

Good morning, everyone! We are so glad you are with us. As you could see from that video, we are kicking off a brand-new series on revival, and we are asking God to move in a new way, in a powerful way, to bring dead things back to life. We know God has done great things in the past; we want him to do great things in our midst. We saw God do great things last weekend. Last Sunday we worshiped with nearly 5,500 people, and 29 men and women made the decision to be baptized. We are grateful and humble and want to get out of the way and watch God move.

I cannot tell you how excited I am about this series on revival. This is a series that has been on my heart for five years. I have been praying about it and looking forward to it almost the entire time I've lived in Indianapolis. But every time we got ready to pull the trigger on it, it seemed like God was telling us it wasn't time. To wait. To pray. To continue to prepare the soil and follow his perfect timing. And I feel like there were things God needed to do in the health and infrastructure of my own heart, as well as things God wanted to do in the health and infrastructure of our church so we could be ready for a series like this. A wise parent doesn't go up to an eight-year-old kid and give them a million-dollar check. They aren't ready for the weight of that responsibility yet. With time and maturity, they may be, but not yet. I believe in these next nine weeks God wants to impart eternal wealth to us. He wants to give us his presence, he wants to reveal his glory to us, he wants to awaken us to an abundant life filled with joy, purpose, conviction, and intimacy with him. He wants to move in such a way that people who have grown stagnant in their faith begin flowing like the Colorado River in late spring, that people who have been lethargic in their faith begin moving with the energy of an Olympic athlete. That's what this series is all about. That's what we are hoping and praying for!

Before we dive in, I want to publicly express appreciation for a few people and give them credit for the influence they have had on this series. Jon Tyson is one of the most influential preachers in America right now. He has preached on this numerous times and has significantly helped shape the content of this series. Authors Walter Kaiser, Earnest Baker, Elmer Towns, and Doug Porter have all written books on revival and have likewise shaped this series. We won't quote them every time we draw from them, but know up front that we are grateful for these leaders and indebted to them. We are calling this series "*Revival: Making Room for God to Move Again.*" Let's begin by talking about **revival**, what it is, and how it happens.

The Progression of Revival

Regeneration—This is what happens when God brings people into his family, the gospel is preached, people's hearts are opened, they place their faith in Christ, and their sins are forgiven. Jesus says no one can enter the kingdom of heaven unless they are born again. "Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again'" (John 3:3).

Restoration—This is what happens as those who come to faith grow as disciples. God begins to restore his image in them and puts the pieces of their lives back together. "And the God of all grace...will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" (1 Peter 5:10).

Reformation—This is what happens when the ripple effects of an individual's regeneration and restoration impact and change the lives of those around them. Marriages are different, households are different, sometimes entire friend groups, workplaces, and neighborhoods are different. "He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents" (Malachi 4:6).

Renewal—This is when the grace and power of God spread beyond a small circle and into broader arenas. When the gospel came to Ephesus—a major metropolitan city in the first century, on par with a Los Angeles or a Chicago in today’s world—Paul stayed there for three years, teaching and preaching, and things changed in the spiritual realms. The name of the Lord was held in high honor, people openly confessed their sins and repented, and about ten million dollars’ worth of cult paraphernalia was burned as a sign that people were walking away from false religion. The preaching of the gospel impacted the local economy and people who used to make their living by selling idols were going out of business. “The word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (Acts 19:20).

Revival—This is when the movement of God spreads beyond a city and a region and captures the attention of people everywhere. Elijah is considered the greatest prophet of the Old Testament. In his day, nearly the entire nation had turned away from God and was living however they saw fit, in rampant and shameful immorality, selfishness, and greed. God’s fire fell from heaven and “When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, ‘The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!’” (1 Kings 18:19).

Reawakening—This is when the revival lasts not just for a sliver of time, but for years, and the entire society is transformed. This happened in the Old Testament under a leader named Nehemiah—when he rebuilt the walls and read the Bible for all the people, every one of them, including all the leaders confessed their sins as well as the sins of their ancestors. They drew up a contract in which they promised to follow all the command of God: “We are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it” (Nehemiah 9:38). Their society changed at a foundational, structural level.

You can see the movement:

- **Regeneration**
- **Restoration**
- **Reformation**
- **Renewal**
- **Revival**
- **Reawakening**

In terms of where we might be today, I’d say, humbly, that we are in the upper half. By God’s grace, we have seen some incredible movement. But we are hungry to see more. This is what we are hoping for. In our series called *Revival*, we are talking about making room for God to move. I have been studying this since I was 18 years old, a freshman in college. In all that study, one consistent pattern I noted is that God comes where he is wanted. We can’t spark revival; only God can do that. But God seems to move when people ask him to, when they want him to, when they are both desperate and expectant for it. Revival is not something we can generate on our own. We can no more generate revival than the captain of a sailing ship can control the wind. But like a captain and his crew can set the sail and prepare for the wind when it blows, we can prepare ourselves for the move of God, and our posture invites his movement. When revival happens, God is the guest of honor! We want to prepare the house, set the table, and send out the invitation, then be ready and waiting for him to show up.

But this series is not only about making room for God to move; it’s about making room for God to move again. During these nine weeks, we are going to look at nine examples of revivals in the Bible, and then in addition to studying a biblical example of revival, we will look at nine revivals that have happened throughout church history. Our pattern every week will be looking at the way God moved in the Bible, looking at the way God moved in history, and then asking God to move like that again in our day, in our

city, here at this church and in our lives. “Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known” (Habakkuk 3:2). We don’t want to simply study the Bible, study history, and hear of his fame; we want to see his deeds in our day, in our time, with our own eyes. That’s what this series is all about!

We are going to kick off this series in the book of Ezekiel. If you have your Bible, you can turn there. Ezekiel, the person who wrote this book, was a man who lived roughly 600 years before the time of Christ. He lived in Jerusalem, but when he was in his mid-twenties, he and many of his family members and friends were taken captive by Babylon and forced to become exiles who lived in a land nearly a thousand miles away, in their enemy’s capital. Eventually, the same nation that took them captive would destroy Jerusalem, burn down the temple, and either kill or take captive everyone who remained. This political, social, and economic destitution wasn’t simply bad luck; it wasn’t just the result of kings and generals working their plan. It was God’s judgment on his people for their idolatry, pride, and rebellion. So God’s people were in a state of depravity and destitution. Their capital had been destroyed, they were slaves in a foreign land, and even the most optimistic people among them were beginning to lose hope and metaphorically throw in the towel. Right at that moment, Ezekiel had a vision.

“The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry” (Ezekiel 37:1-2). These dry bones were symbolic of the spiritual state of God’s people: dead, lifeless, hopeless. A valley full of skeletons—nothing gets bleaker than that. Then God asked Ezekiel a challenging and perspective-orienting question, a question that put his faith in God to the test: “‘Son of man, can these bones live?’” (Ezekiel 37:3a). What you are looking at right now: absolute lifelessness. Not just bones, not just dry bones, but very dry bones. This is not like coming across a tree that has just blown over and wondering if you can get it back in the ground to live again; it’s like holding petrified wood, wondering if it can live again. On the surface, at face value, there is no hope, but do you believe, do you have faith in what the eye cannot see? Do you think they can live again?

Ezekiel didn’t really know what to say here. He didn’t want to take a side, so he gave the ultimate non-committal answer: “I said, ‘Sovereign Lord, you alone know’” (Ezekiel 37:3b). I’m not sure Lord, but you are; what do you think? Can these bones live again? “Then he said to me, ‘Prophecy to these bones and say to them, “Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord’”” (Ezekiel 37:4-6). God says those dry bones are going to live again. Like God breathed the breath of life into Adam and gave him the initial gift of life in the Garden, he is going to breathe the breath of life into these bones and bring them back to life. This is a vision of revival—that which was once alive, which had become dried up and dead, being restored by the grace of God.

That is our prayer over these next nine weeks, that in every area where there has been death and decay, God would graciously breath on us and bring us back to life. Some here made a decision for Jesus when they were younger, and though they still believe in God and still come to church, the passion and zeal of their faith has dwindled. What was once a roaring bonfire has cooled to an ember. There is still heat, but it’s not what it was. We want God to come and fan that ember back into flame! I know a lot of people in this church who are empty nesters. When their kids were in the house, they were in church once or twice every week. They were active, they were engaged, they served, they led, they set an example for the kids. Their kids are out of the house now, and their engagement level, their enthusiasm level, their commitment has gone from a 9/10 or a 10/10 down to a 2/10; they’re honestly just going through the motions. We pray for God to breath into their lives and stir them back to the heights they’ve known. There are some here

today who love God deep down, truly and sincerely. He's their rock. They would do anything he asked of them. But if they were to assess their walk with him, they would admit it's become stale. They've got a thousand other things that vie for their attention every day: a job, kids, a house, bills—there is so much competing for their attention and devotion, and apart from Sunday mornings, God, more often than not, ends up on the back burner. We want to pray that God would breathe on us and, as Hebrews 12 says, become a consuming fire.

In every one of these weeks, we are going to look at an example of revival from church history as well as a biblical example of revival. Today I want to turn our attention to the revival that happened at Herrnhut with a group of people known as the Moravians. It was 300 years ago, in the 1720s. A rag-tag group of about 220 people were fleeing persecution for their faith. This group was made up of people from several different denominations—Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans—all looking for a place to worship. A man named Count Zinzendorf used his wealth to buy a large piece of property where these individuals could live and worship freely. It seemed like the perfect scenario. But because the groups had so many differences, coming from different denominations, they quickly found themselves disagreeing with one another and fighting constantly. Finally, Count Zinzendorf, the benefactor of the community, called them all together and told them it was time to be committed to God, to unity, and to truly loving one another. They signed a covenant, promising to put their devotion to Jesus over their denominational differences, and they confessed their sins of pride and arrogance. After confessing their sins, committing to unity, and asking God to grow their love and devotion to one another, fifteen of the people, including their leader, spent the night in prayer together, asking God to breathe on them and send them a fresh wave of his grace and mercy.

The next time they gathered, everyone who was present said the Holy Spirit moved in such a way it felt like Pentecost! Count Zinzendorf wrote, "Up until this point, *we* had been leading. At once, the Holy Spirit came upon us and *he* was now leading everything and everyone, and there was a perpetual awareness of the nearness of Christ." It was such a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit that even people from their community who were at work at a town twenty miles away had the exact same encounter with God at the exact same time, even in a different city.

After they felt God move so powerfully, they became drawn to the passage in the Old Testament which describes the fire on the altar never going out in the temple. They decided that because now the church is the temple, just like that fire never ceased to burn in the temple, their prayers should never cease but should continuously arise as an offering to the Lord. On August 27, 1727, beginning with 48 people, and growing to eventually include 77 people, they committed to unbroken prayer. Every person signed up to pray for an hour a day. When one shift ended, another began. They joined together in unbroken, 24/7 prayer, and that prayer chain lasted for 100 years.

The sign of their revival wasn't just that they prayed a lot, and they loved one another, and they felt close to God. All those things are wonderful, but their little community of just a few hundred people changed the world. They sent missionaries all over the globe. You can see on the map below how many places they touched. Even the great John and Charles Wesley, who helped pioneer the first Great Awakening here in America, were both converted by the Moravians. Charles Wesley wrote over 6,000 hymns. John Wesley founded the Methodist church. This little community, committed to unity, the confession of sin, loving one another, and prayer, was the spark that began the first Great Awakening in the United States, which resulted in 80% of the population making faith decisions and worshiping in churches. They made room for God to move, and he did. They asked God to breathe on their dry bones and in grace, he did!

