

From Bouncer To Preacher

Stovall Weems, a pastor who once fully embraced the partying lifestyle, now lives to reach the lost and help people passionately pursue God 

Stovall Weems, the pastor of Celebration Church in Jacksonville, Fla., is demonstrating his passion for Christ in word and deed. As a result, he's fueling the fire of not only his congregation but also of those around the world.

Though Weems was not raised in the church, today he and his wife, Kerri, are seeing the church they founded become one of the largest and fastest-growing in America. Weems says he is driven by his passion for the local church and reaching people.

"Different things have driven me at different seasons—but reaching people drives me. I love the unsaved. I like reaching really lost people. We really reach a lot of people out of the party scene," he says.

That scene is something Weems knows about from personal experience. While attending Louisiana State University, he was into the party lifestyle and even became a bouncer at a local bar. Working at a bar, if you're in the party lifestyle "was the place to be," Weems recalls.

However, both as a result of seeds being sown in Weems years earlier at a youth camp and of people praying for him, God saved the party-loving bouncer. His passion turned from being a party animal to a follower of Christ—and leading others to the same grace he'd discovered.

"I didn't know any better than to witness in the barrooms," he

says. And he did so until he felt God telling him to pull completely out of that scene.

In fall 1998, after much prayer and counsel from his church leadership in Baton Rouge, La., Weems, Kerri and their baby daughter moved to Jacksonville to plant a church. Their launch team consisted of seven people. Today Celebration has 10,000 members and includes 27 weekend services spread over 12 regional and international locations. There are 90 extension services, countless missions trips and the church recently established a Dream Center in the inner city. Stovall Weems Ministries broadcasts weekly in 200 countries and can be seen in 90 million homes across the U.S.

Relevant messages of grace and overcoming victory are drawing hungry souls to Celebration where they are ignited to walk in power. But the pastor is quick to give God the glory and to point out that the success he's experienced is the grace and favor of God in action. Weems has witnessed God move in mighty ways in his personal life, ministry and church as a result of fasting and prayer.

These results have fueled his desire to see others walk in passion and fire, motivating him to write *Awakening: A 21-Day Experience That Will Revolutionize Your Walk With God*. Weems and his church corporately participate in a 21-day fast every year.

In *Awakening*, Weems draws on his own experience as well as from others who have fasted and prayed and received dramatic results. The book offers a 21-day plan that guides readers through the principles that maintain an ongoing, new relationship with God.

"I want to help others get a game plan to walk in personal revival," Weems says. "It's time to wake up and put an end to spiritual sluggishness! I promise this year will be the best of your life if it is your best year spiritually."

The Scoop on Stovall

Age: 41

Hometown: New Orleans

Hobbies: Fishing and hunting

Favorite sports team: LSU Tigers

Favorite Scripture: Matthew 6:33