

50 Years Since the Jesus Movement

As I reflect, along with many others, upon the 50th anniversary of the Jesus Movement, I find myself asking when another awakening of this magnitude will take place in America. When will this generation turn from sin and rebellion in as radical a pursuit of Jesus as the hippies of the 1960s and '70s? Without discussing the details that depict our nation's turmoil, it does not take strong discernment to recognize that our country is in trouble. America is in a mess that does not begin in Washington, D.C., our colleges and universities or the public school system. The mess in America begins in the church of America. What will it take for the bride of Christ to position itself for another revolutionary move of God in a generation that mirrors the strongholds of the 1970s? Truly, we are in a season of ripened harvest and few workers (Matt. 9:37).

However, there is a question more pressing than "Will America see another groundbreaking revival?" Before revival can come, we must know if the American church is *prepared* for a revival that will shake this generation. Based on the prophecies of Joel, an outpouring of God's Spirit will come upon the earth before the return of Jesus (see Joel 2:28-31). I sometimes wonder, though, if the church in America is making room for what is being prayed for. I have no doubt that the church prays for revival. The verbal feedback I receive in churches where I minister seems to match the level of urgency I feel in my heart. Unfortunately, this verbal feedback often translates to empty words, as there is no expression of urgency beyond hand clapping and shouting.

In the church of America, there is a crisis taking place. The crisis has nothing to do with the size of the church, the financial status, the rural or urban culture or the age

demographic of the congregation. The crisis in our churches has its roots not in external circumstances but in the hearts and motives of our congregations. Why, in a nation where nearly 65% of the adult population identifies as Christian, is there such chaos, turmoil and division?

Sadly, the same adjectives used to describe the condition of the United States could also be used to describe the condition of its church: chaotic. Divisive. Envious. Bitter. Overall, despite the culture or demographic of the church, there is an alarming lack of discipleship. It is a sad fact that many churches know how to grow congregations without growing the people who sit in them.

Additionally, many churches are void of an intercession ministry. Prayer and intercession are the backbone of what our ministry does, and without it, I believe we would have no ministry. In the American church, we have exchanged a strong anointing for “good vibes” as we seek to make guests as comfortable as possible. Yet I have never read a passage of Scripture where a vibe destroyed a yoke. We have sacrificed a standard of holiness on the altar of memberships and offering plates. Consequently, we allow people into leadership positions without evidence of righteous living before Jesus simply because they possess a gift and a pleasant personality.

Radical Shift

In youth ministries across America, we have replaced His presence and glory with pizza and games in an effort to have the largest youth group in town. Gossiping tongues have destroyed the biblical mandate to have family relationships within the body of Christ, with trust shattered by every backbiting conversation.

Some churches do not worship Jesus at all. Instead, they idolize the deeply coveted traditions of men over the Holy Spirit’s tangible presence in a service. The fear of the Lord

has evaporated from the American church because of the profound shortage of bold gospel preaching.

Unfortunately, many churches have a reputation of spiritual life because of their lively messages and charismatic music, but the spirits of many Bible-believing men and women are dead (Rev. 3:1). In this way, a rising generation exists that knows how to “have church” void of the presence of Jesus. We are in no way prepared for a flood of newly saved converts to fill our churches. What would they be fed by your church if they stumbled inside this Sunday morning?

For this generation to experience Jesus, there must first be a radical shift in the way the American church pursues Jesus. Before awakening can come to the streets, revival must come to the pews.

Though the terms “awakening” and “revival” are often used interchangeably in the church, they differ greatly by definition. “Revival” happens when something once living is brought back to life. I picture taking shock pads to a lifeless body, causing the heart to begin beating in rhythm again. In this case, we take the shock pads to the heart of a lifeless church body.

Awakening, however, is the act of someone coming alive to something they had not previously known, such as being awakened to the knowledge of Jesus. Awakening must come to America. To awaken a generation, God can only use those who have been revived in spirit. The time has come for the rebirth of biblical revival strategies in America.

The time has also come to resurrect the preaching of the *entire* gospel. The lack of urgency within the church has led to roadblocks in reaching this generation for Christ. The church is more concerned with filling the offering plate than filling the kingdom. Urgency comes when the fear of the Lord is preached boldly. Boldness does not undermine the love of

God but instead serves as its aid.

In the summer of 2020, the apostolic leadership that covers my ministry sent us throughout West Virginia to preach in the streets. From the northern panhandle to the southernmost tip, we traveled as the circuit riders of old, proclaiming the saving gospel of Jesus. We held services outdoors in parking lots, picnic shelters and anywhere people would allow us to set up. Carrying a galvanized horse trough, we spontaneously baptized as we went. In a six-week span, we saw nearly 500 water baptisms. The messages stayed simple: "Heaven is sweet, hell is hot, and Jesus is coming back!"

The crucifixion of the flesh resonated as a common theme, with cities flooded with the sound of true repentance, even from pastors and deacons. At the time of this article, we have seen over 1,700 water baptisms across the two Virginias. The renewing power of the Holy Spirit flooded our state as the church and the unchurched buried their sins in the water with Jesus. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord (Prov. 9:10). Likewise, the beginning of urgency is preaching the reality that we could meet Jesus at any moment.

We boldly proclaimed the necessity of repentance and the response continues to be overwhelming. As repentance floods the altar, urgency will flood the soul. Thus, awakening begins with bold gospel preaching.

Real Discipleship

The time has come for churches to embrace discipleship and family. Discipleship does not mean to have a Bible study on a weeknight. Discipleship is where true growth takes place. Too often, I find that young people who are saved in our revival services return to their carnal ways within months. After several years of noticing the trend of the same teenagers "rededicating" to Jesus at each revival, I inquired of the Lord on the reason for this. I find it rooted in a lack of

discipleship.

The church is quick to celebrate large numbers of people being saved in a service, which is a wonderful thing. However, the real celebration begins when they are still serving the Lord years down the road and are making disciples of Jesus themselves. This can only happen when the church body makes a commitment to nurturing these “baby Christians” (1 Cor. 3:1) as a parent would a newborn baby.

We never expect infants to care for themselves. Parents face prosecution for neglect of their precious children every day. Likewise, churches will answer to God at the end of days for neglecting baby Christians who cannot yet care for themselves spiritually. Paul wrote that we have thousands of teachers but few fathers (1 Cor. 4:15).

Discipleship involves far more than reading the Bible to people on a Monday night. It means getting into the dirty places of their lives and assisting them in spiritual growth. Members of this generation, many of whom are dealing with rejection and neglect from biological family, desperately crave the spiritual family that comes in discipleship.

Without the discipleship of my mentor, Pastor Jay Morgan, I would have surely quit the ministry and stopped following Jesus altogether. Morgan spent hours of one-on-one time with me, helping me work through the challenges of following Jesus at a young age. It was more than a Bible study. It was personal. It was intimate.

That is what young people today desire. Without true discipleship and family, they will run back to the carnality of this world. The church lacks the kind of family that we read of in the early church (see Acts 2:42-47). Seasoned Christians must commit to being spiritual mothers and fathers in this hour.

The time has come for the church to eliminate what I refer to

as the “Leaders Mentality.” The Leaders Mentality is the mindset of the everyday churchgoer that says, “I am not called to make disciples. I will leave that to the leaders of the church.” This mentality has led to pastors and their leadership teams entertaining flocks of grumbling goats on a weekly basis, and call that “having church.” This has also led to great leaders crumbling under the weight of the congregation’s cross.

Jesus made Himself abundantly clear in the Gospels, specifically in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). In this moment, Jesus entrusted His followers with power and authority to make disciples. True Jesus-followers find no contentment in sitting in a seat and having church leadership entertain them every Sunday. The urgency of winning the lost compels Jesus-followers and they will do whatever it takes to see a generation come home. Get your cross off of your pastor’s back, walk in your God-given authority and go make disciples!

Relentless Intercession

The time has come to cultivate prayer movements in our churches. In our culture, prayer has become nothing more than a “God, give me this” list. According to Scripture, the Lord does nothing on earth before revealing it to His servants, the prophets (Amos 3:7). This ensures that there will be intercession made to clear the way for revival.

Intercession is a lost art in the church. Intercession moves the heart of God (Ps. 141:2). Angels respond to intercession (Dan. 10:10-14). Bondages that shackle generations break at the cry of an intercessor. I am certain God spared me from life-ending situations before my salvation because of the intercessory prayer of my grandfather, Keith Walker.

Intercession releases clear strategy to the church for how to infiltrate the community and take it back for Jesus. When we intercede, we communicate with our general, Jesus Christ, in

the midst of ongoing spiritual warfare.

I recall Pastor John Kilpatrick speaking of the direction the Lord gave him three years before the famed Brownsville Revival sprang forth. As Kilpatrick recalls it, the Lord asked him to start a prayer ministry. He reluctantly turned one of his services into a prayer service, with several prayer focuses posted on the walls of the sanctuary. A small group of people and one hour of prayer, with consistency and cultivation, turned into large groups of people praying for hours on end. As the relentless intercession moved the Lord, the Brownsville Revival was birthed. This revival lasted several years and reached multitudes from many nations.

Prayer certainly changes things, but it also prepares the hearts of people to receive what God is preparing to pour out. Those who fail to intercede will be overlooked in the last-day revival that will sweep the earth.

Relaxing Traditions

Finally, the time has come for the church of America to be flexible with this generation. No, this does not mean to compromise biblical truths to keep them in your buildings. What it does mean, however, is that the saints are only as effective as their ability to be flexible.

This generation dresses differently, and today's young people likely won't be wearing dresses and suits. They worship differently and it may not sound like hymns. They are bold and unashamed about their sin, and the boldness does not change after salvation. They will become more radical about Jesus than they were about sin.

Flexibility with tradition is different than compromising the truths of Scripture. The church must not allow its perceptions and traditions to cause it to look loftily upon this generation because the young people don't "look" the same. The coming revival will be a revival of epic proportions, but it

will not look the way it looked in 1971, nor will it sound the same.

Members of this generation fall prey to frequent shunning by churches because they don't look like "church material." I am thankful that God looks upon the heart rather than outward appearance when calling people out (1 Sam. 16:7). Scripture teaches that the man with a quiver full of arrows has been blessed by the Lord.

According to the passage, these arrows represent young people. If young people are arrows, the saints are the bows. These arrows do no good if they remain in the quiver. A church will only defeat the enemy and see revival if the bows are flexible enough to shoot the arrows lying in their quivers (see Ps. 127). Therefore, the coming revival will be a multigenerational revival.

The Jesus Movement was far from perfect, as is the case with every move of God. However, we can take much from that season as these strategies were well implemented and provided lasting fruit. The coming revival will not make its appearance as a sequel to the Jesus Movement, but these scriptural strategies, among others, lay a solid foundation for what is to come.

Raise the standard. Preach the gospel. Pursue Jesus together. Make Disciples. Awaken America!

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