

Todd Bentley Enters Restoration Process

After months of seclusion, the former leader of the Lakeland revival is seeking healing

Todd Bentley, who led the Lakeland Outpouring for four months before disappearing amid scandal in August, was planning to move to the campus of MorningStar Ministries in Fort Mill, S.C., in late October in search of healing and restoration.

MorningStar founder Rick Joyner told *Charisma* that he will be leading Bentley's restoration process and was hopeful that the 32-year-old evangelist will one day return to ministry "stronger in the Lord than ever" if he faces his problems squarely. "Todd does have some serious issues he must deal with, and he knows it more than anyone," Joyner said.

After leading revival meetings in Lakeland, Fla., for nearly four months, Bentley suddenly stepped down from public ministry in August after informing staff members that he and his wife were separating. His Fresh Fire Ministries (FFM) board in British Columbia, Canada, later announced that Bentley had confessed to an inappropriate relationship with a female staff member. A senior board member also told *Charisma* that Bentley's alcohol consumption had "crossed the line."

Joyner's recent involvement in Bentley's restoration stems from his appearance last June on the platform in Lakeland, where Bentley publicly submitted himself to the oversight of apostolic leaders Bill Johnson, John Arnott and ChŹ Ahn—all members of a group called the Revival Alliance. Joyner said Johnson, representing the Revival Alliance, and Texas pastor Jack Deere have agreed to assist him in Bentley's restoration.

Ahn told *Charisma* the Revival Alliance has given "full authority" to Joyner, Johnson and Deere, while he and Arnott

will serve in an advisory role.

Ahn added that the arrangement with Bentley was not unlike the disciplinary process Joyner and Deere offered prophetic minister Paul Cain in 2005, after he publicly confessed to moral failures. International House of Prayer founder Mike Bickle was also a part of that restoration team, which Cain ultimately abandoned in 2006 when he decided to seek counsel elsewhere.

In the current case, Joyner said Bentley does not believe his marriage to Shonnah is salvageable. “[Bentley] has also taken steps to make the relationship with the girl that was inappropriate, appropriate,” Joyner said.

He explained that both Bentley and the unidentified woman have expressed “deep remorse” over the situation, knowing they were “two wounded people who fell into a trap.” Joyner said Bentley acknowledged that even if his marriage were to fail, his timing for beginning a new relationship was “terrible.”

Joyner said that though it is tempting to judge, observers must remember that all parties involved are struggling to do what’s right. “A divorce is one of the most traumatic things you can go through,” Joyner said. “For a while, Todd had spun down into some pretty deep hopelessness.”

Ahn echoed Joyner’s sentiments. “Our goal is to restore Todd to his relationship with Jesus,” he said. “His restoration as an evangelist is secondary. We are deeply concerned for his wife, Shonnah, and their children and trust that [Joyner, Johnson and Deere] and the Fresh Fire Ministries board will make sure that she is ministered to in the whole sense of the word.”

Johnson, senior pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, Calif., told *Charisma* that many people were saddened by Bentley’s failings, “but people have also come to grips with the fact that [the outpouring] was never about Todd, it was really

about God.”

He said the impact of the Lakeland Outpouring, which held its final meeting Oct. 12 amid dwindling crowds, has been both significant and global. “There are fires of revival all over Europe that are the direct result of what God was doing in Lakeland,” he said.

Yet Johnson made it clear that he and the rest of Bentley’s restoration team are not primarily concerned with seeing Bentley quickly return to ministry. “The focus is not [on] Todd the evangelist; it is on Todd the person,” Johnson said. “We want him healed up, not because of what he can do, but because God loves him and treasures him as a son.”