

Spirit-Filled Pastor: 'We Don't Need Success' in Ministry

"I don't need success," Gary Wilkerson recently told a group of ministers. That is an astounding statement coming from the president of a global multi-million dollar ministry.

Gary was taught a secret by his father, the late David Wilkerson, that many others miss. "My father was a loving, powerful and wonderful father, but also a mentor," Gary recounts. "He really raised up his children to, first of all, know God, not just work for God—but to really know Him in our hearts. And out of that flows the work."

Acts 3 and 4 tell the story of Peter and John, two unschooled fishermen, who were headed to the temple for daily prayer time. They met and healed a widely known man who was lame. This attracted a lot of attention, so they began sharing the Good News of Jesus with the growing crowd. When the learned religious leaders took offense and dragged them before the Sanhedrin to interrogate them, Peter and John gave their testimony. "When they [the religious leaders] saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Knowing God, being with Jesus, is far more important than worldly success. It is our time in the presence of the Lord that empowers us for life and ministry.

As I look at the history of my life, I was impacted tremendously by men like Leonard Ravenhill and David Wilkerson. They contributed so much to formulating who I am and my focus in ministry. I have also been blessed with the friendship of their sons, David Ravenhill and Gary Wilkerson,

who each carry a torch for revival and holiness that was passed down from their fathers.

“It’s easy for us in ministry to get distracted by our ministry and put it ahead of Christ Himself,” Gary explains. “We have to have Christ-centric ministries, with Jesus being exalted and high above everything else.”

We see this in Isaiah 6, where Christ is so exalted that the entire temple is filled with just the hem of His garment! As Jesus is exalted to His rightful position, He is able to touch our hearts and understanding of who we are and who He is. Out of this understanding we cry, like Isaiah, “Woe is me. I’m done. I’m a man of unclean lips, and I live amongst a people of unclean lips.” When we have that vision, that understanding, all striving for worldly success vanishes and our only desire is to glorify Him.

David Ravenhill shares how he learned this humility and dependence in the early days of his ministry due to a fear of speaking.

“God gave me a gift,” he says, “and that gift was absolute dependency on Him. In my own ability, I had absolutely nothing to draw from. My well was dry. So, from the very early days of my ministry, I had to literally draw from God’s grace, God’s strength, God’s enabling. That really is the secret to my entire life.”

David continues: “God, ultimately, will bring us to the end of ourselves until we say, ‘Lord, unless you build this house, we labor in vain. My advice is this:

Dig your own well in God. Have a place you can draw from, so when the going gets tough you know you can go to that place and find refreshing that only comes from the presence of God.”

Tommy Tinney, a modern revivalist, shares the story of Elijah and the widow in 1 Kings 17. Elijah told her to collect as

many empty vessels as she could possibly find, and God filled each one to overflowing with oil! "The more emptiness you can present to God," Tommy says, "the more of His fullness you can receive."

It's what we do behind closed doors when no one else can see that determines the power of God or lack of it in public. It's about what we do on our knees in prayer before the Lord, in surrender to Him, being with Jesus.

Instead of pursuing success, revival, our dreams or anything else, we must pursue God. This posture is where revival will begin. And from this posture, the power of the Holy Spirit will flow from us to impact a hurting world.

Dr. Doug Stringer is founder and president of Somebody Cares America/International. As an American of Asian descent, Doug is considered a bridge-builder of reconciliation amongst various ethnic and religious groups. He is a sought-after international speaker, addressing topics such as persevering leadership, reconciliation, community transformation, revival and more. He is host of A Word in Season with Doug Stringer & Friends, with new programs posted weekly on the Charisma Podcast Network.