

# Are Reformation Churches Ready for Prime Time?

Can we have reformation ministries? Yes.

Can we have reformation churches? I don't think so. Not yet. And I doubt true revival can come without them.

We can have ministries staffed by a few radicals who will faithfully carry and release the burning messages of God. People like Leonard Ravenhill did this powerfully.

But to gather a people who burn night and day with a spirit of reformation and revival into a reformation church culture is extremely difficult—finding those who are ready for a daily life of intense intercession, surrender and continual prophetic shocks to the system is even harder. The reformed church will strike and trouble every believer, and this transitional season of moving from the old to the new wine skin is more costly than most are comfortable with.

Reformation requires bold prophetic voices that do more correcting than comforting, more rebuking than affirming and more commanding than suggesting. Yet such voices are soundly rejected in today's casual, sleepy, independent culture. Reformation churches led by people with a never-ending shock in their voice are rare today.

We need prophets who are more skilled at revealing the ancient truths and calling people to repentance than prophets who are more given to revealing the future and calling people to their conferences.

*Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. They say continually to those who despise the word*

*of the LORD, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you'" (Jer. 23:16-17).*

*"The prophet in his day is fully accepted of God and totally rejected by men. The prophet is violated during his ministry, but he is vindicated by history. The prophet comes to set up that which is upset. His work is to call into line those who are out of line! He is unpopular because he opposes the popular in morality and spirituality. There is a terrible vacuum in evangelical Christianity today. The missing person in our ranks is the prophet. The man with a terrible earnestness. The man totally otherworldly. The man rejected by other men, even other good men, because they consider him too austere, too severely committed, too negative and unsociable. In a day of faceless politicians and voiceless preachers, there is not a more urgent national need than that we cry to God for a prophet!" –Leonard Ravenhill*

Forerunners are prophetic messengers who blaze new trails and call out with passion to the remnant church to follow them into new territories, new models and new wine skins. They are awakeners who understand the urgency to gather the church on the other side of the Jordan River—away from the old and familiar and into the land of promise. This type of advance requires a new form of leadership, a type that we see in Joshua as he boldly, urgently commanded the people to follow God into a land of risk.

*"At the end of three days the officers went through the camp and commanded the people, 'As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it. Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.' Then Joshua said to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.'*

*And Joshua said to the priests, 'Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people.' So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people" (Josh. 3:2-6).*

Moses surrendered to popular opinion as a bad report was given about the very land they had been pursuing for years. The decision was to remain in the place of familiarity instead of paying the price to advance. Today's church is in the same place. It's foolishness to think revival is to be had if we are still standing in fear next to the water in the desert. Giants are in the land and we must have a fearless people who are willing to lay down their dreams and personal endeavors for the sake of corporate advance. God is waiting for such a people to arise—and when they do we will have true reformation churches.

Revival tarries because we presume it's a rare and extraordinary work of God alone. It also requires a rare and extraordinary work of man. The response must be significant, immediate and extreme. Revival costs much, and right now too few are willing to pay the price.

### **First Church of Starbucks**

As I sit here in a Starbucks with my headphones on listening to some worship music I wonder if this is just the atmosphere today's church is looking for. Great coffee, amazing music, potential friends all around, lots of comfort and people behind the pulpit (oops, I mean counter) to get me what I need.

I was downtown Chicago one day, driving behind a bus. On the rear of the bus was an ad that still troubles me to this day:

Vineyard Church ... Experience God and great COFFEE.

Yes, the word COFFEE was in all caps. I know it's just an ad, but it bothered me. I think it speaks something. It speaks to surrender to our culture. What if instead the ad said:

Vineyard Church ... come and die.

It doesn't have the same zip, does it? I actually like it better.

A toned down message can certainly result in bigger numbers, but, in my 45th year of life, I have no desire to modify the message or de-emphasize the cost for the sake of butts in seats. For me, it's a reformation church or nothing. And as I shared in the previous article, numbers are greatly suffering at Revival Church and we are in a place of considering whether this nation is ready for such an extreme call—but we will not compromise the call in order to pay the bills or provide the appearance of success. Hell is begging me to do that and I refuse to listen.

So, I do wonder if a reformation church is ready for prime time. I don't think it is. Too many people are still sleeping and disinterested in the call to the cross—to carry it and to lay down everything for its sake.

*“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:14-17).*

## **Awakening**

Alarms of awakening are always extremely irritating to disinterested, comfortable sleepers. Alarms of awakening are even more irritating to those who are convinced they are already awake. Those convinced they are awake are at the greatest risk of spiritual death as they intentionally ignore warnings they presume are not for them. We all must be willing to question whether we are as awake as we think we are. I ask myself the question often: Am I kidding myself? Am I possibly talking it up without walking it out? The fear of the Lord rests on me day and night.

*"I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God" (Rev. 3:1-2).*

*"But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matt. 25:6-13).*

I live every day with a God given disturbance in my gut ... knowing that so many people who are convinced that they know God, convinced there's time to fill their lamps with oil, are actually on a track toward hell. Awakening them is my No. 1 job in my short time on the earth. I grieve daily over this.

As I drive by various churches I have a constant, underlying question that wrecks me ... is it possible that everybody in that church is going to hell? I'm not talking about obviously heretical churches ... I'm talking about mainline, Spirit-filled churches. I'm even talking about my own church! I don't presume it to be the case ... but I always have the question. Do they, do we, really know what it is to be surrendered to Jesus? Have apathy, sleepiness and deception crept in? Is hell growing larger because of us? My God. Reformation must come!

So for me to simply tell people how much God loves them and to encourage them to rejoice in that fact would be a major violation of my calling. There are possibly millions of people today who are celebrating God's love for them while living in

an unsaved condition. I can't encourage them in that ... my passion is to call people into radical extravagance, surrender, death daily, deep intimacy, and night and day prayer as we prepare for even greater troubles ahead.

As I've shared before, I only give myself an 80 percent chance of making heaven. Why? Not because I'm insecure in my salvation now, but because I'm keenly aware of my vulnerability to failure in the future. I can't presume myself to be exempt from the great falling away. I will have many options to allow my love to grow cold and to fall asleep. It's that message that I need to get out there.

We can be joyful and full of life while being sober and broken over the reality of our situation. Without holiness we cannot see God. If we leave that message out then we will lead people right to hell. Reformation churches major on the call to repentance—and most don't want to live in such an atmosphere.

*“And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:12-14).*

This is what must be preached.

Leonard Ravenhill said he doubts that 5 percent of professing born-again Christians in the USA are truly saved. That means in a church of 100 worshipping, dancing, tithing, Bible reading people ... 5 of them might go to Heaven and 95 will burn forever in hell.

Somebody needs to warn them before it's too late. We must have bold, and yes, aggressive, unapologetic prophetic leaders who draw a line in the sand and call the church to stop the madness. We must see the apathy come to an end and awaken today's comatose church into mandatory response. We can't be passive. We don't have time.

Be careful not to reject such an invasive, direct messenger as arrogant. A lesser-known but very real threat to revival is false humility. So many hold back offensive messages so they don't come across as brash, arrogant or presumptuous. They hope to display humility, but at the expense of truth. The thought is, if we appear loving as defined by what the recipient desires to feel, then we are loving and the person hearing the message is more likely to respond. This simply isn't true or biblical. I once heard, "You can't sacrifice truth on the altar of love." Be bold. Love deeply. Shock the dead to life. Reformation churches will do just that.

### **Can We Have Reformation Churches?**

This is the question of the hour. I honestly wonder if we can, or if they might be extremely rare.

To fill the seats we have to bring the bar down a bit so as not to scare away the less committed. That grieves my spirit terribly.

I believe we must embrace this wheat and tare season that we are in and refuse to lower bars. Let God prune and define the true remnant. The question is, will there be enough people left after the pruning?

**7,000**

*"He said, 'I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away'" (1 Kin. 19:14).*

*"Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (1 Kin. 19:18).*

Yes, there is a remnant who will not bow. They are very small

in number, but they are out there. Now is the time for them to gather. Where are you remnant? Awaken, church! Strengthen! Pray! Gather! The 24/7 church is needed and YOU are the warrior God has created for this hour! If the remnant gathers in full force, then, and only then will we have enough to have reformation focused remnant churches in our cities. Until that happens we are left with a choice: Lead low-key churches that satisfy people of various commitment levels or raise the bar to the level of Scripture and wait for the few burning ones to arrive for battle.

Pastors, the choice is yours.

*Pockets of true revival are breaking out across America. Want to know more about the next great move of God? [Click here](#) to see Jennifer LeClaire's new book, featuring Dutch Sheets, Reinhard Bonnke, Jonathan Cahn, Billy Graham and others.*

**John Burton** has been developing and leading ministries for over 20 years and is a sought out teacher, prophetic messenger and revivalist. John has authored nine books, has appeared on Christian television and radio and directed one of the primary internships at the International House of Prayer (IHOP) in Kansas City. Additionally, he planted two churches, has initiated two city prayer movements and is currently directing a prayer and revival focused ministry school in Detroit called [theLab University](#). John's mandate is to call the church in the nations to repentance from casual Christianity and to burn in a manner worthy of the King of kings. He is equipping people to confront the enemies of God (established religion, Jezebel, etc.) that hinder an extreme, sold-out level of true worship.

For the original article, visit [johnburton.net](http://johnburton.net).