

PRAY FOR REVIVAL

INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE, EDWARDS, AND BONAR



T. M. MOORE

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Pray for Revival

Readings and Reflections in Scripture, Jonathan Edwards, and John Bonar

T. M. Moore

A *Pastor to Pastor* Resource of The Fellowship of Ailbe

www.ailbe.org

Copyright 2015 The Fellowship of Ailbe

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Welcome to *Pray for Revival*, a month of readings challenging us to take up the discipline of seeking the Lord for revival, renewal, and awakening in our time.

Pastor to Pastor studies combine the resources of Scripture and great Church leaders from the past in a format agreeable to personal or group study. We are happy to offer these resources at no charge to pastors and church leaders, to help you in better grounding the work of ministry in the Word of God and the great tradition and heritage of Christian Church leadership.

Pastor to Pastor studies can be used by church leaders as a supplement to their devotional reading or as a resource for leadership training. Daily “Next Steps” and weekly Questions for Reflection or Discussion can help in bringing new perspectives and developing new skills for the task of leading and building the local church.

Pray for Revival looks at one of the most important treatises on revival in the history of the Christian movement, Jonathan Edwards’ *An Humble Attempt*. Edwards was passionate about revival, and in calling the pastors of his day to seek revival in prayer. Our prayer is that his work will have similar effects on us, as we consider the need for revival in our own day.

Along with Edwards’ treatise we’ll work through a sermon from 19th century Scottish minister John Bonar. Bonar and other ministers of Scotland in that day experienced the kind of revival Edwards was calling his contemporaries to seek. As God has revived His Church in the past, we have every reason to believe that He can and will do so again, even in our own day.

May these readings lead us to a firm and ongoing commitment to seek the Lord for revival! If we truly love Him, and love His Church, we will certainly do so.

The entries in this *Pastor to Pastor* study are arranged for a month of readings, one reading per day followed by a series of Questions for Reflection or Discussion at the end of the week.

We hope you will find this study helpful and encouraging as you continue the Lord’s work in building His Church, His Body, His Bride.

T. M. Moore
Principal

Week 1, Day 1

A Glorious Advancement

“Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD.” Zechariah 8:22

An Humble Attempt¹

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“In the text we have an account *how* this future glorious advancement of the church of God should be introduced; *viz.* By great multitudes in different towns and countries taking up a *joint resolution*, and coming into an express and *visible agreement*, that they will, by united and extraordinary *prayer*, seek to God, that he would come and manifest himself, and grant the tokens and fruits of his gracious presence.”

As a pastor, Jonathan Edwards had known at least two extraordinary seasons of revival, in which many unbelievers were converted and many dormant Christians were renewed in faith and obedience. Yet he believed he saw in this text a coming day when God would send an even greater revival to His Church, and he was determined to be found of the Lord, praying for that glorious advancement. His instruction and example calls us to consider our own attitude toward the world: Is it a weed field, ready to be burned, or a wheat field, ready to be harvested?

How would you describe your congregation's attitude toward its own community? Do the people you serve expect revival?

Week 1, Day 2

The Duty to Pray

“The inhabitants of one city shall go to another saying, Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD and to seek the LORD of hosts, I myself am going.” Zechariah 8:21

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“Particularly we may observe *the duty*, with the attendance of which the glorious event foretold shall be brought on; *viz.* The duty of *prayer*...with regard to the duty of prayer; considering that prayer is here expressly and repeatedly mentioned; and also considering how parallel this place is with many other prophecies, that speak of an *extraordinary* spirit of prayer, as preceding and introducing that glorious day of religious revival, and advancement of the church's peace and prosperity...”

Only God can bring revival to His people and awakening to the world. We can't program these into being, and if we neglect the means God has appointed for them – the duty of prayer – we shall not be able to realize their fruit. Edwards called his readers to *extraordinary* prayer for revival, gathering together with one focus, and repeatedly beseeching the Lord to do what only He can do. Prayer sowed the seeds of revival in Edwards' day, and it must do so again in ours.

Do the members of your church pray for revival? Do you and your church's leaders encourage praying for revival in all the groups and ministries of your church? Should you?

¹All quotations are from Jonathan Edwards, *An Humble Attempt, &c.* in Edward Hickman, ed. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1834, 1995), Vol. Two, pp. 278ff.

Week 1, Day 3

The Lord Himself

You have said, "Seek my face." My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek." Hide not your face from me.
Psalm 27:8, 9

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

"The *good*, that is to be sought by prayer; which is God himself...This is the *good* they ask for, and seek by prayer, *The Lord of hosts* himself. To *seek God*, as the expression may perhaps sometimes be used in Scripture, may signify no more than seeking the *favour* or *mercy* of God. And if it be taken so here [in Zech. 8:20-22], *praying before the Lord*, and *seeking the Lord of hosts*, must be synonymous expressions. And it must be confessed to be a common thing in Scripture, to signify the same thing repeatedly, by various expressions of the same import, for the greater emphasis."

Revival occurs when people gain a renewed experience of the Lord, whether through conversion or by having the eyes of their hearts opened to the larger vistas and greater power of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The substance of revival – or, the "good" – to be sought is thus not merely more people in church, or even happier people at church, but God Himself. He calls us to seek Him and promises that, if we will, He will make His presence and power known to us in reviving ways.

How would you counsel a young man, just beginning his ministry, to lead his people in a focus on seeking the Lord as a fundamental aspect of their calling to follow Jesus?

Week 1, Day 4

Seeking the Lord

"The you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from the nations and all places where I have driven you..." Jeremiah 29:12-14

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

"But certainly that expression of *seeking the Lord*, is very commonly used to signify something more; it implies that *God himself* is the great *good* desired and sought after; that the blessings pursued are God's gracious presence, the blessed manifestations of him, union and intercourse with him; or, in short, God's *manifestations* and *communications* of himself by His Holy Spirit."

We shall know that our seeking the Lord has accomplished its objective when the power, fruit, gifts, and unity of the Spirit are increasingly known among us. For then God shall have come down into our midst again, filling each one with His Spirit, working within us to will and do of His good pleasure, exceeding abundantly beyond all that we have ever before dared to ask or think (Phil. 2:13; Eph. 3:20). And when God comes to His people like this, then real revival will be achieved.

How might you be able to know, in your own church, when the Spirit of God was beginning to stir people for revival? Do you pray for this to happen? Do you pray with others for it?

Week 1, Day 5

A Call for God to Return

When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive. Psalm 69:32

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“If the expression in the text [Ps. 69:32] be understood agreeably to this sense, then by *seeking the Lord of hosts*, we must understand a seeking, that God who had withdrawn, or as it were hid himself for a long time, would return to his church, and grant the tokens and fruits of his gracious presence, and those blessed communications of his Spirit to his people, and to mankind on earth, which he had often promised, and which his church had long waited for.”

It seems strange to suggest that God has “withdrawn, or as it were hid himself” from His Church today. But if the measure of God’s presence with His people is that, in many ways, they turn their world rightside-up for King Jesus, then it becomes clearer why we might suggest such a condition as describing the Church today. For while we are very busy, active, and in many ways “successful,” where is the evidence of Christ ruling in the hearts of the people around us, and in our culture and its priorities and morality? We need God to return to us, and for this to happen, we must seek Him in prayer.

Is it reasonable to suppose that the Church should have a more pronounced impact on culture and society than we see in our day? Why or why not?

Week 1, Day 6

Prayer in Many Places

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling. 1 Timothy 2:8

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“We may observe *who* they are, that shall be *united* in thus seeking the Lord of hosts: *the inhabitants of many cities*, and of many countries, *yea, many people, and strong nations*, great multitudes in different parts of the world shall conspire in this business... There shall be given much of a spirit of prayer to God’s people, in many places, disposing them to an express *agreement*, unitedly to pray to God in an extraordinary manner, that he would appear for the help of his church, and in mercy to mankind, and *pour out his Spirit, revive his work*, and advance his spiritual *kingdom* in the world, as he has promised.”

What Edwards envisioned was more than an insertion of prayer for revival into the existing prayer routines of the people of God. He called for special seasons of prayer, times set apart to unite by explicit agreement for the purpose of seeking the Lord for revival, with this as the sole focus. As J. Edwin Orr has shown in his many excellent books on the history of revival, this is precisely the way God has often worked in the past to revive His Church and awaken the lost. May He be pleased to do so again in our day.

How many different ways can you think of that you might use to encourage extraordinary prayer for revival on the part of the people in your church? Choose one, and get started!

Week 1, Day 7

Revival Leads to Awakening

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. Acts 6:7

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“Thus after the inhabitants of many cities of Israel, or of God’s professing people, have taken up and pursued a joint resolution, to go and pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of hosts, others shall be drawn to worship and serve him with them; till at length *many people and strong nations* shall join themselves to them; and there shall, in process of time, be a vast accession to the church, so that it shall be *ten times* as large as it was before...”

The church in Jerusalem appears to have been slipping into a bit of complacency, at least, lethargy, in the area of caring for its needy. But the apostles and the people together renewed their love for the Lord and one another in such a dramatic and visible way that the Word of the Lord kept increasing beyond the church, and many of its most ardent detractors became obedient to the faith. When God revives His Church and renews His people in His love, the effects of that will necessarily impact everyone and everything in their lives. Revival, in short, leads to awakening.

How do you, in your preaching and teaching, seek to cast a vision for revival and awakening in your church and community?

For reflection or discussion

1. It’s clear Edwards was seeking something well beyond “status quo” Christianity. If revival were to break out in your church and community, what would it look like? Is this a good thing? A thing to be sought earnestly in prayer?
2. Edwards say we should always be praying for revival – every day. But he also called for special times of prayer for revival, times set aside for that endeavor only. Have you ever participated in such seasons of prayer? If you were to lead such a season, what would that require of you?
3. How would you describe the state of prayer in your church today? How about the state of praying for revival? Can we expect the Lord to revive us if we refuse to seek Him diligently for it? Why or why not?
4. Edwards reminds us that what we’re really seeking as we seek revival is the Lord Himself – His presence among us in manifestations of beauty, goodness, and truth. What are some areas of you community where revival might bring more of the Lord’s presence to light in a “rightside-up” manner?
5. Will you pray for revival? Will you encourage and enlist others to join you?

Week 2, Day 1

A Coming Day

“But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’” Acts 2:16, 17, 21

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“It is evident from Scripture, that there is *yet remaining* a great *advancement* of the interests of *religion* and the *kingdom of Christ* in this world, by an *abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God*, far greater and more extensive than ever yet has been...It is often foretold and signified, in a great variety of strong expressions, that there should a time come when *all nations*, throughout the whole habitable world, should embrace the true religion, and be brought into the church of God.”

Edwards’ postmillennialism may be off-putting to some, but his argument is certainly worth considering more carefully. I sometimes get the impression that preachers see the world, as depicted in the parable of the wheat and the tares, as a weed field, waiting to be burned. But does not Jesus teach, in fact, that the world is a wheat field, to be sown and harvested by faithful laborers? “Lift up your eyes...The harvest is plentiful...”

How are you leading your congregation into the harvest work in your community?

Week 2, Day 2

Joy in Earth and Heaven

“The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” Zephaniah 3:17

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“A time of great and universal joy, we are taught to expect, will take place through all the earth, when ‘from the utmost ends of the earth shall be heard songs, even glory to the righteous,’ and God’s people ‘shall with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation’...Yea, the Scriptures represent it not only as a time of universal joy on earth, but extraordinary joy in heaven, among the angels and saints, the holy apostles and prophets there...”

In churches today we have a difficult time “connecting” – if I may put it that way – with the unseen realm which spreads out all around, above, beneath, and through us. Yet saints and angels watch what we do, and, the Scriptures indicate, are affected by our grief and joy. There is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents, as we know. How much joy must there be in heaven – not to mention among the myriads of lost sinners, waiting to be redeemed – when revival engulfs and renews the people of God?

How do you help the people in your church to practice the reality of the unseen realm, and to evidence their engagement with it as a vital aspect of their faith (Heb. 11:1)?

Week 2, Day 3

Worth Praying For, Indeed!

...we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Colossians 1:9, 10

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“Such being the state of things in this future promised glorious day of the church’s prosperity, surely it is worth *praying* for. Nor is there any one thing whatsoever, if we viewed things aright, for which a regard to the glory of God, a concern for the kingdom and honour of our Redeemer, a love to his people, pity to perishing sinners – love to our fellow-creatures in general, compassion to mankind under their various and sore calamities and miseries, a desire of their temporal and spiritual prosperity, love to our country, our neighbours, and friends, yea, and to our own souls – would dispose us to be so much in prayer, as for the dawning of this happy day, and the accomplishment of this glorious event.”

This only makes sense. God wants His people to be revived; He desires sinners to be converted; He longs for the joy of salvation to be known and the glory of Christ to be celebrated. Why would we not make prayer for this a central and extraordinary feature of every aspect of our lives and ministries? Only God can give such revival, but He is not likely to give it where people do not eagerly long and earnestly plead for it. We are not experiencing revival now because God is not persuaded we really want it.

Do your preaching and teaching create a sense of anticipation among the people you serve? Anticipation for what?

Week 2, Day 4

The Subject of God’s Promises

“And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.” Ezekiel 39:29

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“The Holy Spirit, in his indwelling presence, his influences and fruits, is the sum of all grace, holiness, comfort, and joy; or, in one word, of all the spiritual good Christ *purchased* for men in this world: and is also the sum of all perfection, glory, and eternal joy that he purchased for them in another world. The Holy Spirit is the subject matter of the promises, both of the eternal covenant of redemption, and also of this covenant of grace.”

In Scripture the “face of God” is equated with the Spirit (cf. Ezek. 39:29). To be indwelt by the Spirit is to have the face of God shining upon us, bringing us into His glory (2 Cor. 4:6), and radiating Christ out through us. In the process we are filled with power, joy, and peace, and we bear the fruit, exercise the gifts, and wield the power for witness and holiness that this same Spirit gives. What we long for in revival, therefore, is a renewed upwelling, filling, and overflowing of the Spirit of God within and through us.

What would your church look like if the Spirit of God began increasingly to manifest Himself in these ways from within the people you serve?

Week 2, Day 5

An Offering like the Lord's

Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually! Psalm 105:4

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“Now therefore, if this is what *Jesus Christ*, our great Redeemer and head of the church, did so much desire, and set his heart upon, from all eternity, and for which he did and suffered so much, offering up *strong crying and tears*, and *his precious blood*, to obtain it; surely his disciples and members should also seek it, and be much in prayer for it.”

Everything that Jesus did was motivated by love and designed to purchase and redeem a people for God's own possession. Consider to what lengths He went to obtain this! When we hear that something of this, some greater measure of what Jesus Himself sought, may be realized through united, specific, extraordinary prayer for the Spirit of God and revival, how can we not respond to this summons, and make every effort to be found seeking what Jesus sought, with fervor appropriate to what the Lord commands?

How would you explain to a new believer what it means to seek the Lord for revival and renewal?

Week 2, Day 6

In Sync with Creation

Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun. You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and winter. Psalm 74:16, 17

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“All the changes brought to pass in the world, from age to age, are ordered by infinite wisdom, in one respect or other to prepare the way for that glorious issue of things, when truth and righteousness shall finally prevail, and he, whose right it is, shall take the kingdom. All the creatures, in all their operations and motions, continually tend to this.”

Edwards says that the creation is like a clock, ticking toward the progress of the Kingdom and the advancement of Christian faith on earth. God employs the entire creation to prepare for the day of revival, and the creation in whole and part longs to share in the glorious liberty of the sons and daughters of God. Our prayers will be in sync with the course of creation and history, Edwards maintains, when they are working toward the same end toward which all creation is working.

Do you think people really believe that the creation is serving the purpose of preparing a stage for revival? Do you believe that?

Week 2, Day 7

They that Love Christ's Appearing

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“It is abundantly represented in Scripture as the spirit and character of all true saints, that they set their hearts upon, love, long, wait, and pray for the promised glory of that day... The glorious inhabitants of the heavenly world – the saints and angels there, who rejoice when one sinner repents – are earnestly waiting, in an assured and joyful dependence upon God’s promises of that conversion of the world and marriage of the Lamb, which shall take place when that glorious day comes...”

It’s sometimes difficult, reading Edwards, to distinguish his longing for promised revival now and for the Day of the Lord and the marriage supper of the Lamb. In his thinking, the one anticipates and is a foretaste of the other, and so he is not always so careful to distinguish them, as, I think, in this passage here. Either way, we must consider whether we love the Lord’s appearing, and how much. Do we love it when He appears to us in reviving grace? When He makes Himself known to a sinner? When He moves with awakening power throughout a community, a nation, a time?

How shall the people of God demonstrate that they love the appearing of the Lord, if not through prayer and preparing their own lives?

For reflection or discussion

1. What does Edwards seem to think will happen when this great revival begins? Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. What kinds of expectations for your church, and for the Gospel through your church, does your preaching or teaching reflect? Are you giving people a vision for personal, ongoing revival? For renewal in your church? Awakening in the world?
3. Meditate on Ephesians 1:15-23, especially the last few verses. Reflect on these in the light of Edwards’ comments about creation and revival. Would you describe your life as “in sync” with what you read here? Why or why not?
4. Would you say that you “love the Lord’s appearing”? What does that mean? How do you encourage the people in your care to love the Lord’s appearing? What does this have to do with seeking revival through prayer?
5. Are you beginning to feel any more inclined to take up the work of praying for revival?

Week 3, Day 1

Much in Prayer

"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Luke 11:13

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

"The word of God is full of *precepts, encouragements, and examples*, tending to excite and induce the people of God to be much in *prayer* for this great mercy. The Spirit of God is the *chief* of blessings, for it is the *sum* of all spiritual blessings; which we need infinitely more than others, and wherein our true and eternal happiness consists... The Scriptures not only direct and encourage us, in general, to pray for the Holy Spirit above all things else; but it is the expressly revealed will of God, that his church should be *very much* in prayer for that glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit..."

If Edwards is correct in His reading of Scripture, then we are surely remiss in our duty if we are not seeking a fresh upwelling and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit alone is able to bring revival to the churches of the land, but we must seek Him for it, asking and pleading with the Father to give us that great gift with fresh new power and presence. Otherwise, we will never be revived.

How much are you in prayer for the Holy Spirit to revive you and your church?

Week 3, Day 2

Importuning the Lord

You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth. Isaiah 62:6, 7

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

"I know of no place in the Bible, where so strange an expression is made use of to signify *importunity* in prayer as is used in Isaiah lxii.6, 7, where the people of God are called upon to be importunate for this mercy... How strong is the phrase! And how loud is this call to the church of God, to be fervent and incessant in their cries to him for this great mercy!

I doubt that many of us would use the word, "importunate," concerning our prayers, at least, our prayers for revival. But that is the thrust of this passage in Isaiah. God longs to establish His Church as a praise in all the earth. Increasingly, we are more of a byword among the lost. But God has other plans, and He will fulfill them in His way and time. Will He fulfill them in our day? Our prayers may be the deciding factor. Let us practice importunity in prayer for revival.

What would it look like if your church were characterized by importunity in praying for revival?

Week 3, Day 3

Precious and Very Great Promises

...by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 2 Peter 1:4

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“There is perhaps no one thing the Bible so much promises, in order to encourage the faith, hope, and prayers of the saints as [the promise of the Spirit]; which affords to God’s people the clearest evidences that it is their *duty* to be much in prayer for this mercy. For, undoubtedly, that which God abundantly makes the subject of his *promises*, God’s people should abundantly make the subject of their *prayer*. It also affords them the strongest assurances that their prayers shall be *successful*. With what confidence may we go before God, and pray for that, of which we have so many exceeding precious and glorious promises to plead!”

We pray for a good many things we would like to have – health, safety, provision, friends and family, and so forth. But it may not please God to give these to us. However, if we’re honest, I think most of us would agree that the bulk of time we *do* spend in prayer is invested in such matters. Meanwhile, that which God *does* promise – to give us His Spirit for revival – we almost never seek. Are we ignorant of God’s promises, or do we hope to persuade Him to change His promises to suit our interests, rather than His?

How might you be able to encourage the various groups of your church to begin praying earnestly and consistently, whenever they are together, for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

Week 3, Day 4

Rivers of Living Water

“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ Now this he said about the Spirit... John 7:38, 39

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“The Scripture gives us great reason to think, that when once there comes to appear much of a *spirit of prayer* in the church of God for this mercy, then it will soon be accomplished...Spiritual *waters* and *rivers* are explained by the apostle John, to be the *Holy Spirit*...It is now a time of scarcity of these spiritual waters; there are, as it were, *none*. If God’s people, in this time of great drought, were but made sensitive of this calamity, and their own emptiness and necessity, and brought earnestly to *thirst* and *cry* for needed supplies, God would, doubtless, soon fulfill this blessed promise.”

First we have to recognize our need. Only then will we seek from the Lord that which we lack. But it seems that many believers – dare we say, most? – consider that their Christian life is “good enough.” They like their church, they have many Christian friends, and their life as a whole is pleasant enough. Why would they want to seek more of the Spirit of God? But if we can rouse them to consider the greater boon and glory that attends His constant filling and transforming work in our lives, their complacency may give way to a new vision, and more earnest and fervent prayer for the Spirit may ensue.

What is your own sense of what the Spirit of God wants, and is able (exceeding abundantly able, Eph. 3:20), to do in your life? Do you need to have your vision enlarged?

Week 3, Day 5

Extraordinary Prayer

Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice. Psalm 55:17

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“The greatest effusion of the Spirit that ever yet has been, even that which was in the primitive times of the Christian church, which began in Jerusalem, on the day of *Pentecost*, was in answer to extraordinary prayer...according to Christ’s direction, after his ascension, they returned to Jerusalem, and continued in *united fervent prayer* and supplication...till the Spirit came down in a wonderful manner upon them...”

Edwards, remember, is insisting that we must invest “explicit agreement and visible union of all God’s people in extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion” if we are going to realize what God so earnestly desires for us to know. This means getting together with a single focus, praying at unusual times, and fervently and for extended seasons – all pleading with the Lord and “giving Him no rest” until He pours out His Spirit on us anew, not for salvation, but for revival.

What is preventing you from beginning such a prayer effort in your own church? What will it require of you to do so?

Week 3, Day 6

He Comes to Those Who Wait

It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; lest be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:9

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“God will come to those that are seeking him and waiting for him...When Christ came in the flesh, he was first revealed to them who were *waiting for the consolation of Israel*, and *looking for redemption* in Jerusalem, Luke i.25, 38. And in that great outpouring of the Spirit that was in the days of the apostles, which was attended with such glorious effects among the Jews and Gentiles, the Spirit came down first on that that were engaged in united earnest prayer for it.”

Do we think, that is, have we considered, that our *lack* of the kind of prayer for which Edwards called could be the very thing that is hastening the secularization of our society? For without the Holy Spirit to restrain evil, convert sinners, and transform the redeemed, men and their societies will drift in the direction of the sin that everywhere abounds. If our lack of prayer is contributing to this, might our fervor in uniting to prayer mark the beginning of a turnaround?

What kinds of objections to this project would you expect to meet from those you might invite to participate? How will you answer those objections?

Week 3, Day 7

If...

"...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

An Humble Attempt

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

"And if ministers and people should by particular agreement and joint resolution, set themselves, in a solemn and extraordinary manner, from time to time, to pray for the revival of religion in the world, it would naturally tend more to awaken in them a concern about things of this nature, and more of a desire after such a mercy. It would engage them to more attention to such an affair, make them more inquisitive about it, more ready to use endeavours to promote what they, with so many others, spend so much time in praying for."

If only we could be persuaded to pray for revival! So many good things can happen as we unite, time and time again, to plead with the Lord for a renewed outpouring of His Spirit! So much blessing could come to the Church and the world, if only...

Have you begun yet to pray for revival? Are you encouraging others to do so?

For reflection or discussion

1. Review the quote from Edwards just above. How many benefits does he cite from beginning to pray for revival in the way he calls us to pray?
2. Suggest two reasons why you should take up Edwards' challenge to begin praying for revival. How would Edwards answer those reasons?
3. "Extraordinary" and "wait" and "importunity": These are words Edwards uses to describe the kind of prayer for revival we need. What would your church look like if such prayer were being pursued?
4. What will it take to keep such an effort of prayer going in your church? How can you help to ensure that will happen?
5. Do you believe God can send revival in our day? Are you willing to seek Him for it?

Week 4, Day 1

You'll Know it When You See It

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.” Matthew 7:15-17

Ministers of Scotland: Lectures on Revival²

The Rev. John Bonar, Minister of Larbert and Dunipace

“[Revival] is not only a time when many *say* they are converted, but when multitudes show that they are converted. In a word, by the purity of the doctrine taught, by the spirituality of the effect produced in the soul, as well as by the gracious results in the life and conversation, does a time of true refreshing show itself; and by them is such a time for ever distinguished from those seasons of excitement which many have sought to confound them with.”

In the early years of the 19th century God visited the churches in Scotland with an extraordinary season of revival. As in each such season, voices arose denying the authenticity of the events and questioning the very idea that revivals occur in this modern era. The ministers of Scotland, who witnessed this extraordinary moving of God’s Spirit, thus combined to put their thoughts into print, and to explain and celebrate the work of God in renewing His churches. These men knew what they had seen, and they wanted the rest of the world to understand as well, in order to stir the followers of Christ to seek renewal from His hand. What could be more appropriate for our own day?

How would you be able to tell when your church was being revived? When it was in need of being revived?

Week 4, Day 2

First, Pray

“...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14

Ministers of Scotland: Lectures on Revival

The Rev. John Bonar, Minister of Larbert and Dunipace

“Such being the nature of revival, it will not be difficult for us to appreciate the state of religion which most requires it – which at once demonstrates it as most needful, and yet declares it far away, unless it be brought nigh by much prayer and the outpouring of the Spirit in answer thereof.”

Revival is a work of God’s Spirit in which believers and their churches are renewed in joyous experience of Christ, fervent love for His Word, and an earnest desire to communicate the Good News of the Kingdom to one and all. Revival comes when God’s Spirit moves suddenly, deeply, and pervasively upon a community of His people, bringing them to repentance, creating in them a hunger for more of God’s Word, and renewing them thoroughly from the inside-out. Revival does not come unless God’s people seek the Spirit, and prayer is the appropriate setting for such specific pleasing with the Lord.

Do you pray regularly for God to send revival? Do you lead your church to pray for revival? Do you expect revival to come apart from praying for it, specifically, repeatedly, earnestly, and with your fellow believers?

² Ministers of Scotland, *Lectures on Revival*, Richard Owen Roberts, ed. (Wheaton: Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers, 1980).ruth Trust, 1995),

Week 4, Day 3

When Revival is Needed

“So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.” Revelation 3:16, 17

Ministers of Scotland: Lectures on Revival

The Rev. John Bonar, Minister of Larbert and Dunipace

“So long as the Church is weighed down by a body of sin – so long as there is in all her members a law in the flesh which warreth against the law of the mind – so long as without ceasing there arises from her the voice of distress, ‘Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!’ the enlightening, convincing, and converting influences of the Spirit will be required at each step of her process through the wilderness. And so long as the world remains a valley of the shadow of death, every where times of revival will be required – every needed – every where to be sought.”

There is never a time in which churches are not candidates for revival, for our experience of the life of faith is never as rich or full as it could be, and our churches are never as vibrant and missional as they should be. So we must always be seeking the Lord for revival and not allow complacency to settle into our lives or ministries. Pastors must stir their people with extraordinary visions of what God can do, and then they must lead them into extraordinary labors of prayer, pleading with God to do what He can.

What are some indications that your church might be ready for you to lead more aggressively in seeking the Lord for revival?

Week 4, Day 4

Aiming Too Low?

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it... Micah 4:1

Ministers of Scotland: Lectures on Revival

The Rev. John Bonar, Minister of Larbert and Dunipace

“...such a revival of true religion meets the darkness and deadness which comes over the Church in times of decay. In such times the designs, desires, and doings of the Church are apt to become to a lamentable extent low set. Contented with things as they are, she stretches not forward to the things that are before. The Spirit seems gone; and even the things which remain are ready to die.”

Most of our churches are not those envisioned by the prophet Micah. People are not flowing up to us, hungry to be taught the Word of God. We are not sending God’s people out into the world to live and proclaim His Law, so that their neighbors come to faith and begin seeking the Lord. For many churches the vision they pursue is that of perpetuating the status quo indefinitely into the future. But if we want God to come and revive us and stretch us beyond where we’ve ever been before, we must dare to think it possible, and then be bold to ask (Eph. 3:20).

What kind of vision are you and your church leaders casting for your church? High-raised mountain or status quo?

Week 4, Day 5

When Divides Are Deepest

I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:1, 3

Ministers of Scotland: Lectures on Revival

The Rev. John Bonar, Minister of Larbert and Dunipace

“Never for instance were brethren more unworthily or unhappily divided that they have been of late. No where can they be more worthily or happily reconciled than in the mountain of the Lord’s house...O it is sweet to see how in such a time [of revival] the holy of all sects and denominations are invincibly drawn together by the constraining influence of the ‘love of the Spirit.’”

One way to begin creating such a context is to seek opportunities for praying with Christians from other churches and denominations, that God might be pleased to send revival. This can’t just be a one-time event, however. Let ministers call their members together monthly, moving around from church to church, as they seek the Lord together in prayer for revival. Let the invitations go out to all churches to join this movement of prayer, and soon enough the Spirit of God, recognizing a familiar and wanted venue, will show up in power and begin to grant our requests.

Is there another pastor with whom you might share such a vision of your churches beginning to pray together for revival?

Week 4, Day 6

Read It – and Weep

Restore us, O LORD God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved! Psalm 80:19

Ministers of Scotland: Lectures on Revival

The Rev. John Bonar, Minister of Larbert and Dunipace

“The only book of Christian doctrine or of Christian evidences, which most men can think of reading is the lives of professed Christians. From these they judge what it is to be a Christian, and what claims Christianity has on them. Alas, this book has in times past been indeed dark and deluding: many blots on the fairest lines; many blanks in the most important passages. Hence the mockery and triumph of the wicked – hence the suspicion and murmuring of pretended friends. But when God sends a time of refreshing to the church these blots are dried up, these blanks are filled, the lines of truth become broad and clear...”

Unbelievers who “read” the books of our Christian lives these days are not all that impressed. To many, it does not appear that the faith of Christ is real, or that it makes any difference. Christians talk a lot and get indignant about all manner of things, but when it comes to the evidence of holiness, love, and sacrificial service to others – well, the book of too many of our lives looks like one of those blank pages journals you can get at the book store. All the more reason to believe we should be seeking the Lord for revival.

Is your preaching and teaching clearly pointed at “filling” the blank pages of the lives of those you serve?

Week 4, Day 7

Show Me Now!

...but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you... 1 Peter 3:15

Ministers of Scotland: Lectures on Revival

The Rev. John Bonar, Minister of Larbert and Dunipace

“Arguments will often fail to convince: No form of reason is so conclusive that a form of reason may not be found to oppose it: But let the proud reasoned who would deny the soul, and dispute God out of his world – come into the midst of those who are dealing directly with this God; let him mingle with that deep, solemn, and impressed company who now feel that the favour of this God is life, and his wrath worse than death; let him mingle with those who joy in God through Jesus Christ, and he will know better than by a thousand arguments that verily there is a God, yea, and that it is no vain thing to draw near to him...”

“Words, words, words! I’m so sick of words!” a flustered Eliza Doolittle blurted out at Freddy. Today’s churches are not at a loss for words, but the world is looking to see if there’s any *there* there behind all those words. “Don’t talk of love,” our unbelieving neighbors seem to be saying. “Show me now!” When the Spirit of God clothes us with revival, and the fruit of His presence, the tokens of love, the gifts He brings for ministry, and the power He flexes for witness – when these begin to be in evidence throughout our congregations, then none will be able to deny the reality of the risen Christ or His Kingdom. Pray, brethren, that God would send such revival to us sooner than later!

What will it take to convince you to begin a concerted, ongoing effort to pray for revival in your church?

For reflection or discussion

1. What do we mean by “revival”? Is such a revival needed in our day? Why or why not?
2. Summarize what Edwards and Bonar teach about the kind of prayer we need if God is to send revival in our day:
3. Are you willing to pray like this? To lead and encourage others to pray like this? Why or why not?
4. Meditate on Psalm 126. What “vision” of “restoration” guides your Christian life? What kind of “sowing” will that require of you each day?
5. What’s the most important idea, insight, or lesson you’ve gained from these readings? How do you plan to work that lesson into your walk with the Lord?