

Welcome to BNEXT

I am excited to share this journey through God's Word with you. As we study Scripture, we see an unfolding revelation of who God is, the nature of Jesus, and how we can become stronger in our walk with Christ. It is important that we study Scripture for ourselves — allowing the Holy Spirit to enlighten us (Acts 17:11).

The Scripture covered by each lesson is listed on the top-right side of the masthead of the page. Read the Scripture passages and then begin working your way through the lesson. Each lesson in this series contains three pages of commentary, followed by three pages of questions that will assist you to dig deeper and reflect on God's Word.

We have also included a Leader's Guide that will enable anyone to facilitate a small group. Once you have completed this BNEXT study, I hope you will consider leading others through this material — whether it is a group of friends, your church, or as a ministry outreach. (See the Leader's Guide at the end of this study for more information.)

Again, thank you for allowing me to share this amazing journey with you.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,

Handwritten signature of William P. Campbell in blue ink.

William P. Campbell

Founder & President | Scripture Awakening

BNEXT Participant's Guide

Thank you for choosing BNEXT Bible study curriculum. To help you get the most out of your study, please take a few minutes to read this information before you begin. Studying the Bible is much like going on a journey — it takes us to new places in our understanding and our walk with God. The Word of God is transformative — it's living and active, can build up our faith, and call us to move beyond where we are.

Using this curriculum, you may journey alone, or travel with others in a small group, or even engage as an entire congregation (with small groups as part of the program). Groups gather once a week to review what was read, to share answers to discussion questions, and to deepen their understanding.

About This Study

This electronic version of the Participant's Guide contains the same material as the printed version. It allows you to electronically record your answers to the questions which are part of each lesson. Following each question, you will find a blue text box. Click or touch the box and the field within it will turn white allowing you to type in your answer. Your answer will automatically be saved when you exit the text box. Should you need more space for your answer, the text box will automatically expand and insert a scroll bar on the right-hand side.

Things to Know

These studies are designed to be used in many different settings— individuals, congregations (separating into small groups), Sunday school classes, prison ministries, military, business groups— virtually anywhere a small group can be formed. Experience has shown that participants find the small group experience to be greatly beneficial. The input and interaction with others will broaden your perspective and stimulate your thinking about Scripture.

The lessons are designed to be done throughout the week. Each lesson contains a few pages of commentary, followed by study questions. There are three types of questions: Devotion (Personal Questions), Discussion (Small Group), and Digging Deeper (Further Study). While participants may use any Bible translation they prefer, all of the Biblical quotations in BNEXT studies are from the New International Version (NIV).

Plan your daily reading. The Scripture readings are located on the right side of the masthead of each lesson. Some lessons may cover a few chapters of a book (such as Genesis 1-11 in the series, *In the Beginning*). Longer readings may be broken down into more manageable daily readings, which may take some thoughtful planning. Some readings are as short as a few verses and will not present any difficulties. Some topical studies do not have assigned Scripture readings.

If you are meeting in a small group, be sure to first read and complete the lesson before the gathering. Once a week, your group will meet to spend time (about an hour) discussing the lesson and sharing personal insights.

More of our resources and study aids can be found at ScriptureAwakening.com. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or comments at info@scriptureawakening.com.



And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

Introduction

Welcome to *Renewal Journey*, a devotional tour of some of the greatest revivals in Scripture and in history. Studying how God has moved in reviving power in past times brings hope and understanding about what God will do today. There is reason to hope that God will bring another great awakening to the Church in our generation. And, it is time to get ready! The reflections found in this *Renewal Journey* will help you find your place as one of God's instruments of spiritual awakening.

On this tour, we will peer through the window of time and observe what God has done before. And we will pause to reflect and participate. We will explore an account of revival in Church history, an Old Testament example of revival, and an insight from the New Testament journey through the filter of nine key topics: nurture, Scripture, repentance, hope, prayer, guidance, surrender, empowerment, and faithfulness.

And so, we begin with *nurture*. Leaders for God's work do not arise in a vacuum; they must be nurtured.

Example of Nurture in Church History

John Wesley is known as the primary architect of the First Great Awakening, in the seventeenth century, and the founder of the Methodist Church. An itinerate preacher for 65 years, he traveled an estimated 250,000 miles on horseback to preach some 40,000 sermons. John left behind the legacy of 233 books and more than 130,000 Methodists, overseen by 750 preachers in England and 350 in America. His brother Charles penned 9,000 hymns, many of which are still enjoyed today.

Suzanna Wesley, the mother of John and Charles, may be considered the mother of modern Methodism. With a heart to honor God and a determination to raise her children in the ways of God, she helped to shape lives that would impact the world.

Susanna Wesley was married to a headstrong pastor, Samuel, and they had 19 children, nine of whom died as infants. At the end of Suzanna's life, only eight of her children were still alive. As Anglicans, Susanna and Samuel were part of the dissenting church, refusing to bow to the dictates of the Church of England. As with many other dissenters, they lived in poverty, always struggling to provide for their children. Samuel was often gone on church business. At one point, he left for over a year due to a minor dispute with Suzanna. Twice, Samuel spent time in jail because of his inability to pay off his debts. Twice their home was burned down.

In one of the fires, young John Wesley, then six, was rescued from a second story window before the roof collapsed around him. He later referred to himself as a "brand plucked from the fire." Suzanna decided to be especially careful with John's soul as she felt God had so mercifully spared his life for a purpose.

And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the LORD."

1 Samuel 1:20

The Wesley home was a place of strict discipline and learning. Once the children reached the age of five, their formal education began. They attended classes at home for six hours, learning Latin and Greek and the full classical education that was expected in that era in England. Suzanna practiced daily devotions throughout her life, and she made it a habit to spend an hour with each of her children at night, one for each day of the week.

Suzanna never preached a sermon or wrote a book. She did something greater: she nurtured her children in the ways of the Lord. Largely due to her dedication as a mother, a spiritual awakening eventually swept through England and colonial America.

Example of Nurture in the Old Testament

In 1 Samuel 1, we read about a woman named Hannah who pleaded with God so passionately for a child that Eli the priest thought she was drunk (1 Samuel 1:13). God gave her a child, and she named him Samuel, which means "heard of the Lord." He was a product of prayer. Hannah dedicated Samuel to the Lord, to serve in the house of God from a young age (1 Samuel 1:28). She kept Samuel, however, until he was weaned. He was likely weaned not only from breast milk but also from the spiritual milk of the Word of God for more solid food. His mother nurtured his growing faith. Jewish historian Josephus Flavius believed that Samuel was 12 when he was brought to the Temple, even as Jesus was 12 when He was brought to the Temple, in Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-52).

In the presence of God, Samuel "was ministering before the Lord" and "grew in the presence of the Lord" (1 Samuel 2: 21). Hannah made a new robe for her boy and brought it to him each year (1 Samuel 2:19). We can be sure that he was covered by her prayers as well. Thus, even in his youth, Samuel learned to hear and obey the Word of God (1 Samuel 3).

The care for Samuel's soul stands in sharp contrast to the lack of spiritual direction provided to the two sons of the priest Eli. Even while serving in the Temple, Hophni and Phinehas violated the commands of God and their father did not rebuke them. Eli enjoyed meat taken by his boys that was meant to be saved as a sacrifice for God (1 Samuel 2:29). When Eli was old, his boys had gone so far in their debauchery as to sleep with the women who served at the Tabernacle. The priest rebuked them, but his confrontation proved to be too little too late. Judgment came upon the house of God and the Ark of God's presence was captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4).

As an adult, Samuel called the people back to the Lord, saying, "If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart ... he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines" (1 Samuel 7:3). They turned back to the Lord and removed their idols. God delivered them from servitude for the remainder of Samuel's term of service. He continued to pray over the people and to guide them into his old age (1 Samuel 12:23).

Samuel's life reminds us of the importance of praying for our children and training them in the

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

2 Timothy 2:1

ways of the Lord. In so doing, we may hope for them to arise in our day as instruments of revival. This is not to say that children who are raised in God's ways will never stray. Samuel's own sons did not follow the Lord (1 Samuel 8:3). Nor should those who have not been raised in godly homes think they cannot be used mightily by God. We can all, as adults, choose to draw close to God and to draw strength from Scripture and prayer.

Example of Nurture in the New Testament

Paul didn't work alone. He ministered in teams. And he mentored others to become leaders for kingdom work. In a letter to Timothy, he explained, "...*what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*" (2 Timothy 2:2).

Paul and Timothy were following a pattern for kingdom leadership development that has marked the ages. In the era of the Old Testament, prophets had their schools, and their groups of followers who were trained to use their gifts for God (1 Samuel 19:18-24; 2 Kings 4:38-44). John the Baptist, the last of this line of prophets, likewise mentored disciples to know and follow God. When his cousin, Jesus, came on the scene, John's disciples followed our Lord. Jesus spent three years with them that they might grow and develop spiritually (Mark 3:14). He poured His life into 12, who eventually grew in number and to whom the work of ministry would be committed.

Jesus ascended into heaven, leaving behind disciples who were equipped to carry on. If they did nothing else, they were to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). And they did. Paul was mentored by Barnabas, and Paul, in kind, mentored Timothy.

Paul and Timothy first met when Paul was traveling through Derbe and Lystra on his second missionary journey. Acts 16 informs us that Timothy's mother was a Jewish believer in Jesus and his father was Greek. Timothy's father was most likely not a believer. Timothy needed a spiritual father, a mentor. He accepted the invitation to be part of Paul's team as Paul's ministry assistant. Some years later, in 2 Timothy, the Apostle gave this charge to Timothy: find faithful people and do for them what I've done for you. 2 Timothy is the last piece of written correspondence we have from Paul.

Final Thought

Do you hope to see revival sweep the land? Are you called to help make it happen? Then you must engage in the Biblical pattern of leadership development. Ask God to put you in a mentoring relationship with another who is committed to the same. And as you grow in understanding and ministry, you will be called by God to touch another life, who will impact yet another. Life-to-life is how the kingdom advances.

Spending Time With God

This study is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion



questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the commentary portion of this study guide. What thought about nurturing especially encouraged or challenged you? Why?
 - a. Do you sometimes find yourself praying with such urgency and passion? What motivates such prayer for you?
 - b. Do you pray with such passion for leaders of revival to be raised up? Why or why not?
2. Read 1 Samuel 1. Notice how Hannah travailed in prayer, pleading with God for a child (1 Samuel 1:10-17).
 - a. Do you sometimes find yourself praying with such urgency and passion? What motivates such prayer for you?
 - b. How can we train our children to know the Word and to hear the voice of God? Be specific.
3. In 1 Samuel 3, young Samuel learns to hear the voice of God when “the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision” (1 Samuel 3:1).
 - a. At what times do you feel closest to God? Do you sometimes seem to hear God’s voice? Explain.
4. Samuel, who had been blessed with a godly mother, nurtured others in God’s ways throughout his life (1 Samuel 12:23). His own children, however, did not follow in his steps (1 Samuel 8:3). What insights can we draw from this sad disconnect between Samuel’s life and that of his sons?



Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. From Acts 11:19-30:

a. Describe how Barnabas reached out to Paul and pulled him into the community of faith to help him grow and develop in kingdom ministry.

b. Do you think Paul would have had such a significant ministry if Barnabas had not connected with him and encouraged him? Explain.

6. In Acts 12:25, John Mark was included in Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey.

a. From Acts 15:36-41, what happened to the team as they launched into the second missionary journey?

b. What do you learn from this about Paul?

c. What does this account tell you about Barnabas?

7. In 2 Timothy 4:11, we find Paul and John Mark reconnected in ministry. Mark would later write the Gospel of Mark.

a. Do you sometimes feel you are not useful to God? If so, what can you learn from this account to inspire you to connect with key people and to serve God alongside them in a relationship of mutual encouragement and accountability?

b. Do you know of people like John Mark, who need a Barnabas to come alongside them to encourage them in ministry? List their names and how you might fill that role for each of them?



8. What does 2 Timothy 2:2 mean to you? Does the average Christian take this admonition seriously? Explain.

11. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 describes God's great command, which should be the central aim for our lives. List three things we can do to make this a reality for our children as well.

9. Do you have any person or people who are helping you to deepen your faith walk with God? Are there people for whom you are providing this kind of nurture? As you reflect on these things, record your thoughts as a prayer to God, asking Him to deepen relationships in your life that create an environment for you and others to grow in faith.

12. Read Deuteronomy 6:10-25. What significant truths or guidelines do you draw from this text related to the concept of spiritual nurture?

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. Note in Deuteronomy 6:1-2 the emphasis given by Moses to passing the faith onto one's children and grandchildren. What is the danger of depending on the Church to do this work for us?

Scripture for Meditation

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5



Teach me, O LORD, the way
of your statutes; and I will
keep it to the end. Give
me understanding, that
I may keep your law and
observe it with my whole
heart. Lead me in the path
of your commandments,
for I delight in it.

Psalms 119:33-35

Introduction

A true and abiding work of revival is centered on a fresh and holistic understanding of God's Word. In this lesson, we will show examples from Church history, the Old Testament, and the New Testament, all illustrating the essential role of Scripture for spiritual awakening.

Example of scripture in Church History

The *Great Awakening* is the title commonly assigned to the great move of God's Spirit that impacted England and the American colonies between 1725 and 1745. This awakening is considered great, not because of its impact on people and nations as some later revivals would have a more substantial global reach. This first revival was great largely because it was a *first*. In no former awakening of the Church had God's reviving power been so markedly and simultaneously evidenced around the world.

Just as the first book of the Bible, Genesis, is important to the whole of God's Word because it contains the roots of every major Biblical teaching, so did this first Great Awakening contain the ingredients that would be necessary for every subsequent spiritual awakening. The centerpiece of the eighteenth century Great Awakening was the preaching and teaching of God's Word. Without Biblical foundations, no revival can be sustained for long.

The three central figures in the Great Awakening were John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards. We have already noted that John Wesley has been regarded as the architect of the Great Awakening. Through his keen organizational skills, he built on the experience of his childhood and of the Holy Club at Oxford by creating cells of committed disciples around England and eventually in America. He trained a network of leaders to shepherd these groups, and he wrote prodigiously to fertilize the growing work of God with Biblical truth.

George Whitefield was more of an orator than an organizer. He helped to foster and spread revival through his passionate and persuasive preaching. He developed much of his spiritual fervency, with John Wesley, in his Oxford experience through the Holiness Club. Whitefield's mix of enthusiasm and eloquence quickly set him apart from other preachers, and he was in great demand in England in his early twenties. Overflow crowds attended his sermons. After a trip to America, he took his preaching to the fields where he could reach greater numbers of people.

Whitefield crossed the Atlantic seven times, and over 34 years he preached an estimated 18,000 messages through nearly every town in England, Scotland, and Wales, and up and down the American colonies. Benjamin Franklin befriended the revivalist and used his newspaper to publicize Whitefield's sermons. Sometimes the crowds attending Whitefield's preaching swelled to 20,000 or more, and hearers responded with weeping and repentance, even falling to the ground as if slain. In the words of John Dunn, "All his energy was poured into his preaching so that none doubted but that he at least really believed that what he was saying was true! He used all his abilities to make others believe it too. No one slept when he preached. There was a

So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly...he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law... And there was very great rejoicing.

Nehemiah 8:2-3, 17

holy violence about him that took men by storm and he never let his hearers alone."¹

In the autumn of 1740, Whitefield came to Northampton, New England, and finally met the man he so respected, Jonathan Edwards. Both men shared a Calvinistic approach to Scripture. Edwards was distinguished by his profound scholarship. He is recognized as one of America's greatest intellectuals. He read his lengthy sermons in a monotone voice. It was the content of his messages and writings that stirred his Congregationalist congregation and that helped to spread the revival fires in England. Edwards fostered a Biblical understanding of God's surprising works that would be necessary for the Great Awakening to continue and expand.

Example of scripture in the Old Testament

It was 445 BC. Nehemiah was cupbearer to the king over Persia, serving in the upper echelons of the monarch's court. Report came to Nehemiah through one of his brothers that Jerusalem was in disrepair; the walls of the city were broken down and the gate burnt (Nehemiah 1:1-3). In years past, two groups of exiles had already returned to Jerusalem to commence the rebuilding process; and yet, the city was in shambles. Nehemiah mourned and fasted from Kislev to Nisan, between the general periods of Thanksgiving and Easter on our calendars.

During these months of prayer and fasting, Nehemiah came to realize that he should lead a group back to Jerusalem in order to repair its walls. The Persian monarch granted Nehemiah his request, and the cupbearer led a group of exiles to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls. Through wise strategy, tribal unity, sheer determination, and deep dependence on God, the Lord enabled them to complete their task in a mere 52 days (Nehemiah 2-7). There was one task remaining, however, before the people could celebrate. With the help of Ezra the scribe, Nehemiah sought to revitalize the spiritual lives of God's people through Scripture.

In Nehemiah 8, we read that the people assembled on New Year's Day of the Jewish civil calendar, which was also known as the Feast of Trumpets on their ceremonial calendar. The people stood in the square before the Water Gate from daybreak until noon, for five or six hours, listening attentively as Ezra read God's Word. He paused from time to time and with the aid of 13 priests, provided explanation and instruction most likely in smaller groups. The people came to realize how much of God's declared will they had overlooked and violated through their own ignorance (Nehemiah 8:9). They mourned deeply, asking God's forgiveness.

The people were then instructed to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths. Thus would they feast before God and make sacrifices, living in booths for an entire week as a reminder of the huts the Israelites lived in during their forty-year desert wanderings. And their joy was great. It was the joy of the Lord. Not for a thousand years, since the time of Joshua, had the feast been properly observed. Thus the Word of God became the platform on which the people could meet with God and be made whole again.

1. Dunn, John, George Whitefield: *Man of Grace* (Australia: New Creation Ministry, 1992), 11.

Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:14-15

New Testament insights

In our previous lesson, we noted that Paul's last written epistle, 2 Timothy, contains a succinct declaration of Paul's *call* for training leadership for revival. Today we focus on the *key*. The leader must be grounded in God's Word. In Paul's mind, whether or not Timothy would be able to "correctly handle" Scripture would make all of the difference.

The King James Version translates the Greek word for "rightly handling" as "rightly dividing." *Orthotomeo* is a compound word composed of *ortho* (as in "orthodox") and *temno* (meaning, "to cut"). This compound word would be commonly used for the stonemason who etched and then sliced through a piece of rock without destroying it. In the same manner, it described the surgeon who used the scalpel to heal rather than hurt patients.

To rightly divide Scripture is to cut through potentially divisive issues to find central Biblical truths that advance God's work. One must know how to rightly divide Scripture when teaching about styles of worship, the use of spiritual gifts, the meaning of prophecy, the call to holiness without legalism, the command to love without compromising truth, and many similar topics.

During the Great Awakening, John Wesley and George Whitefield sought to rightly divide the truth about God's sovereignty in our salvation. Wesley emphasized one's freedom to choose God. Whitefield focused on God's election of those who are His. These two men had spent their college years at Oxford together in the same small group for spiritual growth and service, called *The Holy Club*. However, once they stepped into ministry, they preached and taught on opposite sides of this significant issue. Despite their doctrinal disagreements, Whitefield and Wesley strove to maintain peace and unity through the years for the sake of the greater good.

These men knew, as should all mature believers, how to rightly divide the Word, separating out doctrines that have been and always will be debatable among Christians from those which are core essentials to our salvation, unity, and growth. Laboring side-by-side in the kingdom for lost souls, they disagreed on the way in which God saves but did not debate the need for everyone to hear and respond to the Gospel.

We too must develop a mature outlook on Scripture, balanced and focused on the core essentials of the faith such as salvation, growth, evangelism, holy living, caring for the poor, and being always prepared for the Lord's return. When we are spending more time debating fine points of doctrine than obeying the clear commands of God, we are missing the declared will of God for our lives.

Final Thought

Think of ways you might give higher priority to the Word of God in your life. For example, consider writing out the "Scripture for Meditation" at the end of this lesson and carrying it with you, meditating on it whenever you have breaks. Do this each week and keep your verses in a small carry pack that you can review once a month, so that God's Word will be locked safely in your



heart.

Spending Time With God

This study is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. **PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.**

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the commentary portion of the lesson and record a thought that you would like to explore more deeply on your own or in your small group time.

2. From the commentary above and from Nehemiah 8, describe how Scripture was central to the awakening of God's people.

a. Do you believe a good understanding of Scripture should be foundational to any revival today?

b. Can you illustrate or support your perspective with stories or teachings in Scripture?

3. In Nehemiah 1, the cupbearer seeks God on behalf of God's people. For months, he mourns, fasts, and prays. Through this time, God reveals a divine plan to answer Nehemiah's concerns. In short, describe that plan as found in Nehemiah 2. What would Nehemiah need to give up in order to live out that plan?

4. Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem and involved all of the people (Nehemiah 3) to rebuild the walls amidst opposition (Nehemiah 4 & 6) while serving God and the people with his whole heart (Nehemiah 5). Under his godly leadership, the people completed the project in 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15). Still, Nehemiah recognized that something more was needed. The people needed to become right with God.

a. What parallels can you see between the state of the people in Nehemiah's day and that of our day?



b. Explain.

c. Why?

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. What questions or insights from the Personal Study Questions would you like to discuss further with others?

7. List some of the core truths that should unite believers despite their differences. With this list in mind, do you think it is a good thing that we have so many denominations in the Christian world? Why or why not?

6. Paul exhorts Timothy to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV).

a. List some of the doctrines or Biblical teachings that tend to divide rather than unite believers.

8. Take a few minutes to highlight from 1 & 2 Timothy a few of the many areas in which Paul urged Timothy to use sound judgment to rightly divide truth. Write a brief prayer for leaders of revival today to have such wisdom.

b. Which of these teachings do you wish you could rightly divide with more skill?

9. Drawing from 2 Timothy 2:14-15 and 4:1-5, tell why a right (correct) understanding and teaching of Scripture is the essential foundation for spiritual awakening.



Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. One key to the Great Awakening was leadership that remained humble and useful to God through a right (correct) understanding of the Word of God. Success is often more difficult than failure. Pride can swell the head, making it difficult to stay on one's feet.

a. From Romans 12:1-3, what advice might you give to a person who senses God's call to foster and lead revival?

b. What part of that advice do you most need to heed yourself?

c. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 describes God's great command, which should be the central aim for our lives. List three things we can do to make this a reality for our children as well.

11. When we read summary statements about movements such as the Great Awakening, it is easy to glamorize the high points and to overlook the persecution and hardships faced by those who led and experienced God's revival. Leaders suffered. Churches split. God's work advanced through fiery trials. So it has always been. Read 1 Peter 4:12-19 and list commands, promises, and insights from this text that can help one to face such challenge.

Scripture for Meditation

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17



In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 3:1-2

Introduction

Revival is built on repentance. Unless we turn from our sins and turn to God for new life, we cannot live in the manner God desires. In this lesson, we will consider the life of Charles Finney, the story of Jonah, and the ministry of Paul. Through these three viewpoints, our hope is to see repentance from a historical and Biblical perspective that we might experience it more fully ourselves.

Repentance in Church History

John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord by calling people to repentance. The same may be said about one of the greatest revivalists of the eighteenth century, Charles Grandison Finney.

On the eve of the Industrial Revolution, Finney's preaching sparked the Second Great Awakening, bringing together a divided country through his emphasis on Scripture and prayer. More than half a million people were converted through his influence. His approach to theology and his methods of ministry laid the groundwork for the holiness movement and for methods of revivalism that have been employed by a significant sector of the Church to the present day.

Finney was born in 1792, approximately a year after the death of John Wesley. His parents did not claim faith or religion despite the abundance of Methodist circuit riders that passed through their town in western New York. The area in which Finney grew up became known as the "Burned-over District," a designation assigned because so many Methodist preachers had passed through the area that people had become immune to their messages. Early in life, Charles developed a distaste for lukewarm religion and half-hearted Christianity. He began working as an apprentice to a lawyer when he was dramatically converted and then impacted by a baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Charles gave up law and prepared for ministry in the Presbyterian Church. After being ordained in 1824, he began preaching in the frontier communities of upper New York where rigid Calvinism dominated the theological landscape. Finney spoke to people directly, arguing the case for their repentance with the practical logic and persuasive appeal of a lawyer on the bench.

Finney's methods quickly became controversial. Unlike other preachers, he spoke extemporaneously and used common and informal language. In the same manner, John the Baptist confronted the Pharisees and Sadducees, Finney was unafraid to call people out for their hypocrisy. He allowed women to pray out loud in meetings and he employed the *anxious seat*, or altar call method by which people would come forward to indicate their desire to be saved. He also developed the *protracted meeting*, moving the frequency of gatherings from weekly to nightly.

Finney's innovations brought him much success and won him many enemies. When other pastors complained about his methods he infuriated them by asking who was bearing the most fruit. As Finney preached, people often fell under deep conviction for their sins and were

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD ... When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.
Jonah 3:1-2,10

soundly converted. Charles teamed up with Father Nash, who would go ahead of Finney and prepare the way in each city or town through travailing intercession. Charles preached with the expectation that he would see the Holy Spirit suddenly poured out. Until this outpouring would occur, he acknowledged his preaching would have little effect. But once the Spirit came in power, Finney had little else to do than point people to the Savior.

In September of 1830, Finney came into Rochester, New York to preach revival under great opposition. He persevered and God moved in power. Roughly 100,000 people, nearly the entire population of Rochester, were converted. God's work in Rochester sparked a national revival that spread like wildfire across the country in 1831. Many of Finney's antagonists became supporters. The membership rolls in impacted churches began to swell, whether Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian, or Congregational.

Even today, Finney's methods are both debated and supported. As with John the Baptist in the time of Christ, Finney was little concerned about public opinion as he called people to get their hearts and lives right before God. Many systematic theologians consider his theology weak. Nevertheless, his writings have withstood the test of time because embedded within them is an appeal for uncompromising and immediate change toward God. His preaching laid the foundation for social reforms, abolition, temperance, and above all, true repentance.

Repentance in the Old Testament

The book of Jonah is a story of repentance. However, it is not merely the Ninevites who needed to repent. Jonah, too, needed to get right with God. He had heard and then resisted the call of God to bring a message to Nineveh. In this ancient epic, God helped the prophet get over his merciless attitude toward them.

The word for *repent* suggests a change of heart and mind. With this definition before us, we can see a rather surprising third line of repentance in the story of Jonah. We read in the narrative that not only did Jonah and the Ninevites turn back to God, but God also repented (Jonah 3:10, KJV). When God repents, it is not for any sin on His part; but rather, it is to show compassion for the penitent sinner. God often changes His mind about a pronounced judgment when a nation or person turns from their sinful ways (Exodus 32:12-14; 2 Samuel 24:16; 1 Chronicles 21:15; Psalm 106:45; Jeremiah 18:8; 26:3, 13, 19; Joel 2:13-14; Amos 7:3, 6).

We, who are made in God's image, can easily understand. Loving parents set standards and rules of discipline for their children to encourage good behavior and to curb self-destructive tendencies. If a child is given warning about a particular action that is unacceptable and if the child has a complete change of heart for the better, the parents have a choice to make. They can rigidly apply the threatened punishment as a nonretractable law. Or, the parent can reward the child's change of attitude with a lightening of the punishment as incentive for even better behavior.

Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

Ephesians 5:8-11

There are instances in the Bible when God declares that His chastisement for the sins of a person or nation will not and cannot be diverted (Ezekiel 14:12-14). More often, however, God pulls back on the severity of His pronounced punishments when signs of true repentance are evident. We reap what we sow.

It might be asked, “How much repentance is required on the part of a nation to avert the rightful judgment of God?” No human can answer such a question completely because such decisions are in the hands of God. Based on the book of Jonah, however, we may surmise that the surest way to elicit God’s mercy is to repent before God as did the Ninevites: En masse. From the greatest to the least, they put on sackcloth and fasted before God, pleading for mercy. And the King of Nineveh issued a decree: “Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish” (Jonah 3:7c-9).

The greatest miracle in the book of Jonah is not the big fish. It is rather that a large and wicked city full of people humbled themselves before God, seeking mercy and forgiveness. Would that God might perform such a miracle again in our day! Oh that our entire nation might be swept up by a revival based on the sure foundations of true repentance!

Repentance in the New Testament

On his third missionary journey, Paul settled into Ephesus for two years, preaching and teaching in the Hall of Tyrannus. Such lecture halls were typically filled with students of philosophy in the cool of the morning but empty and open during the hot portion of the day. During the hours when people took a break from work, Paul got to work, proclaiming the name of Jesus. The Gospel spread from this lecture hall in Ephesus, the capital and business center of the Roman province of Asia, into the entire province. And the impact was significant.

Ephesus was home to the temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient Roman world. This temple was four times larger than the Parthenon in Athens, and it housed the image of Artemis, the Greek goddess of fertility. The local silversmiths created small replicas of Artemis which people purchased to display and worship in their homes. Theirs was an extremely lucrative business.

So effective was Paul’s ministry in Ephesus that the business of the local silversmiths began to suffer. Their trade was in danger of losing its “good name” to the greater name of Jesus (Acts 19:27). “And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all” (Acts 19:19a).

When God’s Word is taught with clarity and conviction, it will impact our lives. Holy Spirit-initiated repentance, if it is real, will work its way deeply into our souls, calling us to godliness on

every level. Those who get right with God will always rid themselves of their idols.

Final Thought

As with the Greeks in Paul's day, many who claim to be Christians in our day are not living by God's standards. We may not give our idols names such as *Artemis of Ephesus*, but the characteristics are similar. Paul exhorts us, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming" (Colossians 3:5-6). Let us seek God fervently for the grace of repentance.

Spending Time With God

This study is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. What thought from the commentary would you like to explore further?
2. From what you know about Charles Finney, what do you think were his strengths and weaknesses? How do you think Finney would be received in our day? Why
3. From Matthew 3:1-12, why do you think God used John the Baptist so powerfully? Do you know anyone like John in our day? Explain.
4. From Matthew 11:1-19, what significant truths about John did Jesus highlight (See also Malachi 4:5)? Pray for the message of repentance to sweep our land, preparing the way for the Lord's Second Coming.



Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. What thought from the Personal Study Questions would you like to discuss with the group?

6. Charles Finney was bold. And he was relentless in his push for revival. Have there been times when you began following the Lord boldly and then wimped out when the going was tough? Explain.

7. From Jonah 1:

a. Why do you think Jonah resisted God's call?

b. What is God's call on your life?

c. With Jonah's story in mind, why is it stupid not to obey the Lord?

8. In chapter 2, Jonah repented. In chapter 3, he obeyed, proclaiming God's judgment for Nineveh. Picture Jonah walking down the crowded streets of evil Nineveh, preaching God's message to the very enemies of the Jews.

a. Describe his boldness.

b. What, if anything, holds you back from being so bold in obedience to the call God has placed on your life?

9. From Jonah 4:

a. Why was Jonah mad with God?



b. What object lesson did God provide to help the prophet develop more compassion?

11. Acts 19:21-41 shows us Paul's determination to obey God even in hardships. He called people to follow God and to live in holiness even when persecution was sure to follow. What so motivated him? Do you have a similar motivation for your life and ministry? Explain.

c. Think about those you consider your enemies. Do you have God's compassion for them?

12. From Ephesians 5:1-21, list the things Paul exhorts us to extract from our lives. List also those things that we are to embrace. When you compare the lists to your own life, how are you doing?

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. Read Acts 19: 1-20.

a. Do you think these sorts of powerful encounters and miracles are still possible for today?

b. Why or why not?

Scripture for Meditation

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Romans 2:4



The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...

isaiah 61:1-2

Introduction

Hope keeps us going for God. It is like a muscle that grows with exercise. Opposition-- rather than weakening our hope-- can become the counterweight against which our hope becomes stronger (Romans 5:2-5). In this lesson, we will examine hope in history and in the Scriptures, that we might experience it more fully in our lives.

Hope in Church History

Born into relative poverty in a suburb of Nottingham, England, in 1829, William Booth lacked the advantages of wealth, education, and opportunity that one might think necessary for a person to have significant influence on the world. His father died when he was 14, leaving William to help earn the family's income as a pawnbroker's apprentice.

Sometime during his fifteenth year, William attended a Wesleyan chapel and was converted. He wrote in his diary, "God shall have all there is of William Booth." And God did. Working amidst poverty all of his life, Booth became known as *The Prophet of the Poor*. He founded and became the first general of the Salvation Army. So bright was the hope his life and ministry shone into his world that after his death, 150,000 people filed by his casket and some 40,000 attended his funeral. Even Queen Mary was there, sitting next to an ex-prostitute, one of General Booth's converts.

Booth's great influence on the world was driven by his love for the poor and the hope he inspired in lives that would otherwise seem hopeless. Before he was 20, Booth could be found preaching throughout the streets of Nottingham and making hundreds of hospital visits. He served with his wife Catherine as pastor of a Methodist Church from 1850 to 1861.

Feeling constrained by the requirements of the pastorate, William stepped away from the Methodist Church by faith to do evangelistic work in East London. With only his wife at his side, he focused on street preaching, personal evangelism, and practical philanthropy. His preaching drew crowds and resulted in great numbers of conversions. His methods were criticized, however, by many in England for being "lusty American, not Victorian English." Had John Wesley's life and legacy been completely forgotten?

A study of William Booth's life and ministry punctuates a truth that has been demonstrated by every leader of revival throughout history: it doesn't come easily. Ministry of impact is sustained by hope. And it grows slowly and steadily through a life of dedication. Leaders of revival attained their posts only through dogged determination to obey the call of God. No one can expect to march on the front lines of battle for God's kingdom without becoming a prime target of attack through the world's opposition.

William Booth was ridiculed and jeered as he poured his efforts into serving the multitudes in London's slums. Those who worked with the Booths were likewise taunted, beaten, and driven

1. Poxon, Stephen J., *Through the Year with William Booth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch, 2015), 8.

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

2 chronicles 34:1-2

away by mob violence. Such opposition did not slow up the work. Rather, it created a stronger bond of commitment between his coworkers and their God. It was through opposition that motives were tested, hearts purified, and the work solidified. Relentlessly, Booth organized workers and held Gospel meetings late into the night. “Go for souls,” he charged his helpers, “and go for the worst!”²

Booth organized the East London Christian Revival Society, from which eventually grew the Salvation Army in 1865. Under Booth's vision and discipline, uniforms were donned by the volunteers and a military-type structure adopted. Booth became the general of a veritable force for God's kingdom. By January 1879, he had 81 stations, 127 full-time evangelists (100 were his converts), and 75,000 services a year. Over the years, more than two million street people professed faith in Jesus Christ, and by 1930, there were branches of the Salvation Army in 55 countries.

Part of the great legacy of the Salvation Army was its successful fight in England against human trafficking. They saw first-hand the sexual exploitation of women and children, and helped to persuade the courts to raise the age of consent from 13 to 16. So great was their risk in fighting for these young girls and so effective their eventual results that the Salvation Army became a household name signifying that which is good and right. They became a beacon of hope for the world.

Hope in the Old Testament

The situation was bleak for Judah. Out of her succession of twenty kings, only six were declared righteous in the way they lived, and Josiah was the last of these good kings, born into an environment that was very dark. His reign followed that of Manasseh and Amon, two of the wickedest kings ever to sit on the throne of Judah. Due to the wickedness of Manasseh, the land of Judah was under a curse, about to receive judgment from the Most High God (2 Kings 21:11-15).

Josiah's story reminds us that no matter how dark and evil the world may seem, God's light can shine brighter. No matter how despairing the condition of the Church may appear to be, God's reviving power can bring change. There is always hope!

Josiah likely took comfort in the stories of some of Judah's righteous kings. His great grandfather Hezekiah (715-687 BC) led God's people in a time of spiritual awakening, as to some extent did Joash (640-609 BC), Jehoshaphat (871-849 BC), and Asa (912-871 BC). Above all, he must have found hope in the life and writings of the “man after God's heart,” for Josiah “did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left” (2 Chronicles 34:2). Likewise, revivals throughout the history of the Church have often arisen through the flame of hope that has filled the hearts of those who have learned about former works of God.

2. Christianity Today, “William Booth”, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/activists/william-booth.html>.

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. more than that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 5:2-5

Josiah was only sixteen years of age and eight years into his reign when he began to seek the Lord and four years later "he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and the metal images" (2 Chronicles 34:3). He scattered the dust of these idolatrous phallic symbols "over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them" (2 Chronicles 34:4). Such a bold statement of faith and such a relentless stand against sin can only arise in a heart that is set on pleasing God. Revival will never come from our programs; it must always begin in our hearts, through hope.

Hope in the New Testament

The Greek word *elpis* denotes a confident expectation that what God has promised will come to pass. Paul's life was shaped by such hope. His hope in God was not dependent on his mood or circumstances. Each of us should understand, embrace, and be guided by this hope. And the book of Philippians demonstrates it.

Philippi became a gateway for the Gospel's advance into Europe during Paul's second missionary journey. The details are given in Acts 16. The Apostle sensed the leading of God there through a night vision in which a man from Macedonia beckoned him. So Paul took the journey to Philippi, a Roman province to the north of Greece. The reception in Philippi was not as warm as was the invitation in the dream. Within several days, Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned for their proclamation of the Gospel.

Those who relentlessly follow the commands in the Bible and the leading of the Holy Spirit may soon find the whole world seems to be against them. When resistance comes their way, they may easily assume they have missed God's will or that God has forgotten them. Thus hope diminishes.

Paul understood hope differently. It was an attitude to embrace based on a God whose promises and character do not change. He chose to hope in God. No matter what his circumstances, no matter how great his trials, he looked above it all and trusted God to work everything for good (Romans 8:28). And God did.

As Paul and Silas sat bruised and bloody, positioned painfully in the Philippi prison stocks, they continued to hope in God. At midnight, he and Silas "were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened" (Acts 16:25-26).

So was the door for the Gospel opened as the jailer and his family became believers. Paul strengthened Lydia and the other new believers in Philippi and then left town. But the hope of God remained in their hearts.



Final Thought

Are you living with unshakable confidence in God and the Gospel today? Or do opponents and opposition shake your faith and leave you weak and confused? Hope in God, and soon you will be praising Him (Psalm 43:5). He will work through your circumstances for good, even if you don't initially understand how or why. He is the God of hope. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Romans 15:13).

Spending Time With God

This study is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. What thought from the commentary would you most hope to apply to your life? Why

2. What about the life of William Booth most challenges you? Inspires you? Be specific.

3. Read Isaiah 61:1. Do you think Jesus came especially for the poor? Is God more accessible to the poor than to the rich? Explain.

4. Read Luke 4:14-30.

a. Why do you think Christ chose the Isaiah 61 text to inaugurate his ministry in his hometown?

b. How did the people react? Why?



c. What does this show you about how people may react to pure and untainted ministry in the Lord's name today?

a. Record the circumstances in your life that cause you to often wonder if God can really use you in ministry to a greater extent.

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. What thought from the commentary or Personal Study Questions would you like to explore more fully with the group?

b. Now write a reason for each listed circumstance that God would be glorified to use you despite the situations that seem to limit you.

6. From 2 Chronicles 34:1-7:

a. What do you think motivated Josiah to take such aggressive and bold steps to clear Judah of idols?

8. Josiah found hope in the legacy of Hezekiah, David, and others. Who in your family line, in Church History, or in the Scriptures inspires hope in you about how God might use your life for His glory?

b. What impresses you most about his actions?

9. Revival involves two decisions. First, we must turn from idolatry. Second, we must turn back to God. In what ways did Josiah lead the people back to God in 2 Chronicles 34:8-33?

7. Josiah made a great impact in his day despite the dire circumstances he faced.



10. Note in 2 Chronicles 35:1-19 how Josiah instituted the Pass-over once again

a. What would happen today if a government leader attempted to promote faith in God in the land?

b. When you consider all of the odds against Josiah turning Judah back to the Lord, do you find hope for what God might do again in our day? Why or why not?

12. How does Romans 1-5 challenge you to believe hope in God should become more central to your thinking and actions even when circumstances seem to say otherwise? Explain.

13. Read Psalm 43:5. Notice how the Psalmist instructed his soul to hope in God. What do you learn from his example?

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

11. What specific challenge do you find from this lesson about the Biblical concept of hope? How does Paul's experience in Philippi encourage you?

Scripture for Meditation

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11



And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals... So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies ... Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.

Judges 2:11-16

Introduction

United prayer is the machinery that drives the kingdom of God. This truth has been born out in history and in the Bible. The question is how much do we believe it? The answer will be seen in our actions, in whether or not we are involved in such prayer today.

Prayer in Church History

In the mid-nineteenth century, a spiritual awakening occurred in America that swept the nation and impacted the world, bringing an estimated one million to trust God for salvation over a period of two years. In the providence of God, it began with a prayer meeting in New York City.

It was 1857. The Church in America was eclipsed by materialism and spiritual lethargy. The population was booming, prosperity was abounding, and church attendance was declining. In lower Manhattan, a Dutch Reformed Church that had been losing members hired a layman, Jeremiah Lanphier, to hopefully reverse the trend. Seeing little fruit through his visitation and outreach efforts, Lanphier decided to host a weekly noon prayer meeting on the third floor consistory of the Old Dutch Reformed Church on Fulton Street.

Jeremiah put up advertisements and at his first meeting on September 23, 1857, six people showed up. At the second meeting, 20 came out and at the third, 40 people attended. Lanphier moved his meetings from weekly to daily in that first week of October, 1857.

On October 10, the stock market crashed. There was a run on the banks. Businesses failed and railroads went into bankruptcy. In New York City alone, some 30,000 people lost their jobs. People became much more serious about seeking God. Lanphier's meetings grew dramatically. By the spring of 1858, prayer meetings were occurring around the city, and daily attendance was about 10,000.

This was the beginning of what has been called the *Layman's Prayer Revival*. It was the first great worldwide revival to begin in America. And laymen led it. The meetings were informal. Anyone could speak or lead in a song or prayer, as long as they adhered to the five-minute limit. This revival was all about prayer; little preaching was involved.

The media became a conduit to spread the news, fanning the flames of revival. In February, 1858, Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald* gave extensive coverage to the prayer revival. In response, the *New York Tribune* devoted an entire issue to the topic in April, 1858. News of awakening traveled west by telegraph. In March of 1858, a religious journal reported that, "The large cities and towns from Maine to California are sharing in this great and glorious work. There is hardly a village or town to be found where 'a special divine power' does not appear displayed."¹

In December of 1857 in Utica, New York, attendance at a weekly union prayer meeting increased so rapidly that by the third meeting the main floor and the balcony of the First Presbyterian

1. Candler, Warren, *Great Revivals and Great Republic* (Nashville, TN: M.E. Church, 1904), 199

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

Esther 4:15-16

Church were filled with deeply burdened people. Then daily prayer meetings were started each morning. Chicago's Metropolitan Theater was filled daily with 2,000 praying people. In Jayne's Hall in Philadelphia, 4,000 were meeting. In Louisville, several thousand came to the Masonic Temple for prayer each morning. Two thousand assembled for daily prayer in Cleveland, and St. Louis churches were filled for months at a time.

The revival spread to Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, Europe, South Africa, India, Australia, and the Pacific islands. The impact of this revival on society was profound. Businesses became focused on honest dealings and integrity. The Bible was revered once again in society. Salvation became the deep concern of the Church, and great numbers were swept into the kingdom of light. Families established an altar of daily devotions. The moral tenor of societies shifted toward godliness. James Buchanan of Scotland summarized, it was a time when “new spiritual life was imparted to the dead, and new spiritual health imparted to the living.”²

Prayer in the Old Testament

When God's people come together in humility to cry out to God with one voice, no power in heaven or earth can stand between God's purpose and their passionate pleas. This is the promise highlighted, like a gem against the dark and difficult setting, in the book of Esther.

The events in Esther took place while the Jewish people were in exile, likely during the reign of the Persian king Xerxes 1, the fourth king of the Archaemenid Empire. He ruled from 486 to 465 BC, placing the story of Esther over a ten-year span of approximately 483 to 473 BC.

The fascinating thing about the book of Esther is that it never mentions God, even though the story line shows the work of God as clearly as does any Biblical account. This is a strong reminder to us that God is at work in our lives even when He seems to be distant. So striking were God's answers to the prayers of His people in Esther, that it became the basis for the celebration of Purim, one of the two Jewish festivals not prescribed by Jewish law, and yet, still celebrated today (the other is Hanukkah).

If you do not know the story of Esther, you need to read the book. Its ten short chapters can be digested as quickly as one eats a meal. And when you take time to reflect on the meaning of the story, you will ponder the great promise of answered prayer in the most desperate of circumstances. Moreover, you may come to wish that God's people would not wait for desperate circumstances before finding such motivation to pray.

The book of Esther describes a young Jewish girl, Esther, who was chosen by the king of Persia to become the new queen for his empire. Esther's uncle, Mordecai, uncovered a plot by an enemy of the Jews, Haman, to annihilate God's people. Through Haman, the Jews in exile would become marked for mass extinction by the passing of an unchangeable Persian law. Esther, however, called the people to three days of fasting and prayer; and so, the tables turned, moving

2. Earley, David, *Prayer Odyssey: A Journey to Life-changing Prayer* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny, 2003), 104.

About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also ... So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

Acts 12:1-5

God's people from extinction to protection and giving them cause for great celebration.

The battle in Esther's day was a foreshadowing of a greater battle that continues still today. Our warfare is not between peoples but between unseen powers (Ephesians 6:12). And the battle between dark spiritual forces and the advance of God's kingdom is ongoing, as is the need for united prayer among God's people.

Prayer in the New Testament

It was during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the seven-day period following the Day of Passover (Acts 12:1-3). As the Jews would purge all leaven from their kitchens and homes, King Herod I (Herod Agrippa) began purging the area of key Christian leaders. He had already secured the death of James, the brother of John, through the sword. Seeing how his opposition to the Christian movement brought favor with the Jews, he now seized Peter as well.

Herod set four squads to ensure that Peter could not break out of prison-- one squad for each of the four night watches (Acts 12:4). The capricious king failed to take one factor into account: the combined power of the intercession of God's people (Acts 12: 5). Through such prayer, the King of Kings can be roused from His throne to take action.

As Peter slept, the people prayed and God arose. There were two soldiers next to the chained Apostle and two sentries standing guard at the door. An angel of God stepped into the room, slapped Peter's side to awaken him, and told him to get up quickly. The chains fell from Peter's wrists as the guards to whom he was chained and those guarding the door continued their slumber.

The angel instructed Peter to put on his clothes and sandals. As Peter followed the angel through the prison's inner gates undisturbed, he was still half asleep and supposed he was seeing a vision. They came to the iron gate that opened into the city. It swung open of its own accord. The angel led Peter the length of one street and disappeared. Stunned, Peter realized he was not dreaming. He would need to find the others and inform them of his release. He headed straight for the home of John's mother, Mary, knowing the believers would be assembled there.

When Peter knocked, the servant brought word of his presence. The people refused to believe it, and kept on praying. Peter kept on knocking until the people had no choice but to receive him. What a telling picture of our human refusal to believe in God's divine abilities. God answers our prayers according to His timing and His wisdom. And yet, we find it hard to believe that our prayers have been heard even as the answer comes knocking on our door.

The persistent united prayers of God's people may do much more than release individuals from prison. It may also release the Church at large from its bondage to spiritual lethargy and sub-standard Christianity.



Final Thought

There is no simple formula for advancing God's purposes in the earth. Biblical and historical precedent suggests, however, that humble, united, sustained prayer by God's people is one of the greatest means by which we may become the people through whom God's glorious purposes are fulfilled. Are you encouraging and involved in such prayer?

Spending Time With God

This study is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. What thought from the commentary especially encouraged or challenged you?

2. How is the Prayer Revival of 1857 different from other revivals we have studied thus far? How is it similar?

3. From Judges 2:11-23:

a. What pattern was repeated over and over for the people of God during the period of the judges?

b. Why is it, do you think, that we humans tend not to turn our hearts to God unless we need God's help?

c. As we are now under the era of the new covenant, do you think we are better in this regard than were the people of the Old Testament? Explain.



4. God delivered the people of Israel when they cried out to God corporately. So we find that in the history of the Church, God has often brought revival when there has been a united crying out to God because of the desperate state of things in the world. You can read about one such prayer meeting in Acts 4:23-31, during a time when the Church was experiencing explosive growth. Describe the spirit of these praying Christians.

7. From the commentary (or the Book of Esther), what about Esther's example most encourages or challenges you? Why?

8. What might have given Esther such boldness in prayer? Then think of times in your life when your prayers were set on fire. Record what seemed to make the difference for you.

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. What thought from the commentary or Personal Study Questions would you like to explore in more depth with the group?

6. The Prayer Revival of 1857 grew over time, by the providence of God. It all began with invitations to corporate prayer. Are you part of a regular, corporate prayer gathering for awakening? If not, what might be the benefits of starting or joining such a group?

9. Haman the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews in the book of Esther, is commonly traced to the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:1-3). Battle between Israel and the Amalekites goes back to the time of Moses.

a. Do you think the ongoing strife with the Amalekites make God's people stronger? Explain.



b. From Exodus 17:8-16, how might the lifting of Moses' hands be a picture of prayer?

12. Can you find at least one additional account of united prayer and its impact in the book of Acts? List the characteristics of such a prayer gathering.

c. What can we surmise from this text about the benefit of not only praying alone but also together?

13. Complete this thought: "As a result of this study, I will do the following to support or to be more involved in united prayer focused on spiritual awakening..."

10. The preservation of the Jewish people in Esther is a profound example of the power of united prayer. Can you think of other historic accounts or experiences of your own that demonstrate God's answers to united prayer? If so, describe them.

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

11. Read again the story of Peter's release from prison in Acts. What insights do you draw from this account about the power of united prayer?

Scripture for Meditation

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

Matthew 18:18-19



Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Introduction

Everybody wants to know God's will. But how many are willing to DO what God commands? The knowing and the doing are inseparable. God cannot guide those who are unwilling to go. In this lesson, we will see three prime examples of people who were willing to give God their all. And God led them to impact many others. Their positive examples may motivate us likewise to follow God's leading.

Guidance in Church History

He was born in poverty but destined to enrich souls for eternity. He dropped out of school at 13; yet, he would found a school, church, and publishing company that impacts the world today. He was limited by his broken grammar and felt he should only work with children. Nevertheless, the Lord guided him to become one of the most persuasive orators and greatest evangelists of the 1800s. His name was Dwight L. Moody. And his life reminds us that God will use any person who depends not on their abilities but on God's.

Born in 1837, Dwight seemed to be the last person God would use to win a million souls in a forty-year span. His father, a small farmer and stonemason, died when Dwight was four, and creditors swooped in to take all they could from the struggling family. Dwight dropped out of school after fifth grade to help support the family. When he was 17, after many job rejections, Dwight traveled to Boston to sell shoes at the invitation of his uncle, Samuel Holton. He had no religious education, and his uncle required that he attend church. Dwight entrusted his life to Christ. However, he knew so little of the Bible that he was required to wait a year before he could join the church.

At the age of nineteen, Dwight moved to Chicago to sell shoes with another uncle. There he set the goal of earning \$100,000, which would be more like a million dollars in our day. He also got involved in a church on Plymouth Avenue, where he was told, "You can't teach, but you can bring children." Indeed, Dwight could hardly read, much less teach. He rented four pews and filled them with kids from the streets. They were rowdy and smelly, and the church folks became troubled. So Dwight looked for a fitting place to meet. He rented a saloon and invited kids from the worst part of town to attend. Soon 300 gathered with his offer of candy and pennies. Dwight didn't care how they came, as long as they were being reached.

Dwight's Sunday School gatherings outgrew the saloon, and he rented North Market Hall. He recruited teachers from surrounding churches. Eventually up to 1,500 children were attending his meetings. President-elect Lincoln visited one of Moody's inner city classes, and Dwight's reputation improved. The title *Crazy Moody* was replaced by *Brother Moody*.

When the Civil War began, Dwight became involved with the United States Christian Commission of the YMCA and visited the battlefield nine times. Ministering among wounded soldiers, he learned to lead adults to Christ. Dwight's Sunday School gatherings needed a permanent

...And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.... And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

1 Kings 19:11-13

home, and he started a church in Chicago, the Illinois Street Church.

In 1871, Moody met a gospel singer named Ira D. Sankey at an international Sunday School Convention in Indianapolis. The two would eventually collaborate in ministry. In October of 1871, the Great Chicago Fire broke out. Moody and his family fled for their lives. His church and home were lost, along with the homes of many of his parishioners. Moody realized he had nothing left but his reputation and his Bible. He traveled to New York to raise funds and within three months, the church was rebuilt.

In the Spring of 1872, Moody traveled to London to conduct evangelist rallies. The response in England was encouraging. He took a second trip there in June of 1873, bringing Ira Sankey with him. Over a two-year span, Moody's direct and simple preaching and Ira's stirring singing drew thousands around Great Britain. News traveled to America. When Moody returned to the United States, his meetings often drew crowds of 12,000 to 20,000. President Grant and some of his cabinet officials attended a meeting in January of 1876. Moody conducted evangelistic rallies from Boston to New York and from Vancouver to San Diego.

One may ponder how God could so impact the world through such a simple and uneducated man. Proverbs 3:5-6 gives us the key: "Trust in the LORD with all of your heart ... and he will make straight your paths." If we hope to be guided and used by God, we must be fully surrendered to God. Moody was. He once heard his friend Henry Varley say, "It remains to be seen what God will do with a man who gives himself up wholly to Him." Moody thought to himself, "Well, I will be that man."¹

Guidance in the Old Testament

Elijah, whose name means "the Lord is my God," was called to confront Israel in a time of spiritual darkness. In obedience to God, the prophet confronted wicked King Ahab with the news of an impending famine. Elijah then fled to a safe place.

Eventually, God guided Elijah to confront all of the false prophets of Israel on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18). He challenged them to get off the fence and to be fully surrendered and obedient to the Almighty God, the very challenge that is needed in our day. It is the heart cry of revival.

After defeating the false prophets, Elijah was threatened by Queen Jezebel. He fled into the desert. With the strength of food provided by an angel, the prophet traveled an additional 40 days and 40 nights--likely without food or water--to reach Horeb, the mountain of God. As Elijah stood on the mountain, a mighty wind passed by. But God was not in the wind. Then an earthquake shook the mountain. Again, God was silent. And finally, a fire ravaged the hillside. But God said nothing. Such violent acts of nature are often called "acts of God" and these truly were. Still, Elijah waited for the voice of God. Finally, it came to him as a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:12).

1. Torrey, R. A., *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (Pensacola, FL: Christian Life Books, 2008), 22.

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God.

Acts 10:1-3

Like Elijah, we must commit ourselves to following God's lead--even if at times we must pass through the desert of difficulties before we can settle our hearts once again and hear God's whispers. A gentle nudge, an inner conviction, a burden of the soul, coupled with God's promises provide us divine light to show us the way in which we should walk. It was because Elijah was so determined to follow God, no matter what the cost, that God used Him so greatly for revival in the nation of Israel. God, send us more Elijahs today! And give us his spirit!

Guidance in the New Testament

Cornelius was a "god fearer." He yearned to know and to serve the God of the Jews but he was not Jewish. He was a Roman centurion, commander of a hundred soldiers. Cornelius gave generously to the needy and prayed to God regularly (Acts 10:2).

One day, Cornelius had a vision in which an angel said to the commander, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea" (Acts 10:4-6). Cornelius sent a devout soldier and two of his servants to Joppa, 32 miles down the coast.

As the delegation drew near to the place where Peter was staying, the Apostle fell into a trance. He saw, as in a vision, a large sheet being lowered from heaven with a variety of animals, many of them "unclean" by the standards of the Jewish Law (Leviticus 11). Peter was commanded to "rise, kill, and eat. Peter objected, and God said, 'What God has made clean, do not call common'" (Acts 10:13-15). This happened three times, after which the Spirit of God informed Peter that three men were looking for him. He was to go with them for God had sent them.

The Apostle traveled with his three guests back to Caesarea and found a large gathering of Gentile people waiting in Cornelius' home. In that day, Jews did not associate with Gentiles. For a Jew to step into a Gentile home was scandalous. Being obedient to God's guidance, Peter joined the group and explained the full message of the Gospel. Cornelius' friends believed the message, and the Holy Spirit was poured out on them. Peter baptized them (Acts 10:24-48). This experience would later serve as a motivating force for the Church leaders in Jerusalem to embrace Paul's missionary outreach to the nations (Acts 15:6-10).

We are reminded by this story that God always leads us in pathways that have been laid down for us in the Scripture. It was God's intent, all the way back to the promise given to Abraham, that the Gospel would be brought to all of the peoples and nations of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3). We note also in this text the importance of seeking God in prayer. If we wish to know the will of God about a matter, we should seek God in prayer.



Final Thought

Do you hope to be useful for God? Then embrace the guiding principles of Scripture. Seek God in prayer. Do not expect a detailed five-year plan from heaven. Be content with light for the next step. And the next. And the next. The Almighty God is in control, and He is leading your life.

Spending Time With God

This study is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. What was the most encouraging or challenging thought to impact you from the commentary? Explain why.

2. D. L. Moody could have excused himself from God's service based on his personal shortcomings and limitations. What things limit you from being used by God? How might these very weaknesses become channels of God's grace and strength?

3. According to Proverbs 3:5-6, what are the requirements for being guided by God? Write them out, and make a short list of things you can do to better follow these mandates.

4. Based on Proverbs 3:7-8, what are some of the benefits of choosing to follow God? Why do you think this is so?



Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. What idea from the commentary or the Personal Study Questions would you like to pursue in more depth with the group?

6. Describe the biggest area in which you need guidance in your life today (and if you're comfortable doing so, share it with the group).

7. You may have heard the expression, "God can't steer a parked car." Do you agree with this idea? Can you support your answer with any Scripture verses?

8. In 1 Kings 16:29 - 17:6, notice how ready Elijah was to obey God, no matter what the cost.

a. Complete this thought: "If we are not willing to obey God no matter what the cost, we are not likely to be able to hear the voice of God because..."

b. See John 7:17. Why do you think the "will" so impacts our ability to believe in God and to hear from God?

9. In 1 Kings 17:7 - 18:15, Elijah was taken care of by God and prepared for the confrontation he was to have on Mount Carmel with the false prophets (See 1 Kings 18:16-46). He then fled to Horeb (1 Kings 19:1-9). Note in these texts how God spoke to Elijah. In what ways does God speak to His people today?

10. 1 Kings 19:9-18 describes God's conversation with Elijah, eventually through a gentle voice.

a. On what basis can we expect the same from God (John 10:27-28; 16:12-13)?



b. What practical steps will you take to position your heart and soul to walk more closely with God, to listen and to hear God's voice, to be obedient to the Lord each day?

b. If possible, describe a time in your life when God impressed you with a truth or with guidance in a manner that seemed rather unforgettable.

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

11. Read Acts 10:1-8. What qualities in Cornelius do you wish to emulate in your life? List any barriers in your life that might prevent you from receiving guidance from God. Pray for the Lord to remove all barriers and to make you as devoted to God as was Cornelius.

13. Read Acts 10:24-48. Those who gathered in Cornelius' home to hear from Peter were likely "God fearers." That is, they believed in God but did not know how to follow and obey God. They lacked an understanding of salvation and of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Do you see a parallel between their condition and that of many people who call themselves Christians today? Explain.

12. Acts 10:9-23 describes Peter's vision.

a. Do you think Peter had such experiences with God all of the time? Why was it important for this occurrence in the life of the Church to be so outstanding and unforgettable?

Scripture for Meditation

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6



Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Psalm 51:10-13

Introduction

Full surrender is an essential step toward experiencing the reviving power of God. We can see this truth underscored through the examples of Evan Roberts, King Asa, and James, the brother of Jesus.

Full Surrender in Church History

Evan Roberts has long been considered a centerpiece of one of the most impactful revivals in history, the Welsh Revival (1904-05). In just nine months, from November 1904 to August 1905, some one hundred thousand souls came to salvation in Wales. The Welsh Revival sparked a global awakening that brought hundreds of thousands into God's kingdom in other nations around the world.

In his youth, Evan Roberts developed a yearning for revival. Raised by a Welsh Calvinist Methodist family in Loughor, he daily attended a church about a mile from his home. He memorized Scriptures and as early as age 13, he began to long for a divine visitation to stir the land. This longing carried him through the years he worked in the coal mines, then as a smithy, and finally when he entered a preparatory college as a candidate for ministry at the age of 25.

In 1903, Roberts was in a Christian gathering where he heard evangelist Seth Joshua say, "Lord, bend us." Evan yielded to the sense that submission and brokenness before God was what he needed. At the following meeting, Evan experienced an infilling of the Holy Spirit. So powerful was the presence of God in his life that he longed to traverse all of Wales, telling others about the Savior. He began to pray for a hundred thousand souls to come into the kingdom and felt in his soul that God was about to strike Wales with a mighty revival. Evan had two visions that further convinced him revival was about to come.

Evan returned to his hometown to conduct meetings with youth. He encouraged the students in his home church to pray for revival through an outpouring of the Spirit. Gradually, the meetings grew in numbers and strength. Evan focused on four simple points that would become the hallmark of the Welsh Revival: confession of all known sin; repentance and restitution; obedience and surrender to the Holy Spirit; public confession of Christ.

As the gathered youth yielded to God in prayer, the Holy Spirit came upon them powerfully. They began crying out to God in weeping and with great joy. So heavy was God's glory that they sometimes feared that if they were to experience more of the Spirit, they could not endure it.

Evan began to travel with some of the youth, especially girls, and wherever he went the revival followed. Their meetings began with passionate prayers and testimonies, urging others to surrender to God. Roberts would often remain quiet and bent before God, weeping and crying out for revival. The Spirit of God came over the crowds who attended and more prayer, testimony, confession of sins, and singing with joy would fill each event. There were no musical instruments used and rarely was there any preaching. Those who fell into deep conviction were

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars.

2 Chronicles 16:9

encouraged by Evan and his team to make a full surrender to Christ.

People poured in from other lands to experience the mighty revival in Wales and to take it back to their own lands. Unfortunately, the very fires that would be carried around the world began consuming Evan as he neglected his own emotional and physical health. Meetings typically ran into the early hours of the morning. His team would head home to catch two or three hours of sleep and be out by 5 AM to invite the coal miners who were coming off of the night shift to attend upcoming gatherings. As the revival spread around Wales, Evan spread himself too thin. The intensity of God's presence and a lack of wisdom about finding needful rest caused Evan to become confused, sometimes hearing voices that were not from God. He became anxious and even rude, often rebuking people without cause.

Surrender for the leader of revival must be both heavenward and earthward, both to God's leading and to the wise counsel of others. The rigorous and nonstop schedule Evan attempted to keep finally pushed him into a nervous breakdown. In 1906, he accepted an invitation from Jessie Penn-Lewis to rest at her home in Leicester. It is generally recognized that Lewis' influence on Evan added to his confusion and to the deterioration of the revival in Wales.

It was because Evan Roberts surrendered from his youth so fully to God that God's renewing Spirit rested upon him. And yet, this young leader of revival failed to surrender sufficiently to the common sense that could have been received from others. The Welch Revival lost a key leader and what might have become a marathon for God became short lived. The fruits of the revival in Wales quickly shriveled such that within a generation there were few signs that revival had even occurred in Wales. Worldwide, however, the impact was much more lasting.

Full Surrender in the Old Testament

A great revival occurred during the forty-one-year reign of Judah's third king, Asa. God blessed the life and work of Asa such that his kingship spanned the reigns of seven kings who ruled the northern kingdom, Israel. Asa's reign in Judah began with reformation, which ushered in revival. Unfortunately, Asa eventually turned from God and his life and legacy ended in spiritual ruin. The attitude of surrender that had long marked Asa's life was tossed aside and stubborn pride filled in the gap. Thus does the life of Asa, through both his good example and his mistakes, reminds us of the importance of *surrender* before God if we hope to live in a state of renewal with God's people.

The account of Asa's reign begins with the commendation, "And Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God" (2 Chronicles 14:2). He vigorously denounced evil and idolatry, tearing down pagan shrines and altars. Concurrently, Asa "commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment" (2 Chronicles 14:4). This was a true reformation.

When even one person surrenders to God, God will show Himself strong on her or his behalf. We

“...God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

James 4:6-10

thus see the fulfillment through Asa of the marvelous promise, “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him” (2 Chronicles 16:9a).

Asa humbly submitted to the words of God's prophet, Azariah, and reformation gave way to revival (2 Chronicles 15:1-15). The people “entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul” (2 Chronicles 15:12). And thus rest and peace prevailed in the land for another 20 years.

However, in the thirty-sixth year of King Asa's reign when Judah was once again threatened by an enemy, Asa failed to surrender to the Lord. He instead bribed neighboring Syria to come to his aid. He was rebuked by the prophet Hanani, “You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars” (2 Chronicles 16:9b). An opportunity given by God to allow Asa to once again strengthen his faith and bring glory to God became the king's greatest failure.

Full Surrender in the New Testament

James exhorts us to humble ourselves “before the Lord” (James 4:10). He challenges us to surrender ourselves to the work of God in every aspect of our lives: our thoughts, words, and actions. James sets the standard by describing himself as “a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1). He could have called himself “the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ,” but he chose to humble himself before the Lord. He then calls us to surrender to God's purpose by humbling ourselves to gain perspective about:

Our trials (1:1-4), our doubts (1:5-12), our temptations (1:13-18), our anger (1:19-20), God's Word (1:21-27), the rich (2:1-13), our acts of service (2:14-26), our speech (3:1-12), our jealousy and personal ambitions (3:13-18), our lust (4:1-6), the devil (4:7-10), our judgmental attitudes (4:11-12), our future (4:13-17), our possessions (5:1-6), our Lord's promised return (5:7-11), our empty promises (5:12), suffering and sickness (5:13-18) and those who have strayed into sin (5:19-20).

This humble surrender is the essence of what Evan Roberts meant when he said, “Lord, bend me.” We must ask the Lord to bend our pride by producing in us true humility. Until we do so, we will always find ourselves getting in God's way, rather than doing God's work.

Final Thought

The key to obtaining a low view of ourselves is to maintain a high view of God. This truth was well exemplified in the life of the great missionary, Hudson Taylor. Once Taylor was scheduled to speak at a large Presbyterian church in Melbourne, Australia. The moderator of the service introduced the missionary in eloquent and glowing terms. He told the large congregation all that Taylor had accomplished in China and then presented him as “our illustrious guest.” Taylor stood quietly for a moment and then opened his message by saying, “Dear friends, I am the little servant of an illustrious Master.”



Spending Time With God

This study is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. What thoughts from the commentary touched you personally? Why?

2. Compare 2 Samuel 11 with Psalm 51:1-4. Describe the sins committed by David. What can we learn from this account about the need to remain fully surrendered to God?

3. Read 2 Samuel 12:1-15.

a. How did the prophet confront David?

b. What insights do you draw from Nathan about confronting others who are hardened in their sin?

4. Read Psalm 51:5-19 and offer it as a prayer to God. Write a prayer asking the Lord to show you any part of your life that is not fully surrendered to His divine purposes and His glorious presence.



Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. What promise, command, or principle from the personal study questions would you like to explore more fully?

6. Describe the reforms instituted by Asa in 2 Chronicles 14. What type of reforms are needed in our day, both in the Church and society?

7. In 2 Chronicles 15, Asa was guided by the prophet Azariah to further the reforms and to lead the people to seek God with their whole heart.

a. Describe the revival.

b. What is keeping us from experiencing a similar turning to God throughout our land?

8. Read and reflect on 2 Chronicles 16:9. Write this verse on paper or a card and carry it with you through the day to meditate on and to memorize it, that it might remain before you as a signpost of the surrendered heart.

a. What insights from this verse especially move you?

b. Why?

9. Both the story of Evan Robert's fall from leadership and that of King David's backsliding into adultery remind us of the importance of having others we can trust to hold us accountable to holy living and to balanced lives.

a. Rate on a scale of one to ten (ten being the best), how strong the support and accountability system is in your life.



b. Explain how your accountability system works.

11. Reviewing either the above summary of the book of James or the book itself, select three areas in which you most need God's help in humbling yourself before the Lord.

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. James calls us to humble ourselves before God.

a. What does this mean to you?

12. What practical steps will you take to daily meditate on the greatness of God? Be specific.

b. Why is this difficult to do if we have a small, unbiblical understanding of who God is?

Scripture for Meditation

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.

2 Chronicles 16:9a



And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, And your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. ... everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.

Joel 2:28-29, 32

Introduction

Once we surrender our lives fully to God, we will find the need for God's supernatural, indwelling power. There can be no revival, no coming to life again, unless the Lord's reviving Spirit is at work in us and through us.

Empowerment in Church History

The Azusa Street Revival of 1906 became a fountainhead through which the Pentecostal movement burst forth on the world scene. Its impact was interracial, sensational, and controversial. A key figurehead for this movement was William Joseph Seymour.

William Seymour was born in 1870 to parents who had been former slaves. As a young adult, Seymour fled the poverty and oppression of southern Louisiana and traversed the Midwest, picking up waiter positions in big-city hotels. He first heard Pentecostal doctrines in 1905, in Houston, Texas, under the teaching of Charles F. Parham. In 1906, Seymour was invited to pastor a small church in Los Angeles. He took a train west to pursue his new opportunity.

Once William arrived and began preaching his Pentecostal doctrines, he was locked out of the church building. Part of the problem was that he was preaching about the promise of tongues as a sign of a baptism that he had not yet experienced himself. Seymour moved into the home of a local janitor, Edward Lee, and began a prayer group that sought God for Holy Spirit baptism. On April 9, Lee received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Soon others were overcome with the power of God, including Seymour himself.

Soon hundreds gathered as Seymour preached from a house porch, which eventually collapsed under the weight of the gatherings. Seymour and his followers then rented an old African Methodist Episcopal church building on Azusa Street from which the Pentecostal Revival received its name. In an age of segregation, blacks and whites broke with society and worshiped together at Azusa Street. Soon Hispanics and people of other ethnicities joined the gatherings. Division around sex and age were also minimized, and unity in the Spirit's power was emphasized.

A reporter from the *Los Angeles Daily Times* came to the scene on April 17 and wrote critically about the "new sect of fanatics." When he published his article the next day, the great 1906 San Francisco earthquake shook the landscape from southern Oregon to Los Angeles, rattling the earth as far east as central Nevada. Immediately Frank Bartleman, an itinerant evangelist and Azusa Street enthusiast, published a tract about end times prophecy and linked it to the earthquake.

Soon multitudes packed into Azusa Street, crowding the building and its surrounding dirt roads. Accounts multiplied of people from other countries who visited Azusa Street and heard the Gospel in their native languages through the supernatural manifestation of tongues. This phenomenon was correlated with the Biblical account of Pentecost in Acts 2. Stories of demons cast out and miraculous healings abounded. Seymour's sermons were transcribed, printed, and

When he (Samson) came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men. And Samson said, "With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey have I struck down a thousand men."

Judges 15:14-16

disbursed through a newspaper, *The Apostolic Faith*. Those who were impacted by the Spirit traveled as missionaries to carry the Pentecostal fire into the world.

Meetings continued at 312 Azusa Street, three times a day-- beginning at 10 AM, 12 noon, and 7 PM. Often one service spilled into the next, creating the effect of a nonstop gathering. Seven days a week for three years people flocked to Azusa street from greater Los Angeles and from around the globe. When Seymour wasn't preaching, he was often bent in prayer to remain invisible, sometimes putting his head into the crate on the upper half of the makeshift pulpit to remain focused on the Spirit and not on the frenzy.

The Azusa Street Revival was fraught with controversy. Even Parham, Seymour's primary mentor, attempted to close the meetings down. He was not in favor of so much racial integration and emotionalism. Criticisms by denominational churches mounted. Dissenters from within the group caused splits and two ladies stole the newsletter mailing list, crippling the flow of communications to the outside world. Still, Seymour continued to pastor the church and to travel extensively, promoting the "Apostolic" faith. On September 28, 1922, he developed chest pains and died. Some say he died of heartbreak over the declining and fractured movement. Nevertheless, Pentecostalism is today one of the fastest growing sectors of Christianity, especially in the Global South.

Empowerment in the Old Testament

When you think of God's supernatural strength coming upon an Old Testament hero, who comes to mind? For most of us, it would be Samson. His story is notorious, and his strength legendary. Samson's story begins in Judges 13, where an angel announces Samson's birth to his parents and declares that Samson is to be a Nazirite for his entire life (Judges 13:7). The word *Nazirite* is derived from the root word *nazir*, which means "consecrated" or "separated." The Naziritic vow is described in Numbers 6. It involved abstaining from three things: eating or drinking any substance that contains traces of wine or grapes, cutting the hair on one's head, and physical contact with corpses or dead things.

Naziritic vows could be for a declared period or for a lifetime. Samson was deemed a Nazirite for life. So, apparently, was Samuel by decree of his mother (1 Samuel 1:11). John the Baptist was dedicated to God as a Nazirite before his birth (Luke 1:13-15). Paul took a vow that appeared to be Naziritic and let his hair grow for a time (Acts 18:18). Because these men were set apart for God, each was used by God. Samuel became a great prophet and priest. John the Baptist became the forerunner of the Messiah. Paul became a great New Testament missionary. And Samson became known for his great strength.

Samson's life provides instruction for each of us. The call to holiness was given before he was born, even as believers today are called by God to live in holiness-- without exception. Paul put it directly: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8

Samson did not keep his vow. First, he took honey from the carcass of a dead lion (Judges 14:8-9). Nazirites were not to go near carcasses. He then held a “drinking party,” which is what the word *feast* literally means in Judges 14:10. Perhaps he didn’t actually drink at his own party. And maybe he didn’t technically touch the carcass of the lion. The text doesn’t say. But he was clearly testing the limits of obedience. Small compromises can become stepping-stones to a big fall. Rather than remaining centered on God’s purposes for his life, Samson danced around the precarious edges of sin and soon fell off—he gave into sexual temptation. Sampson then allowed his hair to be cut by a seductress and became as weak as other men.

God offers supernatural strength to each of His children. But we must be set apart from the world if we are to draw from this power. When we make idols of our pleasures and live in our own strength, God removes His protective covering from us. And defeat by the enemy is just around the corner. You and I are no match for the powers of darkness that wish to bring us down. The good news is that when we fall --and no matter how far we fall--if we finally and fully repent, God may yet restore us.

Empowerment in the New Testament

As God’s promise in Acts 1:8 was fulfilled, the Gospel spread from Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12), and to the ends of the earth (Acts 13-28). With each new phase, God brought a fresh outpouring of His Spirit accompanied by the gift of tongues (Acts 2:4, 10:46 & 19:6). Some see this as evidence that believers should seek a similar experience today. Others argue that once the Gospel began reaching the nations and the Bible was complete, sign gifts such as tongues were no longer necessary. Which is it?

When we come to debated topics that have not been settled through the ages of Church History, the likelihood is that they will not be fully solved any time soon. In the meantime, each denomination, church, and person may hold their own opinions. But we *must* embrace core doctrines, such as the trustworthiness of Scripture, the deity and humanity of our Lord, and salvation in His name alone. We must live by the Biblical call for holiness and keep ever before us the command to share the Gospel with all people. When our focus is right, we will find grace to minister side by side with those who disagree with us about debatable concerns of faith and practice.

Final Thought

If we wish to experience the empowerment of God’s Spirit as described in Acts 1:8, we should focus first and foremost on God, not on God’s gifts. If we then make it our priority to bring the Gospel to those who do not know the Lord, we can trust that the gifts of the Spirit will accompany our efforts with confirming evidences of the Lord’s presence. And so the story found in the book of Acts will be ongoing, even in our lives.



Spending Time With God

This study is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. a. What thoughts or challenges from the commentary touched you personally?

b. Why?

2. Read Joel 1:1 to 2:11.

a. What kind of destruction is being prophesied?

b. Do you see any parallels between the spiritual and moral demise of Israel in the Old Testament and the decline of the Church today?

c. Do you believe we are due for God's judgment today? Explain.

3. From Joel 2:12-27, what steps should God's people or a nation take to avoid God's judgment?

4. a. What hope do you find in Joel 2:28-32?



b. Do you believe these promises can be applied in some manner to our day? Explain.

7. Samson often floundered and vacillated as he struggled to find the will of God for his life. What insights about God's will can you draw from 1 Thessalonians 4:3?

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. What did you learn, or what question are you still pondering from the Personal Study Questions?

8. From your own study about the Nazirite vow (Numbers 6) or from the commentary in this lesson, what specific applications can you make from Samson's life to yours?

6. It is easy for us to focus so much on the experiential side of our faith that we lose sight of the importance of sound Biblical teaching. Yet at other times, we may focus so much on Biblical understanding that we fail to put what we learn into practice.

a. Where do you currently fall between the two extremes?

9. Read 2 Timothy 2:20-22 and Hebrews 12:14. Complete this thought: "Holiness is critical for my life before God because..."

b. Would you say your life and faith are balanced in this regard? Explain.



10. Compare James 1:13-18 with the story of Samson's life (Judges 13-16), noting how Samson gave in a little here and there before his great fall. Prayerfully consider areas of your life in which you are tempted to give in to sin and compromise. Write a prayer asking the Lord for grace and strength to resist, and to be faithful for all of your days.

b. What aspects of their experience should we strive to replicate today as we seek revival?

13. Read Acts 2:5-47. What timeless truths (versus specific experiences unique to their circumstances) can we learn from the early believers and apply to our lives today?

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

11. Read Ephesians 5:15-21 in context, focusing on verse 18.

a. What do you learn from this verse?

b. How does it challenge you?

12. Read Acts 1:1 to 2:4.

a. In what ways were the believers available for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

Scripture for Meditation

Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

2 Timothy 2:20-21



Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed...My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

James 5:16-20

Introduction

Each topic we have studied thus far, if embraced in our lives, will help us to live faithfully before God. Such faithfulness is critical if we hope to impact the world for God's glory. In this lesson, we will consider examples of faithfulness in history and in the Scriptures.

Faithfulness in Church History

Jonathan Goforth was born in Canada in 1859, the seventh child of a pioneering immigrant family from Yorkshire, England. He was raised in the faith and made his personal profession at the age of 18. He received a call to serve as a missionary in China while in Knox College, Toronto. On February 4, 1888, Goforth set sail for China's Honan Province with his wife Florence Rosalind Bell-Smith.

The work was not easy. Jonathan and Rosalind labored tirelessly, planting seeds of the Gospel through preaching and teaching and saw very little fruit. During the 13 years leading to the turn of the century, very few Chinese embraced faith in Christ, and the Goforth's lost five of their 11 children to sickness. Then the Boxer Rebellion broke out causing riots against foreigners, and nearly 189 Protestant missionaries and thousands of Chinese Christians perished. Goforth was attacked with a two-handed sword and left for dead. Some local Muslim villagers hid Goforth and his family, and Goforth recovered. He fled the country with his family.

The Boxer Rebellion calmed near the end of 1901, and the Goforth's returned. Jonathan longed to see God's work increase. Stories of revival in Wales and India stirred his heart. In 1905, he began reading from Charles Finney's works on revival, and the fire of God stirred within him. He traveled to Pyongyang in 1907 to see revival first hand. He witnessed Koreans confessing hidden sins as God healed factions between Korean churches. Great numbers were also saved.

He brought back reports of this amazing work of God to the fractured Church in China. Goforth soon fell under conviction about his broken relationship with another missionary. He made his confession and sought to reconcile. No one knew of his personal resolutions; and yet, his obedience provoked God's blessing. He pleaded for others to trust in the Lord as he had always done; but now, the Spirit of God stirred hearts as he spoke.

Soon many were heeding Goforth's plain and simple calls for repentance and his admonitions to pray and to trust in the Lord. Many who confessed their sins wept before the Lord into the night. Goforth urged his missionary colleagues to join him for prayers at 4:00 PM daily for revival to impact the country.

He traveled to Manchuria in February of 1908, and was disappointed with the lack of prayer for revival in the region. Believers in Korea began praying by the thousands for God's work in China, and the Spirit of God soon came down in power. Crowds of people cried out to God from the depth of their souls, confessing sins and getting right with each other. Soon groups of revived Christians began traveling the countryside spreading the flames of the Manchurian Revival.

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions...Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

Genesis 12:4-7

One of the great hindrances to the spread of revival in China was a refusal of some to forgive those who had persecuted them during the Boxer Rebellion. Goforth traveled to Shinminfu, for example, where more than 50 people had been martyred during the Boxer uprising. The remaining believers who had lost their loved ones still kept a list of 250 people who, during the rebellion, had taken part in the murderous acts. It was being kept for the day they could exact their revenge. However, as Goforth began to minister, the Spirit of God fell upon them, and God's grace melted hard hearts. The believers tore up the list and stomped on the remains.¹ Such forgiveness and reunification occurred in many parts of China.

Goforth continued to travel and the revival in Manchuria became known throughout China and in much of the world. He and his wife Rosalind eventually coauthored the book, *Miracle Lives of China*. Perhaps the greatest miracle was that, through the grace and power of God, these two missionaries did not give up despite so much suffering and difficulty. They remained faithful.

Faithfulness in the Old Testament

Faithfulness is built on the backbone of faith. When we lack faith in God, we become fickle before God, snubbing His promises and commands. Those whose faith is secured in God, however, will be true to their calling, no matter how great the cost. To illustrate this point, we will consider the life of Abraham, a man who remained faithful to God.

Abraham was originally named Abram by his parents. God would later change his name to encourage his faith. After his father died in Haran, Abram received direct guidance from Yahweh. He obeyed the call, taking his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot on a 400-mile trek to Canaan. He carried in his heart the promise of God:

"And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:2-3).

The author of Hebrews captures the essence of Abraham's faith: "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith, he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:8-10).

Abraham's life has become a standard for those who would come after him. Paul highlights Abraham as an example, a model for our faith, even "the father of us all" (Romans 4:16). Abraham and Sarah gave birth to a son who would found a nation that would bless the world. Yet, Abraham did not live to see his descendants populate the Promised Land, where they became "as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore"

¹ Hansen and Woodbridge, *A God-Sized Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 145-6.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

(Hebrews 11:12-13).

We are called to follow in Abraham's steps. We too must labor faithfully, knowing that if we do not see the fruits of our labors, God will be honored still. When we pray for the Lord's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven, we acknowledge that earth in its present state is not our home, and that each prayer we offer in faith and each step we take in obedience is of eternal value in the sight of God.

Faithfulness in the New Testament

Hebrews 11 provides a stirring New Testament call to faithfulness based on the lives of Old Testament believers. The next chapter, Hebrews 12, opens with a challenge: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses..."

The word *witnesses* primarily points to those listed in Hebrews 11, who have run the race of faith. The word in its Greek form, *martureo*, is from a root meaning, "to bear witness, to testify." From this is derived the English word *martyr*. Many of the faithful in Hebrews 11 clung to their faith even when faced with the threat of death:

"...Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Hebrews 11:35-38).

The lives of Abraham and other faithful witnesses should inspire us until the day we stand with them around the throne of God in perfected fellowship. On that day, we will see Abraham and the 14 other examples of faith listed in Hebrews 11. Our company will include all who "... died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

Final Thought

Recall how each of the instruments of revival we have studied endured the discipline of God. Suzanna (and John) Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, William Booth, Jeremiah Lanphier, D.L. Moody, Evan Roberts, William Seymour, and Jonathan and Rosalind Goforth are among a list in Church History and in Scripture that goes on and on. We have been challenged by the lives of ordinary women and men, who were called by faith to live extraordinary lives for God. Now it's our turn!

Spending Time With God

This study is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their



small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. a. What thoughts or challenges from the commentary touched you personally?

b. Why?

2. Compare James 5:16 with the story of Jonathan Goforth.

a. Why was confession so important to the Manchurian Revival?

b. Why is it important to every revival?

c. What things hinder true prayers of contrition and confession?

3. Consider the example of Elijah's prayer--he prayed for rain (James 5:17-18; compare with 1 Kings 18:41-46). Why should we not give up in our prayers when answers don't seem to come immediately?

4. Read James 5:19-20. What challenge does this bring to your life? Pray specifically about people God might lead you to call back to the faith.



5. Jonathan Goforth didn't give up, despite years of what seemed like fruitless labor in China.

a. Do you find yourself sometimes wanting to give up in the areas of ministry to which God has called you?

b. List those areas. Ask the Lord to help you continue to be faithful, and to be led day-by-day toward greater fruitfulness.

Discussion (Small Group Study)

6. What did you learn, or what question are you still pondering from the Personal Study Questions?

7. Briefly summarize the various challenges Abraham and Sarah faced in the opening verses of Genesis 15, 16, 17, 18, and 22.

8. Do you ever think, "If I only had more faith, life would be much easier?" Hold that notion against the life of Abraham, the father of our faith.

a. Was his life easy? (Explain.)

b. What do we learn by comparing our lives with his?

9. Read Hebrews 11:8-19. What most impresses you about Abraham's faith? Be specific. Pray for the Lord to strengthen your faith, that you might live faithfully for His glory.



10. Abraham was blessed by God to become a blessing to all nations. He would not see the fulfillment of these promises in his lifetime. In the same way, your life may make an impact for God's kingdom that reaches far beyond anything you'll see in your days on earth. Prayerfully, describe the legacy you believe the Lord wants you to leave behind.

12. See Philippians 3:12-15. How can both the Old and New Testament witnesses spur you on to run faithfully for the Lord, as though you were racing in the Olympics (Hebrews 12:1)?

13. Jesus is our pacesetter. From Hebrews 12:1-13, what steps will you take to make sure you keep pace with the Lord?

Digging deeper (further Study)

11. Read Hebrews 11.

a. Which examples of faith most inspire you and stir you to want to live a life that is pleasing to God?

b. Why?

Scripture for Meditation

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Hebrews 12:1



Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

Introduction

We have pondered how great movements of God may be grouped around nine areas of God's activity in our lives: nurture, scripture, repentance, hope, prayer, guidance, surrender, empowerment, and faithfulness. Let us now glean the greater blessing by moving from mere information to personal inspiration and action steps.

Nurture

Are you, right now, in the process of being nurtured? Each of the Biblical and historical leaders of revival we have studied thus far was *nurtured* to maturity that they might fulfill God's purposes. Like young plants that need the right time and conditions to become full-grown and to become fruitful, leaders of renewal must experience nurture. Even the most mature plant must be nurtured by sun and rain if it is to continue bearing fruit.

It is hoped that during this *Renewal Journey* you found daily personal time to be with the Lord in the Word for prayer, study, and reflection. Keep it up! Pick a time and place where you will meet the Lord each day. Develop a pattern. Make a habit of it.

Scripture

The need for Biblically-based revivals has been made evident through our study of historic awakenings. Revivals that were grounded in Scripture tended to last longer and to produce strong disciples for the Lord. Those that were not founded on God's Word tended to veer into experiential extremes and were short-lived. Most experience-centered revivals, in fact, were so short-lived that they hardly left a mark on the world and were not a part of our study.

It all comes down to the individual. Those who neglect the deepening of understanding of God's ways through God's Word are likely to miss God's plan for their lives. How about you? Will you not only take time out each day to be with the Lord, but will you incorporate a practice of Bible reading and Bible study? Consider engaging in Scripture Awakening's additional BNext studies. Also, you will be deeply blessed by using the Bible in 90 Days program, found on the same site (scriptureawakening.com).

Repentance

Repentance is more than a sudden gush of tears. It is a life-long posture and practice by which we remain in right standing with the Lord. A one-time act will not suffice. We should each engage in the ongoing process of surrender, of turning away from compromise, and of drawing near to the Lord. We must repent not only for things we've done, but also for things we ought to have done. True repentance has always been a mark of true revival, leading to a renewed joy in the Lord.

Examine your life. Do you honestly find the need for repentance on a daily basis? If not, are you

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

2 Peter 1:3-4

meditating daily on God's Word? Be wary of the teachers who emphasize grace without repentance. Our God is full of grace, yes. And our Lord calls us to live by His truth. God's grace is most appreciated by those who understand that God's truth standards do not change. Thus, we must remain humble before God, walking circumspectly with a constant awareness of our human tendency toward pride and compromise.

Hope

We may define hope as a confident expectation of what God is going to do in and through our lives. Such hope is a critical component to the faithful, fruitful Christian life. How is your hope quotient? Are you excited about the promises of God for your life and ministry?

One way to strengthen hope within us is to make a list of key promises in Scripture, those that speak personally to us. Such a practice can change everything. And here is a simple way to make this happen. In a journal or on a pad you will keep, write the key promises of God that you would like review regularly and to embrace as a guide for your life. By doing a read through the entire Bible, you can find promises that speak to you personally from a variety of places. Seek a balanced approach, pulling together promises on a variety of topics. Write them out, word-by-word, including the Scripture reference. To get you started, examples of such promises can be found at: ScriptureAwakening.com/promises.htm.

Prayer

Great revivals have always been birthed through the prayers of God's people. We are not talking about perfunctory requests, but rather about passionate prayer that wells up from the innermost parts of the soul. Travailing prayer gives birth to God's transforming power.

There are several things you can do to grow your prayer life. A good starting point is to find a time and place to pray. Then, as suggested in the last section, start your prayer time by first reading God's promises. Keep prayer lists, and keep the lists active and fresh. Yet, don't be overly dependent on the lists. Be sure to take time to listen, allowing God to show you people and concerns not on your list. Read good books on prayer from time to time to energize your prayer life. For a list of such books, please see: ScriptureAwakening.com/prayerbooks/htm. And find a partner for prayer. If you are married, make sure you pray daily with your spouse.

Also, be sure to engage in corporate prayer. Find some friends you can pray with regularly. Covenant to support each other and to keep the prayer concerns confidential. Consider creating a family altar of prayer. Start a prayer group in your church or join an existing one.

Guidance

The Lord has a specific plan for our lives and desires to lead us into it one step at a time. He provides us a map, called the Bible. And God has also provided a guide, the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14). There is no set program or neatly crafted formula that can guarantee that we will always

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

be centered in God's will. This is why the guidance of the Lord is so critical.

We see in the book of Acts that the early disciples were guided by both the Word and the Spirit of God. If you have not done so recently, consider setting aside time to read the book of Acts afresh. Keep a journal. Note how the Spirit of God led the early believers. Record in your journal what the Lord is showing you about His person and about His purposes for your life.

Surrender

Once we are determined to know and follow God's specific guidance for our lives, we will experience the dire necessity of total surrender to God. Surrender is the position we must take with the whole of our lives if we wish to experience the whole of God's life in us.

We offer two practices that can help you live the surrendered life. First, it is good to take semi-regular spiritual retreats during which you allow God's Word and Spirit, through prayer and reflection, to realign your life with God's will. Make the time to do so, whether it be marked by minutes, hours or days. Find a place of solitude and enjoy the renewing power of God.

Second, consider fasting as part of the process. You may even find that taking one day a week to fast and pray is an effective means of keeping your life in line with God's. For specific guidelines and suggestions about taking spiritual retreats and about fasting, see ScriptureAwakening.com/fasting.htm.

Empowerment

Supernatural strength from God is promised to those who are fully surrendered to God (Acts 1:8). In seeking such power, we should regularly check our motives, asking ourselves if we are seeking power for the right reasons. We may not always know the motivation of others, but we are responsible to discern our own ambitions (2 Corinthians 13:5). Test your heart and intentions daily. Be sure that your aim is to glorify God and to serve others that they might know God. In your daily study of God's Word, don't avoid the many passages that promise challenges and trials for those who follow Christ (e.g.: John 15:20, 16:33; 1 & 2 Peter). Keep humble before the Lord, asking for the power and strength, above all, to be obedient.

Faithfulness

Faithfulness, the ninth area of focus in this series, ties all of the rest together. It is of little use for us to focus on *nurture, Scripture, repentance, hope, prayer, guidance, surrender, and empowerment* if we are not planning to be *faithful* in our pursuit of each area. We are called to advance God's kingdom all of our days. No quitting until we step into glory. Let us stay on track, keep the pace, and follow the Lord *especially* when it is not easy.

Final Thought

One way to foster faithfulness in each area we have studied can be to review this final lesson

from time to time. Consider also doing the entire study again with a group, or with your entire church. We are the body of Christ, and we function best when we work and grow together, side-by-side for the kingdom of God. With God's help and with the support of friends, we can continue this journey of renewal all of our days to the glory of God.

Spending Time With God

This study is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. **PRAY, ASKING GOD FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO HIS WORD.**

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Which category of the nine topics for a *Renewal Journey* as reviewed in this commentary brings the greatest challenge or hope to you? Why?

2. Regarding nurture, do you have one or more close and intimate relationships with others who provide you accountability, wisdom, and support in time of need? Who are they? If not, commit to forging such a relationship. Pray daily for God's guidance until it comes to pass.

3. Nurture works two ways. We are built up in the faith that we might build up others. Are you providing spiritual nurture to one or more people that they might become strong warriors and servants for the kingdom of God? To whom? If you are not, consider how as you pour your life into others, their lives plus yours can make a far greater impact for God's glory than could your life alone.

4. We become nurtured through the Scriptures. Have you ever read the entire Bible, from cover-to-cover, in a short enough span of time to allow you to remember what you started with by the time you finished? If not, would you like to do so? Take a few minutes to look at *Biblein90Days.org*. What might be the benefits of doing such a program?

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. In your daily times with God, do you spend some quality time in Scripture? Why is this important? If you are already doing so, what is working for you?



6. James, the brother of Jesus, reminds us to view the Scripture as a mirror for our souls (James 1:22-25). Scripture guides us to practice repentance every day, allowing the Spirit and the Word to correct attitudes, words, and actions that are not in line with God's declared will for our lives. Is repentance a regular part of your life? Explain.

7. Hope comes to us through God's Word also, especially God's promises. Record one of your most favorite promises, and explain why you choose it.

8. What practices might you incorporate into your life to better embrace and follow God's wonderful promises?

9. Hope inspires prayer. Many suggestions were given in the commentary to help your prayer life become more vital and active. What action steps will you take to strengthen your prayer life?

10. Regarding guidance, the commentary encouraged you to read the entire book of Acts, and to record ways in which the Lord guided early believers. Have you ever done such a read? If so, how did it impact your life? If not, what might be the benefits of doing so?

11. When God guides us, we find the need to surrender to God's will. The commentary suggested taking spiritually-focused retreats to realign our lives with God's will. Have you experienced such a retreat before? If so, did it help you in some way? Explain.



12. Have you ever engaged in fasting for spiritual reasons, with proper guidelines? If so, explain what it was like and whether or not it helped you in your prayer life or otherwise.

14. The commentary referred to the words of our Lord, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” taken from the parable in Matthew 25:14-29. Read this parable and record insights about the importance of being faithful to the Lord.

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

13. Those who surrender to God find need for the Spirit's empowerment. Record what you learn from the following Scriptures about the need to have discernment and humility as we seek God's power:

a. Matthew 7:21-23

15. When we embrace nurture, scripture, repentance, hope, prayer, guidance, surrender, and God's empowerment as priorities in our lives, we will experience greater faithfulness toward God. From this lesson, record the top three action steps you will take as an expression of your commitment to faithfully engaging in a *Renewal Journey* in the years ahead.

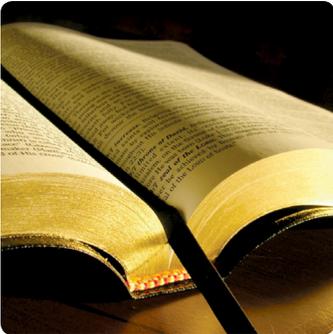
b. John 15:20

c. John 16:33.

Scripture for Meditation

Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.

Matthew 25:21a-22



BNEXT Small Group Leader's Guide

This BNEXT Leader's Guide is for facilitator/leaders. Please read this information before you begin. As the facilitator of a small group, you will have the experience of not only sharing this journey through God's Word with others but of aiding them along the way. You do not need previous experience or special training to lead a group. (Your primary responsibility is to serve as facilitator, not to teach.)

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE

- Either the electronic version or a printed copy for each participant. (The electronic version of this BNEXT Study can be printed. When printed, the blue boxes that were visible in the electronic version will print as blank spaces for participants to record their answers.)
- Bible for each participant, preferably the same version (these studies use the NIV)
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- Watch or clock to monitor time

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This BNEXT study series is versatile and may be used by individuals, small groups, or even entire congregations. The use of a small group as part of the program will enhance each one's experience. BNEXT studies have successfully been used in a variety of environments, including home groups, churches, prisons, and businesses.

These lessons are designed for the individual to read the Scripture passages, read the three pages of commentary, and answer the questions throughout the week. The participants then attend a weekly meeting with the small group to share insights and discuss the material. Total time for each weekly lesson should be about 1 to 1½ hours in length. Suggested lesson plans with timing guidelines are found at the end of this Guide.

If you use this study in a large group or an entire church, there are two possible approaches. One approach is for the entire group to first gather for a welcome and opening prayer, after which participants can meet in small groups for discussion using the BNEXT questions. After a specified amount of time, all would reconvene into a larger setting to present highlights from each group, and for closing words of encouragement and prayer. The other approach is to begin together as a larger group for a welcome and then split into smaller groups for the remainder of the time/lesson.

ABOUT SMALL GROUPS

Group Size: Experience has shown that a group size of 10–12 people works best. If your group is significantly larger, we suggest that you create additional small groups.

Group Leaders: Each group should have its own facilitator/leader. It is good to also have at least one back-up facilitator in case the primary facilitator is absent. If you have several groups meeting at one time, decide who will be responsible for facilitating the larger group gatherings for the welcome time and so forth.

ABOUT FACILITATOR/LEADERS

These lessons are designed to easily be used by a first-time leader as well as an experienced leader. The ideal small group facilitator/leader should have:

- a hunger for God's Word and a deep desire to see others grow in their knowledge of God and His Word,
- a commitment to the group, emphasizing seeing the program through to the end,
- the ability to facilitate and moderate discussion rather than teach, and
- a willingness to follow the "Discussion Group Rules of Engagement" (found in this Leader's Guide).

As facilitator, pray for your small group. Spend time preparing your own lesson (you should attempt to answer all of the questions before the class) and be thinking about how to present the questions to the group. Group members should be encouraged to at least answer the first two sets of questions — Devotion (Personal Study) and Discussion (Small Group Study) questions — before each class, to enhance their learning experience. Even better, encourage them to find time to complete Digging Deeper (Further Study) questions on their own. One of the goals of this approach is to encourage participants to develop the habit of delving into Scripture and studying on a regular basis.

You are not expected to be a Biblical expert. You are a facil-

itator, so resist the attempt to teach. You are there to guide the group, keep them on track, and avoid getting caught up in doctrinal debates. If you want to facilitate the group with a broadened background knowledge, see our "Background Study Option" below.

Recognize that not everyone is comfortable answering questions. Gently keep discussion going by asking questions like, "Does anyone else have something to add?" It can be helpful at times to have a volunteer read Scripture texts that are referred to in the questions.

Recognize and affirm all who contribute to the discussion. Do not dismiss someone's answer as wrong. If an answer is obviously off-base, thank them for their answer, then ask what others think. Remind the group to let Scripture interpret Scripture.

If you feel that a certain statement or question is inappropriate for your group, you may omit it or at least recognize that not everyone needs to answer it. However, do not be afraid of letting the group tackle tough topics.

BACKGROUND STUDY OPTIONS

Again, facilitators are not expected to be Biblical experts. If the group looks to you for an answer you do not have, it is perfectly fine to say, "I'm not sure. Perhaps we can all think about that one and bring it up again next week?" Or, "Let's bring this one up to the larger group when there is time allotted for such discussion." Or, "Let's see if this doesn't answer itself over the weeks as we continue our study. Remember, the Bible interprets itself."

For extra study, you may wish to approach your pastor or to read commentaries and use other resources. The internet contains a wealth of information ... and also disinformation. Some internet sites that provide reliable (and free) commentaries and articles include: biblegateway.com, biblestudytools.com, biblehub.com, and blueletterbible.org.

Another useful source of general Biblical knowledge is *The Essential Bible Companion*, by the same contributors of our *Bible*

in 90 Days study series: John Walton, Mark Strauss, and Ted Cooper Jr., Zondervan Publishing (also available as an e-book).

LEADING THE CLASS (Suggested Lesson Plans)

First Class

Decide where you want to meet weekly and decide on a time. Once this has been done, actively publicize the *BNEXT* study throughout all your circles — at your church, workplace, friends, family, etc. There are some free publicity aids on our website at ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/freebies/. (If the study is being done by the entire congregation, recruit facilitators for each group and have one facilitator designated to lead the closing session when all come back together.)

Be sure that every participant has downloaded the electronic version or has a printed copy of the study at least one week prior to the first small group meeting. Have everyone complete the first lesson's reading and answer the questions in preparation for the first gathering of the group(s).

The first class is unique in that a little more time is spent on introductions and explanations of how the classes will function.

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of members (13 minutes)

(NOTE: Entire church groups meet together for opening prayer only and then break into their small groups.)

 - a. Think of something brief each participant could say about themselves such as: "Tell us something unique about yourself." Or perhaps, "What do you hope to get out of this BNEXT study?"
 - b. Remind them to keep their answers brief (one minute or less).
2. Give an overview of the class and expectations (7 minutes)
 - a. Inform the class of how many weeks it will take to cover the study and the date of the last class.
 - b. Discuss the format of the BNEXT study and ask if

there are any questions.

- c. Review the "Rules of Engagement" which are located at the end of this Leader's Guide.
3. Discuss lesson questions (35 minutes)
 - a. Ask if there are any Devotion questions that anyone would like to discuss with the group.
 - b. Give primary attention to the Discussion questions, which are provided to promote dialogue and conversation.
 - c. If time permits, you may wish to use one or more of the Digging Deeper questions.

(NOTE: For an entire church, allow an extra 10-15 minutes to allow for the groups to come back together at a specified time. Allow each group to share a highlight of their small group discussion.)
 4. Closing prayer (5 minutes)
 - a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
 - b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.
 5. If you are providing printed copies of lessons to participants, distribute the lesson for next week
 6. Dismissal

Subsequent Classes

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of any new participants (10 minutes)

(NOTE: Entire church groups meet together for opening prayer only and then break into their small groups.)

- a. If there are new members, have them introduce themselves. Remind them to be brief (one minute or less).
- b. Think of a good ice-breaker that somehow relates to the study. For example, if you are studying "The Ten

Commandments – Exodus 20,” you may ask, “Why do you think Exodus or the Ten Commandments are important?” Or, “How do the Ten Commandments relate to the cross of Jesus Christ?” Remind them to keep their answers short. Set a time limit for this opening section; not everyone needs to answer.

- c. If you think it's necessary, remind the group of the “Rules of Engagement” at the end of this Guide.

2. Discuss lesson questions (45 minutes)

- a. Ask if there are any Devotion questions that people in the group would like to discuss.
- b. Give primary attention to the Discussion questions, which are designed to promote dialogue and conversation.
- c. If time permits, you may wish to use one or more of the Digging Deeper questions.

(NOTE: For an entire church, allow an extra 10-15 minutes for the groups to come back together at a specified time. Allow each group to share an insight of their small group discussion.)

3. Closing prayer (5 minutes)

- a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
- b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.

5. Dismissal

SMALL GROUP RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

It is important to treat one another in Christian love. These “Rules of Engagement” will be helpful, so read them aloud during the first class; thereafter, refer to them as needed by the group.

1. Begin each reading/study session with prayer, expecting God to speak to you through His Word.

2. Come prepared for each week's session by completing the reading and the study questions.
3. Your small group will have a facilitator. Please be respectful of the facilitator's leadership.
4. The facilitator's responsibility is to guide or shepherd the discussions. Do not expect your facilitator to be an expert on Scripture — each group member should seek the answers from Scripture on his/her own.
5. Each group member is invited to join the discussion but should not feel required to do so. If called upon, it is okay to say, “Thank you, but I would prefer to pass on answering that question.”
6. Alternatively, do not dominate a discussion. Time is limited, so please be sensitive to everyone in the group to help ensure that each person has the opportunity to participate.
7. Respect everyone's answers and views on Scripture. However, let Scripture interpret Scripture and expect the Holy Spirit to speak/teach through His written Word.
8. In preparation for each lesson, you are not expected to do extra study or research. If you wish to dig deeper, then here are a few helpful resources:
 - Go to ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/ for key tips and guidelines for best use of BNEXT study series in your small group or whole church.
 - The internet contains a wealth of information (and sometimes disinformation). Some useful Bible study sites include: biblegateway.com, biblestudytools.com, biblehub.com, and blueletterbible.org.
 - *The Essential Bible Study Companion* (hard copy), by John Walton, Mark Strauss, and Ted Cooper Jr., Zondervan Publishing (also available as an e-book).