

Charisma Event to Shift Focus to Equipping Women for Ministry

The most recent Charisma Women's Conference drew almost 8,000, but organizer Joy Strang says it's time for a change

Nearly 8,000 women convened in Daytona Beach, Fla., April 22-24 for what turned out to be the final Charisma Women's Conference in the city's 10,000-seat Ocean Center arena.

Conference host Joy Strang announced on the last day of the event that she believes God is initiating a change of seasons that will shift her focus from inspiring spiritual hunger in women and urging them to embrace their freedom in Christ, to training and equipping them for more effective service.

"God has a role for women to play in the harvest, but so many feel inadequate," said Strang, co-owner of Strang Communications, publisher of Charisma and SpiritLed Woman, the magazines that sponsored the conference. "We want to see them rise up in power to fulfill His strategy for this hour."

For the last 10 years, the Charisma Women's Conference has offered extended periods of worship, personal ministry and teaching from a diverse gallery of speakers, including Cindy Jacobs, Apostle John Eckhardt, Betty Freidzon and the late Fuchsia Pickett.

The conference began in 1995 at the Sheraton World Resort in Orlando, Fla., with about 1,200 registrants but doubled in attendance the second and third years. In 1998, the conference

was moved to the 10,000-seat Ocean Center in Daytona Beach, where it was held the final seven years.

The 2004 event boasted nearly 8,000 attendees of diverse ethnic and denominational backgrounds. Main sessions were translated into Spanish for the more than 2,000 women who participated in the Spanish-language track.

After each conference, Strang received numerous testimonies, many from women who claim they will never be the same. "The description we have heard most often is 'life-changing,'" Strang said.

Laurie Melton of Charlotte, N.C., wrote in a Strang Communications online forum that she had been in constant pain on her left side as a result of a car accident five years ago. "I was totally healed from pain on Friday, April 23, 2004," she said.

Kay Nelson wrote in the same forum that she was healed of fibromyalgia and migraine headaches at this year's event. "I have not taken any pain medicine since I have come home," she said.

Mary Jo Clouse, conference prayer team coordinator for all 10 years, said miracles have marked the events since the beginning. "I've seen more miracles than I could even think about—people coming out of wheelchairs, blind eyes being opened, marriages healed and women who had had abortions [released] from guilt and shame," she told Charisma.

Yet to Strang, the most significant result of the conferences is that "thousands ... have been saved, healed, baptized in the

Holy Spirit, set free and [have] received new vision for their lives," she said. "Many ministries have been established as the women put into effect what God showed them He had for [them]."

One example is the ministry of Roxana Perez of El Salvador. During the 2000 event, Perez heard minister Nola Warren say that God was prompting someone to publish a magazine similar to Spirit-Led Woman in Spanish. Perez said she understood God wanted her to do it, and within a year, she had launched a women's magazine in her own country.

Florida pastor Shirley Arnold, a 10-time minister at the Charisma Women's Conference, said testimonies such as Perez's reflect the primary purpose of the event. "These 10 years have been about raising women to the place that God has called them," she told Charisma.

Evangelist Joyce Rodgers, who spoke at the conference for three years, agrees. "I've seen the Charisma conference serve as a vehicle to empower women ... to do what God has called them to do."

More than one of the 2004 conference speakers confirmed Strang's new focus by declaring that now is the season for women to move into their God-given purposes. In one session prophetic minister Chuck Pierce declared: "God is doing a new thing among women. ... It is time for them to come out and find their place of influence."

Charisma editor J. Lee Grady told the women God was commissioning them to take what they had received—salvation, empowering, healing, deliverance and refreshing—to those who

don't have it.

Strang said she will host a smaller women's event sometime in 2005. Many Charisma Women's Conference veterans have already told her they plan to attend. One of them, Doris Huff of Deltona, Fla., declared in a letter to Strang: "Wherever Charisma goes next, I will be there."

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