

Interview with Bishop Amaechi Nwachukwu

LSJ: What informed the name LIVINGSPRING? We are aware that even the radio/TV programs bear the same name.

BISHOP: God's word is living and powerful. This same word is the source of life and truth; it is a spring, an outflow of water that cleanses, refreshes, heals and blesses. The messages we share bear these testimonies, hence the name LivingSpring. God is the origin of His word, the water of life, as the Bible declares. His word is unceasing, it never dries up. And like Jesus said in John 7:37-38, the messages gives life from source. Thus the messages, both on the radio and television, should excite spiritual awakening and restoration.

LSJ: What is the vision behind this journal? With so many Christian magazines, what makes it different?

BISHOP: I really cannot speak for other publications but I do know what we do. LSJ began with a desire to make available to the general public, literature that would be challenging and life-transforming, literature that would portray Christianity in its true perspective. A couple of our editorial team members had read the Decision Magazine and felt we could produce something similar that is culturally relevant and qualitative and easy to read. Whether this makes it different from others or not, you would decide.

LSJ: How did the editorial team come together and what has sustained your remarkable bonding these 10 years?

BISHOP: The team came together by an act of God. Jeff, Ayo, Victor and Chimka each had a desire for deep involvement in the work of God and collectively expressed an interest in producing a Christian publication that would represent the truth about the Christian faith and life. I say this was an act of God because the church did not formally commission them before they started this ministry. In fact, I (as their Pastor) did not get to know what was going on until the draft of the maiden edition was brought to me for proof-reading! Interestingly, and this is how God works, Jeff and Chimka have a flair for writing and both are avid readers of Christian literature; Victor is a computer engineer and versed in all aspects of computer operations; Ayo is a graphic artist and involved in printing. Only God could have known their individual qualities, only He could have brought them together like this. All we need for our team so far, we have it - at least, in terms of human resources.

Do you still need to ask what has kept us together? We have a kindred spirit. I am their Pastor and testify of their sincere love for the Lord, for the church and for me. I thank God for their commitment. Frankly speaking, God has meshed us together and we work as a family.

LSJ: What have been the major challenges of producing LSJ, which is meant to be a bi-monthly production?

BISHOP: There are always challenges in work like this, big and small. Our team members are not all full-time staff, therefore availability presents a major challenge. However, I commend the way they are handling the difficult job of combining their regular occupations with the editorial and other ministry work. So, the publication delays are not only predictable but also inevitable.

LSJ: Is there a future for LSJ in view of competition from the Internet and the book market?

BISHOP: We live in a competitive world but whatever is sourced from and sustained by God certainly has a future. Despite the increasing computer literacy of the Nigerian populace, many people want readily available material that can be used at anytime without the stress of linking up through a laptop or PC. I thank God for books. We may get into the digital production of LSJ but that will come in time.

LSJ: Do you have an editorial goal or projection for the next 10 years?

BISHOP: The word of God has proved true and unchangeable for thousands of years. We intend to remain true to the integrity of God's word in all our productions and to continue declaring the uncontested truth that Christianity is the only way lost humanity can get back to God. Also, that Christianity is not a historical relic from the past, but a relevant institution for the modern man.

LSJ: You are deeply committed to children and have been called the "Pastor of Youths." How do you ensure the spiritual purity of the children when there are so many external perversions?

BISHOP: Biological and spiritual parenting is a grave responsibility. Here, we emphasize both since we understand that spiritual purity is more easily assured when the children are given a proper foundation, of

course. This begins with their being dedicated to God who made us their custodians, then it continues with their being taught and allowed to be involved in our corporate worship. We have a non-denominational children's fellowship (Junior Fellowship Int'l), a play and study group for children in pre-primary and primary school.

Children cannot grow up in a spiritual bubble; neither can we live our lives and theirs too. I can say that there is power in prayer and in consistently making godly pronouncements over our children. When they find themselves in the wrong places where there are strong ungodly pulls, our prayers and spoken words can keep them from going the wrong way. Coupled with right parental modelling, this can help. There really is no foolproof method for maintaining spiritual purity, only God does that, but we must not fail our commission as parents.

LSJ: Some of the children have given remarkable recitations. Do they attend special lessons? How is this possible?

BISHOP: There is nothing the Spirit of God cannot do with an open heart, teachable spirit and a certain level of personal discipline even at this tender age. Some of the children were helped by dedicated parents who encouraged them in their recitation.

LSJ: In many churches, the youths are the teenagers in higher institutions but in ALA they are the unmarried workers. Why is this so? Does this category of your membership pose any special challenge to you as a Pastor?

BISHOP: Perhaps it isn't that our classification is so different but that our understanding varies. Timothy was a pastor and a youth. David was still working in his father's fields when he was anointed king of Israel; he was a youth. Joseph was a youth and the chief administrator of Potiphar's affairs. I see no link with youthfulness and the teenager, not even Biblically. Youths are people of wisdom, strength and vision, so our classification of the unmarried members fits well. Do you know that we have "youth" who are married men and women? To be a youth in no way diminishes who a man or woman is before God.



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How do they affect my pastoring role? Not in any unusual or awkward way. I love my youths as I do every level of membership. I am keenly aware that they battle with external pressures but we all have challenges peculiar to our status in both church and the wider society. I pray, teach, counsel, rebuke and encourage them not to succumb to peer pressure as I do with all my spiritual children. Ultimately the choice is theirs. I can neither prioritise life for them nor pontificate decisions. They must make their choice.

LSJ: ALA has a reputation for being the church of the rich people. We have heard much about your corporate life of giving. Can you respond to this?

BISHOP: (Laughs) I have responded to this!

LSJ: Well, Sir, can you say something as an answer!

BISHOP: People will always say what they want. Why deny the testimony that is in accord with the truth of scripture; it is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich. If we are rich, it is the outflow of God's blessing. Quite frankly, I am not in the habit of responding one way or the other to what people think or say about us.

LSJ: On a personal level, you are known as a man with a tremendous capacity for giving. How are you able to consistently and freely give in spite of so much ingratitude you have encountered from others?

BISHOP: If I am giving at all, it is by the grace of God. My focus remains the Lord Jesus, so I really don't give because I'm expecting a "Thank you" or smile or any other form of appreciation. Man is basically selfish and it is so easy to forget the good done to us on account of one supposedly perceived misdeed. God is our rewarder.

LSJ: From the grapevine we heard about your plans to travel abroad. Why did it take you so long to decide to go for a holiday? Do you have any anxiety about leaving your congregation, since this will be your first long absence?

BISHOP: I have received clearance from God and told my congregation so there is nothing to hide. You forget that I am a man under authority and move when my Father says so. All through the period of building the Praise Temple, I was asked not to leave this country. Did I need to



rest? Oh yes, but it had to be at the instance of heaven for such an outing to be blessed.

The church family has grown to a level of maturity that they can be left for a certain period of time on their own. Part of our modus operandi is leadership training; I know I have able men and women in positions of leadership who can hold forth for God. I trust my congregation to be as supportive of them as they are of me. I have been away from the church for brief periods of time and all has been well. I really have no anxiety about travelling.

LSJ: More and more churches are making open statements about dressing, especially as it concerns females. How do you balance your members' right to choose clothes with the church's commitment to decent dressing?

BISHOP: The Bible has its own code of ethics, its own standard for Christian living of which dressing is a part. You cannot legislate spirituality, so we teach Biblical precepts and encourage our members to live according to 1 Corinthians 10:23.

LSJ: Does this 21st Anniversary hold any special significance for you?

BISHOP: This Anniversary is an "Anniversary of Hope." I want you to know that when God has placed His vision in your heart, nothing can remove it; no powers of hell or schemes of men can destroy it. This is the hope we have. God gives. God sustains. God fulfills. He knows the end from the beginning and for the people of Amazing Love Assembly, we have the sure hope of a greater tomorrow.

This interview was conducted by the Editorial Team.