

Discernment: The Safe Guard Of Revival

Memory Text: Psalm 119:159, 160: "Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.¹⁶⁰ The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever."

Illustration: Reading an article the other day, and the writer quoted from a 1975 book *Sail Your Own Seas*, where George Vandeman repeated a warning of C.S. Lewis. In a chapter titled "Fire Trucks and Floods," Vandeman cites Lewis's reference to a demon called Screwtape, whose scheme was to get people "'running about with fire extinguishers whenever there is a flood.' Get people to crowd to the side of the boat that is already nearly under.

When people are lukewarm and apathetic, get them stirred up about the dangers of enthusiasm and emotion. If they are lazy, talk to them about the hypocrisy of the working community. If they are cruel, warn them against the evils of sentimentality. . . . In other words, let them hear loudly and repeatedly the warnings they don't need."

These Sabbath School lessons are not about calling firefighters to deal with a flood. Revival is truly needed both individually and for our church at this time in earth's history.

The Promise Of Revival:

Revelation 18:1: "After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory."

"Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be, among the people of the Lord, such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon his children." (The Great Controversy, p. 464)

Opposition To Revival:

Matthew 24:3, 4: "Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" ⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you."

"The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work; and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it, by introducing a counterfeit. In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power, he will make it appear that God's special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world." (The Great Controversy, p. 464)

What Is Revival?

A neglect to follow the Word of God leads to sin; sin produces death, and the only hope of the sinner lies in the life and death of Jesus on his behalf. As the guilty sense their lost condition, realizes the incredible debt they owe to God, and come to appreciate to some extent the amazing love of his Savior, they are led to confess their sin, and to return to deliberate obedience to all the Word of God through the power of divine grace.

“Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from the spiritual death. Reformation signifies a re-organization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.” (Review and Herald, Feb. 25, 1902)

Discernment:

To know the difference between true and false revival we need discernment. Oxford Dictionary: “perceive or recognize”, “distinguish”, “having good judgment”, or “the ability to judge well”.

The word “discerns,” and its equivalent occurs 28x in the Bible (KJV). Several Hebrew and Greek words are used: “Nakar” (naw-kar) is used in Gen. 31:32 (Jacob & Laban), Gen. 38:25 (Tamar & Judah), and Ezra 3:13 (joy and weeping) with the sense to scrutinize, or to look intently at something so as to become acquainted with it. “Shama” (shaw-mah) is used in 2 Sam. 14:17 (handmaid speaking to David), 1 Kings 3:11 (Solomon praying for wisdom) to express the idea of hearing intelligently. “Yada” (yaw-dah) is used in Ezek. 44:23 (priests) to mean to know or ascertain by seeing. “Biyn” (bene) in Job 6:30 (taste discerns), and Prov. 7:7 (youth void of understanding) as to separate mentally, or to distinguish. “Raah” (raw-aw) in Mal. 3:18 (between righteous and wicked) to mean to see.

In the NT the idea of discernment appears several times:

Luke 12:56: “Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how *is it* you do not discern this time?”

Hebrews 4:12: “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner [“kritikos” – critic] of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Hebrews 5:14: “But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Or translated: “having the facilities trained to distinguish between good and evil.”

1 Corinthians 12:10: “to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits [to differentiate between divine and counterfeit inspiration], to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”

* **1 Corinthians 2:14:** “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually

discerned.” – The wisdom of God is understood only by those who permit themselves to be taught by the Holy Spirit.

Discernment in Scripture is the skill that enables us to differentiate. It is the ability to see issues clearly. We desperately need to cultivate this spiritual skill that will enable us to know right from wrong. We must be prepared to distinguish light from darkness, truth from error, best from better, righteousness from unrighteousness, purity from defilement, and principles from pragmatics.

How Do We Get Discernment?

“Connection with the Source of wisdom will give light and the power of discernment between right and wrong. Those so endowed will become morally and intellectually strong and will have clearer views and better judgment even in temporal affairs.” (Child Guidance, p. 484)

But, *“The enemy is seeking to becloud the discernment of God’s people, and to weaken their efficiency...”* (Counsels To The Church, p. 357) How? *“The end of their pleasure-loving life is ruin for this world and for the world to come.”* (Christ Object Lessons, p. 54). Speaking of Noah’s day: *“In proportion as the people resisted conviction, their discernment was clouded, and their desire to follow a course of ungodliness strengthened.”* (Conflict And Courage, p. 35) *“Anything that lessens physical strength enfeebles the mind, and makes it less capable of discriminating between right and wrong. We become less capable of choosing the good, and have less strength of will to do that which we know to be right.”* (Counsels On Diets & Foods, p. 48)

What are the spiritual indicators of genuine revival? What are the signs of false revival? What does God’s Word say?

Sunday – God’s Will & His Word

All true spirituality is focused on knowing God and doing His will (**John 17:3, Ps. 40:8**). Experience over doing God’s will is not a sign a genuine revival. Holy Spirit never goes against God’s Word, instead leads us to it. **Illustration:** *Lady confronted with claims of God’s Word and wanted to pray to see what the Spirit said. “Didn’t feel right,” she said.*

We need to measure our experience by the Word, and not change the Word to meet our experience. Let’s look at what the Bible brings to the Christian’s life:

Psalm 119:25: “My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to Your word.” - *joy*

Psalm 119:28: “My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word.” - *healing*

Psalm 119:49: “Remember the word to Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.” - *hope*

Psalm 119: 50: “This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life.” - *comfort*

Psalm 119: 67: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.” - *truth*

Psalm: 119: 81: “My soul faints for Your salvation, but I hope in Your word.” – *genuine assurance*

Psalm 119: 105: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” – *direction/guidance*

Psalm 119: 116: “Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope.” – *conviction/purpose*

Psalm 119: 130: “The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.” – *wisdom/discernment*

Psalm 119: 154: “Plead my cause and redeem me; revive me according to Your word.” - *life*

“In many of the revivals which have occurred during the last half century, the same influences have been at work, to a greater or less degree, that will be manifest in the more extensive movements of the future. There is an emotional excitement, a mingling of the true with the false, that is well adapted to mislead. Yet none need be deceived. In the light of God's Word it is not difficult to determine the nature of these movements. Wherever men neglect the testimony of the Bible, turning away from those plain, soul-testing truths which require self-denial and renunciation of the world, there we may be sure that God's blessing is not bestowed. And by the rule which Christ himself has given, “Ye shall know them by their fruits,” [Matthew 7:16.] it is evident that these movements are not the work of the Spirit of God. “ (The Great Controversy, p. 464)

“Emotional excitement” reminds me of something I read in *A Time of Departing* by Ray Yungen: “People are seeking spiritual experiences that leave behind the humdrum of dry intellectualism and stale institutionalism. These seekers are quick to jump on a bandwagon that promises spiritual refreshment and innovation...

People in past generations put up with life’s frustrations, whereas today we see an inclination to seek out, seemingly surefire approaches that promise clear-cut results. Our own era has nurtured a strong reliance on pragmatism. No longer is truth determined by what God has said to be true, but rather, by what works (what is practical). The question that drives many to determine truth is, ‘Will it make me feel good about myself?’ However, for the Christian, we are not to live by what feels good but rather by what is good. We must stand by the apostle Paul’s caution to the Thessalonians: ‘Test all things, hold fast what is good.’ (1 Thess. 5:21)” (p. 85)

Ray Yungen is concerned with the infiltration of the New Age movement, or metaphysics, into conservative Christianity. According to the movement, this is the age when we are all supposed to realize man is God, or God within, and bring it into a meaningful reality. “Occultism is defined as the science of mystical evolution; it is the employment of the hidden (i.e., hidden) mystical faculties of man to discern the hidden reality of nature, i.e., to see God as the all in all.” (The Mission Of Mysticism, p. 6)

How is this achieved? Through “the silence,” or through certain meditation practices. Whereas the Bible encourages thoughtful meditation, this meditation encourages emptying the head. This altered state of consciousness is achieved through breathing exercises, where attention is focused on the breath, and mantras, which are repeated words or phrases. The basic process is to focus and maintain concentration without thinking about what you are focusing on. Repetition on the focused object is what triggers the blank mind.

This is more than pantheism or monism, which says all is God. It’s panentheism – God is in all things – God is both a personality and an all-encompassing substance as opposed to God being impersonal. God is in everything and everything is in God. The only difference between pantheism and panentheism is how God is in everything.

Ray Yungen asserts that these practices are being embraced by what has become known as yoga of the west – Christians embracing eastern mysticism. The emergent church phenomena - a movement teaching people how to have experience with God - adopts “the silence.” You may have heard of words like “contemplative prayer.” In essence, the same metaphysical components of meditation are included in Christian prayer – breathing exercises and mantras (words like Jesus are used instead). This exercise, like eastern mysticism, produces a euphoric experience. Mr. Yungen sees that eastern mysticism has come from India to Alexandria, to the Desert Fathers, to Thomas Merton to contemporaries such as Richard Foster and Brennan Manning.

In *The Signature Of Jesus*, Manning teaches how to suspend thought: “The first step in faith is to stop thinking about God at the time of prayer...Contemplative spirituality tends to emphasize the need for a change in consciousness...we must come to see reality differently...Choose a single, sacred word...repeat the sacred word inwardly, slowly, and often.” Even Rick Warren encourages us to do something similar in his book *The Purpose Driven Life*.

Where there is the discovery of God’s will as revealed in His Word, there is seen true revival. Life of Jesus testifies to that.

Monday – God’s Love & His Law

In the October 9, 1856 issue of the Review & Herald, James White challenged the prevailing view that Sabbathkeeping Adventists were the church of Philadelphia but were instead the church of Laodicea. From November 1856 through the year of 1857, 348 items appeared in the Review on the Laodicean message. It received a large, and mostly positive response. Unfortunately, it wasn’t a lasting impression.

Over a period of months the message faded from the people’s memories. In Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 1, p. 154-184 Ellen White described God’s plan for the revival indicating that it was to culminate at the second coming. On pages 185-195 she delineates the decline. She says, “as the failed to the powerful work accomplished in a short time, many lost the effect of the message.” Why? “Because of the hardness of their hearts.” Because they “moved from feeling, not from principle and faith.” Because they found the message struck “directly at some cherished idol.” Because they were “not willing to closely examine themselves.” Because their “pride,” their “love to follow the fashions of the world,” their “vain and empty conversations,” and because of their “selfishness.”

Basically, the revival failed because the accompanying reformation required more of them than they were willing to give.

“The nature and the importance of the law of God have been, to a great extent, lost sight of. A wrong conception of the character, the perpetuity, and obligation of the divine law has led to errors in relation to conversion and sanctification, and has resulted in lowering the standard of piety in the church. Here is to be found the secret of the lack of the Spirit and power of God in the revivals of our time.” (Great Controversy, p. 465)

“It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people.” (Great Controversy, p. 478)

The answer to why we don't witness genuine revival's as much anymore lies in the restoration of the law of God to its rightful position. Not as a means of salvation, but as a measure of the efficacy of the grace of Christ in the life. Do we fall short of the standard in our lives? It may be because we have neglected the grace of Jesus.

1 John 2:3-6: "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

* **1 John 4:7, 8:** "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

Genuine revival results in a changed life. "The heart of revival is not a warm sensation of feeling close to Jesus. It is a transformed life filled with the joy of serving Jesus." – Mark Finley

Tuesday – Formalism, Fanaticism, & Faith

Two challenges to revival: breaking through dead formalism, and avoiding an emotional fanaticism. Formal religion is focused on externals. Fanaticism goes to extremes and focuses on only one aspect of faith (2520 or feast days). Jesus sought to get through to the religious leaders of His day (Matthew 23 – Woes). He said they were nice looking on the outside but dead on the inside (Matt. 23: 27, 28). They honored Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him (Mark 7:5-9).

God's desires the following for His people:

* **Ephesians 4:14:** "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting..."

How do we find the right balance? "We are forming characters for heaven. No character can be complete without trial and suffering. We must be tested, we must be tried. Christ bore the test of character of our behalf that we might bear this test in our own behalf through the divine strength He has brought to us. Christ is our example in patience, in forbearance, in meekness and lowliness of mind. He was at variance and at war with the whole ungodly world, yet He did not give way to passion and violence manifested in words and actions, although receiving shameful abuse in return for good works. He was afflicted, He was rejected and despitefully treated, yet He retaliated not. He possessed self-control, dignity, and majesty. He suffered with calmness and for abuse gave only compassion, pity, and love. . . .

Imitate your Redeemer in these things. Do not get excited when things go wrong. Do not let self arise, and lose your self-control because you fancy things are not as they should be. Because others are wrong is no excuse for you to do wrong. Two wrongs will not make one right. You have victories to gain in order to overcome as Christ overcame.

Christ never murmured, never uttered discontent, displeasure, or resentment. He was never disheartened, discouraged, ruffled, or fretted. He was patient, calm, and self-possessed under

the most exciting and trying circumstances. All His works were performed with a quiet dignity and ease, whatever commotion was around Him. Applause did not elate Him. He feared not the threats of His enemies. He moved amid the world of excitement, of violence and crime, as the sun moves above the clouds. Human passions and commotions and trials were beneath Him. He sailed like the sun above them all. Yet He was not indifferent to the woes of men.

His heart was ever touched with the sufferings and necessities of His brethren, as though He Himself was the one afflicted. He had a calm inward joy, a peace which was serene. His will was ever swallowed up in the will of His Father. Not My will but Thine be done, was heard from His pale and quivering lips.” (This Day With God, p. 263)

Wednesday – Ministry & Miracles

The SS lesson states: False revival places major emphasis on miracles. Genuine revival focuses on ministry. False – signs and wonders. True – the miracle of conversion. Jesus life was about “seeking and saving the lost.” (Luke 19:10). The miracles He performed were an outgrowth of a redemptive ministry, not the reason for His ministry.

How can people be deceived? Jesus talked about false prophets arising the last days performing signs and wonders to deceive the elect:

Mathew. 24:11, 24: “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many...²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

The Revelator also talked about it:

Revelation 19:20: “Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

Paul talked about those not receiving the “love of the truth” that end up believing a lie:

2 Thessalonians 9-12: “The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

When the desire for the sensational is far more important than a desire for a new life in Christ, the mind becomes open to deception.

God does still perform miracles of healing as outlined in James 5, but not the way one would typically see it demonstrated among some televangelists. Seventh-day Adventists need to be careful of something far more subtle:

“Thousands, I was shown, have been spoiled through the philosophy of phrenology and animal magnetism, and have been driven into infidelity. If the mind commences to run in this channel,

it is almost sure to lose its balance and be controlled by a demon. "Vain deceit" fills the minds of poor mortals. They think there is such power in themselves to accomplish great works that they realize no necessity of a higher power...Some will be tempted to receive these wonders as from God. The sick will be healed before us. Miracles will be performed in our sight. Are we prepared for the trial which awaits us when the lying wonders of Satan shall be more fully exhibited?

Will not many souls be ensnared and taken? By departing from the plain precepts and commandments of God, and giving heed to fables, the minds of many are preparing to receive these lying wonders. We must all now seek to arm ourselves for the contest in which we must soon engage. Faith in God's word, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will be our shield from Satan's power and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of Christ."
(Testimonies, Vol. 1, p. 297, 302)

Phrenology and magnetism; what are these and what do they have to do with today? These are 19th C. words that describe some of the holistic health movements of the western world. White expounds: *"His agents still claim to cure disease. They attribute their power to electricity, magnetism, or the so-called 'sympathetic remedies'. In truth they are but channels for Satan's electric currents. By this means he casts spells over the bodies and souls of men."*
(Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 192, 193)

In the book *Mystical Medicine*, Dr. Warren Peters explains: "Electric currents are an accurate description of the "energy field" concept that dominates holistic health thinking. Aura's are another term to describe the energy fields. This theory believes that "every object is enveloped in a field of magnetic energy which acts as a medium for the interplay of other energies present in its immediate environment.

This magnetic energy field is composed of seven rays related to the glands of the endocrine system. The harmony and balance of every individual and the degree and quality of each of these can be ascertained by observing the aura subjectively, as some "sensitives" are capable of doing, or objectively using a special type of glass called a Kilner screen." Ann Hill, *A Visual Encyclopedia Of Unconventional Medicine*.

You can tell these are not physiological concepts. Instead, these phenomena are explained in subjective, metaphysical terms that require someone to be "attuned" to these powers to describe them. The seven rays of the magnetic field are none other than the Hindu concept of "Chakras" or energy focal points. Many try to treat these as wholesome, physiological and even natural, but the true origin of this idea is based on self-worship. You are God.

Magnetism forms the basis of many of the holistic medicines in use today, from the pendulum, similar to water witching, which is also used in homeopathy, acupuncture, reflexology, applied and behavioral kinesiology, iridology, some forms of chiropractic, yoga, self-help gurus.

We have been warned. These things are designed by the enemy to prepare us to receive greater delusions that are and are about to occur on a greater scale. Animal magnetism was originally based on the study of astrology. Mesmerism was very similar to the modern touch therapies and applied kinesiology. Reading auras and applying acupuncture and reflexology deal with 'electric currents'. Iridology is similar to phrenology. The 'human potential' movement is no different than the 'mind sciences' of yesteryear. The

consequences of dabbling in these areas may have far-reaching and eternal consequences. We can't join ourselves to an advisor or healer without first knowing their worldview. Unknowingly we may just be opening ourselves up to the occult."

Why don't we see more miracles today, like in Christ's day? *"The way in which Christ worked was to preach the Word, and to relieve suffering by miraculous works of healing. But I am instructed that we cannot now work in this way, for Satan will exercise his power by working miracles. God's servants today could not work by means of miracles, because spurious works of healing, claiming to be divine, will be wrought. For this reason the Lord has marked out a way in which His people are to carry forward a work of physical healing, combined with the teaching of the Word. Sanitariums are to be established, and with these institutions are to be connected workers who will carry forward genuine medical missionary work."* (Selected Messages, Vol. 2, p 54)

"God's Word declares that Satan will work miracles. He will make people sick, and then will suddenly remove from them his satanic power. They will then be regarded as healed. These works of apparent healing will bring Seventh-day Adventists to the test. Many who have had great light will fail to walk in the light, because they have not become one with Christ." (Selected Messages, Vol. 2, p. 53)

So it is through the health message that God wants to work...NEWSTART. We do have assurance of divine intervention at His discretion through the Biblical anointing service outlined in James 5, but God works through natural means, not spectacular.

Thursday – Fruit & Gifts

Spiritual gifts are given for service – for the building up of God's kingdom (1 Cor. 12, Rom. 12, Eph. 4, 1 Pet. 4).

Fruit of the Spirit is described in Galatians:

Gal. 5:16, 22-25: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Any revival that is interested in, or obsessed with gifts but little to no interest in fruit is highly suspect (tongues for example). "For God to turn on heaven's power when the spiritual lines are frayed would be catastrophic!" – Mark Finley

Appeal

True revival is all about knowing God and doing His will, obeying His Word, keeping an even keel, focusing on ministry, and experiencing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Let's enjoy the experience of genuine revival. What do you say?