



## Joyce Meyer Ministries

# MinistryWatch.com Recommends that Donors Withhold Giving to Joyce Meyer Ministries

### The Issues

MinistryWatch.com calls upon donors to prayerfully consider withholding contributions to Joyce Meyer Ministries/Life in the Word, Inc. (JMM) in response to new facts and allegations regarding lavish lifestyles enjoyed by Joyce Meyer and many of her family members. Information about extravagant spending on salaries and other benefits for Joyce Meyer has recently been made public as a result of claims by Jefferson County, Mo. Tax Assessor Randy Holman that JMM is in fact a business and not a church.

These newly revealed facts, published in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and obtained by the newspaper through Missouri's Open Records law – coupled with MinistryWatch.com's previous concerns about the self-serving "prosperity theology" generally taught by Joyce Meyer, and poor governance of the ministry – has caused MinistryWatch.com to recommend that donors prayerfully consider withholding contributions to JMM. Instead, donors should direct their gifts to one of the many biblically-based ministries that are not only more transparent in their dealings with the public but also treat donor's funds as a sacred trust dedicated exclusively for the Lord's work.

Furthermore, MinistryWatch.com recommends that donors to JMM pray specifically for the spiritual well being of Meyer and her family members. With the Meyer family seemingly using God's money for their own personal gain, it is highly likely that they need to humble themselves, repent and seek to re-establish a right relationship with the Lord and His people. If the ministry had a truly independent board (see below), it would likely follow the Biblical model of calling for Joyce Meyer to step aside from ministry for a period of time and seek godly counsel in order to achieve the goal of restoration with our Lord and His church. Since the ministry's board is controlled by Meyer, no such action is likely. Indeed, if the board were independent, then these matters would likely never have materialized to begin with.

Donors are encouraged to express their concerns about JMM through prayer, their gifting decisions, and by direct communication with the ministry.

### The Details

Recently, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that Holman said of Joyce Meyer, "She's using the ministry for her own private gain. That's the position we're taking." The newspaper also reported, "Under the law, a religious organization can be tax exempt only if its property is used for the public good and only if public church services are held regularly at the site, Holman said. Meyer's headquarters has no public services; its chapel is used only by the 600 employees who produce and sell tapes and books, broadcast Meyer's television program and collect money for the ministries.

"Holman contends that the ministry is a business – the business of selling Joyce Meyer."

Because of his views, Holman assessed taxes upon JMM's property as if it were a business. It was because it appealed Holman's decision that JMM was required to release information revealed in the Post-Dispatch article by reporter Carolyn Tuft. Information revealed included:

- "The ministry's board of trustees, which is headed by Joyce Meyer, agreed to pay her a \$900,000 annual salary in 2002 and 2003."
- "The board agreed to give her husband, Dave Meyer, the board's vice-president, an annual salary of \$450,000 in each of

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those same two years.”

- The board agreed to provide the couple with free personal use of a corporate jet and luxury cars, a \$2 million home where all bills are paid by the ministry and a separate \$50,000-a-year housing allowance.”
- “The ministry paid \$1.475 million to buy three homes for the three Meyer children.”
- “The board authorized Joyce and Dave Meyer to control a \$790,000 fund to be used at their discretion for bonuses to ‘executive management.’”
- “According to tax records for 2003, the ministry paid one son, David Meyer, \$101,076; another son, Daniel Meyer \$49,453 and daughter Laura Holtzmann, who works part time, \$14,250. In 2001, another daughter, Sandra McCollom, was paid \$50,203.”
- “The ministry also paid son David Meyer a \$10,000-a-year housing allowance in 2002 and 2003, even though he lived in the ministry home free of charge, records show.”
- Ministry officials refuse to disclose the current Meyer children salaries.
- Additionally, though Joyce Meyer’s annual salary has reportedly been reduced to \$250,000, the ministry continues to provide the family with personal use of the homes, cars, and plane; it also continues to contribute \$80,000 annually into a retirement fund for the Meyers.
- Joyce Meyer, while accepting a now lower salary, made other changes which moved her book royalties from her ministry to her personally. Since these royalties approximate \$3 million annually generated by the sales of the more than the 70 books published under her name, the net effect of these changes in salary and royalties is likely to dramatically increase Joyce Meyer’s earnings and significantly reduce the funds available to the ministry.

### **MinistryWatch.com Take**

MinistryWatch.com believes donors are entitled to make an educated and knowledgeable giving decision based on all the facts about a church or ministry. The disclosures noted above raise issues of concern to MinistryWatch.com and the donating public it serves. Concerns include, but are not limited to:

- The Post-Dispatch and Mr. Holman, through their own investigations, have raised serious questions as to whether the benefit and compensation package for Joyce Meyer and many of her family members diverts funds intended for designated, charitable purposes.
- The same investigations raise questions about JMM’s board composition and its independence, given that it is dominated by Meyer family members.
- Because Joyce Meyer’s multi-million dollar book royalties are made possible in large part by the work of ministry and its employees as well as the national notoriety she receives from the ministry’s TV programs and conferences, it is inappropriate for Joyce Meyer to benefit directly and personally from her book sales. Donor funds support the ministry’s TV and conference programs and Meyer should not leverage this into personal gain through royalty arrangements. In keeping with the best practices of other published ministry leaders, all royalties should be returned to the ministry to be used for the ministry’s designated, charitable purpose, and an independent board of trustees should determine the appropriate compensation for Joyce Meyer.
- Joyce Meyer continues to espouse the self-serving Word-of-Faith or “prosperity” gospel. Jesus and his followers never amassed personal wealth through their ministry and instead lived a clearly sacrificial life. Meyer would be wise to follow this example and encourage her believers to do likewise as this would lead to much greater spiritual prosperity, the value of which far exceeds anything material.

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### **MinistryWatch.com Recommendation**

MinistryWatch.com recommends that donors prayerfully consider withholding contributions to Joyce Meyer Ministries/Life in the Word (JMM). Those that oppose such action should consider that the reported exorbitant spending of the Meyer family reveals that JMM has far more money than they need to carry out their ministry. MinistryWatch.com also recommends that all Christians join with it in praying specifically that Joyce Meyer and her family acknowledge their failures in the stewardship of the money entrusted to them by donors, and humbly submit themselves to a process of personal repentance and restoration.

Should such actions not be taken by Joyce Meyer within a reasonable amount of time, MinistryWatch.com would regrettably have no alternative but to recommend to the IRS and the relevant Missouri state authorities that a full government-led investigation of the charity be undertaken to ensure that donors are being treated fairly and that the ministry's charitable purpose – rather than the Meyers' reported lavish lifestyle – is being diligently pursued.

Meanwhile, donors should look for other worthy ministries to support until JMM takes actions that can provide donors with confidence that donated funds are being used for designated charitable purposes, that biblically sound theology is being taught by the ministry, and that improved governance is in place. Hundreds of alternative worthwhile ministries, with detailed financial and theological information, are profiled on [www.MinistryWatch.com](http://www.MinistryWatch.com). The information is offered to the donating public for free so that donors might equip themselves with appropriate information and be the best possible stewards of their giving to the Lord's work.

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### **Links**

#### **St. Louis Post-Dispatch articles:**

“Meyer received millions, records show”

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/special/joycemeyer.nsf/0/2E5CA9B7A83E18DF86256FF30067121A?OpenDocument>

Series of articles on Meyer's theology, lifestyle and ministry

“Just 10 years after first appearing on television, Joyce Meyer has become one of the most prosperous televangelists, yet few in her home town of St. Louis know of her presence or her power. Read here about what she does and what she owns.”

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/special/joycemeyer.nsf/front?openview&count=2000>

#### **MinistryWatch.com related articles:**

JMM Summary profile: [http://ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/F\\_SumRpt.asp?EIN=431382734](http://ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/F_SumRpt.asp?EIN=431382734)

JMM Full profile:

[http://ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/F\\_FullRpt.asp?EIN=431382734](http://ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/F_FullRpt.asp?EIN=431382734)

Reflections article

“Word of Faith – A Critical Look”

[http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/pdf/Reflections\\_WordFaith.pdf](http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/pdf/Reflections_WordFaith.pdf)

Word of Faith commentary

“A Word of Faith Can Be Deadly”

<http://www.thegoodsteward.com/article.php3?articleID=1990>

## Contact Information and Resources

### Government Contacts

#### Internal Revenue Service

Exempt organization customer service address:  
Internal Revenue Service  
TE/GE Customer Account Services  
P.O. Box 2508  
Cincinnati, OH 45201

- Tax-exempt assistance: 1-877-829-5500
- General tax questions: 1-800-829-1040
- Order forms and publications: 1-800-829-3676
- Website: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)
- Verify tax-exempt status
- Verify tax deductibility
- Obtaining federal tax-exempt status
- Completing federal tax forms
- Specialized assistance to tax-exempt organizations

#### Attorneys General offices, or Departments of Justice, Charitable Activities Section

Most states have an active unit of the Attorney General's office that are willing to help consumers. Check with NASCO (National Association of State Charities Officials) at [www.NASCO.net.org](http://www.NASCO.net.org), look under US State Charity Offices and click on the state of interest.

- Reporting illegal activity by nonprofit organizations
- Information about charitable organizations and copies of annual reports
- Questions about professional fundraising reporting requirements
- Registrations of charitable corporations or trusts
- Questions about annual reports for charitable organizations
- Merging nonprofit organizations
- Serving as a board member of a nonprofit organization
- Dissolving nonprofit organizations

#### Secretary of State, Corporation Division

Check phone number on the Internet or your local phonebook under state government.

- Verifying that a nonprofit corporation is in fact incorporated and current in its filing
- Obtaining copies of filed articles of incorporation and amendments
- Forming a new corporation
- Obtaining state identification numbers
- Merging nonprofit corporations
- Amending articles of incorporation
- Dissolving nonprofit corporations

#### Federal Trade Commission

Consumer Response Center  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20580  
1-877-382-4357  
Website: [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

- Information on fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices
- How to file a complaint

### Christian Ministry Marketplace

#### MinistryWatch.com

1 (866) 324-7097  
[www.ministrywatch.com](http://www.ministrywatch.com)  
A free donor advocate service. Aid donors in understanding the key issues concerning a ministry's operations.

#### The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA)

1 (800) 323-9473  
[www.ecfa.org](http://www.ecfa.org)  
A membership ministry advocate. A peer accountability membership group. Primary responsibility to the ministries that pay dues to the ECFA and thereby fund its operations.

#### WWW.thegoodsteward.com

Growing source of information on all areas of stewardship.

#### Generous Giving

[www.generousgiving.org](http://www.generousgiving.org)  
Nonprofit that seeks to encourage givers of all income levels to experience the joy of giving and embrace a lifestyle of generosity, according to God's word and Christ's example. It was launched in 2000 by the Maclellan Foundation.

#### Royal Treasure

1 (770) 977-4502  
[www.royaltreasure.org](http://www.royaltreasure.org)  
Nonprofit teaching Biblical Stewardship to women.

#### The Gathering

[www.gatheringweb.com](http://www.gatheringweb.com)  
Conferences, email forums, conference calls and other activities for those that give a minimum of \$200,000 annually to Christian ministries or have the capacity to do so.

#### National Christian Foundation

1 (800) 681-6223  
[www.nationalchristian.com](http://www.nationalchristian.com)  
Facilitates Christian stewardship. Helps donors set up a Stewardship Fund, a donor advised fund, liquidate assets, provide gift annuities, trusts, scholarships, and endowments.

#### Calvin Edwards, & Co.

1 (770)-395-9425  
[Info@calvinedwardscompany.com](mailto:Info@calvinedwardscompany.com)  
For profit organization providing philanthropic counsel to high-capacity Christian donors.

#### Geneva Global

1 (610) 254-8202  
[info@GenevaGlobal.com](mailto:info@GenevaGlobal.com)  
[www.genevaglobal.com](http://www.genevaglobal.com)  
For profit organization assisting individual donors.

#### Excellence in Giving

1 (719) 329-1515  
[www.excellenceingiving.com](http://www.excellenceingiving.com)  
For profit organization with tailored services of affluent families and individuals.

#### The Legacy Group

1 (262) 789-3160  
[www.philanthropyatwork.com](http://www.philanthropyatwork.com)  
For profit organization to assist private wealth management and those to achieve charitable goals.

#### The Eternity Portfolio

[www.eternityportfolio.com](http://www.eternityportfolio.com)  
Book by Alan Gotthardt that shows how to get the ultimate return on your investments through investing in eternity.

### Secular Resources

#### GuideStar

[www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)  
Largest public search engine of nonprofit organizations. Provides access to many tax-exempt organization's IRS Form 990s. Some knowledge of accounting may be necessary to understand the documents found on this site.

#### BBB Wise Giving Alliance

[www.give.org](http://www.give.org)  
A charitable watchdog site. The Alliance reports on nationally soliciting charitable organizations that are the subject of donor inquiries. These reports include an evaluation of the subject charity in relation to the voluntary BBB charity standards.

#### Charity Navigator

[www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)  
Helps guide intelligent giving by evaluating the financial health of each charity in its database.

#### Charity Channel

[www.charitychannel.com](http://www.charitychannel.com)  
Known best for its nonprofit email arena discussion forums.

#### The American Institute of Philanthropy

[www.charitywatch.org](http://www.charitywatch.org)  
A charitable watchdog group that rates US charities in different categories. Fee for reports. They also provide tips to insure safe giving.

#### The Charities Review Council

[www.crcmn.org](http://www.crcmn.org)  
Conducts detailed reviews of national and local charitable organizations soliciting in the State of Minnesota. They also provide tips and guides for donors to help them make wise giving decisions.

#### Internet Nonprofit Center

[www.nonprofits.org](http://www.nonprofits.org)  
Provides an extensive array of nonprofit topics.

#### Independent Sector

[www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org)  
A national leadership forum, working to encourage philanthropy, volunteering, nonprofit initiative and citizen action that help to better serve people and communities. There is a section on ethics and accountability, including donor's bill of rights, related publications, articles and other resources.

#### Chronicle of Philanthropy

[www.philanthropy.com](http://www.philanthropy.com)  
Biweekly newspaper of the nonprofit world.

#### The Nonprofit Times

[www.nptimes.com](http://www.nptimes.com)  
Articles and topics related to nonprofits.

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[www.ministrywatch.com](http://www.ministrywatch.com)  
[www.wallwatchers.org](http://www.wallwatchers.org)  
[www.thegoodsteward.com](http://www.thegoodsteward.com)