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A GREAT AWAKENING

EXPERIENCE

A SIX-WEEK GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

DEVELOPED BY

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A Nationwide Call For Spiritual Awakening



AS YOU BEGIN ...

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to experience a genuine, nationwide spiritual awakening? Something so Heaven-sent and earthly-accessible that it was life-changing for you and those around you? Something that was so visible that the world noticed? That transformed millions of lives and changed culture? That redeemed the next generation? A divine invasion in which you knew you were experiencing the very presence of God?

George Whitefield and Benjamin Franklin found themselves there. A mighty awakening began on American shores in the 1730s and continued in multiple waves for many years. Over 15% of the population was converted during these God-filled days. Whitefield, a young man in his early twenties, was mightily used of God in the rapid expansion of the Gospel across the Eastern Seaboard. Franklin, a skeptic and Deist, became Whitefield's dear friend. Although he gave no public display of spiritual conversion, he was deeply affected.

From an almost non-existent believer in prayer, there came a day when Franklin stood before the Continental Congress, calling them to begin a practice of prayer on each day of their deliberations.

"I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?"

AND NOW ...

Are such spiritual awakenings still possible? Are they needed? And, most importantly, is God inviting you into the next great awakening? Into more? More surrender, more faith, more prayer, more of His presence, and more usefulness for Him? What does a genuine spiritual awakening look like, and can we be personally involved in it? The following pages are a good beginning. The wonderful movie, *A Great Awakening*, is an accurate retelling of what happened during one season of awakening in American history. Now, you can take this six-week guide to help you experience spiritual awakening personally. You can use this individually or in a group as we unpack this simple definition of spiritual awakening.

"A Spiritual Awakening is a necessary, extraordinary movement of God, that is fueled by fervent prayer and courageous witness, resulting in genuine repentance and faith in Christ alone, that raises a new generation and accelerates the rapid advance of God's Kingdom, and begins with YOU!"

This study may be one of the most important pursuits of your life. But whatever you do these days, pursue Christ. Knowledge is not the goal, but experiencing Him is. Awakening is all about Him. “Look for Christ,” C. S. Lewis said, “and you will find Him, and with Him everything else.”

YOU MIGHT BEGIN WITH THIS SIMPLE PRAYER:

"Father, thank You for what you have done in the past. Thank You for loving those You've created and providing a way that we could experience more and more of You. Lord, would you work in my heart and the hearts and minds of those I love? Would You send a greater measure of revival among Your people and spiritual awakening for those who don't yet know You? And would you extend this movement across our nation, and even the world, to every tongue, and tribe, and nation, and people for Your glory and our good?"

[1] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (C. S. Lewis Pte. Ltd.: 1980) 226-227.

SIGHT & SOUND
FILMS

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A SIX-WEEK GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

By Robert O. Bakke and Bill Elliff

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A Spiritual Awakening is a necessary, extraordinary movement of God, that is fueled by fervent prayer and courageous witness, resulting in genuine repentance and faith in Christ alone, that raises a new generation and accelerates the rapid advance of God’s Kingdom, and begins with YOU!

SESSION 1



A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING IS A NECESSARY, EXTRAORDINARY MOVEMENT OF GOD

America was birthed in the midst of mighty spiritual awakenings. The story of the First Great Awakening is a reminder of God's supernatural movement and its dramatic effect on our nation.

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL AWAKENING?

God is moving all the time. We could not rise from our beds without His aid. The enduring progress of the church that Christ began is a testimony to His promise that He would build His church and “the gates of hell would not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

Along with the normative, daily work of the church to advance Christ’s kingdom, there is a periodic need for a fundamental reset, a supernatural work from heaven that revives the church and awakens the lost in larger numbers as God’s Spirit turns hearts of stone into hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). Such movements accelerate the work of God, reminding a nation of who God is and that it is impossible to have His favor without dependency upon Him. The First Great Awakening (1730-1750) came during a period of empty churches, “coarse sensuality,” natural disasters, and social unrest, yet 15% of the American population came to faith in Christ, dramatically affecting the moral and spiritual landscape of the nation. During the early 1800’s and beyond, there was a Second Great Awakening. Things were dramatically worse spiritually, socially, and economically. But extraordinary works of God during America’s infancy shaped what America was to become, by the grace and intervention of God. Historian Mark Knoll said that the Second Great Awakening had a greater impact on America than any season before or since. (2020 article from Modern Reformation: “New Rites, Old Stories)

The film, *A Great Awakening*, reflects the first of what many historians of the American church believe have been five nationwide awakenings. These movements seem to occur every 30-60 years, granting us a reset from heaven so we would not lose sight of our calling. Today, we are seeing a return to God once again.

Over the next six weeks, we want to discuss, using the Scriptures and aided by the film, what a Spiritual Awakening is, why it is so important, and how we can be involved in aggressively cooperating with God to see another awakening in our day. Remember our definition:

A Spiritual Awakening is a necessary, extraordinary movement of God, that is fueled by fervent prayer and courageous witness, resulting in genuine repentance and faith in Christ alone, that raises a new generation and accelerates the rapid advance of God’s Kingdom, and it begins with you.



WATCH THE FILM CLIP

Take a moment and *scan the QR code*. Watch the clip and meditate together on what was happening during the First Great Awakening.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Nehemiah lived in a day in which God's people had turned away from Him. Despite repeated warnings from God through His prophet, Jeremiah, they continually rebelled. Finally, God brought His judgment on them to bring them to repentance, and they were overtaken and enslaved by the nation of Babylon.

Years later, God used Ezra and Nehemiah to call the people back to Himself and lead them back to the Promised Land. When the walls around Jerusalem were miraculously rebuilt in 52 days, they set aside a time to call for a return to God.

Read Nehemiah 8:1-6 and 9:1-3. *(If you're in a group, read the text together and discuss.)*

When the whole nation of God's people gathered to listen to God through His Word, what was the response?



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In 1742, George Whitefield preached in Cambuslang, Scotland, to 30,000 people, leading to *a massive revival that shook most of Scotland*. "Nine years later [Rev. Wm.] McCulloch [pastor of the Cambuslang church] . . . assessed the movement he had witnessed, and wrote, 'This work embraced all classes, all ages and all moral conditions. Cursing, swearing, and drunkenness were given up by those who had come under its power. It kindled remorse for acts of injustice; it won forgiveness from the vengeful. It bound pastors and people together with a stronger bond of sympathy. It raised an altar in the household. It made men students of the Word of God and brought them in thought and purpose and effort into communion with their Father in heaven.

"True, there was chaff among the wheat, but the watchfulness of ministers detected it and quickly drove it away. And for long years afterwards, humble men and women who dated their conversion from the work at Cambuslang, walked among their neighbors with an unspotted Christian name, and then died peacefully in the arms of One they had learned in the revival days to call Lord and Savior." [1]



DISCUSS IT

1. Do you think we need an extraordinary spiritual movement in our nation? Why or why not?
2. What might a great awakening look like in your church? Your city? Your nation?
3. What signs do you see that God may be bringing such an awakening in America and around the world?
4. Our lack of biblical and historical information about past revivals often makes our faith small and our prayers weak. Do you believe God could send an awakening that affects us nationwide?
5. How could you begin to strengthen your faith and increase your prayers for such a movement?



PRAY IT IN

Spend time individually or in your group in prayer each week. Here are some prayer points that could guide you, but also ask God for His God-initiated prayers to pray. Listen to His Spirit and cry out to Him. He is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God!

1. Give thanks for the Spiritual Awakenings that have happened in our history.
2. Pray that what happened in Nehemiah's day would happen in ours (*be specific*).
3. Pray that what happened in the First Great Awakening, in Whitefield's day, would happen in ours (*be specific*).
4. Pray that God would do something that would lead to revival and awakening in your small group in the next six weeks.
5. Ask God to begin this work in you.



LIVE IT OUT

Would you pray each day next week for spiritual awakening? *Take one of the prayer points above and pray it specifically each day.*

SESSION 2



A Spiritual Awakening is a necessary, extraordinary movement of God . . .

THAT IS FUELED BY FERVENT PRAYER AND COURAGEOUS WITNESS

There is a beautiful, divine-human cooperation that occurs when God intends to bring a great awakening. It is not something brought merely by man's activities; God uses people in His movements. We must cooperate with Him.

A revival is not the Church deciding to do something and then doing it. It is something that is done to the Church, something that happens to the Church.

— Martyn Lloyd-Jones

True revival is the merciful and sovereign work of God calling His people back to Himself. It is the call that Christ brought to the churches in Revelation 1-3. Without His initiation and aid, we would never see a spiritual awakening in a life, a church, or a nation. It is a sovereign work from a gracious Father to renew His Bride and use her again in His great mission to bring the lost into His kingdom.

As God moves, revival also demands the aggressive cooperation of humble, obedient men and women. God moves through people first to pray, then to speak, lead, write, plan, and to witness—and to do each courageously. We saw this in the film as Whitefield faced hostilities from mobs. Aristotle is credited with saying: "*Courage is the first of human virtues because it is the quality which guarantees all the others.*" Aristotle observed what God has commanded: "Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9). And Paul echoes the same to the church at Corinth: "Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13 NRSV).

As God calls His people to return to Him, their response is all-important. To fail to respond is to quench the Spirit and hinder His work. God uses people as His hands, feet, and voice—*His Body*—to accomplish His reviving and awakening work.

And in movements of the Spirit, the first thing that happens and which eventually leads to a great revival is that one man or a group of men suddenly begin to feel this burden, and they feel the burden so much that they are led to do something about it.

— Martyn Lloyd-Jones



WATCH THE FILM CLIP

Take a moment and *scan the QR code*. Watch the clip and meditate together on what was happening during the First Great Awakening.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

In Nehemiah's day, the wall around Jerusalem was miraculously restored in 52 days because "the people had a mind to work" and had the leadership of a godly, praying servant. But after the physical restoration, more was needed—a spiritual revival to restore the nation's biblical and moral foundations.

Read Nehemiah 8:1-11.

BOLD PROCLAMATION

The people gathered to hear the proclamation of the Word of God. A pulpit was built (just as you noticed George Whitefield doing in the movie), and Ezra stood and boldly proclaimed the truth. The Bible is like "a hammer that pulverizes rock" (Jeremiah 23:29). The people's hearts were broken because they realized how deeply they had violated God's Word. What should they do?

God has had voices in every great awakening, unashamedly proclaiming the truth. When hearts are broken and desperate, His Word cuts like a two-edged sword, helping to separate the soulish from the spiritual, and discerning the very thoughts and intents of our hearts (Hebrews 4:12).

God has a way of raising up bold proclaimers who will share the Gospel everywhere as it is needed. And He's doing it right now. All around us, we are seeing hearts that are open to hear God's Word and those who are bold to proclaim it.

FERVENT UNITED PRAYER

There has never been a spiritual awakening in any country or locality that did not begin in united prayer.

— A. T. Pierson

Read Nehemiah 9:1-3.

Nehemiah and all the leaders called for a solemn assembly . . . a day of fervent, united prayer. On this day, they turned their full attention to the Lord in humble confession, unceasing prayer, and unashamed worship. Chapter 9 is one long prayer. True to His merciful nature and faithful promises, God heard and answered their cry and brought a nationwide awakening, one of the greatest in Israel's history.

Every spiritual awakening in history began with God calling His people to united prayer. Desperation begins to grow about the condition of the church and the nation. As hearts are burdened, people begin to ask God what they can do and to spend more time in both private and corporate prayer, turning to the only One who can help them. And then the God who mercifully initiated the prayer mercifully answers.



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

*After watching the film, **A Great Awakening***, you might believe that courageous young men like Whitefield and Wesley simply appeared out of nowhere, preaching to great effect. But there's more to the story. For over 100 years, "prayer societies" had been popping up all over Great Britain. They were groups that knew that the Church of England was spiritually dead and in need of a new work of God. Prior to Whitefield's debut, there were "multitudes of these meetings, both young men and elder persons in London." Some met every week; others met every two weeks.

They were found everywhere in England—London, Oxford, Cambridge, and many other places—because the need was everywhere. These prayer societies also spread throughout Scotland. By the end of the 17th century, every social class was involved, and by Whitefield's day, they were flourishing because the need was so great. These prayer meetings were the impetus to a massive and historically transformational revival in Cambuslang, Scotland, where Whitefield preached to **30,000 people** (in a city of 2,000) for what turned out to be the largest communion service in Scottish history.

This happened amid national devastation across Scotland. Because of the great need, a modest Cambuslang pastor, William McCullough, mobilized his church to pray for months prior to Whitefield's arrival. When a wave of prayer is unleashed on bold witnesses, history is made. Thirteen years before Cambuslang, another prayer meeting among Moravians in Herrnhut, Germany, produced a revival that sent out the first modern missionaries. The Moravian prayer meeting lasted 100 years, 24 hours a day, and the Gospel spread to the nations. Ever since Pentecost, prayer and courageous witness have gone hand in glove.



DISCUSS IT

1. Have you sensed a rise in desperation across our nation? Why are people so desperate?
2. What signs are you seeing that God is calling people, particularly students, into united prayer for revival and awakening?
3. Do you feel this rising need for intercession in your own heart? What are the next steps for you in prayer?
4. Have you noticed a greater boldness in witness and proclamation in our nation and a greater openness to the Gospel? When Jesus promises to never leave you or forsake you, does this give you courage to witness?
5. What is happening as the Word of God is being proclaimed so courageously?
6. How might God be calling you into a greater witness for Him? What's your next step?



PRAY IT IN

Would you spend time praying with your group about the following needs?

1. Pray that God would make you a powerful, faithful intercessor for the next great awakening.
2. Ask God to pour out a “Spirit of grace and prayer” to raise up a prayer movement (*Zechariah 12:10; see also Ephesians 6:18*).
3. Spend time with others, like the people in Nehemiah, in humble confession. How have we sinned against God? Of what do we need to repent? Of what do you need to repent? How can we intercede?
4. Would you ask God to make you courageous in your speech with others? You don't have to be George Whitefield, just a witness—someone who shares what they know and have experienced. Pray Paul's prayer: "Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel." (*Ephesians 6:19*).



LIVE IT OUT

Ask God to make you an instrument of revival and awakening this week. As you encounter people, pray for them. And then, ask God to “open your mouth with boldness”, that you would share the Gospel with them. Try to share a genuine, sincere word with them about Christ.

Share with the group next week the opportunities you’ve had. Be honest about your courage and your fears, your successes and failures, and help one another. You might be surprised how God will use you!

SESSION 3



*A Spiritual Awakening is a necessary, extraordinary movement of God,
that is fueled by fervent prayer and courageous witness . . .*

RESULTING IN GENUINE REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN CHRIST ALONE

People wander. Confronted by the constant temptations of the world and its philosophies, the flesh (*our humanity*) and its weakness, and the devil and his powerful temptations, we are easily distracted and pulled from the path God planned for us. The only remedy for this is the gracious work of God that brings us to two needed responses: repentance and faith.

Repentance is a change of mind. God can bring a spiritual change in our thinking and our desires that is so profound, it leads to a change of direction. While we were once living only for ourselves, God helps us see the foolishness of a self-absorbed life and makes us long for a new life. Worldly goals that we once thought all-important become meaningless. Worldly gods seem useless.

If we try to produce this change ourselves, we will soon realize that such a transformation is impossible without Christ. We must depend upon Him to provide what we cannot. And so, we turn to Him in faith, trusting in His death and resurrection on our behalf, and His promise to save us if we will believe.

Faith is dependency. It is fueled by acknowledging our need and admitting our sin. Jesus said that this poverty of spirit is the way of entrance into His kingdom (Matthew 5:3). We must come to Him with repentance and faith initially (*this is spiritual awakening*), but even after we become believers, there is often a need for a return to intimacy with Him when we are pulled away by the deceitfulness of sin. This return is revival.

Our definition of spiritual awakening is that it is a “necessary” movement of God. It is made necessary because of the continual pull away from Him. There are seasons when we are walking with Christ and then other seasons when we have fallen away. This can be true both individually and collectively in the church. We must come to Christ initially in salvation, but we are also called to return to Him as believers when we have wandered away.

Seasons of widespread revival and awakening are not marked by mere programs or plans, but by a mighty movement of repentance and faith in Christ alone.



WATCH THE FILM CLIP

Take a moment and *scan the QR code*. Watch the clip and meditate together on what was happening during the First Great Awakening.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

In the national awakening and revival recorded in Nehemiah 8, we see the bold proclamation that produced genuine repentance.

Read Nehemiah 8:1-11.

As a result of being confronted with the truth, God's people began to weep and mourn and grieve. They realized how far short they had fallen, how deeply they had sinned. Such mourning is essential. This mourning is the result of repentance.

When God was calling His people back to Himself in James 4, He commanded them to mourn.

You adulterous people! Don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes the enemy of God. Or do you think it's without reason that the Scripture says: The spirit he made to dwell in us envies intensely?

But he gives greater grace. Therefore he says: God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

*Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.** – James 4:4–10*

Look at the progression in the Beatitudes as Jesus told us how to enter the kingdom. We must have a poverty of spirit (a true recognition of our spiritual need) so much so that we mourn (Matthew 5:3-4). This mourning over

our condition then makes us willing to come into dependency upon Christ to let Him rule our lives. This leads to meekness (Matthew 5:5), which G. Campbell Morgan said is a “willingness to be governed by another.” It could be expressed by the sentiments of this prayer:

*“O Lord, I see my sin and my desperate need for You.
It has broken my heart, and I have come to the end of myself.
And now, dear Savior, RULE ME!”*

Repentance (a genuine change of mind about our sin and need) and faith (a genuine dependency upon Christ to do what only He can do) are the two wings upon which spiritual awakening rises. Repentance and faith are the initial response of all who come to salvation, but they are also the continued responses that keep us in humble intimacy with Christ, that help us abide in Him.

If you have never come to Christ initially in repentance and faith, you can do that right now. Pause and cry out to God for His cleansing and salvation. You may want to express your heart with the simple prayer that is listed above.



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Jonathan Edwards was a pastor in Northampton, Massachusetts, a town of about 1,100 people. He became the first president of Princeton University. In 1736, Edwards wrote that, in 1734, after a period of spiritual coldness and immorality in the town, God began a remarkable awakening.

As Edwards preached on justification by faith and the necessity of personal conversion to Christ, God’s Spirit began to move: “very suddenly, one after another, five or six persons who were to all appearances savingly converted . . . and some of them wrought upon in a very remarkable manner . . . Their joyful surprise has caused their hearts as it were to leap so that they have been ready to break forth into laughter and tears often at the same time issuing like a flood, and intermingling a loud weeping.” The Spirit’s work intensified in early 1735, affecting nearly every household in the town.

Edwards describes the effect: “[Northampton] was never so full of love nor of joy . . . It was a time of joy in families on account of salvation being brought unto them; parents rejoicing over their children as new born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands . . . God’s day was a delight . . . our public assemblies beautiful; congregations alive in God’s service . . . from time to time in tears while the Word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors.”[2]



DISCUSS IT

1. In your own words, explain what repentance is and why it is so necessary.
2. What tends to pull you away from nearness to Christ?
3. As Christians, we can sometimes live independent, self-focused lives. When this happens, what steps do we need to take?
4. If you are a follower of Christ, share what happened that initially brought you to repentance and faith. What led to your salvation?
5. If you are a believer, share about a time when you needed personal revival and spiritual renewal, and what happened. How did you cooperate with God to see that happen?



PRAY IT IN

Pray together for . . .

1. A deep repentance to occur in your life and the life of your group.
2. A wave of repentance to descend upon the people of our nation that would make us mourn over our sin and long for a change.
3. The gift of faith. For God to help millions of people believe in Him and turn to Him to save them. That there would not be “false conversions” as people merely try to “do better,” but such a brokenness that people would cry out in humble faith for Christ to save them, and then have great joy that the grace of God has embraced them.
4. Spiritual awakening among lost church members and repentance among believers who have “left their first love” (*Revelation 2:4; ESV*).



LIVE IT OUT

On a sheet of paper, write the words “Repentance and Faith Worksheet” at the top and then pray the prayer of David in Psalm 139:23-24:

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.

Make a list of anything in your life that God brings to mind that is sinful, anything that may be displeasing to Him. Take a deliberate, prayerful time to deal with everything fully. (Things become clearer when we write them down.) Circle any items that involve others and determine, at your earliest opportunity, to go and clear your conscience with anyone you have wronged, just as Paul did (Acts 24:16) and as Christ instructed (Matthew 5:23-24). Seek to take the “roof off and the walls down,” nothing between you and God (roof), and nothing between you and others (walls).

SESSION 4



*A Spiritual Awakening is a necessary, extraordinary movement of God,
that is fueled by fervent prayer and courageous witness,
resulting in genuine repentance and faith in Christ alone . . .*

THAT RAISES A NEW GENERATION

A "**generation**" describes a group of people who live at roughly the same time (i.e., the "younger" or "older" generation). The time span described by that term is generally 40 years. Generations change. In fact, it is the common human experience that generational and cultural trends swing like a pendulum, pushing the edges of human behavior.

The history of the Israelites in the Old Testament records this reality. One generation would have a godly king leading the people to pursue the Lord; the next would lead in the opposite direction. These generational swings emphasize the constant need in every generation for the "necessary, extraordinary movement of God" that revives the church, awakens the lost, and raises up the next leaders to advance the kingdom of God.

It is fascinating and noteworthy that God has graciously sent a nationwide spiritual awakening in America every 30-60 years. Each of these movements has helped to bring the church back to vibrancy and effectiveness and has developed a new generation of spiritual leaders.

While these dates cannot be exact, notice the trend in God's extraordinary movements in American history approximately every 40 years.

- **1730-1750** – First Great Awakening
- **1800-1820** – Second Great Awakening
- **1857-1858** – Prayer Revival
- **1904-1920** – Welsh and American Revival
- **1969-1975** – Jesus Movement

NEW WINESKINS

It's also consistently true that new generations adopt new methods. New music, new dress, new cultural expressions are common. Biblical truth and principles must never change, but methods can and often should. Each new generation must find and utilize new expressions that reach its contemporaries.

Jesus confronted this in His day. As He returned the people to “simple, pure devotion” to Him, the rigid traditionalism of the religious Pharisees was forsaken. He said, “New wine must be put in fresh wineskins” (*Luke 5:38*).

Seasons of great, nationwide spiritual awakenings almost always call for fresh wineskins. Whitefield took to open-air preaching after being rejected by church leaders. The *1857-58 Prayer Revival* exploded through noonday prayer meetings, led almost exclusively by laypeople, and was carried by non-stop worship services, profound testimonies, and rapid obedience. The Jesus Movement adopted worship music utilizing the styles of their day.

Most importantly, these new forms and methods for the movement of God must not change the truths of God's Word or the purposes of God, but simply unleash them. To be sure, there are always excesses and errors, but an openness to God's fresh expressions to reach the next generation and an openness to the new, young leaders God is raising up (the “Davids” to follow the “King Sauls”) is necessary.

Spiritual awakenings are not just for the young by any means. But the great hope is to capture the young who will lead the work of Christ for the next 40 years. And the great need for the older generation is to applaud, mentor, and unleash new leaders so the work of God continues.



WATCH THE FILM CLIP

Take a moment and *scan the QR code*. Watch the clip and meditate together on what was happening during the First Great Awakening.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

When Ezra and Nehemiah called the whole nation to unite in a solemn assembly, it was not just the older adults. Young and old came, repented, and signed a fresh covenant with God.

“The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, 29 join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and his rules and his statutes. – Nehemiah 10:28-29

Read aloud together the following passages. What do they tell us about the next generation?

Deuteronomy 11:19; 31:12-13; 32:7

Judges 2:10

1 Chronicles 15:16

Psalms 22:30-31; 44:1; 48:13; 145:4

Joel 1:3



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Tonya Prewett is a mother and the wife of former Auburn University assistant basketball coach Chad Prewett. In 2023, after nearly dying in a hospital bed, Tonya surrendered to God and offered to do whatever He asked of her. Having been healed, she began mentoring Auburn students. Her broken heart for students inspired prayer-walks around Auburn's campus. Little by little, students joined her until her prayer group numbered 200.

The Lord led her to dream of Auburn's basketball arena filled with students encountering Jesus. She had never done anything like it before, but she was compelled to act. Tonya's small team secured the basketball arena, not knowing if anyone would show up. Amazingly, 5,000 came, and God's Spirit filled the arena. That night was a call to repentance. Students saw their own sin and need for the grace of Jesus. The evening ended after midnight with thousands responding to the Gospel and hundreds baptized in a nearby lake lit by the headlights of a hundred cars. It was a scene of great joy. It wasn't long afterwards that the Lord woke Tonya in the night and told her to quickly form a team and go to other campuses because His Spirit was moving. "I am no prophet, but I do feel like God has shown me that this will be called *the greater awakening*," she said.

Tonya organized the *UniteUs* movement and, in 2023-2025, has held meetings on 20 major college campuses, with 120,000 attending, 18,000 decisions for Christ, and many thousands of baptisms – and they are praying for many more to come! They are discovering 18–25-year-olds who are desperate for Jesus. When they hear the call of God, they stand ready to leave their lives behind and follow Christ. These numbers correspond with the Spirit of God moving throughout American students.

Tonya started with surrender. Like Nehemiah, she and others devoted themselves to prayer. And they are now seeing students transformed by the proclamation of the Gospel. They have built an army of young leaders who believe in the impossible, anchored in prayer and the Word. It has happened quickly.

Barna Research notes that a revival movement has emerged since 2023. Those coming to genuine faith in Christ have quadrupled among 18–25-year-olds, and they are now the largest demographic in church on Sundays. They are also the first generation on record that is more devoted to God than their parents.

*(Tonya’s story can be found in her new book, *Roses to Revival*.)*



DISCUSS IT

1. Why is it always necessary to see the next generation revived by Christ and raised up to lead? What would happen if such a movement didn’t happen among the next generation?
2. What evidence are we seeing that God is igniting a fire of spiritual awakening among the young?
3. What could older believers do that might hinder the growth of spiritual awakening among the next generation?
4. What could older believers do that might accelerate the growth of spiritual awakening among the next generation? What practical steps could you take?
5. Discuss the balance needed of the wisdom of the current generation, coupled with and fueled by the energy of the next generation. What is your part in this?
6. What are some of the forms and structures, the “wineskins” that God might use or is using to ignite spiritual awakening among students? How should we evaluate and respond to them?



PRAY IT IN

Pray together for . . .

1. For a mighty spiritual awakening among the next generation.
2. That God would raise up young leaders who would courageously lead and boldly proclaim.
3. That God would give young leaders wisdom to rely upon older mentors to help them.
4. That older believers would not be afraid of the next generation but would pray for them, help and disciple them, and give them room to lead.
5. That God would protect all of us, and particularly the young, from the deceptive influences of the Evil One.
6. That God would help maintain biblical truth in the midst of awakening and make error very evident.



LIVE IT OUT

If you're **OLDER . . .**

ask God to show you who you are to pray for, invest in, and mentor to help raise up the next generation.

If you are **YOUNGER . . .**

ask God to give you mentors to help you. Approach them and humbly ask for their help.

SESSION 5



A Spiritual Awakening is a necessary, extraordinary movement of God, that is fueled by fervent prayer and courageous witness, resulting in genuine repentance and faith in Christ alone, that raises a new generation . . .

AND ACCELERATES THE ADVANCE OF GOD'S KINGDOM!

Do you long to see the kingdom of God advance at a mind-boggling pace? Do you desire a mighty army of young men and women to be called out and formed into a mighty, worldwide army to reach every tongue, tribe, people, and nation for Christ? Would you like to see God's great mission accomplished so that the end would come? Then you must pray for spiritual awakening and aggressively cooperate with God.

Every great missionary advance in history has come on the heels of spiritual awakening. In fact, that is God's endgame in such movements. He desires to bring us back to nearness to Him, so our hearts begin to beat in unison with His. And His heart's desire is to seek and save the lost . . . to advance the Gospel to every nation, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that He has commanded (*Matthew 28:18-20*).

Genuine spiritual awakening always leads to the acceleration of the missionary purposes of God.



WATCH THE FILM CLIP

Take a moment and *scan the QR code*. Watch the clip and meditate together on what was happening during the First Great Awakening.





BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Read Acts 1:8, 2:1-12; 4:31; 13:1-5.

If you want to understand the purpose of seasons of spiritual awakening, read the book of Acts. Christ had manifested Himself in the greatest display the world has ever seen. He promised, as He left the earth physically, that He would send His Spirit to be with us and in us so that we could accomplish His great mission outlined in Acts 1:8. When Pentecost came, and the Spirit was poured out on those fledgling believers, the church was set ablaze with passion for lost people and empowered for the task. They were “all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness” (*Acts 4:31*).

In those first days, thousands were saved, then tens of thousands. Historical estimates suggest that the church in Jerusalem grew to over 50,000 people in a very short period. In the heat of this spiritual awakening, the Gospel advanced to other nations and continents. The only hindrance to the Gospel’s advance in the next decades occurred when believers’ hearts grew cold, and their lives became selfish. When our eyes move from Christ to the world, and we become enamored with “the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life” (1 John 2:16), we pull away from Christ, our affections waver, our vision is clouded, and our missionary passion dies.

Again, as we have seen, spiritual awakening is the “necessary, extraordinary movement of God” that brings us back to Christ. Without these periodic invasions, we drift back into our own selfish purposes and lose God’s passion. He graciously sends revival and awakening to bring us back to Him and to His eternal purposes.



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Williams College, in northeast Massachusetts, was founded in 1793 with 20 students. In the summer of 1806, in the wake of a glorious work of God’s Spirit that was sweeping the newly born nation (the Second Great Awakening), five Williams students met in a grove of trees near the Hoosack River, then known as Sloan’s Meadow. Their hearts were aflame with the love of Christ, and they were wrestling with the question of how to advance Christ’s kingdom. Such missionary service, apart from the work of the Moravians and a few others, was merely a novel concept.

They met in the field in secret because of the campus’s antipathy toward Christianity. Their meeting in the hayfield was suddenly interrupted by a thunderstorm. The students—Samuel Mills, James Richards, Francis L. Robbins, Harry Loomis, and Byram Green—found shelter under a haystack. “The brevity of the shower, the strangeness of the place of refuge, and the peculiarity of their topic of prayer and conference all took hold of their imaginations and their memories.” God invaded the haystack, inflaming their hearts with passion and vision. This signaled the beginning of the modern missions movement in America. It is known today as the Haystack Prayer Revival, and there is a monument to these five students on the Williams College campus.

The Haystack Prayer group grew and took the name "The Brethren." These students organized themselves around a global vision. In 1812, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was founded, sending its first missionaries to the Indian subcontinent, while Samuel Mills led the foundation of the American Bible Society and the United Foreign Missionary Society. What God did by His Spirit in an hour under a haystack impacted the world.



DISCUSS IT

1. Why do you think we are hearing of hundreds and thousands of students gathering, hearing the Gospel, coming to Christ, and being baptized right now? What does this indicate?
2. Many are describing some of the greatest openness to the Gospel that they have seen in their lifetime across the nation and around the world. To what can this be attributed? And what is God's agenda? How should we cooperate with this?
3. One of the largest denominations in America recently reported a 400% increase in missionary applications. Why do you think we are seeing more people seeking to go to the mission fields? How could we, as individuals and churches, personally cooperate to accelerate this?
4. Proverbs 10:5 says this: "He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame." What does this say to us about our responsibility right now? If this is a time of harvest, how can we engage practically to maximize the season for God's glory?



PRAY IT IN

Would you pray for the following today and this week?

1. That God would send such a spiritual awakening that our hearts would be filled with an unceasing burden for those without Christ. Pray what one man calls the B.O.B prayer: Burden for the lost, Opportunities to witness, and Boldness to speak courageously.
2. That our physical and financial resources, so freely given to us by God, would be unleashed in a flood of missionary work.

3. That God would give churches and missionary agencies extraordinary wisdom and God-initiated strategies (new wineskins) to advance the Gospel rapidly.
4. That a mighty army in the next generation would rise with utter abandonment and surrender to fulfill the Great Commission and finish the task.
5. That people would be unusually hungry for and open to the news of the Gospel.
6. That a great harvest would occur among those without Christ, both in our country and around the world. That God would particularly give a harvest in the 10/40 geographical window (the least-reached part of our world).
7. That this window of missionary advance would remain open until the job is done!

LIVE IT OUT

Ask God to show you and your group how you can be used to more rapidly advance the Gospel. Begin at home, but then think deeply about the world. *Perhaps you could begin by . . .*

- Sharing every week about the gospel conversations God is giving you.
- Adopting an unreached people group or nation in prayer and partnership.
- Going on a short-term mission trip, individually or as a group.
- Helping your pastor and church strategize together about more rapid mobilization.

SESSION 6



A Spiritual Awakening is a necessary, extraordinary movement of God, that is fueled by fervent prayer and courageous witness, resulting in genuine repentance and faith in Christ alone, that raises a new generation and accelerates the advance of God's Kingdom . . .

AND BEGINS WITH YOU!

God uses men and women, as imperfect as we are, to accomplish His work on earth. It is true in individuals and countries, and it is certainly true in the rise of nationwide spiritual awakenings. Our national history is filled with courageous patriots who lived and died for freedom. George Washington and Benjamin Franklin are portrayed in the film *“A Great Awakening”* as they played vital roles in the establishment of our nation. They, perhaps, had no idea how significantly their decisions and work would affect generations.

In the five nationwide spiritual awakenings that have occurred in America, we see many people whom God used mightily. Many of these, like Whitefield, were in their twenties.

But besides many prominent public figures, God has used hundreds of thousands of ordinary men and women to stir the fires of revival in their churches and cities. Only heaven records the thousands of prayer warriors, high school and college students, faithful pastors, moms and dads, and ministry leaders who have been used by God. As He used them *then*, He could use you *now!* God is always looking for men and women who can ignite the fires of revival. He doesn't need great ability, but humble availability. God loves to take the most unsuspecting people to be instruments to start His movements. *People like you!*



WATCH THE FILM CLIP

Take a moment and *scan the QR code*. Watch the clip and meditate together on what was happening during the First Great Awakening.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

The Israelites had been conquered and taken into captivity by the Babylonians. Nehemiah was a common slave, but through the providence of God, he became the cupbearer to the king. An important task, but still a servant. While in slavery, he asked his brother about the condition of their homeland. The description broke his heart.

Read Nehemiah 1:1-4.

What would you have done in this situation? Shrugged your shoulders? Talked to your friends? Complained about the government?

Nehemiah, like any man, had his options of how to respond to the desperate needs around him. But he turned to God in humble, desperate fasting and prayer. He chose to do that which brought God into the equation, leading to a nationwide awakening. Notice what he did in response to the spiritual needs around him. This response, recorded in Nehemiah 1, happened over four months.

Read Nehemiah 1:4-2:8 and discuss.



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Charles Finney was one of the most important figures in 19th-century America. He witnessed hundreds of revivals and saw thousands come to Christ. But, in 1821, he was an unexceptional 29-year-old small-town lawyer who, while studying the Bible, was led to a deep conviction about his own sinfulness. He determined to settle the question of his soul's salvation. On a Sunday evening in October 1821, this young lawyer resolved to make peace with God or die trying.

Finney turned toward a wooded area north of his village. He needed to be completely alone so he could pour out his heart to God in prayer. While climbing a hill through brush for about a quarter of a mile, he recalled repeating aloud as he went: "I will give my heart to God, or I will never come down from there." He found a spot where large fallen trees crossed each other, creating a small open space like a natural "closet." He crept into this place, knelt down, and began to pray, *determined to surrender fully or not return.*

Finney struggled intensely, wrestling in prayer until the breakthrough came. He experienced a profound sense of the finished work of Christ's atonement, realizing he needed no righteousness of his own but simply to accept God's offer through Christ by giving up his sins. Overwhelming waves of peace, joy, and what he later described as "liquid love" rolled over and through him, causing him to weep aloud with joy. It was God's Spirit.

In a moment, a skeptical young lawyer was transformed into a fervent believer. Because of empty churches, dispirited Christians, and godlessness in the American frontier, Finney was soon compelled to leave his legal career and fearlessly share the Gospel. His listeners often remarked that hearing him preach was like a courtroom prosecution. He went on to become one of the most influential evangelists of the Second Great Awakening. Also, like an Old Testament prophet, he was a strong voice calling Americans to abolish slavery.



DISCUSS IT

1. How did God change Nehemiah's heart? Describe in your own words what Nehemiah saw and felt about the condition of his people and land. What did Nehemiah do that changed everything?
2. In Nehemiah 1:11, Nehemiah asks God to give him favor as he approaches the king. The king had the authority to kill Nehemiah as he approached him with such a request. What do you think Nehemiah thought about as he offered himself as an advocate for his people?
3. What parallels do you see between our nation today and Nehemiah's day or Whitefield's day?
4. One man said, "Movements begin by not moving!" Nehemiah began by looking inward and confessing his sin and the sins of his fathers. What could you do to start like that?
5. As we see what is happening in our nation, should we sit back and complain, or is there something we are being called to do in response? How can we personally cooperate with God in His movement among us? What is our next step?
6. Whitefield wanted to act. Finney was a lawyer. Peter and Andrew were fishermen. An encounter with Jesus changed their futures. Is He free to change yours?



PRAY IT IN

Spend some time in prayer, either individually or in your group.

1. Thank God for the ways in which He is bringing us back to desperation and prayer.
2. Pray that God would revive your church and the churches in your city and nation.
3. Pray for a movement of brokenness and repentance over our personal and corporate sin. (Use Nehemiah's prayer in Nehemiah 1 as your guide.)
4. Pray for a rising tide of united prayer that begins in your own heart.
5. Ask God what part you're to play in the coming awakening (in your home, your work, your church, your school, your city, and nation). Ask Him to do whatever is necessary to make you usable at all times for spiritual awakening.



LIVE IT OUT

Take a sheet of paper and write these words at the top:

“MY ROLE IN THE NEXT GREAT AWAKENING.”

Ask God every day this week to help you see what should go on that page. It could be multiple things. Write them down daily and then, by God's grace and the aid of His Spirit, live it out!

AND NOW . . .

Thanks so much for your study of *A GREAT AWAKENING*. Please encourage others to see the film and participate in the study. You can become a lifelong student of revival and spiritual awakening, for there is always a great need. Join millions of others who are regularly praying for revival and cooperate aggressively with God as He prompts.

For further reading on spiritual awakening, consider these resources:

OneCry: A Nationwide Call for Spiritual Awakening by Byron Paulus and Bill Elliff

The Power of Extraordinary Prayer by Robert O. Bakke

Reflections on Spiritual Awakening by Bill Elliff

[1] Dallimore: Life and Times of George Whitefield, Vol. 2, Crossway Books, Westchester, Illinois, 1980, p. 136.

[2] George Whitefield, Arnold Dallimore, Crossway Books, Westchester, Illinois, Vol. 1, p. 426.

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