



24 DAYS OF PRAYER

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Introduction: Why Revival?

Revival has long been a topic of interest among Christians. Why is this so? Perhaps it's because of the continual stories we hear of the powerful ways in which God is at work in other areas of the world. Or maybe it's because of a much more personal reason...we realize we are living below God's best for us. Have you ever found yourself thinking, "There's got to be more to the Christian life than this! How do I have that kind of abundant life that the Bible talks about?"

Scripture makes it clear that God has a great purpose for His people and His church. But we know we are far from where we should be. So God's goal is to do a work in us in order to bring us to where we should be. Perhaps that's why we are seeing revivals break out. God is up to something big! He is breathing fresh life into His people and He is preparing His Bride, the Church. Question is will you just sit back with your arms folded and watch passively as these events unfold? Or will you do your part in preparing the way for the Lord? We do this first of all in our own hearts, then in our homes and in our church. And as a result, this fire will spread to the nations!

So what is revival? Christians may differ in their views of what revival is, but at the heart and center of revival is simply the rediscovery of the wonderful presence of God and a hunger for that presence. Scripture tells us that God's presence does not come automatically or easily (Revelation 3:19-20). There are conditions to meet and preparations to make before God can come. Second Chronicles 7:14 is a key verse in showing us how to prepare and what conditions to meet; therefore, even though we will read different passages throughout the next 24 days, we will spend our entire first week on this one verse:

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

Do you really want revival? Do you want to be ready for all that God wants to do among you as an individual, your family, and our church? Then begin to prepare the way for the Lord now...

If My People...

Passage: 2 Chronicles 7:11-16

Though these words were spoken to King Solomon at the opening of the Jerusalem Temple, verse 14 gives us universal principles that apply to God's people in all generations. It is a well-quoted verse on revival, but how well is it understood and applied? Today we will look at what is clearly required of us:

If my people, who are called by my name, will

- humble themselves (brokenness)
- pray (dependence)
- seek my face (intimacy)
- turn from their wicked ways (repentance)

Those are steep conditions when we really start to take them seriously and put them into practice in our lives. But oh, what a great promise the Lord makes in return:

...then I will

- hear from heaven
- forgive their sin
- heal their land

I want to experience that! Do you?

For Further Reflection:

1. Read Isaiah 40:3-5. According to this passage, what kinds of preparations need to be made so that God can come and be present among His people?

2. What must you do to prepare your own heart for the Lord's visit?

...Humble Themselves (1)

Passage: 2 Chronicles 7:14

As you can see, the first condition of revival is to humble ourselves. Pride, in its many forms, is the first and greatest blockage to revival. It is the #1 sin that spoils our relationship with God and with others; therefore, pride is the root of all our problems. It shows up in various ways (independence, self-centeredness) and keeps us from recognizing our total dependence on God. It's not hard to spot pride in every area of our lives. First, there's pride in ourselves. You may think, "I don't have a super-sized ego. I'm not a braggadocious person." Sure, but are you ever independent from God? Are there times when you attempt to manage things on your own instead of giving Him control? That's pride. There's also pride in our churches. There's certainly nothing wrong with being proud of your church, but do you find yourself comparing it to other churches? Do you think thoughts such as, "We do things so much better here" or possibly even, "If God is going to bring revival to our area, it will surely be through our church!" Then there's our ministry. Pride not only affects the average church member, but it can affect those who serve and lead. If we're not careful, the church can become full of people who want status, position and power rather than those willing to serve in any capacity. Feelings of superiority can easily slip up on those in service of any kind and develop the attitude, "I am more spiritual than you."

The answer to pride is not simply trying to think less of ourselves and more of others. Pride has to be broken. Usually when we think of something broken, we think of it as spoiled and therefore useless. A world that celebrates success certainly doesn't see the value in broken things. But God brings beauty out of brokenness. Think about this: for a plant to rise from the soil the seed must be broken. For a baby chick to experience larger life, the shell must be broken. Even a thoroughbred horse must be broken. Get the idea? The issue in our brokenness is not so much our circumstances, but our response. True brokenness is when God strips us of all our self-sufficiency and we see that He alone is all we have and all we need. It is when our "self" dies that Christ can fill our lives with His presence.

For Further Reflection:

1. The answer to pride is brokenness. How does it apply to you personally? In other words, what things/areas in your life need to be broken?
2. Read Ezekiel 36:25-27 and ask God to remove any stony areas and to give you a heart of flesh.

...Humble Themselves (2)

Passage: 2 Chronicles 7:14

In his book, *The Calvary Road*, Roy Hession states, "To be broken is the beginning of revival. It's painful, it is humiliating, but it is the only way." God tells us to humble ourselves. It's not something we wait on Him to do for us (although there are certainly times when He does humble us). It is something we are told to do, something we must do! So how do we humble ourselves?

1. By praying and seeking God's face. Whether in subtle ways or not, pride makes us think we can handle life on our own. So we tend to work hard and pray little. But 2 Chronicles 7:14 tells us we can't expect a powerful movement of God in our lives until we pray and seek His face. We must turn to God and depend on Him for everything.

2. By coming to Him with a humble and contrite heart. It's one thing to pray and seek God's face, but it's another to come to God with the right attitude. See, even in the act of praying, we can come to Him with a proud heart: "Lord, please change my spouse. I'm doing all that I know to do, but he/she needs to change!" God will only respond in favor to the person who comes with a humble heart (Luke 18:9-14).

3. By confessing our faults to one another (James 5:16). Pride keeps us from owning our sins, confessing our wrongs, and making things right. Healing will only come when we confess our sins to the Lord and one another, seek forgiveness, and repent. Ask yourself, "Am I willing to apologize where needed right now? To my spouse, my kids, my parents, my friend?" Once sin is brought out in the open, it can be dealt with properly - its power has been broken.

4. By being willing to forgive. Often we will confess our wrongs to others and seek their forgiveness, but what do we do when someone wrongs or hurts us? We let pride get in the way and demand that the offense be dealt with. True humility means dying to the self in us that cries out for justice and revenge.

5. By serving one another. There's no greater example of service than Jesus Christ, Himself. In Philippians 2:7 we see that Jesus humbled Himself by "taking the form of a servant" and in Mark 10:45 "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve." So if we truly want to emulate Jesus, then we must display a humble and contrite heart.

For Further Reflection:

1. Look back over the five main ways to humble yourself. Do you find yourself struggling in any of these areas? Pray and ask the Lord to help you in those particular areas.

2. Read Micah 6:8. Pause and think for a moment about your relationships. How do you relate to God and to others? On the basis of pride or humility? Ask the Lord to reveal to you anything in these areas you need to do this week. Then do it.

...Pray

Passage: 2 Chronicles 7:14

The second condition of revival is prayer. No Christian can expect to know God intimately without spending time in prayer. And no church can expect revival of any kind without earnestly praying for it. Prayer is the avenue through which the Lord works.

Hopefully you see the need and don't have to be told why we need to be praying more than ever. We are in a time of crisis right now in terms of our culture, the value of life, our families, the institution of marriage, etc. And oftentimes the Lord will use times of crisis to awaken His people. He did so in Isaiah 6:1-8. As the Israelites were in a time of crisis, we see Isaiah seeking God in the Temple. God often brings people to a point of desperation before He brings revival. It is only at this point that we can clearly see the meaning behind Christ's words, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

If what's happening in the world around you right now is not enough reason for you to fall on your face before God, then ask Him to give you a burden to pray. You can be assured He will do this because He wants His people to seek His face! Make a decision to do so. David did so in Psalm 27:8, "Your face, O Lord, I will seek." God does many things in this world without the prayers of His people, but there are some things He will only do when His people are involved.

One of the greatest revivals ever occurred in the region of Wales. Someone once asked why the fire of God fell on Wales, and the response was, "Fire falls where it is likely to catch and spread. . . Wales provided the necessary tinder." Wow. Wouldn't it be great if that could be said about us. "Sherwood provided the necessary tinder." When God lays the burden of praying for revival upon people's hearts, it is not ordinary prayer. It's revival prayer! It's urgent; it's intense! It's a shifting of focus from personal needs to praying for His Church, our city, and our nation. Revival prayer is also persistent and persuasive. It's not praying occasionally for the Lord to bless us with His presence or tacking on a sentence or two after the dinner blessing. It's calling out the promises of God according to the Scriptures. . . reminding Him of His Word and not giving up until you see those prayers answered. God is looking for those who will pray down revival. Will it be you?

For Further Reflection:

1. God often uses times of crisis to bring His people to pray. What concerns do you have right now concerning the things going on around you?

2. Read Isaiah 44:3-5 and Acts 2:17. What are some of God's promises of what He will do? Pray some of these promises back to Him.

...Seek My Face

Passage: 2 Chronicles 7:14

The third condition of revival is seeking His face. How is this different from prayer? Seeking God's face moves us to a deeper dimension of prayer and fellowship with God. In other words, we can give ourselves to prayer but fail to seek God's face. If we are not careful, prayer can be just seeking His hand (His blessings, His gifts, even revival itself). But God desires that we seek His face. To know Him and His character, not just what He can do. Our highest priority and greatest privilege is fellowship and intimacy with God.

Michael Maeliau once said, "If you want revival, don't seek revival – seek Him. To enter into a deep and intimate relationship with Jesus is revival." In seeking revival we can make the mistake of seeking the signs, the experiences and the blessings that come with revival, but we can fail to seek Jesus! Remember this: Jesus IS revival! Revival is just the by-product of knowing Jesus more intimately. So it's not revival that we are seeking, but a fresh love and passion for Jesus. When we have that, revival can begin in our hearts, in our church, and hopefully spread to our surrounding communities and beyond.

So what are the requirements for seeking His face?

1. A longing to know God. As stated yesterday, David said, "Your face, O Lord, I will seek. Do not hide your face from me" (Psalm 27:8-9). Sadly, it is possible to know all about God, but not know Him personally and intimately.

2. Taking time to seek Him. As is true with any close relationship, you must take time to spend with that person. Intimacy with God can only come from taking time to be alone with Him. Not just time to present your requests to Him, but time to express your love, adoration and worship to Him. Do you take time each day to do that?

3. Dealing with obstacles. Again, as is true in any relationship, true intimacy can only occur when problems in the relationship are dealt with and removed. Are things in your life causing Him to hide His face from you and therefore preventing you from experiencing Him so closely? Psalm 24:3-6 tells us what is required of those who would seek God and draw near to Him. It gives us a checklist of the kinds of things we should watch out for if we want to be near to Him. God delights to honor those who fervently seek Him. Are you going to be one of those?

For Further Reflection:

1. What does it mean to seek God's face? In what ways is this more than praying?
2. Where do you stand when measured up against the checklist in Psalm 24:3-6? In what areas do you need to see improvement?

...Turn From Their Wicked Ways (1)

Passage: 2 Chronicles 7:14

We have looked at the first three conditions for revival – humbling ourselves, praying and seeking God’s face. Today we look at the fourth condition mentioned in 2 Chronicles 7:14: repentance (“turn from their wicked ways”). At first glance it might seem odd that we should pray and seek God’s face before turning from our wicked ways. Shouldn’t there be repentance before we can seek fellowship and intimacy with God? Truth is, we do not know what to repent of until God reveals our true condition.

Peterus Octavianus once said, “Revivals do not begin happily with everyone having a good time. They start with a broken and contrite heart.” Think about your own perception of revival and what it must be like. Oftentimes we have a one-sided view in which we see revival as a time of joy with people flooding into our churches. While we certainly long to see that happen, we must first experience a time of true conviction. This obviously begins with the people of God. The Holy Spirit cannot fill us until we are clean.

What is repentance? Repentance is more than regret or remorse. It is more than just being sorry, or apologizing to God. Repentance is deep conviction that brings a change of heart and leads to a change of behavior. A.W. Tozer says it best:

“Unless we intend to reform, we may as well not pray... we must have a reformation within the church. To beg for a flood of blessing to come upon a back-slidden and disobedient church is to waste time and effort. A new wave of religious interest will do no more than add numbers to the churches that have no intention to own the Lordship of Jesus and come under obedience to his commandments. God is not interested in increasing church attendance unless those who attend amend their ways and begin to live holy lives.”

Repentance, therefore, is the key to revival for it is both a preparation for revival and an ongoing part of revival. If repentance dies, so does revival.

For Further Reflection:

1. “I repented when I became a Christian, and that’s all that’s needed.” Is that a proper view of repentance? What else is needed? (1 John 1:8-10)

2. Look again at the quotation by A.W. Tozer. According to Tozer, why is repentance and reformation necessary before there can be revival?

...Turn From Their Wicked Ways (2)

Passage: 2 Chronicles 7:14

General confession of sin will never do. Your sins were committed one by one, and they should be reviewed and repented of one by one. Imagine having a fight with your spouse. Emotions ran high, and many hurtful things were said. Once things cool down, imagine your spouse coming to you to apologize. What would you rather hear: "I'm sorry for last night" or "I'm sorry that I said such and such because I know that really hurt you. I'm also sorry for bringing such and such back up because that wasn't fair." We desire a more detailed apology from others not to be mean, but because it helps us to see that they really understand what hurt or offended us. The same is true with the Lord. He doesn't desire a blanket apology for everything we've done - repentance must be specific.

At the back of your booklet you will find two helpful tools entitled "Not I, But Christ" and "22 Thought-Provoking Questions". Often referred to as "sin checklists," these are great instruments to use in your personal time with the Lord as you seek to acknowledge and repent of the sin in your life. You might be surprised at how many of these sins you tend to overlook. We claim that "sin is sin," but unknowingly many times we will still categorize it in our minds. We render certain sins harmless in the grand scheme of things. But true repentance is a desire to turn from ALL things unholy and displeasing to our Lord. As you pray and ask the Lord to reveal your sin to you, remember to confess that sin immediately. Commit yourself to turning from it, and go ahead and take that first step whatever it might be. Immediacy is important. Otherwise you can allow the enemy to start planting thoughts in your head such as, "Is that really that bad? Come on, everyone does that. . . it's harmless."

If you've ever experienced a problem with termites you know that they start from the inside and work their way out. They will eat away at the core of a post, weakening it and finally causing it to collapse. In the same way, those "little" sins in our lives have the same effect if they are not dealt with. Outwardly we might look strong to others, but we are rotting away on the inside. God calls us to "turn from our wicked ways." This applies to all of us! Every single small departure from God's way of holiness is sin. And those little sins will eat out our spiritual strength and vitality without us even realizing it. Let's identify them and deal with them!

For Further Reflection:

1. As you confess your sins to the Lord, do you list them individually or do you just offer Him a blanket apology for all you've done?
2. Spend some time working through "Not I, But Christ" and/or "22 Thought-Provoking Questions". Ask the Lord to help you identify some of those "little sins" in your life that you tend to overlook.

Revive Us Again!

Passage: Psalm 85

What is revival? Some see it as powerful evangelism that brings many lost people into the church. That might be a result of revival, but it's not actual revival. The word "revival" means to "re-vive" or "bring back to life again." It's referring to those who had "life" at one point in time. . . . in other words, believers. Revival begins in the Church and then spills out into the world.

A famous Welsh preacher, C. Evans, writes, "Revival is God bending down to the dying embers of a fire just about to go out and breathing into it until it bursts into flame." Another writer, D. Panton, describes revival as "an inrush of divine life into a body threat-ening to become a corpse." Revival is recognizing that we need God to break into our churches and into our lives in a powerful way. We need Him to wake us up, shake us out of our complacency and challenge us to a deeper walk with Him while revealing the sin in our lives that is keeping Him from using us in a mighty way. This part of revival is not always fun, but it is necessary.

In our passage today the psalmist recognized the need for revival. The question is, do you? How do we know that we need revival?

- When we are much more excited about socials than prayer meetings.
- When we do not love God as we once did.
- When we would rather watch TV or play on the computer than read our Bible or pray.
- When we seldom think thoughts of eternity.
- When we make little or no effort to share our faith with anyone.
- When we are bored with worship.
- When we can be at odds with someone and not feel compelled to make things right.
- When we are not exercising faith and believing God for the impossible.
- When people have to be begged to give and serve in our church.
- When we are more concerned with our children's education and athletic activities than the condition of their souls.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. But as you read through it, chances are it won't take much to convince you that revival is needed and NOW is the time for it. Revive us again, Lord!

For Further Reflection:

1. What are some other signs in your own life or in the world around you that convince you revival is needed?
2. As you spend time in prayer, do you pray for revival? If not, spend time this week asking the Lord to send revival just as the psalmist did.

From Desert to Glory

Passage: Isaiah 35:1-10

“Another year has passed me by; still I look at myself and cry, ‘What kind of man have I become?’ Sometimes I feel like a man in the wilderness. . .”

Recognize these words? They belong to a song called “Man in the Wilderness” by the 80’s rock group, Styx. Certainly, their intentions were not to capture where many people are with the Lord these days, but chances are it might hit close to home with you. Truth is, we all have times when we feel lost in the wilderness. We believe in God, but when we look, we cannot see Him. When we listen, we cannot hear Him. And when we try to walk in His ways, we stumble and fall. Have you ever been there? Are you there today?

Isaiah 35 speaks to the man in the wilderness and provides hope for him. Are you lacking vigor? Does God seem distant to you? Have you tried going your own way for a while and failed? Listen carefully. Isaiah has good news for you. Your God will come.

In the first two verses, Isaiah summarizes revival for us. He was assuring the divided nation of Israel that God would take them from desert to glory. Time and again God brings people from desert to glory. He will do the same for you. Notice the four landmarks on the journey from desert to glory in our passage:

- 1.The starting point is the desert. Isaiah describes it in v.1 as a parched land. In order for any type of revival to occur, there has to be a thirst for it.
- 2.The second landmark in God’s work is presence. Throughout history God has proven that He will come. In v. 3-4, Isaiah tells the people how to prepare for it.
- 3.The third landmark is the pathway. Once God comes into the scene, He always provides a way. That pathway is holiness (v.8). Holiness is the bridge between God’s coming and the future glory.
- 4.The final destination of this journey is glory. There will come a day when we will see in full. We shall behold His glory. Those who have put their trust in Jesus Christ will enter into heaven, referred to by Isaiah as Zion, with singing. Everlasting joy will crown our heads (v.10). From desert to presence to pathway to glory, God is in the business of reviving our souls and renewing our lives.

For Further Reflection:

- 1.Have you ever experienced time in the wilderness? Maybe you are doing so now. What did/does that feel like?
- 2.As you journey from desert to glory, where are you in this list of landmarks? What do you need to do to get to the next step?

Breathing Life Into Dry Bones

Passage: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ezekiel was a man of God confronted with a congregation of God's people who were discouraged, displaced and spiritually dead. The circumstances were ripe for revival, so God took Ezekiel to a mountaintop and gave him a visual aid of what that would look like. He showed him a valley of dry, sun-bleached, brittle and scattered bones. Then the Lord asked the question - "Can these bones live again?" Revival is the process of bringing to life that which was previously alive, but is now dead. Ezekiel obeyed God, preached to those dry bones and then God breathed His spirit back into their bodies.

Today churches are full of people, but many of God's people have a self-sufficient spirit, an apathetic heart, and a rebellious lifestyle. Why is it that we have people coming to church more, but experiencing it less? Why is it that our world has experienced a major shift in thinking in which we are now quickly rejecting the same absolutes we used to affirm? Why is it that our society now bows down before the God of tolerance? What is the problem? The problem is sin. We are dry. Many of us have dead disobedient lifestyles that have caused us to become spiritual corpses, and we don't even realize it! Much like the church at Sardis....DEAD. Question is, can these bones live again?

Yes, they can. But we have to overcome our spiritual dryness, which can be hard to recognize at times. So how do you know if you are getting dry?

1. When there is no desire for Bible study and prayer.
2. When spiritual conversation embarrasses you or is avoided.
3. When you rationalize sin.
4. When you can quote Scripture and attend service, but it doesn't make a difference in your life.
5. When your life revolves around money.
6. When it no longer bothers you that others are in misery and spiritually lost.
7. When worship and service to God does not excite you.

Only God has the power breathe life back into our bones. But it's up to us to put ourselves in a ready position. Revival comes through preaching and hearing God's Word. Revival comes through prayer. Revival comes through obedience to God's commands.

For Further Reflection:

1. Are you experiencing spiritual dryness in your life? If so, what do you think led to this?
2. What can you do to put yourself in a position ready to receive the life God wants to breathe back into your bones?

Prepare the Way

Passage: Isaiah 40:3-5; Luke 3:3-6

God never sends revival blessings on a people unprepared for it. He will not pour out His Spirit on hardened hearts or on those unready or unwilling to receive it. In ancient times, when a king was to visit a city, a messenger would go before him, telling the people to prepare the way for the king. These people would then get to work preparing the road along which the king would travel. They would remove debris, fill in potholes, and do whatever was necessary to make the road ready and the king's travel smooth. If these kinds of preparations were made for an earthly king coming to visit his people, how much more do we need to prepare the way for our sovereign King?

In our passage today we see the work of John the Baptist being foretold – he was to prepare the way for Christ to come on the scene. Revival is doing that same thing . . . preparing the way for the Lord. Verse 3 tells us to “make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.” The word “highway” means “raised up.” It’s a higher elevation of living, meaning we must be spiritually raised up and living above the status quo. We won’t have revival just because we scheduled one. There must be preparation first - we are to make straight a highway in their desert. So what are Isaiah’s instructions on how to pave the way?

1. Every valley shall be raised up. A valley is a low place. This would be the troubled spots in your Christian life. The places that seem bogged down, empty or lacking. It could be a hardship, a financial burden, a marital problem, your past. Revival will fill these places up because the Lord will be invited to intervene in these situations.

2. Every mountain and hill made low. This is the leveling process – tearing down the things that stand in the way of revival coming. What is that for you? Disbelief? Addiction? A bad habit? Pride? Indifference? Worldly friends? Wrong priorities? Selfishness? Greed? Depression? Think about this: many times when a hill is cut down to a level position, the dirt is taken and put in a valley area near the hill. So what used to be a deep valley and a steep hill all becomes level ground. That is what revival will do in your life. Those mountains will be made level. Those valleys will be filled.

3. The rugged places shall become a plain. This is the smoothing process. True revival will smooth out those bumpy areas of your life (marriage, finances, etc.) because your heart will be getting right and your actions will follow. God wants to come and meet with you . . . will you help build the road?

For Further Reflection:

1. How can you be more active in preparing the way for the Lord in your life?
2. What are some areas that need to be filled in, leveled, or made smooth?

Break Up the Fallow Ground

Passage: Hosea 10:12

Notice that Hosea 10:12 begins with the act of sowing. Sowing, as you know, is to plant or put into the soil. In other words, it is to do something that will eventually reap a particular result. Scripture says we are to sow for ourselves righteousness. What does this mean? It means no one else can do it for you! The Pastor can't do it, your spouse cannot do it, your friend can't do it. . . you have to sow righteousness for yourself! In other words, you have to determine FOR YOURSELF that you will be right with God! Now, this isn't just any righteousness. Scripture tells us very plainly that our own righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God (Isaiah 64:6). To sow for yourself righteousness means to allow God's Word and Spirit to produce in you His righteousness!

As stated earlier, sowing is doing something that will produce a particular result. Notice what Hosea said we would reap: unfailing love and mercy! The Bible tells us a man reaps what he sows (Galatians 6:7), so if we are sowing, planting, and cultivating the righteousness of God, then we will reap His mercy.

So how do we sow? Hosea tells us to "break up the fallow ground." Fallow ground is hardened ground that has been left unplowed. And just as the four types of soil Jesus addressed in the gospels refer to your heart, Hosea is also comparing this ground to your heart. It must be broken up and plowed, ready to receive the seed (Word of God). The Word of God must get inside your heart in order to produce real righteousness.

We are foolish to think that REAL revival will come with hardened ground: bad attitudes, unforgiveness, or a lack of interest in the work of God. Issues in our lives will not simply go away – they become a hardening agent and cause us to justify our feelings and actions. We feel that we are right in holding resentment for wrong done against us. Revival only comes after the breaking up of the fallow ground.

For Further Reflection:

1. Read Matthew 13:1-9. Which type of soil does your heart reflect?
2. What can you do this week to break up any hardened ground and prepare your heart to receive the Word of the Lord?

The Essential Building Blocks

Passage: Nehemiah 1-2

Although the Jews completed the temple in 516 B.C., the city walls remained in shambles for the next 70 years. These walls were needed to protect the temple from attack and to ensure the continuity of worship. Nehemiah found out that the exile survivors who had returned home were in bad shape and living in deplorable conditions. They were disorganized and didn't have the leadership needed to begin rebuilding the shattered walls. By now an entire generation had grown up with Jerusalem in this condition. It was normal for them. That's the way it had always been.

How many times have we accepted that same attitude, "That's the way it's always been?" We see fighting, gossip and division in the church and we just accept it. We see sinful patterns, bad habits, and wrong thinking in our lives and we excuse it. It's time we get honest with ourselves and recognize the places in our lives where the walls have been broken down. Those areas where it seems like we no longer have any defenses. That's the kind of ruin that Nehemiah saw in Jerusalem. We are no different today. But there's a lesson we can learn from Nehemiah: IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THAT WAY! You see, God is in the reconstruction business. This awesome book of Nehemiah is one of the most helpful pictures we have of recovery from broken lives.

What can we learn from Nehemiah?

- Nehemiah recognized the situation (1:3)
- Nehemiah fasted and prayed (1:4)
- Nehemiah took responsibility (1:6-7)
- Nehemiah returned to God's Word (1:7-9)
- Nehemiah took action (2:5).

Nehemiah not only saw how things were, but he saw how things could be. He was not only willing to fast and pray and cry out to God on Jerusalem's behalf, but he was willing to do whatever it took, even if that meant giving his own life. Nehemiah looked through a different set of eyes. He saw through the eyes of the Re-creator.

Just like the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, during revival our spiritual walls are restored. It's important that Jerusalem's walls were built upon the original foundations because revival can only be established upon the original Truth. As you seek to rebuild the spiritual walls in your life, follow Nehemiah's example in doing it the right way.

For Further Reflection:

1. Nehemiah was willing to do whatever it took to rebuild the walls. Are you?
2. Do you focus on how things have always been and accept them or do you see through God's eyes how they could be and desire to change them?

Real Pearls or Fake Ones...It's Your Choice!

Passage: Lamentations 3:40-42

One day, six-year-old Jenny and her mom were at the local dime store when she saw some pearls that she desperately needed. The cost was \$2, and Jenny's mother told her she could do extra chores to earn enough money to buy them. Jenny did just that. She loved those pearls and wore them everywhere, even to bed. One night Jenny's dad went to tuck her in and asked Jenny if she really loved him. Jenny said yes. Her dad then asked if he could have her pearls. Jenny offered other things to her dad as a token of her love because she really loved those pearls. This scenario went on for several nights. Finally one night, Jenny's dad came in to put her to bed and asked the same question. With tears running down her cheeks, Jenny handed her dad the pearls. Then with tears in his eyes, Jenny's dad reached into his pocket and pulled out a blue velvet pouch. Inside the pouch was a strand of real pearls that her dad had purchased for her birthday. He had waited to give the genuine pearls until she was willing to part with the imitation ones.

Revival occurs when we are no longer willing to trade our real pearls for dime-store imitation ones. In other words, when we are serious about keeping God first in our lives. You see, at one time Israel had put God in first place where He belongs. But eventually the Israelites began to rely more and more on individual people and physical things than God. Dime-store solutions. They gave themselves over to idolatry, and God dealt with His people severely.

In the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah vocalized what he felt inwardly for his people and their plight. In the first two and a half chapters we see despair, depression, and a people devoid of hope. But in our passage today, Jeremiah focuses again on the hope that comes from God and the ways He encourages His people to repent. First, we are to examine ourselves. This includes not examining ourselves in light of others, but in light of God. God has given us a standard to shoot for and the tools needed to meet that standard. Second, we are to walk in God's direction. God has not moved. He is where He has always been – it's up to us to turn back and walk towards Him. Third, we are to be serious about prayer. God is serious about wanting to hear from us. And fourth, we are to be sincere in our confession. God's forgiveness is predicated on our repentance and confession (1 John 1:8-9).

For Further Reflection:

1. What kinds of things do you allow to come before the Lord in your life? It can be activities, possessions, people, etc. Confess those now to the Lord.
2. What might you need to do to reassure yourself and the Lord that you will not allow those things to creep into His place in your life again?

Come, Let Us Return to the Lord

Passage: Hosea 6:1-3

Many people refer to the book of Hosea as “God’s Love for His Adulterous Wife.” Israel had been an adulterous nation in that she had betrayed the Lord through continual worship of Baal and other gods. Through the personal tragedy of unfaithfulness in his own marriage, Hosea was allowed to experience something of the heartache God felt for His bride, Israel. Therefore, Hosea sought to guide Israel to return to a faithful relationship with the Lord. Our passage today highlights Israel’s response to God’s call to repentance in Hosea 5:15. At first the Israelites’ repentance seems genuine and heart-felt, but upon closer examination, we see that no sin is specifically confessed. Their repentance is shallow and insincere. This is later confirmed in God’s continual objections with the nation throughout the rest of the book (7:10, 13, 16). In fact, true repentance does not come until the last chapter in which we see Israel repudiate its idolatry and acknowledge its need of God’s grace.

So what went wrong with this “confession”? To begin with, their concern was for healing and not for cleansing. The Israelites saw their nation in difficulty and wanted God to make things right, but they did not come with broken hearts and surrendered wills. They wanted happiness, not holiness. A change of circumstances, not a change in character. Rescue from danger, not deliverance from sins. Ever been there?

Furthermore, the people of Israel wanted a quick fix: “After two days will He revive us; on the third day He will raise us up” (6:2). They wanted to put a band aid on a cancerous tumor instead of calling for drastic surgery. They didn’t want to pay the price for deep cleansing. We see in v.3 that the Israelites were no different from those of us today who see forgiveness and restoration as a mechanical process rather than a relational matter with God. It’s like getting a candy bar out of a vending machine: put the money in, push the button, and out comes the candy. The Christian life is a relationship with God, and it’s a relationship not based on cut-and-dried formulas.

As you confess your sins to the Lord, ask yourself, “Am I more interested in the healing of my circumstances than I am personal cleansing? Am I sorry for my sin or just tired of suffering?” The Lord can spot insincerity a mile away.

For Further Reflection:

1. Do you want happiness or holiness? A change of circumstances or a change in character? Rescue from danger or deliverance from sins? Ask the Lord to help you make the harder choice.

2. Are you in this for the long haul? The Israelites wanted a quick fix, but the Lord is not interested in that. Are you ready to go the distance with the Lord?

Requisites for Revival

Passage: Deuteronomy 30:1-10

Moses had passionately urged Israel to obey the LORD and His commands. He even set the blessings and curses before them in order to motivate them. Yet he knew their stubbornness well enough to realize that their apostasy was inevitable and that the worst curses would come upon them—exile and dispersion among the nations. However, even in the midst of this, Moses foresaw God's blessing. The Israelites would eventually come to their senses and take God's Word to heart. Their repentance, however, would be insufficient to reverse the curses because they would still be under foreign domination. So in response to their repentance, God Himself would intervene and gather the nation and bring her back to her land. In doing so, He would restore Israel's fortunes. The prophets made it clear that this great restoration to the land would not take place until the Second Advent of the Messiah just before the beginning of His millennial reign on the earth. Yet we have the opportunity to return to the Lord now. Our passage today instructs us how:

Remember (v.1) - The phrase "take them to heart" is more literally translated "call them to mind." It is time to take a hard look at ourselves. Are you satisfied with where you are in your walk with the Lord? Are you serving the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind? Are you committed to making your Sunday morning a time of Spirit-filled worship and expression of Christ's hope and joy? What things do you need to actively be calling to mind?

Return (v.2) - The theological word implied here is "repentance." A change of attitude and actions is always at the heart of revival. Notice that repentance is not merely external, but internal as well. It must start with us as individuals, then our families, then our church before it can ever spread to the outside community.

Restore (v.3-5) - Restored fellowship with the Lord immediately follows repentance. As a result, things begin to work better because He is in control. And beyond that, God begins to shower His blessings in natural and supernatural ways when we come to Him in humility.

Renew (v.6) - God will then increase the capacity of our hearts to love Him. God understands that loving and serving Him are the reason we were created, and so our greatest fulfillment is in the enjoyment of Him. He renews us for that purpose for which we were created.

For Further Reflection:

1. Based on our reading today, what things do you need to actively be calling to mind?

2. God created us to love and serve Him. Are you doing so on a daily basis? Why or why not?

Can You Spare Some Change?

Passage: Acts 2:1-47

It's generally true that people are always looking to improve. Isn't that why we diet and exercise? Read books or go to school? People want to be changed for the better. What is it about yourself that you would like to change? Is it the way you look? Something to do with your health? Or maybe your level of expertise on a certain subject?

God is interested in change. He's interested in changing you. In fact, that's what revival is all about. As we take a look at what happened on Pentecost many years ago, we see that God changed many people's lives. At that time the disciples still didn't fully understand Jesus' mission; they were confused, and as a result, timid about sharing the Gospel with others. Suddenly, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and a crowd gathered to listen as the disciples preached the Gospel. The Apostle Peter stood up and gave a beautiful sermon that the Holy Spirit inspired him to preach, a sermon that converted 3,000 people in one day!

Do you see the changes that took place on Pentecost? No longer were the disciples confused. Now they understood the plan of salvation completely. No longer were they timid. Now, they were confident, speaking publicly. Look at Peter – two months earlier he was so afraid that he denied Jesus three times. Now he was speaking to the crowd with confidence and understanding that he had never had before.

Pentecost can be summed up in one word: change. Our world today needs change. There are so many people who do not believe in Jesus Christ, and there are so many Christians who are like the disciples before Pentecost – confused, weak, timid. In order for us to see revival, we need the Holy Spirit to come to us and change us.

How does a person change his soul? You can't do it by trying to be a better person. That's like saying there is something wrong with your car, so you'll try to change it by being a better driver. You need someone to work on your engine, your soul. You need someone to fix it for you. And that someone is the Holy Spirit. Allow the Holy Spirit to come to you through the quiet, humble teaching and preaching of the Word. May He continue to work in you, to change you and to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you.

For Further Reflection:

1. Are there certain things about you that God wants to change? What are they?
2. Do you try to change them yourself or are you deliberate about allowing the Lord to do so?

Create In Me a Clean Heart

Passage: Psalm 51:1-19

Our passage today is one of self-examination. David wrote this psalm after his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. In his desire to fulfill the lust of his flesh, he had broken at least five of God's Ten Commandments... coveting another man's wife, adultery and murder just to name a few. Yet the Bible says David was a "man after God's own heart." Seriously? Yes, seriously.

You don't have to read much of Psalm 51 to be convinced that David was truly convicted over his sin. He knew his disobedience had broken God's heart and had caused a fractious relationship with God. As a result, his own spirit and heart were broken, and he cried out for restored fellowship with God. David knew the great magnitude of God's mercy, and once his sins were confessed, forgiven, and purged, look at what David begged God for... restoration of joy, God's presence and His Holy Spirit.

So what can we learn from David? In order to walk closely with God and put ourselves in a position ready to experience Him in a powerful way, we must live lives of repentance. Therefore:

1. We need a spirit of confession. Confession is an honest look at our sin and a willingness to acknowledge it before the Lord.

2. We need a spirit of repentance. A lot of us don't mind confessing, but that's not enough. Confession without repentance is like laying all of our sins out before God, rummaging through them, naming them and then picking them all up again. Jesus didn't die on the cross just so we could wallow in the filth of our sin without ever getting cleaned up. Confession is naming our sin before God while repentance is leaving it there and turning away from it.

3. We need a spirit of pardon. This psalm is not about David's sin and confession. It's about God and His love, mercy and grace. It's about forgiveness.

God is not looking for perfection. He's looking for sinners willing to examine their lives, show sorrow over sin and desire to turn from it. We tend to rationalize our sin. But a repentant heart doesn't blame circumstances or others for our own failures. David didn't blame God or Bathsheba: "Lord, if you hadn't had me king I wouldn't have been walking on the palace roof in the first place. Besides, did you see how she was parading around?" True repentance owns up to sin and does something about it.

For Further Reflection:

1. When you mess up, do you own up to it or do you tend to blame others or even God?

2. Do you find yourself confessing your sin, but stopping just short of repentance?

Fire From Heaven

Passage: 1 Kings 18:16-39

There just aren't many like Elijah! Here was a man willing to take a stand for the Lord, and as a result the Lord showed Himself in a mighty way and turned the people's hearts back again (v.37). The people Elijah was dealing with were half-hearted followers. They weren't concerned with the Truth - they wanted to waver back and forth between the one true God and Baal. But God wasn't interested in that. He wanted all or nothing from them. The same holds true today. As we live in a culture surrounded by Baal worship (sex, money, and power), God wants all or nothing from us.

Notice the prophets of Baal danced, shouted and did all kinds of things to hear from Baal and got nothing. The same thing happens in our culture today. We go after these things relentlessly, and we get nothing in return:

"Hey power, answer me!"

"Hey money, give me what I need."

"Hey sex, make me feel good."

Nothing. You'd think we'd learn.

We see that Elijah never tried to be politically correct by reconciling Baal worship with the Lord. He wasn't trying to make everyone happy. He believed in absolute Truth. Either God is true or He isn't. Elijah didn't try and convince people why it was a good idea to follow the Lord. He didn't claim it would solve all their problems. He just said follow God because He is God. We can't base our decision whether or not to follow God on whether or not we like His ways or ideas. We follow Him because we are seeking Truth.

The best part is Elijah was a man just like us! He was no different. No super powers, nothing. And the God he served is the very same One we serve today. Elijah was just an ordinary man on fire for God. He gave his life to God. His heart to God. And God used it to bring revival to His people: "When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, 'The LORD – He is God! The LORD – He is God!'" (v.39). That's all He asks from us. A heart willing to take a stand for God. He will do the rest.

For Further Reflection:

1. What gods are most prevalent in our society today? How can you protect yourself daily from worshipping these things?

2. Are you willing to take a stand for God today even if you are the only one? Could God use you as a powerful example of faith to those around you?

You're the God of This City

Passage: Acts 8:1-25

Some of the most fascinating stories you can ever read are about the occurrences of great city-wide revivals! For example, over 200 years ago a preacher named Charles Finney conducted revivals in the northeastern part of the US. On one occasion in Rochester, NY, over 100,000 came to Christ...the entire city was shaken for God! Then there was the great Welsh Revival at the turn of the 20th century. It all started in a small room when spiritual fire fell on a youth meeting. Historians say it could only be compared to the day of Pentecost! The young people were weeping and crying out to God to make a difference in their lives so they could make a difference in the world. Their fire spread to the adults who carried it throughout their city and eventually throughout the country of Wales...the ripple effect was felt around the world!

We have a similar thing happening here in Acts 8. A man named Philip went to preach in the region of Samaria, and the entire city was moved to great revival. This wasn't some temporary, counterfeit revival that touches only the emotions...it was a revival where Christians genuinely get right with God, lost people get saved in great numbers, marriages are restored, alcoholics are delivered, rebellious teens are brought to their knees, etc. Would you like to see that in Albany and the surrounding area? Acts 8 should make us hungry for it right here!

There are two key factors in this Acts 8 city-wide revival: the man and the Message. First, there was the man (Philip). Revival can start with just one person who is hungry for God to do something awesome and is willing to pay the price. In the 1800's a man asked Gypsy Smith, a great revivalist, how to have revival. He said, "Go home, lock yourself in your room, draw a circle around yourself with chalk, and ask God to start a great revival within that circle! When God has answered your prayer, the revival will be underway!" Revival broke out in Samaria in Acts 8 when one man, Philip, decided he wanted to be used by God. Then there was the Message – Philip preached Christ, not the watered-down message that so many itching ears want to hear. At Sherwood Baptist we are committed to preaching and teaching this same absolute Truth. We do not take from it, nor do we add to it. It is God's holy Word and the only Message that saves souls, changes lives and brings repentance! We need to pray for revival at Sherwood and for it to spread to our city and our world!

For Further Reflection:

1. Do you truly believe that God could bring revival to our church and our community? Are you praying in a way that exemplifies your belief?
2. We already have the Message. Are you willing to be the person hungry enough for God that you allow Him to use you as a catalyst for revival?

Will You Be the One?

Passage: 1 Kings 15:9-15; 2 Chronicles 14-15

In his book, *Why Prayers are Unanswered*, John Lavender tells a story about Norman Vincent Peale. When Peale was a boy, he found a cigar and immediately lit up. It tasted gross, but it made him feel grown up...until he saw his father coming. Quickly he hid the cigar behind his back and acted casual. Desperate to divert his father's attention, Norman pointed to a billboard advertising the circus. "Can I go, Dad? Please?" His father's reply taught Norman a valuable lesson. "Son," he answered quietly but firmly, "never make a petition while at the same time trying to hide a smoldering disobedience."

King Asa understood this concept. Asa is one of the five kings through whom God brought revival to the southern kingdom. During his reign and some of the kings to follow, there was a period of reformation and a time of revival. Asa commanded Judah to seek the Lord and obey His commands (2 Chronicles 14:4), but he knew he had to take care of one thing first: removing the idols. Asa exemplified the lesson taught above – don't bother petitioning the Lord while living in disobedience.

God chose Asa as the first king through whom He would bring revival. So what can we learn from him?

1. Asa dedicated himself to God (2 Chronicles 14:2, 15:17). He was a man of character who longed to do what was right in God's eyes. Revival will come when we do what is right. God is not looking for human perfection—He's looking for obedience.

2. Asa dedicated the people to God (2 Chronicles 14:14). Revival only needs one person to get right with God, and then others will follow (2 Chronicles 15:9, 12-15). Asa was that man.

3. Asa got rid of the idols (1 Kings 15:12; 2 Chronicles 15:8, 16). Idolatry and perversion were prevalent back then and still are today. We are surrounded by it!

As we look at our nation and our culture today, let us be encouraged that:

- a) Revival can come to even the most wicked and perverse nations.
- b) Revival can come where idolatry reigns.
- c) Revival can cleanse individuals and nations.

The revival that came to the nation came because Asa was this kind of a king. Will you be that one person through whom the Lord decides to bring revival?

For Further Reflection:

1. Do you pray for things while willfully living in disobedience?

2. What things would you need to change in order to be that one man or woman God would choose to use?

A Little Dust on the Bible

Passage: 2 Kings 22:1-20

King Josiah was born during the darkest time in Israel's history. For years the people were mixing pagan practices with their worship of God, making offerings to Baal and other gods, and disregarding God's call to remain separate and distinct. In all their confusion they neglected God's Word. In fact, they had stored the Book of the Law in some dark closet and forgot it even existed.

Look at what happened after King Josiah heard God's Word...he tore his robes and sought guidance from the Lord. He tore down the pagan altars, ripped out the idols and smashed them, and he removed the corrupt and pagan priests. And Israel, after encountering God's Word, turned away from a dead religion and trusted in the living God. That's what the power of God's Word will do. It will change lives!

If that's true, then why is the bestselling book of all time also one of the least read? According to Barna Research, 93% of Americans own one or more Bibles, but less than 12% read it every day. Even worse, 57% do not read it at all during the week. We have God's blueprint for life, yet we ignore it. In our arrogance, we think we're better than the Israelites. We have it all figured out, so we never open the Word. We say the Bible is our guide, but do we know what it says? We might can quote a few verses, but do we really study it? Think about this: if you were planning a trip to NYC, would you look at your map the same way you read your Bible? No, you would study the map inside and out. You would check it frequently as you made your way through the city. So why don't we study our Bible in the same way as we seek to navigate through life?

What's interesting and sad in our passage today is that no one had noticed that the Book of Law had been missing. What had Hilkiah the priest been doing all of those years to not know where the Torah was? Obviously he had been performing religious exercises with no meaning to them. The Israelites were content with mere rituals. Not Josiah. Once exposed to the Word, he called for the national reading of it. And the result was revival. Not surprising. Renewal and transformation come about when we rediscover God's Word. Can you imagine what would happen if everyone in our church began to study the Bible and use it as our guide and blueprint for life? The result would be changed lives and hearts ready to participate in revival.

For Further Reflection:

1.If the Word of God got tucked away in some dark closet in your home, how long would it take you to notice it was missing?

2.How often do you read your Bible? When you do, is it a mere glance or do you study it to know more about God and His instructions for life?

Ezra the Great!

Passage: Ezra 9:6-10:4

The book of Ezra is set in the period when Israel was in captivity for many years because of her sin. Corruption had taken place at all levels of society from the priests down to the common man. God raised Ezra to return back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and restore worship in His house. Look at how Ezra prayed for his nation:

1) He tore his garment and his robe (Ezra 9:3) – the tearing of a garment symbolizes mourning. Sorrow for our sins is an important part of confession, repentance and intercession. In China Christians often weep when they pray over the thousands of lost years when China was totally closed to the Gospel. When is the last time you felt deep, repentant sorrow over your sins and the sins of others?

2) He prayed for hours (Ezra 9:4) - Ezra did not pray a five minute prayer. He labored for hours in God's presence. When you feel strongly about something, you are always willing to give it the time it deserves.

3) He kept a posture of humility (Ezra 9:5) – God will not hear from the proud.

4) He confesses his nation's sin (Ezra 9:6) - Intercessors must identify with the sins of the nation and confess them. Throughout Scripture you will find other men of God, like Daniel, praying similar prayers.

5) He thanks God for His grace (Ezra 9:8-9) – In just two verses Ezra acknowledges all that God has done in His allowing a remnant to escape, a revival even in bondage, the repairing of God's house and the rebuilding of its ruins!

So what were the results of Ezra's prayers? "While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites...gathered around him. They too wept bitterly" (Ezra 10:1).

Wow. Ezra's prayers made a huge impact on Israel. As you read on, you will see that the covenant was instituted again, and the leaders swear an oath that they will do according to His Word (Ezra 10:3-5). Repentance was accompanied by actions! It all began with the intense prayer of a righteous man for his nation. God is looking for intercessors like Ezra who will change the spiritual climate of a nation by prayer. Will you be one?

For Further Reflection:

1. How seriously do you take intercession?

2. When you pray, do you find yourself burdened by the needs of others and of our nation or are you just concerned with your own needs?

The God of Second Chances

Passage: Jonah 3:1-10

A popular Nike commercial years ago showed four-time MVP, two-time gold medalist Michael Jordan arriving at a game. His stride was easy and his smile secretive. He walked like the winner that he was. Yet in the voice-over he said: "I've missed over 9,000 shots in my career and lost more than 300 games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I have failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." We often learn more from our failures than our successes. This was Michael's story. This was Jonah's story. This can be our story as well.

God had commissioned Jonah once to go to Nineveh and Jonah refused. God then came a second time to him. Praise God that He still uses those who, at some point in time, have rejected His calling, turned a deaf ear to His Word, or pursued a course of determined disobedience! If it were not so, there would not be too many of us here, or any for that matter. Jonah experienced the unmerited grace of God and as a result, he willingly ran with God instead of running away from Him.

Therefore, Jonah goes to Nineveh and for three days proclaims the message God has given him. He doesn't worry about the result, whether it is good or bad; he simply proclaims the Word. But it did have an effect! First of all, the Ninevites repented dramatically (v.5-9). Jonah preached a message of judgment, and the Bible says the entire city repented, beginning with the king! The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and when the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh that everyone give up their evil ways and call urgently on God. God moved, the Ninevites heard the Truth and believed. It was the most incredible and unexpected response imaginable. A revival broke out instantaneously. Secondly, God showed mercy (v.10). When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction He had threatened.

There is something here we must always remember...God does not ignore righteousness and justice. Yet He is compassionate, and He wants to give you another chance. If Nineveh can repent, anyone can repent. No one is hopeless!

For Further Reflection:

1.Perhaps you need a new start today because up to this point you haven't been a whole lot better than the Ninevites. God loves to give second chances. Ask Him for one.

2.Then express your gratitude to God over the endless chances He gives us.

Not I, But Christ

The following are some of the manifestations of the self-life. The Holy Spirit alone can interpret and apply this to your individual case. Pray for the Lord to put the spotlight on your heart and ask yourself if you are ever conscious of:

A secret spirit of pride - an exalted feeling, in view of your success or position; because of your good training or appearance; because of your natural gifts and abilities. An important, independent spirit? Love of human praise; a secret fondness to be noticed; love of supremacy, drawing attention to self when speaking or praying?

The stirrings of anger or impatience which, worst of all, you call nervousness; a touchy, sensitive spirit; a disposition to resent and retaliate when disapproved of or contradicted; a desire to throw sharp, heated jabs at another?

Self-will; a stubborn, unteachable spirit; an arguing, talkative spirit; harsh, sarcastic expressions; an unyielding, headstrong disposition, a driving, commanding spirit; a tendency to criticize and pick flaws when set aside and unnoticed; a peevish, fretful spirit; a disposition that loves to be coaxed and humored?

Carnal fear; a man-fearing spirit; a shrinking from reproach and duty; reasoning around your cross; a shrinking from doing your duty by those of wealth or position; a fearfulness that someone will offend and drive away some prominent person; a compromising spirit?

A jealous disposition, a secret spirit of envy shut up in your heart; an unpleasant sensation in view of the great prosperity and success of another; a disposition to speak of the faults and failings rather than the gifts and virtues of those more talented and appreciated than yourself?

A dishonest, deceitful disposition; the evading and covering of the truth; the covering up of your real faults; leaving a better impression of yourself than is strictly true; false humility; exaggeration; straining of the truth?

Unbelief; a spirit of discouragement in times of pressure and opposition; lack of quietness and confidence in God; lack of faith and trust in God; a disposition to worry and complain in the midst of pain or poverty; an overanxious feeling whether everything will come out all right?

Formality and deadness; lack of concern for lost souls; dryness and indifference; lack of power with God? Selfishness; love of ease; love of money?

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” (Psalm 51: 10)

22 Thought-Provoking Questions:

These are 22 questions the members of John Wesley's Holy Club asked themselves each day in their private devotions over 200 years ago:

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told to me in confidence?
4. Can I be trusted?
5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits?
6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying or self-justifying?
7. Did the Bible live in me today?
8. Do I give it time to speak to me everyday?
9. Am I enjoying prayer?
10. When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?
11. Do I pray about the money that I spend?
12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
13. Do I disobey God in anything?
14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
15. Am I defeated in any part of my life (thoughts or actions)?
16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?
17. How do I spend my spare time?
18. Am I proud?
19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people?
20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward? If so, what am I doing about it?
21. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
22. Is Christ real to me?