



IN ALL THINGS PRAY

MY FAMILY • MY COMMUNITY • MY CHURCH • MY COUNTRY • MY WORLD

40-Day Revival
Preparation Guide

January 9–February 17

First Baptist Church, Yazoo City

Church Family,

Thank you for beginning this journey together, as we pray for personal and corporate revival. I believe that in my time as your pastor that the need has never been greater for revival in our church and in our homes.

In the Welsh Revival, one of the greatest revivals in history, they had to take the work horses out of the mines and retrain them because the workers had stopped using the profanity they had used in the past to command them. One police station formed a singing group and sang at churches because so much of their time was freed up. Judges were given white gloves, the custom when there were no cases to be heard. Will you pray that the Lord will do a similar work in your life and in our church?

In order for revival to come, we must begin an inspection of our lives. This guide is written by your staff with that in mind. As you read, allow the Holy Spirit to begin the work of revival in your life.

I would also encourage you to fast at least one day during this time of preparation. It might be a traditional fast from food, but also consider fasting from such things as social media, television, your iPad, or anything else that keeps you from focusing on the Lord. Then, rather than spending your time on this activity, use it to pray for revival.

Lastly, plan to faithfully attend our revival services. They are scheduled for Sunday-Wednesday, February 18-21. You are going to be blessed, and challenged, by the preaching of Dr. Rick Lance.

I am excited to see what the Lord is going to do in and through our church family. Thanks for the honor of being your pastor. Please join me in praying...

“Lord, Send a Great Revival!”

Bro. Clint

Day 1 – January 9 Clint Ritchie

Read Psalm 85

Jason Brown was the highest paid center in the NFL, playing for the St. Louis Rams. In late 2011, Jason had two children, and a mansion with two fully-stocked bars, yet he and his wife were "dying inside" and were likely headed toward divorce. As a professed Christian, Jason had to admit that his relationship with Jesus was a ticket to forgiveness and little else—until he released his grip on money and football. Jason said he started releasing his grip on his lavish lifestyle by pouring thousands of dollars of expensive liquor down the drain. After leaving the Rams and turning down three other teams, the Browns put their home up for sale and bought a 100-year-old farmhouse with a dairy barn and 1,000 acres of uninterrupted land in North Carolina. Jason would become a farmer and give away what he grows. Jason learned farm basics from YouTube, which resulted in First Fruits Farm, an organization that seeks, through community and service, to boost Bible literacy.

Ten thousand pounds of cucumbers, and one hundred thousand pounds of sweet potatoes later, Jason says, "I literally still know nothing about farming." But Jason can summarize his business plan and his life these days with one word: "Obedience."

Jason Brown experienced revival, but it took a change of life and commitment to obedience. Revival is when God awakens believers to their lukewarmness and sin, and powerfully calls them to repentance. In revival God presses upon His people the seriousness of sin and the urgency of repentance. Revival forces us to shake off our indifference. God reinvigorates His church in revival. There is new life and power in the church. Christians serve the Lord with great effectiveness and a fresh joy.

True revival cannot be scheduled. It cannot be worked up or promoted into existence. We can pray that God will send revival, but it is a brave prayer. If God is pleased to send revival, it will mean conviction of sin, the work of repentance, and moving outside our comfort zones.

Lord, plant in my heart a desire for true revival. Give me a glimpse of You that will bring the rest of my life in focus. Let me rejoice in You. Let me experience true revival.

Day 2 – January 10 Clint Ritchie

Read Revelation 2-3

When is revival needed? Here is a list based upon the churches in Revelation. It should be taken as a whole, though individual items may speak to you more forcefully. When this group of symptoms are present, revival is needed.

- Revival is needed when spiritual matters are kept in the background and are a low priority.
- Revival is needed when God's people find themselves going through the motions, having only "a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Tim. 3:5).
- God's people need revival when they are wallowing in sin, perhaps regretting their sins, but unwilling to thoroughly repent of them.
- Revival is needed when the church languishes and is no longer advancing.
- Revival is needed when evangelism is no longer considered a matter of urgency.
- Revival is needed when Bible study becomes boring and prayer a drudgery.
- Revival is needed when Christian zeal fizzles out.
- Revival is needed when Christians grow worldly and lose their distinctiveness from others around them.
- When serious sin is tolerated among God's people, without effort to gently warn or restore, revival is needed.
- When disunity divides a congregation, revival is needed.
- Revival is needed when Christian parents fail to rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
- When a church is over-confident, thinking their fellowship, their programs, their staff, their building program, etc. are enough, revival is needed.
- When God's people are contented, complacent, satisfied with things just the way they are, revival is needed.

The sad reality of the majority of the Revelation churches was that they did not acknowledge these issues prior to the Lord pointing them out. That is further evidence of the need for revival. We are prone to perceive ourselves doing better than is the reality. Will you face the truth today?

Lord, enable me to see where I really am in my walk with You. Give me the courage to face the truth.

Day 3 – January 11 Clint Ritchie

Read 1 Peter 5:5-10

A soldier was assigned the responsibility of serving guard duty throughout the night. Early in the morning, this soldier reported to his commanding officer who demanded, “Did you sleep well while on duty?” “What made you think that I fell asleep?” asked the surprised soldier. “Look in the mirror,” came the officer’s reply. As the guard stood before the mirror he saw on his forehead the imprint of the logo from his truck’s steering wheel. There on his forehead was the trademark of his vehicle, and that trademark revealed something about him.

As a believer, there should be a trademark on us that people will see that reveals that we belong to Christ. That trademark is humility.

Humility is the willingness to be corrected. It is removing the walls we have built for self-defense. While humility does include not considering ourselves above others, one part we often ignore is that humility opens up our lives for correction. Humility means that we stop being defensive and start being open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, to correction from the Bible, and to the advice of mature Christians who wish to help us grow.

The lack of humility leads to a hard heart. The Bible tells us to break up the unplowed ground. When hardness enters our lives, we become closed to God. His grace, like rain, will roll off of us instead of sinking in. The problem is not with God, but with us; we are too hardened to receive what He has for us.

When God sends revival He starts with a few people. When He sent revival to Nineveh, He started with Jonah. In other revivals throughout church history there would be a group of people who were burdened for revival and would meet together to pray. God starts in a small inner circle and works His way out. The inner circle will always be people God has raised up and whom God has burdened for revival, and these will be people of humility. Will you be part of the inner circle?

O God, give me a soft heart toward You.

Day 4 – January 12 Clint Ritchie

Read 1 Thessalonians 1

Sam Jones, one of the great revival preachers of years gone by used to conduct what he called “Quittin' Meetings” during his revivals. They were so called because he gave people the opportunity to confess their sins and repent. Many quit swearing, drinking, smoking, gossiping... etc.

Jones asked one woman what she planned to quit and she replied, “I ain't been doing nothing and I am goin' to quit that too.”

Verses 9-10 show that the Thessalonians embraced repentance, and so must we. Repentance is turning to God and away from self and sin, but it is first a turning to God. It is turning our affections to God. It is turning over our time to God. It is rearranging our priorities around God. Repentance may involve, not the overt sin we committed, but the godly things we omitted. Repentance is starting to do again the things we have been leaving undone. Where we have neglected our devotional life, we start it again. Where we have neglected Christian service, we get to work. Where we have failed to love others, we love anew. Sometimes we fall, not into scandal, but into doing nothing. That is sin and we must repent of it.

Repentance is turning from self. And self is the problem: self-will, self-seeking, self-righteousness, self-centeredness, self-sufficiency, selfishness. These are sins as great as adultery or murder. Repentance means turning to God and away from self.

Repentance is turning from sin. It is admitting that it is wrong, an offense against God—it's not a fault or a little imperfection—it is sin. Repentance is stopping the sin and replacing it with something good. It is renouncing the sin in our own lives and taking our stand against it.

Repentance is turning to God from self and sin. Are you doing something you need to quit and replace? Are you doing nothing and need to repent of that?

Father, point out every offensive way within me and lead me toward righteousness.

Day 5 – January 13 Clint Ritchie

Read Psalm 51

As a young man Evan Roberts experienced the presence of God in powerful ways. One night he was awakened from his sleep and led into a deep communion with God that lasted for hours. This experience was to continue every evening for the next few months and did not stop until he went away to the school. Attending a conference while away at school, he prayed, “Bend me O Lord.” He would go home from school to share with the youth group of his home church four steps to getting right with God:

1. Confess all known sin
2. Deal with and get rid of anything ‘doubtful’ in your life
3. Be ready to obey the Holy Spirit instantly
4. Confess Christ publicly

The message spread widely as thousands accepted this message and put it into practice during the Welsh Revival. This message is not limited to the early 1900’s and the promise of revival is available to you.

David writes Psalm 51 after being confronted by Nathan after his adultery with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband. Notice that David does not fall into the self-justifying trap of shifting the blame. He does not say, “The devil made me do it,” or “I was just having a bad day.” He did not point to Bathsheba for bathing on her rooftop or his general for obeying an order he knew was a bad one to end Uriah’s life. He faces the music: it is “my iniquity, my sin, my transgressions.” David does not try to cut a deal with God or negotiate with his consequences. He comes clean without conditions.

Do not rationalize, minimize, excuse, or spin what you have done. Get real. David lived in denial for a while before he reached this point. Once he realized he had not fooled God, he stopped playing games. These words we just read are desperate, gut-wrenching, offered by a man who seriously misses what he once knew with God.

Bend me, O Lord, and have mercy on me. Cleanse me from my sin.

Day 6 – January 14 Clint Ritchie

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

When John Wesley was traveling around and preaching the gospel, he came to one village, where he asked if he could preach in the service on Sunday. The minister of the church refused because he, along with many others of the day, believed Wesley to be a heretic. So Wesley went to the cemetery, and stood on one of the tombstones, and preached to the crowd that gathered to hear him - the largest congregation the town had ever seen.

He did this night after night, preaching also at several of the surrounding villages. Many people were saved, and lives were changed. Some of their angry neighbors seized an entire wagon-load of these new heretics and took them before a magistrate. When the magistrate asked what they had done, there was a deep silence, because no one had thought about that. Finally, someone said, "They pretended to be better than other people," while another said, "They prayed from morning to night." One man said, "They have converted my wife. Till she went among them she had such a tongue, and now she is quiet as a lamb!"

When the magistrate heard this, he proclaimed, "Take them back! Take them back, and let them convert the entire town!"

Why are we afraid of what God would do if He got hold of our lives? Why can we not see the goodness of the changes a spiritual awakening would bring to our families? Is it because we fear the goodness of God? Have we confused Jesus with someone else? Jesus told us in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." God's plan is a good plan and we can trust Him because He loves us more than we love ourselves.

Where are you limiting what God can do in your life to bring revival? Is there any area you have not allowed Him to touch? Open all of your life to the Lord.

Father, help me not to fear Your work in my life. Grant me the courage to embrace the changes You will bring to my life as good things.

Day 7 – January 15 Clint Ritchie

Read Daniel 6

When Dwight became president of Yale, the new class that entered in the autumn of 1796 included only one freshman who was a "professing Christian," while the sophomore class contained none. The college church had itself dwindled to two members. A reversal of the situation seemed hopeless.

Dwight encouraged the students to debate openly the validity of the Christian faith, allowing each student to state his case without fear of reprisal, and then the president entered the list of speakers himself. For the next six months President Dwight preached steadily on the central subject of Christian Faith. Though his eyesight became so bad that only with the greatest difficulty could he write or read a single sentence, he still preached twice every Sunday, taught his class, and administered the college.

Finally, in the spring of 1802, revival came. One third of Yale's two hundred and thirty students professed faith in Christ. Over thirty of these would enter the ministry, while the others, in various ways throughout their lives, spread the influence of the Christian message.

Perhaps you work in a place where few are Christians. Maybe you wished you could work alongside fellow believers. Perhaps your Sunday School class is not doing as well as it should be doing. Maybe people are not as interested in the Scriptures as they ought to be or are not interested in spiritual growth. Maybe they are not stepping up to accept opportunities for Christian service. Just maybe you would like to turn them in for another class.

If God moves you that is one thing, but until He does, stay where you are. Follow the example of Daniel who remained faithful even though he stood alone and knew the punishment that would come. Listen to the Holy Spirit's promptings. As He leads, speak to people. Reason with them. Use your influence. Watch God make a difference.

Father, give me the courage not to retreat. Give me the words I do not have. Give the patience to wait on You.

Day 8 – January 16 Clint Ritchie

Read Galatians 5

Robert Moffat was born in Scotland in 1795. When he was seventeen, the London Missionary Society accepted him as a missionary and he sailed to South Africa. Two years later, he met and married Mary Smith in Cape Town and together they began to minister to the Bechuana tribe in Africa's interior. They were faithful in translating the Bible into the native language and preaching the Gospel, but not one person came to Christ.

In 1827, they received a letter from England. A friend wanted to mail them a gift and asked what they would like. Trusting that the Lord was ready to bless their work, Mary replied, "Send us a communion set; I am sure it will soon be needed."

In 1829, after ten years, the Moffats still had not seen a single person come to Christ. Then in May of that year, six people came to the Lord. By July, there were over one hundred and twenty believers. The church prepared to gather on the first Sunday in July for their first celebration of the Lord's Supper. Two days before the observance, a package arrived. It was the communion set. It had been delayed two years in the mail, but it arrived right on time.

We can promote revival services. We can challenge our church members to attend. We can change our schedules so that we can come each service. In fact, we ought to do all of those things. However, only the Holy Spirit can renew minds and change lives. It is possible to run ahead of the Spirit, but we cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit. We can, however, be faithful. We can keep on keeping on when it seems nothing is "clicking." We can purify our own lives and prepare our own hearts before God. We can continue to pray for revival. We can wait on God – Until it comes.

Remember, God is seldom early, but He is never late. He is always on time. It is His timing that is perfect. Pray that you are ready when the time comes.

Lord, we cannot produce revival fire; it must be sent down. Deliver me from the temptation to rush it or to fake it. I will depend on You.

Day 9 – January 17 Clint Ritchie

Read Joshua 1:1-11

Adrian Rogers told about a man who bragged that he had cut the tail off a man-eating lion with his pocket knife. Asked why he had not cut off the lion's head, the man replied, "Someone had already done that!"

Joshua probably felt the same way following Moses. Moses had already done so much in leading the people out of Egypt, giving them the Law, guiding them during the time of wandering, and directing them to the edge of the Promise Land. On top of that, Joshua is commanded to lead a group of people who have shown their tendency to rebel against leadership, forget the Lord, and desire to return to their old way of life.

The nation of Israel is not where it is supposed to be. When the Lord brought them out of Egypt, the intention was that they would immediately begin the conquest of the land. God is intent on completing His plan in the lives of His children and will not allow them to stay where they are if it does not complete its plan. The same is true for us: God will not allow us to stay where we are if where we are does not complete His plan for our lives.

God communicates to Joshua that nothing which had transpired had changed His plan for Israel and it was time for them to get ready to go. Failures, such as Israel's failure to believe God when the spies reported, do not change God's plan, nor the loss of a beloved leader, such as Moses. Our failures and obstacles might change the timing but God's plan for us does not change.

The difference-maker was God's presence and power. "I will be with you" brackets the commission, guaranteeing that Joshua is unstoppable and the inheritance of the Promised Land is inevitable. Without the presence, Joshua has everything to fear.

Today, God calls us to fulfill the Great Commission, and He promises to be with us, "to the end of the age." It is time to get going.

Father, thank you for the promise of Your presence. Prepare me to be ready to go.

Day 10 – January 18 Clint Ritchie

Read Joshua 2

Joshua was probably not surprised to hear from the spies that God was already moving, setting things in order for the time when they would enter the Promised Land. They might have been surprised to discover that it was a prostitute, Rahab, that God would use to hide them and help develop a plan, eventually seeing Rahab acknowledge the power of God on behalf of the Israelites.

The spies show increasing faith, noticed in their words in verse 14, “*when the Lord gives us the land.*” They were seeing God work right before their eyes in and through Rahab, and their own faith increased by leaps and bounds.

Rahab is clearly impacted by what is happening and has been changed, devising the plan of escape for the spies. She accepts the plan of the scarlet cord, trusting that the Israelites will be faithful to their word. She also risks people probing her to find out why she has the cord in her window. The dangling cord symbolizes her expectant hope of survival. Her faith is increasing.

Rahab’s family was impacted by her faith. At some point, she had to tell them about the visitors and the plan that was made. We do not know anything about them other than they had the faith to be willing to gather at Rahab’s house in order to survive.

We are selfish and ignorant when we do not acknowledge the impact our faith has on others. It can be a positive or a negative impact. If you experience personal revival, it will be evident to others, and they will be impacted.

Over the past year, I have been with several spiritual giants in our church in the last weeks of their life. Each time I left, I knew it could be the last time, but I was always strengthened at the faith they had at that moment in their life. They impacted me, and each of us can make a similar impact daily.

God, help me to see the spiritual impact I can make and live with faith.

Day 11 – January 19 Clint Ritchie

Read Joshua 3

In *Facing the Giants* as the team is about to play the championship game, the coach's pre-game talk includes the challenge, "Give your best to God."

Those words pose a challenge to us today. Many people, including most in the church, would say they give something to God, but do we give our best? To experience God at work in our lives and in our ministries is something we should all desire, but it is also something we must actively pursue. We pursue God at work by giving our best to Him.

The people are camped about six miles from the Jordan River. After the spies return with their report, they get up early the next morning and begin their journey. It is probable that at this time Joshua did not know how they were going to cross the Jordan, but he believed it would happen. He was trusting completely God's plan to take the land, which meant they had to leave where they were and start the journey.

Joshua demonstrated a long-term trust. He has waited, along with Caleb, for forty years to arrive at the point of entering the Promise Land. It had to be difficult to know they could have taken possession of it many years before if the people as a whole had been faithful, but they did not give their best to God. It is not until midway through the chapter that God tells Joshua how they will cross the Jordan, but Joshua gives himself completely to the plan, then the people follow with the same commitment when they hear of the plan.

We live in a society that believes "just enough" is acceptable. One college student said, "People think I am weird because of this. I honestly do not have a desire to thrive. Getting by, surviving, that is enough for me.... I will not go out of my way because I am lazy and frankly do not care. If I can do the bare minimum and get by, I will."

Before we shake our head at this student, are we just as guilty in our spiritual lives?

Father, work in my life to help me give my best to You.

Day 12 – January 20 Clint Ritchie

Read Joshua 4

My office is filled with personal memorials: pictures of my family, diplomas, plaques, colored pictures from my children, certificates of appreciation, and lots of Razorback paraphernalia. When I take the time to sit and look around, I am reminded that I am blessed.

Given man's propensity to forget, it is little wonder that memorials played an important role in biblical history. In this passage, the Israelites are instructed to gather stones from the middle of the river so they could be placed one on top of the other in the land of promise as a witness to and memorial of this amazing event which had just taken place.

When the Israelites recalled this event, they should "fear the Lord their God" (verse 24). The "fear of the Lord" is a central biblical teaching that means to treat with the highest respect or to hold in awe. Fear finds expression in praise, adoration, and worship. A memorial of this event was to remind them of who God was, and who He is, and move them to praise.

Our lives are full of memorials: places, people, events, scars, lessons. But we often tend to forget these memorials, and some of them we forget purposefully. As we look back at our memorials, we are reminded of God's provision and protection; therefore, our response should be to praise God. It is easy, though, to become like the Israelites and take it all for granted and act as if we were deserving.

During a visit to their grandparents, two young girls watched from the breakfast table as a man came to the back door. When the visitor left, the grandpa explained that he was an appraiser. "What's an appraiser," the younger child asked. Before grandpa had a chance to answer, the older sister quickly cleared up the matter: "He's a praiser. He goes to church every Sunday!"

That is the legacy that we should desire to leave, but we often forget the wonderful things God has done for us and leave a legacy of complaining.

God the Provider, let me remember how You have worked and give You praise.

Day 13 – January 21 Clint Ritchie

Read Joshua 5:2-12

It is becoming more common today for couples to renew their wedding vows. There are many reasons behind this decision, but probably the most common is those who have had some rocky times in their relationship and would like to reaffirm their commitment to each other.

The Israelites are making progress toward the Promise Land and have overcome their first major obstacle in the flooded Jordan River, but the Lord slows down the process of acquisition and calls the people to renew. Renewal is important in our relationship with the Lord, too. We often refer to this as rededication, but once we dedicate our lives to the Lord, we cannot just take it back and go back and forth. Renewal is a refreshing, or a revival, and we have been preparing ourselves for such a time.

Circumcision was instituted by the Lord as the sign of the covenant with Abraham's descendants and the symbol of Israel's unique identity. Unlike their ancestors who died in the wilderness, the generation born in the wilderness and standing at the brink of the Promise Land had not been circumcised. This procedure would not have been comfortable for the men, but at stake here is the question of whether or not this generation, the one the Lord graciously preserved in the wilderness, will obey Him and not lose the land.

The Israelites have exited a time when they were not in the will of God for forty years, so the Lord calls them to renew their vow to Him. There are times when we come out of a period of sin and wandering that the Lord may call us to renew our vow to Him through a public commitment, giving something up, or any other way that God decides to act.

As a result of their commitment, a sad era of disobedience for the people of Israel is brought to an end (verse 9). This act confirms an obedient spirit and gives the Lord cause to declare the past humiliation dead and buried, never to be thrown accusingly at Israel again, just as our sins are thrown into the heart of the sea (Micah 7:19).

Lord, in order to experience revival, show me how I need to renew my commitment.

Day 14 – January 22 Clint Ritchie

Read Joshua 5:13-6:25

It has been said that we spend the first year or two of a child's life trying to get them to talk, then we spend the next sixteen trying to get them to be quiet!

There are times in the battle of life that we simply need to be quiet and allow God to work. That was part of the battle plan at Jericho. We usually focus on the walking around the city, but verse 10 shows that the people were instructed to remain silent until they hear a long blast on the trumpet, then they were to shout. For six days they walked around the city, then returned to the camp. No one said a word. On the seventh day, they did not return to the camp; they kept walking. Then the trumpet blast sounded and the people shouted, resulting in the walls coming down.

Why were they commanded to be quiet? God's Word reveals that we hear God's voice best when we remain silent. Moses said in Exodus 14:14, "The Lord will fight for you, and you shall be quiet." The Psalmist says it this way in Psalm 46:10, "Be still, and know that I am God."

I can imagine that if they people were allowed to talk, it probably would have been negative. Surely someone would have said, "No one has ever fought a battle this way before!" After a few days even the most faithful person would have been tempted to complain, "This is getting old." Had they talked, it might have changed the readiness of the people to triumph. There are times when we simply need to be quiet.

When we are quiet, we remember who is in charge - and it is not us! The first part of today's reading highlights Joshua's encounter with the Lord, and out of that encounter flowed the battle plan for Jericho. Part of the plan included the people being quiet. In our military, the privates do not run the show, but I am afraid that spiritually we forget who is in charge. In the busyness of life, we tend to forget that "apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

As we pray for revival, is it possible we just need to be quiet?

Father, help me to be quiet so that I can hear from you and be ready to triumph.

Day 15 – January 23 Clint Ritchie

Read Joshua 7

In 2007, Spherion, a career recruiting and staffing agency, asked 2,000 employees if they had ever taken office supplies for personal use. Nearly 20 percent of employees admitted they had. Surprisingly, the likelihood that someone would use company materials for personal use increased with education and salary level. In fact, employees in the highest salary ranges have been known to help themselves to company cell phones and computers.

Why do people take office supplies and equipment for personal use? Because they do not think anyone will notice; they believe they can hide it. That was the problem with Achan, whose hidden sin caused the Israelites to experience their only defeat as they take the Promise Land. The Israelites were given Jericho, but the spoils of victory were dedicated to the Lord (gold, silver, etc.). These were not to be touched but Achan took some. His disobedience led to the failure of all Israel, and God dealt severely with Achan, and his family, because the price of sin is high.

You cannot experience revival with hidden sin in your life. I believe that one of the reasons Achan fell into the sin was because he had become self-confident. The victory over Jericho caused the Israelites to become prideful, and Achan demonstrated that pride when he saw something he wanted and took it even though it was wrong.

A three-year-old girl was staying with her grandmother when she discovered the joy of playing in the mud. Her grandmother had been reading and was facing away from the action. Upon discovering the problem, she told Larissa to quit playing in the mud and turned her chair around so as to be facing her granddaughter. The little girl soon resumed her routine, with one request: "Don't look at me, Nana. Okay?" Nana of course agreed. Larissa continued her work. Three times she said, as she continued her work, "Don't look at me, Nana. Okay?" It may be that out of all the prayers that are ever spoken, the most common one—the quietest one; the one that we least acknowledge making—is simply this: Don't look at me, God. It was the very first prayer spoken after the Fall. God came to walk in the garden, to be with the man and the woman, and called, "Where are you?" "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid," Adam answered, "so I hid." Don't look at me, God. What area in your life are you saying, "Don't look at me, God"?

God, look at me and help me to forsake the hidden sin in my life.

Day 16 – January 24 Clint Ritchie

Read Joshua 14:6-14

As the human body ages, there are many changes. While you are probably experiencing the changes to some degree, a quick google search reminds us that as we age, our voice changes, as does our personality. Age adjusts our values, as well as our idea of love.

We are also susceptible to changes the longer that we are a Christian. Many Christians have a glorious past of walking with God and serving Him, but they have stopped seeking and serving. As a result, their abilities, discernment, and wisdom have lessened. Regardless of your age or how long you have been a Christian, you should regularly consider: When was the last time you followed God in a new task?

Caleb remained open to a new task, asking at the age of 85 for the hill country that God had promised to him. Numbers 14 says that Caleb had a “different spirit” that set him apart from his unfaithful comrades. Throughout his life, Caleb unswervingly and without hesitation obeyed God’s will rather than his own or that of someone else.

My fear is that we do not know what wholehearted devotion looks like. We have people that we look up to, people that are church leaders, that had one good moment (or a good period of time), only to see that they now complain, question what God can do, cause division, and do not submit to the spiritual leadership of others. They also take others down the same path because this supposed devotion is marked by sin and sin is attractive.

I love that at the age of 85 Caleb has not changed his level of devotion. Rather than sending someone else, he goes to Joshua and asks for the fight of his life. I have to imagine that his statement in verse 11 was only physically true in his head, but Caleb knew that the same Lord that was going to give the land forty years ago could still bring it about. Rather than being a by-stander, he was leading the pack.

If you are not living in the greatest spiritual days of your life, you have changed your devotion and you need revival.

God, renew a steadfast spirit within me, and send a great revival to my soul.

Day 17 – January 25 Clint Ritchie

Read Joshua 23

Some commentators believe that as many as twenty-five years have elapsed since the land distribution and this moment. All of Israel's key leaders sit up front facing Joshua with thousands of Israelites behind them. Everyone has arrived from all over Canaan to her the very man who allotted each of them their inheritances. Joshua knows the end of his life is near, and he uses the time to give some final reminders.

Joshua knew the tendency of mankind to take personal credit for victories God provided and become prideful, so he reminds the people that it was the Lord who fought for them. Joshua also knew the tendency to reflect the people around you in order to get along, so he reminds them of the commitment they made to holiness. Verse 10 is a reminder that we all need: the power of one person.

Israel was so unstoppable that one solitary Israelite could rout a thousand Canaanites. While Joshua uses exaggeration, the point is not to be missed. There were times when the people were vastly outnumbered and the Lord fought for them and they were delivered. In a negative sense, through Achan they knew the power of one person when they were not obedient.

Oftentimes we have the feeling, "I am just one person, so what can I do?" Helen Keller said, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do."

Throughout Scripture we find example after example of the power of one. Jesus took one boy's lunch and fed 5,000 men. Esther saved a nation by using her position. Just these two examples show us the importance of making ourselves available to God.

D.L. Moody said, "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to Him. By God's help, I aim to be that man."

Father, I am just one, but you only need one to start revival. Let it be me!

Day 18 – January 26 Clint Ritchie

Joshua 24:14-28

Many homes have the last part of verse 15 hanging on pieces of artwork in visible places. It is catchy verse and one of importance, but I am afraid we miss the impact of the entire passage when we simply focus on that one sentence.

Joshua is at the end of his life and he stood before the people and challenged them to choose whom they would serve, and he made sure that they understood that he personally was going to serve the Lord. It did not matter that he might have only a few days or weeks to live, from that point forward, you could mark it down that he was going to serve the Lord.

Joshua could have called the people to make the decision and just spoke for his house, but he wanted there to be no doubt where he stood. He knew that he could not expect anyone else to do what he was not willing to do himself. It is easy to have high expectations for other people, but you cannot hold them to a standard you are unwilling to keep for yourself.

Joshua stood before the people and said that not only was he going to serve the Lord, his family was as well. The first implication of this point is that there are some people in your circle of influence that you can make the decision for them, such as those in your house. The point will come when they will have to make the choice for themselves, specifically for salvation and what to do when they no longer are under your authority; however, we can speak for them, just as Joshua did.

The people agree with Joshua that they will serve the Lord, but Joshua says, "You are not able to serve the Lord." We expect God to celebrate people committing to serve Him, but the problem was that the people were not willing to be completely sold out to God. They wanted to add serving God to their service of foreign gods. Until you are willing to make the personal decision to serve the Lord that involves a complete surrender, and then lead those under your influence to do the same, you are not able to experience revival.

Lord, as for me and my house, we will serve You and You alone.

Day 19 – January 27 John Yates

Simon Peter Syndrome

Do you see revival as necessary? Ask any counselor or minister who has talked with an individual or couple whose life or marriage seems spiraling out of control and ask what they hear. Partly it will have been something like; “I never thought I would find myself here,” or “it didn’t start this way,” and on and on. The process of a decreased attention to the Lord’s leadership in your life is generally very gradual. It is not like you wake up and decide that today you are turning your back on Christ, never to live for Him or allow His leadership in your life again. And yet, there you are.

I am fairly certain Peter did not wake up that one fateful day and decide that the day would be best served denying Christ. Peter had dropped his nets to follow. He had seen Jesus do many miracles and even attempted to murder the servant that came with the mob to arrest Jesus...yet here he is, hours later, standing around a fire and 3 times he denied ever knowing Him.

Satan is very calculating and deceiving and will lead you in a long journey away from God, and often times, in slow increments. Little by little you fall away, excusing choices you’ve made, until you look up one day in bewilderment wondering what exactly happened. 2 Cor 4:16; “Therefore we do not despair, but even if our physical body is wearing away, our inner person is being renewed day by day.” Revival, therefore, could be considered a daily thing. A series of services enable us to place all our focus on Him and His will for your life. As we near these services, stop and take a spiritual inventory. Are you as close to Jesus as the day you asked Him to save you and be Lord of your life? 1 John 1:9; “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Lord, help me see me the way you do.

Day 20 – January 28 John Yates

The Unspeakable Gift

2 Corinthians 9:15: “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable free gift.”

I do not know if you are reading this at the beginning of your day or the end. Let's begin this devotion with a spirit of thankfulness. Are you thankful that you woke up today? What about the strength needed to accomplish what He put in front of you today? When was the last time you thanked Him for the roof over your head or the comfortable bed you can climb into at night? Or that your home is cool during those warm days and warm during the cool ones. What about your clothes or family? Or the way you were raised? Your church, family friends, etc. I could go on and on...

In Luke 17, we read about the 10 lepers Jesus healed. All were healed but only one returned to thank Jesus. We are all guilty at some time in our lives of taking the blessings and gifts He has given us for granted and we do not take the time to go before Him to thank Him.

During a kids camp bonfire night, kids were taking turns sharing what God had taught them that week. One little boy began this way; “Jesus, thank you for making the greatest gift of all so easy to receive.” Revival does this for us. It is during revival services that we can forget all the outside noise and listen to His voice and then thank Him for speaking. “For the wages of sin *is* death, but the **gift** of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

*Lord, forgive me when I don't take the time to thank you. Thank you, especially, for Your **unspeakable (inexpressible, wonderful, priceless) gift.** (2 Cor 9:15)*

Day 21 – January 29 John Yates

Heart Condition Matthew 13:1-50

How is your heart today? The biggest battles Jesus had throughout His entire ministry were with those who had heart issues, and He spent a great deal of time talking about it. Jesus taught many times in parables. When He talked with farmers, He talked farming. When he talked with fishermen, He talked fishing. While speaking one day, He spoke about the human heart by talking about sowing seed. And He introduced 4 different hearts.

The first was a **Calloused Heart**. That hard heart is the one that sits in the pew during revival services wondering if there is any new revelation the guest preacher can bestow. 1 John 2:23-25. There's no new revelation. It is a matter of having a receptive heart.

He spoke of a **Shallow Heart**. No firm roots. He said **When** persecution arises, not **If**. Things will happen to try and discourage your attendance and with a shallow heart...you will be prone to making the decision to stay away.

When He spoke of thorny ground in verse 22, He was talking about the **Cluttered Heart**. God wants to speak to us but often the ears of our heart are too cluttered and bogged down to hear. And if we do hear, all of the clutter simply disables us from following in obedience.

The good soil in verse 23 represents the **Christlike Heart**. But even that one can come up short. He mentions 100%, 60% and 30%. How committed are you?

Pray, today, to have the heart God desires. Pray as we near our services that you have a heart receptive to hear and do His will 100%.

Day 22 – January 30 John Yates

The Aliens Have Landed 1 Peter 2:11-12

The Bible says all of us who are followers of Jesus are like aliens in this world. According to the dictionary the word “alien” has three meanings: (1) “Belonging or relating to another person, place, or thing; (2) Relating, belonging, or owing allegiance to another country or government; (3) Differing in nature or character typically to the point of incompatibility.”

When we were born the first time, we were born into this world. This is the world you can see, smell, taste, hear and feel. When you experience a spiritual birth, you are born again into a new world. From that moment on, we belong to a different world and we no longer feel at home in this world. There are two kinds of people living on this rock—the natives and the aliens. The natives are the ones who live for this world, the aliens are the ones who live here but realize there is another world to live for. If we are aliens in this world, where are we from? Where is our real home?

In Philippians 3:20, Paul wrote: “We’re citizens of high heaven! We’re waiting the arrival of the Savior, the Master, Jesus Christ who will transform our earthly bodies into glorious bodies like his own.” (*The Message*) We live here, but this is not our home. That is why we never feel totally at home in this world. Heaven is our true home. We reside in this world, but we do not belong here. Pastor John Piper wrote, “Our first and primary citizenship is in heaven—not the United States. Our first and primary constitution is the Bible not the U.S. Constitution; our first and primary King and Commander and Chief is Jesus Christ and not to our President, and the dominant cravings of our heart are not for the treasures and tributes of the world, but for the kingdom of God. I love America and I support and pray for our President—as the scripture tells us to do. But I realize that our American culture is temporary, and the Kingdom of God is eternal. We are aliens and we’ll never quite fit into this world.” Do not be fooled. We are in a war of worlds. Jesus said to His current and future disciples: “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world.” (John 15:18- 19)

You are an alien on a mission. May you realize, today, the battle that exists and fight in His strength and might.

Day 23 – January 31 John Yates

Against the Flow Matthew 7:13-23

Someone said; “Normal is a relative term...and it isn’t any of my relatives.” That word – normal – is an interesting one. If I were to ask you, “are you normal?” you might have to be given a little more information before you could answer. Normal is defined sometimes by your peer group, your country, or your family – and they can mean different things. Wanting to be “normal” is considered a healthy attitude but it is not helpful if “normal” is left for society to dictate the definition. We are not supposed to be normal in that way, we are not supposed to be a nameless cog in a group of nameless cogs. In fact, God’s plan ultimately is to have his people so transformed into a new creature that they are shockingly out of place in whatever spot they occupy. They are meant to be out of place for the reason of pointing to him. An evangelist once said; “Christians have become so subnormal that if they began to act normal people would think them abnormal.”

Yes, the world has certainly infiltrated Christians everywhere. Isaiah 29:13; “The Lord says, ‘These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.’” Neither tradition nor majority opinion are good enough to guide our life. This is what Jesus is warning about when he talks about the wide road leading to destruction. (Matt 7:13)

Jesus said, “Watch Out!” and then he says you will be able to tell by the fruit of their lives. What did Jesus mean by the word “fruit.” Some say he was referring to the fruits of the Spirit Paul talked about – things like patience, kindness, self-control, etc.

I saw where someone else said, “The fruit is produced by a good tree and does so because that is what it does.” I have to agree that Jesus was talking about the obvious result of a life lived with God; a person might be able to hide their real intentions for a while but eventually the fruit they produce will show up very clearly; like grapes from grapevines, figs from fig trees. It isn’t something you try to make happen– you strive for a pure heart, you will naturally produce good stuff.

Pray that today you will be the “normal-fruit bearing” Christian God desires.

Day 24 – February 1 John Yates

Walk in the Light

1 John 1:5-2:6

The New Testament calls the Christian life a walk. This begins with a step of faith when we trust Jesus Christ as Savior. But salvation is not the end. It is only the beginning of the spiritual life. Walking involves progress and Christians are supposed to advance in the spiritual life. Just as a child must learn to walk and must overcome many difficulties in doing so, a Christian must learn to walk in the light and the fundamental difficulty involved here is this matter of sin. Neither the Old or New Testament makes an effort to whitewash the sins of the saints. Sin is as old as Adam and Eve and continues in the lives of some of God's choice servants.

The fact that Christians sin bothers some people, especially new Christians. They forget that their receiving the new nature does not eliminate the old nature they were born with. The old nature fights against the new nature when we are born again.

The saints who sinned are not mentioned in the Bible to discourage us, but to warn us. And all of us must deal with our sins if we are to enjoy the new life in Christ to its fullest. So we sin and we need to know how to deal with this problem. **We can try and cover it up.** The Bible says that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. When we are saved, God called us out of darkness into his light. If we are walking in the light, the darkness has to go. **We can confess our sins.** When we confess our sins, God promises to forgive us. (vs 9) By walking in the light, we are able to see the dirt in our lives and deal with it immediately. **A Christian can conquer sin.** The secret of victory over sin is found in the phrase "walk in the light", chapter 1:7; "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." To walk in the light means to be honest with God, with others and with ourselves. But walking in the light means something else. It means obeying God's word.

Thank you, Lord, that I can come to you open and honest and, through my confession and obedience, have a right relationship with you.

Day 25 – February 2 John Yates
3 Principles for Standing
Ephesians 6:10-20

Scenic overlooks, like those at the Grand Canyon, have railings and warning signs. There are places everywhere that are dangerous areas in which to stand. In our walk with the Lord there will be times that can be quite difficult. As we prepare our hearts for this series of revival services, let's look at some principles for standing.

First we must **Stand in Supernatural Strength**. (vs 10) "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might." "Finally"---the word in the greek means "from now on". This is a passive command. God is telling us to do this but He knows we cannot possibly do this with our power and our strength. You put on all the armor God has given you, each and every day and use His power and strength to stand. You must stand in supernatural strength.

We Must **Stand Against Spiritual Struggles** (vs. 12) spiritual struggles are every day and they are real. This is a real fight. How can I possibly stand against the prince of the world? In the power of His might, that is how! On April 12, 1970, a Soviet November class, attack submarine K-8, sunk with all 52 crew members and eventually disintegrated as a result of pressure changes. Sometime later, a small sub investigated and found some small fish living in parts of it. The pressure on the inside was the same as the pressure on the outside. Listen, you can withstand, you can stand against the spiritual struggles and the prince of the world when what is on the inside of you is greater than what is on the outside.

We Must **Stand with Single Minded Stamina** (vs. 13) James 1:8 tells us; "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. A marathon runner told me that in every race he reaches a point that he calls "The Wall." It happens to him around mile 13. He feels he can no longer keep going. When asked how he handles it he simply responded; "With a single-minded focus I just keep going knowing that if I can break through that wall, I can make it.

Today, be determined that nothing is coming between you and God's perfect will for your life. Amen

Day 26 – February 3 Aaron Sibley

Psalm 126

We have just finished the Christmas season and there is something I am noticing now that Ava Grace is old enough to understand what getting presents is. Santa Claus gets all the credit. I have heard over and over again what Santa is bringing. Of course its all good fun and we enjoy her excitement, but the truth is we often attribute praise to the wrong people or things. We look to others or ourselves for the things we have when we have not had that much to do with it.

The psalmist is careful here to attribute praise to where it belongs. He knew it was God who would bless the people of Israel and not their own works. He knew that every good gift comes from above. What is especially interesting here is the tense of the passage. Notice that the first stanza is remembering how the Lord had provided. The writer was thankful for things that had come and gone. Then he asks the Lord to restore them again, with the past as proof.

As we enter into the revival season it would be good to do three things. First, let's set our focus on the one that can bring true revival to our church. That is the Lord. We must attribute all the praise to Him for that. Secondly, we would be wise to remember how He has revived and restored us in the past. Each of us can think of times where we have experienced revival in our hearts. Remember those times and how God moved, and thirdly ask for him to do it again. Ask Him everyday and seek revival yourself, just as the psalmist did.

Day 27 – February 4 Aaron Sibley

Psalm 51

Forest fires can be devastating. We probably do not think about them much in the South, but in other parts of the country they are a real threat. People lose their homes and sometimes even their lives to these catastrophic events.

When I see the reports of these fires I always think back to another use for them. When I was in college, I had an opportunity to hunt with a friend on their family farm. Every few years they would do a controlled burn of the property. I did not understand why they would want to cause a forest fire! As I participated in the burn I asked his grandfather who was a retired wildlife biologist. He explained, in a lot more academic way than I can, that burning the underbrush actually made the ground more fertile and more valuable. The ash would break down into the soil and be used as minerals for new growth. While it did not completely make sense to me, I understood that sometimes things need to be destroyed before they can be rebuilt.

I am sure this was a hard concept for David. He wrote this Psalm after his affair with Bathsheba, when Nathan confronted him. David's humility is obvious. He was completely torn down over his sin and the consequences that were coming from it. In his state of humility, he asked God to rebuild him, which we know that God did. Perhaps we should have the same humility as David as we prepare ourselves for revival. We should confess our sin and our need for revival. Then we should ask God to give us that revival.

Day 28 – February 5 Aaron Sibley

Isaiah 26:1-6

When I was in college I worked several different jobs. One of those was for a frozen custard place. That job definitely contributed to my figure. As I worked there for several years, I got moved up to having more responsibility and eventually became a shift manager. Lofty goal, I know. One of my responsibilities was to delegate different tasks to the other workers throughout the shift. When I first became a manager this was a hard job for me. I had never paid attention to others work ethic and had always just focused on what my job was. I soon learned that some people do not work quite as hard as others. I learned that I could not trust some people to clean well or refill containers regularly. I would go behind those people and do right what they had done wrong. I could not trust them to be consistent.

My favorite part of this prophecy addresses just that. We cannot trust other people to hold us up or be steadfast for us, but in verse four, Isaiah makes clear that we can trust in the Lord because he is an “everlasting rock.” He will be solid forever. The verse just before that one tells just how we can come to have that rock. We must be dependent on him for perfect peace. He alone can restore us and hold us in that place. As you prepare your heart for revival, remember that God alone is forever trustworthy. Only in Him can we find peace. We should throw ourselves on His mercies and trust that He will revive us and bring us peace beyond our understanding.

Day 29 – February 6 Aaron Sibley

Ezekiel 39:21-29

It is important to understand when reading this passage that God's people had been rebellious. If you know the narrative of the Old Testament, you know that His people were constantly on an up and down roller coaster of trusting and obeying Him, then turning away from Him and to idols.

Many of us can relate to that as well. There have been times when we have sought after God with what seems every fiber in our being; then, there are other times when we have placed other things in our life before him. His cycle was detrimental to the Israelites who suffered greatly for their sin as Ezekiel mentions here in his prophecy.

But God never turns his back on them. When they are at their lowest and they recognize their fault, He is there to pick them back up and place them back where He meant for them to be. And notice in this passage, it is not for their own sake that God does this. It is to show His own holiness. He brings them out of their slavery and into safety in their own land so that He can show that He is a good God and that He is their God. Then when they recognize God's holiness, goodness, and that they are His, He said He would pour out His Spirit on them.

Perhaps we would do well to recognize God's holiness and His goodness, and that we are His possession. If we are praying for a revival, we are praying that His Spirit would be poured out on us. Before we ask for that Spirit, be sure we have properly recognized who He is, and who we are to Him.

Day 30 – February 7 Aaron Sibley

Ezekiel 37:1-14

This past Thanksgiving many of you ordered Boston Butts and Turkeys from the church to help fund our Chile mission trip. I had several of you mention how good those were, and I am extremely grateful for the funds that were raised to go towards making those mission trips possible. However, my turkey was not so good. It was not because of those who smoked it, but rather those who reheated it. While I was hunting Thanksgiving morning, I left the directions and the turkey at home. When I got back, I found that the turkey had been cooked too hot and for twice as long. While I ate every bite of it, it was pretty dry. There was no reviving it.

I think of that story when I read this passage. God brings Ezekiel to a place with an impossible task: to revive dead dry bones. But when asked if these bones could live, Ezekiel replied with the best reply that could have been given, “Lord God, only you know.” Essentially he was saying, “I recognize the impossibility of this task, but if it can be done, it will be done only by Your hand.” From there Ezekiel is obedient and he sees a miracle before his eyes, a perfect representation of what God would soon do to his people.

Perhaps you feel as though you are a pile of dry bones. You desire spiritual nourishment, but you cannot bring it to yourself. It may seem impossible but our reply should be that of Ezekiel. “Lord God, only you know.” We should be obedient to God and trust that He will bring revival that only He can bring. In our obedience, we will find life for our dry bones.

Day 31 – February 8 Aaron Sibley

Psalms 79:5-11

It seems strange at first to read this passage as we prepare for revival, but there is an important truth here that we need to understand. Israel was in a tough place and it was their own fault. They had worshiped idols and God finally let them have what they wanted and turned away from them, allowing them to be punished by the pagan nations whose gods they had worshiped. Here the psalmist recognizes it is Israel's own fault and is begging for mercy. He is asking to be put back in the place they once were and that those who persecute them would be destroyed.

That request, however, was not only so their situation could be better. It was for the glory of God. He states this in verse 9, that it is "for the glory of your name" and "for your name's sake." Again he says "why should the nations ask, 'Where is their God?'" The psalmist understands that all that happens is for God's glory and he wants God's name to be lifted up. He asks that he and his people be an instrument to lift that name up, that they would be revived and restored, and that those who see it would know it is by God's hand that this has happened.

This too should be our prayer, as we get ready for revival. That we would be revived and restored and that God alone would receive the praise for it.

Day 32 – February 9 Aaron Sibley

Jeremiah 29:1-14

There is one verse in this passage that is quoted all the time and unfortunately it is quoted out of context. Verse eleven is posted on our houses and said in moments of tragedy. However, this may not be something we want to proclaim. If you read the passage before you will realize that God had banned his people from Jerusalem to Babylon because of their actions. He is giving them a hefty punishment. The part we all like is what God says He will do after they have completed their punishment. That He will restore them to what they were.

Some of us may be in a difficult situation now because of our decisions. God does not promise to remove the consequences. However, if we ask for forgiveness and turn toward Him, God does promise to restore us and give us a hope of something greater than the consequences we live in now. In order to receive that hope, we have to be obedient to Him and not our own flesh. That can be difficult but it will always end with your good and his glory.

However there is one consequence He does promise to remove from us. This is the consequence of sin. That consequence is removed by the blood of Christ for all those who believe. That promise alone is worth giving God the glory. As we prepare for revival, remind yourself of the work Christ did for you on the cross and ask that you would be restored and revived personally to what God intended.

Day 33 – February 10 Ken Hall

Read Psalm 33

The writer of Psalm exhorts us to sing and play music to the Lord. *It is fitting for the upright to praise Him* (v.1). He talks about singing a new song and to play skillfully and even to shout for joy. Oftentimes the Baptist Church is terrified by the idea of shouting for joy, yet throughout the Psalms we are encouraged to do so. Our enthusiastic response is not for a job well done by a musician or speaker, but it's done to honor our King! If a parade was held today in our streets and the Queen of England was on one of the floats, we would clap and cheer loudly for her. That's just what you do! How much more fitting to show the same enthusiasm to the King of kings! Yet often our times of worship are times of yawns, boredom, and even disdain. How sad that we approach the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe with such indifference! Nothing is more distressing for a worship leader than to look out on the congregation and see some bored, distracted, and even angry expressions. Now this is not everyone by any means. Our church is full of people who truly praise and worship and what a joy to share in the worship experience with them.

The psalmist here is encouraging us to not present old, worn out praise. We should put life, soul, and heart into every song because every day is a NEW day full of NEW mercies and NEW wonders of works of OUR Lord. In our music ministry, we seek to do things with excellence. Yes, we make mistakes and there may be some things we cannot do as well as other music ministries. But God should never be praised in a lazy, slovenly manner. He deserves the BEST that we have. Just as our musicians practice to present praise in the highest manner, every member should approach worship and singing in the same way. I believe it is a sin to approach praise and worship in any manner less than our best efforts.

Every Christian should strive to sing joyfully (and not being able to carry a tune in a bucket is no excuse)! To sing joyfully is to sing with gusto! It should be a natural overflow of our walk with Him that causes us to express ourselves in such a manner. May our worship be an overflow of our relationship with God Almighty. Worship transforms us!

Pray that your heart will be in tune with the heart of God and that He will give you a song to sing.

Dig Deeper: Psalm 98

Day 34 – February 11 Ken Hall

Read Psalm 20

In 1976, recording artist Stevie Wonder released an album entitled, *Songs in the Key of Life*. Several of the songs on this album were hits including the most familiar one, *Isn't She Lovely?* The title of the album could easily be another name for an ancient songbook, the book of *Psalms*. The book of *Psalms* seems to be a soundtrack for life. Filled with poems and songs, the book of *Psalms* captures all of the different emotions related to life experience and the writers' walk with God. You can literally open the book of *Psalms* to anyplace and find a song that relates to your current situation in life. From majestic songs of Praise to cries of help and mercy, the *Psalms* offer comfort, guidance, and hope.

In Psalm 20, King David seems to be offering up a prayer for his people. It is a prayer for protection, for help, for guidance, and hope. He reminds us that it is not in earthly power and might that we trust, but in the name of the Lord.

Pray: As you pray today, be honest with God and let him know what distresses you. Ask for His divine help and intervention. You do not have to have fancy words to impress God, speak to Him from your heart and trust Him completely.

Dig Deeper: Psalm 18

Day 35 – February 12 Ken Hall

Read 2 Kings 22:1-20

The history of the children of Israel can best be described as:

1. Walking with God
2. Walking away from God - Sin
3. Judgement and Punishment
4. Repentance

They repeated this cycle over and over as recorded in the Old Testament. The center of Jewish life was to be the Temple, because it represented God's presence among them. Yet, as worship in the Temple was replaced with other gods, the Temple would fall into disrepair. I am sure it did not happen overnight but occurred gradually as the people and even the priests soon forsook their duties. Young King Josiah had a heart for God and led in the restoration of the Temple. As part of the work, the Book of the Law was discovered and taken to the king who had it read to him. In chapter 23 He reads it aloud to the people in order to renew their covenant with the Lord – *to follow Him and keep his commands.*

When we forsake the Lord and let other things (which become our gods/idols) squeeze out the study of His Word, worship, serving, witnessing, and sharing fellowship, the local church begins to decline. Unhealthy, anemic churches lead to unhealthy families and communities. By looking at needs all around us, we do have cause for concern. Crime, abuse, poverty, broken homes are just a few things in our community that need repair. Our own church buildings, built to honor and glorify God, have fallen into a state of disrepair. Only when we as individuals clean out the idols in our lives and begin walking according to God's Word, can we see real change, transformation, take place in our church and our community.

Pray that God will begin now to reveal the “idols” in your life and lead you to repentance and restoration.

Dig Deeper: Read 2 Kings 23:1-25

Day 36 – February 13 Ken Hall

Read John 18:33-40

There used to be a television show, “To Tell the Truth” where a celebrity panel had to decide which of the 3 contestants were telling the truth. They came to their conclusions based on answers given to questions they asked. They were on a quest for the truth. Today truth is in short supply, especially in politics. Almost everyone will agree that most political leaders will say anything to get what they want or to get their constituents to vote for them and their agenda. There was a day when most newspapers prided themselves on presenting only the facts so readers could come to their own conclusions. Today, most papers and media outlets are slanted one way or the other and slant their reports to support their agenda. So what is true and what is not?

In Jesus’ encounter with Pilate, they go through a dialogue as to whether Jesus is the King of the Jews. Jesus explains to Pilate His mission on earth was to “testify to the truth.” Pilate replies with “what is truth?” I think Pilate’s reply was probably accompanied by a chuckle or a grunt because he was not interested in truth. To the Romans, truth was whatever the Emperor deemed it to be. So basically he was simply shrugging that statement off.

Our society today responds much in the same manner. Most people believe that truth is whatever you perceive it to be. Talk show hosts and self-help gurus tell us to “stand in our own truth.” In other words, truth is determined by your feelings.

In order to determine what truth is, there has to be a measuring stick. Throughout history, only one measuring stick has survived and has been the source for other measuring sticks – God’s Word. In John 1:14 we read “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” Jesus is the Word and the Word is Truth.

Pray that God will guard your heart and mind from anything that is contradictory to God’s Word and that you will stand firmly on His Truth.

Dig Deeper: John 1:1-14 John 8:31-32

Day 37 – February 14 Ken Hall

Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9

When I was young, our family would bring my grandmother to stay with us during the winter months of January and February. I remember each year after New Year's Day, traveling from Pine Bluff to Murfreesboro, Arkansas, to help her winterize her house and move her home with us. I was always excited to have her around, because grandmothers just make everything better. One of the things I remember about her, and thought it a little odd, was that no matter what we were doing, or what we were talking about, she always brought the conversation around to talking about God. She was always bragging on God, talking about His greatness, His mercy, His power, and His love. One of her favorite expressions was "isn't that just like God?" or "isn't God good?" Now I grew up in a Christian home and my parents made sure I was raised to follow the Lord, but my grandmother seemed to take things to the extreme when it came to God. One day I asked her, "Why do you put God into everything? He does not care about my homework or what's on television, or whether we get that puzzle put together." She was quick to remind me that everything that happens is because God allows it to and that God made everything including me – so I should spend every breath praising God through what I say and what I do.

I have to admit, it was not until I went to college that I truly realized the truth in her statements. I realized they were true because I was discovering truth through God's Word and seeing how her actions reflected what she believed. Deuteronomy 6 impresses on me that God has entrusted each of us with His Words and that we are to impress them on our children. Verse 7 makes it clear that it is more than sending them to church, but it is a way of life and that God's Word should be a part of everything we do.

I am grateful that my parents and grandparents passed this on to me to pass on to my children who I know will pass down to their children.

Pray that you will be obedient to God's Word and that you will be faithful to impress these words upon the hearts of others.

Dig Deeper: Deuteronomy 8

Day 38 – February 15 Ken Hall

Read Psalm 80

In 1806, five students at Williams College in Massachusetts met together in a field to pray and talk about the spiritual needs of people in China and Asia. At the heart of the discussion was a debate over the theology of missions service. During this time a thunderstorm broke out and the five retreated to a haystack nearby and burrowed under the hay to escape the storm. Little did they know that out of this meeting a spiritual fire would be lit that would have a profound effect on future missionary efforts. This meeting would come to be known as the Haystack Prayer Meeting or the Haystack Revival, which became a watershed moment for the missions movement. One of the students, Samuel Mills, would play a key role in the founding of the American Bible Society and the United Foreign Missionary Society.

These were ordinary young men - college students. These five had no idea that all of history was watching that day and what weight of responsibility lay on them. *God uses moments like this, not to test our hearts, but to reveal them. He is unveiling to us what holds our true loyalty. Neil McClendon says, "Life's interruptions are God's invitations." Heroes like this are made, not born. Let us press on to know Him deeply and know His heart so that in times of testing and interruption it might be revealed that our heart has been replaced with His. Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."* (www.thetravelingteam.org/articles/haystack-prayer-meeting)

We should pray fervently for revival among God's people that a fire would be ignited among us and we in turn would share the gospel through our verbal witness and the service we give to make disciples among all nations. We must ask the question, *"If revival in this land depended on your prayers, your faith, your obedience, would we ever experience revival?"* (Spirit of Revival, Feb., 1999, p.11). May we earnestly seek God through fervent prayer and obedience.

Pray that God would unite a spark inside you that would begin a true revival in your life and the life of our church and community.

Dig Deeper: Psalm 85

Day 39 – February 16 Ken Hall

Read Isaiah 48:17

31 years ago Sue and I were married here at First Baptist Church. There were a couple of unique elements to our wedding ceremony that day. One of those was that our youth choir sat in the choir loft and sang beautifully two songs which expressed our desires as we began our journey together – *Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us* and *Me and My House*. The other unique element was our recessional. We wanted something special and asked Gaye Sikes to help out. After talking through several things, we agreed on one of my favorite hymns, *Lead On, O King Eternal*. Gaye agreed to compose an arrangement for piano and organ which she and my sister played that day. Although that arrangement later appeared in one of her published piano/organ duet books, I doubt anyone has ever used it in their wedding. But the words expressed what we were feeling that way. Looking at the words you might question our sanity because it talks about marching, conquest, and battle. But the truth is we face battles every day and must be spiritually prepared to meet these. The key is that our King leads the charge with us following behind. We felt that was a fitting way to leave the church that day.

Lead on, O King Eternal, The day of march has come,

Henceforth in fields of conquest, Thy tents shall be our home;

Through days of preparation, Thy grace has made us strong.

And now, O King Eternal, We lift our battle song.

God knows what is best for all of us and directs us in the way we should go. If you read the entire chapter of Isaiah 48 you will see that while God states this truth to them, He is in the midst of chastising them for not paying attention to His commands. At the same time he is letting them know that He has not forgotten them and will restore them to Himself.

Pray that God will make clear His voice in your life and that you will follow.

Dig Deeper: Isaiah 43:16-21

Day 40 – February 17 Clint Ritchie

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Tomorrow begins our revival services. I have one final thing to ask you to consider: How will you respond—or react—to hearing the Word of God preached during these services? There are several approaches we all take depending on the message and on our spiritual condition at the time. Here are some examples:

“Preach to ‘em brother!” This is when we assume the message is for someone else. And sometimes—for example, when we a Christian hears an evangelistic message—this could be the case. However, instead of observing the process with relief, we could listen to learn how we might be more effective in communicating those truths to others ourselves. Or we may know of someone who needs this word from God. We can humbly pray that God will bless their hearing of it. Generally however, this is not the case. There is something in most messages that we could all use. We should listen for it.

Fear and Resentment. This took place in the book of Acts when Stephen was martyred. As he died, he exclaimed how that he saw Jesus. “Then they screamed at the top of their voices, stopped their ears, and rushed together against him.” (Acts 7:57). Stephen had warned them earlier, “You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are always resisting the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:51). This is a most extreme example. However, there are milder, more typical forms of this. Sometimes, when the Bible is preached, some stop attending the services rather than face the message. Sometimes we take issue with parts of the message while approving of other parts. Sometimes, we divert attention from the message by critiquing the style of the messenger. All of these forms, however, keep us out from under the Word and slyly puts us over the Word. And we do this, because we fear the Word and the adjustments it might bring into our lives if we submit to its authority.

We can receive the Word. We can welcome the Word in We can receive the Word. to our hearts like a guest into ourhomes. The truth is our friend. God will not hurt us with the truth; He will help us. All of God’s plans for us are good plans. We can be like the people in the town of Berea. When Paul and Silas brought the Gospel to that town, the Bible tells us, “The people here were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, since they welcomed the message with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

God, give me ears to hear what You will say to me this week.