

# **Spirit-Filled Pastor Asks, 'Would You Have Been Embarrassed in the Upper Room?'**

Although I consider myself a conservative, I often wonder how so many conservatives can quote people like George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards but conveniently avoid the mighty, uncommon moves of the Spirit that occurred under their preaching. Is it because these things don't fit within their theological framework?

Although many powerful experiences during these spiritual awakenings parallel the books of Acts, many critics still refuse to accept them. They avoid words and phrases like "revival," "moves of the Spirit" and "the deeper life," but these themes are used throughout the Bible. How many times did God say that He would "pour out His Spirit"? How often was the heart-cry of God's people focused on revival—"Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?" (Ps. 85:6). And isn't seeking God with all our heart part of the deeper life? Absolutely. The living water Jesus spoke about is not dead and stagnant.

Why would we fear encountering God in powerful and profound ways? To be stoic and stiff is fine for a graveyard, but not for a dynamic worship service. I wonder if these types of people would be embarrassed if they were in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on that historic day in Acts 2?

## **Excited About the Presence of God**

If a pigskin can travel a hundred yards across a football field and millions get emotional, shouldn't Christians saved

by the power of God get emotional when they experience Him? Sadly, 1 Corinthians 14:40 is often used as a fire extinguisher to quickly quench anything out of the ordinary: "Let all things [in the church] be done decently and in order."

Sometimes I'm accused of being "too conservative" because I want to honor this verse. I believe a "circus" environment is not healthy or beneficial, but I also believe a cemetery setting can be just as damaging and damning. When sinful men encounter a holy God, it's often controversial. We need shepherds who can steward the flame of revival, not snuff it out.

I will never forget many years ago when a man found his way to the altar during closing worship. He was weeping and crying out to God. I was a little nervous wondering what people were thinking. As I was praying, his friend came over and said that the man at the altar had just found his son hanging in the garage—suicide had taken his life. I immediately made my way to the altar and wept with him. I was flooded with so much emotion that I couldn't even pray. God broke me that day.

### **God May Ruin Your Schedule to Fix Your Heart**

Another time when the service didn't go as expected was when I was speaking at a friend's church. The power of God was so apparent that I could barely get through my message without breaking down. When the service was over, no one left. There was a holy hush as tears were heard throughout the sanctuary. The first service ran into the second service (this happens on occasion at the church I lead as well). The parking lot was a mess, but it was a beautiful problem to have. Sometimes we're more worried about parking than we are about people. God may ruin your schedule to repair your heart.

George Whitefield, once perplexed by the emotional things taking place when he preached, asked Lady Huntingdon for

advice on containing it. She said, "Oh George, leave them alone. What they are experiencing from God will do far more than you're preaching."

You'd have a better chance of damming up Niagara Falls than containing a move of God.

### **Bold but Not Weird**

To be clear, I'm not validating weird behavior. Just because something is odd doesn't mean that it's of God. The fruit of the Spirit is not weirdness; it's boldness. It doesn't promote hysteria; it promotes holiness.

Granted, there are times of strong conviction, such as when people held onto trees because they feared that they were falling into hell during Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." And people did cry out to God and fall on the ground under the strong conviction of sin during the revivals of George Whitefield and John Wesley, but this is because sin, righteousness and holiness were preached. The apostle Paul wrote that if an unbelieving or uninformed person entered a meeting where the Holy Spirit was moving, he would experience conviction, and "falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you" (1 Cor. 14:25b). True revival is emotional and unpredictable.

Again, don't misunderstand what I'm saying: theology is vital, but are theology students also encouraged to fast and pray as well as study? How often are they taught brokenness and repentance in addition to translating the Greek language? How often are they taught the surrendered life? We can sometimes be more concerned about a master's degree than a degree from the master.

Are you truly a lover of His presence? Or would you have been embarrassed in the upper room? Take time now and humble yourself before God. I believe a genuine spiritual awakening

can take place. God will rend the heavens and fill you with His Spirit if you humble yourself before Him.

*This is excerpted from my series on revival and my new book, Oh God, Would You Rend the Heavens? Understanding and Contending for a Genuine Spiritual Awakening. For more, click [here](#).*

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