

From the Desk of Doug Stringer

Heart Awakening & Church Response



The Need for A Heart Awakening and Church Response

The escalation and acceleration of human crises and natural disasters occurring in both our nation and around the world are things that we cannot ignore. All that can be shaken is being shaken, just as Hebrews 12:26-28 tells us will happen. We have seen earthquakes, floods, fires, and an escalation of natural disasters across the country and the world. We have seen an increase in violence and juvenile crime. We have seen the continued moral failures of our leaders.

It is an hour of urgency in our nation.

A Call to Respond

Government leaders across the country are acknowledging the extreme challenges we face as a nation and are calling for the only true answer to a nation's crisis—prayer and fasting and a seeking of God's face. They recognize the need for seeking God's face through prayer, fasting and worship; and to seek God for His forgiveness, wisdom, and provision for our nation. These gatherings are being called *The Response*. They are a challenge to believers across the country to respond humbly to the crises we face as a nation.

As the Body of Christ, we must respond to the call of our governmental leaders—regardless of political party or affiliation—when they call for believers to gather and seek the Lord on behalf of our nation. We cannot afford to hit our snooze buttons and ignore the warnings about the late hour in which we are living. The souls of millions in our nation hang in the balance and we must decide what our response will be.

As the Coordinator and National Mobilization Director for *The Response*, I'm issuing a call to our own ministry partners and affiliates to seek the Lord regarding their involvement in these solemn assemblies. Even more importantly, I'm asking

all of us to examine our hearts as we seek the Lord for His Church and our nation. The following are some of the ways I feel God is asking us to respond, and I pray you will also ask the Lord how you and your church can participate:

In this hour of crisis, God is calling us to:

1. Be ready and aware of the urgent hour we are in.

In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul tells Timothy to be ready in season and out of season. The Amplified Bible says it this way, “Keep your sense of urgency; stand by, be at hand and ready, whether the opportunity seems to be favorable or unfavorable, whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether it is welcome or unwelcome.”

We must recognize the hour we live in and heed the many warnings of God regarding the direction we have been heading as a nation. As a corporate Church, we must be like Noah, who by divine warning built an ark that served as God’s vehicle of salvation and preservation in the midst of judgment. We must not ignore the warnings and suffer the consequences.

2. Stay awake in the midst of sorrow, anxiety, and stress around us.

In Luke 22:45, while Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Bible says, “He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and said to them, ‘Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.’”

Unfortunately, this is the state of many in the Body of Christ today. The trials we face, the uncertainty in the world around us, the anxiety and stress we experience as we watch the news and see all that is happening around the world—these all can serve to lull us to sleep. We enter into a state of spiritual slumber in order to escape the sorrow and stress we face.

God is calling us to arise and shake sleep. 1 Thessalonians 5:6 (Amplified) says, “Let us not sleep, as the rest do, but let us keep wide awake (alert, watchful, cautious, and on our guard) and let us be sober.”

3. Get God’s perspective.

How do we not become overwhelmed by the chaos and trouble all around us? How do we remain free from fear and anxiety when it seems that the very foundations of our nation are crumbling around us?

We must have God’s perspective on the times in which we live. We must allow our Heavenly Father to lift us up on His shoulders, so that we can get perspective from His vantage point. God wants to transform us into a people with vision—a people with prophetic insight for the days we live in, prophetic understanding of what He is doing around us, and prophetic wisdom to know how to lead others to the unshakable foundation of Christ.

There is a desperate need in both the Church and in our nation for a people with prophetic insight who can both illuminate the Word of God and interpret the present times. Scripture speaks of leaders like these in 1 Chronicles 12:32: “The sons of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do.”

In “The Gift of Prophetic Insight,” A.W. Tozer wrote about religious leaders who lack understanding of present conditions:

“Religious leaders who continue mechanically to expound the Scriptures without regard to the current religious situation are no better than the scribes and lawyers of Jesus' day who faithfully parroted the Law without the remotest notion of what was going on around them spiritually...The prophets never made that mistake nor wasted their efforts in that manner. They invariably spoke to the condition of the people of their times.”

4. **Examine ourselves first.**

Before we can speak to the condition of our nation, we as believers must examine the condition of our own hearts. Many years ago, I was invited by the late Dr. Bill Bright to speak on the subject of “Healing the Moral Soul of Our Nation.” I began to ask a question: How can we heal the soul of a nation when the heart is sick? I believe the Church should be the heart of any community, city or nation. But when the heart is weak or sick it needs a defibrillation. Likewise the Church needs to return to Its first love if we are to impact the soul and moral fabric of society around us.

2 Corinthians 4:1-2 tells us that one of the dangers of losing heart is that we may have the tendency to mishandle the Word of God, adulterating or compromising God's Holy Word. As a result, we have an entire generation of young people disillusioned with the hypocrisy and shallowness they have witnessed. Many are no longer interested in traditional religious activities, but they crave something real!

We need courageous leaders, from the pulpit to the political offices of our nation, who will care more for the people they serve than for themselves. We need those who will be more concerned with building the Kingdom of God than building their own legacies.

Before we can point the finger at those around us, blaming the moral failure of our nation on all those we think are responsible, we must take a long, hard look at ourselves. Nearly 150 years ago, the great preacher Charles Finney preached a message called “The Pulpit is Responsible.”

“Our preaching will bear its legitimate fruit. If immorality prevails in the land, it is our responsibility to a great degree. The decay of the pulpit is responsible. If the church is degenerate and worldly, the pulpit is responsible for it. If the nation loses its interest in religion, the pulpit is responsible for it. If our politics become so corrupt that the very foundations of our government are ready to fall away, the pulpit is responsible for it.”

Finney wrote this message in December of 1873. **How fitting is it today!**

Will we humble ourselves before the Lord and cry out like David, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. “ (Psalm 51:10)

5. **Arise to our purpose and calling.**

Yes, we are living in a time of great shaking, and there is darkness around us that only seems to be getting darker. **But light belongs in the darkness!** It is time for the Church of Jesus to be the light! We must be ready, arise from sleep, get God's perspective, search our hearts, and then arise to the holy calling God has for us.

In Luke 21, Jesus is sharing with His disciples that in the last days, there will be wars, rumors of wars, famines, pestilence, and earthquakes. What He says next in verse 13 is His message for us today: “But it will turn out for you as an occasion for your testimony.”

Brothers and sisters, the world needs what we have. In a time of shaking, in a dark hour, they need the answer that we know and the hope that we possess. We must arise in these days and shine with the light of Christ (Ephesians 5:14).

What Will Our Response Be?

In the midst of economic crisis and moral failure in our nation, how will we respond? Are we a people who will examine our own hearts before we point the finger at others? Will we allow God to cleanse our hearts and give us fresh vision?

Will we then intercede for those who are perishing? Or do we stand back and say, “They’re just getting what they deserve.” Our neighbors, our colleagues, our families, our communities, our nation—they need an intervention from heaven. They need for God to heal our land and set us on an unshakable foundation. What will our response be?

2 Chronicles 7:14 tells us, “If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

The Response gatherings across the country are not political events. They are not a time for preachers to pontificate or politicians to give speeches. Rather they are times for the Church to come before the Lord and cry out on behalf of the land.

The Time is Now

Leonard Ravenhill once said, “Many people want the benefit of the upper room experience at Pentecost, but they’re unwilling to go to their knees at the foot of the cross.” The only way to experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our nation is for us to go to our knees in humility and brokenness, in the fear of the Lord, to cry out on behalf of our families, churches, city, nation, and generation, and ask for God’s intervention.

In 2 Chronicles 5, it says that when all the priests went into the holy place, they came out undivided. God is calling us to a moment of response for our nation that is far greater than any of us can do alone. With a fishing pole, you can catch a fish, but when we are connected to one another, bonded together as one giant net, we will see the greatest harvest we have ever seen.

Time itself seems to be accelerating around us. What used to take years now takes weeks. What used to take weeks now takes days. Our greatest commodity is our time. We need to seek the Lord so we don't waste energy, resources, or time on things that are frivolous. We cannot afford to waste time fighting one another. Let us cross our racial and denominational barriers. We must be a people of Godly character and conviction rather than those who are moved by emotions influenced by personal preferences. Let us come together at the cross of Christ, seeking the forgiveness and wisdom of a loving and yet Holy God.