

Todd Bentley Separation Shocks Followers, Apostolic Overseers

Pastors

within the apostolic movement, who commissioned Bentley as an evangelist in

June, express shock over the breakup of revivalist's marriage.



[] Leaders of the apostolic movement are scrambling for answers

after learning that revival leader Todd Bentley is separating from his wife.

California pastor Bill Johnson, who with pastors John Arnott and Ché Ahn

represents Bentley's apostolic "covering" under a group called the Revival

Alliance, said he was shocked by Bentley's announcement. "This is an obvious

tragedy, both for Todd and Shonnah and the move of God in Lakeland," Johnson

said.

"They had problems a couple of years ago, and I got involved at that time

to lend support and give counsel to Todd and his staff. In talking with Todd I

was led to believe those issues were now in order. Obviously they

weren't."

During an impromptu meeting Monday, Bentley told the staff of his Fresh

Fire Ministries that he and his wife, Shonnah, were

separating. In a statement released Tuesday, the Fresh Fire board of directors said “an atmosphere of fatigue and stress” created by the daily meetings Bentley led until recently, “exacerbated existing issues in [his marriage].”

Bentley did not respond to *Charisma's* request for comment.

Fresh Fire's board members stated that the meetings were not to blame for the breakup of Bentley's marriage, that the separation was not due to infidelity by either spouse and that they hoped the marriage would be restored. “We know that many of you will have questions, for most of which we presently have no answers,” the board members stated.

Bentley has spent most of the last four months away from his home in Abbotsford, B.C., where his wife and three children reside. Shonnah Bentley has appeared on the platform with her husband in Lakeland periodically.

The news did not come as a total surprise to the top three members of the Revival Alliance, an apostolic group that Bentley submitted himself to during a commissioning ceremony on June 23 in Lakeland. “We are all of one heart in that we want to see their marriage restored, and just as important, see their hearts get healed from these points of weakness that have been there for years,” Johnson said.

At press time, Johnson said he had still not been able to make contact with Bentley.

C. Peter Wagner, leader of the International Coalition of Apostles, convened and officiated at the Revival Alliance's commissioning ceremony in June. Wagner's wife, Doris, said he was shocked when he received the news of Bentley's separation while he was in Asia conducting a 10-day ministry trip.

Arnott, an alliance member and founding pastor of the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, said he was also surprised when he got word Monday of Bentley's separation. "I had hoped that the previous troubles had been resolved and worked through," he told *Charisma*, referring to marital problems he said the Bentleys had two years ago.

Ahn told *Charisma* the Revival Alliance is "doing all that we can do to bring correction and counsel to Todd."

Stephen Strader, senior pastor of Ignited Church, where Bentley's revival meetings began, told *Charisma* the separation was for "a period of time while [the couple] both continue to receive counseling." Strader said he only recently discovered the counseling sessions between the two had been ongoing for the past three years.

"The outpouring has put a tremendous strain on their [counseling] process because the process, for all intents and purposes, was almost suspended because of the exaggerated distance and the exaggerated seven-days-a-week schedule,"

Strader said.

According to Strader, Bentley turned the leadership of the revival meetings over to him on Aug. 6—more than two weeks before the Aug. 23 date Bentley previously said would be his last service. Strader said Bentley would officially depart the revival during tonight's meeting in Lakeland, when Bentley is scheduled to thank the crowd and "commission his interns" to continue the revival.

In their statement, the Fresh Fire board members said the ministry would focus on "growing the Global Outpourings" that have spread since April via GOD TV and the Internet.

Rory and Wendy Alec, founders of GOD TV, said that even though last Friday was their network's final live broadcast of the Lakeland meetings, they believe the "outpouring" is a genuine move of God. "We believe that it is important to recognize and defend the authenticity of this outpouring by the testimonies of the countless thousands who viewed on GOD TV or attended at Lakeland and were healed, set free and delivered through Jesus Christ," the Alecs said in a statement.

Patricia King, founder of Extreme Prophetic TV and a close friend of Bentley's, told *Charisma* she is praying for wisdom about how to help people process the news of Bentley's separation. "I am heart-broken over the situation," she said. "I love Todd. I will always love Him. I

will carry
Him in my heart and prayers and never let go.

“Right now, though, I am in pain, deep pain,” she added, “for the
body [of Christ], for Todd, for his family.”

Johnson said the Revival Alliance leaders want to help Bentley heal and
experience restoration. “None of the Revival Alliance members sweeps things
under the carpet and ignore or deny tragedy,” he said. “Neither do we think
great anointing is a replacement for character. We will now work hard to bring
healing and restoration, considering it a privilege to stand with a brother in
trouble, regardless of who is at fault.” **—Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**