

The Man Who Asked God For More

He's best known as the man God used to start the Toronto Blessing in Canada in 1994. Today revivalist Randy Clark is spreading sparks from that fire all over the world.

On January 20, 1994, an unassuming pastor from St. Louis walked into a small storefront church situated in an industrial park near the Toronto airport. The 42-year-old minister had been invited to preach for a few nights at a series of meetings scheduled by the church's pastor, John Arnott. Little did Randy Clark know that here, in Toronto's subzero weather, God would use him to spark a fire of revival that continues to blaze into the 21st century.

What was supposed to be a three-day meeting lasted for more than two months, attracting crowds of 1,000 people a night. News of God's visitation quickly spread, and by May 1995 more than 700,000 people from around the world had attended meetings there. Clark, pastor of Vineyard Christian Fellowship in St. Louis, has since received more than 200 overseas invitations from missionaries and nationals who are thirsty for this work of God Clark calls "renewal."

In all of his meetings, Clark breathes a simple prayer: "More, Lord. More of Your Spirit." That cry for "more" became the theme of the Toronto Blessing.

Clark was unmistakably a catalyst of revival in Toronto—but those meetings were only the beginning. In the six years following the Toronto Blessing, he has chauffeured the Holy Spirit to hundreds of cities around the world, reaching out to many cultures and denominations. He travels 180 days a year, preaching about the power of God and the impartation of the Holy Spirit. His message is simple: "God wants to use you."

Clark is always careful to make room for the gifts of the Spirit. "I believe I've failed if I haven't instructed people that it is incumbent upon us as Christians to share our faith, pray for the sick and learn how to cast out demons," Clark told Charisma.

"That's part of the gospel. It's not peripheral," he says. "If we focus on that and have more success in that, our churches will flood with people coming in, because the church will be the place people can come and get free—the place where you can get healed."

John Wimber, the late founder of the Association of Vineyard Churches, prophesied over Randy Clark in 1984 that he had an apostolic call on his life and would one day have a translocal ministry. The prophecy seemed outrageous to Clark at the time because up until that time he had never left the continental United States and was rarely asked to speak anywhere.

But today this humble pastor traverses the globe and stands before audiences as large as 12,000. He tells them to get ready—because the fires ignited in Toronto are going to rage throughout the world.

God Uses Ordinary People

In addition to the demands of pastoring a church and traveling overseas, Clark has invested much of his time teaching others how to step out in ministry. In the last six years he has individually trained 40 people, each of whom share his vision for revival and intermittently travel by his side.

He calls this ever-growing task force Global Awakening. At least half of its members are laypeople. Clark readily shares the platform with them to exemplify that God can use anyone who is willing—not just "professional" pastors.

New Jersey residents Bill and Barbara Cassada abandoned their careers with the Federal Aviation Administration to travel

with Clark from 1996 through 1998. "Randy doesn't come [to meetings] in a limo surrounded by bodyguards," Bill Cassada says. "He is very real. He loves God, loves people, and his heart is wanting to see everyone enter into the fullness and freedom that Jesus won for us. He has probably done more to truly equip the body of Christ than anyone I've ever met in ministry."

After a period of intense mentoring, Clark releases team members like the Cassadas into worldwide ministry. Global Awakening members have effectively trained 40,000 leaders and laymen in 14 countries in how to function effectively as a prayer team during and after revival meetings. The teams cross all denominational barriers to minister to the lost, the sick and those tormented by demonic powers.

This ministry of revival is no respecter of persons. It has carried the Holy Spirit's peace and power throughout regions of the United States, Australia, South America, Korea, Japan, Russia and Eastern Europe. In 1999 alone, Global Awakening counted more than 4,000 conversions, 500 deliverances and 8,000 healings.

Meetings are commonly characterized by an impartation of the Spirit's anointing and the equipping of believers to minister. But many of the services release spiritual bombshells that surprise even seasoned ministers like Clark.

Rivers of Healing

In a Global Awakening meeting in Hendersonville, Tennessee, Clark was startled to see a 49-year-old woman walk down the aisle as he was preaching to young people.

"I want you to pray for my healing," the woman interrupted. "I got a flyer about this meeting and the Holy Ghost said, 'If you go there, Randy Clark will pray for you, and you will be

healed.'”

The woman, named Anne, explained that she had Parkinson’s disease. She shook so badly she was unable to drink from a cup, do housework or even hold her grandchild.

At first Clark didn’t want to pray for her. “I wasn’t expecting anything because I was geared for God to touch young people that evening,” he recalls. “I can’t even say the prayer was good. Then—bam! She fell on the floor and immediately stopped shaking.”

When she got back up, Anne began touching her nose with her finger, a test for Parkinsons’s that she hadn’t been able to do in years. She asked for a cup of water and drank easily without shaking. With tears running down her face, she stood behind a keyboard for the first time in years and played and sang, “He touched me/ Oh, He touched me/ ...and made me whole!”

Clark has witnessed miraculous healings overseas as well. While ministering in Cordoba, Argentina, the Global Awakening team prayed for a 66-year-old woman who had come forward wanting to be healed of a bad colon problem. After an hour of intense prayer, she was healed and started to leave. But Clark knew the Holy Spirit wanted to do more.

Knowing the woman was blind, Clark urged her to stay with the prayer team. It seemed hopeless at first, when the woman told them she had been blind for three years after her retina had been destroyed by diabetes.

After 20 minutes of prayer, her eyes suddenly began to feel warm. “That’s good,” someone told her.

“I think I see a shadow,” she said.

“Look at that light,” said Clark, directing her to a huge light outside the open building.

At first the woman saw nothing, but a few minutes later she

said, "I can see light." After continued prayer she told the team, "I can see forms."

As the ministry team continued in prayer, the woman suddenly cried out, "I can see my husband!" After successfully counting fingers randomly held in front of her, the woman left the platform with a healed colon and her sight restored.

"I'd never seen a blind eye healed until 1995, and we've seen 23 since then," Clark said. "I only prayed for four of them. The rest of them were prayed for by members of the team and church laymen."

Clark prays for the sick, often into the early hours of the morning. Team members testify that they see him step off the stage or cross the parking lot to go home, only to be detained by another needy person who wants prayer for themselves or a sick family member.

After praying for people all evening, Clark often takes 20 minutes to an hour earnestly seeking heaven on behalf of one individual. This kind of compassion transfers to those who travel with him.

Errol Faulkes, a pastor from Albuquerque, New Mexico, went with Clark to Brazil in September 1999 and helped pray for a deaf girl. The child gave her life to Christ after her hearing was fully restored in one ear and partially restored in the other.

"It changed my life," Faulkes recalls. "I had compassion for the lost and the oppressed, but my compassion for healing has exploded since I've been with Randy Clark. You must see, with the eyes of Jesus, the suffering. It's a new seeing."

The Painful Side of Healing

Helping others see the needs and God's power to meet those

needs has become one of Clark's trademarks. But stepping out in faith for miracles is not without its challenges.

"The healing ministry is like the old ABC show Wide World of Sports," Clark says. "There's the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. Healing is a place of death where we die to self and enter into the suffering of others. This is why most people don't pray for the sick. It is emotionally painful—that's the cross. And we run from the cross."

Clark confesses the heartrending experiences he's had when the people he's prayed for don't receive their healing. "If you don't ever pray for people, you don't have to fail," Clark says. "Plus you must be willing to answer when people ask, 'Why didn't I get healed?' The most profound answer to that question is, 'I don't know.' Why do we try to be more profound than we are?"

Clark learned about failure in praying for the sick while following John Wimber one night during a healing meeting at which no one was healed. Clark asked, "John, how can you live with that?"

Wimber explained that all he did was stick out his hand and say, "Come Holy Spirit." It was God who was responsible when people got healed and when they didn't. He was only the obedient servant.

Wimber's answer took all the pressure off of Clark. He thought, I can do that!

"The Bible says we're co-laborers with Christ," Clark says. "I'm like a 3-year-old who can't do anything. Jesus is like the father's hand that holds mine. When something does happen, it wasn't my little hand that did it. It was His hand on mine. But God likes it when we work with Him."

Working with God to spread the Holy Spirit's fire is what Clark is all about. And God is using him to kindle those

flames in other pastors around the world.

One of the most unsuspecting recipients of Global Awakening's ministry was the Rev. Charlie Kape, a Catholic priest from Papua New Guinea who visited a Roman Catholic school of evangelism in Canberra, Australia, where Clark held meetings in February 1998.

"Father Charlie got blasted as a result of Randy's ministry and went back to Papua New Guinea full of God's fire," said Matt Ransom, a Catholic layman who arranged the Canberra meetings.

The day Kape returned to New Guinea, he prayed for a woman with a broken arm, and she was instantly healed. The next day he was asked to pray for a man who was bedridden with tuberculosis. He, too, was instantly healed. As a result of these healings, crowds of New Guinea nationals began to seek out the renewed Catholic priest, and many more were healed.

Perhaps more stunning was an event that occurred later that year. Kape stood before a crowd in an area where he didn't know the language when suddenly the Holy Spirit gave him the language. The priest obediently spoke in tongues, and people who were present testified that he communicated eloquently about Jesus Christ.

In 1999, Kape organized a procession to evangelize the surrounding communities. The group, carrying a cross in front of them, marched through a high-crime neighborhood where many murders had occurred. But a group of young men who routinely commit crimes in the area were touched by the worship, the cross and the message of Jesus.

Fifty of these criminals turned to the Lord, handed over their weapons and renounced violence, Clark says. There have been no holdups in that area since Kape's procession. The police superintendent later contacted each of the young men, destroyed their criminal records and invited them to become

police cadets—and 30 enrolled.

Power Evangelism

It is this purging fire of the Holy Spirit that inspires Clark to keep running with the vision God has given him. Although 16 years have passed since John Wimber prophesied that he would one day have a “translocal apostolic” ministry, Clark believes even greater things are ahead.

“We’re going to continue to be used in renewal, revival and healing to churches,” Clark told Charisma. “But my ultimate goal is ‘power evangelism’—sharing the gospel in Third World countries. I want to use the best of evangelists Billy Graham and Carlos Annacondia, combining presentation and power evangelism to reach the lost.”

Clark’s 2000 schedule bolts forward with meetings in Moscow this May, England in June, Mozambique in August and—what Clark says may be Global Awakening’s largest power evangelism crusade—Brazil in September.

All the travel may sound glamorous, but Clark’s humility is evident as he labors in the trenches. He usually finds himself in a one-room motel shared with four other men, eating beef jerky and popcorn between meetings. He counts his accomplishments not in the size of his audience but in the number of disciples he’s training.

“I feel you are not a success if you don’t have successors,” Clark says. “We need to model for the next generation.”

Ben Scofield, 19, who has traveled with Clark the last two years, is testimony to the impact Clark is making on his generation.

“Most of what I learned from Randy wasn’t so much what he’s taught from the pulpit,” the teen-ager said. “It’s seeing the

way he handles what God's calling him to do and how it mixes with the rest of his life—his family, integrity and honesty on the road. He's extremely honest. I'm hoping before we split ways I'll pick up on his humility."

Kayle Mumby, 17, echoes Scofield's sentiments. After he returned from traveling with Clark to Argentina last year, Mumby carried renewal to his church and school.

"I've learned that it doesn't have to be the big-name people going around," Mumby says. "God can use anybody—young people like me, old people and children."

Clark believes that's the attitude that will impact the world for Christ and spread revival fire. "There aren't any superstars anymore," he says. "Jesus is using weakness. That's me. I came to Toronto with only two sermons—I'm an object lesson from heaven."

An object lesson who shows us that if we really do want more from God, He will pour out His fire.

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The Fire Spreads to Honduras

After a pastor visited Randy Clark's meetings in Florida, he took revival to a Nazarene church and launched a ministry to prostitutes.

Revivalist Randy Clark had been invited to hold two weeks of renewal meetings at The Tabernacle Church in Melbourne, Florida, beginning Jan. 1, 1995. The services escalated into what has become known as the Melbourne Florida Renewal, which continued six days a week for more than eight months.

Pastor Jose Alberto Arias and 30 other pastors from Honduras were invited by pastors in the Melbourne area to attend the ongoing services in June 1995. Surprisingly, Arias didn't sense anything spectacular in Melbourne. But when he returned home to his 500-member Nazarene congregation in Honduras, a wave of signs and wonders ensued. Believers throughout the building began to manifest unusual signs of God's presence including trembling and "holy laughter."

"It was an amazing time," said Michael Thompson, pastor of the Melbourne church at the time. "I had never seen anything like it. The power of God stepped out of the sanctuary into the streets, and the results were of divine proportions."

After Nazarene leaders in Honduras were informed of the services, they took swift action to disfellowship Arias, and his church was turned over to another pastor. But 200 church members who wanted to stay in the river of revival followed Arias out of the denomination into the poorest section of their town, Comayaguela.

They established a small sanctuary on the only land available at that time—the slopes of a garbage dump. The small sanctuary could barely seat 300 people.

Freshly renewed with the love of Jesus, the little congregation targeted the poorest area of town, known as La Zona Roja, "The Red Zone." Here, in a region with more than 30 houses of prostitution, the congregation began ministering to the children of area prostitutes. The Christians fed and clothed the children, then taught them to read.

In time, all of the children received Christ and shared the gospel with their mothers, who also turned to Jesus. The church swelled to 1,500 believers who squeezed into three separate church meetings every weekend. The church also utilized other buildings for training centers and called the ministry the Evangelical Center of Eternal Life.

The ministry has established a medical clinic and a pharmacy, and it also teaches children trades by holding training classes that coincide with their school schedules.

Pastor Arias continued to lead his people in renewal while ministering to the poor and destitute until all of the bordellos, or houses of prostitution, closed down. Comayaguela's mayor later signed a law forbidding any bordellos from reopening in the area.

In July 1999 a new sanctuary was finished that holds 1,200 people shoulder to shoulder and is filled to capacity for three weekend services. And Randy Clark is amazed at the way revival spread across the Gulf of Mexico to transform a town.

Says Clark: "This is one of the greatest examples of the power of renewal to affect a whole community. When we receive the power of God in renewal meetings, we also receive the heart of God for the poor and for missions."

GLOBAL AWAKENING

Más fuego, Señor: Clark prays for healing during a recent visit to Central America.

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RNS/PETER TYM

How the Toronto Blessing Began

Randy Clark says he was just an innocent bystander when God showed up at a small Canadian church in 1994.

Randy Clark traveled to a small church in Toronto in January 1994 for what he thought would be a three-day series of meetings. His purpose was to preach and pray for anyone who needed a touch from God. He had no idea that the power of the Holy Spirit would fall like it did—and that those three days would turn into a series of revival meetings lasting more than

two months.

This outpouring, which has come to be known as the Toronto Blessing, was birthed out of Clark's own need for a personal touch from God.

"I started my church in St. Louis in 1986, and by 1993 I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown from pastoring," Clark told Charisma.

Desperate for God's intervention, Clark attended a Rodney Howard-Browne conference in 1993. He felt little "spiritual electricity" during the conference, he admits, and was unsure what he gained from the meetings until the following Sunday morning service at his church.

"The power of God hit us like a bomb," Clark says. "A few weeks later, at a regional pastors meeting for Vineyard Churches at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, I told other pastors what God did in my life and church." He was then invited to Toronto by John Arnott, pastor of what was known at that time as the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church.

Randy arrived in Toronto with one sermon and a testimony in hand for a few days of meetings. "I was going to preach twice and have my associate preach twice because I didn't feel I had four sermons worth giving," says Clark, who downplays his role in the outpouring.

Clark stayed with the revival for the first 42 days, an active fire-starter in the manifestations of healing, shaking, laughter and falling under God's power that became common among revival participants.

Only 160 people attended the first meeting, but as news about God's visitation in Toronto spread around the world, crowds of 1,000 a night became routine. And it's not over yet: Six years later, the revival meetings continue—six days a week, 52 weeks a year. The church is now called Toronto Airport Christian

Fellowship.

Since 1994, the Toronto Blessing has attracted 3 million visitors to its auditorium. But it has also drawn criticism from some, particularly Hank Hanegraaff of the California-based Christian Research Institute. He has condemned the Toronto revival for encouraging “esoteric experiences.”

Clark told Charisma that the best argument to Hanegraaff’s criticism came from Clark’s former evangelism professor, Lewis Drummond of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Drummond once stated that the greatest revival in the history of Southern Baptists was the Shantung Revival, which occurred in northern China in 1933.

“I was shocked to find that almost all the phenomena that occurred in the Shantung Revival had happened in my meetings in Toronto in early 1994,” Clark says.

Clark also discovered that the Southern Baptists reprinted the book in 1970, but they omitted all reports of the revival phenomena. He has reprinted the book in its original form, adding only an introduction. The unedited version of The Shantung Revival is available through Global Awakening at (314) 416-9239.

Let the fire fall: John Arnott (left) prays for seekers at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship.

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A Kentucky Methodist Catches the Fire

Rich Stevenson left his denomination when revival hit, but Randy Clark’s visit to town opened unexpected opportunities.

Five years after revivalist Randy Clark stirred controversy in the United Methodist stronghold of Wilmore, Kentucky, the town's fastest growing church is a charismatic fellowship that has established a network of 12 congregations.

Clark was the featured speaker at the 1995 Light the Fire Again conference, an event that created bitter opposition. The small town of Wilmore is a historic center for Methodism, and the local Asbury Seminary fills more United Methodist pulpits than any other school in the nation. Many in the community objected bitterly to the conference, and some college and seminary professors accused organizers of manipulation, emotionalism and anti-intellectualism.

"Families who had been friends for years found themselves on opposite sides of whether or not this was a good thing," said magazine editor Steve Beard, who has written booklets for Methodists explaining contemporary revivals in Toronto and Pensacola, Florida.

To Rich Stevenson, a former United Methodist evangelist who now pastors Great Commission Fellowship, Clark's conference was positive. Six months after the event Stevenson held the church's first service with eight families. Today more than 800 people attend the church on Sundays, and its 42 home groups meet weekly across the area. Affiliated churches are located in Georgia, Alabama, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida, as well as in India.

Stevenson first prayed about starting a church in the fall of 1993 and after the conference stimulated discussion about the need for a charismatic congregation he moved ahead.

His desire stemmed from his experiences in evangelism. After pastoring in New Jersey for five years, he traveled under the auspices of Wilmore's Francis Asbury Society. But it didn't take long before he concluded he wasn't involved in cutting-edge evangelism.

"My generation wasn't coming to the meetings," the 37-year-old pastor said. "Church planting is the best means of evangelism today—starting churches for a new generation."

Great Commission Fellowship meets at the local Holiness campground, where it renovated two buildings. Among its distinguishing marks are vibrant praise music, casual dress and active outreach to the poor.

Despite the church's departure from local norms, it doesn't fit into a neat charismatic package. Although Stevenson embraces the charismatic label, he doesn't speak in tongues. Nor has the church experienced public messages in tongues or waves of healing. While those things do occur the pastor said they primarily take place in quiet ministry settings.

"It's awesome, but it's not the typical type of charismatic stuff—miracles and things," Beard observes. "It's a different expression of Christianity than has been seen here in 60 years."

Not surprisingly, many in the Great Commission Fellowship have Methodist roots. Dave Carlstedt, a member of the leadership team, grew up Presbyterian but had attended a Methodist church before coming to Great Commission.

"I was comfortable with a holy, righteous and just God. But the part that eluded me was a loving God and the Holy Spirit's role in that," Carlstedt said.

Stevenson believes that God is showing people that spiritual gifts are for today and are intended to empower His followers. "It's time to reclaim that heritage of power and holiness," he says. "We believe the Spirit-filled church is the force the gates of hell can't prevail against." —Ken Walker

Reclaiming his heritage: Pastor Rich Stevenson baptizes a new convert.