

Marvin Gorman Enjoys Restored Ministry After Swaggart Debacle

The New Orleans minister, disgraced by a 1986 scandal, has put the past behind him to focus on healing his city

There is a growing belief that New Orleans, the city that boasts throwing the largest free party in the world, could one day be better known for revival than revelry. Many see a man once linked to the city's notorious ministry sex scandals as having a key role in the transformation.

While thousands of tourists were packing New Orleans' historic French Quarter in February for the annual Mardi Gras celebrations—renowned for drunkenness and nudity—a growing number of visitors were heading to a suburban church to investigate what is being heralded as possibly the country's next major move of God.

The healings, deliverances and Holy Spirit encounters being reported at Abundant Life World Outreach Center were coming through the prayers and touch of Marvin Gorman. He once commanded communitywide respect but now still occasionally meets people who whisper about him behind his back for the headlines he generated more than a decade ago.

Gorman's ministry and personal life came crashing down in 1986 when he resigned from New Orleans' booming First Assembly of God (AG) after admitting to infidelity. At one time tapped for

the AG's top post as general superintendent, he was stripped of his denominational accreditation and had to file for bankruptcy.

Gorman's accuser had been Baton Rouge, TV evangelist Jimmy Swaggart, whom the following year Gorman photographed with a prostitute at a New Orleans motel, prompting Swaggart's own ministry collapse. In 1991, Gorman won a \$10 million slander suit against Swaggart for spreading rumors about his supposed involvement with other women.

Despite what he called an attempt to run him out of town, Gorman remained in New Orleans. He pastored a small, independent church and wrote a book about how God had humbled him through his fall, and told him to forgive and pray for his enemies. He returned to television and began to speak at pastors conferences about the challenges and trials of leadership.

Then two years ago, sensing a "broader scope of ministry" unfolding, Gorman handed over the leadership of his Temple of Praise church to his son-in-law. The first taste of what that "broader scope" might be came early last year when Gorman held some meetings at Christ Cathedral of Praise in Ville Platte, a small community northwest of New Orleans.

The resulting revival ran 3-1/2 months and was "a tremendous breakthrough," according to pastor Jerry Fitch. "We recorded over 300 people filled with the Holy Spirit, and 200 got saved. There were a number of healings."

When Gorman visited Abundant Life—located at a converted country club—in January, it was to be for just four nights.

But pastor Jonas Robertson “began to realize that this was very possibly something like Pensacola.” Within weeks the church and Gorman had committed to continuing meetings through the end of the year, holding them Friday through Monday to better accommodate out-of-towners.

“The power of God just came down in a new way,” Robertson said. “This revival has all the elements of the book of Acts. It’s being filled with the Holy Spirit, being saved, being delivered, being healed from just every kind of disease. It’s creative miracles.”

Church member Paul Eymard told Charisma his life had been dramatically impacted by the revival. After one service he began to feel sensation returning to the fingers of his left hand, which had been almost severed in a nasty barge accident more than 20 years ago. He also was freed from troubled dreams about the accident.

“There’s so much more joy in my life,” he said. “I have never been able to feel my wife’s hair or my kids’ faces or pet my dog—the kind of things which may seem little, but are enormous to me.

It’s made me much more outgoing; there’s a complete personality change.”

Worship leader Steve Kinchin said he had been healed of tendinitis in his hands and Crohn’s Disease that had plagued him since a child. “It’s incredible. I have never before in my life witnessed people so hungry after the things of God, people coming with such a high level of expectancy. It’s not church as usual,” Kinchin said.

The church's youth group quadrupled a few weeks after the revival began. To meet the growing need, the congregation launched into an ambitious 30-day project that transformed one of its buildings into a new youth and family center complete with basketball cages, video games, pool tables and a 1950s' style diner.

Now 67, Gorman said he believes the move of God was the fulfillment of a promise that his latter days would be more fruitful than his former.

"I believe with all my heart these meetings are the beginning of something that God is going to do that will be phenomenal in this city and reach out to many parts of the world.

"I just want to be used in whatever way I can," he added. "My real burden is for leadership. I feel that He has brought me through enough that I can relate to any of their hurts or challenges."

Robertson points to what has been happening at his church as part of the fulfillment of a widely circulated prophecy by Cindy Jacobs in 1998 that foresaw a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit in southern Louisiana that would spread up the Mississippi and across the United States.

Robertson, a one-time drug addict saved under Gorman's First Assembly ministry, said he saw a greater tenderness and compassion in his former mentor.

"The argument is, God can't use him anymore, but when we have the miracles and healings and salvations, how can you argue with that?" he said. "What God is doing now is giving people

an opportunity to do what they didn't 15 years ago. And the church will either fail or pass the test. They will forgive and love mercy or will continue to hold bitterness and judgmentalism."