

Is It Time for Another Jesus Movement?

If you are over 50, you probably remember it. It would do you well to reminisce a bit.

If you are under 50, you may not know much about it. You need to read on to appreciate what God did and wants to do again, differently but even more powerfully.

In the midst of a very turbulent and discouraging time in our nation's history, God intervened in a supernatural way during a five-year period from 1968 to 1973. A grass-roots spiritual movement burst forth on the scene with a soft explosion that revolutionized millions of lives. It was called the "Jesus People Movement."

Recently, *Christianity Today* magazine selected their annual "Book of the Year" award. They chose *God's Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America* by Larry Eskridge. It boldly proclaims that "the Jesus People Movement was one of the most important American religious movements of the second half of the 20th century" and that it "must be considered one of the formative powers that shaped American youth in the late 1960s and 1970s."

Are you aware of what happened? Do you realize the significance of this divine intervention for the church and the culture?

Here's the deal: Ecclesiastes 7:13 tells us, "Consider what God has done." In the midst of the daily barrage of disturbing and depressing developments in our culture, we desperately need something like this to stir up memories of a time when God's fire fell upon our nation. Then let's remind ourselves that He wants to rekindle that flame afresh today!

Rewinding the Tape

The 1960s was a disturbing, unsettling time of cataclysmic change in the United States of America. President Kennedy was assassinated; prayer and Bible reading were banned from public schools; the “British Invasion” played a major role in bringing rock ‘n’ roll, unrestrained sexual activity and drugs to our shores; the Gay, Women’s Lib, Anti-War and Black Power movements exploded on the national scene; and when Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. were assassinated amidst student riots and burning cities, *Time* magazine declared 1968 as the “knife blade that severed past from future.”

Rebellion and cynicism abounded. A hippie and drug counterculture blossomed as America’s youth were seduced even as they are today by the radical gay agenda and secularists. I know firsthand because I was there pounding away on my drums for a Cleveland rock band called The Lost Souls. Like scores of confused youth, I was lost and in need of God’s saving grace.

Then something unexpectedly happened. Smack dab in the epicenter of California’s Haight-Ashbury hippie subculture, the Holy Spirit began drawing bummed-out and disillusioned young people to a genuine encounter with Jesus Christ! Only God knows how many people and for how long they had prayed for this divine intervention.

Scores of naive guys and gals who had grabbed their love beads, put flowers in their hair and fallen in line behind Pied Piper Scott McKenzie for a “Summer of Love” in San Francisco (Recall his hypnotic song? “If you’re going to San Francisco/ You’re gonna meet some gentle people there. ... All across the nation ... there’s a whole generation with a new explanation/ People in motion, people in motion.”) were suddenly being radically converted and set free from drugs, sexual immorality and deception.

New converts began enthusiastically pointing their one-way finger heavenward and hitting the streets to tell others about a living, dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. They were baptized—many in the ocean! They swayed to new forms of music and found themselves gathering informally in coffee houses where they shared testimonies about the living God.

Like wildfire, this move of God spread across the country from city to city before—imagine—the advent of cellphones, computers, smartphones, tablets, Facebook, Twitter and other social media.

God imparted a burden among young people to reach their generation. He instilled in them a hunger for His Word, evangelism and genuine community. There was spontaneity and a simplicity that characterized the come-as-you-are gatherings.

New and innovative expressions of art were displayed through Jesus newspapers, posters, bumper stickers, T-shirts, jewelry and buttons. Rock and folk music creatively communicated their beliefs and new identity to curious crowds. Bottom line: God had intervened and was at work to rescue a generation that Satan, just like today, was trying to destroy.

Influential ministries like Calvary Chapel, the Vineyard, Willow Creek, Jesus People USA, plus outdoor Jesus festivals like “Cornerstone,” “Creation” and the Florida “Jesus” festivals as well as the entire Contemporary Christian Music industry and Jesus Music radio all trace their roots back to this incredible Jesus People visitation.

Musicals that continue running to this day, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Godspell* were birthed. Leaders like Steve Strang, Greg Laurie, Mike Bickle, Michael Brown, Scott Ross, Bob Weiner, Lee Grady, Che Ahn, Lou Engle, Rick Joyner, Arthur Blessitt, Phil Keaggy, Andre Crouch, the late Keith Green and Larry Norman—plus scores of others—recognize how God called and fashioned them in or around this season of unique

blessing.

I was converted in 1969 in the Jesus People outpouring. In the nation's capital I aligned with a dedicated woman named Lydia Little and dozens of others who had been radically saved in this season. Starting with a handful in her home, a ministry was launched that in a few short years 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 healed. The majority were middle school, high school, college students and young professionals.

Cars lined the streets outside the facility and people arrived early in order to get a seat. A United States senator, son of a Supreme Court Justice and a young evangelist named Sid Roth sat in the crowd.

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.

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 Movement Captures National Attention

In June 1971, the Jesus People phenomenon landed on the cover of *Time* magazine, which featured an eight-page, positive report.

In his book, Eskridge cites a front-page story in *The Wall Street Journal*, an article in *Newsweek* as well as coverage in *Life* magazine. Here is how he stated it:

"In many ways, the advent of the Jesus people must have seemed

like an oasis in the desert of several years' worth of distressing news about the younger generation. The Jesus movement had, as one article put it: 'an uncommon morning freshness, a buoyant atmosphere of hope and love along with the usual rebel zeal. A love that seems more sincere than a slogan, deeper than the fast-fading sentiments of the flower children.'

"For adults buffeted by several years worth of bad news about the sexual revolution, the rise of the drug culture, the generation gap, the domestic chaos and violence surrounding the civil rights movement and the seemingly intractable nightmare that was the Vietnam War, both over there and on the home front, the Jesus People were a refreshing bit of good youth news."

To give an accurate report, the Jesus People Movement did have its casualties and counterfeits. The leading evangelist was "Samson-like," who died at 43 of AIDS as he did not make a clean break from homosexuality. Another individual yielded increasingly to pride and ended up in polygamy, sex trafficking and assault. He is currently in prison for life. The "Fallen Angel" pioneer of all the Jesus music went through divorces and World magazine reported he fathered a son with an Australian woman during one of his tours. He died at 60.

In spite of the blemishes, the Jesus Movement was an authentic visitation from God. Let's humbly learn lessons to avert the errors while gaining motivation to seek God with passion that He in our time might be merciful, spare us His wrath and do it again, however and through whomever He sovereignly chooses.

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.

"Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your

deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy" (Hab. 3:2).

Please share this article with five to 10 others to encourage them plus get them praying and believing!

Larry Tomczak is a best-selling author and cultural commentator with over 40 years of trusted ministry experience. His passion is to bring perspective, analysis and insight from a biblical worldview. He loves people and loves awakening them to today's cultural realities and the responses needed for the bride of Christ—His church—to become influential in all spheres of life once again.