

Spirit-Filled Pastor Provides a Battle Cry for Dead Churches

Note: Although this article is mainly directed toward leaders, we all need to hear what is being said. My hope is that you would share this with Christian leaders in your sphere of influence.

As I recently stated, America's stage 4 cancer is progressing at an alarming rate (you can read the prognosis [here](#)). The warning is dire, and the outcome looks hopeless. The signs of impending death are most evident in our pulpits and our pews:

- Weakness and exhaustion from not obeying God's Word.
- Spiritually asleep, often spending most of the day consuming social media, Netflix or the latest popular TV show.
- Loss of spiritual disciplines: Fasting is old-school; prayer is passé; church is outdated; and holiness is weird.
- Minimal or no appetite for God; difficulty eating or swallowing absolute truth.

But be encouraged—God can heal our land, as well as our families and our churches, if we prepare the soil of our hearts. God heals and restores those who are “contrite and lowly in spirit” (Isa. 57:15, NIV).

Healing Is Costly

As with most things, there is a price to pay; there is a cost, and this cost often begins in the pulpit. Pastor, it may cost you popularity, status and recognition. Prophetic voices are rarely popular, but they are powerful. God uses them to awaken a dead church.

A quote often attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville helps to clarify my point. Even if you've heard it before, you may need to hear it again. In short, de Tocqueville looked throughout America to find where her greatness originated—from her harbors and shorelines to her fertile fields and gold mines—but it was not there. In his words, "It was not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her success. America is great because she is good, and if America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great." The pulpit greatly affects the pew and regulates the spiritual climate of our nation. It's where the battle cry must begin.

Sugar-Coated Preaching Isn't Healthy

I so appreciate pastors. For those who are truly called, it's one of the hardest labors that man has never known. They carry the weight of the world on their shoulders as well as the burden of the Lord in their hearts. However, like addicts on a sugar binge, we have satisfied our carnal nature with candy-coated preaching, and we are paying the price with poor spiritual health. As with diabetes, the symptoms are clear: extreme hunger for the wrong things, unexplained spiritual weight loss, lethargy in seeking God and blurred vision when it comes to biblical truth.

You may have a big church, but Hollywood also has a big audience. You may have tremendous growth, but false religions are also growing exponentially. You may have a huge budget, but the wicked also prosper. Growth can be good and God-given, but it's not the main indicator of spiritual health. It can also be a warning sign that there is cancer in the body.

How are you gauging spiritual success? Is prayer an absolute passion and worship a must? Is there a desire to fast and starve the fleshly appetites that have you in bondage? We must begin with self-examination. Personal revival begins when we stop "doing" and "trying" and turn completely to Christ,

admitting that we cannot do it in our own strength. Without Him we can do nothing (see John 15).

Avoid Travesty by Finding the Balance

The pulpits must be aflame with righteousness again, and leaders must be filled boldly with the Spirit if we are to awaken the spiritually dead. Let me illustrate this with a story from David Ravenhill's book, *Surviving the Anointing*:

Duncan Campbell, a key figure in the New Hebrides revival, had a dream where a large crowd gathered to hear the preaching of the Word. As he got closer, he could hear the Word of God being proclaimed, but he didn't recognize the preacher. After a while it dawned on him that this was no ordinary preacher; this was the devil. Finally the crowd dispersed, and in his dream he went up to the devil and said, "You're the devil, aren't you?"

"Yes I am," he replied.

Duncan Campbell then asked, "Why are you preaching the gospel? Why are you preaching the Word of God?"

And the devil responded, saying, "Duncan Campbell, don't you know that the greatest weapon I have is the preaching of the Word of God without the anointing of the Spirit? You see, the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

The truth is that many are not filled with the boldness of the Spirit but rather with cowardliness and complacency. Ironically, the more time we spend with God, the bolder we become.

Pastors, we need uplifting messages from time to time, but if you're not balancing hope and encouragement with warnings and calls to repentance, you are committing the greatest travesty known to man: leading people straight to their graves without telling them of their need to turn from their sins.

Repent or Change Your Title

Where are the Isaiahs calling the nation to repentance? “Cry aloud, do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isa. 58:1). Even Jesus said to go and preach repentance (Luke 13:3-5).

If you’re not doing this consistently, you are not a pastor, watchman or a steward of the Word of God—you are a motivational speaker. Either repent or change your title. I don’t say that flippantly or judgmentally, but it needs to be said. If we are to be awakened from our spiritual slumber, America needs to hear the voice crying in the wilderness.

My hope is that the Lord will spark another awakening in the pulpit as well as the pew that results in deep repentance, sincere humility, full surrender and passionate, effective prayer. These are the true signs of spiritual health.

What Will It Take?

How many more mass shootings, teen suicides and broken families will it take? How much more deaths by addiction and perverted legislation will we endure? Dire times call for dire measures! God says that if you seek Him with all your heart, you will find Him. Partial obedience doesn’t accomplish anything (see Jer. 29:13). Whenever I read old biographies from John Bunyan, John Wesley, David Brainerd, George Whitefield, Duncan Campbell and the like, I think often of that verse.

I was recently captivated by this account from Wesley: “At about three in the morning, as we were continuing in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy.” Yes, you heard that correctly—3 a.m. They were desperate to experience God. Are you?

Duncan Campbell also writes about a time when they fasted and

prayed in an old barn until well past midnight and the Spirit of God fell in such a profound way that an enormous spiritual awakening occurred and the town was set ablaze with the fire of God. It's not the time of day that ushers in a mighty awakening, it's the priority of seeking God. Sadly, people are so sick spiritually that they won't attend a prayer meeting even at a convenient time of day. We must awaken from our deathlike slumber.

Join me in praying this today: *Oh God, our cry is that you would come down again and rip the heavens open so that even the mountains tremble in Your presence (Isa. 64:1)! And let it start in me.* {eo}

Shane Idleman is the founder and lead pastor of Westside Christian Fellowship in Southern California. More can be found at [www.shaneidleman.com](#), and free downloads of his books are available at [www.shaneidleman.com](#). Visit him on Facebook and subscribe to his podcast.

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.