



March 13-April 2



SHC family,

Today we begin 21 days of fasting and prayer. Today we begin to seek and ask God to start a revival in our hearts, our homes, our church, and our community. When thinking of the word “revival,” it brings to mind the famous evangelist, Billy Graham. His impact on the world was certainly a revival as he preached to over 215 million people through hundreds of crusades around the world resulting in countless thousands placing their faith in Jesus Christ.

One of the great stories from Graham’s early years centers on a group tour he was on of the home of John Wesley, the famous English preacher who played a significant role in the First Great Awakening. In Wesley’s bedroom, the group noticed actual indentions on the floor where Wesley knelt to pray each day. After the tour, the tour guide noticed Graham was missing and later found him kneeling in the imprints by Wesley’s bed praying, “Do it again, Lord, do it again!”

Little did Graham know what the Lord would do through him, but it is clear that he understood that God’s work would begin with a personal desperation to see God move.

The prophet Habakkuk records the same kind of cry in **Habakkuk 3:2, *O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it.***

As we ask the Lord to send revival, it is critical we realize that revival starts in us. Let’s make it our heart’s cry to ask the Lord to send revival, beginning in our own hearts and in our lives.

Will you join me for the next 21 days in praying for God’s leading in our lives, our families, our church, and our community? Will you take time to fast, giving up physical sustenance to be filled spiritually by God in preparation for this next season? Will you pray expectantly that God will display His power and faithfulness to us in this season? I believe as we come together, fully submitted to God in prayer, He will display both His person and His power in unprecedented ways. And He will advance the gospel so that more people will meet, know, and follow Him.

My prayer for you during the next 21 days is that you will experience a deeper craving for the beauty of the Lord and for the wonder of His leading in your life, and that you will know the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the favor of the God of heaven. My prayer is that you will realize you are not alone on this journey. You are joining with your church family in seeking God for significant breakthroughs. These will ripple out and turn into a tidal wave of revival and spiritual awakening in our personal lives, families, church and community. My prayer is that you will acquire your own prayer-and-fasting testimony, and that God will overwhelm you with His goodness as you seek His power, presence, and provision in every step of your 21-day journey.

Pastor Chip

The 21 days are divided into **3 one-week segments**:

- **Personal revival.** Revival starts with you. We will consider what this looks like and how it comes.
- **Community revival.** Praying for revival in our church, our community and throughout our nation.
- **Preparing for revival.** God is the One who sends revival. It is His prerogative. But we will look at our role in preparing for this revival.

You may choose to **fast** at some stages during the 21 days to focus on prayer and show your willingness to sacrifice for God's revival. You will find some suggestions below to help you on your fasting journey.

What is Fasting?

Fasting is deliberately abstaining from the normal routines of life. Its purpose is to spend focused time in prayer and the study of God's Word, seeking to align our lives with God's will.

Ultimately, fasting is more about replacing than abstaining. It is filling our lives with God's Word instead of with food, social media, sports, entertainment, etc... It is finding satisfaction and enjoyment in God and in God alone. Fasting helps us humble ourselves before the Lord and positions us to experience spiritual breakthroughs in our lives.

Fasting is a choice, but it is also obedience. In Matthew 6, Jesus talks about three duties of every Christian: giving, praying, and fasting. He doesn't use the word **if**, He uses the word **when** for all three of those duties.

Why should you fast?

- Are you in need of healing or a miracle?
- Do you need the tender touch of God in your life?
- Is there a dream inside you that only He can make possible?
- Are you in need of a fresh encounter with God?
- Do you desire a deeper, more intimate and powerful relationship with the Lord?
- Are you ready to have heightened sensitivity to the desires of God?
- Do you need to break away from bondages that have been holding you hostage?
- Is there a friend or loved one that needs salvation?
- Do you desire to know God's will for your life?

There are many ways to fast, and many things you can fast from, but remember, it's all about the heart. The whole point of a fast is so we can remove obstacles and

distractions that would otherwise hinder us from growing closer to God. What's holding you back? What's taking time away from you spending time in God's Word? Look at those things and pray about what God would have you fast from during these 21 days.

How do I start?

1. Pick your fast

Full Fast: Drink liquids only. *Please consult your doctor first.

Daniel Fast: Eat only vegetables, fruit, water, and juice (minimal amount of carbohydrates).

Partial Fast: Not eating one or two meals on a specific day or abstaining from certain kinds of food.

All-day Food Fast: Abstaining from food one day or multiple days per week.

Activity/Media Fast: Foregoing a time-consuming activity such as entertainment, social media, TV, internet, sports, etc.

Whether you choose to fast or not, please seek God with us in prayer for revival.

WEEK 1: PERSONAL REVIVAL

DAY 1: DESIGNED FOR INTIMACY

When tracing any theme through Scripture, it is always wise to check out how it all started. What were God's original intentions? To do this we have to return to the beginning. So, our Scripture reading today goes right back to revival in the Garden. Except that it wasn't called "revival" because there was nothing to revive at that stage. No-one had slipped backwards. That comes in this Scripture reading. We find God's plan for our relationship with Him and how that all got messed up in this passage. You may have to read between the lines a little to discern God's intentions, but I am sure you can see it.

Scripture: Genesis 3:6-10

Devotion

A lot is made of nakedness in this passage so perhaps we should start there. Up to this point in the narrative, Adam and Eve had been completely naked and completely unashamed. They were not the same and they were certainly different from God, but this had no impact on their relationships. They were open books. Nothing to hide. No shame. No embarrassment.

This certainly applied to the relationship between Adam and Eve, but it also characterized their relationship with God. It appears that God would walk in the Garden, and they would share and chat with Him. These were special times. Just Adam and Eve and God walking and talking together. They would have learned so much and experienced how deeply God loved them. This was always God's plan. To have a deep, open, unashamed, loving relationship with His children.

In many ways this is a glimpse of what happens in revival. God restores the intimacy and tenderness of the Garden. We want to be close to God. We want to share with Him. We want to walk by His side. We love His presence. We enjoy His freedom. We are saturated with His love. We drink deeply of His wisdom. This is what we are praying for over the next 21 days.

As the Scripture makes clear, Eve and Adam's disobedience wrecked all of this. They thought they could be wise like God, and so, would not need Him around all the time. All they succeeded in doing was recognizing how different and shameful (naked) they were – hence their need to hide from each other (fig leaf coverings) and especially to hide from God. All intimacy was lost at that moment.

Sin continues to have this impact. It does not break our relationship with God, which Jesus has achieved for us. But the shame kills our intimacy. So, as we will find, confession and repentance are keys to revival, restoration of our closeness to God. Thank goodness our sin does not have to separate us from God's love and intimacy.

Prayer Response

I honestly want to be close to you Lord. I want to share my life with you. I want to be free of shame. I long to drink in your love for me and sense your presence. I dream of walking and talking feely and intimately with you. No shame. This is my heart cry.

Prayer for Revival

We live in a shameful and shame-filled world. Wherever I look there is pain, distress, brokenness, disappointment, arrogance, rebellion, oppression, fear. Our world bears all the marks of life without you Lord. Please bring your hope and healing and peace. We are desperate.

Notes:

WEEK 1: PERSONAL REVIVAL

DAY 2: THE PRESENCE OF GOD

It looked like the failure of Adam and Eve had closed the door to deep human intimacy with God. Ejected from the Garden, people were forced to make their own way. Sure, God would still speak and guide, but it was more as a wise teacher than an intimate friend. But this was not the whole story. In the Old Testament, we find occasional characters who were incredibly close to God. Oh, not everyone by any means. These companions of God stand out. One of them was Moses.

Ex. 33:11 says, “The Lord would speak with Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.” At one point, Moses asked God, “show me your glory” (Ex. 33:18). Well, he got his wish and experienced the lost intimacy, beauty and glory of the Garden. He was so full of this glory that all his followers could see it.

Scripture: Exodus 34:29-35

Devotion

I wonder what Moses looked like after spending time with God. His appearance changed so much that people were afraid to come too close to him. But Moses' radiant face was merely a symbol of the beauty, power and holiness of God that rubbed off on him as he talked with God, His friend. He was transformed by the presence of God and his followers could plainly see it.

But inevitably the radiance faded. Moses set up a special tent where he would go to meet with God. Between these intimate conversations, he found that God's presence slowly faded away in his life. That is why he wore a veil (2 Cor. 3:13). He did not want people to see that he no longer reflected God's glory as much, that the radiance was disappearing.

There are at least two truths that are reflected in this narrative. The first is that the presence of God is both possible and transformative. If Moses could be a friend of God, so can we. We are children and heirs of God, which is even better. As we spend time with our Friend, it makes a huge difference in our lives. We live better. We believe better. We love better. We lead better. This is personal revival. God's presence and glory filling our lives. And it will show.

The second truth is that God's presence fades. The grubbiness of our world rubs off on us. Our tendency to live independently increases. The attraction of sin grows. And so, the glory of God in our lives dwindles. Fortunately, we do not need to head off to a tent to meet with God. But we do need to intentionally live in His presence or God's reviving glory will wane.

Prayer Response

Lord, may I be a Moses who is so filled with your glory that other people notice you in my life. I really do want to be transformed by your presence so please give me strength to live close to your heart. Right now, may your presence fill me as I talk with you, my friend.

Prayer for Revival

There are many people in our community looking for hope and reality. They don't know it yet, but they are searching for you. Please unify our church and fill us with your presence so that our community may see your grace and goodness and power and love through us.

Notes:

WEEK 1: PERSONAL REVIVAL

DAY 3: CLEANSING AND JOY

One of the encouraging things about the Bible is that it describes its heroes' warts and all. Great men and women of God are seen as deeply flawed. King David is one of these godly heroes. Although the Bible says that he was a man after God's heart, many of the stories indicate he had significant weaknesses. But, in the songs David wrote we get a glimpse of his true heart. He certainly did a lot wrong. Preceding the writing of Psalm 51, David had committed both adultery and murder. And God was not pleased. David would live with the painful consequences of these sins for the rest of his life. In Psalm 51, we find David seeking God's forgiveness and pleading for cleansing and a revived purity, goodness and joy.

Scripture: Psalm 51:7-12

Devotion

You cannot separate repentance and revival. Because personal revival brings a new holiness and closeness with God, it is always preceded by repentance and maintained by repentance. As James said, "friendship with the world is enmity with God" (Jam. 4:4). So, we can't be close friends with God and allow the world into our lives. The only way to stop sin getting a grip and destroying our friendship with God is continual repentance. This might sound like hard work, but it is incredibly freeing.

David refused to deal with his sin for over nine months and he found that it crushed his bones (51:8). That sounds incredibly painful to me. He felt ashamed. He lost his joy. And most significantly, he no longer knew the presence of God. He was even fearful of losing God's Spirit forever. Yet he still ignored and justified his sin until God finally broke through. Satan just loves to squash us and keep us imprisoned by our pride and shame.

But, as David repents of his sin, you can see the incredible freedom and life that he believes will flow from God. Cleanness (51:7). Purity – whiter than snow (51:7, 10). Joy (51:8). A new heart and spirit (51:10). Fresh faithfulness and obedience (51:10, 12). This is the way to live.

The following illustration is a little gross, but then so is sin, so bear with me. I hate vomiting. I will fight so hard to hold it back. No matter how sick I feel, I will not give in. I am determined not to let that food come back up. Maybe it's fear or maybe it's pride. I do not know. But when I can finally hold it back no longer and I vomit, I feel really good (at least for a while). The wretched rubbish has been expelled. Sin is like that. We fight so hard to ignore it, or justify it, or hold it at bay, or pretend it is not too bad. We feel that nothing can be done about our sin and so we hold it in. But when it comes to the surface and we admit, confess and repent, oh the joy and freedom that flows.

Personal revival involves giving up the deception of our goodness and letting Jesus take

our sin and guilt away. We do not have to pretend any more. We keep on repenting and are free through Jesus.

Prayer Response

Read this Psalm again a few times and make it your personal prayer.

Prayer for Revival

Lord, sin is a terrible blight on our community. It touches everyone. It invades everything. It squashes our hope. It wrecks our peace. It crushes our bones. And it keeps us from fellowship with you. Please bring your conviction like you did for David. May Satan's lies be exposed. May grief and sorrow over sin lead to new life, freedom, and revival.

Notes:

WEEK 1: PERSONAL REVIVAL

DAY 4: REMAINING IN CHRIST

In today's Scripture, Jesus uses an agricultural illustration to explain His relationship with His followers. I am sure you will understand what Jesus is getting at but let me try to illustrate the truth in this passage with a different illustration. There was a man who had some preschool grandsons that loved "mowing" the lawn with him. The problem was that his lawn was very thick, and his grandsons had no chance of pushing the mower through it. So, they came to a compromise. They would let him help them. They all pushed together, and the lawn was mowed. They worked as a team. The grandsons did not know it, but their grandfather really mowed the lawn. They needed him to provide the muscle. With his support, together, they had a well-mown lawn. Without his support, all their efforts would have been a waste of time. Now read Jesus' story.

Scripture: John 15:5-8

Devotion

At first glance, this illustration has little to do with personal revival. Jesus is challenging the Jews to get linked in with Him or otherwise God will discard them and leave them on the scrap heap, despite all their religiosity and history. Without Jesus there will be no life or fruit for them.

But there are two themes in this passage that link with what we are learning about personal revival. The first is the emphasis on remaining in the vine. The more we stay connected with Jesus, the more fruit we will see. What does it mean to remain in Jesus? It is staying closely connected with Jesus so that we hear and obey His voice (15:7). It is having Jesus as an intimate friend. It is staying right with God and loving to follow Him. These are the foundational elements of personal revival. We need to remain in Jesus.

The second theme in the Scripture is the power that flows from remaining in Jesus. It is not just that we have a pleasant relationship with Jesus and are kept safe from the fire. We will bear "much fruit" and find that whatever we ask for will be answered. Wow. Now this is getting exciting. Revival not only brings freedom from sin through repentance and deeper intimacy with Christ, but it also results in more fruit, greater power and answered prayers.

Going back to my mowing illustration. The more we recognize our own weakness and get in sync with Jesus, the quicker and better that lawn will be mowed. Of course, staying with the allegory, Jesus could mow the lawn better and quicker by Himself. But in His grace, He chooses to work through us. Jesus wants us pushing that mower with Him as long as we realize that He is providing the muscle.

Prayer Response

I recognize that I am hopeless and helpless without you Jesus. All my effort will produce nothing if you don't flow through me. To see "much fruit," I need to know Your heart, hear Your voice and rest in Your strength. Draw my heart closer to You. May I be a channel for Your authority and influence. May You produce much fruit through me.

Prayer for Revival

There are a lot of perishing branches all around me, Jesus. On the surface, people look like they are flourishing but dying. In my church. In my workplace. In my neighborhood. Among my friends. People are cut off from You and slowly withering. If you don't do something, they are going to be thrown into the fire. My prayer is that you will bring the dead to life. That you will awaken them. That you will revive them. Please flow in us and through us.

Notes:

WEEK 1: PERSONAL REVIVAL

DAY 5: JESUS IN CONTROL

Paul's letters were not ad-lib scribbles but very carefully constructed documents. It cost a lot of time and money to write a letter in Paul's day, so you had to be sure that you were not wasting words. In our Scripture reading today, when Paul outlines a prayer that he prays for those he is writing to, don't think that he is making it up as he goes. Every word counts. Every phrase matters. We are going to spend two days on this prayer because it is crucial for understanding two key steps in personal revival. I think this prayer relates to personal revival because it ends up with God doing "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine by his power at work within us" (Eph. 3:20). See if you can pick out two steps to personal revival in this rather complex passage.

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21

Devotion

Paul is praying for something to happen in the inner being/heart of the Ephesians. For us, the word *heart* epitomizes the center of our emotions. It is the place where we feel. But for the Hebrews, it was much more. It was the center of everything. Your heart controlled your thinking, your decisions, your opinions, your motivations, and your morality, as well as your feelings. When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes and positions himself in your "heart," at the center of your life. In this prayer, Paul is praying that the Holy Spirit would do a powerful work in hearts of the Ephesians, so that Christ could live there.

But wait a minute, if we are Christians then surely Jesus is already living in us, along with the Holy Spirit. So why does the Spirit need to work powerfully to enable Jesus to dwell in our hearts? It all hinges around the word "dwell" which means *live permanently, really settle down there*.

The trouble with our heart is that it is a crowded place with lots of tenants. Jesus lives at the center of our lives, but so do our fears, our idols, our passions, our pain, our habits. When it comes to making decisions that govern how we will live, there are many residents having their say in our heart. Sometimes we listen to Jesus, but our choices are also driven by the other voices at our very center. They make it difficult to love and follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

Paul is praying that the Spirit would work powerfully so that the other tenants would be driven out completely. Then Jesus could have the whole place. Then He could speak without confusion. Then He could work powerfully through our lives. This is not a matter of willpower. I am sure you have tried. It is the freeing work of the Holy Spirit that we pray for. This is a key step in personal revival.

Prayer Response

I do not know how this is going to happen, but I pray, Holy Spirit, that you will work in my heart to get rid of all that Jesus does not want there. Jesus, I really want you to dwell in me, all of me. I want to love you and follow you and be full of you. Holy Spirit, please root out all that opposes Jesus in me.

Prayer for Revival

There are so many places in our world that you do not rule, Jesus. Please extend your kingdom. Take charge. Show your power. Drive out the evil forces and establish your authority. We need you Jesus.

Notes:

WEEK 1: PERSONAL REVIVAL

DAY 6: KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE

One day, a man was talking about his grandchildren. "I have quite a few grandchildren. So far, they like me most around the one to three age range. That is when I am at my peak. I'm fun, entertaining, cool, enthusiastic, with lots of sweets. I can only do about an hour babysitting because it is hard work being that exciting, but it is a great hour for a two-year-old. Our grandson Tate is two and it is his turn to like grandpa. Recently when I was keeping him overnight, I woke in the morning to find Tate lying quietly on a pillow on the floor beside my bed just waiting for grandpa to wake up. But he has no idea how much I love him. He did not know that I watched him for 10 minutes as he lay there. Loving him, praying for him. He will find better heroes soon. Maybe he will never understand just how much I care for him." God is watching you now. You have no idea how much He loves you.

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21

Devotion

As Paul points out, Christians have a strong foundation in God's love (3:17). The gospel is saturated with God's love for us and His grace in sending Jesus to live, die and rise for us. We do not become Christians by doing good stuff, but by accepting Jesus by faith. We can experience God's love in Jesus. God's saving love is our foundation, but it is only the start. There is so much more to grasp about God's love.

Eugene Peterson translates Paul's prayer: "And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights!" Paul is praying that the Lord will open the eyes of the Ephesians so that they will know Christ's colossal love for them and their community and their world. That they would be saturated with the joy of His magnificent love. That they would revel in the deep security of being loved eternally. That they would see how desperately God loves their community and the people they serve.

I think there is a progression in this prayer. The pathway to personal revival first involves Jesus being Lord of our lives. Then with Jesus firmly in control, we can begin to explore and appreciate and celebrate and delight in how deeply He loves. This does not happen naturally. As Paul says, the love of Jesus "surpasses knowledge." So, it has to be a work of God's Spirit to open our eyes to His love. This revelation is the second step in personal revival.

Appreciating the love of Jesus is vital in revival. If we are not saturated with God's love, revival quickly becomes another set of rules that we have to keep to ensure that we maintain God's approval and blessing. Revival can become a legalistic prison for us as we try to avoid sin and do right. But when revival is drenched in God's love and grace, it

becomes an exciting journey with Jesus as we see the kingdom of God on the move in us and through us.

Prayer Response

This seems impossible to me Lord, but I want so much to be saturated with Your love. I want to experience the breadth and the depths of Your immense and incredible and eternal love. Open my eyes to Your love for me. Fill me with Your love. Let me feel that I am loved like I've never felt love before.

Prayer for Revival

We live in a world short on love. In families, in workplaces, in governments, in communities. There is plenty of action but little love. Please pour out Your love in new ways. Open eyes. May Your love be seen.

Notes:

WEEK 1: PERSONAL REVIVAL

DAY 7: OPEN THE DOOR

We finish our week on praying for personal revival in the last book in the Bible. Revelation 3:20 was a prominent verse in my childhood. It was often quoted by evangelists. They would conclude their message with the image of this verse - Jesus standing at the door of our hearts knocking and asking to come in. All we had to do was open the door and Jesus would enter, and we would become His children. That's an attractive picture and God graciously used it to draw many into His family, but it's not what this verse is really saying. Jesus is not addressing non-Christians with His appeal to enter and eat, but lukewarm Christians. He is speaking to those He loves and disciplines. See for yourself.

Scripture: Revelation 3:14-21

Devotion

Laodicea was the wealthiest city in its region with a booming financial sector, extensive textile industry and famous eye salve. You will find allusions to these aspects of Laodicea in this passage. The main problem for the Christians was that their wealth was making them self-reliant. They could not see their spiritual poverty. They were lukewarm. Sure, they spoke of Christ and acknowledged His salvation and worshipped together, but for most of the time they pretty well did what they wanted. And this made God sick.

This church's problem is probably true of much of the Western church. We have so much materially and so little spiritually. We are lukewarm. But God has not given up on us and He hasn't given up on you. Jesus stands at the door of your heart and is knocking. He is appealing for you to listen for His voice and let Him take over. He wants to bring personal revival to you. He wants to make you spiritually hot.

You can see many of this week's themes reflected in the passage. The invitation is to deep friendship. Jesus wants to eat with you. To spend time with you. To encourage you. To relax with you. To do life with you. To love you. This is personal revival.

The entry of Jesus requires acknowledgment of our lukewarmness and deep repentance. Revival is not an added dimension to strengthen our spiritual walk but a new passion and friendship with Jesus based on acknowledging our brokenness ("wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, naked") and turning away from our self-sufficiency.

Jesus is knocking on your heart right now. He wants to share your whole life. He wants to cleanse you of your self-reliance. He wants to "dwell" in you. He wants to reveal the immensity of His love for you. He wants to set you free to be His completely. You can hear Him calling. It is time to open the door.

Prayer Response

I am hungry for more of your presence Jesus. I have heard You knocking and calling. I am ready to open the door. I confess that I am broken and self-reliant and lukewarm. I desperately want You to fill all my life.

Prayer for Revival

Lord, much of the church in our country is lukewarm. We think we are doing okay but we are not. Please forgive us and heal us. Put a new fire in us. Work in fresh power. Please revive us in your grace.

Notes:

WEEK 2: COMMUNITY REVIVAL

DAY 8: BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

When God blesses us, He always intends it to be passed on to others. God's reviving work in our hearts is meant for our community. Today we will look at a foundational example of this as we study God's promise to both bless Abram and bless the world through Abram. As God revives our hearts personally, He wants to use us to bring revival to our community. We are blessed by God to be a blessing to our world.

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-5

Devotion

As we saw last week, God has chosen to use people to achieve His purposes. I am not sure why. It seems to me that God could do a better job by Himself, but this is not His way. He loves to include us and give us a place in His powerful work of blessing.

Adam and Eve were God's original choice to represent Him to the world, but when they failed by wanting to displace Him, God looked for another family through whom he could share His blessings with the world. He eventually settled on Abram and His descendants. They were not outstanding in any way. But that is the way God likes it. He takes ordinary people who trust Him and rely on Him and uses them to bless.

This Scripture focuses on the way God is going to bless Abram. He would be the father of a great nation. Which is interesting because at the time had had no children at all and would not actually have a child through his wife until he was 99. He would possess a new land. Which is interesting because at the time he was a nomad. And he would build a huge reputation. Which is interesting because at the time he was a nobody. Of course, from our vantage point, we can see how all these promises were fulfilled by God through Abram's family, Israel, and Abram's descendant, Jesus. Abram/Abraham is still a household name throughout the world over 4000 years later.

But the point of God's promise in this Scripture is not just the impossible and undeserved blessing that would eventually come to God's representative Abram and his family, but the fact that it was God's intention that the whole world would be blessed through Abram. "All peoples on earth" God says. This is the way God works. He blesses His people because He loves us, but the blessing is not just for us but for everyone – our friends, our family, our neighbors, our community. We are blessed so that we will be a blessing to our world.

As our spiritual lives are revived and God's incredible love for us flows into our hearts, God's intention is that we will bless others. This involves serving others of course, but it also includes praying for spiritual revival for those around us. For those who are close

to God and those who are a long way off. That they might be filled “to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19).

Prayer Response

Lord, I thank You for what You are doing in my life. Drawing me closer to Your heart. Lavishing me with Your love. Reviving my trust in You and passion for You. But this is not just for me. May Your grace work in my life influence those around me. May Your presence in me be obvious to them. May You work in power in those I love and in those I struggle with. Please Lord, revive the spiritually lukewarm and dead in my community.

Prayer for Revival

Lord, please bring a new hunger for You to our church and community. We are a broken and rebellious people, but You love us deeply. Forgive our apathy and draw our hearts to you. Bring your revival!

Notes:

WEEK 2: COMMUNITY REVIVAL

DAY 9: GOD'S GLORY REVEALED AGAIN

The 66 chapters of Isaiah's prophetic book forecast two major changes for Israel. The first 39 chapters of Isaiah mainly focus on God's future punishment of His people for their disobedience. God is going to allow other nations to dominate and decimate them. They will be dragged away from their land. In the first part of His prophetic book, Isaiah warns that Israel is in big trouble and very difficult times are on the horizon. Then in chapter 40, Isaiah changes direction and speaks of a new season following this incredibly tough time – a season of hope and comfort, a season of God's working in power, a season of God living close to His people, a season of God's glory being seen by all. In other words, a season of revival.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1-5

Devotion

When did this new season of great blessing prophesied by Isaiah come about? Well, it is not straightforward. In some ways it came about 200 years after Isaiah's prophecy when God's people returned from their exile in Babylon. As Isaiah had prophesied, the Babylonians ransacked Jerusalem and replanted most of the Jews throughout their Empire. But from 538 BC, a significant group of Jews started coming back home. They rebuilt Jerusalem and re-established the Jewish nation in their own land. It was a new season of God's blessing.

But then Isaiah's prophecy was also fulfilled almost 700 years after he spoke it, when Jesus arrived on earth. All the Gospel writers link 40:3 ("a voice of one calling in the wilderness") with the ministry of John the Baptist who preceded Jesus. As Isaiah prophesied, Jesus came and died. Then He was resurrected. The Holy Spirit came. The church was born. It was a new season of God's blessing for His people as Isaiah predicted.

But in some ways this prophecy is still yet to be fulfilled. Isaiah 40:5 speaks of all people seeing the glory of God together. This will occur when Jesus returns to this earth as king (Rev. 1:7). It will be the ultimate new season of God's blessing for His people. So, this prophecy by Isaiah is not just predicting one historical event that happened thousands of years ago, but a series of new seasons in which God would work in revival blessing.

This is what we are preparing the way for. A fresh season in which God shows Himself in greater glory. It may be the return of Jesus which we expect at any time. That would be the ultimate answer to our prayers. But it may also be a season of revival. During revival people sense the presence of God powerfully. Conviction, contrition, repentance and prayer grow. People thirst for God and His Word. Lukewarm Christians

come alive. Many non-believers are saved. “The rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed” (40:4-5). This is worth praying and preparing for.

Prayer Response

Lord, Israel had to wait almost 200 years for their revival. May we not have to wait that long. Please come in Your power. Do the impossible. Bring conviction of sin. Draw our hearts to You. Show Your power. May many people see Your glory and turn to You.

Prayer for Revival

Lord, I ask that you to work in the lives of our community leaders – our politicians, our business leaders, our media and social media influencers, our school principals, our bosses. May those with significant influence become aware of You. May they see Your greatness and follow You.

Notes:

WEEK 2: COMMUNITY REVIVAL

DAY 10: DRY BONES CAN LIVE

One of the challenges we have in praying and preparing for community revival is that most of us have not personally experienced it. We live in a secular and materialistic society (at least in the West) and we are surrounded and influenced by our culture. How can this ever change? How could our community come alive spiritually? Well, the Jews that had been exiled wondered the same thing. They were defeated, downtrodden and banished. How on earth could God restore Israel? Both ancient Israel and modern Christians are faced with the same dilemma – spiritually dry bones everywhere. But Ezekiel the prophet told Israel what God would do. And his message is the same for us.

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Devotion

Ezekiel saw a picture of devastation and desolation. Lots of dry, dead bones piled all over the floor of a valley. They may have been a powerful army at one stage, but those days were long gone. These people had been slaughtered and their bodies left to the animals and elements. In this valley, there was no strength. No life. No hope. Just misery and despair.

Ezekiel was speaking primarily about Israel in this prophecy, but what a poignant picture of our community. Dry bones. Spiritually barren. Devoid of life and hope. Morally corrupt. Trapped by the idols of pleasure and self-indulgence and selfishness. Dry bones everywhere. Maybe I am being alarmist. I know God is at work and many people in our community try hard. But as I look around, it just feels spiritually like a pile of dry bones. People don't care about God. They are apathetic and disinterested. Their hope is gone. I find myself confronted with the same question Ezekiel was asked, "Can these bones live?"

If this is your question about your community, keep reading the Scripture passage until God's answer sinks in. These dry bones can become a vast army of God. God does the work, but our role (with Ezekiel) is to believe, pray for new life into our community. God can breathe on these bones and restore spiritual life.

Prayer Response

Lord my faith is small. It is so hard to see how things are going to change radically among the people I mix with. But faith is believing what I cannot yet see. So please help me to hold on to Your promises and trust Your power. Help me to believe that dry bones can become a vast army of people following You.

Prayer for Revival

Lord, you built Israel into a powerful nation again as Isaiah prophesied. You bring spiritual life to those who are dead. I am asking You to do the same for my community. Please work in Your power. Do the impossible. Bring spiritual revival. May these dry bones live.

Notes:

WEEK 2: COMMUNITY REVIVAL

DAY 11: BOTH GRIEF AND JOY

What would community revival look like? Of course, every powerful work of God is different so it is difficult to predict, but let's have a look at a spiritual revival that occurred in the Old Testament to see if we can find some clues. First, some background. As God had promised in yesterday's Scripture, many Jews returned from exile and set about rebuilding Jerusalem. It was not easy reconstructing a nation from scratch and eventually their energy waned, and they returned to bad habits both physically and spiritually. It was very disappointing. But God was not ready to give up, so He called an important godly official in the Persian empire (a Jew named Nehemiah) to lead a new delegation back to Jerusalem to get the revival going again. Nehemiah helped the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, but they still were not in a good place spiritually. So, Ezra, the main Bible teacher of this revamped nation, stepped up.

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:1, 5-11

Devotion

The Book of the Law of Moses that Ezra read from was most likely the whole Pentateuch – the first five books of the Old Testament. These books contained foundational narratives of God's relationship with His people, but they particularly focus on how God's family can live in covenant relationship with Him. They lay out what Israel needed to do to live close to God. Now you would probably find someone reading laws to you rather boring. A bit like someone reading the Constitution aloud. Not a promising start for revival. But most of these people were illiterate. They were used to listening to the leaders read and as Nehemiah makes clear, there were some helpful explanations happening as the covenant law was read. They also stood the whole time out of respect for God's Word, and this probably aided concentration.

Whatever the arrangements, God was at work in a powerful way this day. Everyone started to cry as they listened. They realized that they had not been living the way God wanted. That they had abandoned God and His covenant again. They were mortified at their callousness to what God asked of them. It struck them how far they had slipped away from their God as a nation. And the tears flowed. They were deeply sorry. God was convicting them about their apathy and disobedience. Revival was beginning. Revival is always accompanied by deep repentance from sin. This seems to be the only way to enter revival. God convicts and we repent...often accompanied by tears. We repent alone and we repent together.

But while repentance is vital and Israel would need to do more of it (see Nehemiah 9), revival does not stop there. The spiritual leaders of the nation recognized this. The dominant emotion of revival is not grief, but joy. The joy of coming close to God. The joy of living God's way. The joy of following God together. The joy of delighting in God.

The joy of seeing God work in power. The joy of the Lord becomes our strength. In revival there will be more joy than you could ever dream of which will give us a foretaste of heaven.

Prayer Response

Lord I long for the tears that will bring release. Release from my shame and guilt. Release from my cold-heartedness to You. Release from the chains of sin that bind me. But even better will be fresh joy. I desperately need Your joy to sustain my spiritual strength. I want to profoundly enjoy You and Your work.

Prayer for Revival

Lord in Your grace, please bring Your conviction on us – our church, our community, our nation. Show us how we have abandoned You. How we have wounded You. How we have ignored You. How we have disappointed You. Do not leave us alone to slowly perish in our self-righteousness. Please convict us so that we can know real joy.

Notes:

WEEK 2: COMMUNITY REVIVAL

DAY 12: SIGNS AND WONDERS

Like the other Hebrew prophets we have studied in the last few days, Joel prophesied blessing ahead for Israel if the nation would repent and turn to God. He promised that after their punishment, God would repay them for the years “the locusts had eaten” (Joel 2:25). Israel would flourish again under God’s protection. We saw a little of how this worked out yesterday in the study. But Joel goes on to describe an even more powerful time of revival that would lie still further ahead. This revival would impact the whole world. He calls it “the Day of the Lord.”

Scripture: Joel 2:28-32

Devotion

It is easy for us to identify the day that Joel was speaking about. Not because we are particularly brilliant biblical scholars, but because the apostle Peter, preaching on the Day of Pentecost, quoted this exact Scripture (Acts 2:17-21) to describe what was happening. Joel here was predicting the pouring out of God’s Spirit on believers and the impact it would have.

A strong emphasis of Joel’s prophecy is that everyone will be included in this revival. God’s Spirit would be for all peoples. God’s Spirit was often at work in the Old Testament, but not in or through ordinary people. It was the spiritual leaders who were empowered by the Spirit. In this revival it would be different. The Spirit would be poured out on everyone. It’s “all people.” It’s “men and women.” It’s old and young. Everyone can hear God’s voice through His Spirit within. Everyone can speak God’s words.

And there will be signs and wonders. Joel pictures them in figurative terms – fire, smoke, black sun, red moon. At Pentecost, Peter applied these pictures to the miracle of his friends, now full of the Spirit, speaking the gospel in tongues (in perfect Ethiopian and Egyptian, etc.). Joel’s signs of this Day are meant to show that things will occur that will defy nature. God, in His power, will override His natural laws and do powerful miracles that will be seen by everyone.

In this Scripture we see some of the marks of community revival. God’s Spirit fills the lives of believers, and they are empowered. Regular Christians hear God and speak boldly on His behalf. Revival is not something for the spiritual elite. It is for us all. Everyone.

And many are saved as they call on God. The power and love of God are seen through the lives of common people and the wonders God does through them. And many are drawn to the freedom and deliverance of Jesus.

Prayer Response

This is getting exciting Lord. Thank You for giving me your Spirit to live in me and empower me. Fill me with Your Spirit. May I hear Your voice. May I speak Your truth with boldness. Please work in your power through me.

Prayer for Revival

Lord, You worked to bring revival to the early church, and You have revived your church many times since. Please do it again. Fill us with Your Spirit. Take us ordinary Christians and turn us into powerful witnesses. Work through whatever means necessary to help unbelievers see that You are sovereign God and that You care for them. May many call on you and be saved.

Notes:

WEEK 2: COMMUNITY REVIVAL

DAY 13: CUT TO THE HEART

Today we move out of the Old Testament and into the New Testament in our biblical study of community revival. We are looking at the Day of Pentecost, as Joel had prophesied, God's Spirit was poured out for the first time on all His people. It was an incredible day. A group of Jesus' closest disciples had been privately celebrating the Feast of Pentecost when the Spirit came on them, accompanied by signs like fire and the sound of a violent wind. They all began speaking loudly in languages they had never learned. This commotion attracted a large crowd that had come to Jerusalem for the Feast from all over the world. Unexpectedly those in the crowd heard these relatively uneducated and un-travelled followers of Jesus speak perfectly in their native languages. They were amazed and perplexed. So, when Peter got up to speak, they listened intently. Quoting from the Old Testament, he told them about Jesus. Now read on.

Scripture: Acts 2:37-41

Devotion

Three thousand converts after one sermon – that's revival. I know that Jesus had large crowds following Him at one stage, but there were only perhaps 500 disciples left by the time of His ascension. So, with 3,000 new baptized converts, in one day the fledgling church grew by about 600%. That is clearly more than church growth. That's revival.

Of course, the coming of God's Spirit was a unique and special event. It is doubtful that we will see anything quite like that response in one day in our church. But the powerful, supernatural conviction of God's Spirit seen in this Scripture is typical of revival. I love the phrase "cut to the heart" (2:37). This was not an emotional response to a powerful sermon by Peter. This was a work of God, opening the eyes of many in the crowd to their separation from God and their desperate need to be saved by Jesus.

I have seen God do this convicting work many times. I remember a proud and unemotional Moldovan sobbing loudly during a church service as God's Spirit cut his heart for the first time. I remember an older mean and angry Greek Orthodox person shedding tears of repentance as he realized that Jesus loved him – the Jesus he had ridiculed most of his life. I know God works like this, but in revival it ramps up. Many are drawn to Jesus. Many hear the convicting voice of God's Spirit. Many prodigals come home.

It is not that Peter had no contribution to the work of God's Spirit in revival. He warned and pleaded with the crowd (2:40) to believe in Jesus. He put the pressure on as best

he could. He was bold and convincing. But this was the Spirit's work, not Peter's work. God's Spirit was opening eyes and cutting open hearts in powerful new ways. The small group of Jesus followers watched in awe and excitement as the revival began.

Prayer Response

Lord, I read about the way Your Spirit worked 2000 years ago, and I long for it to happen again. There are many people I care about who are completely ignorant of You. Some have turned their backs on You and walked away. Others have no idea of who You are. I would love for You to cut them to the heart with the gracious truth of the gospel. Not to leave them broken, but so that You can forgive them and adopt them and fill them and bless them. Please open their eyes Holy Spirit of God.

Prayer for Revival

Out of all the blessings that revival will bring, the one I long for most is to see many people streaming into your kingdom. The lost coming home. The broken being healed. The rejected being accepted and loved. The proud being humbled. The self-reliant seeking a Savior. Bring revival please, Lord.

Notes:

WEEK 2: COMMUNITY REVIVAL

DAY 14: REVIVAL LIFESTYLE

We have looked at some of the signs that accompanied biblical revivals. But how will community revival impact the lifestyle of Christians? That is a difficult question to answer because lifestyles are significantly impacted by cultures, and there are many different cultures both throughout history and in our world today. Obviously, we will live more intimately with Jesus and be more dependent on Him, but how will this change our priorities? Let's look at how the revival commencing at Pentecost impacted the lifestyle of the early Christians, and then try to extract some principles. Today's reading follows on from yesterday's Scripture. As you read, look for lifestyle changes that could impact you in revival.

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

Devotion

It is a mistake to see the lifestyle described in this passage as normative for the whole of the early church. It may appear that the early Christians lived in idyllic Christian communities without any problems as they shared meals, possessions, support and worship. However, this is not true. We find in the New Testament letters that many of the early churches faced the same tensions and problems that we face today. The Christian lifestyle described here flowed from a revival. God was on the move in extraordinary ways. For example, people were being added to the church every day. But this description of lifestyle in the early Jerusalem church does give us some clues as to how our lifestyle might change as God moves in revival.

First, there will be a greater passion to spend time with God and grow in relationship with Him. These revival Christians were at the temple every day as well as learning from the apostles and spending much time in prayer. It will be interesting to see how this desire for time with God meshes with our hectic Western lifestyles. I suspect some things will have to go.

Second, we will want to be together more to encourage and disciple and serve and share with and pray with each other. While the Jewish culture 2,000 years ago was more communal than our contemporary, individualistic culture in the West, these Christians took community to the next stage. There is a huge emphasis in this passage on being together: in the Temple, in homes, around meals. Even generously sharing money and possessions. It is not that these early Christians had oodles of spare time and cash. They worked all day with no weekends. Most were quite poor. They just loved each other and wanted to share together in every way. In revival, unity and fellowship will be strong.

Third, we will have a much stronger awareness of the presence and power of God. These early Christians experienced numerous miracles. They saw God adding new people to their church community every day. No wonder their hearts were glad, and they were filled with awe. Even their neighbors were impressed. As God works in greater power, it will be exciting for us. Our expectations of God's presence and power will grow. Where will all this fit into our present daily routines? I am not sure really. Maybe our access to social media and technology will help us connect together more often. All I know is that things will change. There will be significant sacrifices along with wonderful new experiences of God.

Prayer Response

Lord, I recognize that revival will bring change and some of that change will be costly for me. Maybe I will have less time or money for myself. Maybe I will be called to give up things I really enjoy. But bring it on Jesus. I want to be filled with awe. I want to love others more deeply. I want to see new Christians daily.

Prayer for Revival

These early believers had been mourning the death of their Messiah. They felt their hope was gone. Then within 7 weeks they not only had a risen Savior but were in the middle of your powerful, new revival work. Many of us have waited a long time for community revival Lord. Please bring it!

Notes:

WEEK 3: PREPARING FOR REVIVAL

DAY 15: DESPERATE FOR GOD

We have asked God for personal revival and greater intimacy. We have looked at what community revival will entail. What else can we do as we wait for God's revival? G. Campbell Morgan was a well-known British Bible teacher and evangelist who lived at the beginning of the last century. Here is what he said about revival. ***“Revival cannot be organized, but we can set our sails to catch the wind from heaven when God chooses to blow upon His people once again.”*** I like that. We cannot make revival happen, but we can “set the sails.” We can prepare the way. We can get ready. This week we will consider how to prepare for revival. Probably the most frequently quoted verse on getting ready for revival is 2 Chronicles 7:14. Let's start there.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:11-16

Devotion

The challenges and promises of 2 Chron. 7:14 are addressed to a specific context. We just need to check that out to make sure that this verse is still relevant for us today. Solomon had completed his first major building projects, especially the construction of a magnificent temple for Yahweh (God). Solomon and Israel were doing well spiritually at this stage, but God knew that this would not always be the case. In the future, they would abandon Him and suffer the consequences. But God promised Solomon that there would always be a way back to blessing for Israel if they humbly gathered in the temple, abandoned their sin, and sought God desperately.

This pathway to God's blessing remains true today. We do not need to gather in a temple to pray, and the blessing of God comes more in spiritual prosperity than physical and economic prosperity. But as God's people humble themselves, pray like crazy, desperately seek God, and abandon their disobedience, God promises to see, hear, forgive, and pour out His blessing. So that is the way we prepare for revival. That is the way we “set the sails.” We will be exploring this biblical pathway to revival further in the next few days.

Why didn't Israel use this pathway to God's blessing more frequently? Why did they suffer so much? Because they were not desperate enough. They thought they had other options. They believed that somehow, they could solve their own problems. It is desperation that drives us to God. It is when we experience this kind of desperation spiritually that we humble ourselves and pray and seek God and turn from sin. Then revival is imminent.

Prayer Response

Lord we are not okay. Our sin is not alright. The brokenness of our society is not acceptable or solvable. Our lukewarmness is not tolerable. God, we need you. There is no other answer. If you don't do something soon, we are destined to spiritual oblivion. Please forgive us and heal us.

Prayer for Revival

Thank you, Lord, for the good people who are trying to solve our problems. Many are giving so much, and it does make a difference. But Lord, our nation is not going to be saved by capable leaders or smart scientists or generous donors. We need You. You are truth. You are hope. You are life. We need You to work in power.

Notes:

WEEK 3: PREPARING FOR REVIVAL

DAY 16: HUMBLE OURSELVES

I have preached through the book of James quite a few times in the last 25+ years, and today's reading is my least favorite passage in the whole book. James tackles challenging issues right through his letter, but in this passage, he really lets it fly. "You are proud. You are committing adultery. You are an enemy of God." Try preaching that to a busy and committed congregation. It is not what they expect or want to hear. They are thinking, "Are we really that bad?" Well, as we saw yesterday, the first step in 2 Chron. 7:14 to prepare for revival is to desperately humble ourselves. That is what this Scripture is about. James tells us why we need to humble ourselves and how to do it. See if you agree with his observations and challenges. Does the shoe fit?

Scripture: James 4:4-10

Devotion

An adulterer is someone who commits himself (or herself) totally to his partner through their wedding vows, and then chooses to have sex with someone else. Adultery is so painful and damaging that Jesus even suggests that it is grounds for the dissolution of a marriage (Matt. 19:9). God sees our friendship with the world as committing adultery. It is being unfaithful to our Savior. It is abandoning our promises. It is breaking God's heart. The more we move away from dependence on and trust in Jesus and the deeper we entrench our relationship with the world, the stronger the adulterous affair becomes.

In life, adultery frequently leads to divorce, but not always. Sometimes the adulterer recognizes their dreadful betrayal and humbly seeks forgiveness. Sometimes the victim of the infidelity can accept the offered confession and begin to rebuild relationship and trust. Occasionally the marriage even ends up stronger. But this does not happen without humility and repentance on the part of the adulterer.

When we read a challenge like this, we can justify and protect ourselves. We can conclude that we are better than these people James is calling out. And maybe we are. Maybe we are not as adulterous as them. Maybe our friendship with the world is not as entrenched as theirs. Maybe we are closer to God than they were. We can compare our adultery with their adultery and possibly feel okay.

Or we can humble ourselves. We can admit our friendship with the world. We can confess our adulterous ways. We can repent of our sin. We can cry out for God's mercy. We can grieve over our unfaithfulness. We can be truly sorry for our duplicity. We can humble ourselves and wait for God to lift us up. This is how we prepare for revival.

Prayer Response

I am an adulterer, Lord, and I am truly sorry. I am more entrenched in and reliant on this world than You want. I so easily neglect You, even abandon You, when the world offers me its pleasures. I have chased after other partners and broken your heart. I am truly sorry. Please forgive my disloyalty and deceitfulness. Please wash me clean and restore our precious marriage.

Prayer for Revival

Please forgive our church, your bride, for our adultery. We have loved our comfort and convenience more than we have loved You. We think we are doing okay, but we are not living close to Your heart. Please forgive, heal, restore, and revive us.

Notes:

WEEK 3: PREPARING FOR REVIVAL

DAY 17: PRAY FOR WORKERS

The second response that God calls for in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is to “pray.” There are different ways of praying for revival as we have been discovering in the last few weeks. We confess and pray for forgiveness. We ask for personal closeness to God. We pray for God to work in power. We cry out for our nation. All these prayers are important. But today I thought that we could focus on a prayer that we may not have prayed so far in these devotions. It is a prayer that Jesus asked His disciples to pray so it must be important.

Scripture: Matthew 9:35-38

Devotion

The Greek word translated “compassion” in this Scripture is an intensely emotional word. Jesus was deeply moved as He watched the crowds and the hopelessness of their situation. He could not meet all their needs. These needs included their health problems and their poverty. But what really got to Jesus was the fact that they had no one to look after them, no one to lead them, no one to protect them. They were like sheep who had no shepherd. They were lost and ravaged by wild animals. And this profoundly touched Jesus. He deeply felt the hopelessness of their situation.

So, is this true of the people we mix with? On the surface it does not look like it. They seem happy. They seem satisfied. They seem self-sufficient and free of needs. But you just look underneath the surface, and you find deep disappointment, debilitating depression, broken relationships, draining hopelessness and sapping confusion. People are not doing well, with divorce and suicide rates being just the tip of the iceberg. But who will care for them? Who will help them? Who will support them? Who will share Jesus with them?

Jesus called on His disciples to pray for God to send out more harvest workers. The opportunities to serve and reap were great, but there were not enough workers to meet the need. This must be our prayer as well. It involves praying for more Christians to share their faith and serve their communities (both here and abroad). It also means praying for God to raise up more leaders who will be good shepherds pastoring and supporting their people well. As we prepare for revival and a great harvest, we need to ask God to increase the harvest workers. We just do not have enough to meet the need now.

It is interesting to note that in the flow of Matthew’s narrative, immediately after calling for this prayer for harvest workers, Jesus commissioned His twelve disciples to get out into the harvest field themselves (Matthew 10). In a way, the disciples were at least part of the answer to their own prayer. Maybe this will be true for you as well. As you pray

for God to raise up godly leaders and effective evangelists and bold witnesses and community workers and caring missionaries, you might well find Him calling you to become a harvest worker yourself.

One of the greatest privileges of being a harvest worker is helping people find Jesus. To have a role in someone's journey towards faith in Christ is very exciting and very precious. Revival will require loads of harvest workers who will shepherd the harassed and helpless to Jesus. Maybe you will be one?

Prayer Response

Lord, please increase my heart for the lost. Help me to see people the way You do – harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Help me to feel Your compassion. Please raise up the leaders and witnesses we will need to bring the lost home and to care for them well. And Lord if you want me to be one of those harvest workers, I am available.

Prayer for Revival

Lord we are praying for a great harvest. The kind of harvest that we have never seen before. But You will need to call and equip the workers that we need to bring in this harvest. There are not enough at the moment. Please call and send out more workers with Your compassion to serve and evangelize and disciple those who have no Shepherd.

Notes:

WEEK 3: PREPARING FOR REVIVAL

DAY 18: PRAY FOR UNITY

There is one other specific revival prayer I would like to focus on. In John chapters 14 to 16, Jesus is giving His final instructions to His disciples before His crucifixion. He mainly focuses on how the disciples will live by the Spirit once He has gone. After these directions, Jesus prays. He prays for Himself first and then He prays for His disciples, particularly for God's protection over them when He has gone. Finally, Jesus prays for all those who will believe in the future. We are included in that prayer. Jesus prayed specifically for us. And the heart of His prayer is instructive. Under the shadow of the cross, Jesus asked for one major thing for His future followers. It strikes me that this must be extremely important.

Scripture: John 17:20-23

Devotion

Jesus knew that the impact of His future church would rely on its unity. That makes sense. As fellow members of God's family, Christians have a huge amount in common and will naturally be drawn together. Our unity and love for each other is the major sign that God is at work within us – saving us and transforming us. Jesus prays that as God indwells their lives, future believers will become like He and His Father. Different persons, yet completely one.

In some ways, the unity of the church is totally natural – we are clearly drawn together by the Spirit. But in practice, Jesus knew that real unity in His church would be incredibly difficult. Roman culture was strongly stratified. Everyone had their position and role, and this was constantly reinforced. You had to accept it. There was no stepping outside the bounds of your place in society. So, when Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slaves and Roman citizens, rich and poor all became Christians and met together in small church groups, unity was a huge struggle. It was vital as Jesus said, but it was a colossal challenge. Almost all the New Testament letters deal with aspects of this call to unity. It was probably the most difficult issue in the early church. No wonder unity was the thing Jesus prayed for at the end. Unity was so important and so challenging.

It still is. So, we need to join Jesus in praying for unity. A divided church will never see revival. It cannot be a clear witness to the world. It cannot reflect the love and grace of the gospel. It cannot show the reality and beauty of Jesus. It will be stuck with its judgements and disagreements and arguments and splits. It will be clear evidence to the lost that the church is no different from the world. With Jesus, we need to pray and pray for unity among believers in preparation for revival. "May we be one."

Prayer Response

Lord, please grow my love for and grace towards other believers, especially those who are different from me. May I see Your presence in their lives. Protect me from judging others – that is Your job. May I grow in grace as You fill my life. Help me to link arms with those who I tend to judge.

Prayer for Revival

Division destroys the power and witness of Your church Lord. Please break down the divisions that are invading our churches. Forgive our judgmentalism. Bring conviction. Bind us together in unity in preparation for Your revival. May we all be one Lord Jesus. Bring us to real unity.

Notes:

WEEK 3: PREPARING FOR REVIVAL

DAY 19: SEEK GOD'S FACE

We know that Psalm 24 was written by David (it's in the subheading), but we are told nothing about the context that lay behind the composition of this song. However, if we look within the psalm, there is a call to open the gates (presumably of Jerusalem) so that the King of glory can enter (24:7, 9). This is likely to be a reference to the entry of the Ark of the Covenant (representing God's presence) into Jerusalem. David wrote Psalm 24 for this special occasion. The incidents preceding this event are outlined in 1 Chronicles 13 and 15.

David had captured Jerusalem and established his capital there, but the Ark was still stationed at Abinadab's house. So, David summoned Israel to bring the Ark up to Jerusalem so that God's special presence could dwell in the center of his kingdom. It was a delicate operation because the Ark was holy and had to be treated very carefully. But the day was full of excitement and celebration. This was the culmination of David's reign – God's presence coming into the capital. As the Ark was being transported, the cart lurched and the guy in charge put his hand on the Ark to stop it falling off the cart. God struck him dead on the spot. As you can imagine, this put an end to the festivity. The Bible says that David was both angry with and afraid of God, and he cried, "How can I ever bring the Ark of God to me?" (1 Chron. 13:12). So, he left the Ark close by and returned to Jerusalem.

Because of what happened, David was too afraid to bring the Ark into Jerusalem. He did not feel worthy or able to live close to God. God was too frightening, too dangerous, too holy. It was another three months before he was ready to try again. David did a lot of soul searching during this time and realized how he could seek God's face and live close to a holy, all-powerful God. He put his revelation in this song.

Scripture: Psalm 24:1-10

Devotion

As David writes, God is incredible. He created the whole of this world, and everything belongs to Him. God is powerful. He never loses a battle. Everything is under His control. He is all-powerful. So, we have to be careful about seeking His face, of coming close to Him, as David found out. You cannot push God around. You cannot toy with Him. You cannot treat Him lightly. Seeking God's face without due respect is a recipe for disaster.

But we can come near to God. It is possible to get close to Him and know His blessing as David discovered. It is possible to "stand in His holy place." You just need "clean hands and a pure heart." Right actions and right motivations. This is possible for us

through Jesus. We come humbly through Jesus to stand in God's presence, to seek His face, to savor His love, to hear His commands, to be filled with His power. And when a generation seeks God in this way (24:6) then the door to revival opens. God's blessing is poured out on His people. David saw this in His generation and so will we.

Prayer Response

Lord, I honor You. The whole of creation cries out in praise to You, and I gladly join them. I recognize my smallness and brokenness and yet through Jesus I come freely into Your presence and seek Your face, the Lord of the universe. I know it will be costly and humbling, but I want to live close to You. To hear Your voice and to follow Your will and to enjoy Your presence. To seek Your face. This is my heart's desire.

Prayer for Revival

Please raise up this generation to seek Your face with pure hands and clean hearts. Please make it a generation that will be yielded to You. A generation that will be blessed by You. A generation that will see Your power.

Notes:

WEEK 3: PREPARING FOR REVIVAL

DAY 20: TURN FROM OUR WICKED WAYS

When God called His people to “turn from their wicked ways” in preparation for His revival, we would think that they were involved in all sorts of evil practices. Maybe the Israelites were abusing the poor, or worshipping idols, or even sacrificing their children. They must have been into some rotten stuff that clearly needed to be abandoned before God could revive their nation. In comparison, our ways are not too wicked. Some of us may have “big” sins that taint our lives and wreck our relationship with God. But while we are aware of our weaknesses, most of us do not appear all that bad. We do not feel that we have to change our lives all that much. We do not have too many “wicked ways” to abandon. We are mostly behaving okay, and we feel that God is fine with us. We are off the hook. The church in Ephesus was just like that.

Scripture: Revelation 2:1-5

Devotion

The church in Ephesus sounds pretty decent to me. They had been through some rough times, but they had worked hard, stayed true to Jesus, dealt well with sin in their midst, and persevered despite the challenges. What a solid church. Good theology, committed, faithful, robust, stable. Like us, they were difficult to fault in any major way. There were no obvious “wicked ways” from which to turn.

Yet Jesus is so unhappy with this church that He threatens to finish their work completely, to wipe them out. What? Their problem was that they did not love Jesus the way they did at first and it showed in their actions. Perhaps they were going through the motions without any real desire for intimacy with Jesus. Perhaps they had correct theology, but it got stuck in their heads and didn't touch their hearts. Perhaps they felt that all their hard work had earned them God's favor and so they lost sight of Jesus. Perhaps they had become hard and judgmental towards each other. Whatever the reasons and signs, they just did not love Jesus and each other the way they used to. Jesus could see this.

Losing love can happen in any relationship. For example, without continual effort in a marriage, the love can fade, and the relationship becomes two people living together but sharing very little. Jesus is not happy with such a relationship with us. He loves deeply and is looking for our love in return. The “wicked ways” of the Ephesians were not rebellion or apostasy or immorality, but something equally dangerous and more insidious in Jesus' eyes - lost love.

This is the biggest challenge in the Western evangelical church. Our theology generally is not bad. We are reasonably committed and hard working. In a broken world, we continue to maintain most of our Christian distinctives. Our worship has plenty of

energy. But we just do not love Jesus and each other the way we should, and it shows in our prayer life and in our dependence on Jesus and in our love for His Word and in our grace towards each other. As we prepare for revival, God calls us to turn from our wicked ways and return to our first love. And as we do, He will come running to welcome us home with incredible love.

Maybe personally you know that there is a major sin blocking your closeness to God. It is time to repent and turn away from your wicked ways. But maybe your greatest sin is your lost love for Jesus. Much more hidden, but just as harmful. It is time to turn back to Jesus.

Prayer Response

Lord, You love me deeply and I want to return that love. Set my heart on fire for You. Grow my need for You. Reawaken the love I once had. I have drifted a long way from the love I once had. Please forgive and revive me in Your grace.

Prayer for Revival

Jesus, open our eyes to Your love and heart for Your church, Your bride. Forgive our waning love and the mess it has brought to our lives and churches. Restore our love Lord and bring revival.

Notes:

WEEK 3: PREPARING FOR REVIVAL

DAY 21: BE A WATCHER

This is the last day of our 21 days of prayer for revival. But I hope it is not the last time you pray for revival. We are at the beginning of a new passion and prayer for God's reviving work. God is not finished with us yet. The spiritual wave might appear to have withdrawn, but there is a new wave coming. This last study focuses on those God is asking to watch and pray for a new move of His Spirit that will bring great spiritual blessing and transformation. It is a call to be on the forefront of the preparation for revival – a watcher.

Scripture: Isaiah 62:6-12

Devotion

In Isaiah's time, watchmen would be posted on the walls of cities. Their main task was to watch for invaders and to warn the citizens. But sometimes they would be watching for something wonderful like a returning army or an arriving ally. Isaiah figuratively applies this role to those who watch and prepare for the coming Savior who is going to bless the nation. God has given people this watching role and they need to be continually calling on God. There is to be no rest for the watchers as they prepare for this wonderful event.

As we saw in Isaiah 40, this triumphant arrival of a Savior for God's people refers to their return from exile, and also to the arrival of the Messiah and also to the return of Christ. But it covers other powerful saving works of Jesus as well. As we move towards God's reviving work, God raises up watchers. Their role is to believe in God's future, pray continually for it, get things ready for what God is going to do, and keep reminding everyone that there is a powerful work of God to come.

God has called many of us to be watchers for revival. He has posted us on the walls and told us to keep pleading with God until He works in revival power. He has summoned us to prepare the way for His awakening by humbling ourselves, praying, seeking God's face, and turning from our wicked ways. He has encouraged us to dream of what will be and to get others excited about God's future blessing. We are the watchers.

And what is our message? "See, your Savior comes! See, His reward is with Him, and His recompense accompanies Him." We will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD; and we will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted" (62:11-12). Come close, Lord Jesus, in your mighty power. Bless us like never before.

Prayer Response

Lord, if You are calling me, I will be a watcher. I would love to help prepare for revival. I know that You are gracious and powerful and that You want so much more for Your people. Help me to believe and pray incessantly. Open the heavens and pour out Your revival blessing on me and our church, Lord.

Prayer for Revival

Lord, I have read and thought and prayed so much about revival over the past 21 days. I long to be part of it. Please, please, may You forgive your half-hearted people, renew our dependence on You, and pour out Your power in us and through us so that our personal lives, families, church, and community experience Your love and grace and is transformed. Please revive us, Lord!

Notes:

***Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?***

Psalm 85:6

