

What about Todd Bentley and the Lakeland Healing Revival?

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In the past week numerous people have contacted me to ask my opinion of the healing revival taking place in Lakeland, Florida with Evangelist Todd Bentley.

Evidently, Bentley started a crusade almost two months ago in a small church that grew so large they had to move to an arena that could accommodate over five thousand people. This revival is being covered every night by Christian television, with people coming from all over the world to receive a healing touch from God.

Although I have not been to any of their meetings, I have spoken to numerous people who have been in his meetings when he came to the New York City area, and also those who have viewed what is presently going on via television and the internet. Thus what I am saying in this article is not based on a personal knowledge of either Todd or his meetings.

Those I know who attended his meetings in the past were not very happy. They told me there was much hyperbole and weird manifestations replete with the usual charismatic antics that included spiritual “fireballs” coming from folks on his team, in which the recipients would then fall down under the power of God.

Those that I know and respect who were at these meeting, who also move much in the power and anointing of God, never fell down and did not think much regarding the authenticity of the “fireballs.” There were other things they said that are not necessary to go into now.

However, just because it is possible there is some questionable stuff in these meetings does not necessarily negate the authenticity of the faith of the people and the reality of God’s healing power. The Bible tells us that the Spirit is poured out on all “flesh” (Joel 2; Acts 2:19). So, whenever the Holy Spirit comes down He will always be mingled with fallen, fragile, issue-laden, fleshly people in whom there is a mixture between what is really from the Holy Spirit and that which is really the quirks, foibles, and personalities of those ministering to the people. In spite of what many are telling me regarding these fleshly activities, I have no problem believing that people are really being healed and that this is a valid demonstration of God’s power.

Also, regarding the phenomena of what is happening: Todd Bentley came at the right time in America. Most of us in ministry get so bogged down with administration, dealing with problems of money, leadership, attendance, facilities, etc. that we often do not have our focus on the things of God necessary to see a full demonstration of His power and glory. Once in a while, God still finds someone that will believe Him to release a raw

demonstration of His power that reminds the church that He really is an “ever present help in times of trouble.”

Also, because Bentley has tattoos, earrings, does not wear a suit when he preaches, etc., he will appeal to a large segment of the United States’ population (especially youth) that is sick of religious formalism, which has a form of godliness but denies the power.

One cannot help notice that in the past 30 years it seems that the United States has lacked the great healing crusades of the late 1940’s and 1950’s (much of it cut short because of doctrinal and moral scandal). With the exception of Benny Hinn, there is no one out there who can draw a huge crowd with a healing crusade. The Reinhard Bonnkes of the world understand this, which is why most of the powerful crusades are outside of the United States. Todd Bentley is now tapping into the felt need of this starved U.S. population.

Regarding whether or not this is a revival, I believe we need to be careful with our use of this term. In the 1990’s we had the so-called Toronto Airport revival and Pensacola revival. If we look at the historic use of the term *revival*, both of these experiences were not revivals but rather renewals. Toronto and Pensacola basically amounted to thousands of people coming to renew their passion for God (Toronto) and bringing backsliders back to the Lord (Pensacola). Unlike the first and second Great Awakenings with Whitefield, Wesley, and Finney, both of these movements had almost no affect on the cultural, religious, and secular atmosphere of their surrounding communities. Thus I would not call them true revivals but rather church renewal movements.

From what I understand, the meetings going on today in Lakeland are reaching outsiders (coming for healing) more than those who do not know the Lord that live in Lakeland, but I do hope that it can mushroom into a full-blown revival of faith that will result in thousands coming to know Christ as Lord and Savior as well as their healer.