

## Transcript 147

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. Over the past 10 days to two weeks started getting a lot of questions about something going on here in the United States, specifically at Asbury University in Kentucky. I'll let Jeff kind of fill in some of the details, but there is a, quote on quote, a revival occurring there. So a lot of people are wondering what's going on? Is this a legitimate or genuine move of God? And some questions of how can I get a piece of that sort of topic to them? And so we just want to present what does the Bible say about revival? How can you recognize it? And ultimately it's the true revival, empowered by the Holy Spirit, what would be the results of it, whether short term or long term? So we will not be talking too much about Asbury because there are plenty of people who've already done excellent jobs, people who have been there experienced it, and neither Jeff or I have done that. So we don't want to talk too much about Asbury specifically. But more, just here's some biblical tools, concepts that you can use to help you to discern whether something like this is a genuine move of God. So joining me today is Jeff, the managing editor of [bibleref.com](http://bibleref.com). So Jeff, what have you learned about specifically what's going on at Asbury?

Jeff Laird

Well, it's interesting because you brought up the idea that there are people who have reported on it, who have been there and I'm really careful about this sort of stuff, where if you're not physically present at what's going on, it is sometimes hard to know what is or is not happening. As it happens with the Asbury, as far as I know, there's been a lot of live streaming, a lot of videos, stuff that's come out of that. Even with that, I've been sort of careful because I don't want to, you know, just try to make some sort of reaction based on 30 seconds or 20 minutes of watching. But in general, what happened at Asbury was a group of college students got together for a required weekly Chapel that they were there for, and when the service was over, a few of them decided to just stay, and play some music, and pray together and more people sort of showed up and then they stuck around. And then as it went later into the night and then even into the next morning with people still there, singing and praying, it started to catch fire on social media. And that turned it into an even bigger thing.

Jeff Laird

Now that started on February 8th today is the 20th, and as of today it's a little bit fuzzy right now exactly what's happening there, in part because they've put some restrictions on what sort of social media people can use. My understanding is that as of now, it is still in process, but the college is looking to not necessarily close it down, but to separate it out from a public thing into a student thing, move it to a different location and so on and so forth. So at least for the last, what is that 11-12 days this is going on and it's attracted a lot of attention because it is arguably spontaneous. There's no set list of songs or anything else that's going on. People are reporting that the atmosphere is pretty calm. From the videos that I've seen from the accounts that I've read of what's going on there, this is not people flailing around or wailing or something like that, but it's a very low key, worshipful kind of environment, and that's inspired a lot of people to wonder what exactly is happening. Is this some sort of major revival? Is this some sort of big spiritual awakening that's happening there? And that's where the real questions come in, is we can kind of look and see what's going on, but knowing exactly what it means is a different story.

Shea Houdmann

For sure and I read a statement from I think the President of the university saying look, we're all for people worshipping God and giving testimonies of repentance and life change, and so forth, but this is a University you all need to get back to class. So, right, that's a difficult spot for I I do not envy him having to, in a sense, put a stop or at least limits on what seems to be a great work of God. But no it, so these are the type of questions we've been receiving is kind of what's going on there? I've always found it fascinating with this revival concept that sometimes it will happen kind of spontaneously at a specific location. Other people from around the country around the world will want to go there so they can get like I want some of this. I I want to experience what they're experiencing. And if you look at what the Bible says about revival and the word revival means like bringing something back to life, reviving someone. Picture someone who's had a heart attack and they're laying there dead, you to get out the almost said jumper cables. I know that's not the right term, but that'll work.

Jeff Laird

That will.

Shea Houdmann

The panels that shock the heart and the person has revived. They're back to life. That sort of things that's happening at Asbury. You do not have to be there with that specific location to experience it. If you pour out your heart and worship that, if you repent from any sins that you are currently engaged in. If you truly seek the Lord, he will perform work in your heart, on your mind, in your life, no matter where you are. So this idea that like a special anointing right now at Asbury, and I've got to go there in order to get it and then bring it with me so I can have the same thing on my campus. It's like maybe you can go there and learn just by observing, seeing what's doing, but it's not like a move of God like this can't just be replicated just by having your presence there and then transferring your presence to somewhere else. So it's, it's always been kind of a weird thing every time there's a, quote on quote revival in the United States, everyone wanting to go there. I know people who travel across the country around the world just try to experience this and I don't see anything like that really in the Bible. That everyone has to go to the specific location in order to get this specific blessing. That doesn't not seem to be how God works, at least in in my study of the scriptures.

Jeff Laird

Yeah, and it's, it's it raises that question of exactly what is happening at Asbury, and I think we're allowed to discern between saying the things about it that are good and the things that we just don't know where the things that we're sure about without trying to cram it into some specific label it. These things aren't always going to look exactly the same. That particular college claims that they've had revivals many, many times, and in the 1900s and then I think they said the the Fifties, 58, 1970 and so on and so forth. So we've, we've seen a lot of things that people refer to as revivals and I, I agree with what you're saying, that sometimes part of what can make these things catch on is sort of they become a little bit of a fad, so that's one of the things that makes it hard to gauge with Asbury because it caught fire on social media. And understandably, a lot of people want to be involved. And I don't think that that's necessarily a bad impulse. I think if something's going on and you find that it's Worshipful and it's meaningful and it's important and you say, hey, I want to go be a part of that. I think it can be a very positive thing. But

there is a difference between something that's really popular, or something that's really engaging, or really fulfilling as opposed to something that's an actual revival. Now, you mentioned the idea of repentance. That's something that's really critical when we look at Scripture and what it says because the the core idea of revival in the Bible always revolves around that idea of the people on mass repenting and turning back to God. It's not necessarily about the emotional experience, but repentance is a key part of it.

Shea Houdmann

Looking at Scripture, I mean in the Old Testament, the two closest examples to revival I could think of would be in the range of Hezekiah and Josiah in the Old Testament, where for generations or for at least a generation, the people who completely abandoned the Lord. Like no one was seeking after the Lord and God raises up a king with the heart to follow him and Hezekiah and then three generations, and Josiah and results in people repenting. People turning back to submission to God's word, observing the Passover and other things, and doing the things that the law commands. So the people went from being dead in terms of their following the Lord. To being alive. And it impacted that entire generation of people. Like an entire generation went from no interest in things of God to closely following God. Sadly, following the storyline that didn't continue beyond those generations, but for at least a time, those revivals had a huge impact.

Shea Houdmann

And New Testament. I maybe I'd go to some of the seven churches in Revelation where layered to see how you basically you're you're dead I want you to come back to life. Or maybe that's not in the right church, but one of the seven churches that specific language is used where Christ is like you're not doing what I've called you to do. You're not fulfilling the calling I have on your life. Stop doing the things you're doing instead follow me. That's sort of an attitude is a powerful example of a revival. So to me, like I have no interest in judging what's going on at Asbury, it's like neither one of us have been there. I have a someone I'd consider a friend who did travel there, but she is currently at college in nearby and she her feeling from it was, I came away wanting to follow God more closely than I currently am. And if that's what's going on there, then I am 100% all for it. So no criticism at all heading towards Asbury in this conversation.

Shea Houdmann

But ultimately don't know way you can judge whether a clinical revival was of God would be the impact it has on people. Is that like sending your kids to a Christian camp for a week while they're on a big spiritual high, and then two days after they get home they're back to living exactly how they were before? Or for adults, a bunch of men go to a men's retreat or women go to a women's retreat or even a conference, and you come back and that was so powerful, life changing. Then a little bit later made no noticeable difference in your life. So is that what's happening here or is this, are people's lives truly being transformed? People turning from being disinterested in the things of God to dedicated to them? So a lot of things. It's always wise to withhold judgment, not not buying into something, oh wow, God is really moving in Asbury. This is clearly the work of the Holy Spirit. You want to go that far, but you also don't want to this can't be of God. It very well could be. But the only way to ultimately to discern, to evaluate is to see the effects the Holy Spirit produces long term in the people who are involved at Asbury.

Jeff Laird

Yeah, that's really the key is, is we need to just admit that we really don't know what this signifies, if it signifies anything for a couple of reasons. One is because this type of thing where a group of people get enthusiastic and a lot of people joined together and there's, you know, some type of event or a spontaneous thing that that happens pretty often. That that's not a super, super uncommon thing to have going on. What's more rare and what's much more powerful is when that does turn into very broad lasting, social change. And there have been times where that has happened. There have been times in Christian history and even in American history where what we refer to as revivals have turned into something bigger. There's sort of a difference in that terminology even that when when I was growing up, I remember hearing people talking about we're going to have a revival at this and that church this weekend, you know. In other words, it's being used as a term to say we're gonna meet outside. We're gonna invite the public in. We're gonna get all fired up and we're going to kind of get reenergized for the faith, which is fine. And in that sort of a sense, I would say what's happening at Asbury is, is a revival of sorts in that context.

Jeff Laird

But a revival that actually goes through and has social consequences is something different. So like in the 1740s, we had the Great Awakening where there was a revival, where there was a surge of interest that started with these small groups and then spread beyond that. And it led to people who were much more engaged with faith and much more involved with what was going on. Then we had the second Great Awakening, which was late 1700s, early 1800s, that wound up resulting in a tremendous number of new churches and influence. More recently, for us, probably the last time that we had something happen that you could really say was a revival with long lasting consequences was the Jesus movement. And that was in the 60s and 70s and there's where the concept of revival even gets complicated because the Jesus movement was not a, let's say, brilliantly theologically astute approach, but it definitely had a huge impact. It changed a lot of the way American culture responds to church and reacts to church. And at the time that all of those were going on, you wouldn't have really been able to say yes, absolutely, this is going to be a really big deal. You you couldn't know that until later. You weren't going to be able to see those effects. So if with what's happening with Asbury and any other revivals I've heard, there's other colleges that are, I don't want to use the term imitating, but I guess that's just the closest way to to put it. They're they're doing something, experiencing some something similar. We're not really going to know until later what this is about. In the meantime, it's OK for us to look at what they're actually doing, what they're actually saying, what sort of people are there, what people are saying about it. What's the atmosphere like? You can, you can still gauge the doctrines and everything else like that. In the meantime, you, but you're not really going to know is this a truly from God revival until quite a bit of time has passed.

Shea Houdmann

And what to me is refreshing in a sense about what I've heard at Asbury is it's not gone the route to some of the more recent claims of revival. If you look at I'm not going to try to remember the dates, but in Toronto, in Brownsville and Lakeland, there were these revivals that almost entirely revolved around things that were ecstatic. That people were screaming, and falling down, and claims of healing, and gold dust, and oil, and all sorts of crazy things that the Bible doesn't even talk about, these are not things, biblically speaking, happen when God is reviving someone's hearts. Not to deny that God does miracles

and can do those things. But when the entire movement completely revolves around the miraculous, with very questionable teaching. I remember people I know were traveling to these places as they wanted to get a sampling of the anointing.

Shea Houdmann

I don't see, at least at Asbury and some of the other break off groups might be able right way to say it, but I don't see that sort of happening. It seems to truly be people worshipping, people confessing their sins to one other, people truly seeking to be on fire for God, and so for that I have nothing but gratitude for what's what seems to be happening there. And I truly hope that lives are changed for the long term because if a movement among young people were to happen in this country, that is tremendously needed. That when you hear the statistics of the number of people who are claimed to be followers of Jesus Christ, every generation the number gets lower and lower and lower, and amongst people who are now teenagers and 20s, it is frighteningly low. So a revival among young people would be would be amazing. I would love to see the Lord do something like that. And I truly hope that that's what is occurring here. I would love to see it spread throughout the country and around the world. But far too early to make a claim like that.

Shea Houdmann

I've just noticed in the last few days people asking a lot of questions about is there going to be a worldwide revival before the end times get here? I'm like, well, one, the Bible seems to describe things getting progressively worse and worse and worse before the end. Not better. But OK, right now we've got essentially a potentially, hopefully a legitimate work of God occurring in one university of the United States. Let's not jump to this is a worldwide revival that's going to usher in the end times sort of thing. So let's thank God for what he's doing. Let's pray that he continues to do it. Changing people's hearts minds, transforming people's lives. Let's seek to accomplish some of the same things we see at Asbury and our churches and our lives and our families in terms of worshipping the Lord together, praying together. Confessing our sins to one another. Helping one another. Those sorts of things. But let's not take something that just looks exciting for a time and blow it way out of proportion. Definitely far beyond we can. There's enough information out there that we can truly evaluate it.

Jeff Laird

Yeah, I like the idea of saying let's let's just take what's good from this and be willing to accept it. I mean the idea that people in the that generation are seemingly organically and naturally attracted to this particular expression of faith, OK, that is a positive thing. And if it's not exactly perfect, then it's not exactly perfect. And you know, we don't need to necessarily crush everything about it because we can find some criticism. We do want to be careful that we don't endorse something that might be going on that is, is sort of a concern, and there are things that you hear from what's going at Asbury where they do give you reason to pause and to be concerned. There's questions about the the lifestyles, doctrinal stances, theological views of a lot of the people who are major players in keeping this going. OK, that's reasonable. There's questions about whether this is just and I'll say just with the air quotes, I'm not diminishing worship in any sense of the imagination. But as we talked about with revival, Biblical revival involves repentance and turning towards God.

Jeff Laird

A long running worship service is a positive thing. That's a good thing, generally speaking, but that doesn't necessarily mean it involves repentance. The the the fruit that we're looking for from a true revival is a widespread movement of people turning away from sin, evil, selfishness, violence, all those other things and turning towards God and towards Christ. If the result of this current revival or movement or whatever we want to call it, is that people are just more interested and enthusiastic about getting together to worship, we don't want to say that's a bad thing, but that's clearly not an actual revival. And to what you were saying before that you're looking for some sort of longer term effects.

Jeff Laird

My go to for revival, probably because I'm a little more cynical, is the book of Judges. And you see what we would think of as revival. There's times in the book of Judges where Israel says you're right. We collectively recognize that we've done wrong, we're emotionally invested in what's going on. We're going to make a change, we're going to follow. We're going to do the things that we're supposed to do. And for a time, they really do turn in that direction. There is an actual, measurable change in the people and in the culture. And then eventually that fades away. And then there's a need for it to happen again. So a revival doesn't have to be permanent, but it does have to have some sort of lasting effect. So I think we can we can keep a cautious eye, approve of the good aspects of what we see. Be cautious about the negative.

Jeff Laird

One thing I have seen people do that I do think we need to be very careful of is, we need to be careful not to condemn something because of who approves of it. And I'm not necessarily saying that that's always a bad thing, but what I am saying is you, you even have the stopped clocks principle is, you know Satan is not in the habit of taking and making his agents always these drooling demons. So most false teachers hold beliefs that if you just line them up on some sort of a graph, 85, 90, 95% of what they say would be biblical. So I've seen some people, they've referred to some of the folks who've caught this social media vibe and are now going to Asbury and I guess kind of glomming themselves on to what's going on. And they've pointed to some of these voices and said, well, if that person thinks this is good, then it's got to be from the devil. And I think we need to be really careful not to not to take that approach. It's entirely possible for somebody who is a non believer, even a false teacher, to see something that's going on and have a positive response. But I'm not going to condemn what's going on in Asbury because of flaming heretic looks at it and says yes, I think this is a good thing. Now if the people who are there versus the people who who are not there. That's another thing. If the people who are there, all the people who say that they like it, are all flaming heretics, and all the people whose judgment, and discernment, and wisdom I trust who go there and say no, this doesn't look good. OK, well, now we have reasons to be a little more cautious.

Jeff Larid

But I think we can wait and see what sort of fruit comes out of this. We don't need to to try to judge every little bit of right here and right now. I like what Gamaliel says in Acts Chapter 5. He's a Jewish leader. He's responding to the apostles as they're promoting the faith, and he basically recommends a very hands off approach. And I'm not necessarily in favor of us being careless about these things. We do need to sort of stay in front of what happens in spiritual movements, so we know what's right and wrong. But Gamaliel's basic approach was to say, look, when you're looking at these people, if what

they're doing is from God, you're not going to be able to stop at anyway. And if, if it's from God and you try to stop it, then you're guilty of interfering with what God wants to do. Now again, we are called to be watchmen and and to defend and so on and so forth. So if there's something blatantly false that we see, we should talk about it. We should say something about it. We should bring it up. But I think we're in a phase right now with this where all we know is people seem to be very interested in participating in worship and it's very organic. I don't see any reason to discourage anybody from that, or to be upset about it until or unless we have some sort of a reason to think yeah, this is really a bad thing. Because if this really is something that God wants to do, I don't want to stamp on it. And if it's something that God's not up for, then eventually it's not gonna mean anything anyway.

Shea Houdmann

Excellent point, Jeff. And I've I've seen some of that same attitude like oh, oh, this person is for I therefore, I must be against it. That's really not a good way to to live your life and to evaluate different movements. But maybe in in summary, neither Jeff or I have been to Asbury, so we have no first-hand knowledge. I've got a little bit of second hand knowledge. Some people that we, I'm generally speaking, trust and respect have been there and they've given evaluations. And when this episode goes live will include some links to some of their evaluations so you can we get a little bit more of a first hand touch on it. But ultimately, if it's a Biblical revival, it's a revival that matches what Scripture says it's going to result in change lives for the long term. And ultimately, that's what we hope for. I mean we when we see something like this happening, we should truly hope that this is the work of God, that these people are going to be permanently changed by what they experience there. That God is truly through the Holy Spirit doing a mighty work. And we should want that more.

Shea Houdmann

If I I don't know the from the very first time I heard of it and the first thing that came to my mind is I've never been a fan of the I'm going to travel to this location in order to get a piece of this blessing. I mean, to me if what's happening in Asbury worship, repentance, confession, if that's, if that's what you need, if that's what you want, you can do that anywhere. We would God is omnipresent. The Holy Spirit, it is with you. If you're a believer in Christ, he is in you. You don't need to travel somewhere to experience those things. You don't need to experience the, you don't need to go somewhere to feel the overwhelming joy of having a restored relationship with God. That can happen wherever you are, whenever you're ready to submit to him in that. So few little corrective, not necessarily about Asbury, but how other people are looking at it. So with anything like this always go back to Scripture. Compare what you see, what you experience with God's word. God's word will will never lead you astray. So, Jeff, any other closing thoughts?

Jeff Laird

I think that that's a good summary for how we want to approach this. If it's if it's really something that God wants, we're going to see lasting change. And over time we'll learn more about the details of exactly what this either was, or is, depending on how long it continues. And for me the things that I'm really looking for is is change. I'm looking for the idea that is, is the primary thing that's going on is preaching of the gospel. Of turning towards God. Again, not because there's something wrong with worship, but just singing worship songs is not revival. It's not a revival of any meaningful kind, unless people are actually being led to the truth. And I wouldn't want to interfere with that until or unless I

have a good reason. So for me at least right now I haven't seen or heard anything about Asbury that makes me say no, this is dangerous or this is a bad thing. I'm excited by the idea. It's at least a good thing. I could use some good news with all the baloney that I got to see. So I'll be happy for the positive stuff that we see in this for right now. But I'll be ready if it turns in the wrong direction to be one of those people who stand there and say no now we're kind of moving in the wrong direction. But until then I'm I'm going to take the good when I can get it.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely agree with you 100% . This has been the Got Questions podcast and sort of like what is revival? Kind of inspired by all the questions we've been receiving about what's taking place at Asbury University. So hope this conversation has been encouraging. Helpful to you. Got questions? The Bible has answers. And we'll help you find them.