



a pastoral letter from
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WHEN REVIVAL COMES

Dear Friend in Christ:

In recent weeks, we've been receiving thrilling reports of a genuine move of the Holy Spirit happening on the campus of Asbury University in Kentucky, and spreading across many other college campuses. Our response at CSM has been to rejoice and re-commit to praying for these students and all who are encountering God.

Many of us have been praying for revival in this younger generation. Past revivals are wonderful and worth remembering, but every generation needs its own personal, fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Of course, we've also seen some revivals co-opted or even counterfeited by wolves in clergy costumes advancing their own agendas. Sadly, we've seen times when hype, pressure, clever marketing, manipulation, and politicization have polluted gatherings that began sincerely. I've heard my Dad say, **"If the devil can't stop a revival, he will join it."**

What we're seeing now at Asbury does not have the stench of showmanship. Religious celebrities are not directing it. There is no political agenda. It is not a planned "top-down" religious spectacle. **This revival is the result of God mercifully pouring out His love and power on a group of students who humbly and hungrily sought after Him.** A simple Bible message, heartfelt praise, prayerful seeking, and deep repentance prepared the way of the Lord, and His glory fell in that chapel sanctuary at Asbury.

Some of you reading this were part of another great outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Asbury in 1970. I've appreciated the wisdom and grace of "revival veterans" who have reminded us all that what is happening now is not the same revival as 1970; it's not the same as Toronto, Pensacola, the Hebrides, Azusa Street, or other great revivals. God is doing a new thing!

Therefore, we must be careful not to lay our own expectations or "Saul's armor" on the young people who are responding to the Holy Spirit now. We must continue to make room for the Lord to move in His way and in His time. We must make room for this revival to look differently than past revivals. The Kingdom is coming to people who may think differently, talk differently, sing differently, vote differently, and approach life differently than you or I do. Hallelujah!

Is it possible that those of us who have experienced times of refreshing in earlier revivals might once again be renewed by the overspill of what God is doing in a new generation? I'm certainly praying for that. **Can we not only receive the younger generation, but receive from them what God is doing in them?** That's worth asking.

Is it possible for us to humble ourselves to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through our younger brothers and sisters? I sure hope so. Amid the unique differences between various outpourings, are there any aspects which are held in common? I believe so. Let's look at a few of them.

REPENTANCE PRECEDES REFRESHING

In Acts 3, Peter and John have just raised up a lame man in the name of Jesus Christ. Everyone in town knew about this man's infirmity, and when the man began to walk, leap, and praise God, a large crowd quickly gathered. They were amazed and curious. Peter began to preach the Gospel of Jesus to the people. And, Peter reminded them that they had called for Jesus to be crucified. Remember, these are the same people who Jesus saw as weary and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd. He was moved with compassion, and called His disciples to pray for workers in the Harvest.

As Peter spoke to the people gathered at Solomon's Colonnade, he was moved by the same compassion for them, and gave them this word:

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21).

Pride and stubbornness are barriers to refreshing. I've often heard my Dad say, "It's the hungry who get fed." Are we so filled up with spiritual "junk food" that we are not hungry when God brings us the bread and wine of healing and the meat of His Word? Do we think that we are somehow too good to need fresh manna for today? Do fears of embarrassment or misplaced confidence in our own rightness prevent us from humbling ourselves before the Lord?

I once heard my Dad minister out of Psalm 34, which opens this way:

"I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together" (Psalm 34:1-3).

Dad then stressed the phrase: **"The humble shall hear."** Just as it is the hungry who get fed, it is the humble who hear. Arrogance, presumption, over-familiarity, or rebellion will make us spiritually deaf and blind. Our friend, Pastor Mike Poulin, once said, **"You can be right in the middle of**

something that God is doing and still miss it.” Isn't that a true and deeply sobering word? I don't want to miss what God is doing! And I really, really don't want to resist it.

So, one of the conditions that I believe must exist for revival to happen is humility; awe of God and godly sorrow leading to repentance. And a consequence of repentance is refreshing. Sometimes we want the refreshing to happen without repentance. We want God to bless our sin. We want to “feel good” without receiving His righteousness at the foot of the Cross. That's not how this works!

REFRESHING LEADS TO RESTORATION

In Christ, we are being restored to a right relationship with God. When Adam and Eve fell, separation came; a holy God will not fellowship with sin. Mankind became separated from our Creator and life source. So, there was a price that had to be paid for sin ... every sin, every time a sin was committed, by anyone ... in order for a person to atone for their sin and be made right with God. The blood of animals was offered as a sacrificial acknowledgment of the gravity of sin. It was an imperfect, temporary system, because men and women don't just sin once. It was an imperfect sacrifice for imperfect obedience.

But in Christ, a sacrifice was made once and for all at the Cross for any sinner who is willing to receive the shed blood of Jesus, that we might be reconciled to God and receive His restoration in our lives. Peter says it this way:

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit...” (1 Peter 3:18).

He not only works restoration **in** us, but also **through** us. Remember Psalm 34:1-3, which we looked at earlier in this letter? Our testimony brings joy to the humble hearer; we are restored, they are restored, and together we praise and worship God together.

Real revival results in restoration. It not only restores individuals, but it calls individuals to do the work of restoration and reconciliation in their communities. Another hallmark of authentic revival is that it makes an impact on the neighborhoods and cities around the place where the Holy Spirit is being poured out.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is not to simply make us feel good in our gatherings, but to send us out in His mission so that the knowledge of the glory of God will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea ... that is to say, completely (see Habakkuk 2:14). As our friend and CSM Board Member Michael Coleman says, “How much of the sea is covered by water? All of it!”

The purpose of God's power being poured out upon us is not so that we can strut and flex our muscles in a mirror. It is not for us to pridefully lord it over yet-unsaved people. Jesus told His disciples, and anyone who would follow Him:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Being filled with the Spirit—and staying filled with the Spirit—will not make us more insular or out of touch with the world around us. The Spirit will refresh and equip us and send us out in His mission. I encourage you to listen to the powerful Matt Redman song, “**Mission’s Flame**,” which is not only a passionate heartcry for God’s presence, but also His outward call for His people to extend His Kingdom Gospel to all people, everywhere. Also I highly recommend the new film, “**The Jesus Revolution**,” starring Kelsey Grammer, Kimberly Williams-Paisley, Joel Courtney, Jim Gaffigan, and Jonathan Roumie. God’s timing for this film is amazing!

Sometimes, the refreshing happens **as we go**. Recently in Wisconsin, I had a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit as I ministered to two homeless men ... the Lord filled me in a fresh way and gave me something precious to share with them. We had revival together in front of Walgreen’s in Madison on a cold Winter day. And then I spent almost three hours in my car weeping, rejoicing, and fiercely engaging in intercessory prayer for several specific people who God put on my heart.

THE RHYTHMS OF GRACE

We want to invite you to our annual CSM Leadership Conference to be held May 9-11 in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Our theme is, “The Rhythms of Grace,” from Matthew 11:28-30, where Jesus says:

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (The Message).

Our speakers this year are Charles Simpson, Gerard Montenegro, Tim Parish, and myself. For more information and to register, [visit csmpublishing.org](https://www.csmpublishing.org). Please remember us in your prayers and in your giving this month, which is a critical time for us. Thank you!

In Jesus,



Stephen Simpson
President

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