

The Jesus Fast: A War Manual and Global Summons

Once there was a Jesus movement. If those words bring to mind the strange and glorious salvation song by which thousands were saved during the 1960s and 1970s, you are off by approximately 2,000 years.

While every true revival is its own sort of Jesus movement, there was, in fact, an original: It started in roughly A.D. 30 with a guy named John the Baptist boldly preparing the way with fasting and a message of repentance. His ministry thrived, yet he voluntarily shuttered his operation in order for the greater ministry of Christ to begin. After John handed the reins to Jesus, the Lord was driven into the wilderness to fast 40 days and be tempted by Satan. Emerging victorious from that encounter, the Jesus movement began.

I am highly interested in this sequence of events, for I believe it is more than simple history; it represents a pattern. The fasting of John and the fasting of Jesus are as important as every other part of their ministries; there is no Jesus movement without them. This is the wisdom behind what theologians call a “high view of the inspiration of Scripture”: Nothing is left to chance; every detail matters.

The details of history matter too, and history moves in circles. This is partly because “there is nothing new under the sun ... no remembrance of earlier things” (Eccl. 1:9, 11). Since humanity is bent toward evil, man has been repeating the same sins for thousands of years with great forgetfulness and tragic predictability.

Yet Romans 5:20 offers a powerful antidote: “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (emphasis mine). This tells us that no matter how deeply our historical ruts of

rebellion may run, God's nature is more faithful than our sin. Where we cycle in sin, God cycles in grace. Negative generational patterns are countered by redemptive 40-, 50- and 70-year cycles of testing, hope and renewal. Our folly may be great—and it is!—yet it is surpassed by His greater mercy. Our part is to turn toward Him, but our “appeal to heaven” (in the words of my friend, Dutch Sheets) is most effective when combined with massive, corporate prayer and fasting. Biblically, this is the divine reset button, the spiritual chiropractic adjustment that aligns Earth with heaven. In this book, I will show you many reasons why I believe that statement to be true. Herein lies the possibility of revival in every generation.

The Jesus Fast is both war manual and global summons, but ultimately and primarily, it is a book of hope. I want to challenge our collective forgetfulness, and perhaps despair, by remembering former revivals and awakenings. As you observe and discern the prayer patterns of history and Scripture, I believe the Holy Spirit within you will begin to rise, compelling you to seize our present throbbing hour of human history and lay hold of God with passion, focus and commitment.

Awakening of a Flag Bearer

“The effective leader hears God's voice when all other ears are deaf. He hears God's call, is unwavering in his commitment, and unexplainable in human rationale in his power with people.”

This aptly describes the late Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. In 1994, Bright began to feel a tremendous burden for America, knowing the future of his nation lay in the balance. In the midst of a private 40-day fast, God spoke to his heart that the greatest harvest in the history of America and the world would begin by the turn of the millennium—if God's people would come together as a nation

and humble themselves in prayer and fasting. As he recounted:

“God has never spoken to me audibly, and I am not given to prophecy. But that morning, His message to me was clear: “America and much of the world will before the end of the year 2000 experience a great spiritual awakening! And this revival will spark the greatest spiritual harvest in the history of the church.”

I sensed the Holy Spirit was telling me that millions of believers must seek God with all their hearts in fasting and prayer before He will intervene to save America. I was impressed by the Spirit to pray that 2 million believers will humble themselves by seeking God in 40-day fasts.

Compelled by this insight, Bright wrote his pivotal book, *The Coming Revival: America’s Call to Fast, Pray, and “Seek God’s Face.”* We use the word pivotal for truly affecting books—something is pivotal because we pivot. When this book released to the public in 1995, it invoked a remarkable, cross-denominational response leading up to the year 2000. Hundreds of thousands fasted.

Bright was God’s catalyst for the hour, a “hinge man,” if you will, by which history pivoted in the collective response to his summons. In *Firefall: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals*, Malcolm McDow and Alvin Reid describe the dynamic:

“The patterns for national revivals are that one or a few leaders emerge as the flagbearers on the national scene and many leaders provide (additional) leadership in smaller geographic areas. Revival leaders . . . interpret the renewal to the people, organize to conserve results, and direct activities under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. ... Before revival ignites a nation it first ignites a leader.”

Bright prophetically provoked the entire United States by

boldly stating, “The promise of the coming revival carries one condition ... believers by the millions must first humble themselves and seek His face in fasting and prayer.”

When a man like Bill Bright, arguably one of the greatest evangelists and campus movement leaders in church history, calls for a 40-day fast, it is not time to quibble about the particulars of doctrine and timing. Often we can reason ourselves out of making history with God because our flesh wants an easier way and our minds are clouded with unbelief. Second Chronicles 20:20 offers a 20/20 vision for the church: “Believe his prophets, and you will succeed” (ESV).

So the church did. Waves of believers, hundreds of thousands at a time, took up the call to fast and pray. I remember a well-known Youth With A Mission (YWAM) leader telling me he had almost given up hope for America, inwardly resigning himself to focus on bringing the gospel to other nations. But when Bill Bright called the fast, the leader said, “Now I am filled with hope.”

Why? Because the mightiest weapon in the Christian arsenal is humility, expressed in fasting, combined with prayer. Even in his name, Bill Bright was modeling John the Baptist, for Jesus said, “That man John was a lamp that burns and brightly shines” (John 5:35, ISV). I believe God likes puns!

In January of 1996, I refused to be the last entry into the call to fasting and prayer Bright had issued. Similarly, my co-author, Dean Briggs, undertook his first forty-day fast in response to Dr. Bright’s summons. It was a pivotal moment in his life. Such moments are transferable; they impart DNA.

One of the questions of this book is, “What happened to the Bright fast?” There is an important matter of language and timing here. Many would ask, “Where is the harvest?” because they equate great spiritual awakening with harvest. But look again at what Bright predicted. His word was actually that

awakening would lead to harvest.

A remarkable spiritual awakening did indeed begin before the end of the year 2000 in the form of a global prayer movement. We believe the promised harvest is coming ... and now is.

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