

Lakeland Outpouring Reaches 50-Day Milestone

After 50 consecutive days of revival meetings, what is known as the Lakeland Outpouring shows no signs of slowing. It has already outgrown three venues.



[] On Wednesday night thousands hoping to experience God's presence waited for doors to open at the Lakeland Center, an 8,000-seat sports arena in Lakeland, Fla.

After 50 consecutive days of revival meetings, what is known as the Lakeland Outpouring shows no signs of slowing, having outgrown three venues since a 32-year-old Canadian evangelist named Todd Bentley visited Ignited Church on April 2 and the next day encountered in his hotel room what he said was an angel.

"The last 50 days have been like heaven on earth," Bentley told *Charisma*. "I have never been so hungry for God."

Placing his global itinerary on hold, Bentley said he plans to remain in Lakeland, a city of about 90,000 between Orlando and Tampa, for as long as God wants him to. "I have never been in such intense glory," said the tattooed evangelist, "nor witnessed so many miracles and healings in America."

"I would say in the last week we have touched a new realm of miracles," he said. "There were more testimonies of people coming out of wheelchairs [on Monday night] than in any other meeting."

Euphoric worship and claims of miracles have added to the excitement in Lakeland and have prompted some to fly in from across the country and even from abroad.

Fire marshals closed the doors to capacity crowds last month at the 700-seat Ignited Church, locking out hundreds of people

who waited in the church parking lot until after midnight to receive prayer from Bentley.

Meetings relocated to a larger facility on April 24. Venues have since included an arena, a field and a stadium. More than 10,000 have reportedly filled venues during weekend meetings. Starting next week, services will be held at an "air-dome" near a regional airport.

"I could never have dreamed that each day the anointing could grow any stronger and continue [this way]," Stephen Strader, senior pastor at Ignited Church, told *Charisma*.

John Arnott, senior pastor of Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, where a spiritual outpouring began in 1994, was at Tuesday night's service with his wife, Carol. Bentley honored the couple for sharing "the father heart of God" with the world. Arnott later blessed the Lakeland meetings.

"Todd, it's just amazing what God is doing here ... it's being talked about around the world," Arnott said. "Carol and I are here tonight to absolutely bless this, with everything in us."

Worship lasted three hours that evening. "I feel like I'm under a shower right now. Is it raining in here?" Bentley asked his associates on stage at one point.

One woman sobbed facedown on the cement floor. A man with outstretched arms slowly turned in circles where he stood. A loud chorus in the air above them—"Less of me and more of you, less of me and more of you. I am thirsty, hungry, desperate for your presence"—reverberated inside the giant-sized auditorium.

"You're in heaven's atmosphere tonight," Bentley said. "I feel the same fire I felt when I first got saved ... there's only one thing I want—the presence of Jesus. I just want Jesus. I'll lay anything down."

The meetings have been broadcast live on GOD TV, opening the meetings to millions of potential viewers worldwide. Strader

said 1.2 million separate computers have logged on to watch services online.

One YouTube video of the Lakeland meetings was ranked as the eighth most viewed video in the world, according to Bentley.

Hundreds are claiming healing from various ailments, including deafness, cancer, tumors and paralysis. There are also unconfirmed reports of the dead coming back to life.

One of the cases involves a 3-year-old girl, dead for two days, who allegedly woke up and coughed as she was being wheeled into a room to have her organs harvested, Strader said. The hospital denied the report.

Another case involves a woman in West Virginia who had three heart attacks last Saturday, but was revived after family members had made the decision to pull her breathing tube. The woman's niece, Darla Pence, told *Charisma* she received prayers of "healing, revival and restoration for your family" one week prior to her aunt's heart attacks from someone who had been to Lakeland.

Pence said that since her aunt's miraculous recovery, nine family members have come to the Lord.

As word has spread of the Lakeland Outpouring, various circles within the Spirit-filled community have been hesitant to fully acknowledge what is happening in Lakeland as a genuine move of God.

Jack Hayford, president of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, said it's important to "guard our souls from being either gullible, doubt-prone or resistant to whatever God may seek to do."

"With time," he said, "whatever is taking place in Lakeland and through activities issuing from its happenings, will either verify or discredit the source of its manifestations."

Bentley said on Tuesday that TheCall founder Lou Engle phoned

him from Kansas City, Mo., to let him know they were praying for him.

John Kilpatrick, who pastored Brownsville Assembly during the Pensacola Revival of the 1990s, visited Lakeland recently to lend Bentley his support.

Kilpatrick told *Charisma* last month that he planned to visit Lakeland as soon as possible in order to encourage Bentley. "It saddened me that many weren't willing to at least come and check things out," he said of his early meetings in the 1990s with revivalist Steve Hill. "I made a vow before God that if revival ever broke out again, no matter where it was, that I'd at least go."

Bentley said he's grateful and even surprised by the attention. "I am absolutely blown away by how many thousands of pastors and leaders have come to receive impartation," he said.

"Sometimes I think people think that I think that I know what I'm doing," he said Tuesday. "But what God does is sovereign. I wish I could duplicate things, or just turn on the miracles, but I can't."

Bentley places a strong emphasis on taking "the anointing" from the worship services and out into the streets. People have reported many salvations and healings taking place in local parking lots, restaurants and malls throughout Lakeland.

GOD TV made a financial appeal to its viewers today to "keep this revival going" for another 40 days. "It is in complete obedience to the will of the Father that we are extending coverage of this mighty move of God ... all at great expense," stated Rory and Wendy Alec, co-founders of GOD TV. "Now we feel challenged of the Father to commit to broadcast a further 40 days. But we can only do this with your help."

Bentley said meetings would continue for however long God's "glory" continues to manifest. **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli in Lakeland, Fla.**