

Channel Surfing

SPOTLIGHT

Satellite-Fueled Revival

GOD TV has helped the Florida Healing Outpouring go global.

GOD TV has been changing how people experience revival ever since its satellite trucks began beaming live broadcasts last spring of daily meetings in Lakeland, Fla., led by Canadian revivalist and Fresh Fire Ministries founder Todd Bentley.

“For the first time in history, revival is literally being ignited across the airwaves,” says Wendy Alec, director of programming at GOD TV and co-founder of the network with her husband, Rory. “We believe that only the Lord could have engineered this.”

She says that she and her husband obeyed the Lord and broke with advertising schedules on April 11 so that the Lakeland meetings could go to 214 nations, “even though it meant not only some loss of revenue but upheaval on the television side of the ministry, as we consistently had to reschedule seven world feeds.”

This summer, viewership doubled and weekly Web site visits to streamed services jumped 800 percent, according to GOD TV’s head of distribution. Alec says with tens of thousands claiming healing, it’s “like the book of Acts in real time.”

GOD TV’s media coverage also has had the effect of putting Bentley’s unorthodox tactics on display, generating many YouTube clips of the tattooed evangelist shouting “sheeka boomba” and kneeling people in the stomach to impart healing.

Phil Cooke, a media analyst and author of *Branding Faith*, says GOD TV, the Internet and the Florida revival are in the middle

of an “open media revolution.” “From a media perspective, whatever your opinion may be about Todd Bentley or the revival in Lakeland, the media’s connection is enormous,” he says. “In a digital age, the smallest event can become a global phenomenon.”

One senior Pentecostal leader told Charisma that clips of Bentley he watched on YouTube “are not a good witness, on the whole, to an unbelieving world.”

“Perhaps they would be attractive to some,” says George O. Wood, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, “but in the main, I think what is portrayed on the YouTube videos does not represent Christianity as practiced by the early church.”

But Alec thinks Bentley is sending the world the right message. “There have been some critics of Lakeland,” she says. “[But] Todd and all of his team consistently lift up the person and the presence of Jesus Christ and consistently give glory to the Lord.”

GOD TV is scheduled to continue live broadcasting of Bentley’s meetings in Lakeland and other U.S. cities through August 23, according to GOD TV production chief Graeme Spencer. After that, its live revival coverage will be sporadic, as Bentley takes the Lakeland revival on the road.

—PAUL STEVEN GHIRINGHELLI

Original **reality show Cruise With a Cause kicks off its third season on JCTV** this fall as the Christian cruise liner sets sail out of Miami for the island nation of the Bahamas. Hosted by Praisefest Ministries, *Cruise With a Cause* qualifies as one of the world’s largest missions trips, drawing more than 2,000 Christians to a cruise ship bound for the streets, prisons and schools of the Bahamas. As cameras roll 24/7 viewers see various hosts and passengers enjoying carefree times together as well as unscripted, candid moments in which the gospel message is presented to outsiders. During the show’s previous

two seasons, 5,500 decisions were reportedly made for Christ. Many musical guests and speakers are expected aboard this year's cruise, including: Josh McDowell, Tony Evans, Martha Munizzi, Donnie McClurkin, Mary Mary, Michael English and Sonic Flood.

Marriage seminar counselors and musicians **Eddie and Cathy Williams' original program The Joys of Oneness is celebrating three years exclusively on the TCT network** They claim that deficiencies in properly relating to one's spouse—from bad communication skills to patterns of abuse and unforgiveness—often prove to be just as problematic for married Christians as for non-Christians. Married for more than 30 years with two daughters and one grandchild, the Michigan-based couple openly share their own story of love, pain, healing and triumph through the power of God's love and often try to use humor, drama and music in order to touch and inspire viewers.