



WAXED TABLET PUBLICATIONS

Give Him No Rest
Readings, Meditations, and Prayers
Jonathan Edwards on Prayer
Copyright 2017 T. M. and Susie Moore
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Foreword

The meditations that follow are designed to lead you into a fuller, more focused, and more fruitful life of prayer.

Using three works by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), the great Puritan preacher and theologian, we will examine the *necessity* of prayer in the life of faith, the importance of *seeking the Lord in prayer for revival*, and the *goals of spiritual renewal* to seek as we pray.

Each morning and evening reading includes a selection from Scripture, an excerpt from one of the works of Jonathan Edwards, a question for reflection, and prayer prompt to guide you in bringing the focus of the meditation before the Lord in prayer.

We hope you will use this book faithfully for 28 days, and that you will share it with others, challenge them to work through these meditations, and join with them to discuss what you're learning and to share how your prayer life is improving.

At the end of the book you will find one psalm – Psalm 72 – set up to guide you in praying for revival. We encourage you to use this psalm every day during the period you are working through these meditations, and to strive increasingly to make the words of the psalmist your own words as you pray.

For more resources on prayer – books, prayer guides, and our free online course, *The Parameters of Prayer* – visit our website at www.ailbe.org. May the Lord bless you richly as you undertake this 28-day adventure of becoming more deeply immersed in the work of prayer.

T. M. Moore

Give Him No Rest

Day 1: Morning

A Faith for Others?

“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” Matthew 6.5

“It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure to leave off the practice of [private prayer]...They can omit this duty, and their omission of it not be taken notice of by others, who know what profession they have made. So that a regard to their own reputation doth not oblige them still to practise it...Therefore they may omit this duty and still have credit of being converted persons.”¹

None of us wants to be thought of as a hypocrite. Hypocrisy comes in various forms. We generally associate it with people who put on a good show of piety and goodness when they’re around other believers. But out in the world, they can be calculating, cold, self-serving, and even downright mean. In Jonathan Edwards’ mind, hypocrisy took the form of going through the motions of religious life – attending church, being part of a Bible study, perhaps leading in some capacity in the ministry of the church – but all the while ignoring or giving short shrift to the work of prayer. After all, people can see our faith when we’re participating in the life of the church. They can’t see whether we practice prayer with any degree of consistency, or at all. But Edwards challenges the idea that we can be true Christians apart from a growing life of private prayer. If we lack that, we may as well face up to the fact that we are hypocrites.

What would you consider to be a vibrant and necessary life of prayer? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the highest rating, how do you stack up against that standard?

Heavenly Father, let no hypocrisy be found in me, especially with respect to this matter of prayer. Instead, be at work in me to...

¹ All quotations from Jonathan Edwards, “Hypocrites Deficient in the Duty of Prayer” in Edward Hickman, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1834, 1995), Volume Two, pp. 71 ff.

Day 1: Evening

Gradual Collapse

So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering. 1 Samuel 13.9

"Men of this character can come to a neglect of secret prayer by degrees without shocking their peace. For though indeed for a converted person to live in a great measure without secret prayer, is very wide of the notion they once had of a true convert; yet they find means by degrees to alter their notions, and to bring their principles to suit with their inclinations; and at length they come to a notion, that a man may be a convert, and yet live very much in neglect of this duty."

Saul did not become a king rejected by God in a sudden collapse, or moral or spiritual failure. He declined by degrees, at every turn justifying his unwise decisions and actions with flimsy excuses (is there any other kind?). Edwards says that new converts know that they should keep times of secret prayer with the Lord. And, for a while, many of them do. But it's easy – oh, so easy – to let those times go, sacrificed on the altar of busyness or disinterest. And at every stage we tell ourselves, "It's OK, I'm still a loyal follower of the Lord. I know I don't pray very much, but then, no one else I know prays very much, either." Like Saul, we justify actions contrary to the Word of God, because they suit our mood or "inclinations." Soon enough we learn to live with the idea that not praying very much is not all that bad. No matter what God says.

What are some of the things that tend to get in the way of your practice of private prayer? How do you overcome these obstacles?

As I reflect on the day now ending, Lord, I can think of many opportunities when I might have sought you in prayer. Forgive my many excuses, even those I am making right now. Tomorrow, let me...

Day 2: Morning

Praying to Themselves

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.'" Luke 18.9-11

"They may commonly be present at public prayers in the congregation, and also at family prayer. This, in such places of light as this is, men commonly do before they are so much as awakened...Otherwise they may continue to attend upon prayer as long as they live, and yet may truly be said not to call upon God. For such prayer, in the manner of it, is not their own. They are present only for the sake of their credit, or in compliance with others. They may be present at these prayers, and yet have no proper prayer of their own."

We can translate the NKJV's rendering of the Pharisee at prayer as "he prayed thus to himself." Which was true. He was only praying for his own advantage, an advantage which would have been increased by his standing prominently for all to see and hear. It's fair to assume that this man didn't have much of a prayer life – except, of course, that which he engaged so that others could see him praying. All kinds of men are guilty of this hypocrisy. They spend little or no time with the Lord in private prayer, but they say grace at the table for their families, pray with their children (maybe), and bow their heads to pray when everyone else does at church. Are they not participating in the life of prayer? Jonathan Edwards would answer, "No, they are not. They are only praying to themselves, for their prayers are only directed at making sure others see them as the men of prayer they'd like to be seen to be." Or, as he actually did say, "They may be present at these prayers, and yet have no proper prayer of their own."

Do you agree with Edwards on this point? Why or why not?

Day 2: Evening

The Spirit of Prayer

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Romans 8:26

“Hypocrites never had the spirit of prayer...The spirit of prayer is a holy spirit, a gracious spirit...Wherever there is a true spirit of supplication, there is the spirit of grace. The true spirit of prayer is no other than God’s own Spirit dwelling in the hearts of the saints. And as this Spirit comes from God, so doth it naturally tend to God in holy breathings and pantings. It naturally leads to God to converse with him by prayer.”

Within the Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit maintain continuous communion and communication, motivated by mutual love. God’s plan of redemption involves, in part, His desire to increase that communion and communication, by drawing people into the fellowship of the Godhead through prayer. What better way to accomplish this objective, and so to multiply the experience of God’s joy, power, and life, than to send the Spirit to dwell within all who are true believers, so that He might teach and help them in the work of prayer? To neglect private prayer is to quench the Spirit as He seeks to move us into communion with the Father. We protest we do not know how to pray as we ought; yet God has sent His Spirit to teach us. We object that we’ve never had a great prayer life; but God reminds us that this Power at work within us can do exceedingly abundantly above all that we’ve ever thought or asked. God’s Power is at work within us, that we might will and do what brings us into the pleasure of God. Rather than quench this power – the power we need for prayer – we should submit to it, and put ourselves in times, postures, and frames of mind where prayer can happen.

How would you counsel a new believer to avoid quenching the Spirit by nurturing a growing life of prayer?

Let me not quench Your Spirit, Lord, but make me alert to those times You are calling me to prayer. Help me to be ready for those times by...

Day 3: Morning
A Natural Thing

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified. 2 Corinthians 13.5

“It is natural to one who is truly born from above to pray to God, and to pour out his soul in holy supplications before his heavenly Father. This is as natural to the new nature and life as breathing is to the nature and life of the body. But hypocrites have not this new nature. Those illuminations and affections which they had, went away, and left no change of nature. Therefore prayer naturally dies away in them, having no foundation laid in the nature of the soul. It is maintained a while only by a certain force put upon nature. But force is not constant; and as that declines, nature will take place again.”

Paul wrote two long and difficult letters to the churches in Corinth. These must have been as hard for him to write as I’m sure Edwards’ sermon on the duty of prayer was to preach. But as Edwards continued to bear down on the central significance of private prayer, and what the neglect of this implies about those who do not pray, he was as unsparing as Paul in forcing the Corinthians to a serious examination of the state of their faith. “Examine yourselves,” Paul insisted. “Test yourselves.” A person who is truly born again, who knows his sins to be forgiven, his eternal destiny secure, and his soul indwelt by the Spirit of God, will naturally pray, wrote Edwards. How could he not? Prayer for a true believer is as natural as breathing. If a man is not breathing, he’s most likely dead. If you’re not praying...

We don’t have to think about breathing, but we do have to remind ourselves to pray. Suggest some ways you can remind yourself throughout the day to surface from the deeps of your daily involvements for a few fresh breaths of prayer.

Help me to pray like breathing, Lord, so that it comes naturally to me in my new nature in Jesus, and so that...

Day 3: Evening

True Prayer

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.” John 14.12-14

“The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of true love to God, and that naturally inclines the soul to those duties wherein it is conversant with God, and makes it to delight in approaching him. But a hypocrite hath no such spirit...The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of faith and reliance on the power, wisdom, and mercy of God, and such a spirit is naturally expressed in prayer. True prayer is nothing else but faith expressed.”

Jesus clearly connected believing in Him with prayer, so that God might be glorified. Others do not see our times of secret prayers – or the lack thereof – so they cannot tell whether we love the Lord or truly believe in Him. But God sees us. He knows what our souls truly pant after – what we prefer to think about and meditate on instead of Him, how we choose to use our time rather than in His presence. God knows our hearts, whether we love and believe in Him or not. Surely the quickest way to confirm faith and improve love for God and trust in Him is to make better use of these secret times for prayer. True prayer is merely true faith come to its most basic and most natural expression. Where this is lacking, or neglected, how can we suppose that God looks upon us as having true faith?

What do your times of secret prayer say about your love for and trust in the Lord?

I know I can make better use of my time, Lord, so that I have sufficient time for prayer as the most basic and natural expression of my faith. Help me, Lord. Guide me in making good use of my time so that...

Day 4: Morning

Little Things

How long will you slumber, O sluggard?

When will you rise from your sleep?

A little sleep, a little slumber,

A little folding of the hands to sleep—

So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler,

And your need like an armed man. Proverbs 6.9-11

“As to those common convictions and affections which the hypocrite had, and which made him keep up the duty of prayer for a while; they are not reaching the bottom of the heart, nor being accompanied by any change of nature, a little thing extinguishes them. The cares of the world commonly choke and suffocate them, and often the pleasures and vanities of youth totally put an end to them, and with them ends their constant practice of the duty of prayer.”

Life is full of all kinds of things – the activities and commitments that take up the moments God gives us every day. Some of these are big and important, like prayer. Others are smaller – like a few extra minutes sleeping, or idling at your desk, surfing the Web, playing video games, watching too much television. During these times, we’re not so much awake to our calling to seek the Kingdom and glory of God in all things (1 Thess. 2.12; 1 Cor. 10.31), as we are asleep at the helm of our little ship of state. The writer of Hebrews warns against “drifting” from true faith into something less than that (Heb. 2.1). We don’t typically fall away from the Lord all at once, by some sudden change of heart. Rather, we drift from Him, allowing the moments of our lives to be gobbled up in little things, rather than seeking to garner more of our time for Christ and His Kingdom. The place to begin resisting the corroding power of little things is in prayer. It only makes sense: Put this biggest thing into every available moment of time, and there won’t be any room for the little things that encourage drift and can undermine your faith.

How many moments today can you recoup from little things for the big work of prayer?

Here’s my schedule, for today, Lord. I plan to meet You for prayer at...

Day 4: Evening

New Desires, Holy Appetites

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5.17

“But after a true conversion, the soul remains sensible of its own impotence and emptiness, as it is in itself, and its sense of it is rather increased than diminished. It is still sensible of its universal dependence on God for every thing. A true convert is sensible that his grace is very imperfect; and he is very far from having all that he desires. Instead of that, by conversion are begotten in him new desires which he never had before. He now finds in him holy appetites, a hungering and thirsting for righteousness, a longing after more acquaintance and communion with God. So that he hath business still at the throne of grace; yea, his business there, instead of being diminished, is rather increased.”

Edwards simply elaborates on what Paul asserted in our text: Newborn folk are newborn in every way. It's not long before they begin to evidence new spiritual desires and new holy appetites, and they realize how important prayer is to achieving the kind of oneness with the Lord which now their hearts desire. But Edwards also notes, as we've seen, that these early longings and aspirations can gradually fade, and those who seem to have had true faith in Christ, are seen in fact only to have added church as a new social and cultural outlet. They will hang around until the church fails to deliver the sense of wellbeing they're seeking, then they'll move on to another church, or simply stop going all together. In prayer, the coals of conversion kindle, and can glow to true spiritual fire, bringing enthusiasm for the Lord and His Kingdom, refining grace to nurture the soul, and the warmth of Christ's love to others. In the absence of such prayer, however, Christianity becomes just another niche in a person's life, devoid not only of prayer, but of fruitfulness, witness, and joy.

How do you determine the spiritual health of the people entrusted to your care? How much do you know about their practice of prayer?

Lord, kindle the coals of daily revival in my soul as I come to You in prayer! I need Your help in this Lord. Give me new desires and holy appetites, so that...

Day 5: Morning
Oil and Water

*If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear.
But certainly God has heard me;
He has attended to the voice of my prayer.* Psalm 66.18, 19

“Sinning and praying agree not well together. If a man be constant in the duty of secret prayer, it will tend to restrain him from willful sinning. So, on the other hand, if he allow himself in sinful practices, it will restrain him from praying...A man who knows that he lives in sin against God, will not be inclined to come daily into the presence of God; but will rather be inclined to fly from his presence, as Adam, when he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, ran away from God, and hid himself among the trees of the garden.”

If we want people to take prayer seriously, then we as pastors and church leaders must take sin seriously. When we fail to confront issues of sin in the congregation, we make it difficult for people to find the promise and power of prayer. Like oil and water, sin and prayer just don't mix. We must teach people how to recognize and repent of sin, so they might take up the work of prayer with greater enjoyment and effects. But let's remember as well that sins are not merely those of commission; sins of omission are equally to be deplored. And the greatest sin of omission is lack of prayer. That being the case, should not our most urgent, constant, and practical exhortations be to lead those in our care to greater consistency, depth, and rejoicing in the life of prayer?

How can you begin to focus on private prayer as an application in all your preaching or teaching? Is there a danger that we assume people to be praying, when they may not be doing so?

Help me to be sensitive to sin, Lord, especially in my own heart. Let Your Spirit search me daily, so that I...

Day 5: Evening

Persevering in Prayer

“Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD...” Jeremiah 29.12-14

“Hypocrites never counted the cost of perseverance in seeking God, and of following him to the end of life. To continue instant in prayer with all perseverance to the end of life, requires much care, watchfulness, and labour. For much opposition is made to it by the flesh, the world, and the devil; and Christians meet with many temptations to forsake this practice. He that would persevere in this duty must be laborious in religion in general.”

We cannot separate prayer from our daily walk with the Lord, and our daily walk with the Lord is hard work (cf. Phil. 2.12). We do not work *for* salvation; rather, the salvation we have received by grace through faith must be *worked out* by us, in the power of the Spirit, if we are to know full and abundant life in Christ. Unless we are earnest in seeking and following the Lord in every area and at every moment of our daily lives, we won’t be very serious about or effective in secret prayer, either. And the reverse is equally true. Paul exhorts us to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17), by which he seems to mean that we should ever sustain vital communion with the Lord and never be far from engaging in conversation with Him. Thus prayer informs true religion and true religion sustains and deepens secret prayer. So get ready for a lifetime of hard work.

What should we teach as the basic tools and disciplines for working out our salvation?

Lord, am I working out my salvation as diligently as I should? Am I persevering in prayer, so that find You and grow in You daily? I want to improve in this, Lord, so...

Day 6: Morning

Interest in the Promises?

“Thus says the LORD who made it, the LORD who formed it to establish it (the LORD is His name): ‘Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.’” Jeremiah 33.2, 3

“Hypocrites have no interest in those gracious promises which God hath made to his people, of those spiritual supplies which are needful in order to uphold them in the way of their duty to the end...But hypocrites have no interest in these and such like promises; and therefore are liable to fall away.”

It’s astonishing how cool and indifferent Christians can be to the exceedingly great and precious promises of God (2 Pet. 1.4). God promises to meet us in prayer, and show us “great things” and “mysteries” (the literal translation of “mighty things”) which we’ve never known before. He promises to answer us as we persist in calling on Him. Does that entice us? Do we get excited thinking that *God* awaits our coming to Him in prayer, that He might show us bigger and more “beyond” things than we’ve ever known before (Eph. 3.20)? That He might bring us into His promises with such presence and power, that we will *partake* of Him in a glory-filled way? If such prospects do not incite us to pray, then this says something about the genuineness of our faith, or at least, about our spiritual health and growth. God offers great and glorious promises, which He makes available to us through prayer – earnest, seeking, secret prayer. Do *we* have interest in such promises?

How would you summarize God’s exceedingly great and precious promises for a new believer (2 Pet. 1.4; cf. Gen. 12.1-3)? How consistent are you in holding these promises before the people you serve?

Keep Your promises before me, Lord, and let them lead me into more consistent and more fervent prayer. As I seek Your promises in prayer...

Day 6: Evening

Hope and Prayer

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2.11-13

“I would exhort those who have a hope of their being true converts – and who since their supposed conversion have left off the duty of secret prayer, and ordinarily allow themselves in the omission of it – to throw away their hope. If you have left off calling upon God, it is time for you to leave off hoping and flattering yourselves with an imagination that you are the children of God.”

All who are apart from Jesus Christ hope for happiness in a variety of circumstances and things. But these are changeable, fleeting hopes, which means, as Paul observed, that they have no *sure* and *lasting* hope, from which nothing can separate them. Who has such hope? Those who have been “brought near by the blood of Christ,” of course. Now they have been given the promises, and earnestly desire them. Now they have been seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2.6). No wonder they are filled with hope! And how can it be that, seated with Christ, near to Him, and grafted into His promises, that they can *not* commune with Him in joyful, heart-felt prayer? Hence the strong words from Edwards: If we do not pray, do not delight to be near to the Lord and living out His promises, so that we do delight in His presence and live in His power, then are we not acting like people whose hope is fixed on something less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness?

Edwards was direct and clear to his congregation. This was his way of emphasizing the importance of private prayer. How do you emphasize that in your ministry?

Lord, I do hope in Your promises and salvation, and I rejoice in these. In prayer, therefore, I should...

Day 7: Morning

What Sort of Ground?

“But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.” Mark 4.20

“When you find by experience, that the seed which was sown in your hearts, though at first it sprang up and seemed flourishing, is withering away, as by the heat of the sun, or is choked, as with thorns; this shows in what sort of ground the seed was sown, that it is either stony or thorny ground; and that therefore it is necessary you should pass through another change, whereby your heart may become good ground, which shall bring forth fruit with patience.”

The parable of the soils is often misunderstood, as if *all* the soils were somehow “Christian,” but one was more Christian than the others. The others had the seed sown in them, and were in the same “field,” so they represent a kind of Christian experience as well, only one not as well developed as in that good soil. This was not what Jesus intended. Where the seed takes root and grows, it bears fruit, because the dead seed has become alive. Where there is no fruit, for whatever reason, there the seed remains dead. Edwards is arguing that the most natural and abiding fruit of true conversion is private prayer. Where that does not exist, or where we are drifting from it, we have reason to question whether the seed sown in the soil of our hearts has ever truly taken root. Jesus expects fruit of His converting Word. Edwards did, too. Do we?

What fruit of faith do you expect from your own life?

I agree, Lord, that prayer is a reasonable fruit to expect from those who know and love You. I want to grow in that love, and to realize more of this and other fruit. Today, help me to...

Day 7: Evening

A Wicked Life

*Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart...
Luke 18.1*

“Why therefore will you retain such a hope, of which your own experience shows you the ill tendency, in that it encourages you to lead a wicked life? For certainly that life is a wicked life wherein you live in the neglect of so well-known a duty, as that of secret prayer, and in the disobedience of so plain a command of God, as that by which the duty is enjoined. And is not a way of disobedience to God a way to hell?”

Jesus said that “men always ought to pray and not lose heart.” Can there be any doubt about what He expects of those who follow Him? Edwards insisted that it is “wicked” to live “in the disobedience of so plain a command of God, as that of secret prayer” – and *always* to be in prayer. Edwards bore down on his congregation over this matter, because he did not want them to neglect prayer, and so turn to the path of wickedness, where they might find many more distractions and traps. People today neglect private prayer, or striving to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17), because we give them the impression that, while these are good *ideas* and noble *spiritual aspirations*, they’re hardly the sort of thing to be expected of *every believer*. If we are giving that impression, then are we imitating Christ in His instruction? Are we following in the footsteps of a pastor like Edwards, who experienced multiple seasons of revival as a result of his preaching and his prayers?

Do you believe that “always” to pray, or, to “pray without ceasing” is a goal you should be striving to realize in your life? Why or why not?

Lord, You say that we ought always to pray. How can this be? Help me to understand! Help me to grow in the ability to pray...

Day 8: Morning

The Pleasure of His Company

*As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So pants my soul for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God? Psalm 42.1, 2*

“How is your conduct consistent with loving God above all? If you have not a spirit to love God above your dearest earthly friends, and your most pleasant earthly enjoyments; the Scriptures are very plain and full in it, that you are not true Christians. But if you had indeed such a spirit, would you thus grow weary of the practice of drawing near to him, and become habitually so averse to it, as in a great measure to cast off so plain a duty, which is so much the life of a child of God?”

How do we know that we love our friends and our “most pleasant earthly enjoyments”? We spend time with them. Enjoyable time. Time we look forward to and remember with pleasure. It’s quite a good thing to enjoy all the gifts of God, as He intends. But what about the greatest gift, the gift of knowing Him, of enjoying the pleasure of His company (Ps. 16.11)? How do we, and more important, how does God know that we love Him, if we don’t spend much time with Him, and if the time we do spend with Him is hurried, perfunctory, and intermittent? Edwards says a true Christian would not “grow weary of the practice of drawing near” to the Lord, but would hunger and thirst for Him, and make as many opportunities as possible to be with Him in prayer. If we truly knew the joy and pleasure that come from being in God’s presence in prayer, we would not see prayer as a “duty,” but as the highlight and most refreshing time of our day.

Do you think spending more time in meditation, as part of your private prayers, would help you realize more of the joy and pleasure of being in God’s company?

Lord, I’ll know my time with You is what it should be when...

Day 8: Evening

To Lead a Holy Life

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 7.1

“To lead a holy life is to lead a life devoted to God; a life of worshiping and serving God; a life consecrated to the service of God. But how doth he lead such a life who doth not so much as maintain the duty of prayer?”

Christians are called to be holy, as our Father in heaven is holy. His holiness rubs off on us best as we spend time rejoicing in the pleasure of His company, in prayer. The work of “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” is our continuous calling, and we cannot sustain this work apart from being in the presence of God in prayer. Holiness begins in prayer. Holiness is maintained in prayer. Holiness is enjoyed in prayer, sought through prayer, expressed in prayer, and realized by worshiping and serving God in every area of our lives. Holiness is the life devoted to God, but, as Edwards insisted, we cannot lead such a life if we do not “maintain the duty of prayer.” In prayer, holiness grows within us, as our minds, hearts, and consciences, enthralled with the vision of God, and delighted in His most pleasurable presence, are shaped into the very image of Jesus Christ by His Spirit. We cannot “patch on” holiness, it must be nurtured from within, and from within the context of prayer.

How would you describe the role of prayer in bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God?

I'm far from being perfect in holiness, Lord, and I know I can improve in this area, if only...

Day 9: Morning

Faith and Prayer

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11.6

“But who can believe that the man lives by faith who lives without prayer, which is the natural expression of faith? Prayer is as natural an expression of faith, as breathing is of life; and to say a man lives a life of faith, and yet lives a prayerless life, is every whit as inconsistent and incredible, as to say, that a man lives without breathing.”

For most of us, probably, it's not that we don't *ever* pray. We do. We pray some maybe in the morning. Then again at meals, or in starting or ending a meeting (if it's "religious"), and perhaps as we retire at night. We pray. But our prayers are more like gasping than breathing. There's not much rhythm, regularity, or fullness, and little of spiritual health resulting from our prayers. The state of our prayers provides a true measure of our faith. If we wish to have more faith, we need only ask. But then, we must come to the Lord in prayer to ask for more faith, and that takes a measure of faith, even to come. And if our faith is struggling – gasping – we may be reluctant to come before our Father. But let's do so, nevertheless. Prayer expresses our faith, but it also renews, refreshes, and strengthens it. The more we pray, the more our faith will grow, and the more prayer will be the testament of our faith.

Suggest some ways you might add more prayer to your daily life. Begin doing so at once.

Lord, here is my plan for improving my time in prayer, beginning now...

Day 9: Evening

Prayer and Worship

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4.23, 24

“If you live in neglect of secret prayer, you show your good-will to neglect all worship of God. He that prays only when he prays with others, would not pray at all, were it not that the eyes of others are upon him. He that will not pray where none but God seeth him, manifestly doth not pray at all out of respect to God, or regard to his all-seeing eye, and therefore doth in effect cast off all prayer. And he that casts off prayer, in effect casts off all the worship of God, of which prayer is the principal duty.”

Worship is a form of prayer – at times, public and extended, at other times, private and brief. In worship our focus is on God, our desire is to meet with and adore Him, and to praise, thank, supplicate, and hear Him, according to His Word and will. But this is all prayer is, and if we fail to sustain a life of vigorous prayer, then our worship will suffer, because we will not be *tuned* for worship if we are not *tuning* our souls for worship by prayer throughout the course of our days. And if we enter worship *untuned*, our worship will be a mere cacophony to the Lord. It will not blend with the worship of saints and angels, who maintain perpetual prayer, and it will most likely be engaged mainly for what “I get out of it.” Pray more, and you will worship better. Worship without private prayer ends up being not worship at all – at least, not worship of *God*.

In what ways does your prayer life mirror the worship you participate in at church?

I would like my prayer life to be more worshipful, Lord. Help me to...

Day 10: Morning

Watch, Continue, Persevere

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting... 1 Timothy 2.8

“Thus abundantly the Scriptures insist upon it, that we should persevere in the duty of prayer; which shows that it is of very great importance that we should persevere. If the contrary be the manner of hypocrites... then surely we ought to beware of this leaven... Perseverance is not only a necessary concomitant and evidence of a title to salvation; but also a necessary prerequisite to the actual possession of eternal life... The apostle...directs us to pray with all prayer, watching thereunto with all perseverance, and to continue in prayer, and to watch in the same.”

Edwards returns to the need for perseverance in prayer, because perseverance is the opposite of drifting from prayer, which is the way of hypocrites. If we do not persevere, we will drift. That seems to be his point. So Paul also exhorts men to pray in all kinds of ways, at all times, for all kinds of people and needs, full of faith and without doubting whether their prayers matter. This is abundantly plain. So why do we find it so hard to take up the life of watching, continuing, and persevering in prayer? Why do we have so little regard for prayer? Do we prefer to fill the time God allows us with things other than prayer? Is it because we do not know the teaching of Scripture? Or is it because we are well caught-up in that drift which keeps us from praying as we know we should?

What advice would you give to a fellow believer who asked you how to arrest his drift from prayer, and to become more consistent in this most important practice?

Lord, I know the privilege of prayer is open to me at every moment. I want to make better use of this privilege. Help me...

Day 10: Evening

Sovereignty and Prayer

*For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.
Amen. Romans 11.36*

“We cannot draw a breath without his help. You need his help every day for the supply of your outward wants; and especially you stand in continual need of him to help your souls... Seeing therefore you stand in such continual need of the help of God, how reasonable is it that you should continually seek it of him, and perseveringly acknowledge your dependence upon him, by resorting to him, to spread your needs before him, and to offer up your requests to him in prayer.”

Our generation has learned from the teaching of secular science that the universe and everything in it run by a set of physical laws. These laws, which describe the interactions of material things, govern all aspects of the physical cosmos, including our lives, and our health and wellbeing. So who would ever think of giving thanks to impersonal laws? Or supplicating such laws to provide for our needs this day as all the days before? In fact, no such laws exist. As Edwards elsewhere explains, what we call “laws of nature” are merely descriptions of the way our totally sovereign God rules, governs, and directs all things and situations, such that all that we are and have, and everything around us, are what they are by His personal care and sovereign good will. If we really understood this, this alone would fill our time with prayers of praise and thanks and rejoicing at the wonder of such comprehensive and personal care.

Spend ten minutes right now, thanking and praising God for all the ways He is blessing you at this moment.

Lord, let me begin by thanking You for...

Day 11: Morning

Excusing Prayer

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. Hebrews 2.1

“Watch against the beginnings of a neglect of this duty. Persons who have for a time practiced, and afterwards neglect it, commonly leave it off by degrees. While their convictions and religious affections last, they are very constant in their closets, and no worldly business, or company, or diversion hinders them. But as their convictions and affections begin to die away, they begin to find excuses to neglect it sometimes. They are now so hurried; they have now such and such things to attend to; or there are now such inconveniences in the way, that they persuade themselves they may very excusably omit it for this time. Afterwards it pretty frequently so happens, that they have something to hinder, something which they call an excuse. After a while, a less thing becomes a sufficient excuse than was allowed to be such at first. Thus the person by degrees contracts more and more a habit of neglecting prayer, and becomes more and more indisposed to it.”

The danger in the life of faith is not radical, whole-hearted, complete rejection of belief and its practices. It is drift. We do not suddenly stop praying. We drift from it, little by little, and at each point we *excuse* our failure to devote time to prayer by telling ourselves we have more pressing duties. More pressing duties!? Than prayer? Jim Kennedy used to say that an excuse is the skin of a reason, stuffed with a lie. If we are excusing ourselves from prayer because we prefer to invest our time in other matters, then we are lying to ourselves about the importance of prayer. We are saying, in effect, that prayer may be important, but it's not important to me – not *very* important, at any rate. And so Edwards ends his two-part sermon on prayer at the place where he began, warning us against making excuses for not praying, warning us against drifting from true faith into hypocrisy, and pleading with us to give prayer the place it rightly deserves in our walk with and work for the Lord.

What will you do today to increase and improve your time in prayer?

Lord, I'll know that I'm drifting from You when I find my time in prayer...

Day 11: Evening

A Glorious Advancement

*“Yes, many peoples and strong nations
Shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem,
And to pray before the LORD.” Zechariah 8.22*

“In the text we have an account *how* this future glorious advancement of the church of God should be introduced; *viz.* By great multitudes in different towns and countries taking up a *joint resolution*, and coming into an express and *visible agreement*, that they will, by united and extraordinary *prayer*, seek to God, that he would come and manifest himself, and grant the tokens and fruits of his gracious presence.”²

As a pastor, Jonathan Edwards had known at least two extraordinary seasons of revival, in which many unbelievers were converted and many dormant Christians were renewed in faith and obedience. Yet he believed he saw in this text a coming day when God would send an even greater revival to His Church, and he was determined to be found of the Lord, praying for that glorious advancement, and urging others to join him in this endeavor. His instruction and example call us to consider our own attitude toward the world: Is this world a weed field, ready to be burned, or a wheat field, which we must work toward a harvest? Since it is the latter, can we expect any significant increase of sowing, much less of fruit, unless we look first, often, and together to the Lord in prayer? Edwards’ ringing call to seek the Lord for revival inspired the generation of those who, hiding under haystacks, in secret dorm room gatherings, during seasons of weary worship, and in private homes throughout a spiritually destitute nation, were used of God to ignite the spark of the Second Great Awakening, which lasted for a generation. Dare we hope for – and *seek* – such an awakening in our day?

*How would you describe your congregation’s attitude toward revival and awakening?
Do the people you serve expect revival? Will you lead them in seeking it?*

You can revive us, Lord! You can send another great awakening! For my part, I...

² All quotations are from Jonathan Edwards, *An Humble Attempt, &c.* in Edward Hickman, ed. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1834, 1995), Vol. Two, pp. 278ff.

Day 12: Morning

The Duty to Pray

*“The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying,
Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD,
And seek the LORD of hosts.
I myself will go also.”* Zechariah 8.21

“Particularly we may observe *the duty*, with the attendance of which the glorious event foretold shall be brought on; *viz.* The duty of *prayer*...with regard to the duty of prayer; considering that prayer is here expressly and repeatedly mentioned; and also considering how parallel this place is with many other prophecies, that speak of an *extraordinary* spirit of prayer, as preceding and introducing that glorious day of religious revival, and advancement of the church’s peace and prosperity...”

Only God can bring revival to His people and awakening to the world. We can’t program revival into being, and if we neglect the means God has appointed for revival – beginning with the duty of prayer – we shall not be able to realize its fruit. Edwards called his readers to *extraordinary* prayer for revival, gathering together with one focus, and repeatedly beseeching the Lord to do what only He can do. Prayer sowed the seeds of revival in Edwards’ day, and it must do so again in ours. Edwards, following Zechariah, regarded praying and seeking the Lord for revival as every believer’s *duty*. But if those we serve do not see us busy about this duty, it’s certain they won’t consider it important for themselves. What would you say to Jonathan Edwards, and to those faithful multitudes whose prayers God honored to ignite and sustain the Second Great Awakening, to excuse yourself from taking up this duty as well?

Do the members of your church pray for revival? Do your church’s leaders encourage praying for revival in all the groups and ministries of your church? Should they?

Lord, should I consider praying for revival to be my duty? And if it is my duty, then...

Day 12: Evening

The Lord Himself

*When You said, "Seek My face,"
My heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek.
Do not hide Your face from me;
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my help;
Do not leave me nor forsake me,
O God of my salvation." Psalm 27.8, 9*

"The *good*, that is to be sought by prayer; which is God himself...This is the *good* they ask for, and seek by prayer, *The Lord of hosts* himself. To *seek God*, as the expression may perhaps sometimes be used in Scripture, may signify no more than seeking the *favour* or *mercy* of God. And if it be taken so here [in Zech. 8.20-22], *praying before the Lord*, and *seeking the Lord of hosts*, must be synonymous expressions. And it must be confessed to be a common thing in Scripture, to signify the same thing repeatedly, by various expressions of the same import, for the greater emphasis."

For people to seek the Lord together in prayer is "a common thing in Scripture," as Edwards noted. This explains, no doubt, why our meetings for prayer are so frequent and so well attended. Oh wait. They're not? Perhaps we ourselves need revival before we can see revival in our world? Revival occurs when people gain a renewed experience of the Lord, whether through conversion or by having the eye of their heart opened to the larger vistas and greater power of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The substance of revival – or, the "good" – to be sought is thus not merely more people in church, or even happier people at church, but God Himself. He calls us to seek Him and promises that, if we will, He will make His presence and power known to us in reviving ways. How much more glorious is this when we *join* to seek the Lord and the revival only He can bring!

How would you counsel a young man, just beginning his ministry, to lead his people in a focus on seeking the Lord and revival as a fundamental aspect of their calling to follow Jesus?

Lord, I wait on You this evening in prayer. I want to be faithful in seeking You, and joyful in finding You. Lead me to some friends, Lord, with whom I can...

Day 13: Morning

Seeking the Lord

“Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you...” Jeremiah 29.12-14

“But certainly that expression of *seeking the Lord*, is very commonly used to signify something more; it implies that *God himself* is the great *good* desired and sought after; that the blessings pursued are God’s gracious presence, the blessed manifestations of him, union and intercourse with him; or, in short, God’s *manifestations* and *communications* of himself by His Holy Spirit.”

We shall know that seeking the Lord has accomplished its objective when the power, fruit, gifts, and unity of the Spirit are increasingly known among us. How does it stand with these matters at present? Abounding fruit? Multiple and abundant gifts engaged in the work of ministry and building the church? Power for witness flowing to and through the members of our congregations? Churches in every community joined in visible unity? The apostles, following Christ’s instruction, waited together in extended prayer for God to send His Spirit for all these blessings, and after ten days, He came. God wants us to be filled with His Spirit (Eph. 5.18-21). He commands us to pray, and promises to listen when we do. And then, He says, we will find Him. For then God shall come down into our midst again, filling each one with His Spirit, working within us to will and do of His good pleasure, exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we have ever before dared to ask or think (Phil. 2.13; Eph. 3.20). And when God comes to His people like this, then real revival will begin.

How might you be able to know, in your own church, when the Spirit of God is beginning to stir people for revival? Do you pray for this to happen? Do you pray with others for it?

I do long for revival, Lord. Give me a vision of what that will look like, what I should expect to see, and what I long for, when You...

Day 13: Evening

A Call for God to Return

*The humble shall see this and be glad;
And you who seek God, your hearts shall live. Psalm 69.32*

“If the expression in the text [Ps. 69.32] be understood agreeably to this sense, then by *seeking the Lord of hosts*, we must understand a seeking, that God who had withdrawn, or as it were hid himself for a long time, would return to his church, and grant the tokens and fruits of his gracious presence, and those blessed communications of his Spirit to his people, and to mankind on earth, which he had often promised, and which his church had long waited for.”

It seems strange to suggest that God has “withdrawn, or as it were hid himself” from His Church today. But the measure of God’s presence with His people is that, in many ways, they turn their world rightside-up for King Jesus. They gather as one body for joyous worship; show the beauty of the Lord to their community in service to the needy; shine like lights before their neighbors by faithful and exuberant witness; and affect all aspects of life and culture with the righteousness, peace, and joy of the Spirit. Yeah! Where’s that happening? Upon a little reflection, it becomes clearer why we might suggest that God may have withdrawn and hidden Himself from His churches in our day. For while we are very busy, active, and in many ways “successful,” where is the evidence of Christ ruling in the hearts of the people around us, and in our culture and its priorities and morality? We need God to return to us, and for this to happen, we must seek Him in prayer.

Is it reasonable to suppose that the Church should have a more pronounced impact on culture and society than we see in our day? Why or why not?

Lord, can it be that You really can revive us, and awaken our neighbors, and bring Your beautiful and joyous Kingdom to greater expression in our day? Show me, Lord, how I can...

Day 14: Morning

Prayer in Many Places

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting... 1 Timothy 2.8

“We may observe *who* they are, that shall be *united* in thus seeking the Lord of hosts: *the inhabitants of many cities*, and of many countries, *yea, many people, and strong nations*, great multitudes in different parts of the world shall conspire in this business... There shall be given much of a spirit of prayer to God’s people, in many places, disposing them to an express *agreement*, unitedly to pray to God in an extraordinary manner, that he would appear for the help of his church, and in mercy to mankind, and *pour out his Spirit*, *revive his work*, and advance his spiritual *kingdom* in the world, as he has promised.”

What Edwards envisioned was more than an insertion of prayer for revival into the existing prayer routines of the people of God. He called for special seasons of prayer, times set apart to unite by explicit agreement to seek the Lord for revival, with this as the sole focus. Past seasons of revival and awakening have been preceded by such special gatherings, as people united and persevered in prayer, believing and *insisting* that God would fulfill His promise. As [J. Edwin Orr](#) has shown in his many excellent books on the history of revival, God has often worked in the past to revive His Church and awaken the lost, as He raised up men to join in special seasons of prayer, to seek the Lord for revival. May He be pleased to do so again in our day. And may you be one of those men.

How many different ways can you think of to encourage extraordinary prayer for revival on the part of the people in your church? Choose one, and get started!

I will begin praying for revival, Lord. And I will begin today by...

Day 14: Evening

Revival Leads to Awakening

Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. Acts 6.7

“Thus after the inhabitants of many cities of Israel, or of God’s professing people, have taken up and pursued a joint resolution, to go and pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of hosts, others shall be drawn to worship and serve him with them; till at length *many people and strong nations* shall join themselves to them; and there shall, in process of time, be a vast accession to the church, so that it shall be *ten* times as large as it was before...”

The church in Jerusalem appears to have been slipping into a bit of complacency, or at least, lethargy, in caring for its needy. The congregation was poised to break apart in any number of ways. But the apostles and the people together renewed their love for the Lord and one another in such a dramatic and visible way, that the Word of the Lord kept increasing beyond the church, and many of its most ardent detractors became obedient to the faith. The hearts of the people were revived, congregational life was renewed, and awakening occurred in Jerusalem, even among some of those least likely to believe. And all this began as the leaders of the church committed themselves to prayer. When God revives His Church and renews His people in His love, the effect of that will necessarily impact everyone and everything in their lives. Revival, in short, leads to renewal, and renewal leads to awakening. But if we want any of this, we must pray.

How do you, in your preaching and teaching, seek to cast a vision for revival, renewal, and awakening in your church and community?

Lord, give me a vision for revival, renewal, and awakening! Help me to see what You can do when...

Day 15: Morning
A Coming Day

“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...
And it shall come to pass
That whoever calls on the name of the LORD
Shall be saved.” Acts 2.16, 17, 21

“It is evident from Scripture, that there is *yet remaining* a great *advancement* of the interests of *religion* and the *kingdom of Christ* in this world, by an *abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God*, far greater and more extensive than ever yet has been...It is often foretold and signified, in a great variety of strong expressions, that there should a time come when *all nations*, throughout the whole habitable world, should embrace the true religion, and be brought into the church of God.”

Edwards’ postmillennialism may be off-putting to some, but his argument is certainly worth considering more carefully. He firmly believed that God intended to fulfill the visions of Micah (4.1-8), Daniel (2.44, 45), and Isaiah (9.6, 7) concerning the coming and increase of His Kingdom. Edwards had seen sudden and significant awakenings in his day, and these encouraged him to seek the Lord for greater seasons of harvest yet to come. I sometimes get the impression that preachers today see the world, as depicted in the parable of the wheat and the tares, as a weed field, waiting to be burned. But does not Jesus teach, in fact, that the world is a wheat field, to be sown, cultivated, and harvested by faithful laborers? “Lift up your eyes... The fields are white for harvest... The harvest is plentiful...” Jesus taught us to hope, work, and pray for the harvest. By uniting in prayer for revival, we can nurture that hope, and help others to nurture it as well.

How are you leading your congregation into the work of sowing, cultivating, and harvesting in your community?

Lord, I want to believe that a great harvest does indeed lie just ahead. I want to believe this, and today I want to live it. So...

Day 15: Evening

Joy in Earth and Heaven

*“The LORD your God in your midst,
The Mighty One, will save;
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will quiet you with His love,
He will rejoice over you with singing.”* Zephaniah 3.17

“A time of great and universal joy, we are taught to expect, will take place through all the earth, when ‘from the utmost ends of the earth shall be heard songs, even glory to the righteous,’ and God’s people ‘shall with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation’...Yea, the Scriptures represent it not only as a time of universal joy on earth, but extraordinary joy in heaven, among the angels and saints, the holy apostles and prophets there...”

Many believers today have difficulty “connecting” – if I may put it that way – with the unseen realm which spreads out all around, above, beneath, and through us. Yet the Lord observes our every movement, peering even to the depths of our souls. Holy saints and angels surround us, watching as we run our race, and, the Scriptures indicate, are affected by our grief and joy. There is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents, as we know. How much joy must there be in heaven – not to mention among the myriads of lost sinners, waiting to be redeemed – when revival engulfs and renews the people of God? Jesus intends to reap the whole earth for His glory (Rev. 14.14-16). As we pray for revival, joining our prayers with departed saints and holy angels, let us ask the Lord to embolden us to join Him in this great work.

How do you help the people in your church to practice the reality of the unseen realm, and to evidence their engagement with it as a vital aspect of their faith (Heb. 11.1)?

Lord, send your angels to help me, and enlist departed saints to intercede for me as I...

Day 16: Morning

Worth Praying for, Indeed!

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God... Colossians 1.9, 10

“Such being the state of things in this future promised glorious day of the church’s prosperity, surely it is worth *praying* for. Nor is there any one thing whatsoever, if we viewed things aright, for which a regard to the glory of God, a concern for the kingdom and honour of our Redeemer, a love to his people, pity to perishing sinners – love to our fellow-creatures in general, compassion to mankind under their various and sore calamities and miseries, a desire of their temporal and spiritual prosperity, love to our country, our neighbours, and friends, yea, and to our own souls – would dispose us to be so much in prayer, as for the dawning of this happy day, and the accomplishment of this glorious event.”

This only makes sense. God wants His people to be revived; He desires sinners to be converted; He longs for the joy of salvation to be known and the glory of Christ to be celebrated over all the earth. Why would we not make prayer for this a central feature of our lives and ministries? Only God can give such revival, but He is not likely to give it where people do not eagerly long and earnestly plead for it. We are not experiencing revival now because God is not persuaded we really want it. How can we persuade Him? Edwards would say, pointing to Zechariah 8, by joining together regularly, with the singular purpose of seeking the Lord for revival. What good reasons could there possibly be for not taking up this holy challenge?

Are you praying regularly for revival? Do you lead others in praying for revival? How would you respond to someone who said that praying for revival wasn’t important enough for him to make the time for it?

Help me to be more consistent in this Lord. And show me specifically what to pray. Let revival begin in me, Lord, so that...

Day 16: Evening

The Subject of God's Promises

"And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," says the Lord GOD." Ezekiel 39.29

"The Holy Spirit, in his indwelling presence, his influences and fruits, is the sum of all grace, holiness, comfort, and joy; or, in one word, of all the spiritual good Christ *purchased* for men in this world: and is also the sum of all perfection, glory, and eternal joy that he purchased for them in another world. The Holy Spirit is the subject matter of the promises, both of the eternal covenant of redemption, and also of this covenant of grace."

In Scripture, the "face of God" is equated, among other things, with the Spirit. To be indwelt by the Spirit is to have the face of God shining upon us, bringing us into His glory (2 Cor. 4.6), and radiating Christ out through us. In the process, we are filled with power, joy, and peace, and we bear the fruit, exercise the gifts, and wield the power for witness and holiness that this same Spirit gives. When we gather to pray for revival, using a psalm to guide and focus our prayers, we join our voices together after each man prays, crying out in unison, "Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let Your face shine, that we may be saved!" (Ps. 80.19) Thus we plead with the Lord to send His good Spirit afresh upon us, that we might know a greater measure of His salvation, and that others may be saved through our witness. What we long for in revival, therefore, is a renewed upwelling, filling, and overflowing of the Spirit of God within and through us. We should all be committed to praying for this.

What would your church look like if the Spirit of God began increasingly to manifest Himself in these ways from within the people you serve? How would that impact your community? Are such effects worth seeking in prayer?

I need more of Your Spirit working in and through me, Lord. This is especially true in the areas of...

Day 17: Morning

An Offering like the Lord's

*Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face evermore! Psalm 105.4*

“Now therefore, if this is what *Jesus Christ*, our great Redeemer and head of the church, did so much desire, and set his heart upon, from all eternity, and for which he did and suffered so much, offering up *strong crying and tears*, and *his precious blood*, to obtain it; surely his disciples and members should also seek it, and be much in prayer for it.”

Everything Jesus did was motivated by love and designed to purchase and redeem a people for God's own possession. Consider to what lengths He went to obtain this! When we hear that something like this – some greater measure of what Jesus Himself sought, some deeper and more widely known measure of His great salvation – may be realized through united, specific, extraordinary prayer for the Spirit of God and revival, how can we *not* respond to this summons, and make every effort to be found seeking what Jesus sought, with fervor appropriate to what the Lord commands? Is this too much of an offering to ask, for Him Who offered His all? Find or start a group that will meet at least monthly to seek the Lord and His strength, and to cry out for His face and Spirit, until revival sweeps up the churches, and awakening breaks out all around.

How would you explain to a new believer what it means to seek the Lord for revival and renewal, and why he should?

Lord, what reasons can I set before You for not taking up this challenge? Let me enumerate them, then...

Day 17: Evening

In Sync with Creation

*The day is Yours, the night also is Yours;
You have prepared the light and the sun.
You have set all the borders of the earth;
You have made summer and winter. Psalm 74.16, 17*

“All the changes brought to pass in the world, from age to age, are ordered by infinite wisdom, in one respect or other to prepare the way for that glorious issue of things, when truth and righteousness shall finally prevail, and he, whose right it is, shall take the kingdom. All the creatures, in all their operations and motions, continually tend to this.”

Edwards says that the creation is like a clock, ticking toward the progress of the Kingdom and the advancement of Christian faith on earth. God employs the entire creation to prepare for the day of revival; and the creation, in whole and part, will share in the glorious liberty of the sons and daughters of God as revival comes (Rom. 8.19-21). Our prayers will be in sync with the course of creation and history, Edwards maintains, when they are working toward the same end toward which all creation is working. As all creation unites “to prepare the way for that glorious issue of things, when truth and righteousness shall finally prevail, and he, whose right it is, shall take the kingdom,” let us get in sync with creation, and unite to groan in prayer, that the liberating power of the Spirit would wash over us all for revival, renewal, and awakening.

Do you think people really believe that the creation is serving the purpose of preparing a stage for revival? Do you believe that?

Lord, today I have seen many examples of Your creation. I know Your glory is there to observe and claim. Help me to see You in creation, and to join You and creation in...

Day 18: Morning

They that Love Christ's Appearing

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Timothy 4.8

“It is abundantly represented in Scripture as the spirit and character of all true saints, that they set their hearts upon, love, long, wait, and pray for the promised glory of that day... The glorious inhabitants of the heavenly world – the saints and angels there, who rejoice when one sinner repents – are earnestly waiting, in an assured and joyful dependence upon God’s promises of that conversion of the world and marriage of the Lamb, which shall take place when that glorious day comes...”

It’s sometimes difficult, reading Edwards, to distinguish his longing for promised revival now, and for the Day of the Lord and the marriage supper of the Lamb. In his thinking, the one anticipates and is a foretaste of the other, so he is not always so careful to distinguish them, as, I think, in this passage. Either way, we must consider whether we love the Lord’s appearing, and how much. Do we love it when He appears to us in reviving grace, daily renewing our vision, hope, and strength in Him? Do we rejoice to think about the lost people we know coming to saving faith, when Jesus finally makes Himself known to them? Do we earnestly pray for Him to appear with more presence, promise, and power in our churches? In our community and nation? Throughout the world? If we love the Lord’s appearing in such ways as this, we should unite to pray for and earnestly seek it.

How shall the people of God demonstrate that they love the appearing of the Lord, if not through prayer and preparing their own lives?

Lord, I would love to see more of Your appearing in my today as...

Day 18: Evening

Much in Prayer

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” Luke 11.13

“The word of God is full of *precepts, encouragements, and examples*, tending to excite and induce the people of God to be much in *prayer* for this great mercy. The Spirit of God is the *chief* of blessings, for it is the *sum* of all spiritual blessings; which we need infinitely more than others, and wherein our true and eternal happiness consists...The Scriptures not only direct and encourage us, in general, to pray for the Holy Spirit above all things else; but it is the expressly revealed will of God, that his church should be *very much* in prayer for that glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit...”

If Edwards is correct in his reading of Scripture, then we are surely remiss in our duty of seeking a fresh upwelling and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Where is the evidence that Christians unite together frequently to seek a greater measure of God’s Spirit for revival, renewal, and awakening? In fact, here and there we do see signs of such a stirring, and this is most encouraging. The Spirit alone can bring revival to the churches of the land, but we must seek Him for it, asking and pleading with the Father to give us that great gift with fresh new power and presence. Otherwise, we will never be revived. And if we join in seeking Him, we shall have more reason to believe that God will hear our prayers, forgive our sins, and heal and restore His people once again. Let us be “very much in prayer for that glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit.”

How much are you in prayer for the Holy Spirit to revive you and your church? Have you gathered a group of your church members who are committed to seeking Him for as long as it takes?

Lord, let Your Spirit have more rein and power in my life and in our church. Tomorrow, in my life, let Your Spirit...

Day 19: Morning

Importuning the Lord

*I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem;
They shall never hold their peace day or night.
You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent,
And give Him no rest till He establishes
And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* Isaiah 62.6, 7

“I know of no place in the Bible, where so strange an expression is made use of to signify *importunity* in prayer as is used in Isaiah lxii.6, 7, where the people of God are called upon to be importunate for this mercy...How strong is the phrase! And how loud is this call to the church of God, to be fervent and incessant in their cries to him for this great mercy!”

I doubt that many of us would use the word, “importunate,” concerning our prayers, at least, our prayers for revival. But that is the thrust of this passage in Isaiah. God longs to establish His Church as a praise in the earth. Increasingly, we are more of a byword among the lost. But God has other plans, and He will fulfill them in His way and time. Will He fulfill them in our day? Our prayers may be the deciding factor. Dare we entertain a vision and desire for prayer to be going up to God for revival from groups of watchmen all over the world, until every hour of every week, every week of every year, is taken up with men who are determined to “give Him no rest” until revival breaks out again? Do you want God to set you as one of those watchmen? And if not, why not? Brethren, let us make it our practice to seek the Lord earnestly in prayer for revival.

What would it look like if your church were characterized by importunity in praying for revival?

Lord, if I were to describe myself as “importunate” in prayer, as You commend, I would be...

Day 19: Evening

Exceedingly Great and Precious

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 2 Peter 1.2-4

“There is perhaps no one thing the Bible so much promises, in order to encourage the faith, hope, and prayers of the saints as [the promise of the Spirit]; which affords to God’s people the clearest evidences that it is their *duty* to be much in prayer for this mercy. For, undoubtedly, that which God abundantly makes the subject of his *promises*, God’s people should abundantly make the subject of their *prayer*. It also affords them the strongest assurances that their prayers shall be *successful*. With what confidence may we go before God, and pray for that, of which we have so many exceeding precious and glorious promises to plead!”

We pray for a good many things that we would like to have – health, safety, provision, friends and family, a healthy and growing church, and so forth. But it may not please God to give these to us. After all, none of them is specifically promised. However, if we’re honest, I think most of us would agree that the bulk of time we *do* spend in prayer is invested in such matters. Meanwhile, that which God *does* promise – to give us His Spirit for revival – we almost never seek. The promise of the Spirit is the capstone of those exceedingly great and precious promises of God, for in Him, and in Jesus Christ, all other promises find their “Yes!” and “Amen!” Are we ignorant of God’s promises? Do we not find them most desirable? Or do we hope to persuade Him to change His promises to suit our interests, rather than His? If we seek the promises of God, we shall not be disappointed.

How might you be able to encourage the various groups of your church to begin praying earnestly and consistently, whenever they are together, for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

Lord, Your Spirit is a precious gift. I need more of Your Spirit at work in me to...

Day 20: Morning

Rivers of Living Water

“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit... John 7.38, 39

“The Scripture gives us great reason to think, that when once there comes to appear much of a *spirit of prayer* in the church of God for this mercy, then it will soon be accomplished...Spiritual *waters* and *rivers* are explained by the apostle John, to be the *Holy Spirit*...It is now a time of scarcity of these spiritual waters; there are, as it were, *none*. If God’s people, in this time of great drought, were but made sensitive of this calamity, and their own emptiness and necessity, and brought earnestly to *thirst* and *cry* for needed supplies, God would, doubtless, soon fulfill this blessed promise.”

First we have to recognize our need. If evidence of the living waters of God’s Spirit was scarce in Edwards’ day, what shall we say of our own? For all the Christian movement’s outward “success,” we’re not making many real disciples, not filling our world with the fragrance of Jesus, and not turning the world upside down for the glory of God. Whatever we’re doing with the time and resources God provides, it’s not having the kind of effects we see in the New Testament, or which were present in other periods of revival. Surely we can admit this? Only when we do will we seek from the Lord that which we lack. But it seems that many believers – dare we say, most? – consider that their Christian life is “good enough.” They like their church, they have many Christian friends, and their life as a whole is pleasant enough. Why would they want to seek for more of the Spirit of God? But if we can rouse ourselves to consider the greater boon and glory that attends His constant filling and transforming work in our lives, our complacency may give way to a new vision, and more earnest and fervent prayer for the Spirit may ensue.

What is your own sense of what the Spirit of God wants, and is able (exceedingly abundantly able, Eph. 3.20), to do in your life? Do you need to have your vision enlarged?

Help me to be honest about my faith, my church, and our needs. I can see that we need revival because...

Day 20: Evening

Extraordinary Prayer

*As for me, I will call upon God,
And the LORD shall save me.
Evening and morning and at noon
I will pray, and cry aloud,
And He shall hear my voice. Psalm 55.16, 17*

“The greatest effusion of the Spirit that ever yet has been, even that which was in the primitive times of the Christian church, which began in Jerusalem, on the day of *Pentecost*, was in answer to extraordinary prayer... according to Christ’s direction, after his ascension, they returned to Jerusalem, and continued in *united fervent prayer* and supplication...till the Spirit came down in a wonderful manner upon them...”

Edwards, remember, is insisting that we must invest “explicit agreement and visible union of all God’s people in extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion” if we are going to realize what God so earnestly desires for us to know. As J. Edwin Orr points out in his extraordinary and concise overviews of modern revivals, great outpourings of God’s Spirit have always begun with people uniting to pray. This means getting together with a single focus, praying at unusual times, and praying fervently, even for extended seasons – all pleading with the Lord and “giving Him no rest” until He pours out His Spirit on us anew, not for salvation, but for revival. This movement has begun again in our day. Won’t you devote a portion of your time to being part of it?

What is preventing you from joining or beginning such a prayer effort in your own church? What will it require of you to do so?

Lord, whom could I invite to join me in praying regularly for revival? Tomorrow, I will contact...

Day 21: Morning

He Comes to Those Who Wait

And it will be said in that day:

"Behold, this is our God;

We have waited for Him, and He will save us.

This is the LORD;

We have waited for Him;

We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Isaiah 25.9

"God will come to those that are seeking him and waiting for him... When Christ came in the flesh, he was first revealed to them who were *waiting for the consolation of Israel*, and *looking for redemption* in Jerusalem, Luke i.25, 38. And in that great outpouring of the Spirit that was in the days of the apostles, which was attended with such glorious effects among the Jews and Gentiles, the Spirit came down first on them that were engaged in united earnest prayer for it."

Do we think, that is, have we considered, that our *lack* of the kind of prayer for which Edwards called could be the very thing that is hastening the secularization of our society? We have fretted much over the state of our world, and exerted ourselves in the political realm for change more in line with our values. But fretting and politics do not change hearts. This is the work of God's Spirit. For without the Holy Spirit to restrain evil, convert sinners, and transform the redeemed, men and their societies will drift in the direction of the sin that everywhere abounds. If our lack of prayer is contributing to this, might our fervor in uniting to pray mark the beginning of a turnaround? As Asaph noted in Psalm 80, even as we join to pray, we can know that this great reviving work of God has begun again, because unless He moves you to pray, you will not (Ps. 80.18, 19).

What kinds of objections to this project of meeting together regularly to pray for revival would you expect to meet from those you might invite to participate? How will you answer those objections?

Today, Lord, I will pray for revival. My plan is to seek You for revival and...

Day 21: Evening

If...

"...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 I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7.14

"And if ministers and people should by particular agreement and joint resolution, set themselves, in a solemn and extraordinary manner, from time to time, to pray for the revival of religion in the world, it would naturally tend more to awaken in them a concern about things of this nature, and more of a desire after such a mercy. It would engage them to more attention to such an affair, make them more inquisitive about it, more ready to use endeavours to promote what they, with so many others, spend so much time in praying for."

The complete title of Edwards' book is *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of All God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Progress of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, Pursuant to Scripture Promises and Prophecies*. As we have seen, his work fulfills the promise of the title. If you will seek the Lord for revival, your concern about revival, and your willingness to exert yourself for it, will grow. If you will call others to join you for revival, this mindset of seeking and working for revival, and of longing for and relying more completely on God's Spirit, will spread like a holy virus through all your life and work. If you will make the time to pray for revival, your approach to following Christ and serving Him will be dramatically transformed. If only we could be persuaded to pray for revival! So many good things can happen as we unite, time and time again, to plead with the Lord for a renewed outpouring of His Spirit! So much blessing could come to the Church and the world, if only...

Have you begun yet to pray for revival? Are you encouraging others to do so?

Lord, I don't have any excuse for failing to seek You for revival. As I look ahead to tomorrow, and the times I have set apart to meet with You in prayer, I...

Day 22: Morning

To Know True from False

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 1 John 4.1

“In the apostolic age, there was the greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God that ever was; both as to his extraordinary influences and gifts, and his ordinary operations, in convincing, converting, enlightening, and sanctifying the souls of men. But as the influences of the true Spirit abounded, so counterfeits did also abound...This made it necessary that the church of Christ should be furnished with some certain rules, distinguishing and clear marks, by which she might proceed safely in judging of the true from the false without the danger of being imposed upon.”³

Christians in every generation long to know the blessing of God and the power and presence of His Spirit. And, as in the first generation of the Church, so in every age, there are those who claim to be the latest iteration of God’s favor on His people. They have this going for them, that abounding, and other things in evidence way beyond what most of our churches ever dare to think or hope. But how can we know whether these things are what we should be seeking, and, more to the point, what we should be praying for as individuals and congregations? Unless we test the spirits in any age, we shall not be able to discern the true works of God’s Spirit, and seek these accordingly. Jonathan Edwards understood this need in his day, when revival fires were rekindling, and some were doubting their authenticity. As his *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* served to guide his generation, so it can be useful for us as well, encouraging us to seek and pray for a renewed flourishing of God’s Spirit among us.

What vision of God’s blessing and favor guides the ministries of your church? How confident are you that this is the vision God wants you to pursue?

I long to know more of Your Spirit’s power at work in me, Lord, to...

³ All quotations are from Jonathan Edwards, *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, in Edward Hickman, ed. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1834, 1995), Vol. Two, pp. 257ff.

Day 22: Evening

Types of Marks

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. 1 John 4.2, 3

“The apostle’s discourse on this subject is introduced by an occasional mention of the indwelling of the Spirit, as sure evidence of an interest in Christ...Whence we may infer, that the design of the apostle is not only to give marks whereby to distinguish the true Spirit from the false, in his extraordinary gifts of prophecy and miracles, but also in his ordinary influences on the minds of his people, in order to their union to Christ, and being built up in him; which is also manifest from the marks themselves that are given, which we shall hereafter notice.”

Jonathan Edwards’ message on the marks of the Spirit is based on 1 John 4, and he will follow the apostle’s teaching in guiding us to a clearer understanding of the favor and blessings of God we should be seeking in prayer. In Edwards’ day, some were doubting the signs of revival because of their extraordinary and ecstatic nature. How could what seemed to be the possession of a very few indicate a general outpouring of God’s Spirit? Edwards did not deny these, but he emphasized the more broadly visible signs of revival, those that indicate the Spirit’s working in the thoughts, spiritual lives, and growth of all believers. When you see these, you can be sure the Spirit is at work, bringing the life of Christ to greater expression in more and more of His people. So when you pray for revival, think of how the Spirit of God might work in you, and through your church, in ways that show the reality of Jesus, alive from the dead, to all the people around you.

In what ways would you expect to see the evidence of the Spirit at work for revival in your life? In your church?

Lord, give me a vision for revival, beginning with myself. Let me see how You...

Day 23: Morning

Our Standard

We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. 1 John 4.6

“And here I would observe, that we are to take the *Scriptures* as our guide in such cases. This is the great and standing rule which God has given to his church, in order to guide them in things relating to the great concerns of their souls; and it is an infallible and sufficient rule...Doubtless the Spirit who indited the *Scriptures* knew how to give us good rules, by which to distinguish his operations from all that is falsely pretended to be from him.”

As we begin to cast about for those marks which indicate a true work of God's Spirit, we must look nowhere else than in Scripture. Counting heads, comparing church campuses or facilities, observing the general happiness of the people as they participate in worship, or tallying up the number and variety of programs and offerings – these may be impressive, but they may not be true marks of a work of the Spirit. Only if we are doing God's work *God's* way, and seeking the outcomes He prescribes, can we be sure the Spirit of God is really at work. We need to search the *Scriptures*, asking ourselves, “What makes for a growing disciple and witness for the Lord? What indicates a healthy, growing church? How shall we do the work which the Spirit will bless?” And we must allow the *Scriptures* to guide us as we work and pray for changes in our lives and churches that indicate revival, renewal, and awakening.

How would you explain to a new Christian what it means to grow in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3.18)?

Lord, I understand our church to be growing when...

Day 23: Evening

Surprising Newness

But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too..." Acts 17.6

"The work of the Spirit then, was carried in a manner that, in very many respects, was altogether new: such as never had been seen or heard since the world stood. The work was then carried on with more visible and remarkable power than ever; nor had there been seen before such mighty and wonderful effects of the Spirit of God in sudden changes, and such great engagedness and zeal in great multitudes – such a sudden alteration in towns, cities, and countries..."

As we pray for revival – for that increasing presence of the Lord that sees us daily growing in Him and increasing in the evidence of His Spirit; and as we seek the Lord for renewal in our churches and awakening in our world, we should make sure *our* vision of what we seek is in line with *God's*. When we look to the Word of God we will see, where the Spirit of God was working, remarkable, powerful, and glorious effects such as the world had never seen before. Is this what we expect? Do we expect our lives to be as powerfully transformed as Peter's or Paul's? Are we praying that God will make our churches such places of worship, disciple-making, selfless fellowship, and mission that our entire community will be drawn to them, seeking the Lord (cf. Mic. 4.1-8)? What do we seek? What are we expecting? For unless our prayers are informed by Scripture concerning the effects of a work of the Spirit, our prayers will be empty and meaningless, and our lives will continue as at present, pretty much unchanged.

The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18). What should you expect this to look like as it advances in you, in your church, and throughout your community?

Help me to seek Your Kingdom more consistently, Lord, and in every area of my life. Let Your Spirit work in me to...

Day 24: Morning
For All to See

“For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day.” Luke 17.24

“This is to distinguish Christ’s coming to set up his kingdom, from the coming of false Christs, which he tells us will be in a private manner in the deserts, and in the secret chambers; whereas this event of setting up the kingdom of God, should be open and public, in the sight of the whole world and with clear manifestation, like lightning that cannot be hid, but glares in every one’s eyes, and shines from one side of heaven to the other. And we find, that when Christ’s kingdom came, by that remarkable pouring out of the Spirit in the apostles’ days, it occasioned a great stir every where.”

In Psalm 126, the psalmist looked ahead expectantly to the day when God would revive His people. He had a vision of Israel’s “restoration” fully restored, and of the people, filled with joy and wonder, laughing and praising the Lord, as if their wildest dream had come true. And everyone around them can see this. The revived people of God declare that they are seeing the great things they had prayed for coming to pass all around them. And they aren’t alone. “Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them” (v. 2). To which the people reply, “The LORD has done great things for us, *and* we are glad” (v. 3). The people of ancient Israel could *see*, if only with the eye of their hearts, the promises of God coming to fruition in them, in their congregations, and to the communities and nations around them. They prayed for such a harvest of God’s blessing, and sowed the seeds of revival through prayer, preparation, and diligent obedience toward the outcomes they sought. We won’t know revival until this is the way we pray, prepare, and live as well.

As you seek the Lord for revival, renewal, and awakening, what do you see? What are you expecting? Does anyone else share this vision with you?

Grow my vision for revival, Lord, until I see...

Day 24: Evening

The Power of Example

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. 1 Timothy 4.14, 15

“It is surely no argument that an effect is not from God, that means are used in producing it; for we know that it is God’s manner to make use of means in carrying on his work in the world, and it is no more an argument against the divinity of an effect, that this means is made use of, than if it was by any other means. It is agreeable to Scripture that persons should be influenced by one another’s good example...By which it appears, that example is one of God’s means; and certainly it is not argument that a work is not of God, that his own means are made use of to effect it.”

In Edwards’ day, some doubted that revival had begun because, they said, so few people actually seemed to be indicating a work of the Spirit in their lives. But Edwards rejected that view, arguing that God used such means as the personal example of a few to encourage others to take up the work of revival as well. He provides a long list of Scriptures to this effect – consistent with his insisting that Scripture is our standard – and says that we who are wanting to be revived should follow the example of those who evidently *are* being revived. Revived people, and those who are seeking revival, provide an example of the work of God’s Spirit to encourage, instruct, and lead others more fully into His presence, promise, and power. What example are we holding out to our fellow believers? Is it one of eagerly seeking and expecting revival? Or is it one of a life of following Jesus which is merely “good enough”? You are an example to the people you serve, and your example has powerful effects, but of what?

What example of Christian faith are you providing others? Can you say that others are eagerly and faithfully turning to prayer, and seeking the Lord for revival, because of your example?

Tomorrow, Lord, let me be an example of one who is eagerly seeking revival. Help me start the day tomorrow by...

Day 25: Morning

Telling the Truth

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matthew 10.28

“It is no argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that it seems to be promoted by ministers insisting very much on the terrors of God’s holy law, and that with a great deal of pathos and earnestness. If there be really a hell of such dreadful and never-ending torments, as is generally supposed, of which multitudes are in great danger – and into which the greater part of men in Christian countries do actually from generation to generation fall, for want of a sense of its terribleness, and so for want of taking due care to avoid it – then why is it not proper for those who have the care of souls to take great pains to make men sensible of it? Why should they not be told as much of the truth as can be?”

In Edwards’ day, people were being stirred and moved toward revival by the preaching of God’s Law, and warnings about hell and eternal condemnation. Some objected that, if people were believing because of this, then that was no true revival, but only a response to guilt and fear. But Edwards’ point was clear: Should not people who are guilty of sin be advised of their guilt? Should not those who were bound for eternal perdition be warned and urged to repent? When Edwards and others preached this way, many people responded by confessing their sins and turning to the Lord. In our day, nothing could be further from what we’re likely to hear from any pulpit than the moral duties attached to the Law of God and the certainty of judgment and hell for those who will not believe. We decline to preach such verities, and the results are predictable: People who are not confronted with their sins do not repent of them; people who don’t worry about hell seek only the fleeting joys of the present. And revival stalls.

Why do you think we’re so reluctant these days to preach about the Law of God and the certainty of hell? Do you think our failure to do so is keeping people from coming to the Lord?

With whom can I share the Good News of Jesus today, Lord? Help me to prepare for this opportunity by...

Day 25: Evening

Confessing Christ

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God... 1 John 4.1, 2

“When the operation is such as to raise their esteem of that Jesus who was born of the Virgin, and was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem; and seems more to confirm and establish their minds in the truth of what the gospel declares to us of his being the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; is a sure sign that it is from the Spirit of God... This implies a confessing not only that there was such a person who appeared in Palestine, and did and suffered those things that are recorded of him, but that he was Christ, *i.e.*, the Son of God, anointed to be the Lord and Saviour, as the name Jesus Christ implies.”

Many people confess faith in Jesus in our day. And many of those who confess faith in Him seem to know Him, at least, to a certain extent. They accept the historical facts concerning His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension; and they look forward in faith to the day when He will return in glory, to take His faithful ones home to Himself. This is good – as far as it goes. But the teaching of Scripture, from which Edwards drew his instruction, is that confessing Jesus as Savior simply does not go far enough. We must also confess Him as *Lord*, and, just as we adapt our lives to believing that Jesus is our Savior, so we will adapt our lives to His claim, as Lord, to rule every aspect of our being, all of life, all the time, for the glory of God the Father. We cannot call Jesus “Lord, Lord” and not do the things He commands us to do (Lk. 6.46). No confession is valid that is not accompanied by a life in support of that confession. And no true revival will occur where Jesus is not confessed as Savior and Lord. We must continue to preach Jesus as Savior, and call people to repent and believe the Gospel. But we must also tell them that God has made this Jesus *both* Lord and Christ (Acts 2.36), and call them to respond, not only with their mouths, but with their whole lives.

What’s the difference between confessing Jesus as Savior and confessing Him as Savior and Lord? How does believing Jesus is Lord affect your daily life?

Jesus, I know You are my Lord because...

Day 26: Morning

Change of Kingdoms

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 1 John 4.4

“So we may safely determine, from what the apostle says, that the spirit that is at work amongst a people, after such a manner, as to lessen men’s esteem of the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world, and to take off their hearts from an eager pursuit after these things; and to engage them in a deep concern about a future state and eternal happiness which the gospel reveals – and puts them upon earnestly seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and the spirit that convinces them of the dreadfulness of sin, and the guilt it brings, and the misery to which it exposes; must needs be the Spirit of God.”

People who confess Jesus as Savior and Lord, and are born again into the Kingdom of God, embark on a new course in life. Old things pass away; all things have become new. As they learn Jesus (Eph. 4.17-24), the old priorities of life in the kingdom of darkness give way to the new values and objectives of the Kingdom of God. People take stock of their commitments, priorities, and values; and they begin to seek the Kingdom and righteousness of God in every area of their lives. They get on the growth curve with Jesus, and take up the challenge of being witnesses for Christ. They still have to make a living, of course, and the material benefits of contemporary life are not entirely out of bounds. What changes, rather, is the mindset – a desire now to have more of Christ, and less of the world; more of His Spirit, and less of their selfish will; more of the promises of God, and less of the fleeting prospects of our materialistic age; more time for Jesus and His Kingdom, at the expense of time devoted to things which cannot last. This is what we seek when we pray to the Lord for revival, and when we see such evidences coming to pass, we can be sure that revival is upon us.

In your preaching and teaching, do you hold out such life-change, and urge the people of God to pursue it?

I long to know more Kingdom newness, Lord, especially in...

Day 26: Evening

Love for the Word

We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. 1 John 4.6

“The spirit that operates in such a manner, as to cause in men a greater regard to the Holy Scriptures, and establishes them more in their truth and divinity, is certainly the Spirit of God...A spirit of delusion will not incline persons to seek direction at the mouth of God. To the law and to the testimony, is never the cry of those evil spirits that have no light in them; for it is God’s own direction to discover their delusions.”

In times of revival, people turn to the Word of God with new fervor, conviction, diligence, consistency, and joy. They don’t have to be coaxed or cajoled into reading, meditating in, and studying the Bible. They hunger for God’s Word, and long for the Spirit to open its treasures to them, and by it, to transform them into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. When people set aside the time for being with God in His Word; when they show real delight in studying the things of Christ, in hearing the Word preached and taught, and in growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, then we can know that the Spirit is working in our midst for true revival. We should pray for this, that God would make His people conscious of their need for the pure milk of His Word, and that He would stir in them a hunger and thirst for righteousness, so that they plunge into the Word daily, taking it in and living it out, and eagerly sharing their discoveries with one another. Let this be our vision, and let it be our prayer, and it may please God to revive us in our day.

How would you describe the Bible reading and study practices of the people entrusted to your care? Ask a few.

Lord, tomorrow, whom can I encourage in seeking the Lord for a greater hunger for His Word? In my own life, show me...

Day 27: Morning
Spirit of Truth

We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. 1 John 4.6

“And therefore, if by observing the manner of the operation of a spirit that is at work among a people, we see that it operates as a spirit of truth, leading persons to truth, convincing them of those things that are true, we may safely determine that it is a right and true spirit. For instance, if we observe that the spirit at work makes men more sensible than they used to be, that there is a God, and that he is a great and a sin-hating God; that life is short, and very uncertain; and that there is another world; that they have immortal souls, and must give an account of themselves to God; that they are exceeding sinful by nature and practice; that they are helpless in themselves; and confirms them in other things that are agreeable to sound doctrine; the spirit that works thus, operates as a spirit of truth...”

Paul understood the importance of teaching all the truth of God (Acts 20:26, 27), to the saved and unsaved alike. He did not hold back anything that God has revealed in His Word, even though people may not have liked to hear everything. Revival followed wherever Paul went. In our day, we are more selective where the truth is concerned. We try to give people what we think they need, or what they might like to hear. But what they need is all the truth of God, regardless of whether they like hearing it. Where the Spirit of truth is working in a people, they hunger for *all* the Word of God, and are humbled, grieved, encouraged, instructed, edified, broken, healed, renewed, repentant, or restored accordingly. The Spirit of truth lays the truth in the foundation of any revival movement, builds the structures of revival on that foundation, and fills the temple He builds with the fragrance of the whole counsel of God. As we pray for revival, let us ask the Lord to renew in us a hunger for all His truth, for all of life.

How confident are you that the people in your care are being grounded in all the truth of God? How might you help them become more open and eager in feeding on God's truth?

I need to improve in this area, Lord. I need to become better immersed in all Your truth. So today,...

Day 27: Evening

Renewed in Love

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4.7, 8

“If the spirit that is at work among a people operates as a spirit of love to God and man, it is a sure sign that is the Spirit of God...In these verses love is spoken of as if it were that wherein the very nature of the Holy Spirit consisted; or, as if *divine love* dwelling in us, and the *Spirit of God* dwelling in us, were the same thing...”

The first fruit of the indwelling Spirit of God is love (Gal. 5.22, 23). Where love for God and neighbor is in short supply, we can be sure that the Spirit of God has not yet revived His listless people. The love of God *sends grace into the world of the lost* (Jn. 3.16). Love for God *moves us to bear witness to Jesus* (1 Cor. 9.16). Love for God *draws us to seek and wait on Him in prayer* (Ps. 27) and to *devote our entire lives to serving Him* (Deut. 6.4, 5). When we love our neighbors, we will *regard their concerns as more important than our own*, and *freely give whatever we can* to help meet their needs (Rom. 12.3; Acts 4.32). When the Body of Christ is a community maturing in the love of Jesus, unity prevails, false teaching and worldly ways are opposed, and every member of the community looks to the wellbeing of those entrusted to his care (Eph. 4.11-16). As we pray for revival, let us nurture a vision of love abounding in and through us, flowing with living water to refresh the world in grace and truth, and let us pray earnestly that it may please God to send His Spirit for such renewal in love.

Where do you see evidence of the Spirit of God working to engender such love in your church? How can you encourage growing in love like this?

More love, Lord, I need to show more love. As I reflect on the day gone by, I see I could have loved more in...

Day 28: Morning

More Diligent Improvement

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 1 John 4.17

“The Spirit that is at work, takes off persons’ minds from the vanities of the world, and engages them in deep concern about eternal happiness, and puts them upon earnestly seeking their salvation, and convinces them of the dreadfulness of sin, and of their own guilty and miserable state as they are by nature. It awakens men’s consciences, and makes them sensible of the dreadfulness of God’s anger, and causes in them a great desire and earnest care and endeavour to obtain his favour. It puts them upon a more diligent improvement of the means of grace which God has appointed; accompanied with a greater regard to the word of God, a desire of hearing and reading it, and of being more conversant with it than they used to be.”

For many Christians today, their experience of Christ is good enough. They’re happy and blessed; they like their church and Christian friends; and they’re surrounded by the comforts of the world to a satisfactory extent. Because they don’t spend much time in prayer, and only about the same in the Scriptures, they don’t have a sense of the greatness of Christ – His infinite beauty, unbounding goodness, and unfathomable truth – and they are not convinced that they need much in the way of Christian improvement. They know that the Scriptures, when they address the life of faith, use such terms as “press on” and “grow” and “increasing” and “exceedingly abundantly more.” But such ideas are not sufficiently motivating to the ends they prescribe, since we feel certain that, when the judgment comes, we’ll just point to Jesus, punch our ticket, and robe up. They don’t live *toward* the judgment to come, toward the day of seeing Jesus face to face, toward having to give an account of their lives as to the degree of gratitude for Christ’s suffering they have shown. They only live toward the promise of blessing then and there, and are too easily satisfied with spiritual matters in the here and now. “In this world” they are not at all like Jesus was when He walked among us. When the Spirit of God moves among a people for revival, all that changes. Growing in Jesus, becoming more like Him, pressing on toward the Kingdom, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God – these are the concerns that abound when the Spirit is stirring within us for revival.

How is it apparent that your church is “in this world” as Jesus would be, were He there with you? Lord, help me to improve in You by...

Day 28: Evening

No Hindrance

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 1 John 5.4

“Let us all be hence warned, *by no means to oppose, or do any thing in the least to clog or hinder, the work; but, on the contrary, do our utmost to promote it.* Now Christ is come down from heaven in a remarkable and wonderful work of his Spirit, it becomes all his professed disciples to acknowledge him, and give him honour.”

Edwards believed that discouraging the work of God’s Spirit was a serious matter. As the Spirit begins to move and stir and gesture in the direction of revival, it is the duty of every true believer to take up the call, seize the banner, and contribute what he can to that great work. The world cannot stop us, for we have overcome it. But we can stop ourselves, by doubting that revival can occur in our generation, by refusing to join some action to seek or encourage revival, or by discouraging those who long for revival, and have dedicated themselves to seeking it in prayer. Edwards concludes his argument for seeking the work of the Spirit by urging readers to “give diligent heed to themselves to avoid all errors and misconduct, and whatever may darken and obscure the work; and to give no occasion to those who stand ready to reproach it.” The evidence that revival has begun can be seen in the fact that some – if *only* some – have taken up the challenge of seeking revival earnestly in prayer (Ps. 80.18). The end we seek – a great work of the Holy Spirit in our day – is certainly a cause worthy of every believer’s passion, devotion, and time.

Will you take up the challenge of seeking the Lord for revival? How can you encourage and enlist others for this calling?

Tomorrow, Lord, lead me to some friends whom I can challenge to join me in praying for revival, and that You will...

Psalm 72 The King and His Kingdom⁴

This is a psalm *for* Solomon and *by* David (cf. v. 20). In being a psalm for Solomon, it's also a psalm for the greater King Who would descend from David, even our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Sam. 7). David prays to know a world ruled by the justice and righteousness of the Lord (vv. 1, 2), where all creation and its peoples are flourishing in full restoration glory (vv. 3, 4, 7, 15, 16). In the Messiah's Kingdom the poor are defended, the needy are cared for, and oppressors are suppressed (vv. 4, 12-14). Distant nations stream up to this Kingdom, bringing all their best gifts into the service of the Lord (vv. 8-11). The praise and glory of God fill the whole world (vv. 17-19), as waters of grace – living waters of God's Spirit (Jn. 7.37-39) – flow from Him, through His Church to revive, renew, awaken, and restore the earth and its peoples in the peace and bounty of God (vv. 5-7).

Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved!
Psalm 80.19

A Psalm of Solomon.

¹Give the king Your judgments, O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's Son.

Recall Isaiah 9.6, 7 and pray for increase of the righteousness of Christ and His Kingdom.

²He will judge Your people with righteousness,
And Your poor with justice.

³The mountains will bring peace to the people,
And the little hills, by righteousness.

⁴He will bring justice to the poor of the people;
He will save the children of the needy,
And will break in pieces the oppressor.

Pray that God will restore justice to the world, that love and care for the last, the lost, and the least among us might flourish once again.

⁵They shall fear You
As long as the sun and moon endure,

⁴ We're pleased to offer this sample psalm to use in praying for revival. For additional psalms to pray, and for guidance in beginning a revival prayer group of your own, order a copy of our book, *Restore Us!*, from our online store, at www.ailbe.org.

Throughout all generations.

Let God's people and all people fear the Lord!

⁶He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing,
Like showers *that* water the earth.

⁷In His days the righteous shall flourish,
And abundance of peace,
Until the moon is no more.

Bring the peace of the Lord to men's hearts, and to the nations of the world.

⁸He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.

Pray that Christ's Kingdom will come and advance, on earth as it is in heaven.

⁹Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him,
And His enemies will lick the dust.

¹⁰The kings of Tarshish and of the isles
Will bring presents;
The kings of Sheba and Seba
Will offer gifts.

¹¹Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him;
All nations shall serve Him.

Pray that the Gospel will go to the nations and the nations will come to Jesus!

¹²For He will deliver the needy when he cries,
The poor also, and *him* who has no helper.

¹³He will spare the poor and needy,
And will save the souls of the needy.

¹⁴He will redeem their life from oppression and violence;
And precious shall be their blood in His sight.

Pray for the love of Christ and the salvation of the Lord to reach to the poor and needy of the world.

¹⁵And He shall live;
And the gold of Sheba will be given to Him;
Prayer also will be made for Him continually,
And daily He shall be praised.

¹⁶There will be an abundance of grain in the earth,

On the top of the mountains;
Its fruit shall wave like Lebanon;
And *those* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.
¹⁷His name shall endure forever;
His name shall continue as long as the sun.
And *men* shall be blessed in Him;
All nations shall call Him blessed.

Let the blessings of the Lord abound, and let the peoples of the earth flourish and bear fruit unto the Lord.

¹⁸Blessed *be* the Lord God, the God of Israel,
Who only does wondrous things!
¹⁹And blessed *be* His glorious name forever!
And let the whole earth be filled with His glory.
Amen and Amen.
²⁰The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

Praise the Lord, and give Him abundant thanks as you wait on Him for revival, renewal, and awakening.

Other prayer requests:

Psalm 72

Tune: Martyrdom – “Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed”

vv. 1, 2

O give the King Your judgment, Lord, and righteousness Your Son;
And let Him judge by Your good Word the need of every one.

vv. 3, 4

Let now the mountains ring with peace, the hills in righteousness;
Let justice rise, oppression cease, and all the needy bless.

vv. 5, 6

Let nations fear You while the sun and moon endure on high;
Refresh, renew us, every one, like sweet rain falling from the sky.

vv. 7, 8

Let righteousness abundant be where Jesus' reign endures;
Let peace increase from sea to sea 'til moonlight shall be no more.

vv. 9-11

O let the Righteous rule the earth, and let His foes bow low;
Let nations praise His matchless worth, and all His bidding do.

vv. 12-14

The Lord the needy rescues when he cries to Him for grace;
All they who suffer violence find mercy before His face.

v. 15

Let Christ be praised and all the gold of Sheba be His right;
Let blessings to His Name be told, and prayers made both day and night.

vv. 16, 17

And let the earth abound with grain, let fields His fame proclaim;
And may our King forever reign and nations bless His great Name.

vv. 18-20

Now bless the God of Israel Who wondrous works performs.
And bless His Name, His glory tell both now and forever more!

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the contribute button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.