



fresh encounter

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An Invitation to a Fresh Encounter with God

There is much joy and hope associated with “beginnings.” The birth of a new baby, a new romance, a wedding, a new job ... But we don’t live in a perfect world and inevitably life unfolds in ways we had not anticipated. Too often the journey that began with such hope and promise can be spoiled by sin. Parents become estranged from their children, couples split up, a family is torn apart by divorce, a job degenerates into drudgery. But there is always the hope of a second chance. Isn’t it wonderful when life offers a chance to get it right? When reconciliation occurs? When broken relationships are healed?

Most people who become Christians experience tremendous excitement and joy as they enter into an amazing, loving relationship with Almighty God. In those early weeks of their salvation, new Christians devour God’s Word and excitedly learn to pray with God and worship Him. But the world we live in is a broken world. Believers are not exempt from the challenges of the economy, pain of disease, struggles in our relationships, and effects of sin. Some Christians begin to feel as if God is distant from them and wonder where the vibrancy of their faith has gone. They may continue to regularly attend worship, live moral lives, and serve in their churches, but God seems distant. As a result, many churches are filled with professing Christians who are not experiencing the power of God in their lives. Today’s world is in a spiritually deplorable condition. The primary reason is not because of the morally deadening influence of the media, corruption in business, or the lack of godly leaders in government but is due to the fact that there are lifeless, powerless churches dotting the landscape which are making little difference for God’s kingdom.

Contemporary believers wonder why the mighty movements of God recorded in Scripture and Christian history are noticeably absent today. Today’s pastors are burning out at epidemic levels as they experience the demoralizing futility of attempting to lift their church members out of their spiritual lethargy. While some individuals and churches are experiencing a fresh wind of God’s Spirit, many others are asking, “Is there a word from the Lord? What does God want us to do?” Throughout history God has always had a response for those who sought Him. “Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and wondrous things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

But across America and around the world, God’s people are crying out for a fresh encounter with Him. Everywhere we travel we hear churches pleading with God to revive them, their nation, and the world. The widespread dissatisfaction with today’s church cannot be solved by best-selling books, church conferences, or an endless stream of Christian trends. When the church seems powerless, only God can make a difference.

As in biblical times, being in God’s presence is an awesome, life-changing experience. But because our hearts tend to wander from God, we are often in need of a fresh encounter with Him. We need to be revived. Through salvation, God has granted new life to us through the death and resurrection of Christ. But when we disobey Him, we need His power to renew our relationship once again.

While God is always present in a believer’s life, revival is a sacred event when the Holy Spirit draws unmistakably near to His people. Revival involves a fresh encounter with God, and entails a serious, irrevocable accountability. Revival does not call for minor adjustments. It elicits a humble, on-your-face response to our Creator. Revival does not result from an encounter with a doctrine but a response to a Person—God Himself.

In *Fresh Encounter*, you will be taught what the Bible says about God’s requirements for fellowship with Him. As you read Scripture, the Holy Spirit will assist you to understand and apply what it says. Instead of merely studying Bible verses; you will encounter the living God, because every encounter with God’s Word is a meeting with its Author.

The goal of *Fresh Encounter* begins with seeing Christians and churches revived. A revival can only occur among God's people. But once believers experience a revival, they should work with God to see a spiritual awakening occur in the world. A spiritual awakening occurs when large numbers of people are saved and the culture of a city or community begins to change. Unfortunately, we have not witnessed a spiritual awakening in North America in many generations. But if today's Christians are revived then the Lord can work through them to accomplish the miraculous results of a spiritual awakening.

Our hope is that believers will be so revived because of the truths taught in this study that God can use them to affect a spiritual awakening in their communities, their cities, and the world.

Study Tips

The intent for this material is to help you come face-to-face with holy God and, as a result, to be forever transformed. The Scriptures you will study provide a glimpse into God's heart so you can view sin the way He sees it. God's pattern for revival and spiritual awakening will be laid out as it is found in Scripture. The following are a few ideas to help you maximize your experience as you study.

1. Prepare your heart to receive whatever God reveals to you (Hosea 10:12).

Every truth you encounter has the potential to produce spiritual fruit in your life. If your heart is resistant to God's word, you will struggle with some of the scriptures that are presented. If you have cultivated your heart to be receptive to God's word, your life will be changed.

2. Join with a small group to study this material together.

While God does revive individuals, there is a powerful dynamic that occurs when people seek the Lord together (Malachi 3:16). This material is designed as a group study. You certainly can work through it individually, but there is an added dimension to sharing the experience with others. A Leader's Kit is available with DVDs designed for viewing and discussing in a group setting. The Holy Spirit will speak to you as you hear what God is saying to others. As you sense others' hearts cry to live holy lives that glorify God, you will receive fresh impetus to live your own life in obedience to the Lord.

3. Faithfully do the homework each week.

Your relationship with God is the most important thing in your life. It deserves your time and best effort. Scripture promises you will reap what you sow. Your present walk with God is the result of how you have cultivated it. Be sure you take this opportunity to receive everything God intends for you. Arrange your schedule so you can gain the maximum benefit from the next six weeks of study. Carefully set aside enough time to read each day's material. This study covers some of the most challenging truths in the Christian life. Read them slowly and meditate on them. Don't try and to do five days' reading in one sitting. Let the truths soak into your life throughout the week.

Memorize the Scripture for each week. Each verse has been carefully selected. Having these verses in your mind will help you recall the truths presented as you go about your daily life.

Experience God cleansing and filling you with His Word. Each unit has a list of Scriptures in "Cleansing by washing with water through the Word." Pray through each verse and allow the Holy Spirit to rid your life of anything that is robbing you of what God intends for you. He will take each Scripture and reveal to you how you need to adjust your life in accordance with God's desire.

At the end of each unit you will find a section entitled “Encountering God in Prayer.” Meditate on what you have learned and ask the Holy Spirit to identify how you must live your life differently from now on. Use these times to enjoy fellowship with God as He adjusts your life to Himself and His will.

Write down the lessons learned. Take notes in the margins of this book or in a separate journal. At the close of each unit, review what God said to you. You may want to keep a summary of your notes in your Bible where you can be regularly reminded of what God is teaching you. Don't file those notes away until God has completed everything He spoke to you about as you studied this material.

4. Enlist people to pray for you and your group as you go through the study.

Prayer has been a key element to every revival. Be sure others are praying for you as you seek the Lord.

5. Expect God to do a fresh work in your life.

James 4:8 promises that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. Since the original version of *Fresh Encounter* (1993) by Henry Blackaby and Claude King much has happened in the Christian community and around the world. This new edition has been significantly revised. It has benefited from Richard Blackaby's work of updating the study to include what we have learned as we have walked with many Christians and churches as they encountered God. God has granted each of us the enormous privilege of traveling around the world and visiting numerous Christians and churches who experienced a fresh touch of the Holy Spirit. We have seen what God can do through one individual or church that is wholly yielded to Him. We believe there are enough Christians and churches in the world today to reach humanity for Christ, if only each Christian and every church would surrender fully to God. For that to happen, a mighty revival must sweep through the churches. That is the focus of much of our ministry today and that is why we wrote *Fresh Encounter*.

We are delighted you have chosen to undertake this study! We have seen these truths challenge people from all around the world and set them free. Our prayer is that you will become keenly aware that God stands before you and invites you to be cleansed from your sin. He wants you to begin a qualitatively deeper and more vibrant walk with Him than you have ever experienced. So let's begin this study together, expecting to hear from God and to experience a profound refreshing of our souls and a deepening of our walk with God.

May we continue to tremble with holy fear when God speaks (Isaiah 66:2), and may we be filled with hope and anticipation for what God is going to do in our day among His people for His glory.

Henry and Richard Blackaby, Claude V. King

For more information on Blackaby Ministries International, please visit www.blackaby.org.

For more information about the *Fresh Encounter Group Study Kit* or to download the *Fresh Encounter* teaching videos, please visit www.lifeway.com/freshencounter.

Introducing

fresh encounter



Introductory Session

Small-Group Discussion Guide



Leaders: As you begin this new study, ensure that everyone has a *Fresh Encounter* workbook.

Open in prayer.

As you begin this study, it will be vital to become familiar with the others participants as you learn how God desires to bring about revival in your church. Each week, start your gatherings with prayer. Today, ask if anyone has a specific spiritual need or burden. Keep prayer requests focused on issues of spiritual growth. Ask someone to lead the group in prayer as you embark on this spiritual journey together.

View Introductory Session of the Teaching DVD

Truths to Remember

Scriptures to Read

Quotes to Remember

Actions to Take

If you missed this session, go to www.lifeway.com/freshencounter to download this and any other session of *Fresh Encounter*.



Discussion Guide

When you hear the word “revival,” what image or definition comes to mind?

After the introductory video from Henry and Richard, do you have a different definition in mind now?

For some, the possibility of encountering God might seem exciting and to others it may seem somewhat improbable. Discuss how you view such a radically personal encounter with God.

Have you ever been involved in a church when a sudden movement of God occurred? Describe the experience to the group.

How would such an experience affect your church today?

Henry described the need to come into this study with an expectancy of what God can do in our lives. Thinking about your walk with God as it is today, what might be the result if you experienced a “fresh encounter” with God?

What would be different?

How would others see a change in your life?

Some of us have participated in discipleship studies in the past. Some studies have a profound effect and others have caused little change in our lives.

What do you hope to learn about God that will deepen your knowledge of Him, increase your love for Him, or bring about a reviving of your church?

Richard said on the video that life is a sum of the choices we make. What choices need to be made by believers today to come into a closer walk with God?

Ask someone to read James 4:8 and discuss the promise made by God.

Henry described the secret that many other believers have found is “an intimate fresh encounter with God.” Do you know a believer who obviously has a deep relationship with the Lord? Describe how that person's life is different from other Christians you know.

Invite everyone in the group to finish this sentence: “By the end of this study, I hope that ...”

Use the responses to the sentence as the prayer requests of the group members. Lead a closing prayer by asking God to grant a fresh encounter to each person.

Close in prayer.

UNIT 1: GOD'S PATTERN FOR REVIVAL AND SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Scripture-Memory Verse

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

2 CHRONICLES 7:14, NKJV

Unit Overview

- DAY 1: REVIVAL AND SPIRITUAL AWAKENING
- DAY 2: GOD'S PATTERN FOR REVIVAL, PART 1
- DAY 3: GOD'S PATTERN FOR REVIVAL, PART 2
- DAY 4: REVIVAL FOR ALL PEOPLE
- DAY 5: WHERE ARE YOU?



Cleansing by Washing with Water Through the Word

THE APOSTLE PAUL DECLARED, “*Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, to make her holy, cleansing her in the washing of water by the word. He did this to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless*” (Ephesians 5:25-27). The Holy Spirit uses Scripture to address the sins in our lives and to make us holy and pure. The Spirit also takes God’s promises in Scripture and works them into our lives to make us like Christ. At the beginning of each unit, you will find Scripture verses on which we encourage you to meditate. Throughout the week, return to these verses daily and open your heart to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you about each truth.

Wash Out

Are there actions, behaviors, habits, or sins that need to be cleansed from your life? Your family? Your church? Confess them to God. Resolutely turn away from those activities and surrender your life to God.

Soak In

Are there biblical truths, beliefs, or promises that God wants you to apply to your life? Whenever you see something in Scripture that is not yet fully operative in your life, stop and pray that God will work that truth into your life and into the lives of those around you. Are there behaviors and attitudes that your family or church needs to adopt?

- Psalm 24:3-5
- Psalm 15:1-5
- Micah 6:8
- 2 Peter 1:3-9
- Titus 2:11-14

Keep the verses above in mind as you work through the Bible studies this week. Use the space below to keep a list of the specific lessons you learn from your studies and how God is applying these lessons to your life.

Experiencing God's power

Spiritual Awakening in Wales

Evan Roberts was deeply concerned about the spiritual condition of Wales, his native land. Roberts began his adult life working at a local coal mine. For 13 years he prayed daily that God would revive the churches of his country. In 1904 Roberts surrendered to God's call on his life and enrolled in a Bible college. Roberts became actively involved in a group of students who regularly met to pray for revival and to promote spiritual renewal in area churches.

At the end of a midweek service, Seth Joshua, an evangelist, closed the meeting by praying, "Lord, bend us." The Holy Spirit drove those simple words into Evan Roberts' heart. Over and over Roberts prayed, "O Lord, bend me!" Roberts sensed God calling him to return to his home church in Loughor to lead the young people in a series of meetings. The pastor would not allow Roberts to address the entire congregation that had gathered for the weekly meeting but announced that anyone who wished to remain afterward could hear what Roberts had to say. On that evening, October 31, 1904, 17 people stayed behind to hear Roberts. His message had four points:

- 🕊️ You must put away any unconfessed sin.
- 🕊️ You must put away any doubtful habit.
- 🕊️ You must promptly obey the Spirit.
- 🕊️ You must publicly confess Christ.¹

All 17 people pledged to follow these guidelines. The Holy Spirit began to work powerfully in this group. Soon crowds were gathering at the church each evening. God's people began to repent of their sin and renew their relationship with Him. Unbelievers came to the services, and many put their faith in Christ. Roberts and other preachers spread out across Wales to speak in churches and saw revival spread. Within two months 70,000 people had become Christians. Within six months, 100,000 people had been born again and added to the churches.

God's activity among His people exerted a profound impact on the community at large. Taverns were closed for lack of business. The crime rate dropped so dramatically that the police had to find new uses for their time. People repaid delinquent debts and made restitution for thefts and other transgressions. There was even a work slowdown in the coal mines as the pit ponies reportedly could no longer understand the reformed language of the converted coal miners! Soon the world took notice of what God was doing in Wales. Before long, similar revival movements occurred worldwide. It all started when God drew 17 of His people back to Him. Once they returned to God in complete surrender, their community, then their nation, and ultimately the world felt the impact.



Day 1

Revival and Spiritual Awakening

TWO EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TERMS WE WILL STUDY ARE *revival* AND *spiritual awakening*. Both terms have been defined in many different ways. In the space provided, write your own definitions for both.

Revival:

Spiritual Awakening:

The word *revival* can be understood in a variety of ways. It has been used to describe a series of church meetings held for purposes of evangelism or spiritual renewal. This term can also refer to a renewed interest in something, such as classical music or retro car styles. Sometimes the word *revival* is used to describe a spiritual awakening.

What is biblical revival? The word *revive* consists of two Latin words: *re*, meaning *again*, and *vive*, meaning *to live*. Therefore, *revive* means *to live again or be brought back to life, health, or vitality*. *Revival* may describe a return to spiritual health after a period of decline. Revival is not a creation of life but a return to vigorous life. Bearing that in mind, we will use *revival* to describe what God does to His people as He draws them back into a vibrant relationship with Himself. God revives His people by convicting them of their sin, leading them to repent and return to Him. Then they experience the restoration of their spiritual vitality.

Revive means to live again.

Here is a working definition for this study:

Revival is a divinely initiated work in which God's people pray, repent of their sin, and return to a holy, Spirit-filled, obedient love relationship with God.

Take a moment and identify at least three key words or phrases in the definition above. Beside each phrase, make a note of why it is important in a definition of *revival*.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write the four bullet points from Evan Roberts message in the opening story on a note card and post it somewhere in your home or office as a daily reminder of remaining pure before God.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What impact would a great revival have on your city?

What Is a Spiritual Awakening?

Spiritual awakening occurs when a large number of people or a high percentage of a population are born again in a relatively short period of time. In Wales 100,000 people were converted in six months, beginning in 1904. During the 1857-58 revival in New York, approximately 1 million people joined the churches in one year out of a national population of 30 million.² Spiritual awakening generally grows from a period of revival among God's people. Some common by-products of spiritual awakenings are widespread social reform, a marked decrease in crime and unethical behavior, and improvements in society through the efforts of reinvigorated Christians and churches.

Consider the state of churches today, as well as the condition of your nation. Do you think there is a current need for revival and spiritual awakening? Why or why not?

Which statement would you use to describe society today?

- Judgment is imminent without revival.
- Society is desperately wicked.
- There is still time for things to change.
- There is no need for revival at this time.
- God is making significant progress today.
- The need for revival is greatly overstated today.

God's Invitation to Revival

Revival and spiritual awakening are the Lord's work. God determines the time and way in which He will revive His people. Yet He has also clearly established the terms by which He brings revival and spiritual awakening.

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

2 Chronicles 7:14, NKJV

Read 2 Chronicles 7:14 in the margin. What four things does God require of His people before He will revive them?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

When God's people meet His requirements, what three things does God promise to do?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Beside each of the three previous answers, place an *R* beside those that address revival and an *S* beside those that address spiritual awakening.

From our vantage point, we believe churches today are desperately in need of revival. Likewise, countries around the world are in profound need of a spiritual awakening. God has established His terms. However, God's people must believe Him and obey Him. As you study this course, we pray that you will encounter God in such a way that revival will begin with you.

Encountering God in Prayer

Review 2 Chronicles 7:14. Ask God what you must do to meet the requirements so that He will forgive your sin and heal your nation. Which portion of the verse should you focus upon in prayer today? As God brings specific things to your mind, write them down. Passionately pray that God's requirements will soon be met in your life.

Day 2

God's Pattern for Revival, Part 1

Created for a Love Relationship

God created people to experience a love relationship with Him. Tragically, people often reject the Creator's divine invitation by refusing to put their trust in Him. Even those who once enjoyed fellowship with the Lord can choose to turn away from Him.

We pray that you will encounter God in such a way that revival will begin with you.

"I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob."

Malachi 3:6, NKJV

That is why people need revival. Although we can leave God on our own volition, we cannot return to Him without His help.

God's nature remains constant (Malachi 3:6). He is beyond our human understanding, yet He has promised that those who seek Him will find Him (Jeremiah 29:12-13). Although it is impossible to predict exactly what God will do in light of His absolute sovereignty, patterns and principles are found in the Scriptures and throughout history that help us understand the ways God relates to people. The following is an overview of the seven stages that occur in revival.

A Cycle of Sin and Revival in the Book of Judges

The Book of Judges presents a clear pattern for revival. As you read this biblical account, you will observe the repetitive cycle God's people experienced in their walk with Him:

1. The people followed God.

"The people worshiped the LORD throughout Joshua's lifetime and during the lifetimes of the elders who outlived Joshua. They had seen all the LORD's great works He had done for Israel." Judges 2:7

God did not deliver the Israelites from bondage merely so that they could go and live comfortably in the promised land. Rather, God rescued them so that they would be free to enjoy a special relationship with Him (Exodus 19:4-6). Joshua's generation experienced God's incredible power exercised on their behalf. Joshua was a strong spiritual leader who never wavered in his trust in God. The people he led also chose to trust and follow Joshua's God; as a result, they experienced continual victory.

2. The people forsook the Lord.

"The Israelites did what was evil in the LORD's sight. They worshiped the Baals." Judges 2:11

We cannot live on yesterday's walk with God. Neither our parents' faith or our own earlier relationship with Him can serve us in the present. Every day we must choose to walk with God intimately and obediently. The Israelites had heard their parents speak of God's glorious provision and protection, yet turned their devotion elsewhere. To love anything or anyone more than God is to forsake Him.

What are the things we most often love more than God?

3. God defeated the people through their enemies.

"The LORD's anger burned against Israel, and He handed them over to marauders who raided them. He sold them to the enemies around them, so that they could no longer resist their enemies." Judges 2:14

"You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart."

Jeremiah 29:12-13

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me. Now is you will listen to Me and carefully keep My covenant, you will be My own possession out of all the peoples, although all the earth is Mine, and you will be My kingdom of priests and My holy nation. These are the words that you are to say to the Israelites."

Exodus 19:4-6

God loves us. He knows our relationship with Him brings life and our rejection of Him causes death. Therefore, when we stray, He brings whatever is necessary to bear on our lives so that we return to Him (Deuteronomy 28:25). He does not allow us to remain comfortable in our sin and rebellion. He removes His hedge of protection from us and allows us to experience the pain and despair that come with alienation from our Creator (Isaiah 5:1-7).

4. The people cried out for help.

“They suffered greatly. The LORD was moved to pity whenever they groaned.”

Judges 2:15,18

While prosperity will not generally motivate God’s people to cry out to God, tribulation more often brings us to our knees. Revival begins when people recognize their sin and their hearts return to God. Only when we realize our desperate need for God are we in a position to fully enjoy God’s presence in our lives.

5. God had compassion and delivered them.

“The LORD raised up judges, who saved them from the power of their marauders. The LORD was moved to pity.” Judges 2:16,18

God is an expert at setting people free. When we cry out to Him, His heart is invariably moved with compassion. Regardless of how many times we reject Him and break our promises to Him, His infinite love compels Him to reach out to and save us.

The previous pattern of obedience, apostasy, discipline, despair, deliverance, and restoration was repeated throughout the Book of Judges. Read Judges 3:7-11 as an illustration of this cycle.

Reading Judges 3:7-11, what impresses you about the way God’s people rejected Him and had to be restored through His intervention? How does their pattern compare with the way God’s people respond to Him today?

In your own words, write the five stages of the Israelites’ departure and return to God, demonstrated in the Book of Judges. Refer to pages 19-20 if needed.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

God is an expert at setting people free.

apostasy: an intentional rebellion or departure from one’s religious beliefs

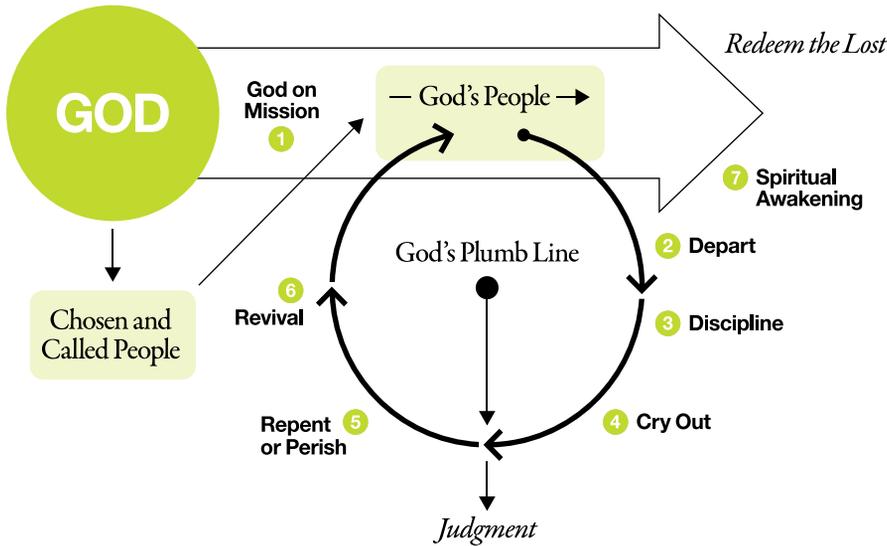
“The Israelites did what was evil in the LORD’s sight; they forgot the LORD their God. ... The LORD’s anger burned against Israel, and He sold them to Cushan-rishathaim king of Aram of the Two Rivers, and the Israelites served him eight years. The Israelites cried out to the LORD. So the LORD raised up Othniel ... as a deliverer to save the Israelites. The Spirit of the LORD was on him, and he judged Israel. Othniel went out to battle, and he handed over Cushan-rishathaim king of Aram to him, so that Othniel overpowered him. Then the land was peaceful for 40 years.”

Judges 3:7-11

Seven Phases of Revival

Throughout this material we will present a sevenfold pattern for revival we find in Scripture. Notice that the following pattern begins and ends with God, who works in and through His people to redeem a lost world.

Diagram of Revival



Phase 1: God is on mission to redeem a lost world.

God calls people into a love relationship with Him, and He accomplishes His work through them. God is constantly working to bring people around the world into a saving relationship with Himself (see John 3:16). Once we enter a personal relationship with God, He shares His heart's desire for man's redemption with us and begins to involve us in His mission. As we walk with God, He gives us the desire and the power to serve Him by showing others how they can be saved and serve Him.

God's primary call on our lives is not to activity but to a relationship with Him. We must fight against the confusion of defining Christianity as a set of activities to be performed. God desires for us to act according to our faith, but being a "good person" should be an outworking of our relationship with Him. Only as we walk closely with God can we receive the divine enabling to accomplish what He asks of us.

Have you been tempted to serve God without walking closely with Him? If so, what was the result?

Phase 2: God's people tend to depart from Him, turning to substitutes for His presence, His purposes, and His ways.

The most destructive condition that plagues God's people is their chronic tendency to depart from God. Despite all the heavenly resources and blessings our Lord makes

"God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life."

John 3:16

Tragically, we jettison our priceless walk with God for whatever captures our momentary interest.

available to us, we inexplicably choose to wander from His protection. We are far too easily enticed by the world's empty promises and shallow temptations. Tragically, we jettison our priceless walk with God for whatever captures our momentary interest.

What are some things in the past that have led you to wander from a close walk with God?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work/business | <input type="checkbox"/> Addictions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Selfishness | <input type="checkbox"/> Laziness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pride | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorance of God's will | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Phase 3: God disciplines His people because of His love.

As His people invariably rebel against Him, God could remain serenely indifferent to the inevitable plight of His creatures. He could mock our frail attempts to live independent of Him, knowing the dire consequences we face. But God does not remain unmoved by His people's plight. His love compels Him to actively work in our lives to make the result of sin patently unappealing in order to lead us back to Himself. God will do whatever is necessary to draw us back to Himself.

It is often difficult for us to associate God's discipline with His love. Read Hebrews 12:4-11 and identify whom God disciplines and why.

Whom?

Why?

What are some ways God has used to draw you back to Himself when you departed from Him?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of job/income | <input type="checkbox"/> Health problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship turmoil | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional pain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural disaster | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Tomorrow we will examine the final four stages of the revival process.

From the first three stages, which stage do you feel you are in right now?

Now give an example from your life when you have been in one of the other two stages.

"You have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons: My son, do not take the Lord's discipline lightly, or faint when you are reprovved by Him; for the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and punishes every son whom He receives."

Hebrews 12:5-6

Encountering God in Prayer

Reflect on how God led you and worked through your life in the past. Consider times when you clearly knew God was calling you to serve Him in a particular way. Is there any way you have departed from Him and His will for you? Would you be able to say that you are currently in the center of God's will for your life? Take time to pray and make certain that today you are walking with God exactly as you should.

Day 3 **God's Pattern for Revival, Part 2**

Yesterday we examined the first three phases in God's pattern for revival. Today we will look at the final four phases.

Without looking back, try to list the first three phases of revival.

Phase 1:

Phase 2:

Phase 3:

Phase 4: God's people cry out to Him for help.

God's discipline becomes increasingly intense until His people cry out to Him. He is patient and will not force Himself on people or on a church. Like the father of the prodigal son, God eagerly waits for His children to return to Him. He seeks the gentle restoration of His people; but if they will not respond, He increases the intensity of His discipline until they can no longer ignore Him or what He is saying (see Deuteronomy 28:15-68). It takes enormous determination and stubbornness to refuse to repent and return to God after all He does to draw people back to Himself.

But consider the attitudes displayed in the parable of the prodigal son. In Luke 15:17-19, the wayward son prepares himself to beg for his father's mercy. He is ready to be a servant in his father's house rather than live under the disgrace of his new-found poverty. As he approaches his father, he is met with compassion. He is not even able to finish his prepared speech to convince his father to accept him into the household. Read how, the scene plays out in Luke 15:21-23 in the margin.

The father did not desire his son's prepared speech. He only wanted to restore the relationship. We should take heart from Jesus' teaching that when we are prepared to cry out for God's mercy, our Heavenly Father is ready to answer. Our hearts should be ready to seek's God's favor the moment we recognize sin in our lives.

God eagerly waits for His children to return to Him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father told his slaves, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate."

Luke 15:21-23

Check all of the reasons you believe people often have to experience hardship before they return to God.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stubbornness | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorance of God's ways |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arrogance and pride | <input type="checkbox"/> Selfishness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoyment of sin's pleasures | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Phase 5: God calls His people to repent and return to Him or perish.

Repentance is one of the most positive words in Scripture! It means there is hope for fallen sinners. It signifies that change is possible and there is a remedy for sin. God has given no other options for our relationship with Him. Returning to Him is nonnegotiable. Partial, halfhearted, or delayed repentance are all contradictions in terms and unacceptable. Refusing to repent invites negative consequences. Godly repentance, on the other hand, leads to forgiveness and restoration.

Does the word *repent* normally have a positive or negative connotation for you? Explain why.

Repentance must occur at the heart level. It is not merely changing our behavior outwardly while inwardly we are bitter for being caught in our misadventures in morality. Without returning back to God, He may allow us to suffer under the full consequences of our sin. These consequences could be the breakdown of relationships, illness, or even death. Sin is serious and always carries the ability to destroy our lives.

Phase 6: God revives His repentant people by restoring them to a right relationship with Him.

Revival is God's people returning to Him, their source of life. Repentance returns us not to a system but to a person—God! It also brings forgiveness, freedom, and purity. The ultimate result of repentance is renewed fellowship with God. From this revitalized relationship flow joy and abundant life (see Psalm 51:12).

Why is the experience of God's forgiveness so powerful?

List evidence in your life that you have been restored to a right relationship with God (for example, joy, peace, understanding Scripture)?

Phase 7: God exalts His Son, Jesus, among His people and draws unbelievers to saving faith in Him.

When God's people are rightly related to Him, He displays His glory through their lives to a watching world. Spiritual awakening becomes a natural by-product of a

Repentance is one of the most positive words in Scripture!

"Restore the joy of Your salvation to me, and give me a willing spirit."

Psalm 51:12

revived people. God receives glory when His people walk closely and obediently with Him. Nonbelievers take notice and are drawn to the God who is being glorified.

Do you find it easy and natural to witness to nonbelievers? Yes No

If you answered no, take time to examine your life. List areas of your life in which Jesus is not being glorified through your actions or attitudes. Beside each item you list, write how you plan to change.

List three persons with whom you would like to share the gospel.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

God's Purpose for Revival

We should learn to identify the seven phases because of God's purpose in bringing revival to His people. Knowing that we are given to wander from Him, God has prepared for our return. There are two primary reasons revival is critical for believers.

1. God takes delight in our love, and He receives glory from our worship of and obedience to Him. If we have strayed, revival brings us back to walk closely with God so that our lives are pleasing to Him once more.
2. God chooses to accomplish His redemptive purposes through consecrated people. To be useful to Him, we must walk closely with Him.

God is not indifferent to our departure from Him. He will pursue us and do whatever is necessary to bring us back into a loving, obedient relationship with Himself.

What are the two purposes of revival?

- 1.
- 2.

God Pursues a Love Relationship

Life's greatest mystery is why God loves His rebellious creation. Why does God continue to reach out to a stubborn, arrogant, foolish people? Why would He pay the ultimate price to obtain redemption for people who were oblivious to what He was doing? Why would the God of heaven care whether His people choose to have fellowship with Him (see Jeremiah 7:13)? But God does care!

Christian history testifies that God's amazing love causes people's hearts to melt in shame and remorse for the calloused way they have responded to His compassion.

“Now, because you have done all these things’—this is the LORD’s declaration—‘and because I have spoken to you time and time again but you wouldn’t listen, and I have called to you, but you wouldn’t answer.’”

Jeremiah 7:13

David Brainerd, an 18th-century missionary to the American Indians, claimed it was his preaching on God's love that reduced his listeners to tears rather than his sermons on God's judgment.³ Even a glimpse of God's incredible love for us should drive us to our knees in awe and profound gratitude. Likewise, we should grieve when we realize we have not responded to such love from God.

What thoughts come to your mind as you consider all God has done to reach out to you?

Recall a recent time when you experienced God's forgiveness for one of your failings. Place a check mark beside the word(s) that describe the experience.

Hope Love Peace Comfort
 Help Relief Gratitude Other:

How should a recognition of God's love for us change the way we live?

God Calls People to Join Him in His Work

Besides revitalizing our relationship with the Lord, revival also prepares us to carry out God's will. Throughout history God has brought people into close relationships with Him so that they became useful instruments in His hand to redeem a lost world.

In Christ, God established a new covenant with a new people—the church. This relationship is based on faith, not on keeping the law. Through Peter, God echoed His promise given to the Hebrews long before:

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9

Christians are called by God for His pleasure and His purposes. God intends for them to shine the light of Christ in a spiritually dark world. He wants the church to continue what He began with the people of Israel. God continues in His quest to redeem a lost world. Let's look at some ways God uses His church to accomplish His redemptive activity.

We are a chosen generation.

As God's people, we are chosen to be trophies of His amazing grace. We are set apart, not because we deserve it but because we belong to Him. We are not our own but privileged to belong to God's family (see Romans 8:16-17)! As our Father, God deserves and expects our obedience to His purposes to redeem our generation.

Christians are called by God for His pleasure and His purposes.

"The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, and if children, also heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ—seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

Romans 8:16-17

We are a royal priesthood.

God did not establish a kingdom with a priesthood—a population ministered to by a few priests who know the secrets of relating to Almighty God. Rather, every believer is a royal priest who enjoys constant access to God. *Royal* implies that each person has a direct relationship with the King and belongs in the royal family. During biblical times the priests equipped God's people to properly worship and serve God. The priest also brought a word from God to the people and represented the people before God. We have the exalted assignment and high privilege to act as God's ambassadors.

We are a holy nation.

The word *holy* means *set apart for God's exclusive use*. We are to be separated from the values and ways of the world. Our outlook on life should be different from unbelievers. We are to reflect God, His character, and His ways. We are commanded to live honorably among unbelievers so they will glorify God (see 1 Peter 2:11-12).

But today's church is not impacting the world for God's kingdom. Just as the Israelites forgot their calling and became entangled in worldly values and pursuits, Christians today are disoriented to what God asks of them. Churches continue holding services, building larger buildings, and launching new programs; but the world becomes increasingly dark and hostile to God. We desperately need reviving.

How does the perspective of your identity as a "royal priest" change the way you relate to other believers?

Many unbelievers today say they have rejected the claims of Christianity because of the way Christians live their lives. What are some ways God's people repel unbelievers from God instead of drawing them to Him?

God is on mission to redeem a lost world. He could use any method but has chosen to work through a people consecrated to Himself. When God's people turn away from their covenant relationship with Christ, they are no longer prepared to serve God and bring Him glory. God disciplines them to draw them back to Himself. Once God's people repent and return to Him, He forgives them and uses them once again to accomplish His purposes. God takes our relationship with Him extremely seriously because it gives our lives meaning and purpose as we relate to Him and serve Him.

Encountering God in Prayer

Take a moment to reflect on what kind of priest you have been for God. Have you been faithful, always prepared to follow His leadership? Have you been royal, reflecting the King you serve? Have you been holy, keeping yourself untainted by the world so that you could be a consecrated instrument in God's hand? If you have not,

pray and ask God to consecrate you afresh for his service. If you have been serving God faithfully, ask God to take your consecration and your service to a deeper level.

Day 4 Revival for All People

The Shantung Revival

In the 1920s Christian missionaries in north China were grieved over the lethargic condition of their churches. Members showed little interest for spiritual concerns. They began to wonder if many of the people in the churches had accepted Christianity intellectually but had never been spiritually born again. They began to devote one day a month to praying together for revival.

In March 1927 the Chinese Southern Revolutionary Army burned Nanking, and missionaries were ordered to Chefoo for possible evacuation. While the missionaries were together, waiting to learn whether they could continue their work, they began to study the Scriptures and ask the Lord why they had been removed from their field.

Some of the displaced missionaries asked Marie Monsen, an evangelical Lutheran missionary from Norway, to join their prayer meetings. God used her to challenge them to get right with Him. The group spent days before God confessing every known sin. They were reconciled with one another as God drew His people back to Himself. Marie asked the missionaries three penetrating questions:

1. Have you been born of the Spirit?
2. What evidence do you have of the new birth?
3. Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit?⁴

What are your answers to Marie Monsen's three questions?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The hunger for spiritual vitality caused the missionaries to do much soul-searching. One missionary, observed, "We felt an electric excitement, a feeling that God was preparing us for something we had never known before."⁵ Once God's people drew close to Him, He used them to powerfully impact China for Christ.

God set His plumb line against the lives of the Chinese church leaders, and they saw how short they fell of His expectations. An evangelist for 25 years, Mr. Chow, realized he was trusting in his good works for salvation but not in Christ. He gave his life to Christ and henceforth refused to be paid for his preaching.⁶ Lucy Wright, a missionary nurse for 9 years, realized she had only joined the church but had not been

plumb line: a cord with a lead weight at the end to determine a straight perpendicular line

born again. She turned her life over to Christ for the first time.⁷ By 1932 thousands of people in China were coming to Christ. One example was a school where six hundred girls and nine hundred of one thousand boys professed faith in Christ in 10 days.

Revival produces exponential results. New converts went everywhere telling people what Jesus had done for them. Those who turned to Christ took down their “house gods” and burned them. The hearts of God’s people were full of praise and thanksgiving. Joyful singing filled the services. New hymns were written, and Scriptures were put to music. Believers developed an insatiable hunger for God’s Word. Classes met nightly to study the Bible. Enrollment in Bible schools and seminaries dramatically increased. Spiritually stagnant churches were reinvigorated. Church attendance multiplied, and members enthusiastically participated in worship, prayer, and discipleship. Prayer meetings lasted two or three hours as people were reconciled with God and prayed for unbelievers. Broken families and relationships were healed.⁸ Once God’s people realized how far they had drifted from Him, they enthusiastically returned, and soon vast regions of China felt the impact.

Marie Monsen asked three simple questions. Why did they have such a dramatic impact on the missionaries and churches in China?

List some of the ways revival impacted churches in China during the Shantung Revival.

The Shantung Revival affected people in China in a variety of ways. From the saving of the lost to the mending of families to the reinvigorating of stagnant churches—God impacted China. When God brings revival, every human relationship can be restored to the way God intends. Once people have their relationships with God made right, their other relationships are inevitably affected.

Revival Impacts Individuals

God intends for individuals to enjoy close communion with Him. When people like Joseph, Elijah, David, Mary, Peter, or Paul walked closely with God, they not only experienced God’s joy, peace, and power but also witnessed God doing amazing things in and through their lives. One individual, no matter how ordinary, who is totally surrendered and consecrated to God, can become a powerful instrument in His hand.

Sin, however, impairs our fellowship with God and hampers our effectiveness in doing His work. Out of His grace, God chose to walk with David and bless him. Ultimately, God raised the lowly shepherd boy to become a king and a great blessing

Once people have their relationships with God made right, their other relationships are inevitably affected.

One individual, no matter how ordinary, who is totally surrendered and consecrated to God, can become a powerful instrument in His hand.

“Do not banish me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore the joy of Your salvation to me, and give me a willing spirit.”

Psalm 51:11-12

“As for Me, this is My covenant with them,’ says the LORD: ‘My Spirit who is on you, and My words that I have put in your mouth, will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouth of your children, or from the mouth of your children’s children, from now on and forever,’ says the LORD.”

Isaiah 59:21

to his people. Then David grievously sinned against God and against Uriah. This is how David described the consequence of his sin:

*“When I kept silent, my bones became brittle
from my groaning all day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was drained as in the summer’s heat.”*

Psalm 32:3-4

Read Psalm 51:11-12 in the margin. When David repented of his sin, God forgave him and restored His presence and joy in David’s life.

How did David feel when he was estranged from God because of his sin?

What feelings have you experienced when you held on to your sin?

Revival Impacts Families

God designed the family to be a source of joy, peace, refuge, and safety. In the context of family, a husband and a wife can experience a loving, trusting relationship (see Genesis 2:24-25). When God called Abraham, He promised to use his family to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (see Genesis 12:3). The family is the primary setting where God wants children to be taught about Him (see Deuteronomy 6:6-9). God’s truths and promises are to be passed down from one generation to the next (see Isaiah 59:21).

However, sin erects barriers between husbands and wives (see Genesis 3:7). Sin leads to anger, even murder (see Genesis 4:8). It causes adultery and divorce between spouses and estrangement between children and parents (see Matthew 19:3-9). When God brings revival, marriages are restored and broken families are mended. Only God can soften the hearts of spouses, parents, and children (see Malachi 4:6). He can empower them to forgive one another and equip them to love as Christ loves.

What do you think would happen to your family if God brought revival?

Revival Impacts Churches

Christ is the head of the church (see Colossians 1:18) and is the one who builds the church (see Matthew 16:18). God adds people to the body as it pleases Him so that members are interdependent with one another (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-31). God intends for congregations to be united in caring for one another and in boldly sharing their faith (see Acts 4:31-33).

Why do churches dwindle and die? They lose sight of their purpose and neglect their relationship with the head of their church. Sin causes division among members. Churches can become so focused on gaining numbers, collecting offerings, or building buildings that they forget that Christ should receive glory from all the churches do. Congregations can become like the church at Laodicea, which claimed, “I’m rich; I have become wealthy, and need nothing.” Yet this church did not realize that God saw them as “wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). Just as sin binds individuals and families, it deceives and destroys congregations.

When the church in Ephesus needed revival, the risen Christ cautioned: “Remember then how far you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first. Otherwise I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent” (Revelation 2:5).

Just as sin binds individuals and families, it deceives and destroys congregations.

Why was repentance so important as the first step for the church at Ephesus?

What are some reasons churches get off track from what God originally called them to do?

What might it take for churches to return to God’s plan for them?

Revival Impacts Nations

Read 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV) again to see what it says about reviving nations:

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

How would you describe the spiritual and moral condition of your nation today? Circle all that apply:

Healthy	Desperately sick	Experiencing God’s judgment
Deceived	Needs reform	Continually becoming more depraved
Blind	Beyond hope	Experiencing revival
Apathetic	Close to judgment	

Did you notice what God said must happen before the land would be healed? He did not say, “When the media experience positive changes” or “When government is reformed.” God did not even say, “When Christians pray for their nation to be revived.” The Lord made it clear that the nation would be healed when *God’s people* repented of their sin. The reason nations need revival is that God’s people have not been the salt and light God intended for them to be (see Matthew 5:13-16). When

It should not be surprising when unbelievers behave according to their nature. It is tragic when Christians do not act according to theirs.

Christians see how wicked their nation is becoming, it is not the time to point a condemning finger at unbelievers. Rather, it ought to break Christians' hearts that their presence is not making a more significant difference in their land. It should not be surprising when unbelievers behave according to their nature. It is tragic when Christians do not act according to theirs.

In what ways should the church have a strong spiritual impact on the nation?

Why do unbelievers often exert a more powerful influence over a nation than believers do?

Revival is a return to the life God originally provided.

Revival is a return to the life God originally provided. For individual Christians, it brings them back to the state of enthusiastic obedience to their Lord they had when they first became followers of Christ. Revival returns the spiritual life and vitality they once enjoyed before sin robbed them of it. For families, it is returning to God's intention when He first fashioned them into families. It involves restoration, forgiveness, and reestablishing a pure commitment to follow Christ. For churches, it is a return to God's purpose when He first assembled the congregation. It involves corporate repentance by His people. Finally, national revival happens when God's people return to Him and unbelievers feel the impact of God's presence and work. Tomorrow we will examine the symptoms of a person or group's need for revival.

Encountering God in Prayer

Take time to examine your Christian walk. If you've kept a journal, review your spiritual journey. Are you as close to God now as you have ever been? Are your marriage and family fulfilling every purpose God has for them? Is Christ being glorified in your church? Is your nation conducting itself in such a way that God would be pleased to bless it? If not, spend time in prayer, asking God to show you in what ways you and others must return to God.

Day 5

Where Are You?

Revival in Korea

According to Jonathan Goforth, the Korean revival of 1907 began when the Central Presbyterian Church held an eight-day series of meetings for universal prayer. Many of its members sensed that God was about to renew the church, yet each meeting concluded in the normal fashion. As the final service drew to a close, Elder Keel

suddenly rose to his feet. People were startled when this greatly respected church leader confessed, “I am an Achan.”⁸ (See Joshua 7.) He tearfully admitted that a year earlier he had managed the financial affairs of a deceased friend’s widow. In the process he stole some of the estate’s money. He admitted his sin, vowed to make immediate restitution, and acknowledged that his sin was hindering the Spirit’s work in their church. Immediately, a powerful conviction of sin swept over the congregation, and people lined up to confess their sins. Revival burst forth.

Keel had faithfully served the Lord for years and was highly respected by his congregation. But he had fallen. Sin had crept into his life through what he perceived to be a small act. No one had discovered his dishonesty, yet he knew his spiritual vitality had waned. He was a faithful church member, but he lacked God’s blessing until he confessed his sin. Then the Holy Spirit immediately convicted many others in the church that they had allowed sin into their lives and were no longer experiencing God’s power. Revival came to the church and then spread out to the nation when one man was willing to confess and repent of his sin.

God Used an Ordinary Businessperson

When God approached Abraham, it was not merely to have fellowship with Him. God intended to use Abraham’s life to bless generations to come. The Bible tells us that God invited Abraham to become involved in accomplishing His purposes.

Look up and read Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1,7-9. Answer the following questions.

Who is the focus of these Scriptures—God or Abraham?

In Genesis 17:1 how was Abraham to walk before God?

Describe the effect God’s covenant with Abraham was to have on Abraham’s children.

In calling Abraham, God was setting His plan in motion to redeem an entire world. God told Abraham to follow Him, to be blameless, and to teach his children to follow God. God kept His promises and built Abraham’s descendants into a nation. Ultimately, the Lord brought salvation to all humanity through one of Abraham’s descendants—Christ.

Throughout history God has called people to Himself so that He had a holy people through whom to work. When God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, it was not so that they could become wealthy and comfortable in the promised land. Read the call God gave His people in Exodus 19:3-6 (in the margin).

Achan: an Israelite who disobeyed God and brought judgment upon all of Israel in Joshua 7

Revival came to the church and then spread out to the nation when one man was willing to confess and repent of his sin.

“Moses went up the mountain to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain: ‘This is what you must say to ... the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me. Now if you will listen to Me and carefully keep My covenant, you will be My own possession out of all the peoples ... and you will be My kingdom of priests and My holy nation.’”

Exodus 19:3-6

We know God brought the Israelite people to a land of prosperity, but more importantly, God said, “I ... brought you to Me.” God’s plan for Israel was not primarily a place but a relationship. That is what made them unique from any other people. From their relationship with God, the Israelites would be God’s special messengers of salvation to the entire world.

Who have been the ordinary people God has used to express His love and message of salvation to you?

See if you can list, from memory, the seven phases of revival. If you can’t remember them all, look back at the diagram on page 21.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Now put a check mark beside the stage that best describes your present spiritual condition.

The phases of revival are cyclical. We begin by walking closely, excitedly, and obediently with Christ. But then sin lures our trust away from God and toward substitutes. Even as we turn away from God, He relentlessly pursues us and attempts to draw us back to Himself. God said to His people, through His prophet Jeremiah: *“I did give them this command: Obey Me, and then I will be your God, and you will be My people. You must walk in every way I command you so that it may go well with you.’ Yet they didn’t listen or pay attention but walked according to their own advice and according to their own stubborn, evil heart. They went backward and not forward. Since the day your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent all My servants the prophets to you time and time again.”* Jeremiah 7:23-25

What does this Scripture indicate about God?

What does this Scripture indicate about God's people?

When people do not respond to God's loving appeals, He disciplines them. God has numerous ways to reprimand His people. He can allow defeat in our lives or disasters. He can afflict our health or remove our prosperity. Because God is sovereign over nature, He can use it to gain His people's attention. God's intent is to make any substitute for God so undesirable that we return to Him. When our discomfort becomes unbearable, we repent and cry out to God for deliverance. Then God forgives and delivers by restoring us to a healthy relationship with Himself. Afterward we are in a place to be useful to Him in accomplishing His divine purposes. Unfortunately, it often does not take long before we allow sin to reenter our lives as the cycle of rebellion and return repeats itself.

As you continue in this study, keep in mind that this is not merely a picture of the way ancient people walked with God. A study of revival is more relevant than reading this morning's newspaper. People need revival today as much as they did two thousand years ago. It is our prayer that your heart will be sensitive to all that the Holy Spirit will say to you through this study. Though you may have begun this study with a concern for your children or church or nation, revival always begins with you.

Once we are rightly related to God, He works through us to accomplish His redemptive purposes for our family and church and nation. If you decided to undertake this study so that you could understand how God might revive others, you have missed the point. Revival begins with us. So open your heart and mind to all God wants to do in your life and then watch and see how God uses your submissive life to draw others to Himself.

Encountering God in Prayer

Turn to page 21 and look at the diagram of the seven phases of revival. Identify where your life presently lines up. Ask yourself, *Where would God see my life right now?* Prayerfully ask the Lord how your life has come to be where it is spiritually. Was there a particular sin you allowed into your life? Have you disobeyed Him? What must you do to return to a healthy, vibrant walk with God once again? Do it today.

1. Malcom McDow and Alvin Reid, *Firefall: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1997), 278.
2. Arthur Strickland, *The Great American Revival* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Press, 1934), 16.
3. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1834), 2:353.
4. Bertha Smith, *Go Home and Tell* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1995), 43.
5. C. L. Culpepper, *The Shantung Revival* (n.p., n.d.), 9.
6. Smith, *Go Home and Tell*, 44–45.
7. *Ibid.*, 48–50.
8. Adapted from Culpepper, *The Shantung Revival*, and Smith, *Go Home and Tell*. See these books for more information.
9. Jonathan Goforth, *When the Spirit's Fire Swept Korea* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 8.

A study of revival is more relevant than reading this morning's newspaper.

Session 1

Small-Group Discussion Guide



Open in prayer.

Ahead of time, ask someone to be prepared to pray. Invite prayer requests and ask the group for prayer requests that pertain to personal and corporate revival. Listen for how God is presently working in their lives through the study so that the group will know how to pray for them. Once people have had an opportunity to share, call on the person appointed to pray.

Before you began this week's study, what were your views of revival and spiritual awakening? Has your perspective changed in any way after the first week?

What was most intriguing, challenging, or offensive as you began this study on revival?

View Session 1 of the Teaching DVD

Truths to Remember

Scriptures to Read

Quotes to Remember

Actions to Take

If you missed this session, go to www.lifeway.com/freshencounter to download this and any other session of *Fresh Encounter*.



Discussion Guide

In the introduction to our homework, the story of Evan Roberts and Seth Joshua was told. Remember that Evan Roberts asked the people who stayed after the service to pray about four issues. They were:

- *You must put away any unconfessed sin.*
- *You must put away any doubtful habit.*
- *You must promptly obey the Spirit.*
- *You must publicly confess Christ.*

What is your personal reaction to being confronted by these issues?

Read 2 Chronicles 7:14. What are God's people called upon to do when seeking God's reviving power?

Discuss the seven stages of revival from the diagram on page 21. What stage do you feel is the most common one for churches to be in today?

Discuss the Blackabys' definition of revival: "*Revival is a divinely initiated work in which God's people pray, repent of their sin, and return to a holy, Spirit-filled, obedient love relationship with God.*"

Why do God's people struggle to be faithful to our God who loves us so deeply?

What are some reasons for which churches tend to depart from God?

Invite people to share an experience they have had with one of the seven phases of revival. You don't need to evaluate or correct their sharing. Just ask questions to help clarify what they experienced.

Read 1 Peter 2:9 and discuss God's calling on the lives of believers. How will understanding our calling reorient a Christian to live in a closer relationship to Christ?

In day 3 you listed persons with whom you would like to share the gospel. Ask a volunteer to give the first name of someone on their list and to pray for that person.

Day 4 discussed how revival can come to all levels of human interaction, beginning with the individual and extending to an entire nation.

Which of the four categories—individual, family, church, or nation—most intrigues you? Why?

How would our community and city operate differently if revival came to our church?

Invite people to share, in light of the first week's study, what they sense God may want to do in their lives, their families, their church, and their nation.

Close in prayer.