

Why Revivals Never Last

by Sandeep Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance and a soft heart towards God, highlighting the distinction between poverty in spirit, body, and soul. It encourages a change in mindset through repentance, focusing on God as a loving father and our identity as His children. The sermon stresses the need for true spirituality to grow in God's house, the local church, where resurrection life thrives beyond temporary revivals.

Scripture: Matthew 5:3, Acts 2:37, Revelation 2:4, Ephesians 4:11, Luke 22:28

Topics: "Repentance", "Identity as God's Children"

Description

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Transcript

I wanted to share some of the thoughts that I had on something that has been going on recently in our culture. There's, if you don't know, some of you may know that there was a college campus on which there were some students who were gathering about 10 years ago, February 8th, and there was a message preached and as a result of that, people stayed behind instead of going to their classes. And this was a Christian college, and so they started praying and continuing to seek God and confessing their sins and reading God's word and things developed from there to where now for 11 days straight now, it's in a college called Asbury, Kentucky.

There's been non-stop, 24-7, non-stop, literally, 11 days, people singing, confessing their sins, God's word being read, and in today's day and age, it's all college students. We're talking about teens in their 20s, early 20s. People seeking God non-stop and social media has gotten a hold of it.

It's been reported on all the news networks now and videos of it on my Twitter feed and other things that come to my attention, even on YouTube. So I've been wondering about what the Lord is trying to teach me from this. What's the Lord trying to teach us from this? So here's the first thing I want to put in context.

I was looking up some statistics about teens and young people. 44% of them reported feeling sad and hopeless in the last one year. 44%.

How many teens are here? One in every two. More than half teens and young adults, 18 to 24, 25, reported experiencing emotional abuse at a minimum. More than half.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among teens and young adults. Second leading cause of death. And one in every four.

One in every four students or teens, 18 to 24, have seriously considered suicide. One in every four. In the last one month.

It's all statistics from the CDC. What do our teens face? Our teens face tremendous pressure because of social media. Especially if you're living in this area of California, your academic pressure is ridiculous.

I just came from India, where vaping and addiction to drugs is skyrocketing. You've got a lot of kids, a lot of teens, and who are spending most of their free time or all of their free time watching movies, surfing on the internet, watching YouTube videos, numbing themselves. And in the midst of all of this, you've got reports of teens and people in their 20 somethings spending 24-7 prayer, seeking God, singing, Bible reading.

So in light of all those statistics I've said, I'm extremely happy to hear about these teens and the 20-somethings. I remember when I was a teen, I remember some of my fondest memories when I was a teen and seeking God. There was an earnestness to it.

That's what happens when you're teens, you know. You do things with an expansiveness that us old folks can't do. You stay up all night talking to your friends.

I can barely do that anymore. Past one or two, I'm out. Teens just can keep going.

Young people, teens can drive in the middle of the night 50 miles to get a cheeseburger. I used to do things like that. Don't quite have the energy anymore for stuff like that.

Too old. There are fantastic experiences that young people can do. And I appreciate that.

I appreciate that. I remember some of those fond memories I have seeking the Lord, extended times with the Lord. This is special times that young people, you specifically can have.

And just because you don't see some of the older folks doing, don't let it stop you. I'm glad to see God's people having a hunger for the Lord. Hunger is the beginning start that must inhabit us, young and old.

And young people have a way to really nourish that and build that up. So I encourage you young people to have a hunger for the Lord. We may approach it slightly differently, but it's so important to have that hunger.

Young people remember that from a young age. Jesus, when he had free time, only one instance I can see a way when he was a close to a teenager and he had free time because he couldn't find his parents. And in his free time, he goes and he find himself in among the father's business.

I'm not saying you have to spend all your free time doing that. But he had a longing to go and meet that hunger. I want to know more about God's word.

And he's asking the people, what does this verse mean? What does this passage mean? There was a hunger there. So you can watch YouTube videos. You can play video games.

We can do all kinds of fun like we all do, even as adults. But there must be a hunger. And I look at these young people who are having a hunger and I say, Lord, do they have something that I don't have? And they could very well have something that I don't have.

They have a softness in their heart towards God. But I may not have. And I might have lost.

I used to have it before. But if I don't have it anymore, I'm not going to get from God. It's the good and honest heart that God will speak with.

I was quoted this quote many years ago. I'll repeat it again. Eugenia Price said this.

Outside of Christ, my need is my most glorious possession. Let me repeat that one more time. Outside of Christ, my need is my most glorious possession.

That's how it tells you how important hunger is. How important having a longing and yearning for God is. But we have to resolve all of our hungers in Christ.

We don't resolve our hungers by remaining hungry. The Christian life is not a life just a perpetual hunger. Listen to that quote again.

Outside of Christ, my need is my most precious possession. So the life of a Christian is a life where we are satisfied with Christ because he's our most glorious possession. But outside of Christ, in the areas where we're missing Christ, where the trials start to shake us, that need, that hole in our heart becomes our most glorious possession because it drives us to Christ.

It points us to Christ. And that hunger must be treasured. And our hearts must remain soft for it so that it gets resolved in Jesus Christ.

And we are satisfied with Christ till the next wave of temptation comes and we see our need. And that's not a problem. It's a glorious possession for us to point us back to Christ.

And so treasuring this hunger is so important. We are satisfied with Christ in his life. So I want to share with you five points.

I hope I can go through it relatively quickly. This is the first thing that the Lord has been sealing on my heart in the last few days. Point number one, bring it up.

True spirituality comes from poverty in spirit. That's the first word that was blessed. That's the blessed.

That's the first time blessed comes in the New Testament. First time. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

And I want to make a distinction here, though. Poverty in spirit is different from poverty in body and poverty in soul. Poverty in body corrupts and destroys.

Poverty in soul will also corrupt and destroy. Poverty in spirit brings life. That's where the kingdom of God happens.

Poverty in body. Let's talk, you know, we have three parts, body, soul and spirit. What is poverty in our body? Financial difficulties, health problems.

That's all we have. We don't have in our body the things we should have. Things on the earthly life that we shouldn't have.

We'd like to have. Ability to breathe properly. Ability to walk properly.

Ability to work properly. Because of physical conditions. Because the brain is firing.

Different reasons. It's poverty in the body. It's not from God.

God's in it, though. He's the potter. His hands are right in it, working it out for good.

Then there's poverty in my soul, where my emotional being is fragile. Where things rock me. Grief, death, things like that hurt us.

Challenges, even earthly challenges, bodily challenges affect us in our soul, too. You lose a job. You get struggled with despondency, discouragement, different things.

That's different from poverty in the spirit, though. And we have to distinguish between the two. But poverty in the body and poverty in the soul can be good things.

These things in our life that happens to us are things that can drive us towards poverty in our spirit. And we have to keep going. So when I hear about revivals or awakenings that happen, when you have a real hunger for the Lord, and you're seeking the Lord, and you're trying to find Him, it's a beautiful space.

But that's poverty of the soul. You may be weeping a lot, you may be seeking the Lord, but God doesn't want us to end there. God wants us to find our resolution in poverty of spirit, very different from poverty of soul.

So if you're feeling weeping before the Lord, it's not a bad thing, it's a good thing, but keep going. And I won't despise these young people who are weeping before the Lord. Yes, it's poverty of soul, but they may be way closer to the Lord than I am, who's content to just go along my merry way, sit on the armchair and critique them, and say, well that's emotionalism, that's intellectualism.

Well, it doesn't really matter what it is, if they're closer to God than I am. I'm not saying they're with God, I'm just saying they're at least closer to God. And so in the name of theology, I don't want to dismiss the softness of my heart that I need to have towards God, because that's the soil in which life can happen.

So dear brothers and sisters, let's seek for the softness in our heart, knowing that's often a precursor. It comes through trials, if you're going through a hard time, health-wise, emotional time, whatever it is, it's a precursor to poverty in spirit. God's trying to make us get there through all the things that are going wrong in our life.

My next point, God doesn't automatically get you from poverty of soul to poverty of spirit, but here is the word, here is the word that must grab a hold of us to get a hold of poverty of spirit, and this is the one word, repentance. And repentance goes beyond all human emotions. Repentance goes beyond all human emotions and goes way past revival.

Another word I like to think of, whenever I hear the word revival, is resuscitation. It's a great word for us to think, whenever we hear God's doing a revival, we could say it as God's doing a resuscitation. Praise God for children who are resuscitated, but I really don't want my children to be perpetually resuscitated.

It's not the life I want for my children. There's another word I want for my children, I'll talk to you in a second about it, but I don't want the resuscitating life. So we are constantly seeking revival.

What you're saying is I really want resuscitation all the time. The word is repentance, God. The poor in spirit is repentance, and I want to show you this passage from Acts chapter 2. The day of Pentecost may be one of the greatest experiences anybody would say that there ever was.

The day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to first dwell within the disciples and the rest of humankind besides Jesus Christ. I was on the day of Pentecost and talked about in Acts chapter 2, and Peter preaches this rather ordinary sermon, not that emotionally tugging, but a rather emotionless sermon with the Holy Spirit in it, and you see what happens after he speaks that. When they heard this they were pierced to the heart, and they said to Peter and the apostles, brethren what shall we do? Let's read that question.

They were pierced to the heart. If we had walked upon that crowd, what would we have seen them saying? We would have said, well that was the pure Word of God that was preached. The people are pierced all the way to their heart.

This is clearly a revival. You got people probably crying, people probably desperate, seeking God and asking God what should we do? Asking the disciples. Every bit of our emotions and instincts on a human level, we would have said that's revival.

See what Peter says in response to these weeping people. People who are seeking God, torn up all the way to their hearts. Peter is not fooled.

Peter is not discounting them being pierced in the heart. Peter sees the revival happening, a resuscitation happening, and Peter says here's what you need to do. I'm not fooled.

I'm not going to tell you you're all good. Now go on. He says repent.

Wait, what do you mean Peter? Don't you see what's going on? You're ready to send them away. They don't need anything more. They're weeping, they're spending day and night singing to God, praying to God, reading God's Word.

This is the best place to be. No, it's not. No, it's not.

Peter has a word for everybody. When our hearts are soft, repent. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that there's great joy in heaven when there's revival.

It says there's great joy in heaven when there's repentance. That is why the Bible talks a lot about repentance and slim to none about revival. So that is why we have to keep going past revival.

I'm not anti-resuscitation. A lot of us too, teens, adults, may need a pretty strong resuscitation from our lives of lukewarmness. But we have to keep going towards repentance and the way we learn what repentance is is from God's Word.

God's Word divides between soul and spirit. That's what it says. The Word of God is a sharp, two-edged sword.

If we would just remember that the devil had the audacity to try to deceive Jesus after 30 years of a perfect life, that the devil came to Jesus and said, I think I have a shot of deceiving you, we would realize our helplessness to think we can figure out the devil's schemes on our own. And we will learn from the life of Jesus. Let's look at God's Word to protect ourselves from the deceptions of the devil.

And in the Word of God, we can have to realize the importance of the word repentance. Point number three, repentance is a change of way of thinking. It's not a change of way of acting first, because you can act and be faking it.

But what I'm interested in more is a change of way of thinking, renewing our minds to the way God thinks. It's a completely different way of thinking about God. It's a completely different way of thinking about ourselves.

Who's God if you're repenting? You're seeing God as a father. And so we have to repent radically to dismiss any other thought about God except God being a father. We have to be ruthless about it.

That's what repentance is, beyond all our revivals, beyond all our resuscitations, God's telling us after all of us revivals, repent about how you think about me. You think I'm a mean hard taskmaster. I'm not.

I'm a loving father. Get it out of your system. All your feelings have driven you crazy.

Get it out of your system. Repent. What do you think about God? Repent about what you think about yourselves, with all of your failed track records, or with all of your personality challenges.

Repent. Your identity is a child of God. And cut out every other thought about who you think you are, what your society tells you, what your bank balance tells you, what your job record tells you.

Your identity is child of God. And there's a deep repentance that we all need to do. Revival or no revival.

We don't need an emotional upheaval to do repentance though. A completely different way about thinking about sin. I shall forever lift my eyes to Calvary and see the cross on which he died for me.

That thing has to happen. That has to become a big deal to me because sin has become a big deal to me. A completely different way of thinking about this earth and everything on this earth.

All the pleasures of this earth, all our mind on earthly things, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the desire for status and recognition and pleasure, and all the comforts of this earth. We have to have a complete... This is repentance. It's not a small word.

It's a big word. It's a dramatic word. It's a drastic word.

But this is where revival dies. This is where revival goes to die. Because it never leads to repentance.

Never leads to strong, deep, wholehearted repentance. And so we don't have to go to Kentucky. But we need to have soft hearts.

Whatever it's going to take, teens, young people, we need to have soft hearts. And that soft heart needs to result in repentance. A changed way of thinking over and over again.

Revelation chapter 2, another verse on repentance. This is another verse. You've lost your first love.

And if you read Revelation chapter 2, you see that this church of Ephesus was a tremendous church. They started, their whole church began with a massive revival. Where they burnt up millions of witchcraft.

That's how the church began in Ephesus. You can read about it. Acts 19 or 20 or whatever.

They burnt up millions of dollars if you convert it. Millions of dollars. That's how the church began.

There was a huge bonfire where they brought all this witchcraft and just burnt it. Lost millions of dollars. That's how this church started.

The church in Ephesus. Paul was there for multiple years. Paul wrote the book of Ephesians to it.

Tremendous church. But look what happens in Revelation chapter 2. He says, I know your deeds and your toils and your perseverance. Verse 3, you've endured for my name's sake and have not grown weary.

Beautiful commendations from the Lord. But then he says, I have this against you. You've lost your first love.

And what was the prescription by the master physician? When we've lost our first love, even though we're doing, we're not saying it in some great way, we're persisting, we're having patience, we have an endurance. We've lost our first love. Here's the prescription by the master physician.

Repent and do the deeds you did at first. That's in verse 5. Do the deeds you did at first. That's what I wanted to ask us about.

What are the deeds you did at first? Was it, some of us are older, who can think back to a love we had for the Lord. That was genuine. That was sincere.

That was simple and pure. Was it all-night prayer meetings? Wasn't for me. I don't know many godly men who, that was their first love, was all-night prayer meetings.

Was it non-stop reading of God's Word? Wasn't for me. I'm talking about my first love for God. It wasn't non-stop reading, let's take the next one week and let's all forget about our work responsibilities and our school responsibilities and let's just spend time seeking God.

Wasn't my first love. Wasn't mine and no godly man that I know. Was it non-stop listening to Christian music? Singing Christian music? Not me, not anybody I know.

I'm stopping my earthly responsibilities so that I can spend days and weeks not going to college, not going to school, not going to work. That wasn't my first love. The deeds I did at first were the same normal earthly activities that I did before but I had a different mindset.

That was what was different. God was number one. God kept coming back to focus.

I kept pulling him back maybe every hour, maybe twice an hour. He kept continually before me. I have placed the Lord.

That was more natural when I had first love. It was the same going to work, going to school, taking care of my children, going to my classes when I was in college. I'm talking about my first love and so I don't need

to just shut down my life and do something dramatically different.

That's what revival does. That's poverty in soul. We want to do these sacrifices for the Lord.

The Lord says I'm not after sacrifice. I'm not all after these heroic acts to prove. It won't last.

What I'm after is repentance. Do the deeds you did at first which is you kept pulling me back to front and center. You kept, your number one priority was me.

The kingdom of God and His righteousness, His righteousness, doing things the right way was number one. Look at the life of Jesus. You see him just checking out her life for a week.

Sorry I know I had to build these tables for you but I'm sorry I'm busy. I'm gonna spend a week with the Lord. Good luck with your tables.

Hope it works out but I'm here to push you God not you. You think he did that? All these people were expecting tables to be delivered on Feb 1st and Feb 15th. Jesus is busy following God.

That's not Christianity. It's not the righteousness of Christ. We don't see any instance of this.

The Christian lifestyle, the lifestyle is what I need. Point number four. Revivals never last because God doesn't want it to last.

God's not interested in resuscitating children just like I'm not interested in constantly having my children choking and at the edge of death so I have to keep resuscitating them. That's not the life I want for my children. That's not the life God wants for His children is perpetual revivals, revivals that last forever.

God wants resurrected life. God wants the life of Jesus. God's interested in living more than He's interested in being brought to life.

God's interested in a thriving life. So thank God for the times when the lost are brought back and the lost are revived. Thank God for those who are lukewarm and praise God for those who are lukewarm and have lost their first love.

That includes me but God wants me to live and God wants me to thrive. That's the resurrection life. Let's go back to Acts chapter 2. See what happens after Peter tells them to repent and you know verse 40 and with many, Acts chapter 2 verse 40, and with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them saying be saved from this perverse generation.

Be saved, be saved, be saved from this perverse generation. And look what happens. Look how revival turns into repentance so easily.

So then those who receive the word, that's it. No complicated long journey, no days of prayer and fasting. Receive the word as simply as that.

Then they were baptized right after that and then they kept going. You look in verse 42. They just kept moving on.

It sunk in and they receive the word saying, all right I'm changing my way of thinking. Starting now. I'm starting tomorrow, starting now.

And then they kept on. And for those of us who've already been baptized or are old enough to get baptized, we don't have to get baptized anymore or even for those who are too young, memorialize it. That's what I take from baptism.

Write it down. Put it on your phone if revival is happening in your life and say Lord I want to repent. I want to change my way of thinking about who you are.

I want to change my way of thinking. Baptism is an external act. If we're old enough to get baptized, that's what we ought to do after we repent.

For those who are already baptized, do some other physical act. Write it down. It doesn't have to be complicated.

Put it on our phone. Put something down. Tell our wives, tell our children, I'm repenting today of a different mindset.

Children, you can tell your parents, I'm repenting today of a different mindset. I'm going to think of God a different way. I'm going to think about myself a different way.

I'm going to think about the earth a different way. All the things of this earth. That's what baptism needs to be.

And then we keep moving on. We don't need to visit a special location for God to meet with us. You know the story in Acts chapter 8 about Eunuch, the Ethiopian Eunuch.

He was going away from Jerusalem. He'd come to Jerusalem, bought some scrolls or whatever he did. Isaiah, going away from Jerusalem.

Missed the revival. Never got what he wanted. God sent the man of God over to him and said, I'll meet you there.

We don't need any special location. Mothers got busy lives. Parents, you got busy lives.

You can be going away from church because that's where your work is calling you. That's what your children are calling you. And God will send the word of God into your life.

And Eunuch gets salvation, gets baptized, and his life changed. So we don't need any special music to be playing, any special event to be playing for repentance to happen. God will find us where we are hungry.

Where that Eunuch had spent a little bit of his money to get the book of Isaiah. So I'm going to read it. I can enjoy the scenery from Jerusalem to Gaza.

No, but you found him reading the book of Isaiah and God met with him. God said, I'm going to send Philip. God will do that in life.

God may have already done it in some of our lives in the past. He'll do it again. The last point, resurrection life grows only in God's house.

It's only one place where God's resurrection life goes. When we were starting NCCF, before NCCF started, some of you know this, we had a decision to be made. There were two groups, two doors from each other.

Some of you don't know this. There are two groups, two doors from each other. One was a college group that was purely helping working with college students.

And then there was a Bible study that we had. And the question was, should we merge the groups? And as we sought the Lord, it became clear to us that God doesn't have anything in his word about age-specific groups. God's house is not college groups.

God's house is not based on ethnicity. There's no Indian group or the Caucasian group or the African group. God doesn't work.

When we draw lines of age or state of life or ethnicity or gender or any of the things, the church of God is multi-generational. It should be multi-ethnic. We don't control who comes in.

God sends them. But we draw no barrier. And so when I see movements in particular groups, college groups, things like that, we learned from this over 12 years ago that the Lord wants to bring such revivals into a personal life.

First of all, that's the temple of God. That's the first temple of God. And then to grow it in a church.

That is why our local family of God is so important because that's where resurrection life happens. More than just resuscitation and revival. Wherever that happens, praise God that it happens.

In the bars, somebody is getting revived in a bar after having drunk too much. Good for them. Somebody is getting revived and resuscitated because they've been smoking too much or on drugs.

Good for them. But the point God is saying is I have to bring them and bring them into a family. And that family is the family of God.

That's the local church. God bless all the ministries by college age or whatever it is, as well as parachurch ministries. But this is why the local church, the local family of God is so essential because God calls that the home, his home.

That's where he dwells. That is why preserving the purity, as well as the infinite love where God, the father presides over it. And Jesus, the one who was slain because of our sin, is the king of kings.

That is why the local church is so important. We've known these passages that we put on the Ephesians chapter 4, 11 through 16, those things. He gave apostles, prophets, teachers, all so that we could all become the church.

That's where resurrection life happens. And we have to become guardians of that. Every one of us have to be guardians of the, not the revivals over and over again, but the repentant and the resurrection life that happens over and over again.

Dear brothers and sisters, I envy the softness of heart that I see these teens and young people have. I envy it. I do.

But God doesn't want true revival. True revival never lasts. The softness of heart, young people, older people, we need a softness of heart like we never had.

But take that softness of heart and go to the word. Take that softness of heart and that's the only place we will find our salvation. Get to know God.

Get to know God through his word. Ask God to speak to you. And for us adults, besides that, we got to keep bringing God back to the center.

As Jesus lived, so am I on this earth. That is going to be our place, not a revival and resuscitation. That's going to be the place where we get poverty of spirit, poverty of body and poverty of soul corrupts.

Poverty of spirit blows up our earthly life and gives us the resurrection life. I'm not afraid of poverty and body. I'm not afraid of poverty and soul because these are all pointers to me saying, Sandeep, you need to get poverty in spirit because theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

That's where the good stuff is. The eternal stuff is happening. And I have to press through all of these things.

So we'll use emotion. We'll use music. We'll use our intellect.

We'll use every means possible. Young people, whatever it takes. If it is listening to music, do it.

If it is reading something, do it. Don't stop there. Don't think that the emotion is it.

Keep going. God's going to be found in repentance. But you change your way of thinking and you get planted, planted, unshakable like a house has planted on the rock.

That doesn't come through emotions. That comes by you as you holding fast to God's Word. Beyond every emotion, beyond every intellectual idea.

I might desire anew amidst all these things. God speaks through all these events. God's spoken to me powerfully.

Get what they have and much more. Keep going till you get life, till you get life. And that's for young and old, not just for young people, but especially as we heard for the teens today.

Counted worthy to stand with Jesus in your trials. In his trials, not in your trials, in his trials. Counted worthy.

What an incredible compliment to receive on the final day. Luke 22, 28. You are those who stood with me in my trials.

When Paul was persecuting the Christians, Jesus said, why are you persecuting me? Not why are you persecuting my family? Why are you persecuting me? And our college campuses, our high school campuses, they're not persecuting you. They're persecuting Christ. You are those who stood with me in your trials, in my trials.

And they persecuted me. You stood with me. And that's where the Holy Spirit will be poured out on us.

I praise God for these events. I praise God for the opportunity for us to seek that, to seek a repentant heart. Let's maybe take a moment, a couple of moments, a minute or two of silence.

So ask the Lord to deal with us as we may have heard. Everything that we've heard. One more thing about what Brother George said.

What a beautiful testimony about Jonathan. 1 Samuel 14, 44, 45. He did the Lord's work today.

He did the work of God today. He did the work of God today. Let's let those little phrases hang over our lives today.

He was one who stood with me in my trials. Luke 22, 28. Another one.

1 Samuel 14, 44, 45. He did the work of God today. Jonathan.

Let's ask ourselves that these words can hang over our lives. They're beautiful commendations. We don't have to preach the wonderful sermons.

We don't have to be part of some great music sessions in some part of Kentucky. We can have these little phrases hang over our lives and God will say, well done.

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