

We Need More Men of God Like Leonard Ravenhill

We continue our study of some of the greatest Christian lives with one from more recent times, Leonard Ravenhill. I was privileged to get to know him in his final years, and I count him as one of the great Christians I have known.

Leonard Ravenhill

Ravenhill, as he is respectfully called by historians, journalists and friends, was born in Leeds, Yorkshire, England on June 18, 1907. He emerged as a powerful evangelist during World War II, drawing large crowds and turning multitudes to Christ during some of the darkest times the earth had yet endured.

A remarkable, and possibly the most important, characteristic of those converted in Ravenhill's campaigns was the high percentage who went into Christian ministry or missions. This remained a hallmark of Ravenhill's ministry to the end of his life. Whether in large crowds or small prayer meetings, those who heard Ravenhill preach were compelled not just to believe in Christ, but to serve Him.

Ravenhill's books became almost instant classics, helping him become one of the powerful prophetic voices of his times. His all-time best-seller, *Why Revival Tarries*, practically became essential reading for serious Christians, and it continues to be one of the more high-impact books written in the 20th century.

Ravenhill moved to the U.S. in 1950, and he traveled around America through the 1960s holding tent revivals. His uncompromising message of the cross and devotion to walking in holiness became a strong anchor to many emerging movements, and his influence was broad. It is obvious the way that he and

his good friend, A.W. Tozer, influenced each other, and together they carried an important message for their time and ours.

Ravenhill moved to Lindale, Texas in the 1980s, where his extensive influence continued, especially in mentoring present and future Christian leaders, such as Keith Green, Ravi Zacharias, Steve Hill, Michael L. Brown, Charles Stanley, Bill Gothard and David Wilkerson.

I met Leonard Ravenhill in late 1987 when speaking at a conference in Palestine, Texas. He came in with an entourage while I was speaking. I could tell by the response of the audience that he was someone of importance, but what really got my attention was when the voice of the Lord announced to me who had just entered. He said that this was a modern Simeon who had waited long and prayed much for the consolation of God in his times, and that he had been given the honor of beholding and prophesying over the last-day ministry in its infancy.

When I finished speaking and went to meet him, still not knowing his name, I shared with him what I had been told when he entered. We became friends, and I treasured the letters I used to get from Ravenhill. I enjoyed being able to sit with him in his home where there always seemed to be remarkable Christians gathered to hear his wisdom.

I introduced Ravenhill to Mike Bickle and Bob Jones, who immediately asked him to come to Kansas City to speak. That was the first time I had seen Leonard speak to a large audience, and I was amazed to see so many peel out of their chairs and fall on their faces before the Lord. He was immediately adopted by everyone there as their father.

When Mike wanted to introduce Leonard to John Wimber, the leader of the Vineyard Movement, I was skeptical because these two were so different. I was amazed at how fast John and

Leonard bonded at their first meeting. I was even more amazed when John asked Leonard to share at the Anaheim Vineyard. Then John decided to host him at a special Holiness Conference, and I knew I had to be there to witness it.

Again, Leonard had hardly begun to speak when people started to fall on their faces before the Lord. Soon there were more on the floor than in the seats, and the groans of repentance began to drown out Leonard's frail voice. Leonard was a brilliant preacher, but it was not his words that were causing this response, rather the Holy Spirit moving in conviction. People were getting free of old yokes, and a love and devotion to the Lord and His cross came upon them.

As I watched, I felt that I was beholding the perfect marriage between grace (the Vineyard Movement) and truth (the Holiness Movement). These two really needed each other, and they had met and kissed. It was an important sign of what the last-day ministry is going to look like.

Leonard Ravenhill passed on Nov. 27, 1994. When I ponder those I've been privileged to know who ran well and finished well, I think of him first. The following are a few quotes from this great messenger to the church and a list of books, as listed on Wikipedia.

Some of Leonard Ravenhill's wisdom:

- *The only reason we don't have revival is because we are willing to live without it!*
- *Today's church wants to be raptured from responsibility.*
- *If weak in prayer, we are weak everywhere.*
- *Men give advice; God gives guidance.*
- *Are the things you are living for worth Christ dying for?*
- *A sinning man stops praying, a praying man stops sinning.*

- God pity us that after years of writing, using mountains of paper and rivers of ink, exhausting flashy terminology about the biggest revival meetings in history, we are still faced with gross corruption in every nation, as well as with the most prayerless church age since Pentecost.
- The church used to be a lifeboat rescuing the perishing. Now she is a cruise ship recruiting the promising.
- The opportunity of a lifetime must be seized within the lifetime of the opportunity.
- My main ambition in life is to be on the devil's most wanted list.
- If Jesus had preached the same message that ministers preach today, He would never have been crucified.
- Entertainment is the devil's substitute for joy.

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