

God is at Work Today

by John Avant

This sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God, highlighting the need to be captivated by His presence and to allow Him to infiltrate our hearts and minds with the mind of Christ. It encourages freedom in expressing what God wants to be said and anointing to give glory to Jesus alone. The speaker shares personal experiences of revival and the impact of saying 'yes' to God, urging listeners to take a holy pause, consider their ways, and be more astonished by God than afraid of the world.

Scripture: Haggai 1:7, Haggai 1:12, Haggai 1:13, Haggai 2:6, Haggai 2:9, Isaiah 6:8, John 17:21, Acts 2:46, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 6:19

Topics: "Surrender to God", "Experiencing His Presence"

Description

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Transcript

Lord Jesus, I pray that you will arrest my brother with the glory and the presence of your spirit. You will captivate his tongue, his heart, and his mind and infiltrate him with the mind of Christ. Give him the freedom to liberate everything that you want said and anoint him to give glory to Jesus alone.

Bless him, Father. Thank you for John. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen. Well, good afternoon. It's great to see you and everybody that's watching online, wherever you may be, and it's just an honor to be here with you.

I'm so sorry that I couldn't be here for the whole conference. I've been speaking all across the Los Angeles area, and I've been out here before, but I've never done this many speaking things in one trip to Los Angeles. Let me tell you, this is a big, big area, and every day I'll get my phone out and put the GPS in of where I'm speaking, and I'm going, oh, it's two hours away, and I'm in the same city.

So I started out at Azusa today. That's two hours away, and I've got to catch a flight after this at LAX. That's about two hours away, but I'm still in Los Angeles.

That's crazy. It doesn't— they're kind of Los Angeles area, right? But it's been a great week, and I've been praying for you guys and what's been going on here. If you're not familiar with Life Action Ministries, I'll tell you just a little bit about what we do.

I can really brag on it. I can probably do it for at least another year, maybe, because I've only been president for a year, and Life Action is 47 years old. So the bad stuff is probably my fault, the things that I've done since I've been there.

The good stuff, I haven't had much to do with, but I sure get to talk about it a lot. 47 years, Life Action has been one of the major revival ministries in this country. When I was new at Life Action, I was looking at all of these churches Life Action had served, because for all these 47 years, we just go where churches need us and serve in the way they need us to serve so that we can help them refocus and prayerfully experience revival.

And we've seen mighty moves of God many times in many places in the ministry of Life Action, and we believe the best days are yet to come. But as I was looking with some of our team at all the churches Life Action has served, I couldn't believe what I was seeing, because we figured out that we've served over 47 years about 20 percent of the evangelical churches in the country. About one in five churches we've personally served, and yet most places I go, I don't think anybody's heard of Life Action.

It's pretty much a secret. And I tried to figure out why that is, because it bothered me, and it doesn't really bother me anymore. I figured out why Life Action is such a secret, because it's never been the job of Life Action to talk about Life Action.

Life Action talks about Jesus. Life Action talks about revival. Life Action talks about the power of the Holy Spirit moving.

Life Action talks about what happens when a church comes to life and grabs hold of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, and starts loving people and loving God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength, and then can't help but tell people about Jesus. That's what Life Action has talked about for 47 years. So I've been trying to figure out these days, am I messing up if I talk about Life Action? Not so sure, but I do know that I have inherited a legacy of tremendous humility.

There's about 300 Life Action missionaries. About 80 of them are based at our home site in Michigan, and the rest of us are somewhere else. I travel about 250 days a year.

We have teams that are right now on the road somewhere, and they're teams of millennials, largely millennials. We recruit from all over the country, and we say, all we ask you to do is raise your own salary, be a missionary with us, live on the road for a year, so you get to serve children, students, those that lead worship, you get to lead worship. They may be 18, 19, 20 years old.

There are some incredibly gifted 19-year-olds in this country that we find and say, you can serve children, students, preschoolers. You can do sound, tech, lighting. You can share the gospel.

You can lead worship, play instruments, whatever it is you do, and we bring them together in the summer, form them into teams, pray like crazy, commission them, and send them out across the country in buses to live in people's homes and serve the Lord all that year. You'd think, who would do that? Who's crazy enough to do that? Well, we've got teams doing it right now all across America, but also you'd say in these days, do churches even still do that? I mean, clearly culture is changing, and we're in a day in which fewer

and fewer churches are doing multi-day events, and I'll talk about in a moment why it's absolutely crucial that we remember again that we must stop and pause and have time set aside to be with God. But, you know, certainly less churches are doing that, but there's also, I think, a desperation coming, beginning to form.

I wondered if it would ever happen, but I think it's beginning now. I think when 80 to 90 percent of our churches are now declining, when even our largest churches, most of our large churches, are no longer growing, we think they're large, so they're growing. No, they're large, but they're not as large as they used to be.

And when we look at the culture collapsing around us, and we see what's happening in church consistency, Tom Rayner says that the head of Lifeway, the leading reason that churches aren't growing anymore is not that people are mad. It might not even be that we're not doing evangelism. The leading reason is that God's people just don't take it seriously anymore.

He said 15 years ago, in a Baptist church, for instance, the average Baptist came to church three times a week. Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, prayer meeting, discipleship training, committee meeting. A lot of people came six, seven, eight times a week.

He said now the average Baptist comes three times a month to something at church. In less than two decades, from three times a week to three times a month. So pastors are wringing their hands and going, what am I doing wrong? What's happening in my church? My church is declining.

And then they run into somebody at the store that they know is active in their church and say, hey, what did you think about the sermon Sunday? I need to get your advice. Well, we had family on Sunday. What about last Sunday? You know, we've been going at it three weeks.

Well, you know, last Sunday we had, you know, we were on vacation. So you have your active people and they hadn't even been in three weeks. And this is the church in America today because everything else now is more important than God.

But you know what is encouraging? Those that are doing research are saying actually the core of the church is getting stronger in America. Because there's no pressure to go to church anymore. There's no pressure to be a part.

In fact, there's pressure against it. I mean, we're considered, you know, the strange ones now, the intolerant ones now. And so those that are actually really faithful in their churches, they're growing more solid in the gospel.

The core of God's people has at least stayed solid, if not grown. But I think we're going to continue to see the periphery falling away and falling away. So the core is going, if we don't get serious with Jesus, we're not even going to have a church pretty soon.

They're just going to, they're going away. They're going away across America. So there's a new desperation and we're booking into 2020 with churches saying, come and help us.

Four days, a week, two weeks. We have teams coming into churches staying for two weeks where churches are coming almost every night. Maybe a couple of nights we'll take off every night saying, God, help us.

We've got to have the power of your spirit again. And so there's a lot of things to be pessimistic about, but there's also a lot of things to be optimistic about. And remember, we cannot allow the world to brand us as a pessimistic people.

We are gospel people. What's the word gospel mean? Anybody know? Bad news, right? No, good news. Good news.

So we ought to be a people of joy, a people of life, a people that when the world sees us coming, when the world sees us coming, they go, I don't know that I believe what they believe, but I want to be around that person. I'm really, I don't, I don't get, I'm kind of uncomfortable these days with Christians that look like they've been sucking on green lemons all day long. And that you spend about five minutes with them and you go, I think I'd rather hang around lost people.

You know, I don't think that's what God calls us to in these days. Jesus was a friend of sinners. I was talking to a friend of mine who moved out here years ago from the Bible Belt from a church I used to pastor.

And he said, man, he said, John, you would teach us when I was your pastor to join Jesus, the friend of sinners. And then we ought to spend lots and lots and lots and lots of time with people that don't even know the Lord. And we shouldn't be afraid of that.

And from fortresses where we hide away from the world because that's not what Jesus did. He said, but I come out here and then I went back home to my home church. And he said, somebody was saying, how are you doing out there in California? He said, I'm doing great.

We love it out there. He said, be careful. Why? He said, well, those people out there, they may act nice to you, but they don't know Jesus.

And my friend said, yeah, you're right. A lot of them don't know Jesus, but why would that make me afraid of them? They're not my enemy. They're my mission field.

Oh, but this person had a hard time imagining that, you know? So we should be good news people. We should be crying out to God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. And then we ought to believe that God's going to do something in our day.

He told us if we seek him, we'll find him. Anybody here seeking him? I am too. I am too.

I believe we're going to find him. I believe we're going to see him move. At Life Action, we believe in enough to give up everything.

I gave up a 6,000 member church one year ago, salary and everything else, and just said, God, I can't anymore stand still the rest of my life in one place. I just can't do it because, Lord, if there's any chance at all in my lifetime that I could see you move in a mighty awakening, I want to get everywhere I can, plant seeds everywhere I can go, and be with as many people as I can to see if we might just see you move again in mighty revival before you return. Because the other thing that I want you to know tonight that's encouraging, I'm deeply involved in an overseas mission, both my wife and I. Life Action has been primarily a national ministry of revival, but I told the board, if you want me to be president, we've got to be involved overseas as well.

Otherwise, we're going to miss the greatest awakening in the history of the world. Now, I don't want to miss that. I believe we are alive to see, if we want to, the greatest awakening in the history of the world, if we want to.

Problem is that we usually have to get on a plane to see it. See, in many countries of the world, if there was a conference like this, there's no way we could do it here. Couldn't do it in Korea.

Couldn't do it in Ethiopia. Couldn't do it in many parts of the persecuted church world. We'd have to find an outdoor place where they could hide, but thousands would come.

They'd walk for miles. There's no way we could get around it. My friend Dan Cathey, president of Chick-fil-A, I was his pastor for years.

He called me the other day, and he said, I'm at a prayer meeting. I think it was a Tuesday morning. I said, you're at a prayer meeting? See, I'm in Korea.

I had a prayer meeting. They want me to speak, so pray for me. I said, great.

I said, is it like a home meeting? And he said, no, there's about 40,000 people here. All they were doing is praying for revival. See, do you know that 30,000 people a day in China are coming to Jesus by conservative estimates? 30,000 a day.

30,000 every single day. Because the church of China is ablaze with prayer warriors and with churches that are on fire with revival, and it can't be stopped. Nobody can stop it.

The government's cracking down again. Here's what the government of China does. They crack down a while, and boom, the Holy Spirit just explodes.

And they go, well, that didn't work. Maybe if we leave them alone, maybe that'll work. And it grows, and they crack down again, and boom, it explodes again, and they crack down some more.

You know why? Because they're stupid. It's stupid to be without the Spirit of God and watch the Spirit of God over and over and over and over again. It doesn't matter if we know the Lord or not.

If we get apart from the Spirit of God, we'll get real stupid real fast. The Chinese government's just stupid because they know nothing about the Spirit of God, and they can't figure it out. I was talking to an Ethiopian man two days ago where I was speaking at California Baptist University, and we were talking about thousands and thousands and thousands, hundreds of thousands of people in that country crying out to God for revival.

I'm deeply, deeply involved in the Muslim world. I'll tell you a story or two in this message. I'm deeply involved in what God is doing there.

Why? I mean, there's plenty to do in this country. Why would I want to take time and life action to go to the Middle East? Because I don't want to miss out on spiritual awakening. I don't want to miss it.

I hope we see it in this country, but I'm not willing to miss it if we don't. And listen to this. Now, if you think I'm making this up, I can send you the missional research, the scholarly research.

This is absolutely true. In the last 15 years, one five, 15 years, more Muslims worldwide have come to Jesus than in the previous 1,500 years. This is why I'm not discouraged.

If we're discouraged today, you know what that means? It means we take America more seriously than we take the kingdom of God, and that scares me to death. I mean, all this political talk the last couple of weeks, I know it's real popular to jump on the bandwagon of that. I just want to encourage you.

Listen, listen, we are prophets of God. We're supposed to be able to speak truth to those in authority. We're not waiting for Washington, D.C. to help us make things right, and we ought to expect them to be a mess almost totally without Christ.

We're not running to Egypt for our help. In fact, we're commanded not to do that, so I'm scared to death watching evangelicals acting like, oh, woe is us. If we don't get things right in Washington, D.C., then we're just not doing our jobs.

We need to apologize to the persecuted church in the New Testament and today because they must be messing it up because they just don't have the politics of their country right. You know, it may be that the best thing that would happen for us would be for liberalism to take over this country completely and get us to a place where we finally believe we don't have the power to fix things. We don't have the votes to make it right because only the Spirit of God can make anything right in this nation.

I would rather have revival and having us taken over by liberalism in this country, by liberal politics, than to have conservatism rule and never see revival again. Most believers don't amen that these days, and a lot of pastors try to speak that message, and then they're trying to speak it in some other church. So, it's desperately important that we understand what God's doing in the world and rejoice in it because He cares just as much about what's happening in Syria as He does about what's happening in our own country.

And all over the Muslim world, we're seeing incredible, incredible revival. And because of that, when you come to Christ in the Muslim world, you know what it means, and you immediately begin to share the gospel at great cost. One country where I was in May, and I'll be taking a group of Life Action young missionaries there next May at the latest, they're calling it the homeless millennial revival right now.

Here's why. Because most of the Muslims who are coming to Christ are young, 18, 19, 25 years old. And when they come to Christ, their families kick them out of the home.

Most people there live in extended family homes. Families kick them out, and they lose their job. One of these young men is so smart, he had a full scholarship to study in Germany, but he turned it down because he said, everybody I know is lost, and I can't leave my country lost like this.

He has no home, but he's sharing the gospel everywhere. So, our missionaries there are just trying to help him live and survive. He's absolutely brilliant, but he's a revival centered evangelist to the Muslim world without a home or a job.

So, these are some of the things God is doing around the world. I don't want to miss it. I had the privilege of being a part of a revival movement.

I normally don't get to preach and share something about this movement, but I've been given a little more time tonight, and I'll respect the time, but I want to share with you just a little bit of what happened in 1995

and 96. Because you're here, because you love revival. You long for revival, and I got to see a little bit of it, and it wasn't something that we expected to happen.

It was 1995. I was pastoring a church in Brownwood, Texas. We were not in a very healthy place.

Probably nobody here. Anybody here ever been to Brownwood, Texas? Maybe one or two. You probably couldn't find it on a map.

Brownwood, Texas is the place where Howard Payne University is, a small Christian school. That was kind of its claim to fame. Our church was going through all kinds of struggles, and I really actually didn't think I was going to survive as a pastor, but that drove me to desperation, and so a group of us as pastors, interdenominational.

We had a born-again Episcopalian. We had a couple of Charismatics. We had a couple of Baptists, and we began to just cry out to God.

All of our churches were a mess, and we began to cry out to God to do something in our churches, and we began to see God do some unusual things, and we were kind of talking about it and saying, you know, we've been praying, and some things are happening we haven't seen before. We're not seeing revival, but we're seeing something, aren't we? Like the day that I was out with a police officer. I was a police chaplain in the town, and we're driving around.

He goes, I need to show you something. I need to take you by the gang house, and I said, well, should we get, you know, make sure we got our Kevlar on and be ready. He said, no, no, no, just don't worry, and we went by the gang house, and it was dark Saturday night.

Nobody's there, and I said, well, where is everybody? I've been out here with you before where we're all in danger of our lives, mostly in a Hispanic drug-based gang issue there, and he said, well, you're not gonna believe this, but they're studying the Bible. I said, what? He said, yeah, there's this guy. He used to be a gang leader here, and he went somewhere else, and he got saved.

His name is Fernando Hernandez, and he's come back, and he's just telling them all about Jesus. I said, I gotta meet him. So I meet this guy.

He knew very little at that point about the Bible or anything else. He didn't know, for instance, that all these kids he was leading to Jesus, these teenagers and young adults, needed to be baptized. He didn't know that.

He really hadn't read a whole lot of the Bible yet. He told me, he said, well, I was a mess, and Jesus saved me. I figured I need to tell others about that.

That was a simple faith, and so he just pretty much cleaned out the gang problem there in West Central Texas. So I told him, I said, listen, we need to help you, and we need to disciple them. We need to baptize them.

He said, okay. So we start teaching them and talking with them, and one day the day had come, and I brought into my very, very traditional Baptist church with a lot of strife going on an entire section over here of gang members—Hispanic gang members, all right? Fernando walked in, and he sat them down, and he loudly said, sit there, shut up, and don't say a word, and listen to that man up there. Everybody's going,

who? They were better behaved than our deacons, basically, in the service.

So that was the first time they were there. A couple of weeks later, we baptized a whole bunch of them, and we brought the first one into the baptistry. The baptistry was right up here like this, and brought him in, and he's looking out.

He's wide-eyed. He'd never seen anything like all these people, and I baptized him, and he doesn't leave. He's just standing there.

I said, you can leave now, and he starts going like this. He starts hopping, and everybody knows you don't hop in a Baptist church. It's right there in the Baptist rule book.

He's hopping like this, and he won't stop, and I said, it's time to go now, and the guy that's next in line is his buddy, and he's standing up where they can't see him, weeping, crying, and he goes, praise God, and he kind of swan dives into the baptistry, and they're high-fiving and splashing the water over onto the choir, and they're just grabbing each other and celebrating. Everybody there is just kind of wide-eyed. Well, these kind of things went on for a little while, and we started to realize, okay, God may be preparing us for something, but on January 22, 1995, I had no expectation of God moving in our church.

We were in a series of the Ten Commandments that had not been responded to well. We had an early service at eight o'clock. I gave the invitation.

Nobody responded at all. Empty altar. I was about to close the service, and a young man way in the back—I noticed that our college students had the last two back rows right back there, and they didn't ever come at the eight o'clock service, but I didn't know that God had been breaking them, and they'd been fasting and praying and crying out to God for revival, and God led them to come to both our services that day and pray for us, and so this student named Chris Robinson comes up the aisle and said, I think God has put something on my heart to share with the people.

Well, you know, you have moments in your life you look back and you think, God, what if I'd missed that? And I think often, how many of those moments have I missed where I didn't hear the Spirit of God? This one time, I got it right. I heard him right, and I let him come up. I'm standing down there, and he comes up here, and he opens the Bible to Joel chapter two and begins to read about returning to the Lord with all your heart and rending your heart, not your garments, and he starts to cry, and a woman from this side in her maybe her 50s comes up and stands beside him, and she says, he's right.

We need to repent. We're not a praying church. We don't even pray.

What's wrong with us? And I'm standing right down here, and suddenly our church just broke. I've never really understood it, except for what was said earlier about the power of prayer. I found out later one man had been rolling out of his bed named Carol Lancaster every day for 40 years because God told him to pray for revival at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church until it came.

Every day. Another woman was dying of AIDS lying in her bed from a blood transfusion back in the day. Well, you didn't talk about having AIDS.

She's dying of AIDS, but I'd go to her bedside, and she'd say, you know, when you're laying here dying of AIDS, you can't do much but pray, and that's what I do all day long for God to bring revival. That's the only explanation I have for what happened next. I'm standing down here and looking at like a war zone of

people laying on their faces weeping and crying out to God, and then people began to get up and come up to my pulpit.

They didn't even ask permission. I often say I lost control of the church that day. It was the greatest thing that ever happened in my ministry because God got control of it.

So people started coming up and sharing confession of sin. Now, usually when you see people coming, they're going to at least give a testimony. Nobody was giving testimony.

They were practicing James chapter 5 verse 16. They were confessing their sins one to another. I really didn't.

I'd never really seen it practiced, so I didn't know if it was right or wrong, but I gotta tell you, I was pretty sure it was wrong when a guy came up and said, it's my fault, and he starts crying. Our church is a mess because of me. I'm a deacon, and I'm using pornography, and he's just weeping.

I'm going, oh no, he just said pornography right there in church. What am I going to do? And so I went up beside him, and he's crying, and I went up beside him, and I said, you know, I just feel led to say if there's anybody else here, men that are struggling with sexual sin, I want you to come and pray over him, but I don't want you to come unless you're struggling too, and I thought, why did I say that? I didn't. It's like the Lord's brought it out of my mouth.

There's nobody's going to come. Men came from every direction crying and praying. We later found out half our deacons were using hard porn.

Well, no wonder we were, you know, it's such a mess, so we instantly had these kind of accountability groups for me. So much happened. I don't have time to tell it all, but we had to go through this through the Sunday school hour.

People were leaving and telling people, get out of your class. We're not having Sunday school today. One person ran across to the college students who were gathering in our little gym and said, God's come.

God's come to the sanctuary. Come on, we're not having Sunday school, and it makes you wonder, you know, where he was before, but so they all came running in, and we go into the late service, and we're still in there, and God's just moving in all these ways. We were on the radio live.

Somebody called into the radio station and said, what's happening? All I can hear is people crying, but I'm out here, and I'm out here on my ranch, and I just got saved. I don't know what to do, but I've been not right with God, and I turn to the radio station, and people are crying, and what do I do now? People were getting saved listening to us crying, you know. It was just unbelievable, impossible to really comprehend all that was happening.

We went into the early afternoon, and I finally said, church, we need to let our babies, our people watching our babies have a break. I said, here's what we'll do. We're going to come back tonight, six o'clock, and we'll see what the Lord does.

I went home that afternoon, and my friends in the prayer group began to call me to talk about what had happened that day, and it was the strangest conversation with the first guy, Mark Bryant, a friend that I actually talked to yesterday, and Mark said, I've got to talk to you about what happened today. I said, were

you there? Did you visit our church today? He said, what are you talking about? I'm talking about what happened in our church. He said, we were about to end the service, and God just broke loose among our people.

I don't know what happened. We had people laying on their face everywhere, and I'm like, what? Do you know what happened in our church? Something happened in your church? He had no clue. Assembly of God pastor was preaching.

He's behind the pulpit. All of a sudden, he stops. He shuts his Bible, and he stood there a moment.

People thought he had a stroke. He just stood there, and he said, God just spoke to me. I can't preach anymore.

He's bringing a revival to our city. Come on and pray with me. Come on and pray with me, and he just hit his face on the altar.

Five churches that we know of broke out in revival spontaneously on the same day, so we knew God was up to something, and then just a few weeks later, we had scheduled Henry Blackaby to come to Howard Payne University for a campus revival. It had been scheduled a year and a half in advance, and Henry walks in to these things that were happening in our church, and we knew that revival was spreading, and that night when Henry spoke, just as he was finishing up, a young man just shaking with tears came walking up the platform, and I'm thinking, that's James. Solid.

I mean, just a leader, not very emotional, and he comes up, and he asked Henry, could I share something, and I wonder, what's Henry going to do? He said, yes, you can, young man. He gave him a microphone, and he said, you guys think I'm a Christian leader here. I'm a fake.

He said, I'm wearing a mask, but tonight I'm taking it off, and he laid flat down on his face right there on the platform. Seven hours later, we're still there. The president is on his knees with the students.

Students are lining up at the microphone, just crying out to God and confessing sin, and they're meeting in groups here and there and praying, and oh, by the way, if anybody ever tells you revival doesn't make a long-term difference, remember that Muslim revival I told you about? That student that laid on his face when revival broke out at Howard Payne? He, in my opinion, is one of the most strategic missionaries in that movement right this moment, so much so, I can't tell you his name or where he is. Howard Payne broke out in an all-out campus revival over the weeks ahead, and then it began to spread, and we began, there's no internet. We just start word of mouth, and people start calling, and we're going, what is going on here, and people are calling us to send the students to tell the story, and I got asked to go to Southwestern Baptist Seminary, my seminary, the largest in the world at the time, and they had just fired the president, and there was all this political wrangling, and I thought, I can't believe they want me to come, and I went in, I'm scared to death, young pastor, and told the story, and the president and I agreed not even to give an invitation, because we were afraid of being accused of manipulation, and so I preached, I told them to preach, I told the story, and I went, and I sat down, and the president got up to close it, and a young lady on this side shouted, oh God, send revival fire on us, oh God, and people just flooded to the altar, and seven hours later, we're still there.

Classes are canceled in a seminary. People started hearing about it from area churches, and coming in from the outside, and let me just pause in that story and ask your prayer. I've asked you to write down

dates and pray, because there's no—I couldn't manipulate this if I tried.

I don't have an ability to do it, but on October 23rd, something unprecedented will happen at that same seminary. They've asked me to lead a life action team back for three days and three nights of crying out to God from one of the largest seminaries in the world. 3,500 students, but you see, in 1995, you know, they fired the president, and there's all kind of political wrangling, but in 2018, they fired the president, and there's all kind of political wrangling.

But morning and night for those three days, we're going to be crying out to God. I'm not asking him to repeat 1995. I'm asking for something greater than that.

Why not? I'm asking boldly that God would take somebody, maybe it's just one of them, but surely somebody among 3,500 students preparing to be ministers and use him or her as a spark for the next great awakening. Please join me in that, and every service will be streamed October 23rd through the 25th. Join us.

So after that, Southwestern students began to share. Wheaton had a massive revival breakout. They've written a book just about that.

One day Bill Bright calls me. I mean, I'm a 35-year-old pastor in Brownwood, Texas. Bill Bright's a hero, and he calls me.

I said, are you really Bill Bright? He said, yeah, I am. Far as I know. He said, I am.

I said, oh, well, it's great to talk to you, sir. And he said, well, listen, we know that this movement started in your church, and at the campus there. He said, I just thought you might want to know that at this moment—this was 1996 now— there are 100 college campuses ablaze with historic revival at this moment.

So some people have called it the Brownwood Revival. You can google it and find more about it. We've got a book.

We just wrote a 20-year edition a few years back tracing where all these students are called Revival Revived. I was supposed to bring some to sell this week, but we sold every one we had last week, so that was good. But you can get on Amazon Revival Revived if you want to know more.

In the weeks following that, God ripped apart racial barriers in our city, tore them apart. We had black, white, Hispanic worshipping together, washing each other, shining each other's shoes, symbolically washing feet. It's unbelievable.

We saw more people saved during that movement than all the churches in our county had seen in 10 years. And when the phenomena ended, the revival continued, because everywhere I go, including on this trip, I meet people that say, because of that movement, this is what's happened in my life. Yesterday, yesterday, my secretary calls me.

He said, you need to call this guy in North Carolina. He said, I'm not sure if he's crazy or what, but man, he is pretty excited about talking to you. I said, okay.

I called him up. He said, 12 weeks ago, I met Jesus. He said, my whole life has been transformed, and he said, my father-in-law is a pastor, and Sunday, he said he'd read this book about revival that happened in

1995, and he told this story, and it was about you, and I didn't know who you were or where you were, and I started researching you and found your head of this ministry, and all of a sudden, you're talking to me on the phone.

And he said, listen, I'm a very successful businessman. I've got three different businesses. He said, I don't need any more money.

I don't need any more anything except more of Jesus, more of Jesus, more of Jesus. He said, can I come join you anywhere where you're going to talk about revival, because I want what's happening in my life to spread to everybody and everywhere it can. So a guy that's been right with Jesus for 12 weeks hears about a revival that happened 20-something years ago.

He's going to be with us in Fort Worth for the Southwestern Seminary Revival. God's at work. God's moving.

Don't be discouraged, but pray, pray, pray. Open your Bibles to Haggai chapter 1. Let me spend a few moments with you in Haggai. Haggai chapter 1 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible.

Haggai is one of my favorite books in the Bible. Here's why I love this book so much. Haggai is one of the only prophets in the Bible where the people actually listen to what he said.

It gives me great hope, and because they listened, and they said yes to God. By the way, if I was going to title the message I'm about to preach, the little mini sermon I'm about to preach, I would just call it, Say Yes to God. Just say yes, because if God's who we believe he is, and he speaks, single most important thing in our lives or our churches is just to say yes to him.

That's it. In fact, we wanted to simplify our mission at Life Action because you realize most Christians have no idea what revival is anymore. So we just say, we just inspire your next yes to God.

You say yes to God, you're placing yourself in a position for him to revive you if he chooses. So that's it, and in Haggai that happened. In fact, we also know the exact day that Haggai spoke these words.

We don't know that about anything almost in the Bible. August 29th, 520 BC. August 29th, 520 BC, people of God, some of them had returned to Jerusalem after captivity.

Do you know most of them stayed, by the way, in Babylon? Do you know that? I just found that out recently. I didn't know that. Can you imagine? Seventy years they've been in slavery.

They were told, prophesied, and it all came true, but the Lord said, but then I'm going to set you free. And so much of Isaiah is written for this freedom that was coming, and so 70 years they're freed. Slavery's not that bad.

It's kind of comfortable now, you know. Got a business here. King's not been too bad to us.

So most of them just stayed in slavery, kind of like a lot of us today. But the ones that went bad, you would think, well, great, these are spiritual leaders. No, the temple's in ruins.

At that time, the centerpiece of the presence of God and his people, they didn't even think about rebuilding it. They had houses to build. So in that backdrop, here's what the word says.

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, the Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Thus says the Lord of hosts. These people say, the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.

Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet. Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled, it means mosaic houses, fancy, nice suburban houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts. Remember this phrase.

It's a revival phrase. Consider your ways. You've sown much, you've harvested little.

You eat, you never have enough. You drink, you never have your fill. You clothe yourself, no one's warm.

And he earns wages, does so to put them into a bag with holes. In other words, you put them into pockets. The word bag can mean pockets with holes in them.

Walking around with trying to stuff more stuff in your pockets there, and it just keeps coming out because there's holes in it. You might want to write this down. Saying yes to self never satisfies.

Saying yes to self never satisfies. You know, these folks weren't, they weren't the worst of sinners, at least not by our way of thinking. I'm not sure that the Lord thinks about sin the way we think about sin.

Sometimes it's very easy for me to become carelessly arrogant. Um, to think, well, I'm, I've never had an affair. In fact, I was a virgin when I married.

Not too many people do that. I've never had an affair. I'm faithful to my wife.

I'm not like these other preachers we hear about these days. And the Lord may be saying, yeah, and in thinking that way, you've just become an arrogant you-know-what. And I'm just pleased with that because I'm wondering if maybe the sins of our heart, pride, arrogance, bitterness, gossip, slander, the things that come to our heart and then out of our mouth, this unity in the body.

Isn't it interesting? Jesus in John chapter 17, he's praying. He's, you know, he's on his way to the cross. It's the last thing he said before he died to his disciples.

And he said, you know what? I want to pray right now for those that aren't even born yet. I'm going to pray for those, for those folks in a conference coming up in a while. There's a lot of things he wants from us, but he didn't pray those things.

Does Jesus want us to be sexually pure? Of course he does. He didn't pray for that. Not then.

Does he want us to be doctrinally sound? Sure he does. That's not what he prayed for. He said, Father, I pray that they'll stay unified.

That means that I'm going to have to believe that I might be wrong about some of my doctrine. And you might be too, probably you, but that was a joke. But that's the way we act sometimes, right? I've got this right.

If you listen to me, I'll straighten you out. No, no, that's arrogance. Saying yes to self never satisfies.

And sometimes we, we think we're saying no to self because we're not doing those really bad things that other people are. Sometimes the Lord's just whispering, yes, but I just want you to love me. And I just want you to love others.

And I don't know that I see that. There's a difference between trying to be good, trying to be better, and just loving Jesus so much. So much.

You know, you know what the gospel teaches me? I can't do it. Not I can do it. I can't.

That's why I've got to have the gospel. That's why I've got to have the Holy Spirit. And that's why when I read this passage about the word of the Lord saying, listen, your pockets are full of holes.

You're trying to keep trying to stuff stuff in there to satisfy. That's even for us as Christians, even in church life. Just get things our way, make church what we want, then we'll be satisfied.

But it keeps going out, going out, and going out. Saying yes to self never satisfies. But let's not point out there to the world.

Let's point right back here and say, Lord, I may be saying yes to self just because I've just drifted away from my first love. I just have. Are you astonished by God today? Do you ever think about that? We're not in the temple anymore, right? We're not Isaiah.

But you remember what happened to Isaiah in the temple? He noticed God. He noticed God. He's watching this vision in the temple of this incredible, incredible God with his robe filling the temple.

That's two football fields, by the way. And, oh, by the way, speaking of that, you know why that's significant? How big the train of his robe was? An ancient king back then, when he conquered another king, he cut off the train of his robe and sewed it on his own. And the longer the train of your robe, the greater you conquered.

And Isaiah said the train of his robe filled the temple. And he was astonished. And so when the triune God said, hmm, I wonder who would go for us? Me! I would have been saying, let me check here in my schedule.

Lord, what were you thinking? I got an opening next week. What were you thinking? But the Lord didn't tell him what he was thinking, did he? He could have said, well, Isaiah. He could have told him what he told him later.

Well, Isaiah, here's the deal. No one's going to listen to you. And what we know from history, one day they're going to saw you in half.

He could have told him that, but he didn't. He just said, I wonder who will go for me. Whatever it is, me.

Why? Maybe we'll write this down. Because he got more astonished by God than he was afraid of the world. What if that was you? What if you got more astonished by God than afraid of the world? You say, I'm not afraid of the world.

Now, when we stuff our pockets with whatever we think, apart from the gospel, we'll fill them up. We got to keep putting stuff in there. We're afraid we're going to lose it because there's holes in our pockets.

No. No, often we're just afraid. And we got to be more astonished by God.

We got to live like my friend. I'll call him Hasim. I often wonder what would happen if just in every church, just one person lived this way.

I never met Hasim. My friend there, not him, but my friend in the Middle East shared the gospel with Hasim. He was preaching, and Hasim was a radical Muslim in an ISIS-controlled part of the Middle East and came running up to my friend.

My friend thought, this is it. I'm going to heaven now. He wasn't surprised.

He has seven bullet holes in him, my friend. He shares the gospel with Muslims by opening his shirt and saying, this is what you've done to me. Let me tell you why I still love you.

This is what he does in ISIS territory. I'm not telling you a story that I heard from somebody else. This young man, my friend, asked me one day to pray a fatherly blessing over him like Abraham over Isaac.

He said, because I never had a father that knew Jesus, and I know I'm going to be a Stephen. I know I'm going to be martyred. I don't want to die without the blessing of a father.

I said, you are now my son, and I'll pray that blessing over you. Somebody beside us put it on video. We're all weeping and crying.

That's the person who shared the gospel with this radical Muslim named Hasim. But Hasim wasn't coming to hurt him. He grabbed his arm and said, you've got to tell me this name you just said, because there's someone coming to me in a dream every night in glowing white and saying the Arab name for Jesus, the name Christians use, and saying Yeshua, not Yeshua.

Yeshua. I am Yeshua, follow me. And he said, who is this man? He took him aside.

He shared the gospel with him. He led him to faith in Christ. And Hasim said, I will tell everyone about this great love that I have found.

I've lived with hate all my life. I will tell everyone. My friend said, let's take it slowly.

He said, I can't take it slowly. Everyone I know is without him. So he walked straight into ISIS territory and began to tell everybody he knows and knew his friends and relatives about Jesus.

And he came to my friend one day. He said, I don't know how long, much longer I'll be able to live through this. He said, but I've been reading the Bible and I'm not baptized.

I've got to be baptized. Tomorrow you're coming to my home and you're going to baptize me. He said, I've got a big tub of water.

My wife and I will be baptized and we're going to have all of our friends come and they'll be there to watch and you will baptize me. And my friend said, they'll kill us both. He said, I can't do it.

And Hasim said, well, then I'll baptize myself. My friend said, well, you can't do that either. And Hasim said, well, if you don't baptize me, I just must love Jesus more than you.

To my friend with seven bullet holes in him. And he finally said, okay. And when he walked in, there were 30 sandals at the door and 30 angry Muslims in there.

And he took Hasim under the water, buried with Christ in baptism unto death and raised to walk in a new life. And he took his wife unto death, means that something different there, raised to walk in a new life. He shared the gospel a few more weeks before they cut his throat.

Missionaries there, if you give to missions, you may very well be helping pay the salary, the salary of the missionaries and the expenses of caring for his wife, who is on fire for Jesus to this day. My wife and I were back in that part of the world, not that long ago. And we had been praying and wondering, Lord, we don't understand these things, why you allow this.

But we would like to know if there's been anything that we can see at this side of heaven that you've done because of the martyrdom of Hasim. We went to our two missionary friends. And when we got there, they embraced us and said, we've been waiting for you to come.

We've got a story to tell you. We could not tell you by email. And we've got to figure out how you can tell it in conferences and churches like this.

And so that I don't identify where it is or who it is and get anybody killed or in trouble, but people have to know what God's doing. They said, we just went back in. It's been two years.

It's been two years since his martyrdom. We just went back in. We robed up, went carefully in, kind of in disguise to see if we could find any believers there.

We didn't expect any to be there. And one of them said, John, Pastor John, we found 26. And I interrupted.

I said, 26? You mean 26 people came to faith from Hasim's martyrdom, from one martyrdom? They said, no, no, no, you're interrupting us. We found 26 churches, each of them pastored by a Muslim who came to faith because of one man who'd been buried with Christ in baptism unto death. And now they're called to ministry.

And in these two years time, they've learned the scriptures. They've become pastors. They've started churches and the gospel sweeping that part of the country.

One man, one man more astonished by God than he is afraid of the world. What if you became that man or that woman? Well, saying yes to self never satisfies, and that's why saying yes to a holy pause changes everything. In verse 7, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways.

Second time he said it, right? When God says something twice in a few verses, you better pay attention. The word consider your ways, it's a phrase that means stop and meditate upon your life and the direction you're going. It's kind of a Hebrew synonym for repent.

It is the heart cry of those seeking revival to stop and pause and say, Lord, how are things really going for me right now? Where am I, where am I really at? That's why we do what we do at Life Action. That's why we still say every year, Lord, if you'll give us churches that will take a holy pause and say we're going to stop everything and we're going to hear from God, we'll come in and we'll take everything off that church. Their children's ministries, everything.

So nobody has to do anything except stop for a few days at least and say, God, speak to us, not about our programs or our growth or anything. Just speak to us and then we'll say yes, God, to you. Make sure that in your life you are disciplining yourself spiritually to take holy pause times.

Twice a year I just go away, turn off my phone, don't talk to anybody but my wife and God to hear from him. I really don't know how to do ministry without it. I don't know how to withstand the attack of the enemy without it.

I just don't. I'll just be real honest with you, I don't know the Lord close enough, I guess, to handle the attacks of ministry without major, major, major times with God like that. And I just don't see how a church is going to ever experience a fresh touch from God without it, without setting aside those times of what we call holy pause.

Now here's the really good news as I move toward the finish here. If you say yes to God, God will say he's yes over you. He always does, it's the way he works.

He always initiates, he'll speak, and then when we answer and say yes, listen, he's not speaking to hear himself talk. If he speaks through his word and his spirit and prayer and to us and he speaks to his people when he does that and we say yes, it's not for no reason. Look at what happens in this chapter.

Again, these people actually listened. In verse 12, it's irrevocable and Joshua, so you got here, it's the government and, and the church. God is, and the people of God.

God sovereignly moved. God can change our government if he wants to, but that's never where it starts. And then all the remnant of the people, you know what they did? They obeyed the voice of the Lord, it says.

They said yes to God. They heard the words of the prophet. They said yes, and they feared the Lord.

They stopped fearing the world, and they feared the Lord. And then Haggai said, well, then I got a word for you from God. He spoke, you said yes.

Here's what the Lord says. I'm with you, declares the Lord. God said, I'm speaking my yes back over you.

You said you're yes to me, now I'm speaking my yes over you. And the people got to work, and they rebuilt the temple. You know why that matters so much to you sitting right here today? Temple of God's not there anymore, we know that, but it became the centerpiece of the people of God so that Judah recovered, and there was a people of God, and that's kind of important because no Judah, no Jesus.

No Jewish people, no Jesus. And by the way, the revival under Haggai, I could historically talk about how it lasted 150 years. That's really not right.

We can count up the years from 520 BC, and it's still lasting now, because here's what God says in chapter 2, verse 6, thus says the Lord of hosts, yet once more in a little while I'll shake the heavens, the earth, the sea, the dry land. I will shake all nations, so the treasure of all nations shall come in, and I'll fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. These are eternal results he's talking about.

And if God shakes us, shakes you, shakes me, shakes our churches, brings revival, we are still living out the prophecy of Haggai, so I just ask you, what will you do with the temple today? The temple is no longer a building. It is your heart and mine, your church and mine, wherever the people of God gather, there is

the temple. What are you doing with this one chance? What are you doing with this one shot that God's given you? Say yes to God, because you know who he is? Something like 14 times in this book of Haggai, he puts something sneaky in there that I think we just mess up when we translate it from Hebrew.

He says, I'm the Lord of hosts. I'm the Lord of hosts. I'm the Lord of hosts.

I'm the Lord of hosts. I'm the Lord of hosts. I'm the Lord of hosts.

I'm the Lord of hosts. He says it more than that. And a host is an army of angels.

The Lord says, listen, I am the king of angel armies. You say yes to me, I am unlimited in power to do anything that needs to be done and in your life and in this church and in this nation and in this world. So let's just say yes to him.

If you ever go to the Wailing Wall, you'll see Orthodox Jews doing this. I didn't know why. And once when I was there, I asked one of the Orthodox Jews, why do you do this? Would you mind telling me? Am I offending you? No, not at all.

He spoke English. He said, you see, this wall is as close as we can get to the Holy of Holies where it was. We can't get any closer to God's presence than this.

Made my heart so sad. And he said, we believe Messiah is coming. And so we come as close to the presence of God as we can and we ask him to send Messiah.

And then we do it by reminding him that we're ready to be consumed like a flame. We're symbolizing a candle. We're flickering.

We're flaming, being consumed. We're rising with our life and our prayers to say, come Messiah, come Messiah, burn and blaze in us. And I wept again because I knew that Messiah has already come and I knew that he's coming again.

But often my flame has burned low and it's time for us in this day to say, Lord, I'm ready. I'm ready. I'm ready to flame and burn and be consumed again by you.

And if that's you, just stand up with me right now. Lord Jesus, we just end this time right now together and we just take a minute and we just ask you to show us what our next yes is to you. Lord, is it like Isaiah? You don't want to tell us yet what it specifically means.

You just want to see if we're astonished enough by you to say, yes, Lord. I don't know what the question is. I don't even know where you want to send me, but who will go with you? Me.

Then, Lord, we want to say yes. It may be really specific, Lord. It may be really specific, but hard.

Usually easy requests are a word from another mouth. So, Lord, if we know specifically, as my wife and I took months to pray a little over a year ago, pretty sure we knew already, but scared to death to leave behind everything we knew, all of our foundation, all of our finances, to leave it all. We were pretty sure, but we had to come to a place of saying a specific yes.

For those who know right now what that is, lead them to say it. Maybe right where you are, you just want to voice it. Maybe nobody has to know why or what you're saying yes to, but I would encourage you just in

this minute, if you know what your yes is, it's an open-ended yes or it's a specific yes, when you're ready, just say it out loud.

Say it out loud to Him. Just say yes. Hear the prayers of your people, King of the universe.

We have heard your voice. We have said our yes. Now, we humbly ask you to speak your yes over us.

That like the people of Judah 2,500 years ago, we might too see you move in my way. We ask you to give us your mighty power again and rebuild us into the mighty force for the gospel that you've created us to be. This is our prayer.

This is our yes. In Jesus' name, amen. God bless you all.

Well, I dismiss.

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