

 **SERMON QUICK START GUIDE: OUTLINES AND IDEAS**

**Introduction**

So, you’re interested in preaching or teaching parallel to the *Seeking Him* workbook? We’re excited to help! Over the years, we’ve heard testimonies from thousands of churches, classes, and groups who have walked through the material and have experienced powerful results. Our prayer is that your experience will be the same.

In fact, as one who serves in the ministry that developed *Seeking Him* and in a local church as a teaching pastor, I can attest to the immense value of setting aside twelve to thirteen weeks to walk through the workbook together as a church-wide experience. In my church, we linked together Sunday morning preaching, small groups, and the personal devotions in the books, and we also invited an event team from Life Action to come and challenge our people on these same themes a few months later. There is definitely unique power in a concentrated focus!

The sermon quick start material below is yours to utilize and modify—you don’t need to attribute credit to me or to our ministry. We hope the following ideas will accelerate your creativity and passion to craft your own *Seeking Him*-themed messages. —Dan Jarvis, for Life Action Ministries (2019)

**Message #1: Revival**

We use the term “revive” when we think of either refreshment (like water to a thirsty soul) or the moment in an emergency room when someone’s heart stops beating—they need to be *revived*!

It’s possible that you need either type of revival or even both! And the Bible offers us a pathway in that direction, but it isn’t always an easy road.

How do I know if this whole “revival” conversation is for me?

In Revelation 2–3, we can see three examples of churches in need of revival, and we can apply them as tests to our own lives.

1. The church of Ephesus needed revival: they had left their first love.

**Test #1: If I don’t love Jesus the way I once did, I need revival.**

1. The church of Sardis needed revival: they had external appearance of life, but they were dead inside.

**Test #2: If my spiritual life is defined by my activity for God rather than by intimacy with God, I need revival.**

1. The church of Laodicea needed revival: their commitment to Christ was lukewarm.

**Test #3: If my commitment to Christ has grown lukewarm and my pursuit of holiness compromised, I need revival.**

A fourth “bonus test” can be applied if we think about the way the book of Revelation ends—the vision painted for us of eternity with God, and all the joys of heaven and all the adventures that await us there (Rev. 21–22).

**Test #4: If I’ve lost or neglected my sense of eternal vision and mission in the Christian life, I need revival!**

So, what about you? Do these test questions reveal a need for a fresh infusion of life, a need for real revival in your soul? If so, you’re in the right place. Over the next twelve weeks, we will be walking through *Seeking Him* and asking God to do a fresh work in our hearts.

We can begin this journey by looking back to Revelation 2:5 and the three-part prescription Jesus gave the church of Ephesus to recover their first love relationship with Him.

This series will be an opportunity for all of us to:

* Set aside quality time to seek God.
* Return to our first love relationship with Him.
* Catch a fresh vision for what God wants to do in and through our lives.

Our prayer as we begin the journey comes from Ephesians 3:14–21.

*Idea: In my church, during this prayer time I said, “Verse 14 shows how Paul ‘got on his knees’ to pray about all this. If you are physically able and you have the desire to do so, you might want to join me on your knees right now, right where you are, as an outward demonstration to the Lord of your inward humility.”*

**Message #2: Humility**

Humility is always step #1 on the road to revival—and in fact, it is step #1 in any aspect of our relationship with God.

Think of it this way:

* If you aren’t humble, you’ll miss your purpose (since you were created to follow God’s will, not your own).
* If you aren’t humble, you’ll miss salvation (since you won’t admit you need a Savior).
* If you aren’t humble, you’ll miss revival (since you won’t be able to identify your own spiritual need for it).

And to be clear, if you aren’t humble, *everything* in your life will *ultimately, eternally* go wrong.

Let’s look at an amazing story of pride and the destruction in brought into the life of a king in Daniel 5. (Retell the story through the passage.) MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN

*(Idea: to research what was happening militarily around Babylon on the night of this party and what the result was.)*

Pride has an amazing way of blinding us to the real needs in our lives!

* Psalm 10:4

Humility, on the other hand, is when we see and believe the truth about who God is and about who we are. Humility isn’t degrading yourself; it is just being honest about the fact that you’re a created being whose purpose can only be found in God, not in self-pride.

The Bible explains this truth in James 4:6–10. *(walk through this passage)*

So often, even those of us who are Christians can get caught in the trap of pride, saying things like, “I’m not wrong. I don’t need help. I won’t move until someone else does. I already know what I need. I don’t need to listen.” Or, like Cain, we simply say, “I want to do it my way.”

Revival can begin when we repent from these attitudes and say instead, “Lord Jesus, I need You!” As James 4:6 explains, God gives GRACE to the humble, and from that flows the gift of personal revival. It always starts with humility!

*Extra content option: Whether or not our hearts are humble before God is often demonstrated by how humble we are in the context of our relationships. Here are a few principles related to that:*

*In relationships, humility means:*

* *Not always having to get your way (Phil. 2:3).*
* *Being quick to listen and slow to speak (James 1:19).*
* *Being able to apologize and seek forgiveness (Matt. 5:23–24).*
* *Putting the needs of someone else above your own needs (Phil. 2:4).*

*There is a helpful list that compares the heart attitudes of pride and humility (brokenness) on Day 5 of the readings in the Humility chapter.*

**Message #3: Honesty**

*Idea for a warm-up: invite people to stand and ask someone nearby them: “Why is it so hard for people to be honest?”*

Humility is the foundation of revival—step 1. Honesty is the logical next step, because once you’ve admitted you need God’s help and grace, you’re able to get specific about that need. “Lord, I need Your grace to overcome my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” “I am willing to confess my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

The good news we can start off with today is that when we get honest before the Lord, He responds mercifully to us—even when our honesty means we have to confess the evil in our hearts.

**A promise: 1 John 1:9 (“If we confess our sins . . .”)**

**A premise: Psalm 19:7 (“The law of the Lord is perfect, *reviving* the soul . . .”)**

Why would LAW be involved in reviving our souls? Because the Law helps us get honest; it’s like a mirror to show us what areas we need help with.

* The Law drives us to Jesus (Gal. 3:24).
* The Law stops us from making excuses (Rom. 3:19­–20).
* The Law forces us to be honest with ourselves, with God, and with others. (A quick walk-through of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 illustrates how the Law shows us our need for mercy and grace.)

We need grace so much, based on Ephesians 2:8–9. This is important to understand not only in reference to our salvation, but also to our ongoing relationship with God. We can be honest about the fact that we need Him!

Psalm 19:7 indicates that the Law “revives” our souls because it drives us into honesty, so that we can experience God’s love and grace. Without the Law, we might be left in blind pride and never realize how much mercy we need. The Law reminds us of what sin has done to our souls and what our fate would be apart from the forgiveness and salvation God offers.

Our honest response to the Law of God then (both initially when we put our trust in Christ and then beyond that as we seek Him for revival) is well expressed by David in Psalm 51. *(Walk through, then pray about this passage).*

**Message #4: Repentance**

During the times of Martin Luther, most churches had strayed from teaching about authentic relationship with God and had traded it for religious rituals and even “games” (like the selling of indulgences). Rather than truly turning toward God out of love and devotion, many people were just trying to “check off the boxes” of church requirements so that they could move on with their own agenda apart from God.

Does this sound like today? Martin Luther confronted these wrong attitudes with his famous “95 Theses” that began the Reformation. The first of these 95 statements? “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent!’ he willed that the entire life of believers be one of repentance.”

Repentance is turning from “my will, my way” to “God’s will, God’s way” instead. It’s turning from everything I know to be sin toward God’s best plan for life.

Repentance begins with humility, involves specific honesty, requires a choice, and results in a change.

It’s saying “no” to sin and self so that I can say “yes” to Christ and His vision for my life.

Why should I repent? Mark 1:15; Luke 13:5; Acts 2:38, 17:30–31; Revelation 2:5

*Idea: this is a great message in which to share your own testimony or to have someone from your group share theirs as a demonstration of repentance.*

**Key text to walk through as far as how repentance works: Ephesians 4:17–5:2.** Verses 22–24 are the “miracle” and the part that God does. The verses that follow are the practical application where our choice gets involved daily. We repent once (salvation) and yet we also repent every day (ongoing obedience).

* Will you turn from your own way, to start walking God’s way?
* Will you give up on your sins to put your faith in God?
* Will you let go of your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to love Jesus instead?
* Will you seek your own path forward or will you seek Him?

This is the question at the beginning of our faith journey, and it is one we must come back to again and again. This is what Martin Luther meant when he said, “The entire life of believers should be one of repentance.”

**Message #5: Grace**

This is a good day to review what has happened so far: “Are we having fun yet?” This is a message of hope—the fact that in the midst of our own needs and sin, God is there with grace for transformation!

God doesn’t expect you to meet His requirements on your own. He provides grace. Grace is God doing for us what we could never do for ourselves.

**What does God’s grace do for us?**

* Saves (Eph. 2:8)
* Retrains (Titus 2:11­–14)
* Sustains (Heb. 4:16)
* Energizes (Phil. 2:12–13)

In summary, God can give you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.

**How do we live by the power of grace?**

* Receive the gift of grace.
* Admit you need grace daily.
* Cry up for grace in your moments of temptation or need.
* Do it now. “God never gives strength for tomorrow, or for the next hour, but only for the strain of the minute.” —Oswald Chambers

**Message #6: Holiness**

Can you imagine saying “holy humanity”? What would be wrong with such a statement?

Weren’t we created in the image of God, with a special purpose, set apart from the rest of creation? In that sense, we are (or were created to be) holy. So, what happened?

Sin was a defilement of human holiness, a forfeit of human purpose. From the moment of original sin until the present, we have all be separated from God.

**To be holy is to be:**

* Set apart for special use.
* Defined by and devoted to what is good.
* Totally separated from evil.

Holiness also can be said to have degrees of intensity. God’s holiness is so massive, bright, and powerful it easily overwhelms even the most “holy” action of any of us.

*Idea for illustration: the sun as compared to a lightbulb. You (the lightbulb) can strive for holiness and have a brightness that is akin to that of the sun but nowhere near the intensity and scale of holiness that God represents!*

There is a brightness, a blaze, a projection of purity and perfection that emanates from God as a result of His holiness. True holiness is an awesome, radiant glory.

Anytime someone says something is “for God’s glory,” you can understand that to mean: “This is dedicated to be holy, free from evil, defined by and devoted to what is good.”

But what do we do? If God’s holiness is perfect and if we have already admitted that we fall short of that, what is our road forward from here? How can we “be holy” if we’ve already been polluted by sin?

* Hebrews 10:10-–22
* 2 Corinthians 3:7­–18
* 1 Peter 1:13–16

We live in a tension of two realities: we have been made holy by Jesus **and** we are being made holy by Jesus.

**How to live for the holy glory of God:**

1. Believe what God has said about you (1 Cor. 6:9–11).
2. Ask God for the grace to walk in daily holiness (Titus 2:11–14).
3. Put off the old and put on the new (Eph. 4:22–24).
4. Start devoting all your activity to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

Concluding encouragement: 1 Peter 2:9

**Message #7: Obedience**

Share the story of Brother Andrew (*God’s Smuggler*), culminating with this quote from his book:

Whenever, wherever, however You want me, I’ll go. And I’ll begin this very minute. Lord, as I stand up from this place, and as I take my first step forward, will You consider this as a step toward complete obedience to You. I’ll call it the step of *yes*.

Obedience is saying “yes” to God—doing what God says to do, when He says to do it, with the right heart attitude.

It is empowered by God’s grace and the indwelling Holy Spirit (Titus 2:11–14).

It is the way I demonstrate my love for God (John 14:15).

**Five powerful reasons to say “yes” to God:**

1. Obedience is the price Jesus paid to save me. Remember when He said, “Not my will, but yours be done”? (Phil. 2:6–11; Heb. 5:7–9).
2. Obedience is the point of my Bible study (James 1:21–25).
3. Obedience is the proof that I’m actually a Christian (1 John 2:24­–2­5).
4. Obedience is the practice of my love for Jesus (John 14:21, 23).
5. Obedience is the process God uses to unlock His plan for my life (Luke 5:1–11).

Return to the Brother Andrew quote as a possible conclusion/call to action.

**Message #8: Clear Conscience**

What was wrong with the Old Testament Law? Why wasn’t it sufficient?

* Hebrews 9:13–15, 10:1–18

Conscience issues are actually *accounting* issues. They arise when we have knowledge of an unpaid debt.

When we choose to sin, we take on a debt toward God (what we owe to justice) and toward other people (whatever we specifically did to them).

As our debt burden grows, we lose:

* Our sense of fellowship with God and with other people.
* Our “credit” for the grace and mercy of others.
* Our ability to fulfill our mission.
* Our confidence to take forward steps or to be a witness.
* Our ability to pray joyfully.

Our conscience demands justices when our debts are unpaid. If we pridefully ignore our conscience, we move quickly into guilt, shame, sorrow, and resentment.

**How do I clear my conscience, then?**

1. Begin with confession to God (1 John 1:8–2:2; Ps. 32).
2. Follow up with confession and restitution to people you have wronged (Matt. 5:23–24; Luke 19:1–9).
* A clear conscience is worth it! To be able to say, “There is no one alive I who I have wronged, offended, or hurt in any way that I have not gone back to in an attempt to make things right.”
* A clear conscience empowers our prayers (Heb. 10:21–22).
* A clear conscience confirms our credibility (Acts 23:1).
* A clear conscience fills us with joy (Ps. 32:2).
* A clear conscience empowers our witness (1 Peter 3:15–16).

**Message #9: Forgiveness**

Starting Verses: Ephesians 4:31­–32

Remember the principle: conscience issues are accounting issues. They arise when we have knowledge of an unpaid debt. Well, hurt and forgiveness issues are also accounting issues on the other side of the same ledger. They arise when we have knowledge that someone owes a debt to us.

Every debt is ultimately paid; the question is, “By whom?” Forgiveness is the act of saying, in essence, “I will cancel the debt you owe to me, and thus, I’ll swallow the price of it rather than asking you to do something to pay it back.”

Study the legal basis of God’s forgiveness toward us: Romans 3:20–28.

Justice says: “You pay what you owe!” Jesus says: “I’ll pay what you owe!”

Study how we must forgive other people: Romans 12:14–21, Matthew 18.

We could demand justice: “You pay what you owe!” or we could follow in the footsteps of Jesus—to say: “I’ll forgive you, and thus, I’ll pay what you owe!”

**Steps toward forgiving others:**

1. Write off your loss, on the basis of God’s love for you.
2. Stop being a bill-collector (let God take care of who owes what).
3. Let the person know their debt has been marked “paid in full.”
4. Choose to love that person as Jesus loves you, to seek their good and not their harm.

*Idea: Since this issue opens up a lot of difficult questions, I did a quick walk-through of some common questions and offered the opportunity for those who might be struggling to speak with one of our leadership team after the service. Also, I pointed people to the* Seeking Him *workbook chapter on this, which is a much deeper dive into the issue.*

**FAQs on Forgiveness**

* What if the person isn’t sorry?
* What if they don’t stop doing the wrong thing?
* What if their sin also impacts other people?
* What if I can’t actually afford to say, “I’ll pay what you owe me”?
* What if they never get what they deserve?
* What if their past wrong keeps affecting me?
* What if I try to forgive, but I just don’t feel it?
* What if we are both at fault?

*Concluding prayer moment based on Ephesians 4:31–32.*

**Message #10: Purity**

Starting Scripture: Psalm 15

What comes to mind, when you think of the word purity? (I usually think of water, and I’m really interested in water that is 100 percent pure not just 99 percent).

Being morally pure means having a clean and virtuous heart—righteous, godly, redeemed by Christ. Purity involves many things, including thoughts, motives, words, and behaviors. Of all the areas of purity we are called upon as believers to pursue, certainly sexual purity is the most complicated and, for many, the most difficult.

**A look at God’s standards for moral purity:**

* 1 Corinthians 6:9–11
* Matthew 5:28
* Ephesians 5:3–7

God made humans sexual beings for His glory and for our enjoyment. He intends sex to be the most intimate statement of loving commitment that a man and a woman can share—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

The best sex life possible is reserved for those who enjoy it based on God’s design: when a man and woman unite in a pure, lifetime marriage commitment.

Unrighteous expressions of sexuality always lead to loss, sorry, disappointment, and emptiness (Eph. 4:17–22).

Purity begins with a simple choice to say “no” to sin’s lie and “yes” to God’s best at the earliest moment you perceive an unrighteous desire. (Note: your power for “no” comes from a stronger “yes.”)

The power source for moral purity is the Holy Spirit giving us grace to obey, even when under temptation (1 Cor. 10:13).

Premise for purity: Titus 2:11–14. (Recall that this passage also came up in our discussions on repentance, grace, and holiness.)

**Three freedom principles for those pursuing purity of heart:**

1. Radical affection. “I love God more than this sin!”
2. Radical amputation. “I’ll cut out of my life anything that drags me into sin.”
3. Radical accountability. “I’ll get honest with someone I trust regarding my sin so that they can help me.”

A new plan for sexual satisfaction: Save all of your sexual energy and focus for your spouse, always putting their needs above your own. This results in unity, peace, joy, and a sense of shared mission and love together.

If you’d like to include a note to singles, consider speaking a bit on how Matthew 6:33 would apply to them in this regard.

A vision for purity: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).

**Message #11: Spirit-Filled Life**

Are you in step with the Holy Spirit?

Do a quick review of how the Holy Spirit it helps us in our lives: convicting, indwelling, leading, gifting, and filling. In this message we are focusing on the *leading* and the *filling* of the Holy Spirit.

A Spirit-filled lifestyle is not something you can generate. It’s allowing your life to be fully controlled, influenced, and saturated by God.

Allowing the Holy Spirit to fill you requires ongoing humility, because it starts with the recognition that you can’t/shouldn’t take the lead!

Walk through Galatians 5:16­–6:10.

* Being Spirit-filled means that I refuse to let my flesh determine my choices, habits, and pursuits (5:16–21).
* Being Spirit-filled means that I am easily identifiable as a Christian because my attitudes and actions are full of spiritual virtue (5:22–23).
* Being Spirit-filled means I have put to death the sinful patterns of my old life before Christ (5:24)
* Being Spirit-filled means I am synchronizing my life with God’s priorities and values (5:25).
* Being Spirit-filled means I resist pride, walking humbly in God’s grace (5:26–6:6).
* Being Spirit-filled means I make daily choices that please God and bring blessing to all people (6:7–10).

Are your choices “full” of the Holy Spirit? How about your attitudes? Your inner thoughts? Your future plans?

Encouragement: 2 Peter 1:3–4

**Message #12: Devotional Life**

Devotion is love, loyalty, or enthusiasm for a person, activity, or cause.

Here’s an interesting quote from Martin Luther King Jr., preached on August 9, 1953:

We are challenged to devote our lives to the cause of Christ as the Communists do to Communism. We cannot accept their creed, but we must admire their zeal, and their readiness to sacrifice themselves to the very uttermost. . . . I have seen communist universities passionately attempting to win their associates to communism. How many Christian students have ever attempted to win other students to Christ? How many of you on your jobs have ever attempted to do so? Would today that the Christians’ fire were burning with the same intensity in the hearts of Christians as the Communist fire is burning in the hearts of Communists. We must unreservedly commit ourselves to the cause of Christ!

Christian devotion is love, loyalty, and enthusiasm for Christ, for His way of life, and for His mission.

Imagine devoting your life to Christ to the very fullest extent, to say “yes” to Him in every aspect of who you are, where you’re going, and what you love. Behind the scenes of a commitment like that is something deeply personal, something inside of your soul. We call it your “personal devotional life.”

**Our devotional life is cultivated by:**

* Bible intake and meditation.
* Prayer and spiritual focus.
* Worship and praise to God.
* Attending to your relationship with God on a daily basis.
1. Your devotional life is fueled by your desire to be close to God (Ps. 42:1–2, 84:10).
2. Your devotional life involves the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16–17), but it isn’t *about* the Bible (John 5:39).
3. Expressions of your devotional life can happen all the time (1 Thess. 5:17) or at specific times (Ps. 5:3; Luke 5:16).
4. Your devotional life is mostly secret (Matt. 6:5–18), which is why it requires faith for results-oriented people to maintain.

As devoted followers of Jesus, ready to follow His plan and fulfill His mission, we’ll find our strength, resolve, and renewal along the way in the quietness of personal devotion.

How do I begin? The book of Psalms in the Bible is like kindling for the fire of your devotional life. Start there!

**Optional Wrap-Up Message Ideas**

* Hebrews 11—how the life of obedient faith leads to adventure and sacrifice, giving our best for the kingdom of God.
* The Great Commandments and the Great Commission—defining our purpose (to love God and love others) and our mission (to make disciples).
* Matthew 6:33—to learn what it means to seek the kingdom of God first and to watch as God provides and guides our new lives of obedience.