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FRESH FIRE MINISTRIES, TODD BENTLEY:

Tattooed preacher Todd Bentley says God heals through him

The Charlotte Observer, USA

June 19, 2008

Charles Chandler

www.charlotte.com



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LAKELAND, Fla. — Hands were raised in worship as a crowd of more than 6,000 sang the words “You Are Holy,” a cappella.

Tears fell. Every member of the band was lying flat on the ground.

So was [Todd Bentley](#), the tattooed Canadian evangelist whose Florida revival was into its third month.

Bentley said later he was, in those moments, transported into a personal meeting with Jesus. He said he knew that night’s healing would be especially powerful.

Todd Bentley

[Todd Bentley](#) is a Canadian preacher with a “Toronto Blessing”-type ministry. He works with and/or otherwise promotes false prophets such as [Bob Jones](#) and [Rick Joyner](#), as well as such offbeat churches as the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship.

[Bentley’s ministry](#) is part of a loosely organized movement — or group of movements — of people who believe they are receiving words and visions from God.

Many of the leaders of these movements consider themselves (or others within those movements) to be ‘apostles’ and/or ‘prophets.’ Much unbiblical nonsense has been introduced to churches by these movements — including [strange manifestations](#) and alleged miracles — ranging from people barking like dogs and churchgoers receiving ‘[gold dust](#)’ while worshipping.

[Bentley’s Lakeland ‘revival’](#) is seen by them as a continuation of the [Toronto Blessing](#), and the [Pensacola Outpouring](#). As common in these movements, ‘angels’ are said to appear. Reportedly, both Todd Bentley and Bob Jones have seen an angel called “Winds of Change.”

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And at least one man, Florida minister Brian Burgee, says it was. He says his hearing was restored that night in May.

Bentley, 32, brings his controversial ministry to Concord tonight. Some say he’s a vessel for God. Others accuse him of heresy — or worse.

Bentley says thousands of healings and salvations — even people rising from the dead — have resulted from the Lakeland revival.

Reports of healings by faith have existed for centuries, but modern communications distinguish this revival. Bentley’s staff says millions worldwide watch the nightly services on God TV and online.

The popularity, Bentley says, has not enriched him personally. He told Fox News in a June 14 appearance he had received no money from Lakeland offerings. He says he gets a modest paycheck every two weeks from his nonprofit ministry.

A Vancouver newspaper reported in April that property records showed Bentley “lives a modest life.” It said he owned an Abbotsford, B.C., home, a 2007 GMC Sierra and a 2003 Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

Bentley has said he was a rebellious teen, serving time in youth prisons, listening to satanic music and overdosing on drugs three times. He said he had a dramatic conversion at age 17 to Christianity.

He said most of his tattoos are from his pre-Christian days, but he makes no apologies for them.

"I love art and, to me, my skin is the canvas," he said. "I'm not taking my skin to heaven."

Bentley's claims of resurrections – more than 25 – are targeted because Bentley often reads e-mails during Lakeland services trumpeting the risen even before his staff has time to seek verification.

"This is not 'no harm, no foul,'" said [Hank Hanegraaff](#), whose nationally syndicated "Bible Answer Man" radio broadcast is based in Charlotte. "This is very, very tragic ... "These people are in emotional chaos. The counterfeit revivalists play on that."

Bentley is undeterred.

"I believe what God is doing isn't for Lakeland and Todd Bentley," he said. "I believe it's for the world.

"I expect when we come (to Concord) ... very hungry people – believers, leaders – are going to receive a real contagious, faithful spirit and begin to run with this. We want to see a fire started in the Charlotte area."

Burgee, the minister at The Rock Church in Tampa Bay, believes. On May 27, he was sitting near the back of the crowd working on an upcoming sermon as Bentley spoke:

"I'm telling you right now, somebody in here has been deaf in one ear for 34 years. Who is that? Thirty-four years deaf. The Lord just spoke to me. Come up here."

Burgee, 55, says he'd been almost completely deaf in his right ear since 1974 – 34 years earlier, to the day.

After Bentley prayed for him, Burgee announced: "I'm hearing fine!"

Three weeks later, Burgee talked to the Observer.

"I'm talking to you with the phone in my right ear," he said.

The revival's media relations staff has tried to document healings. They e-mailed the Observer information on 15 people reportedly healed, providing phone numbers for each and noting that 12 had received medical verification.

The Observer contacted five, plus three whose names were not provided, including Burgee. Each said God had healed them through, or related to, Bentley and the Lakeland services.

Their reports: A 15-year old said her jaw was reset; a 44-year-old said his sight was restored in one eye and that he has begun seeing light and shadows out of a socket with a glass eye; a woman, 66, said six hernias on her stomach had disappeared; and a 16-year-old Fort Mill, S.C., girl said a birth defect in her femur that had left her pigeon-toed is healed.

Such testimonies encourage the faithful, including [Rick Joyner](#), pastor of Morningstar Ministries in Fort Mill.

"I think it's a powerful outpouring of God touching his people," Joyner said.

Others say Bentley is dangerous.

Hanegraaff believes Bentley's Lakeland services and its claims are fake, just like previous movements included in his book, "Counterfeit Revival."

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"I call it counterfeit because it's looking for God in all the wrong places," said Hanegraaff. Hanegraaff said Bentley is more bizarre than previous revivalists. Bentley, for instance, once claimed God told him to kick a woman in the nose with his cowboy boots.

Bentley said such incidents are rare and never have resulted in physical harm.

"Sometimes when you're dealing with a demon spirit, it's done with great force," he said. "Also, for me, it's a simple act of wanting to be obedient."

Bentley, supporters say, is forcing believers to examine their views. He talks a lot about angels and trips to heaven, and ministers some nights without preaching or much Bible reading. He shouts "Bam!" sometimes when praying or laying hands on people.

David Chadwick, pastor of Charlotte's Forest Hill Church, is measured on Bentley.

"I just don't know how legitimate it is," said Chadwick in an e-mail. "I'm concerned of chicanery."

“Everything within me wants to believe it’s true. ... If true, it’s certainly very good news to those who have been delivered.”

Bentley said he tries to be measured in responding to critics.

“I don’t actually feel a need to defend myself because the Holy Spirit will defend the gospel,” said Bentley. “We don’t want to be in the revival on the defensive because we just want to stay focused on Jesus.”

• Original title: *Tattooed preacher says God heals through him*

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