

Ready for Revival

**Ten Passions of a Generation
Ready to be Used by God**

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LET'S GET READY!

Do you ever ask yourself: "Is this all there is?" It's a good question. I ask it all the time. There is a hunger within me that is desperate for MORE: more of God; more of His work in my life; more evidence that I am totally surrendered to Him; more people coming to Jesus in our world; more broken homes healed; more devastated lives made whole; more ministers and churches to meet the needs of the hurting; more outpourings of the Holy Spirit's supernatural work.

I'm totally unsatisfied—and I know God likes it that way!

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." In His perspective, desperation is OK. Those who are desperate for Him, those who hunger and thirst for Him, are those who have caught the reality of who God is. He is EVERYTHING—we are nothing without Him. God is infinitely powerful, holy, loving and gracious—we are tiny, insignificant, purposeless and useless without Him.

When we begin to see God for who He truly is, the only appropriate response is to cry out in desperation: "We want more! Give us more of who You are God!"

People who don't understand who God is become satisfied with their little lives. They don't ask for "more" of Him, because they don't really know God and that He desires to bless them and use them to bless the world. And I'm not talking about those who have never met Jesus. I'm talking about those who are in the church—those who come to youth group week after week, but fail to recognize that God wants to release His power in them and through them. I'm talking about those who, despite their own salvation, have grown content with the fact that dozens of their friends and thousands in their community are headed toward an eternity in hell.

Well...I'm not satisfied. How about you? I know that God has more for us. Yes, us—THIS generation, at the beginning of a new century and millennium. I am convinced that we have experienced so very little of what God is prepared to give us. His desire is to open up the windows of heaven and dump so much blessing and glory upon us that we won't be able to

contain it. He longs to visit us with His powerful presence, bringing revival to the world. But God is waiting. Just as He has throughout history, God is watching and waiting for people who are so desperate for His mighty touch that they are willing to pay whatever price is necessary to fling open the doors of revival.

LET'S TAKE IT OUTSIDE

For years the church (and its youth groups) has been very good at throwing parties. We know how to gather the family of God together to celebrate the good things of the Lord. The truth is, we've grown quite fat sitting around the banquet tables of fellowship and discipleship—and this is not a bad thing. It's just that there is SO MUCH MORE!

In Isaiah chapter 49, God gave a powerful message to His people, Israel. In verses 6 and 7 He said, "it is too small a thing" for His people to just gather those who were already in the family. God declared that He had a much bigger job for them to do: "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles (the nations), that you may bring My salvation to the ends of the earth." Not only did God give this MAJOR task to His people, but He also empowered them to do it. In verses 8 and 9, He declared, "In the time of My favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you...to say to the captives, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'Be free!'"

This word from God was not just for His people thousands of years ago—it's for His people NOW! This isn't just my idea—the Apostle Paul confirmed it. First, Paul quoted Isaiah 49:8, then he declared: "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). It is time for this generation to grow dissatisfied with where we are today and recognize that God wants to do MORE—and He wants to do it NOW. It is time for this generation to rise up in passionate desperation and cry out to God: "We want more of You! We will do whatever it takes to open the door to Your Spirit's radical work! We want to be used by You! Send revival now!"

LOOKS LIKE REVIVAL

What does revival look like? How will we know when God has answered this cry of our hearts? The Bible is full of historical accounts of revival—read for yourself about these who experienced revival:

- An entire household—led by Jacob (read Genesis 35:1-13).
- The nation of Judah—led by Asa (read 2 Chronicles 15).
- Judah and Israel—led by Hezekiah (read 2 Chronicles 29-31).
- The nation of Judah—led by Josiah (read 2 Chronicles 34-35).
- The nation of Judah—led by Ezra (read Nehemiah 8-10).
- About 3,000 in the city of Jerusalem—led by Peter (read Acts 2).
- Thousands more in Jerusalem—led by Peter and John (read Acts 3-4:4).
- More and more in Jerusalem—led by the apostles (read Acts 5:1-16).
- A large gathering of people in the home of Cornelius—led by Peter (read Acts 10).
- A great number of people in Antioch—led by ordinary men and later Barnabas (read Acts 11:19-24).

As we read these Biblical accounts, there are certain features that clearly stand out as identifiable characteristics of revival. Here are some of these features.

- God's hand is obviously at work. Even though people are strategically involved in revival, it is clear that God is the One orchestrating His plan.
- God uses human leaders. At the epicenter of every revival is God's anointed leader—a man or woman who is willing to do whatever it takes to obediently carry out the will of God.
- Repentance. Revival always brings about change—people turn from their past wicked ways as they turn to God, willing to throw out every evil thing.
- Salvation. People by the dozens, hundreds and thousands put their trust in God and receive His forgiveness.
- Unity. When people from diverse backgrounds are drawn into relationship with God, they are simultaneously drawn into relationship with each other.

- Worship. People worship God when they step into His awesome presence.
- Giving. A freedom in giving marks those who have been touched by God's reviving power.
- Splash! Revival always messes up whatever is going on. The peaceful, floating-on-the-pool kind of life that people are leading is suddenly interrupted by a cannonball off the high-dive. God shows up and immediately neat little lives and programs are thrown into a state of "divine disarray."

What makes revival happen? How does it start and how does it grow? I picture revival like a splash that's been created by a stone thrown into water. At the point of impact is always God's leader, ready to receive and carry out God's plan. The waves moving out from the splash represent the advance of God's grace and power as it radiates into ever increasing groups of people—a church, a neighborhood, a city, a region, etc.

You've probably guessed that God is the "stone thrower." His desire, as shown in Scripture and throughout modern history, is to send revival over and over again to His world. God is desperately compassionate and does not want anyone to die without having received His gift of salvation (read 2 Peter 3:9). The question is not whether God is throwing stones. The question is: what is He hitting? Are the hearts of His people so cold that the "stones" of revival are sadly bouncing off frozen water? Or, are the hearts of His people **READY FOR REVIVAL?**

The goal of this book is to help prepare a generation to be ready for revival.

OUR PASSIONS DEFINE US

What are you passionate about? What is your youth group passionate about? What are the passions of this generation? Our passions help to define us. By examining them we can tell whether or not we're ready for revival. If we are consumed by worldly passions (read Titus 3:3-8) then when God throws revival our way it will bounce right off of our hardened hearts. If, however, our passions are the same as God's, then we can be sure that we are ready to be used by Him.

Here is the determining question: are you desperately passionate about knowing Jesus and making Him known to the world?

If your answer is YES, then this book will challenge you to live out your passion and open the doors for revival. If your answer is NO, then it's time to EXCHANGE your passions! Titus 2:11-14 talks about how Christ's power enables us to live free from our old worldly passions so that we can become passionate about doing God's will. You don't have to live as a slave to your old passions. Scripture tells us that when we received salvation, we became "new creations" (read 2 Corinthians 5:17). Since you've been made new, don't drag along worthless passions from your past.

The ten passions discussed on the following pages are not a spiritual "to do" list that you can check off when accomplished. They are a "want to," "must do," "love to" list for those who are hungry for Jesus; for those who greatly desire the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon their youth group, their church and their generation; for those who are desperate for their friends and family to come to know Jesus; for those who shed tears over those who die without coming to salvation; for those who are willing to pay the price, no matter the cost, to see revival begin in their own lives and in the lives of others.

As you read through this book, I have a challenge for you: don't skip the "Paying the Price" worksheets at the end of each chapter. As you work through them, they'll help you to wrestle with your passions and identify personal points of action. Also, please realize that none of our passions will perfectly match the Lord's passions until we see Him face to face. But because He is merciful and full of grace, God will use us in spite of our weaknesses and imperfections. Let's keep our eyes set on Him and our passions fueled by His Spirit.

I cannot wait to see what God is going to do with this generation. I believe that millions are about to be added to God's family as they are reached with the good news of Jesus. I believe that youth groups, churches, schools, communities, cities and whole nations are about to be rocked by revival. And this is going to start with you and me—ordinary people who are willing

to align our passions with the passions of God in order that we might be epicenters for revival.
NOW is the time of God's favor, NOW is the day of salvation! Let's get ready for revival!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Mossholder'.

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PASSION ONE: A PASSION FOR JESUS

Philippians 3:7 “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.”

WHATEVER IT TAKES

Tuesday morning, April 20, 1999. It was a typical school day for kids across the country—studying in classrooms, running through halls, laughing with friends. For one school and its students, however, that morning would be tragically different than all the rest.

At 11:30 AM at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, two students began their evil plan to massacre hundreds at their school that day. They walked through their campus spraying bullets and placing bombs, leaving a trail of death behind them. By the time the two young killers took their own lives they had murdered thirteen others, wounded many more and horrified a nation. Only God’s grace prevented their goal of slaughtering hundreds from being carried out.

As the personal stories began to pour out of Columbine, they caught the attention of the world—a teacher who had sacrificed his own life to save the lives of many students, an athletic African-American student shot because of the color of his skin, and the stories of at least two young ladies who were killed because of their faith in God. Out of all these stories, one in particular has continued to captivate the imaginations of millions—it is the story of Cassie Bernal.

Cassie, known by her friends and youth group as a committed Christian, had not grown up being passionate about Jesus. Just two years prior to her death, Cassie had been experimenting with drugs and the occult and had even contemplated suicide. Something, however, had radically changed in Cassie’s life. It began when her parents, who were frightened that their daughter was walking further and further from Christ, took some hard steps to help Cassie get back on track. At first she rejected her parents and their efforts to

“correct” her, but then she made a decision that would forever alter her own life and the lives of all who have heard her story—she decided to make Jesus her number one passion.

When the two killers walked into the library and found Cassie Bernall, they did not know who they were dealing with! They were confronting a young woman who had already died—not physically, but to the world and everything in it. When they asked her at gun point, “Do you believe in God?” she could answer, “Yes, I believe in God.” only because she had already died to herself and all other passions. Jesus was her number one passion in life—even in the face of death. On April 20, 1999 Cassie Bernall’s life was taken, but two years earlier she had already willingly given it to Jesus.

Two thousand years before Cassie Bernall, the Apostle Paul had come to the same conclusion that Cassie had. He wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Paul and Cassie were living in the exact same truth: I am no longer alive, it is Christ who lives in me.

The same evening that Cassie was martyred for her faith in Jesus, Cassie’s younger brother found the following note on her desk that she had written just two days before:

Now I have given up on everything else
 I have found it to be the only way
 To really know Christ and to experience
 The mighty power that brought
 Him back to life again, and to find
 Out what it means to suffer and to
 Die with him. So, whatever it takes
 I will be one who lives in the fresh
 Newness of life of those who are
 Alive from the dead

I love the phrase: “whatever it takes.” It speaks of a total abandonment to the things of this world. When Cassie wrote those words, it showed that she had completely aligned her passions with the passions of God. When someone says, “whatever it takes,” they are saying, “God I’ll do anything, anytime, anywhere for You! I am completely surrendered to You.” Cassie had no idea what lay before her when she wrote that note—but I don’t think that it would have mattered. Her number one passion was Jesus. Once that is settled in a person’s life, everything else flows from that decision.

SOMETHING HAS TO BE NUMBER ONE

What is the one singular passion that defines who you are and what you do? Every person has one. Every youth group has one. Even though some don’t realize what it is, everybody has a number one passion. You probably know someone whose passion is music, or sports or their friends—it shows up in just about every thing they do. May I suggest to you that if our ONE most defining passion isn’t Jesus, then we’ll never experience revival in our lives personally, or in the world around us.

The Apostle Paul stated his passion for Jesus very clearly. In fact he was so radical in his passion that he stated, “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him.” (Philippians 3:8-9) He knew what his priorities were—and Jesus was number one. In fact, this first priority was so far above every other thing in his life that everything else looked like trash to him compared with his passion for Jesus!

AN ARMY FOR GOD’S USE

The streets of England were filled with poor, hopeless people when William Booth founded the Salvation Army in 1865. This ministry, that was created to bring both physical and spiritual help to the hurting of London, has since been a blessing to millions around the world.

When Booth was asked for the secret of the success of his ministry, he responded, “I will tell you the secret. God has had all there was of me. There have been men with greater brains than I, men with greater opportunities; but from the day I got the poor of London on my heart, and a vision of what Jesus Christ could do with the poor of London, I made up my mind that God would have all of William Booth there was.”

William Booth had such a passion for Jesus that he surrendered himself ENTIRELY to Him. It wasn't that he was proud or that he thought that his plan would greatly impact the world—he simply told Jesus, “You can have all of me there is!” Can you imagine what God would do with a generation that would declare: God you can have us totally for your use! That would be quite an army—and the result would be the salvation of millions.

I LOVE YOU. I LOVED YOU FIRST.

THE most amazing thing about having a passion for Jesus is realizing that He was passionate about us first. In fact 1 John 4:19 tells us that “We love because he first loved us.” We couldn't even love Him if it wasn't for His love poured out for us. Do you know how much He loves you? Do you realize how passionately He cares for you? You need to understand that His love has no boundaries—it is limitless and never ending. His love for you is not attached to whether or not you've been a good kid—in fact, we were all messed up and undeserving of His love when He went to the cross and died to make us whole. Read the way the Living Bible captures the heart of God's incredible love in Ephesians 2:1-5.

Once you were under God's curse, doomed forever for your sins. You went along with the crowd and were just like all the others, full of sin, obeying satan...We started out bad, being born with evil natures, and were under God's anger just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy; He loved us so much that even though we were spiritually dead and doomed by our sins, He gave us back our lives again when He raised Christ from the dead—only by His undeserved favor have we ever been saved.

When we begin to realize the depths of God's love for us, we are released to new levels of passion for Him. We owe Him everything—our very lives. If the God of the universe can be that passionate for me, I can certainly try to express the same level of devotion to Him. What other choice do I have but to surrender all I am to Him?

TO KNOW ME IS TO LOVE ME

The more you get to know Jesus the more you'll fall in love with Him. The more you learn about Him the more you'll want to get closer to Him. If you want to increase in your passion for Jesus, start by getting to know Him on a deeper level.

When Jesus left the earth and returned to heaven, He left us three powerful ways by which we can grow in our knowledge and understanding of Him:

1. The Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that when He returned to heaven He would send us His Holy Spirit who would teach us all things, guide us into all truth and remind us of everything that Jesus has said (read John 14:15-26 and 16:7-15).
2. The Bible. Praise God for His Word, the Bible! By examining the Scriptures we can study Him closely and investigate His incredible plan of redemption for mankind.
3. The Church. A third thing that Jesus did before returning to heaven was to establish His church. You may have heard the church called the "body of Christ." When we become vitally connected to His "body" at a local church level, we're actually connecting to Jesus, too. If you want to get to know how Jesus is working in the world today, get plugged in to a church (read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and Ephesians 5:23).

THE COST AND THE REWARDS

Whenever you say "yes" to something, then of course you are saying "no" to something else. When you say that Jesus is your number one passion, you are declaring that EVERYTHING else must take a back-seat to Him. It will cost you everything—your time, energy, gifts,

possessions, dreams, plans for the future, family. It will cost you your life. Jesus didn't pull any punches, He was very clear about this. Read His words in Matthew 10:37-39.

Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Even though the cost is great, Jesus' words in this last phrase let us know that His radical demands come with a promise attached: if you lose your life for Me, then you're really about to find it! The rewards of making Jesus your number one passion are real—though they're NOT always the kinds of immediate rewards the world is longing for.

What rewards can we expect? You can expect eternal life in the future (read Matthew 19:28-29) and expect to be a history maker now! Being a "history maker" is never easy—just ask the three guys who were thrown into a furnace for refusing to bow to a false God. BUT...they made history by turning the heart of their king (read Daniel 3). Just ask Jesus' disciples—all but one of them were martyred for their faith. BUT...they changed history forever and were even accused of having "turned the world upside down" (read Acts 17:6 KJV). Do you want to turn your world upside down for Jesus? Then make Him your number one passion and you'll be getting ready for revival.

PAYING THE PRICE

Cassie Bernall had made following Jesus her number one passion. She had “died to herself” and decided to live only for Him. Have you decided to die to yourself and make Jesus your number one passion and priority? Make a list of the top five priorities in your life, then pray about which priorities may need to change.

William Booth declared, “God has had all there was of me.” Can you think of an area that you need to surrender to Jesus so that you could honestly say, “He has ALL of me?” Write your own declaration of surrender to Jesus.

In Revelation 2:4 Jesus said to a church, even though they were doing some things right, “I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.” Is Jesus still YOUR first love? Are there any areas in your life in which you used to follow Jesus more closely than you are right now? Write out what can you do to return to your first love.

Making Jesus your first passion is not just a one time decision—it’s a choice that we make every day. In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Write down what you can do every day to renew and maintain your passion for Jesus.

PASSION TWO: A PASSION FOR REPENTANCE

2 Chronicles 7:14 “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

YOU CAN ONLY GIVE WHAT IS IN YOU

Do you remember playing with a sponge when you were a kid? When my children were young, they loved to fill sponges and squeeze out the contents over and over again. *We* are like sponges—and God’s desire is to squeeze *US* out all over the earth! In John 7:38, Jesus said, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” That’s exactly what we need to flow from us—His living water. Nothing else will quench the thirst of our needy world.

The question is: when God squeezes us what comes out? If we are filled up with ourselves, sin and the things of this world, we’ll never be able to contain the living water of God. If, however, we are filled up with the things of God (His passions, attitudes, thoughts and actions) we’ll be ready to spill His living water on anyone with whom we come in contact.

It’s time to allow Him to wring us out—then fill us with His Spirit. It’s absolutely necessary if we want to live in right relationship with God and be used to bring His life to the world. This process of being wrung out is what the Bible calls “repentance,” and those who are ready for revival will develop a passion for it.

Repentance isn’t just saying “sorry” to those whom we’ve wronged. It’s *much* more than that. It starts when our hearts are broken, realizing that the things we’ve done and the things with which we’ve filled our lives are absolutely gross compared to the matchless beauty and holiness of God. This “godly sorrow” leads us into the process of repentance—doing whatever it takes to totally wring every ungodly thing from our lives (read 2 Corinthians 7:8-11). Doing

“whatever it takes” involves confessing our sin, making changes in our lives, then living openly in front of others who can help to hold us accountable.

LIVING A LIFE OF CONFESSION

A person who has a passion for repentance will be willing to live a life of confession. Going to someone and confessing that we’ve been wrong is never easy. It’s always a humbling experience that requires us to die to our pride and our “right” to privacy. Those whose attitude is, “Don’t bug me about my sin—I’ll take care of it by myself and in my own time,” will never experience the freedom that comes from repentance. We must have a willingness to live an “open life” that is free from secret sin.

One of the most important keys to confession is finding trusted spiritual authorities in our lives—people to whom we can confess and who will help us to grow past our points of failure. On several occasions I have gone to my parents, a pastor or a strong Christian friend to confess points of sin in my life. I praise God that He’s given me leaders and friends who have graciously helped me grow in my walk with the Lord—they never have pushed me away or made me feel like I was rejected by God.

Very often the hardest people to confess to are our parents. Not only is it embarrassing when they find out ugly things about us, but we worry that they won’t trust us again and fear that they will make our lives miserable with new rules and regulations. We must remember, however, that God has given parents a unique role of authority in our lives. This is especially true before we are adults while we are living under their covering (both physically and spiritually). God’s Word commands us to honor our parents (read Ephesians 6:1-2). In order to “honor” them we must allow them to know what is going on in our lives—the good AND the bad—then willingly receive their direction and correction. There is no way we can honor our parents and hide things from them at the same time.

Are there other people besides our spiritual authorities to whom we may need to confess? Yes! Confession needs to be made to all those against whom we have sinned. If you cheated on a

school project, then you need to go back to your teacher and confess your sin. If you broke a certain rule that your parents had given you, then it is not enough just to confess to a youth leader, you must confess the sin to your parents. If you made fun of someone in front of a group, then you need to confess your sin not only to the person you made fun of, but to the whole group as well because you affected them all by your sin. And we always need to make confession to God. All sin is an offense against our Lord who died to set us free.

As we are learning to live lives of confession, we need to use wisdom. We never want to fill someone else's mind with the filth that we are wringing from the sponge of our life. This can happen if we are "overly graphic" as we confess our sin. We need to confess the WHOLE sin (not hiding the parts that make us look bad), but this does not necessarily mean communicating EVERY gory detail.

If you've been involved in some horrible things (and many of us have), and believe that all the details of your sin need to be shared in order that it may be dealt with thoroughly, then you should make an appointment with a pastor or professional Christian counselor. These women and men of God have lots of experience in helping people deal with all the "gross stuff" in which they have become entangled.

Here's an important truth about confession: we can't allow the pain of embarrassment or the fear of discipline to convince us that we should shut up and hide our sin. Repentance and confession are always the right things to do—and will bring great reward. King David understood this reality. In Psalm 32:1-6 (Living Bible), he declared, "What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record."

LIVING A LIFE OF CHANGE

As important as confession is, it's only the first step in the process of repentance. The next critical step is turning away from our sinful behavior as we turn toward God. It is not enough just to say we have been wrong—we must actually change and begin to live differently. John

the Baptist preached, “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Luke 3:8). In other words, “You say that you have repented...OK, show me what’s different about your life!” Real repentance is not just about words—it’s about a changed life.

The Bible says that God is like a potter, and that we are like clay in His hands. He is continually working on us and changing us to make us into something useful, something of beauty (read Isaiah 64:8). Can you imagine a lump of clay crawling off the potter’s wheel, deciding on its own when it is finished? Pretty silly, huh? But that is what we do when we refuse to allow the Lord to change us and form us into the man or woman that He wants us to be. A passion for repentance will be shown by a willingness to “stay on the potter’s wheel,” allowing God to continually make changes in our lives.

LIVING A LIFE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

It’s one thing to “get free” from sin, but it’s another thing to “live free.” We “get free” through confession and turning away from sinful behavior, but to “live free” we must walk in ongoing relationship with other believers who can help us to walk the walk of righteousness. This is called accountability.

In 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul instructs Timothy to “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” We usually remember that we are supposed to “flee” from the bad stuff and “pursue” the good stuff of God—but it is easy to forget that we are NOT supposed to do either of these things on our own. We are to run from sin ALONG WITH those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. How do we do this? By entering into relationships of accountability.

Being accountable simply means living honestly and openly in front of someone else and being willing to receive his or her words of correction and encouragement. I have a close Christian friend who holds me accountable for the sinful things into which I easily fall. He loves me and is willing to ask me the tough questions—and I am committed to answering honestly, even

when it will make me look bad. This has greatly helped me from continually falling into the same sin.

To whom should we be accountable? It should be to someone who is strong in the Lord and is not struggling with the same areas of weakness that we are. Parents, pastors, youth leaders and Christian friends can all help to hold us accountable. The fact is, if we have a passion for repentance, a passion to be completely wrung out by God, then we'll WELCOME accountability from whomever it comes! We can't, however, just wait for some "accountability relationship" magically to appear. Establishing ongoing relationships of accountability takes real work. Go and ask someone you trust, "Will you help to hold me accountable in this area of my life?" Then follow up on it! Regularly meet with that person to pray, confess and strategize for continued freedom over sin.

OVER AND OVER AGAIN

When my kids were done playing with a sponge and had squeezed from it all they possibly could, they were always amazed to see how much more daddy could wring out! That's another picture of our lives. When we place our lives into the hands of our heavenly Father, He can always find more that needs to be squeezed out. We must remember that repentance is not a one time act—it is an ongoing, daily process of being wrung out. If we allow Him, the Holy Spirit will bring things to our attention EVERY DAY that need to be wrung from our lives in repentance. The cool thing is, the more we repent, the more room we make for His Spirit. The more junk we flush from our "sponges," the more of His wonderful grace we'll be able to soak up.

Never resist the "squeezing" hand of the Lord—welcome it! Passionately place your life into His hands and say, "Wring out anything and everything that is getting in Your way." A life that has been totally wrung out is one that is totally ready to receive. Repentance—done through confession, changed living and accountability—paves the way for revival.

PAYING THE PRICE

Have you deceived your parents or other leaders—allowing them to believe that you have been obeying them when really you were not? Are you willing to pay the price of repentance by confessing your disobedience to them? Write down those things which you need to confess and when you will do it.

With which of my youth leaders will I become accountable and reveal the “danger areas” I face in my private life? Write down which leader I’ll contact and when I’ll do it.

What do I need to do this week to make things right that I’ve done wrong in the past? Do I need to pay back a store where I stole something? Do I need to apologize to someone whom I’ve hurt? Do I need to ask forgiveness of a teacher against whom I’ve rebelled? Do I need to go to a parent, brother or sister and repent for my poor attitude? Allow God to remind you of things you need to make right and write them down here.

Think about the illustration of the “sponge.” Rate yourself on a scale of one to ten regarding how “squeezed” your life is. A “one” would indicate that you’re holding onto a lot of unconfessed garbage; a “ten” would indicate that you’ve been completely wrung out by God and that you know of NO sin that remains in your life. After you’ve rated yourself, list the things you’ll do to become a “ten.”

PASSION THREE: A PASSION FOR LOVE AND UNITY

John 13:34-35 “A new command I give you: Love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, the world was horrified by Charles Manson—a mass murderer who gathered a “family” of teenagers and young adults around him who were willing to carry out his evil plans. One such follower was Lynette “Squeaky” Fromme. In 1975, thinking that it would somehow help Manson, Squeaky tried to assassinate President Gerald Ford. When interviewed about why she was so committed to Manson, Squeaky replied, “When I was about 14 years old, I realized I was a misfit. I was a misfit at home and at school, so I left home. I ran across the country, ending up sitting on a curb in Whittier, California. A man came up to me, put his hand on my head and said, ‘Come with me and I will take care of you.’ And I believed him, so I followed him. His name was Charles Manson.” She went on, “I would still die for him. I decided when I was 14 years old that whoever loved me first could have my life.”

What is so important about love? Why did Jesus “command” it? Because of people like Squeaky. Because there are millions of people who, whether they know it or not, are lost and in need of compassion. Jesus desperately loves these people and compels us to be His ambassadors of love to them. If we want to win this generation, if we want to see God send revival, then we must be passionate about reaching out in love.

THE SEED

God IS love—so without Him love is not possible. We see the evidence of this within people who have rejected God. People who have hardened their hearts to His amazing love are filled with hatred, cruelty, abuse and bitterness. However, in people who have accepted the love of God through Jesus, there is health, growth, acceptance, forgiveness and compassion.

You see, when God sent His only Son into the world, He was planting a seed of love that would grow within everyone who would receive Him. In 1 John 4:7-12 we read that our love is a direct result of knowing God. We're instructed that we are to love others because of God's great love for us. Read John's words...

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Like any seed, love must be nurtured so that it will grow strong. We've got to water it, feed it and make sure that it is protected so that it will develop in health. How can we nurture the development of love? Whenever we invest time in others and show them acceptance, kindness, thoughtfulness, gentleness or patience we are strengthening our love. We nurture love whenever we put others and their best interests above our own and whenever we use creative ways to express our love for each other (notes, hugs, songs, gifts, etc.). It's not always easy to allow love to grow in our relationships—some people are pretty hard to embrace. But the rewards are worth it. The fruit of love is so tasty that the world will come running to see if they can get what we have.

THE FRUIT

What is the fruit of love? Unity. Wherever the seed of love is nurtured it will always produce unity—an invisible, spiritual bond between people that creates great strength in spite of great diversity. Unity is absolutely important in our youth groups and churches. Without it, we'll never see growth and we'll certainly never experience revival. Unity opens the doors to God's blessings (read Psalm 133:1-3), paves the way for the working of the Holy Spirit (read Acts

2:1-4) and provides the means by which we can work together for God's Kingdom (read Romans 12:4-5).

God warns us of what will happen if we don't allow His seed of love to produce unity. Galatians 5:14-15 says, "The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other." This is a strong warning! The Body of Christ (of which you and your youth group are a part) is meant to work together in unity—it's not meant to fight against each other. Can you imagine if your own body fought against itself? You wouldn't get much done if your hand decided that it wasn't going to listen to your brain and your brain decided that it wasn't going to receive any input from the eyes. You'd destroy yourself! It's exactly the same in the Body of Christ. If we don't learn to operate in unity, we'll end up destroying each other rather than seeing God's will accomplished.

When believers do work together in unity, good stuff happens. When Jesus prayed for his disciples (and us), He asked His Father, "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me" (John 17:23). Our unity will result in the world finding Jesus!

SEEDS OF DESTRUCTION

Every seed eventually grows up and produces fruit. The seed of love produces unity—but other seeds produce different fruit. Have you ever been in a group where seeds of destruction have been sown? It's easy to spot the fruit that is produced by these evil seeds—it's the deadly fruit of division. Division will tear apart families, youth groups or churches wherever it is allowed to grow. Jesus said, "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25). Division always leads to the destruction of God's work, and hurts many people along the way.

As much as God hates division, satan loves it. Our enemy is constantly trying to break apart the church by sowing seeds of division wherever and whenever he can. The two seeds of destruction that he most commonly uses are the seeds of “talk” and “prejudice.”

Have you ever seen a plant that grew straight through a cement sidewalk? It’s amazing how that tiny plant can be so strong—and destructive! That’s a picture of the way the seed of “talk” can destroy God’s work. When people begin talking badly about each other, God’s appointed leaders or some aspect of the group, even the strongest ministry can begin to crumble. Proverbs 12:18 states, “Reckless words pierce like a sword.” Many have left youth groups and churches “bleeding” and wounded, having been pierced by the words of someone who was either careless or cruel. Some have eventually found healing from these hurtful words, while others have been so wounded that they never come back to the group or to God. Many have been heard to say, “If that’s what Christians are like, I don’t want to have anything to do with them.” God, forgive us for wounding those for whom you died.

Why is it that we find it so difficult to keep our mouths shut? James gives us a clue when he tells us that the tongue “is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (James 3:6). He lets us know that hell is behind the wickedness of our words—when we open our mouths to speak evil, we are working hand in hand with the devil, sowing his seeds of destruction.

Isn’t it interesting that James also compares the tongue to a fire? Once wounding words are spoken, like the destruction of a fire, the damage cannot be undone. Even if apologies are offered, the hurt and destruction has often already spread from person to person, effecting whole groups of people. Hell loves to “fan the flames” of evil and destructive words. Gossip that was meant to only be shared with one person somehow finds it’s way through entire groups, hurting many along the way. A cruel remark that you thought was “no big deal” becomes a very big deal in the heart of the one to whom it was directed. Why? Because the devil is fanning that flame. He wants to “kill, steal and destroy” and he loves using OUR words to do it!

We MUST learn to control what we say, submitting our words to the Lord BEFORE we open our mouths. Jesus warns us, “But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken” (Matthew 12:36).

Jesus also tells us in Luke 6:45, “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.” What is overflowing from YOUR mouth? Praise, encouragement, things that will build others up—or is it gossip, cutting remarks and things that will tear others down? To make sure that the seed of division does not take root among us, we must have a passion to keep our mouths shut.

Another common way that satan tries to bring division is by planting the destructive seed of prejudice. Prejudice comes in many different forms—and all of them will end with relationships being torn apart and ministries crumbling.

Some think that prejudice is limited to disliking those from other ethnic groups, but it’s much larger than that. ***Prejudice takes place any time when “difference” becomes the reason for “distance” between people.*** We tend to feel comfortable with people who are similar to us—this in itself is not an evil thing. But it becomes evil, and becomes prejudice, when we choose to “distance ourselves” from those who are different than us.

Here are some prejudices that we must frequently stand against in our churches and youth groups:

- Generational prejudice—young people staying away from their “elders” and older people avoiding “those rowdy kids.”
- Style prejudice—categorizing people according to their music or fashion styles and staying away from those who don’t match our own.
- Ethnic and language prejudice—avoiding those whose skin color and primary language is different from our own.
- Spiritual prejudice—refusing to embrace non-believers or those who aren’t as “spiritually mature” as we are.

I remember not too long ago when I had to deal with a seed of prejudice that had sprouted up in my own life. I was part of a group of leaders who had assembled from all across America—and there was lady in the group who bugged me. She was from a different part of the country...she talked funny...and her hair was TOTALLY out of style. I basically thought she was a hick! Not only did I avoid being around her, but I felt free to joke about her behind her back. Then God got a hold of me. He rebuked me for allowing prejudice to drive a wedge between me and this woman of God. Ouch. I repented of my sin before the Lord, then I went and asked for forgiveness from each of the other group members to whom I had said things about this woman.

Am I now best friends with this woman? No—but I'm now willing to embrace WHO SHE IS, and I'll never again allow for our differences to create distance between us.

Do you remember when the Holy Spirit was first poured out upon the disciples? Acts chapter two tells us that people from “every nation under heaven” gathered to hear Peter preach—then about 3,000 of them gave their lives to Jesus! Revival will draw people from all over—many of whom will be VERY different from you and your current circle of friends. Will you choose to lovingly accept every new person that Jesus brings across your path, or will you pridefully distance yourself from them? People who are ready for revival will be passionate about resisting prejudice and embracing EVERYONE.

One of the saddest moments in church history came early in the 1900's during a powerful time known as the “Azusa Street Revival.” Under the leadership of William Seymour, an African American preacher, God poured out His Spirit in Los Angeles. Thousands of people from many different ethnic and economic groups were saved, baptized in the Holy Spirit and radically touched by the power of God. Some, however, began to feel that the different ethnic groups did not belong together—that it just wasn't right. This evil seed of prejudice quickly produced the fruit of division and ended this season of revival. May THIS generation never become a victim of the same trick of the enemy. Let us be PASSIONATE about love and unity.

TIME FOR SOME GARDENING!

The wonderful truth is that God has given each of us the ability to weed out the destructive seeds of division. The two tools we need are acceptance and forgiveness.

Acceptance is something we think we do pretty well. We're usually not mean to people, so we figure we must be accepting. Jesus, however, practiced a radical form of acceptance—quite different than the “I-can-barely-tolerate-you” level of acceptance in which most of us function. Jesus didn't just tolerate the “rejects” of His day—people like cheating tax collectors, prostitutes and diseased lepers—He chose to hang out with them. Jesus' acceptance of people was so radical that it not only shocked His disciples, but it even shocked the people He was accepting (read John 4:4-27)!

Jesus' prescription for radical acceptance is found in Matthew 5:43-45. “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” The Living Bible puts it this way: “If you are friendly only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even the heathen do that” (Matthew 5:47). Those who practice radical acceptance go out of their way to embrace everyone, not just their friends.

The second tool we need to weed out destruction is forgiveness. Again, we find that Jesus' brand of radical forgiveness is far different than the more common variety we tend to practice today.

Our “forgiveness” is often only granted to those who first come and apologize for the wrong that they committed against us. Jesus' radical forgiveness, however, was extended to those who were in the process of killing Him. Luke 23:34 records Jesus' words while on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Radical forgiveness does not depend on how “sorry” the other person is—it's given freely, regardless of the other person's attitude.

Our “forgiveness” also tends to be incomplete—we want to hold on to some of our hurt and pain, so that if we need to, we can use it against the one who offended us. God’s forgiveness of us, however, is total and forever. He completely removes our sin from us and He remembers it no more (read: Psalm 103:8-12 and Isaiah 43:25). Radical forgiveness is complete and does not keep a record of how people have hurt us.

So...do we HAVE to forgive others? Jesus answered this question with a promise AND a warning: “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15). It sounds like He’s serious about forgiveness!

Why does God care so much about acceptance and forgiveness? Because these two things will not only nurture the love that He’s given us, but they also will help to destroy the divisive work of the enemy. Don’t allow the devil an inch! Passionately chase after love and unity—your pursuit will be making you ready for revival.

PAYING THE PRICE

Someday we'll all have to stand before the Lord and have to explain to Him each of our careless words (read Matthew 12:36). Before this happens is there anyone to whom you need to ask forgiveness from because of words you have spoken? Make a list of those to whom you will go and ask for forgiveness.

When the Holy Spirit was first poured out upon the church they were living in a time of revival when thousands were coming to the Lord. Acts 4:32 describes the church this way: "All the believers were one in heart and mind." What things would need to happen so that these words would also be an accurate description of your youth group?

According to the definition provided in this chapter, do you have any prejudice toward a group of people (ethnic, generational, style or spiritual)? If you do, write a prayer to the Lord asking Him to help you see these people and love these people the same way He does—then list three things you can do this week to help break this prejudice.

According to Jesus, "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25). What ways has the enemy tried to divide your family? What ways can you be used by God to bring unity in your home?

PASSION FOUR: A PASSION FOR WORSHIP

Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”

It is amazing to me that all believers do not have a passion for worship. What an incredible privilege to be invited into the presence of the God of the universe! You would think that everyone who has been invited would respond—but incredibly, some hang back, outside of intimate relationship with the Lord. Those who are ready for revival won’t be the ones hanging back—they’ll be those blazing a trail to the throne of God, passionate about worshiping their King.

What is worship? Worship is what happens when we come into the presence of the one true God. It is the ONLY thing that CAN happen. We see this reality throughout the Bible. Take Isaiah for example—we read in Isaiah 6:1-8 about this young man’s experience in the presence of God:

“I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphs...And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.’ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’ Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’”

What a radical description of what takes place in God's presence. Isaiah didn't sing a song, dance before the Lord or even raise his hands in praise—but he worshiped. He cried out in recognition that he was an unholy man in the presence of the most holy God. That is worship! Worship happens when our minds grasp this simple but profound truth: He is God—I am not. Worship flows from people who recognize the stark contrast between who we are and who God is. God is amazing and powerful—I am pitiful and weak. God is holy and full of beauty—I am sinful and in need of His grace. When we begin to recognize these things, we worship.

MORE THAN A SONG

Worship is not just singing songs, and it's not just something we do at church. Worship is our response to who God is and what He has done. Worship is EVERYTHING we do because of our faith in God. Romans 12:1 tells us that worship involves living our entire lives as continual offerings, or "living sacrifices," before the Lord. When you become a living sacrifice you are saying to God, "You deserve ALL of me; I'm surrendering everything of myself to You and I won't hold anything back; Jesus, take my mind, emotions, body and relationships and shape them into something that will glorify You."

Because worship includes everything we do in faith, our entire lives can reflect worship to God. Every time we pray we are worshiping the God who hears and answers. Every time we share our faith with a friend we are worshiping the God who saves. When we are obedient to those in authority over us we are worshiping the God who places people in positions of authority. When we study and become obedient to the Bible we are worshiping the God who has given us His Word. When we accept God's call upon our lives we are worshiping the God who created us to do good works for Him. Our entire lives, lived out in obedient surrender to the Lord, are expressions of worship.

WORSHIP TOGETHER

If our entire lives are supposed to be lived in worship, then what do we call all that singing, dancing and other stuff we do when we get together at church? That's worship, too! Not only are our whole lives lived as expressions of worship, but we also get to enjoy special moments of worship. These special moments can occur during "regularly scheduled" times of worship (like our weekly church services or youth group meetings) or can take place at the most unlikely times when we're least expecting them. Special moments of worship happen when we once again "catch hold" of the reality of who God is and what He's done.

When Jesus lived on the earth His disciples had special moments when they "caught" the reality of who it was they were following. Even though they walked with Jesus every day they also needed moments of revelation. They needed special times when their eyes were more fully opened to the fact that they were in the presence of God. When their eyes were opened, guess what they did? They worshiped.

You may remember the amazing story of Peter walking on the water with Jesus. It was stormy and late at night when the disciples became terrified at the sight of a man walking on the lake. That's understandable! After they realized it was Jesus out on the water, Peter goes to join Him. After briefly walking on the water himself, Peter starts to sink and ends up needing to be rescued by Jesus. But do you remember what happened when they got into the boat? Matthew 14:32-33 tells us that when Peter and Jesus climbed into the boat, the storm immediately stopped. At that moment the disciples "caught" it. "Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'"

We are no different than the disciples who lived two thousand years ago. We know Jesus and "walk" with Him, yet we need moments when we are rocked by the realization: this is God! We need special moments, whether at youth group, at camp or when kneeling alone in our bedrooms, when we once again "catch" hold of the reality of who God is and what He's done.

The Bible has given us many examples of how we can respond creatively to the Lord during these special moments of worship:

- Shout and sing joyful songs (Psalm 100).
- Give thanks to the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:8).
- Play all kinds of instruments (Psalm 150).
- Bow down (2 Chronicles 20:18).
- Kneel before the Lord (Philippians 2:9-11).
- Dance (Psalm 149:1-3).
- Lift hands up to God (Psalm 134:1-2).
- Applaud the Lord (Psalm 47:1).
- Share in communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- Confess sin (Nehemiah 9:2-3).
- Give financially (Matthew 6:21).
- Spend time in fellowship with other believers (Acts 2:42-47).
- Declare your faith to others (2 Corinthians 4:13-14)
- Serve others (Matthew 25:40).

Here's a quick test. In the following scripture, how many forms of worship can you find?

“In that day you will say: ‘Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you’” (Isaiah 12:4-6).

Galatians 5:6 states: “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

Worship is our love response to God—the creative expression of our faith. And since God has made each one of us unique creations, then it should be no surprise that we all worship a little bit differently. And when we blend our various forms of worship together it creates such an incredible and beautiful mosaic of praise to the Lord—a rich expression of our love for Him.

WEAK OR POWERFUL WORSHIP?

In Isaiah 29:13 we read God's rebuke of people whose "worship" wasn't really worship at all. They were involved in a meaningless ritual that was NOT a response to who God is or what He had done. "The Lord says: 'These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.'" You may have seen this yourself—music is being played and people have their hands lifted as if they might be worshipping, but you notice that those same people are looking around, laughing and talking with their friends, etc. This is WEAK worship and is nothing but a waste of time.

If we are not careful, we can easily fall into the trap of weak worship. We can get caught up with the crowd, just "going through the motions," never once being rocked by the realization of who God is or what He's done. How do we protect ourselves from weak worship and keep our worship powerful? By staying focused on God and immediately responding to what He shows us. If He shows us an area of sin in our lives—then we'll repent right then and there. If He stirs us to give—then we'll take out our wallets. If He calls us to surrender to Him—then we may get on our knees or bow down before Him. If He reminds us of His faithfulness or mighty power—then we'll shout for joy or sing songs of praise. If He speaks a prophetic word to us—then we'll get up and faithfully share it with whomever He directs us.

While weak worship accomplishes nothing, powerful worship opens the door for everything that God wants to do. Those who are passionate worshipers are ones who are ready for revival.

PAYING THE PRICE

Based on what you learned in this chapter, how would you describe worship? According to your description, are you a worshipping person?

Review the list of examples that the Bible indicates are appropriate ways that we can respond to the Lord in worship. Which of these ways do you most often use in your worship? Are there any which you have never used in your worship? Find a time today to worship Jesus in a way you've never (or have seldom) done before.

What forms of worship would you like to see developed in your youth group? What can you do to help this happen?

List three things you will do this month to develop your passion to worship.

PASSION FIVE: A PASSION FOR SOULS

Luke 19:10 “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

In 1997 a sweet young lady with long, thick, brown hair began her eighth grade school year. Lauren Mercier was quiet and rather shy. Her youth pastor, Marty Walker, describes her as a faithful kid who would always show up to youth group, but one whom you would never expect to say a word up front. As that school year began, however, God began to give Lauren a passion to see Jesus do something new at her Christian school where students had grown indifferent about God.

One night at the beginning of the school year during a time of worship and prayer at youth group, Lauren stood up. This surprised everyone, but not as much as the prayer that would next come out of her mouth. Lauren prayed, “God I want to see revival happen at my school. I don’t just want to see people showing up to See You At The Pole—I want to see people praying every day. I want to see people getting saved. I don’t care what it takes. Use me.” No one, most of all Lauren, could imagine how God would answer that sincere prayer of abandonment.

The next month Lauren began to feel sick. She went to see her doctor who gave her family the worst possible news—Lauren had a horrible form of cancer, a type that no operation could cure. Over the next months Lauren grew increasingly sick, even losing all of her beautiful, long hair due to her treatments.

During the months of her sickness, however, something incredible began to happen at her school. People who had not cared about prayer at the start of the school year began to meet daily before class to pray for Lauren and their school. The hearts of students were changing, becoming softened to the things of God. Her youth pastor brought this news to Lauren in the hospital and this very sick young lady began to get excited. “It’s happening, isn’t it Pastor

Marty?! This is what I had prayed for!” Lauren began to see how God was answering her prayer for revival.

Before Lauren died, she was able to give her testimony at youth group. She told her friends, “I prayed for God to use me—and He did—and He is! It wasn’t my choice how God would use me. This is how God is choosing to use me!” At that moment this once shy young lady whipped off her hat and threw it to the ground. “God is still using me even though I’m bald! The call on my life didn’t change just because I have cancer.” She challenged her youth group, “I told God that I was available and YOU need to be available, too. Have you volunteered to be used by God?”

At Lauren’s funeral dozens of students from Lauren’s school received Jesus, along with some of their parents and even Lauren’s grandmother. Her family, youth group AND her school have been forever changed by the legacy of this quiet young woman who prayed for revival and volunteered to be used by God.

CATCHING THE HEART OF GOD

Lauren was passionate about the souls of her friends. She had caught the heart of God and began to see her school the same way that He did. Her passion for souls led her to action and her action, empowered by the Holy Spirit, brought about great results.

What is God’s heart for the lost? God is so passionate for the souls of all mankind that He gave His best, sending His own Son to die in our place, so that we might have relationship with Him (read John 3:16-18). 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God’s desire is that NO ONE would die without salvation and that EVERYONE would come to repentance.

Jesus lived out this passion here on earth. Time and time again the Bible records instances of His great compassion—in fact His entire ministry was marked by a passion for people. Consider how Jesus’ passion was shown in different ways during His years of ministry:

- He humbled Himself to leave heaven and come to earth as a man (read Philippians 2:5-8).
- He touched a person who was considered “untouchable” (read Luke 5:12-13).
- He went out of His way to heal a young girl (read Mark 5:22-43).
- He forgave a woman who was caught in sin (read John 8:3-11).
- He provided food for thousands who had come to see Him (read Luke 9:12-17).
- He angrily removed salespeople from the temple (read Mark 11:15-17).
- He took time to minister to a disciple who doubted Him (read John 20:24-28).
- He allowed His blood to be poured out on the cross for all mankind (read Mark 14:24).

Jesus summed up His whole ministry when He stated of Himself: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). His passion for the lost motivated Him to reach out in ministry, eventually leading Him to give up His life on the cross so that the lost might be saved.

The Apostle Paul was a man who caught the heart of God for the lost. His passion for souls led him to take extreme measures in ministry, risking his life many times (and eventually losing it) in order that the world might be reached with the good news of Jesus. Read Paul’s passionate words that he wrote to the church in Rome: “I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel” (Romans 9:2-4). Paul’s passion was so great that he would do whatever it would take to see people come to Jesus.

Are we willing to pay the price to see revival come to our world? Are we willing to step out of our personal comfort zones to bring the love of Jesus to our friends? The way we answer these questions reflects whether or not we have caught the heart of God for the lost. Lauren Mercier and the Apostle Paul were willing to pay whatever price necessary to see people get saved because they had caught God’s passion for souls.

GETTING THE CHURCH OUT OF THE CHURCH

When we have a passion for souls it will stir us to action. It motivates us to become radically obedient to Jesus' command: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

I've heard it asked before, "What part of GO do you not understand?!" The mission of the church is not to figure out the coolest way to have services; it's not to sit around and get fat at pot-luck dinners; it's not even to write books about being ready for revival. These things are meaningless unless they help the church somehow to accomplish its true, God-given mission: to GO and make disciples.

Often times our passion for souls grows cold because we lose sight of our mission and grow content just hanging out with other believers. If you want to fuel the fire of your passion for the lost, just step outside the four walls of your church building and start ministering to the lost. When we obediently begin to carry out our mission, our passion begins to grow and before long we become consumed with the very passion of God.

This frequently happens on short term missions trips. When young people get outside of the normal "youth group" setting and begin to see that they really are capable of praying for the sick, sharing the gospel and working to build the Kingdom of God, their hearts begin to be ignited with a passion for souls. Many of those serving the Lord today as full-time missionaries were called by God to the mission field when they were on a short-term missions trip as a young person. Why? Because when they began to "go" in obedience to Jesus, their passions began to become aligned with the passions of Jesus Himself.

THE TIME IS SHORT

It is reported that D.L. Moody, who was an incredible evangelist a century ago, preached to 100 million people and personally won a million people to Jesus. He did this without appearing on TV or radio, without a computer, without even traveling in a car. Imagine what we can do when we become passionate about seeing people won to Jesus.

One particular event in Moody's ministry deeply affected his passion to see people accept Christ's salvation. He had been preaching at a series of meetings in Chicago and on one occasion shared the need for people to receive Jesus. But rather than asking them to respond immediately to the gospel, he decided just to invite them back for the next day's meeting. That next day never came for many, however, as later that night the great Chicago fire broke out and hundreds lost their lives.

That night Moody was broken hearted and understood what Paul had written to the church long before, "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16).

Have you ever remembered a term project that was due the next day and you hadn't even started it? Hopefully you got busy! Realizing that time is short usually stirs our passions. If you KNEW that you only had one week left to tell your friends about Jesus, you probably would get passionate about their souls. Well, time IS short! What if, like most people, you never see your friends from school again after graduation? What if they were killed tonight in a car crash? When do you plan on talking with them about Jesus? Time is short. It may be short for you, like it was for Lauren Mercier, or it may be short for others around you.

Keith Green was a man who understood that the time is short. He was a radical young musician and evangelist who challenged the church to wake up and minister to the lost and hurting in the world. Read the lyrics to Keith's song, "Asleep in the Light," that captured his passion for souls.

Do you see, do you see
All the people sinking down
Don't you care, don't you care
Are you gonna let them drown?

How can you be so numb
Not to care if they come
You close your eyes
And pretend the job's done

“Oh bless me Lord, bless me Lord”
You know it’s all I ever hear
No one aches, no one hurts
No one even sheds one tear

But He cries, He weeps, He bleeds
And He cares for your needs
And you just lay back
And keep soaking it in
Oh can’t you see it’s such a sin?

Open up, open up
And give yourself away
You see the need, you hear the cries
So how can you delay?

God’s calling and you’re the one
But like Jonah you run
He’s told you to speak
But you keep holding it in
Oh can’t you see it’s such a sin?

The world is sleeping in the dark
That the church just can’t fight
‘Cause it’s asleep in the light
How can you be so dead
When you’ve been so well fed?
Jesus rose from the grave
And you, you can’t even get out of bed

Oh, Jesus rose from the dead
Come on get out of your bed
You close your eyes
And pretend the job’s done

Don’t close your eyes
Don’t pretend the jobs done

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Are there places in your life where you have been “asleep in the light?” Are there places where you have lost your passion for those around you to come to Jesus? It’s time to wake up! It’s time for this generation to wake up and get busy doing the Lord’s work: seeking and saving ALL who are lost.

Revival is all about people coming to Jesus. If you want to be ready for revival then it’s time to wake up and get passionate about souls.

PAYING THE PRICE

The founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth, was asked in 1904 to sign the autograph book of King Edward VII. He wrote:

Your Majesty,

Some men's ambition is art,

Some men's ambition is fame,

Some men's ambition is gold,

My ambition is the souls of men.

Write to your King of your own passion and ambition.

Lauren Mercier read the Bible cover to cover every year for the three years before she was used so mightily by God. What effect do you think God's Word had on her passion to see people reached for Jesus? What is your plan to get God's Word into your heart?

John Hyde was a missionary to India. In his first years there, however, almost no one came to Christ. He became convinced that nothing was going to be accomplished for God without strong prayer. At one point he cried out, "O, God, give me souls or I die!" There was great breakthrough in his ministry and thousands came to Jesus. Write a passionate prayer to Jesus about those you want to see receive His salvation.

In 2 Corinthians 6:2 Paul wrote, "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." What is God calling you to do RIGHT NOW to bring His salvation to those around you—family, friends, people at school and in your neighborhood?

Passion Six: A Passion to Follow

Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.

They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Can you imagine a football team that never followed directions—every player trying to do his own thing to score touchdowns and win the game? They’d get slaughtered! It might be funny to watch a team like that for awhile, but it would grow sad pretty quickly. A team is meant to work together following the lead of their coach. When that doesn’t happen, the results are pathetic.

It’s the same in our lives. God has given us “coaches” that we are meant to follow—men and women who are God’s anointed leaders that will help to lead us to victory. Are you passionate about following the leaders that God has placed in front of you? If not, you may have already experienced some pathetic losses in life. If you are, then you’ve actually begun to follow God’s game-plan for victory in your life and are being made ready for revival.

TWO KINDS OF LEADERS

There are two basic groups of leaders that we must be willing to follow—ones with “legal authority” and others with “spiritual authority.” Both types of leaders are placed over us by God to lead us where we need to go. Romans 13:1 tells us, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”

Who are the leaders with “legal authority” that we must follow? Parents, school teachers and administrators, as well as police and other law enforcement officers are examples of those with the “legal authority” to lead us. Do you have a problem following their lead? Do you find it easier to disobey their instruction rather than submit to their authority? If you do, you’re not

ready to be used by the Lord—because when you disobey them, you’re actually disobeying God as well. Disobedience can never be honored by God and it will prevent you from experiencing the full work of His power in your life.

Those with “spiritual authority” to lead us include: parents, pastors and others who serve in ministry (youth leaders, worship leaders, etc.). God’s Word is very clear, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.” We can’t play games when it comes to following the leaders that God has placed over us. It’s time to become passionate about following God’s anointed leaders.

Notice that our parents have both “legal” AND “spiritual” authority over us. They, more than any others, have a unique role of leadership in our lives. Colossians 3:20 tells kids, “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.” In EVERYTHING—that’s a major command! Ephesians 6:2-3 goes on to tell us that simply obeying our parents isn’t even enough. Paul writes, “Honor your father and mother—which is the first commandment with a promise—that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Obedience to our parents is mainly something that we do when we live under their care and supervision—but honoring our parents with our love and respect is something that God calls us to do for a lifetime.

ONLY ONE RESPONSE

While there are different kinds of leaders in each of our lives, if we have a passion to follow there can be only one appropriate response: radical obedience. Radical obedience is far different from the “partial” obedience that many of us try to get away with. What might “look” like obedience can actually be something far short of Godly, radical obedience. Take the following story for example.

I once heard of a little girl who was being loud and obnoxious while shopping with her mother. Not long into the girl’s rude outburst her mom told her to “sit down and be quiet!” After a few minutes of silence the mom thanked her daughter for obeying and remarked at how nicely she

was seated. At that point the little girl fired back, “I may be sitting on the outside, but I’m standing on the inside!” This kind of “obedience” isn’t obedience at all, but actually a form of rebellious disobedience. Ever been there?

Radical obedience can always be measured in three ways: the timing of our response, the degree of our response and the attitude of our response.

1. The timing of radical obedience: IMMEDIATE! Those who have a passion to follow don’t wait around until it’s convenient to obey—they respond right away. Sometimes we don’t understand God’s timing (or the timing of our leaders), but those with a passion to follow will submit immediately anyway. This means we GO when they say to GO. Radical obedience is immediate obedience.
2. The degree of radical obedience: TOTAL! Half-way or partial obedience isn’t obedience at all, but a form of prideful rebellion that says, “I know how to do this better than my leader!” In 1 Samuel 15 we see a sad picture of Saul, the man God had appointed as king, disobeying God by only partially carrying out His orders. The result? Because Saul didn’t TOTALLY obey the direction he’d been given, he lost his kingdom. We might be able to “fake out” the leader in front of us, but we’ll never fake out God. He knows our heart and the degree of our obedience. Radical obedience is total obedience.
3. The attitude of radical obedience: JOY! Radical obedience is never done grudgingly—it is done with an attitude that says, “I’m glad to do what you have asked of me.” Joy is not to be confused with “happiness.” Happiness is based on what is “happening” at the moment, while true joy is an attitude that stays with us *in spite of* what’s happening. God doesn’t care about our momentary happiness, though He does expect us to keep a right attitude, even when obedience is difficult. Radical obedience is carried out in joy.

Jesus showed us by His own life that He was radically obedient to His Father. In John 14:31 Jesus said, “the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.” Just as Jesus’ obedience flowed out of His love for His Father, He tells us that love should motivate our obedience as well. “If anyone loves me, he will obey my

teaching...He who does not love me will not obey my teaching” (John 14:23-24). Jesus was passionate about following His Father and has set an example for us to imitate.

THE ENEMY OF OBEDIENCE

Satan himself is the enemy of all obedience—he refused to follow God’s plan. Ephesians 2:2 tells us that satan is “the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.” From the time he slithered into the garden he has tried to get men and women to turn from following God’s plan—and all too often he succeeds. What are the tools he uses to convince us to disobey God’s appointed leaders? Pride and rebellion.

In Isaiah 14:13-14 we hear the prideful words of Lucifer that led to his insane rebellion against God: “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” This was an angel with a serious “I” problem! Can you hear his words dripping with pride—so much pride that he actually was convinced that he’d make himself like the Most High God. His prideful arrogance led him into a stupid move—rebellious against God. God moved next and kicked him out of heaven!

Pride always leads to rebellion. Always. Pride says, “I know better. I am better. I can do it without the help of anyone else. I don’t need leaders telling me what to do!” All the way back in the Garden of Eden, satan used pride to trick Eve into rebelling against God... “when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” What foolishness! What pride! The same pride that led to satan’s dismissal from heaven got Adam and Eve evicted from the Garden and from intimate fellowship with God. Whenever pride creeps up within us, we are in immediate danger of rebelling against the leaders that God has given us to follow.

How can we combat pride and stay obedient to our leaders? By keeping a submitted spirit of humility. Humility sounds like a bad thing—like we enjoy being humiliated or something weird like that. But having humility is NOT the same thing as experiencing humiliation. Humiliation

always comes from the outside—someone making fun of us or exposing one of our weaknesses. Humility, however, is something that we ourselves develop on the inside. Jesus is the ultimate model of humility. Philippians 2:6-8 tells us that even though He is God, Jesus humbled Himself, came to earth as a servant and died for us on the cross. That was humility. If anyone in history ever “deserved” to have pride it was Jesus—but He refused it! So should we.

GROWING SOLID LEADERS

In the next chapter we'll deal with having a passion to lead, but did you know that the best leaders are also the best followers? Solid leaders have developed foundational qualities for their own leadership as they have followed other leaders. What are some of the foundational qualities of strong leadership?

- Loyalty
- Team work
- Trustworthiness
- Compassion
- Courage
- Ability to see the big picture
- Sacrifice
- Sense of humor
- Good listening skills
- Ability to follow directions
- Humility
- Servanthood
- Willingness to work hard
- Perseverance
- Creativity
- Celebrates other's victories

All of these qualities are learned FIRST by following. When you are thrust into a position of leadership you will not be magically given any of these qualities—they must be developed. And these qualities are not developed by “reluctant followers.” They grow in the lives of those who have a passion to follow. Young men and women who have a passion to follow are on track to becoming great leaders—leaders whom God can use in revival.

RIGHTEOUS DISOBEDIENCE?

Are we obediently to follow EVERY direction that a leader may give us, or are there ever occasions when God allows for righteous disobedience? This is a very important question in the day in which we now live. An increasing number of leaders are showing that they are using their positions of leadership to manipulate others into doing wrong. Are we to blindly trust every leader and follow them, even if they are leading us into sin? God’s Word tells us that there are rare moments in which going against a leader’s direction would be the right (or “righteous”) thing to do.

In the story surrounding the birth of Moses we have a good picture of this kind of righteous disobedience. In Exodus 1:15-21 we learn that the Hebrew midwives (ladies who help other women during the birthing process) were instructed by the king of Egypt to kill all the baby boys. In verse 17, though, it says that, “The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.” What was God’s reaction? “God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.”

Why did God smile upon the actions of these courageous, disobedient women? Because they feared God more than they feared their human authorities. This is the key. In Acts 5:27-29 the religious leaders demanded to know why Jesus’ disciples were still preaching in Jesus’ name when they had forbidden it. “Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than men!’” Who do you fear, God or man? Who will you obey, God or man? When the instructions of human leaders CLEARLY and TOTALLY contradict God’s directions found in the Bible, then we must obey God instead of man.

But...when we righteously disobey our earthly leaders we must be willing to pay the price. Just because we obey God instead of man doesn't mean that everything will instantly be OK. When we read about the disciples' refusal to obey the religious leaders we also discover that time and time again they were beaten, jailed and eventually martyred for their unflinching commitment to follow Christ. Before you ever make a decision to "righteously disobey," you had better be sure that you're doing the right thing and decide that you are willing to pay the price.

THE REWARDS OF OBEDIENCE

Jesus succeeded in His mission because He humbly obeyed the plan of His Father. Salvation was purchased for all of mankind because of His act of radical obedience on the cross. Throughout God's Word we find that success follows obedience. Read what God spoke to His servant Joshua: "Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go" (Joshua 1:7). I want to be successful wherever I go, how about you? God's promise is that our obedience will be rewarded with success.

Success through obedience comes in many different ways. Peace in your home between you and your parents—that's success! Freedom from needing the discipline of God and others—that's success! Growing to become a person of inner strength and self-discipline—that's success! Becoming a young man or woman that is ready to be used by God—that's success!

Radical obedience is a key factor in being ready for revival. This is true for you personally and it's true for your youth group. When your youth group is willing to wholeheartedly support and follow the vision that God has give your pastor and youth leaders, you are setting the stage for God to throw revival your way. The reverse is also true—disobedience and defiance will never be blessed by a strong move of the Lord. Let's get passionate about following God's appointed leaders and watch how He will bring success our way.

PAYING THE PRICE

God's Word is clear—we must be followers of the leaders that God has placed in our lives. Which leaders in your life are the most difficult to follow? Write down the names of leaders to whom you need to apologize for not following their leadership.

In this chapter was a list of qualities that leaders develop first by following others. Review the list and write down the three qualities which you find are the strongest in your life and then write down the three which are still most lacking. Then, without showing your list, have your parents and your best friends tell you what THEY think are your three strongest and weakest areas.

Write down the names of the three most significant leaders in your life. Write them each a note thanking them for their faithful leadership and letting them know the qualities that you are developing by following them.

At the time of Moses' birth women had been instructed to kill all the baby boys. Have you ever been told to do something that was clearly wrong? Make your own list of things that you would never do even if told to. Share your list with your parents and other leaders to gain their perspective.

PASSION SEVEN: A PASSION TO LEAD

1 Timothy 4:12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

Imagine being young, wealthy, well educated and the top sports star in the country. That was all true for Charles "C.T." Studd. C.T. grew up in the late 1800's, the son of a wealthy businessman. He was taught in the best schools of England and rose to become the country's number one star in the sport of cricket—which was the most popular sport of his time.

When C.T. was in college, God used the sickness of his brother to completely grab his attention. Although he had at one point received Christ's gift of salvation, it suddenly became clear to C.T. that he had not been living for God. When faced with the possibility that his brother might die, he quickly realized that earthly fame and fortune were nothing compared to living for God. He asked himself, "What is it worth to possess the riches of the world, when a man comes to face eternity?" At that moment, C.T. decided to live entirely for God and become radically obedient to whatever God called him to do.

Along with six other young men from Cambridge University, C.T. followed God's call to go into the heart of China. This group, known as the "Cambridge Seven," were used by God in many ways—taking the gospel to remote areas, working with drug addicts and serving local leaders.

At the age of fifty, after spending many years in China, and more time as a pastor in India, C.T. Studd was back home in England and penniless. He had become so sick that he had been unable to continue his missionary work. Many thought that his years of leadership were over, but God called him to lead again.

C.T. learned that central Africa was completely unevangelized—no one had ever gone there to bring the good news of Jesus. Not only did he sense in his spirit that God was calling him to bring the gospel to this part of Africa, but also that he was to begin an organization that would

continue this ministry long after he was gone. The trouble was...he was sick! Businesspeople did not want to invest money in his project because they did not believe he would make it. His response? “Gentlemen, God has called me to go, and I will go. I will blaze the trail, though my grave may only become a stepping stone that younger men may follow.”

C.T. DID die in Africa...twenty years later! Because of his willingness to lead, God allowed C.T. to lead thousands into His Kingdom and to begin a missions agency that exists to this day. Throughout his life, C.T. Studd had a passion to lead—the same passion that we need in our lives, too.

THE EPICENTER OF REVIVAL

At the epicenter of every revival, is always a leader. Revival begins when God finds a man or woman who is ready and willing to carry out His will, no matter what the cost. Biblical history as well as modern history is full of examples of leaders who, when God knocked, were willing to swing open the doors of revival.

- The nations of Judah and Israel were led into revival by Hezekiah.
- About 3,000 were led into revival in Jerusalem by Peter.
- In 1735 New England was led into revival by Jonathan Edwards.
- In 1739 London was led into revival by George Whitefield and John Wesley.
- In the mid-1800’s America was led into revival by Charles Finney.
- In the late-1800’s America was led into revival by D.L. Moody.
- In 1904 Wales was led into revival by Evan Roberts.
- In 1906 Los Angeles was led into revival by William Seymour.

These are only a few of the revivals in history—and the outpouring of God’s Spirit continues today. Over the past decades dozens of revivals have been reported around the world, as well as here in the United States. Each of these has begun with God pouring out His Spirit in places where the leaders were ready for revival.

Revival doesn't begin in countries or cities or churches or youth groups. Revival begins in individual people, then spreads as these people begin to LEAD others. Revival begins in people like you and me, ordinary people who answer God's call to influence others for Him.

Being a spiritual leader isn't some big mysterious thing. We can tend to think of these leaders as "super human" or somehow better than the rest of us. But this just isn't the case. Spiritual leaders are just regular people who decide to get busy doing whatever it is that God tells them to do. While there are many "qualities" that good leaders should possess (many were listed in the previous chapter), when you boil it down, there are actually very few things that set spiritual leaders apart from the rest of the crowd. What sets them apart is their influence, their willingness to take risks and their unswerving determination. People who are passionate about these three things are ready to help lead in revival.

YOU MAY ALREADY BE A LEADER!

I'm sure you've seen those big, important looking envelopes, boasting that "You may already be a winner!" As soon as I receive one, I immediately put it in a special place reserved for such items: the trash! You and I both know that the boast doesn't match reality. So when you hear me say, "You may already be a leader," you might become quite suspicious. But it's true! In fact...you already ARE a leader.

John Maxwell, a man of God who is a world-renowned authority in the field of leadership, rightly states that leadership can be summed up in one word: influence. Guess what? You are already a person of influence—that makes you a leader. Your influence may not yet be great, but I'd bet that you influence SOMEONE. Maybe you influence a friend, or possibly a younger brother or sister. Maybe you influence your soccer team, or your youth group or someone who looks up to you in your geometry class. Your influence is probably greater than you think.

The question is: how are you using your influence? Spiritual leaders will use their influence to help move others toward God's will. Hezekiah used his influence, as a godly twenty-five-year-old king, to bring revival and radical changes to his nation. Lauren Mercier, a shy eighth grader

who was dying of cancer, used her influence to powerfully challenge her school and youth group.

Moving people toward God's will doesn't always happen in big ways. Often a spiritual leader's influence is just a gentle "nudge" in the right direction. Think about a time when you have encouraged someone to do the right thing—to pray about a problem, to not cheat on a test, to make it to youth group, to not talk behind someone's back—that was spiritual leadership. Even if they didn't choose to go in the direction that you were nudging them, you still were influencing them. Remember that NO leader is followed one hundred percent of the time. Many people even rejected the influence of Jesus Himself. If you are willing to use your influence to move others closer to God and His will, then God will use you as a spiritual leader.

SPIRIT-LED STARTERS

Another thing that sets spiritual leaders apart from the rest is their readiness to move at God's command. Many freeze when God gives them a direction, immobilized by arguments that run through their minds: "I'm not ready to do that; I'm not qualified; I'm not old enough; no one would follow; I'll be misunderstood; someone else would do a much better job; I want my mommy!" Leaders have a different response. They simply say, "YES" to God. Someone has accurately stated, "God doesn't call people who are qualified. He calls people who are willing, and then He qualifies them."

Every work of God in history began when someone was willing to become a Spirit-led starter. Churches, missions agencies, campus Bible studies and revivals have all begun this way—God directed and they obeyed. He said, "Do this" and they did!

C.T. Studd was an excellent example of a Spirit-led starter. When he left to be a missionary in China he was the "Michael Jordan" of England, the most famous athlete of his day. Family and friends begged him not to go—but he went in obedience to God's calling. He went despite not knowing the Chinese language, despite the dangers of primitive travel, despite the possibility of disease, despite the fact that he knew nothing other than God had told him to go. Later in

life, when God directed him to Africa, everyone again thought he'd be crazy to go. He was fifty-years-old, without money and plagued with sickness—but he went anyway, and God brought fantastic results. He was a Spirit-led starter who was unafraid to do the impossible when God told him to do it.

We will never see revival if we don't have leaders who are willing to step out and be Spirit-led starters. If your desire is to be ready for revival, then get ready to hear from God and obediently do whatever He tells you to do.

NEVER SAY DIE

Isn't it interesting how the very same problem can affect people in completely different ways? One person says, "That's way too difficult. I'm outta here!" Another one faces the same challenge and says, "That ain't no big thing. Give me some room and let me work!"

When challenges come, what is your level of resolve? Your "resolve" is your inner strength and determination to stay locked on to your goal. Great resolve was seen in a person like William Wallace, who was popularized in the movie "Braveheart." Wallace, a Scottish revolutionary leader, was a man of unswerving determination. The greater his opposition became, the greater his level of resolve became.

Leaders are people who have a high level of resolve. If they weren't, people wouldn't follow them! People will follow leaders who are courageous, leaders who won't back down because of opposition.

It's the same for spiritual leaders. Satan is not going to just roll-over and play dead, allowing you and your youth group to spread revival wherever you want. I guarantee that you will face strong opposition. The question is, when opposition comes, will you lead on into battle—or will you give up and go home? My prayer for you is that you will learn to lead.

The spiritual leader, however, doesn't just "work up" their own resolve. Saying, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can..." just won't do it! Spiritual leaders gain their resolve from Jesus, the One who resolved to pay the ultimate price to be our Savior and Champion. Hebrews 12:2-3 says, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

JUST LEAD!

You may still question whether you are really meant to be a leader. You may wonder if you have what it takes. Let me encourage you to examine the people that Jesus chose to be His twelve key leaders. The disciples certainly weren't extraordinary—they were just average people like you and me. They made lots of mistakes and at times said stupid things; some had questionable backgrounds; there were even moments when they lost their resolve and turned away from Jesus. But Jesus saw something in these men, a readiness and willingness to be used by God.

If you are ready and willing to be used by God, then He'll use you as a leader, too. You probably don't have all the "right" qualifications yet, or all the training and experience that you'll have someday. But that's O.K. Don't wait for the day you may "someday" be ready—just step out NOW and lead! If your heart is set on obediently following God's direction and influencing others to do the same, you have what it takes to be a mighty spiritual leader. When God knocks, you'll be ready to throw open the doors of revival.

PAYING THE PRICE

Dr. David Livingstone is considered to have opened up the continent of Africa to the gospel. He was a great missionary who greatly loved the people. Once he received a letter from his own country that said, "We are happy to hear of your success there in Africa. We are ready to join you, if you can tell us of any good roads." Livingstone was angered! He replied, "I do not need people who will come if there are good roads. I need those who will come if there are no roads at all." Can you think of something that God has called you to do, but you have hesitated because you were waiting for an easy way to get it done?

Just before C.T. Studd was to leave for Africa a young man asked him, "Is it a fact that at fifty-two you mean to leave your country, your home, your wife and your children?" C.T. fired back, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." Put this response in your own words. Personalize it by writing it to God.

Make a list of areas around you (at school, home, church, community, nation) where there is a real need for leadership. In which of these areas do you believe that God may be calling you to provide leadership? Who can help prepare you to be an effective leader in these areas?

If it's true that leadership equals influence, then where is an area that you already have leadership (because you are influencing others)? How can you use your influence to lead people toward Jesus?

PASSION EIGHT: A PASSION TO SERVE

Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Her name was Amy Carmichael. The setting was a respectable community in Ireland in the late 1800's. Amy was a young woman who was not accustomed to associating with the poor when God used an encounter with an old woman clothed in rags to change her life forever.

One day while walking home from church with her two brothers, they noticed a disheveled old woman carrying a large bundle. They stopped to help the woman by carrying her heavy load and lending her an arm on which she could lean. Immediately Amy sensed the stares of the “respectable people” from her community. She was filled with shame and became embarrassed for having publicly been seen with such a woman. Amy said that it was...“a horrid moment. We were only two boys and a girl, and not at all exalted Christians. We hated doing it.”

But in the next instant God spoke to Amy so powerfully that she turned to see if someone on the street had spoken to her. God said to her that each person's actions will be tested by fire and will show whether or not they have any value. That very day Amy decided that her life would be different and that she would be “dead to the world and its applause.” That was the day Amy became a servant.

She started by working with poor young women who were outcasts in her own city of Belfast. God then called her to India where she spent fifty-three years rescuing children from prostitution in Hindu temples and serving the peoples of that land.

While ministering in India, Amy received a letter from a young woman who asked, “What is missionary life like?” Amy's response was direct and filled with wisdom that had come through experience. She wrote, “Missionary life is a chance to die.”

If we are ever to become people who will radically impact our world for Christ, we will first have to die—to self, to pride and to the need for the applause of men. We will have to have a passion to serve.

THREE STEPS TO IMPROVING YOUR SERVE

What did Jesus mean when he told His disciples, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all” (Mark 9:35)? Jesus was making a very clear point: the way people look at things is NOT the way God looks at them. People think that when they make it to the top of the food chain, then everyone else exists to serve them—but God says, “You’ve got it backward!” In God’s Kingdom, the greatest are those who are willing to serve, however they are needed, no matter what personal sacrifice may be required.

If we want to become servants of God, ready to be used by Him to touch our world, then we must learn three things that servants can NEVER do.

1. Servants never choose their own assignments.

A missions team that I led some years ago learned this lesson firsthand. We had gone to Mexico to finish the construction of a home for a single mother who had several young children. Part of the job involved installing a bathroom in her home and connecting it to the main sewer line. We had been digging ditches and laying pipe for several days—not looking forward to the last part: connecting the pipe to the sewer. When the final day came and the task could be avoided no longer, we stood around trying to figure out how to get the job done without getting dirty. Just then, the woman’s pastor happened to come by to check on our progress. As soon as he saw what needed to be done, this humble man of God slipped off his shoes and jumped into the raw sewage to complete our task.

Out of all the experiences we shared as a team that year, the servanthood of that pastor was what stood out the most. We were the ones who had gone to serve, yet when it came down to it, we hadn't been willing to do "whatever" was needed. Real servants are those who do **WHATEVER** is needed.

2. Servants never set their own schedules.

Can you imagine servants "clocking out" just when they are needed the most? No way! Servants are "on call" twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

I remember being in bed late one night when the phone rang. A group of hard core punk-rockers had begun showing up at our youth group, and Mary, the "leader" of their group was on the line. Mary wanted me to come over to her house right then to explain some things in the Bible that she and her friends didn't understand. I had a decision to make. I could tell her to "make an appointment" so I could get together with them when it was convenient for me—or I could serve them by getting out of bed and spending the next couple of hours with kids who needed Jesus. I'm so glad I served.

I honestly don't know the impact that one act of servanthood had on those kids. But I do know that they'll never forget that a youth pastor loved them enough to come and spend time with them in the middle of the night. Real servants are those who serve **WHENEVER** needed.

3. Servants never get to choose whom they will serve.

The kind of servants we're discussing are not like "waiters" in modern day restaurants. Hey, if waiters don't like you, they just won't serve you. "No shoes, no shirt, no service!"

It is said of Jesus that even though He is God, when He came to earth He took on the "very nature of a servant" (read Philippians 2:5-8). Jesus showed us through His ministry that He would serve anyone—no one was beneath Him. The most radical example of His willingness to serve "anyone" might have been when he reached out and touched a man

afflicted with the disease of leprosy. I've personally been to a leper colony—and it's not a pretty sight. Leprosy is a disfiguring disease that leaves its victims grossly mangled—many lepers lose arms, legs and parts of their faces. The man with leprosy in Luke 5:12-13, is described as being “covered with leprosy.” You can imagine that people stayed away from this man, sickened by him and afraid that they could catch his disease. Jesus, though, reached out and touched him, instantly restoring his body. Real servants are those who will serve WHOEVER needs help.

A SERVANT'S REWARD

There are three rewards that come to servants of the Lord. The first two have to do with the servant and the third has to do with revival. First, are you worried that if you say OK to this “servanthood thing” that God is going to load you down with more than you can carry?

That won't happen! Jesus rewards His servants with rest when they pick up the burdens that He prescribes (read Matthew 11:28-30). It's when you run around carrying all of your own burdens that you get burned out and frustrated. If you've been feeling that way, it's time to turn in your burdens for His and reap the reward of rest.

Second, we are promised, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up” (James 4:10). Have you ever been around “servants” who were constantly looking for human affirmation? This may be a clue that they really weren't servants at all! God has a way, however, of blessing those who truly humble themselves in service to Him.

An example of this came when Jesus was eating at the home of a religious leader. A woman who had lived a sinful life came in and poured a bottle of expensive perfume on Jesus. The reactions of the those attending the dinner were mixed—but all were negative. The disciples were angered that all this money was wasted—the perfume could have been sold for more than a year's wages. The religious leader was disgusted that Jesus would let a sinful woman even touch Him. Jesus, however, had a completely different outlook on this woman's precious act of worship. He viewed her as a humble servant who had anointed Him for burial in

preparation for His death. Then came Jesus' statement, one that blessed her and has since "lifted" her in the eyes of millions. He said, "I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (Mark 14:9). Jesus knows how to "lift up" a humble servant.

The third reward for servants is revival. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible" (1 Corinthians 9:19). Servants win souls! There is something about the act of servanthood that is irresistible to the world. Like moths to a flame, they are drawn by the stunning reality that someone is actually doing something for someone else. They can't believe it! Servanthood is such a complete reversal of the world's "natural" order that they recognize that something "supernatural" must be going on. Time and time again, youth groups and churches have seen that when they set out to serve their communities, people come to Jesus. What a great reward!

Do you want to see revival happen around you? Then develop a passion to serve.

PAYING THE PRICE

Make a list of attitudes you have that are preventing you from serving with a whole heart. Read Philippians 2:5-8 and pray through your list, asking God to help you adopt His attitudes.

In this chapter it was stated that servants don't get to choose whom they will serve. Who are those in your life whom you have disliked serving (think of people in your family, neighborhood, church, school)? Write down one thing that you will do this week to serve each of these people.

In biblical times, slaves were considered "living tools" for their owners. With this in mind, read 1 Corinthians 7:22-23. How should this effect how we live?

We are called to be God's servants for our entire lives—but many have experienced powerful life transformation by taking a year or two to do NOTHING but serve Him. Are you willing to do this? What plans could you start to make in order for this to become a reality?

Passion Nine: A Passion to Grow

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly;

I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

Have you ever heard the phrase: “No pain—no gain?” Its message is true: growth isn’t automatic, it takes work. It would be nice if we could build muscles by eating ice-cream, develop maturity in our sleep and become spiritual heroes while watching cartoons. It just doesn’t happen that way! Nothing of lasting value happens by itself—it requires our dedicated effort.

Athletes understand the truth of “no pain—no gain.” They know that they must pay the price of training in order to win—and they must pay the price of HIGH LEVEL training if they want to be ready to win in HIGH LEVEL competition. Superstar athletes may make it “look easy,” but they weren’t born with their incredible skill. Their skills were forged over years as they drilled on the practice field, punished themselves during long workouts and studied the game for countless hours.

That is what Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 9. When he says, “I beat my body,” he’s not talking about some strange ritual, he’s talking about HIGH LEVEL training. Paul knew that in order to grow, in order to gain spiritual victory, there was a price to be paid—and he was willing to pay it.

If we want to win the race God has set before us, like Paul, we’ll have to commit ourselves to HIGH LEVEL training. If we want to be more than “spiritual weaklings,” knocked over by the slightest opposition, then we must have a hunger to become spiritually strong and mature. If we want to be ready for revival, we must have a passion to grow.

There are many ways to grow in our spiritual lives—and they all require hard work. No pain—no gain! In the following pages we will look at four primary exercises for our spiritual growth: praying, studying God’s Word, giving and fasting. These are not the only ways one can grow in the Lord, but they are essential elements of HIGH LEVEL training that will help prepare us to be people who are ready for revival.

PRAYER

Philippians 4:6 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Can you imagine trying to get to know that “special someone” and NOT talking to them?! I actually did that once. In junior high I had a crush on a beautiful girl, who, for some reason, agreed to be my girlfriend. The problem was...she scared me to death! I was so intimidated by her that I wouldn’t talk to her. You can bet that the relationship was rather short-lived.

Without ongoing, two-way communication NO relationship can grow. That’s why prayer is so important! God established prayer so that we would have a way to talk to Him and hear from Him at any time. It’s such an important part of our relationship with God that He filled His Word with lots of instruction regarding prayer. The Bible tells us to be faithful in prayer (read Romans 12:12), to pray on all occasions (read Ephesians 6:18), to devote ourselves to prayer (read Colossians 4:2) and to pray continually (read 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

God is serious about us being people who are in communication with Him. When we pray our heart is changed—we begin to feel things the same way that God does. When we pray our outlook is changed—we begin to see things the same way that He does. If we aren’t praying, we aren’t growing in our relationship with God.

In the same way that our communication with people around us takes on many different forms, our communication with God in prayer can be done with great variety. Let's look at five different ways the Bible shows us how we can communicate with God in prayer.

1. **Thanksgiving Prayer.** "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name" (Psalm 100:4). Thankfulness is not just an attitude that we should have, it's also something that should be practiced. Praising God and actually telling Him "thank you" for what He has done should be an important part of our prayer lives.
2. **Confessing Prayer.** "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). King David, who wrote this prayer, knew that relationship with God requires a willingness to confess anything that would stand in the way of that relationship. When you pray, allow God to illuminate any "offensive way" in you so that you can confess it and live a life of repentance.
3. **Listening Prayer.** "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him..." (Psalm 37:7). Being quiet during prayer and listening to the Lord is a difficult discipline to learn. We get into the habit of pouring our hearts out before the Lord, but seldom allow Him to pour His heart out to us. It is as we listen to Him that we receive from Him.
4. **Requesting Prayer.** "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14). God loves it when we ask for His help! It shows that we believe that He is the answer—whether it's for health, friendship, provision, direction, salvation, etc. We should pray both for ourselves and for others.
5. **Declaring Prayer.** "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23). When we pray we are to profess our hope—and our hope is based on what God has promised. As we declare the promises God has made, great

hope will rise in our hearts and lead us to move out in faith (read the example of King Solomon's prayer in 2 Chronicles 6:14-20).

Let's stop dragging our heels when it comes to prayer! Let's recognize that prayer is not just some ritual or formality. It is a powerful way to grow in our relationship with the Lord and fling open the doors of revival. Let's quit being reluctant prayer weaklings and become passionate prayer warriors.

GOD'S WORD

Jeremiah 15:16 "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear Your name, O Lord God Almighty."

Several places within the Bible refer to God's Word as food. King David was a man who was "hungry" for God's Word. Psalm 119:103 records his words: "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" When we realize that God's Word is spiritual food, we can also understand why some people are such spiritual wimps—it's because they are starving! They have neglected God's Word to the point that they are spiritually spineless, unable to be a blessing to others or fend off the slightest attack of the enemy.

The Bible is not like any other book that has ever been written. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that God's Word is actually "living and active." God has breathed His life right into His Word, and that life has the power to change us. If we aren't "eating" His Word, we aren't growing in our relationship with God.

If God's Word is "living and active," what does it do and how does it help us to grow? The following are ten things that His Word will do in our lives.

1. God's Word provides **DIRECTION**. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).
2. God's Word **CLEANSSES** us. "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you" (John 15:3).

3. God's Word ASSURES us of our salvation. "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).
4. God's Word gives us PEACE. "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace" (John 16:33).
5. God's Word gives us HOPE. "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).
6. God's Word gives us FAITH. "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).
7. God's Word helps to keep us ON TRACK. "...he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees...and not turn from the law to the right or to the left" (Deuteronomy 17:19-20).
8. God's Word EQUIPS us for good works. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
9. God's Word gives us WISDOM. "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7).
10. God's Word gives us SUCCESS. "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8).

It's not enough for us to just "read" God's Word—we've got to "eat" it! "Eating" implies that we are actually chewing on the Word and digesting it, so that it will bring strength to every area of

our lives. There are two main ways that we can “eat” God’s Word: through devotions and in-depth study.

“Devotions” are an important part of any growing believer’s life. As the name suggests, these are special times “devoted” to being with God. We don’t spend time devotionally with the Lord in order to be able to “check off” a box on some spiritual to-do list—we spend time with the Lord because we love Him and are passionate about growing in our relationship with Him. Reading God’s Word, meditating upon it and memorizing portions of it are vital ways to empower our devotional lives.

Studying God’s Word is another important way to “eat” His Word. Through in-depth study we can “mine” the Word for its treasures, realizing that most precious gems are to be found deep beneath the surface. Have you ever heard a preacher who pulls amazing truths, ones that you had never considered, from a very familiar passage of Scripture? How do they do that? Through the in-depth study of God’s Word.

Here are four different ways to study God’s Word in-depth.

1. Book studies. Dig in to a single book of the Bible by reading it through several times and using a commentary that will help to point out major themes and explain the historical setting.
2. Word studies. Take a single word and find out everything the Bible says about it. If you did a study on the word “passion,” you’d discover that the words “passion,” “passions” or “passionate” appear seven times in the New International Version Bible. A concordance is a tool that will help you find each verse where the word appears.
3. Character studies. Investigating the lives of various people in Scripture can be very helpful. Discovering how they responded to the Lord can provide us with insights and inspiration for our own lives. Check out the lives of Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Esther, David, Daniel, Mary, Jesus, Peter, Paul and others.

4. Topical studies. There are many topics within Scripture that deserve intense investigation. Topics like salvation, God’s will, healing, obedience, worship, faith, the Holy Spirit, etc. are so important. But if you don’t single these topics out for individual study, it’s likely that you’ll never come to a deep understanding of any of them.

Some people are determined that they CANNOT understand the Bible! I believe this is one of Satan’s favorite tricks—he loves to cause confusion so that people believe God’s Word is too hard to figure out. There are many ways you can overcome this obstacle: getting a Bible that uses simpler language; reading along with someone else and discussing what you are reading; doing a character study instead of just reading “wherever;” and developing the discipline of consistent Bible study. The most important step you can take, however, to begin understanding the Bible is to simply ask God to explain His Word to you. When Jesus was on earth, Scripture records, “Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). He’d love to do this for you, too.

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

PBS Television aired a documentary titled “Affluenza” which got its name by creatively morphing the word “affluence” with the name of the common illness “influenza.” The program was dedicated to unmasking a “sickness” that afflicts much of our society—the sickness of constantly pursuing wealth. Many live under the culturally inflicted pressure to GET more stuff, become richer, drive a nicer car, live in a bigger home, collect more in the bank, take more expensive vacations, wear fancier clothes, eat at nicer restaurants, give more lavish gifts, etc. One thing is for certain, “affluenza” will always kill one’s passion to grow in the Lord (read Matthew 6:34). But this sickness of “living to get” has a cure—it’s called “living to give.”

God has called us to be givers. Money is certainly not the only thing that God wants us to give, but what we choose to do with our money does accurately reflect our passions. Jesus stated in Matthew 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” One way to see what is important to someone is to examine their spending—and their giving.

Read Jesus words, found in Matthew 6:24-27 and 31-33.

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

We need to recognize that it is Christ who satisfies our needs—not our employer, not our parents, not the government, not the lottery, not anything nor anyone other than God alone. Once we trust Him as our provider and accept the fact that God is in control of our finances and circumstances, we will no longer feel the need to desperately hold on to everything we have. That’s when we can experience the freedom of “living to give.”

There are two ways that the Bible directs believers to give of their money. The first is called our “tithes” and the second is called our “offerings.” Our tithe is the first ten percent of all that God provides—this goes straight back to Him as part of our worship. God’s Word tells us that we actually “rob God” when we fail to tithe (read Malachi 3:8-9)! He also tells us, however, that if we are faithful to tithe He will, “throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10). What a great promise!

Where are we supposed to bring our tithe? We're directed in Malachi 3:10 to "bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house." Where is the "storehouse?" It's your church—the place where you and others are "fed" and have needs met. If we all obediently become tithers, there will be PLENTY for each church to do the work that God has called it to do (read 2 Chronicles 31:4-10). It's also true that when people disobey God and hold onto their tithes, there will never be enough resources for the church to accomplish its God given assignments.

While tithing reflects our obedience in giving, offerings reflect our passion to give. Offerings can be money or other things of worth that we give beyond our tithe—it is whatever we "offer up" to God that is ABOVE ten percent of our income. Offerings are simple yet powerful ways to practically bless others and say "thank you" to God for all that He has done. Many ministries and mission agencies are funded exclusively by the offerings of believers around the world—and offerings are often how BIG things get done. Recently, one hundred thousand dollars was given by a woman to help get a youth prayer project off the ground. Land, worth millions of dollars, has been given to help churches and ministries expand. Some creative business people have even established companies with the sole purpose of giving the profits to ministries.

The truth is, if every believer obediently tithed, then every community would have churches with full-time ministers dedicated to meeting the needs of the people in those communities. And if every believer began to offer up to God MORE than their tithe, we would begin to see huge inroads made around the world as the Kingdom of God would powerfully advance. Let's become passionate about giving in order to pave the way for revival.

Wrestle with this concept: the *act of giving* prepares us spiritually for revival while *the gift itself* practically paves the way for revival. It's important to remember that our financial giving is primarily a spiritual discipline. Because it's spiritual, and not just a physical act, the amount we give is irrelevant. Sometimes when we only have a little to give we might be tempted just to hold on to it—it seems so insignificant. The rich might fall into a different trap, thinking that a million dollars is too much to give. A million dollars is pocket change, however, to a billionaire and wouldn't come close to what he or she should tithe. God looks at the heart of the giver and

is not impressed with the amount that is given, regardless of whether it's a little or a lot (read Mark 12:41-44). Remember that He doesn't "need" our money! He does, however, use our giving to accomplish His will. So, be a giver (of your life AND finances) and watch God do amazing things.

FASTING

Joel 1:14 "Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord."

Fasting may be defined as special periods of time when believers choose to go without food or other things with which we commonly fill up our lives, in order to become more fully dependant upon God. Fasting is "unplugging" from every other power source so that we can totally "plug in" to God. When a believer fasts, he or she is saying to God, "I trust You for all that I need; because of Your power and provision I don't need anything else." It also says to our flesh: "You don't rule me—God does!" Fasting is a radical way to grow in our relationship with the Lord and prepare ourselves for revival.

As important as it is for us to discover what fasting is, it is also very important to know what it is not. First, fasting is not a way to rid ourselves of evil. Some false religions believe that our flesh is evil and that "salvation" comes through the purification of our bodies. People that believe this lie have starved themselves, crawled for miles on their knees and have even allowed themselves to be nailed to crosses in order to "purge themselves" of wickedness. God's Word is clear—Jesus made the perfect sacrifice once and for all so that ALL of mankind's sin might be washed away. The only way to get free from our sin is to receive His free gift of salvation. 1 Peter 2:24 states, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed."

Second, fasting is not a way to "look religious," lose weight, or affect any other aspect of a person's outward appearance. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 6:16-18, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are

fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” If someone’s motivation to go without food is to appear “religious” or to lose extra pounds, then this is not a Biblical fast and it will not bring any spiritual reward. True fasting is always a reflection of the passion of one’s heart to grow in the Lord.

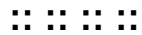
Let’s take a look at several important truths about fasting.

1. Fasting is Biblical. Throughout God’s Word we find men, women, groups and even whole nations humbling themselves before the Lord in times of fasting. Esther (read Esther 4:16), David (read 2 Samuel 12:16-23), Daniel (read Daniel 10:1-3), Jesus (read Matthew 4:1-2) and the disciples (read Acts 13:2-3) are just a few of those mentioned in Scripture as having fasted.
2. Fasting can include giving up other things besides food. We fill up our lives with so many things that can easily become what “ministers” to us, rather than God. For many people it is their friends—they turn to their peers rather than to Jesus. For others it is music—whenever they want to feel better they just pop in a CD (Christian music as well as secular). Some turn to sports, movies and TV, computer games, educational pursuits, romantic relationships, novels, internet, hobbies, etc. ANY of these things can become “idols” in our lives (things that minister to our needs rather than Jesus) if we’re not careful. By surrendering these distractions to the Lord during a fast, we create the opportunity for God to set us free. Many have found that fasting has resulted in freedom from areas of bondage, areas that had threatened their worship. Whatever type of fast that is entered into, it is wise to ask God what He wants us to give up for that season of time. Obedience to Him will bring great victory.
3. Fasting usually involves going without food. Why? Because food is the one universal thing which we all depend upon for our strength. Giving it up for a season is difficult—but it declares our passion to be dependant upon God alone. There are several ways that one can fast from foods:

- What is commonly called a “Daniel fast” is one that limits one’s diet to only fruits and vegetables (read Daniel 1:8-16). Almost everyone can participate in this kind of a fast without physical difficulty.
 - A “partial fast” is where one limits his or her eating to one or two meals per day. If one chooses only to eat dinner during a partial fast, then they are fasting from after dinner until dinner time the next day. Usually snacks and desserts are not eaten during a partial fast.
 - A “juice fast” is one that includes no solid foods but does allow for various juices. This greatly helps to maintain energy for those who are keeping an active schedule. Many people have found that they can fast for as long as forty days while only consuming juice.
 - A “water fast” is difficult for longer periods of time and one should use caution when consuming only water for more than a few days. Preparations should be made to cut back on regular activities during this kind of fast, as one’s energy level is often greatly reduced.
4. For those who ARE fasting from foods, wisdom should be used before, during and after the fast. Here are four ways that you can help yourself to fast successfully, reducing the strain on your body:
- Prepare yourself before the fast. Reduce your intake of processed sugar, caffeine and other chemically-laced foods and drinks prior to your fast. This will help to reduce fatigue, headaches and other side effects that may be experienced if you suddenly cut them from your diet.
 - No matter what kind of fast you are on, always drink more liquids than usual. This will ensure that you do not become dehydrated and will help to cleanse your system.
 - Increase your sleep and rest while fasting. This will help you to maintain your energy levels.
 - End your fast slowly. Especially if you have been on a juice or water fast for more than a few days, your body will need time to readjust to digesting solid food again. Take a couple of days to ease into foods by eating mild fruits and soups—and NEVER break a fast with a large meal.

5. For some, fasting should NOT include going without food! Those who are involved in sports or jobs that require heavy activity, those with diabetes or other illnesses that are affected by food intake, those who are pregnant and those who have struggled with eating disorders should NOT go without food. People in these categories can fast in other spiritually powerful ways. Remember that fasting has to do with becoming more dependent on God and less dependent on those things with which we normally fill our lives—fasting has nothing to do with hurting our bodies. If you have any question about whether going without all foods or certain foods for a period of time might have a harmful effect on your body, then seek the advice of your parents and doctor before fasting.
6. Set aside time during your fast to pray, read God’s Word and worship. This may seem obvious, but can be difficult if not planned for because of our busy schedules. Before fasting, select the “prayer targets” for which you will be praying. Are there areas in your life, family, friends, church, world, etc. that need spiritual breakthrough? Allow these to become specific target areas for which you will pray during your fast.
7. Before your fast, seek God for direction as to how you are to fast and for how long. Sometimes there are times of “corporate fasting” when someone will call people to a specific time of fasting (read examples of this: Esther 4:16, Jeremiah 36:9, Ezra 8:21-23). Other times we choose to individually enter into fasts in order to humbly come before the Lord for worship and spiritual warfare. When we obediently commit to a certain type of fast for a certain length of time, we can then find others who will help to hold us accountable.
8. Do not become discouraged if you do not make it to your original goal. We are very used to eating, watching and listening to whatever we want—and doing these things **WHENEVER** we want to do them. It’s not easy to instantly give these things up. Remember that God never condemns us for falling short, but in His grace He always allows us to pick up and keep going. The devil is the only one who wants us to feel like we have failed God! Don’t give our enemy an inch—rather, continue on in your fast with a renewed commitment to rely on the power of the Lord.

9. Get ready for breakthrough! Though we do not fast to get something from God, when we begin to plug into Him, aligning our passions with His and declaring our dependency upon Him, we are setting the stage for what God wants to do both in us and through us. Many have experienced great spiritual insights and points of breakthrough during times of fasting. Some have received visions, healings and other miracles during and after times of fasting.



None of these four spiritual exercises are easy—they aren't supposed to be. No pain, no gain...remember?! But when you find something of real value, then the price is worth paying—and your spiritual growth is worth the price. It's sad to meet believers who have been saved for years, but have never paid the price to grow into spiritual maturity. Don't let that happen to you. Pay the price while you're young to become mature in the Lord and for the rest of your life you will be ready for revival.

PAYING THE PRICE

Prayer

Are you reluctant or passionate about your prayer life? Rate yourself, then write down two things that you will do differently, starting this month, that will help you to grow in this area.

reluctant **passionate**

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God's Word

Are you reluctant or passionate about getting God's Word into your life? Rate yourself, then write down two things that you will do differently, starting this month, that will help you to grow in this area.

reluctant **passionate**

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Giving

Are you reluctant or passionate about tithing and giving of offerings? Rate yourself, then write down two things that you will do differently, starting this month, that will help you to grow in this area.

reluctant **passionate**

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Fasting

Are you reluctant or passionate about fasting? Rate yourself, then write down two things that you will do differently, starting this month, that will help you to grow in this area.

reluctant **passionate**

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PASSION TEN: A PASSION TO PAY THE PRICE

Luke 14:26-27 “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be My disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor during the years of Hitler’s evil regime. At a time when most of the German church was embracing the Nazi’s plan to “bring about moral renewal,” Bonhoeffer openly criticized Hitler and his plans. In 1945, when it was discovered that Bonhoeffer had connections with the people who had conspired against Hitler, this thirty-nine-year-old pastor was executed.

One of the legacies left behind by Dietrich Bonhoeffer was his writings. During his years of ministry he wrote a great deal about what it meant to be a Christian and live as a real disciple of Jesus. Eight years before his death, in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer wrote this about paying the price:

...the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him, or it may be a death like Luther’s, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call. Jesus’ summons to the rich young man was calling him to die, because only the man who is dead to his own will can follow Christ. In fact every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts.

As you have read through the previous chapters, I’m sure that you have noticed that “paying the price” has been a major reoccurring theme. I hope that you have taken the time to really consider what this means for your life. Following Jesus and bringing His life to the world is costly. It will cost you everything. Dietrich Bonhoeffer understood this, that’s why he didn’t pull

any punches as he wrote. He wanted everyone to understand: when Christ calls you, He's calling you to come and die!

PAYING "THE" PRICE

Many people are willing to pay "A" price to serve the Lord. But how many are willing to pay "THE" price? Those willing to pay "A" price are those who might give up some Sunday mornings to go to church, they might give up some entertainment that doesn't glorify God, they may even give money once in awhile to help someone in need. Though paying "A" price does require giving, it doesn't require surrendering everything. Christ has called us to pay "THE" price and abandon everything to Him.

Jesus spoke very clearly to His disciples about their need to pay "THE" price. In Matthew 16:24-26 Jesus said to them, "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Jesus' disciples did develop a passion to pay "THE" price. Not only did they pay the price throughout their lives as they radically served Jesus, but they paid the price in their deaths as well. See how Jesus' twelve closest followers paid the ultimate price.

1. Andrew was crucified.
2. Bartholomew was crucified.
3. James was beheaded. When James' accuser saw his faith and courage, he accepted Christ too, and was beheaded along with James!
4. John was boiled in oil—miraculously he wasn't even injured! He was the only disciple not to die a violent death.
5. Jude was crucified.
6. Luke was hung.
7. Mark was torn to pieces.

8. Matthew was killed with an axe.
9. Matthias, the disciple who replaced Judas, was beheaded.
10. Peter was crucified upside down—this was at his request because he declared that he was not worthy to be crucified in the same way as the Lord.
11. Simon was crucified.
12. Thomas was thrust through with a spear.

The Apostle Paul, who was later beheaded, summed up the attitude of the disciples as he declared, “I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace” (Acts 20:24).

Anyone ready to sign up to be a disciple? Amazingly, in the midst of this season of murderous rage against the first Christian believers, thousands were coming to Christ. It was as if the devil was trying to call the bluff of the early church to see if he could get them to back down. But they would NOT back down—because they were ready to pay the price. It didn’t matter how high the stakes got, they were willing to pay whatever price necessary to be victorious in Christ. It was as if the disciples were saying to the devil, “The worst you can do is take our lives—go ahead—we’ve already given our lives to Christ and died with Him.” They were convinced that the rewards of revival on earth and eternal celebration in heaven were worth the price—no matter how high. How about you? Are you convinced?

Just as the devil lost his bet against those first disciples, he’ll continue losing as long as there are other disciples who are willing to pay the price. And there ARE others. It is estimated that in 1998, close to 156,000 Christians around the world lost their lives due to their faith in Jesus. In 1999 the number of martyrs will likely be closer to 164,000. There are disciples today, both young and old, who are willing to pay the price. Are you one of them?

The price to be paid is the same for every person who surrenders to Christ—the price is death. Not every believer will end up losing his or her life physically, but even for those who are not martyred, the “dying” must be just as real. We must die to ourselves, killing off every selfish passion that would want to get in the way of our relationship with the Lord. We must be willing

to sacrifice our dreams, futures, money, comfort, pride, families and friends in order to radically carry out the will of God. We must be passionate about paying the price.

What makes someone willing to pay the price? What could be so great that it's worth losing EVERYTHING else? Jesus provided us with a clue in a story He told about a man who was willing to pay the price. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Matthew 13:44).

That man found SOMETHING—something so special, so precious, so overwhelmingly priceless, that he was JOYFULLY willing to pay the price, even though it cost him EVERYTHING he had.

Have you found SOMETHING that is worth EVERYTHING? Cassie did. Lauren did. They, along with other radical God seekers throughout history, discovered the joy of giving up everything else in order to obtain a priceless treasure. That treasure was Jesus.

My prayer for this generation is that we will discover that knowing Jesus and making Him known to the world is worth whatever price we will have to pay. When this discovery is made God's passions will become our passions and we will truly be ready for revival.

Jesus is knocking. Let's be a generation that throws open the doors!

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who
for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame,
and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Hebrews 12:2

PAYING THE PRICE

The movie “Chariots of Fire” told the story of Eric Liddell. Eric was an Olympic gold medalist who set aside fame and fortune to give his life as a missionary to the people of China. Eric wrote, “Ask yourself, if I know something to be true, am I prepared to follow it, even though it is contrary to what I want?...Will I follow it if it means being laughed at, if it means personal financial loss or some kind of hardship?” Write your answer to Eric’s question.

What price is God telling you to pay in order to become ready for revival?

Paying the price is best done with others so that we can encourage each other and hold each other accountable. Who are the people in your life you could partner with in paying the price? Make a list of those you will talk to this week about partnering with you.

Before going to the cross, Jesus prayed, “Father...not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). This was an amazing prayer, reflecting our Savior’s own willingness to pay the price. Write a prayer to the Lord about your willingness to pay the price.