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REVIVAL AND REFORMATION

In every generation, God's Spirit strives to bring revival into the hearts of His people. Revival is an ongoing, daily experience. Each of us should identify with an old hymn that says: "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, / Prone to leave the God I love" (From "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" by Robert Robinson). Deep within, we know these words are true.

Our hearts are, indeed, prone to wander. Our minds drift from the eternal to the mundane. Our thoughts turn so easily from the heavenly to the earthly. Too often, we seem to be in bondage to deeply entrenched habits. At times, our own attitudes and reactions baffle us.

That's because our natures are fallen (*Jer. 17:9*) as the result of sin. Our natural tendency is to turn from God's way to our own (*Isa. 53:6*). With the apostle Paul we cry out, "O wretched man that I am" (*Rom. 7:24*), and with David we plead, "Revive me, O LORD, according to your lovingkindness" (*Ps. 119:159, NKJV*).

Revival is all about a God of lovingkindness seeking to deepen His relationship with us. The initiative in revival is His. His Spirit creates longings within us. His Spirit convicts us of our need. His Spirit reveals Jesus' goodness and grace.

Throughout history, God's Spirit has moved mightily in revival. When Israel drifted from God's plan and purposes, God used the young King Josiah to lead the nation back to Him, and a mighty revival followed. At the dedication of the temple, God said to Solomon: "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 will forgive their sin and heal their land' ” (2 Chron. 7:14, NKJV). The longing of God’s heart was for Israel to meet the conditions of revival, experience the power of revival, and reveal the light of His love to the entire world.

When God’s people responded to His appeals for revival, He worked mightily in their behalf. This was true for the New Testament Christian church, the Reformation, and the Advent Movement. It will also be true for God’s end-time people. His Holy Spirit will be poured out in its fullness and the earth will be “illuminated with his glory” (Rev. 18:1, NKJV).

This quarter’s lessons focus on the varied aspects of revival and reformation. Together we will probe such questions as, What are the conditions that God has given for the outpouring of His Spirit? Is God waiting for some magical moment to pour out His Spirit on His last-day church? What does it mean to live a Spirit-filled life? Is there anything we can do to cooperate with God in order to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit now? Where does revival and reformation begin?

Ellen G. White describes the importance of revival in these words: “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121. Heaven places priority on revival. What could be more important? This quarter, as we study such topics as prayer and revival, the Word and revival, witnessing and revival, a finished work and revival, and other related subjects, let us pray that God will powerfully speak to our hearts and draw us closer to Him.

Why not open your heart to the moving of His Spirit right now? Why not ask Him to do something extra special in your life today? He will answer your prayers, and heavenly blessings will flow in ways that you have not yet imagined.

A native of Connecticut, U.S.A., and an internationally known evangelist, Mark Finley, was a vice president at the General Conference from 2005 to 2010. After retiring from full-time employment, he became an assistant to the president of the General Conference to work part-time with the Revival and Reformation initiative. Pastor Finley and his wife, Ernestine, have three children and two grandchildren.

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How to Use This Teachers Edition

Get Motivated to Explore, Apply, and Create

We hope that this format of the teachers edition will encourage adult Sabbath School class members to do just that—explore, apply, and create. Each weekly teachers lesson takes your class through the following learning process, based on the Natural Learning Cycle:

1. Why is this lesson important to me? (Motivate);
2. What do I need to know from God’s Word? (Explore);
3. How can I practice what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Apply); and
4. What can I do with what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Create).

And for teachers who haven’t had time to prepare during the week for class, there is a one-page outline of easy-to-digest material in “The Lesson in Brief” section.

Here’s a closer look at the four steps of the Natural Learning Cycle and suggestions for how you, the teacher, can approach each one:

Step 1—Motivate: Link the learners’ experiences to the central concept of the lesson to show why the lesson is relevant to their lives. Help them to answer the question, Why is this week’s lesson important to me?

Step 2—Explore: Present learners with the biblical information they need to understand the central concept of the lesson. (Such information could include facts about the people; the setting; cultural, historical, and/or geographical details; the plot or what’s happening; and conflicts or tension of the texts you are studying.) Help learners to answer the question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Step 3—Apply: Provide learners with opportunities to practice the information given in Step 2. This is a crucial step; information alone is not enough to help a person to grow in Christ. Assist the learners in answering the question, How can I apply to my life what I’ve learned?

Step 4—Create: Finally, encourage learners to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (*James 1:22*). Invite them to make a life response to the lesson. This step provides individuals and groups with opportunities for creative self-expression and exploration. All such activities should help learners to answer the question, With God’s help, what can I do with what I’ve learned from this week’s lesson?

When teachers use material from each of these four steps, they will appeal to most every student in their class: those who enjoy talking about what’s happening in their lives, those who want more information about the texts being studied, those who want to know how it all fits in with real life, and those who want to get out and apply what they’ve learned.