

REVIVE CHURCH - Carrying Longing

July 19, 2023 - Amy Hanson

Heavenly Father, be exalted as we lift our praise to You. Come delight in Your Church tonight. Jesus, establish Your kingdom in us. We choose again to love you from this day forward. Holy Spirit, sanctify Your people as we agree with everything you illuminate. How we love You, Lord! Amen

A core teaching of Revive Church about Jesus is that we individually and corporately pursue His Presence. This is a good environment for developing a heart that longs for Jesus. Tonight I want to share about what it's like carrying longing for Jesus. I want to give this message because God has purpose behind the fiery zeal He places in His people. I also want to speak on what it is to steward the fire of longing. I'm eager to share this testimony as a fellow lover of Jesus. I don't want to take my eyes off Him. My desire is to be postured at the feet of Jesus forever. Adoring Him. Delighting in His Presence. Jesus is beautiful!

If you've been here awhile you've heard longing preached, prophesied, prayed for, and passionately sung at the top of our lungs. In this house, we desire to love Jesus with all of who we are. Our *hearts, minds, souls, and strength* get marked with it. We love loving Jesus. Our deepest *affections* are involved. It transforms how we *think and make choices*. *How we even see ourselves* gets progressively realigned. What we choose to *pour ourselves into* is changed now that we love Him in this way. Heart, mind, soul, and strength. Loving Jesus impacts all of who we are. It's meant to.

I believe Jesus is preparing His people for a fresh outpouring of His Spirit that gives birth to longing for Jesus above all things. Hear the layers of longing in the original Hebrew used in 2 Chronicles 7:14 AMPC. If my people, who are called by My Name, shall humble themselves, pray, seek, crave, and require the necessity of My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. Before Jesus returns, Israel will crave Jesus, their Messiah, and earnestly require the necessity of His face. Together with the Church, they will embody first love and will yearn for Him with a new ache. Like David, reawakened Israel and the Church will fix their gaze on Jesus and together proclaim a "one thing" longing for Him.

Psalms 27:4 ESV One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple.

Longing starts with beholding. Beholding is preceded by hunger. Without beholding I don't know what I'm looking at or what I'm meant to not tear my eyes away from. Without spiritual hunger I don't have the drive to stare at Him long enough to see His beauty. Hunger starts us in the right direction. It was hunger that turned the prodigal son back to the goodness of the loving father. Hunger powerfully motivates. Speaking of Jesus, hunger says "I just know I want Him. I'll receive from Him whatever He wants to give." In the kingdom, those who hunger and thirst are fully satisfied, and, having been filled, linger to behold the beauty of Jesus, which opens them up to zealously long for Him.

Psalms 107:9 He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things.

Last week, in the Wednesday night teaching, Frank illuminated this idea of beholding the beauty of Jesus. He used Scripture and song to draw our hearts into the throne room of heaven. Descriptive passages about Jesus were read from Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation. Frank paired them with reverential worship and the sounds of thunderings. The setting was *prepared as a beholding atmosphere*. The Lord came in the room and caught us up into His glorious beauty in a profound way. Many of us were in tears. We didn't just hear about Him, we beheld Jesus in His throne room. We waited for Him to reveal more of Himself. We slowed our hearts and minds to the prevailing speed of His stillness. He showed us His beauty. It was breathtaking. *We haven't exhausted beholding Jesus. We never will.*

Longing comes after hunger and thirst have been richly satisfied and after fascination with the beauty of Jesus has been stewarded. It has cultivated a history with God.

Mike Bickle writes, "We are made to love and be loved by God, and He has made us to crave Him until our hearts' cries are answered. He increases our experience of Him through the process of both awakening and answering desires within us" (Growing in Prayer Devotional, pg 183).

Longing is a *knowing*, lovesick cry for more of what has already satisfied so perfectly. Longing is specific. It is exclusive. It assigns value to what is longed for. Speaking of Jesus, longing says, "*I can't get enough of His kindness, His endless goodness, His trustworthy leadership, His perfect peace, His love... I want Him and only Him! He is unlike anyone else! I'll partner with Him. I want to give Him my everything.*" While beholding Him causes our hearts to sing, "**Jesus is wonderful!**" Longing progressively wrecks us to such a point that we will willingly face persecution, confessing, "Jesus is worthy!" 'till our last breath.

Longing has purpose. It produces a life of full consecration and it develops patient endurance, which is necessary for victorious overcoming. He fills us with fire for a reason. In longing we learn to watch and pray with our lamps full of oil. We burn for Him. Longing for Jesus will be fully matured in the Church before His triumphant return at the last trumpet. Our deepest expressions of love for Jesus will carry over to eternity! There isn't an end point to this pursuit. Jesus has purpose in giving us a mantle of zealous longing for Him. He knows how to develop faithful endurance in His Bride! Hunger draws us. Beauty sustains us. Longing activates us. It will produce in our lives and in the kingdom. Never has there been a better time to *talk about what it means to carry longing. And to pray for it to be poured out.*

Cultivating longing is an emphasis the Father has been highlighting in my life recently. The Holy Spirit has been stirring greater longing in me like only He can. This new ache has been shifting how I view my life's calling, and has heightened my surrender to the Lord's leadership.

Pastor Todd is leading us through the Book of Revelation on Sunday mornings. Together we've read descriptions of Jesus that are some of the most striking in all of Scripture. Jesus stands among His Church, represented by golden lampstands, and holds apostolic leaders in His hands like stars. His appearance is breathtaking and points to His nature, His power, His divine activity, His thoughts, and His desires. As we've looked at the letters to the Churches, I keep getting stirred by the Beautiful One who makes such generous promises to those who will overcome. Jesus longs to reward faithfulness and His gifts are all tied to His nearness! It's stunning. He is very clear about His plans to involve us and to lavishly reward our first love for

Him. I encourage you to go back and read the promises to overcomers in the letters to the seven churches. Reading all of the promises grouped together helps me be fascinated by the astounding way Jesus loves us.

The Lord lit a stronger flame of agreement and fervent love in my heart this year. I'm experiencing it poured out in the secret place and it goes with me as I drive to work. I turn to inquire of Him during my workday and His touch surges longing in me once again. It's like He's everywhere!

Psalm 139:7 "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your Presence?"

Psalm 139:5,6 "[I am hemmed in, behind and before and Your hand is upon me!] Such knowledge is too wonderful for me..."

Carrying a heavy longing for Jesus throughout my day is giving me a new freedom to follow Him with greater abandon. And as I share personal testimony tonight of longing for Jesus, I want to do it with care. Many in this house carry rich stories of the nearness of God's felt Presence. It's absolutely beautiful and it points many to Him. I want to frame my testimony with the same great intention. I am certain my testimony should express a specific TRUTH that I believed which had significance in my journey with Christ. I can add a time stamp to it to give a brief reference point for my listener, but a true testimony doesn't require much attention on my experience at all. I'm asking myself the question, "What truth can someone take from my testimony that if believed would bring a lost soul to Christ?" In other words, am I sharing enough Biblical truth in my testimony that I'm a legible signpost pointing to salvation's path? I want to go far beyond telling unsaved friends just that God's always been there through all my struggles. I used to think that's all a testimony was coming from a Christian kid. I was wrong. Frankly, it's time we clean up how we share our faith. It's only a testimony if it makes Him known. He gets the glory!

Romans 10:17 NKJV So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Jesus invited me into a big calling that I have *no idea* how He will accomplish. I'm pressing in. He is trustworthy. Some of His recent words over me are that...

I will speak to nations. I will release masses. I will take a city. I will preach.

I am a beloved, renowned warrior. As an intercessor, I am built to labor with Him for all that He longs to be accomplished in full. I have a book to write.

My heart burns for the Lord when I reflect on His purposes spoken over me. I long to see the fulfillment of His longings because they reveal His character. The gift of longing keeps me close.

Isaiah 26:3 AMPC You guard him and keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind [both its inclination and its character] is stayed on You, because he commits himself to You, leans on You, and hopes confidently in You.

He can be trusted. These are really high things that God will involve me in carrying out. My soul says, "Do all that you have in mind, Lord! Tell me what to put my hand to." *Longing is not entirely easy.* I've also wrestled with the Lord, about the bigness of these words and because I'm a woman who senses a calling to kingdom work. I've run to the Bible to sort through my baffled mixture of joy and my old theological framework. In the Gospels, I'm struck by the gentleness of Jesus' reply when He came to John to be baptized and John argued strenuously with Him because he wasn't worthy to untie His sandals. Jesus is right in His asking and He can be trusted.

Matthew 13:14,15 AMPC John tried to prevent Him [vigorously protesting], saying, “It is I who need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me” But Jesus replied to him, “Permit it just now; for this is the fitting way for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John permitted [it and baptized Him].

Months ago, I was content, growing, and enjoying the beauty of Jesus daily, uncovering various facets of His character in His Word. The prayer room was my favorite setting for beholding. I knew my assignment and the ways He was working through me in marketplace ministry. I had no idea He was going to shift everything with His Words over me. I was reclining under the apple tree with my Beloved, like the language of Songs 2 when His voice spoke.

Song of Songs 2:10,14 “Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away... in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear our voice...”

The Father has been essentially saying to me, “Daughter, do you want to come higher? Do you desire to see more? Would you like to join Me in what I’m doing?” The answer of my heart is a resounding “YES!” drenched with love, ready to sacrifice, longing to see it take shape. What He’s promised He will do is beautiful. Fiery longing has set my heart intensely ablaze like never before. *He’s put fire on my fire.*

Longing is similar to hunger because it’s a gift *and* it’s a fruitfulness that needs stewarding. We can turn our affections to the Lord and steward this fire of longing for Him that He ignites and kindles in us. In the waiting of holding the calling on my life, deeply longing for its fulfillment in Christ, there have been times I have been overcome by the ache. At one point I desired to lessen the ache and asked the Lord if I could turn from His promises and just look at Him, the Promise Giver. I was essentially wanting to abandon the nurture of the promise. He responded to me ever so gently, the way He responded to His cousin John in the Jordan before His baptism. Essentially, “Let it be both. Look at my face and my hands. Don’t diminish anything I’ve revealed to you about who I am and what I will do in you. Sit with Me in this.”

There is maturing that comes through sustained longing for Jesus and all He has revealed. I haven’t turned back from Him, and in His grace, He gives refreshment to maintain this long distance run by His side. God has been training me to nurture stillness and develop prayerful listening. Hearing from Him becomes a rich source of refreshment. His Presence is like a fountain of living water welling up inside me! When He has things to release over me I write them all down. When a well is dug in Africa, we see images of families capturing clean water in containers of all sizes. That’s how I feel about the Lord speaking. I excitedly write down His message to me so a word doesn’t fall to the ground. In my journaling I’m stewarding His encounter and His words because their richer meaning may not be fully ripened when I receive them. Rereading them after some time has passed helps me confirm or correct my earlier take on what God was revealing or promising He will do. These memories hold a wonderful weight! Mary of Nazareth felt it too while stewarding longing.

Luke 1:46,53 ESV My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant... He has filled the hungry with good things.

Expectancy grows as I catch His excitement for what He will do. Partnering in intercession for the Lord’s plans to be released in fullness, kindles my fire even more. It feels good to burn for Him and catch His heart. *Sustained longing is stewarded by remembering encounter, recording what was revealed, radiating joy to even be in relationship with Jesus, resolving to remain in*

agreement with what He's said, and resting in His promises. He's led me into a wilderness season where I've been strengthened to press into the unseen and broaden my capacity for hope. Bill Johnson defines hope as,

“the joyful anticipation of good. Hope gives you permission to enjoy the emotional benefits of an answered prayer before it ever happens. Hope gives us permission to experience the joy of a breakthrough before the breakthrough comes” (Bill Johnson, recorded sermon content).

In this recent wilderness season of waiting on the Lord, He's been exposing and breaking things off in me. It's been a time of preparation and His Presence. Corey Russel writes,

“The wilderness is the furnace of transformation. It's the context by which God causes all the dross, all the culture, and all its stuff to surface. We get delivered from the masks and illusions, and we begin to see correctly... It's in the furnace where we wait and just burn for Him... It's where we are forged in the fire of delayed promises. We are delivered from fantasies of grandeur and are conformed into the image of the Son” (Corey Russell, Teach Us To Pray, pg 38,71).

The resulting maturity of sustained longing is reflected in expectancy, contending for the prodigals and for the lost, watchfulness for His unfolding plan, responsiveness to His movements, and full consecration as a daily lifestyle of purity. Psalm 16 is an incredibly passionate prayer written by David that can edify the believer who is walking in sustained longing for Jesus. It ends with the line,

Psalm 16:11 You make known to me the path of life; in Your Presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

We can steward longing. Intimacy with Him fuels it. The Word of God deepens it. We are sustained by the refreshment of the Spirit when the ache becomes heavy and we want to relax our yearning. We press on because He is still speaking. Jesus loves telling His followers what He is about to do. I think that excitement in Jesus stirs longing in me because His motives are so beautiful in all that He initiates. Jesus is eager to share. Corey Russell describes it like this,

”When you sit at His feet, you become filled with the dreams of His heart, and that puts you to work to manifest His dreams in the earth...” (Corey Russell, Teach Us To Pray, pg 16).

When I was a teenager, both in my youth group and in Christian school, I was often encouraged to pray, “Lord, break my heart for what breaks yours!” It became my cry in those years and I was marked by longing. Now my prayer is taking on a fiery expectancy for Jesus and is becoming, “Lord, set my heart ablaze for what kindles yours!” I want that to be my cry!

I've been describing tonight what it is to carry longing for Jesus and be stirred up in zeal, aching for what He will do. Did you know that Jesus is stirred with zeal as well, and that He shouts, with the stance of a warrior? He's fiery!

Isaiah 42:13 ^{ESV} The Lord goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up His zeal; He cries out, He shouts aloud, He shows Himself mighty against His foes.

I know this Jesus. He's the One who jumps out of His sandals. Jesus doesn't downplay His longing as we sometimes think. On June 5th, Jesus shouted loudly to me, with an engaging posture as He stood facing me at a distance, in a harvest field in front of me. He shouted,

“I have called you!!!” His tone was decided and joyful. Confident in His choice. Jesus shouted with gusto, almost jumping with eager anticipation as He said it, eyes locked on mine. It was powerful! I can never doubt His call again. I’ll steward His longing and call.

Jesus’ fiery longing and zeal are exuberant for what He wants to accomplish through each of us. He is a beautiful, rugged, warrior King who has mighty victories to win with the word of mouth and the strength of His arm. Scripture describes Him in this way. When we dig into the Word from cover to cover, to know Him as He is, we develop better eyes to see Him. It’s a powerful image to picture Him as a warrior who rallies Himself up in passionate zeal to accomplish justice and righteousness. I think that at times we see Him with passive emotions. Yet the Bible testifies in passage after passage handed down to us that all of His emotions work. We’re people of the Word, and yet because we know the end of the story in which Christ slays His enemies with a word, it’s tempting to picture Him dispassionately. Yes, He has already won the victory and He will once and for all vanquish His foes. His heart is fully engaged in all He does. God talks about what He’s passionate about. The Word is filled with references to Jesus’ end time plans. He can’t stop talking about it because He’s longing to get after it, and involve us in its completion. He yearns jealously.

I want us to picture Jesus moved with lovesick longing as a Bridegroom layered with this picture of Him getting fired up with a loud, zealous cry of victory over His foes. He is all that Scripture says He is. Jesus is zealous to complete all of the Father’s plans and get to His wedding banquet! We long for this Jesus, “the most exhilarating, the most fascinating, the most glorious Person you will ever meet” (Corey Russel, Teach Us To Pray, pg 53). His very essence for all eternity has been marked by love and longing. May we see Him as He is, zealous for us to believe Him, adore Him, and partner with His end time narrative. He’s jumping out of His sandals with heavenly reward for those who overcome, sustained by His beauty and keeping His word until the end. He is worthy!
Come, Lord Jesus!

REVIVE CHURCH - Carrying Longing- Activation

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1. Let's catch the Father's heart and intercede for what He's emphasizing.
Let's ask for the gift of longing.

Heavenly Father,

We love you and all that You are! We love your fiery, forever love. We want our hearts to burn within us as the disciples did walking on the road with you after the resurrection. Unpack the Scriptures to us so that our hearts are set ablaze. Cause us to see You! Lord, pour out Your Presence. Your longing Bride wants more of you. Holy Spirit, we ask for impartation. Give us the fire in our chests of deep reverence and fear of the Lord.

Stir greater hunger and give deeper longing to Your people in this hour. Make us ready to partner with you. Draw us away into a season of preparation so we come up from the wilderness leaning on our Beloved. Fill us with power. Pour out a greater measure of expectancy and longing on Your people in this place and across our region. We want Your fiery love to consume us. Lord, make us ones who steward Your Presence, lean in to hear You speak, and carry Your promises of what You will do.

I'm asking for You to outpour a new longing, an ache, and deeper heartcry in each of us! Pour out your fire, Lord! Posture our hearts to press in as intercessors and co-laborers with You to birth Your desires into being for the expansion of Your kingdom and for the praise of Your glory. Give us boldness. Cause us to walk in greater measures of longing until Your return in a way that draws many to salvation and full transformation in You. Have us completely, Lord Jesus, we belong to You! It's in Your Name that we ask with great expectancy. Amen

Add your prayer, using words that are your own. He loves the expression of your heart.

2. Scripture contains rich descriptions of Jesus and all that He's made available to those who desire Him. Let's burn for the irresistible beauty of Jesus! Let's hang on His every word. What does Scripture say that we carry, in Christ, that if considered thoughtfully, would begin to stir up our longings for Christ? Here are a few to get started with.

Colossians 1:27 "... God chose to make known...the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Colossians 3:1-4 " If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above... For... your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Hebrews 12:28-29 "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

Hebrews 6:19 “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever...”

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 “Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

3. Those who truly desire more of Jesus, seem to always be giving away the goodness of God through simple acts of grace. If we carry a burning heart for the Lord others can be exposed to the longing we have stewarded and be drawn to the flame of love for Him that we never let die. The flame of our perpetual love for Christ is the part of our priestly call that naturally overflows into a kingly expression of outward ministry. Are there unsaved people in your circle of influence who seem to carry a “good soil” type depth that may be noticing this fascinating joy in you? List them here and take the next few months to pray for them that your longing for Jesus would be “a burning and shining lamp” they are drawn to.

4. We were created to worship in Spirit and in Truth. What music can I intentionally surround myself with that can help stir my longings of Jesus? Here are some that may quicken your heart for Jesus. What are others that cause you to enter into the throne room of heaven with deep longing for the Beautiful One, Jesus? His felt Presence is the doorway to fascination & longing.

Rick Pino - The Altar Sessions album
Jeremy Riddle - Live in the Prayer Room album
Abbie Gamboa - Pure album
Steffany Gretzinger - The Narrow Way album
Is He Worthy - Upperroom song
Release the Sound - David's Tent song
Worship Session-Live - Yinka Okeleye worship set

5. Books can stir us to carve out a greater capacity to hold longing. Here are two that can help us mature so we are sustained to journey with the Lord. He is the reward we pursue!

Growing in Prayer Devotional, a 100 Day Journey - Mike Bickle
Teach Us To Pray - Corey Russell