**Revival**

For a long time the American Evangelical Church has been in dire need of revival. Our society has, year by year, moved farther and farther away from the scriptures, and the church has been, in part, swept along. If there is to be revival in the church and thus an impact for God on our society, then we must return to the Bible. With that return in mind I humbly offer these questions and thoughts for your prayerful consideration.

~ Can we do God’s work in man’s strength?

~ Why do we use manipulation, guilt, and peer pressure to goad and push God’s people into trying to

do His work, and yet so often fail to mention their absolute need of God’s strength and guidance in

that doing?

~ Does Christ actually live in us?

~ Is He there only as an observer?

~ Can Christ live His life through us?

~ Does He desire to do so?

~ Do we desire for Him to do so?

~ Is it true that all our efforts apart from His very life flowing through us will be a complete waste of time?

~ What is our specific responsibility in being a vessel through which the life of Christ can flow out to a lost

world? Let me suggest two ideas:

1. We acknowledge that He can and that He desires to live through us today, and that apart from that happening all our efforts are in vain.
2. We get on our knees before Him and ask Him to teach us the practical reality of His life being lived through us.

~ Do we understand that what the lost world needs to see is love, not human affection, human  sentimentality,

or our vain attempts to imitate the divine; but the very love of God Himself?

~ Will our grit and determination, our increased level of commitment, our programs and seminars, our intellect

and group efforts; ever produce God’s love?

~ Have we ever come to a really settled conclusion as to whether Christ is alive or dead? (If a group of

Christians were to conclude that Christ is dead, then it wouldn’t it be reasonable for them to seek to honor

Him by trying their best to emulate His life, tragic though it was; to sincerely worship who He was; and to give

their highest efforts to promote the gospel movement He started before His untimely demise?) [Come think of

it, haven’t I just described the American Evangelical Church’s mission statement?] (We consistently proclaim

that Christ is alive, yet if we also consistently turn to man’s wisdom and strength, instead of God’s, then

aren’t we in practice saying to the world and to each other that Christ is, in fact, a dead savior?)

~ We encourage our young people to wear the WWJD bracelet, which is actually asking, “What would Jesus

do if He were here?” The very question presupposes two things: (1) If I know what Jesus would do in a given

situation then I can reproduce that behavior. (2) Jesus is not here. Both suppositions are in serious error. (By

the way, don’t trash the bracelets, just teach their meaning to be, “What will Jesus do?”)

~ In our haste to get people saved we have largely failed to consider what being saved means. (Ask almost

any church member this question: “Are we saved by the life of Christ or the death of Christ? The vast

majority will answer, “The death of Christ.” Yet Rom. 5:10b says, “We were reconciled to God by the death of

his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” We have in many cases practically

removed all the “much more” from Christianity. To many Christians, the living Christ has very little relevance

to their day to day lives, nor to what the church is doing. We need to realize that the major thrust of the

gospel is not a way to get man out of hell into heaven, but rather as the divine plan of getting God out of

heaven into man. The gospel is not just a message about a change in our eventual destination, but the way

we can have a completely new manner of life down here on earth on the way to heaven. Heaven is icing on

the cake. We have, however, today created a gospel message which is all icing. We beg people to go to

heaven but leave them hopelessly inadequate for life here on earth.

~ We have a weak understanding of the gospel and we are, at best, inconsistently living it out. It just seems to

me that participation in the gospel is a prerequisite to promoting it.

~ Having said all the above, I have been much encouraged as of late that a growing number of churches and

Christians are getting the message. Lord willing we might yet see revival in our lifetime.

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