

God's Fire Starter

With help from a radical band of teen-age prayer warriors, California minister Lou Engle is calling the United States back to God.

PLUS: Igniting God's Fire in the Cold Northeast

History belongs to the intercessors," says Lou Engle from his small office at Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena, California. "I believe that there are spiritual powers contending for the soul of our nation and that all the false ideologies that affect our nation spring from the powers of darkness."

Engle, a co-founder of Harvest Rock, and a pastor and ministry-team member of the church, is describing a spiritual bleakness hanging over the United States that he believes parallels ancient Israel's darkest periods of apostasy.

His caveat for this, however—lest the body of Christ be persuaded to fold its hands and do nothing to change course—is The Call, a youthful generation of intercessors united for action by Engle's impassioned plea for them to step up and follow God with zealous devotion to change their world.

"It has gotten into my heart that God would raise generation who are burning like John the Baptist, a generation who are totally separated to God," he says. "John the Baptist was the one who had the spirit of Elijah upon him. And the Lord said [in Mal. 4:5-6] he'd come and restore the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers—that in the last days, the spirit of Elijah would come on a people who are going to prepare the way for the end-time return of Jesus Christ."

Engle, 49, burns with his own fire that causes him physically to rock back and forth incessantly when he is captured by his vision and to spend much of his life in both silent and booming prayer. It is a fire that has branded him the prophet of the worldwide movement of youth who have heard his call and attend massive prayer gatherings where they engage in extended periods of fasting and intercession for current affairs.

For Engle, today's youth are the carriers of the end-times "spirit of Elijah" that Malachi spoke of. For the generation of youth who have rallied around him, Engle is their John the Baptist. He is on fire, and his passion is contagious.

Igniting a Fire

Engle's vision for The Call first materialized on September 2 last year. Through his Elijah Revolution ministry, he helped organize The Call D.C., a gathering in the nation's capital that drew 400,000 fasting youth to the Washington Mall for an intense prayer meeting.

Among other things, young people interceded for the U.S. Supreme Court. A ruling by the justices some three months later on December 12 cleared the way for George W. Bush to claim the White House. Engle called The Call D.C. "an initial breakthrough."

"I believe The Call D.C. was part of a shift in the heavens and that God has thrown a window open," he says. "We have entered a season of time in a massive [spiritual] war. It's Pearl Harbor. It's Nazirites or Nazism. We are in a war, and if we don't win, we lose everything."

He points out that during eras of spiritual recession in ancient Israel God raised up some of the country's greatest leaders—Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist—all “Nazirites,” or followers of the Hebrew religious order marked by its zealous consecration to God.

Engle believes large groups of Christian “Nazirite youth,” fasting and praying fervently, have the power to dispel such demonic ideologies as New Age mysticism and humanism. His ministry, particularly its prophetic focus, is based on the biblical position that sacred, praying assemblies are called by God during turning points in history. As basis for this, he points to biblical passages such as Joel 2:15, Esther 4 and Jehoshaphat's assembly and fast of 2 Chronicles 20.

God rewards such gatherings, he says, by giving Christians power to “retap, revive and renew” the spiritual manifestations of past generations of godly men and women, thus causing the work of the Holy Spirit from those generations to be continued and revivals to break out again. This occurs, he says, because “the hearts of the children are turned back” to their spiritual forefathers.

It's a process he calls “redigging the wells of revival,” one that he details in his book, *Digging the Wells of Revival* (Destiny Image). It is based partly on a passage from the Old Testament book of Isaiah.

“Out of the roots of Jesse, a shoot will spring forth,” Engle says, referring to Isaiah 11:1. “God remembers the root. No roots no shoots. We can pray all we want for revival, but unless we get the hearts and the prayers and fasting of our forefathers back into it, there will be no fire at the altar.”

Engle last February first preached on redigging the wells of revival at Harvard and closing the doors on the false ideologies that had entered the country through New England. The day after he did, he received a call from his friend Sen. Sam Brownback, a Kansas Republican.

“The first words out of his mouth were, ‘Lou, you need to redig the wells at Harvard and close the doors to false ideologies.’ That sealed the deal for me for New England. I know that New England is the root. If we lose the root, we lose everything. If we can get to the root we can begin to move.”

On September 22 of this year, The Call continued with a gathering in New England in which 50,000 people filled City Hall Plaza in Boston. They petitioned God to shift the ideologies of witchcraft and the Gothic subculture and to affect the humanism that came to Boston by way of the French Age of Enlightenment philosophers Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire (see related story on page 48).

New Englanders and others united in prayer, seeking to bring back into bloom the shoots from the spiritual roots planted by Colonial preacher Jonathan Edwards of Massachusetts during The Great Awakening (circa 1735-1745).

“I don’t believe the church understands the theology of gathering,” Engle observes. “We come together for festivals, for music, for parties, but we don’t understand that in massive fasts and gatherings whole shifts in the heavens can take place. We need a theology of gathering so that faith can be born in the hearts of the people.”

Though he is quick to define Scripture as “God’s final authority” for any such theology, Engle notes that ancient Israel was also led by a pillar of fire at night. His own “pillar of fire” is a pair of dreams he has had about The Call.

The first dream occurred in 1996 and led him to institute Call events. A boy named Joel was standing with two leaders of Rock the Nations—a ministry he helped start in 1994—and Engle was trying to give the boy a letter. Engle had lost the letter. He awoke to hear God’s Spirit telling him not to “drop” Joel’s letter.

“Joel 2 wasn’t a ‘good idea’—it was a command to the whole nation,” Engle says. “The Call is not just a ‘good idea.’ God spoke it into existence.”

The second dream came a few weeks after The Call D.C. In it, he was playing tennis with fellow prayer warrior Cindy Jacobs, founder of Generals of Intercession in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She was mentoring four or five people on the sidelines who were striving to improve their game.

One had succeeded, making an impact on the court, but the others were in a state of expectancy. Engle says that in the dream he was brought to weeping, and Jacobs embraced him as a son, affirming his travail. He believes the tennis court represented the American judicial system, the first man breaking through was The Call D.C., and the others on the sidelines were future Call events.

“I know that God [was] speaking something very deeply to me about my vocation, saying, ‘This is what you are about,’”

Engle says. "I asked God, 'What are you saying?' The Lord spoke to me very clearly, saying no one is targeting false ideologies with united, massive, fasting and prayer."

Becoming a History-Maker

It's a Thursday afternoon, and on the second floor of the Zwemer Building at Harvest Rock Church, 16 people gather around a huge table draped with a sky-blue cloth for a Call board meeting. This planning session for future Call events is led by Ché Ahn, the Korean-born senior pastor of the Pasadena church, a congregation known for revival outbreaks during the last several years.

The Call operates as a nonprofit corporation separate from the church, and Ahn is its president. He also is The Call's apostolic architect. Last year he gave legs to the body of administrative muscle that raised the \$1.5 million and handled the logistics that put some 400,000 youth on the Mall in Washington.

The two men have been close friends for 18 years.

"Lou's calling is as a prophet, mine is as an apostle," Ahn says. "I want to see him be all that God wants him to be. The lesson here is that there is no limit to what any of us can do for God as long as we're not worried about who gets the credit."

In structure, The Call is analogous with the large crusades pioneered by evangelist Billy Graham and healing evangelist Benny Hinn. Churches in the area help organize, provide manpower for and partly fund the events.

Talk at the meeting turns to such mundane subjects as portable toilets, Jumbo Tron screens and Web promotions. Ahn gives direction and focus to the discussion, seeming always to ask the right question of the right person. Engle sits huddled within himself, praying and excitedly rocking, the constant back and forth an apparent spiritual pump, priming his soul for revelation.

When the board's discussion gets bogged down on follow-up procedures and someone suggests the dates be moved back, Engle gets up, paces, then abruptly speaks, recasting the vision across the group like a net thrown to contain their straying earthly thoughts.

"I know we need to carry forth follow-up, but The Call is something like Woodstock in the '60s that captured a nation," he says. "If we go out and find that kairos ["God ordained"] moment, the fruit will remain."

In the moment, his declaration seems to come from a mountaintop, and it rings with prophetic clarity, holding the meeting on course. It was Lou Engle the prophet speaking, and all came to attention when he did.

A Humble Prophet

Knowing, however, where Lou Engle the prophet stops and Lou Engle the man starts is difficult. To get him to talk about himself requires effort. Not that he is evasive—his entire being just seems to gravitate away from himself and toward his vision.

Raised in Upland, California, where his father, Gordon, pastored a Brethren in Christ congregation, Engle is a seventh-generation pastor. The first-Jacob-traveled to America aboard a ship in the 1700s and founded the Brethren in Christ denomination.

Engle became a Christian in 1976 near the end of the Jesus Movement and attended Ashland Theological Seminary in Ashland, Ohio. After making a covenant with God to seek the Pentecostal empowerment of Acts 2, he left.

He met Therese, his wife, in a church in Maryland, and the two soon married. He mowed lawns for five years, led a home fellowship group in Silver Spring, Maryland, and in 1984 accepted Ahn's invitation to come to California to help plant a church.

Having no immediate success, he held rallies that few attended. He once became so disillusioned with his lack of success in ministry that he took six weeks off. During that time, he said, God gave him the vision of writing his now-popular *Digging the Wells of Revival*. In April 1994 Ahn and Engle planted Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena.

Pastor John Arnott, whose Toronto (Canada) Airport Christian Fellowship had undergone a Spirit-filled revival beginning in January 1994, spoke at Harvest Rock Church the next January. The congregation Ahn and Engle had planted underwent its own revival—with one outcome: Engle's 24-hour prayer ministry at the church.

Engle was deeply affected by Bible teacher Derek Prince's book *Shaping History Through Prayer and Fasting* and became part of

a large prayer movement. He spent hours each week praying at his church and in organized groups, including one that meets at First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood.

He began leading people on prayer walks to such Los Angeles “revival wells” as the Bonnie Brae House, a small restored home where prayer and fasting that preceded the Azusa Revival was held. And he took part in an intercessors’ prayer walk of the 500-mile El Camino Real (“Highway of the Kings”) from San Diego to San Francisco, retracing the steps of historical Spanish missionaries who founded a string of missions.

Digging for Revival

Today, Lou and Therese Engle and their children, Christy Joy, 16; Jesse, 13; Josiah, 12; Jonathan, 9; Glory, 6; and Jacob, 4, live across the street from the church. The couple was expecting their seventh child in November.

Oldest son Jesse has declared himself a Nazirite and for The Call D.C. gave up baseball, television and computer games and fasted for 40 days. As the probable eighth-generation preacher of the family, Jesse often takes the microphone at gatherings and with an emotional plea that typifies his generation pours out the call to become a Nazirite.

Lou Engle describes his own relationship with fasting as one of “love and hate.” He once joked with a gathering of youth: “You can’t lose with fasting. I’ve broken more fasts than all of you put together. I live a fasted the doughnuts show up.”

Despite the humor, Engle’s ministry has an aura of divine

purpose and historical significance. His theology of massive prayer meetings to redig wells of revival and positively affect a nation's future may sound odd to the modern ear.

Yet his vision of an Elijah Revolution may be just that. The grassroots momentum needed to make the revolution happen is building.

Call gatherings are being planned for New York City; Hollywood, California; and Dallas. Internationally, Call Manila was scheduled for November 22 in the Philippines capital, and future Call events are being planned for Brazil and England.

The Call New York, planned for June 22, 2002, intends to redig the wells of revival both of Charles Finney (1792-1875), who led hundreds of thousands to Christ, and Jeremiah Lanphier, whose noon prayer meetings in New York City in 1857 resulted in cities across the country shutting down at noon for prayer.

Praying youth will petition God to shift the ideology manifested in 1962 in nearby New Hyde Park when a lawsuit by parents against the local school board became the Engel vs. Vitale Supreme Court case that, along with the Madalyn Murray O'Hair case the following year, removed prayer from public schools.

The Call Hollywood, also planned for 2002, will seek to redig the wells of revival that flowed when Aimee Semple McPherson, founder of the Foursquare denomination, led prayers that healed hundreds at Angelus Temple in the 1930s, and when Henrietta Mears' ministry at First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood touched Billy Graham and Campus Crusade for Christ

founder Bill Bright in the 1940s.

Planners hope as well that the Hollywood Call will retap the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, the first of the 20th century's revival wells and the one credited with launching the modern Pentecostal movement. The Hollywood Call will direct prayer at the false ideologies propagated by the film and TV industries.

For 2003, organizers hope to hold a Call in Dallas—40 years after President Kennedy was assassinated in the city and 30 years after the infamous Texas case that became the Supreme Court's Roe vs. Wade decision, which allowed abortion on demand.

Though Engle paints a bleak picture of the United States' apostasy, he believes there is hope for the nation.

Overwhelmed during a dream about the impossibility of seeing America turn to God, he says the words of Luke 1:11-17 were "downloaded into my spirit." In the verse, an angel tells Zacharias that his soon-to-be-born son, John the Baptist, would fulfill the prophecy of Malachi, carry the mantle of Elijah and "make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

"I felt God telling me that what He is pouring out is greater than the rebellion taking place. The Bible says there is hope for a tree even when it's been cut down and at the very scent of water, shoots will spring forth.

"America is a nation that has been cut down, but there are godly roots under ground, and at the very scent of revival, these new generational shoots will come forth. I am convinced

that this can be the dawn of another Great Awakening.”

Ed Donnally is a former newspaper reporter and a free-lance writer based in Los Angeles.

Igniting God's Fire in the Cold Northeast

Days after the Pentagon and World Trade Center attacks, thousands gathered in Boston to pray for a new spiritual life in America.

America's "Cradle of Liberty" became a sanctuary of intercession September 22 when Christians nationwide gathered in Boston to beseech God for mercy and preservation of the country. Just 11 days before, terrorist attacks had crippled New York and Washington and propelled the United States into a season of tears, heroism and war.

Ignoring national alerts by Attorney General John Ashcroft that further terrorist actions could be forthcoming, 50,000 intercessors rallied for The Call New England, a "solemn assembly" of prayer organized by Lou Engle, associate pastor of Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena, California, and founder of the Elijah Revolution ministry.

"We felt such a battle over this thing," Engle told Charisma. "With the threats of the terrorists, then the lightnings and thunderings and rain [the night before], some called us and said they're not coming. But the young ones defied the orders of the powers of darkness. I felt there were massive breakthroughs in New England."

Christians across the country joined New Englanders at the Boston Government Center to offer prayers and sermons in a united plea for a "Third Great Awakening." They asked God to recapture the heart of the nation for Christ and grant America mercy. Even the stoic officers of the Boston Police Department nodded in silent agreement to the many prayers for neighboring New York City.

Shaleem Brethen, a 21-year-old medical technician from Los Angeles, flew from California to join the assembly.

"With all the things the Lord has been showing me, I really felt like the Lord's going to begin to move strongly on the East Coast," she said. "And if the Lord's starting His fire here, I want to get my torch lit and take it back. I have confidence that every prayer was answered."

Dutch Sheets, senior pastor of Springs Harvest Fellowship in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and a co-organizer of the event, said he had been interceding for New England for years.

"I knew the Northeast was a war zone spiritually," he said. "Now that things have happened as they have, it makes more sense."

He says the spiritual battle for New England shows its strategic importance to revival in America.

"God showed me it's the womb of the nation—the birthplace. If you don't get breakthrough in New England, then you won't get breakthrough in the rest of the nation."

Engle said that earlier this year he had been planning a Call event for Hollywood, California, but the Holy Spirit turned his attention to Boston. In March he joined fellow intercessory prayer leaders Sheets; Cindy Jacobs, president and co-founder of Colorado Springs-based Generals of Intercession; and Chuck Pierce, president of Glory of Zion International Ministries in Denton, Texas, for a prayer conference in Colorado Springs. According to Sheets, the Holy Spirit moved upon them all with a conviction to focus their efforts on New England and the Northeast.

The Call New England's cry for spiritual revolution dramatically parallels historic events that occurred 233 years before. On September 22, 1768, Colonial patriots John Hancock, James Otis and Samuel Adams opened a similar gathering in prayer at Faneuil Hall, the landmark at Boston's Government Center known as the "Cradle of Liberty." Protesting the threat posed by increased British troops in Boston, representatives from 96 towns enacted radical measures at the gathering that eventually led to revolution.

Prophetic insight shared in May through a network called the Elijah List stated: "Boston, your 'Cradle of Liberty' is going to rock again with the glory of God. There's a second birth coming into your will rock America. This birth out with a New England from the dead."

Since the terrorist actions of September 11, prayer meetings with an emphasis similar to The Call New England's have sprung up across the country in churches, workplaces and stadiums. For most Americans, priorities have shifted.

"I think what has happened has ultimately created a sense of thankfulness in our nation that goes beyond material things,"

Cindy Jacobs said. "We have had a focus on material things.
But now the main thing has become the main thing."

-Jon Hamill