

# IN THE CLOSET

## Prayer Guide



September 2021

### *Praying For Revival and Spiritual Awakening*

Look around the world today. Look around America. You cannot help but see that things are well beyond control. There is disease. There are wildfires. There is terrible violence. There is hopelessness. There is an obvious turning away from God. Even the existence of truth is seriously doubted.

More and more Americans speak openly of their doubt that Jesus is the way, insisting that people should be free to choose from any number of ways for approaching God. The sanctity of life and marriage are under constant attack. More churches are closing than are being started.

Perhaps the passage below describes our present spiritual state and God's power to deliver us from our, humanly speaking, hopeless condition.

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. 2 And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. 3 And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." 4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath[b] to enter you, and you shall live. 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will

in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord."

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

11 Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' 12 Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. 14 And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord.

### *What God Has Done Before . . .*

(These accounts are based on the article, "A Brief History of Spiritual Revival and Awakening in America," on the Man in the Mirror Website.)

Here we see God giving assurance to the exiles in Babylon, using this dramatic example to promise He will bring His people back to their land and His

blessings. Though spiritually, they seem like dead men's bones, God can and will revive them and bless them with His Presence among them once again.

In our nation's history, God has brought revival and spiritual awakening time after time. What is known as The Great Awakening took place throughout the years, 1734-43. George Whitfield began his impassioned preaching in Philadelphia. It has been estimated that 80% of American people during those years heard his preaching. Obviously, there was a great movement toward God.

Then between 1800 and 1840 came the Second Great Awakening. During these years revival and spiritual awakening sprang up in many parts of the country. In New York, it is reported that over 500,000 came to Christ in one year. Charles Finney began a ministry that is said to have seen over 500,000 converted to Christ. Americans who associated with evangelical churches grew from 350,000 to 3,000,000.

In 1857 and 1858 Jeremiah Lanphier began a lunchtime prayer meeting, which began with six in attendance before growing into a New York City-wide movement that spread throughout the U.S. and the world, with over 1,000,000 people joining churches, and another 1,000,000 coming to Christ though they had already been considered church members. This became known as the Great Prayer Meeting Revival.

The tragedy of the Civil War also brought revival. During the war, over 300,000 soldiers were converted, including members of both armies.

Between 1875 and 1885 Dwight L. Moody became a leading figure in revivals based in the country's biggest cities. Hundreds of thousands came to Christ. These revivals took place even though more and more Americans were adopting a non-Biblical worldview.

During the first half of the twentieth century, there seemed to be no widespread interest in spiritual awakening and revival, even though great events such as the Great Depression and the World Wars seemed to provide mighty reasons for seeking God. However, there were localized revivals in various places across the country. Billy Sunday featured heavily in such movements and is estimated to have seen 1,000,000 conversions to Christ.

In 1906, an African American led home-based prayer meetings which became central in the Azusa Street revival, resulting in the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements.

After World War II there were great revivals, as Bill Bright and the Campus Crusade for Christ and Billy Graham and his evangelistic association's work begin movements that brought many millions to Christ over the years.

During the 1960s and 70's the Jesus Movement, continued Charismatic Renewal and the 1970 Asbury College Revival in Kentucky, brought many

to Christian faith. Then in the 1990's revivals broke out among charismatic congregations. Henry Blackaby preached and taught among Southern Baptists, seeing many making deep Christian commitments across the country. The Promise Keepers brought many men and boys to Christ during these same years.

Here are some characteristics shared by many of these periods of God's renewal and awakening. Often these movements began in times of spiritual and moral decline. Believers turned to prayer and God answered with revival. People also turned back to God's Word. The Holy Spirit added a depth of commitment among such believers. Conviction of sin broke believers' hearts. God was greatly glorified among these believers. New efforts in ministry and renewal developed. Various manifestations took place, including miracles. It seems that revival movements have been cyclical, much like the response of God's people as recorded in the Old Testament.

### *What God Will Do . . .*

It's been quite a long time since widespread revival has taken place in the U.S.

It's time for us to pray daily for God to raise up prayer, hearts broken over personal and collective sinfulness, repentance and openness to God's correcting and empowering and instructing word, proclamation of the Good News, loving acts of service and glorification and testimony to all that God has done, is doing and will do. Surely we can see the dry bones in the valley. Surely we know that God can raise up those dry bones. Surely we can simply obey, surrender ourselves to His conviction, His cleansing and His correction. May He begin in me. May He continue in our own church and community. May He rescue our country and bring worldwide revival and spiritual awakening.