

The Miraculous Revival That Happened When Young People Prayed

“There’s a scarlet thread of redemption that the Lord weaves through our lives,” Doug Stringer shares. “Just as God has done throughout history, so it is true in our present day.”

As Doug shared at the University of Houston’s Baptist Student Ministry that night, he reminded the young adults of past revivals.

“God takes seemingly impossible or unlikely situations and uses them for good. One such example occurred in the midst of World War II,” he said. The Lord raised up a young Japanese American believer in the midst of World War II and used him to spark a revival at Baylor University, a revival that continues to impact lives to this day.

Reiji (Ray) Hoshizaki was saved as a young man and became a student at Baylor University, preparing for seminary. While meeting with other students and leaders, Ray sensed it was time to hold revival meetings. In the midst of the war era, naturally people were concerned about the future. Rather than calling in a known evangelist, the consensus was Ray and the other students should start hosting the meetings.

What began with a handful of students sparked revival meetings that expanded beyond Baylor University. Extending through Texas and beyond those meetings resulted in many salvations.

In 1945, before school began, students prayed together at a retreat for a spiritual revival on Baylor’s campus. These prayers were answered and the movement happened across Baylor’s campus. Through several student leaders adamant about sharing Christ, several hundred students were gathered and

marched from downtown Waco to campus with a sign that read "Youth for Revival."

"Soon the student leaders were getting requests to lead revivals elsewhere. The movement swept the South in the 1940s and 1950s." (Flagg, A. Nov. 10, 2011, Baylor Lariat as cited the *Baylor Lariat*.)

Now in their 80s and 90s, these men and women have continued to walk with the Lord and influence lives. Among them are business professionals, ministers and leaders including Howard Butts, the founder of HEB grocers.

Ray Hoshizaki was an unassuming man and to speak with him, one might not know the impact he had. It's in some of the Baptist historical writings and in *Riding the Wind of God: A Personal History of the Youth Revival Movement*, that one would find Ray mentioned as a key person during the revival that spread through Waco. Following his training, he became the first missionary sent out by the Baptist Missions Board to serve in Japan after the War. He and his wife Alice served there for many years and retired to Waco—where his journey began.

Stringer continues to share about his own friendship with Ray, which spanned over two decades. In this too, God was weaving a thread. When Doug's step father, Randy Boman, retired from the military, he and Doug's mother moved to Waco. Since his stepfather was born and raised in Waco with many relatives there, this would be home for them; in fact Doug's stepfather and mother have been laid to rest in Waco. Doug's mom was originally from Japan and shared stories of what it was like as a child during the war years.

The Japanese-American population is a close-knit community and as Waco is a smaller college town, it was providential that Alice Hoshizaki and Ann Ayako Boman would meet. They became friends and Alice invited Ann to a Bible study they hosted. Over time as Doug would visit his family, he was introduced to

Ray and Alice Hoshizaki. As a Japanese-American, Doug has been invited on numerous occasions to minister at Japanese Christian churches in Houston, churches which Ray Hoshizaki served as overseer.

Although Doug speaks in a variety of Asian churches, he always has a place in his heart for the place of his birth and the land of his mother. His prayer continues that “the nation known as the Land of the Rising Sun become known as the Land of the Risen Son!”

Over time, Doug connected with Waco-area pastors and through the years, he has been a guest minister at several area churches. As often as possible during those visits, Doug would meet with Ray. In recent years Doug and his wife, Lisa would keep in touch with him and later his widow, Alice.

“I gleaned and learned from him,” Stringer says. “I would have never known the significance of his life, the depth and width of how God used him during and after WWII, without probing more during my conversations with Ray and Alice. I had to draw it out of him because of his humility.” That’s the quality you found in Ray.”

Humility is a principle Stringer emphasizes to young leaders and the mature alike.

One meeting with Ray in particular impacted Doug’s life in a way he didn’t expect.

“Following a Texas Asian youth Camp at Baylor University, Ray and I met at a local Chinese restaurant. We both chuckled because here we were, two Japanese Americans eating Chinese; it was ironic. But to Asians, humorous.

Ramiro Pena, Pastor of Christ the King Baptist Church, joined us. During lunch, Hoshizaki-san looked at me; grabbed my hands and said, I need to pray for you. With tears in his eyes, he prayed to Jesus and shared a word with me. ‘I believe the Lord

wants to use you to minister to the leaders of Japan and the royal family because as they are touched, the nation will follow.' I've longed and prayed for the nation of my birth and land of my mother but looked at him and said, But Hoshizaki-san, I don't even speak Japanese, how am I going to do that? He simply looked at me with a smile and said, 'In Christ all things are possible.'"

Pastor Ramiro remembers it well.

"I had read about Ray in the writings about the Baylor Revival and was grateful for the opportunity to meet him. When he shared that word with Doug, it felt like a very holy moment. I also felt reinvigorated to believe that God would one day again, do something significant that would come out of Baylor University and other Youth Revivals."

Stringer has pondered that prayer for many years and in the aftermath of the Japanese Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011, it came to pass. While Stringer and Somebody Cares, the ministry he founded, were involved in relief efforts, he found himself before leaders of the Japanese DIET (equivalent of our US Congress or a Parliament), business leaders and other prefectural leaders from various parts of Japan. "While I was speaking with, praying for and ministering to them, I remembered Hoshizaki-san's prayer."

Stringer's ministry connections to Waco continue. In the aftermath of the West, Texas explosion in April of 2013, Somebody Cares was involved in recovery efforts.

"Connecting and empowering the local churches is key during times of disaster," Stringer says.

Because of the relationships developed over the years, Somebody Cares connected and served through Waco partnerships. From resources, gift cards and funds, Somebody Cares supported the recovery work and honored to serve the process.

Ministry opportunities take the Stringers to Waco to this day. Leaders such as Ramiro Pena of Christ the King Baptist Church and member of the Board of Regents of Baylor University; Jimmy Siebert of Antioch Churches; and Kevin Harrison of West Coast Bible College and Victorious Life Church are long-time friends. They along with several others were the organizers and members of the executive team for the "The Gathering WACO" to at Baylor's McLane Stadium on March 29, 2015. Because of his connections and long-term investment into Waco, they felt it was important for Stringer to be one of those sharing during The Gathering WACO.

The Gathering WACO became an opportunity for churches and the body of Christ of Waco and surrounding communities to join their hearts so others may come to know Christ. "It's time for Spiritual Awakening. And as we gather, in our hearts we'll hear the echoes of the prayers from a former generation crying out for Revival."

For the young people gathered at the University of Houston that night in December 2014, at the most ethnically diverse university in the nation in the most ethnically diverse city in the nation, the exhortation was to invest their lives for Kingdom purposes. Prayers prayed and their endeavors will have a perpetual impact. Live and leave a lasting legacy.

It's over time that the impact of each of our lives becomes known. This was true for Ray Hoshizaki, and true for each of us.

During Stringer's conversations with Alice Hoshizaki, she mentioned that their children really didn't realize the depth of the impact their father had, until they heard about it from other students while at Baylor U. They would come up to the Hoshizakis' children and ask if they were related to Ray. Then they began to read and hear about their dad. What a humble man.

During his lifetime, Ray may not have seen or realized the depth of his impact but in Japan today and across America, there are professors, business owners and many whose lives were changed by the Baylor U. Revival in Waco in the 1940s. "Hoshizaki-san may not have seen with his eyes the fruit of the years of investment as a missionary in Japan but through others, it will be fulfilled. After his passing, I felt a strong leading to keep in touch with his widow which Lisa and I did until her recent passing in November 2014."

As Stringer shares at leadership trainings and as encouragement to believers, "the Bible is clear that there is a scarlet thread of redemption. God weaves a thread throughout our lives for lasting legacy." As he often states, "we sow to our future."

Today two of Ray and Alice's children are missionaries to Japan. "Ray and Alice have left a multi-generational legacy. That's what revival looks like; the prayers prayed and impact are perpetual."

Isn't that the greatest honor each of us can give back to the Lord—to live a life worthy of the calling? That is the legacy of Ray Hoshizaki and his family. Be encouraged; your labor for the Lord is not in vain and you will fulfill the purpose for which the Lord has called you. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. You are sowing to your future.

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