

## GRASSLEY EXONERATES TELEVANGELISTS

After more than three years, an investigation by the Senate Finance Committee headed by Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) concluded with no fines or discipline for six prominent televangelists. The committee released its final report Jan. 6 and it was posted on Grassley's Website. Among those investigated were Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, Kenneth Copeland, Paula and Randy White, Creflo Dollar, and Eddie Long.

The report disclosed that during the inquiry, Joyce Meyer Ministries "responded fully" and Benny Hinn "also provided complete answers to all questions." However, the other four ministries "either did not provide any information or provided incomplete information." According to *Christianity Today*, the four televangelists refusing to cooperate with details as to their finances, "questioned whether Grassley had the authority to conduct the investigation." "Others accused him of violating their religious freedom," the magazine said.

The Associated Press reported, "Grassley's staff said in the report that they did not issue subpoenas to further the investigation because witnesses feared retaliation if they spoke out publicly and the Finance Committee did not have the time or resources to enforce the subpoenas."

Grassley has asked the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability to move forward in the evaluation process where his committee stopped. The ECFA Website says it "is an accreditation agency dedicated to helping Christian ministries earn the public's trust." Its members include a variety of Christian ministries, churches, and non-profit organizations.

Ole Anthony, president of the televangelist watchdog group Trinity Foundation, was not impressed with Grassley's findings and suggestion. He said he was "disappointed" with the proposal that the ECFA form a commission to further study issues raised by the committee. "The ECFA, he said, has no 'teeth' to compel the televangelists into greater accountability and transparency."

Benny Hinn immediately capitalized on Grassley's press release. He wrote to his followers, "We have a solid reputation of going above and beyond when it comes to our governance and compliance with governmental agencies. I'm glad this latest report from the Senate Finance Committee bears this out once again." However, a few days later, Hinn wrote that as a result of that three-year investigation, his ministry spent millions

of dollars in defending their name and innocence. "At the same time," he said, "we've lost millions in revenue, as some partners walked away, believing there was something financially wrong with our ministry." He stated that his "ministry is facing great financial danger," and that those who stand with him financially will experience "the greatest season of harvest and blessing" they have ever known. "2011 will be your year of recovery and supernatural abundance," he wrote.

—MKG

## HAGGARD DEBUTS IN REALITY SPECIAL

Reality television seems to know no bounds. The more aberrant and dubious its protagonists, the better. Case in point: *The Learning Channel's* January broadcast of *Ted Haggard: Scandalous*. The one-hour special, produced by RelativityReal, was hoped to be successful enough to lead to an ongoing series. Haggard was the founder and pastor of the New Life megachurch in Colorado Springs before resigning in disgrace in 2006 after his drug use and involvement with a male prostitute was revealed.

The program detailed the chronicles of Haggard as he established a new church in Colorado Springs last June. His St. James Church, which meets at a local middle school, is said to be a nondenominational fellowship that attracts 300 worshippers at its Sunday morning services.

Haggard maintains, "I don't have any idea about a series." "After what I went through four years ago I'm just glad to be alive and in ministry," he told the *Denver Post*.

Haggard has appeared on another reality show, *Divorce Court*, and has been a featured guest on broadcasts such as *Larry King Live* when moral failure of pastors is the theme.

—MKG

## JOHN PAUL II ON FAST TRACK TO SAINTHOOD

Pope Benedict XVI has set May 1 as the date for bestowing upon his predecessor Catholicism's highest honor: sainthood. The beatification of Pope John Paul II is unprecedented for a number of reasons. It will mark

(continues on page 22)