

## Thirty-One Days to Explore Revival

### Preface

The Lord has put it on my heart to write. I have had numerous encouragements concerning this over several years. People keep asking if I have written anything. I recently had a YWAM Nicaraguan staff person ask me, “Are you writing a book?” She knew nothing. I answered cautiously, “Well, maybe.” She replied, “I think God wants you to set aside the time and do this.” In other words, get off your duff and get started.

Here is a beginning, still unfinished in some ways. I ask for your input as you read. Where are the gaps in thought? What is missing to make this a better devotional? Is it too long? Lacking something? Too complicated?

The format is an introduction, then a daily devotional for each of thirty-one days. Each devotional has a Scripture passage and then thoughts relating this passage to revival. At the end of each devotional is a “reflect and respond” section for some application. Finally, there is a short reading list and some definitions of terms to help with some ideas that may be new. I have kept the endnotes to a minimum.

Thank you for your honest input! If the Lord says “write,” I will; but I would want to know how to make this something of value to His people, worthwhile to the kingdom and mostly a joy to Him.

Mike Huckins  
March, 2018

## Thirty-One Days to Explore Revival

### Introduction

What is “revival?” Take a look in a dictionary and you would find something like “to restore to health or vigor something languishing near death.” In popular use, it can be about music or art or home décor, thus “to have a creative resurgence.”

What does it mean to you? People’s impression of *Christian revival* is a mixed bag. As believers, we often think about revival as meetings, preaching, emotion and excitement. Perhaps revival brings up images of mass meetings like a Billy Graham crusade. For some, it is something out of the movies, charlatan preachers manipulating the masses for personal gain. For others, it is a nostalgic image of “old time” tent meetings from another era, featuring “hell fire” preaching and “altar calls.” I would guess that for most 21<sup>st</sup> century Americans, the whole idea of “having revival” seems a bit silly and irrelevant; if it has any meaning at all.

Even for those who do see revival as something positive, it still seems a bit mysterious. So, what is it? The revivals of Christian history do not lend themselves to simple caricatures; they are complex social-cultural events. They may or may not have strong emotion. They are not crusades or meetings. While truth is essential, sometimes preaching has been lacking. The historical time period and the social-cultural setting affect what they look like. Yet, for all the diversity, true revivals share some things in common.

For starters, we can say this. Revival is both a God-thing *and* an us-thing. It is about God’s heart for His people and about their heartfelt return to Him. Anything that would call itself revival must have this relational element front and center.

All said, it is impossible to define revival without carefully considering what it looked like in the past. The following revival accounts are but quick glimpses. While they differ in time and place and intensity, they share the common characteristics of **historic revival**.

Here is an account of the revival at Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky in 1970.

On that Tuesday morning, February 3, 1970, students and faculty members had shown up at the Asbury College chapel, Hughes auditorium, for what they assumed would be one more routine chapel service. Custer Reynolds, Asbury’s academic dean, was in charge of the meeting. Reynolds did not preach. Instead, he briefly gave his testimony, then issued an invitation for students to talk about their own Christian experiences. There was nothing particularly unusual about that.

One student responded to his offer. Then another. Then another. “Then they started pouring to the altar,” Reynolds said. “it just broke.” Gradually, inexplicably, students and faculty members alike found themselves quietly praying, weeping, singing. They sought out others to whom they had done wrong deeds and asked for forgiveness. The chapel service which was scheduled for fifty minutes, went on and on. It lasted 185 hours non-stop, 24 hours a day. Intermittently, it continued for weeks. People didn’t want to leave...they were afraid they would miss something wonderful.

J.T. Seamands, at that time a professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, vividly remembers. His daughter, Sandra Seamands, an undergraduate at the college, was late coming home for lunch. She burst through the door and exclaimed, “You simply wouldn’t believe what’s happening at the college.” He went to Hughes Auditorium to investigate. The 1500 seat chapel was packed. When he entered, Seamands said he felt as if he had been baptized in an unaccountable spirit of love. His skepticism vanished. “I said to myself, ‘This is not of man, this is of God.’”

It was after 2 a.m., when Dennis Kinlaw, the college president returned from an out of town trip and walked to Hughes Auditorium to see what was happening. He was approached by a student who asked for his counsel. Though no one knew it, she said quietly, she had been a habitual liar. She needed to make reparations to people on campus she had wronged. Soon Kinlaw, too, was convinced that the revival was legitimate.

Later, a reporter asked him to explain. "I said, 'Well, you may not understand this, but the only way I know how to account for this is that last Tuesday morning, about 20 of 11, the Lord Jesus walked into Hughes Auditorium, and He's been there ever since, and you've got the whole community paying tribute to His presence.'"<sup>1</sup>

Here is an eyewitness account of revival in China in 1908,

"An opportunity was then given for prayer, and thereupon ensued such a scene as never before had I seen, nor again do I expect to see. A man started to pray, but had not said more than half a dozen words when another, then another joined in, and in a moment the whole group was crying aloud to God for mercy...Nothing in my mind can more fitly describe the scene than to compare it to the suddenness and violence of a thunderstorm ...Some were praying for help to confess their sins, and to allow nothing to be unconfessed. Some could only sob, 'O God, forgive me; O God, forgive me.' Some were imploring the Holy Spirit not to leave them. That which weighed most heavily on the consciences of all was that we had so long been grieving the Holy Spirit by not giving Him His rightful place in our hearts and in our work. While believing in Him we had not trusted in Him, to work in and through us."

In another city, Chinchow, during the same 1908 revival, a Dr. Walter Phillips who was present at two of the meetings, writes:

"It was at Chinchow that I first came into contact with the revival. Meetings had been going on there for a week, hence, I was ushered into the heart of things unprepared, and in candor, I must add, I with a strong temperamental prejudice against 'revival hysterics' in every form, so that mine is at least an unbiased witness. At once, on entering the church, one was conscious of something unusual. The place was crowded to the door, and tense, reverent attention sat on every face. The very singing was vibrant with new joy and vigor. The people knelt for prayer, silent at first, but soon one here and another there began to pray aloud. The voices grew and gathered volume and blended into a great wave of united supplication that swelled till it was almost a roar and died down again into an undertone of weeping. Now I understood why the floor was so wet - it was wet with pools of tears! The very air seemed electric - I speak in all seriousness - and strange thrills coursed up and down one's body."<sup>2</sup>

Here are eyewitness accounts of the Korean revival that occurred in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century,

"(This) night it was very different. Each felt as he entered the church that the room was full of God's presence. Not only missionaries but Koreans testify to the same thing...a sense of God's nearness, impossible of description. After a short sermon, Mr. Lee took charge of the meeting and called for prayers. So many began praying that Mr. Lee said, 'If you want to pray like that, all pray,' and the whole audience began to pray out loud, all together. The effect was indescribable - not confusion, but a vast harmony of sound and spirit, a mingling together of souls moved by an irresistible impulse of prayer. The prayer sounded to me like the falling of many waters, an ocean of prayer beating against God's throne. He (God) came to us in Pyongyang that night with the sound of weeping. As the prayer continued, a spirit of heaviness and sorrow for sin came down upon the audience. Over on one side, someone began to weep, and in a moment the whole audience was weeping. Man after man would rise, confess his sins, break down and weep, and then throw himself to the floor and beat the floor with his fists in perfect agony of conviction...Sometimes after a confession, the whole audience would break out in audible prayer, and the effect of that audience of hundreds of men praying together in audible prayer was something indescribable. Again, after another confession, they would break out in uncontrollable weeping, and we would all weep, we could not help it. And so the meeting went on until two o'clock a.m., with confession and weeping and praying."<sup>3</sup>

In reading of historic revival, scenes like the above are repeated many times over. Some are less intense, some are *more*. The stories of revival are extraordinary; the intensity of God's presence and all that follows is wonderful *and* wonderfully disconcerting! They are times of "glorious disorder," to use Charles Spurgeon's words; times of disruption, controversy and change. Yet for those who experienced God in these revivals, it was utterly transformative. For the remainder of their lives, they lived in the light of this Divine encounter; it left them discontented with anything less and they constantly longed for it once again.

Of course, these short descriptions above are but snap-shots, moments in time. There is always more to the story in every case. But know this - they are a God-thing and nothing short of heaven will ever match their wonder.

They were powerfully relevant to the people who experienced them. They are encounters between a personal God and real people in real times and places – all with a God-purpose. They always have for a larger context what God is seeking to do in history. Thus, any explanation of revival must take into consideration the Divinely directed movement of God's kingdom purpose.

Because they are historical, we can study them and learn from them. We can reflect on them with Bible in hand. Most importantly, reading and studying them can *prepare* us to experience God and welcome His presence in our own desperate day.

Very few today in America could say they have experienced historic revival. Because this is so, we find ourselves moving into unknown territory where we may soon be confronted with an invasion of power from another dimension - close encounters of a Divine kind!

God longs to draw close to us and renew us; such is *His* expectation for revival. Stories like those above of past revival should create in our hearts a desire that mirrors God's desire; and with that desire an expectation that prepares us for His coming. I have provided some resources at the end of this devotional for learning more about revival.

Revival is always personal, for God and for us. In revival, we become acutely aware that we are being pursued by a relentless, desperate-for-us personal God. He is jealous, He refuses to let anything take us away from Him or to let anything come between Him and us. Revival is when we relinquish control, when we remove all the obstacles that hinder His love and presence in our lives. We turn to meet the pursuing God. Our newfound hunger for Him meets His desperation for us – the experience can be quite intense!

Perhaps you already are getting a little nervous about all this. Good, good, very good! Only when we get uncomfortable, when we are ready to open the windows of our little insulated worlds and let God confront us with His convicting truth can we have revival. We come to see that revival is what God deserves and what we need.

My hope is that these little devotional sketches will help do what must be done – prepare us and stir us such that we can be a people who yearn for and welcome His presence.

While she was not writing about revival, author Annie Dillard captures something significant about revival's essence,

"Why do people in churches seem like cheerful, brainless, tourist on a packaged tour of the Absolute? On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of the conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea of what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is

madness to wear ladies straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake some day and take offense, or the waking god **may draw us out to where we can never return.**”<sup>4</sup>

In revival, God Himself crosses the point of no return and takes us places from which we can never return - nor will we want to.

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## Day 1

### Drifting

“We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.” Heb. 2:1. NIV.

You hear stories now and again of someone on the ocean surf relaxing on their tube, lazing away, only to suddenly realize they have drifted much too far from shore, dangerously far. To realize your danger is a good thing, to not do so can be deadly.

Several things are immediately obvious from reading the above passage. First, it is *possible* to drift. We do not drift because we deliberately intend to move away from God, but simply because we lose track of things. Drifting is not rebellion against God, but negligence. We simply lose our concentration; we are no longer paying close attention. Second, it is *our* responsibility to pay careful attention. No one can do this for us. Finally, the purpose of this challenging word is to warn us, so that we will *avoid* drifting. I don’t think I speak too forcefully when I say that the people of God in America are *adrift*. Why is this so?

The opportunity to drift isn’t like those “in your face” temptations that most believers can spot and refuse. The danger of drifting is in its subtlety. We lose our focus on the significant and important, on those things that are of ultimate value. We become distracted by the expedient and even the trivial.

Like lazing away on a tube without caution to the danger, spiritual drifting is deadly because it is deadening; its soft whispers of ease and comfort lull us into a relaxed state of complacency where the voice of God and His truth lose their edge. Drifting is like texting while driving; that one distracted look away might well be your last.

Author Peter Greig tells a story of a friend who visited the 1990s awakening in Pensacola, Florida. Greig’s comment on his friend’s experience there is enlightening,

“The simple truth had impacted him profoundly that ‘sin is not an option.’ He had not been involved in terrible immorality or deliberate disobedience, but he had grown painfully aware of areas of subtle compromise and excuses that had been given the credibility of time until they even convinced his own conscience.”<sup>5</sup>

Ah, there it is! Read that quotation again. Drifting. We live in a world that is radically contrary to God and that pulls and pushes us in subtle ways of which we hardly aware. Given this, we are deceived if we think that we do anything less than passionately pursue God. We pursue *or* we drift. To not *cultivate* passion is to ensure our complacency; and with complacency we begin to drift. We cannot take a “vacation from God,” where we can for a season pursue our own interests, lives and ambitions. It deadens the heart.

### Reflect and Respond

How do I know if I’m drifting? Consider and reflect on these questions:

- Is my passion for Jesus greater today than it ever has been in my life?
- Am I in pursuit of Him? Where is the evidence in my life?
- Has anything or anyone crowded Jesus out of my life? Read 1 John 2:15-17.
- If someone took a careful look at my lifestyle, e.g., what I do with my time, money, how I do relationships, etc. - would they say I am pursuing or drifting?

## Day 2

### Pursued

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, **being made in human likeness**.” Philippians 2:5-8. NIV. (emphasis mine)

Most of us would find the thought that someone is shadowing us a bit disconcerting. It is the stuff of horror flicks and bad dreams. You know, running away from something, but having that feeling that your legs just won't go.

Now don't take me wrong in how I say this, but Someone *is* after us (thankfully). We might say God is our persistent, faithful and glorious *pursuer*. Much of the Bible makes little sense outside of this wonderful truth.

In the verse above, Paul shows how far God has gone in His pursuit. In what we call the incarnation, God became one of us. How humble and vulnerable is God! God has not kept His distance, communicating with a text or a tweet; rather God in Christ has come *Himself* into our world and entered into our space.

How we often have misunderstood Him! Many think Him more the devil than the great lover of our hearts He actually is; now in Jesus we see Him for who He really is. In becoming *fully* human, God came to be *fully* with us, to share in our pain, sorrow and tragedy. And in the end, His becoming one of us, His pursuit of us, meant His death. I must confess how little I really grasp the wonder of these things. And to then to consider that this same God is *now* pursuing *me* seems unfathomable.

Why does He pursue? Because He longs to fulfill and bring about the best and greatest good for His creation. And more to the point, He longs for this for *me*. How much He values me and values the relationship with Him for which I was created. The moment our hearts drift toward indifference or sin, God refuses to let us continue uncontested down a path which can only bring us pain. He pursues for *our* sake; He has no selfish interest. God is no ego-maniac that lives for His own ends or “glory,” despite what some might think.

Revival is about God's “wooing and pursuing” and this is no casual matter for God! He pursues with an intense, heart-broken search after our wayward hearts. He pursues with a frustration and grief over our unresponsiveness to His love and purposes. He pursues because He will never be content until He has us completely. He pursues with passion and because of this passion, revival is often powerful, disconcerting and disruptive.

God's goal in pursuing is to close the “relational gap” of our indifference. We need revival because we have been so casual in our attitude toward Him. The foundation for personal and corporate revival rests in the fact that *He* has urgently and eagerly sought after us.

#### Reflect and Respond

What is your response to the idea that He pursues *you*? How should you respond personally to Him? Do so, right now - picture Him sitting across from you – what do you need to say to Him?

## Day 3

### Discontent Rising

“And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated *at their tables*. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, ‘Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business.’ His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME.’” John 2:14-17. NAU.

Some believers are giving up on church. Some are even calling this “unchurch” phenomenon a “movement.” Whether there is such a movement or not, there is a growing discontent with the status quo stirring among many believers. Among what I would call the “hopeful indicators” of coming revival, discontent is perhaps one of the most important.

Some kinds of discontent are not only necessary, but *righteous*. When Jesus drove the money changers from the temple in the passage above, when Paul confronted the powers of darkness at Paphos,<sup>6</sup> there was a controlled, directed rage. If the word “rage” seems too strong, perhaps we do not really yet understand God’s restless painful discontent over a broken world. True passion will settle for nothing less than the whole will of God being done fully in our lives and our world. It is a deep inner burning that can never be “contented” with less. Can we say this of ourselves at this moment?

Let’s be clear what we are *not* talking about. Godly discontent is not the whining and complaining that so often plagues churches and faithful pastors and leaders, “We don’t like the music, the color of the carpet, the time of the services, the way the pastor dresses, preaches, etc.” ad nauseam. In fact, this kind self-serving dissatisfaction is evidence of the problem: we think church is all about *us*. No, the discontent that prepares us for revival is discontent of a particular *kind* which must grow and develop in a particular *direction*.

Discontent with the status quo is but the beginning. In and of itself, this kind of discontent may end only in *resignation*. Some have simply given up and decided to muddle along with things as they are. For revival to come, our unsettledness with the status quo must move toward a *longing for God to work*, to intervene. Godly discontent begins as we become increasingly aware of our own bankruptcy, our impotence to change things in a constructive kingdom direction. Many persons never come to this stage because they don’t fundamentally believe that unless God *acts* we can do nothing that really matters.

But we must move beyond even this. Our longing for God to act must be evaluated – otherwise it can be still quite self-serving, “God won’t you bless *us*? Won’t you save *our* nation, grow *our* churches, deal with the wicked, make America safe for *our* grandkids, etc.” If we are honest, what we are really asking is, “Won’t you keep *us* comfortable, safe, prosperous – so *we* can continue along just as *we* are.” Such thinking hardly reflects those persons in the Bible or in Christian history who “put first the kingdom.” The selfishness and pride of our hearts remains *unbroken*.

We must cross a significant boundary, step over a line in our hearts. We must move to a level of discontent that says, **“God we just want You! You alone! We surrender our agendas, our plans, ourselves – God just give us YOU!”** The longing for God *alone* must come to a desperate moment whereby we willingly surrender *all* to have Him, pay *any* cost, remove *any*



obstacle, give *all* of our energy, our hearts, our lives – just to have *Him* and Him *alone*. It is a place of unqualified, unconditional surrender.

Must we really become this desperate? Will He not be faithful regardless? Of course, *He* will – but we miss the point. The question is not about God’s faithfulness, but *ours*. It is our true heartfelt desperation that signals to God that He can now safely work in and through us to see His revival purposes achieved. How many potential revivals never were or have been cut short because God’s people have not been fully prepared to receive Him? Discontent, rightly understood, is our preparation to give God His place.

Do we *really* want revival?<sup>7</sup> Until we become alert to the Spirit, see the true condition of our own hearts, see the true the situation of the church and of the world around us, we will never be *shaken* out of our indifference. *Without discontent there can never be revival.*

### **Reflect and Respond**

Am I discontented with a Godly discontent? Does what troubles God trouble me?

Am I willing to adjust my life to have Him and Him alone?

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## **Day 4**

### **Hungry?<sup>8</sup>**

“O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in your sanctuary and gazed upon your power and glory. Your unfailing love is better to me than life itself; how I praise you! I will honor you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in prayer. You satisfy me more than the richest of foods. I will praise you with songs of joy. I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night. I think how much you have helped me; I sing for joy in the shadow of your protecting wings. I follow close behind you; your strong right hand holds me securely.”

Psalm 63:1-8. NLT (A psalm of David, regarding a time when David was in the wilderness of Judah.)

I once stood outside in the cold waiting for a *chance* to shake the hand of President Ford. My desire for even the *possibility* of being able to brag to my grandkids that I shook a President’s hand was greater than the cold. And it was *cold*.<sup>9</sup>

To my shame, I admit that this same desire is at times lacking in my pursuit of God. Is it in yours?

In times of revival, all that seems to change. People long to be in God’s presence and refuse to leave it. God, and the things of God, *actually* delight God’s people. Bibles and Christian literature fly off the shelves and are sold out, people gather together on street corners and in public places to pray spontaneously, they come hours before scheduled services to worship and pray. Great is their hunger and they come to delight in what from an eternal and true perspective is truly delightful!

The revival stories of this God-hunger are many and widespread in history and in geography. Here are few samples from the Welsh revival of 1904:

“A veteran Welsh preacher told the writer that he was only seven when the Revival reached the Rhondda. His father was a coal-miner. He came home from the early shift, washed off the coal-

dust, put on his best clothes and took his wife and children to the nearby chapel, which was packed at four in the afternoon. Evan Roberts (the revival leader) arrived about seven, made his way to the front of the big church, climbed over the knees of the people sitting around the pulpit, stood up and uttered but one word in Welsh, ‘Let us pray.’ Immediately, prayer burst forth audibly and simultaneously from the vast crowd; but Evan Roberts took no further part in the extraordinary proceedings, making his way out about ten p.m. to pray all night in the quiet of his room. The meeting was continuing in full power at two a.m., when the family made its way out. The children were put to bed, but the miner dozed in the big chair by the fire till daybreak, went to work, returned home, took a bath, put on his best clothes, and took his family back to the chapel at four in the afternoon *of the next day* to the same meeting still going strong.”<sup>10</sup>

“A British pastor visited his Welsh pastor friend during the 1904 revival to see things for himself. He asked, ‘Is it real?’ His Welsh friend told him about the meetings that were going on all over the region. ‘Is it happening in your church?’ he was asked. ‘It is happening in all the churches’ the Welshman responds, ‘The meetings begin at six and end at twelve.’ The Englishman is incredulous, ‘You are having meetings that last six hours?!’ ‘No, the meetings begin at six a.m. and continue until twelve midnight. The people would continue on all night, but we have insisted that they go home to rest.’”<sup>11</sup>

There are many accounts of revival meetings where the people simply refused to leave, despite the meeting leader’s many attempts to close the meetings and send people home. A pastor who was part of the Ulster revival in 1859 made this ironic observation, “The difficulty used to be getting people into the church, now it is to get them out of it.”<sup>12</sup>

We might say it simply. It times of revival God gets what He truly deserves. He becomes the center of our attention, the longing of our desperate desire.

### **Reflect and Respond**

Is He really the desperate desire of your heart? Do you hunger for Him?

If we are being honest, where is He in the “hierarchy” of our desires? What consumes our time, our resources; what is it that we look forward to in our calendar?

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## **Day 5**

### **Loving Truth**

“They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” 2 Thess. 2:10b. NIV.

If one were to ask the average evangelical in 21<sup>st</sup> century America about truth, their answer would likely run something like this, “Of course I believe in truth, it is what makes us Christians so different than the secular world around us. We believe the truth and they don’t.”

However, the “truth” tells another story. In general, the thinking and lifestyle of those who call themselves Christian is little different than those of their secular neighbors.<sup>13</sup> While lip service is given to the value of Biblical truth, it seems to have had little impact on evangelical values, worldview and lifestyle. Seemingly the “truth” many evangelicals claim to believe is simply an “in their heads” truth and that has little to do with their real life and world.

Am I just being cynical? I wish it were so. Researchers interviewed church attendees after a church service and asked them about the message. Few could even identify the topic or main

point, let alone say they were impacted. You might be thinking, “Well, if the communicator was better and his/her messages more relevant, it would all be different.” Let’s call that thinking what it is - an excuse.

In times of revival, hearers sat on the edge of their chairs in rapt attention listening to some pretty inarticulate messengers. People stood in pouring rain to hear the message. In their hunger for truth, people came out at five a.m. *to stand in the open air* to listen to three-hour messages.

In revival, stories of this hunger for truth abound. In England in 1739, during one of the bitterest winters on record, 10,000 people stood in the open air in the snow to hear the preaching of the revivalist George Whitefield. Churches filled to overcapacity. In one case the balcony collapsed under the strain of the numbers. Unable to get inside the building where the meeting took place, thousands would stand outside, crowding around the windows hoping to hear even a little of the message.

No, if we are honest, we must admit it is not the failure of our preachers and teachers. It is our failure to love the truth. Perhaps, we are on overload, satiated by the constant flow of trivial information as we scroll through on our devices all day long. Maybe it’s time to set aside our devices and ask God about all this. It is our love of the truth that allows the truth to fuel us and rekindle our hearts. Dare we ask for it?

For myself, I have recently prayed, “God, reveal your truth to me, especially the truth about me.” A dangerous prayer indeed! And in His mercy, He answered - uncomfortably and yet wonderfully filled with comfort! We need not fear the great Truth giver. He longs to set us free from into all that He has in His heart for us!

### **Reflect and Respond**

Will you join me in my prayer for God to reveal me to me?

Will you do what He says when He tells you the truth out of His love for you? Write down specifically what God says you. What are you to do?

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## **Day 6**

### **Being My Own God**

“Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’” Gen. 2:15-17. NAU.

What we know from Gen. 3:6 is that Adam (and Eve) “ate from the tree” in a willful rejection of God’s word to him. In doing so, he rejected God, rejected God’s place in his life, rejected God’s loving rule, severed the love relationship and forsook God’s purpose for him. He made a decision to be his own god.<sup>14</sup> What a ridiculous, destructive choice! The prohibition, “don’t eat” was God’s way of protecting humanity; true freedom always has limits. *Only God* knows what is ultimately and individually best for us. To be our own god is to enter into death; when we join our lives with God we walk in life. There is no gray area in this regard.

It may seem crazy, but I can actually remember the moment I decided to become my own god. I was in my teenage years and I was conscious of God wooing me and appealing to me to yield my

life to Him. In that moment, sitting with an open Bible in front of me, I decided to eat from the tree. Slamming the Bible shut, I made my self(ish) declaration, “I don’t want to do the God-thing.” I proceeded, like we all have, to try to live independently of the God who loved me and was so eagerly pursuing me.

In that very moment, I broke His heart, though I didn’t care. I was willfully oblivious. To be sure, there is no good in even one second of selfishness and sin. I believe that it is the heart of God that every person would decide to walk with Him from the moment they are conscious of their need to make that decision. For me, there would be several foolish, wasted years before the prodigal returned.

Your story may differ in details from mine. Yet all of us have tried being our own god and if we are honest, we must confess it simply didn’t work out (or isn’t working out) all that well. How could it? We are created and designed by God to live with Him in a close personal relationship where we succumb to His love and willingly, passionately let Him rule over us. We *will* be ruled by something or someone. God created us to be self-governed under His loving wisdom, but not selfishly-governed.

In times of revival Jesus and His love conquer hearts. In our own personal revival, God in His mercy *exposes* those areas of our life where we still attempt to be the ruler. Over time, even those of us who have known Jesus for a long period might well experience a bit of erosion or slippage, where we subtly take control of areas of our life once again. In exposing these little acts of rebellion, God in His kindness shows us the truth about ourselves, intending to lead us to repentance! (Rom. 2:4-5)

The heart of revival is a repentant heart. A repentant heart is a truly broken heart - over our lack of responsiveness to God’s love and over our neglect of God’s true place in our lives. Whatever else is true about revival, I must get off the throne of my life and give it the rightful Ruler.

### **Reflect and Respond**

Who is your God? Who *really* rules over you? What evidence can you show that Jesus is your true ruler? Are there things God wants to reveal to you which you must yield to Him? Ask Him!

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## **Day 7**

### **God is No Detached Observer (1)**

“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Hebrews 4:13. NAU.

How we read the meaning of this passage says a lot about how we think about God. If we misread it and think that God sees our situation, but looks on in a distant, disinterested manner at our plight or even worse in harsh judgment; we would seriously misunderstand God’s heart and character – very seriously.

God is no detached observer of the world; but is intimately involved. He experiences in a real way the life of every individual person. He knows completely our innermost thoughts, feels intimately our emotions, is clearly aware of the inner motive of our hearts. The New Testament says that He counts the hairs of our head! He knows the entire history of our life in the minutest detail, from the instant of our conception until this very moment as we read the words on this

page. He focuses on us intently and is actively involved in our life, whether we know it or not. He holds in His heart incredible purposes for each of us and then knows the disappointment of our resistance and unwillingness to allow Him to bring about those dreams. He longs to give life to us and in the hardness of our hearts we choose death!

He knows what it is to love, passionately, longingly, intensely and never see that love returned. He knows what it is to hope beyond hope. He sees a flicker of light in a human heart as it weighs and considers a response to His tender urges and appeals. And He knows the crushing disappointment when He, the passionate lover of our soul, is ignored and rejected by us; and that for the transient and temporary trifles of this world. He knows the pain of being rejected, ignored, hated without cause; of being misunderstood, misrepresented, slandered, cursed, reviled.

He grieves at the pain sin brings into every life. From the moment of Adam and Eve's sin in the garden until the present, He experiences every terrible moment of every wickedness. He recalls in exacting detail every rape, murder, evil word, cruel atrocity, violent and selfish action, from the moment it is conceived in a person's heart and mind until it brings forth its horrible and painful consequence into the world. No suffering, no hidden tear, no disappointment, no unspoken pain, no sorrow escapes Him. He suffers in our suffering with a God-sized grief which we can never fully understand. Yet, despite it all, He constantly lives with a longing in the deepest place of His heart that it might be different and that He would be allowed to change things, to bring healing and restoration.

These things He experiences every moment of every day. Perhaps in this light we can somehow better grasp what it must have been like for Jesus to feel the crushing weight of these things concentrated and focused in a moment of time at Calvary! No wonder then that the physical body of Jesus was no longer able to endure this profound and tragic suffering, and it finally took His life.

And all for us. As author C.S. Lewis says, "It costs God nothing, so far as we know, to create nice things, but to convert rebellious wills costs Him crucifixion."

### **Reflect and Respond**

Personalize the above, put your name in it. It is your life, you, that God has been close to in these ways. How does this affect your view of who He is?

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## **Day 8**

### **God is No Detached Observer (2)**

"And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ **had to suffer** and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, 'This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ'." Acts 17:2-3. NAU (emphasis mine).

The God who is intimately involved in our lives and world simply wouldn't let things alone. It seems beyond comprehension that He entered fully into our world and joined in our humanity, including the pain and suffering *we* created. No religious system or philosophy has a God like this One.

Perhaps our over-familiarity with the cross has left us un-phased. Perhaps, as a starting point, we need to lay down on the lethal injection table, sit all wired up in the electric chair, put the noose around our neck so that somehow the reality of what Jesus has suffered *on our behalf* could come home afresh into our hearts. Yet, the physical sufferings were *not* what made the sufferings of Jesus's sacrifice on the cross so awe-filled and tragic. Something more – something so intense and profound transpired on the cross that we can only bow our hearts in wonder and humility.

The New Testament accounts present the tragic picture of divine suffering in Jesus. A great deal of attention is given to the last few days and even hours of Jesus life. In all of the gospel accounts and in multiple ways Jesus is seen as the object of people's hatred, anger, rejection, betrayal. This rejection summarizes the whole God-human relationship. Here is how we have treated Him! The pain we have brought to Him!

In His final moments on the cross, Jesus cries out, "God, why have even *You* abandoned Me?" In Jesus's total identification with us, he enters into the final sense of alienation and isolation that sin brings. This is what sin does! It brings dreadful and tragic consequences to both us and to God. It ruins and spoils the best of God's purposes and intentions for humanity.

The cross stands, mockingly, in the midst of the world's sinful tragedy and ruin. How unlikely it seems that this dreadful, shameful executioner's tree could be God's way to rescue us! YET! It is in this dreadful place that there is an atonement and a resurrection and a way home to God! Jesus took upon Himself the worst of humankind's abuse, selfishness, sin and rejection and **reversed** it all! Through the sacrificial giving of His life, He offers healing and wholeness and salvation for the world.

### **Reflect and Respond**

Have we as God's people become numb to the truth of the costliness to God to rescue us from our selfishness and sin? What about you?

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## **Day 9**

### **Scandalized?**

"And He (Jesus) said to them, 'What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?' And they stood still, looking sad. One *of them*, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, 'Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?' And He said to them, 'What things?' And they said to Him, 'The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.'" Luke 24:17-21. NAU.

For Christians, the cross is a central symbol of our faith. We wear it as jewelry, hang them up in and on our churches, stamp in on our Bible covers. However, for those in the first century AD, the cross had no such appeal or attraction.

Crucifixion was common enough. It was likely that the average person in Judea during the time of Jesus and Paul, including Jesus and Paul, had seen a crucifixion. When Jesus told His own disciples they must take up their own cross, they immediately knew, vividly, what He meant.

Crucifixion was done in a public place and used as very public warning, “Find yourself crosswise with Rome, here is what you get.” It was considered shameful. It was uncouth for a Roman person to speak of it in polite company. It was reserved for the worst offenders.

The point is this. No one present at Jesus crucifixion would have looked at Jesus on the cross and have said, “Wow, something wonderful and redemptive is happening here.” Or, “Look, God has brought salvation to us!” In fact, the very opposite. They would have thought, as did those disciples on the way to Emmaus in the passage above, that the road Jesus had travelled had come to an unfortunate dead end and that all those redemptive hopes and dreams they attached to Him had died there, too. But, crazily, Jesus was on the right road; the road that would bring about the rescue of the world!

Somehow, we must recover the “scandal” of the cross if we are to be rightly impacted by it. How could *this* way be *God’s* way to change and save His world? Like those early followers, we need to find ourselves perplexed. Perhaps we have been way too casual in our approach to the cross, too familiar. We think we know what is happening there, but maybe like them, our insufficient and deficient understanding has kept the cross from fully impacting us.

How can we recover the impact of the cross? Perhaps we should translate it into our own generation. If we were to do so, we would wear lethal injection syringes around our necks or maybe a noose. We would have at the front of our churches replicas of the tables upon which the executed are laid when given a lethal injection; or perhaps an electric chair. Scandalized yet?

The cross was ugly, shocking, intense; it brutally murdered those who were put upon it. And He went there for us! There is no beauty in sin, how appropriate is the horror of the cross to reveal sin’s true ugliness. It was our sins that drew Him to the cross and for us He gave His life. *And there He waits for us to join Him.*<sup>15</sup>

### **Respond and Reflect**

Has the cross become too familiar to you? Can you say that you are “perplexed” and “scandalized” by it? Why or why not?

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## **Day 10**

### **God with Us**

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14. NAU.

The Bible presents the picture of a God who longs to be *with us*. From the Eden of Genesis to the New Jerusalem of Revelation and everywhere in between, God seeks to be as close to us as possible. When Jesus came as a human, God came into our world to be *with us* and so that we could *see Him*. He wants us to know Him and makes proximity a priority.

While we believe theologically that God is always with us, in revival we know without any question or doubt that He is. In times of revival God is so tangibly, concretely present that everyone, believer and unbeliever alike are aware of His presence. To say that this awareness is awesome is surely an understatement; it can often be wonderfully terrifying. People, even in public spaces, live under a “cloud” of the awareness of Him. They talk in whispers, they are afraid to do anything sinful. During the revival in the Scottish Hebrides in the 1950s, “So

overwhelming sometimes was the presence of God, that people were afraid to open their mouths...”<sup>16</sup>

Stories abound which illustrate this revival reality. Some have a touch of humor. During the revival in Rome, New York in the 1820s, God’s presence was so saturated the entire community that all were intensely and consciously aware of God. An army officer, a Lt. Simonson, was in charge of the weapon’s arsenal at Rome. He was so afraid that he might be affected by God’s presence that he refused to walk through the town and would only ride through on his horse, and that at top speed!<sup>17</sup>

In the normal course of things people can take God or leave Him. Not so in revival! You WILL take Him and NOT leave Him; He will meet you in a personal encounter which you will find impossible to ignore! Such encounters are the undoing of many persons whose flippancy and neglect of Godly matters is shattered in a moment of Divine experience.

In Michael Brown’s words, “Do we really want revival?” Do we really want the living God to visit us?<sup>18</sup>

### **Reflect and Respond**

Are you ready to have Him present in this intense way He comes during revival?  
What might He want to say to you?

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## **Day 11**

### **“I Will Make You Known”**

“O righteous Father, the world doesn’t know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. And I have revealed you to them and will keep on revealing you. I will do this so that your love for me may be in them and I in them.” Jesus. John 17:25-26. NLT.

When we think about cross, we often consider how it has benefited us; and, of course, it has. However, we have come to the cross too self-absorbed. We miss the most important truth about the cross – what it reveals about God.

We have tended to disconnect the cross from the rest of Jesus life and from the Old Testament. In doing so, we have lost the continuity of God’s heart revealed throughout the Biblical story and of which the cross is the culminating revelation. In other words, the richness of the revelation of the cross begins even before the creation!

The dream of the Father, Son and Spirit in the creation was the *overflow* of the eternal love relationship which they shared. Such love simply couldn’t be contained. Their decision to create humanity was a way to direct this passionate overflow. In other words, they created us *to love us*; this was their motivation and purpose! We are the object of their hearts. They invite us to love them in return and join in their “Divine dance.”

The tragedy is that humanity rejects God, rejects His offer of love relationship and chooses to live as their *own* gods. What an irrational and destructive decision. The Old Testament records the long history of humanity’s rejection of God. From God’s broken heart before the Genesis flood and then throughout the centuries of Israel’s resistance and hardness, we see God’s determination to love us, no matter how deeply we pain Him.



Given this tragic history, it might seem that God's dream was just that, a dream - and one turned nightmare. I must admit that I would have given up on humanity. But not God!

In John 17:25-26, with His disciples gathered around, Jesus prays to His Father in those last moments before His betrayal and execution. Jesus says that He has revealed the Father to them "and will keep on revealing" Him – but how? The most obvious answer is in what will transpire in the next few hours. Roman soldiers will brutalize Jesus, strip Him naked and then put Him on a cross. Here the Father reveals Himself; the cross the fullest revelation of God's heart *for us*.

What does this revelation mean? Jesus says, "For the purpose that they, Father, may experience the same love I have known in my relationship with You." The purpose of the cross is our return to God's intent at the creation – for us to experience His love and enter into the life of the Trinity. In the greatest reversal of history, the horror of the cross would open up the beauty of God's purpose for us.

What a climatic revelation! The cross shows how far God goes to reclaim our hearts! The cross is God's heart cry, "Will you love Me, now!?" From His perspective it was not too great a sacrifice to give His life for us. I am humbled into the dust.

### **Reflect and Respond**

Have you ever thought that God made you just to love you? How does this affect your picture of Him? What does it stir in your heart?

Jesus went to the cross to reveal God's love to you – how does that impact you?

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## **Day 12**

### **Gripped**

"For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. NAU.

"For Jesus love continually holds us in its grip. How did I (Paul) come to know and experience this love? I know I am loved because He went to the cross for me! Yes, for us all; He gave away, totally abandoned His life. Such love calls for only one reasonable response – we must give our lives wholly to Him – unconditionally, without qualification - so that we can now live fully and completely for Him." (my interpretive paraphrase)

There are things that come into our minds and grip our thoughts so tightly we cannot seem to escape. How many times has some trivial silly commercial jingle forced its way into your head and you wasted the rest of your day trying to make it stop? The cross is no silly song.

Its compelling power should take hold of our hearts and minds. Perhaps, two millennia in the shadow of the cross have left us jaded and less able to feel its power. Some theological ideas haven't helped much either.<sup>19</sup> The cross is an historical fact and irrefutable *demonstration* of God's heart.

The cross was and is a *revelation* of God's love for *all to see*. To respond appropriately to the cross cannot be simply how I *feel* about the cross or how the cross makes me *feel*. It is much more than a "sentimental" reminder of love; how could it *not* be more? Whether we look away

from it, ignore it or even choose to deny the truth of it, there it stands in history as a radical, public, stark fact that invades our minds and pierces our hearts. We cannot escape its *grip*. It calls for, demands, a response; it shocks us into reality. It summons us to decide.

For Paul, God's sacrificial total self-giving love was so powerful that it held him *continually*. He responded to it in the only appropriate way – he *continually* surrendered fully, completely and without qualification to that love. No matter what it cost him (and it did), he lived *gripped* by it the whole of his life.

If God gave Himself fully for *me*, then how should *I* reasonably respond? Paul states it clearly, “so that they who live **might no longer live for themselves, but for Him** who died and rose again on their behalf.” If God has given His life fully for me and to me, then the only appropriate response is that I give myself fully and completely to Him. This is what it means to be “saved” and nothing less.

Yet for many in evangelical circles the cross has become simply a factoid to which one gives mental assent, words one says in a “sinner’s prayer.” But to only believe *in* the cross and to not give oneself completely to the One *on* the cross is not only inappropriate but a travesty.

Not surprisingly, the rekindling of our hearts must begin here. Here, standing at the foot of the cross, revival begins.

### **Reflect and Respond**

- What has been your response to Jesus self-giving love? Is your response appropriate?
- Where have you *qualified* or put *conditions* on your love response to Him?
- What does God want to say to us about this? Take time to ask God. Perhaps you need to have the awe of His sacrificial love revealed afresh to you. Perhaps God would show you areas where you need this love to invade and transform you. Perhaps there are things that need “gripped” in your life – areas needing surrender, areas needing God’s presence and power. Invite Him!

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## **Day 13**

### **The Big Why and For Whom**

“The LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.’ Then Satan answered the LORD, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’” Job 1:8-9. NAU.

Satan’s accusation was quite simple – “Job doesn’t love You for Yourself, he loves You for all the stuff You give him.” In other words, Job was a user; He gave God the nod as long as God kept him blessed. He didn’t love God just for Himself.

Winkie Pratney, Bible teacher and evangelist, was once ministering on a Christian college campus. He struck up a conversation with a non-Christian girl who asked him, “Do Christians really love Christ or do they just love the good feelings that come from loving Christ.”<sup>20</sup> What an insightful question! Do we love God as an end in Himself or do we “love” Him because we derive some benefit or advantage for ourselves from “loving” Him? In human relationships we

would not call this kind of love real love, but simply a perverted selfishness. How much more is this true when thinking about God?

This, then, is **the question of the ages**. Do we love God as an end in Himself or are we using God as a means to some end of our own making? Are you using God? If you have never asked this question, now is the time to ask and settle the question in your own heart. What is the “why and for whom” of your life?

The Bible presents only two possible answers to this fundamental “why and for whom” question. Either **God** is our ultimate purpose for living, our motivation and goal OR **we** live for ourselves supremely, for our own happiness, pleasure and purposes.

We can never have true revival without this searching question being asked and answered. We can settle it here and now. We can make a decision to make God our ultimate purpose for living, to surrender to His love and make Him, and Him alone, our life’s end.

But, don’t be too quick or flippant. Give God time to really apply this to your life so that you can carefully count the cost.

### **Reflect and Respond**

Present yourself to God and ask Him, “Are you my ‘why and for whom’ or am I really just living for myself?” Let Him show you, for He will.

Do an analysis of your life. Ask, “Why am I doing \_\_\_\_\_ and for whom am I doing it?” Make this practical, fill in the blank as you think about various areas of your life – marriage, work, use of your time, money, etc.

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## Day 14

### Letting Go

“Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.” Romans 12:1. NAU.

According to Paul in this passage, the foundation for giving ourselves to God, is God’s incredible giving of Himself to us in mercy. In using a sacrificial image, Paul is surely thinking here about the presentation of offerings on the sacrificial altar in the Old Testament worship. For those sacrifices there was no holding back; the Old Testament sacrificial animals never returned to their pasture. Now, *we* are to be the offering on the altar, but still quite alive!

Why do we hold back in our relationship with God? Perhaps we fear what might be asked of us (“Please don’t send me to Africa!”). More likely, if we are honest, it is simply that we want to lead our own lives, do our own thing, do things our own way. Thankfully, God never had nor has now that attitude toward us. God gave His Son; the Son gave His life. He never held back anything (Rom. 8:31-39).

Author Brian Edwards tells the story of Douglas Brown, a pastor of a large church in London in the 1920s. God had been dealing with Brown, “there were reservations in his surrender.” When he finally was able to yield all to God, Brown describes his experience, “Then something happened. I found myself in the loving embrace of Christ forever and ever and all power and all joy and all blessedness rolled in like a deluge...God had waited four months for a man like me;

and I said, ‘Lord Jesus, I know what you want; you want me to go into (local) mission work. **I love you more than I dislike that.**’”<sup>21</sup>

It was Brown’s unwillingness to *give way* to God that kept God at a distance; not God’s unwillingness to draw close to him! Once Brown removed the barriers in his own heart, God, who had been waiting in eager anticipation rushed to embrace him!

In revival, we come to see that our reservations, our holding back, have kept God at a distance. *We* have created obstacles, hindrances and difficulties for God in His desire to draw close to us. God will not force Himself into our lives, though He constantly woos us and appeals to us.

### **Reflect and Respond**

Take a moment: What is the Holy Spirit speaking to you about?

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## Day 15

### Knee Prints

“And He was saying, ‘That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the **heart** of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. All these evil things proceed from **within** and defile the man.’” Jesus. Mark 7:20-23. NAU (emphasis mine).

For there to be revival, we must become aware and “convinced” about our sin. We might think that this conviction is about dealing with our “sins,” meaning our sinful behaviors, and this is true. However, to emphasize outward behaviors alone is *not* revival. With this focus we are in danger of only trying to “manage sin,” to use discipleship guru Dallas Willard’s words. According to Jesus, to see only the results is to ignore the true nature and source of our problem, the heart.

To focus on behaviors alone will only lead us into despair and failure when we confront temptation. Many have discovered that “sin management” does not produce real freedom, only legalism and sin-damage control. What a sad state for us! Especially so when Paul says that victory can be ours through the cross and by the Holy Spirit’s power. What, then, is the problem of our heart? It is about *idols*.

We might laugh at the idea that the worship of idols is really a problem for us. But idolatry is not bowing down to a figurine or an image. It is about the conscious, willful decision to not let God fill our lives with Himself. Idols are our substitutes for His kingship over us. Our commitment to idolatry is the source of both the Divine and the human tragedy. We were created and designed to let God be God; anything less results in pain for both God and us. It devalues and degrades us; it short circuits God’s intent to share His glorious purpose with us.

How might we define idolatry? Idolatry is “any object or pursuit that replaces, substitutes for, distracts or hinders us from a life of wholehearted undivided devotion to God.” Read this through slowly and carefully. How might this definition help us to see our own “knee prints,” to see where we kneel before idols?

Paul recognized that his Thessalonian converts had, “you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.” (1 Thess. 1:9) Idols can be smashed, but once torn down God must replace them in our hearts. In other words, to repent means a turn from idols to God alone. As did those early believers, so must we.

### **Reflect and Respond**

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any idols. Look carefully; can you see your knee prints, places where you worship things not God?

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## Day 16

### Smashing Idols

“Now when they heard *this*, they **were pierced to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ Peter *said* to them, ‘Repent...’” Acts 2:37-38 NAU (emphasis mine).

Now we come to the one thing that makes revival *be* revival in fact. Of course, there can be no revival without God present, no revival without truth, no revival without encountering the living God.

But in revival, it is our **repentance** in response to God’s revelation of Himself and of truth that that brings about our return to the intimate relationship God desires. Repentance is our part to close the “relational distance” between us and God. It is because there is distance that we have need of revival in the first place.

When God reveals and exposes our hearts, repentance is how we *remove* those obstacles and hinderances that have kept us from His intimate purpose for us. Of course, God takes the initiative to call us to repentance; but repentance is something *we must do*. God does not do things *to us*, but *with us*.

Repentance is how we relinquish control of *everything* to God. Without this total, unqualified surrender, we cannot have revival; not personally and not in the church. We must take the Divine sledgehammer to each and every thing the Holy Spirit identifies; for these are the places where He does not fully reign, where His love is not supreme. It is the smashing of idols!

### **Reflect and Respond**

Ask the Spirit to show where you have resisted or ignored His loving rulership. Ask Him for specifics – where you have resisted, neglected or ignored Him in your affections, your life focus, your use of time and resources. What must you do about it?

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## Day 17

### Do I Really Have to *Die*?

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” Paul. Gal. 2:20. NAU.

So much of what is true about God runs against the grain, it is counter-cultural and counter-intuitive. The kingdom of God was Jesus self-declared mission.<sup>22</sup> The kingdom looks “upside down” when compared to the ways of the world around us. It is the kingdom of forgiveness, not retribution; loving enemies not hating them; authority given to the greatest servant; power in weakness; freedom in becoming God’s slave.

With that in mind, finding life through death should not seem so surprising. But dying, really? Death seems so...*final*. And that really is the point. Until we come to the end of ourselves, we cannot fully enter into the fullness of life God intends. Until we let go of our lives, we cannot embrace His.

The above passage was no theory for Paul, he writes out of his own personal experience. Of course, he didn’t actually go to a cross and die physically. So, obviously, he is not speaking of *literal* death.<sup>23</sup>

Nor is he thinking of dying as some crazy ascetism or weird self-denial. Some in church history have tried this path to no constructive end. Some of these attempts border on humorous, others are tragic. One monk in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, named Simeon Stylites, sat on top of a pole, 45 feet off the ground for 36 years to show his devotion and self-denial.

But, let’s be clear, we *must* die. And the death we must die may be more difficult than dying physically or sitting on a pole for decades. This dying means we must meet Jesus *in the cross*. It is as though He waits there for us, “join Me *here* and have My life.” How counter-intuitive is that?

We might live under the illusion that there is another way. But what we must face the reality that without Jesus we are under the power of sin and death. And the only escape is to “die our way out” – to join with Him in His death so that we can experience His resurrection life, “the newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

How to die, then? We must yield our will to His. Daily, hourly, every second of every day. How? We do life deliberately *with* Him, by faith in Him, who is the author of life! As we surrender, the life of Jesus can come to us and then through us in daily living. Here we meet the Spirit who leads us and orders our lives.

In times of personal and historic revival, believers always return to the cross. At the cross, we yield up our life in death and so that we can embrace His life.

Are you aware of His living presence in your life? His kingship ruling over you? If not, you need to die. Biblically speaking, the road to life must go through death – *ours*.

### **Reflect and Respond**

What do you think about the idea that we must meet Jesus on His cross?

What does “taking up your cross” look like in your daily life?

## Day 18

### “I Must Get Out of His Way!”

“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” Jesus. John 16:7. NAU.

Jesus spent those final hours before the cross with His closest disciples. When Jesus said to them what He does in this passage, they surely must have thought He had lost His mind. He had for some time tried to get them to see that He must soon leave (and that by way of a cross), yet they could not hear it. If His leaving wasn't difficult enough, He tells them it is to their *advantage* that He go. Crazy, huh? More than just a little unsettling, it devastated them. All their hopes and dreams were fixed on Jesus. They had staked their lives on His leading them and now He was abandoning them – and to who?? “Another Helper?”

When I teach on this “other Helper,” the Holy Spirit, I like to ask my students, “Would you prefer to have Jesus physically present with you, 24/7 or the Holy Spirit?” I laugh and say that we have a king size bed, so we could make plenty of room for Jesus. 😊 Of course, most know the “right answer,” but I press them to give me their “felt” answer. Many choose Jesus. Now this is totally understandable; having Him physically present would seem to make following Him easier. But interestingly, and according to the passage above, Jesus doesn't think so!

Our response to Jesus' words expose something important - our comfort level with the Holy Spirit's presence and leadership in our lives. What *value* do we place on the Spirit?

Jesus own attitude toward the Spirit is enlightening. He so *valued* the Spirit and the Spirit's presence, that He was genuinely eager to “get out of the way” so the Spirit *could* come to His disciples! He genuinely believed it was to their advantage – and to ours as well. But how could He see things in this way?

It is helpful to consider how Jesus carried out His earthly ministry. He ministered in an obedient responsiveness to the Father and in the Spirit's power. He knew the Spirit and knew what the Spirit was capable of doing with a person who was fully available and yielded to God. Jesus displayed this in His own life and ministry – the miracles, the healings, the deliverance from the demonic, the words of truth. What the Spirit accomplished He did in cooperation with Jesus; and Jesus responsiveness to the Spirit was essential to Jesus fulfilling the Father's kingdom of God mission.

Jesus knew that unless His ministry could be *multiplied* in the world, then His kingdom's healing, restoring power could not be fully realized and unleashed. In other words, for Jesus to stay in a physical body would limit God's purpose.<sup>24</sup> Jesus knew that the multiplying of His vision and kingdom purpose would require His own disciples to be Spirit-led and empowered as He Himself had been. They, too, must learn to know, relate to and cooperate with this same Holy Spirit - in the same power and the same purpose as did Jesus.

Preparing for revival in our own lives requires that we value and understand the Spirit who brings revival. How do you see the Spirit's place in *your* life and *your* world?

### **Reflect and Respond**

How would you answer the question I ask my students, “Who would you rather have in your life 24/7, a physical Jesus or the Holy Spirit?” What does your answer reveal about the value you place on the Spirit in your life?

## Day 19

### The Holy Who?<sup>25</sup>

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.” Jesus. John 14:16-17. NAU.

When I first began to teach on the Holy Spirit, I was surprised by people’s confusion concerning the Spirit’s *identity*. I have come to see that this confusion is generally widespread, even among those of a Pentecostal-Charismatic orientation. In a survey asking American evangelicals about the Spirit, 59% saw the Holy Spirit as a force and not a person; only 31% agreed that He was a person.<sup>26</sup> So who or what is He? And why does it matter?

From the book of Acts and then onward throughout Christian history, God’s story is the story of the Spirit’s activity and purpose. Not to say that Jesus and the Father are now somehow “obsolete;” for certainly the Spirit points to them and reveals them. But now the Spirit is the leader, enabler and empowerer of God’s people. It is His show, His agenda, His role. We might pause to reflect on whether or not the church historically has fully engaged the Spirit as God intends; but that is for another time.

What does this have to do with revival? It is the “coming of the Spirit” that *reconnects* us to God; He *reignites* our passion for Jesus, He *revives* us who are nearly dead. He *awakens* us who have been fast asleep in our relationship with God. To meaningfully experience God means an encounter with the Spirit; to experience the Spirit is to come face to face with God.

For some, the very thought of a “Spirit encounter” elevates their blood pressure. Images of people acting weirdly and out of control fill their minds. True enough, unusual and quite supernatural things happen in times of revival. However, we need not be caught up in any weirdness. We simply need to let the Bible lead us into a clearer understanding of how the Spirit works and how we are to interact with Him. Two foundational truths can help us.

First, the Spirit is *God*. God as “Three-in-One” (what we call a “Trinity” – Father, Son and Spirit) is the New Testament teaching, implicitly if not explicitly. Historically, belief in the Trinity became for the church an important test of what it means to be an orthodox, authentic Christian.

What are the *implications* if the Holy Spirit is God? As God, the Spirit shares all God’s attributes and character qualities, so we can trust Him as we would the trust the Father and the Son. It means He deserves the same place in our lives we give to the Father and to the Son. We should respond to Him accordingly; love, honor and obey Him as God, because He is! If the Spirit is fully God, then He is an equal partner with the Father and with the Son.

Second, the Spirit is a *person*. This aspect of the Spirit’s identity is especially confusing for many believers. Because we are accustomed to think about the Spirit’s *power*, there is tendency to see Him as a force or as some kind of impersonal energy. Some of the New Testament language about the Spirit complicates this difficulty when it talks about the Spirit in seemingly



impersonal ways, e.g., “poured out,” “filled,” etc. Yet, the New Testament teaches that He is a person.

How do we interact with the *person*, the Spirit; how does it *work*? For a starter, because He is a person, He has *personal expectations* for how *He* wants to relate with us. He desires a living, active, dynamic, authentic relationship. And it is *His* expectations that should shape and determine *our* expectations. The New Testament provides a great deal of insight into our relationship with the Spirit, especially when we look closely at the book of Acts.

### Reflect and Respond

How do you think your understanding of Him up to now has affected your interaction with Him? As you see Him as God and as a person, what might need to change in how you relate to Him?

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## Day 20

### Discombobulated

“Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the LORD *given* by Moses. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. Then Shaphan brought the book to the king [Josiah]...And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king. When the king heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes.” “‘Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and *because* you humbled yourself before Me, tore your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you,’ declares the LORD.” Excerpts from 2 Chronicles 34:14b-27. NAU.

Upon hearing the word, “discombobulate,” likely your face crinkles up in a perplexed look; “*What* are you talking about?” Some words, like discombobulate, are fun because just hearing them has an effect that is like what the word means. To be “discombobulated” is to “to be confused emotionally.”<sup>27</sup> “If something has put you in a state where you don’t know up from down and you can’t spell your own name, you may be **discombobulated**.”<sup>28</sup>

When some people learn that revival is about an experience with God, they say, “Oh, how cool! To feel God so near!” They would be correct - at least in part. However, upon reading the accounts of what people *actually* experience in times of revival, we discover something else. The experience will be *discombobulating*, even *terrifyingly* so.

How could it *not* be? When angels appeared, people dropped helplessly prostrate on their faces. How much impactful will be the arrival of the living God in His majesty? In revival God shows up – powerfully and intensely. It is discombobulating and it should be. In a generation that has dismissed God as irrelevant and foolish and a church that has ignored and trivialized Him, we all might well need an encounter that will scare the hell right out of us.

The Old Testament passage above occurs in a time similar to the moral condition of our own. The culture was Godless and disintegrating. In a time when very few shared God’s heart, Josiah did. Josiah was a good king when good kings were in short supply. In fact, he was the only Godly king among the last seven kings of Judah.

Josiah loved God and was a reformer committed to bring change. Early in his reign he began systematically to destroy the idolatry and false worship practiced by his father and grandfather.

He sought to re-establish and reinvigorate true worship of the true God. It was a massive undertaking, but Josiah was all in to undo past sinful practices and to clean up the cultural mess.

Josiah knew that the people of Judah were not where they should be in their relationship with God and he worked to “close the gap” between God and the people. Yet, when Josiah heard the “book of the law” read, the *real truth* of the people’s desperate and wicked condition was revealed to him. The situation came into sharp focus - he was shocked and profoundly grieved. He tore his clothes, he wept, he was undone, stunned. He was *severely discombobulated*.

Like Josiah, we as believers may think that we get it – things are out of sorts between God and us as His people. Yet in revival, our sudden God encounter reveals the true situation in a stark, new way – it *undoes* us; we are *discombobulated*.

Should there be surprise that when the Spirit of truth comes, He comes with the *truth*? Unless and until we have this discombobulating experience, we are not yet experiencing revival. Unless *my* heart is exposed to *me*, then I am not yet revived.

Let us never forget. Revival is an intensification of God’s presence *with a purpose*, to restore our hearts to Him. The intensity of such an encounter will be discombobulating.

### **Reflect and Respond**

Are you ready to be *discombobulated*? Are you ready for your heart and life to be revealed to you?

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## Day 21

### Up Close and Personal (1)

“...the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Romans 5:5. NAU.

Revival, whether it be in my personal life, in my church, city or nation is about *encounter*. Such moments of encounter cannot be taken lightly because they cannot be easily dismissed. We find ourselves face to face with God.

In the verse above, Paul speaks from his own personal experience. He could just as easily have said, “the love of God has been poured out within *my* heart through the Holy Spirit who was given to *me*.” In revival, God’s love is made real to us by the Spirit. In doing so, He invites us to respond, to come closer. How amazing! God desires closeness with us!

Author Melinda Fish writes,

“When God’s presence and power invade a human soul, it is with great restraint. He probably wants to touch us more powerfully than He does, but He does not want to frighten us. If we were to see Him as He is, we would die—or want to—before our time on earth is finished. But sometimes in revival God’s presence comes down as though He almost cannot wait.”<sup>29</sup>

You might think that for Fish to talk about God in this way is way too personal or familiar, “God is God after all.” You might think that God is “too much God” to be so eager with desire. To the contrary, I think she might well be *understating* God’s passion.

For some, *any* talk of personal and intimate experience with God smacks of emotionalism and excess. It is true that extremes and excess are sometimes part of revival. In revival, people are entering into new experiences with God. Often, they do not know quite how to respond to what is happening to them. Emotional responses, sometimes including tears and shouts are part of their discovery of the wonder and beauty of God. To experience God’s love and find that you are valued by the God of universe is worth a shout!

We need to challenge our own personal status quo. Who says that an overly rational, feeling-less relationship with God is Biblical? And who says such a relationship is to be preferred to one where we experience and feel?

Let me be clear. Unless we have an *experiential* relationship with God, we are not having the kind of relationship God desires and that the New Testament describes. If we are to be Biblical Christians, then a stoic, emotionless relationship with God will not do. In revival, the Spirit brings us into the intimate experience of relationship for which we were created.

How can we prepare ourselves? First, we must adjust our expectations. Are we open and available to experience more of God the Spirit, however *He* decides this should be? Second, we need to invite Him closer. As revival authors McDow and Reid note, “Christians are not waiting for the Holy Spirit, He is waiting for us.”<sup>30</sup> He awaits our invitation. Finally, we must cultivate an appetite for Him. Time in prayer, worship, fellowship with like-minded believers, reading good books, and of course the Bible. This means we set aside those other things that hinder us from developing our appetite for Him – shutting off our phones, fasting Facebook, TV, etc. We need to quiet our minds if our hearts are to grow to hunger what is truly valuable.

### **Reflect and Respond**

Pray this prayer, if you dare, “Holy Spirit, I want more of you. I give you permission to invade my life, to give me fresh and new experiences with you.”

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## **Day 22**

### **Up Close and Personal (2)**

“So, Jacob named the place Peniel, for *he said*, ‘I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved.’” Gen. 32:30. NAU.

In revival, the always-present God *intensifies* His presence such that He is suddenly with us in a *felt*, unmistakable way – *and everyone knows it*. In my forty years as a Christian I have had a few such intense experiences. They were supernatural, and yet, very natural. They were clearly God, beyond my control and beyond my “normal” experience, but yet not strange or weird. They fit into normal reality; they were not an escape from the real world into Lalaland. Most importantly, they were an encounter with a *personal* God. In revival, God draws near to us.

Because His intensified presence can “discombobulate,” we should understand His intent. When God comes, He comes to be close and *personal*. No matter the moment’s intensity, no matter the

at times noisy and seemingly uncontrolled “glorious disorder” of revival, it is always a *personal* face to face encounter with God.<sup>31</sup>

Consider these revival accounts,

During the 1950s revival in the Scottish Hebrides, Duncan Campbell noted, “The whole island was aware of God. It seemed as if the very air was electrified with the Spirit of God... There was an awesomeness of the presence of God, so much so that many were terrified of being converted. Some refused to come to the meetings, but God met them in the fields; others sat near the door so that they could make a fast escape, but still they were converted. ‘Revival can be a terrible thing,’ comments one, **‘to be face to face with God.’**”<sup>32</sup>

“My last glimpse of the audience is photographed indelibly on my brain. Some threw themselves full length upon the floor, hundreds stood with arms outstretched toward heaven. Every man forgot every other. **Each was face to face with God.**”<sup>33</sup>

If God’s arrival disturbs our sleepy complacency, then all the better! But we should never miss the point: God longs to be face to face, personal, intimate and authentic. He comes to reignite our passion for Him with His passion for us. Author Winkie Pratney says it well, “Revival is a return to intimacy with God – all else is results.”

### **Reflection and Application**

What is your reaction to the idea of God being so intensely personal?

How do you feel about being face to face with God?

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## Day 23

### Afraid (1)

“So, the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.” Acts 9:31. NAU.

It is typical during revival for believers in their newly revived condition to see themselves as returning to the same dynamic life with God as is recorded of the believers in the book of Acts. They find *themselves* living in the pages of the New Testament!

In studying Acts over the years, I found the above verse to be an important summary of how those early Jesus followers did life. In the passage, there are two key statements that describe how it is that they were “built up” and “continued to increase.” They lived **in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort (presence and power) of the Spirit.**<sup>34</sup> These statements reveal two key principles that we can imitate. Let’s begin with *fear*.

The “fear of the Lord” is a major Biblical theme in both testaments. Should we be afraid of God? Well, yes and no. If we mean afraid because we believe Him to be angry, punishing and tyrannical, then no. Such false ideas are unbiblical, misrepresent His character and misunderstand His heart.

Yet, we must be careful to not underestimate the awe and even stark terror that God being *present* can invoke. Author C.S. Lewis, in his classic tale *The Lion, the Witch, and the*

*Wardrobe*, has his child characters step through a clothing wardrobe into another world called Narnia. There they meet animals that are quite human-like and can talk. It is when the children encounter Mr. and Mrs. Beaver that they learn about the Christ figure, Aslan the Lion. Mr. Beaver tries to help the children understand who exactly Aslan is. He tells them,

“Aslan is a lion - the Lion, the great Lion.” “Ooh” said Susan. “I’d thought he was a man. Is he - quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.” “Safe?” said Mr. Beaver, “Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”<sup>35</sup>

In times of revival God’s presence is “intensified.” While we believe, rightly, that God is always present; in revival we *know* it without any doubt. Our sudden awareness of God can be surprising, even alarming! Yet, while it does not seem God’s intention to frighten us, it may be that we need to be startled so as to give God our full attention. Is He safe? Well not exactly. Mr. Beaver was correct.

So, what then is this fear? Often it is described as “reverential love.” I have defined it as “awe plus love.” The revelation of His *awesomeness* certainly can and should “shake” us – if the appearance of angels caused people to shake and fall down; how much more God! If He would choose to show up in even a tiny portion of His majestic fullness, He might just scare us out of our wits! Yet, God has much more in mind than a good scare. It is the revelation of His *love* that draws us to Him, melts our hearts, ignites our passion and brings about our revival.

### **Respond and Reflect**

How have you thought about this idea, “the fear of the Lord?”

What might need to change in your thinking?

How might this fear apply to you?

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## **Day 24**

### **Afraid (2)**

“So, the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and **going on in the fear of the Lord** and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.” Acts 9:31. NAU.

What practical purpose should this Godly fear have in our lives? What should it look like? It is when we live out this fear that we find ourselves living as closely as is possible to the New Testament life and vision. We are then living like those early believers in Acts. In fact, it is this fear that is the *necessary prerequisite* to our being God’s kingdom people in our generation.

In reading Acts, we can see this fear in those early believer’s lifestyles, attitudes and thinking. They showed it by their total availability to God; they continually sought Him out about everything in their lives. The fear of the Lord is an attitude of heart, a way of seeing life. While we can and should ask God for the fear of the Lord; we can and must also cultivate and learn it. We must be intentional, be “on purpose” in embracing this attitude and making application to our life.

How can we know if we are living in it? We know by the practical place we give Him in our thoughts and in our deliberations about life. Do we have an ongoing internal conversation with God that is continually shaped by the question, “God what is on your heart, your mind; what is

Your desire in this matter?" If not, we do not have the fear of the Lord.

Without this fear we are in danger of becoming "practical atheists." We say we believe in a *living* active God, but our lifestyles say otherwise. If I say that God is truly alive and with me, do I experience this in everything? Only in adopting this fear do we position ourselves in our hearts and in our minds to respond rightly and fully to God. **In other words, we are no longer asking God to join us on our journey; but are asking Him how we are to join Him on His journey.** The difference is immense and defines whether we are really Christians and have an authentic relationship or just have religion.

To have the fear of the Lord is to give to God His rightful and legitimate place. It means that He is the Lord and we are His followers! We do not set the agenda for our lives, He does. He decides. He must be the center of all. We must ask, "Is He practically, actually the center of my life or is He simply an addendum, an appendage, to *my* plans, dreams, lifestyle?"

According to Jesus grapevine analogy in John 15, if we as branches are not drawing our life from the vine and bearing fruit we are in fact dead. But the heart of God toward us is for life!

To have the fear of the Lord is to recognize that without His Person, presence, power, purpose and leadership, all our efforts will come to nothing. One of the keys to revival is not to simply to *say* we are bankrupt, but to actually *be* bankrupt. Until we do this, we might continue in the illusion that our ideas, our plans, our programs, our dreams, our agendas might somehow produce something of lasting value. We must come to see and then embrace the truth – we are impoverished, destitute and without resources to do anything of kingdom value on our own.

Why should we think we are better than Jesus? He said He only did what the Father showed Him and that He could nothing without Him (John 5:19, 5:30, 6:38).

I doubt that we in the American church have yet come to this point. But if our lives are to have lasting significance, we must embrace this truth, however painful.

Please hear my heart. This path is necessary because this path alone allows our loving Father to bring about all He intends for us. And it is the only way He can work with us, so that His loving heart can flow through us to a very lost world.

### **Reflect and Respond**

How can we know if we are living in the "fear of the Lord?" Answer this simply question as a place to begin, "If God died tonight, could I tell any difference? How would it change anything for me – *practically*?"

We say we believe in a *living* God, but *do we live* as though He is?

Afraid (3)  
Anticipation!

“So, the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.” Acts 9:31. NAU.

“It was being strengthened as it lived in the fear of God and with the strength given by the Holy Spirit, and so it continued to grow in numbers.” (Scholar I. Howard Marshall’s translation of Acts 9:31)

“The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it continued its growth, both in strength and numbers. The believers were completely devoted to Lord Jesus and were **living closely, intimately with the Spirit**, such that they were actively dynamically cooperating with Him in all that He was doing.” My Paraphrase

The “fear of the Lord” is first and foremost the language of devotion. This is no legalistic slogan or formula, but the **joyful anticipation** of the possibilities of **God present** with us. It was this wholesome fear that prepared those early believers for the impossible. After all, they knew they could do nothing in their own strength; so, “What might God, the Holy Spirit, do through us!” If revival does nothing else, it revives our anticipation and expectation of God.

The fear of the Lord prepared them. With their eyes fixed on their loving Lord, their lives became *fully available* to the ever-present Holy Spirit. They knew Him, they experienced Him, they were “addicted” to Him as Eph. 5:18 implies, “Don’t be drunk with wine, but be continually filled with the Spirit.”

The results were explosive then and *now*. While we may lament we see so little of God in our culture, in many places in the world God’s presence and activity is a daily reality. It is this dynamic and interactive relationship with the Spirit that is at the heart of what it means to be a revived people.

Pastor and author Francis Chan’s book called *The Forgotten God* has as its premise the idea that we have forgotten and neglected the Holy Spirit, practically speaking. In contrast, in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit present with God’s people dynamically leads them into God’s purposes. If we do not actively engage the Spirit, we quickly slide into a “practical atheism” where we do life on our own.

And the Spirit is not quiet, docile or domesticated. He activated, empowered, enlightened and impassioned those early believers – and many believers since have tasted of His presence and life. What about us?

**Reflect and Respond**

How would you describe *your* relationship with the Spirit? Does He ever surprise you or have you “domesticated” Him?

Do you anticipate with excitement the possibilities He might lead you into or are you a little bit hesitant or uncertain? Why? Ask God for insight.

## Addicted

“<sup>15</sup>Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the most of your time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit...” Ephesians 5:15-18. NAU.

When Paul writes these words to the believers in the Ephesus region, he writes out of his own dynamic, living experience with the Spirit. Paul knows what it is to experience the Spirit’s power and to give the Spirit the central place in his own life. In these words, he seeks to ensure that this experience will be true in their lives as well. The “Spirit-life” is no escape from life’s difficulties, but rather an empowering to face life in a meaningful and effective kingdom way.

Paul shows in this passage that we are to pay very close attention to how we do life, our “walk” (v. 15), because we live in a world dominated by evil (v. 16). We need the Lord’s leadership and wisdom to navigate these difficult waters (v. 17) and we do all this by being “continually filled with the Spirit” (v. 18).

Always, revival returns God’s people to a proper relationship with the Spirit. They come to experience Him and fully appreciate Him. They give themselves over to Him and enter into a fully cooperative relational life with Him. They join their lives to His and He gives them His love, leadership, life and power.

It is sad to see some believers today seemingly afraid of the Spirit. To fear the Spirit is a lie. It is a predictable tool of our spiritual enemies intent to keep us from fully experiencing what God has for us.

In this passage, Paul’s comparison with drunkenness goes something like this, “You know what it was like to be addicted to alcohol, to have in the past let it control and dominate your lives; so now, give that place to the Spirit, let Him have that same kind of powerful influence over your life, be *addicted* to Him.”

There are some things we should cultivate as an addiction! In fact, only in cultivating this “Spirit addiction,” we can be freed from those other harmful and dangerous addictions which seek to dominate our lives. Accept no false substitutes!

### **Reflect and Respond**

What might an “addiction” to the Spirit look like, do you think?

Could you characterize your life as “addicted to the Spirit?” What might need to change for this to be true?



## Living Out the Four-Letter Word

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.” Jesus. John 14:15-17. NAU.

For some *obey* is a four-letter word. For them it smacks of legalism and restriction, the very opposite of the freedom Jesus promises. Yet, Jesus seems to think highly of obedience; in fact, He sees it as *necessary* for His followers. Is God really a legalist after all?

Much confusion surrounds how we think about obedience. Yet, we were created for obedience! In the original creation, our being “set apart” to God meant a personal relationship with Him. He *alone* could reveal what we needed to be able to live in this relationship and we were dependent upon Him for this understanding. As we responded in obedience to the truth He gave, we could become all He intended. All along He wanted good and blessing for us; but this required us to respond correctly. In other words, we needed to obey Him!

In reading the passage above, many “put the cart in front of the horse” by having Jesus say, “If you keep my commandments, you prove that you love Me.” Yet, Jesus was very careful in what He said. To reverse Jesus words is a surefire recipe for becoming a legalist. No, Jesus puts *love* first, “If you continue in **your love for Me**, *then* you will keep on obeying Me.”

Author Henry Blackaby puts it well, “If you have an obedience problem, you have a love problem. Focus your attention on God’s love.”<sup>36</sup> If we struggle to obey in some area of our life, the solution to our struggle is *not* to try harder, but to run back into Jesus arms and surrender again to His love. If we are quick to return to Him when we fail, then we will find obedience easier and failure more difficult the next time we are tempted.

How counter-intuitive! The last thing we feel like doing when we fail is to run quickly home to God! Rather, we stay in our shame, guilt and self-condemnation; punishing ourselves for our failure. But the cross means that His love beckons us, implores us, to return immediately and to receive His forgiveness and affirmation. Resting in His love will empower us to walk in victory.

With revival, our love for Jesus is rekindled; and with that fresh passion is a renewed embrace of obedience. Once our passion for Him is ignited, our obedience is quickly and easily given. We want to do what He wants, what pleases Him. We are in love! Many people struggle to have genuine *affection* for God. Affection is about our emotions, but isn’t emotionalism. As we grow in our appreciation for God and His beautiful character, our hearts and lives are bound to Him.

Once there was a woman who was married to a demanding and harsh husband. When he left home for work he would leave her a long list of things to be done before he returned. If the list was not completed or didn’t meet his expectations, he would fly into a rage. If the food wasn’t to his liking, he would turn the dinner table over and demand that she cook something else. She lived in fear and no matter how hard she tried, she could never do things right in his eyes. Suddenly and unexpectedly (thankfully for her), he died.

After some time, she met a kind, gentle, thoughtful man and they were married. One day as she was preparing their evening meal, she thought back about her day. How busy she had been, how much she had accomplished! How much she had enjoyed her many responsibilities and had

hardly gave a thought to them. Suddenly it hit her. She was working harder and accomplishing more than she ever did when she was married to the first husband - *without a thought* to the task. It was all because of love! It was easy to give to her grateful and gracious husband.<sup>37</sup>

### **Reflect and Respond**

Do you obey? Are you in this moment obeying what God has said to you? Specifically?

Why do you obey? Do you fear punishment or hope for some reward?

What do you think a *love response* would look like in your life? What about in those areas where you have found obedience difficult?

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## Day 28

### Inviting Images

“And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” 1 John 5:20. NAU.

Jesus is the ultimate accurate picture of what God is like. John, in the above passage, reveals *what* Jesus has come to tell us about God and *why*. God *wants* to be known, He is not hiding or distant. He wants *us* to know the truth of who He is. Jesus, the image of God, comes so that we might know God (Heb. 1:1-3, John 17:3).

A major problem God faces in revealing Himself is our distorted picture of Who He is. For some, talk about an encounter with God invites uninvited images. By “imaging” we are not thinking of some weird new age stuff. Rather, we are just acknowledging the God-given ability that we call “imagination.” We “image,” have mental pictures of reality, and often attached to these images are deeply powerful ways of thinking and feeling.

We once did a class at our church called “God’s Scandalous Love.” My friend, Vaughn, in leading the class would present Biblical material from Jesus’s parables in Luke 15; the lost coin, the lost sheep, the lost son. He would ask each person to let the Holy Spirit reveal to them through these stories how *they* pictured God. What people shared was incredibly insightful and a reflection of their own, often false, pictures of God.

Some saw *Him* as distant, disinterested. Some saw *themselves* as so ignored, neglected and out of the way that even God couldn’t see them or reach them. One person, in discussing the lost coin parable, saw themselves as a “lost coin” far back behind the refrigerator in the dust and grime, unseen even to God and impossible to find.

So many people hold false images of God. Some see a harsh judgmental God who is looking for any and every opportunity to punish them when they fail. For others, God is aloof, untouched by their pain and indifferent to their lives, their difficulties, their sorrows.

Often, we are not fully conscious of these images, yet they powerfully affect our ability to relate with God in the meaningful and intimate way He intends. The Spirit desperately seeks to overcome, reverse and replace all of these false images by giving us an *experience* and a *revelation* of God’s heart and love.

Transformation of images is the legacy of revival. None who encountered Him in revival ever “imagined” God in the same way again. Their experience of His love transformed them, they were never the same. Many still lived in the “afterglow” of the encounter decades after.

So, what is God after in correcting our false images? Simply, that we might know Him for who He really is and that we might know how He sees us. So simple, yet so revolutionary.

Let’s ask Him to reveal His true image and to correct our false ones! Let’s ask God for “inviting images,” those win our hearts and draw out our affections for God. The Holy Spirit will do just that, but we must use our imagination to cooperate with Him.

### **Reflect and Respond**

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you:

What kind of images do you have of God? How do these images affect your relationship with Him?

Ask Him to use your imagination so you can see Him for the loving, kind God that He really is.

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## **Day 29**

### **The Big Why**

“Father, your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus. Matt. 6:10. NAU.

Here is the most succinct statement of Jesus’s longing and desire; it is His heart cry, “Father! Bring your kingdom to earth! Do it now!” In having this desire, Jesus fully shares God’s heart for His world. What if God’s kingdom did fully come *today*? What if His will was done completely? Would that not be really “good news?” The kingdom come is the New Testament “gospel,” the good news!

So many “salvation” schemes are about how I can “get saved”- meaning presumably from hell and into heaven. The problem is the Bible doesn’t really talk about salvation exactly in this way. I can find no Biblical evidence to show that the *purpose* of salvation is to avoid hell and get into heaven. It might surprise some to discover how little heaven and hell are discussed in the New Testament.

To focus our “gospel presentation” on hell-avoidance and heaven-obtainment is nothing more than an appeal to people’s selfishness. Isn’t a selfish heart and life the world’s most fundamental problem; the very problem Jesus seeks to change? If we take this false “what’s-in-it-for-me” approach, we actively work against the Spirit.

When we present this so-called “gospel,” we in effect put out the welcome mat to selfish-hearted people, “Come on in, and bring your hellish self-serving selfishness into the very halls of heaven.” Such a “gospel” would be the ruin of heaven. Is this really what the “good news” is about? Did Jesus die so that people never need forsake the very selfishness and sin that took His life? This is a false gospel; a travesty that shames the cross.<sup>38</sup>

What is the true gospel and how does it relate to revival? The New Testament gospel is the good news about *King* Jesus and about His *kingdom*. True revival means we return to God on God’s

terms, namely, His loving kingly rule over our lives. Lordship cannot be optional or some later addition to “making Jesus my personal Savior.” The issue of our lives and of God’s world is our unwillingness to let God rule over us. How can God rescue us (“save us”) from living for ourselves if we don’t quit living for ourselves? How can He rightly sit on the throne of my life if I don’t get off?

This is why He came, why He died and was resurrected. The good news (gospel) which Jesus own followers declared was that Jesus had become King - not simply to rescue people from hell to get them to heaven – rather to put *everything* in the world right again. Jesus self-declared kingdom mission was given to Him by His Father (Luke 4:42-43); Jesus resurrection and exaltation launched the kingdom’s multiplication. All with an intention to bring the world into conformity with His loving purpose.

Revival is when we return to *King* Jesus’ loving rule and we become King’s agents for the sake of His agenda and purpose in the world.

### **Reflect and Respond**

How do these ideas challenge your thinking about the gospel?

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## Day 30

### No Escape

“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” Jesus. John 17:15-18. NAU.

In those last hours before the cross, Jesus gathers His disciples and prays these words to the Father. He tells His disciples He is leaving *and* they are staying. Because of their relationship with Him, He had “ruined them for the ordinary” and now He is leaving them to do the same for the whole world.<sup>39</sup> What a perplexing tension! To no longer be “of the world” but with a responsibility to be sent “into” it. How does one do this well?

It might be easy to see revival as a means of *escape* in a time when things seem particularly gloomy. We might think, “If only we have revival then God can save our church, the nation, our culture, our posterity from the evil forces.” If we think this way, then we are really saying we want revival so that *we* can keep our prosperity, *our* safety, *our* personal lifestyles and preferences. In other words, so we can continue to have things the way *we* like them.

Notice how “we” and “me” centered is all this thinking. This self-serving attitude is *why we need revival*. Revival has a lot to do with perspective - seeing things as they really *are* in contrast to how they *should* be. In fact, revival is when we see the truth from God’s perspective and then adjust our lives accordingly. Repentance means I *actually* change my life to align with the truth.

Revival is not a means by which we escape difficulty, but an empowered re-focusing of our lives so that we can *embrace* difficulty. We must embrace difficulty because we are followers of Jesus; His whole life meant difficulty and trial. We are at war and like soldiers must face the facts of combat – it will not be easy and we may not survive.

In other words, the reason for revival is not about us; rather it is about Jesus and His kingdom mission. When we are revived we gladly take up His dreams, heart, agenda, priorities - without regard for cost - because we are renewed in love with Him. And anything less would not match our new-found revelation of His incomprehensible value and worth. We become true “worth-shippers” with our whole life.

Revival is God’s means “to return us to reality” and in doing so bring us fully into the life He intends for us in His kingdom. Not to escape but to *engage*. Revival is God’s gracious preparation to live in a difficult and hostile world.

### **Reflect and Respond**

How does this way of thinking affect how you think about revival?

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## Day 31

### What *Does* God Deserve?

“Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high...” Psalms 113:5. NIV.

“Praise the LORD, all you nations. Praise him, all you people of the earth. For he loves us with unfailing love; the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!” Psalms 117:1-2. NLT.

Some might accuse God of being a super egomaniac, always looking to be the center of attention. I would suggest that to the contrary, God is rather subdued and reserved, given who He *really* is. In fact, He is the ultimate definition of humble. To think that Jesus as God incarnate, came into our world to suffer and die *for us*, should immediately give any skeptic of God’s motives a pause.

In times of revival, God is able to show up in ways that He could not wisely and lovingly do otherwise. He doesn’t come to “show off,” He simply shows up – and that for the purpose to love on us. Revival is not primarily about God’s power, but about God’s purpose in restoring relationship. He comes to ignite in us the *same* passion for Him that He already has for us. How far is that from self-aggrandizement!

Yet, when He does show up, He finally gets the full attention and focus of His people, which He truly deserves at all times. To talk of what He deserves is simply to acknowledge what is actually true about Him.

In the 1904 Welsh revival, so impactful was His “showing up” that all else was put on hold. Author Rick Joyner notes the effect,

“The theaters and football stadiums likewise closed down for lack of interest. Political meetings were canceled or abandoned. Many of the elected officials, even those from London, abandoned their seats in parliament to participate in the revival meetings... The largest and most influential newspapers were soon almost completely dominated by news of the revival. Headlines of crime, violence and scandal were replaced by conversion counts, news from the meetings, the words to new hymns and revival maps detailing where the Spirit was moving with the greatest intensity.”<sup>40</sup>