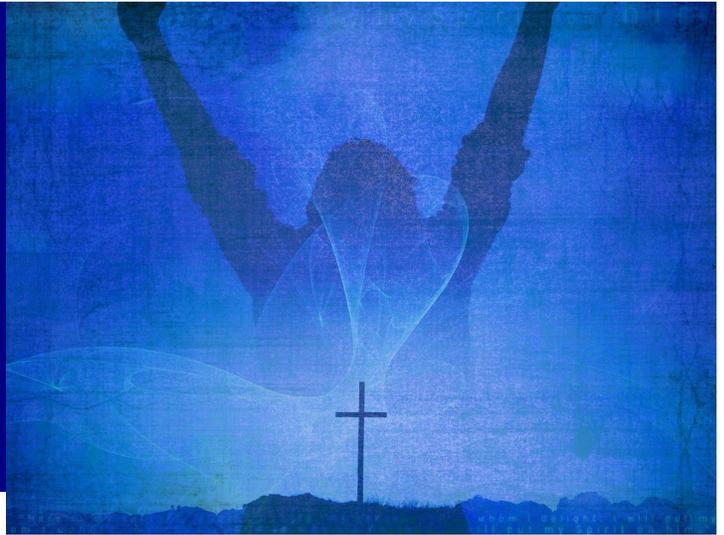


## CHRIST AWAKENING

# Love the Lord Your God



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### SCRIPTURE STUDY

Matthew 22:37; 1 John 1:9-10;  
Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:4-5;  
Malachi 3:7; Isaiah 1:1-20;  
Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:15-16;  
Isaiah 6:5; 66:2; Ephesians 4:31;  
James 5:8

### PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,  
Jesus, revive us again. Bring our  
hearts closer to You. Help us to  
turn our hearts toward you in  
calling upon you for our families,  
our nation and our world.  
In Jesus' Name, Amen.

*Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and  
with all your soul and with all your mind." (Matt. 22:37)*

Across America and around the world, God's people are crying out for a fresh encounter with Him. Everywhere we travel we hear churches pleading with God to revive them, their nation, and their world. There is widespread dissatisfaction with today's church. Numerous efforts have been attempted to make the church more relevant, seeker friendly, contemporary, or cutting edge. Yet despite millions of dollars, hundreds of best-selling books, countless church growth conferences, and an endless stream of Christian trends, the church displays a powerlessness that cannot even evangelize people today at the same rate as society's population growth. Spiritual awakening makes prayer exciting, preaching dynamic, and Christian service fervent. Even when God's people are longing and praying for it, it comes suddenly and unexpectedly. It is a God-initiated work in which His people pray, repent, and return to a yielded, love relationship with Him.

### *Work of God*

Spiritual awakening is a work of God. Spiritually dormant Christians cannot resuscitate themselves! Those in a coma cannot push the button beside their hospital bed to alert the nurse's station of their dire condition. They cannot give themselves medicine or go for a walk to get some fresh air. God is the Creator and sustainer of life. Only He can dispense it. Even when people begin to sense their need for revival and they start meeting with others to pray for it, they are simply responding to a divine initiative, convicting them of their sin and prompting them to return to God.

### *Place of Repentance*

In revival, God takes His people to the place of repentance. There will be no revival where there is no repentance. Scripture clearly teaches that sin brings spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). The only remedy for sin is repentance (1 John 1:9-10). Just as the first word of John the Baptist and Jesus in their earthly ministries was "repent," so the first place the Holy Spirit will always take people experiencing the spiritually deadening effects of sin is to the place of repentance (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:4-5).

### ***Returning to God***

Spiritual awakening involves returning to God. When God seems distant from us, it is never God who has departed from the relationship. God urged His people through the prophet Malachi: “. . . Return to Me, and I will return to you” (Mal. 3:7). Throughout the historic accounts of revival, there are repeated references to the nearness and palpable presence of God in the midst of people. Just as in the days of Malachi when God’s people asked, “In what way shall we return?” (Mal. 3:7), so God’s people are often unaware of how far they have departed from God until He leads them to return. In times of revival, God’s people suddenly become aware of how far they have strayed from God, and return.

### ***Holiness***

True revival always leads to holiness. You cannot continue to practice sin and simultaneously experience spiritual renewal. In Isaiah chapter 1, God rejected His peoples’ worship when they entered the place of worship with sin-filled lives (Isa. 1:1-20). When the prophet Isaiah experienced a fresh encounter with God, his immediate concern was his lack of holiness (Isa. 6:5). More than our worship or our service for Him, God desires holiness (Lev. 11:44; 1 Peter 1:15-16). While some people suggest there can be a revival of worship or prayer without repentance, we do not see this as possible or biblical. It is only after God restores us to holiness that we are free to pray, worship, and serve Him in the manner He deserves.

### ***Filled with the Holy Spirit***

When revival occurs, people are filled with the Holy Spirit. Preaching becomes powerful when anointed by the Spirit. The congregation can sing the same songs, yet now they are invigorated by the Spirit and the times of corporate worship are characterized by the joy and presence of God’s Spirit.

### ***Willing Obedience***

Revival stimulates an attitude of willing obedience to whatever God requires. Much of carnal Christianity comes not from ignorance of what God expects but from hearts unwilling to do what God has clearly commanded. Revival, because it draws people back to the Lord, inevitably produces an eagerness to do His bidding.

### ***Love Relationship***

Most importantly, revival brings God’s people back into a love relationship with Him. When revival comes, people recognize their sin for what it is: a renunciation of God and a violation of the love relationship. That is why, in times of revival, people often declare that God’s salvation is too good for them considering the way they coldly rejected the love of Jesus their Savior.

What are some ways you have seen God intervene in your life and draw you to Himself? When did those events occur? What were the circumstances that surrounded them?

What are some areas of obedience that you need to surrender to God? How can you become more pliable in God’s Hands? How will it change your life? Your relationships?

How would you describe your intimacy with God? Are you following Him at a distance? Are you communing with Him on a daily basis? Do you sense His presence moment-to-moment?

## *Prayers to Offer*

### *Thanksgiving*

We are grateful for the gift of prayer and Your willingness to honor our requests: “If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:14).

Jesus, thank You for the spiritual discipline of confession, for if we confess our sins, You are “faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Dear God, we appreciate the discipline of repentance and the opportunity to be restored: “Return to me, and I will return to you” (Mal. 3:7).

### *Confession*

Our churches resist a fresh work of God. Forgive us, Lord, that we do not long for spiritual awakening.

We resist the Spirit taking us to a place of repentance. Change our hearts.

We often resist returning to God. Dear God, we repent of hardheartedness.

We are often lacking holiness in our lives. Cleanse us, Lord.

Our churches promote religion rather than a love relationship with God. We repent of our neglect of You, Jesus.

### *Petition*

Lord, as we practice spiritual disciplines, may we be as one “who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles” at Your Word (Isa. 66:2).

Jesus, through fasting and prayer, might we “get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice” (Eph. 4:31).

Dear God, might we, starting with me, have the response of Isaiah: “‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty’” (Isa. 6:5).

Jesus, we have strayed; therefore might we return to You: “Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (James 4:8).

### *Holiness*

Dear God, might we desire holiness as much as You: “I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.

Lord, may we “not get drunk on wine. . .instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).

Dear God, “tell us where we should go and what we should do” (Jer. 42:3).

Lord, might You bring us into a deeper love relationship with You, for we cry out for You: “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jer. 33:3).

*\* Henry and Richard Blackaby and Claude King, Fresh Encounter: God’s Pattern for Spiritual Awakening, Revised and Expanded (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), used by permission.*