**Responding in Faith to Racism**

A resurgence of voices declaring that revival is coming to America has caught the attention of God’s people from coast-to-coast. In the face of numerous nationwide challenges, it seems that a national revival—what some refer to as a Great Awakening—is necessary to save our nation. And since God loves us, to those who are declaring and promising revival, it is all but a foregone conclusion that revival is on the way.

National leaders are alerting people to this pending revival through interviews, streaming messages, social media, articles, and books. But the widest proliferation of this message is coming through an overwhelming amount of YouTube videos declaring, “God is not done with America yet;” and therefore by implication, we simply need to hang on a little bit longer until America is saved by a glorious move of God.

I too believe that it is only through the spiritual empowerment of God’s people amidst God’s manifest presence, along with multitudes of people coming to faith, that America can be saved. By God’s grace, I experienced a taste of these realities while leading a campus ministry at the University of Wisconsin—Madison in 1995. Also, I served with Life Action Ministries (a ministry focused on seeing God move in national revival and awakening) for 12 years before launching *Forerunners of America*. So, hear me before reading further: I am pro-revival and pro-awakening!

However, in recent months I have heard national figures declaring—and sometimes promising—a revival that is out of step with the Bible and revival history. It sounds more like a Disney Land ride with God stepping in to make us feel good and to fix everything, rather than a genuine move of God in line with His purposes.

The lack of understanding of revival by many of these leaders—regardless of how many books they have written or their large number of YouTube subscribers—is betrayed by their own words. Sadly, much of what is now being declared seems to promote a fictitious God who wants to bless our nation in its sin rather than call us out of it.

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To illustrate how far we’ve departed from genuine revival and the gospel, consider the first Great Awakening experienced on American soil (1734–45). During this special season, sin of all kinds was taken seriously—both within the body of Christ and as observed by Christians throughout culture. So much so, church leaders were careful not to call people Christians until their lives were transformed by the gospel. Until this thorough transformation had taken place, people were only referred to as “hopefully converted.” While such a mindset is foreign to many of us today, it was a key dynamic throughout America’s first Great Awakening.

Also in contrast to what we are hearing today, the Bible and revival history reveal that the extent to which revival takes place and the duration of a move of God are *conditional*—that is, not something to be declared as a fixed future reality by people with large YouTube followings. It might feel good to receive these declarations from famous people, but Scripture repeatedly teaches the opposite. For example, James taught that moving into God’s favor was conditional. Specifically, James’ readers had to wrestle with the following questions based on [James 4:1–10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+4%3A1-10&version=NIV):

* Will you stop feeding your own pleasures?
* Will you stop loving the world?
* Will you humble yourself?
* Will you draw near to God?
* Will you repent from entertaining sin in your life?
* Will you turn your laughter into mourning (that is to become serious about the things that trouble God)?

Also, notice that 2 Chronicles 7:14 affirms the conditional nature of revival, even as it pertains to national revival: “*If* my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, *then* I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” Numerous leaders are declaring a coming revival, but where are the calls for humility, prayer, seeking God’s face, and turning from one’s wicked ways? During the 1995 revival, God first exposed the pride and wicked ways in the hearts of His people—including me. It was through this process of brokenness over personal sin, forgiveness, and refreshing in the Holy Spirit that we began to see much greater fruit within the ministry and across campus. Second Chronicles 7 and James 4 provide the necessary conditions for experiencing a genuine revival. Why are we rarely hearing this today?

Jesus too gave a contrasting message to what is currently being declared. In [Revelation chapters two and three](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=rev.+2-3&version=NIV), Jesus called five of the seven churches to “repent” of specific sins to receive the blessing of God’s reviving presence along with His rewards. Not once does He declare that if these churches remain in their backslidden condition, that God would graciously visit them in revival. Rather, Jesus clarified that if they didn’t repent, He would personally—and permanently—close their church doors. This is precisely what Jesus taught when He called the church of Ephesus to return to their first love. And if they didn’t return, what would happen? He said that He would remove their “lampstand,” meaning the church itself would be removed from Ephesus ([Rev. 2:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=rev.+2%3A5&version=NIV)).

If this is the case, why are Christian leaders today tantalizing their followers with revival when the church in America has yet to return to its first love? There may never have been a church more in love with the world than the American church is today. Perhaps it is more palatable to announce or predict a coming revival that will fix everything than it is to call people to get low before the Lord in life-transforming humility, repentance, and intercession.

Further confusing Christians throughout America, the current announcements of a coming revival—or a revival that is already here—is leaving the impression that personal holiness and holiness throughout the church have no bearing on the extent of the coming revival. Again, this is foreign to the Bible and revival history. The urging of holy living propelled both America’s First and Second Great Awakenings as well as the Azusa Street revival, until holiness was obscured by other priorities. Of course, holiness is a New Testament theme—something the writers repeatedly emphasized (see [2 Cor. 6:14–7:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Cor.+6%3A14-7%3A1&version=NIV); [I Peter 1:14–16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+1%3A14-16&version=NIV)).

Moreover, some have proposed that revival is heaven coming to earth. Reflecting on heaven’s holy atmosphere, I am reminded of the four living creatures in Revelation who cry out day and night before the throne, “**Holy, holy, holy** is the Lord God Almighty” (Rev. 4:8). While not emphasized today, holiness matters very much to God; and it matters very much in the ramping up season toward revival; and it matters in sustaining any true move of God.

Additionally, the current declarations of coming revival by religious leaders on YouTube and elsewhere miss the mark by failing to exhort us to cry out to God for mercy due to the wild rebellion and sin that so aptly describes the church and our nation as a whole. Other than a few exceptions among today’s national leaders, such as Jonathan Cahn, there have been almost no national calls to get low before the Lord to cry out for mercy for our nation.

Honestly, rather than engendering revival, are we not a nation provoking God to judgment? Is wickedness or wholesomeness surging through social media in general and TikTok specifically? Are LGBTQ lifestyles surging or diminishing throughout our nation? Is godless Marxist socialist ideology surging or abating within our national, state, and local governments? Is the entertainment industry trending toward portraying virtuous living or wickedness? And how much of this has already overtaken the younger generation - both inside and outside of the church. Obviously, it is vital that we cry out for mercy for our nation before it is too late ([Psa. 28:1–9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+28%3A1-9&version=NIV); [Hab. 3:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=hab.+3%3A2&version=NIV)).

In summary, the streams of Christianity that are promoting national revival need a mid-course correction. Often, they promote a revival without repentance; a national awakening without personal responsibility; a move of God void of deep intercession; a Great Awakening without the holiness of God; and national transformation without a cry for mercy emanating from a broken heart. Attractive as their message may be, it often inadvertently encourages Christians to do nothing as they wait for God to show up and fix everything.

There is no time for us to waste in idle hope over someone on YouTube who “got a word.” Now is the time to move into personal brokenness over sin and repentance. Now is the time to seek God’s face in humility. Now is the time to cry out for mercy over our wayward rebellious nation. Now is the time for each of us to boldly influence others with the truth of God’s Word and the power of His Spirit. These actions likely won’t win more followers on social media nor produce more “likes” on YouTube, but Jesus warned us that the truth will not always be received ([John 15:18–20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15%3A18-20&version=NIV)). And what is at the heart of revival truth? It is that a sustained national revival will only occur when God’s people heed God's voice and come into alignment with His will and ways. And that is my hope for the body of Christ in America.