

Teaching for 4-16-08

Understanding National vs. Nationwide Repentance

In a nation where sin is clearly rampant, we can be quick to call for national repentance. In our desire for the healing and restoring of our land through repentance, the natural inclination is to gather and repent for the sins of our nation. They are many, after all! But is there a difference between *national* repentance and *nationwide* repentance?

As we approach *ReignDown USA* on April 26, it is important that we make a distinction. In understanding the vision of *ReignDown*, we must also be clear on the true call to repentance.

ReignDown USA is primarily a call to *nationwide repentance*. Granted, the sins of our nation are grievous to God—including abortion, racial prejudice, imperialism in other countries of the world, etc. As the people of God, we are quick to point out the sins of others with a rally cry to gather and repent of our corporate sins. However, focusing on national repentance can lead us away from the real issues that we as believers must deal with in our own hearts. A call for *nationwide repentance* is a call for all followers of Jesus Christ across this nation to bow in humility, brokenness, and repentance for our own ways that we have grieved God.

Where the Real Problem Lies

In their book *Reign Down*, Shawn-Marie Cole and Walt Kallestad address this very issue. They write: *A supposed call to national repentance is a diversion, a cheap substitute, a lie. National repentance sounds good, but it keeps us from the real question. It keep me from the real question about me. If you want to change our nation, and surely you must, that change must start with you* (pg. 213).

This dilemma is seen in the statistics that challenge our supposed biblical standards. We say we are for the sanctity of marriage, yet there is little difference between professed believers and those outside the Church when it comes to divorce, teen pregnancy, and other sexual practices. It is easy to rant against the immorality of society without allowing the Lord to look deep into our hearts to reveal our own attitudes and the hidden things we tolerate.

Because of this hypocrisy, we are watching a growing negative attitude toward evangelical believers in our nation today. In the book *UnChristian*, David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons with the Barna Group point out that only three percent of those outside the church (ages 16-29) have a good impression of evangelical Christians. Only 16 percent have a good impression of Christianity in general (pg. 25). Their research found that among this same group, present-day Christianity is viewed as judgmental, hypocritical, too involved in politics, out of touch with reality, and insensitive to others (pg. 28).

No matter what you may think about these findings, the fact is that these impressions are based on real-life encounters between the unchurched and evangelical Christians. You might cry out defensively, but truly repentant hearts will allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the deeper and undiscovered attitudes that dwell within us.

The Need for Nationwide Repentance

Nationwide repentance acknowledges the truth of the role of the Church in the current condition of our nation. In the words of Cole and Kallestad, *The vision of nationwide repentance--a nation of people all repenting as individuals--is the key to our personal wholeness and key to our national future* (pg. 217). *Nationwide repentance—millions of us humbling ourselves, saying yes to Him, handing over control of our lives, yielding ourselves to a probing, searching journey of repentance that takes us to a place of personal wholeness and completion—is the way to fulfill His expectations of us. **He doesn't want some collective act of repentance. He wants a collection of people who have individually repented.** A nation of people who actively follow a lifestyle of repent and believe, repent and change, repent and worship* (pg. 218).

ReignDown USA is not an event of national repentance. It is an invitation to join in saying yes to a lifestyle of repentance that allows God to transform us into the people of God who will truly reflect Jesus to a nation in desperate need of the manifest presence of Christ. God is extending an opportunity to come before Him in brokenness and true repentance that will result in a change of lifestyle.

Imagine how a sweeping nationwide move of repentance can impact our nation! Surely God will be pleased to reign down on us with forgiveness, healing, and restoration. Please accept His invitation to offer your own heart in repentance.