

BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY DR. AYODEJI AWE

QUESTION 44-THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF CONCERNS LATELY ON THE ISSUE OF THE GENERAL OVERSEERS, BISHOPS AND PASTORS OF MEGA CHURCHES OWNING JETS WHILE OBVIOUSLY MANY IN THE CONGREGATION CANNOT AFFORD TWO SQUARE MEALS DAILY. PASTOR WHAT DO YOU THINK IS GOD'S VIEW ON THIS?

ANSWER-

To truly get to the bottom of the matter of preachers , pastors, televangelists and General Overseers owning private planes and jetting around the globe, we need to be open minded, factual, and scripture approved. To be open-minded is to not jump into any conclusions without actually collating the facts of the matter. To be factual is to gather relevant information and bases upon which decisions are made and carefully consider how the actors made their decisions, and to be scriptural approved is to weigh each case by scripture, remembering that no two cases are the same. Individuality must be looked at in lieu of the mind of God.

Bear in mind that all who own jets or use private ones no matter what field of endeavor they come from have a few things in common; they have access to or simply have a lot of money; they feel like for their work or assignments they need a private plane that can bypass the public airport protocol and get to destination quicker; and they feel like they are in a special class that sees it too ordinary to go around in the same transportation mode with 'common' people(remember that air travel anywhere in the world especially in the developing world is still for the privileged few upper class). These people feel like they have attained a celebrity or special status that being lumped together with the commons either puts them at risk or demeans them. As a matter of fact and this is ironic too, some of them can actually constitute a risk to the others if they go around ordinary. For instance imagine President Obama or Pastor Benny Hinn or Pastor Enoch Adeboye or the Queen of England fly Continental into Houston. These four, picked as examples across the isles are all super stars in their own right and you and I know how people like this are hounded not just by the paparazzi but even common people.

Many who adore them if chanced want to touch them, talk to them, ask them for favors, even as ridiculous as this may sound, waylay them for autographs etc. With all these distracting and disturbing prospects, a superstar who has money enough to live his or her life in a way to avoid

these hassles will probably go that route. That being the case, we can't fault them.

Look at another dimension, some of these people when traveling for work reasons may have a lot in their entourage. For instance whenever Pastor Joel Osteen is going for his Night of Hope in any major city here in the US or across the world, he travels with a large contingent that it may turn out to be more economical to own private planes for the purpose of efficiently conducting his numerous and massive crusades, instead of going public or chartering. For ministry in the magnitude of the likes of Joel Osteen, I 'm pretty sure that moving by way of public is not even a close call nor an option; and as mentioned, chartering most probably will be uneconomical.

Take the case of (well respected for his humility and godly posture) Enoch Adeboye, General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, a church recorded as the fastest growing denomination in the world, having branches in over 160 countries in the world: as the leader who may feel the need to touch these countries at some time within certain time frame, to be conscripted into going by public flights would be insane. Bear in mind that the church by virtue of a massive membership size has a lot of money. Even in a poor country because of size, the purse is deep. Therefore, if there is enough money to run the jets, yes he should. Though a lot is required to run such a venture, nevertheless, a lot more will be needed, plus a lot of pain, inefficiency and disappointments if the trips are via the public channels.

Inefficiency, disappointments and botched hopes of people are the pleadings of Pastor Ayo Oritshajefor while defending his own jet acquisition. The CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria) chieftain was presented with one during his celebration of 40 years in ministry and most people raised fists but after his counter protest and defense, many calmed.

Therefore in fairness to the preachers who have massive assignments to accomplish (just as you have top executives of corporation or companies or national governmental officials that have a lot in common) one cannot just rise up to crucify them without scrutinizing the extent of the need to go about private movement, whether by land or air. I want to believe that each jet owning preacher should be referred to their conscience as to why they feel the need for private planes in the line of service. Is their jetting a status symbol of the rich and the famous or is it on basis of need and efficiency?

Looking at examples in both rich and fairly comfortable countries like America and the other side like Nigeria, (though rich but ill managed)

can bring thought provoking comparisons and challenging contrasts. Here in the United States, many don't even know how preachers like Joel Osteen, T D Jakes, E V Hilliard, Billy Graham, Kenneth Copeland, and Benny Hinn just to mention a tiny of the whole bunch of these cash stuffed church and ministry leaders move around to do ministry business. Many of them own private jets and planes. Not too many know and care to know. For every intent and purpose, many private power brokers outside of church, in business, government, educational, etc own private means of traveling. Also, common people have access to good public transportation, and life amenities and opportunities to function as decent humans. Therefore the rich preachers in America are not conspicuously flashed on the big screen for public scrutiny.

But in the developing countries like Nigeria, a preacher using jets and leaving in mansions can really draw attention because in the country, common people live light years far apart from the privilege few. Many in a typical congregation of a rich pastor are so poor that to conveniently afford two meals a day is unreal. Therefore the luxury that some of the big GOs, bishops, and pastors are exposed to or may be truly entitled to by the size of their work have to be retagged as extravagant because many of their sheep are downtrodden. The reasonable thought will be that: if the shepherd and the sheep are both grafted to the vine (John 15) how can there be such an outrageous disparity in their outlook? It is hard to reconcile, really.

For instance many who had criticized Bishop David Oyedipo's jets and high profile educational facilities cannot understand why a devoted member of the (Living Faith World Outreach) cannot send his/her child to Covenant University that is built in the name of the church and by the funds of the church at large, and yet few individuals have so much money that they could buy a whole city. They query the Christ's love that leaders are supposed to live as examples to follow? Hear me, I don't have enough facts about Covenant University, neither had I any opportunity to talk to the bishop but if the complaint is valid, then somebody has to start to think about a change.

Recently Forbes Magazine through its own independent collation listed the five top richest preachers in Africa as coming from Nigeria: David Oyedepo –Living Faith World Outreach Ministries (Winners' Chapel), Chris Oyakhilome – Believers' Loveworld Ministries(Christ Embassy), Temitope B. Joshua (Synagogue Church of all Nations), Mathew Ashimolowo (Kingsway International Christian Center, London, England) and Chris Okotie (Household of God Church). Except for Ashimolowo, the other four are headquartered in Nigeria. (To begin with, it is kind of disturbing when preachers have to be measured in terms of wealth and riches).

Nevertheless, they are considered wealthy and they all operate massive ministries. All of these and many more like Enoch Adeboye, who though may not be called very wealthy but surely has access to a huge vault of money, when you consider the size of their ministries and work, I don't think anyone with respect for facts and reason can fault them for flying private jets. I believe the argument become weighty because of the seeming disparity in the living standards of the leaders and the majority of the parishioners.

Hopefully the big men in the pulpit world over will take some quality time to assess their lifestyles and penchant for excessive drive and propensity for wealth especially in a society where inequality of class and wealth is the bane of the pride of the ungodly. This must be a matter of conscience between the man and his/her God. In a country like the USA, sometimes people can actually put a little pressure on preachers who are living extremely large to consider their ways (recall Senator Grassley congressional attempt to probe into the finances of 6 of the most popular televangelists and pastors in America between 2007 and 2011). Such can actually inject a little caution into the financial cards of the big men in ministries. But in a place like Nigeria or other developing countries, the upper class and the rich occupy a secluded planet where they can rarely be touched. For those who are named with Christ the only recourse is their conscience before God.

Therefore in closing, I want to categorically state that there are some who by virtue of their work and status as defined by societal inclination towards them may do better by having their movements shaded away from the general populace. Those, we may need to excuse especially when they can afford it and their hearts are right and motives are pure. As is in all situations, there are surely those who have forsaken the right way and gone astray like Balaam (Jude 1:11). Their belly is their god and their focus is money and big name, summing up to vanity. For those, their lifestyles may be openly questionable. You cannot but find them in church because unfortunately, the church is fastly becoming an infamous satellite of the society. For all in this category, they need our prayers that they will remember the words of Christ: What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his soul? (Mk. 8:36). Who will find a shepherd that has gone astray like a lost sheep?

The focus of a real man of God is to sell the gospel to the unsaved, bring them in and keep them secured and fit for rapture and the afterlife. The likes of the followers of Professor Applewhite were eternally disappointed to realize that no spaceship was forthcoming to transport them to afterlife. In the same light, let our spiritual leaders and all the rich know

that no one is going to the rapture with a jet, private or public. When Jesus comes back in glory, our rewards (as pastors and under shepherds) will not be based on our stash of money or bigness of names but rather on our faithfulness at keeping the sheep entrusted into our care. As a matter of fact, focusing on wealth makes it harder for any believer- G.O or the least in the church, to enter the kingdom of God. Hun! Food for thought!

To have your questions answered; for counseling in any areas of your Christian life or for prayers feel free to con tact us at:

BQA @ Our Saviors Church

8430 Northern St. Houston, Tx. 77071

*713/8947832 * 713/7761958*

JUMIE888@YAHOO.COM