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Revival and Young People

"I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy ... your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28).

In every generation, God has been faithful to bring revival to His people and spiritual awakening to nations. In almost all cases, those movements of the Spirit were most evident among young people. Most modern day surveys indicate that up to 85 percent of all people who get saved are converted before age 30, and most before age 25. One preacher described young people as "kindling" which helps set fire to "old logs."

As we see the following accounts, history records the role of young people in the revivals which have occurred over the centuries.

Old Testament Revivals

* Joshua and the generation under 20. "Your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it" (Deuteronomy 1:39).

* David the young hero. "You are not able to ... fight with him; for you are but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth ..." (I Samuel 17:33).

* Josiah, the boy King who started a Revival. "In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the Lord God of his father David ... and he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places ..." (II Chronicles 34:3).

* Jeremiah, the young prophet. "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth. But the Lord said to me: 'Do not say, I am a youth. For you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak'" (Jeremiah 1:6, 7).

New Testament Revivals

* John the Baptist and his radical message. "Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt ... and he ate locusts and wild honey" (Mark 1:6).

* The original Jesus Movement. "Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about 30 years of age." The disciples who followed Jesus probably ranged in age from 21 to 35 and many others followed Him including teenagers and children. From these young leaders, the Lord established a Church that "turned the world upside down."

Church History

* The Great Reformation - 1500s

John Calvin - He was converted at age 25 and within a year had completed the first draft of a now famous book, Institutes of the Christian Religion - a book called "the single most influential book on theology in Church history."1

Martin Luther - Himself a young man, he was joined by Philipp Melanchthon, a 21 year old scholar, as they lectured to hundreds of University students during the years of the Reformation.

* The Great Awakening - 1700s

George Whitefield - One of the greatest preachers of the 1700s, he began to preach at age 21 and often spoke to crowds in excess of 30,000 people with no amplification.
Johnathan Edwards - A young preacher in Northampton, Massachusetts, Edwards had a great influence on the youth of his day. In 1734, some exciting things began to happen among the young people of New England.

"It seemed to be a time of extraordinary dullness in religion; licentiousness prevailed among the youth of the town. The church kids ignored their parents ... walked the streets and partied all night ... When two young people died unexpectedly, some of Edward's sermons began to get through ... the young rebels of the town began to turn to Christ, and ... it became the Jesus Movement of its generation."2

Yale College - In 1796, 26 Yale students founded an organization on campus called the "Moral Society" which discouraged profanity, immorality and drinking. By 1800 nearly one half of the college students were members and this group is credited with laying the foundation for four revivals that occurred later on that campus in the first few decades of the 19th century.

* The 1857 Revival

D.L. Moody - In 1858, Dwight Moody began an outreach to young people in Chicago. He started a Sunday school for youth in a vacant tavern which soon grew into a church filled with young believers. This was the launching pad for one of the great ministries of the 1800s.

C.T. Studd - A convert under Moody's ministry at Cambridge University in England, Studd "was the toast of the nation, captain of their champion cricket team ... top sportsman, and inheritor of a small fortune." He became part of the "Cambri
dge Seven." This group consisted of Moody's helpers or his converts, who toured universities and challenged students to missions. They were called "holy madmen, launched out to redeem another generation of spiritual warriors."3

Wales - From a report in 1859, "one of the most striking characteristics of the movement was its effect on young people and even on children. The youth of our congregations are nearly all the subjects of deep religious impressions. Very young people ... children from 10 to 14 years of age, gather together to hold prayer meetings, and pray very fervently. In many places, the young people hold a prayer meeting of their own, and these sometimes proved instrumental in bringing the powerful influences of the revival to that particular locality. The majority of all converts of the revival ... were young people."4

The 20th Century

* Evan Roberts - A movement known as the Welsh Revival began in 1904 when Evan Roberts, at the age of 26, said to his college principal, "I keep hearing a voice that tells me I must go home to speak to our young people in my home chur.
ch." So began a sweeping revival in which 100,000 people were converted in five months throughout Wales.

"The revival seems to work especially among young people. Its form, which is that of prayer, praise and personal testimony, and its absence of method make it the most methodical expression of the emotions of young hearts aflame with the love of God."5

* Yale - In 1905, nearly one-fourth of the college's students were part of campus prayer meetings and Bible studies.

* 1948 Canadian Revival - In a Bible College in Northern Canada, an outpouring of the Spirit took place that started a revival around the world. Young people were overwhelmed by the presence of God as spontaneous worship broke out among the students and the power of God was demonstrated.

* Billy Graham - One of the greatest worldwide evangelists of all time, Dr. Graham started crusades in Los Angeles, California, in 1949 and was one of the first speakers for a new movement among young people called "Youth For Christ." They "attracted tens of thousands of high schoolers for their 'rallies.'"6

* Jesus People Movement - Out of the "hippy" culture that arose among American youth in 1967, came a second counterculture called the "Jesus People." Baptized by the hundreds in the Pacific Ocean, they brought a strange and unique youth awakening to the streets of the nation. Many of the young people converted in this move of God are now leaders in today's churches.

* Charismatic Revival - In 1967, a small group of Catholic college students were baptized in the Holy Spirit at the "Duque
sne Weekend," an event regarded as the start of the Catholic Charismatic movement.

* 1970s - Many youth-related Christian organizations began in the '60s and '70s, including the Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts, A.C.E. Schools, Teen Challenge, Campus Crusade, Agape Force, Youth With A Mission, Maranatha Campus Ministries, Last Days Ministries and others.

The Future of Christian Revival

There are many young Christian leaders who sense that another awakening among young people may be just around the corner as we step into the last decade of this century. There are encouraging signs of revival and moving of the Spirit.

In a nation that is experiencing perhaps the greatest growth in the Christian faith, for example, come these reports:

"According to a recent estimate, more than half of China's one billion population are under 20! China is a nation of young people, so it is not surprising that the house churches have a preponderance of people in their 20's and 30's. Some of them are ex-Red Guards."7

Some sources estimate over 72,000 people a day are being converted in Red China! All across the world there are indications of a significant move of the Holy Spirit in our generation.

We must believe that the Lord is going to help us influence our generation for the Kingdom of God. We must pray and act to see a revival and an awakening in our time, in our nation.

In the United States of America, for example, there are approximately 45 million young people between the ages of 14 and 24. Nearly 20 million are teenagers going through some of the most difficult days of their lives.

If we could see a revival among the certain percentage of those who are Christians, they in turn could affect a spiritual awakening among hundreds of thousands of other young people who are not yet converted to Christ. If God moved sovereignly among both believers and unbelievers at the same time, we might witness the greatest youth revival the world has ever known.

Our generation may have the greatest opportunity in all of history to experience revival, awakening and the supernatural power of God.

Depending on our vision, our ability to conquer our enemies and our desire to achieve our destiny, we could see a dynamic demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power in our generation.

Let it be recorded in the history books of Heaven, that the young Christians of this generation respond in radical obedience and dedication to the revelation of the purposes of God for their lifetime. Let us be like David who "served the purpose of God in his generation." Perhaps we will discover that we came to the Kingdom "for such a time as this"!