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## Awakening or Slumbering?

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It has been 13 years since 9/11/01. Are you more ready today than you were then?

I know God woke me up that day and my life has not been the same since. He has continually kept me awake when in my humanness I wanted to slumber and return to old comfortable ways. Prior to 911, much like Nehemiah, God showed me the condition of spiritual walls nationally. He began to forge in me a pathway to help Christian become more prepared for any emergency large or small, as He impressed upon me that time was of the essence to prepare His church for what lay ahead. He showed me where we had gone astray as a Christian community and how to provide a positive biblically based pathway to go forward. CEN was formed October 2001, just 13 years ago next month. Those who joined our team at that time could never have imagined the journey God would take us on, one that was very non-traditional.

As you may recall, when the U.S. was hit on 911, it was the first time since Pearl Harbor where citizens knew they were under attack. While those grounded in Christ had forewarned of such an occurrence, based upon Scriptural truth that whatever nation rejects God face consequences for disobedience, the vast majority of Americans returned to their routines once the shock and perfunctory emotional response subsided. As Christian churches brought in grieving visitors one week, eight weeks later they were walking out the back door. Christian media was still reverberating from losing their audiences and donors because they did not have a Christian worldview to present to their needy audiences as they found themselves competing with the secular media. Ministries were scrambling to have an emergency response to capture the ministry opportunities while emergency response was not ever part of their mission prior to 911. Many churches spontaneously started up emergency response groups and suffered serious questions of their fiscal credibility.

Meanwhile, many of these Christian ministries did not do too much to alter their own

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readiness as a result because they found they could return to normal without making many adjustments in how they did their business within just a few months. This was true for most Christians as well they returned to “normal” without any markedly big change in behaviors resulting from that wake up call. Yet, God did not slumber. He is still correcting and patiently prodding a largely deaf generation. What followed, after 911 were more disasters of broader scope and gravity, like Hurricane Katrina. And, more terrorist attacks occurred while we chose to call them different names.

Scripture reminds us in Psalm 145: 18-20 “The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.”

For those who are drawing near to Him and listening to His call, He is hearing. But, we need to ask ourselves are we in a better spiritual readiness condition since we experienced 911? And, if another event like 911 or worse should befall us as a nation would we be in a better position to respond to help others with the Hope of Christ than we were 13 years ago?

If we are indeed at the end of the Church age, as some biblical scholars profess, and beginning the stage of the “agonies” as outlined in Scripture how are we to respond in the “new norm”? What are the some of the tough things we face as a result of being almost 50 years without intentional discipleship formation occurring to replicate the faithful, and what is the result of spending the past 13 without much self-correction? Who is calling us to correct? What are the pitfalls that we face for the “priesthood of believers” who are increasingly loosing their influence and way? What are the most critical things we need to address in our time in order to face the future with biblical assuredness and spiritual fruit?

We have three very strategic gaps in our Christian community today. Biblical Leadership, Biblical Facilitation and Biblical Readiness, Coupled together will determine whether we, as contemporary Christians, will seize the Kingdom expansion moment of our generation or we leave many behind. Revival will not be poured out onto an exceedingly unprepared generation and that is our only Hope.

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Therefore how do we intentionally address the three biblical gaps?

Relationship is still God's method of meeting with man to bridge the gap of separation and return to fellowship with Him as He intended. Our relationship with Him and others - conversion (transformation of the heart) and commission (deployment of the redeemed) are still His plan. This means we are to cultivate those relationships to our dying day - our relationship with Him, our relationships with our families and friends, and our relationships with others who are seeking Him for Hope. If ever there was a moment in history when cultivating our spiritual relationships was important it is now when the Church is in agony.

Leadership in the Church age has largely been based upon denominational or non-denominational membership versus relationship with the God of the universe. Our spiritual leaders have focused to a large extent on numbers, buildings, and programs for the past fifty years. Pastors are not or unable to listen to the voice of God. Followers wait upon designated popular leaders to guide them because they have for so long depended upon them and not learned how to listen and respond to the Lord directly themselves. This generational malady translates hearing God directly and does not produce well-formed disciples. Rather this produces professional church followers rather than spirit-filled responders to where God Himself is leading. We have a gap in God inspired leaders who are committed to altruistically leading the flock in their own spiritual formation. Who will lead the way?

Facilitation in the greater church is sorely lacking due to a built in top down hierarchy methodology, which threatens our ability to respond locally to emergencies of all kinds including our security within and outside the body of Christ, its very mission. While God has already poured out His resources upon us we have largely squandered them, reassigned them for government purposes counter tot the Gospel, and we are in chaos as a body of believers as we do not know how to use these resources well. God may choose to ignore us as stewards if we keep this up, as we have tended to use His resources for political leverage and control or worse yet to annihilation any Christian who does not believe exactly as we do. The Nehemiah principles of working together in true spiritual unity has been hijacked by a false religion which has been invading our churches and seizing our resources for nefarious purposes. Who will guide the path?

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Readiness in the body of Christ does it appear today to be at an all time low? While we hear of the martyrdom of Christians worldwide we see complacency among Christians who are not on the front lines to step us in defense. And, whereas, fifty years ago Christians were discipled intentionally into the fold, now they are largely ignored by their congregations and asked to simply pick up whatever crumbs are tossed out and figure it out themselves. With the realization that the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical lives of people go hand in hand how many much has the Gospel been lost along this rather selfish path? The result is, a lack of strong holy disciples who are up to the challenge before them. These are believers who have done a reality check of our times, are willing to stand courageously, and who are ready to lead others into the fold for such a time as this. Who will stand ready to share the Hope within on Christian, one church, and one Christian community at a time?

As a Christian, are you ready?

Ready Reality Check - The times we live in beg for Christians who have seen the realities before them, know the risks and who have asked God "How do you want me to live in this age?" They accept God's Providential plan for their lives in living through this time based upon trust in His word. These believers do not have their heads in the sand just waiting for the next shoe to drop or are they accepting God has allowed this for their good?

Ready to Stand - Have you seen the brutal reality of our times refused to look away thinking it will go away? Or, Have you accepted your providential role in such a time as this and ready to stand courageously now and for the battle which lies ahead? Have you asked God and personally heard from Him about what you can personally do about what lies ahead? These are times, which call for the maximum of sacrifice as we see with our brothers and sisters in other lands where martyrdom is now a daily event.

Ready to Respond - Are you ready to give an answer for your Hope in Christ? Have you intentionally taken steps to become spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically strong to lead others in the fold when 90% will ask "Where is God in this?" "If you cannot answer these questions then today is the day to become a

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CEN would like to stand with you in becoming more aware of our times, preparing in advance, and responding to what lies ahead with the Hope of Christ.

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