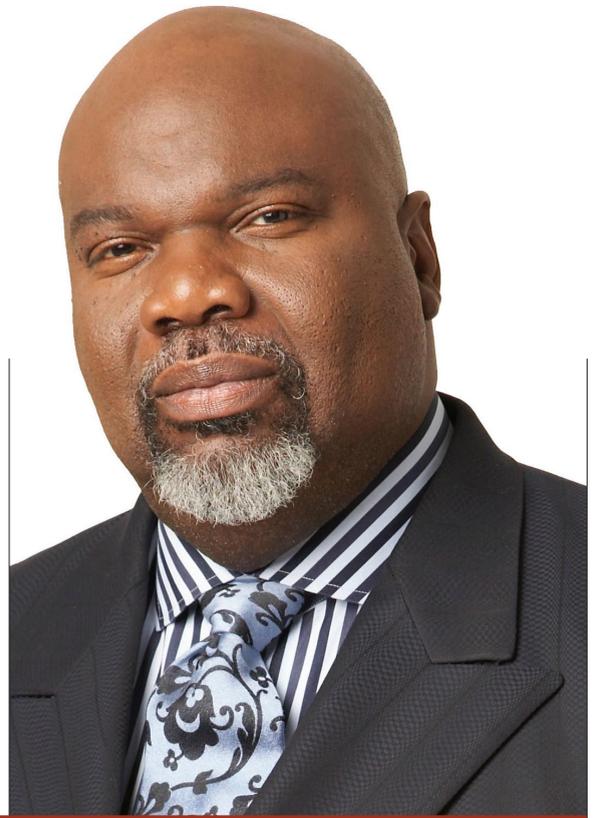


## Bishop T.D. Jakes

**WIDELY KNOWN AS SENIOR PASTOR OF THE POTTER'S House, a nondenominational megachurch in Dallas, Bishop T.D. Jakes is also a respected entrepreneurial trailblazer. As CEO of TDJ Enterprises L.L.P. (previously T.D. Jakes Enterprises Inc.), Jakes is a *New York Times* best-selling author; founder of the Grammy Award-winning record label Dexterity Sounds; and founder of his own film company through which he's produced three faith-based films, including his new release, *Jumping the Broom*, in theaters May 6th. Jakes, 53, spoke to **BLACK ENTERPRISE** about the role faith plays in Hollywood and how he hopes his films will change "the Hollywood machine."**



### Hollywood has a reputation of being what some call spiritually bankrupt.

I'm glad you [mentioned] that. I think it is always bad when you make generalizations about any people or group. I found quite a few actors and actresses in Hollywood who have faith. To those who think Hollywood is a dark place, I say bring some light. Let's not evacuate, let's infiltrate, let's get involved. If we really believe that we're the salt of the earth, let's be sprinkled in every arena and represented there, because Hollywood, like social networking, like a telephone, is a means of communication. Let's communicate with that because it's available to all Americans.

### Has the industry's attitude changed toward faith-based films, especially with the success of Tyler Perry's films and Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*?

Mel Gibson and *The Passion of the Christ* showed that there is an audience out there and they are underserved. I think the delineation is in part faith, but it's also generational. [Hollywood] has a propensity to use sci-fi flicks to cater to younger people, and intense drama that maybe 20- to 30-year-olds might like. But then they began to see that there was a strong niche for family-friendly films for African Americans. I think that was a wake-up call. I shot *Jumping the Broom* for around \$7 million. Although that's not a big budget for Hollywood, for a film of that genre, from the faith community, it is the largest budget that has ever been extended to date. I think that shows Hollywood's growing commitment and respect for [faith-based] films.

### So, why do so many Christian films go straight-to-DVD?

We need to impact opening weekend. Whether they come from the faith community or the African American community, if they really want to educate Hollywood, they have to understand that these

films need their support the first weekend. Hollywood as a whole is only looking at opening weekend. So if you want to continue to give people of color jobs, and [put out] positive messages that are entertaining for families, and let us develop other films with larger budgets, then we need to impact opening weekend.

### Why is it important to put faith-based movies on the silver screen?

I want to see people of faith not excluded or discriminated against. I want to see them having equal opportunity and access to the Hollywood machine. I want to tear down the wall and the myth that Christians or people of faith are aliens having some other experience. We laugh, we have issues, we have problems just like anybody else. There really isn't a difference in the subjects of interest, though there might be a difference of where we go for support, but there is certainly no difference in the experience of the maladies, the humors, the tragedies, and the adversities of life. We're sharing this planet together.

### How do you relax and get away from all your work?

It's hard to just let it all go and trust that it will all be OK when you get back. I have to work at this. Sometimes that's a real challenge because it's difficult to let it all go and not feel guilty, not feel like you're letting somebody down. There's always somebody who wants something or needs something from you. But I started swimming, I like to fish, and my wife and I are avid Scrabble players, Writing is also relaxing for me.

—LaToya M. Smith