

America's Moral Collapse Demands 'Radical Action'

Calling the power of Christianity pervasively "ineffective" in America, a prominent Pentecostal leader is asking Christians to fast, pray and repent for 21 days in the dawn of the New Year.



[] Billy Wilson, executive director of the International Center for Spiritual Renewal and a leader at the Awakening America Alliance, says Christians in America must recognize the moral depravity of the times, humbly repent for the spiritual passivity of the church, and fast and pray for a Third Great Awakening.

"We are very convinced that our present spiritual state in the church demands radical action," Wilson told *Charisma*. "One of the radical actions that scripture gives us, which God ordains, is the act of fasting. One of the things we're fasting for and repenting of is our lack of effectiveness in changing our culture for Christ, and also for [failing] to bring a new generation to Christ."

Between Jan. 1 and Jan. 21, Awakening America's "21 Days of Awakening" is calling on Christians across America to "dedicate 2009 to the Lord." "It's a fast of contrition and repentance and humility," said Wilson, noting thousands have already committed to joining him. "To seek God together, across the body of Christ, for a new spiritual awakening in the American church and across the U.S."

Wilson said more than 300 parachurch ministries are affiliated with the Awakening America Alliance—a three- to five-year initiative that launched in early 2008 aimed at ushering a Third Great Awakening into America. Alliance participants include Assemblies of God General Superintendent George O.

Wood, AGLow International President Jane Hansen, TheCall Founder Lou Engle, Foursquare Church President Jack Hayford and Church of God in Christ pastor George McKinney.

Since Wilson announced the 21-day fast many denominational leaders have called on their entire constituencies to fast. "We feel it's like a 'first fruits' principle, as with giving and tithing, we're dedicating this new year to the Lord," he said. "We wanted to push our plates back. It's sacrificial. [We're] saying to heaven: 'We want this year to be different in America.'"

Wilson said, generally speaking, Christian effectiveness in evangelism in America and Christians' overall effect on culture "has been in a slow, two- to three-decade decline."

"We believe that that ineffectiveness signals to us that our fruitfulness needs to increase, which means our relationship with Jesus needs to deepen, and out of increased intimacy comes increased fruitfulness," he said. "One of the ways toward increased intimacy is through the discipline of fasting."

Jentezen Franklin, senior pastor of Free Chapel Worship Center in Gainesville, Ga., and author of the *New York Times* best-seller *Fasting*, told *Charisma* that beginning the new year with fasting adds a supernatural element to a believer's life. "For me, fasting has become the secret to obtaining open doors, miraculous provision, favor and the tender touch of God upon my life."

Through a Christian's commitment to give his or her heart to God in fasting, "the focus after the holidays will turn quickly back to knowing God intimately," Franklin said.

"Just as you set the course of each day by beginning with morning prayer, and just as you set the course of each week by beginning that week in church on Sundays, when you give God the first part of the year in fasting and prayer you set the

course for the rest of the year.”

Franklin added that the corporate unity and blessings that come as churches or groups fast together are significant and supernatural. “When you enter into a fast at the beginning of the year with the body of Christ you link up with thousands of people all over the world, who also begin the New Year with a fast. When a group of people [fast together], it is multiplied strength [and] multiplied power.”

Wilson, who helped organize a celebration marking the Azusa Street Revival centennial in April 2006, strongly agreed. “When we fast in a corporate way and in a called way, it adds a public nature to fasting that is a bit different. It also adds a multiplied effect to fasting that we believe positions us for God's blessing,” he said. “Ultimately, to change the world we must have something and be something different than the world in which we live.

“Sometimes we get hung up on certain [issues] and we forget that the real base root of this is that the church is to be intimate with her bridegroom, who is Jesus Christ, and that out of that will come the change we need in our society and in our culture,” Wilson said. “It seems that in each movement there's a hungry remnant that realizes America is in desperate need of a deep transformational revival. It is [among] that remnant that we're finding unity and resonance.”

Rick Joyner, founder of MorningStar Ministries, said he's excited to hear that Wilson is intent on motivating the American church to fast at the New Year. “I think the next few years will be some of the most intense, but potentially fruitful the church in America has had in a very long time,” Joyner told *Charisma*. “But we must come to a much higher level of unity to make it.”

Added Franklin: “For several years now the Spirit has been calling the church to a new level of fasting. If you want to

know God and experience the presence of God ... [if] you want to go into the throne room and see your Father's face, join the fasting movement." **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**