

5 Lessons from the Jesus Movement

Never before have I started crying within the first 30 seconds of a movie. As the opening scene of the *Jesus Revolution* movie revealed the sandy, rocky path over the ridge to Pirate's Cove on the west end of Corona Del Mar State Beach, my memory instantly was taken back almost five decades. I clearly remembered scrambling over those same smooth boulders, sand in my toes, anxious to get up to the summit where I could see the hundreds of other young people gathered around that calm bay, preparing to meet the Lord in baptism! However, even that impression is not as memorable as the impact of the Jesus Movement itself, which is why I want to share some lessons from that remarkable season that continues to have such an impact today.

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Filming much of the movie on location in Southern California was necessary at one level, but it also presented the challenge that you can never completely reproduce on film something that was so vivid and so powerful in so many people's lives. Yet the movie came very close to succeeding in that effort.

I was a 16-year-old, growing up in Los Angeles County, who was invited by some older kids to come with them to Calvary Chapel, about a 30-minute drive southeast in Orange County. The year was 1972, and I had just had a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit through a small home fellowship of other "Jesus freaks." As a young musician myself, I was just starting to learn about the new bands that were leading

worship at this new church called Calvary Chapel.

As much as I try to recall, only a few images remain in my memory of that first night at Calvary Chapel. But I do recall a skinny hippie, Lonnie Frisbee, holding his Bible and inviting people to the front, both to receive Christ and to encounter the Spirit of God. I recall so many people flooding the front of the church, including some who clearly were high on drugs, and I saw a powerful move of the Holy Spirit on them that night.

A few years later, my girlfriend, Linda (who later became my wife), and I were baptized by Pastor Chuck Smith in Pirate's Cove. In 1979, I became an associate pastor at a growing Southern California megachurch in LA County, Calvary Chapel Downey, where Pastor Jeff Johnson was also leading baptism services, also at Pirate's Cove. Over the next several years, I led worship on the shoreline and also baptized hundreds of new believers in that same spot.

Our personal ministry journey then led us to Denver, Colorado, to serve with Pastor Tom Stipe from the early Calvary Chapel "tent" days. He was pastoring a rapidly growing Jesus Movement church that then became one of the early Vineyard congregations.

Back in the '70s, I regularly went to the same tent portrayed in the movie for the Saturday-night evangelistic rock concerts where Stipe was preaching. He went home with the Lord in December 2020, and I had the privilege of being one of the speakers at his memorial service, along with Greg Laurie and a number of those early leaders and musicians in the Jesus Movement. Let's examine some of the lessons this life-changing movement holds for us today.

1) Spiritual revivals often occur within specific cultural circumstances that are rarely reproducible.

The history of modern revival demonstrates how the Spirit of

God often landed upon social and cultural people movements that were already exploding on the scene. The extraordinary difficulties of westward expansion in the early 1800s gave way to the Cane Ridge Revival in rural Kentucky. The Welsh miners' movement to organize and protest unsafe work conditions back in the late 19th and early 20th century provided fertile ground for the Welsh Revival. And, near to the heart of modern charismatic and Pentecostal believers, the social and racial inequities of the early 1900s gave birth to the Azusa Street Revival, where interracial worship preceded any societal or legal efforts to abolish racial segregation.

My father grew up during the Great Depression in Los Angeles, California. His aunt attended Angelus Temple, and he recalled visiting there as a 10-year-old boy and seeing Aimee Semple McPherson on the stage. In time, he came to Christ, which is why I also came to know Christ at a young age. These revivals came at remarkable times within a complex era of history.

Yet even these moves of God's Spirit contained very human elements. The Jesus Movement happened organically within a major cultural event, the counter-culture hippie movement of the late '60s and '70s. Young people rejected their parents' norms, choosing an alternative lifestyle and a street culture. As they embraced drugs, free love and rock 'n' roll while at the same time opposing the Vietnam War, they were "looking for love in all the wrong places."

Cultural anthropology tells us language acquisition is the most important aspect of cross-cultural communication. While we can chuckle at some of the fashion and language of the '70s, the shared identity that came with the slang, the clothing, the music and the legitimate frustration and anger toward the so-called establishment all brought the clash of cultures to a predictable collision.

Hippie preacher Lonnie Frisbee spoke the language of this new counter-cultural movement, and Pastor Chuck Smith was willing

to try to understand it. As a young adult, I sat under Smith's ministry and teaching for several years. We all respected the ways in which he never tried to look like us, yet his love for us and willingness to be our pastor were evident.

While it's too recent to truly reflect upon it in any meaningful way, the recent Asbury outpouring seems connected to young people who had their lives radically interrupted by a pandemic that isolated them, robbed them of normal high school experiences and blocked them from close, physical human fellowship and community for several years. All this may have fertilized the field as they had the opportunity to gather again, this time in the Asbury University Chapel. The Holy Spirit fell on these young people corporately as they genuinely sought God.

The challenge is that the various cultural conditions that provide the environment for revival can rarely if ever be replicated. Yet the immediate response in almost every case is to try to organize and duplicate them.

The Doorbell Rang and My Life Forever Changed, By Larry Tomczak

1971. Having recently graduated from Cleveland State University I was away from home for the first time in my life starting my first major job. I had been selected as an intern for training at the AFL-CIO headquarters across the street from the White House in Washington, DC.

Renting an upstairs bedroom, I was busy unpacking boxes when the landlady called to me, "Larry, two guests are here for you!"

In the hallway downstairs I encountered two smiling ladies who welcomed me to the area and proceeded to invite me to join them for a gathering of Christians meeting that evening.

I initially hesitated, offering some flimsy excuses, but they persisted so I thought, "Why not?" and went with them for what would be the beginning of my being plunged headfirst into a phenomenal move of God underway in America labeled on the cover of *Time* magazine, "The Jesus Movement."

The prior year I'd had an encounter with Jesus Christ and yielded my life to Him as my Lord and Savior. Another providential move of God was underway known as the "Catholic Charismatic Renewal" and I frequented prayer meetings and enjoyed fellowship with many Catholics who were discovering "new life in the Spirit." Even though I'd had 12 years of Catholic education and attended the largest Catholic boys' high school in the state, I'd never read the Bible, but later when I did, guided by more mature Christians, my life was turned around.

Christianity Comes Alive

That night God connected me with a humble woman named Lydia Little (who'd just returned with a few youths from "scouting out" the emerging "Jesus People" experience in California and returned praying and passionate to see it explode in the D.C. area). Starting with a handful in her home, then dozens of young adults who had been radically saved during this season, a ministry was launched that enabled me and another young man to serve as tag team Bible teachers. In a few short years it grew to over 2,000 primarily young people meeting weekly just 15 minutes from the White House! Every week, people got saved, filled with the Spirit and many were healed and delivered from destructive lifestyles.

Cars lined the streets outside the facility and people arrived early in order to get a seat. A U.S. Senator, a son of a Supreme Court Justice and a young evangelist named Sid Roth sat in the crowd. Soon, future leaders like Che Ahn and Lou Engle emerged amidst this outpouring of God's Spirit.

A publisher challenged me to write my story which I did in the book *Clap Your Hands!* When it became a quarter million bestseller, I knew I was truly a part of something supernatural.

Over the years, the teaching meeting (TAG – Take and Give) developed into a ministry called “People of Destiny” planting and adopting about 100 churches.

Jesus Movement Revival

In 1972, Campus Crusade for Christ held a massive event in Dallas called EXPL0 ‘72 and 85,000 Jesus People attended the five-day event. The Saturday all-day closing concert drew a crowd estimated at 180,000! Billy Graham came, as did Johnny Cash.

The Jesus People phenomenon landed on the cover of *Time* magazine which featured an eight-page positive report.

Here’s the deal: The Jesus Movement was an authentic visitation from God. There’s no question we are reaching a tipping point and a place of desperation in our land. May we pray like the prophet Habakkuk did in his day for a fresh visitation from Almighty God before the clock runs out.

“O Lord, I have heard the report of You, and was afraid; O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of these years make them known; in wrath remember mercy,” (Hab. 3:2).

2) Spiritual revivals have a shelf life.

As a kid growing up in LA County, my family and I would drive to our Lutheran church and parochial school multiple times a week, and we would almost always pass by a small, older Pentecostal church. Years later, after doing some research, I discovered this church had roots in the Azusa Street Revival.

Yet as a kid, I noticed that at least once a month, the church would hang a large banner outside, declaring, "Revival Services Next Week!"

I would ask my mom about it, but we Lutherans didn't really know much about revival services. Throughout my childhood, this little church regularly advertised its next revival. I have often wondered how the people could be so sure that revival was going to show up the next week.

After the red-hot flame of the Jesus Movement diminished, the hippies grew older. They got jobs and mortgages, becoming part of the establishment they had so passionately opposed. The Jesus freaks learned how to pastor and disciple the converts who had come to Christ during this movement. In the decades since the Jesus Movement, the musical genre called contemporary Christian music has almost completely replaced the organs, choirs and hymns of a previous generation. Casual dress, non-churchy buildings and the worship band have become standard for most evangelical churches.

I admire the leadership of Asbury University and the maturity and wisdom they demonstrated in responding to the recent outpouring on their campus. They showed genuine concern for the small town of Wilmore, Kentucky, which had a massive influx of tens of thousands of people, some of whom, it would seem, wanted to show up and even influence the meetings with their own particular idea of what God wanted to do there. Their eventual decision to stop the 24-hour meetings, taking them off-site to a larger town and venue, showed they were aware that these moves of God don't last forever.

I remember attending the Brownsville Revival back in 1998. We had an incredible time during our week there. There was such a powerful sense of the presence of God on the entire campus of Brownsville Assembly of God. People stood in line for hours in the hot Florida sun just to get into one of the overflow buildings. I recall meeting a handful of folks who had moved

to Pensacola just so they could live permanently at the revival.

Some revivals have lasted weeks, others months, and many continued for several years, but none have lasted forever. The Transfiguration of Jesus is one of the few events recorded in all four Gospels. As Jesus shows Peter, James and John His glory, their immediate response is, “Let’s build booths [dwellings] so we can just stay up here forever!”

That’s our typical human response. “Lord, can’t we just stay here in this place with You forever?” We don’t want to go back down the mountain, to the challenges of life, of work, of everyday routines. Yet the very nature of Jesus’ Incarnation, is, in the wonderful words of Eugene Peterson’s *Message* paraphrase of John 1:14a, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”

Times of revival end, but our responsibility to continue to walk with Jesus—even through our mundane lives—and share His Good News with others remains.

Jews for Jesus Now a Worldwide Force for the Gospel, By Susan Perlman, one of the founders of Jews for Jesus

The “Jesus Revolution” was pivotal to thousands of Jewish young people in the early seventies—including me.

I still recall seeing the day-glow illustration of Jesus on the cover of *Time* magazine back in June 1971 and I read the article with interest. Jesus had not been on my radar up to that point. After all, I was Jewish and I knew that Jews don’t believe in Jesus. But the powerful cover story planted a seed.

A few weeks later, I ran into Larry Norman on a street corner in New York City. He was wearing a “Jesus” button on his denim jacket and I connected him with the article. Not being shy, I

asked him if he was one of the Jesus People I'd read about. I had no idea he was a well-known Christian rock musician. Larry wrote a lot of the Jesus Revolution music, along with Love Song and the Second Chapter of Acts. And he actively shared his faith wherever he went, even with a Jewish girl he just met on a street corner. He told me his story and invited me to one of his concerts. And the rest is history.

The Jews for Jesus movement was birthed during the Jesus Revolution. As the Holy Spirit poured down on hundreds of thousands of hippies, a significant minority of them were Jewish. Many were artists, musicians and writers who brought their own creativity to the movement. I became part of that Jews for Jesus movement, and one of the founders of the modern-day Jews for Jesus organization.

Moishe Rosen, the experienced missionary who was there from the beginning (he was almost 40 years old) came to Berkeley, California, to listen to Jewish hippies. And he really did listen. He'd been experimenting with a new short form of gospel literature called 'broadsides,' and soon young Jewish believers were catching on, creating catchy hand-calligraphied pamphlets like, "If Being Born Hasn't Given You Much Satisfaction, Try Being Born Again!" or "Jesus Made Me Kosher." Jewish believers in Jesus were writing our own style of music as well, often taken right from Scripture, with minor key melodies. One early song, "I Knew Jesus Before He Was a Gentile" spoke to those who thought Jesus was not for them.

Today our movement is worldwide. Jews for Jesus has trained hundreds of missionaries, distributed millions of tracts, talked to hundreds of thousands of Jewish seekers, planted and partnered with Messianic congregations and continues to innovate on digital platforms, in Israel, the Ukraine, Paris, among ultra-Orthodox Jews, university students and more. No longer is the idea that Jews can believe in Jesus unknown to most of the general public. The "day-glow" Jesus is now the Jewish Jesus to many.

We've never stopped praying for the next outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Please join us in asking the Lord to send His Spirit again to touch multitudes of Jewish and Gentile young people with His truth. We need a Jesus Revolution today and we need to be ready for it when it happens.

3) We are not responsible to ignite the flame of revival, but we are responsible to pastor and steward it.

There were several poignant moments in the *Jesus Revolution* movie when Smith gently corrected Frisbee, considering the young evangelist's dramatic style a bit excessive. Five or six years later, Frisbee reemerged in Southern California just as the Vineyard churches were beginning. During those days, I got to know him, as I was a Vineyard pastor during that time.

More can obviously be said about Frisbee's personal challenges, but several things are true. First, God always has and always will use broken people if they love Him and are willing to serve Him. Second, being a pastoral influence in the lives of highly gifted, yet broken people is difficult. I think many of us who were around him would admit that we could have done more to reach out to Frisbee.

Finally, and especially to the naysayers, Frisbee always returned to God's mercy and grace. I have no doubt whatsoever he entered the Lord's presence upon his death in 1993. But the old saying that the church is the only army that shoots its own wounded has some truth. Though the stories are often hidden, there are many men and women used mightily by the Lord who were never really pastored by those in authority toward the purposes of personal healing, restoration and maturity.

Along with the move of the Spirit, there are always parallel movements of emotions, personal agendas and mixed motivations by others seeking to use such an outpouring as a stepping stone for their own personal—and often carnal—purposes and

self-promotion. It is vital that mature men and women of faith provide godly stewardship over these moves of the Spirit, protecting both the participants and the integrity of the move itself.

Recalling the Face of the Jesus Movement, By Oden Fong, a member of music group, Mustard Seed Faith

Before meeting Jesus, I was involved with a group of friends who were attempting to change the world through the use of psychedelic drugs. We saw the need for global change as we observed the wars, racial division, inequality in many levels of society and general hopelessness and confusion.

My first recollection of experiencing the Jesus Movement was noticing the disappearance of several close friends from our Laguna Beach counterculture in 1969. They would reappear in Laguna, changed, transformed into different people, shining with a noticeable bright countenance, like a light had gone on within. They would no longer participate, as they once had, in our particular culture of drug use, sexual interactions, etc. They told me that all they had done to change was to "Ask Jesus Christ into their hearts."

When I finally asked Jesus to reveal Himself to me, I also became transformed and found myself driving up to a little church in the middle of a huge bean field, very visible off one of the main freeways in the city of Costa Mesa, California.

The church's sanctuary appeared like it was designed to hold a congregation of perhaps a hundred or so. However, the day I first attended, it had three times that many in the sanctuary alone! All of the pews were filled with people sitting on the floor, in the aisles and even on the platform (stage). There were folding chairs outside on the patio and the doors were opened so that they could participate.

There was a diverse group of young people, some long-haired, some short, suits, tapestry clothing, beads, jewelry, nice shoes and bare feet! There was a commonality among them. They appeared joined, intertwined, both emotionally and spiritually. I witnessed some of them hugging one another and then, introducing themselves. Strangers accepting one another as family members, a unity I had not experienced.

This was far greater than the gatherings which I had experienced in the past. I had been involved with "Love Ins" at both Elysian Park and Griffith Park in Los Angeles. And I had followed and attended most of the large music festivals which took place in the Sixties.

When the church service began, a young man with long hair, mustache and beard accompanied by a pretty young woman with glasses and guitar, clapped their hands and began singing, "Happy! Happy! Happy! Happy! Happy is the people whose God is the Lord!" The place was filled with this happiness, acceptance, joy and excitement.

Another characteristic of the Jesus Movement was that believers felt naturally compelled to share their faith. Jesus had opened the door to receiving forgiveness of sin, inheritance of the kingdom of God and empowerment from the Holy Spirit.

It was common to share our faith in Christ with whomever we came into contact, wherever we happened to be. It was a great daily adventure, always looking forward to the following day. This was the face of the Jesus Movement as I remember it!

4) True revival results in strong local churches being revived and new churches being planted.

A revival that only populates student ministries, missionary organizations or any other entity at the exclusion of the

local church is not a revival. I've worked with a missionary organization for over 20 years, but we still acknowledge that the local church is the way in which God works to reach the world. We want to see new disciples integrated and solidly connected within local congregations of believers. The church is God's Plan A.

It is vital that, as a result of revival, local faith communities are revitalized and restored, and new churches are planted to make room for new converts. In *Jesus Revolution*, we see that Smith took a tremendous risk in welcoming these new guests, young people who looked nothing like his existing church community. But his church grew, and beyond the revival dynamics of the Jesus Movement, thousands of new churches were planted throughout the country, providing a solid place for growth and maturity for these thousands of new converts to the faith.

I would suggest that a welcoming church must be more than a somewhat disguised liberal term for congregations or denominations that embrace and endorse nonbiblical sexuality. It should be an invitation for us to demonstrate biblical hospitality, welcoming and loving the stranger (see Heb. 13:2). Ministries such as Alpha and Celebrate Recovery are great examples of making these strangers feel welcome within the church.

What would it look like for your faith community to welcome people who don't think they could ever feel welcome in any church? Let's make this our goal as we ask God for revival again. "Lord, send revival" is a great prayer, but are our present-day churches ready for God to answer that prayer?

Isaac Air Freight Lifts Off! By Dan Ruppel, Co-Founder of Isaac Air Freight, Supervising Producer CBS Television, CEO Mastermedia International

It was the mid-1970's in Southern California, the comedic era of Cheech and Chong, Monty Python and the inaugural launch of *Saturday Night Live*! At 20, I was in the midst of forging my own comedy career, regularly performing at Hollywood comedy clubs with my three-man sketch group. Just as we were taking off, an accompanying emptiness began to overwhelm me, and with it came an inner voice saying "Read your Bible." Alone in my bedroom, with a Bible I was given as a child at VBS, I scoured the pages for red letters remembering those were the words of Jesus. Landing on the Sermon on the Mount, I went no further than the first sentence, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!" The impact of this short statement sent me crumpling to the floor in grateful surrender.

My newfound faith in Christ completely transformed my life, putting our "less than wholesome" comedy content in conflict with my longing to live a Christ-honored life. Planning on announcing my comedy exit at our next rehearsal, unbeknownst to me, my two partners also had announcements of their own. By God's extraordinary design, they both independently had come to Christ as well. In that moment, God orchestrated our calling into the foray of pioneering Christian comedy as Isaac Air Freight.

I was aware of Calvary Chapel's reputation as a gathering of long-haired, tattered jean wearing, hippie Jesus freaks who worshipped to rock music. Just my kind of people! I soon joined the crowds at Calvary's Maranatha concerts in praise of our newfound Savior to the musical beat of our generation.

One particular concert, after making our way backstage, we were introduced to Malcolm Wild (of the British singing duo, Malcolm & Alwyn). Having never heard of a Christian *comedy* group, Malcolm invited us to a musician's fellowship he led. In keeping with a radical tradition of openness to artistic expression in the church, Isaac Air Freight was asked to perform at the next Maranatha concert, opening for Oden Fong

(formerly of Mustard See Faith). An overwhelming response soon led to being signed to Calvary Chapel's record label, Maranatha! Music, and with it, the honor of having our first album produced by Tommy Coomes of the groundbreaking Christian rock band, Love Song. With projected sales of 30,000 copies, we saw the national Christian community embrace a new form of comedically explored faith, resulting in sales of 120,000 copies of our seminal effort.

Isaac Air Freight continued to perform for the next 15 years, supported with combined record sales of a half million records. But possibly the most rewarding legacy is the hundreds of talented Christian comedians to follow.

Looking back now, I'm hesitant to guess what might have happened had these three long-haired, hippie comedians not been welcomed and embraced into this vibrant Christian community in the Jesus revolution era. They understood that if God could use rock music, He could also use comedy to bring Him glory!

5) Revival will come as we pray for the next group of 20-somethings who will lead the next revival rather than trying to pretend to be those 20-somethings ourselves.

In videos of Smith's sermons just prior to his death in 2013, you will most likely see him in a suit and tie. For most of his ministry, he continued to dress as a pastor from his generation was generally expected to dress. He was comfortable in his own skin, in contrast to my [Boomer] generation's fixation with never aging and wearing skinny jeans when our bodies are far beyond that trend.

We should not just be strategizing on how to reach the millennials, Gen Zs or whatever other label we attach to younger people these days. We should be praying that God will raise up the next batch of young 20-somethings who will be

filled with the Holy Spirit and can reach their generation. We need to start fathering and mothering these young people rather than competing with them in our efforts toward relevance and being cool.

In the movie, Smith asks his daughter, "So, do you think I'm square?" She replies, tongue-in-cheek, "You are the squarest square I know!" The actor portraying Smith shows a bit of a smile, but the rest is history.

Are we on the cusp of a new Jesus Revolution? I hope and pray so. As older Christ-followers, are we ready to be as open to what that might look like as people like Smith were?

For that, we must genuinely search our hearts and endeavor to have that loving, welcoming attitude toward the next generation. Let's begin even before the revival begins. What if we entered our local churches, looking around for young people to meet and showing an interest in them? What if we learned their names, prayed for them and watched to see what God might do? We don't have to be "cool"; we just have to be loving and genuine.

Lord, hear our prayers!

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