

Palmetto Baptist Church: February, 9, 2020

The Gospel of God: Acts 19:8-10

- **He can open doors for the Gospel.**
- **He can open hearts with the Gospel.**
- **He can open entire regions to the Gospel.**
- **He can open entire generations through the Gospel.**

5 Great American Revivals¹ (by Zach Kincaid)

What is a revival? Growing up in the southern United States, I can remember revival meetings that lasted at least a week. Every night you'd attend church and hear a traveling minister preach powerfully the Word of God and invite attendees to receive the good news of Jesus for the first time, or to come forward and recommit your life to the ways of faith. It's this reawakening (and the residual effects on society) that creates what historians interpret onto history as a period of revival. What sparks great American revivals? The short answer is the Holy Spirit. The more complicated answer includes cultural shifts, local and global events, and the willingness of individuals to embrace faithful leadership. Here are five great American revivals, citing the who, what, when, where and how.

First Great Awakening

When: 1730-40s

Where: England and then the colonies, most notably Massachusetts

What: Churches are lax in their requirements for church participation and membership. It is called the Half-Way Covenant and it allowed children of non-believing parents to still be baptized in "good faith" that they'd be reared with the morals of the church. Remember that church membership is voluntary which creates a challenge for what is Truth and the function of infant baptism as an ushering into wider community citizenship.

Who: Jonathan Edwards is well-known for his "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God" and so many other well-crafted, expository sermons that emphasize the rational appeal for faith (he was greatly influenced by John Locke). John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and George Whitfield are several other instrumental leaders. John Wesley begins the Methodist movement. His brother, Charles give it its music, writing more than 6,000 hymns. Whitfield begins an orphanage in Savannah (it's still there) and preaches to nearly a million people throughout the colonies.

How: Through the local teaching of Edwards and the traveling ministry of Whitfield, starting in Georgia and working up to Massachusetts, the colonial people are convicted of their sin and renewed in their need for Jesus.

Second Great Awakening

When: 1820s-1850s

Where: Throughout America and England

What: The moral fabric of society is tattered, torn by sin and misplaced affections. The desire to usher in the Second Coming of Jesus by saving society provides the strong impetus to make certain, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven."

Who: Charles Finney offers a fiery message of repentance. In the big tents, constructed for meetings lasting weeks and weeks, he institutes the "Crying Bench", where he invites those renewing or professing faith to proceed down front and make a public commitment to Jesus. The Awakening theology is clear in Finney: Jesus calls everyone and anyone can heed the call. Finney helps to establish Oberlin College as well.

¹ <https://www.sharefaith.com/blog/2016/06/5-great-american-revivals/>

How: Whereas the First Great Awakening works itself through the church, The Second will appeal to anyone and everyone. It brings about the temperance movement, the antislavery movement (as well as the Underground Railroad), women's rights, the Salvation Army, the Adventist movement, the YMCA, and sees mighty growth in the Baptist and Methodist denominations.

Third Great Awakening

When: 1875-85

Where: Chicago

What: The Civil War ends in 1865, and, with the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 the vulnerability of humanity is clear. This backdrop provides the opportunity for many to see their need for Christ.

Who: D.L. Moody begins a Bible study for street children in the 1850s. It grows to a substantial number whereby even President-elect Abraham Lincoln attends to see it for himself. Moody goes on to establish Moody Church and Bible Institute and continues to preach all around the country to more than 100,000 million people. Ira Sankey, a notable hymn writer, works closely with Moody.

How: Moody is uneducated and breaks out of the normal conventions of the church. The appeal is simple: Jesus wants you the way you are, and, come to him now because he's coming back soon.

Azusa Street Revival

When: 1906-1915

Where: Los Angeles, in the church at 312 Azusa Street

What: What happens on Azusa Street sparks what we know today as the Pentecostal movement. It is built on the Holiness movement which focuses on sanctification (being noticeably separated from the habits of the world) and is a repercussion of the Second Great Awakening. On April 9, 1906, the Spirit of God falls down and several people begin speaking in tongues. They call it the "second blessing," or sometimes the "third work of grace", the first being salvation, and the second, sanctification.

Who: William J. Seymour is front and center, from the discipleship of Charles Fox Parim of Topeka, Kansas, and the influence of the Evening Light Saints or Church of God in Anderson, Indiana. Seymour sometimes prays for seven hours a day for months on end with an expectation that God would act in his timing.

How: The revival helps integrate the church into a more harmonious, unified community, bringing together rich and poor, black and white, male and female. Humanism is beginning to take root with all its "superman" thoughts of the future glories of society. The Azusa revival and subsequent Pentecostal movement brought back into focus the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the unique place of the church as God's institution in the world to do his bidding.

Twentieth Century Revival

When: 1910-1970s

Where: American cities, most notably New York and Los Angeles

What: The Industrial Age is in full force and Darwinism is reshaping our sense of the value of history and future accomplishment. Much like the revivals before it, this period is noted for its large gatherings and the accusation of sin and proximity of people to the gates of Hell as a result of their wayward lives.

Who: Billy Sunday, a professional baseball player turned preacher, is direct and powerful with the Gospel message beginning in 1907. He carries the message to 1.5 million people around the country in month-long meetings. He preaches up until his death in 1935. Billy Graham enters the scene with vigor in 1949 with his Los Angeles

crusades that catch the attention of the press. He goes on to hold more than 400 crusades in 185 countries, attracting arena-size crowds and broadcasting many crusades on television.

How: Sunday and Graham are two of many who see the fraying of culture, both before the Wars and certainly after World War II. They represent the preaching arm of revival. Francis Buchman who begins the Oxford Group and Alcoholics Anonymous and Robert Pierce who founds World Vision and Samaritan's Purse represent the social arm of revival. Graham's work is careful to work with local churches, the outgrowth of the movement is not isolated but designed to be a stimulus for strong church participation and discipleship.

There's a wealth of information out there about each of these *5 Great American Revivals*, more than could be addressed in this blog post. God's work is not isolated but sometimes we see it concentrated around specific places and people, like in the cases above. Could God be working toward a revival now? May our hearts and minds be open. May our posture be prayer. May our hope be in the living God who will seek and save those who are lost. May we be his instruments.

- **He can open doors for the Gospel.**
- **He can open hearts with the Gospel.**
- **He can open entire regions to the Gospel.**
- **He can open entire generations through the Gospel.**

I. He can open doors for the Gospel. (8a)

- Three months in the synagogue speaking boldly. (8)
- Two years in the Hall of Tyrannus (9-10)
- God can provide unique opportunities at specific points in your life to communicate the truth to others. (Pray for those doors to be open. {Col. 4:2-4}; Be prepared to walk through those doors when they are opened. {Col. 4:5-6})

II. He can open hearts with the Gospel. (8b)

- God uses willing messengers (8a)
 - to proclaim a simple message (8b)

Reasoning and persuading

About the Kingdom of God (talk about the theology of the Kingdom of God: Rev. 1:9; Col. 1:13; Phil. 3:20; Matt. 6:33; Rev. 20) [spiritual; physical; visible - Matt. 13 and Eph. 3-2]

- to practice biblical separation (9)

Some chose to reject the truth (9a) ["became stubborn and continued in unbelief: Rom. 9:18; Heb. 3:8 {choice}, 13 {deceived}, 15 {leads to a movement (Num. 14:22-23) based on unbelief in God's goodness and intent for His chosen people} 4:7 {resulting in disobedience}; Psalm 95:7-11; Exodus 17; Num. 20]

Some chose to accept the truth (9b)... Paul took his disciples with him to the Hall of Tyrannus)

- and model biblical discipleship. (10)

III. He can open entire regions to the Gospel. (10)

- All the residents of Asia heard...

- Jews
- Greeks

- I. *He can open doors for the Gospel.*
- II. *He can open hearts with the Gospel.*
- III. *He can open entire regions to the Gospel.*

IV. He can open entire generations through the gospel.

- The 5 Great Awakenings
- The 5 generations (Boomers, Busters, Gen X, Y, and Z)

How the last 5 generations have changed us:²

Folks talk a lot today about Millennials. For that matter, we've talked about younger generations ever since the Baby Boomers introduced the "generation gap" in the 1960s. The unique realities each generation faces as they come of age (shared tragedies, heroes, milestones, music, television shows and economy) shape us into the people we are as we enter adulthood. These realities, in fact, offer a paradigm (or lens) with which we view our world.

Today—I'd like to share some helpful observations on the five generations that are influencing our world. These observations may help you better understand a work colleague or a student with whom you interface each day. As you read the ideas below, reflect on how you might better demonstrate empathy for each generation and how you can better communicate with them. While there are exceptions in every population, I am sharing the bump part of the bell curve in the following comments.

I hope this big picture perspective will spark conversation.

Perspective Is Everything

As students graduate into adulthood, each generation carries with it a primary lens which informs how they vote, what they buy, and why they believe and act the way they do. Consider the perspective of each new population:

The Builder Generation (1929-1945) These folks endured the Great Depression and World War II. In general, they're frugal and know how to save money and resources. They tend to value holding on to what is right and good.

The Baby Boomers (1946-1964) These people represent the population "boom" after the war. As the largest generation to date, they felt large and in charge and expected life to be better for them than it was for their parents.

Generation X (1965-1982) This generation started with the birth control pill and Roe vs. Wade. This smaller population grew up in a broken, jaded world of Vietnam and Watergate. As realists, they know life can be hard and want to keep it real.

² <https://growingleaders.com/blog/last-five-generations-changed-us/>

Millennials (1983-2000) Currently, the largest U.S. generation, they grew up in a time of helicopter parents, participation trophies, college degrees and options. They often see life as a cafeteria from which they pick and choose what they want.

Generation Z (2001-2018) This young population is still forming, but they have grown up in a time of terrorism, recession, under-employment and racial unrest. They tend to be hackers, navigating a tougher world full of social media and angst.

Personal Values as They Came of Age

The Builders – Think long term. We must plan ahead and conserve what we have.

Boomers – Anti-establishment. Don't trust institutions; make your own way.

Generation X – Unplug and get real. Life is not full of sunshine and rainbows.

Millennials – Change the world, starting with the environment. We can do it.

Generation Z – We are aware, savvy and evolving. We value human equality.

Personal Message as They Came of Age

Builders – I'm Humble.

Boomers – I'm in charge.

Generation X – I'm scrappy.

Millennials – I'm awesome.

Generation Z – I'm fluid.

Personal Style as They Came of Age

Builders – Create the system.

Boomers – Take over the system.

Generation X – Avoid the system.

Millennials – Work within the system.

Generation Z – Work around the system.

Application:

- **Pray for open doors.**
 - Ask God to allow us to participate in a 6th Great Awakening!
 - Practice Colossians 4:2-5
- **Prepare for open doors.**
 - Learn how to communicate the Gospel in a simple fashion
 - Get to know the God of the Gospel by studying the doctrines of the Trinity, The Way, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- Study culture and develop a list of changes that need to be made to effectively reach our current culture.
- **Walk through open doors.**
 - Have the courage to take a step of faith and talk to your family member, friend or co-worker.
 - Identify a ministry need and take time to write up a ministry plan.