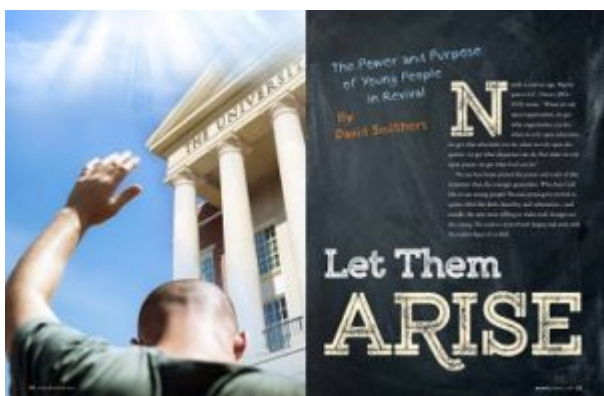


Let Them Arise

The Power and Purpose of Young People in Revival

By David Smithers



Nearly a century ago, Baptist pastor A.C. Dixon (1854–1925) wrote, “When we rely upon organization, we get what organization can do; when we rely upon education, we get what education can do; when we rely upon eloquence, we get what eloquence can do. But when we rely upon prayer, we get what God can do.”

No one has better proved the power and truth of this statement than the younger generation. Why does God like to use young people? Because praying for revival requires child-like faith, humility, and submission—and usually the ones most willing to make such changes are the young. The road to revival both begins and ends with the tender heart of a child.

First Corinthians 1:27–29 explains why this is the case: “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”

Yes, our young people are tomorrow's leaders. Yes, they are creative, talented, untapped bundles of potential willing to try new things. But that is not the primary reason God so often uses them. It's not their talent and potential that qualifies them most as carriers of revival but rather their hungry hearts and honest faith.

Too often God has to pass over the old guard and use our young people because He can't freely move through an older generation's extrabiblical rules and expectations. God prefers to work through those who are small enough, simple enough, and even flawed enough to erase all the debate over who did what. Why does God like to use young people? Because God's glory shines brightest through a humble heart!

God's Hidden Vessels of Revival

God's most precious treasures are often hidden in plain sight because of their seeming insignificance. Remember the Old Testament account of God rescuing His people through Hannah's prayers and the fearless faith of her son, Samuel (1 Sam. 3:1–20)? Through this one boy's prophetic ministry, God revealed His power and drove out the enemy. Yet years later when Samuel had grown into a strong and confident minister, he nearly stumbled over the very principles of grace and humility that had thrust him into his own prophetic service.

With the best of intentions, the old prophet at first overlooked the young shepherd boy named David. Swayed by outward appearances, Samuel momentarily confused the strength and talents of people for the grace and anointing of God. But God told him, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

Isn't it strange that we can forget the very principles of

grace that we ourselves have benefited from? This divine partnership between childlike faith and revival can be traced throughout all the great moves of God. The last 300 years of Church history have been marked by powerful spiritual revivals and subsequent seasons of miraculous missionary growth. More people have come to Christ during this modern era of evangelism than during the previous 1,800-plus years combined. Much of this supernatural growth can be directly traced to the prayerful lives of the younger generation.

Great Awakenings and Missions

Early in the 18th century, when God began to reignite the fires of 24/7 prayer, revival, and world missions, He used a young Moravian in his mid-20s by the name of Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. A few years later God used the Moravians again to help ignite revival in England by inspiring two young Wesley brothers (John and Charles) and a slightly cross-eyed 21-year-old by the name of George Whitefield.

Through these fearless young Methodists, God birthed miracles of grace and power that the great English Reformers and Puritans had only imagined. The young men preached the gospel with power and passion to tens of thousands, and Britain was awakened and rescued from moral collapse and certain destruction. Many people considered them unorthodox, reckless, and inexperienced. But God used them to change the course of history!

This era of Great Awakening and the evangelical revival radically redefined the Church's view of the character of God, the Great Commission, and the eternal needs of an unreached world. By the end of the 18th century the fires of revival had given birth to the modern missions movement in the British Isles. Soon William Carey, Henry Martyn, Robert Morrison, Robert Moffat, Alexander Duff, David Livingston, and James

Hudson Taylor—all men in their 20s—were setting out to share the hope of Christ with a gospel-starved world.

The Haystack Prayer Meeting

By the early 1800s the Second Great Awakening was transforming whole communities and colleges in the Northeastern part of the United States. In 1806, when a young 23-year-old freshman named Samuel J. Mills arrived at Williams College in Williamstown, MA, he found the campus stirred by the recent move of the Holy Spirit.

One hot August day Mills and four other Williams College students were praying in an open field just off campus when suddenly they were caught in a thunderstorm. They took shelter in a nearby haystack and finished their prayer meeting. Before returning to campus, they pledged to take personal responsibility for the Great Commission. They committed the matter to prayer and went to work at mobilizing their fellow classmates. Only six years later, in 1812, America was sending out its very first missionaries to Asia—all because a handful of young college students dared to believe God's Word and pray it into action.

Today Samuel J. Mills is remembered as the father of American missions. But initially, some dismissed him because he was young, he was socially awkward, and he had an odd speaking voice. Most people never assumed that Mills would ever accomplish anything of lasting value. In spite of Mills's youth and inexperience, God used him to awaken and mobilize the American Church.

God is no respecter of age, title, or position, but He always honors and blesses humility and childlike faith!

The Welsh Revival

Evan Roberts is another example of the hidden gems (even spiritual misfits) God so often uses to bring revival. By 1902 many believers in the British Isles had begun to earnestly pray for another outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Many seasoned leaders were ready to move the Church forward into a new era of spiritual awakening. Then in 1904 God surprised everyone by using an unknown young coal miner named Evan Roberts.

Roberts was a 26-year-old who had dropped out of Bible school to go home and pray for revival. The revival started at a mid-week young people's meeting as Roberts shared his vision for revival in Wales. Soon, everywhere Roberts and his young ministry team went, the fires of revival followed. Within a year and a half much of Wales had been radically awakened and transformed.

Like many of God's instruments of revival, Evan Roberts was not a great orator or brilliant theologian. But he did know how to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Often when trying to pray or preach, he became so overwhelmed by the Spirit he couldn't speak. He would collapse behind the pulpit and sob like a baby. Then the Holy Spirit would sweep through the congregation and people would begin to spontaneously confess their sins. Others, convicted by those confessions, would then stream down the aisles and come to Christ.

The meetings would often run night and day, around the clock, because the miners would sometimes arrive late and start the process all over again. Roberts was proof that God is able to do much more through much less, when a heart is fully surrendered to the Holy Spirit!

The Jesus People Movement

Because God's ways are higher than ours, we sometimes miss or

even reject some of His most precious gifts. Just as God loves to hide gems beneath the clay or hide pearls in rough oysters, He delights to send revival through flawed and broken people. This is exactly what happened in the late 1960s and early '70s during the Jesus People Movement.

It was an age of political and social unrest—an era of defiant self-expression. War, riots, and assassinations cast a dark shadow of fear over the whole nation. Many within the evangelical church had been praying for revival since the late '50s, yet everything seemed to be growing steadily worse.

Then in 1967 revival broke out in an unexpected place—among the hippies of Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco. From there the revival quietly spread south and gained momentum in Orange County at Costa Mesa's Calvary Chapel. Soon a wave of revival was washing over the whole California coast, transforming thousands of young drug addicts and runaways. Whole motorcycle gangs reportedly converted to Christ. Dozens of go-go bars across the state turned into Christian coffee houses where young people sang worship songs and prayed.

The revival moved east and broke out in places like Asbury College in Wilmore, KY. Then, seemingly unrelated, revival also broke out in Canada around 1971. God was sovereignly moving in a variety of different ways all across America, but especially among the youth counterculture. The February 9, 1971 issue of Look magazine quoted one very optimistic minister as saying, "It's the greatest awakening in the history of the Church, and it's kids. Kids are leading it."

Many of the older generation who had been praying for revival were not prepared for the manner God chose to move and the people He chose to use. Though God was unquestionably working, some people still resisted the revival because its converts were barefoot and shaggy or too charismatic and unconventional. Young seekers were regularly told that they could not come into churches unless they cut their hair and

put on shoes.

Many others recognized what God was doing and quickly adapted to the needs of the new converts. But it is sad that some, to this day, refuse to acknowledge the lasting significance of this powerful move of God!

The Two Faces of Revival

As useful as young people are in revival, we must not forget that God typically works through a shared partnership between the older and younger generations. This is the message of Joel 2:28 (echoed in Acts 2:17) about the last days: God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."

The birth and ministry of Jesus confirms this same truth. Luke 1:1–20 tells us that the coming of Jesus and the forerunner ministry of John the Baptist, were birthed through two very different families and generations. One was older and declining in strength; the other was young and energetic but very inexperienced.

God reached out first to the older Zechariah and Elizabeth. Even though Gabriel tried to encourage Zechariah that his prayers had been answered, Zechariah couldn't accept it. Apparently his physical circumstances or past disappointments had blinded his eyes of faith. So the Lord disciplined him, and Zechariah temporarily lost his voice and his power of influence.

Nevertheless, God in His mercy still used him and Elizabeth in this special season of grace.

The younger Mary responded quite differently from Zechariah. In spite of the greater obstacles she faced, she responded

with a tender heart of faith and submission.

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her (Luke 1:34–38).

We Don’t See Like the Lord Sees!

It’s this kind of faith and humility that makes our young people such powerful tools in the hand of God. Humble hearts always make better homes for the Spirit of revival than heads full of assumptions. The thing that gives our young people so much potential is not their head but their heart connection with God.

If, in our pursuit for revival, we trust in what we can see and touch, we are destined to be swayed by the fool’s gold of human strength, or stumbled by God’s unconventional means and methods.

Remember, those who knew Jesus best were deeply offended by His outward meekness and humanity. They missed the day of their own visitation. “When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, ‘Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter’s son?’. . . So they were offended at Him. . . . Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (Matt. 13:54–58, NKJV).

May we not make the same mistake!

If we want to see revival, God may be asking us to cultivate in ourselves, whatever our age, the tender heart of the young—a hungry heart with honest faith. A heart that relies upon prayer to see what God can do.

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The War on Children

By Chris White

After working with students on college campuses for many years, I have noticed a shift in their emotional and spiritual personalities. Today's kids are great-loaded with possibilities for success—and it's a privilege to take the time to mentor them and help them find their niche for serving God. But they are coming to our campuses with deeper hurts and more emotional baggage than ever before. What happened?

The Bible is clear that children are special to the Lord and play a crucial role in the Kingdom of heaven. They are precious in the heart of the heavenly Father. Jesus said in Matthew 18:10, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." In Luke 18:16, He declares that "the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." And Psalm 127:3 says that "children are a heritage from the Lord."

Yet we see from Scripture and history that the devil hates

everything God loves. Here are some examples:

- **The Jewish race:** The Lord chose the Jewish people as the firstfruits of His eternal Kingdom, yet the powers of hell and men have tried repeatedly to wipe out the Jews.
- **Women:** Because God declared that the judgment of the evil one would come through the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), the devil has had it in for women ever since, provoking abuse, oppression, and mistreatment of this half of the human race. Yet the Bible declares them fully co-heirs of the Kingdom of God together with men (Gal. 3:26–29).
- **Women and children:** The American suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton strongly opposed abortion, predicting that, if allowed, it would become a chief weapon against women. Why then should we be surprised that the devil would also make war upon children, who are so dear to the heart of God?
- **Marriage and the family:** Our generation is witnessing a profound devaluation of marriage and of children. There are many roots to these changes, but the sexual revolution of the 1960s played a large part. That revolution spearheaded an attack upon traditional marriage and morality, claiming that marriage was no more than a piece of paper.

David Elkind, professor emeritus of child development at Tufts University, describes these changes: “Up until the 1950s, we placed the needs of children and adolescents ahead of the needs of parents, and children flourished. . . . From the '60s on, we have put the needs of children and adolescents beneath the needs of adults and parents. The outcome is a lot of stress.”

What has ensued since then is a continuing redefinition of marriage, without considering the consequences for children. Combine these cultural changes with the legalization of abortion in 1973, the breakdown of the family, and more

recently, calls for the legalization of infanticide by university professors in the United States and England—and you have what can only be described as a “war on children.”

God’s Plan: Godly Offspring

In our time, the majority of children around the world are living in poverty. Many suffer abuse, neglect, and increasing exposure to immorality at an early age. How? Through the Internet as well as observing adult behavior around them. Thousands of children are ensnared in the worldwide sex-trafficking industry.

Why is traditional marriage—the lifelong union of one man and one woman—so important? Marriage was not the invention of man but of God Himself. Malachi 2:15 declares, “Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? Godly offspring. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth.”

Children need a mother and a father who are faithful and loving to one another as well as to their offspring. A study published in May 2014 by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) provided strong evidence that children do best with their two biological parents. Such children avoid the majority of negative outcomes suffered by children living under other circumstances.

1. How should we respond to this war on children?
2. Repent of any sexual immorality in ourselves and live according to the standards of God’s Word.
3. Value children—as much as God does—because they are His eternal heritage.
4. In this war with the enemy, battle for families through prayer! Pray that kids today will find the Savior, the only One who can redeem them and heal their brokenness.

Remember Jesus' words in Mark 9:37, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

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