

YOUTH AWAKENING! THE CATALYST FOR REVIVAL

As we see the greatest need America has ever had for a fresh move of God, one of our greatest resources that God, in His wisdom has chosen as the harbinger for revival, i.e., the youth, is being ignored. As we study the history of revival, we see the roots of revival almost always go back to a time of renewal among the youth. Modern day surveys indicate that up to 85 percent of all people who get saved are converted before age 30, and most before age 25. In my experience it is almost always the young people, especially those in their teens, who surrender to full time Christian service. One preacher described young people as “kindling” which helps set fire to “old logs.”

It may well be said, there would have never been the greatness of America had she not been birthed in the labor of revival. Jonathan Edwards wrote these words in 1743 about the Great Awakening that shook England and America:

“In the year 1740, in the spring, before Mr. Whitefield came to this town, there was a visible alteration. There was more seriousness and religious conversation, especially among young people; those things that were of ill tendency among them were more forborne. And it was a more frequent thing for persons to visit their minister upon soul accounts; and in some particular persons there appeared a great alteration about that time. And thus it continued till Mr. Whitefield came to town, which was about the middle of October following. He preached here four sermons in the meeting-house (besides a private lecture at my house)-one on Friday, another on Saturday, and two upon the Sabbath. The congregation was extraordinarily melted by every sermon; almost the whole assembly being in tears for a great part of sermon time. Mr. Whitefield's sermons were suitable to the circumstances of the town, containing just reproofs of our backslidings, and, in a most moving and affecting manner, making use of our great profession and great mercies as arguments with us to return to God, from whom we had departed.”

In 1795 Timothy Dwight, the grandson of Jonathan Edwards was elected to the presidency of Yale University. Yale had departed from the earlier awakening and needed revival. Christianity Today records, “Early in the spring of 1802 two students were overwhelmed with conviction of their sins. In a short period they came to faith in Christ and assurance of forgiveness. After making a public profession of their faith, they joined the college church. This made a large impact on the other students. In the ten days before vacation, fifty young men declared themselves to be eager to find salvation. Wherever the students gathered, in their rooms, at meals, and around New Haven, the great subject of conversation was eternal salvation. Many feared that when the students left for spring vacation, the revival

might cease. Instead the reverse occurred. The students carried home with them news of Yale's turnabout, and the impulse spread. When they returned after the summer, more offered their lives to God. Dwight witnessed the conversions of 80 out of the total enrollment of 160 students. A new awakening came in April 1808 which was almost as powerful as that of 1802, and succeeding revivals came to the students in 1813 and 1815. These awakenings marked only the beginning of a movement which swept Connecticut."

Ultimately the entire country was bathed in revivals of all sorts from camp meetings to protracted meetings, from the urban centers to the most remote parts of the American wilderness. The revival culture lasted until the outset of the American Civil War. The culmination of this revival was given a fresh wind in the 1859 Prayer Revival under the burden of Jeremiah Lampier. And after the Civil War evangelists such as Dwight L. Moody in the North and Sam P. Jones in the South were used of God to carry the torch once again. And they later handed it off to evangelists such as Wilbur Chapman, Billy Sunday, Bob Jones, Sr. and Morecai Ham. And to think this one hundred year legacy was kindled by the youth at Yale!

The great Welsh Revival began in 1904 when Evan Roberts, at the age of 26, said to his college principal, "I keep hearing a voice that tells me I must go home to speak to our young people in my home church." The Lord used young Roberts as the igniting point that began a sweeping revival in which 100,000 people were converted in five months throughout Wales. Roberts said, "The revival seems to work especially among young people. Its form, which is that of prayer, praise and personal testimony, and its absence of method make it the most methodical expression of the emotions of young hearts aflame with the love of God."

The great Hebrides Revival that affected the outlying islands of Scotland was nothing less than phenomenal. It started in a barn prayer meeting. It was reported that during that prayer meeting there was a literal shaking of the ground as though an earthquake had come. The passage of Scripture being claimed was Isaiah 64:1: "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence." The "shaking" was so real and understood by all that God was visiting the island of Lewis, that immediately a youth dance was broken up and turned into a revival. Conversions began to take place spontaneously. The revival lasted from 1949 to 1952. It is estimated that the entire population of accountable souls on the isle of Lewis got saved!

In the 1940s in America, a new movement among young people called "Youth For Christ" was born. They attracted tens of thousands of high schoolers for their rallies. God used Jack Wyrzten in New York and Torrey Johnson, a Baptist pastor in Chicago to become the spearheads of the movement. Johnson became the first president of YFC and they brought in a young evangelist from North Carolina who was finishing up his schooling at Wheaton College named Billy

Graham to become the first full-time evangelist for Youth For Christ. This spiritual team effort that began with youth was really the beginning of one of the greatest moves of God in the Twentieth Century. From this came the mass revival crusades and the rebirth of personal soul winning, which was the fuel on the fire of the renewal of the great Sunday School movement of the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

In every generation, God has been faithful to bring revival to His people and spiritual awakening to churches and nations. In almost all cases, those movements of the Spirit were most evident among young people. We are praying a special prayer for our people and especially the youth this weekend. Brother Caleb Garraway is our evangelist for our Weeekend Revival here at Christchurch Baptist Fellowship. Let's pray for an old-fashioned, Holy Ghost, heart-felt, Jesus loving, Devil fighting, sin-ridding, righteousness-bringing revival. And this, by the way, is the ONLY way to make America great again! And it is God alone who shall receive all glory and praise. "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake" (Psalm 115:1).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.