Lion Rising

A Call to Embrace a Fresh Awakening

John Caldwell

1. A Wind is Blowing

"There's A Wind A Blowing All Across the Land A Fragrant Breeze of Heaven Blowing Once Again."

"Aslan is on the move- perhaps has already landed." C.S. Lewis

Something is stirring in the nation. Faith is rising. God is moving. The church is awakening. The spiritual atmosphere in the land is shifting. There is a fresh breeze blowing. I'm not claiming revival is here – it obviously isn't. But the winds of change are blowing. In the last year or so, I've seen more salvations, more divine appointments, more healings, more deliverances, and more people encountering the presence of God than I've seen for some time – possibly more than I have ever seen. And I'm hearing others say the same. I believe we are seeing the first fruits of the harvest. This is why I'm writing this book, to encourage the church – To encourage you! – to get ready because the harvest is coming, and God is looking for labourers who will work together to reap the harvest and disciple those who are swept into the Kingdom of God. The most exciting days of the church are yet to be, and God is looking for YOU to be a part of His Kingdom purposes. A fresh wind is blowing. The Lion is rising.

The wind of the Spirit

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." John 3:8

Unless God moves sovereignly by His Spirit, nothing happens. Before an individual can repent and turn to Christ, the wind of the Spirit must blow upon them. Before a jaded and tired church can be revived, the wind of the Spirit must blow fresh life into her. Before we can see revival at a national level, the Wind of the Spirit must blow. God is sovereign, and He

must take the initiative. Yet, as the old adage says, "we cannot control the wind, but we can lift and adjust our sails." Yes, God is sovereign, but we too have a responsibility. In one sense, God has a divinely appointed season for each of His sovereign purposes, but he also has conditions. The sovereignty of God should never become an excuse for passivity. God has done, and is doing His part, the church is called to do her part.

In one sense, the wind of the Spirit has been blowing since the Day of Pentecost: "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting." Acts 2:1-2 The word for wind in the original Greek is Pneuma. The word in Hebrew is Ruach. This wind is the breath of God. It is the Spirit of the living God. When God created Adam, He breathed into him the very Spirit of God. When The Spirit fell on Pentecost, God was breathing into his new creation – the church – and giving her life.

Led by the Wind

The Apostle Paul writes: "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God." Rom 8:14. We could equally say, all who are directed by the wind of God are children of God. The defining characteristic of true believers should be that they are sensitive and obedient to the Spirit's promptings and leadings. However, instead of being led by the wind of God, the church has created inflexible structures as a windbreaker to keep the wind away. Church leadership, in many places, has become about control and management of services, resources, people and projects. Personalities, positions, academic qualifications, and management have taken the place of the Spirit of the living God. During seasons of revival, we see a transition take place, the church surrenders control, and yields to the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is wrong to think that revival is abnormal; rather, it is the status quo that is abnormal. The problem is not with revival, the problem is the spiritual temperature that we've come to accept as the norm. If revival means bringing back to life that which was dead, then the default position of the church is that we have normalised spiritual death. If we are saying revival is just a special season of

visitation, then we are making a state of lifelessness the norm. This shouldn't be.

Embrace the wilderness

Ezekiel 37 is a picture of the process of revival. Whilst it was primarily written in relation to God's purpose for His exiled people to be restored to their land, it has a broader application for the people of God in all places at all times. Wherever God's people find themselves in need of revival and restoration, Ezekiel shows us what needs to take place.

The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ²He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. ³He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

⁴Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! ⁵This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath^[a] enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'"

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

⁹Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

¹¹ Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' ¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ Then you, my people, will know that I am

the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. ¹⁴I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.'" Ezek 37

Notice first and foremost that it's in a barren, dry valley that the Lord raises up a prophetic ministry.

The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. Ezek. 37:1-2

Notice there is a period where the prophet is led to spend time in a wilderness type environment. He is going "back and forth" but nothing is happening. There are times in our lives where it seems as if we are just going back and forth in our personal wildernesses, and nothing is changing. It is just the same old, same old. Church can be like that too. Dead, dry and respective. Sunday church attendance can be weekly dose of take a *seat*, *sleep*, *repeat*.

However, wilderness periods need not be pointless. All throughout scripture, God uses seasons in the wilderness and the desert for the preparation of His people for the fulfilment of His purposes. God is calling us not to run away from wilderness periods, but rather to redeem our wilderness seasons. The wilderness creates the opportunity to discover afresh the presence, power and purpose of God - if we yield to God and seek him in the midst of the wilderness. Some believers fail their wilderness probation period. They drift from God, and they turn to wrong relationships, or they go back to drugs because they did not persevere through the tough wilderness season. However, for those who press through and remain faithful, an inner transformation takes place. Solomon illustrates this when he says: "Who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved?" SoS 8:5 If we continue to seek God in the midst of our personal dry, valley, and desert-like seasons, we too will emerge leaning on Christ. We will have discovered a fresh trust and reliance on Christ. Our relationship with Christ will be richer and sweeter.

The people God will use in this coming season of revival will not be some random selection. No. God has been preparing forerunners. Just like He did with Ezekiel, God has been leading His people into key places, and preparing them for what lies ahead. It's in the valley that Ezekiel was prepared, and it's in the valley that God prepares his vessels of revival. Seminaries don't make prophets, only the furnace of God does that. Revivalists are prepared by fire. Some of the leaders of the next move of God might be in a prison cell at this moment. Some of them may be begging on the street. Some of them may be walking through the pain of divorce, or bereavement. Some may have been written off by the church, but they have not been written off by heaven.

A divine question

Notice what happens next, God asks the prophet a question: "He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezek 37:3 Evangelicals love truth, and propositional statements. We love to have the answers. Sometimes we need to allow God to stir up the right questions within us. Sometimes churches are uncomfortable with questions. I come from a Community Education background. That was the first formal training that I undertook. At the heart of Community Education is the commitment to asking the right questions. Rather than assuming we know what the community needs, we need to ask the community what they need. Likewise, rather than assuming we know what the church needs, we need to allow searching questions to sift our hearts. God asks the prophet if he believes the bones can live. In other words, does the Minister have faith that the people of God can be restored? Do you and I have faith that the church can be revived? Do we have faith that the nation can be revived?

Revival: A Sovereign Move or a Human Response?

The Prophet's answer appears to be both honest and humble. "I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."" Ezek 37:3 Humilty and honesty is critical when it comes to aligning ourselves with God's presence and purpose. We don't need to try and "fake it to make it" when it comes to

faith. God doesn't need our hyped-up confessions, decrees or declarations (despite what some teachers of spiritual warfare say!) An honest and humble expression of our ignorance unbelief and doubt before God will be more effective in moving heaven than a multitude of hyperbolic and triumphalist decrees.

However, there is a danger that we over-emphasise the sovereignty of God. Some believers who believe in revival, and who understand revival to be a result of the sovereignty of God have a tendency to neglect the role of human responsibility. We must receive with humility the revelation of a sovereign God, and allow that to bring us to our knees, but if our view of God's sovereignty neuters the need for human responsibility, we are no longer holding a Biblical view of God. We have exchanged the God of the Bible for a kind of divine determinism. We see this in God's response to the prophet's answer to His question: "

Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! ⁵ This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶ I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'"

Only God can bring a dead church back to life, only God can pour out his reviving Spirit upon his lifeless people, but God chooses to do this in partnership with his people. Likewise, only God can save a sinner, but God has chosen to save people through the preaching of the gospel. It is the gospel in the mouth of a believer that causes the spiritually dead to awaken to life. God is committed to partnering with His people to reveal His glory. We are the Body of Christ, and the purpose of that Body is to reveal the glory of Christ on earth in the midst of the cosmic battle between heaven and hell.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. Eph 3:10

A restoration of the proclamation of the Word of God

The first thing God commands the prophet to do is to prophesy – to declare the Word of the Lord. "So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone." Ezek 37:7 One of the greatest tragedies to have taken place in the church is the polarisation that has taken place between preaching and prophesying. To prophesy is to declare the word, will and mind of the Lord. To preach is to declare the word, will and mind of the Lord. Preaching should be prophetic, and prophecy should be reflective of the preached word. When prophecy is divorced from the written word, it becomes a form of fortune telling and mere positive confessions. When preaching is divorced from the flow of the Spirit, it becomes a dry academic lecture. True preaching and prophesying are Spirit birthed, and Spirit empowered.

Show me a revival in history and I'll show you a return to the Word of God. The Word of God is designed to correct, comfort, guide and equip the church. Whenever the church moves into a season of decline, apostasy, and backsliding we can be sure that the church has neglected, rejected and watered down the Word of God. We are called to proclaim the full counsel of God and that means all of His word. Not just the fridge-magnet verses. Only when we preach all of the word do we encounter the fullness of God's character. Only when we preach all of the word will we be grounded in the great essentials of the faith such as the incarnation, sinless life, atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension, outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the great commission, the final judgement, and the glorious return of Christ.

It was restoration of the proclaimed Word that brought the dead nation of Israel to life; it was not the restored nation of Israel that then declared the Word. If we want to see the church rise up out of the valley of death and dryness, we also must return to the Word of God and proclaim the Word of God in its fullness.

The restoration of the wind of God

The restoration of the preached word of God for revival is essential, but it is not enough in and of itself.

⁸ I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

⁹Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

The Word of God had spoken, and there was a response. The church arose, but the church needed the breath of God. It is possible to be a Bible-Christian yet still be a life-less Christian. Sure, there is a bit of movement, and hey, at least you are not as bad as the dead, dry bones lying on the floor of the valley – however partially alive is not much better than dead! We need more than the Word in our heads, we need the life of the Spirit in our hearts. The Evangelical revivals have been a blessing to the Body of Christ, but they have also created problems. On the one hand God has used evangelicalism to restore the centrality of the preaching of the cross. Evangelicalism has often prophetically called the church away from over reliance on sacraments and liturgy. However, Evangelicalism has often created a minimalistic and reductionist form of church that presumes right believing is all that is needed. It is wrongly assumed that just because a person has believed in Christ, that they no longer need any further work of the Spirit. This is not only unscriptural, but also arrogant.

Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, commands believers to "be filled with the Spirit." That one command should be enough to put any objections to rest. Every Christian, and every church needs the ongoing filling, leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit. We can literally do nothing without Him.

Ever since the day of Pentecost, the Spirit has been blowing from heaven. God's purposes have never changed. Whilst there are seasons of decline

and dryness, there are also seasons of growth and renewal. It's when church and society are at their lowest and driest that the stage is set for revival. Over the last year, I have felt a fresh breeze from heaven blowing upon my own soul and ministry. I lead a church plant in Stirling, and I am a full-time prison chaplain, and in both environments, I'm sensing the fresh breeze of the Spirit. Someone once said, whatever the Holy Spirit touches, He changes. I am seeing the Holy Spirit breathe upon addicts and they are experiencing transformation. He is breathing upon prisoners, and they are receiving hope, healing and wholeness. I'm hearing similar testimonies across the nation. The lion is rising, and He is breathing fresh life into the church and the lost. And you and I are called to embrace this fresh awakening. As the lion rises, the church arises, and as the church arises, the nation awakens to the presence and purpose of God in our generation.

Lucy looked and saw that Aslan had just breathed on the feet of the stone giant.

It's all right!" shouted Aslan joyously. "Once The feet are put right, all the rest of him will follow."

— C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

2. A Return to Discipleship

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42

Many Christians are passionate about a move of the Spirit. Many are praying and even prophesying an end-time awakening and harvest. However, I sometimes wonder if we know what it is we are praying for. If God were to pour His Spirit, what would that look like?

If God were to pour out His Spirit afresh in these days, the book of Acts gives us a glimpse into what an awakening would look like.

After God's presence fell on the day of Pentecost, and after the mass conversions and baptisms, what happened next? Discipleship began. Those who were added to the church devoted themselves to learning and living the Word of God, relationships with other believers, communion and prayer. Notice they didn't just flirt with discipleship; they were devoted to discipleship. Too many professing believers treat church like a booty call when they should be treating it like a marriage. Discipleship isn't dating Jesus, it's devotion to Jesus.

Revival and Reformation

Revival is the bringing to life of something that was dead or dying. Reformation is the transformation from one state to another. If revival doesn't lead to reformation, then the purpose of revival has been aborted. Revival is a fresh encounter with God, but that encounter is designed to change us. I fear that some who are passionate about revival are really just chasing an experience. If revival does not result in disciples who make disciples, then all we have achieved is making church a little more exciting.

The reason we need revival is because our hearts have become cold, or lukewarm. Lukewarm hearts lead to lukewarm Christian living. Revival reignites the fire of God in our hearts, but that fire is given to empower us into holy and anointed living.

We need reformation in the church. Reformation will lead to a transformation of our collective gatherings, and our individual lives. Our church services will carry something of the awe and majesty of God. God will take centre stage; individuals will step back from the limelight. In our current celebrity-driven culture, this will be one of the first signs of revival. Charismatic Christian leaders will humble themselves. They will get out the way. Strutting on the stage will be replaced with falling on our face. The Christianised Ted Talk will give way to the bold preaching of the cross of Jesus. The rock concert with its humanistic pseudo-Christian songs will give way to Christ exalting songs where the singing of the congregation will be heard once more. Our guitar solos do nothing to move heaven, the fragrant song of the redeemed on the other hand is like incense that attracts the presence of the King.

Character and Commitment

Revival inspired reformation will lead us to develop character and commitment. Our humanistic and self-serving culture has caused us to follow Jesus on our own terms. We don't mind doing a little bit here and there, as long as it isn't an inconvenience for us. Revival and reformation will help us rediscover true discipleship. The call to follow Jesus is a call to come and die.

We need to re-transition from Christian consumerism to Christian commitment. Commitment isn't based on our emotions, it's the fruit of a renewed will. It flows from a life that is surrendered to Jesus.

Revival is hard work. If revival happens someone will have to set up the sanctuary. Someone will have to clean the toilets. Someone will have to sweep the floor. Someone will have to mentor new believers. Someone will have to pray for people at the altar. Revival will involve lots of hard work. Glory chasers don't want graft, they just want gratification. A true sign that the Spirit is working in your life is that you will be willing to serve in the most mundane and obscure ways.

Too many have a 'not my gifting' mindset when it comes to serving. Serving tea? Not my gift. Hospitality? Not my gift. Putting chairs away? Not my gift. Jesus did not say serve and love others only if it is your gift. He just calls us to love and serve. True discipleship sees a need and meets the need.

Study the scriptures

The disciples devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. This means they diligently studied the Old and New Testaments. Regular study and meditation on God's Word are the only way our minds will be renewed. Part of the reason why our lives are so far from God's purposes is the fact our minds are full of our own natural wisdom. If we saturate our minds with the Word of God we would have more discernment, make better choices, and have a stronger relationship with God.

Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,

but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:1-3

Authentic Relationships

Community is essential if we are to thrive. This is true in all areas of life, but especially discipleship. Western Christianity is very individualistic. A sole minister prepares a sermon in isolation, delivers it as a monologue, to a crowd of individuals in pews staring at the back of heads. This style of church is inherently anti-social. The twenty minutes of fellowship around tea and biscuits after this doesn't change this fact. Neither does an

hour of small group. Relationships must go beyond meetings and ministry times. The early church was a family. It is this family atmosphere that Jesus said would win admiration of the world.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:5

Prayer as Delight and Duty

Prayer can be both dull and a delight. Our emotions are fickle, it's easy to pray when we feel like praying, but what about when we don't feel like praying? It's easy to justify not praying. At least, I find it easy to justify missing times of focused prayer. There is always something vying for my time. Yet the reality is, prayer is source of life. When I neglect prayer, I start leaning on my own strength and I soon begin to feel the strain and demands of the calling. Since God's calling is bigger than what I can accomplish in my own strength, I need to be disciplined about spending time with God.

In the height of a spiritual awakening, prayer becomes easy. It's easy to pray when the heavens are open. This time of delighting in God is the perfect seedbed to begin to develop the discipline and duty of prayer. As we are faithful in the seasons of blessing, we will develop rhythms that can carry us through the dark and dry seasons.

Collective prayer is a feature of revival. Prayer can be a catalyst of revival and also a fruit of revival. The prayer meeting is always one of the most neglected meetings in our church life, yet it should be the most important meeting. I remember a season where I felt the Lord to change our Sunday morning from a normal service to a time of prayer. We were a new church plant. That decision saw us lose 50% of the people who were attending the church plant. They wrote an email saying they didn't want to meet for prayer, they wanted a normal service. Like Gideons army this kind of subtraction is not a bad thing. It's better to have a small group of people who are serious about prayer and discipleship than a large congregation of people who don't have a heart for intercession.

Breaking of Bread

In seasons of revival and reformation, the Lord restores that which is central to His purposes and removes that which is a hindrance. One aspect that desperately needs to be restored in our churches is the central place of the Breaking of Bread. We see in our Acts 2:42 passage that communion was one of the essential marks of discipleship. This centrality of the bread and the cup continued beyond the book of Acts into the period of the early church fathers and medieval period. In fact, it is only the evangelical movements of the 20th century that have moved away from the centrality of the Lord's Supper. This is another symptom of our individualistic and ritual-averse culture.

Pastor and theologian, Jonathan Black, in his book on the Lord's Supper, demonstrates how important the Lord's Supper was for the early church.

As Paul traveled around the eastern Mediterranean on his third missionary journey, he stopped for seven days in Troas. That means the church in Troas could have the great apostle, one of the most famous preachers in the world, preach on the Lord's Day. Can you imagine if your church was suddenly going to have the apostle Paul preach on Sunday? We'd probably be shouting about it from the rooftops (or, well, you know, whatever the social media equivalent might be). Everyone would want to make sure they were at church that day. But that's not quite what happens in Troas. The Bible tells us exactly why they came to church that Sunday, and it wasn't to hear Paul. Nope. The Christians in Troas had a much more important reason to crowd into their Upper Room, for "On the first day of the week . . . the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). They didn't come for the celebrity preacher. They didn't gather for a challenging message. They came together for the same reason they gathered each and every Lord's Day: to break bread.¹

This sounds strange to contemporary Christians. Many have made an idol out of the 'event'. The high-powered praise, the dynamic message, and the charismatic speaker has become the main attraction. When we place

¹ The Lord's Supper: Our Promised Place of Intimacy and Transformation with Jesus, Jonathan Black.

central emphasis on the bread and the cup, we are showing that Jesus Christ, and his death and resurrection are the main event.

Disciples who make disciples

Many Christians are faithful, loyal, and devoted the Lord and their local church. Yet, for many reasons, we have not directed our devotion and loyalty into discipleship and mission. Many people (even in 'missional' type churches) still think that ministry is for the Minister, mission is for the missionary, and evangelism is for the evangelists. Many are confused about their role and responsibility as disciples and disciple makers.

The first thing that needs to be said is this: God does not call the qualified, he qualifies the called. Many sense their incompetence and see this as a barrier to making a disciple, we need to flip that round. It's the qualification.

The first thing God requires of us in not a specialist skill set, but a surrendered heart. A heart that says "yes" to all that God wants us to be and do. This may take a bit of working through. It may take more than one visit to the altar. But I van guarantee this, if we are serious about surrender, God will be serious about empowering and equipping us.

The second thing we need is to be willing to be relationally vulnerable. We need to move beyond social awkwardness into resting securely in our identity in Christ. As we minister out of a place of security in Christ, we get our eyes off ourselves and onto the harvest field. All we are called to do is share the grace of Christ. We can only share what we ourselves have received.

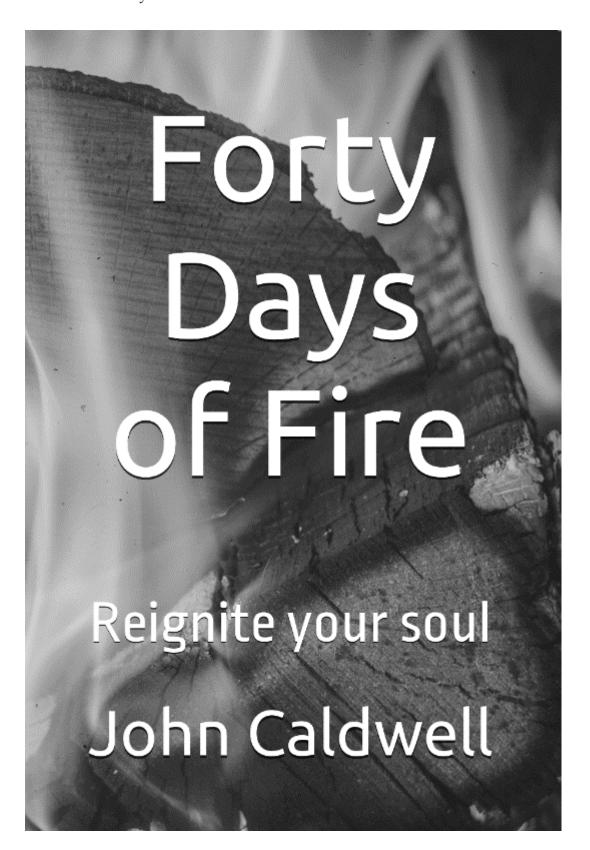
Thirdly we need to be willing to grow. You can't make disciples if you don't do relationships (and you also can't be a disciple if you don't do relationships). This means we need to be willing to relate to people in a variety of ways. Jesus discipled people in various ways, he addressed large crowds by preaching and teaching, he spoke to people one-to-one, he gathered people into small groups for instruction and discussion.

All of us as Christians should seek to develop all three areas. You may not be called to preach and teach, but you should develop the confidence in sharing your testimony publicly. Likewise, if a preacher is only confident standing at a pulpit but doesn't invest in individuals or small groups, that person's preaching ministry will be hindered because true ministry flows out of relationships and relationships can only happen in a one-to-one or group setting.

It's time to arise

I'm conscious this chapter may feel like I'm bursting the bubble of what revival looks like. But we need to be clear about the vision of revival. Revival is about God partnering with us to bring in the harvest. This also just basic Christianity. Revival is a return to basic Christianity.

The Lion is rising, and he is calling for those who will rise with him. The call is to complete abandonment to God's purpose. We are yet to see the fulness of what God is going to do in the nations. The church is central to God's purpose. Jesus is coming back for a bride who has been prepared. Are you willing to step out of your comfort zone into the adventure and challenge of a lifetime? It's time to rise, it's time to run the race, it's time to be a disciple who makes disciples. It's time to embrace a fresh awakening and live a life that counts for eternity.



The Lion's Roar

Restoring Tongues of Fire



Streets Bine for Locality Streets Streets Streets Streets Streets Streets Streets Streets Streets

Empowering the church to take the gospel to the streets

John Caldwell

Free Inside

5 Sessions designed to lead your groups into freedom and transformation

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