

Revival Fever Breaks Out in Florida

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Pockets of the Christian community in this area and beyond are buzzing over what could be compared with the early meetings revivalist Rodney Howard-Brown held here 15 years ago at Carpenter's Home Church two miles down the road.

With an almost palpable sense of expectation hanging in the meetings, wild stories of healings have been lighting up the blogosphere, from reports of permanent scars disappearing off bodies to tumors disintegrating in stomachs.

Word of the meetings has spread across the globe via GOD TV's live Web stream, and will air live on the network every night this coming weekend.

If hunger, as in the outpourings in Toronto and Pensacola during the 1990s, is a characteristic of revival, then believers here appear starved. "I'm just here for the presence of the Lord," said one young man last night.

In loud heart-crying worship, one song lyric in particular—"healing is the bread of your children"—has become an anthem of the meetings being held in Lakeland by Todd Bentley, a Canadian revivalist and founder of Fresh Fire Ministries.

The stocky tattooed minister called out various ailments and

diseases for several hours last night. Clusters of the more than 1,000 feverish believers responded to his words of knowledge, and later claimed healing.

A young teenaged girl testified the lump on her neck had disappeared. A woman with osteoarthritis of the knees kicked the air and ran across the stage. Several people declared hearing for the first time out of deaf ears.

"We're still hungry," the crowd worshiped, "we're receiving, there's got to be more, got to be more, got to be more."

One five-year-old boy named Corey, accompanied by his parents, wanted prayer for his heart, which was irregular since infancy. His mother said it beat three times faster than normal, "like a washing machine under his skin" to the touch, she said.

As Bentley prayed, the boy swayed softly, eyes closed, eventually drifting into what appeared to be a trance-like state. Several minutes later Bentley asked the boy what he was feeling, but he was unresponsive.

"Are you there? Can you hear me?" Bentley said, snapping his fingers by the boy's ears. "Hello? Hello? Can you hear me?"

The expression on the child's face was as if he had disappeared. A man in the congregation shouted: "He's in heaven! He's getting a new heart!"

Standing behind his son, the boy's father began weeping. "I think he's in heaven," Bentley whispered.

When he finally opened his eyes the boy's mother held him, cried over him, and joyfully reported to the large crowd that her son's heartbeat was now normal. "This is the first time it doesn't beat like that pitter patter!" she said.

The current situation in Lakeland is apparently traceable to April 3, when Todd Bentley says an angel visited him. He was in Lakeland for one of his normal itinerant conferences

scheduled from April 2-6.

He said the encounter wrecked his plans. Bentley cancelled his global itinerary and extended the meetings at Stephen Strader's Ignited Church to daily daylong events. He said the meetings would continue at least through the end of April. **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli in Lakeland, Fla.**