

### Revival?

[JP] Good morning! How're we doing? Hey, I'm glad you're here. I love hearing you guys talk and mingle and connect and whatnot. We're gonna do something a little bit different today. I'm gonna bring out a friend here in a minute and we're gonna talk about revival. The reason we're talking about that is because there is something unique happening in our country right now. If you are completely in the dark on that, that's okay. You're in the right place; that is why we're having this discussion this morning—to bring you up to speed.

I'll tell you a little bit about my week. It's been a really full week. This season has been full because I have a book that releases mid-March. I'm a pastor and an author, and that can bifurcate my life at times. When those things happen, I have to go out and meet with publishers and have conversations and do podcasts and and speak at different places. This past week has been one of those weeks for Freddy and I. Freddy leads worship here, so you guys know him. We jump on a plane and go to Atlanta; from Atlanta we go to Athens and speak in Athens; from Athens we go to Nashville and have some meetings in Nashville and do a podcast. Freddy says, "Hey we should go to Asbury." Asbury University is in Kentucky, south of Lexington. There's a revival happening there; that's what it's called right now in the news and on social media. There's a revival happening at that university. So, he says, "Hey, we should go. I looked it up; it's only three hours away."

Let me just push pause right there and back up. We have a young staff, and last week, when I did Friday Q&A, I got some questions on this. "Hey, have you heard what's happening at Asbury University?" "Have you seen what's happening at Asbury University?" And the answer to that question was, "No, I have not," so I Googled and checked social media. I saw some of the crowds that were gathering in the chapel there and had heard murmurings of 24-hour prayer and worship services and whatnot. Then, some of the young members of our staff said, "Hey, we would like to go. We'd love to go to Asbury." I said "No, you know we don't need to do that. We have the same access to the Holy Spirit; the same Holy Spirit that is doing work in Asbury is ready, willing, and able to do work here in Waco. We don't need to go there. Let's pray that that movement would come here and that we would see much of what's happening in Asbury here in Waco." That's what I told them. "No, we don't need to go." Well, then I find myself in Nashville, Tennessee with Freddy, and Freddy is like, "Hey, I just looked it up; did you know Asbury University is only three and a half hours away? We should drive there. We could pull an all-nighter; it's gonna be amazing." And I'm thinking, "Freddy, that's the worst idea I've ever heard. In fact, speaking of all-nighter, I'm really tired. I'm gonna take a nap." So I did. I took a nap. I laid down for about 15 minutes and I woke up and I realized Friday was open. It was Thursday afternoon and our entire Friday was open. I thought, "We should go. Why wouldn't we? We are four hours away." Freddy was sleeping and as soon as he woke up, I said, "Let's go." He jumps out of bed and grabs his bag and we're on the road to Asbury University in Kentucky.

We drive there and we get there and I'm apprehensive. I don't know what to expect. If God wants to do a work, I want it. "Lord, whatever you want." But even as we pull off onto the property—it's night, probably about 9:30pm or 9:00pm—and I make the mistake of checking social media. There's this post about me. That happens at times. Somebody's said terrible things about me. It had around 800 or 900 comments that were all awful, from people antagonistic

against Christianity and pastors and all the things. I'd love to say that stuff doesn't bother me one bit, but it does because I'm human and it just feeds all those insecurities. I think, "Oh, man, where's this gonna go? What's this gonna do?" This is me getting out of the car, walking to the Asbury revival. I'm just really defeated. We go in. There's a line; it's like two hours long just to get into the chapel. This is at 9:00pm. We go inside and I'm just thinking, "Lord, what do you have? I want you to do a work." In full transparency, it feels like the desire for Him to do a work is a distraction from Him actually doing a work because I don't want to be weird. I don't want to be just emotional. I don't want to be sensational but I also don't want to be cessational. "What is it that you want to do? What is it that you want to do?" I'm out there; there is singing and sharing stories. This is all student-led. The Lord just says, "Get in the Word. Get in the Word." And I have my Bible with me and, so I grab it and I open it up. I'm just like, "Lord, this is hard. I hate that I'm afraid that what I do is going to negatively impact me, my family, and my children. Now, these people are coming after me online and I'm here. I'm at this revival and I want to experience more of you but I'm distracted by that right now." I'm flipping through the pages of the Bible and I'm like, "What do you want? Where do you want me to go?" I was having this conversation: "Where do you want me to go God?" He just says really clearly, "Psalm 37. Psalm 37." And I'm thinking, "Psalm 37? Psalm 37? What is Psalm 37?" I turn there while I'm thinking about these people who are just mean and they're evil—and in Psalm 37, it says, **"Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."** It was such an appropriate word for such a time.

If I look back on my life and many of the God-said moments, many of them have been me reading His word and Him just saying this. This is my interpretation of what He has said at different times: "I've got you." He's like, "Bro, I got you. You're not smart enough, good enough, fast enough, strong enough, compelling enough, eloquent enough, educated enough. You're not doing enough. None of this is you. I've got you. I've got you." So, I'm sitting there and I find myself in this space where God is reminding me again: "I've got you. I'm doing a work; be faithful and stay humble. Let me do my thing." So, I stand up to worship. In worship, they're singing a song we know as "Agnes Dei": "Worthy is the Lamb, Worthy is the Lamb, You are Holy Holy, Worthy is the Lamb, Worthy is the Lamb." They begin to sing that and they sing it on loop. I sense from the Spirit that He says, "Stay here until we are done singing this." That's the thought that I have prompting me, so I'm singing it. Someone comes in on the piano and they try to take us in a different direction, but the crowd elevates their voice and they just stay there in that loop. I'm thinking, "Oh, this might be five minutes or ten minutes." Well, it was an hour and fifteen minutes later of singing this and just experiencing the goodness of God. I don't know how else to say that. We were just enjoying the presence of God among His people. I was thankful that He had created that pasture that Psalm 37 talked about—that space to find His goodness.

We left Asbury and stopped in Cleveland, Tennessee, where the same thing is happening. It just seems that we are in the middle of something really unique in our country for such a time as this. Again, if you're in the dark on that, you won't be after this morning. I'm sure you will leave here and Google and catch up and see the work that God is doing. But we have a desperation that He would bring it here. So, as I get on the plane and I'm headed home, I'm gonna go back into the Proverbs. I'm gonna teach about laziness and discipline out of the Proverbs—but I'm thinking, "Lord, is there something you want me to do with that?" I ask some people: "Hey, pray with me.

Is there something that God wants to do?” My friend, Bill Sterit, who is a member here at Harris Creek, he says, “My father-in-law is actually in Waco with our kids. He was a professor at Asbury Seminary. He was there at the original revival in the 70s and now he’s been there again. He is an expert on Bonhoeffer; he has taught a class on spiritual warfare; the other class he has taught is on the basics of Christian doctrine. His area of expertise is in prayer and healing and he’s there and has a lot to say about revival.” And I just say, “Hey, do you think I could interview him?” He connected the dots and agreed to it.

I’m gonna show you this video before I bring him out; I’m just gonna show you some of what is happening at Asbury. *[Video plays; JP speaking over it as narration.]* As we pull up there, this is outside. This is the line that I was referring to of people just waiting to get in. This is at 9:00 pm at night. Here is what the inside looks like. This is a picture that I took from the back of the chapel. Here is the moment where we begin singing. This is just so you get a flavor of what is happening. Here, this was last night; it has actually grown this morning. I saw a picture this morning, but this was yesterday evening and what it’s grown into. It’s kind of spilled over into the lawn there. People are coming from all over the country and the same thing is happening at universities across America. Even this morning, they were just staying in these places of 24-hour prayer. Some of you here that are wondering, “Is that emotionalism? I’m skeptical; I’m critical of that. I don’t know. Should we call it revival?” Those questions are welcomed. They are welcomed; just don’t stay there. Seek out the answers to them. We can test all things and see what God is doing, but in His kindness, I believe He orchestrated this morning for us to hear from a new friend: Dr. Steve Seamands. Will you welcome him out here? Thank you so much for being with us again.

*Dr. Seamands:* Hey, this is crazy, man. I thought I was just going to be coming to this 11:00 worship service with my grandkids, and here I am.

*JP:* Here you are. He was going to attend church and I said, “Why don’t you be a part of it?” That’s the risk: sometimes, when you visit Harris Creek, we give you a microphone. I’m so glad and thankful that you would be with us to share some of your journey. I think there are a lot of questions around what is happening if we’ve been watching from afar. What is revival? How would you define that?

*Dr. Seamands:* That word conjures up a lot of things for people—a lot of experiences. Sometimes people think of church revivals every year, which are really more like meetings. I’ve been helped really by reading Jonathan Edwards, believe it or not, who wrote about the First Great Awakening that he was a part of back in the 1700s in Colonial New England. He wrote some of the most profound and helpful reflections on revival that are still out there. Edwards puts it like this: he says that God the Father has this desire to exalt and glorify His only begotten beloved Son. And there are certain times and occasions when He finds it necessary and desires to do that in an extraordinary and powerful kind of way. And the Spirit is poured out as God seeks to lift up Jesus and exalt His Son. Ultimately, revival is a fresh encounter with Jesus. People see Jesus—almost like they have known Him their whole life, but they haven’t known Him. And the veil is pulled back and they see Him as never before. Edwards said this because he saw this happening in that little town that he was the pastor of. A lot of the people in the town had grown up Christians, but were not very excited about it. He saw what happened when the revival and the Awakening came there. He used a phrase that I love: “Those young people were captured by

the divine excellency of Christ.” It was like they were apprehended; they caught a glimpse of Jesus and they fell in love with Jesus. He said that, when that happened, it didn’t matter after that. You couldn’t get them not to follow Him wholeheartedly, kind of like Paul after that Damascus road experience. He was apprehended by Christ in such a way that, 30 years later, he’s standing in front of King Agrippa and he says, “King, I don’t care what you do to me. I just can’t be disobedient to that heavenly vision.” He said that, in revival, people are captured by Christ in such a way that they will follow Him. As a result of that, the church is transformed and falls in love with Jesus again. The church starts allowing Jesus to lead the church—which is a strange idea, don’t you think? Since he is the head of the church?

*JP:* Yeah, because of the whole Christ thing.

*Dr. Seamands:* But anyway, first and foremost, it’s about exalting Jesus.

*JP:* Yeah, what has your experience with revival been, Dr. Seamands?

*Dr. Seamands:* I was a teacher in 1970 at Asbury—it used to be Asbury College then—when on February 3<sup>rd</sup> the revival started. It came as we were attending chapel and a student gave a testimony. As a result of that, others started coming to the altar to pray and seek the Lord. That went on for a whole week. They let us out of classes. It was kind of strange—the other day, when I was in the chapel at Asbury with my grandson who’s a junior there now, I said, “This just sort of feels like *deja vu* all over again.” It was amazing. I experienced that as a senior in college back then in 1970. Two weeks after that started, I was at a local church in northern Ohio and they asked us to come and share about what was going on. I got up and began to share with the congregation and about five minutes into my little sharing, a woman on the back row—there were about 200 people in the church--stands up. She’s in tears; she starts confessing to the pastor and apologizing to the pastor for the things she had said about him and the way she had criticized him.

*JP:* Would anyone like to come forward?

*Dr. Seamands (laughing):* I see one hand; is there another? When she did that, nothing was said, but immediately about 30 people just stood up and literally ran to the front and knelt at the altar there in that church. I’m standing there thinking that I didn’t even get a chance to extend the invitation. I might have just had the chance to say, “Mary had a little lamb his fleece was white as snow.”

*JP:* And something would have happened.

*Dr. Seamands:* Yeah, and something would have happened. Edwards used to say that, in revival, what we experience is an acceleration and intensification of the normal work of the Spirit. It was incredible. That shaped my life. It created in me a memory of what it’s like when God comes and manifests Himself and Christ is exalted like this.

*JP:* Yeah, it’s interesting because, on the way to Asbury, we were four hours in the car, so I went on YouTube and I watched the sermon that led to this. As someone who thinks about communication a lot—I don’t at all mean for this to be a jab—but I was just like, “Really, God? That’s what you used?” I know that sounds like a jab, but wait for it, because then I walked in

and I immediately met him and he said the same thing: “I’m as surprised as anyone that was the message. I am so tired; I had just preached 18 times in two weeks. I didn’t have anything. I walked up there; I read some scriptures; I said some things and then we prayed and He just called people to the love of God.” It was kind of like the, “Hey, I got you” moment. Also relevant to us: in the 1940s, there was a similar movement on Baylor University’s campus. I’ve seen that documentary. My point in telling you that is that we were first. I’m kidding. Would you say that it’s right to call what’s happening at Asbury a revival?

*Dr. Seamands:* When historians use the word revival, you can’t evaluate or call something a revival based on days. You need decades because you want to see the long-term effect this has on people’s lives and on the church. Ultimately, revival leads to a kind of a penetration stage where people evangelize and social evils are confronted. Social justice moves forward. The Second Great Awakening in the 1800s produced the abolition movement, which led to a civil war: a social change. Historians looking at all of this will want to wait to see. What I am saying right now is that the manifest presence of God is moving in a powerful way and we seem to be moving in that trajectory. I think it’s better to just call it an outpouring right now. That’s what they are calling it: the Asbury Outpouring. And let me just say one other thing: in 1970, that revival along with the Jesus Movement and a few other things that were going on hit us. If you know anything about the 60s and the early 70s and that period, that was a period of social dislocation and unrest in our country. That was God’s way of reaching out to my generation, the Baby Boomers. But this is about Gen Z. This is about Millennials and Gen Z; they are the heart and soul of what is going on. I believe that Jesus is chasing after and giving Himself to a generation that has been through perhaps more tough stuff than any other generation in American history.

*JP:* Yeah, for such a time as this. We are in a generation that is more anxious, it seems, than any generation before them. God is providing this place of peace. Having been there, it’s not the really loud, what some would call Spirit-led, manifestation of the Spirit; it really was just this place of peaceful worship. There was the occasional cheering. Any thoughts on that?

*Dr. Seamands:* Yeah, it’s really interesting. On the worship teams, there’s no electric guitars; there’s no drums; it’s just piano and acoustic guitar. There are no PowerPoints. The teams are just college students. As college students have come in from other universities, sometimes they’ll bring a worship team, but it’s really laid back and low. It’s those voices again and again. I would say it’s kind of a holy awe that people are being captured by—a sense of deep peace. And it’s interesting how in each generation, God comes. I think He sort of tailor-makes the revival to the particular needs of that generation. I see that happening right now with Gen Z and this revival.

*JP:* It’s interesting. As Bill shared with me about you, I was trying to do my research quickly on a plane as I headed back and thinking if we need to pivot this morning. So, I just Googled you and I was trying to check your credentials. We only let very educated people on this stage. The first thing that turned up—this is the first thing that showed up and I want to read it—says, “Dr. Seamands pastored for 11 years while he earned a Master of Theology from Princeton and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Drew University. Throughout his ministry, he’s sought to live his life according to Psalm 37:4: “Delight in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” This was in the midst of me saying, “Okay, Lord is this what you want to do? Is this where we want to go?” I just thought that that was His kindness to me.

*Dr. Seamands:* Yeah, isn't that awesome?

*JP:* Yeah, praise God. I know there are a lot of people here that have invested a lot of time and prayer and even their career and their educational background at Baylor University. That's a big part of why our family is here—just thinking about the opportunity to invest in missionaries and send them around the world, corporate America, classrooms, coffee shops, and so on. What can we do as a church to help prepare a way for this kind of work?

*Dr. Seamands:* Well, let me just say, I really believe that God wants to bring revival. This is supposed to happen at Baylor. I would just simply go back to 2 Chronicles 7:14, a familiar 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.”** Well, there are four things there. Humble yourself. Somebody said the greatest blessing spiritually is the knowledge that we are destitute. Until we get there, our Lord is powerless. Just humble ourselves. Pray. I would encourage you to pray for revival; ask the Lord to send revival to your own heart and soul, to your congregation, to Baylor, to Waco, to this area. And find some other like-minded people that you know and do some huddling prayer for revival. And I mentioned in the first service: there's actually gonna be a prayer for revival on Baylor's campus in the Truett Seminary building in the chapel that's there, starting at 8:30 tomorrow. Maybe some of you Baylor students should slip by there for a minute and join with others in prayer. Seek His face. Seek His face. This is a season, I believe, where He wants to be found. He wants to be found. Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. I believe He's near. I believe He wants to give Himself to us. And then turn from your wicked ways. Ask: what wicked way is the Lord wanting to set you free from? What area does He want to work on in your life? I would encourage you to invite the Holy Spirit to convict you about that to lead you into freedom. That might set you on a two- or three-year journey.

*JP:* Yeah, there are two things I want to highlight there. One is that willingness to be found. I think God wants to be found by us more than we want to find Him. Yet when I look at the history of Christianity, there are four hundred years of silence. There are these times where it may be more difficult to find Him. What I think is happening right now is that, maybe more than it has in any other time in your life, He's easier to find. There's God availing Himself to the church for such a time as this. The second thing that I think is a pattern now, right here, is what I pray often: “Lord, mercifully expose our sin. Search us. Is there anything that we are hiding?” These movements are always marked by confession and repentance. If you look backwards at last week's message and recent messages we've done here: if there's anything that we conceal, whoever conceals their sin does not prosper. Revival here may begin with us bringing those things to the light.

*Dr. Seamands:* Yeah, one of the things I've learned in healing ministry over the years—emotional spiritual healing, especially—is that Jesus won't heal things in us that we insist on hiding from Him.

*JP:* Amen. That's a word. The devil is triumphed over by the word of our testimony. What about at an individual level? How can we pursue God in a greater way, not necessarily surrounded by everyone, but in solitude? What does that look like for us to grow a healthy relationship with the Father?

*Dr. Seamands:* To me, there's just no substitute for just spending time with the Lord, for spending time in His presence. Sometimes, just show up. Sometimes it's not exciting, but to be in His presence, to wait on Him, to hear, to seek, to hear Him. We hear Him through His word. Scripture reading is an integral part of being in His presence. You need to figure out how that works for you. Some of you might do your best praying while you're walking your dog outside or someone else might be alone somewhere. You need figure that out. I would also say: be in community. It's important to find several other—three or four other—folks that you can meet with regularly that can hold you accountable, who the Lord can use to speak to you. Be in community. The last thing I would say is to be obedient. He gives the Holy Spirit, says the Scripture, to those who obey Him, so stay in obedience to Him day in and day out.

*JP:* We were talking about ways you hear from the Lord to do the things that are asked of you. And I was asking how you hear from the Lord, so you started that list. You said to add to because there are those promptings. Sometimes the Lord says, "Psalm 37." Sometimes He just pushes everything out of your mind and He just says, "Hey, here it is." He says we have His word. Sixty-six books. A collection of the Word of God. Sometimes, it is, as the prompting says, "Psalm 37" and you read Psalm 37, and it's the Word of God for such a time as that. Sometimes it's community, like we said last week; several people in our lives—consistent voices yielded to the Holy Spirit speaking to us. Sometimes it's circumstantial; maybe it's that open door, that closed door, or those things that start to align. Even you being in Waco right now. Those kinds of things where God says, "Hey, I'm creating a way; I'm paving a path for you." Any final word for the body of Harris Creek as you come and visit here and have fresh eyes? Anything for us?

*Dr. Seamands:* I'm a big Narnia fan. Before the children—Lucy and Peter and Susan—meet Aslan for the first time, the animals are telling them about Aslan and about how it's always winter and never springtime in Narnia. They're waiting for Aslan to come and they give to the children an ancient promise. I actually think this promise summarizes, in a way, what revival is: "Wrong shall be right when Aslan comes in sight. As the sound of his roar, sorrow shall be no more. When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death. And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again." I believe He is roaring right now. He's baring His teeth. He's shaking His mane. Hallelujah. Aslan, come in sight; we want you to come in sight.

*JP:* Praise God. Praise God. What do you think, with Churchianity, consumeristic Christianity, and lukewarm spirituality, what are we doing that is preventing that? That's preventing us from experiencing more of God, more of Jesus?

*Dr. Seamands:* You know that lukewarm church? The Laodicean church in the third chapter of the book of Revelation? "You say you're rich, but I say you're naked, poor, pitiable, and blind." I believe that we've been too captured by the gods of our culture: celebrity culture and consumerism. I think Jesus is wanting us to simplify things in a profound way. When I get with my brothers and sisters from the majority world—Asia, Latin America, and Africa—they don't have one iota of the resources we've got and yet they are seeing God move in profound ways. I think that's something we've got to learn from them. I believe part of this revival that we are in the midst of and that is going to continue to spread is that we've got to unlearn a lot of things about being the church. We need to let Jesus, the head of the church, teach us how to be His people once again.

*JP:* Can you guys thank Dr. Seamands for me? Thank you.

*Dr. Seamands:* Thank you. Bless you, man.

*JP:* Let me pray for us. Father, I pray that there would be nothing in our lives that is preventing us from having more of you. As there are and as they exist, I ask you humbly to mercifully expose them. Lord, if there is an outpouring of your Spirit on our land, I pray that you would not withhold yourself from us; that we would experience the fullness of your Spirit; that we would experience the fullness of the Gospel; that the forgiveness there would overwhelm any shame that we have and any reluctance to expose hidden sins that we have. I believe you have this church here—that you’ve assembled your people here for a purpose. I just pray that we would know what it is and that we would be obedient to it; that the right resources and people and gifts and talents would connect to build what you desire; that it wouldn’t be us; that it wouldn’t be man’s best wisdom, which is less than the foolishness of our God. Would it be your wisdom? Go before us and pave the way. I don’t know what you want to do at Baylor University, even tonight. But I pray that you would show us. I pray that we would be obedient to whatever it is. Lord, in our own individual hearts, whatever we have—life is just crazy and chaotic and fast-paced and there’s lots going on. Would you just create that pasture for us right now? That we wouldn’t be concerned about those who desire to do evil to us on an individual level, but that you would meet us here in this space and move our hearts deeper into a relationship with you? Through your Son Jesus Christ, thank you for Dr. Seamands and the journey that you’ve had him on; the mind that you’ve entrusted to him; his generosity of the time that you’ve given us this morning. It’s in Jesus name, amen.