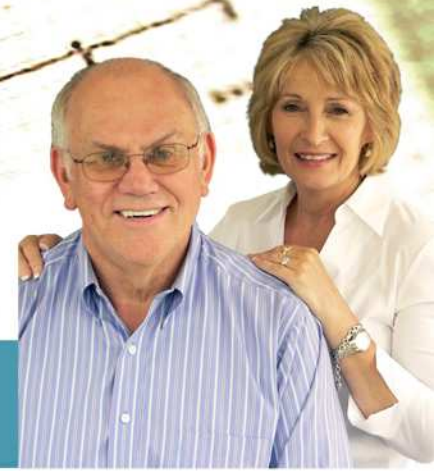




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N E W S L E T T E R
for the cluster of tony & marilyn fitzgerald

AUG 29
2008

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letter from
tony
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peter wagner
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a statement
and appeal
from
dutch sheets

DATES

USA Leaders
Nov 14 & 15
Latham, NY

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In response to many questions I have received and discussions I have been a part of, I have sensed the need to write to the leaders within our cluster concerning recent sadness that has occurred in the Body of Christ both here in the USA and Australia.

I'm writing this, not in any way to judge those involved or expose weaknesses but to lay a platform for us to discuss bigger issues that result from these happenings.

Todd Bentley/Lakeland

It was on May 11 that Marilyn and I, along with others, visited what was being referred to as the "Lakeland Revival". Prior to this we had heard little, although were familiar with Todd Bentley, and had heard some reports of what was happening.

That night left me with some questions and also some encouragement especially in the area of pressing in to see more healed. Following this, wherever I have been in the world, I have been asked my opinion of what was happening in Lakeland. My response has continually been to honor what God was doing while acknowledging that the treasure was in an earthen vessel.

I realize as a group of leaders we had a wide range of opinion and conviction on what was going on. It is always a difficult thing to distinguish in one's heart what is discernment and what is judgment so my encouragement was for you to hear from God and believe your discernment but not carry a judgmental or critical spirit. It is sometimes difficult to sense something in your heart that is against the flow of public opinion without questioning whether you are jealous or critical or is it truly a check in the spirit.

I know we were all encouraged when Todd submitted himself to accountability and we believe that alignment will help him in his restoration.

Following my letter you can read a progression of e-mails I have received from Peter Wagner and Chuck Pierce. I have also attached a letter sent out by Dutch Sheets.



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INTERNATIONAL

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[...CONTINUED]



Michael Guglielmucci/Australia

These comments are more relevant of course to those in South Africa and Australia as you are more familiar with the ministry of Michael and Planet Shakers.

In brief for those who are not in the loop, Michael has been a key leader in the Christian youth life of Australia and a leader in Planetshakers music etc. It has now been revealed that he has had a long standing addiction with pornography and over the last two years has faked an aggressive cancer illness. A recent Hillsong CD/DVD featured a song called "Healer" that was written by Michael out of this deception. This whole event has resulted in a major scandal of course in Australia that has left many in confusion and questioning much.

There is much online that will inform you of details surrounding this matter.

In walking through my own thoughts, as well as discussion with others, I feel it is important that we ask the right questions and come up with some correct answers. I do not believe in any way that Todd or Michael are bad people or have had anything else in their heart but to fulfill God's will for their lives. I have shared with you over many years that I believe God did not create us for stardom but for servanthood. Continually ministry is put on a pedestal and the pressure mounts to perform and over reach because of a driving for success and results. People continue to flock to the flavor of the month hoping to receive something that might help them rise to another level but so many still end up with a hope deferred and dreams shattered.

As I spend time with you over the next few weeks at Cluster events around the world, I want to address some of the questions I have found myself asking and believe to receive some answers as well.

As I have carried these things in my heart before God, particularly over the last couple of weeks, the word impartation is the one word I cannot get away from. In Lakeland, one of the big emphasis there has been "impartation". Many of the people you represent have been affected by Todd and Michael, so I would ask you to pray that any wrong impartation received might be cut off. A thought we have carried in COTN for many years is, we can speak to a group on measles but if it's chicken pox we have that's what they will go home with. Impartation of life is always stronger than impartation of word or gift.

Let us continue to pray and believe for Todd and Michael, their wives and families, and all those connected with them. These are young men with great gift and anointing that are being stolen from at a time when they are needed most. Jesus said "Narrow is the way and few are they that will find it". Let us determine in our hearts that we are not calling people to a broad way that leads to destruction so we can be seen to be successful, but press in to hear God in this hour to see His kingdom established. As I said before the following are reports from Peter Wagner and from Dutch Sheets all received during the month of August that will help you understand some of the progression of thought. There are of course dozens of reports that many of us are receiving but I forward the following as they have been sent to me as a member of the International Coalition of Apostles of which Peter is the leader.

I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Your friend,

Tony

A Report From Peter

THE LAKELAND APOSTOLIC FINDINGS
From the Lakeland Outpouring Apostolic Team
Written by C. Peter Wagner, Convening Apostle
(As of August 11, 2008)

Introduction

Few events in recent church history have drawn as much national and international attention as the Lakeland Outpouring, May-August 2008, led by evangelist Todd Bentley and his Fresh Fire Ministries team. A key factor contributing to this unusual phenomenon has been the decision of Rory and Wendy Alec to use GOD TV to televise the revival meetings internationally.

As would be expected, true to the history of revivals, a powerful move of God like this inevitably draws serious attacks from the enemy and his forces of darkness. One outcome is a range of reactions to the phenomenon from those who focus on the hand of God in the ministry to those who focus on the damage that the enemy is doing. Because of the unprecedented number of people who have been affected one way or another by Lakeland and because of instant communication through technology, opinions and points of view easily become public domain, and the body of Christ can readily become polarized, which, of course, would be a victory for the enemy.

Unfortunately, in the case of Lakeland, the enemy has been succeeding, more than he should, in producing widespread confusion and even chaos throughout large segments of the body of Christ.

Throughout the early weeks of the Outpouring I watched it from time to time on TV, I followed the news items and rejoiced at what God was doing in Lakeland, but the matter was located toward the bottom of my priority scale. I also became aware of a rising number of criticisms and concerns about what was going on there, but I had very little interest in absorbing or analyzing them. This changed when I received a telephone call from Apostle Stephen Strader, Pastor of Ignited Church, and host of the Lakeland Outpouring. Stephen called me as the Presiding Apostle of the International Coalition of Apostles (ICA) of which he was a member. From first hand observation he described both the blessings and harsh opposition that they had begun to experience. Then he said, "Where are the apostles?"

I believe the Holy Spirit spoke to me at that moment and said words to the effect, "Peter, you will need to answer that question." As I have written in my books, one of the roles of an apostle is to set things in order and another is to assure that the body of Christ is operating on the basis of sound, biblical doctrine. There was no question about the need-disorder reigned, and many of the Lakeland doctrines as well as practices were being called into question on an international scope. I believe that I was given a divine assignment that I hadn't even desired, namely to attempt to bring some kind of apostolic order to this widespread and potentially damaging confusion.

While I was talking to Stephen, God kept bringing the word "alignment" to the front of my mind, so I questioned him on Todd Bentley's apostolic alignment. The

upshot was that Todd believed in apostles and prophets, but he had never entered into a formal alignment. I did some more investigation over the next couple of days, and I was assured that this was indeed the case.

As the picture developed, there were two pressing needs. One was to facilitate apostolic alignment for Todd and the other was to deal responsibly with the doctrinal and ministry style issues being discussed. Then the question became, Which should come first? Meanwhile I had been discussing these things with several friends, all of whom were also members of ICA and whose opinion I highly respected. I immediately discovered to my surprise that many of my friends had formed highly-charged and emotionally intense opinions. Some were advising me not to go to Lakeland to promote a formal alignment until the doctrinal issues first had been resolved. Others took the opposite position. I carefully considered what they said and weighed the pros and cons as best I could.

My thinking was that I did not want to deal with doctrinal issues with any one but fellow apostles. I had recently attempted a similar process that had to do with a certain prophet, and I had failed in accomplishing my goal of bringing about a reconciliation of opposing parties. I felt that one of my mistakes had been attempting to deal directly with a prophet who was not aligned with me instead of dealing with an apostle with whom this person was in fact aligned. I certainly knew that I did not want to attempt to work directly with an evangelist such as Todd Bentley, especially one whom I had never met. If Todd was not apostolically aligned, this alignment needed to be formalized before I was prepared to go any further. I am well aware that some friends thought I should have stopped right there and pulled out. Perhaps I should have, but I felt that I would be disobeying the word from the Holy Spirit if I did. Some of my friends have not yet forgiven me for not taking their advice, and, who knows? Someday they might be telling me, "I told you so!"

Regardless, I knew that alignment needed to come first. Chuck Pierce, with whom I am closely aligned prophetically, wholeheartedly agreed. I did my due diligence and discovered that Ché Ahn was the ICA member who had the closest contact with Todd, and that Todd was willing to accept this alignment. Ché felt that he should bring in Bill Johnson and John Arnott since all three of them were close to Todd and they lead the newly-formed Revival Alliance. Unbelievably, all four of us had one date in common open all summer, Monday, June 23, so we decided that we would propose it to Todd. He enthusiastically agreed and invited us to come.

By now the word was getting out and I was receiving a quantity of email correspondence from other apostles who were interested. I opened the door for those who desired to accompany us on the platform. I did not allow prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers to join the group—apostles only. A total of 17 apostles participated representing three apostolic streams: ICA, Revival Alliance, and Morning Star (Rick Joyner).

The Alignment Ceremony

My role in the ceremony was to facilitate Todd's alignment with the three from Revival Alliance, who would then commission Todd as the evangelist to the Lakeland Outpouring. The others were invited to join in with short prayers or prophecies as led.

I need to explain a couple of things at this point, because it turns out that some have misunderstood what I have just said. Some have thought that Todd is aligned with me, which is not the case. He is not a member of ICA. We are barely acquainted. Please note that purposely I have never come out and defended Todd against any of the accusations. I have attempted to maintain neutrality in order to deal with the issues as objectively as possible.

Some have said that my very appearance in the ceremony constituted a de facto endorsement of the Lakeland Outpouring. I anticipated that this would be the case, and I felt I had to take the risk because I knew of no other way to proceed. So while it was an endorsement, I in no way meant it to imply that I was endorsing Lakelands's side of the controversial issues. For one thing I couldn't do that because I had not yet investigated them as I am doing now. I felt that the proper protocol was alignment first. However, I did feel, and still do, that what was wrong with the Outpouring should be corrected if at all possible rather than rejected out of hand.

Others wondered if this was an ICA event. It was not. However, I cannot separate myself from my role as the ICA leader, and I so identified myself in my paper. Thirteen of the 17 apostles on the platform were ICA members, and they agreed that Todd would be better with formal apostolic alignment than without it.

I have been scolded by some for making an apostolic decree at the end of my presentation. They may be right. However, I believe in apostolic alignment so much, that my thought was that Todd would be blessed more after the alignment than before. Take note also that I mentioned a heightened level of discernment between truth and error which obviously has been called for.

The vows of alignment with Ché, Bill, and John led to Todd's commissioning. Ché Ahn was in charge of this. Notice that the only ones who laid on hands and commissioned were the three of them. Several prayed and prophesied. I want to make it clear that I did not commission Todd as some wrongly think. I didn't lay on hands, I didn't anoint with oil, in fact I moved to the back and neither my wife, Doris, nor I prayed or prophesied. I did this intentionally because I knew I would be wrongly positioned for the second part of my assignment if I did.

With the alignment completed, I was ready to go on with the second part of the assignment, namely attempting to bring order out of the confusion concerning doctrines and ministry practices

Bringing Order to the Issues

I felt that I needed a team of apostles who were willing to work with me in order to identify the concerns that had been brought up, define them as carefully as possible, and come to an opinion that could be issued to the public. Ten other apostles have agreed to work with me in this project: Ché Ahn, Bill Johnson, John Arnott, Chuck Pierce, Stephen Strader, Lee Grady, David Cannistraci, Steve Strang, Jeff Beacham, and Joe Askins.

One of our first tasks was to develop a "Lakeland Spectrum" in order to help individuals concerned to know where they stood as over against others. We have a five point spectrum (1) Strong approval, (2) Concerned approval, (3) Neutral, (4) Conditional disapproval, (5) Strong disapproval. The members of our apostolic team

range from 1 to 4.5, so we have a range of perspectives.

We have been working on sorting out what we now have, and the list is down to 24 issues. We are taking this very seriously, and we understand that the process will take time. When we arrive at our conclusions we will release them to the public. John Arnott will be the point person to review our findings with Todd Bentley and the Fresh Fire Board of which he is a member.

We will add to this report of the findings as soon as possible

My Take on the Lakeland Happenings

Doris Wagner

August 15, 2008

This past Tuesday, August 12, started out like any other tough travel day. Peter was out of the house by 4 a.m. heading to the airport for a grueling 24 plus hour trip to San Francisco, Tokyo, and finally to Singapore where he would arrive midnight the next day after crossing the International Date Line. He called me from San Francisco with his usual cheerful: "Hi, did you wake up?" He hadn't awakened me to say goodbye since I had major surgery on my foot on August 1 and it is sometimes tough to sleep well with the cast on my foot and lower leg.

Did I wake up? Man, the computer was filled with correspondence about Todd Bentley's announcement that he was separating from his wife. This was not quite a complete surprise since late the evening before the rumor of marital strife had been dropped in our ears, but it was just a rumor. Of course we had hoped it wasn't true. But there it was.

Since Peter doesn't do his own email, I had to read the Lakeland Ledger newspaper article to him. He then called Chuck Pierce, who immediately wrote the following letter to Peter and e-mailed it to me and wanted to fax it to Peter in the United Airline lounge in San Francisco where he had a little layover. After some detective work (I couldn't call him directly, his phone was busy and his battery was fading fast from overuse), I located him in the International Lounge and procured that fax number from the kind receptionist. She found him and positioned him at the fax machine where this letter from Chuck arrived:

August 12, 2008

Dear Peter:

When I got up this morning and prayed about the move of God in Lakeland and Todd Bentley, this is what God showed me: First of all, I felt compassion to pray for

Todd. The anointing of this move has stirred up a hunger in the Body, and the scrutiny of Todd's life has probably taken its toll on him. So when I began to pray for Todd this morning (since I usually set aside Tuesdays to pray), I saw several things. The Spirit of God is beginning to move greatly. Also, I feel that your call to set some sort of apostolic authority in place was warranted because of potential problems moving into this move of God. The order you set in place in Lakeland establishes a structure and boundary for Todd's problems to be addressed. Before that, there were no boundaries, and Lakeland had been going on for almost three months.

The thing we must remember is that God chose to use Todd to stir up the hunger in the Body of Christ. Therefore, as I prayed, the Lord took me to the life of Samson. He is a mystery. He had a Nazarite vow on his life, yet he had many character flaws. His character flaws did not stop God from using him. I think this is the biggest misunderstanding that the Body has when it comes to the anointing. That is why you see anointed men and women being used so mightily by the Lord, and then falling into sexual sin or monetary impropriety.

Because you have set an order for his life now, for the first time he has a shot at being fully accountable and breaking spiritual forces that could destroy his future. What he needs to do now is submit to apostolic authority over the next nine months. Ministry should not be his goal. Instead, the restoration of covenant alignments must occur in his life. He and his wife might not be able to withstand the pressure of ministry together in the future, but during these nine months Todd's choice would be to submit to the authority structure that God has established in his life publicly. If he does that, he might have a ministry in the future. If this had not been set in place, this would have been much more serious. I'm sure others would say you should not have been involved at all.

Since Stephen Strader requested your help and he is in ICA, you did respond to his Macedonian call. Yes, you would have looked like a hero if you had waited and gotten involved now. But just as you wrote recently, you chose to establish the order first and then any spiritual discipline could be brought. That makes you look like a father.

Again, Todd's ministry allowed us all to see the hunger in the Body of Christ for miracles, healing and just a touch from God. Todd had flaws going into the time in which God chose to initiate his call and had not dealt with some of his problems. But God still chose to use him. Not only did his ministry reveal this hunger, but many have gotten saved. Now, hopefully, Todd will enter in the phase of being disciplined and establish his life in a new way so he can be qualified for use in the future.

Have a good flight to Asia.

Blessings, Chuck

To that, Peter added the following letter the "Lakeland Outpouring Apostolic Team", Skyped it to our assistant and grabbed his plane for Tokyo and Singapore.

To: *Lakeland Outpouring Apostolic Team*

*From: C. Peter Wagner
Date: August 12, 2008
Subject: Todd Bentley's Character Crisis*

Most of you would be aware that the Lakeland Ledger broke the news publicly that Todd and Shonnah have decided to terminate their marriage. In Canada this requires a nine-month "separation" before official divorce proceedings can go into effect. I am quite upset by this development, and I know you will be also. I am now receiving a large amount of "I told you so!" email and I must say that my friends have a point. This has taken the lid off of a number of related character accusations against Todd that are now coming in which I might have dismissed previously, but no longer can do so off hand.

Let's take some time to process this. Todd was officially, publicly aligned with the Revival Alliance, so the three of you should definitely make some kind of statement, probably sending it to Steve Strang. Let's not sweep this under the rug with a "touch not God's anointed" as has been done with so many similar issues in our morally soft charismatic environment.

Meanwhile, I called Chuck Pierce for help, and he sent me the letter I am attaching with this. Chuck has some very encouraging insights for us.

*Blessings,
Peter*

*C. Peter Wagner
President, Global Harvest Ministries
Chancellor, Wagner Leadership Institute
719-262-9922*

Then, during all of Tuesday, until after 1 a.m. Wednesday, all of my time was spent at the computer with e-mails and they all fell into two categories: the PROS and the CONS, roughly pretty equally divided. Wednesday and Thursday, all of my waking hours have been spent answering this type of mail.

The Cons are pretty nasty. One even said: "Let me be the first to say 'I told you so.'" These individuals asked Peter not to get involved in the "Lakeland Thing" from the onset. Some of them are probably rejoicing over Todd's problems. Several are demanding a public apology from all who were on the platform on June 23rd, along with God TV. Many are disrespectful, seemingly calling names and slinging mud. They come across to me as jubilant in victory. I question the godliness of this attitude. Along the way we have lost friends who have ceased to trust us, pulled out of our organizations and separated from us. That's o.k. They say we have been guilty of poor decisions and actions.

The Pros have seen things differently. They have agreed with our actions. Let me reflect a little on these actions as I see it. If I seem defensive, forgive me. Peter is such a kind and gentle person that he would never defend himself. I am a deliverance minister, and can become abrasive when I see Religious Spirits, Pharisaical Spirits, Spirits of jealousy, envy and even hatred become exposed. The fattest of all is the Accuser of the Brethren very much at work in the current

situation. Whenever Peter is falsely accused in print, he usually just smiles and says "Did they spell my name right?" If things get really bad with false accusations, by a John Doe, he will serenely say "John Doe is not the enemy-we know who the enemy really is." This ability to handle the negative really bugs some folks and they dislike him even more. Believe me, my pillow has been next to his for 58 years and I have seen this played out. There doesn't seem to be a wide neutral zone, either he is liked or disliked. That's just the way it is.

Peter is a man of the highest integrity. He's a man of his word, as honest as the day is long. He has kept his wedding vows-no need to renew them, the old ones are still perfectly good! He has been total fun to live with and to raise our children together. He has treated me as a colleague with great respect. He is brilliant and godly. As we have been working on his memoirs, I have been amazed at what we have accomplished together, and we have worked side by side all of our married lives. Of all women, I consider myself to be highly blessed. Enough of that.

Peter did not jump into the "Lakeland Thing" lightly. He thought about it, prayed about it and we talked it over. Did "the outpouring" or Todd have some imperfections? Absolutely. Peter was asked to help out to set things in order and to investigate what some folks thought might be doctrinally "iffy." He was asked to do this by Lakeland's host, Stephen Strader, a colleague in the International Coalition of Apostles, which Peter leads. It was a "Macedonian Call" for help. That is Peter's job. Many of the Con people mentioned above thought Peter should have said no to this plea. After serious thought, prayer and consultation, particularly with our most closely related prophet, Chuck Pierce, we decided to move forward.

We felt as though there was a legitimate anointing on Todd's life. We knew he was an imperfect person but our honest desire was to sort out and save the good. The other charge against us is that we stupidly could not recognize that these miracles were being done under the power of a satanic spirit and that we were totally lacking in discernment. My answer to that is, there probably was some of the flesh at work on some occasions, and people operating with a higher level of discernment may have picked up on some things we could not. I seriously question whether a satanic spirit got away with all of the good. My conclusion is that it was mixed and we wanted to help sort out the good. The Apostolic Team of 11 apostles which Peter put together is still in the process of sorting all of that out, and time is needed to do that.

The most serious charge against us is that the alignment meeting of June 23 was absolutely wrong (implying that at best we were misled, at worst committed a grave sin in so doing). Our thought was to bring alignment to Todd, thereby gaining the right to speak into his life and ministry as he accepted the apostolic oversight of Ché Ahn, Bill Johnson and John Arnott. This was accomplished. Please reread Peter's paper sent out to our entire mailing list a few days ago. Peter did not "ordain" Todd, as some journalists keep saying over and over wanting it to become truth. He blessed him, yes! Isn't it strange that all the negative things surfaced so soon after alignment took place and Todd agreed to oversight?

I see all of this as God's great mercy and love. Lots of critics just plain don't like Todd's looks. He's tattooed and pierced and dresses down on the platform. I wouldn't want my son to look like that, but to throw it all out at the cost of throwing out the anointing needs to be carefully considered. But then the world didn't think

much of John the Baptist who probably wore smelly camel pelts and ate bugs. Jesus had other thoughts about John, however. As I work in the field of deliverance we start with what wants help and go from there. To see some major transformation in a person's life is a miracle often witnessed. We work with some raunchy raw material at times and our only prerequisite is that they want to be helped. It's enough. Man, indeed, looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Let's look at hearts and the hand of God, and bless what He is blessing.

Todd is in a perfect spot for help. The night of June 23 when we were there, Todd gave a long testimony. He has been wounded, and has wounded others along the way. He is still a young man, rescued from the streets and a biker society. He is not highly schooled or terribly polished. He does not fit the scholarly, seminary finishing school mold. He has not had the advantage of a solid steady home environment. But then again God has this habit of not choosing the things that we would choose. I could easily see that Todd needs deep inner healing and professional-level deliverance he has not yet had the opportunity to receive. One of our critics said that we got it backwards and should have taken him into a back room and ministered to him before the ceremony. We had the luxury of a few minutes with Todd before the evening meeting. We had never met the man before. Was I to say, "Hey, Todd, you're a mess and need help in the next five minutes?"

The prescribed protocol is to put things in proper alignment first, then be in a position to speak into his life. That opportunity is presenting itself now. Todd now has the opportunity to address some character flaws and get them healed and corrected in order to carry the anointing God has given him. We in deliverance and inner healing minister to these things daily-they are nothing to be ashamed of. Not to deal with them out of pride or denial is where the shame can take hold. I worked with dairy cows as a kid and picked up some of their lice once. My mom told me as she treated my head with some smelly remedy "The shame is not in getting lice, the shame is in keeping them." I never had lice again!

Be assured that Todd's overseers, Ché, John and Bill along with Peter are hard at work. Please give us some time. Peter is in Singapore and goes on to Indonesia for a few days and will not be back until next week. Ché is ministering in Korea. Bill and John have killer schedules all summer long. We are working as best and as fast as we can, but there are constraints that slow us a little. Things like thousands of miles and schedules that cannot be changed, and when it is day here it is night in Asia.

I am very optimistic. I see a door of opportunity swung wide open. I see a wonderful, merciful God reaching out. What many are calling a rotten mess I see as a splendid chance for one of the church's finest hours. The mess was there festering for a while anyway, now let's fix it. Is Todd's situation a strange thing? The breakup of the family is one of the most common societal problems we face today. How many other couples contemplating family breakup could be encouraged to get help if this is a successful rehabilitation?

Todd now has some fathers by his side to help in time of need and to avoid shipwreck if he chooses to accept that help. He now has some authority in his life, and parameters are comforting to kids. He is deeply loved by many who are in a position to help spiritually, emotionally and mentally. He is a place of protection he did not have the luxury of before June 23.

Let me close by asking and a few questions:

Might it be that there is a hunger for revival as never before in our country? I think so.

Might it be that God wants to send us that revival and is anxious to do so but needs the right persons and proper government in His church to look after it? I think so.

Could it be that there was true anointing in an imperfect vessel and a merciful God wanted to set up circumstances to bring healing to Todd? I think so.

Could it be that when one apostle asked another for help in separating truth from error in a situation of mixture, that error began to surface so quickly? Isn't the church better off when error is exposed and corrected? I think so.

Could it be that God brought alignment, authority and order into the Lakeland situation and once that order was established Todd was in a safe place to be ministered to? If a wounded soul gets help and is rehabilitated, isn't that good? Isn't it wonderful to have a restoration process in place to help a brother back to useful service and full use of his gifts and anointing? If he decides not to be helped, we have done our job in making that help available, and his overseers have charge of his care.

Isn't this what the church is supposed to look like? I think so. If we fail, at least we will have tried. Not to have tried would have been failure to do what God required of us at this point in time.

Now here is where you come in. PLEASE PRAY. Ask God to so minister to Todd to soften his heart and to reach out for help, and to be fully healed. Ask God to help him to be willing to submit to the apostolic oversight that has been put in place. Ask God to heal his marriage and protect and bless his wife and three children.

This episode has the potential of being one of the finest hours the church has seen in recent years. I implore you to pray. Because this has all been so public it is all of our business and we must act on our knees. We have a real enemy capable of infiltrating the church to truncate this process. Let's fight for victory!

Sincerely, in Christ,

Doris

A Message from Peter

An Update on Lakeland from Peter

August 25, 2008

I was in the San Francisco airport on my way to Singapore and Indonesia when the news of Todd Bentley's separation from his wife became public on August 12. When I arrived back home last week, I found that Doris had received and replied to around 1,700 emails and the stack of correspondence on my desk was unbelievable. It took me the rest of the week to catch up!

During the week I was gone, a major watershed occurred regarding the Lakeland situation as most of you would know. We are now on a new playing field. Lakeland Outpouring I, in which Todd Bentley was the main figure, is now history. Lakeland Outpouring II, in which Stephen Strader of Ignited Church is the main figure, has begun. The Outpouring started in a local church, went to a tent, and now is back in the local church. My suggestion is that we no longer use the term "Lakeland Outpouring" but rather distinguish between Lakeland I and Lakeland II because they are very different.

Let me talk a bit about the present, then revisit the past, then project the future.

The Present

It will sound surprising to some, but Lakeland II in Ignited Church, which you will remember was the original host church, is going very well. The big crowds and GOD TV, of course, are gone. Ignited Church seats around 700 in the main sanctuary and Stephen Strader reports that on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings they have to use their overflow room. It is comfortably filled on week nights. The morning training sessions continue with a couple hundred every day, and teams continue to move daily into the streets of Lakeland spreading the gospel. Percentage-wise the dramatic miracles and healings occur nightly with probably a higher percentage of salvations on a daily basis. Support from local pastors is improving considerably. The most interesting report is that every night some 30 percent are first-time attendees, meaning that people are still coming to Lakeland from the outside to experience Outpouring II. A lady from our church with a severe chronic back problem went to Ignited Church and came home healed! Such a thing does not usually happen when a public figure suddenly goes down the tubes, so we need to take our hats off to the apostolic gifts and role that Stephen Strader is demonstrating for us.

Speaking of the public figure going down the tubes, Todd Bentley now carries the label of a liar and a deceiver. I'm sorry to mention it, but I felt personally deceived in the same way when Ted Haggard's sin was exposed and he was immediately removed from ministry. In the Lakeland I case, I am elated at the way things are turning out. The Revival Alliance with whom Todd was aligned on June 23 has kicked into action with a vengeance. Ché Ahn and Bill Johnson, like me, were

overseas when things broke, but John Arnott stepped up to the plate and moved in apostolically. It has since become clear that Todd's Fresh Fire Board could not have handled the situation, Stephen Strader and Ignited Church could not, nor could any of his other close friends. Only the Revival Alliance could. I am delighted that they are not buying into typical charismatic soft morality, also called "greasy grace" or "don't touch God's anointed" or "mercy must triumph over judgment," phrases that have been used on other similar occasions as convenient religious cop-out excuses. They're proceeding in love, but it is tough love!

Since this is an update, I will share some of what I know about what is happening with Bentley, but not all because some things need more verification and it is up to discernment of Revival Alliance what and when this will be revealed. Suffice it to say that there is more than I am going to mention. First of all, Todd has been removed from public ministry until further notice. He has resigned from the ministry he founded, Fresh Fire, so he is no longer a part of that board. It has become clear that he indulged in periodic drunkenness. He has no intention at the moment of reconciling with Shonnah, nor does she with him. Their marriage has been torn for years by his emotional attachment with at least one other female whose physical contact went beyond hugging and kissing and holding hands. Enough said-maybe more details will be revealed later-but it was clearly immoral. All of this was skillfully concealed by lying and by swearing close associates who had observed his behavior to secrecy. Stephen Strader, for example, knew nothing of this before June 23. Apparently some of his board members did, but they did not have the ability to deal with it.

The Past

I hope this is the last time I will have to address the past. It is now history. But as history is written, I feel that I have some responsibility of helping to have history be written accurately, especially since I have turned out to be a lightning rod for a number of severe criticisms.

Most of you know this, but let me reiterate to keep it on record. Previous to around the middle of June, my interest in Lakeland was about a 2 on a scale of 1-10. Then I got a call from Stephen Strader, the host pastor who was a member of ICA, which I lead, with a passionate appeal for apostolic intervention because chaos and confusion had begin to invade the Outpouring I. Toward the end of the hour we were talking, I received one of my infrequent direct words from God: "Alignment!" Just one word, but I knew I had a divine command and responsibility.

Once I knew that God had assigned me to initiate some sort of apostolic intervention at Stephen's side, I began praying and consulting with close colleagues. In less than two days I discovered that Todd Bentley had no formal, established apostolic alignment. I asked God how I should proceed, especially since I had no inclination to attempt an apostle-evangelist approach and expect that Bentley would submit to or even listen to what I had to say if I made an appointment with him in Lakeland. I felt that proper apostolic protocol would be for me to deal with one or more peer-level apostles to whom Todd had aligned apostolically. Since as yet he had no such alignment, I began asking God how such an alignment might come about. He directed me to my close friend, Ché Ahn, who himself is apostolically aligned with me and who also had been close to Bentley for years. Ché agreed that

the best apostolic protocol would be for Todd to align with the Revival Alliance if he were willing. Ché called him and Bentley agreed to submit publicly to the Revival Alliance.

At this point some disagreements arose. I have already mentioned that I was consulting with several apostolic colleagues whom I trusted and whom I know trusted me. It is very necessary for us to understand exactly what the disagreement was about. It was about the most appropriate apostolic protocol for the occasion. After prayerfully listening to the different points of view with careful consideration of what was being said, the decision had to be mine. I believe that God's word to me about "Alignment!" had to be directional. I concluded that the best protocol was to do the alignment first, then deal with the issues that had been raised. My other friends disagreed and urged me to deal with Todd's problems first then do the alignment. I respected their point of view and I was very sorry that I had to follow God's leading for me personally instead of taking their advice. It was not a comfortable decision.

Now let me address what was behind much of their disagreement with my apostolic protocol. They were concerned that if I appeared on the platform with GOD TV, many viewers would interpret it as my personal endorsement of everything that was going on in Lakeland I, and since they were so closely associated with me, they would be implicated as well. This was a legitimate concern, and one I seriously wrestled with as I made my decision. If I went to Lakeland and presided over the alignment, some might well take it as an endorsement. It was a risk, I knew. Let me say personally that all my life I have been a risk-taker instead of a play-it-safe person, and I have taken many hits for it. As an example going to the jungles of Bolivia as a career field missionary when I was 25 with my wife and a one-year-old baby girl was a serious risk. Both that daughter and another who was born in the jungle without medical attention came close to losing their lives during those five years. And we were criticized for our decision to take the risk by many, including parents!

Closer to the Lakeland I situation, I have a private list of no fewer than 18 high-profile Christian leaders starting from the 1970s until Bentley for whom I took risks. For each one of them I took serious criticisms and in some cases personal hits even much more serious than I have received in this current case because I endorsed or partnered with or provided alignment for them. Some were typified as "crazy!" However, I can pretty much discern winners, although not always. My track record for the 18 is 72% emerged as real winners (you would know most of them), 17% ended up losers (including Bentley), and 11% indecisive. I'm sorry for the losers, but they prove I am not perfect. The point I am making is that I am no stranger to taking risks and living with the fallout.

One fallout from Lakeland I is that several have resigned from ICA and other organizations that I lead because they no longer want to be identified with me. Others are still upset. Still, believe it or not, I think that everyone involved is still my friend. We just disagree.

I want it understood that I did not go to Lakeland on June 23 for Todd Bentley. I had never met him personally. I had no knowledge of and little interest in his ministry. I went because I received an apostolic plea to help bring order to the confusion and chaos that was sweeping through the body of Christ worldwide

because of the television. I went strictly for the body of Christ at the invitation of the host pastor of the Outpouring I.

The final question is: Was it successful? Looking back, I praise God for using me and others to help bring order to confusion, which is one of the chief biblical tasks of an apostle. Stephen Strader, who has been keeping records, affirms that the evil that the prince of the power of the air had been subtly introducing into the Outpouring I started to be exposed and unraveled the day after the alignment, June 24! Spiritually, this is very understandable. Just about every leader I knew had discerned that Lakeland I was a mixture of the godly and the ungodly. We were praying in one accord that the evil would be separated from the good. My take is that God had decided to answer these prayers and in order to facilitate His process, He assigned me and the Revival Alliance leaders and others who were with us to align Todd Bentley apostolically for the first time in his life. When we did this publicly, spiritual transactions took place in the invisible world that would not allow the enemy to maintain the veil of secrecy he had carefully placed over the Outpouring. The evil was exposed, Revival Alliance had the authority to deal with it, and the net result is that order is replacing chaos in the body of Christ.

In my section above on "The Present" I gave you some details. Believe me, they are only the tip of the iceberg as I just learned from a new phone call even as I was writing this paper. The proper apostolic structure, happily, is in place at the time of crisis!

The Future

It is now important to recognize that from now on we have a different playing field. Two separate things are going on. (1) The Revival Alliance is dealing with Todd Bentley and the fallout from his sin that has been and continues to be exposed. (2) I have told you previously about a group of 11 apostles that I have formed into the Lakeland Outpouring Apostolic Team. We no longer need to deal with Lakeland I and Bentley as such. However, we have a list of 24 serious issues that have emerged from that unpleasant experience which need to be thoroughly discussed with the conclusions circulated in the body of Christ. If you have seen Dutch Sheets' recent "A Statement and Appeal Regarding Lakeland" you will get a glimpse of some of the things that we agree need to become standard operational beliefs and practices, particularly in our charismatically-inclined evangelical segment of the church.

It will take time, but our Apostolic Team will get to work on the 24 issues after some of this present dust settles, and we will be back to you!

Blessings,

Peter

A Statement and Appeal Regarding Lakeland

August 21, 2008

It has now been a couple of weeks since I heard about Todd Bentley's plans for separation and divorce. Like everyone, I have had a variety of emotions including anger, sadness, and grief. Every time I see this scenario repeated, I grieve: for the husband and wife involved; for the family that will be scarred in so many ways; because of the incredible reproach it brings to Christ; and the distortion it gives concerning God's heart and ways. I am praying for Todd and his family.

I was asked numerous times to write my position on Lakeland while it was happening, but always felt checked by the Lord—the waters were too muddy and emotions too high. I now feel strongly that the Lord wants me to do so. It will be arguably one of the greatest risks of my ministry to date, but one I feel must be taken. Fathers, when given the voice to do so, bear the responsibility of giving correction and wisdom. I hope mine qualifies for the latter. I assure you I have spent many hours praying and thinking through the situation.

The risks are broad: with some of my dearest friends and co-laborers, I risk harming those relationships; with many in the charismatic body of Christ, I risk appearing to be an arrogant, "self-appointed" spokesperson for them; to the "I told you so" crowd, I risk the accusation of "spinning" the situation. (As far as the heresy hunters and revival police—not those who raised legitimate questions about Lakeland, but the attack dogs who make their living and build their ministries criticizing everyone else—I lost respect for them long ago and couldn't care less what they think.) My purpose and sincere prayer in writing this statement, however, is three-fold: to see healing begin for the body of Christ; to initiate a process that can remove the reproach brought to Christ and the Church; and to do these things while preserving and honoring my current relationships. I pray that these desires, along with my heart, come through loudly. And I hope I'm writing this with true humility—who among us clearly sees all hidden in our own hearts?

Let me also preface this statement by saying that what needs to be said cannot be done quickly or carelessly. I do not want my heart to be missed and am not willing to run that risk for the sake of brevity, so please bear with the length. (Incidentally, I think it will be obvious no one involved in the Lakeland situation has asked me to write this; and for the sake of integrity on my part, none have been consulted concerning what I'm stating.)

Mistakes at Lakeland

Did leaders handling the Lakeland situation make mistakes? Yes—huge mistakes. Beyond the obvious fruit of salvations and healings, can good come from Lakeland, as some have suggested, even with the recent revelations concerning Todd Bentley? Yes, but only if there is complete honesty and transparency, the removal of all attempts at self-preservation, and absolute humility from all sides.

Did I endorse the Lakeland meetings? No, I did not, nor did I condemn them. I acknowledged that healings were occurring and some were being saved, which I still believe and rejoice over. I realized and stated that the thousands of people attending were hungry and sincere, as were those involved in leading the

meetings. The worship was regularly good. But looking past some of the immediate and positive results, I, like many, also looked ahead to the possible fruit from questionable doctrine and experiences, exaggeration and hype, youthful pride, character issues and the frightening potential of a 32 year “young” man leading a movement that could shape the future of the Church. These things were frightening, very frightening, to others and me.

When something has the potential of setting precedent, birthing a movement and being reproduced as a prototype, we are no longer simply endorsing good brothers, good intentions and miracles. Doctrine and foundations will be built on these events. Teachings and paradigms for future ministries will be formed—in short, the next generation of the church and the move of God in the earth could be greatly impacted. This is why I stopped short of endorsing everything at Lakeland. Just as importantly, I could not ignore the “check”, the uneasiness, the sickening feeling deep in my spirit telling me something else was wrong—terribly wrong—in this situation. Like other leaders I tried to push past my uneasiness with the showmanship, the “bams,” the head butts and kneeling, along with certain experiences and doctrines, all in order to embrace the good. Like many of my friends I tried to be—and believe I was—gracious, accepting, ready to think “out of the box”, etc. But try as I may, the uneasiness in my spirit just wouldn’t leave.

Did I voice my concerns to the appropriate people? Yes, including stating my concerns for Todd’s marriage to the Lakeland Outpouring Apostolic Team. Did they listen? Some did, some didn’t. But I want to state emphatically, *this is not an “I told you so”* statement. In fact, much of what I want to address goes back several years into our charismatic Christian history. And I assure you that concerning our present weaknesses in the charismatic church, there is plenty of blame to go around. Personally, I’ve been right at times with my discernment and decisions, wrong at others. It would be worse than hypocritical for me to point the finger of accusation—I have no stones of judgment to throw. Nonetheless, mistakes were made and must be acknowledged and learned from in order for us to heal, grow and move forward.

Some of my closest friends endorsed and participated in the Lakeland meetings. For them I have both *criticism*—all of us lose credibility at this point if we’re not completely honest—and *affirmation*. Should they have been more discerning and have listened to the warnings they received? Obviously. Should those who “aligned” Todd with spiritual fathers (which was a good thing and positioned him to receive help if he chooses to accept it) have realized to do so *publicly* was a mistake and could be interpreted by those watching in no other way than as a complete endorsement? Yes, they should have, especially when the event became a commissioning ceremony, complete with decrees and prophecies of going to higher levels, predictions of Todd’s increasing world-wide influence and leading a world-wide revival, emphatic and prolific endorsements of his character, etc.

How could those watching believe the evening was anything but an aligning, endorsing and commissioning ceremony? It was. It really doesn’t matter who laid their hands on Todd—all share responsibility. This was unwise at best, naïve at least and at its worst, foolish. And should the leaders involved have realized that those of us connected to them relationally, ministerially, and as movements—some even in alignment with them apostolically and as sons and daughters—would feel minimalized, if not betrayed, by the fact that they were in essence taking us onto the stage with them? Yes. These feelings were

inevitable, especially when we had such uneasiness and asked them not to. Should there be an acknowledgment of these mistakes to the body of Christ for the sake of accountability and in order to rebuild trust? I believe so, and remain hopeful this will happen.

With such strong statements of disagreement, what is the affirmation toward my friends who led, participated in or endorsed this ceremony (and the meetings in general)? Simply stated, I know their hearts. It is not a contradiction of my criticisms toward some of their actions to, at the same time, defend and endorse their hearts and character. It is completely appropriate—when true—to defend a person’s heart and integrity while disagreeing with their actions. I think the blunder of that night was huge and very damaging to the body of Christ, but I also realize that in their hearts, those involved honestly felt they were doing the right things.

Again, while not defending the action taken, I would defend the character and integrity of Peter and Doris Wagner as vigorously as anyone I know, and do so with absolute confidence. There are no two people, and I mean that literally, who embody the qualities of humility, integrity, holiness (no compromise!), sacrifice, unselfish kingdom-thinking, the tireless giving of themselves to Christ’s cause and the body of Christ—and do I need to add risk-taking?—as much as Peter and Doris Wagner. It remains my great honor to be associated with them and call them a spiritual father and mother. And again, while not minimizing or “sweeping under the rug” any wrong decisions, I remain steadfast in my belief that similar affirmations could be made of others involved—either directly or indirectly—in the ceremony. And some of them still see their endorsing of Lakeland as an endorsement of revival generally, not of Todd personally.

The Bigger Picture

It may come as a surprise, however, that my real purpose in writing this is not to only state the above, as important as I believe saying it is. My primary purpose, and I believe my assignment from the Lord, is to identificationally repent on behalf of the leadership of the charismatic body of Christ (see Nehemiah 1:4-7; Daniel 9:1-19). In doing so, I do not have a pompous, “no one else will, so I’ll do it” attitude, nor am I arrogant enough to think I have become the spokesperson for the charismatic church. But in the same way that I can identify with the racism of white predecessors and repent to blacks, Native Americans and other races, I can represent the leadership of the charismatic body of Christ and identificationally repent for our sins and weaknesses. I encourage leaders who find my statements true and appropriate to join me. Beyond the simple fact of it being appropriate, I firmly believe it is the only way to begin the process of rebuilding trust with those asked to follow us and to remove the cynicism of the world we ask to listen to us. As you know, *regaining* credibility is much more difficult than *attaining* credibility.

Concerning what I’m about to say, I don’t believe I have a critical spirit, nor do I want to diminish the sacrifices, faithfulness, and hard work done by so many in ministry. The fact remains, however, that we have failed the Lord and His people in many ways—not just with Lakeland but in countless other situations—and must repent if we are to be trusted in the future. And as you also know, no repentance is effective if watered down and couched in excuses, therefore, I intend to be brutally honest:

- 1) We, the leaders of the charismatic community, have operated in an extremely low level of discernment. Frankly, we often don't even try to discern. We *assume* a person's credibility based on gifts, charisma, the size of their ministry or church, whether they can prophesy or work a miracle, etc. (Miracles and signs are intended to validate God and His message, not the messenger; sometimes they validate the *assignment* of an individual, but never the person's character, lifestyle or spiritual maturity.) We leaders in the Church have become no different than the world around us in our standards for measuring success and greatness. This has contributed to the body of Christ giving millions of dollars to undeserving individuals; it has allowed people living in sin to become influential leaders—even to lead movement, allowing them influence all the way to the White House. Through our lack of discernment we built their stages and gave them their platforms. We have been gullible beyond words—gullible leaders producing gullible sheep.

When a spiritual leader we're connected with violates trust, is exposed for immorality or falls below other accepted standards of behavior, it does not exonerate us simply to say we don't condone such behavior. Those we lead trust us to let them know whom to trust. We have failed them miserably in this regard.

For this lack of discernment, and for employing and passing on inappropriate standards of judgment, I repent to the Lord and ask forgiveness of the body of Christ.

- 2) We, the leaders of the charismatic church, spin our involvement and fail to acknowledge our responsibility when other leaders fall—all of which stems from our self-preservation and pride. Enough of the spin—we're no different than Washington, DC. Every time another embarrassing and disgraceful situation is exposed, the dancing begins. It seems that no one bears any real responsibility except the man or woman who actually commits sin. Incredibly, we even blame "revival" itself—the pressures, attacks, weariness, the "revival is messy" argument, etc., saying it is responsible for the failures. This is disgusting. Those of us on boards of fallen leaders, those who helped give them a voice, put them on TV, published and endorsed their books (yes, I have), etc., are not exonerated simply by saying we don't condone the wrong behavior or that we didn't know. We're supposed to know.

I don't believe anyone is expecting perfection from us—I know I'm not. We're far too human for that. But we are expected to have enough humility to look the world and those who follow us in the eye when we miss it and say, "we were wrong and we are sorry."

Our careless accountability has caused the body of Christ to be spiritually raped and abused. It has produced disillusionment and brought immeasurable reproach to our God and cynicism to His message. Concerning Lakeland, what was called the "greatest revival since Azusa Street" has become possibly one of the greatest reproaches. We, the leaders of the charismatic church, are responsible.

For not accepting and acknowledging our responsibility, for caring more about our own reputation than Christ's, I repent to God and ask forgiveness of the body of Christ.

- 3) Our procedures and standards of accountability are incredibly inadequate. We have provided camaraderie, not biblical accountability. For those on Todd Bentley's board who had previous knowledge of his marriage problems and said nothing, it was more than a mistake—it was reckless, foolish, and irresponsible. For those on the stage the night of his aligning and commissioning who knew and said nothing—ditto. For those there who didn't know, my question is, "why didn't you?" You were trusted to know. That is one of the purposes of public commissioning and the purpose behind the concept of endorsement. I'm not trying to point the finger; I'm endeavoring to get us to be honest about our failures—we have serious credibility issues. Have I ever laid hands on, commissioned or endorsed anyone without adequately checking them out? Yes, but you better believe I'll be more careful next time!

And we must not single out Lakeland. We're all guilty. What about the leader in my city who ran with some of the leading spiritual fathers in our nation—sincere and good men, I might add, and not all "charismatic" leaders—who sang his praises and helped build his stage—all while he was doing drugs and having sex with other men? But we shouldn't blame only the high profile cases—what about those of us who unknowingly have had adulterers on our staffs or appointed elders that turned out to have compromise in their life? Sounding familiar yet?

This is so epidemic that every member of the body of Christ stands guilty—what pastor or leader did you follow that turned out to have sin issues? What ministry did you support that was unworthy? There is plenty of blame to go around. The big question becomes not "who do we blame" but "how do we fix this mess?"

Leaders can live in sin—adultery, homosexuality, financial wrongdoing, drugs, etc.—for years without it being realized. They can offer completely unacceptable lifestyles for the body of Christ to follow and still keep their TV programs and lavish lifestyles. In the name of grace, compassion and forgiveness we have lowered the standard so much that often there isn't one. We have bought into the lie that true discipline is "shooting our wounded." We have made a mockery of biblical restoration, making "ministry"—not healthy individuals, marriages and families—its ultimate goal. The fact is, integrity matters. No, we don't need legalistic, pharisaical standards, but we must have standards.

For this lack of biblical accountability, I repent to God and I ask forgiveness of the body of Christ.

- 4) We, the leaders of the charismatic church, have built on hype, sensation, innovation, programs, personality and charisma. This has produced: shallowness; false movements; novice leaders—gifted but immature and untested; a deficient understanding of God's word; the building of man-centered rather than kingdom-centered churches and

ministries; competition rather than cooperation; humanistic, self-centered Christians who don't understand sacrifice and commitment; Christians without discernment; superstar leaders; a perverted and powerless gospel; prayerless and anemic Christians; a replacement of the fear of the Lord with the fear of man; and a young generation that is cynical of it all. We are responsible, not the devil; he takes what we give him.

For this compromise in the way we build, for giving the Church watered down wine, commercial Christianity, a flashy but weak Church and hype disguised as anointing, I repent to God and ask forgiveness of the body of Christ.

Galatians 6:1-5 is an appropriate reference with which to end this statement: *“Brethren, even if a man caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one shall bear his own load.” NAS*

My passionate prayer is that God honors this repentance—I believe He led me to do it and therefore, will—and uses it to begin a process of *cleansing* and *healing* for all of us. In order for the coming great awakening to bear maximum fruit we must have both, as well as a course correction that sets us on a path of wisdom leading to life. There is no doubt that past moves of God have been aborted, ended prematurely and contained error or heresy that have wounded, if not destroyed, many. The healing revival of the 40's and 50's, the charismatic movement, discipleship movement and Jesus movement are all examples. My heart is to help shape a movement, the fruit of which will last for decades—better yet, forever. And I have great expectations for us—I am not a cynic.

My passionate prayer is also that Todd Bentley's marriage survives and thrives...that he turns his heart fully toward Christ and toward those with whom he is aligned, and allows them, as God leads, to put him on a path of complete restoration. I thank God for those who were touched by the Holy Spirit at Lakeland and while watching it on God TV and the web.

May we all move forward into all God has planned for us in this awesome season of endless possibility.

With great hope—***Dutch Sheets***