

# Revival Stories: John Sung

by E.A. Johnston

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*E.A. Johnston's sermon explores the life and ministry of John Sung, emphasizing the need for repentance and reliance on the Holy Spirit for true revival.*

**Duration:** 17:00

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:11, Psalm 119:105, Matthew 6:33, Mark 16:15, John 15:5, Acts 2:42, Acts 4:31

**Topics:** "Biography"

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## Description

In this video, we learn about the preaching style and experiences of Dr. John Song, a renowned preacher of the word of God. He compares his sermons to a surgeon's scalpel, explaining how each day of his sermon series focuses on different aspects of the Christian faith, such as repentance, salvation, being born again, holiness, being filled with the Holy Spirit, victory in the Lord, and Christ's second coming. Dr. Song faced opposition and hatred from those who were losing business due to his influence, but he remained steadfast in his mission. Despite the challenges, his sermons had a profound impact on his audience, leading many to repentance and dedication to preaching the gospel. Miraculous healings and protection from harm were also witnessed during his ministry.

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## Transcript

There can be only one answer to the question, why has the Church lost her power? The answer lies in the reality that the Church has forsaken the third person of the Trinity, replacing him with programs, money, and man-centered methodologies. Our reliance is one of self rather than reliance upon the Holy Spirit to empower us to pray and preach and witness with an endowment from on high. It was said of the apostolic Christians that they turned the world upside down, but if that was said of us worldly Christians today, we'd be standing on our heads.

Our grant of evangelism today is foreign to the way John Wesley and George Whitfield preached. Both Wesley and Whitfield preached the law before grace. They believed that a sinner must be confronted with his rebellion against an Almighty God.

In fact, George Whitfield would often comment that a sinner must first be brought to Mount Sinai before he can be brought to Mount Zion. Today's evangelism says, God loves you, just believe on Him and you will go to heaven. Is there no wonder that our congregations are mixed herds of sheep and goats who cannot get along and bite each other's tails? Division in our churches is crippling our congregations.

There are more church splits today than ever before. There is a golden thread that weaves its way through revivals, and if this purified thread is broken, it has been a bar to revival throughout history, to which I refer as the golden thread of a forgiven heart towards others. When one researches the history of revival, it is plainly shown that many revivals began accompanied by a sudden manifestation of God's presence when Christians began to confess their sins of an unforgiving heart to one another.

One of the great moons of grace in the history of the church occurred right before the Second World War in China, and it was when the Chinese believers began to repent of their unforgiving hearts towards one another that God came so powerfully in revival. Jesus Christ has built His church in China today, and it is astonishing what God is doing in the underground church movement in China at this hour. But before World War II, God was at work in China bringing revival through the powerful preaching of John Song.

The subject of our revival stories for today is the great Chinese evangelist, Dr. John Song. John Song was not only a powerful preacher of the gospel, but he was an intellectual genius. He came to America to study academics and earned a Ph.D. in chemistry.

He spoke fluent Chinese, American, and German. He turned down lucrative offers to teach chemistry in the leading universities to study for the ministry at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. And it was while John Song was in seminary that he had a dramatic conversion experience.

This is taken from his diary on February 10, 1927, from his own words concerning his salvation experience. I got to the point where I no longer had any desire to live. When the clock struck twelve, I was suddenly overwhelmed by a vision of the crucified Christ standing before me.

In a compassionate voice, he comforted me. My son, your sins are forgiven. Your name is now changed to John.

John Song said that night he felt a wonderful relief in the sudden rolling away of his sin burden. Leaping to his feet with a shout of hallelujah, he sang praises to his God. His songs of praise rang through the corridors of his fourth-floor dormitory.

But his new born-again behavior disturbed the liberal professors of that seminary, and they had him committed to a nearby insane asylum. He was institutionalized for 193 days, and that mental hospital was God's appointed seminary for him, for it was there during those 193 days when John Song read through the entire Bible 44 times. For the rest of his life, he read 11 chapters of his Bible every day, condensing each chapter into a key sentence which he would use in his sermon outlines.

John Song was first and foremost a man of prayer. When he was not preaching, he was praying. Even after a long day of preaching, he could be found late in the night on his knees before God in prayer, his clothes sticking to him like a dishrag from the sweat of his powerful praying.

It was evident from his preaching that here was a man who just left the presence of God and had a fresh message from the heart of God when he preached. Dr. Song often used props when he preached to illustrate a point from the Bible. One favorite of his was a coffin which he used to pull out slips of paper, naming every sin from A to Z, naming them one by one.

This sermon would be entitled, Open the Coffin, and all throughout his powerful ministry, his primary message was repentance. Often when he opened up the coffin, entire congregations would be drenched in tears and on their faces confessing their sins. Many times when he preached this sermon, several

hundred people could be seen weeping at a time as the coffin was opened with such power and conviction that many thought Judgment Day had come to China.

To catch a sense of what an intellectual genius John Song was, listen to his quick response to a short statement with a sermonic answer which expounds every thought presented. After preaching his famous sermon, Open the Coffin, a clergyman came up to him and said, Your sermons are like a surgeon's scalpel. Without pausing, Song replied, Yes, on the first day, I spoke on repentance, cutting up the body.

On the second day, it was salvation, draining away the pus. On the third day, I spoke of being born again, the removal of mortified flesh, and on the fourth day, it was on becoming holy, the clearing up of all things impure. On the fifth day, I spoke of being filled with the Holy Spirit, the use of medication.

On the sixth day, I covered the topic of victory in the Lord, which is the stitching up of the open wound. On the seventh day, I talked about Christ's second coming, bandaging the wound. I repeat, John Song was a true genius.

I also believe one of the reasons God used him in such a remarkable way was that he knew he served a big God, and he asked God for big things. In 1932, he earnestly prayed to God that God would give him 100,000 souls that year alone. He even kept a blank check on his person which read, The Bank of Heaven, dated March 22, 1932.

My God shall supply 100,000 souls, all for his glory. In 1935, he increased that number and asked God for 200 souls that year. It is hard to describe how greatly God used John Song in the revival and conversion of souls for the glory of God, but one earmark of true revival, friends, is how Satan violently opposes it through various tactics, slandering the evangelist, beginning a false fire, or direct opposition even from religious leaders.

Oftentimes, you can measure the power of a revival by the amount of opposition created by the enemy of our souls. To catch a glimpse of his typical day of preaching, listen to a page taken from his diary dated March 2, 1935. On my way to the church, I saw graffiti on walls, down with John Song, because the movie houses and gambling halls were losing business.

Their owners really hated me. Someone accused me in the newspaper of being a rabble rouser and agitator. Two men plotted to beat me up, but were thwarted.

The believers assigned an escort to accompany me to the meeting place. What the Lord has for me are mostly unpleasant things, so that by experiencing hardship, I would bear more spiritual fruit. On March 2, 6000 people attended the meeting, with many of them standing the whole time.

With my eyes closed, I described for them the crucifixion of Christ. How quiet was the audience. They were all silently weeping as the Holy Spirit used each sentence to pierce their hearts.

Even the children were quiet. I've never seen 6000 people so moved to tears. That afternoon, 300 evangelistic teams fanned out to pass out tracts, and some 150 dedicated their lives to preach the gospel.

The sick were divided into four groups for prayer. Many of them were healed. One person, mute for over 30 years, could suddenly speak.

One leper, who was prayed for, received his complete healing over the period of two days. On March 9, the local newspaper printed letters from three readers demanding the Public Security Bureau to expel me from the area and to bring me to trial. Twelve men plotted to bomb the church where the meetings were taking place and murder me.

The PSB came to search and found the pistols and explosives. How wonderful was God's protection. Well, that, friends, is just one page from the diary of Dr. Song.

Each page is a page of his diary, and it looks like a scene out of the Book of Acts. John Song was an ordinary preacher. There was nothing special about him or even his sermons.

But the Holy Ghost who preached through him made things special. He was a man completely surrendered to the Holy Spirit's discipline in his life. John Song suffered from a physical ailment which made him weak through loss of blood from his bleeding bowels.

He suffered greatly with this physical ailment to the day he died. Frequently, he preached in excruciating pain, at times having to preach from a chair or even laying on his side. But nothing would keep him from preaching the gospel of the Son of God.

I have a dear friend whose father worked under John Song, and he said that Song was a man completely under the anointing of the Holy Spirit that when he preached his simple sermons, the power of God was felt by all who heard him. Song preached hard against sin, often pinpointing sins of individuals before him in the audiences directed by the Holy Spirit. The four Chinese proverbial sins of womanizing, gambling, drinking, and smoking would be hit hard, and this startled many who came under conviction of sin.

Dr. Song could be compared in a way to the evangelist Billy Sunday, for he would move freely around the stage in quick motions, at times bringing surprises on his hearers. Once he was preaching to a large crowd on the feeding of the 5,000, and he produced out of nowhere a French loaf of bread. As he spoke on the bread alive, he would peel it off piece by piece and throw the pieces into the hungry audience.

He preached a double-barreled message of repentance and the new birth, and he fearlessly lashed out on the sins of the people, naming them one by one, until many of his hearers were bent with conviction of sin. Many wept bitterly for their sins and sought God in brokenness and repentance. That was the kind of effect he had on an audience.

This period of revival under Dr. Song's ministry came to be known as the Asian Awakening. One of his biographers has calculated that throughout his 12 years of itinerant preaching from 1928 to 1940, that 400 souls came to Christ. In a sermon preached in South China, John Song testified himself that, During the last nine years of my travels, I have seen several hundred thousand born again.

During a month of his preaching, it was not uncommon for between 7,000 to 8,000 people to be saved each and every month, but he humbly knew he was just a consecrated vessel in the hands of his God. One would have to go back to the Welsh revival of 1904 to 1905 to even come close to that outpouring of grace where it was said over 100,000 came to Christ. In 1935 in Singapore, God came in a mighty harvest of souls under Song's preaching.

Over 2,000 souls were saved and over 100 preaching bands were organized in what became known as the Singapore Pentecost. One of the greatest marks of his anointed ministry was the great number of converts who became preachers of the gospel. Canvassing much of China themselves, hence multiplying

the ministry of Dr. John Song.

He died at the age of 42, but his legacy lives on. Wouldn't it be wonderful, friends, if God came in revival like that to America, where our nation was brought to her knees in brokenness and repentance towards God, where hundreds of thousands of souls would be gloriously saved? Pray that the Lord of the harvest will raise up in our land a John Song for our day.

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