



Bishop Thomas Dexter (T.D.) Jakes, Sr. Biography

***“Even in a profession peopled with multitaskers,
Bishop Thomas (T.D.) Jakes stands out.”***

***Time* magazine, February 2005
Cover Article, “The 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America”**

Ministerial and business visionary, entrepreneurial trailblazer, altruistic philanthropist, and spiritual shepherd to millions around the globe, Bishop Thomas Dexter (T.D.) Jakes, Sr., founded Greater Emmanuel Temple of Faith, his first pastorate, in 1979. It was a small beginning, in a small West Virginia church, pastoring a small, 10-member congregation.

More than 25 years later, Bishop Jakes pastors what Christianity Today calls “one of America’s fastest growing mega-churches.” The Potter’s House, a multiracial, nondenominational church with 50-plus active outreach ministries, has dominated church growth records since its inception in 1996. In its 10-year existence, the church has grown from the 50 families that relocated with the Jakes family from West Virginia to Dallas to more than 30,000 members. Rivaling many corporations, the ministry employs nearly 400 staff members, including full-time finance, human resources, information technology, materials distribution, public relations, publications and television production departments. The Potter’s House is fiscally sound, retiring within four years the financial debt incurred by the 191,000 square feet, \$45 million sanctuary construction.

Bishop Jakes was born in South Charleston, WV, on June 9, 1957. His parents, businessman and entrepreneur Ernest Sr. and educator Odith, were charitable benefactors in their community. It is to them that their son credits as the source of his own integrity, discipline, and self-reliance. In 2006, he celebrated 30 years in ministry.

Bishop Jakes is the CEO of The Potter’s House, a nonprofit organization that has produced four major national conferences – *The Pastors’ and Leadership Conference*, *ManPower*, *Woman, Thou Art Loosed (WTAL)*, and *MegaFest*. A powerful and popular symposium, *WTAL* addresses the specific spiritual needs of women, speaks to their strengths, rather than their weaknesses, and empowers many to go from welfare to work, and from prison inmate to productive citizen. The *WTAL* conference set national indoor attendance records at the Georgia Dome in 1999 with an average 84,500 attendees per day. *ManPower* seeks to equip and encourage men to build strong marriages, increase their confidence, and take on more responsibility within their community. *The Pastors’*

**“Bishop Jakes
combines intense
spirituality with a
therapeutic approach.”**

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and Leadership Conference is designed for individuals in church leadership positions and for those seeking to further develop their leadership skills.

MegaFest, inaugurated in 2004, is a family-oriented Christian festival that combines *Woman, Thou Art Loosed*, *ManPower* and new components for children, teenagers, and young adults. The *Mega Youth Experience (MYE)*, a component added to the conference in 2005, was created for young people ages 13 to 21, and is designed to inspire, inform, prepare, and empower Christian youth for today's world. *MegaKidz* offers fun-filled and interactive sessions throughout the day, presenting the Christian gospel to children ages 5 to 12 in an easily understandable format.

In 2005 Bishop and Mrs. Jakes were honored by Georgia Dome officials for breaking their 1999 attendance record during *MegaFest 2004* when more than 140,000 people attended a single service and over the four-day period the couple hosted 560,000 men, women, young adults, and children. *MegaFest 2005* was broadcast internationally to more than 2/3 of the world's population, broadcast live via satellite into 350 U.S. prisons, and into each prison in the country of Bermuda, with live dialogues in Chicago, Memphis, and Glennville, Georgia. In October 2006, Bishop Jakes announced that the ministry will not host a *MegaFest 2007* conference, and will instead take a year-long sabbatical to strategically evaluate the focus of *MegaFest 2008*. The location of *MegaFest 2008* is yet undetermined.

In 2006 Bishop introduced and hosted the first *For Men Only* conference, and in 2007, he and Mrs. Jakes will also host the first-ever *For Ladies Only* conference. In previous years he has also hosted both the *God's Leading Ladies* and *Into The Hearts of Men* national speaking tours. Each of these conferences was conceived by Bishop and Mrs. Jakes' desire to assist men and women in their efforts to become and achieve their personal best, and to allow themselves the opportunity to speak and teach more intimately into the lives of conference attendees.

Locally, the Metroplex Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is the most immediate example of the ministry's impact on community business development. Endeavoring to remedy social and economic disparities, Bishop Jakes founded the MEDC in 1998 to bridge socio-economic voids existing in urban America. A nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, MEDC works to impact the lives of individuals and families residing in historically underserved communities through the implementation of programs established under the umbrella of its core initiatives. The MEDC has sponsored home ownership conferences and youth mentorship programs, and in April 2005 launched an entrepreneurial training series.

The MEDC NxLevel Entrepreneur Training Series is a 12-session, 36-hour course designed for entrepreneurs who require the hands-on business development assistance necessary to expand and grow existing businesses. The series is developed to provide practical instruction in business planning and development including, but not limited to, developing sound marketing strategies, understanding cash-flow projections and other financial statements, staffing considerations, lender negotiations, and more.

Clay Academy is a private, world-class Christian college preparatory school where children are molded spiritually, academically, athletically, artistically, and technologically to achieve greatness through a focus on the "whole child." On October 10, 2006, Bishop and Mrs. Jakes and The Potter's House church family formally dedicated the school's recently constructed \$14 million learning facility to the memory of his late mother, Mrs. Odith P. Jakes, an educator and mentor. The first of seven structures in a planned \$80 million campus, the 70,000-square-foot, white-columned, red-brick school building sits atop a hill about half a mile from The Potter's House church at 3303 Potter's House Way in Mountain Creek.

Future plans for Clay Academy call for a cafeteria and performing arts center, a chapel, an amphitheater, a middle school building, an elementary school building and gymnasium within two or three years. In operation since 1998, the school currently serves pre-K3 through 9th grade students, and plans to extend its program through the 12th grade within the next few years. Clay Academy is the centerpiece of Capella Park, a 400-acre residential development currently under development by the MEDC that will feature upon completion more than 1,000 single-family homes. More information about the MEDC and Capella Park can be found by visiting www.medc-dallas.org. More information about Clay Academy can be found by visiting www.clayacademy.org.

The outreach efforts of Bishop Jakes and The Potter's House don't tarry at the doors of the church, or even on the shores of the nation. Additional attempts to contribute positively to society include financing and initiating the construction of two Habitat for Humanity homes in conjunction with the 2003 *ManPower* conference, and making a \$107,000 donation to relocate Dallas citizens from an economically and environmentally disadvantaged area in 2003. The ministry is also responsible for contributing to the construction of a much needed hospital in Belize, Central America, and has sent missionaries to northern Mexico, the Republic of Guyana, and other areas of the world where people are living under perilous physical and spiritual conditions. In February 2005, Bishop Jakes presented checks to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF from The Potter's House and Clay Academy totaling \$100,606.11. The contribution represented the largest tsunami relief donation received by UNICEF from a faith-based organization.

Also very mindful of Africa and passionate about doing what he can to contribute to the well being of the continent's people, Bishop Jakes, his partners, and The Potter's House sponsored the construction of six water wells and five water stations throughout the arid, drought stricken areas of Kenya in 2005, supplying desperately needed purified drinking water to people and livestock as well as valuable irrigation for crops. Wells were drilled in each of three Kenyan districts: West Pokot, Sigor, and Baringo.

September 26 – October 2, 2005, Bishop Jakes dedicated the new sources of water during a weeklong humanitarian missionary trip that included than 300 African Americans, including a skilled team of medical professionals, and The Potter's House's 140-member mass choir. More than 6,000 Kenyans received medical care from organized teams of doctors and nurses. Medicines valued at more than \$200,000 U.S. dollars, as well as 7,000 pairs of eyeglasses, were distributed.

While in Kenya, Bishop Jakes and his team served alongside the healing team of Melchizedek Hospital, located in a slum area called Kawangware, and sponsored the construction of six water wells and five water stations throughout the arid, drought stricken areas of Kenya. The mission trip culminated with worship services led by Bishop Jakes in Nairobi's Uhuru Park. On March 18, 2006, Melchizedek Hospital officially dedicated the *T.D. Jakes Wing* to facilitate a maternity ward, intensive care units and an operating room.

In October 2006 a delegation from The Potter's House commissioned by Bishop Jakes returned to Kenya to establish a computer lab at Kawangware Primary School, the first of its kind in a slum school. Contractors remodeled a unit of the school and equipped it with the latest technology, and on Friday, October 6, 2006, the unit was dedicated on to the memory of Bishop Jakes' late mother.

Bishop Jakes and The Potter's House have invested more than \$500,000 in outreach to prison inmates. The church's Prison Ministry develops programs and services that equip, empower, support, and restore offenders and former offenders. To help them with their journey, this support is also offered to families of offenders and correctional staff. Local churches are provided training to better embrace and support former and current prisoners and their family members. The ministry's Adopt A Prison program has meaningfully impacted the day-to-day lives of inmates, and contributes significantly in reducing the recidivism rate of program participants through spiritual support and a network of churches sympathetic to the plight of inmates reentering the system. Every major ministry conference, including *MegaFest*, is broadcast live into prisons around the country.

The Potter's House, working in tandem with a federally sponsored government program, currently administers The Texas Offenders Reentry Initiative (TORI) program, operating in Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Austin, and Houston. These cities were chosen because they are Texas' five primary "reentry points," cities where former offenders reenter society after serving their sentences in Texas prisons. TORI is the ministry's after-care re-entry providing intensive case management services, including HIV/AIDS awareness and substance abuse recovery counseling and education, and other wrap-around services such as family and marriage counseling, and pre-employment counseling.

Bishop Jakes placed in motion the full force of the ministry's resources into actively assisting families displaced by Hurricane Katrina in September 2005. Only two days after Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, The Potter's House created a telephone bank to receive calls from survivors of the hurricanes who were now residing in the North Texas region. The church then matched the needs of survivors with calls from Good Samaritans who made offers of housing, employment, and non-perishable items such as clothing, shoes, bed linens, diapers, toiletries, and school supplies. The church's medical ministry filled prescriptions and provided blood pressure, heart, and diabetic medication. Clay Academy also opened its enrollment to displaced students.

Partnering with the World Children's Fund, the ministry successfully donated more than \$400,000 worth of ready-to-eat meals, nutrition bars, water, ice, and first aid, representing 320 tons of material relief. Within a week of Hurricane Katrina's landfall, \$250,000 was on the ground in the devastated region.

Almost immediately, Bishop Jakes galvanized the support of pastors leading some of the nation's largest ministries and megachurches to aid the survivors, raising thousands of dollars in financial assistance. The ministry also partnered with Bank of America and with the City of Dallas to provide survivors living in the city with housing and household furnishings. With the Creative Arts Agency (CAA), the ministry fully furnished 10 Dallas apartment units. On September 16, 2005, Bishop Jakes served as the official homilist at the Washington National Cathedral during the commemoration of the *National Day of Prayer and Remembrance* for the survivors of Hurricane Katrina. And in December 2005 he was asked to serve with the Rev. William H. Gray III as co-chair of the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund's Interfaith Coalition. In January 2006, it was announced that readers of *The Church Report* magazine chose Bishop Jakes as the Most Influential Christian for 2005.

Bishop Jakes is the founder of TDJ Enterprises through which he employs his other aptitudes as author, songwriter, and playwright. A renowned religious author with more than 30 books to his credit, his work has been featured on Christian, secular, and business oriented best-seller lists. His top five nonfiction bestsellers are: *Maximize the Moment*; *Woman, Thou Art Loosed*;

The Lady, Her Lover and Her Lord; *The Great Investment: Faith, Family and Finance*, and *God's Leading Lady*, which peaked at No. 4 on the New York Times hardcover advice list. He released his first novel, *Cover Girls*, in the summer of 2003, and later that year, *Follow the Star*, a compilation of his favorite personal Christmas stories.

Released in 2004 and peaking at #10 on the New York Times bestseller list, *He-Motions: Even Strong Men Struggle* is a tool for both men and women written with intimate personal stories and painful lessons Bishop Jakes learned through life. Released in January 2005 is his most recent book, *The Ten Commandments of Working in a Hostile Environment*. He released two additional books in 2006, *Mama Made The Difference: Life Lessons My Mother Taught Me* and *Not Easily Broken*, his second work of fiction.

Bishop Jakes has developed business partnerships with Sony, EMI, Time Warner, Warner, Reuben Cannon Productions, Clear Channel, Thomas Nelson Publishing, and a host of other highly respected corporations. Under the TDJ Enterprises umbrella, he Jakes composed and produced the Christian plays *Woman, Thou Art Loosed* and *Behind Closed Doors*. Both became No. 1 gospel plays in the United States. Recently his advocacy for women's rights prompted the development of the cinematic production *Woman, Thou Art Loosed: The Movie* with Reuben Cannon Productions. Debuting in more than 400 theaters across the nation, the movie won the 2004 Santa Barbara International Film Festival. It also won a 2005 NAACP Image Award for best independent or foreign film, and was released on DVD in March 2005. Based on his book *Woman, Thou Art Loosed*, the movie speaks out against domestic violence while encouraging women to rise above injustices.

His music label, Dexterity Sounds, develops music with a divine message and operates in collaboration with EMI Gospel Music. Thus far, the label has produced eight albums, six of which have received Grammy nominations. His music CD *He-Motions* received a 2005 Grammy nomination in the "Best Contemporary Soul Gospel Album." A companion piece to the He-Motions book project, the CD features EMI Gospel/Dexterity Sounds' gospel artist Micah Sampley's, *The Songbook of Micah*. In 2004, T.D. Jakes Presents *Follow the Star* was nominated in the category of "Best Contemporary Soul Gospel Album," and *A Wing and a Prayer* featuring Bishop Jakes and The Potter's House Mass Choir, received a 2004 Grammy award in the "Best Gospel Choir or Chorus Album" category.

Presidents and international statesmen have frequently sought Bishop Jakes' wisdom and counsel. He was the keynote speaker for the Congressional Black Caucus in 2000. He has frequently been invited to the White House to meet with both Presidents Bush and Clinton. He has also shared spiritual guidance with President Rawlings of Ghana and President Obasanjo of Nigeria. He was a guest of the King of Jordan, King Abdullah; the President of Trinidad, George Maxwell Richards, and in January 2005, the president of the Republic of Uganda, Yoweri K. Museveni, and his wife, Janet Museveni welcomed him into their home.

Bishop Jakes has been a guest on several national news programs as a source of spiritual advice such as: Oprah, CNN's *People in the News*, *Larry King Live*, CBN's *Turning Point International*, and *America's Black Forum*. He has also been featured in *Ebony* and *D magazines*, frequently appears in *Jet magazine*, as well as a host of other national publications, including *Time magazine* in September 2001 when it was reported that as "A virtuoso and a prodigy, the only thing more exhilarating than the style of T.D. Jakes' sermons is their rigor and compassion."

February of 2005, *Time* magazine named him among the U.S.' "25 Most Influential Evangelicals." Bishop Jakes lives in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex with his wife Serita and their five children. For more information about Bishop Jakes and The Potter's House visit www.thepottershouse.org.

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