



If someone would ask you to give me a word that describes your relationship with Jesus Christ, what word would you say? Some might say vibrant, life-changing, or real. Others might say stagnant, distant, or unknown. What do you desire?

<sup>6</sup> Won't you **revive us** again, so your people can rejoice in you? Psalm 85:6

**Revive: Verb:** הָיָה (*hāyā*), GK 2649 (*S* 2421, 2425), 283×. *hāyā* indicates "life" or "having life" and is the generic term for "life" or "to live" in the OT. But *hāyā* also indicates revivification (revive, renew). It is an amazing truth that God, who is said to live in a high and holy place, is also with those who are lowly in order to *hāyā* (NIV, "revive") their hearts (Isa. 57:15 "For this is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the spirit of the contrite'").<sup>1</sup>

*I have heard all about you, LORD. I am filled with awe by your amazing works. In this time of our deep need, help us again as you did in years gone by. And in your anger, remember your mercy. Habakkuk 3:2*

*The Bible has no retirement plan. God can keep his people on fire for him and keep them sharp and intense. Jim Cymbala, Fresh Faith*

### Revivals in Scripture

- They occurred in times of moral darkness and national depression.
- Each began in the heart of a consecrated servant of God who became the energizing power behind it [only one spark].
- Each revival rested on the Word of God, and most were the result of proclaiming God's Word with power.
- All resulted in a return to the worship of God.
- Each witnessed the destruction of idols where they existed.
- In each revival, there was a recorded separation from sin.
- In every revival, the people returned to obeying God's laws.
- There was a restoration of great joy and gladness.
- Each revival was followed by a period of national prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

### Setting the Scene

- The temple has been rebuilt, yet there are still major spiritual concerns. The people have not learned from their past and again have been entrapped by their sin. Ezra had resolved to see more than a building (temple) but to see his people following hard after God.

<sup>10</sup> This was because Ezra had determined to study and obey the Law of the LORD and to teach those decrees and regulations to the people of Israel. Ezra 7:10

*Placing a premium on God's word has the power to bring revival to individuals and churches. Church history testifies to this fact. One of the main issues of the Protestant Reformation pertained to the Scriptures, evidenced in the phrase sola Scriptura, a firm belief that the Scriptures matter. Ezra, the latter's specialized role does reveal<sup>3</sup>*

### 1. Fasting: Focus your heart on God. (Ezra 8:21-23)

*Spiritual fasting entails setting aside activities as well as reducing the intake of food and replacing these activities with the exercise of prayer and preoccupation with spiritual concerns. The NT word, which is translated as "fasting," literally means one who has not eaten, one who is empty.<sup>4</sup>*

*"Fasting is a Christian duty." - Augustine*

<sup>1</sup> Mounce, W. D. (2006). *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (p. 589). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>2</sup> In his book *Revival Fire*, Geoff Waugh (Fuller Seminary) lists nine similarities among Biblical revivals.

<sup>3</sup> Petter, D., & Petter, T. (2021). *Ezra-Nehemiah*. (T. Muck, Ed.) (p. 181). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic.

<sup>4</sup> Bass, C. B. (1988). *Fast, Fasting*. In Baker encyclopedia of the Bible (Vol. 1, p. 780). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

For centuries early church leaders would fast twice every week. "Who does not know that the fast of the fourth and sixth days of the week (Wednesday and Friday) are observed by Christians throughout the world?"  
~Ephiphanius

We fast for . . .

- For breakthrough and guidance
- Confession and repentance
- Humbling oneself before God
- Protection

<sup>16</sup> "**And when you fast**, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. <sup>18</sup> Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. Matthew 6:16-18

## 2. **Mourning: Express your Hurt to God. (Ezra 9:1-5)**

- He recognized the sin in the camp.
- Ezra mourned over the sin of the Israelites.
- The more you connect with Jesus, the more you are connected with his heart.

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matthew 5:4 (Blessed are those who mourn for the sin in their life.)*

## 3. **Praying: Ask for help from God. (Ezra 9:6-8)**

- Ezra saw things with God's eyes. His heart and mind were in tune with God.
- He prayed with passion and conviction.
- He took on the posture of humility.
- Notice we read that his first response was to pray.

## 4. **Confession: Repentance that heals. (Ezra 10:1-5)**

- Do more than just acknowledge the sin in your life. They are called to action do away with it.
- The Israelites responded with an attitude of brokenness.
- Honest confession brings healing.

*On October 31 the people assembled again, and this time they fasted and dressed in burlap and sprinkled dust on their heads. <sup>2</sup> Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all foreigners as they confessed their own sins and the sins of their ancestors. <sup>3</sup> They remained standing in place for three hours while the Book of the Law of the LORD their God was read aloud to them. Then for three more hours they confessed their sins and worshiped the LORD their God. Nehemiah 9:1-3*

<sup>10</sup> *For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.* <sup>11</sup> *Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm, such longing to see me, such zeal, and such a readiness to punish wrong. You showed that you have done everything necessary to make things right. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11*

**One last thought:** God is not interested in how much scripture you know, or what people you know, or whether you never missed church, or that you give a lot to the church. He is looking for people that are desperate for Him!

**Challenge This Week:** This week, choose a day to specifically fast and pray for our community and church from sunrise to sunset.