

## The Awakening

### Psalms 63:1-8

1. Pastor Steve spoke of the need for revival. What was his description of revival, and what does that say about who is involved?

People who were once wide awake are asleep (dreaming they are awake), when suddenly they wake up for real. This would suggest that revival is aimed at people who are already Christians rather than at evangelizing those who are not believers.

2. While they are not as common in recent years, revival meetings were an annual rite for some churches in the past. What were some of the characteristics of these services that distinguished them from most other church services?

Revival meetings usually involve an outside speaker, often someone for whom this is a full time role. The meetings are advertised and promoted both to the current congregation and to the community. The services are marked by music that tends to emphasize introspection (“Just As I Am”, “Trust & Obey”). The goal is for spiritual renewal of the faithful, which is often encouraged via testimonials from members of the audience which are solicited at various times throughout the series of services.

3. If revival is truly going to take place, is it all God or can we do anything to cause it?

God certainly must be involved, which is why prayer is always found to be a significant part of any true revival. However, God works through us as well as within us. Thus, a congregation sensing that they as a group need spiritual revival have every reason to believe that their petitions to God in conjunction with planning sermons, special services, small group sessions, or other activities are appropriate things to do (and that God often honors those efforts, if sincere).

4. How would you respond to the challenge Pastor Steve presented, which said “If we do not have revival, it’s because we want something else.”?

Spiritual revival only comes if we intently focus on our relationship with God. One can’t do that if they have other priorities vying for their attention. Thus, if financial well-being is what is driving you, then God will be secondary and spiritual renewal (revival) will be unlikely.

5. Pastor Steve admitted that he has avoided calling for or even using the term “revival” for 17 years. What is it about revivals that would cause some people to question the concept?

The idea that we can schedule a special speaker, advertise a series of meetings, arrange for special music, and then cause a revival to occur reeks of man trying to manipulate God. Thus, revival meetings provide for an opportunity for revival to take place, but the reality may be only vaguely related to the dream. Simply holding meetings and coercing people into emotional testimonials is nothing more than manipulation of those in attendance. If the Holy Spirit is not already moving within a group, preparing them for what is about to happen, the special events will just be more sermons and songs to fill the

calendar and cause the church to feel like they are doing something God would like. Living a holy life is much more about personal commitment and development of a personal relationship with God than about attending services eight evenings in a row.

6. How does the analogy of a tide coming in and going out connect to the concept of spiritual revival?

High tide would be a time of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Low tide would be a time when people are edgy, worried, and afraid. They feel like God has forgotten them. For many believers, it seems like this “tide” comes and goes of its own free will. All of a sudden they feel as if they are alone and God has turned His back on them. Of course, the more likely explanation is that they have allowed God to slowly slip down their priority list.

7. Our scripture passage for the week is Psalms 63:1-8. This cry from King David to God comes at a time when David is fleeing his son Absalom, who is trying to take over the throne. What are the predominant tone and message in these verses?

King David clearly yearns for an even closer relationship with God. He is lonely, but he trusts God with his life and the future of his reign. However, in the midst of all his troubles, David seems at peace with whatever happens because he knows that God is ultimately in control. Note however that David is having sleepless nights (he is aware of the various security shifts (watches) at night). It is this feeling of anxiety that may be motivating David to ask for even more faith.

8. Pastor Steve takes the passage from Psalms and suggests there are two requests to God that might come out of it: “My soul thirsts for you, oh, God.” Or “My soul is satisfied with you, oh, God.” He then suggests that whichever one you feel, you should then ask for the other. Why?

For those who feel a strong yearning to know God better, we should constantly pray that our request will be honored. When it is we will feel satisfied. However, if we are feeling satisfied, it would be good for us to yearn for an even closer relationship with God.

9. Are the members of your church or small group seeking spiritual revival in the midst of all the distractions we face each day? What will it look like if it occurs?

Many of us fall into a rut in which we just try to get through the days and weeks, hoping that something will come along to make life more fulfilling than it is. Whether we recognize it or not, our relationship with God has grown stale. That can happen with an entire church as well as with individual Christians. We need to cry out as King David did, expressing to God our yearning for a closer walk with Him. Having actively reached out to God, we will begin to feel His presence in our lives more keenly and the peace that presence brings will assure us that our spiritual revival is underway.