I don't. I've seen Benny Hinn target specifically people that are in debt, and he says if you want to get out of debt, sow your biggest seed that you can into my ministry. Well, I hate to say it, but I believe that all that that person is going to get is further into debt.

The Bible does teach giving, and I believe in giving. I tithe all of my income to my church. But it is never a give so you can get. We are to give to the Lord's work so that the Gospel can be spread into the rest of the world when people come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. But it is never a give to get principle taught in scripture. That's not biblical at all.

WHAT EVER YOUR DISPUTE WITH HIM AND THE WAY HE LIVES AND HIS PHILOSOPHY ... WHERE DOES BENNY HINN STAND IN THE PANTHEON OF FIRST EVANGELISTS AND SECONDLY RELIGIOUS LEADERS?

Benny Hinn today is one of the most widely recognized men in Christian – in Christianity today, certainly one of the most recognized men in Christian television. He is right up there with, with Billy Graham in name recognition. The two could not be further apart though in how they carry themselves.

But clearly, millions of people, tens of millions of people around the world believe that Benny Hinn is one of God's greatest spokesmen. His daily television show is shown in over 190 countries around the world. Almost everybody that watches Christian television knows who Benny Hinn is.

AND TO WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE THAT? HOW HAS HE MADE HIMSELF INTO THAT LARGER THAN LIFE FIGURE?

I think he's a showman and he's a very good showman. He understands people and he understands how to manipulate emotions. He understands how to build himself up, so that people respect him and people believe what he says. He's got a lot of good people working for him, a lot of smart people working for him.

And it's a well oiled machine. But more than anything, he claims to speak for God. And many people are insecure in their own relationship with him, maybe will not rely on God's word the way that they should, and so they turn to people like Benny Hinn to get direction and to get information and to get miracles.

BUT THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO CLAIM TO SPEAK FOR GOD IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, ESPECIALLY ON TELEVISION THESE DAYS.... IT GOES ON, THE LIST GOES ON AND ON. BUT HOW HAS HE MANAGED TO DISTINGUISH HIMSELF FROM ALL THE REST?

I think part of it is his accent. He claims – or he is from Israel, Arabic descent, but he's from Israel. So he has that tie to the Holy Land and he's used that, by the way, to make himself appear more spiritual than what he really is. But it's his look, it's – it's his show, well choreographed show. He's, he's a salesman. He's a showman and he's a salesman. He's very, very good at it.

IS HE ALSO A MONEY RAISER?

Oh gosh, yes. He lives a very luxurious lifestyle. Of course he – he is known to stay in hotel rooms sometimes cost \$2,000 a night, very palatial homes. It's just not very becoming of a minister of the Gospel. But yes. No one really knows how much money his ministry brings in, but estimates are that it's over \$100 million a year, maybe as high as \$150 million a year.

AND AGAIN I KNOW THE ANSWER TO THIS, BUT I'M GOING TO ASK YOU ANYWAY. ACCORDING TO ITS INCORPORATION AS A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION AND AS A CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION, WHAT DISCLOSURE, FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE DOES THE MINISTRY HAVE TO MAKE, AS TO WHERE ALL THAT MONEY IS SPENT?

Little to none. Very little outside accountability. The only accountability he has is with his self-appointed board of directors. So public records need not be made public, or records need not be made public. So very, very little accountability.

LET'S GO BACK TO LAST NIGHT. WHAT WAS YOUR OBJECTIVE THERE AT THE CRUSADE IN TORONTO?

I wanted – one of my objectives was to continue the research I've been doing and, and to listen to his theology, listen to what he teaches. But also I wanted to see if I could get up on stage last night. And I've tried to do this at other Benny Hinn crusades, and needless to say –

IS THAT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Well, I wanted – I want people to understand that people that look like I do, that have an obvious disability are never allowed up on stage. It's always somebody that has some kind of illness that cannot be readily seen. And if God is truly healing the sick through Benny Hinn, we should expect to see amputees grow new limbs. We should expect to see the severely mentally retarded restored. We should expect to see people that are crippled and have withered arms and legs be restored. But we don't. And so the evidence, the lack of evidence speaks volumes.

WHEN YOU SPEAK TO PEOPLE IN WHEELCHAIRS OR PEOPLE WITH OBVIOUS DISABILITIES, WHAT'S THEIR PHILOSOPHY WHEN THEY ARRIVE AT A SERVICE?

They're very expectant. In talking with people, almost without exception, I will ask them, do you believe that Benny Hinn is used by God to heal people? Oh yes, absolutely. Do you believe that it is always God's will for a person to be healed? Oh yes, absolutely, that's what his word teaches. And then I ask them, well, I hope that you are healed, but if the service comes to a conclusion tonight and you are not healed, given the fact that it's always God's will to be healed, then whose fault is it? And many people will stop and think and they'll say well, it has to be my fault. And that's exactly right. That's the only other conclusion, only conclusion you can draw. And it is absolutely heartbreaking what he does to these people.

AND WHEN YOU SEE THEM LEAVE, AS THEY CAME IN, WITH THE SAME DISABILITY, WHAT DO YOU SEE ON THEIR FACES?

Sadness, a lot of hurt. It, I see parents walking out of the coliseum holding their vegetative children in their arms, tears streaming down their faces. Benny Hinn leaves devastation everywhere he goes. In Dallas, Texas, in a – in a June 2002 crusade, I spoke with a lady that was about 60 years old and she was there with her 31-year-old son, who was in a wheelchair, completely vegetative.

And I asked her where she was from. She said New Hampshire. And I said, so you drove all the way from New Hampshire to see Benny Hinn. She said oh yes, we follow him all over the country. And imagine what that poor lady must be going through, hoping that this will be the crusade, or if not this one, the next one. People follow him all over the country, steadily giving money and – he's just leading them on. Heartbreaking.

YET WHEN YOU GO TO ONE OF THESE CRUSADES, THE FEELING OF FAITH, FEELING OF BELIEF IN THAT ARENA IS ALMOST PALPABLE. YOU ALMOST FEEL AS IF YOU COULD TOUCH IT, THERE IS SO MUCH OF IT AROUND. AND HOPE THAT SOMETHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN, THAT TONIGHT IS THE NIGHT FOR YOUR MIRACLE WITH BENNY HINN –

He says that every day.

COULD THAT NOT BE GOOD? IF HE CAN CREATE HOPE WITH PEOPLE WHO MIGHT NOT HAVE MUCH OF IT IN THEIR LIVES, IF HE CAN BOLSTER THEIR BELIEF AND THEIR FAITH, ISN'T THAT A GOOD THING?

It would be if that's what he was doing, but that's not what he's doing. What good is false hope? Benny Hinn is trying to, in my opinion, trying to remove – move people away from their dependency on God alone, in his revelation of us to himself, in his word. God's word is sufficient, but Benny Hinn is trying to move them away from that, so that they are placing more and more of their faith in him.

Now he won't admit to it, but in effect, this is what's happening. Is it a good thing to give people hope when it's false hope? I don't think so, at all. Because it makes people doubt their own relationship with the Lord. And for the Christian, there is no darker valley to be in when you doubt your salvation. But that is an escapable result of what happens.

IF AS YOU'VE DESCRIBED, IN YOUR WORDS, PEOPLE LIKE YOU, PEOPLE WITH VISIBLE DISABILITIES DON'T GET ON A BENNY HINN STAGE, HOW IS THAT CONTROLLED? HOW DO THEY STOP YOU FROM SIMPLY PRESENTING YOURSELF?

Well, several – several ways. For one thing, there's steps going out to the stage, so nobody in a wheelchair is ever going to get up on stage. There's big bodyguards that guard those steps and people that try to get up on stage, they go down front. They are always turned away. If they're in a wheelchair, they're always turned away. I've seen it happen time and time again. And they come back very dejected.

YOU WENT UP TO THE FRONT OF THE LINE LAST NIGHT. BUT NO FARTHER. WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU GOT THERE?

The ladies that spoke – well, one of the ladies I spoke with was actually very nice to me. She did say I don't think he's letting any more people get up on stage to be healed. So she asked me to stand beside the wall.

YOU THINK SHE WAS BEING POLITE.

I think she was, and she very well may, may have been a very nice lady. But she asked me to stand beside the wall. I was clearly not going to get on the stage. So I, they told me just to step back and pray for my healing. I can do that in my seat.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THEY DO IN FACT TRY TO VERIFY THAT PEOPLE WHO GET ON STAGE AND SAY THEY'VE BEEN CURED OF CANCER OR AIDS OR DIABETES OR A BRAIN TUMOUR ARE IN FACT CURED?

I don't think so, Bob. I know Benny Hinn has come under a lot of scrutiny in years past for not doing so, and he's made pledges that he will do it. But the lack of evidence is astounding. He – there – he offers no medical verification for the healings that he claims to have happened on his stage. On occasions when he has offered medical verification, for one reason or another all of the cases end up being non-verifiable.

NOW IF YOU DO THE MATH, EVERY NIGHT THERE ARE AS MANY AS 20 AT HIS CRUSADES, SO LET'S SAY THAT 3 SERVICES IN 24 HOURS, THAT'S 60. HE DOES DOZENS OF THESE A YEAR, SO IT'S A THOUSAND PEOPLE WHO GET UP ON STAGE AND CLAIM – HE PROCLAIMS THEY'VE BEEN HEALED OF SOMETHING. HE'S BEEN DOING IT FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, SO WE'RE TALKING ABOUT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE HE'S REBUKED CANCER FROM. BUT NOT A SINGLE ONE OF THESE HAS EVER BEEN VERIFIED TO YOUR SATISFACTION?

To the best of my knowledge, not a single one. Now again, that's not to say that some people are not healed because I believe that God does still heal today. But from what Benny Hinn has offered in his ministry, I have seen no conclusive evidence of any miraculous healing that has no other explanation, other than God. I've seen none of that.

AND HAS THAT HAD AN IMPACT ON HIS POPULARITY OR ON HIS ABILITY TO ATTRACT PEOPLE OR RAISE MONEY?

Apparently not. A lot of – there’s – it’s a combination, Bob. There’s a lot of gullible people in the world, but also there’s a lot of hurting people in the world that are grasping at straws. But his population seems to only increase. But really, we shouldn’t be surprised at that because the Bible itself prophesies that in the last day, false Christ will arise. And Jesus said, they will arise and deceive even the elect, if it were possible. So I think what we’re seeing is the fulfillment of prophecy. Shouldn’t surprise us.

BENNY HINN TRAVELS INTERNATIONALLY WIDELY. HE HAD A CRUSADE A FEW MONTHS BACK IN INDIA, AT WHICH IT IS CLAIMED ON HIS WEBSITE, ALMOST FIVE MILLION PEOPLE CAME TO HEAR HIM PREACH. HE’S GOING TO ISRAEL. HE’S TRYING TO GET HIS MESSAGE INTO THE ISLAMIC WORLD. DO YOU BELIEVE HE SEES HIMSELF AS THE PERSON IN THE VANGUARD OF BRINGING CHRISTIANITY TO ALL NON-CHRISTIANS? I think probably so. I’ve often wondered if Benny Hinn knows he’s a fake or if he’s just so self-deluded. I’m not sure. I think initially in his ministry, I think he may have begun with honourable intentions, but he has become intoxicated by the money. He’s been come, become intoxicated by the power. He yields an incredible power over people and I think for him, it’s a real – it’s a real rush. But yes, I do – I do think he sees himself as some type of a messiah figure.

HE’S BEEN ASKED, JESUS DIDN’T ASK FOR MONEY, WHY DO YOU? AND HIS STOCK RESPONSE IS JESUS DIDN’T HAVE A TV SHOW. I HAVE TO BUY AIR TIME, I HAVE TO MOUNT ALL THESE CRUSADES, WHICH PROVIDE MATERIAL FOR MY TV SHOWS. IS THAT A PLAUSIBLE RESPONSE?

In a sense, yes. A ministry does require money to operate. I have an evangelism ministry and it requires some money, nothing on the scale that he has. So yes, ministries do require money to continue. However, if you’re going to raise this money, be open, be forthright about where the money’s going. And, and he’s not. He keeps it very well hidden. So yes, it does require money, but not, not to the level of money that he’s bringing in. Obviously from, from the lifestyle that he leads.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF. WERE YOU RAISED IN A CHRISTIAN FAMILY? HAS THIS ALWAYS BEEN PART OF YOUR LIFE?

I was, Bob. I been going to church, I was going to church nine months before I was born. Yes, my parents are two wonderful Christian people. My sister’s a wonderful Christian lady. And yes, my faith has always been very important to me. I was saved when I was 7 years old. I accepted Jesus as my Saviour and Lord.

And partly because of the influence that my parents had, but also the fact that I have cerebral palsy. God has used my handicap to keep me dependent upon him and to show me things about himself, and to let me experience him in ways that otherwise I may never have experienced him.

BE SPECIFIC ABOUT THAT. WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU FEEL YOUR CEREBRAL PALSY HAS DONE TO ENHANCE YOUR FAITH?

Well, I think for one thing, it’s kept me humble. It is – there have been many times in my life, particularly when I was young, when I couldn’t go out and participate in many of the activities that my friends were doing. I couldn’t go out and play on the playground. When I became a teenager, initially I couldn’t drive. I couldn’t do a lot of the things that my friends were doing.

But I also had a best friend and his name is Jesus Christ and even though I may have been alone in an earthly sense at times, I knew that Jesus was always there with me. And he has used my handicap I think to teach me perseverance. He is – he has given me his sufficient grace that he promised the apostle Paul in 2nd Corinthians, Chapter 12, Verse 9.

I love this passage of scripture. The apostle Paul was himself afflicted with a physical disability. He called it a thorn in the flesh. And Paul asked the Lord three times that it might be removed. But God didn't heal him of it. Jesus came to Paul and he said Paul, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in your weakness.

And I have seen through my life that the power of Jesus Christ has been made perfect, been perfected in my own weaknesses. He has used it to keep me dependent on him. He has used it to grow me in him. I have learned more about the Lord through my handicap than I believe I ever would have learned without it.

He knew that I would need it to do what he's called me to do. Sufficient grace is, is a much greater miracle than being healed of cerebral palsy. Bob, if I have to live the rest of my life, if I ever just hold up another 30 or 40 years with cerebral palsy, that's fine because I know that on the other side of eternity, I'm going to have a whole body. I'm not going to have cerebral palsy. I'm going to be made whole. And I have all of eternity to live whole and in fellowship with Jesus. So if I have to live with CP on this earth for a few years, so be it. You know, that's okay.

WAS THERE A TIME WHEN YOU HOPED THAT YOU MIGHT GO TO A HEALING SERVICE AND BE HEALED?

Yes. When I was 16 years old, a man came up to my parents and me and he said, Justin, God's told me that he's going to heal you. And he said, there's this faith healer coming to Vicksburg. It was December 3rd, 1989. I'll never forget it.

And at the time, as a teenager, sure, I wanted to be healed. I wanted to be able to walk and run and play football and drive a car. None of those things I could do at the time. So yes, I got very excited about it. And, and I went to this healing service, just knowing that I was going to be healed. In fact, it was winter when it happened and I wanted to wear shorts, just so I could look down and watch my legs grow. I mean that's how certain I was that it was going to happen.

WHAT HAPPENED?

The faith healer preached her sermon. It came time for the healing service to begin. People lined up and uh, she said, line up and come up to her. She dipped her finger in some oil, touched them on the head and they would fall out, being slain in the spirit. And I was just bug-eyed. I had never, being a Baptist, I'd never seen anything like this before.

People were laying all over the floor, looking like a scene out of MASH. And boy, I just knew it was going to happen then. Well, the last person went through the line and, and having cerebral palsy, I couldn't stand up that long. So I was, I remained in my seat. Well, she went out the back door and my dad saw this, and he went up and he called her before she could get out.

And he said, my two boys, meaning me and my best friend Justin Fisher, who also has cerebral palsy, my two boys have been waiting to see you and you're not going to leave until you see them. Well he did this in front of everyone, so she pretty much had to turn around. She came back. She asked us to stand up, so I stood up. She dipped her finger in the oil, touched him on the head, touched me on the head. We both fell back.

And needless to say, I was not healed. She said later that night, she said I'm going to be leaving early in the morning. If you want to see me before I leave, come back to the hotel, 4:30 in the morning. So I wanted to come back. My dad by this time was very skeptical, but he brought us back.

He went into the office where she was and he said, boys, just wait. He went into the office where she was, opened the door. She recognized him and her question to him was, what is your financial condition? And my dad asked why does that matter? She said, well, the more money you give, the more likely God is to hear your prayers. And he left the office and he said boys, let's go, and we left.

The potential was there to do tremendous damage to my faith. Thankfully that did not happen. My faith in God was not shaken, but my faith in faith healers was most certainly shaken. That incident is what really began my interest in the word of faith movement, faith healing movement.

AND AT WHAT POINT DID YOU ENCOUNTER BENNY HINN FOR THE FIRST TIME AND DID HE BECOME A SPECIAL INTEREST OF YOURS?

Probably in college. I began to watch him on television, and studied him some. And then my senior in college, the Lord called me into the ministry and I went to seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminar in Texas. And I studied it more in depth, much more at an academic level.

WROTE YOUR THESIS IN FACT.

I wrote my thesis on Benny Hinn. His life ministry and a critique of his theology. And in my research, I went to a number of Benny Hinn crusades, watched hours and hours of 'This Is Your Day', and so I – this is a passion that the Lord has given me. It's my desire that I can be of help to other people and let them know that you know, it's not always God's will for a person to be healed.

If you're sick, pray to be healed, pray for your healing. I would encourage anyone to do that. But if healing does not come, God does promise something better. He promises sufficient grace. He promises that his power will be made perfect in your weakness.

I THINK I MENTIONED TO YOU A YOUNG MAN WE MET IN CALGARY AT THE BENNY HINN CRUSADE NAMED JORDIE WHO HAS A KIDNEY CONDITION WHICH MEANS HE HAS TO TAKE DIALYSIS FOUR HOURS EVERY 48. AND POSSIBLY SHOULD ENTERTAIN A TRANSPLANT.

HE TOLD US HE WON'T BE PUT ON THE TRANSPLANT LIST AND HE DISCUSSES THE POSSIBILITY OF NOT CONTINUING DIALYSIS BECAUSE HE BELIEVES BENNY HINN WHEN BENNY HINN SAYS YOU'VE ALREADY BEEN CURED. IT'S REALLY JUST A MATTER OF TIME, THAT YOU HAVE EARNED YOUR HEALING. GOD WILL HEAL YOU. IT JUST HASN'T TAKEN EFFECT YET.

IF HE WERE SITTING HERE, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THAT YOUNG MAN?

I would tell that young man to go back to his doctor and seek treatment. Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke, was a physician himself. God uses doctors. This is one, one of the many dangers of Benny Hinn and his teachings, is that if a person seeks medical treatment, takes medicine, goes to see a doctor, that is seen as a sign of a lack of faith.

And so many people will avoid that, say I'm not going to take my medicine because that shows I don't have enough faith. And many people stop taking the medicine, stop going to see the doctors, and they get worse and sadly, many of them die.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THAT IS A PHENOMENON ASSOCIATED WITH THIS KIND OF EVANGELISM, THAT A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WE MAY NOT HAVE ANY IDEA BUT WILL IN FACT SUFFER AND DIE BECAUSE THEY CHOOSE NOT TO CONTINUE TREATMENT BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THEY HAVE DEFINITELY BEEN HEALED?

Without a doubt. And we'll never know who these people are. But many, many – it happens over and over and over, I have no doubt about that. A few cases have been documented, but certainly it happens. In fact, just last night, Benny Hinn told a lady afflicted with cancer, he told her that your cancer will never come back.

So she leaves that night, thinking that this man of God has told her that her cancer will never come back, therefore what need does, do I have to go see the doctor? What need do I have to continue treatment?

It's a tragedy.

I TOLD YOU WE HAD A DISCUSSION, SOMEWHAT BRIEF DISCUSSION WITH PASTOR HINN LAST NIGHT. BENNY HINN SAID TO ME IN THAT DISCUSSION, WE'RE DOING THIS IN GOOD FAITH, THAT ALL WE REALLY HAVE TO GO ON AT THESE CRUSADES IS WHAT THOSE PEOPLE TELL US ON STAGE. IS THAT NOT DIRECTLY CONTRADICTED BY WHAT HE SAYS ON STAGE?

Right. At times, he will tell people to go back and see their doctors. But other times, like we saw last night and the night before, he'll tell somebody that their disease, their cancer, is never going to come back. Well, how does he know that? You know, and he just expects people to take him at his word, and many, many people do cause they believe he speaks for God.

BUT HE HAS AT EVERY SERVICE, AS YOU KNOW, THERE IS THE POINT WHERE GOD SPEAKS TO HIM DIRECTLY AND TELLS HIM IN REAL TIME THIS IS BEING CURED, THAT'S BEING CURED, THIS HAS BEEN HEALED, THAT'S BEEN HEALED.

It's a shotgun effect. There are 15 to 20,000 people there and he says, someone's cancer is being healed. Well, odds are there are probably 2 or 300 people there, maybe more, that have cancer. So I mean it's, it's the shotgun effect. Faith healers have been doing this for, for years and years. Why doesn't he – if God can tell him that someone's cancer is being healed, why not give the name? You know – he's a charlatan. 150 years ago, Benny Hinn and others like him would have been snake oil salesmen.

I MEAN HE OF COURSE BASES OR SAYS HE BASES ALL THAT HE DOES ON THE SCRIPTURES. IS THAT A MATTER OF INTERPRETATION AS FAR AS YOU'RE CONCERNED?

Matter of his interpretation. Any, any biblical scholar worth his salt will tell you that, that most of, much of what Benny Hinn teaches is not biblical. He clearly takes passages of scripture out of context, and when you do that, you can make the Bible pretty much say whatever you want it to. And that's what Benny Hinn does.

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO APPLY TO HIM SPECIFICALLY?

This is a passage out of Matthew, Chapter 7, and Versus 22 through 23. These are Jesus' own words. "Many will say to me on that day, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? In your name, did we not cast out demons and perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you to part from me, you who practice iniquity." So see, from God's word, we can clearly see that just because somebody can apparently perform miracles, that is not necessarily a sign that God's blessing is upon them, not at all.

If, this passage of scripture is not talking about people like Benny Hinn, then I don't know who it's talking about. The Egyptian magicians in Moses' day performed miracles too, but they were not doing so under God's power. So the ability to perform miracles, is not necessarily a sign that the one performing them is close to God, being used by him.

IF YOU GOT A CHANCE TO SIT OPPOSITE BENNY HINN AND TALK TO HIM DIRECTLY, WHAT QUESTIONS WOULD YOU ASK, FIRST AND FOREMOST?

I guess one of my first questions would be how do you sleep at night? My other question would be, why don't you just preach the Gospel and leave it at that? Much of what Benny Hinn says I agree with when he teaches on salvation. Not all of it, but much of it. Preach the Gospel, Benny. That is what we are called to do. Leave this preaching healing behind because you're hurting people. Benny Hinn promised back in the early '90s that he would do this. He said I'm going to stop preaching healing and start preaching Jesus. I wish he had stuck to his word. If he would preach the Gospel, I'd be one of his biggest supporters.

ISN'T THE PROBLEM THAT IF HE LEAVES THE HEALING TEACHING BEHIND, HE'LL PROBABLY ALSO LEAVE A LOT OF THAT MONEY BEHIND?

That's the key. People go to see miracles. And the reason he continues to teach healing is because that is where the money is. That what, is what keeps people following him. That is what keeps people giving.

DESPITE ALL THAT WE'VE DISCUSSED, AND ALL OF THE CRITICISM YOU HAVE AND THAT YOU'VE POINTED OUT, EVERY YEAR IT SEEMS, MORE PEOPLE COME TO HIS CRUSADES, MORE PEOPLE WATCH HIS TELEVISION SHOWS AND MORE MONEY POURS INTO HIS COFFERS.

I think what we're seeing is the fulfillment of bible prophecy. The bible tells us that in the last days, people will not endure sound doctrine. Rather, they would have their ears tickled. And that's what Benny Hinn does. He tickles our ears. He tells them what they want to hear, promises them what they want to have.

END