

Revival at Asbury

Did you hear about the recent Asbury revival? Continuous revival services began at Asbury University, in Wilmore, Kentucky, on February 8, 2023. Before the revival officially ended 16 days later up to 70,000 visitors, mainly young people from over 200 different schools joined the students for these moving services. A desire to encounter God is what drew most to the small Wesleyan school.

Student body president, Alison Perfater, described how the revival began when a fellow student remained following a Wednesday chapel service and began openly confessing his sins to a small group of fellow students.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about the revival is that it was spontaneous; beginning in a way no one anticipated. One Asbury employee acknowledged, "We have been crying out for a revival here at Asbury for the past ten to twenty years..."

The revival attracted national attention. *New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat observed, "If you're imagining a renewal for American Christianity, all the best laid plans—the pastoral strategies, theological debates, and long-term trendlines—may matter less than something happening in some obscure place or to some obscure individual..."

Douthat is right, God often works in ways which surprise everyone. While he uses many different people, his greatest work is rarely done by Christians who have great strategies who then systematically implement their grand plans.

When God sent his son to earth as a baby 2,000 years ago, no one expected Jesus to be born in a barn and to have a feeding trough for his first bed. When he was put to death on a cross, neither Jewish scholars nor his closest followers imagined this could possibly be the fulfillment of God's plan. Yet arguably God's greatest work was done through his son's death on that cross. Through his crucifixion Jesus changed the world in a more profound way than anyone has before or since.

According to the Bible, God wants to change the world one person at a time as we seek him. The most famous verse about revival in the Old Testament says, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV)

As the verse suggests, it is no accident the recent revival began when a college student sought God's forgiveness. While the revival appears to be over, when Asbury's President, Kevin Brown, was asked about the "end" of the revival, he wisely said, "You really cannot stop something that you didn't start." As each of us sincerely seek God, we will discover, as the students at Asbury did, that God wants us to find him.