

Hard-won Lessons From the Lockdown Season

Since the launch of Freedom City Church six years ago, we have fasted the last 21 days of January each year. This January, as I was seeking God for a fresh word for our work in our urban church planning model, I felt two words strongly—"recalibrate" and "establish." "Calibrate" means to measure against the standard. "Recalibrate" means it is time to put things back in their proper place against the standard. "Establish" means to create something firm that will last a long time and cause it to grow and multiply.

Systems can gradually drift off course. We periodically need a fresh point of reference to recalibrate. 2022 is a year of recalibrating and establishing, a time to get back to fundamental spiritual habits: prayer, fasting, evangelism, solitude, quieting our spirits to create space for encounters with God. Our standard remains Christ, His Word and the basic Christian disciplines.

In April of 2020, Missouri Gov. Parson issued his lockdown order, "Stay at Home Missouri." From April 6-24, we stayed home. After years of working 60-70 hours each week, planting our church and recovery homes, I was forced to stay home with my family. It was awesome. I noticed how my 4-year-old daughter became affectionate and loving toward me. My relationships with my wife and kids grew deeper.

Relationships require time together to grow in intimacy. It's the same with our relationship with God. We often focus on His great promises and lose sight of the promiser in the process. I was building a home without intimacy with my family while growing a great ministry, but I let myself get too busy to spend time at the feet of Jesus. The lockdowns taught me to get back to basics, to the place where all I wanted was God.

At the end of 2021, it looked as though we could lose our building as the \$643,000 balloon note came due. COVID had hurt us financially. My wife and I knew God had given us that building, so I called my leadership team together to fast and pray for 21 days. We separated ourselves to seek God for favor and breakthrough. I reached out to everyone I knew, including the pastor of the nearby megachurch we used to attend. He felt led by God to take up an offering for us at their next service. The church raised over \$1 million to pay off our building, hire a staff, replace our HVAC and even purchase another home for women. Standing ovations and shouts erupted at all their campuses as people gave generously to our church. This was indeed an 11th-hour miracle. Again, time alone in intimacy with the promiser is the only way we will realize His promises.

I believe the stage is being set for massive new revival, and before 2030 we will see that revival hit the USA as in the days of the Argentine Revival, Azusa Street and Brownsville. An army of 11th-hour revivalists will arise to make ready the bride for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Revival starts with us. First, we need to revive the fire of our love for and intimacy with God through much time in His presence. Spiritual disciplines will lead us into a more intimate walk with Jesus. Seek the reviver, not the revival. Second, passion for souls is the key to a sustained revival that will impact the nations. Jonathan Edwards, a leader in the First Great Awakening, said, "If a revival ceases to be about souls—it will cease." God is passionate about souls. The mission of our Lord Jesus centered on the lost. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

This next—and possibly the final—great revival before Jesus returns will be marked by the presence of God and a wave of evangelism such as this world has never seen. Revival will start in us, and God will then move in the church and make

Himself known in our communities.

Oh, God, “that You would rend the heavens and come down” (Isa. 64:1a), that the dews of heaven would become a torrential downpour, bringing many sons and daughters to glory.