

Fresh Fire leader Todd Bentley accused of ‘perverse sexual addiction,’ preying on interns

Rick Joyner says he knew

By [Leonardo Blair](#)⁽¹⁾, Christian Post Reporter



Evangelist Todd Bentley | Screenshot: Vimeo

Stephen Powell, an estranged protégé of controversial evangelist Todd Bentley at [Fresh Fire USA](#)⁽¹²⁾, has publicly dismissed his mentor as “[not fit for public ministry](#)”⁽¹³⁾,” alleging that he has a “perverse sexual addiction” that has driven him to prey on interns.

Citing personal and reported testimony, Powell, who runs [Lion of Light Ministries](#)⁽¹⁴⁾ in Pineville, North Carolina, alleged in a [lengthy post on Facebook](#)⁽¹⁵⁾ Thursday that Bentley “has an appetite for a variety of sexual sins, including both homosexual and heterosexual activity.” He was not immediately available to respond to The Christian Post's request for further comment on Friday.

Powell also charged that Bentley’s behavior is enabled and covered up by his wife, Jessa, as well as Christian leaders in the evangelist’s orbit such as Rick Joyner, author of *The Final Quest* and founder of Morning Star Ministries and Heritage International Ministries.

Joyner helped Bentley [create Fresh Fire USA](#)⁽¹⁶⁾ in 2009, the year after Bentley separated from now ex-wife, Shonnah, and got involved in [an emotional relationship with a staff member](#)⁽¹⁷⁾. Joyner was also part of the “healing team” that was formed to help restore Bentley after the divorce and emotional affair.

In a [Facebook Live broadcast on Friday](#) ⁽¹⁸⁾, Joyner said he currently has no authority over Bentley and acknowledged being aware of accusations that he had preyed on interns. He also acknowledged that Powell had come to him and tried to pressure him into taking swift action against Bentley. He accused Powell of operating in a spirit of “witchcraft” for going public with his knowledge.

“When people come to me with pressuring, manipulating, especially threatening if I don’t do something their way, or in their time, I know that’s the devil,” Joyner said. “That’s in Scripture, counterfeit spiritual authority which is called witchcraft. That is not the Holy Spirit. We’ve got to start recognizing what is from the Holy Spirit and what is not.”

Powell said that even though he had been aware of misconduct by Bentley over the years, much of the evidence supporting his current allegations came to light this summer after he started appealing to Joyner to stage an intervention.

“Down through the years, Todd [Bentley] has made sexual advances toward (and in some cases engaged in sexual sin with) a number of different men and women outside his marriage, many of them interns and/or students under his leadership care in the church,” Powell alleged.

Powell cited testimony from a male intern who claimed in 2013 that Bentley offered to pay him \$1,000 if he allowed him to perform oral sex on him.

He said the intern told him: ““There was a time that I was with Todd and I was struggling to get by. ... I was living with my sister, working a job, just trying to pay my bills and get by, and Todd was supposed to be my mentor you know. And we’re hanging out and he’s paying for me to eat out, paying for me here, paying for me there, you know, and always showing off his money you know. ... And he was like, ‘I know you’re struggling so’... I don’t know how it came up, but He was like, ‘Can I suck your d--- for \$1,000?’ And I’m like, ‘What?’ I was like, ‘What the F is your freaking problem?’ ... And I was like, oblivious. ... And you know, it was not just that. ... I saw pictures of His wife naked, fully naked, the whole nine yards.”

He said he was told by another male intern who witnessed what happened that he informed Joyner of Bentley’s actions but ultimately “nothing was done and Todd was still allowed to go on in ministry as if everything was okay.”

In a [response on Facebook Friday](#) ⁽¹⁹⁾, Bentley admitted to “having a past” and noted that the allegations against him weren’t new.

“I decided to come out in a public way ahead of what has been brewing in recent months....This isn’t something new as many of the things that I’m dealing with do go back up to six, seven years. Yes, old stuff. I do have a past and many of the things I’m being accused of today come from the fact that I’ve had cracks in my foundation. I’m not about to hide, try to lie or run from the fact that I have a past in which my wife and my therapist [have been a part],” he explained.

He said he has been working with a therapist for approximately one year as well as an accountability team.

Bentley called many of the current accusations against him, “false.”

“They are gossip, they are swirl, they are speculation, hearsay and they are without any real evidence. As far as let the accusers come forth. Let them name names. Let them meet with me, with Rick. With whoever is on my leadership. I would love to be able to look in the eye of the people making the claims,” he said.

“I do have the things in my past I gotta say ... whether they are six months, a year, two years, five, six, seven. Many of the things that I’ve addressed and continue to address in my life to be clean,” he said.

“I am not guilty of the things that I’m being accused of as far as those homosexual acts. Things that are taken out of context in inappropriate text messages or conversations that I had that were not right that I’ve had to own, that go back to 2013,” he said, noting that he didn’t have any sexual affairs or commit adultery.

He said he is now leaning on the prayers and support of his friends, then read a prepared statement after assuring his followers that his ongoing healing revival will continue.

In his response, Joyner explained that after he completed oversight of Bentley’s restoration in 2012 stemming from the 2008 scandal, the evangelist has been charting his own path while continuing counseling.

“I do not have authority over Todd Bentley. Those of you who know the story had the issues [that manifested in 2008]. I was asked by Peter Wagner as a representative of the Revival Alliance to oversee Todd’s restoration. I was given very few guidelines, [not] anything. Just here, you take this. We think you’re supposed to do it. I thought I was the worst one in the world to do it,” he said. “I’m not good at that. That’s not my type of calling.”

He said he prayed about it, however, and he felt like God would give him the grace to do it.

“I would say this about Todd, he’s still being restored but guess what? So am I. So are you. We still have a ways to go. I felt like the Lord showed me in 2008 that this wasn’t the last big public embarrassment that Todd was gonna have or mistake or sin. I was given a Scripture in Proverbs where the righteous fall seven times. Even the righteous fall seven times, but He said Todd would keep getting back up. He said he would fight on. But I never expected after we released him in I think about 2012, that he would be perfect,” Joyner said.

He disputes as well that nothing was done when he learned of Bentley’s behavior toward interns.

“A situation arose in 2013 when Todd, a friend brought some text messages that Todd had sent to some interns. I was appalled,” Joyner said.

“They are in the accusations that the brother put out yesterday. I was shocked. I still didn’t have authority over Todd but I went to him as a brother and I confronted him with it. As a matter of fact, I confronted him harder than I ever confronted anybody over anything. I was absolutely outraged,” he said.

“If a brother is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore them, and do it in a spirit of gentleness lest we too be tempted. So I’ve resolved to obey that. I’m not gonna turn away from anyone who is caught in any trespass. And I’ll be honest with you, working with some really public figures ... my whole concept of any trespass got so stretched. And my concept of what God would give His grace and mercy to got so stretched. Even the deplorable things that Todd did do in this case, to me, they weren’t shocking anymore. And I’ve seen God help people through things way worse,” Joyner said.

He said Bentley got counseling and repented of the things he did in 2013, and he along with others will investigate the other allegations made by Powell.

“My opinion, the things that are said about me and written about me in this accusation, I thought they were not only not true but in my opinion, they were the opposite of the truth. They obviously helped me doubt everything else in it except for what was true that Todd had done way back in 2013. But the rest of it, we’re still gonna examine. We’re still gonna check out and try to get with witnesses and everything else. It’s a long process. I can’t just lay everything else I am doing down,” Joyner said.

Citing testimony he was given, Powell alleged that Joyner refused to help the young male intern who reported Bentley in 2013.

Another intern alleged that Bentley offered to pay him \$500 to send the evangelist a video of him masturbating, while yet another claimed that Bentley and his wife frequently sent him explicit photos and videos.

It was further alleged by Powell that Bentley “made out with his young female assistant whom he is not married to, walked into a room, closed the door, and stayed in there for at least 30 minutes with Jessa being in the same house and knowing about it.”

Citing several other accusations in the post as well as in a [Facebook Live broadcast](#) ⁽²³⁾, Powell said he was forced to speak out because the leaders of Bentley’s ministry have done nothing to address the evangelist’s behavior.

“I believe that both Todd and his wife, Jessa, are both complicit in this sexual perversion and have both participated in inviting other sexual partners, both men and women, into their marriage bed. Todd and Jessa’s relationship and marriage began in sexual sin and it appears that that sin has only grown and become stronger in their lives over the years, despite the bond of marriage they share,” he continued.

“I believe Todd is not fit for public ministry. On top of his sexual sins, he has proven to be a compulsive liar, he lacks financial integrity when handling God’s money, and he is a substance abuser that has drawn many others into these sins with him over the years. I believe Todd has proven over more than two decades of ministry, moral failures, and abuse of others that he cannot be trusted with the care of God’s people.”

Powell said he was a janitor at a small church in Alaska in 2012 when he met Bentley who “recognized a ministry gift on my life and began mentoring me in ministry.”

Bentley, he said, helped him get established as an itinerant preacher but in recent years, he began distancing

himself from the evangelist after God spoke to him about holiness. He admitted to being involved in crude behavior while he was a part of Bentley's camp but said he was never a part of any sexual acts.

"I myself have seen things over the years that I find very disturbing. I myself have seen Todd preach, pray, and prophesy over the people, only to leave the meeting, purchase hard liquor, and walk into his hotel to party the rest of the night," Powell said.

"I myself have seen and heard Todd and Jessa speak with unclean/foul speech. I confess that I myself, at times in the past, have gotten caught up in some of this culture of speech that's unpleasing to the Lord ... what one might call 'guy talk' or 'locker room banter,' which the Lord has dealt with my heart on and I've repented for. But honestly, with the vile culture that has infiltrated the charismatic church, it is extremely difficult at times to have fellowship with other ministers, and build alliances with others for the kingdom, and not be affected by this stuff," he explained.

Powell noted that he is hoping Bentley will respond to the allegations with repentance.

"At the end of the day, given the evidence I have and the 100's of hours I've spent on the phone talking to witnesses, I am fully convinced that Todd & Jessa both have lost the privilege to minister to God's people any longer, in full time ministry," he said.

"When someone has a record of sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, inappropriate behavior, drunkenness, lying, & cheating going back more than 20 years ... and they have repeatedly been offered great mercy and grace rather than disqualification from ministry, yet they continue to behave in this matter ... in my mind and through what I can see in the scripture, they have lost the right and privilege to minister to God's people ever again, in their own public ministry."

Joyner argued that Powell acted out of frustration, which is not of God.

"This brother put out this thing yesterday, admitted he did this out of frustration because I wouldn't meet with him. I was gonna meet with him, but at the right time and for the right reason. I was not gonna cave to his pressuring threatening, manipulating, anything else," he said. "Frustration, I don't think is a fruit of the spirit ... If we do things out of frustration that is not going to be the Spirit of God."

Powell argued that he, along with some of the witnesses he interviewed to compile evidence he submitted to Fresh Fire leaders, have already been threatened.

"Some of the witnesses I talked to at the beginning of my investigation have since withdrawn their testimony because they have been threatened by people involved in this network of sin and cover-ups. I've come across at least one witness who was paid off and made to sign a legal gag order in order to keep silent about the great sins and abominations he's witnessed. And in some cases, I personally have been threatened with a lawsuit and violence if I revealed my findings," he said.

Regardless of the allegations, Joyner believes that Bentley and his ministry will survive and the exposure will be "used for good, for Todd, for me."

“I’ve seen the consequences of those who’ve done the things that this brother is doing ... I was waiting to meet with him so that I could have something from God that I could give to him that might help set him free from the course that I believed him to be on,” Joyner said. “It’s a black hole when you start to believe you’re the police of the body of Christ but you’re not getting that from above. You’re getting it from the devil.”

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