

Solace in the Unknown: One Year After the Asbury Outpouring

Driving past the semi-circle of Asbury's campus, posts linked by neon green rope section off worn, red-bricked buildings from easy public access. While the posts may seem to be keeping others away they are, in my mind, protecting a memory.

Asbury students hear about the spiritual Outpouring that took place on campus a year ago every day, whether in conversations among friends, classrooms or chapel. Discussions are inevitable, for an impromptu visit of 50,000 people in a town of 6,000 typically would be considered inconceivable. But despite the improbability of it all, throngs of people lined sidewalks across Wilmore to worship with fellow believers, hungry to encounter the Holy Spirit upon entering Hughes Auditorium.

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As an Asbury student at the time (I have since graduated), I still battle conflicting, lingering emotions from last February. When you briefly taste something unknown, it is hard to formulate a well-rounded opinion. It could feel instantly familiar, but the aftertaste could be foreign. A strange initial flavor shock could turn someone away wholly, unwilling to revisit, or make someone crave it even more. The emotions of my peers regarding the Outpouring also range across a broad spectrum: some roll their eyes and their limbs sag out of tiredness, others can be argumentative, fighting to prove it was either a hoax or a genuine expression of God's power. Some remain indifferent because they say they encounter God in

different ways.

I will never understand the reach of God's power and love, and I am not supposed to. What I do know, as a follower of Jesus, is that there is grace for every single person's view of the Outpouring. One of the most beautiful parts of this encounter is that it was, and still is, so individualized. God intentionally created all of us, so He knows how to reach us intimately. I experienced the first few days of the Outpouring, and I still believe I had a personal experience with God, standing between the worn rows of Hughes.

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Last February, I was uneasy and uncertain about my purpose in relationships with others and my career choice. Grappling this spiritually heavy event forced me to face a lot of questions I did not have the answers to. To face my questions and the thoughts of my peers, I wrote an article for Asbury's student newspaper. It covered my own experience and my dreams and hopes for the Outpouring. I was incredibly nervous about the response, as it held the goodness of the Outpouring with caution. What I did not expect were the validating and encouraging responses from my peers, my community and the world. God met me through that article in a way I never anticipated. My life is richer and more profound through this encounter, but I have found that with a depth of understanding, more questions arise.

In a day and age when statistics are everything and numbers represent impact, it is impossible to gauge and count God's movement from the Outpouring. We are only a sliver in the sacred mosaic of God's timing. Just like Moses was only allowed to see the back of God, for some of us, this is our glimpse of Him. Every experience from now on will be different, and we will never see our faith the same. No matter what we experienced, positive or negative, may we continue to

stay loyal to the kingdom of God, setting an example of love and grace for every person on Earth. May we continue to ask questions, think deeply and share the thoughts that scare us.

Last year, I asked, "When the dust settles, what will remain?" And this year, I still ask the same question. We may never know the answer, but we can place our trust in the God who does. {eoa}

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