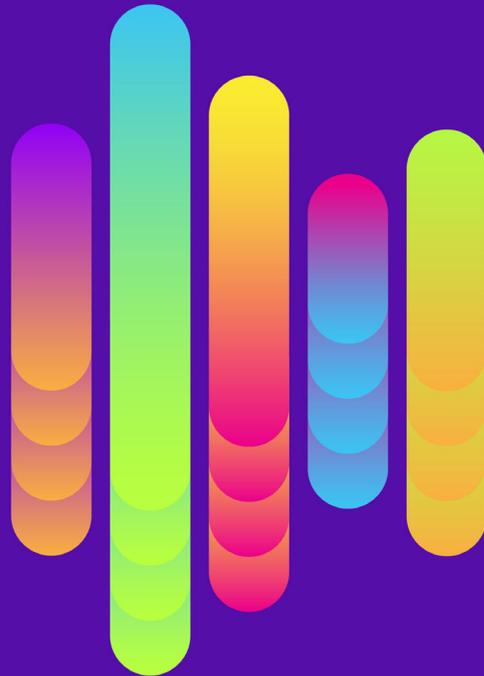


# REVIVAL

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 17:12–19 • Tim McConnell • May 10, 2020

Well, it is Mother's Day 2020. I had a very hard time getting brunch reservations. Anyone else? We are grateful for our mothers. I'm grateful for the mothers in my life. And it is fitting today to talk about one of the greatest challenges of the church, but one that every church in every time has faced and conquered: reaching the next generation with the gospel. In every generation from the year 1 AD the same refrain has spilled out, "This is it! The church dies with us. The next generation doesn't understand. They're not following Jesus. The church is done, the gospel is lost, Christianity ends today!" But, have you noticed? Jesus always finds His way into the next generation. The only question is whether we will follow Him. Not whether they will follow Him, but whether we will follow Him. Will we follow Jesus into the next generation?

We're talking about **Revival**, the COVID Revival of 2020. I'm praying for it. The world is ripe for a new wave of faith in Jesus Christ. When everything is taken away, what is most important rises and comes into stark relief. Crisis leads to Christ. We need to be ready for Revival. Studying Jesus' prayer in John 17, we are taking five shifts together as a church to prepare to host revival right here. Revival isn't something we do; it's something God does, but we prepare, and pray, and posture ourselves as best we can to follow Jesus on a mission of revival. The first shift was from **Confusion to Clarity**. "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). The second, last week, was from **Building to People**. Church is not a building to be preserved, or an institution to be defended, or a religious service provider looking for membership dues—church is a mission, a movement of people on mission for Jesus. The third shift comes this morning: from **Past-Bound to Future-Captured**. The past is precursor. We have a future to gain, and the best is always yet to come. We love our history, but our dreams mean more to us than our legends. The future matters more to us than the past. We are sold out on gaining First Pres 2030 and reaching the next generation for Christ.

A. W. Tozer said, "The treacherous enemy facing the church of Jesus Christ today is the dictatorship of the routine." What did he mean? He was diagnosing our tendency to grow past-bound. What was once new and innovative, grew effective and meaningful, then became tired and routine. What determines what is and puts limits on what will be, and we are stuck. The

church is a body, and a body that does not move and grow becomes sick. Tozer said, "The church is afflicted with dry rot . . . when the psychology of nonexpectation takes over and spiritual rigidity sets in—an inability to visualize anything better, a lack of desire for improvement." What a horrible position for any church offering herself to the Lord as a potential host for tomorrow's revival! Our past glories do not bind our future potential; yesterday builds a platform where we leap to grab tomorrow. We are inspired by our past. Encouraged. God has done it before in our people. God will do it again in us. The past propels us into the future. We don't pine away for the past. We don't long for First Pres 1990. We leap toward First Pres 2030. Can you imagine it? Jesus prayed for it.

"While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me" (John 17:12). Jesus is protective of His children, His followers. Jesus is a defender of His brood, isn't He? Like a mother bear! He protected them, kept them, guarded them. But now He has to watch them step forward without Him. He just said, in verse 11, "I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. 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). Jesus, like a parent, has a heart for what will happen to them after He separates from them, and they move out on their own. They are going to face opposition. "I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world" (John 17:14). Nevertheless, they are to be sent. "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

With each of my four kids, I can remember the day they learned to ride a bike without training wheels. I can remember holding their seat, running along with them, and the moment they were propelled out of my hand. There's a reason that image is in almost every commercial on TV. It's powerful. It kind of sums up the experience of parenting, and it sums up Jesus' prayer to send His children out on mission into the future. There are three steps to it. Hold, Release and Help. There's the Hold. I've got you. You feel me. I'm right here. Nothing bad can happen. Just like Jesus said, "I was with them. I kept them. I protected them." Hold. That's a critical phase. Then Release. Off you go! Then . . . Help! It's okay! I've got some Band-Aids!

Hold is critical. But it doesn't stay there in parenting. It also doesn't stay there for any church that wants to host revival or move forward on mission. Hold gives way to Release. How is Release for you? Is that easy? It's pretty hard. Let go. As a church, we must bend ourselves in every conceivable way toward reaching the next generation. We must innovate, we must grow and change, we must resist the psychology of nonexpectation, the tyranny of the routine, and instead drive into visualization, dreaming, a deep desire for improvement, a Release into First Pres 2030. You know how this goes. I'm 46. That makes it hard to understand the life of someone who is 16. In 2030, I'll be 56. The 16-year old will be 26. Lord willing, he or she will be on session telling me what to do! What are we willing to do to dream today of First Pres 2030? We must do it; the next generation is coming. **Congratulations to the class of 2020!** You see, this Sunday is the Sunday we usually celebrate graduations, give out Bibles to our 2nd-graders, celebrate our preschools and welcome our confirmation students, and now commission Fellows classes each year—all things that have been set aside or are coming in different ways—but we lift up this Sunday our commitment to reach the next generation for Christ. We are not Past-Bound. The future is too beautiful! Too exciting! We are Future-Captured. Future-enraptured. The excitement of First Pres 2030 is too much. We can't contain it! You see? Not Past-Bound. Future-Captured.

How does Jesus pray us into the future? Look again. It starts with the Hold. I kept them; I protected them. Then the Release. What is in the Release? "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. How many preachers and teachers of this passage skip that? Protection I understand. Next verse, hatred, I understand. They are going to face opposition. We are going to face opposition. The world is full of viruses, and bad actors, and violent men, and addictions, and people who hate God's Word, hate God's light, and despise God's children—consider them crack-brained fools. Joy? I don't get it, so I think I'll skip over it. No! "I say these things to them ... so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them." Will you take the full measure of the joy of Christ into you today? Let me tell you a secret. The joy of the Lord is your strength. The joy of the Lord is what gives you momentum in the release. The joy of the Lord lifts your head to overcome the opposition. Hold, Release, Help. When it comes to Help, Jesus

prays for our protection, our purpose and our power. Just to give you the answer to the question up front, Jesus is praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the people. That's our help. **Protection.** "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one" (John 17:15). You can't take them out of the world. The world is where the mission is. But in the world, Jesus prays, protect them. May they know the power of the Holy Spirit stirred up and poured out over them. Protect them. May they shine with the light of the Holy Spirit so that darkness flees from them. May they stand in such power and confidence in the Holy Spirit that the deceiver has no purchase in them. May they be rooted in strength. Jesus doesn't pray, "Save them from hard things." Jesus prays, "strengthen them to overcome in hardship, to stand faithful in opposition, to be light in darkness." Protect them. Then **Purpose.** "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). Do you know yourself as sent by God? We will talk about that in two weeks, I promise.

Protection. Purpose, and the third help, **Power.** Power in the Holy Spirit. The power is in this word "sanctify." "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). Friends, the whole sermon could have been this verse right here. Sanctify. It means to purify, to perfect, to make holy. It also means to set aside for a purpose. "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified" (John 17:19). That's much better understood, "I set myself aside for a purpose so they can be set aside for a purpose." Power in the Holy Spirit to sanctify. We get justification and sanctification confused. We think we need to polish ourselves up and get ourselves together in order to come to Jesus and be of any use. But no, Jesus set Himself aside and went to the cross so that you and I could be forgiven and justified, made right, with God. After justification, after you have met Jesus, after you have confessed your sins and professed your faith, and realized that you can do nothing to earn God's love, that you can do nothing to earn your way into God's good graces, that you are going to have to rely on Jesus and what Jesus did for you if you are going to be forgiven and be right with God, after that—God, who loves you just as you are, God loves you too much to leave you that way. God pours out His Holy Spirit into you with power to free you from sin, to set you free from bondage to sin, to loosen the chains. Power to be different. Power to be altered. New. Sanctified. Or at least on the road toward it.

There is an ancient Greek myth about a hero named Heracles. He was being punished with assignments so difficult they were meant to kill him. He had to clean out the Augean Stables. The Greek gods gave King Augeas 3,000 cattle he kept in a huge stable for 30 years, without ever cleaning it out. 3,000 cattle. 30 years. The dung stinketh. Heracles didn't want to die scooping poop. Smart guy. So he diverted a river to run through the stables and clean it all out. 3,000 cattle. 30 years. That's a lot of stink! There are parts of us that we think can never come clean. There are parts of our lives that we think could never get washed out. Listen, we are preparing for Revival. Jesus prayed for us that we would know the power of the Holy Spirit, stirred up and poured out over us, poured into us, the Holy Spirit, the spring of eternal life. Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them" (John 7:38). A door is open for you. A window is open. Will you open your heart to the joy of the Lord, to the power of the Lord, to the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit to wash you through and through? Is revival possible without this?

We are not Past-Bound. We are Future-Captured. Christ has prayed us so. He has prayed that we would be held—protected always by the loving hand of God. He has prayed that we would be released—sent with purpose out into the world on a mission. He has prayed that we would be helped—filled with the Holy Spirit, poured out into our hearts, overflowing within us to become purifying streams. Isaiah says, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants" (Isaiah 44:3). How does Jesus pray us into the future? With joy. With joy the church steps forward, from generation to generation. We are not bound to the past. The wrongs are forgiven. The rights are not limiting to our future—get it? The bad things of the past are cleaned out. The good things of the past are not the limits of what might happen in the future. We are not Past-Bound. We are Future-Captured. The Spirit is stirred up and poured out over us, and over our offspring, and Jesus walks straight into the next generation, and we will follow Him.

## STUDY GUIDE

### REVIVAL • "Past-Bound to Future-Captured"

John 17:12–19

#### **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 17:12-19.

- 1) Throughout verses 12–19, what does Jesus **do** for His disciples?
- 2) Throughout verses 12–19, what does Jesus **pray** for His disciples?
- 3) What strikes you about verse 13 in relation to the word "joy"? What does this tell us about the very nature of God?

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

4) Pastor Tim writes, "We are sold out on gaining First Pres 2030 and reaching the next generation for Christ... As a church, we must bend ourselves in every conceivable way toward reaching the next generation." Thinking of all our favorite rhythms, environments, programs, styles, etc. at First Pres, what are you personally unwilling to give up to see the rising generation worshipping Jesus? Why?

5) Every generation faces the challenge of passing on the gospel. What concerns you the most about changing the way we as a church have followed God in order to see the next generation responding to the grace of God?

#### **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?