

Todd Bentley Remarries, Begins Restoration Process

✖ **March 10, 2009** – Todd Bentley, who became well-known for leading the Lakeland Outpouring until he stepped down after announcing he was divorcing his wife, Shonnah, has remarried.

He has also entered into a restoration process led by MorningStar Ministries founder Rick Joyner, it was announced Monday.

Joyner said Bentley and his new wife, Jessa, married “several weeks ago” and have moved to Fort Mill, S.C., where MorningStar is based. Jack Deere of Wellspring Church in Texas and Bill Johnson of Bethel Church in California will assist Joyner in overseeing Bentley’s restoration process.

“There were failures; there were mistakes-I want to be absolutely sure he sees them, understands them,” Joyner told *Charisma*. “I want to see that that gate is shut, that this is not going to happen again.

“I’m not in the business of trying to perfect anyone,” he added. “I’m not going to ask him to be perfect, but there are a lot of issues, and they’re valid. ... He is not pushing for ministry or anything; he is trying to get his life right.”

Bentley had led revival meetings in Lakeland, Fla., for nearly four months when he suddenly stepped down from public ministry in August after informing staff members that he and his wife, Shonnah, were separating.

His Fresh Fire Ministries (FFM) board, based in British Columbia, later announced that Bentley had confessed to an inappropriate relationship with a female staff member and a senior board member said Bentley’s alcohol consumption had

“crossed the line.”

Joyner said Bentley and his new wife admit that their relationship was “premature,” but say it did not begin until Bentley was convinced his first marriage could not be saved.

“They have both expressed that it was wrong and premature,” Joyner said in his statement. “They do not want to try and cover this up even though they know many will never accept them for it. Even so, they are married now and are resolved to make the most of their marriage, their lives, and to continue to serve the Lord in the best way that they can.” (Read Joyner’s statement.)

Joyner was one of several charismatic ministers who appeared on the platform at the Lakeland Outpouring last June when Bentley publicly submitted himself to the oversight of apostolic leaders Bill Johnson, John Arnott and Ché Ahn, who represent a group called the Revival Alliance.

Arnott said the alliance would serve in an advisory role during Bentley’s restoration process. “I trust all of those guys,” Arnott said. “They’re just men of integrity, men of grace.”

Arnott said Bentley, because of his actions, had stepped out of the fellowship of the alliance. “Relationally we all do care for him,” Arnott said. “But he wouldn’t be seen as a member in good standing.”

In a statement released with Joyner’s, Bentley said he has been in a season of brokenness. He said his previous marriage endured “years of unresolved conflicts” and apologized that it ended in divorce.

“I take full responsibility for my part for the ending of the marriage,” he said. “I realize that my silence and decisions

have caused many of you to feel hurt, confused, and offended. The reason for the silence was for my need of healing, creating a restoration process under a team of qualified leaders, much needed rest after the Lakeland Outpouring, repentance, and the divorce process."

Bentley said he hopes to be "fully restored, strengthened, healed, and to learn from all the mistakes I have made along the way."

Bentley was scheduled to begin the restoration process last October, but Joyner said his relocation to Fort Mill was repeatedly delayed due to problems securing a permanent visa.

Last fall, Bentley stepped down from the Canada-based ministry he founded, which has since changed its name from Fresh Fire to Transform International. Joyner said Fresh Fire USA would be based in Fort Mill at Heritage International Ministries, which Joyner leads, and he invited supporters to contribute to the ministry.

"The whole point of restoration is to get you back from where you were," Joyner said. "He is going to be back in ministry, and we want to lay a solid foundation for that. There are partners who want to support his process. They want him restored and healthy. It's just building an infrastructure."

Bentley said he would remain out of public ministry while he sought healing, though teaching articles were posted at a MySpace page as recently as December and he continues to sell ministry product through his Sound of Fire Productions, which his father helps manage.

Although Joyner was unfamiliar with the MySpace page, he said it is appropriate for Bentley to begin telling people what happened in his life and ministry. "I think it can help [keep]

a whole lot of other people from going through the same mess,” Joyner said. “And he’s a grown man; I don’t treat him like a child. That would not help his process either. The main thing he’s restricted himself on is preaching, going out doing any kind of public ministry, but there’s a huge demand for understanding what happened.”

Joyner said there is no rush to return Bentley to public ministry. “We know that trust has to be earned and that Todd will have to earn the trust of the Body of Christ for future ministry, which will not be easy, nor should it be,” Joyner said in his statement. “Todd, more than most, does not want to jump back into ministry prematurely, even as much as he misses it in some ways.”

From early on, the Lakeland Outpouring was fraught with controversy. When praying for healing, the tattooed evangelist was known to hit the sick in the stomach with his knee in a move more common among wrestlers than preachers. Bentley even recounted kicking a woman in the face in an act of “obedience to the Lord.”

The revival meetings, which began at Ignited Church in April, ended officially in October. Pastor Stephen Strader said the church has continued to grow since then, and he has no regrets.

“I would not have done anything differently,” Strader said. “Every action we took was based on the information given to us and what the Holy Spirit revealed to us. So if people aren’t happy with decisions we made, they’re going to have to talk to God. I tell people all the time, discernment is a gift, it’s not a talent. If God decides to hide a matter, there’s not a thing you can do about it. We constantly prayed for revelation, protection.”

Arnott said he believes the Lakeland Outpouring was a genuine move of God. “There were a lot of people healed, a lot of

people saved, genuine fruit came out of it," Arnott said. "A lot of young people got released and are ministering like never before. It is unfortunate when a leader falls like this. Nevertheless, the good part was good."

Joyner said the restoration team would be giving regular updates, including videos of Bentley telling his story posted at the MorningStar Web site.