

Jim Bakker: The Most Critical Key to Revival

The most remarkable thing happened on Sept. 11, 2001. In one hour, 19 people had shaken the country to its absolute core. For the second time in 60 years, a foreign power had attacked the United States on its own soil. Americans felt vulnerable and guilty, and they knew there was only one place to go. And that was the church. Business after business put up flags and put "God Bless America" on their marquees and in their windows. America wanted God. Revival was beginning, or so it seemed.

Weeks later, churches were back to their regular attendance numbers. What could have been the greatest revival on a national scale had quickly come to a halt.

The Three R's for Change

This poor attempt at a revival lacked two things. The first was repentance, the prerequisite for any revival to take root. It was much like the parable where the seeds fell on rocky ground with no good soil beneath them with which to take root (Matt. 13:5). One must first repent to invite true revival.

Once you have true repentance (the first R) and the start of revival (the second R), there must be a final action, the most critical of all the three R's: reformation. This is something often overlooked in the revival process. It is not enough to repent of wrongdoing and revive your faith. You must be willing to reform your life. But what is the purpose of each of these actions?

Have you ever apologized to someone because you were told to? More often than not, your heart was not in that apology, and the other person recognized it immediately! To repent, you must truly believe, feel and express your wrongdoing and sins

to God.

Revival is seeking God with fervor in your spirit. It is allowing Him to cleanse you from that which you are repenting and fill those holes in your heart and spirit with His Word and the Holy Spirit. It is when you set your soul on fire for His will to be done and not your own. It is taking up your cross and following Him, dying to yourself daily, and fully devoting everything you are to Him.

But what about reformation? What is it, and what sets it apart from both repentance and revival?

Reformation is an act of true commitment to Jesus. It is a conscious decision to move forward in a new way of thinking and never returning to the one you came from. You must be willing to discard your past, forget your bad habits and work daily toward a new normal, one that now reflects a godly lifestyle.

Release Your Anger

Anger is a natural, albeit highly dangerous, emotion. When we let anger consume us, it begins to control us. You can perform swift and irreparable damage while your anger reigns supreme, such as compromising an important relationship with a loved one or employer or even destroying someone else's livelihood.

Many times in the Bible, God cautions us to manage our anger. Psalm 37:8b, for instance, tells us that anger "surely leads to evil deeds." Ephesians 4:26 even warns us, "Be angry but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger."

While you are angry, you can be easily swayed by the evil one, the manipulating spirits that are running rampant and even the great delusion that is on the world today. You are more easily deceived and convinced that the broad path is the better way, and you leave the straight and narrow. You will be blinded to the fact that the broad path will lead only to destruction.

A friend of mine once shared this powerful quote: "Bitterness is the poison you drink hoping the other person dies."

When you act in anger, it is difficult to listen to reason, much less the Word of the Lord. You will miss the danger signs, and it could be too late! You will be unaware of the danger you inflict on yourself, your reputation or others until your anger leaves you, and you are left in the wake of your own destruction.

Proverbs 14:29 says, "He who is slow to wrath is of great understanding, but he who is hasty of spirit exalts folly." Understanding what is to come will be your saving grace. Allowing your anger to blind you could condemn you.

How does one exactly get rid of anger and bitterness?

Forgiveness Is Freedom

"And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation" (Luke 11:4, NLT).

In Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus expounds on forgiveness.

"For if you forgive men for their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men for their sins, neither will your Father forgive your sins" (Matt. 6:14-15, MEV).

Forgiveness has incredible power. God is willing to forgive you for all your unrighteousness, all your sins, everything under the sun, and place it all under the blood of Jesus. But just as in praying for salvation, you must be the one to take the first and complete step. I learned this the hard way inside my prison cell. Forgiveness was the final barricade that had to be removed in my own life, so I could begin my journey to restoration. To start my healing process, I had to forgive everyone who had wronged me from the bottom of my

heart. Jesus commands:

“So also My heavenly Father will do to each of you, if from your heart you do not forgive your brother for his trespasses” (Matt. 18:35).

Forgiveness was the key to my spiritual and physical freedom. Had I not been able to forgive, I would have been forever condemned to a spiritual and mental prison of my own making.

Why is forgiveness so powerful? And why must it be done? Anger, bitterness and resentment take root in unforgiveness. Feuds between family members start with the inability to forgive a single wrong act. Conflicts within the church often begin when someone feels slighted by another church member or staff member. Unforgiveness will allow bitterness to fester and will harden the heart of the one who cannot forgive. How can we be expected to love one another when our hearts are as hard as diamonds and as cold as ice?

Hebrews 12:15 warns us that we must watch “diligently so that no one falls short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness spring up to cause trouble, and many become defiled by it.” Proverbs 10:12 reminds us, “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.”

Finally, 1 John 4:16b states that “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.” John goes on to say that “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar. For whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (v. 20).

The inability or unwillingness to forgive will have drastic consequences, not just for you, but for all those whom you are supposed to reach for the kingdom of God.

Devour God’s Word

A good friend once asked me the top three things I learned in

prison. I smiled and answered, "Jesus. Jesus. Jesus."

My friend immediately scoffed. "That's really one thing, Jim."

I supposed my friend was correct, so I gave him what he asked for. "Obedience. Obedience. Obedience." Anticipating another objection, I added, "And the Word. The Word. The Word."

Jesus.

Obedience.

The Word.

Those are three incredibly simple and easy-to-grasp concepts. But they are most certainly a challenge to practice every day. You cannot know Jesus without constantly staying in the Word. And you cannot continue consuming the Word without obeying what it says. Only by knowing the Word, knowing our Father's voice, can you navigate the tumultuous waters we are currently sailing in.

Stay in your Bible every day. Devour it as you would a hearty meal or decadent dessert. If you can, get a Bible with excellent study notes or even a thick concordance. Look for the parallels and patterns in Scripture to see God's amazing grace. Check every cross-reference in the Scripture and find those threads woven into this great tapestry. Take care even in reading those boring genealogy passages. These names often have fantastic meanings or even have been connected to incredible acts within Scripture. To me, these lists prove that every life has a purpose, and God does not forget who listens to Him and obeys His voice. Our names mean so much to Him that He writes them in the Book of Life in heaven (Rev. 3:5).

To help me study, I use specialized software on my computer to study the original Greek and Hebrew. Some translations are very poor renderings of the original Scriptures. Some words

have been added by the translators, and other words have been improperly translated.

There are free resources available on the internet as well, especially with Greek and Hebrew meanings. Still, I highly recommend you invest in a pair of these word study books, as well as a few commentaries. Find a church whose pastor digs into the Word and brings new manna and revelation to every service.

No matter what, dig, dig, dig! His Word is inspiring and enriching every day and filled with new revelations and secrets just waiting for you to unlock.

The Invisible Battle and the Good News of Hope

“Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your waist girded with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, having your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace, and above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

“Pray in the Spirit always with all kinds of prayer and supplication. To that end be alert with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Eph. 6:10-18).

Our battle is not with one another—not with our neighbor, our mayor, our governor, our congressmen or our president. It is with Satan and his minions. It is the spiritual forces who

have manipulated those on this earth to do their master's bidding in a massive attempt to corrupt and steal our Father's creation. I will not sit here and tell you the road will be easy. After 81 years of my own life, I can assure you that some days are harder than others.

You must surround yourself with truth, live in righteousness, speak softly in love and peace, guard your faith, keep your mind on Christ and be ready to fight the schemes of the evil one using the Scripture the Lord has armed you with.

And no matter what, do not waver. The storm will soon get worse; the boat will be rocked from side to side; and it will not let up. Stand firm in the Lord, and keep your strength up. Through your faithfulness and diligence, you will become a light in the darkness, and through you, many will come to know the truth and be saved.

I have read the end of the Bible. Revelation is not a tragedy. No, it's a story of hope and victory, the greatest love letter to the church! He has heard the cries of the saints and those who have not loved their lives, even unto death. One day the heavens will open. At the mouth of the heavens will be Jesus Christ on His white horse. At His side will be all the armies of heaven, and the final battle will begin. Our Savior will be victorious, and we will be reunited with our Father in heaven. A great reward awaits each of us, and it is more precious than anything this world can provide.

You can make it!

Jim Bakker has authored more than a dozen books and is considered one of today's experts on the book of Revelation. The Jim Bakker Show is an hour-long daily broadcast available to up to 1.6 billion people throughout 200 countries around the world through DirecTV and DISH Network. Jim and his wife, Lori, reside in the Branson, Missouri, area.

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