

Evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne: Holy Spirit Called Me to America at 5 Years Old

I've never heard of an evangelist from South Africa feeling a call from God to minister in the U.S. But Rodney Howard-Browne received that very call—and he obeyed. I first met Howard-Browne in the early 1990s when Lakeland was experiencing powerful revival. Now, he continues to operate in the power of the Holy Spirit to people to Christ all across the world.

In fact, he recently returned from a tour in Europe, where he proclaimed the gospel in dozens of cities in countries like Sweden, Norway, Finland, Slovakia, Hungary, Germany, Switzerland, England and many more.

I invited Howard-Brown onto my “In Depth With Stephen Strang” podcast recently. (You can listen to the interview [here](#) or at the end of this article.) He shared how he first received that powerful call to evangelism in the States when he was only a young boy.

“As a kid growing up, when I was 5 years old, I would take my teddy bears, and I would line them up, and I would preach to the bears and then lay hands on them and they'd all fall under the power,” he says with a chuckle. “And my brother Basil was with me, and I'd hand the service over to him and then I would climb out the window and go preach in America. So what was crazy is that this is something I felt from when I was 5 years old.”

For that reason, Howard-Browne says Christians must be careful not to write kids off when it comes to things of the Spirit. As Howard-Browne grew older, God confirmed the evangelistic call on his life to come to America. He found himself crying when the U.S. national anthem was played, even though he had

no ties to the States.

God cultivated the anointing of the Spirit in Howard-Browne's life throughout his childhood. He recalls his parents hosting prayer meetings in his home where people would often fall down under the power of the Holy Spirit.

"I used to lie under the coffee table and play with my little cars while bodies were falling out into a pile," he says. "So people would come to our house for two reasons. Number 1, they want to get delivered or, [number 2], baptized in the Holy Spirit. So I'd be lying there and this 6-foot-4-inch man would be falling down under the power on the carpet."

Howard-Browne's heritage in South Africa goes all the way back to the 1700s. And his Pentecostal roots run deep as well. For instance, his uncle was actually the moderator of the Church of God in Southern Africa.

His family was first part of the Apostolic Faith Movement, which John G. Lake founded, and later joined the Church of God. He remembers when his parents were baptized in the Holy Spirit. His father saw three stars that hit him one by one, representing the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Immediately, Howard-Browne's father began to speak in tongues. His mother also began to speak in tongues, and Howard-Browne's brother counted 13 different languages she spoke in that moment.

"My parents took in addicts, alcoholics—there were always strangers in our house," he says. "Many of those people got saved, delivered and went into full-time ministry. Also, some people would come and sit in the house—because this was in the days before TV—just because of the presence of the Lord."

But growing up in a Pentecostal home didn't mean Howard-Browne has been saved his entire life. As many know, you can't become a Christian by osmosis. The evangelist remembers giving his heart to the Lord at 5 years old. Three years later, he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. But that didn't stop Howard-

Browne and his brother from getting into mischief.

"We got into all the trouble normal kids get into," he says. "My dad would do the water baptism. ... And my dad is baptizing people one night, and we thought he had finished, so we pulled the plug on the baptismal fount outside, so the water was draining. And this lady came right at the end to be baptized and my father put his foot on the plug hole and didn't have enough water to cover her. He was splashing. So we got a spanking for that."

Howard-Browne also recounts getting spankings for eating the communion bread before the deacons could serve it as well as for collecting an unauthorized offering from the church for his 5th birthday.

Thankfully, Howard-Browne and his brother grew out of their mischievous stage. Later on, the evangelist met his now-wife, Adonica, and he knew God wanted them to marry. The two wedded in October 1981 and began ministering.

"Last year, we celebrated 37 years [of marriage]," he tells me. "But I thank God again for her. She's a very, very strong lady, very strong in many ways. ... I could not have done anything today without this lady. She is the most remarkable person. She's not just my wife, but my best friend in the whole world."

God eventually moved the Howard-Brownes to America. At first, they ministered in Louisville, Kentucky, although now they are planted in Tampa, Florida. I recall a revival Howard-Browne was a part of in Lakeland in the early 1990s. Often when he would pray over people, the power of God would touch them and they would begin to laugh uncontrollably. My wife, Joy, and I were both received great ministry at that revival.

But Howard-Browne says the Lakeland revival actually traces back to a revival that broke out in upstate New York 30 years ago while he was preaching one morning.

"I was speaking and the very atmosphere, that room changed, and people began to fall out of their seats and they began to weep, filled with joy," he says. "So what started in April of 1989 began to pick up momentum ... [and] went back to Southern Africa. We had three months of revival and thousands came. So what we saw in Lakeland in 1993 we already saw in South Africa."

Wherever God took that revival, the power of the Spirit touched people and many came to salvation. This world has certainly been blessed with a truly Spirit-led preacher and evangelist like Howard-Browne.

Be sure to listen to my podcast with him below, where he shares many more fascinating stories of revival!