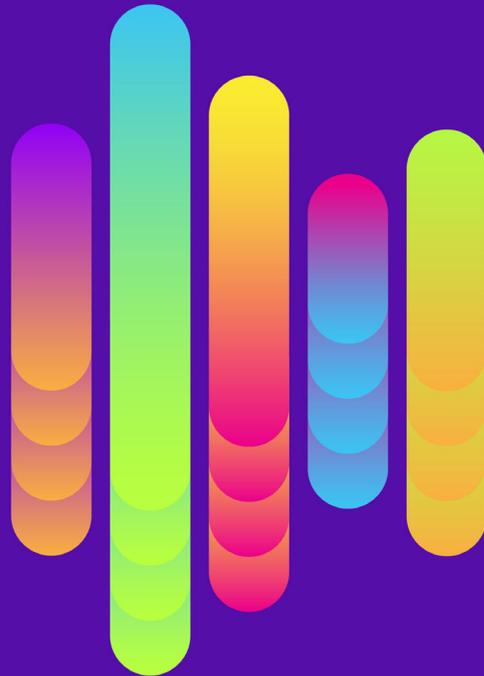


# REVIVAL

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 17:6–11 • Tim McConnell • May 3, 2020

Here is the church, here is the steeple, open the doors and see all the ... empty chairs! No, people. People. There's a steeple on the church, but the church isn't the steeple. There are thumb-doors on the church fists, but the church isn't the fists or the thumbs. Under the steeple, if you folded your fingers right, behind the thumb-doors, are all the people. That's where you find the church—the church is the community of people. There's nothing sadder than an empty church building. But everything is empty. Empty restaurants. Empty schools. Empty streets. Empty stadiums and theaters. Empty. But the church isn't gone when the building is empty. Is First Pres gone? No. The church isn't gone when the building is empty because the church isn't a building but a people; a people united by Christ, saved by Jesus Christ, united in His love and by His Spirit to be a movement, a mission. We are talking about revival. No revival is possible until the people of God know themselves, the church knows itself, as a movement to reach the world with the good news and eternal life found in Jesus.

Without the people, there is no church. The building can come down, the steeple can come down, the doors can come down, but without the people there is no church. If you've been around Christians for a while and heard a dozen sermons or so, you have probably heard someone say this. It's not a new idea. The church isn't the building; it's the people. But we still get stuck on it. The word "church" comes from the German "Kirche" which was the word for all the pagan temples. They got taken over and became Christian sites and they still called them church. A building. The biblical word is "ecclesia." It means the "called out group." Jesus saying, "Follow me." That's how that starts, not with a building. The building is just a tool. It's a good tool. It's in fact our most expensive tool, and our most effective tool. That's why we want to keep it sharp, keep it updated, keep changing pieces out and updating its features, because this building is the strongest material tool we have for our mission. But it's just a tool. It's a hammer, a drill, a laptop. The church is the people on mission to follow Jesus, not a building. To illustrate this, we shut the building down for a few months! Just as an illustration.

Revival is impossible until the people of God see themselves as the church. The church is not a building but a movement, a people on mission, to follow Jesus, to seek and save the lost, to bless the world after the manner and pattern of how Jesus blessed the world—Jesus who gave Himself away for the life of the world, a people on mission to the glory of God. But nobody really thinks the church is a building except

maybe the most lifeless, dead churches, churches that operate as museums with endowments to cover the cost of polishing brass and dusting woodwork. Empty, cobwebbed museums. There are some of those, but I don't find that here in First Pres. What I do find is this. If we aren't careful, we can see our church as a religious service provider. I pay my dues and get my membership benefits from my preferred religious service provider. I write my check and I get the services I expect, according to the preferences I enjoy. Does that start to sound closer to home? That's a dead place. That's when, as Tozer said, rote becomes rut and turns to rot. Dead. Church is a people on mission. Shut the building down and you'll see. Where is the church?

Jesus prayed for the church. John 17. That's our guide to prepare to host revival right here. There are five shifts we need to walk through as a church, and the funny thing is that this COVID crisis is accelerating all of them. First was from **Confusion to Clarity**. We must be laser-focused in our mission. Dialed in. Distractions are not harmless; they suck our energy away from the one clear goal: "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). Today we shift from thinking of church as a building, as a religious service provider where I pay my dues and get my services, to a mission, a people on mission. Shift number two: from **Building to People**.

"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word" (John 17:6). When Jesus prays for the church, he prays for a group of people. Right here you have the whole mystery of salvation and predestination. Who's in charge of my salvation? Me or God? "You gave them to me out of the world." That sounds like Ephesians; I was dead in my trespasses and sins, floating down the river subject to the winds and currents of this present order, lost and helpless when God snatched me up and saved my dead and lost soul. God saves. "And they obeyed;" that sounds like there is some responsibility to receive and trust and obey, to have faith. God is doing the saving, still there is some response. But God saves. God is at work.

The great revivals in history were much less about our ability to make good spiritual decisions and much more about relaxing, releasing, receiving and resting in the arms of a loving and sovereign Savior who is actively moving to rescue and save souls out of this present darkness, the powers of this world, the anxiety and death and worry and pain and

into His eternal kingdom of glory. God is on the move. Revival isn't a turn of the community spirit toward an interest in religion. Puke. Revival is a surprising act of God, when the Holy Spirit is stirred up and poured out to save souls, to redeem a people, to create a church on mission. It's the arm of God sweeping across the landscape. The hand of God grabbing souls. The finger of God penetrating hearts on fire and piercing minds with light and heat. Revival! I want us thinking, watching, praying for what God is doing, what God is doing, and, by His mercy, not getting in the way. God is on the move, and what God is doing is calling a people. See that? Not building a building. Jesus never signed a lease. Never wrote bylaws. The investment was in a people that He put on mission for His glory. Church is that people on mission. Ecclesia—called out and sent forth. Come on, let's go! That's church.

We see these people described as Jesus prays for them. Where do we look to find the church? We look at people on mission for Jesus. And what do they look like? What are they like? "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word" (John 17:6). Obeyed. They obey what they learned from Jesus. Do you find a people on this earth committed to something higher than personal benefit, than civic benefit, than economic benefit? Do you find a people committed to something higher even than nations and nationalism? The people of God on mission, the church, this is a people committed to living out what Jesus taught. Not just talking about it. Not just reflecting on it. Doing it. Obey.

"Now they **know** that everything you have given me comes from you" (John 17:7). They know God. They know God in Jesus Christ, like Jesus said, is eternal life. They know God. That alone sets them apart. If you can walk through this world in an intimate relationship with God. Not a nose-in-the-air, nasty prideful, "I know God." But a humble, ever-present, grateful intimacy with God, that you know is a gift of grace, that you don't deserve, but nevertheless... You don't sit in your apartment alone. You know God and feel His presence. You don't sit in the waiting room alone, Jesus is there. You don't pick up the phone to hear your test results alone, thinking how am I going to handle this alone. You have Jesus with you there on the phone. Jesus who conquered death and rose again ... you get it. They know God. That's what this church looks like. They know God is there. They know Jesus is God. They hope for what science can do, they hope for what doctors can figure out. But that is not their only hope. Their full hope is in what God can do and

is doing. Get it? They hope in what people can do to wear their masks right and wash their hands, but their real hope is in God. They hope in what governments and leaders do, but that's not all their hope. Their real, true, certain hope is in Christ. That makes this people stand out.

"For I gave them the words you gave me and they **accepted** them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they **believed** that you sent me" (John 17:8). Where do you find the people of God on mission? They hear the Word and they accept the Word. Their hearts are softened soil. Not only do they accept and receive, but they believe. This is the word for faith. They have faith. They put their faith in Jesus sent by God. And just since we're on this, there are a few other characteristics in Jesus' prayer. Verse 10 says, "And glory has come to me through them" (John 17:10). They don't glorify themselves. They glorify Jesus. Verse 11 says they have unity: "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be **one** as we are one" (John 17:11). Unity in the name, in the name of Jesus. I cried when I saw our global partners sharing in our Easter worship. In every culture, language, nation are believers united in the name of Jesus. Verse 13 says they are marked with supernatural joy: "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them" (John 17:13). Joy surpassing understanding.

There's a lot more. Even in this prayer, but certainly through the Scriptures, there's so much more we could say. If you are looking for the people of God, don't look for a building. Look for a people with purpose, a people on mission, a people who know God, follow His Word, put their faith in Him, put their hope in Him, give glory to Him in what they do, they stand in unity, and walk in a joy and a peace that passes all understanding. Not a building. And not a people who pay their dues to their church like a gym membership and complain about whether or not the service they are getting from their religious service provider matches their personal preferences enough. Follow me? Nope. That's death. Life is a people on mission for Jesus, in His name, to His glory, united in His joy.

In 1734, Jonathan Edwards was pastor at a church in Northampton, Massachusetts. A town of about 1200. People were disinterested in the gospel. No need for Jesus. That year a young man died of illness. A young woman died a few months later. The young in the town started meeting on Sunday night to discuss spiritual questions. They had been using Sundays as a party night, but the Bible Study grew. Mature

Christian disciples joined with them. Edwards saw a few more people on Sunday morning when he preached. In December, half a dozen of these young men and women came to Christ, including one woman well-known for her party lifestyle. The Holy Spirit was stirred up and poured out over that town. People filled up the sanctuary. Dozens came to church on Mondays to take personal appointments with Jonathan to pray for salvation. In six months, over 300 people came to Christ. 25 percent of the town. Imagine 25 percent of Colorado Springs coming to Christ in six months; that would be like 120,000 people coming to Christ between now and Christmas. Life was changed for Northampton. The Great Awakening had begun. It happens. Revival. Are we ready to host revival right here?

Puritans expected the Holy Spirit to pull people through three phases in conversion. First, was **Awakening**. Like an illumination. They were living life as if there was no God, as if this world and its pleasures and pains were all there was. Then they realized God was there. They had an awakening to spiritual things. This life is not all there is. God is real. God is active. There is a spiritual dimension, and I know little about it. Next, someone naturally wants to know where they stand with God. The minute you realize God is there, you wonder how things are between you! The second stage is **Conviction**. If God is real, and heaven is real, and Jesus is real, I'm not sure where I stand. In fact, my sins weigh heavier on me than ever before. And the things I used to do, the things I used to drink or click or smoke or play for pleasure, they feel a little less fun. The pleasure has drained out of this stuff. Conviction. Awakening, Conviction, leads to **Confession**. Can I throw myself on the mercy seat of Christ? Can I trust that my sins can be forgiven? Can I find any escape from these worldly pleasures that used to feel good and now just make me feel nauseous? Can I be forgiven and redeemed by the grace of Jesus won for me on the cross? I confess my sins, I profess belief, I am forgiven and redeemed. I have new life in Jesus Christ.

**Awakening, Conviction, Confession.** Folks, the whole world is in Awakening right now. Awakening. I was living as though there were no God—and I think there is. And I think we need God. There is an Awakening. If we move from confusion to clarity, if we are a people on mission for Jesus, not a religious service provider looking for memberships, if we really prepare ourselves and pray ourselves and let God shape us as His people ... we could host revival right here. **Crisis leads to Christ.** When so much is taken away, what matters most comes into sharp relief. Let's be a people ready for revival.

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## STUDY GUIDE

### REVIVAL • "Building to People"

#### John 17:6–11

#### 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 17:6-11.

- 1) Throughout verses 6-11, what does Jesus do for His disciples?
- 2) Throughout verses 6-11, what marks of discipleship are given? (note especially the verbs associated with how the disciples have responded to Jesus)
- 3) Many translations of Scripture use the header "Jesus Prays for His Disciples" to mark our passage this week, John 17:6-11. In the final sentence of this week's passage, what exactly does Jesus petition the Father for on behalf of His disciples? What is the relevance of this prayer for God's people alive on earth today?

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

4) Pastor Tim writes, "Revival is impossible until the people of God see themselves as the church. The church is not a building but a movement, a people on mission, to follow Jesus, to seek and save the lost, to bless the world after the manner and pattern of how Jesus blessed the world—Jesus who gave Himself away for the life of the world, a people on mission to the glory of God." Our focus this week is on shifting our thinking back to how Jesus views the church, not a building, but the people of God united to God and one another who live on mission by joining God in seeking and saving the lost. How does this "shift" impact you missionally day-to-day?

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

COVID-19: Spend time connecting with your core circle on how you are doing. Pray together.

Our *Revival* series places great capital on preparing our hearts to be as ready as possible for the movement of God. How can your Life Group pray specifically for you to this end?