

What Is God Saying to Us Through the Asbury Revival?

There was nothing unusual about the 10 a.m. chapel service held at Asbury University on Wednesday, Feb. 8. Guest speaker Zach Meerkreebs shared a message from Romans 12 about demonstrating God's love, and the last thing he said in his closing prayer was, "Revive us by Your love."

Whoever was videotaping the service stopped recording. Eyewitnesses say students began going to the altar to confess their sins after the sermon. Then, students who left the 1,500-seat Hughes Auditorium came back in to worship. The praise team kept singing. More students arrived. By the evening it became obvious that something out of the ordinary was happening.

Continuous prayer, worship and testimonies marked the next few days. There were no famous speakers and no celebrity worship bands. There's nothing fancy about the building itself—it has outdated wooden seats and stained-glass windows. Yet so many people began to flock to the Asbury campus, located in Wilmore, Kentucky, that the school had to open two additional overflow auditoriums.

By Saturday, students from 21 campuses had visited the meetings because they hope to take the revival spirit back to their schools. One group of students from Mount Vernon Nazarene University arrived in a bus at midnight to attend the meetings. Later in the weekend, a pastor who visited Asbury said the carpet near the stage in Hughes Auditorium was literally damp from tears.

"There's not even words to describe it," said Ava Miller, a freshman at Asbury. "It just never stopped. People just never left, never went to class, never went to lunch and then later

people started coming back to chapel," she told Channel 18 News in Lexington.

"No one wants to leave," says Alexandra Presta, an Asbury senior who is editor of the school's website. "I've never witnessed anything like this." And Asbury professor Craig Keener told reporters: "Whatever you want to call it, this is the first time in years anything like this has happened here."

At one point during the early days of the revival an unidentified student took the stage and shared his testimony, noting that he had first come to Christ a year and a half ago. "This is revival. It isn't hype," the young man said. "It's ordinary people crying out for a move of God in our generation! Revival is real! It's not just a story we've heard about. It's come...and it's about to spread out to the nations."

We don't know how long this outpouring will last. When a similar movement broke out at Asbury in 1970, the continuous chapel service lasted for two weeks. What's different this time is that social media has made it possible for the revival fervor and strong sense of God's presence to spread instantaneously.

What is God saying to us through this unusual movement? So far the Holy Spirit has stressed three things to me:

The Lord is calling His church back to humility and brokenness. Notice that we don't hear the names of preachers associated with the 2023 Asbury revival. Those who have attended the Asbury meetings are impressed by their simplicity. Ministers are sharing God's Word, but true revival is never about men, flashy sermons, smoke machines or special lighting. When God's presence is in the room, all we can do is bow and lift our hands. It becomes irreverent to exalt a man when Jesus is the focus. We don't need to fabricate the Holy Spirit's anointing when He is in the room.

Something huge is about to take place on college campuses. For

years intercessors have prayed for this troubled generation to encounter Jesus Christ. Many have prayed that God would send a visitation that would surpass the Jesus movement of the early 1970s. It's no coincidence that a movie about that revival, "Jesus Revolution," will debut in theaters on Feb. 24. I expect what is happening among students at Asbury to break out at UC Berkeley, UCLA, Harvard, the largest state universities, the smaller liberal arts colleges and even community colleges. And this revival will be student-led.

Every church needs to break stale traditions that quench the Holy Spirit. This is not a time to stay in the box of dry religion. If you are worried that young people might jump, dance or shout during praise and worship, or that the carpet in your church parlor might be dirtied by new converts who smell like marijuana, or that your 60-minute service might last three hours, then you have become a Pharisee. God wants to smash our idols so He can reach the lost who need Him.

✠ Lord, let what is happening at Asbury erupt in every church in the United States. Make us desperate for Your presence. Let our carpet be wet with tears of repentance. Open our hearts, and make us flexible, so we won't stand in Your way when You bring true revival.

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J. Lee Grady was editor of *Charisma* for 11 years and now serves as senior contributing editor. He directs the *Mordecai Project* ([MordecaiProject.org](#)), an international ministry that protects women and girls from gender-based violence. His latest books are "Follow Me" and "Let's Go Deeper" (Charisma House).

