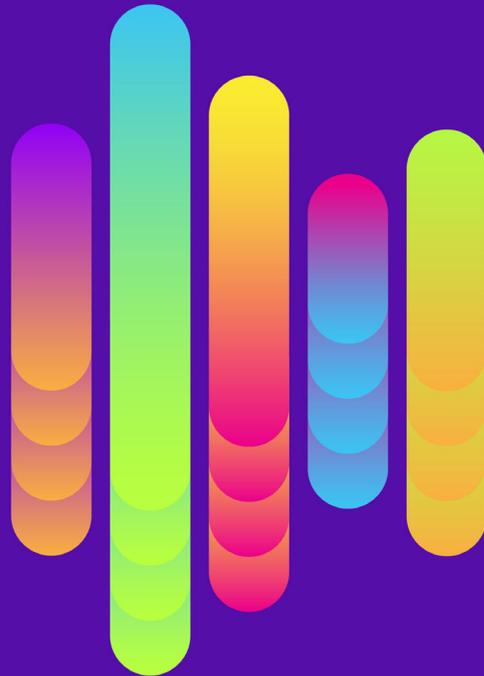


# REVIVAL

five shifts to host revival



Revival is on the way. We cannot plan a revival. Revival is something God does. But we can prepare and pray for it. God is calling us to prepare for revival and we believe we are going to host revival right here in the heart of downtown Colorado Springs. Get ready.

## REVIVAL • John 17:1–5 • Tim McConnell • April 26, 2020

God is up to something big in this mess. The global pandemic is also a moment for global awakening, and it seems to be happening. Crisis leads to Christ. I believe we may see revival in 2020. It was almost a year ago when I suggested this series to the staff. "I think God may want us to talk about revival after Easter next year." Can you believe that? Now the whole world is talking about revival. From the Wall Street Journal to USA Today people are writing about a general return to faith. Awakening. Revival. As we prayed and we planned this series, I thought, how can we get our people out of the status quo? How can we take an objective, outside look at what we are doing to participate in revival God may be initiating? How could we get everyone to just stop and take a look at the things that matter most instead of rushing through everyday schedules without a minute to spare? Well ... sorry. I think I caused this global pandemic. No, it wasn't me. At least, I don't think it was. But here we are. A. W. Tozer says what is rote becomes a rut and causes rot to kill revival. Nothing is rote. There are no ruts. Forget the rot. We are open for revival.

What is **Revival**? When I say revival, what are we talking about? Well, it isn't something we do. It's something God does. Periodically in history there is a stirring and pouring out of the Spirit of God over the people in a way that deepens devotion, sharpens service and opens thousands to new faith in Jesus Christ. You can find it in the Old Testament, but I think of Acts 2. The outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost which we will celebrate at the end of this series. I think of the early church. In a short period of time the church grew from an illegal, small sect to take over the Roman Empire. There are medieval revivals, the pietists, the reformers, the renewalists. Then the Great Awakening in the 18th century here in America. Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, John Wesley. There's the Pyongyang revival of 1907 with prayer meetings at 5 a.m. swelling into the thousands. Some say it started with Mary Culler White and Louise Hoard McCully starting a prayer meeting. Hundreds of thousands have come to faith in Christ in Korea. They send missionaries to us. The Welsh revival of 1904 spilled into the Azusa Street revival in California, and on it goes.

God does this, you see. From time to time the Spirit of God is stirred up and poured out and God saves souls, thousands at a time. I'm praying for it. I want us preparing for it. Crisis can lead to Christ. Plagues and disasters can stir up people's hearts. In the early church,

it was measles. In the Great Awakening it was smallpox. Right now it's COVID-19, and suddenly people want to know what life is really all about. What really matters in life? Is there a God and does He care? The whole world is ready. In times of plague, the nobility ran for the hills, but the Christians took care of the sick. That made a difference. So much so that a pagan emperor named Julian chastised the priests and philosophers of Rome. "If you guys don't step up, our whole empire is going to be overrun by Christians--a religion for women and slaves!" We are not foolish; we are fearless. And Christ shines through in our love and care for those around us. One doctor I know gave his staff the choice to come in or stay home. He said, Tim, the believers are coming in. Not foolish, but fearless.

God is doing something right now. More people have tuned in for our online services than we have ever reached before. That's not just us. Every pastor I hear from is saying the same thing. Incomprehensible. Unimaginable impact. Craig Groeschel, who runs Life Church, reported in March that over 110,000 people had clicked (they have a button to click for more info and connection) to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. He said, and this was a month ago, that meant more people in our nation had sought salvation in Jesus through this one ministry than had, by that time, contracted COVID-19. Crisis leads to Christ. When everything is taken from you, what is most valuable comes into stark relief. We are out of the rote, out of the rut, out of the rot and ready for Revival.

To prepare for revival we need to move through five shifts together. Five ways of thinking differently about our church, acting differently as part of our church, praying differently for our church. Five shifts to host revival right here, and we are looking to John 17, the farewell prayer of Jesus, to guide us. The first shift is this: **Confusion to Clarity**. From confusion around a thousand good things, a thousand different good ideas, to clarity around one great thing, one single truth. Clarity. We need, as a church, laser-focused clarity on what matters absolutely over every single other thing. Passionate, devoted, laser-focused clarity on our mission as a church. Confusion obscures; clarity motivates. Focus in. We are here to introduce people to saving faith in Jesus Christ; to lead people to life and salvation, eternal life, in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Clarity. One thing.

John 17 is called the Farewell Prayer, or the High Priest-

ly Prayer. Jesus just finished a long period of teaching with the disciples and He lifts up His eyes to pray. He is dedicating himself to the Lord, His Father--remember this is Son to Father, but also God to God. Jesus is about to submit to arrest, suffering, death, atoning sacrifice on the cross for our salvation, then trust in resurrection and renewal as we just celebrated two weeks ago. Jesus prays to submit Himself to all that work, but also prays for us, for His followers, for the church, for you and me to be faithful to the end. This prayer is our guide as we prepare for Revival.

"After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you'" (John 17:1). There is a reason, when we talk about revival, we are studying a prayer. Prayer isn't the last resort. Prayer is how we appeal to God to do what only God can do. Prayer is where we find God's strength past our limits and learn to fully rely on God. We appeal to God. Revival isn't something we do; it's something God does. "'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6). We don't want to do what we can do; we want God to do what God can do. My devotions got me to Psalm 44 last week, a beautiful summary of God's faithfulness through hard times. "It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them" (Psalms 44:3). They don't look back and say, "We did it." They don't look forward and say, "Let's do it." They turn to God: "Rise up and help us; rescue us because of your unfailing love" (Psalms 44:26). That's prayer. Turn to God. Let me pause. Maybe you are listening or watching this message and it's out of the ordinary for you. We know hundreds, if not thousands, are digging into questions of faith. Let me ask you, have you prayed? In this pandemic, in this global crisis, have you thought about God, or have you talked to God? Prayer is talking to God. Anyone can do it. You can't make a mistake. Pray.

Jesus says at the opening, "Father, the hour has come." (John 17:1). This is significant. Throughout this gospel Jesus has said over and over again, "my time has not yet come," or "the hour is not yet here." Now he says, "the hour has come." Jesus knows that the most important mission is starting. He came to die for us. By this death and by this resurrection, there will be glory to God. The name of Jesus will be forever glorified. The goodness and mercy of God will be glorified. The Father and the Son will glorify each other and

by the power of the Holy Spirit that glory will spread. "After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you'" (John 17:1). Glory. The hour for glory. It's significant because this prayer is Jesus' summary of His work. When He says the hour has come, He is telling us that this is how He understands the main mission He has been on since John chapter 1 when He came down from heaven and the Word became flesh. Jesus had a job, an errand, a mission. He was about to finish it up. "I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (John 17:4-5). Jesus knew his time on earth was a mission. God the Father gave Him a job to do and expected Him to be about it. I wonder if we see ourselves the same way. We'll get back to that later in the series.

Here comes the clarity. Confusion points at a hundred things; clarity points at one thing. Jesus knew his job, if you could sum it up, was to give life, to give life. Verse 2, "For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him" (John 17:2). What kind of life? "Eternal" life. In Greek you get two words for "life." You get "bios" which means you are a living, breathing organism, biological life. Or as scientists sometimes define life, something with bios life grows and interacts with its environment. It's alive. Biological life. That's not what Jesus is talking about here. Here the word is "zoe" life. Full life. Whole life. Rich life. Fulfilling life. And it's "zoe aionion"--eternal life on and on for ages, on and on for eternity. But eternal life in Jesus, it isn't measured chronologically. The great thing about life given by Jesus is not that it goes on and on forever. It's not chronology, but quality. Eternal, overflowing, fulfilling life. That's what Jesus has authority to bring. A worm is alive. Moss is alive. A worm is perfectly satisfied with "life"--wiggling through mud in the dark. No beauty, no light, it doesn't even have eyes! But for us, we were made for more. We need light and heat and shelter and food, but we also need relationship, contact, interaction, intellection, song, prayer ... most of all prayer-right relationship with God. Not bio-life, eternal life. That's Jesus. He has authority to bring it.

Now verse 3, the clarity: "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). What is eternal life? "That they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." That's it. Knowing God.

How many ways do you chase a fulfilling life? How many options and add-ons promise more life? We have irons in different fires, looking for fuller, richer life. Work, hobbies, physical pleasures, money. I just keep a few pots boiling to see which one really brings the good stuff. One thing. "Purity of heart is to will one thing," said Kierkegaard. One thing. Imagine one thing rising above the rest. Imagine having one priority above all others, one worthy pursuit of the heart. Imagine the clarity. "'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed--or indeed only one'" (Luke 10:41-42). One thing. Know God. Know Jesus. This is eternal life.

As a church, we have sharpened our focus over the last few years. We started asking questions about all the different operations of our church, and all the activity. You can be busy as a church and getting nowhere for Jesus. I'm not saying that's First Pres, but we had to start asking, what matters most? It started with the **Path of Discipleship** and if you've been to any town halls or congregational meetings over the last three years, you have heard about this. Jesus commissioned us to make disciples, right? Last week we heard it--the Great Commission. So a good question for a church is, what's your method for making disciples of Jesus and is it working? We started measuring everything we do against the Path of Discipleship. Clarity. Focus.

What is the one thing that matters most? When, on March 13, we had to close our doors and stop almost everything we were doing as a church, we asked ourselves, what matters most? What must we be doing? We are called to be **Light and Life for the City**. What must we do? We must worship well--promote the love and knowledge of God in Jesus Christ! Clarity. I call it COVID clarity. When everything else is taken away, what matters most rises to the top. This is our first shift to host revival. We must move away from personal preferences and hobby ministries and operate with absolute, passionate, devoted, laser-focus on one thing--making Jesus known. Eternal life is this. "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). Knowing God. Knowing Jesus. So I ask you, do you? The time has come. The hour is here. What matters most? Know Jesus. Start a conversation with Jesus. Deepen your devotion to Jesus. Lengthen your walks with Jesus. Know Jesus. Know eternal life.

## STUDY GUIDE

### REVIVAL • "One: From Confusion to Clarity" John 17:1-5

#### **UP:** **UP: Connect with God through Spending Time in His Word**

Friends, humanity is being rocked right now by needing to physically distance ourselves from one another. For the Christian, we do this out of love for neighbor. Fight hard to distinguish these two realities: physically distancing and relationally separating.

Now is the time to become the greatest artist you have ever been. Create ways to stay relationally and spiritually tethered to your core circle. We need each other. We are gifts to one another! Make phone calls; text photographs; set up video gatherings. Together, we are the hands and feet of Christ to one another and this city!

Begin your study in prayer. Read and reflect on John 17:1-5.

- 1) What is the context of John 17?
- 2) In verse 1, Jesus says, "Father, the hour has come." Discuss the significance of this statement.
- 3) Dive deep into our key verse, verse 3. Why might this verse be a key text for launching a series in preparing our hearts for revival?

#### **OUT:** **Connect With the World Around Us (Join God in His Mission)**

4) Pastor Tim talks about moving "from confusion to clarity." Together with your circle, define the mission of God as clearly as possible. What is the world's greatest need? Where does God fit in and how? Where do we as God's people fit in and how?

#### **IN:** **Connect with Each Other**

COVID-19: Spend time connecting with your core circle on how you are doing. Pray together. Pastor Tim states, "We must move away from personal preferences and hobby ministries and operate with absolute, passionate, devoted, laser-focus on one thing--making Jesus known." Tim is pointing to our key verse, "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). As transparently as you are able, share about your passion for those you meet on a day-to-day basis to know and worship the one, true and saving God. How would you like your core circle to be praying for you regarding your special role in God's mission? How else would you like your core circle praying for you?