

The Road to Revival

The Road to
REVIVAL

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The Road to Revival

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my Father, who would have been 94 this year. I dedicate it to him because he had an insatiable hunger for understanding God's Word. Dad liked raw, in your face, life-changing truth. I dedicate it to him because of the number of times he invited me to the front pew of the church to pray and bask in the presence of God with him as a child. Those moments were life changing. I dedicate it to him because I miss him.

I also dedicate this book to my Heavenly Father, perfect in both love and faithfulness. With all my heart I believe He is calling the church back to where we once were, full of the life of the Spirit. I prayerfully hope that He can use this book in some way to perfect us as a church, so that we can finish this age as the early church began.

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STANDING AT THE CROSSROADS

Jeremiah 6:16 is a wonderful passage of Scripture. It provides very simple instruction for us for when we come to complex places in our life and in our walk with God. Here it is: *“This is what the LORD says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’”* **(Jeremiah 6:16)**

Jeremiah prophesied at one of the most difficult times in Israel’s history. The small western Mediterranean countries were often pawns in the hands of the big imperial governments, such as Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. The time at which Jeremiah prophesied in Israel was no exception. The big boys were up in arms against each other. The fact that Israel had wandered far from God left them in a very vulnerable position. They had stepped out of His protection.

Bad things were coming for Israel, and it was Jeremiah’s job to warn them. Israel had stood at the crossroads, and had chosen a path very different from the way that God had laid out for them.

Nations still come to crossroads. The covid-19 virus may have brought us to one in 2020. Businesses come to crossroads as technology changes, as competitors find success, and as the overall economy impacts their business. Individuals come to crossroads in their personal lives in all kinds of ways. Decisions have to be made that affect their jobs, their marriages, their relations with their children, etc.

Churches come to crossroads as well. Society

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brings us there, as cultural norms challenge the way we do things. Financial situations can bring churches to a crossroad. Strife in interpersonal relationships can bring churches to a crossroad. Perhaps this is the most important crossroad for a church: there is a corner where 'loving God' and 'loving God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength' meet.

I have heard many people, over the years, pray for revival and encourage the church to do so as well. Recognizing the need for revival is a wonderful awareness that as individuals and as churches - we are at a crossroads.

Please read this next sentence very carefully. If we, as individuals and as a church, are going to pray for revival - we have to understand that the answer to our prayer will come by revelation of what we must change in our own lives. The Holy Spirit will show us what we must do to receive what God has done in the past, and has always wanted to do through us, the church.

It is recorded, in Acts 2 that God poured out His Holy Spirit. You will not find a verse anywhere in the Scripture that says that God intended for the church to become any less powerful, or any less effective than what was recorded in the next eight chapters. God has given to us, His church, all that we need to be all that we want to be. He poured out His Spirit, and His Spirit is readily available to the church whenever we are ready to receive. The power of the Holy Spirit was intended to be at work through His body until the end of the church age.

We can't make revival God's responsibility. He gave life and power to the church. If we don't have the kind of spiritual life that we read about, or that we desire, it is not because God hasn't answered our prayer for

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revival. It is because we haven't heard the answer to our prayer for revival.

This is not intended to be critical, nor is it an excuse. We all struggle with this. The reason we need revival is because we have chosen priorities and lifestyles that are contradictory to what God wants for us. It is because of our love for material things, causing us to have established idols in our lives. It is because we have time for everything we want to do, other than cultivating a deeper intimacy with God. The psalmist penned: *“Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? 4 The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.”* (**Psalm 24:3-4**).

So here we are. The church has a sincere desire for revival. We have discussed it, and we have prayed for it. It is an honourable desire. Whether you have realized it or not, acknowledging that there is a need for revival is acknowledging that there is something in your own life, or in our church, that is hindering the flow of the Holy Spirit that has already been made available to us. The good news is that the desire for revival is hopefully an indication that we are ready to make way for the Spirit to do His work in us and through us.

My definition of revival is pretty simple: “Life had, life lost, and life regained.” Here is a wonderful reality. Peter said that *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”* (**2 Peter 1:3**) The Apostle Paul taught in Ephesians 1:19-20 that the same power and energy that raised Christ from the dead is available to us. That bears repeating: “The same power and energy that raised Christ from the dead is available to us.” We can

never say that God is not answering our prayer for revival. Spiritual life and power is available to us in abundance, and it flows like a never ending river. We can only look at ourselves, and at our church, and prayerfully ask: “What is preventing the flow of the Holy Spirit through us?”

If revival is “Life had, life lost, and life regained”, we currently stand on a road called “Life Had” staring at a decision between “Life Lost” and “Life regained”. The natural tendency is to always look forward to what we are hoping for. In many instances, that’s the best thing to do. We are told to forget the past. If we have repented, God has forgiven the past, therefore we are encouraged to always look forward to what God is going to do in and through us. That’s a good philosophy in many aspects of life, but in regard to revival, it’s the wrong first approach. Jeremiah had the right idea. There are things to learn from those who had what we want. That’s the place to start.

The Old Way is the Good Way

“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is.” (Jeremiah 6:16)

When we pray for revival, we aren’t looking for something new. We are looking for a kind of spiritual vitality that the church has experienced before. Therefore, it only makes sense that as we stand at the crossroads, we look back – not forward. Still, we must be careful to look past all of our successes and failures. Don’t get hung up in pride of past successes or remorse for past failures. You don’t want to get hung up on something less than the ideal. Nor do you want to get hung up on feelings of being undeserving. Keep looking through time

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until you get to the most pure, most powerful, most effective, most alive example of Christianity that you can find. Stop there! Then look at what they did to become those people or that church.

Personally, I go all the way back to the New Testament church, the church immediately following its' birth in Acts, chapter 2, when Christ poured out His Spirit. This is what I find: *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.

45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

This is what I see on the surface, (we will delve into this deeper in lesson three), and it is a great measurement of our spiritual life. The activities of the early church are like the devices used in a hospital room that monitor our vital statistics. They determine how alive we are.

- Devotion to sound theology, or the apostles’ teaching
 - The apostles had been with Jesus longer than anyone. They were tutored by Jesus and prepared for the role of establishing the church, therefore they were the best and only source of good Christian theology.

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Thankfully, they left us much of the New Testament.

- Devotion to fellowship with each other
 - Unity was essential to what God was doing and always will be

- They were committed to never forgetting the work of Christ at Calvary, so they devoted themselves to the breaking of bread
 - The cross was at the core of their faith. It was the foundation of their relationship with Jesus. This was a truth that many Jews could never accept, but that the new Christians never wanted to forget.

- They were devoted to prayer
 - They didn't just fellowship with one another, they fellowshiped with God regularly.

- They were devoted to praise
 - They were so thankful for what God had done in their lives that they couldn't help but praise Him and give Him glory for what he had done.

Is this a formula for revival? No, but they may be evidences that revival is taking place. It is a definition of pure Christianity when done out of sincere desire rather than a sense of religious obligation. The results were amazing.

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Our culture may not respond to a church on fire the same way they did in Jerusalem back then, but it is hard for me to believe that authentic Christianity won't be appealing to many.

The result of a kind of Christianity that was rooted in good theology, sincere fellowship, the cross at its foundation, prayer, and praise was pretty amazing. The results were three-fold, and seem to be the natural evidences of the intense presence of the Holy Spirit

- Signs and wonders
- Favour of all the people
- People were saved daily

The degree to which we lack these results of spiritual life and vitality may be an indication as to the degree to which we need revival. So, as we stand at the crossroads; be certain to take some time and look back. Travel in your mind down the ancient paths, and you will see what the good way is.

This Way or That Way?

“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it.” (Jeremiah 6:16)

There are two ways to walk any path. You can go 'this way', or you can go 'that way'. The pathway to revival is no different. There is a 'this way' and a 'that way' on the same path. There is a right way to walk on it that gets us to where we want to be going; and there is a wrong way that takes us a whole different direction. The wrong way may not be sinful, but it does not lead us to revival.

One of the things that we have to watch out for is doing the right things for the wrong reason. Those wrong reasons may be an attempt to obligate God to respond a

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certain way, to selfishly get what we want from God, or sometimes we do the right things without them being heartfelt.

Right behaviours can become meaningful traditions that lead us to where we want to be; or they can be meaningless acts that lead us away from where we want to be. It depends on whether you go ‘this way’ or ‘that way’.

Not long ago I read a quote that simply said: “Tradition: Peer pressure from dead people”. It is a bit of a shocking statement that has an element of truth to it; but can’t be taken at full face value. Before making a judgment about such a statement, it may be important to understand the meaning of the word ‘tradition’. Meriam Webster: “tradition - an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (such as a religious practice or a social custom)”. A customary thought, action, or behaviour is not necessarily wrong. A tradition is no different than a routine. Going to church on Sunday morning, if you do it routinely, is a tradition. It’s a pattern of behaviour passed on by our forefathers.

Traditions can be one of two things. There is a ‘this way’ and a ‘that way’ to traditions, and it’s very personal. Generalizations don’t work here. Some traditions are a ‘this way’ to some people and the same tradition is a ‘that way’ to others. Traditions are good, and traditions are bad, but not necessarily in and of themselves. It depends on the motivation of the person that involves themselves in that tradition.

If the tradition heightens an awareness of God’s glory, confirms and reminds the individual of good theology, and contributes to a closer walk with God – it is

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a good tradition.

If the tradition is simply a religious act that you do, thinking it will contribute to you getting to heaven, or if it reinforces bad theology, or does nothing to draw you closer to God – then it is a pointless tradition.

So, if you get up every morning to read your Bible and pray, but you do it to meet an obligation (because that's what Christians are supposed to do), but get little or nothing out of it; it has become a meaningless tradition. If you follow the same routine, find truth in God's Word that truly changes your life, and you come away feeling that you have truly fellowshiped with God; this is a good tradition. If you have become empowered and equipped to do God's will for the day; then you have developed a tradition or routine that has tremendous value to your spiritual life.

If you attend a church fellowship event because you like egg salad sandwiches; it is a worthy church tradition that you participate in that has little or no spiritual value. If you attend because it provides you the opportunity to have sincere fellowship with your church family, and to love and encourage someone; it is a church tradition that has tremendous spiritual value.

If you look at the calendar, and think "Oh no. It's communion Sunday. We're going to be later getting home for lunch today", you are participating in a tradition that was established by Jesus Himself that has no spiritual value to you. It is merely an inconvenience. But if excitement stirs within you because the communion service reminds you of the price God was willing to pay to restore fellowship with us, how much He loves us, and that He has given us eternal life; then it is a tradition of

great value.

We can get on the right path for the wrong reason, which takes us ‘that way’ instead of ‘this way’. It is so important that we ask ourselves why we do the things we do, what are we getting out of it, and is it taking us closer and closer to the life and power that is available to us through the Holy Spirit. Is the path you are taking leading you to where you want to go?

Rest for Your Souls

“...ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16)

If the last phrase of the verse doesn’t get your attention, I don’t know what will: *“...you will find rest for your souls”*. Doesn’t that sound amazing? It seems that the effect of revival on the community will be signs and wonders, favour of the people, and many coming to know Christ. But, the effect of revival on us personally is perfect peace. Our soul is made up of our mind, emotions, and volition (ability to make decisions). So, our thoughts, and feelings will be at rest, and you will make spirit-led decisions without stress. Peter told the crowd in **Acts 3:19**: *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord”*

There are a lot of wonderful Christian people today that are doing so many things right when it comes to their spiritual life, and yet not all of them are getting these results. Some are living in emotional and mental turmoil. Is it possible that they are doing the right things – not sinful things – but doing them ‘that way’ instead of ‘this way’? This is something to seriously consider if you are not getting the end results that you should be getting. Perhaps you are on the right road, but travelling that road

the wrong way.

As you pray for revival, the Holy Spirit may put His finger on something, and say: “You are going the wrong way with that.”

- ❖ For example, He may say: “When you pray, all you do is talk. I want to talk too. Please listen to me when you pray.”
- ❖ Or, “You’re reading lots of chapters in my Word, but I wanted you to stop after the second verse and talk to you about how to apply that to your life.”
- ❖ Maybe He would say: “Did you know that _____ was really down at the church dinner today. I tried to get you to talk to him/her, but you wanted to get another sandwich before they were all gone. When you got back to the table, he/she was gone.”
- ❖ Possibly you would hear this: “You’ve been praying so hard and so long for _____. Yesterday I finally had all of the details worked out, and I answered that prayer. You didn’t even acknowledge it. You acted as if it was some kind of coincidence. There was no praise. There was no thanksgiving.”

Once again, this verse is interesting. “*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord*” (**Acts 3:19**). The word ‘repent’ seems like a scary word, but it isn’t. Often people think that it applies only to terrible sinners. It does apply to any and every sinner, but it isn’t restricted to them. It simply means to ‘turn around’. It may just mean that you are going ‘that way’ when you should be going ‘this way’. You are doing the right things, you just

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have to do them a different way or with different motivation.

We just may hear God say to us: “If you truly want revival, if you truly want to see signs and wonders, if you truly want to see others come to know me, and if you truly want to be at peace in your heart – turn around.”

There are a lot of people that can walk the very same path they are on. They just need to travel that path a different way, with listening ears, with a pure heart, and with godly motives. When we travel the right path, going the right direction, there is peace that passes all understanding to be found at the end of the road.

Conclusion

How many want to see God do signs and wonders, confirming the truth of His Word, so that people come to know Him daily? We all do.

How many of you want to put an end to the mental and emotional turmoil you’ve been feeling, and you want to be at perfect peace? We all do.

In other words, how many of you want true revival? Let’s not look ahead just yet. We’ll do that in the fourth chapter. In the beginning of the process, we have to stop looking ahead; trying to define what revival will look like in the 21st century and in North American culture. Revival will result in the church getting what the church once had. Revival is “Life had, life lost, and life regained.” That life is readily available to us. We have to identify it so we know what it looks like when it comes, so we know the vital signs. The reason we need revival is because we have lost what we once had and is rightfully ours. You can read all about the church that is

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alive in Acts, chapters 2 to 10.

We have to start by stopping, and looking back. We have to follow the ancient path, the good way, and we have to follow that path the right way for the right reason. To move forward in the power of the Holy Spirit as a church, we have to look backward in humility with a desire to do the right things for the right reasons.

I SURRENDER ALL

Nebuchadnezzar was king of the world. He was the king over the massive Babylonian Empire. He had a dream that wasn't just a dream. It was a message, and he knew it. None of the Babylonian wise men could interpret the dream for him, increasing his frustration level almost to the limit. He needed to know what it meant.

Some of the best thinkers; young men from the land of Israel, had been brought from their homeland to Babylon. They were brought from Israel to be raised up as Babylonians. Daniel was one of those young men. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came at the same time, for the same reason.

Daniel had interpreted the king's dreams before when no one else could, so when his own wise men failed, the king once again called on Daniel. *"Now, Belteshazzar (Daniel's Babylonian name), tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you." (Daniel 4:18)* After being told the dream, this was Daniel's response: *"Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries! 20 The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, 21 with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air-- 22 you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it*

reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.²³ "You, O king, saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live like the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.'²⁴ "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: 25 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.²⁶ The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.²⁷ Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue." (Daniel 4:19-27)

After all of the trouble it took to get an interpretation of the dream he seemingly learned nothing. So, here is what happened. *"All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"³¹ The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. 32 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."³³ Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was*

fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.³⁴ At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.³⁵ All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"³⁶ At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble." (Daniel 4:28-37)

This is the second chapter in a book about revival. It seems like an odd passage to use relative to this topic, but in reality it is a necessary starting point.

Like Nebuchadnezzar, we have to stop building our own kingdoms. We have to stop elevating ourselves above the Lord before we can expect the fullness of God's presence and power. Our lives must be completely God's, not ours.

This sounds pretty bold. It is straight up kind of teaching. In fact, you might think that it is overly confrontational with expectations that are too high. Truth be known, how many times have we all sung this great hymn, committing our self to what I just said – making our life completely God's, not ours? If you've sung the hymn sincerely, you have acknowledged that I am correct.

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I surrender all
I surrender all
All to Thee my blessed Savior
I surrender all

Or...

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise

The thing is, most of us are not completely surrendered to God, and we will not experience revival until we are what we sing about – completely surrendered to Him.

The apostle Paul wrote: *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.”* (**Romans 12:1**) He is making reference to the Jewish sacrificial system. In the Old Testament a sacrificial lamb never came out alive. They were hung with their throat slit, blood drained out, and put on the fire until they were done. They came to the temple alive, but they left dead.

This is what Paul is talking about. We come into this relationship with God - alive, but if we are going to receive all that God has for us, it can’t be long before we die. We die to the world, we die to self, and we give ourselves completely over to God.

Similar principles apply to the church as a whole.

- The church we attend has to be God’s church, not

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ours. It doesn't matter how many nails you may have driven. It doesn't matter how many drywall screws you put in. The church is God's church. We are merely custodians.

- The worship service is God's worship service. Worship is never about us.
- The vision of the church must be God's vision, not ours.
- The ministries of the church have to fulfil God's agenda, not ours.

Until we get to that place where the church is completely God's, a large part of what we are doing as a church equates to eating grass.

This won't be a popular statement, but I'm sure you will realize that you can't argue. If any part of the church programming is designed to please people ahead of God – whether it be the songs we choose for our worship service, the length of time our services last, the way we express our worship, then we are worshipping people rather than God. We exist as a church...

- Because He is God
- For God
- To learn about God
- To do God's work

Many churches, however, design their programs, their worship service, etc. to satisfy the interests of the most vocal individuals; leaving God largely out of the equation.

God is not unreasonable. He desires for people to be part of His body. He wants people to come into relationship with Him, to learn about Him, to become intimate with Him, and to serve Him. He wants that more than we do. So, His ways are not going to be designed to

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scare people away or to make church uncomfortable. But, understand that when His Spirit is allowed to flow freely, the Spirit will draw people more than any...

- Program
- Modern chorus
- Old Hymn
- Guitars
- Drums
- Smoke machines
- Coloured lights

If we are going to be a church that experiences revival, and we need to be for the sake of the community; we need to prioritize God in everything that we do. We need to remember that worshipping God, or giving Him glory, is the primary purpose for which we exist.

The first person that matters when we plan our service - is God. The first person that matters when we design our programs - is God. The percentage of people who like or dislike the music is secondary to whether or not God has been glorified. Whether people think that the service is too long, or too controlled by the clock, is secondary to whether or not God's purposes have been met and His Spirit has been allowed to do His work.

Everything we do must be planned and bathed in prayer, asking God what will please Him the most and what will bring Him the most glory. As soon as we do anything else, church just became about us – not Him. A church that is about us will not lead us to revival, even if we are doing what many would perceive to be 'the right things'. All that matters, really, is what Jesus taught. *"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of*

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worshippers the Father seeks.²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth." (**John 4:23-24**)
Worshipping Him in spirit and in truth is a worthy goal.

Our worship is not what we do physically. Our worship is not the songs we sing. Our worship is not the style of music we choose. Those are merely tools we use to express ourselves. Our worship is what is in our hearts, and whether or not we are truthfully lifting our entire being before Him; and giving Him glory. As soon as our opinions and preferences enter our heart, we are not worshipping God. When personal preference comes into play, true worship tends to get pushed to the side. It amounts to worshipping self rather than God. At that point, we are out to pasture. We are not on the altar of sacrifice. We are not candidates for revival, and we cannot expect God's presence to impact our lives because God inhabits worship. So, if we are not worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, we can't expect Him to be present.

Nebuchadnezzar took glory that belonged to God. He worshipped Himself. He said, *"Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"* (**Daniel 4:30**). This happened: He lost his position as king. He lived with wild animals. He ate grass like cattle. His hair was so long and thick that it looked like feathers. His nails were so long that they curled like the talons or claws of a bird. Nebuchadnezzar became abnormal. He lost it. Some would say that he went 'crazy'.

Let's establish in our minds what normal Christianity is in the mind of our creator, so that we can determine if we are normal or not.

In the Garden of Eden, God walked with man. He

created us for fellowship with Him. In Acts 2, when the church was given birth, the church was devoted to...

- The apostles teaching
- The breaking of bread
- Fellowship
- Prayer
- Worship

There were signs and wonders, and people came to know the Lord daily. In the mind of God, it is normal for us to long for fellowship with Him. It is normal for us, as members of the same body, to love one another. It is normal to love His Word, love others, and desire to share our faith with others. It is normal for signs and wonders to take place to confirm the truth of the message we share.

So, if revival is 'life had, life lost, and life regained', it is logical that the revived believer, and the revived church will prioritize the things that God views as a normal part of the Christian life.

Worship is at the core of normal living in the mind of God. Worship is so much more than a few songs that we sing on Sunday morning. Worship puts God above everything, including self. If worship doesn't define us as individual Christians, or us as a church, we are out to pasture.

Here is what we must do to get on the altar of worship, or the altar of sacrifice where we belong.

To Be Revived we must Raise Our Eyes

"At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored." (Daniel 4:34) This is the beginning of becoming revived. This is the beginning of being a true worshipper. Raise your eyes toward heaven.

Try this if you have a pen and paper handy. If you have any negative opinions about the worship service, write it down. If you have any negative opinions about your pastor, write it down. If you don't like the way the church is run, write it down. If there is something about the people around you that you don't like, write it down. Write down the things that you are proud of. Write down your hurts, your challenges, and your insecurities. Now hold that list in front of you, and begin to look up. Look way up. Look toward the heavens. Can you see any of those things that you have written down? No, you can't because you are looking above them. That's what we all have to do. We have to look above our opinions, our hang-ups, and our distractions, and look at God.

If you look at the worship leader, you will find fault. If you look at the preacher, you will find fault. If you look at the church leadership you will find fault.

To be revived, you have to lie down on the altar of sacrifice, look past your list of dislikes, look to the heavens and see God. That is the beginning of revival. That is the beginning of being a true worshipper.

To be Revived We Must Honour and Glorify Him Who Lives Forever

"I honoured and glorified him who lives forever." (Daniel 4:34)

A partial definition of the word 'honour' is: "to worship, to confer a distinction upon, to bow or curtsy to."

A definition of the word 'glorify' is: "to give glory, honour, or high praise to; to exalt to give glory to, especially through worship."

To glorify and give honour are essentially the same

thing. It is something we give to God. A song isn't worship, but given to God it becomes worship. A raised hand isn't worship, but given to God it becomes worship. Quiet reflection isn't worship, but given to God it becomes worship. Dropping to your knees isn't worship, but given to God it becomes worship. Your acts of service are not worship, but given to God they become worship. I'm sure you get the idea.

One of the things that characterized the baby church is praise, or acknowledging God's goodness toward them. They gave the praise to God. To be revived, you have to give God something that brings honour and glory to Him.

What is God worth to you? Is He worth pushing through your uncomfotableness and raising your hand? Is He worth telling someone about Him? Is He worth sharing a testimony of something God has done in your life? Is He worth using the talents and gifts He has given you for His service?

I have two simple questions for you. First, what are you giving God that brings honour and glory to Him? Second, what more can you give?

When We Die to Self We Will Be Revived

"At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before." (Daniel 4:36)

This is truly amazing. The man was a complete animal. He had totally lost it. In today's terms, he had gone insane. But when he began to worship God, rather than self; not only did he get his sanity back, his advisers and nobles sought him out. God preserved the respect of

the people. His position was restored. He was put back on the throne. His kingdom became larger. All of the riches and pomp that came along with his position was restored to him.

God will bless you as an individual, and will bless the church when He knows that we will use our blessing to give Him glory and honour. He will bless us when we stop and recognize His blessings as something that flows out of His grace, rather than something we have earned or deserve.

He will revive us! God blesses people who prioritize their relationship with Him. God blesses true worshippers. God blesses people who give back to Him in the form of glory and honour.

He will give us growth, and a position of honour in the community because of His confidence that we will give that honour back to Him. I am not suggesting that we worship with selfish motive, because that doesn't work. But, I am saying, without reservation, that when we are a church that truly worships in spirit and in truth, God will bless us beyond anything we have experienced before.

Conclusion

“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.” (Daniel 4:37)

Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson the hard way. He learned that we have to keep our hands off of what belongs to God. For us, that is the church. It is not our worship service, and they are not our programs. When we make them our own it leads to loss of spiritual vitality and life.

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The church will only experience revival when we give everything we are and everything we do to God as an act of worship; taking nothing for ourselves.

There are just a few things that we have to put in place for God to do amazing things in and through our church. I am not proposing a system, or a formula. I'm simply saying that this is how God works.

Let go! Give up ownership. Lift your eyes toward the heavens. Give glory and honour to Him who lives forever. Be a true worshipper, in spirit and in truth. Then, watch how God blesses!!

HOPEFULLY DEVOTED TO YOU

Look at the first three words of the passage to follow. The whole passage is important, but these words infuse meaning into the rest of the passage that is vitally important to what happened historically, and to what we want to happen in our own lives.

All of the good things that happened in the early church are important in and of themselves; but at the same time were symptoms of a heart condition. They were symptoms of ‘devotion’.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.

45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42-47)

So, it seems obvious that the commitment to good theology, prayer, and to the fellowship of believers; along with placing extreme importance on the cross, were all the result of doing one thing right. It is that one thing that we will focus our attention on.

In June of 1978 the very popular movie, “Grease” hit the theatres. It was a huge hit, with rising stars such as John Travolta and Olivia Newton John.

In the movie, Sandy (Olivia Newton John) and

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Danny (John Travolta) meet at the beach in the summer time, and fall in love. Neither of them realized that they would both be attending Rydell High come fall. Danny was the leader of the 'T-Birds'. With such a position he had a 'bad boy' reputation to live up to. It was a reputation that required him to be a very different kind of person than the one Sandy fell in love with in the summer. Sandy hung out with the 'Pink Ladies'. These two groups clashed at the very first fall pep rally, causing immediate friction between the two lovers.

As most gang members do in real life, at one time or another, Sandy broke out into song and dance.

"Hopelessly Devoted To You"

Chorus

But now there's nowhere to hide
Since you pushed my love aside
I'm out of my head
Hopelessly devoted to you
Hopelessly devoted to you
Hopelessly devoted to you

Can you see what is going on in this movie? - 'Love had, love lost, and love regained'. And what was the key to getting that love back? ...hopeless devotion.

If revival is - 'Life had, life lost, and life regained', then I would say that the key is the same. The only difference is that the key is 'hopeful', not 'hopeless' devotion'.

A look into the Scripture reveals that the Garden of Eden was a love story between God and man, creator and creation. They fellowshipped together regularly in the

garden. God physically came to the garden to visit Adam and his wife, Eve. We know that because they “heard Him” walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Many have had a wonderful relationship with God since Adam and Eve, but I can’t imagine that anyone had anything so pure and so intimate as what they did. Adam and Eve began to behave differently. They chose to act in a way that they knew would displease God, and that intimate, pure fellowship with Him was broken.

We find another love story in Acts 2. It is a love story between the Holy Spirit, and the church that He gave birth to. It was the best possible relationship that could be attained between God and man in a fallen world. Many people were away from home, in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. They accepted Christ, met the Holy Spirit, and fell in love with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But, then they had to go home. They had other priorities there. Like Danny, they had a reputation and a pre-established lifestyle. They had responsibilities. Some people, not all, began to behave differently. It negatively impacted the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church.

Over time, the very behaviours that harmed the relationship between God and His church became normal. Behaviours that actually prevent revival have become part of our ‘religion’, and harm our relationship. Church done ‘our way’ has not contributed to the kind of intimacy that we could have with the God who loves us.

God, however, has stayed committed to the relationship between Himself and His bride. He remains “Hopelessly devoted to you.” We must become “Hopefully” devoted to Him.”

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Until that devotion becomes both mutual and equal, we will not regain the kind of relationship that the church had with the Holy Spirit. That relationship was intense. There were signs and wonders. People were added to the church daily. When there was mutual devotion between God and man, the impact on the lives that made up the church was incredible. **Acts 2:42** tells us what the evidence of the church's devotion to God was: *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."* This was the response of the 3,000 people who accepted Christ as their Saviour on the Day of Pentecost. I can't ignore the fact that Luke does not say that they were devoted to God, but they were devoted to...

- The apostle's teaching
- The fellowship
- The breaking of bread
- Prayer

Still, it seems obvious that their devotion to those things only has real spiritual value because of a deeper devotion. It's that deeper devotion that I want to examine.

The response of the new Christians was multi-faceted, but was rooted in one essential characteristic. That characteristic is 'devotion'.

It makes sense that if the quality of life and effectiveness in the church we attend isn't the same as when the church started; or at least as good, we should take some of the same measures that they did. We should strive to be full of the Holy Spirit and develop the evidences of His presence. That means that if we want to have the kind of spiritual vitality that the early church had, we must regain whatever caused them to have that vitality.

That was the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

When a hockey team struggles, you will often hear both players and coach say: “We have to get back to the fundamentals of the game.”

Revival starts with devotion to intimacy with God. Intimacy with God results in devotion to the fundamentals that brought life to the church.

God’s Devotion to Our Spiritual Life

God is not unlike Sandy, in the movie, “Grease”. He is hopelessly devoted to you. He is devoted to the worst of sinners. He is devoted to all of humanity, even those that He knows will never accept Him; because He loves everyone, and gives everyone the same opportunity.

God’s devotion to us is a beautiful example of what devotion looks like. I believe that by looking at it, there is much to be learned about the nature of true devotion.

In a relationship, it doesn’t matter what Meriam Webster has to say, unless you are in a relationship with Meriam Webster. What matters is how the person you are in a relationship with defines devotion.

So, we will take a look at how God expressed His devotion to us. There are five things that I would like to look at quickly. By doing so, we will understand God’s definition of devotion. This, in turn, will help us know how to please Him.

After Adam and Eve sinned, God immediately had a plan for reconciliation

We all know the story of Adam and Eve. They had everything we could ever wish for, except for indoor plumbing. I don’t think they had that. They did, however

live in a garden. It was a garden without weeds, a garden full of every kind of fruit you could think of. Two pure rivers ran through this garden, no doubt teeming with fish – the Tigris and the Euphrates.

The most beautiful thing in Eden was that they had intimate fellowship with our creator in a way that is beyond anything we could possibly imagine. However, they did the one thing that they were asked to ‘not’ do, and suffered the consequences that God did not want them to suffer. They lost everything that the Garden of Eden had to offer, including fellowship with God. Free-will had to have both blessings and consequences for it to be real free-will.

God immediately had a plan for reconciliation. Satan’s punishment was announced even before Adam and Eve’s, and within Satan’s punishment was a plan for reconciliation with mankind. *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:15).* This is the first prophesy of a coming Messiah. The offspring (Jesus) of a woman (Mary) would crush the head of the serpent who led Adam and Eve into sin. In other words, by the death of the Son of God/Son of man, Satan’s ultimate destruction would be guaranteed. The Son of God, however, would raise victorious over sin and death. This is a victory in which every believing follower of Christ will participate in. *“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.” (Romans 16:20)*

God wasn’t willing to just give up on us. He immediately had a plan to reconcile if we want to. Time and again God had every reason to throw His hands in the

air, and just forget about us. At the time of the flood He was so frustrated, but He found one man worth saving. That one man was enough to preserve the plan of reconciliation. So, He did. He saved Noah and his family. He could have done away with humanity and created a whole new planet with a whole new race. But, He was totally devoted to us – to you –to me. So, He made an immediate plan of reconciliation. He had no intention of this separation between Him and us being permanent.

He wrote us a love letter

He gave us His Word; a book to help us understand His plan of reconciliation.

The Torah, which is the first 5 books of the Bible, was written for those who lived before Jesus came. There is much for us to gain from it today, but those books were originally for the early Jews.

The New Testament was written for those of us who lived after Jesus came. Everything in this timeless love letter, both Old and New Testaments, pointed to three things; all a beautiful expression of devotion.

- How to restore our relationship with Him
- How much He loves us
- An explanation of His love language, so we know how to show Him how much we love Him in return

He gave us His life. When I talk about God giving us the life of Christ, I'm not just talking about Calvary. When we consider the three years of Jesus' public ministry, how can we define it? His life was a constant expression of compassion, commitment to humanity, and love for mankind. He consistently gave us His life for those three

years. The expression of that love culminated during the final days of His life. After being beaten to the point of being almost unrecognizable, He died.

Why? Because that's what a relationship with you and I is worth to Him. That's how badly He wanted to be reconciled with us. "*Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*" (**Ephesians 5:2**) To God, that is the definition of devotion. It is to do whatever is necessary, to do all you can do, and to give all you have to give until there is nothing left that you can do or give to make reconciliation possible.

He gave us His Spirit

When a person accepts God's offer of reconciliation, God gives us the Holy Spirit for six reasons:

1. He gives us His Spirit as a deposit. His presence in us guarantees our reconciliation. "*When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*" (**Ephesians 1:13-14**)

2. He gives us His Spirit so we have divine wisdom, knowledge, desire, and the ability to please God. He gives us His Spirit to help us meet the desires of His love language. "*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*" (**2 Peter 1:3-4**)

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3. He gives us His Spirit to adjust our character so that we can be the person we really want to be; to be the kind of person we see when we look at Jesus. *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23)*

4. He gives us His Spirit to enable us to do the things we are naturally good at - at a supernatural level. Because of the Holy Spirit's presence in our life we can do the things we have always been good at in a way that will cause people to see God at work through us. *“...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.” (Romans 12:5-8)*

5. He gives us His Spirit so that we can do supernatural things for the benefit of the whole body of Christ. *“To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Corinthians 12:8-11)*

6. By giving us His Spirit, He gives us the ability to share the news with others that God loves them and wants to be reconciled with them as well. Peter said: *“The Lord is*

not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

Jesus promised this: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)*

He is forever committed

In Jesus’ final words to His disciples, speaking to all of those who have and will live during the church age, He said: *“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)*. This includes us.

He is saying to those who have responded to His invitation of reconciliation: “Now that we are back together, understand that I will never leave you. I’m not giving up on this relationship. I’m in this for the long haul.”

So that’s God’s definition of Devotion. When Adam and Eve chose to separate, He didn’t even let a moment go by before He announced a means by which we could be reconciled. He wrote us a love letter that explains how to be reconciled. He gave His life - the price required to make reconciliation possible. He knew how high the price tag was for our fellowship, and paid it. He gave His Spirit, because He knew that our character had been damaged and weakened by sin. He promised that He would never leave us. That’s the standard of devotion that He has set before us.

Hopeful Devotion

Let’s consider what our devotion to God may look like, keeping His devotion to us in mind. I believe that

when our devotion to God, done in a biblical way, meets God's devotion to us; the impact is powerful. It's like when lightning splits the air and subsequently comes back together, causing a huge clap of thunder. The result of God and man's relationship coming back together with equal devotion is huge. It is powerful. It sends shockwaves through the church. It is revival.

Together in one accord

The first thing we will look at is corporate. You have to understand that God looks at us in two ways. He sees us individually, and He sees us all together as one body. He expects us to be devoted to each other, which to Him is a display to those around us of our devotion to God. In other words, He expects unity. He expects us to function as one body.

My definition of unity is "Everyone going the same direction, at the same time, for the same purpose." As silly as it sounds, stop for a moment and think about your body wanting to go three different directions. You may want to have an extra pair of pants handy, because the ones you have are going to get torn. That's exactly what the church looks like to God, and to our community, if we are not in unity.

Let me show you a couple of passages of Scripture. *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters."* (1 John 3:16). *"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! 2. It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. 3 It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore."* (Psalm 133:1-3)

In the two illustrations that David gives in Psalm 133, he is speaking of the extravagance of the anointing that comes to the church when we dwell together in unity. David uses the anointing of the High Priest and the daily morning dew at the base of Mount Hermon as examples of God's generous goodness. I would encourage you to read both Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 as well. They are both about gifts given to the church by the Holy Spirit. In both cases the giving of supernatural gifts is couched in a discussion about unity of the body.

God honours unity with an extravagant anointing, an outpouring of gifts, like the anointing of the High Priest or the daily dew at the base of Mount Hermon. Our devotion to, and love for one another is a reflection of our devotion to God. It is like taking our 'devotion' temperature. God sees unity and He honours it.

Pick up your cross and follow me

Now we get personal. *"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.'"* (Matthew 16:24-25)

I've heard people with different problems say: "Well, I guess that's my cross to bear". They may be referring to an illness, a problem child, or a marital problem. This is not a correct understanding of the saying. Jesus explains what it means. *"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."* (Matthew 16:25).

Jesus came to earth to do the will of the Father, which ultimately was to die for us so that our relationship

could be reconciled. So, He willingly laid down His life for us. No one took it from Him. He could have called on an army of angels to rescue Him. He willingly picked up His cross and laid down His life for us.

Now Jesus is calling for an equal amount of devotion from us. He is calling on us to pick up our cross and lose our life for Him. It doesn't mean that we will all have to become literal martyrs for our faith. Nor is it having to live with some kind of problem. True devotion to God will mean prioritizing God's will over our own to the point where the two wills are one, no matter the cost. His will becomes our will and our will becomes His will, because we have chosen to lay down our life for Him. It is dying to self and living for Him. When that kind of devotion clashes with God's devotion to us there is going to be fireworks.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind...

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "*Of all the commandments, which is the most important?*" 29 "*The most important one,*" answered Jesus, "*is this: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*" (Mark 12:28-30)

I'm not even going to expound much on this. This is just something for you to sit back and meditate on for a few minutes or hours at some point soon, but note that Jesus is covering every part of who you are. He speaks of loving Him with your emotional being. He is talking about loving Him, or considering Him first in every decision you make, loving Him with your thoughts; and

even the things you do physically. Don't love God first. That's not enough. Love Him so much that it's like nothing else is important.

That being said, let your love for God be expressed through your love for your brothers and sisters in Christ; and love your neighbour as yourself. You can't love God and not love others.

Conclusion

Revival is hard work. The great news is that, because we know all about God's devotion to us, we don't have to be 'hopelessly' devoted to Him. We are 'hopefully' devoted to Him.

Every ounce of devotion we give to Him draws us closer. Suddenly we realize that all of the other things we valued in life are of little significance comparatively. In Him we find...

- Limitless hope
- Limitless love
- Power to live
- Power to do His work

When we devote ourselves to God collectively - in biblical fashion, as a body, our devotion to Him comes together like thunder in the heavenlies. His devotion to us and our devotion to Him will combine into an earth shattering force like the air coming back together after being split by lightning. The result is restoration of everything the church has lost. The result is a spiritual life like we have never known. The result is revival!

IT'S A THANG! IT'S A NEW THANG!

The prophet, Isaiah, speaking for God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, wrote: *“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” (Isaiah 43:18-19)*

In our first lesson, we looked at **Jeremiah 6:16**, *“This is what the LORD says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”* In that lesson I said this: “When we pray for revival, we aren’t looking for something new. We are looking for a kind of spiritual vitality that the church has experienced before. Therefore, it only makes sense that as we stand at the crossroads, we look back – not forward. Keep looking through time until you get to the most pure, most powerful, most effective, most alive example of Christianity that you can find. Stop there! Look at what they did to become those people or that church.”

Isaiah, who was a contemporary of Jeremiah, prophesied in the same political circumstances. He says: “Don’t dwell in the past” I am not reneging on the importance of looking back, looking at the ancient paths - the good way. However, when we add Isaiah’s admonition to the revival process we realize that we can’t dwell in the past. It is a place to study, to look at, and to learn from; but it isn’t a place to stay. The past is unattainable. It is water under the bridge. Its’ value is in what it has to teach us.

We have looked at the baby church (in Acts 2 through 10), the things they did that revealed the depth of

their devotion to God, and the behaviours that proved their sincere devotion to God. But, there comes a moment in time when we have to stop looking back at what others did and what others experienced. There comes a time when we have to stop learning the same lessons over and over again, and look for what God wants to do now and in the coming days.

He will do it by the same Spirit. It will be with the same power. The intent will be the same, and that is to win souls for the kingdom of God. But, we don't have to go to the temple courts in Jerusalem, or try to recreate the Acts scene. The work of the Spirit will likely affect our meetings, and our community, etc. in a different way. Our culture and social behaviours are different. The move of the Spirit will be the same in power and purpose, only different in how it looks.

Looking ahead to something new may be more challenging than one may think for a few different reasons.

- As a church, we've always done what we've always done, and we like it. Someone said: "When the church resists change, it is a classic case of letting the dead bury the living" – unknown. Another anonymous saying is: "The seven most dangerous words are: 'We've never done it that way before'" We must be prepared, as a church, for something new.
- It is hard to expect something different from what we have experienced, especially when we have never experienced anything different. Our minds get locked into whatever our 'norm' is. So, when something new starts to happen, we typically

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wrestle it to the ground until it looks like what we've always done.

- Most churches exist because they have had significant successes in the past that its members love to relish in. Subconsciously, it is hard to accept that the memory of our past successes may get lost in new ones.
- We want to honour those in our past that have made a significant contribution to the life of the church. Expecting something new may feel like we are disrespecting the decisions made or practices established by the founding members.

So when God says, as He did through Isaiah: *“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing.”* (**Isaiah 43:18-19**), it not only applied to the nation of Israel, but it applies to us individually, and to us as a church.

The future is full of unknowns. The word ‘revival’ is a bit scary because the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, although part of the ancient church’s history; may not have been part of our own. It is uncharted territory for us. We are quite certain that with the unknown blessings will come unknown challenges.

To be comfortable with it, we must look to the future through the filter of God’s character. Knowing that He wants nothing but amazing things for us, that our Heavenly Father wants to give good gifts to His children, that He is kind, and good - and both powerful and gentle at the same time. We must look to the future with faith for the phenomenal because of who God is.

In our text, and in a passage from Ezekiel that we will read later; Israel was in captivity to the Babylonian

Empire. There had been a forced ‘brain drain’ on Israel. Many of her citizens had been taken to Babylon, particularly those with high levels of intelligence such as Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Nehemiah, and most of the Major and Minor Prophets of the Old Testament. God allowed this to happen because of Israel’s disobedience as a nation, their idol worship, and the fact that He was no longer their first love. Now He is speaking through the prophets once again. God is prophesying restoration. He is prophesying new life. He is prophesying a productive future, and He is doing so through some of the same prophets through which He prophesied Israel’s demise -like Isaiah and Jeremiah.

God wanted the people of Israel to learn the lessons they needed to learn from the experiences of the past. He certainly wanted them to appreciate and respect the positive influences of the past, but did not want them to live in the past or cling to it.

The challenges of the past make us think that there will be similar challenges in the future. The obstacles of the past make us think that the obstacles ahead are insurmountable. The hurts of the past make us think that the future will be painful. The dark moments of the past make us fearful that our future is dark.

That all sounds a bit dramatic, but I have distinct memories in my time as a pastor of talking about certain changes of direction, changes in programming, or trying something different from what we have been doing. I have actually had responses like this: “I don’t think we should because ‘so and so’ won’t like that”. “We’d better not change that because ‘so and so’ will be very upset”. “So and so” is always a founding member, or long-term

influence in the church. Those statements stem out of past experiences and involvement with certain personalities. They put the brakes on moving forward. When we focus too much on the past, and the people in it, we tend to paint our future the same colours.

“Let go of what’s gone. Be grateful for what remains. Look forward to what is coming next” - unknown

God wants us to focus on Him, and what HE wants to do in the future. He wants us to focus on the ‘new thing’ He wants to do. He wants us to focus on the ‘new life’ He wants to bring. He wants us to focus on the ‘new power’ He wants to give us.

“When the church resists change, it is a classic case of letting the dead bury the living” - unknown

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”
(Isaiah 43:18-19).

God wants to make something good spring up out of the past. Whatever trajectory the past has placed our lives, or the life of the church on, revival will re-direct us toward His best outcome. He wants to take what is dead and give it life. He wants to lead us into a period of promise, power, and fruitfulness.

Forget Abouuuut It!

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.”
(Isaiah 43:18) The problem is, we all say we are forward thinking. We all give mental assent to the need for something new, something more; but we’re not sure we want to be the ones who initiate it or even participate in

it. We'll leave it to the younger ones or the more spiritual ones.

Here are four practical reasons why it is important to “forget the former things”. Before we go there, however, we have to determine whether or not we are happy with the results we are getting as a church right now. The answer should be ‘no’. Every statistic in every study of the church’s impact in Canada suggests that we are failing miserably in our effectiveness. Dr. Phil would ask: “How’s that workin’ for ya?”

ONE - “Old ways don’t open new doors” - unknown

The world is rapidly changing. People that are still alive today can remember when cars were essentially four wheels and a bucket of steel, but there are already cars on the road that are self-driving. Our telephones used to hang permanently on the kitchen wall with a ten foot curly cord attached to it. Now our phones are 100 times (uneducated guess) more powerful than the early computers of the 1970’s. Those computers took up an entire room. Our cell phones fit in our pocket or purse.

The first commercial flight took place in 1914. It was monumental. It flew from St. Petersburg, Florida to Tampa Bay, Florida, a distance of 34 kilometers. It took 24 minutes. Today, the average commercial jet liner travels about 550 mph.

Stop for a moment and think about the changes in your lifetime, both in terms of culture and technology. If today, you tried to sell an old phone, a car, or an airplane for everyday use, people would laugh at you. They may have value as an antique, but not for modern day use.

We expect the church to do things exactly as we did 100, 50, or even 25 years ago and be successful. Some time ago I read that someone, I'm uncertain as to who, said this: "The church is the only organization in the world that thinks it can do things the same way it did 400 years ago, and still be successful"

We are ministering in a different world today. We have to use new methods without changing, or watering down the truth. We have to find ways that are effective in today's world. We have to find the key that unlocks doors to people's hearts in the 21st Century. Our old skeleton keys won't do it. But, to be honest, different methodology won't be enough!

TWO - "You can't reach for anything new if your hands are full of yesterday's junk" – unknown

Our memories are full of all kinds of things, good things and bad; past blessings and past hurts. We have memories of people that we miss, and memories of people that have offended us. Not one person is exempt from all of the above.

Too many times, however, we get stuck in the mud of the past. That mud becomes like quick sand; and we sink deeper and deeper into it. Before we know it, our attachment to the past keeps us from being able to move forward.

Do you know how many people don't go to church because someone hurt them 15 years ago, or won't get involved in ministry or leadership today because their idea got turned down some time in the past? Others got so involved and got burned out 5 years ago, so they have decided to take the rest of their lives off.

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The opposite is sometimes true as well, but less common. People were involved in a very successful ministry years ago and they wouldn't want to be involved in something less significant now. It would seem like a step backward to them, so they refuse. There comes a time when we have to say: "That was then. This is now"

Our commitment to serving God must become greater than our attachment to either the blessings or the hurts of the past that have kept us from continuing in that commitment. Part of clearing the path for revival is emptying our hearts of those things

THREE - "Don't cling to that mistake just because you spent a lot of time making it" – Toby Mac

We have to keep trying new things. We must continually be innovative. Before the airplane was invented they tried kites, rotary wings, tower jumping, balloons, air ships, and gliders. There were many failures and many moderate successes.

The Wright brothers took their first flight in a powered plane that lasted 59 seconds and went 852 feet. Their success was moderate at best, but they knew they were on to something.

We cannot try one thing and be committed to it, successful or not. Neither can we consider it a failure if it doesn't work. We consider it part of the learning and success process.

We may have to take one step toward revival, and when that's not enough, say: "Okay Lord, what's next?" considering each step a step toward our heart's desire; each step bringing us that much closer.

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We can't consider ourselves a failure just because we pray for 5 minutes and don't experience revival. We must be as persistent in doing the things that bring us a little bit closer to our goal as we have been in doing the things that haven't worked in the past.

FOUR

Here is the most important reality. **Revival is not measured by the success of our methodology.** The early church had...

- ✓ NO order of service
- ✓ NO children's ministry
- ✓ NO youth programs
- ✓ NO church building
- ✓ NO hymn books
- ✓ NO worship software
- ✓ NO smoke machines
- ✓ NO coloured lights

...yet it was the most impactful church in history.

Revival is measured by spiritual vitality. We cannot rest in the fact that we've had special moments with God in the past - whatever the context, or however you describe them. Unless you are experiencing God's presence and power on an ongoing and increasing basis, you need to forget the past and look to the future.

God is Up to Something

"See, I am (present tense) doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. (Isaiah 43:19)

There are two important things here. **One** – God understands our current culture and our current situation,

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and is trying to work within it. We may be, but God is not hamstrung by our cultural changes or our past failures. God is not silent. God is at work.

We, the church, are the problem. Our problem, at least in part, is that we are not open to perceiving what God is doing. God and the church are going two different directions.

With Israel, in our text, God was making plans to set them free and lead them back to their homeland, while the people were making plans to raise their children in captivity. Even Centuries before, when God was leading Israel to the Promised Land, and when they faced a few challenges, they had concluded that they were better off as slaves.

As a church, we must have faith that God is up to something, that He is doing a new thing, and that He is making a way in the wilderness. We must know in our hearts that God is creating streams in the wasteland. If we believe that God has given up on His church, we might as well lock the doors and stay home.

The truth is that when Peter proclaimed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Jesus responded: *“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”* (**Matthew 16:16-18**)

God always has a way to work successfully in the culture we live in. He always has a way to bring revival to the church. Our challenge is to know what He wants to do and follow. Sometimes we have to go through the desert to get to the Promised Land, but it is never God’s plan for us to live there for 40 years.

Two - Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit is the key to knowing God's direction. That involves setting aside our personal likes and dislikes. It involves making our opinion secondary to His leading. When sensitivity to the Holy Spirit is missing, the most effective weapon the devil has against the church is the preference of its members.

Listen to this quote from Thom Rainer: "When a church is driven by member preference, it is headed for decline, then death. The decline may be protracted and the death may be delayed, but it is inevitable. A church cannot survive long-term where members are focused on their own preferences."

In conjunction with that, we must understand that church should be a place in which we develop a godly passion and get trained to carry that passion into the world. The only sense in which church is about us is our growth in knowledge and passion for God, the receiving of divine power, and our longing to reach others for Christ.

"Churches that become passionate about people outside their walls will be far more effective than churches that are passionate only about keeping the few people they have inside their walls" – Carey Nieuwhof. The Spirit's passion is for the lost. Jesus said that the reason He came to our world is to "seek and to save that which is lost". Revival of the church will happen so that we have Holy Ghost power to reach the lost. It is not about us alone. Once we are born again, His passion becomes our passion. We long to seek others that are lost that they might be saved. If that is not the case, we are completely and totally out of tune with God's Spirit.

Let Him Breathe

“The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.

2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry.

3 He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” I said, “Sovereign LORD, you alone know.”

4 Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!’

5 This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.

6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’ ”

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone.

8 I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

9 Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’ ”

10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

11 Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’

12 Therefore prophecy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

13 Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them.

14 I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.” (Ezekiel 37:1-14)

In Ezekiel’s vision, that which was dead, rotten, decayed, and reduced to a pile of bones came back to life when the Spirit of God came upon them. It was a picture of the nation of Israel.

There is more to a successful future than the Spirit’s leading. We need His life. To achieve that, we must give Him ours. We must die to self, pick up our cross and follow Him. We must love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. **Galatians 5:24-25** *“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*

You cannot give God your heart without giving Him your life. That means your time, your energy, and your priority. You want to serve Him wholeheartedly. It is the most natural thing to do. Catherine Booth, wife of the founder of the Salvation Army, said: “A salvation that does not lead to service is no salvation at all”. That’s what His Spirit in you wants to do. The desire to serve is an indication of life, and life begets life. Life given by the Spirit is a life to be shared.

The key to success in any church, is not their style of worship, is not found in great programming, is not in how great the pastor is. The key to success is the life of the Spirit. The Spirit of God leads us, empowers us, and gives us wisdom. Getting all of that in full measure will

require revival.

The new thing that God wants to do in our lives, and in our church, is to pour out His Spirit. He wants us to experience His Life in all of His fullness. That involves us dying to self and committing whole heartedly to Him.

Conclusion

The trajectory of the church in North America is not good. The church is aging. We are not holding on to our youth. The church is verbally in support of evangelism, but not interested in actually doing it. The church is stuck in its past. Those things are not evidences of the life of the Spirit, and have put us on a bad path with a frightening future.

“Being defeated is often a temporary condition. Giving up is what makes it permanent” – Toby Mac. Giving up is not an option. I believe it was Billy Graham that said: “The church is only one generation away from extinction”. We need the new things God wants to do. We need revival. Our community needs us to experience revival.

There is only one solution to today’s spiritual decline. Revival of the church is it. Someone once wrote: “The first step to getting somewhere is to decide that you are not going to stay where you are” – unknown.

The things that can and shall be done is to stop looking back. In the very first lesson of this series, we did that. We’ve learned what there is to learn from those who left us with an example of a church on fire. Now we must be attentive to what God has for our future.

Die to self so you can be totally filled with the life of the Spirit. “Let it be said by our generation of

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Christians, that when the church teetered on the edge of destruction, having lost the ancient paths of truth, righteousness, commitment to service, and loving God first – we answered the Divine call to war for its restoration by committing ourselves to revival” – (unknown author and me)

When God plans to do a new thing, it isn't a new program, it isn't a new building, and it isn't a new leadership team. Those things may be a bi-product, but when God plans to do a new thing it is a new outpouring of His Holy Spirit into our lives.

IN HIM

“While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.

18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

19 Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?”

20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.”

21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious.

23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

24 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.

25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit

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the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.

27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'" (Acts 17:16-28)

The Apostle Paul was in Athens, Greece. The city was full of idols. The citizens in the Greek capital were educated and refined people. But, when it came to their religious practices, they were so insecure in their knowledge of who God was that they worshipped many gods. The technical term is 'polytheism'.

The Apostle Paul sets out to explain to them who the only true and living God is. He met with the Jews in their Synagogues and with the Greeks in the market place. His message got the attention of a group of philosophers. While some thought he was preaching nonsense, others thought he was talking about a foreign god that they may need to learn about.

There was a special group that assembled to assess any presentation of foreign gods. The philosophers took Paul there. It was called the 'Areopagus', meaning the 'Hill of Ares'. Ares was the Greek god of thunder. Today the Areopagus is the title given to the Greek Supreme Court. In Paul's day, the Council of Areopagus was responsible for criminal cases, religion, education and morals.

The philosophers that brought Paul to the Areopagus were followers of Epicurus and Zeno. Epicurus believed that nature was the supreme teacher. His theology bordered on no theology at all, being almost atheistic. He believed that nature provided both pleasure

and pain. They sought after pleasure, so if it felt good it was good. If it caused pain it was evil. Epicureanism was all about ‘experience’, not ‘reason’.

Zeno, the Stoics, believed in a creative power. They also believed that the ultimate goal in life was self-sufficiency, which made them very materialistic. Some were somewhat fatalistic as well (whatever will be will be); essentially taking god off the throne and putting destiny in his place.

I’m sure some thought Paul would be made a fool of. They called him a “babblers” (literally a ‘seed-picker’). This was a term also used for ‘parasites’. Historically, these were people who picked up bits and pieces of religious ideas and formed their own to start something new. Others were seriously curious as to what the council’s response would be.

Paul begins to speak. He acknowledges their religiosity. To them it was complimentary that Paul recognized that they took their gods seriously. Paul then draws their attention to an altar inscribed with the words: “Agnosto Theos”, meaning “to an unknown god”. He is essentially going to them that he knows that God. He can fill in that blank for them. More than that, he wants for THEM to know the unknown God. This had their interest. Paul explains that he wants them to know the God they were worshiping when they come to the altar of the unknown god.

The great apostle to the Gentiles explains that, unlike any of the other gods they worship, the God previously ‘unknown’ to them created everything. He gives life to everything living. He gives breath to everything breathing. He gives good gifts to those who

love Him.

This was a totally new concept to the Greeks. Most believed in creationism but they believed that different gods created different things out of pre-existing materials. They had no explanation for where everything came from in the beginning. Paul had their attention. Then he proclaims that his God is the God over heaven and earth; excluding the right for there to be any other gods. God cannot be contained by sanctuaries or idols made by human hands. Neither does He need to be cared for by human hands. As giver of life and breath, what could possibly be done for the creator of all things by humans? He didn't require an artisan to form him into a physical brass sculpture or wooden carving. He didn't need to be dusted and polished. This was mind-blowing theology to the Greek mindset.

Then, Paul established God as the creator of all mankind. This is important, because most pagan religions believed that various races and nations were created separately. In their thinking Greeks were not created at the same time or by the same god as the Jews. This was an ancient view of things. That's why, historically when nations went to war, they were not just battles of men but they were battles to prove the superiority of their gods. Paul, however, is teaching them that there is only one race and therefore only one God to be worshipped. This was mind-blowing for some, and impossible to accept for others.

Now we get to where we want to be for this lesson. Paul wants to emphasize that God is not hard to find. In so doing, he quotes an ancient Greek poet who is not speaking of the true God at all, but by using the words of

one of their own, it catches their attention. It strengthens his message. The Greek poet had no idea as to the depth of what he was writing as it applies to the One True God. This one statement sums up our relationship with Him. It explains how to be used of Him, and how to be blessed by him. Paul said of God: *“In Him we live, and move and have our being”* (**Acts 17:28**).

It is the depth of this statement that we really need to focus on. Perhaps if we can fully understand it, there would be nothing else we would have to learn about our walk with God, or revival. There is a key here to consistency in our walk with God. There is a key to victorious Christianity. There is a key to powerful Christianity. There is a key to effective Christianity. In other words, it defines for us what the revived Christian life looks like. It is very important that you read this lesson to the very end.

In Him we Live

We talk a lot about the Holy Spirit living in us. As amazing as that is, I can almost wrap my head around it as I've been taught about it all my life. But, the idea of us living in Him is an almost inconceivable thought to me. We must know that it was not just a Greek poet who made such a statement. Jesus said: *“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”* (**John 14:20**). No doubt, this incredibly intimate relationship with God is a result of our salvation, but understanding the depth of its meaning is very important. The degree to which we gain understanding, and practice what we learn in increasing measure, will help us experience intimacy with God in a new way. We may experience ‘Christianity’ in a new way. We may

experience revival in a remarkable way.

When I am in my house, I am enveloped by it. When it is cold I am warm there. When it is hot I am cool there. I am safe there. I am comfortable there. We need to carry those principles into our understanding of our relationship with God.

This is so simple, yet so incredibly profound. I want you to think of the nature of the sun for a moment. It is a ball of hot plasma. Out of that ball of fire comes light and heat. Light and heat are resident in the sun and they emanate from there. Darkness cannot come from the sun because darkness doesn't live there. Cold can't come from the sun because cold doesn't live there. The only way for the nature of the sun to not impact us is to block it. Now, I want you to think about the nature of God and we will read the verse again. "*In Him we live, and move and have our being.*" (**Acts 17:28**). When we live in Him we can only experience those things that are part of His nature, unless His nature is blocked. As only heat and light can come from the sun, only the things that flow out of His character comes from Him. That would be holiness, justice, love, goodness, kindness, grace and mercy. Let's not forget His wisdom and power.

There is a real sense in which this speaks of salvation. Jesus said: "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?*" (**John 11:25-26**). He also said: "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" (**John 14:6**). If real death is spiritual, and is separation from God as theologians tell us, then those who live in Christ never die because death doesn't dwell in Him. Only life emanates

from Him. Life is part of who Christ is. Paul taught this in his letter to the church in Rome: *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”* (**Romans 8:1-2**). If the law of the Spirit of life is in Christ, we have been set free from the law of sin and death. It is literally impossible for us to die if we are a born again believer in Jesus Christ because, just as there is no darkness in the sun, there is no death in Christ.

So, this speaks of basic salvation but if we take this one step further there is so much more. *“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* (**John 8:12**). Jesus is the ‘Way’. He is the ‘light of this world’. There is no darkness on our path when we live in Him because He is ‘light’ by nature. What does that mean to our day-to-day lives? Certainly, it means that we won’t walk in sin because sin emanates from darkness. But it is more beneficial to look at it from the opposite point of view. We live in holiness. As Christians, holiness is the atmosphere we live in. Therefore sin isn’t something we have to work hard at avoiding. Sinlessness is natural when we live in Him because in Him there is no darkness. Therefore, if we struggle with sin, it is because we are blocking the holiness that emanates from God’s character in whom we live. Maybe the reason we struggle so much is because we try too hard to stop sinning rather than stepping into the holiness we can and should be living in.

There is no death and there is no darkness when we are in Him. If we don’t feel secure in our salvation, or if we struggle with sin, it is simply because we are stepping outside of our dwelling place. We are blocking the things

that flow out of God's character.

When we are living in Him we are living in the atmosphere of His nature. When we live in Him our desires line up with His desires. Let's stop for a moment and think in a broader way of what it means for us to live in Him. Let's think about being in Him while being in the outside world. For me, the only way to do that is to imagine myself in the mind and heart of Jesus as He went about His ministry. I have to imagine looking into the faces of those around me and seeing what He sees, feeling what He feels, and responding by doing what He would do.

All of a sudden, revival is a non-issue because when we think of ourselves as living in Him, suddenly we see ourselves being what we desire to be, and doing what we desire to do in the power of the one in whom we live.

To be revived we just have to learn to stay inside our dwelling place, to stop blocking the SON, to go where we live - to live in Him.

In Him we Move

When I'm in my car, I go where it goes. It's that simple.

I remember when my children were toddlers, and they would reach up and take my hands while facing me. All three did it when they were little. They would place one foot on my foot, then the other. As I walked, they walked. As I moved, they went with me. Every motion I made effected their movements because we were connected at the hands and the feet.

That's a great picture of what Paul meant when he quoted: "In Him we move." This is the end goal of our desire for revival. This is pure Christianity. When God

moves, we move. Where God leads, we go. His every motion effects our movement. We are in complete sync with Him.

If we live in Him, our desires and actions will line up completely with His. *“Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:21-23).*

God is glorious. As we move through life, His glory should shine through us. Collectively, that glory is evidenced in our unity, and in our day to day actions as a church.

On an individual basis, God’s personality flows through us. *“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.” (Galatians 5:16-18).* His character becomes the motivating force behind all of our actions. *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:22-25).*

Certainly, going where God wants us to go and doing what God wants us to do, in the moment, are important things. But also, living out the character of God should be what characterizes our every movement.

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As soon as that isn't happening we know that we are NOT moving in Him. Measuring the things we do, and why we do them, against the character and desires of God is a great way of determining whether or not we are 'moving' in Him.

This sheds new light on us being 'the light of the world' (pun intended). We are like the ray of light that is propelled from the sun. That ray of sunshine moves through the universe, shining light on everything in its path. When God's character motivates our every movement, we become that light. We shine His light on everything in our path.

When we move in Him, we can move in His power so that His work is accomplished in such a way that He is glorified - doing the supernatural through us. The disciples experienced this, even before Pentecost. *"Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it."* (**Mark 16:20**). He still wants to do that. He wants the world to know that His Word is real. He wants the world to know that He is real. He wants the world to know that having a real relationship with Him is a real possibility.

To accomplish that, we must move in Him. When we 'move in Him' those things that are resident in Him can flow through us. The only limitation is the confines of His will in any given situation. God can do anything. He can do anything through us. **1 Corinthians 12** lists what those things can be. This is just a few of them...

- Supernatural wisdom
- Knowing things that only God can know
- Supernatural faith
- Healing

- Miraculous powers

Those are things that are resident in God. When we live and move in Him the Holy Spirit flows through our lives and ministries to touch the lives of others, both in and out of the church. Ultimately, they are all for the purpose of pointing people to Jesus. This is the end goal of revival.

When we live and move in Him, to go where He wants us to go and to do the things He want us to do is the most natural thing in the world for us. It is natural for us to be motivated by His character and to be a vessel through which His message and His power flows. The supernatural at work through us will bless many and confirm to others that our stand for Christ and His Word are valid.

In Him we Have our Being

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (John 15:1-8)

Spiritual life flows through Jesus into us. We have our being in Him. Without that connection to Jesus, there is no connection to the Heavenly Father. There is no spiritual life. We cannot move in Him. To accomplish

anything of spiritual or eternal value, we must constantly remain in Him!

Out of our connection with Christ comes the fruit of being in relationship with the Father. If we have our being in Christ, we can only bear fruit that is consistent with the nature of God. We can only bear good fruit, holy fruit and spiritual fruit. Jesus makes it extremely clear that bearing fruit is the yard stick by which we measure the degree to which His life is flowing through us. Following is the kind of fruit the Scripture speaks of.

The fruit of righteousness

Philippians 1:11 “...*filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*”

One of the characteristics of God is holiness or righteousness. True righteousness flows out of His being, the place where we live and where we draw our spiritual life. Righteousness should be the most natural thing for the believer because it should flow through our spiritual veins.

The fruit of souls

It seems very clear that the end result of revival is that people come to know Christ. Seeking and saving the lost is the very reason that Christ came to earth. Certainly, as the Spirit moved in the New Testament church, people came to know Christ on a daily basis. The desire to see people's eternal destiny changed flows naturally out of His character. The Apostle Paul speaks of winning souls as a harvest of fruit. “*I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a*

harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.”
(Romans 1:13).

The fruit of the Spirit – the character of Christ

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”
(Galatians 5:22-23)

If we are connected to, and dwell in God the most natural thing in the world should be for our personality to adjust to be like His. We bear the fruit of His character.

If our life is ‘in Him’, if ‘we move by Him’, and ‘have our being in Him’ our desires and actions will be lined up with His desires. The things we want will be consistent with what He wants. His life will then flow through ours to make those desires and wants a reality.

Conclusion

My wife and I built a pergola and sun shade in our back yard. Whether we block the sun or not is a choice we will get to make every moment of every day. We are able to step in to the shade, or not.

Here is the important lesson. Living the Christian life we long for is a continuous possibility. It’s just like living underneath the sun. Heat and light is continuous. It is always there. The only way to not experience it is to block it. We can either step into it or out of it.

God is always there, and He is always the same. In Him we live. In Him we move. In Him we have our being. Revival isn’t something we need to chase after. Because we live in Him, move in Him, and have our being

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in Him we can be all we want to be as a Christian unless we choose to block it. We just have to identify the things in our life that ARE blocking the fullness of His character living through us, and step out from under those things. Blocking the sun is often a good thing. Blocking anything related to who God is and what He wants to do isn't.

Believe it or not, our biggest challenge in understanding or accepting these truths is Epicureanism and Stoicism. These same things that Paul dealt with in Athens, Greece are prominent philosophies today, just without the names.

Epicureans essentially gave in to selfish desires. They had an 'if it feels good, do it' mindset. Their philosophy was 'If you want it, do everything you can to get it. Seek after whatever earthly thing you desire.' People often bring this selfish approach into their Christianity, and they make their relationship with God primarily about themselves, rather than God and His kingdom.

Stoics believed that 'everything happens for a reason.' I hear that phrase from modern day stoics all the time (they just don't label themselves Stoics). If something happens in their life that is good, they credit God. If it is not so good they blame God, but reason that something meaningful will be the result. They take little responsibility for their own choices or actions.

Any philosophy of life or religion that does not cause us to live, move, and have our being totally in Him is wrong. If it does not bear the fruit of righteousness, Christ-like character, and a longing to share the love of Christ with others, it is blocking the SON. If it is not a relationship of total submission, yet absolute faith in Him,

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something is blocking the SON.

Our relationship with God guarantees that we can experience everything related to His character. Sanctified desires come out of relationship that 'lives', 'moves' and 'has our being' in Him. They flow out of His nature. They flow out of His desires. They flow out of His plans. To be revived, we just have to remove the things that are blocking the SON.

FOLLOW ME

I lived on a pig farm when I was a teenager. My dad hobby farmed, but it became a fairly big operation for a man with a full-time job. One thing I noticed is that if we hooked up a sow and a boar; not once did we get goat. All we ever got was baby pigs.

The other thing I noticed was that there were certain qualities my Dad looked for in both the sow and the boar to produce the best possible piglets, which he would raise to 40lbs and sell as wiener pigs. The purer the parent pigs the purer the babies. The healthier the sow and boar were, the healthier the babies were.

This lesson is about being a true disciple of Christ. It presents a pretty big challenge. It is NOT rocket science. We just have to have the will to do it. We have to remember the lessons of the previous chapter.

In this chapter we will talk about Christ's message to a couple of men who proclaimed their readiness to be His disciple. Christ is looking for those kind of people, people who want to be His disciple. Jesus' last instruction to His elite eleven, before leaving the earth, was "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" (**Matthew 28:19**).

Here is the thing. We can't make disciples unless we are disciples, just like two pigs can't make a goat. Also, the better quality disciple we are, the better quality disciples we will produce. This is why revival is so important to us. When we are full of the life of the Spirit, He will shape us into a pure disciple. We can then produce pure disciples. When we live, move and have our

being in Him our life becomes all about living and moving for His purposes. That's pure discipleship. It is radical Christianity.

Revival will make us pure Christians, meaning that everything else important is secondary to our walk with Christ and service to Him. Revival causes us to become radical without becoming fanatical or ridiculous.

Let's look at Jesus' response to two men who proclaimed their desire to be His disciple, and see what we can glean from it. *"When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. 19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." 21 Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 22 But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." (Matthew 8:18-22)*

Jesus must have been exhausted. They were in the town of Capernaum, staying at Peter's house. Peter's mother became ill, and had a fever, so Jesus touched her hand and the fever left her. Possibly word got out that Jesus had done yet another miracle, because by evening a whole bunch of people brought demon-possessed people to Him to set them free. He did. He also healed many who were sick.

The crowd got large, and Jesus got tired. He told the disciples that He wanted to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. He no doubt needed a break. He got in the boat and they followed Him.

He was so tired that when a storm came up on the lake, so severe that the disciples feared for their lives and the boat was filling up with water, Jesus was sleeping right

through it. He was clearly completely and utterly exhausted, but the disciples woke Him up. He spoke to the wind and calmed the storm.

This was early in Jesus' public ministry, and people were obviously fascinated by His power, authority, His ability to heal every kind of illness, and to cast out demons. Now the disciples see that He is also able to control nature. This was truly amazing.

Before they left Capernaum, a Pharisee came up to Him and said: *"Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."* That was an incredible thing. A Pharisee was an elite Jew and a teacher of the law. For him to refer to Jesus as teacher acknowledged that Jesus taught with an even greater authority. Also, Pharisees in general did not see Jesus as fitting into their view of the Messiah. For him to make that kind of commitment to Jesus was quite remarkable.

Sometimes we are a little more curt when we are tired. I don't know if that was an issue, but Jesus' response was short and to the point. It wasn't unkind. He just didn't mince any words: *"Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*

Another man made a similar commitment. We don't know His status in life. He is referred to as a disciple because there were disciples, a committed group of followers; then there were THE disciples – the twelve men that were hand-picked by Jesus. Their conversation went like this: *"Lord, first let me go and bury my father."* 22 *But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."*

There are couple of things that are very important to note here. Jesus wanted the first man to understand that He did not have a home of his own. There was no international headquarters for Jesus' ministry. He stayed

with friends as He travelled. That's not a life that just everyone wants to live.

Regarding the second man, we don't know if his father had actually died, if he was sick, or if he was elderly. We don't know much of anything, other than the man was saying: 'I'll catch up after he dies.' The Jews placed great importance on the children burying their parents, so this was somewhat understandable. Jesus' statement that he should let the dead bury the dead seems uncaring to both the father and the son. Nothing about Jesus is uncaring - ever. It simply pointed to the radical commitment that being a follower of Jesus required because time was short.

So the question is, how does all of this relate to our topic of revival? I believe that for God to give us the spiritual life and effectiveness we are looking for we must meet His standard of discipleship, clearing everything that would or could get in the way.

This is a standard of Christianity that died a long time ago. It is a standard that creates an unobstructed church through which the life of Christ can flow. Remember that revival is: "life had ...life lost ...and life regained." If we want to regain the life that the church once had we will determine to be a disciple God's way.

Let's consider this in a bit more detail.

Birds Have Nests

"Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (Matthew 18:19-20)

Jesus didn't have a home to call is own. Does that

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mean that we shouldn't? Jesus didn't have a wife or children. Does that mean we shouldn't have a wife, husband or children? Jesus didn't have a television, cell phone, iPad, or video games, does that mean we shouldn't have any of those things? It absolutely does not mean that.

Peter had a home in Capernaum, and He was one of the elite disciples. It's most likely that Jesus stayed there most of the time he ministered in Galilee. When He was in the Jerusalem area He would stay in Bethany with His friends Lazarus, Mary and Martha. They had a home and were some of Jesus' closest friends. Peter was clearly married, since that's the only way to achieve getting a mother-in-law. Jesus had no problem with Peter being married. I have to admit that none of them had televisions, cell phones or video games.

Here is the lesson: The problem is never with what we have. The problem is the value we place on them, or where they fall on our priority list in comparison to God.

I don't want to lose balance in this discussion, so let's consider this. God placed Adam and Eve on the earth and gave humanity dominion over it. The things of this earth are a blessing to us. We are its custodians, and it is our job to look after the things of this earth. He gave us things to enjoy, and He gave us things to be responsible for. Clearly, the Bible is not teaching us that it is wrong to own a home, or a car, or things that bring us enjoyment. It comes down to this; it's not what we don't have that makes us a disciple worthy of revival, it is the value that we place on what we do have, and how we use it. So, the Apostle Paul's admonition, in a completely different context, can be applied here. *"So whether you eat or drink or*

whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

A disciple of Christ, worthy of being revived, simply looks at everything he is -his gifts, his talents, and his personality traits. He looks at the use of his time, he looks at everything he has, and asks himself: 'How can I use this to the glory of God?' If the answer is "I can't", we may need to consider getting rid of it.

We talked in the previous lesson about Paul's quotation of a Greek poet: *"In Him we live, and move, and have our being"*. We discussed how, when we get a hold of the concept that we 'live in Him', all we have to do is identify the things that are getting in the way of all that is rightfully ours spiritually; and removing those things. It is quite possible that it is stuff getting in the way, the very 'stuff' that God has blessed us with.

If we live, move, and have our being in Him then everything we are and everything we have also moves through life with us; but for His glory. It has its being for His glory. This is the most normal thing in the world because it's the way God intended it.

We take our talents, our gifts, our personalities, and our stuff through life with us. So, if in life we live in Him, we should do all and use all for the glory of God. This is the most natural thing on earth for the Christian that lives, moves, and has their being in Christ.

If that isn't how we are living then it's a great indicator for us that there is a part of us spiritually that needs to be revived. We are living for self, or we are using something primarily for self rather than God.

Some people's philosophy is "The person who dies with the most toys wins". We know that's not true.

Closer to the truth is that we can't take our things with us when we die. It's true that, we can't take our money, we can't take our house, we can't take our cars, and we can't take our toys. But what we can do is use our money, our house, our cars, and even our toys for God's purposes. In so doing, we store up for ourselves riches in heaven.

If we live in Him, we live for Him, using everything we have and are for His glory. Because we love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and spirit, our love for Him is far greater than the love we have for the things of this world. As a result we most naturally think of how the things of this world can be used for His purposes. That being said, the things we can't take with us can have eternal value because they are being used for eternal purposes.

So in a spiritual sense, like Jesus, we have no nest. We have no den. Physically we do. But for the true disciple of Christ, we have given those things completely to Him. Our reward for doing so will await us in heaven.

The Dead can Bury the Dead. Really?

“Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

22 But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.” (Matthew 8:21-22)

When I officiate at a funeral, and there is a graveside service, I normally ride in the lead car with the funeral director. We are the first to leave the church or funeral home and the first to leave the cemetery. Occasionally, he or she will say to me, when leaving the cemetery, “I just need to talk to ‘the guys’ for a moment. Is that okay?” “The guys’ are the ones waiting in the wings

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to fill in the grave site. Upon my approval, the funeral director will then park in an inconspicuous place or circle around and come back after everyone else has left.

If when he or she came back to the cemetery I noticed that ‘the guys’ were two men that died the previous year, I might get a little freaked out. I can guarantee you that this is not what Jesus’ meant when He said: “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

There are two kinds of dead people. Jesus is referring to both kinds in one sentence. We automatically think of the physically dead, those whose mind has stopped functioning, their heart has stopped beating, their lungs have stopped breathing, and they are no longer a living, functioning body.

Their soul and spirit, however, was given immortality the day he or she was conceived. If they knew Christ, they continue to live in heaven. If they did not know Christ, they are eternally separated from Him. Their soul and spirit continue to exist, but they are separated from God; which is spiritual and eternal death.

Then there are the walking dead. They have a functioning mind, heart, and lungs; but they have not been born again. They have not accepted Christ. They are separated spiritually from their creator. They are spiritually dead.

Jesus is emphasizing urgency here. He wasn’t being inconsiderate or uncaring. That would be completely against His nature.

In His extremely exhausted state, He was saying in a few words, I have less than three years to prove to the world that I am the Messiah, reveal the nature of the Heavenly Father, teach truth that will be the foundation

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of the future church, and offer the ultimate sacrifice

If you are going to be my disciple, you have to understand that ministry to the physically alive, but spiritually dead, is far more important than taking care of those whose choice has been finalized by their physical death.

The early church needed this kind of disciple, the kind that understood urgency and could adjust their priorities accordingly. They had to start a church from nothing. It had to be a church that could survive persecution, lack of persecution, mediocrity, false doctrine, becoming overly political, becoming overly religious, becoming spiritually weak, wars in the name of Christianity, on and on we could go.

In the beginning of the church there was a need for pure disciples. There was a need for the ability to spark real life. There was a need to build a foundation that could withstand all of the storms, and all of the challenges that would come to the church so that when times of revival came there was an example of a 'church alive' to go back to.

As we approach the end of the church age, it is time for real revival to come. In our present day, we are dealing with what the Apostle Paul prophesied about. *"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—5 having a form of godliness but denying its power."* (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge

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the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. (my job) 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. (2 Timothy 4:1-3)

What a problem this is today. In the age of the internet and television, people can find someone who will say pretty much anything they want to hear. Many people do. People listen until they hear what they want to hear, and then they say: “Yes, that’ person is so anointed”.

In addition to that, look around you. Our world is out of our control in so many ways. Natural disasters seem to be increasing in both number and intensity. Viruses and superbugs are developing, filling our hospitals and bringing our world economy to a halt. On and on we can go.

All that to say that there needs to be a sense of urgency about revival and about pure discipleship. The two go hand in hand. Revival begets pure discipleship and pure discipleship begets revival. When that happens for real, we will get a sense of urgency that changes our priorities. We will look at every individual that is physically alive but spiritually dead with godly love and passion. We will look at them with a sense of urgency that they must be born again, and we must tell them. Everything that doesn’t influence spiritual change in our society, in individual lives, and in the church becomes secondary.

Conclusion

Disciples beget disciples. Pure disciples beget pure disciples. Radical disciples beget radical disciples. So, when revival comes, expect that God will challenge you to use all that you have for His purposes, to literally give it to Him to the point where you consider that you don't own it. He does.

When revival comes to your life, expect that you will become less concerned about the dead things that can't be changed. You will live to change the living, those in need of spiritual and eternal life.

Revival will turn you into a radical disciple of Christ. It won't make you extreme in your beliefs, but extremely committed to truth. It won't make you extreme in your behaviour, but extremely committed to being Christ-like. Revival isn't about being weird. Sometimes people glorify being different. It's not about that. However, radical discipleship is being extreme in your commitment to being and doing all that God wants you to be and do.

Now, after knowing what Jesus' response would be, would you dare to look Him in the face and say: "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."?

WORSHIP YOUR WAY TO REVIVAL

I want to look at the relationship between worship and revival. In the last six lessons we have discussed...

- Choosing the ancient paths that caused the early church to be successful
- Complete Surrender to God
- Devotion to God based on the example of His devotion to us
- Despite the fact that we want to follow ancient paths, we aren't going to live in the past. We expect God to do a new thing
- In Him we live and move and have our being
- Discipleship, and the cost of following Jesus wholeheartedly

I believe that worship is the glue that holds all these principles together. Recognition of who God is, and expressing that to Him, is at the very heart of every one of those principles. Each one of the things that we have talked about are an expression of worship in and of themselves. Worship is at the center of revival.

It seems that the Apostle Paul believed the same thing: *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”* (**Romans 12:1**)

The story we will look at in this lesson begins before David became king of Israel. In fact, it was before Saul became king; so it was before Israel had any king at all. I’m going to take time to tell you the story so you fully understand the applications I will make later.

It was the time when Israel was guided by God appointed judges. Their job was to guide the nation in

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practicing the Torah (the first 5 books of the Bible), to act justly, and to keep the nation safe from their enemies.

In our text the Israelites were at war with the Philistines. In their first confrontation Israel had lost badly. Four thousand men were killed. It was proposed by the Elders of Israel, without any disagreement from the two sons of Eli, who were priests, that the Ark of the Covenant be taken into battle. Eli was the priest that Hannah brought Samuel to as a young child.

Please keep two things in mind. First, the Ark of the Covenant represented the presence of the Almighty God. It is understandable that Israel would want God to go with them into battle. The second point is extremely important. The Ark was to remain in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle - period. It was a biblical requirement.

The elders and the priests decided to treat the Ark like an idol, like a graven image, like somewhat of a cosmic good luck charm. *"Let us bring the ark of the LORD's covenant from Shiloh, so that it may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies."* (1 Samuel 4:3). This would amount to a serious act of disobedience and disrespect for the Word of God.

The entire Israelite army were amazed and excited to see the Ark of the Covenant come into the camp. They shouted so loud that the earth literally shook. Even the Philistine army could feel it. The Philistines thought the same thing as the Israelites did. When they found out what all the ruckus was about, they said: *"A god has come into the camp," they said. "We're in trouble! Nothing like this has happened before. 8 Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the desert."* (1 Samuel 4:7-8). Obviously

the God of Israel had a pretty good and long standing reputation. It had been many generations since Israel was delivered from the hands of the Egyptians, but the Philistines were clearly well aware of the events that led to Israel's freedom.

This misuse of God's presence turned out to be a disaster. They lost 30,000 foot soldiers that day. The Ark of the Covenant was captured! Eli's two sons were killed. Eli, now 98 years old, was practically blind and severely overweight. He feared for the Ark of the Covenant. He was not in favour of this plan and he waited by the side of the road to hear the outcome of the battle. He heard a mighty outcry, but could not tell the results. A couple of men came within his hearing, and he was informed of the horrific loss, including the loss of his two sons. When he heard the news, he fell backwards off of his seat, broke his neck, and he died.

Eli's daughter in law was pregnant. When she heard the news that her husband, brother-in-law, and father-in-law had all died she went into labour, giving birth to a son. She named the boy: "Ichabod", which means: "The glory has departed from Israel."

The Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant and put it in the Temple built to house their revered deity, Dagon. This temple was in the Philistine city of Ashdod. God was not about to share a temple with an idol, so when the Philistines came to the temple the next morning their graven image, Dagon was flat on his face. His head and his hands were broken off.

The people of Ashdod experienced horrible things after this, including tumors, or boils. They moved the Ark to the city of Gath. Men, young and old alike, died there.

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Tumors broke out on the people there as well.

The next move was to Ekron. The same thing happened again. The people rebelled. They did not want the Ark of the Covenant in their city.

The Philistine priests and diviners had a big meeting and finally decided to build a new cart to be pulled by two cows that had never been yoked before. They put the Ark on the cart and filled it with a 'guilt offering'. They pointed it toward Israel, and let her go. The cows went straight to Beth Shemesh, an Israelite town just inside the border.

The people of Beth Shemesh were thrilled. They burned the cart the Ark was on and slaughtered the cows as a sacrifice to God. It was great, until the people violated the Word of God and looked inside the Ark. Over fifty thousand men lost their lives as a result.

They sent the Ark to Kiriath-Jearim, to Abinidab's house, where it was properly cared for. The Ark stayed there for twenty eventful years in the nation of Israel.

During that time Saul was made king of Israel, David killed a giant and became Saul's personal musician. He then became commander of Saul's army, but because of Saul's jealousy he became an innocent fugitive. Eventually, consistent with God's anointing, he took Saul's place and became king over all Israel.

David longed to have the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem. He had a new cart built, but no one - including David - bothered to read the Word to fully understand the prescribed methods for handling the Ark. They were coming down the hill from Abinidab's house when the oxen nearly tipped the cart. Uzzah reached out to steady it. He was immediately struck dead. David was both

angry and afraid. They dropped the cart off at Obed-Edom's house and left it there for 3 months. God blessed Obed-Edom and his family, proving that the intensity of God's presence is a true blessing when there are no idols present.

It was time to try again, but doing it right was a priority this time. Every six paces David sacrificed an ox and a fatling. They did this for 5 or 6 kilometers. David stripped off his kingly garments, wearing only the linen ephod that he would normally wear underneath, and he danced before the Lord. David and all the people were shouting as the Ark approached the city. Trumpets were blaring. David led the procession, leaping and dancing. The excitement was palpable.

They finally got the Ark into the tent that was prepared for it. David offered more offerings to the Lord, he blessed the people, giving everyone in the entire crowd three gifts. He gave them a cake of bread, a cake of dates, and a cake of raisins. Then, exhausted but so excited, he goes home. His wife, Michal was waiting for him there. She was conspicuous by her absence from the celebration. Michal didn't participate, but immediately tried to deflate David for His behaviour. *"When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, "How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!" 21 David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD's people Israel--I will celebrate before the LORD. 22 I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor." (2 Samuel 6:20-22).*

Pseudo Worship

Only you and God can judge your heart. None of us can look at another accusingly.

In Israel's decision to take the Ark into battle, to essentially turn the Ark of the Covenant into a good luck charm, we see a pretty clear picture of human nature. That is - to use God, to treat Him as if He exists to serve us, rather than us existing to serve Him. Certainly He loves us and wants to bless us. There is no question about that. At the same time, He does not have a lever to pull with hopes that we win the jackpot.

It is possible to appear to be worshipping Him by coming to church on Sunday, getting involved in church stuff, singing our favourite songs on Sunday morning. But, as it turns out, some people act very much like the Israelites. They are doing all of those things to press open the hand of God a little further, so His blessings will pour into their life even more. They are doing it for what they hope to get out of it, not as an act of worship to God. They have themselves convinced that what turns out to be selfish behaviour is an act of faith and worship.

The Israelites even had the Philistines convinced that the presence of the Ark would make them invincible. It put fear in the heart of the Philistine nation.

God's lack of involvement in the battle revealed the truth that was in their hearts. This was not an act of faith and worship. They were using God's presence like an idol. They were using God's presence like a cosmic good luck charm.

How often people do that. God is such a small part of their lives until they have a battle, or until they want something. All of a sudden they want Him there.

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All of a sudden their prayer life improves drastically; but when God doesn't show up in the battle, they can't figure it out.

Here are the important lessons if we truly want to experience the fullness of God's presence:

- We have to be worshippers because God is worthy of our worship - period
- We have to be worshippers consistently
- We have to live for God consistently
- We have to live surrendered lives consistently
- We have to be as devoted to fellowship with God as He was and is devoted to fellowship with us, consistently
- We have to give God praise for the good things He does in our lives daily

To bring God into our lives only when the battles starts, when we need something, or when we want something, is an attempt at misusing His character.

If we want all of the benefits of revival without changing our life or restructuring our priorities (as discussed in the previous six lessons), we are using God, not worshipping or serving Him. If we want the benefits of being a worshipper, the benefits of the presence of God in our life without living a life that reflects His presence with us or His nature in us, we are using God. We are not worshipping or serving Him. If we want God's protection over our life, His understanding and forgiveness, the hope of eternity, but we don't want to change our lives, our worship is pseudo worship. We are using God, not serving or worshipping God.

When the Israelites took the ark into battle, it appeared to be the right thing to do, but it was an attempt

at man using God rather than God using man. It was an attempt at making God serve man rather than man serving God. It was a result of man feeling like God owed them something, rather than an understanding that blessings flow out of His grace, His undeserved favour. We owe Him everything.

Our motive in striving toward revival must simply be that God would be glorified and His purposes fulfilled. God consistently blesses those who are true worshippers. True worshippers die to self. They don't try to use God to their advantage. What appeared to be an act of faith and worship was a misapplication of faith and pseudo-worship.

Worship without Obedience

When the Ark was being moved from Abinidab's house, David and all the people were truly excited. They worshipped the Lord with every kind of musical instrument imaginable, but they didn't know God's Word. They didn't take the time to learn how to do it right. It was clearly laid out in Exodus 25.

- At the base of each of the four corners was a fixed ring of gold
- Through these rings were slipped gold plated poles by which the entire chest was to be carried
- Numbers 3,4 and 7 clearly state that handling the tabernacle was to be done by Levites, and poles were to be carried on their shoulders

If they had done things as prescribed, rather than carrying it on a cart, it never would have got into trouble and Uzzah wouldn't have felt the need to steady it with his hands, which cost him his life.

Sometimes people's expression of worship is sincere. It is heartfelt, but they haven't taken the time to learn what it means to live a life of worship God's way. It's a dangerous place to be in. We fool ourselves into thinking that we can expect God's blessings.

It is so important that you read God's Word for yourself and make God's Word a regular part of your life. It is important to understand how to apply the six biblical principles of revival that we have discussed so far.

If you truly love God in your heart but don't know how to live according to His Word, you are not going to understand why some of the promises of God are not your reality. If you truly worship Him when you come to church on Sunday, but you aren't living in the 'safe-zone', you can't expect the blessings of God.

Undignified

Three months go by, and the house of Obed-Edom is being abundantly blessed by God's presence. During that time, David figures out what went wrong. He was smart enough, when his actions weren't being blessed by God, to understand that the answer to his query would be in God's Word.

Once he got a handle on his anger and fear, and learned how to move the Ark God's way, his expression of worship intensified, and he got the Ark to the city safely.

What an occasion it was! The celebration was intense. David was ushering the presence of the King of all creation into Jerusalem. He did not want to be thought of as king that day. His highest position in the presence of God was to be a worshipper just like everybody else in that crowd. He took off all of the clothing that stated: "I

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am king”, acknowledging God as the true King of Israel.

What do you need to take off so that you will stop caring about yourself more than God and simply be a true worshipper? Would it be pride, fear, self-consciousness, or religiosity? For our expression of worship to be meaningful, we have to remove the things that are about self and realize that in His presence everything is all about Him. It’s not about us.

The same principles are true of revival. We must die to self. We must put down all of our idols. We must put all of our desires on the altar of sacrifice. It must be all about Him. I say this confidently: The only way to achieve real revival is to be a church full of true worshippers.

It is interesting to me that David’s wife, Michal, the daughter of Saul, David’s predecessor, wouldn’t even leave the palace to celebrate the presence of God in Jerusalem. She stayed home on one of the greatest days in Israel’s history, but watched from the palace window with critical eyes. When David returned home to bless his family as he had blessed the whole nation, she greets him with ridicule and sarcasm.

Michal provides us with a great lesson in sarcasm. *"How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!"* (2 Samuel 6:20)

I love David’s response: *"I will celebrate before the LORD. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor."* (2 Samuel 21b, 22)

Of the two characters in this part of the story, David and Michal, who are you the most like? Are you

willing to strip yourself of all pride to worship God; or are you a non-participant who points your finger at those who do?

David wasn't trying to draw attention to himself, as Michal accused him of. In his heart his expression of worship was an act of humility, humbling himself before God. In my words, he responded to Michal by saying: "I don't want to just look humble to others, I want to be able to look into my own heart and see humility." What he actually said was: "*I will be humiliated in my own eyes*". Our humility acknowledges God's majesty. Our expression of worship acknowledges that He is worth whatever we can find to give Him. That may be a tear. It may be an upraised hand. It may be a bowed head. It may be a bended knee. I don't recommend, however, stripping to your underwear and dancing around as David did. It may be some other form of worship, and someone will either say that it is too much or too little. The physical expression of worship is not what matters. What matters is that your expression of worship is not about you, that it isn't to draw attention to yourself, but is a true and honest act of humility with the purpose of giving God His rightful place as King.

No one else can be the judge of that. Only you and God can judge your own heart. Our hearts must be as David's was: "*I will be humiliated in my own eyes*". Humility of heart is where worship starts and where worship ends. David got it!

Conclusion

If you are truly seeking revival, you can't be guilty of pseudo Worship. You can't act like a person of faith,

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or like a worshipper, because times are desperate, expecting that you can use God for your purposes. That is NOT living a life of faith. That is NOT being a true worshipper. That will not achieve revival.

Having a true heart of worship without living a life of worship is dangerous. We can't expect God to bless us outside the safe-zones. I don't want to minimize His grace, or His understanding, but we also need to understand that He blesses us when we are living according His Word.

To be a worshipper, ready to experience real revival, we have to reach the place where we climb off of our own pedestal. Our life must be primarily about Him. Our expressions of worship must be for Him. Then our heart is ready for revival.

We need to disrobe ourselves of all pride, and stop being king of our own life. With determination and intent, we must humble ourselves in our own eyes. It isn't about what the Michals of this world think. It is about the position you place yourself in before God. *"I will be humiliated in my own eyes."*

- Choosing the ancient paths that caused the early church to be successful
- Complete Surrender to God
- Devotion to God based on the example of His devotion to us
- Expecting God to do a new thing
- Discipleship, the cost of following Jesus wholeheartedly.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

29 “I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

30 “Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.

31 “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.

32 For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.
(Matthew 21:28-32)

This story has personal meaning to me. This is why - I had been a shy little boy growing up, but was definitely coming out of my shell in my later teen years. I was still only seventeen when I became the Intermediate Accountant and Sales Coordinator for the Mack Truck dealership in London, Ontario. At age 18 I drove a 1974 Dodge Challenger, which I ordered from the factory. I discovered by accident that having a nice car was a great substitute for meeting girls when you don't have a personality.

As a teenager, I was serious about serving God. I was privileged to be part of an amazing youth group that had prayer meetings for whoever wanted to gather in the furnace room following youth on Friday night. We prayed for one another regularly. Out of that single youth group came my brother, who did administrative work for a

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mission organization, founded and directed 'Jesus and Me Ministries', and retired as the Executive Director of Children's Evangelical Fellowship of Ontario. Jim Keddy became an incredibly effective missionary to Hong Kong. Wayne Alguire is lead Pastor at Trinity Baptist Church in Kelowna, British Columbia. Mary Meats, now Mary Heimbecker has been involved in children's ministry for 40 some years. Perry and Bonnie D'Eliah are the founders and directors of a retreat ministry called Pearable Ministries in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Steve Green is a pastor in the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Kevin Bodaly and his wife, my cousin Kathy are the owners of Creation Bookstore in London, Ontario. Others have been involved in full-time ministry, or have majorly contributed to the Kingdom of God through their churches. Then there was me.

I felt called to ministry at the age of 18. I had a good job, a nice car, and no personality. I was afraid when God called me to ministry. I did not believe I had what it took. I decided that I must be wrong about this 'calling'. After talking to my pastor and learning that he felt the same way about my abilities, or lack of them, I continued on in the development of my career and working toward my accounting degree.

I got married within a few months of turning 20, bought our first home at the age of 21, became a Dad at the age of 22, then adopted a five month old girl with Down Syndrome a couple years later.

I was on the Board at our church in St. Thomas, Ontario, responsible for our Christian Education Department and managed a couple of rental properties that we owned as a church. All the while I was working,

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going to school, being a husband and a Dad. Then I felt the calling of God on my life again. I recognized it this time, and I didn't like it. Making these life changes would be difficult now. The cost would be significant. It would not only affect me, but it would affect my family. Despite a great job and all that I had as a young man, and all that I was doing for the Lord through our church, I felt out of place. Once God called me to pastoral ministry (again) I was supposed to be in 'another place' from what I was. I felt empty. I was unsatisfied. I stupidly wanted to fill that emptiness with a new house and a new job. I got the new job, but interest rates were 19% during an awful recession, so the new house was going to have to wait.

After about another year, God made His calling abundantly clear. I literally heard spoken words very similar to this. It was the voice of God spoken through a person used of Him by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. "I've called you once. I've called you twice. This is the last and final opportunity for you to enter my will." I immediately said 'yes', and then the struggle began. For every practical reason imaginable it made no sense to leave my career behind, go to Bible College, and take on a role I felt completely inept to do - all in the middle of a deep, deep recession with two young children.

In my personal devotions one day, God began to speak to me through this parable in Matthew 21. Time and time again I had told God that I would do whatever He wanted me to do with my life. I had sung "Take My Life and Let it Be Consecrated Lord to Thee" and "I Surrender All" with sincerity, countless times. But, when the rubber met the road, I had said "No" to Him – twice.

God made it very clear that I was at a crossroads.

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I had a choice. I could be the son in Matthew 21:30 who said “*I will, sir, but he did not go.*” or I could be the son in v. 29 “*I will not, he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.*” (**Matthew 21:29**). I had to make that choice once and for all time. He wasn’t going to ask again. I don’t know what the results would have been if I had chosen to disobey.

So, at the age of 27, with a wife and 2 little children, I registered for Bible College. I quit my new job. We put our house on the market when nothing was selling, rented a tiny apartment in Peterborough, Ontario, and I went to Bible College to prepare to do a job that I knew I could not do. Still, as much as I knew that, I knew God had called me.

I dare say that many individual Christians, and whole churches, have dealt with God’s call for revival in exactly the same way. In our hearts we sing: “I Surrender All”, and when we sing it we mean it. Still, we don’t follow the principles we have talked about to allow the Holy Spirit to bring His life to ours. We say “Yes” to revival with sincerity; but we don’t show up.

God is calling the church again. We have a choice to make. Will we be a verse 30, or a verse 29 kind of Church? Will we say ‘yes’, but not show up? Or, will we, who have made every excuse in the book to say ‘no’ in the past show up for revival now?

I want to take a look at some of the common excuses to God’s calling in the Bible. These are not specifically a call to revival, but the parallels are easy and may strike a chord.

A lot of our excuses are subconscious. We haven’t given it a lot of thought. It’s just how we feel and haven’t

even realized it. If the Holy Spirit uses this lesson to heighten your awareness of a ministry God has called you to in the past, but you have said ‘no’, I pray that you stop in your tracks right now and say “Yes” to God. The applications I will make will relate to our subject at hand.

Excuses

Moses (Exodus 4)

Moses excuse was: *“Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.”*

(Exodus 4:10)

Moses didn’t even mention the fact that he was a murderer, and a fugitive, or that he was eighty years old. Those were pretty good ‘go to’ excuses in my mind. Instead, the thing he was most self-conscious about was that he wasn’t a good speaker. He wasn’t eloquent. He was slow of speech and tongue (some people think that he stuttered, but who knows?). After making his excuse, he said: “Please send someone else.”

This is how some people may feel about their church: “God, don’t you think that there are other churches who could handle revival much better than ours?” There are churches that are more comfortable with this sort of thing. Our church is not really the kind of church to be out doing the things the New Testament church did, sharing the gospel, praying for the sick, and all of that. We are kind of a reserved church and we’ve never seen God do that kind of thing; but we know others have.”

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Like Moses and I, when God called us to ministry, we immediately focused on reasons why we are NOT the right church to experience revival, and on what we are lacking. The first thing we see is that we don't have what we need. We don't have what it takes to be a good 'revival' church.

Sarai (Genesis 18)

If anyone had a legitimate excuse, it was Sarai, Abraham's wife. She was simply too old. Sarai was well past the age of menopause. Naturally speaking, conception of a child was no longer a possibility. Her husband, Abraham, being ninety-nine years of age, and Sarai being well past the age of child birth pretty much eliminated the possibility of having a child.

I think that a growing number of churches that have an increasing amount of grey hair in the pews have this attitude as well. 'Oh, we are too old to experience something like that. We are past the stage of revival. That is for those churches with all of the young people; the loud music, the lights, and smoke machines. It's not for us older folks.'

We just want to come and enjoy things the way we are used to enjoying them. That's probably what Sarai thought too. A child at her age would be a major interruption in her life. She was pretty set in her ways. It wasn't going to be fun having an infant at her age, or having a toddler when she was 100 years old, or a teenager at 110.

After seven lessons on revival, some of you are thinking that the ultimate end of a wonderful experience sounds like a lot of work. You worry that God is going to keep us pretty busy in our old age.

Think of the end results that Sarai's obedience gained. From Isaac came Jacob and Esau. Jacob's name was changed to Israel by God, and he became the father of the nation that bears that name. Out of the nation of Israel came our Saviour, Jesus Christ. The world was changed forever! Our lives were changed forever!

We have no idea what the end results could be if we allow God to give birth to revival in our city or town. We must be willing to step out of our old age into the new thing God wants to do, even if it hurts a little.

Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1)

Jeremiah had the exact opposite problem to what Sarai had. His excuse was that he was too young. He didn't see himself as able to take on the responsibilities of being a prophet, as God was calling him to do, because of his age. He was not yet developed as the kind of orator that God would need.

He felt insecure. The scripture doesn't say this, but I wonder if there may have been other things he wanted to experience before taking on such an important role in God's economy. That is simply my musing.

A lot of youth have those same two problems. They don't see themselves as experienced enough to be used of God. Plus, they have plans for their life. They have things that they want to experience without getting too caught up in their spiritual life or commitments to God.

Most of the people I mentioned from our youth group were called to ministry from our youth. I nearly missed the opportunity.

David, who became king of Israel, was overlooked by his father, Jesse, when Samuel was looking for God's

anointed. He was the youngest of all of Jesse's sons. Somehow, in the mind of his father, his potential was devalued because of his youth. But David had a heart for God and was God's chosen king. God sees beyond a person's years. I encourage the young people that read this book to give yourself completely to God now. Don't let your youth be an excuse to not experience all of God that you can, and to experience the blessing that comes from doing what he wants you to do.

Gideon (Judges 6)

Gideon responded to the 'Angel of the Lord' in a way that reflected his low self-esteem. This is my paraphrase. "I don't come from a very good family. You'd be better off with a family that's more influential. Of all of the families in Israel, we are the smallest and the least important." This what he actually said: "*Pardon me, my lord, but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.*" (**Judges 6:15**)

This is a real problem in smaller churches, especially in small towns. Many have low spiritual self-esteem. They think that the big churches are the ones God is going to work through.

First, every church has a place in the kingdom of God. Every church has a purpose, just like the individuals within it.

Secondly, I'd like to remind you that Jesus was born in the small town of Bethlehem. It is estimated that the population was about 300 at the time of Jesus' birth. He was raised in the small town of Nazareth, which had a population of about 400; and one public bath. I wonder how that worked.

God loves to do big things in small places. Maybe

He gets more attention and greater glory when what He does isn't lost in a big population. It is more noticeable. When God does big things in places of lesser significance, whatever He does stands out as a significant work of God.

Jonah (Jonah 1)

“The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” 3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish” (Jonah 1:1-3a)

Here I go, paraphrasing again: “I don't feel like it Lord. Ninevah just isn't a place I get excited about. Sorry God, but I'm going to do what I want instead.”

For many people, revival is not something that excites them. We can talk about it all we want, but some just don't get all hyped up about it. They'd rather spend their time and energy on something else.

A lot of people know they are going to heaven. That is enough for them. They don't need anything more than that, so they are content and quite able to run from the call of God to revival.

We'd never say it out loud, but in all honesty, our actions prove that this is how we feel about some people: “I don't like those people enough to go out of my way to tell them about Jesus. I'd rather go somewhere else”. To avoid God's leading, Jonah got on a ship, and he went somewhere he didn't plan on going - the belly of a giant fish.

As has been made clear by many conversations that I've have had with different groups, it is commonly agreed upon that the end result of revival will be effective

outreach. Jonah was called to minister to a lost people. He was called to the city of Nineveh to tell them about the God of Israel, but He didn't want to go.

To many people, having the spiritual impetus for effective outreach is not enough motivation to pay the price of revival. They run from it. They would jump on a sinking ship before going out of their way to share the gospel message with some people.

Too Busy for Revival (Luke 14)

“When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, ‘Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.’”

16 Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.

17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

18 ‘But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

19 “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’

20 “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

21 “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’” (Luke 14:15-21)

Some people are just too busy for revival. It doesn't fit into their schedule. There is no time in their day for added prayer. There is no time for greater commitment to following Jesus. There is no time for greater devotion. They are giving God all the time they have to give already. Life places so many demands on

their time. Martin Luther understood something about prayer, and how it affects our daily activities in a way that most of us don't. He said: "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer."

How would we feel if Jesus said: "I don't have time to take 33 years of my place in heaven to go down there just to get rejected, abused and end up giving my life for them." For Jesus, and for us; our actions and our desires are a display of our priorities. We are His. What do your actions and desires say about say about your priorities?

The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19)

"Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:21-23)

When Jesus told the young man that the cost of discipleship would be the sacrifice of his wealth, it saddened him. He was rich.

God isn't necessarily going to ask us to give up everything we own to experience revival, but He is going to ask that we tear down all of the idols in our life. That's why Jesus said what he said to the rich young ruler. The man loved his wealth. It was an idol that needed to be removed.

To some people, the cost of revival is just too great. God normally requires from us the things that we put ahead of Him. The rest of what we have He can often

use, because it holds a proper place in our hearts. God normally asks us to sacrifice those things that we love more than Him. For most, it's a struggle to give them up.

I have to admit that sometimes the things God asks of us aren't idols. They are just things that get in the way. For me it was a career, a home, moving away from my parents and siblings. We never know what God may require of us. What I know for certain is that if we love Him above all else, we will be ready to give up anything in order to do His bidding. The rich young ruler struggled with this. Do you?

It's now or Never

See if you fit into this scenario. In our original text, the first son said: "I'm not going to work in your vineyard". We don't know what his excuse was, but he didn't want to do it for some reason. Later, he realized that this was the wrong response. He went to help his father do the work that was needed before it was too late.

I wonder if there are people who have subconsciously had excuses to not apply the principles of revival. In your mind you have turned those excuses into reasons, but the Holy Spirit is convicting you of that as you read this lesson. You want to change that response

It is a topic for another book, but there are so many signs that time is running out and that the end of the day is approaching. The world is getting dark and there is little time to finish the harvest.

This is a prophecy written by the Apostle Paul: *"Now, dear brothers and sisters, let us clarify some things about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered to meet him."*

2 Don't be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don't believe them, even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us.

3 Don't be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction.” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)

Is there a rebellion against God? You want to believe there is. If it isn't against God, it is against His church. Statistics don't lie.

In another letter, Paul wrote: *“For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. 3 When people are saying, “Everything is peaceful and secure,” then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.*

4 But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief.

5 For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night.” (1 Thessalonians 5:2-5)

We need to get busy as a church before it gets too dark, and we need the life of the Spirit to be affective. For that reason we need **revival**.

So it doesn't matter what the reason, or what the excuse has been. None of this is to make anyone feel guilty, but hopefully some will understand themselves better after reading this chapter. Hopefully some will come to the place where they say: “I need to get past whatever has been holding me back and get down to business.” The day is coming to an end and there is a job to do that requires a spiritual vitality that most in the

church in North America don't have. We need revival.

God needs a church in these last days of the church age that is like the church in the first days of the church age. He needs a pure church. He needs a powerful church. He needs a church that can be effective in a world where many have rebelled against Him.

God needs a church that is willing to say 'Yes Father' when He asks for help in the vineyard. Even if they didn't show up when He called on them previously, they will show up now.

Conclusion

God can call you at any time and for any purpose. Maybe we mystify what we mean when we talk about 'God's calling' ...or being 'called to ministry'. Maybe we should just understand it as the Father asking us to help Him in the vineyard. Is it possible that we don't need to make it any more complicated or mystical than that?

What we don't always know is what the specific tasks will be, or what it will cost us to go into the vineyard that He is asking us to help in. We must be prepared to do whatever He asks us to do, and pay whatever the price is, knowing full well that the reward will be far greater than the cost. Serving God in His vineyard is an investment in His kingdom and our eternal future.

We may not know how much of our time it will take. We may not know what change in our priorities will be required. Will we have to give up a career, a house, an uncaring attitude? Is it possible that God will ask for your youth or your senior years?

Jesus teaches us to be prepared for the most. He told the rich young ruler to be prepared to give up everything that He owned. One thing we learn from the

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baby church in the book of Acts is that the revived will not count the cost. They will count the opportunity. The revived Christian will look for the privilege of giving whatever God asks of them, of saying 'yes' to whatever He asks them to do. No excuses. It's not too late for revival. It's not too late to GO!

HE IS ALL I NEED

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” (2 Peter 1:3-4)

When I was a child and teenager, we often sang a very simple chorus in the church I grew up in. The song was made up of six simple words. It went like this:

He is all I need
He is all I need
Jesus is all I need
He is all I need
He is all I need
Jesus is I need

At times I wondered about the truth of that song. As much as I know I need God in my life, He put us in a world where we have practical needs that we have to work for. After all, I need food and water. I need a roof over my head. I need transportation. I need friends. I need family.

2 Peter 1:3-4 sheds light on the subject. When it comes to the ability to live a Christ-like life, when it comes to the promises of God, when it comes to accessing His supernatural ability to do what He calls me to do, when it comes to my personal revival, HE IS ALL I NEED. The Bible says so.

“His divine power has given us everything we need.” (2 **Peter 1:3**). *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”* (**Ephesians 1:3**). When it comes to things that are spiritual, He is all that I need. Everything of spiritual value flows out of my relationship with God

Intimacy with God is vital to revival. His Divine power flows through us out of our relationship with Him. Therefore revival requires an intimate relationship, and intimacy requires dependency on Him. We must be totally reliant on Him to access His divine power, and the ‘every spiritual blessing’ Paul spoke of.

Peter wrote this letter near the end of his life. The apostle died in Rome under Nero’s reign, so it was probably between 65 and 68 A.D.

In this letter, Peter is writing to stimulate spiritual growth in his readers. He is teaching them how to deal with false teachers that were infiltrating the young church, and he is encouraging them to be watchful for the Lord’s return.

Some scholars believe that one of the doctrinal errors that Peter was dealing with was what we refer to as Gnosticism, although Gnostics never called themselves that. The doctrine wasn’t really formalized until the 2nd Century, but the concepts began to develop 300 to 400 years before Christ. The gnostic way of thinking was addressed by Peter, Paul and John as the ideas grew in parallel to early Christianity. Some Gnostics actually believed that Gnosticism was a higher form of Christianity. They were wrong.

Gnosticism says that humans are divine souls trapped in the ordinary physical (or material) world. The

material world is evil, and it was made by an imperfect spirit - since a perfect spirit wouldn't create an imperfect world. In the Gnostic way of thinking, this imperfect creator is the God we Christians worship. Our God is sometimes viewed as evil by Gnostics, or just not perfect; but doing the best He can. To them the real God, who is good, is distant and not easy to know. So, in order to get free from the material world, a person has to get gnosis. That is a special, secret knowledge given only to a few special people.

Jesus was viewed as imperfect by Gnostics because He had a human body, which is material. Material is imperfect or evil. Still, some Gnostic groups saw Jesus as sent by the Supreme Being to bring gnosis to the Earth through His teachings.

All of that is important background to the understanding of why Peter says some of the things he does, in the way that he says them.

Everything We Need For a Godly Life

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him.” (2 Peter 1:3a)

Gnostics believed that a few people could achieve spiritual life or vitality through special knowledge. So, they strived to find that knowledge. Since their body was material, and therefore evil, they could live however they wanted. Evil is evil, so they couldn't make it worse. All the while, they sought after this special knowledge that would gain them a relationship with the supreme God. Peter teaches that it is true that spiritual vitality comes through knowledge, but it is a knowledge that is available to everyone, not just a select few. It's not a hidden, secret,

and hard to attain knowledge as the Gnostics believed. It is in the knowledge of ‘Him’. The knowledge Peter writes about results in godly living.

Spiritual vitality, power, and strength comes through intimacy with God and our knowledge of Him. It is not a big secret. It’s not true that only a few are capable of discovering the knowledge that leads to God. Knowing God is possible for us all, and achievable by us all.

It is important to break **2 Peter 1:3a** into two parts to gain better understanding.

1. *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life”*

2. *“...through our knowledge of him”*

First, I’ve said it often already – ‘revival is life had, life lost, and life regained’. The first two parts define most of the church throughout the world today - “life had - life lost”. It’s why we need revival.

The kind of life that we are in need of is not physical life. It is the godly life that Peter spoke of. We’ve done this in previous lessons, but let’s look again at what it means to be godly. This is God’s nature. To reflect that nature is to be godly. He is...

- Holy
- Just
- Loving
- Merciful
- Kind
- Good
- Gracious

In addition to these characteristics, He has attributes that belong to Him and Him alone. He is all-

knowing, all-powerful and everywhere present. The presence of the Holy Spirit in every believer makes it possible to grow in the nature of God. That is a truth that is commonly understood, but not as commonly applied. What many Christians choose not to believe, or sometimes forget, is that we can access His knowledge, wisdom and power as He allows. They aren't something we can use willy-nilly, but He gives them to us as He sees fit, and in situations where the use of these attributes through us will benefit the body of Christ.

Here are some scattered verses from **1 Corinthians 12:4-11** *“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them...*

8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy... 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”

There you have it. His Divine Power has given us the ability to represent His character, and to access His attributes as He chooses to use us. The flip side is that we can't live a godly life in our own ability. His character can't be stronger in us than our own without His Divine Power, and we can't do His work supernaturally without the fullness of His Spirit. The more alive we are in Him, the more-godly we can be and the more He is able to use us as instruments, making His attributes at work through us. The gifts of knowledge, wisdom, faith, healing, miracles, discernment of spirits, prophecy, tongues and interpretation of tongues are gifts resident in His Spirit who dwells in every believer. We simply must learn to put

down our sinful human nature to the point where it is non-influential, and submit to the nature of God in us.

The second part of this statement is incredibly important as well. His Divine power is available "...through our knowledge of him". We previously listed God's characteristics, and His attributes. That is what we know 'about' Him. Peter is NOT referring to that kind of knowledge.

To know God is about relationship. For example, if you know my wife, you know things about her as either an acquaintance or a friend. I know my wife as her husband, who has become one with her in life and in spirit. Those are three different levels of relationship with different kinds of knowledge.

Peter is telling us that because of our relationship with Him, God's divine nature has given us what we need to be like Him and to do His work. The deeper our relationship, the more intimate we are, the more we know Him. If we have an intimate relationship with God, we don't just know about Him, we have a deep relational knowledge of Him; and the more of His life and power we have to be like Him to do His work.

Who's Calling?

"...who called us by his own glory and goodness." (2 Peter 1:3b)

Peter's letters were obviously written to Christians. They were intended to be circular letters, passed from community to community, from church to church. The cities listed in his first letter were in Asia-minor. This second epistle probably went to the same audience. The readers would primarily be Gentile, but would certainly include some Jews.

Location and ethnicity are far less important than the fact that he is writing to Christians when he says: "...who called us by his own glory and goodness." I want to clarify that when the Scripture refers to being called there are two types of calling. There is a general calling to salvation. The Greek word that Peter uses here is 'kaleo', which is God calling sinners. It is the call of God to salvation.

The second type of calling is to a specific ministry. The following Scripture provides a list of offices that God appoints people to in the church, but it is by no means a complete list of ministry opportunities created by an ever-changing society. *"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."* (Ephesians 4:11-12)

So, as Christians we have heard the call of God to salvation. As Christians, we all have been given ministry gifts (Romans 12:6-8). God will call us to use them in some way. You are not exempt from the calling of God into some form of ministry activity. God didn't give you ministry gifts to sit on your hands in the pew. Please note that hand sitting is not on the list of spiritual gifts.

The more alive we are spiritually, the more likely we are to be called to a specific ministry and the more we desire it. The revived Christian wants, so badly, to use their God-given gifts to His glory.

What I really want to focus on here is that God calls us out of His glory and goodness. Peter wants people to know that despite what this newly forming religion (Gnosticism) is teaching, we serve a majestic and holy God. He is not flawed in any way. He is glorious. He is

good.

Let's get our heads into the few biblical stories where man got a glimpse of God's glory. When Moses approached the burning bush, he had to remove his shoes because the ground he was standing on was holy. Moses was called out of God's glory.

Following are a few more incidences where man witnessed the glory of God. The Israelites were in the desert, on the way to the Promised Land, when "*On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. 17 Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. 19 As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. 20 The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain.*" (Exodus 19:16-20) "*When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, 16 and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. 17 To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. 18 Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.*" (Exodus 24:15-18). The Ten Commandments, the law, the design for the Tabernacle, etc. were all given out of God's glory.

At the dedication of Solomon's temple, when the Ark of the Covenant was being brought into the Holy of Holies. "*The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give*

praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the LORD was filled with the cloud, 14 and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God." (2 Chronicles 5:13-14). True worship was blessed with God's presence and His glory.

And here is another very specific example of Isaiah being called out of the glory of God. *"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'" 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:1-8)*

Peter James and John witnessed the glory of God when Jesus was transformed on the Mount of Transfiguration.

The Apostle John witnessed the glory of God when He was taken into heaven in a vision. *"At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with*

someone sitting on it. 3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing.6 Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.” (Revelation 4:2-3, 5-6)

The glory of God emanates from His very being and surrounds His presence. Imagine that from His position of holy awe, unlimited power, majesty beyond our imagination, and in a place where heavenly beings bow before Him day and night, God looks at sinful us, and calls us by name into a relationship. We were once the crowning glory of His creation, but now we are a people impacted by sin to our very core - unable to look into the face of God, spiritually dead, physically frail, and constantly disobedient. But, God loves us so much that He looks from that place of glory and goodness into the place where we live. It is a place that is filthy with sin. He looks into our hearts, and He sees that it is penetrated with the same filth, and He says to Himself: “I love them. I want to be in a relationship with them. I will pay any price for their salvation.” *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8).* “I will call them into a relationship with me, and to those who respond I will give them spiritual life. They will be my children, and I will give them a place of service in my kingdom.” Whaaaaat?

Praise God! He has called us out of His glory and goodness. Despite the contrast, that is a thousand times greater than night and day, He loves us, and He calls us.

That thing we call conviction that has led so many

people to salvation is not meant to be condemning. It simply comes from the contrast between the glory from which God is calling us out of, and the sin in which we were living. What an amazing mental image. God calls us out of His glory.

A Promise of Participation

“Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” (2 Peter 1:4)

This statement brings us back to what we talked about in lesson number five. “In Him we live, and move, and have our being”. It isn’t that we become divine, or small ‘g’ gods when we participate in the divine nature. It is that He puts His Spirit in us. In that way we participate in HIS divine nature.

The degree to which we understand and apply that truth in our daily lives and ministry is a clear indication as to whether or not revival is something we need to pray for. Which is the predominant nature in your life? Is it your sinful, human nature, or is it His holy, powerful, loving, good, gracious, merciful, and kind nature?

The more we participate in His divine nature, the less influential our sinful human nature is. The less selfish we are. We are not as focused on material or temporal things. We are heavenly minded, but still very earthly good.

The road to revival requires the putting down of our old nature to make room for His divine nature. *“All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. “But because of his great love for us,*

God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” (Ephesians 2:3-5).

The reason why there were so many conversions, healings, and miracles in the early church was because His divine nature flowed freely through them. There is more to having the life of Christ than salvation. If we cannot see His divine nature at work in and through our lives and ministries it is definitely time for revival.

Conclusion

This passage of Scripture is mind-blowing. *“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms”* (Ephesians 1:18-20).

I’ve come to realize that revival is two things. It is hard work, because we have to deal with our tainted human nature, habits we have developed, priorities we have established, lifestyles we have adopted. We, with God’s help, have to crucify the old nature. *“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”* (Galatians 5:24-25).

On the other hand, all that we want of God, His character, and His nature is as freely available to us as the gift of salvation. We just have to make room for His character by submitting our own character to His. He not only offers us salvation, He offers us His divine nature, and every spiritual blessing as a gift.

Spiritually speaking, He is all we need. He has

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given us His Spirit. Once we have responded to the call of salvation, He has called us to let the spirit work supernaturally in us and through us to reveal His nature and to do His work. He has called us from His position of glory and goodness. Amazing!

You've heard the call to salvation. Do you hear the call to a godly life and a powerful impact on society? Hear the call. Be revived.

POWER, POWER, WONDER WORKING POWER

If necessary, I'd like to suggest that you re-read these ten lessons a number of times until you sense that your life is being changed by biblical truth. Please meditate on the biblical principles until your life is so full of the Spirit that you see God doing things in and through you that you have never seen before or even imagined to be possible.

In the first verse of the Scripture that we will consider, we are reminded of 3 important things. *"I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power."* (**Ephesians 3:7**). Paul says, "I became a servant". There is no question that revival would be a tremendous blessing to the church. But the biggest aspect of that blessing is the ability to serve God in a more effective way. The Apostle Paul wrote this incredible passage of Scripture, which pretty much sums it up. *"I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. 15 All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you."* (**Philippians 3:12-15**)

So, the first thing to note is that we are primarily servants of God. The revived Christian has the ability to serve in the most effective way.

The second thing to note here is that to be God's

servant, and to be given the fullness of God's Spirit to serve, are both acts of grace. These are the Apostle Paul's words: *"by the gift of God's grace given me"*. The truth is, we deserve neither the privilege of serving Him or the strength He gives us to do so. Applying the principles of revival doesn't earn us the privilege or the power God desires to give us. The principles we have discussed simply get the things out of the way that are distracting us from the need for these gifts of grace. They clear our hearts and minds of the things that leave little room for God's Spirit. We get so full of things that aren't necessarily wrong in and of themselves, that we are unaware of the need for more of God. Preparing our lives for all that God has for us simply clears the path of any obstructions, so that the Spirit of God can flow freely through us the way He has always wanted to.

The third thing is that the gift of servanthood comes by way of God's power. This last phrase is literally translated: *"According to the working of the power of Him."* That's what the smart people say. My interpretation of the Greek is slightly different than that of the smart people. Mine is this: "The energy of God's dynamic power". The Greek word translated 'working' is 'energia' – better translated 'energy'. The Greek word translated 'power' is 'dunamis', which is dynamic power, the kind produced by dynamite. So the calling to servanthood is a gift of grace, which sounds all nice and sweet, but it comes combined with an energy that exceeds the energy created by the most powerful bomb ever made. Supernatural energy.

Here's a statement that I find interesting. "The first test of a fission ("atomic") bomb released an amount

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of energy approximately equal to 20,000 tons of TNT. The first thermonuclear ("hydrogen") bomb test released energy approximately equal to 10 million tons of TNT."

I wonder what the measurement of the energy that flows from God's dynamic power would be; that divine energy that came along with the calling God placed on our life to serve Him. If we don't have it, revival still alludes us.

The remainder of our text is a prayer that Paul prays for the church in Ephesus. It starts out like this: *"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."* (**Ephesians 3:14**). We will break down vv. 15-21 as we go.

I have come to the conclusion that the obvious presence of the energy that comes from God's dynamic power, and the evidence of that energy at work through our lives, is probably the best litmus test there is to determine whether or not we are equipped for the role of servant that He has called us to, and whether or not we remain in need of a greater presence of His Spirit in our life to be affective in our calling.

May I remind you that we are all given ministry gifts by the Holy Spirit. We are all members of the 'body' of Christ (**Romans 12:3-8**). That means that, by His grace we all have a purpose or a calling that suits our ministry gifts. Not one of us are exempt, and we should be doing it in the energy of His power.

Years ago, when my family and I travelled the country in ministry, we were doing services in Amherst, Nova Scotia, which isn't too far from the town my Grandmother grew up in. The current population of Pugwash, Nova Scotia, Canada is 736. It sits on a salt

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deposit that is 1500 ft. thick (457.2 meters) and is home to the largest underground salt mine in Atlantic Canada. Apart from being a beautiful ocean side village with a tiny downtown, there isn't much there. Right on the ocean is a lovely golf course and just down the road from that is the Canadian country music star, Anne Murray's cottage. Sandwiched between the two is the farm my grandmother grew up on. This was the same farm where my grandfather worked for Granny's foster parents.

I wanted a memento. My grandmother had told us so many stories from there that I felt very connected. I wanted something to remind me of my visit. Oddly enough, this small town was the home of Seagull Pewter. There was a retail outlet at the manufacturing plant. They made so many beautiful things, but what I bought was a 'blob'. I spent \$6.00 of my hard earned Canadian money on a blob of pewter that simply said 'Imagine' on it. My whole ministry then was about imagining a spirit-filled church across our nation.



Imagine how effective we would be as a church if revival came, and every one of us fulfilled our place in the body of Christ with the energy that comes from His dynamic power.

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Imagine the unity; everyone going the same direction, at the same time, for the same purpose. We would do so because we would all be led and empowered by the same Spirit.

Imagine the impact we would have on our community. Imagine the souls saved. Imagine the miracles. Imagine signs and wonders confirming the Word of God, drawing men, women and young people into His family.

Imagine if the words of this old hymn were our reality. This is the 4th verse and the chorus to the hymn after which this lesson was given its title:

“There’s Power in the Blood”.

Verse 4

Would you do service for Jesus your King?
There's power in the blood, power in the blood;
Would you live daily His praises to sing?
There's wonderful power in the blood.

Chorus

There is power, power, wonder-working power
In the blood of the Lamb.
There is power, power, wonder-working power
In the precious blood of the Lamb.

Let’s look at what the Apostle Paul says in the remaining verses of our text about the energy that comes from God’s dynamic power.

Power #1 - Inner Strength

“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his

Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” (Ephesians 3:14-17a)

I like how verse 16 reads in the New American Standard Bible best. It is truer to the sequence of the wording in the Greek, and helps us better in our understanding. **v.16, NASB** *“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.”*

In Lesson 9 we talked about being called out of His glory: *“...who called us by his own glory and goodness.” (2 Peter 1:3)*. We looked at some amazing instances in the Scripture where God revealed His glory, and in some cases He called people into ministry out of that glory.

What an incredible sense we got of the magnificence of the glory of God as we perused the Scripture and put all of the revelations into one picture. Let's get this image of God's glory fresh in our head. There is a bush on fire that isn't burning. There is a mountain in the desert that is surrounded by fire and lightning. The cloud of God's glory filled the place of worship, and the doorposts shook at the intensity of His presence. His glory filled the temple and heavenly beings sang praises to His Name. Then there was the throne room of heaven, where God sat. A rainbow completely encompassed God's throne. Twenty-four elders each sat on a throne of their own, each one laying their crowns at the feet of God. Heavenly beings of various descriptions sang praises to Him day and night. There were flashes of lightning and the rumbling of thunder.

With all of that in our mind's eye, note that He not only calls us out of His glory, as Peter taught us, He strengthens us with His power ...*“according to the riches of*

His glory” (**Ephesians 3:16**). I would invite anyone to tell me what limitations there are on the riches of His glory. Then I will tell you the limitations of what God can do in you and through you. There are none.

The Holy Spirit is the agent of that power. He not only delivers it to us, He takes up residence in us so we are never without it. With that in mind, think of Paul’s statement: “...*to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man*”. (**Ephesians 3:16**)

I find it interesting that God works through us from the inside out. He strengthens the inner man so that the outer man can be an effective servant. We tend to think differently than God does. We look at people from the outside and judge them, thinking that they should be behaving differently. Maybe we would be more effective if we taught and prayed this prayer for them - that they be strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man. Maybe we should pray this prayer for our self!

The point is that when the Holy Spirit came into our life at salvation, he came with “the energy of God’s dynamic power”. Sometimes, I think we forget that the Holy Spirit is God. He is the third member of the Trinity. All of who God is dwells in Him because He is God. He is glorious beyond our imagination and He dwells in us. He cannot be separated from “the energy of God’s dynamic power”.

If that divine energy is not at work through us to help us live and serve effectively to the glory of God, something is wrong. It means that there are dead spots in our lives that need to be revived. There are things blocking the flow of the Spirit through us. We need revival.

Power #2 - Power to Grasp

Some people are thinking: “I don’t get this whole ‘revival’ thing. I don’t understand. I have never seen this kind of Christianity. I have never experienced the kind of Church you are talking about. Reading the book of Acts is the closest thing I have ever gotten to this kind of Christianity. Surely it died with the Apostles.”

The powerful work of the Holy Spirit was never intended to die with the apostles. Let me assure you that the Apostle Paul was not writing to the other apostles. He was writing to ‘Joe Blow’ Christian like you and me, because he knew their potential if they could grasp hold of this truth. So, he prays that they are given the ability to grasp it. That in itself takes power. *“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”* (Ephesians 3:17b-19).

It’s interesting that Paul focuses on love in these verses but he ends up by referring to all the fullness of God. All of the attributes of God are beyond comprehension. To use Paul’s words, they all ‘surpass knowledge’. In our natural minds this kind of teaching is nonsense. The enormity of who God is, and who the Holy Spirit is that He dwells in us is incomprehensible to the human mind. It’s why we struggle accepting some of the things the Bible teaches about what God can do through us.

Paul prays that the same power that works through us would be the instrument that God uses to help us to grasp that God can work through us. The answer to that

prayer comes when we open ourselves up to the reality *“that you (we) may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”* (**Ephesians 3:19**).

Let’s read the verses again, because there is something here that requires explanation. *“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”* (**Ephesians 3:17b-19**).

All of God’s attributes are equally incomprehensible, and Paul wants us to grasp an understanding of them all, to be impacted by them all, and for all of them to flow through us in equal measure. Still, he really focuses on God’s love in these verses. Why? Love is at the very core of God’s nature. It is the epicenter. Can you imagine a just God, a God who treats people as they should be treated without love? Can you imagine a holy God without love? Grace, mercy, kindness, goodness would not be parts of His character if love was absent.

As we seek the power to grasp hold of all that God is and has for us; as we seek revival we must seek the power *“to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.”* -because the love of Christ must be at the core of everything we are and do as Christians.

As we seek revival seek power first, but seek ‘power to grasp’ hold of an understanding of God’s love. Then, once we have that down pat, we seek to grasp and be filled with all the fullness of God.

Let’s pray for one another:

- That God give us the power to comprehend the

incomprehensible

- That God give us the power to understand truth too big for our human understanding
- That God give us the power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the fullness of God's nature in us

Power #3 – Wonder-working, Mind-blowing Power

I would love if you could begin to make a list of all the things you can imagine God doing. It is helpful to recall the story of creation, and the miracles of Jesus. Include in that list the things you would like for Him to do in and through your life, in your family and in your community.

I'm not asking you to think of God as some kind of genie in the sky. Jesus taught us to seek first the kingdom of God, so think of things that benefit His kingdom, but don't limit yourself. Include salvations. Include healings. Include miracles. Now, listen to the conclusion of Paul's prayer. *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."* (**Ephesians 3:20-21**).

Did you hear what Paul said? Look at your list and listen again. *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine."* That means that God looks at your list, smiles, and says: "That's it?"

I've spent some time asking myself why we struggle getting answers to prayer, or experiencing the fullness of God's power. I've said that revival is hard work because we have things in our own life to deal with

that have become road blocks to all that the Spirit wants to do in us and through us. But there is a sense in which revival is no work at all.

What we must understand is that what we call revival is normal Christianity from God's perspective. A life of power, power, wonder-working power is just the way it's supposed to be. It's a free gift from God, given along with a calling to do His work. All we have to do is get rid of the road blocks, with the help of His Spirit, and accept the fullness of His Spirit as His free gift of grace to us.

So, why don't we do it? What is our problem?

Complacency/Comfort

Have you ever gone to pick up a puppy or a kitten, but you aren't fully equipped yet? You take a cardboard box and poke some holes in it so the cutie can breathe. You line the bottom with an old blanket or towel to make it nice and soft. When you pick up the new member of your family you set it gently in the box. It scratches that towel or blanket, moving it and changing its shape, creating the perfect nest for itself; certainly better than you had done. Then you take that puppy or kitten home.

When you get to your home you open the box, making your home the pet's home. It is a whole new wonderful world filled with love and joy for that animal, but it stays in the box. It is nice and comfortable in there.

On the ride home it discovered that it is safe there; but this new place it now sees is different. It looks amazing. It looks inviting, but it is essentially unknown. The animal knows that the box is safe but is unsure of what is outside.

When you open the box and reach in to pick up

the young animal, it cowers a bit. It isn't in a big hurry to leave the place of comfort. It doesn't want to leave the place that it knows is safe.

We have lived in the box we call the Christian life for a long time. For some of us it has been a very long ride, and we feel safe in the box we've been riding in. We have scratched and changed the way God made the church and created a form of Christianity that is really comfortable for us, but it is so confined; so limiting.

As wonderful as revival sounds, and as inviting as the Christianity of Acts, chapters 2 to 10 looks, it is outside our box.

I'm begging you to stop cowering away from revival. He *"is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us"* (**Ephesians 3:20**). Let's let the Spirit of God take us where He wants us to go. He has so much more for us than the comfortable place we have made for ourselves.

Lack of faith

You all know that God is able to do more than we ask or imagine. He is God. He is all-powerful. He spoke and created worlds. You believe that without any doubt, so in that sense you have great faith. But, how many of you believe that He actually will do amazing things in and through us?

Some grew up in churches that taught that God doesn't do miracles anymore. You were taught that God doesn't heal anymore. That begs the question: "Why then do we pray for people who are ill?"

Some of you have been taught that the gifts of the Spirit were for the time of the apostles only. Why then is Paul saying these things to the Christians in Ephesus?

And why did Peter teach what he did to the other churches in Asia Minor? They did so, so that the working of the Spirit would continue when they were gone. I would like to see chapter and verse that tells us that any of those things were intended to end.

On the Day of Pentecost Peter quoted the prophet Joel. Clearly, under the unction of the Holy Spirit, he believed that this was the beginning of the last days that Joel prophesied about. It was the beginning of the church age, the final dispensation before the coming tribulation period. This was God's promise to the church from that day until the day the rapture takes place. To clarify, I believe that the time from the day the church was born (The Day of Pentecost), until the rapture of the church is the "last days" that Joel referred to. He said: "*I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.*" (**Joel 2:28-29**).

I'm asking the church to believe that God will pour out His Spirit on us, that we will experience His wonder-working power, and that we will see things that are far beyond whatever we could ask or imagine.

Conclusion

There is power, power, wonder-working power available to us as a church. That power is resident in the Holy Spirit who is resident inside you. He has even given us the power to grasp what that really means; that it is a wonder-working, mind-blowing power. It is available to us as a church. It's in God's warehouse with our name on it. We just have to get some things out of the way in our own life and accept delivery of God's gifts to us.

The Road to Revival

When the Holy Spirit came into our life He came with: *“the energy of God’s dynamic power”*. It is a power that is immeasurable, it flows out of His glory, and the Holy Spirit brings it into our lives.

I pray with Paul today that He also gives to us the power to grasp the reality of this truth. That is the truth that the supernatural is at work in us and that God wants to work supernaturally through us. It is a truth that is far too often ignored.

I pray that, although it is a whole new world full of immeasurable power and blessings, that He help us to stop fearing it, to stop cowering away from it, and to believe that God wants to do things in us and through us that are beyond what we can think or imagine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Like all of us, my life could be seen as a compilation of stories and events, ups and downs. I prefer to see it is a story of grace. The record of my life would include growing up in a great family, having a great job, being called to pastoral ministry as a young professional and pastoring wonderful churches in eastern Ontario, Canada. In 1998 God gave me a message for the nation of Canada, and for five years my family of five traveled across the nation sharing that message through worship and preaching of the Word.

At that point everything that was my norm and every plan for the future disintegrated before my eyes. I was divorced. My theology disqualified me from ministry. I was in survival mode. Life was a burden, but God began to reveal to me the enormity of His grace. He blessed me with an amazing wife with a heart after God. Despite my theology, and through no effort of my own, God miraculously opened a door for pastoral ministry once again. I walked through it with awe, wonderment, excitement, and mostly humility at the revelation of the enormity of God's grace.

I have a great life with nothing but excitement about the future as I continue to live and work as a product of His amazing grace.