

Bill Johnson Publicly Rebukes Popular Prophetic Voice

Recently Bill Johnson stood before his congregation in Redding, California, and did something I've never heard him do before. He openly and publicly rebuked another minister. That this minister just happens to be in my first two films, *Finger of God* and *Furious Love*, made me realize I probably needed to address this situation. So please consider this my official response to the calling out of Jason Westerfield.

The first thing you need to know is that Bill Johnson is a very dear friend of mine. I have been around some of the greatest ministers with some of the biggest ministries around, and when you film people the way I do you can't help but get to know them on a more intimate level. Having said that, I admire and respect Bill immensely. While everyone has their own issues and foibles, Bill is exactly what you hope he would be, even when you're chilling with him on a hot July day on a Ferris wheel in Chicago (long story, don't ask). The fact that he has been one of the few who has been singled out by well-meaning but often mean-spirited Christians as everything that is wrong with the charismatic movement is something that saddens me. He is a humble man who is one of the wisest people I've met and who is also head over heels in love with Jesus.

I say all that to get to the point that if Bill Johnson sees something amiss, it's best to sit up and take pause. Jason was a "son of the house" at Bethel, having been a part of the first graduating class of Bethel's popular School of Supernatural Ministry. He was mentored by many of the leaders at Bethel, and was considered a spiritual son by some of them, which, of course, makes this statement all the more remarkable and heartbreaking.

While I know more about the inner workings of this statement

than I can say here, I am confident that it did not come lightly, nor did it happen overnight. I wasn't a part of Bill and his team's discussion concerning Jason, but I am very aware of what has been concerning them and others over the last few years.

When I first met Jason we were both true "youngsters" in our prospective ministries. I was in the middle of making my first film and I had no idea what I was doing. He had just started full-time ministry three months earlier, and probably would have said he didn't much know what he was doing either! All I knew at the time was that he was a lot more radical for God than I was. I filmed with him in and around Yale University and we just walked around trying to pray for people and see what God wanted to do.

Then, for my second film, *Furious Love*, I asked Jason to join Will Hart and me in Salem, Massachusetts, to film at an occult and witchcraft festival. I wanted to bring God's light into the darkest of places, and we filmed some amazing stuff there. Jason was still radical, and he did a lot of things in his ministry style that made little sense to me, but it was obvious that God was moving powerfully through him.

Years passed and I made two more films: *Father of Lights* and *Holy Ghost*. I tried to film with Jason for *Father of Lights*, but by then he had moved to New Zealand and it just wasn't a feasible option. So I continued on my own journey and figured that at some point our paths would likely cross again.

That crossing happened about two years ago while I was speaking at a church on the east coast and showing one of my films. Out of nowhere, Jason walked up to me to say hello. I was able to meet with him after the service was over and we stood at the back of the church and talked for about 45 minutes. But the longer we talked, the more my heart sank. This wasn't the same guy I had known. In fact, he was hardly recognizable to me anymore.

I won't get into the particulars of our meeting or what we talked about, but suffice to say that Jason steered it into very odd and bizarre territory (aliens, interplanetary travel, etc.) and the whole time I just kept thinking, *"What does any of this have to do with the gospel?"*

I have spent a lot of my time in what I call the "fringes" of Christianity. I'm interested in radical people doing radical things for God, but sometimes the most radical people are also the most broken. I have found that those who are radically lost who then get radically saved tend to burn just as bright in their conversion as they did in their prior sin. I used to be terrified that the people I film might flame out or do something stupid that would then cast a bad light on whatever I may have filmed with them. But now I know better. If I have learned anything these last eight years it's that every one of us, big or small, powerful or weak, is on our own journey. As with any journey, there will be a wide variety of twists, detours, wrong turns, mistakes, breakdowns and times of being lost. Sometimes we live in seasons of fruitfulness, and sometimes we are dry as a desert. But no matter what happens, if we don't have community and quality, honest spiritual covering, we will almost always veer off course and crash.

All that being said, when I heard Bill address this, I have to admit that it felt a little weird. I mean, this may have been the first time in eight years I have heard any leader in the charismatic movement call out another minister in an attempt at correction and warning. But maybe that's more of an indictment of the movement than anything else. I want to reside within the "radical middle," where operating with the Spirit is just as integral as understanding the Scriptures. Challenging others sometimes seems anathema to the charismatic, because we realize there are many flavors and ways that the Spirit moves in and through people, but challenge doesn't necessarily mean that you are closed-minded or hard-hearted. Being challenged, especially by people who

have your best interest at heart, should cause you to at the very least stop and take stock of your own heart. Maybe true humility is found in the ability to tear your own defensive walls down for a minute when the people most invested in you give you advice or a warning.

My prayer is for Jason and everyone involved in this situation to be reconciled. I haven't talked to Jason in years, and I have no idea how he is taking this, but I do know that sometimes we need to be held to the fire when we go off course and get stubborn. When I filmed with him, Jason was always a little different, but he had a passion for the lost and for introducing others to Jesus. The last time I saw him, I didn't see that anymore. It had been replaced by something else. But I have to believe that this is simply going to be a part of his journey. I have to believe that Jesus will leave the 99 to go out and bring His sheep who's gotten a bit lost back home.

The church should not stand back and snipe or gossip or voyeuristically pass judgment, but should instead pray for everyone involved in this situation. The goal is always repentance and reconciliation. It's the reason, after all, that Jesus died for every single one of us.

Darren Wilson is the founder of Wanderlust Productions and the creator of various films, including *Finger of God*, *Furious Love*, and *Father of Lights*. Darren's new book, *Finding God in the Bible*, is available in stores everywhere. Visit his website at .