Revival: The Word + Repentance + Worship = Revival

Week 1: The Word

I. As we kick-off a new year, we're praying for:

[Slide]: Revival!

A. If you're over 40, you might be familiar with that word. It's a bit old-school, but it's a great word. If you're a millennial or younger, you may not be as familiar. When I was growing up, Revival was an event. For one week in the summer, you'd have a church service every night and it was typically a more hard-charging service. It was tough sitting through church every night for a week as a small child, but God used it for sure.

1. We're not using the word revival in terms of an event.

Although coming together as a community of Jesus followers is necessary for revival to occur.

We're using revival in terms of a distinct movement of the Holy Spirit in which God ignites a fresh passion in us collectively as a church to honor and serve Jesus! When we humble ourselves and we open our lives to God's purpose, we experience a vibrant and renewed life in the Spirit. Many times, we experience frustration in the Christian life because we're exerting all our energy accomplishing our own agenda and attempting to pull God on board a ship in which we've set our own course!

a. Some are here today or listening online and you've yet to come to a place where you've acknowledged your dependency on Jesus Christ. Today is such a great day! It's not about specific words but a heart posture. You can simply say, "God, I'm a sinner and I want forgiveness. I accept Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Help me to follow You."

b. Many though are Christ followers and we're dry! We're questioning why life is so frustrating? Or even if God is still active in our lives? Just as a reminder, and not because I'm mean, but because I love you: We are Jesus followers. That's the essence of the Christian life. Jesus is our companion and friend, but He doesn't follow us around to do our bidding. The goal isn't for Jesus to make our dreams come true! The goal is to know Jesus! So, if we're equating our relationship with God based off our circumstances then we're missing the mark in a big way. We need revival!

B. When God does a distinct work and revives His people there are a few key ingredients that are always in the mix. Revival can't be manufactured. Emotions can be manufactured but that is a dangerous road to traverse. Revival and emotion aren't contradictory, but we must be clear, our life in Christ is anchored in faith not in feelings. So, we come before God in a humble posture asking Him to do what only He can do, which is to pour out His Spirit on us as we position ourselves expectantly! When we look through the Scripture and see these distinct times when God revives His people there are a few key ingredients.

When these ingredients come together, we see Revival.

What are they?

1. [Slide]: The Word + Repentance + Worship = Revival

Over the next several weeks we'll break these down in detail prayerfully expectant that God will do a distinct work in us as a people.

If we're going to be prayerfully expectant that means we must be intentional in:

a. [Slide]: Prayer!

The equation should really look more like:

[Slide]: {Pray} The Word + Repentance + Worship = Revival {Praise}

We have not because we ask not and constant communion with God comes through prayer.

Talking with God.

C. We're going to launch in the series today looking at:

[Slide]: The Word

1. Bending our lives to the Book isn't optional for the Christ follower because that's primarily how we know Jesus!

When God pours out His Spirit in a fresh way and renews His people, the Scripture is always in the mix!

a. I can't think of a greater example of God doing a distinct work than when He resurrected Jesus from the grave. The resurrection would take those early disciples who bailed on Jesus at His arrest and turn them into a mighty force for the advancement of the gospel!

b. The crucifixion shouldn't have thrown those early followers for a loop like it did, in theory. Why? Because, as we'll see, the plan of God was clearly laid forth in Scripture. The issue wasn't that God called an audible at the line of scrimmage. It was that all the way up to the resurrection, the early disciples were following Jesus, but still holding onto their own dreams in their back pocket. They expected Jesus to launch a rebellion against the Romans and set up an earthly kingdom. They wanted a position in that earthly kingdom!

c. The resurrection changed things! Amen! But what finally opened the eyes of some of the first disciples was seeing Jesus, while also seeing Jesus in light of what the Scripture had declared to be true! It was Jesus the Word revealing Himself through the word that ignited a passion in these pessimistic travelers.

2. Let's dig into Luke 24:24-32. It's the text that shares the experience of two travelers on the road to Emmaus. They're leaving Jerusalem defeated. They had grand hopes but feel like that's all been dashed when another Traveler appears with them. We're told He's Jesus, but the travelers don't recognize Him as the story is unfolding. Jesus gages how they're processing through events and here's their conclusion:

Luke 24:24 [Slide]: 24 "Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they didn't see him."

We could sum up their response like this, "word on the street is that some of the other folks went to see for themselves. The grave was empty all right, but Jesus was no where to be found."

3. God has a sense of humor! Why wasn't Jesus there? Because He was there! Right with them as they traveled. He's about to unleash revival through these guys, but first He's going to take them to school!

Luke 24:25-34 [Slide]: 25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures. 28 They came near the village where they were going, and he gave the impression that he was going farther. 29 But they urged him, "Stay with us, because it's almost evening, and now the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. 30 It was as he reclined at the table with them that he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. 32 They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?" 33 That very hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and those with them gathered together, 34 who said, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"

4. Jesus joins these guys on their journey as they are walking away from Jerusalem defeated. That's important because all the hopes they had a few days before, in their minds, had crumbled like a house of cards. I'm not sure what was special about these guys, but Jesus doesn't let them go, He meets them where they are, and reveals His identity to them through the:

[Slide]: Scriptures!

a. I find it intriguing that the resurrected Jesus didn't join these guys and start breaking down the last few days and the tangible evidence of His resurrection. We know He did that with the disciple Thomas, but here Jesus (whose identity is hidden toward these guys), places the events these guys have experienced within the context of God's written word. It's only 7 miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus and when they arrived it was dusk! This was an intense conversation focused on God's plan of salvation mapped out through the Old Testament Scriptures!

b. Jesus demonstrated at every stage of His earthly ministry that we would do well to:

[Slide]: Bend to the Book!

(1) Jesus the Incarnate Word lived His earthly life in complete alignment with the written word! From the temptation of Jesus to the resurrection, Jesus's earthly life wasn't about following a set of rules. Obedience to the Father was certainly a part, but Jesus lived out the human experience as the fulfillment of the Law! Jesus personified complete obedience to the Father and as the Living Word brought forth in completion what all Scripture points toward: [Slide]: Jesus!

c. The Old Testament looks ahead and most of the New Testament looks back. Some Scripture is yet to be actualized, but all Scripture points toward Jesus! We understand more fully what God has done and will do through His Son Jesus by saturating ourselves in the written word!

Jesus on the road to Emmaus breaks down the Scripture so that they understood the significance of the resurrection in the context of God's eternal plan of salvation!

d. When Jesus and these early disciples (not a part of the original 12), sat down to share a meal and Jesus broke the bread, these guys finally had a breakthrough to see Jesus for who He was! This wasn't a Lord's Supper 2.0, but maybe it was in the breaking of bread that triggered a memory of the Feeding of Five-Thousand or some memory of a previous meal in a tax collector's home. We don't know, but the previous conversation of opening the Scriptures finally clicked!

5. The response is a beautiful illustration of the sacredness of Scripture. It should humble us that the resurrected Lord wanted to ensure that these guys understood the significance of what they were experiencing in the context of God's written word! Here it is one more time:

Luke 24:32 [Slide]: 32 They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?"

D. The Living Word still lives through His word! We experience a dynamic relationship with Jesus. We experience a personal relationship with Jesus! But if or when God chooses to communicate through the wisdom of a friend or through a prompting of the Holy Spirit, it will always be supplemental to the word not separate from the Word! This is vital!! If the resurrected Lord felt it necessary to place His resurrection in the context of Scripture, how much more vital is it for us to filter all of life's experiences through the Word!

1. These guys had experienced the most magnificent event in all history, but they almost missed it because they didn't place their experience in the context of Scripture! Jesus loved them enough to bring forth God's plan of salvation from the Word so that their hearts would be opened. We only have one source of absolute truth that has withstood the changing tide of every culture and every man-made system, and that is Scripture. It's alive and it's breathing! We filter all our experiences through God's Word and if it doesn't bend us toward the Book then we adjust our lives. We don't adjust God's Word!
2. Here's the cold hard reality! None of us have arrived yet. All of us should be in the process of bending our lives to the Book and when we have that posture that's where the passion comes in, being in the Word! If we're reading the Bible to check off a legalistic checklist or skimming it out of context to fit what we want, then we're eliminating the friction that is natural when we open our hearts and minds to Scripture!
3. Praise God His word produces friction in our lives! Why? Because friction is a necessary part of any ignition process. These guys' hearts were burning!! There was a fire in their gut because they recognized the significance of what was occurring before them through the lens of Scripture!

E. What happened next?

Luke 24:33a [Slide]: 33 That very hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem.

1. We've got one more week on The Word but keep this in mind. What did they do?
   [Slide]: They got up and did a 180!
   a. What we determine to do with the Word will determine our direction! They had been walking away from Jerusalem frustrated; they were now running back to Jerusalem fired up!
   They had encountered the risen Word and written word in a way that compels a change of direction!
2. May I level with you this morning and challenge you? I'm a struggling sinner just like everyone in this room or tuning in. Somedays I'm just not feeling it and God's declared victory in my life (that doesn't fluctuate in reality) feels distant. I'm distracted, diluted, or depleted. Usually there's a direct correlation to the time I've spent in God's Word. I know this and yet I still don't always make the wise choice.
3. But I can stand before you in confidence and declare that I love the word of God and I'm absolutely amazed by it! So here's the challenge: dive into God's Word.
   Read it and study it for all it's worth. The more I dig into God's Word the more I stand in awe of it!

II. We're going to be reading through the New Testament as a church family over the next 8 weeks. We want to Immerse ourselves in God's Word and if you'll commit to joining that journey, our lives will be forever changed!
Not only are we going to read the New Testament, but we're also going to learn from each other how God's word has made a difference in lives as we do this in community.
Immersing ourselves in God's Word is a key ingredient of revival and I believe that God wants to do a distinct work in each of our lives this season. Don't miss what God wants to do in your life. There are a lot of good things; but just maybe this is a God thing!