

Megachurch Pastor Has Supernatural Encounter With Jesus That Disrupts His Ministry and Changes Everything

Stovall Weems, Pastor of Celebration Church in Jacksonville, Florida, clearly remembers the night that disrupted his life and altered the way he thinks about ministry forever. It was 2018—on the night Passover lined up with Good Friday. Paul Wilbur was on stage, leading the Seder service.

“I was pretty tired and not feeling very spiritual when Paul called me up.” The megachurch pastor admits.

Paul was reading in Hebrew, and Stovall recalls getting very sleepy and then experiencing a really heavy feeling. “Weighty.” He describes it.

As Paul blessed the bread in Hebrew, his voice changed.

Stovall explains, “It was another voice; it started out like Paul’s but went from mono to surround sound to penetrating. It was alive! I’m thinking, *That’s not Paul’s voice.*”

He knew something supernatural was happening. The voice kept reverberating in him. Suddenly the pastor recognized an overwhelming, terrifying yet loving presence: the personality of the Son. He’d had powerful Holy Spirit experiences before, but never anything like this. “Jesus is here!” he exclaimed.

Turning, He saw Jesus standing on their stage looking out into their congregation. “I know what that means when you say something like that.” Stovall admits with all seriousness.

“The next thing, I know is I’m in another place. I know I’m on the stage at my church...” He struggles to put a language around his experience, “It’s like the heavens were opened. Like my realm was pulled back and I was in the other realm—even though I was standing on our stage!”

You’d have to understand who Pastor Stovall was prior to that night. He describes himself as “the American Megachurch—It’s all about growth and reaching people-pastor.”

He recognizes, “Of course you want your church to grow, and you want to reach people. And there’s a whole lot of good happening in that world. However, so much is filtered around what is the most convenient thing for lost people and people in general on a Sunday. Anything that doesn’t fit into the context of making it comfortable for lost people—it’s not in your thinking.” But all of that was about to change for the Weems and Celebration Church.

At the beginning of 2018, as he and Kerri were getting ready to lead their congregation into their yearly Awakening Event that includes 21 days of fasting and prayer, Stovall says, “The Lord just apprehended me.”

He gets physically overcome with emotion, “It was ... it was a loving—a loving but a very sobering apprehension—like a warning.” He continues, “The Lord said I needed to follow Him really closely, He said I was going to hear His voice, and something was going to happen, and I needed to lock in. So I did.”

The church entered the season of fasting and prayer, and the Lord began to ask him to do things that his training and thinking told him should not be done on Sunday mornings. They were simple things. The turning point of one of these things was on a Sunday morning amid a packed house. Stovall recalls the Lord saying, “There are people in here contemplating suicide, and I want you to call them down front. Don’t let

people leave without calling them down front.”

He instantly went into church growth—the right environment for the right thing—mode, “This is not the right environment for that. What if this is a wife, and she’s with her husband and gets up in front of thousands of people and that’s embarrassing and that could cause shame. It’s not the right environment.”

Stovall says he will never forget what the Lord asked him. “Whose environment is this?”

“It was really humbling.” He called for anyone struggling with depression and suicide to come up front so they could be set free. No one moved. *Great!* Stovall, thought, *I’ve made God look bad, and I look like a flake.* And then all of a sudden, a girl way in the back at the top of the building moved and made her way down. When she got to the floor, 200 people got up and joined her at the altar for those with suicidal thoughts.

“I’m looking at people who’ve been coming to my church for years, thinking, *This is what’s really going on under the hood? I’m sending people home thinking they heard a good message, and this was what was really going on!*”

Stovall explains what the Lord was doing in him was a death to self-preservation.

And then about three weeks prior to Passover, the Lord told him to build Him an altar.

“We have an altar,” Stovall responded, talking about the stage and altar area. “Build Me *an altar.*” The Lord said again. So they created a sacred space and built an altar for the Lord.

At Passover, Stovall found himself in *another* realm, although he was standing on the stage at Celebration church. His first thought was that he’d traveled back in time. “I can’t see, but I can feel the disciples, and I can feel all the emotions. I’m

thinking I'm at the Last Supper and Jesus is about to go to the cross."

But then his sight cleared, and he realized he was in a whole other place, a heavenly realm with a white table in a garden courtyard set halfway up the side of a mountain. After much counsel and study, he concluded he visited Mt. Zion, described in Hebrews 12.

Jesus was at the table ministering Passover to a heavenly congregation; Stovall could see his own people in the mix. He could sense the heavenly host and counsel. Suddenly he was aware of a powerful presence coming down the mountain behind him. A terrifying being. "I knew not to turn around. Do not turn around," he says emphatically.

He recalls standing at the table next to Jesus and being overcome with the feeling of belonging there.

"I've always known Jesus as my God, my Savior, my Lord and Master. I'm his servant. But when you're with Jesus ... this is indescribable how this happens—He treats you as an equal. I'm not His equal. We're not His equals. Yet, He felt like a big brother. That's why I understand now, the church of the firstborn. I couldn't have felt more loved. More accepted."

He continues, " You feel like you want to collapse at the terror of the awesomeness of the being that Paul speaks about; at the same time, you've never felt more alive."

He noted the commanding presence of Jesus. He also found he couldn't control the urge to continually bow before Him.

"He's ready for the fourth cup. He's calling His bride. He's coming." Sincerity and conviction resonate in his voice. "The kingdom is coming, and everything that's not kingdom will be shaken out. Every system. Every doctrine. He's going to shake the systems of the world out of the church. "

He continues in seriousness, "The system is going to be judged. I was this person preencounter. By the world's system, by American success, our church was doing great (with nearly 12,000 people spread over 21 campuses globally). If you have numbers, that's not kingdom authority—that's corporate authority. Kingdom authority has to do with obedience, especially in the area of what is less visible."

Pastor Stovall admits the encounter has been disruptive and has changed everything. He says the Lord has taught him a lot about humility and interdependence. He's sought a lot of clarity. One of the things that disturbed him the most was why God chose to reveal Himself to him, and after nine months of consistent prayer, the Lord finally answered, "I choose whom I choose."

"I felt totally liberated." He laughs, "Okay, yeah, so I probably was the 10 millionth worse choice, but He chose me anyway. He's no respecter of persons. We all have different assignments. If anyone boasts. He has to boast in the Lord."

While the encounter has brought many changes, those changes have brought multiple healings in his church in physical forms and in marriages, and it's prepared his church to not only survive the pandemic but thrive.

"The Lord showed me shakings were going to come and about returning to Jesus as our first love. About 19 months ago, He spoke to me about a structure for the church in case we couldn't meet in large buildings. Our plan was to set up the Lord's congregation in such a way that it would thrive above ground or underground." They were set to launch in January 2021—however, the pandemic hit, and they put it in hyperdrive and are ministering very effectively.

Since then, all facets of the Weemses' ministry focus on empowering the priesthood of the believer, equipping the home and teaching people to demonstrate loyalty to Jesus by imaging

God and bearing his name. They focus on honoring the Sabbath, and families begin by starting it around the table together on Friday nights.

In fact, 7,000 homes of brothers and sisters meet together every Friday praying together. Listen to *more* of Pastor Stovall Weems' on *Faith Works* podcast [here](#).

Stovall and Kerri Weems founded *Celebration Church in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1998. Since then, Celebration has grown to include local, regional and international church locations. Stovall is the author of Awakening: A New Approach to Faith, Fasting and Spiritual Freedom and The God-First Life: Uncomplicate Your Life.*

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