

Strength To Deliver

Spiritually, the women of the world are in travail for the revival the church so desperately needs. But they can't give birth to it alone.

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Americans have become keenly aware of the uncertainty of our nation's future. We have faced the shocking reality that neither our commerce nor our strong military can ensure our security. And we have been awakened to the vast extent of turmoil beyond our shores.

The question is: What do we as Christians do in these troubled times?

Steps toward solutions are complex. Yet this we do know: We need a habitation of God's presence to change us and compel us to impact our society with the gospel.

It's not a time for status quo Christian living. The world is desperately searching for answers. And I believe that America in particular will come to her knees and experience revival either by a birthing or a shaking.

I relate the process we're in to that of a troubled pregnancy in which a woman needs strength to deliver a healthy child. It is as Hezekiah once said: "'This is a day of trouble and distress because the children are ready to be born but there's no strength to deliver them'" (see Is. 37:3). We need the Spirit of Christ to empower us!

And not just the women. It's going to take all of us to go from death to life, from tragedy to triumph.

For either a spiritual awakening or a baby's birth several things must be in place. In the natural, for a baby to be born healthy, he or she must grow in a healthy womb. A healthy womb

requires a healthy woman. And that woman needs strength to deliver.

A man is a strength-giver to the woman. Yet for different reasons women have felt vulnerable, forsaken or in some ways devalued. Men have allowed insecurities and fears to hinder them, and this has created problems that have trickled down through society.

When we as men become secure in our identities in Christ, we won't be threatened by the giftings in women. We'll be able to bless and release them to become all that God destined them to be.

Men were designed to guide, protect, encourage and strengthen women. Women were created to be life-givers and nurturers. So if we're going to have a healthy birth and a life-giving, nurturing process for an entire generation, we need to release healthy women to fulfill their destinies. And we need godly men who are secure in Christ to come alongside as strength-givers so that together we'll be a force to be reckoned with.

A BARREN PEOPLE

Jesus was a man who knew how to strengthen and release men and women alike. The woman at the well is a good example.

Without reservation He asked a simple request. Since she was already pouring water, He kindly asked her to give him a drink.

This is strange, the young woman thought. Why is He talking to me? After all, I'm a woman and a Samaritan.

A similar scenario could happen in many nations today. Racial, gender and ethnic issues prohibit interaction between men and women in public settings.

In this case, Jesus crossed the cultural and social lines of the day. He simply responded, "If you knew who is asking this

of you, you would ask Him for living water.” She pressed in to receive not only an answer—but also new life.

Even the disciples marveled at Jesus’ action, knowing He was going against the social mores of the day. But no one could deny that this woman had received the revelation of Jesus, the Messiah. She was affirmed and empowered to proclaim the Good News to those around her.

Like the Samaritan woman, many today need affirmation. An emotional or spiritual barrenness has stripped away the attributes God has deposited in women.

In America, I attribute some of this loss to the values my generation—people born from the end of World War II to about 1964 (the baby boomers)—embraced. We promoted a philosophy summarized by the phrase “If it feels good, do it.”

We didn’t think we were hurting anyone. But I believe the issues we face in America are at least in part the result of our selfish attitude and our misuse of freedom.

Lack of character and commitment has its consequences. We birthed an unhealthy child—an unhealthy generation. We produced a women’s liberation movement, legalized abortion, removal of prayer from schools, higher divorce rates and single-parent homes. In many instances we left women both to mother and to father their children.

What should have been an era of godly liberation instead became an age of identity crisis. What we hoped would bring freedom brought more bondage.

It also created a physical barrenness in the generation born between the baby boomers and Generation X that parallels the emotional or spiritual one. This generation is marrying later in life, establishing careers first and families second. Women are approaching their 30s and 40s without bearing children.

The men fear commitment, and their reaction to the women's movement was to step aside. Self-absorbed and independent, they make decisions based on criteria other than core family values.

We are as desperate for God to fill our empty womb as Hannah was for Him to fill hers (see 1 Sam. 1:11). A barren woman who greatly desired a son, Hannah regularly poured out her heart to God at the altar, reminding Him of her affliction.

On one occasion when she was travailing in the house of the Lord, Eli the prophet came and brought a word of encouragement. As a result, Hannah was filled with hope. She clung to the promise of the Lord that she would have a child.

In due time, the promise was fulfilled. When God answered the cry of her heart, Hannah gave birth to a new generation of prophets through her son, Samuel—a generation who would prepare the way for the coming of the Lord (see vv. 19-20).

PREPARE TO GIVE BIRTH

We need our hope restored today as Hannah's was when the prophet Eli asked God to grant her petition (see vv. 17-18). Our world needs a birthing of Resurrection life that will lead to revival and a harvest of thousands upon thousands of souls.

The good news is that we're on the verge of birth pangs. Large gatherings of believers such as the Global Celebration of Women held in Houston last year to equip and empower women and The Call, a fasting and prayer rally that drew tens of thousands of young people to New York in June, indicate that travail has nearly begun.

As in Hannah's case, pain and travail will give birth to life. The Lord wants a healthy birth. He will give strength to deliver.

Something is getting ready to happen, and we need to push—to pray for the release of a generation living on the edge for

Christ: men, women and children, together becoming all God wants them to be.

We need the passion and zeal of the young; the life-giving, nurturing nature of women; and the strong, protective and empowering nature of men. To give birth to the revival, we need to combine the gifts and strengths of the whole army of God.

It's time for us to rise up with the radical determination and conviction of Joan of Arc. She was an inexperienced warrior whose enthusiasm inspired the entire French army—something no king had been able to do.

In a time of battle she approached the general of the army, stating emphatically, "I'm going to lead the men over the wall."

"Honey," the general replied, "there isn't one man who is going to follow you over the wall."

With her eyes fixed like flint, Joan replied: "I wouldn't know. I don't plan on looking back to check." She took off over the wall, and every one of the men followed her. Her courageous example delivered her country.

Later, when Joan, at age 19, was about to be burned at the stake, she was given one last chance to deny her convictions. Her reply challenges you and me today.

"Every man gives his life for what he believes. Every woman gives her life for what she people believe in little or nothing, and yet they give their lives for that little or nothing.

"One life is all we have, and we live it and then it's gone. But to surrender what you are to a life without belief is more terrible than dying, even more terrible than dying young.

"But there is a worse fate than living without belief. It is

to live without a firm commitment to that which, at the end of life, at the portals of eternity, turns out to have betrayed you.”

Birthing revival will require Joan’s kind of heroism and radical commitment in the hearts of those who bear the gospel of good news today!

We can move to the next level of awakening across this nation. We can birth a revival that transcends our generational, racial and gender differences—but we will need healthy, courageous men and women to bring it to fruition. And we must be willing to experience the necessary labor pains. The Lord has to do a work in us to accomplish a work *through* us.

Women, don’t let the hurts, injustices and stresses of the past hinder you. Move beyond them into your security in Christ. Men, likewise be secure in who you are in Christ.

Just as Jesus approached the Samaritan woman at the well, He’s approaching you and me today. Whatever challenges, barriers or limitations have been placed on us in the past, it’s time to let the Lord heal us.

He’s not ashamed to call you His child. He’s not embarrassed by who you are. He created you in His image. Release your past, and run with the vision God has placed on your heart. He has a purpose for your life.

If we allow Him to change our hearts, a healthy birth will follow. And after the baby is born, we’ll forget the pain, the sorrow and the challenges. We’ll rejoice in what the Lord has done (see John 16:20-22).

It’s time for a leaping of joy in the womb. Let’s grab hold of the promises of God so that the spiritual baby of the church will leap for joy. First Timothy 2:15 (NKJV) gives a promise to encourage us. The Bible tells us that a woman will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love and holiness

with self-control. It takes all of us doing what is honorable in the sight of the Lord.

For things to work according to God's order and for us to fulfill God's purposes we must reflect His character. The body of Christ must walk in faith, love, holiness and self-control. The proper order will position us to birth both personal and corporate renewal.

Furthermore, the change in us will affect others. Identifying the strengths of each generation and each gender, we'll become what I term *GenEdge*—a generation living on the edge for Christ. Functioning in God's design and order, we'll all benefit as we benefit His kingdom.

It's time for me, and it's time for you. Get ready to birth a lasting revival that will change our world. As a man of God I come to you with a word of encouragement—the same one the prophet Eli proclaimed to Hannah: “Go in peace and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him” (1 Sam. 1:17). Fulfill your destiny and be part of the beautiful birth of a prophetic generation.

Doug Stringer is the founder of *Turning Point Ministries International* and *Somebody Cares America*. He is an international conference speaker and author. From one-on-one ministry to crusades of thousands, Stringer is a revivalist at heart.