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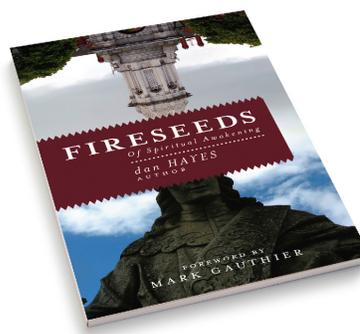
FIVE PREREQUISITES TO CAMPUS REVIVAL

FIRESEEDS OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING CHAPTER EXCERPT

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FIRESEEDS OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

FIVE PREREQUISITES TO REVIVAL

“The appearance of revivals owes nothing to chance; they are a witness to God’s sovereignty. ... We are able to see a regularity in their appearance and, within certain limits, to anticipate their coming. ... First of all, we perceive that they come when preparations have been made, when the times are ripe.”

–James Burns¹

As we consider revival and awakening on our campuses, the question we must ask is, what is my part in seeing revival take place, and what is God’s part? In seeking an answer, there are two things to keep in mind. First, God is the only source of revival. He brings it; He establishes it; He conserves it. The second thing to remember is that God often waits in bringing revival until we have exercised our own faith and obedience. We cannot do His part, but we can fulfill ours. G. Campbell Morgan once said, “We cannot organize revival, but we can set our sails to catch the wind from heaven when God chooses to blow upon His people once again.”²

As we study revivals, we discover five prerequisites that help set our sails toward the wind from heaven. If we meet these, quite possibly God will be pleased to pour out spiritual blessings on our campuses, our countries, and our world.

Though these prerequisites are found throughout Scripture, they are particularly encapsulated in the summary text on spiritual awakening: 2 Chronicles 7:13-14. "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (NASB).

The foundational requisites for revival in this passage are the following:

1. God's people must recognize that there is a desperate need for spiritual awakening.
2. God's people must humble themselves before Him.
3. God's people must confess their sin and repent.
4. God's people must continually and earnestly pray.
5. God's people must call others to join with them to meet these prerequisites.

Let's look in depth at the first of these prerequisites.

God's People Must Recognize the Need for Spiritual Awakening

The context of 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 is important. These are words given by God to Solomon at the apex of Israel's history. In a sense, Israel was already in a time of spiritual awakening. After centuries of Israel's worship services being conducted in a portable tent, Solomon was at

last holding the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly completed temple. Solomon was revered throughout much of the world for his wisdom. Israel's political and military strength were at their height and there was no obvious spiritual declension in the land. Yet, if they were in a time of spiritual blessing, why did God speak so forebodingly about pestilence, locusts, and drought ("If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people ...")?

The reason is that God knows that human beings do not do well in prosperity, whether spiritual or material. As John Wesley pointed out, spiritual prosperity brings diligence, diligence brings economic abundance, economic abundance produces laziness and greed, laziness and greed produce spiritual decline, and spiritual decline brings about God's judgment, necessitating another awakening.

What God seems to have been saying to Israel is that it would become necessary once again to get their attention concerning their spiritual condition when the prosperity cycle had run its course. Verse 13 tells us three ways (out of the many possibilities) that He would do that: through drought, disease, and locust infestation. These manifestations are renderings (amazingly enough) of His grace. Through compassionate discipline, God will help His people meet the first prerequisite for revival: recognizing and experiencing their desperate need for spiritual awakening. And sadly, the only things that seem to get our attention are those that cause us pain. "Pain," C. S. Lewis said, "is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Though God may first send prophets, preachers, and His Word to warn us, quite frequently it takes tragic consequences to really get our attention. And if that doesn't work ... well, then you might expect a swarm of locusts. Without the recognition of our need and spiritual poverty, we will go on our way, down paths to ever-greater harm.

If you polled a thousand Christian students on campus

today regarding apathy, spiritual breakdown, lack of purpose, and moral corrosion, asking, “Do you think we need an awakening today?” there’s no doubt that most would answer, “Of course we do.” But objective assent is not what God is asking for.

Admitting that there’s a problem or that something ought to be done is entirely different from being gripped by the problem and propelled to action. People addicted to nicotine might know that they need to quit smoking, but they might be roused to action only when they receive a diagnosis of lung disease.

When a handful of committed Christians begin to feel a sense of urgency and desperation about the declining state of affairs and then experience a growing burden to do something about it, you have the seeds of spiritual awakening on your campus.

Modern Plagues

What leads to that burden and sense of urgency? Following 2 Chronicles 7:13, it is often moral and spiritual plagues that reach epidemic proportions in our society, on our campus, and—most painfully—in our personal lives.

As we are not physically Israel, there is certainly a point at which the analogy breaks down. For example, most of the plagues we face today are, more or less, the natural consequences of sin or of living in a sinful and broken world. While God certainly allows these consequences, this is quite different from His causative discipline of Israel. And, more typically, the plagues we face are of the moral, intellectual, and spiritual varieties (though I should probably first check my yard for insect infestation before glossing over the literal).

With that said, we dare not miss the parallels either. So what might be some of those physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual plagues whose causalities have now swelled into the millions? Consider the following: drug and

alcohol abuse, AIDS, pornography, eating disorders, sexual addictions, divorce, child and spouse abuse, abortion, self-loathing, unbridled materialism, depression and anxiety disorders, hatred and violence, prejudice, atheism and godlessness, war and genocide, natural disasters, despair, meaninglessness and suicide.

You and I, as Christians, are not immune to suffering personally from anything on the preceding list. And at some point—yes, in our Christian life—almost all of us will be oppressed or enslaved to something: rage, eating disorders, lust, pornography, depression, and so forth. It is during these times that we experience firsthand the pain and suffering that attend these spiritual plagues. We feel the shame, hopelessness, and lack of power. We suffer the effects and consequences. And then, finally, we come to the end of ourselves and cry out for God to intervene, realizing our need for the Spirit's empowerment, transformation, and personal spiritual renewal.

Whether we are burdened by what is happening on the broader societal level or are personally afflicted, oppression is what breeds revolutionaries, or at least it can. We can choose to stay oppressed and impoverished, lower the trajectory of our prayers, acquiesce to life as it is, accept our circumstances, bow to determinism, and embrace an anemic version of Christianity. Or we can humble ourselves, rise up, and cry out. It is choosing the latter course that causes the winds of revival to begin to blow.

Burdened for Change

Josiah, Samuel Mills, and Evan Roberts were all overwhelmed with the need for change and for a turnaround in their situations. This is the first step, the initial prerequisite to revival. If a person really sees the need for revival, then he or she will be motivated to do something about it, beginning to pray and taking the first steps of faith.

In John 2:13-22 we find the story of Jesus' cleansing of the

temple. Upon seeing people selling animals and changing money in the temple, Jesus made a scourge of cords, drove them out of the temple, poured out their money, overturned the tables, and then said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”

Jesus was outraged, consumed by zeal to stop the denigration of the temple. He did not do as we often do. He did not passively wring His hands and lament the deplorable conditions. “What a horrible situation! What an absolute mess we have going on in the temple! Someone should clean that up. I mean, I would, but that’s not my job, and I’m just too busy doing other things. Besides, I might offend someone if I said something, and I don’t want to seem judgmental or narrow-minded.”

Jesus not only saw the need but also did something about it. The editorial comment that John makes after this event sums it up: “His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME’ ” (John 2:17, NASB). The King James Version says, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” Jesus was “eaten up” with the need to do something about the problem. What consumes the Christians on your campus? What grips you? What is eating you up?

Have you fully realized that the need on your campus, and in your life and the lives of students around you, is so appallingly great that, apart from God manifesting Himself in grace and power, no appreciable change will occur? Have you and your Christian friends felt the burden for awakening in such a way that you will begin to pray and gather others to pray? Is there anything that grips you so strongly that, if God does not do it, you will become physically ill? As management expert Bobb Biehl asks, “What makes you weep and pound the table?”

The zeal and fervency that the Lord Himself can and must produce in us are needed so that we will be willing to pay whatever price is required to bring revival and awakening

to our campus. For example, Evan Roberts, before seeing revival break out in Wales, prayed through the night, not just on one occasion, but for months, as he felt a growing burden for God to bring revival. “And it was not only that morning [that he prayed from one o’clock until to five o’clock] but every morning for three to four months. ... And I knew that God was going to work in the land and not this land only, but the world.”³

Think about that. Praying through the night, every night ... for months. Roberts was clearly “eaten up” about the need for a spiritual awakening.

As large as the burden must be to launch three months of prayer, imagine a burden large enough to propel thirty years of it. This is exactly what led to the 1860 revival in Cape Town, South Africa.

In the 1830s, Scottish missionary to South Africa, the Reverend Andrew Murray Sr., had a longing to see God work powerfully in Cape Town and devoted every Friday evening to praying for revival. Eventually other local ministers joined Murray in his Friday evening prayer, as did his son, the beloved Christian writer Andrew Murray Jr. (After attending seminary, Murray Jr. followed his father into the ministry and mission work of South Africa.) They continued to pray, year in and year out, and in 1860, almost thirty years after the initial burden, God began to move. This quote, from eyewitness Reverend J. C. DeVries, who was leading the meeting, allows us to see the moment when thirty years of prayer came to fruition:

On Sunday evening there were gathered in a little hall some sixty young people. I was leader of the meeting, which began with a hymn and a lesson from God’s Word, after which I prayed. Three or four others gave out a verse of a hymn and prayed, as was the custom. Then a colored girl of about 15 years of age, in service with a

nearby farmer, rose at the back of the hall and asked if she too might propose a hymn. At first I hesitated, not knowing what the meeting would think, but better thoughts prevailed, and I replied, "Yes." She gave out her hymn-verse and prayed in moving tones. While she was praying, we heard, as it were, a sound in the distance, which came nearer and nearer, until the hall seemed to be shaken. ... The whole meeting began to pray, the majority in audible voice, but some in whispers. Nevertheless, the noise made by the concourse was deafening. A feeling which I cannot describe took possession of me. Even now ... years after these occurrences, the events of that never-to-be-forgotten night pass before my mind's eye like a soul-stirring panorama.⁴

It's hard to miss the irony that God used the testimony of a fifteen-year-old native South African girl to spark the revival in Cape Town.

It's often surprising to see who God chooses to use, who He burdens, and who responds to that burden. The Lewis revivals of 1948 to 1952 are a great illustration of this.

The Lewis Islands are off the west coast of Scotland. In the mid twentieth century these islands were swept by an awakening in which the unlikely fireseeds were two sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith, ages eighty-four and eighty-two! Peggy was blind and Christine was bent over with arthritis. They led the revival from their cottage, being too old and sick to travel to the church.

In November 1949, this gracious movement began on the island of Lewis. Two old women, one of them 84 years of age and the other 82 (one of them stone blind), were greatly burdened because of the appalling state of their

own parish. It was true that not a single young person attended public worship. Not a single young man or young woman went to the church. And those two women were greatly concerned, and they made it a special matter of prayer.

A verse gripped them: “For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground” (Isaiah 44:3a). They were so burdened that both of them decided to spend time in prayer twice a week. On Tuesday they got on their knees at ten o’clock in the evening, and remained on their knees until three or four o’clock in the morning—two old women in a very humble cottage.⁵

The sisters, anticipating the revival, had appealed for a full-time minister to preside over the churches. Through an intensely intimate prayer life, the sisters knew the revival was coming; they knew God was going to send the Reverend Duncan Campbell to pastor it; they knew his name before he arrived; they knew where he was supposed to preach; they knew the seven future elders of the church (who were yet to be converted); and when they instructed Campbell in where to find those elders so that he could convert them, they become cranky with his reluctance. “Mr. Campbell if you were living as near to God as you ought to be, he would reveal his secrets to you also.”⁶

The sisters’ ceaseless prayer extended for several months, until the revival exploded. Kathie Walters, in *Bright and Shining Revival*, gives this description of the outbreak:

The first meeting was held in the old parish church. Many people had gathered in a great expectancy but nothing exceptional happened....

On the second night buses came from the four corners of the island, crowding into the church. Seven men were being driven to the meeting in a butcher's truck when suddenly the Spirit of God fell on them in great conviction and all were saved before they reached the church building! As the preacher preached his message, tremendous conviction swept down. ... Tears rolled down the faces of the people and men and women cried out for mercy from every corner of the church. So deep was their distress that some of their cries could be heard outside in the road.

The meeting closed when the people began to move out. As the last person was leaving a young man began to pray under a tremendous burden of intercession. He prayed for three quarters of an hour and as he continued to pray people kept gathering outside until there were twice as many outside as there had been inside. When the young man stopped praying the people streamed back into the church again and the meeting continued until 4 am. The moment the people took their seats, the Spirit, in great conviction began to sweep through the church, and hardened sinners began to weep and confess their sins.

As the meeting was closing someone excitedly hurried to the preacher, "Come with me! There's a crowd of people outside the police station; they are weeping and in great distress. We don't know what's wrong with them but they are calling for someone to come and pray with them."

The minister described the scene outside the police station; “I saw a sight I never thought possible. Something I shall never forget. Under a starlit sky, men and women were kneeling everywhere, by the roadside, outside the cottages, even behind the peat stacks, crying for God to have mercy on them.”

Nearly 600 people, making their way to the church, suddenly experienced the power of God falling upon them in great conviction, and like Paul on the road to Damascus, fell to their knees in repentance.⁷

Revival had come in power, and for five weeks it swept across that one parish before it moved on to other towns. Revivals follow a birthing process and someone must always assume the labor pains. In the Lewis Revival it was two octogenarians named Peggy and Christine Smith. On your campus that person could be you.

Burden for the Campus

It is always someone, or a small group of individuals, who assume the burden. In the fall of 1984, on the campus of UCLA, it happened to be eight young men.

That year I spoke at a large weekend conference for university students in California. More than five hundred attended, representing over thirty colleges and universities. Many of these campuses had twenty, thirty, or even one hundred students in attendance. But UCLA, the location of the first ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ and an important link in the university system of California, had only eight students attending—all men. It was a dismal number for a student body of over thirty thousand.

Some of the UCLA students came and asked what I thought could be done differently. They had tried many

things in their ministry to encourage students to get committed. More would come to the meetings, but these eight were the only students truly committed.

I asked if they had yet come to the point where they realized that the only real hope for both their campus and the ministry was to see God sovereignly and supernaturally stir them up in spiritual awakening.

Each one of them replied that he had.

I then suggested that they begin to meet the other criteria for spiritual renewal and refuse to quit until God had blessed them in a significant way.

In a time of prayer together, they admitted their need and admitted that they had not been fervent in laying the foundation for spiritual awakening. They also asked for God's enablement in the days to come.

Shortly after I spoke at this conference, our third child was born. In the midst of the adjustment this brought in the next eight months, I periodically recalled the men at UCLA but gave them little focused attention in either my prayers or my thoughts.

The next summer I was teaching a Bible class and one of the students was from UCLA. In talking with him one day, he asked me the following question: "Well, I guess it is pretty interesting what happened at our school, isn't it?"

Since I had heard nothing, I asked him to tell me more.

The story he told me was remarkable. It was apparent that God had intervened.

After such low commitment prior to the fall conference, the students began to take seriously the admonition to meet God's criteria. So those eight men began to meet daily to pray for revival. They decided that, no matter how long it took, they were not going to quit.

Within a few weeks, not only did the meeting size begin to grow, but students also began to talk spontaneously about their own lack of commitment to Christ and their desire to change. This produced fertile ground for the

next conference on the agenda, the California Christmas conference. After taking only eight students to the fall conference, the movement now took forty-five to the Christmas conference (more than a fivefold increase).

Upon their return to campus for the winter quarter, individuals began to pray each week in large numbers, in a group they called Hour of Power, a prayer time strictly for revival on campus. Students crowded to get involved in discipleship and evangelism. The average weekly meeting now numbered 175. And when an InterVarsity traveling evangelist came to the campus in February, the Campus Crusade for Christ students banded together and did one-on-one evangelism among the large crowds he drew. Hundreds of students heard the gospel that week!

In the spring quarter they decided to have another weekend conference. Instead of eight students coming, over a hundred attended this one and hearts were changed in deep and powerful ways. When the Campus Crusade staff left for their summer mission assignments, the entire ministry was turned over to students for the remainder of the quarter. This resulted in even greater commitment to the ministry.

Eight months following the weekend fall conference, the Campus Crusade movement sent over forty students to summer mission projects. While they were unable to get more than eight students to come to a weekend conference in the fall, they saw five times that number give up their summers to serve Jesus Christ. Truly, some sort of awakening had started.

As I tracked the ministry at UCLA the next year, I discovered that God did still more in their prayer meetings and in the ministry. A giant outdoor prayer meeting involving all the Christian groups on campus was so significant that the front page of the student newspaper, *The Daily Bruin*, carried a photograph and a large article about the work God was doing on that campus. When I

asked students what God had done to change things, their immediate response was to look at me in surprise and say, “Obviously, it was prayer and our willingness to meet God’s criteria that allowed Him to work in such a great way on our campus.” (When I asked a Campus Crusade for Christ staff member some years later what had caused that awakening to dwindle after the third year, he ironically said, “No question about it. We began to overorganize God’s work.”)

God did an amazing work at UCLA, and we must not lose sight of this central fact: it most assuredly would not have occurred if the eight students had not met the first of God’s prerequisites—that they be gripped with a need to do something about the spiritual condition of their ministry and their campus.

Before discussing the second prerequisite for revival and awakening, let me suggest three action points. First, take a piece of paper and list at least fifteen reasons why you believe your campus needs spiritual awakening and why your ministry needs revival. Keep it in a place where you will see it daily. Second, make it your daily prayer that God would burden you and your friends with the need for awakening on your campus. Third, talk to others about this need, bring others into praying for it, and hold each other accountable to pray.

By doing these simple yet profound things, you are taking the first step toward spiritual awakening on your campus.