

Teaching for 10-10-07

A Word for the Church, From a Brokenhearted Pastor

Walt Kallestad, considered by many a successful pastor from Phoenix, shared this past weekend about the spiritual transformation of his heart—that came literally through a devastating attack on his physical heart.

Walt is one of the national leaders of *ReignDown USA*, a national call to repentance. In a series of meetings hosted in the Twin Cities, Walt spoke of a powerful work of God in his life that brought him to the place of repentance before his elders and his congregation. After a massive heart attack and a six-bypass heart operation in 2002, Walt was “benched” by God for a major course correction in his ministry.

Walt has been pastor of the Community Church of Joy for nearly 30 years. He is a nationally recognized leader in the church growth and mega-church movement. Under his leadership, his church expanded to a campus of more than 100 acres that includes a school. People from all over the Phoenix area were drawn to the church and its professionally produced programs and worship services.

Yet after being benched by God and spending several weeks rehabilitating after his heart attack, Walt returned to his church—only to sit and weep through the services. His tears flowed because his heart was broken at what the church had become. Like many churches, he realized they had become “conveyors of Christian consumerism.”

Falling in Love with Jesus

After Walt’s heart attack, the Lord began to do a spiritual healing of his heart. During the several weeks that he was away from the “machinery” of the ministry, Walt found himself being drawn closer to the heart of Jesus. He fell deeply in love with Jesus once again. As the Lord began to change his heart, He was also opening Walt’s eyes to see his ministry in a whole new light. What started out as a sincere vision to reach the lost and make disciples had turned into a demanding call to be a “dispenser of Christian goods and services.”

Although Walt had led a thriving and expanding ministry, God brought him to the critical point of surrendering everything. In fact, as Walt surrendered his life and ministry to the Lord in brokenness, the Lord did the unexpected: He healed Walt completely of a physical heart condition that was continuing to plague him.

The Place of Repentance

So why would the Lord move in Walt’s heart to repent for a successful, thriving megachurch in a changing culture? God showed Walt that there was no point in pursuing a “successful” ministry if the community was still lost to Christ. Walt had led his church into the subtle trap of believing that they needed a better production on Sundays—or people would go to another church. The goal had become attracting more people by offering a greater variety of Christian services. They

were just like many of the other churches that were competing for the greater “market share” of Christian consumers.

Thus, at great cost and to the consternation of many in his congregation, Walt stood before them one Sunday and repented. He renewed his commitment to seek only after the Lord, and to invite the presence of Christ to fill the church. He sold out his heart to pursue Jesus alone.

We’ve All Contributed

The temptation here would be to blame Walt (and many other pastors) who have led their congregations down this path of consumerism. But we must not seek to pull the speck out of our leaders’ eyes without looking at the plank in our own. There would be no Christian consumerism if the people in the Church were not assuming the role of consumers! Many believers today are just one step away from heading to the church down the street if their long list of expectations is not met. “Church shopping” is the height of Christian consumerism.

Rather than understanding the relational nature of the Church as a fellowship of redeemed ones who are committed to one another in mutual growth (Ephesians 4), we see the church as a “farmer’s market” where we can go when convenient, shop for what we think we need, and then head home with our “goods.” Whether it is church shopping or conference hopping, we contribute to the perversion of the true purpose of the Church by putting forth our personal needs as the priority.

ReignDown USA

We desperately need repentance as the entire Church. We are in such great need for a call to national repentance. *ReignDown USA* is just such a call that has been originated in the heart of God Himself. This past weekend, Prayer Transformation Ministries hosted several informational meetings to hear the vision of *ReignDown*, as God gave it to a stay-at-home mom, Shawn-Marie Cole. In this vision, Shawn-Marie saw a sea of believers worshiping and repenting before the Lord in venues across the country. Then she saw Michael W. Smith and President Bush on the steps of the Capitol, with Michael leading the nation in worship and President Bush kneeling before the Lord and saying, “I’m sorry.” She then saw a white rain and the fiery presence of God’s hand sweeping the nation in unprecedented healing and restoration.

After seeking the Lord for nearly a year about the vision, the Lord began to provide amazing confirmations that include Michael W. Smith’s commitment to participate in leading the nation in worship from Washington, D.C. on April 26, 2008. Then God miraculously arranged for Shawn-Marie and her father (Walt Kallestad) to have a private 20-minute meeting with the President to share the vision. With tears streaming down his face and a confession of his love for Jesus Christ, President Bush has committed to pray about his involvement on that day.

We believe this is from the Lord. As we listened to Shawn-Marie share the story this weekend, we sensed an overwhelming confirmation that the Lord is truly in this moment in history. ***We plead with you to begin preparing now by opening your heart to a spirit of brokenness and repentance.*** It seems as though revival is as close as our own hearts’ willingness to repent before the Lord. Offer this prayer to Him:

Holy Lord, come and examine my own heart today. See if there is any tendency in me to become a Christian consumer. Forgive me for the ways that I have contributed to this tragedy in the Church. Give me courage to examine my lifestyle and change whatever You point out to me. Give me the strength to change by the power of Your Holy Spirit for Your glory. Bring a heart of brokenness and repentance on me. In Jesus' name, Amen.