



ALGORITHM

Experiencing Personal Revival

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We'll be taking the next few weeks to dissect what it means to "live out our faith". This simple statement can get awfully complex in the sea of messages and books and authors and speakers, to the point where you just might want to throw up your hands and wonder "what the heck am I doing and how can I ever figure this out". We are going to approach this problem with an algorithm, a step-by-step process, in hopes that new connections and relationships will connect the dots in a powerfully transformative way.

THE WAY MATTERS

You may recognize the Chapel logo to the right; a tree next to a river. It's actually based on Psalm 1. This scripture describes a way of life that is blessed by God, and one way that is not. The way not blessed is the one that disregards God and follows the world. That person does what is right in his/her own eyes and not God's. This way of life does what you want versus what God wants. This way ends in "chaff", the dried up unwanted part of wheat that blows away in the wind. There is no value and nourishment in the chaff. The other way is the way that leads to joy, excitement, and fulfillment. The person on this path loves God's ways and desires to follow Him. This path leads to a never-ending source of nourishment - a river of living water (read **John 7:38**). And even through storms, hardships, and drought, this person survives. They thrive because they are never cut off; their roots run deep to God himself. This person will bear fruit not just for themselves, but so much so that there will be an overflow onto the people around.



Psalm 1: 1-6 (NIV) 1 Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, 2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. 3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers. 4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Psalm 1: 1-6 (MSG) 1 How well God must like you—you don't hang out at Sin Saloon, you don't slink along Dead-End Road, you don't go to Smart-Mouth College. 2-3 Instead you thrill to God's Word, you chew on Scripture day and night. You're a tree replanted in Eden, bearing fresh fruit every month, never dropping a leaf, always in blossom. 4-5 You're not at all like the wicked, who are mere windblown dust—Without defense in court, unfit company for innocent people. 6 God charts the road you take. The road *they* take is Skid Row.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL

1. Does the way you take matter? Why? What is God's promise in this?
2. Is this just a call to be better behaved on the outside? What is important to God? (read **1 Samuel 16:7**)
3. Which path is appealing to you? Which seems harder? Which is more rewarding? Which do you long for? Is the effort worth the reward?

ALGORITHM RECAP

The algorithm we've been studying for four weeks has revealed two separate and distinct paths of Christianity. There is an inner path that recognizes Jesus as God and as long as we believe this, we will go to Heaven when we die. In the meantime, we'll do good works for God and try to live good lives. But since it seems risky to share our beliefs, we will keep our faith private.



The outer path of our algorithm acknowledges that Jesus is the foundation of our faith, the savior of the world, and the King of the universe. Since we believe this to be true, He is the lens through which we read the Bible. We should do what He says we should do, and believe what He says we should believe. He says if we believe, we are to follow him: adopt His priorities and perspectives, His passion, His way of life. As we do that, we come to the value proposition of Christianity -- the Gospel, the good news. And it's a lot less about going to Heaven when we die, but Heaven coming to us now in the form of the kingdom of God.

We don't have to wait until we die to know Him. Furthermore, we don't have to endure the world, but rather we can live in His kingdom in the midst of it. It's a very different reality. His kingdom is present in our lives in the person of the Holy Spirit. When we accept Jesus, we are filled with the HS and He is with us at all times. Because we live *with* God, we live a life led by Him. This is different than knowing things about God, and hence we begin living a life that honors Him. With this relationship, we have a choice to shine the light of God on the world, to share His blessing, or we can decide to hide it.



DISCUSS/JOURNAL

1. Do the two paths seem radically different? How so? Are the outcomes radically different? Which has more potential for personal revival? Revival in the Church? Revival in the world?
2. Evaluate the overall algorithm, which path aligns with the Bible? Express any questions and concerns about either path.
3. If we reflect on our history with God, there probably were times where we were on the path on the left side of the diagram above. Recall your experience, what did you feel, what did you think, what did you receive? Was there joy, peace, excitement, and the presence of God? What about times when you may have been on the path on the right. Did it lead to fulfillment and the blessings of God?

FOUNDATIONAL SHIFT

Revival is not an event or a conference; it's a way of life - a Psalm 1 way of life. It is something that is taken up daily and developed daily. It's not about new programs or new worship music, but more coming alive to God. It can also be seen as God coming alive in you and through you. If we ask ourselves

why we don't see more revival in our times, it's not because we lack resources. It's not because we lack leaders or the numbers of Christians and churches. It could be that the Christianity that some of us have been living just isn't that exciting, transforming, or fulfilling enough to sacrifice for it or to share it. If it has not personally revolutionized us, do we dare take a risk for it? We need to do more than just change the surface look and the feel. The light, the shine, has to come from the inside out. Then we can expect the things the Bible promises.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL

1. How hungry are you for personal revival? For revival in the church, your community, where you live and work?
2. Reread Psalm 1, what is God's promise? How do we receive this promise?

ACTIVATION

Bill Bright, perhaps one of the most impactful evangelists of our times and the founder of Campus Crusades, had this to say when asked his spiritual secrets to being able to understand God and align with Him:

"I was a Christian for a long time but I finally came alive to God. I started reading the Bible on my own and started praying, and it was like God started leaping off the pages and he wasn't just somebody I read about anymore or heard about in church he became somebody I knew. And he became somebody I trusted and somebody I wanted to be with. And I realized that God put a choice in front of me, to give my whole life to him."

The same invitation is extended to you with the same promise. Determine and decide when and where you are going to "chew on Scripture" and pray.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Imagine a giant pile of rocks in the middle of the sanctuary, each about the size of a pebble. If everyone took a rock and took turns throwing it against a giant glass wall at one end of the room, not much would happen to the wall. However, if everyone took their rocks and combined them into 1 giant rock and collectively threw it at the glass wall, we would need a cleaning crew to sweep up all the broken glass of the shattered wall. There are approximately 4,800 churches in the greater Chicago-land area, way more than the 1,400 Wal-Mart's, Starbucks, Jewel-Osco's, Walgreens, etc. in the same geographic region. How much impact would we have if all the churches woke up?

PROVIDE US WITH FEEDBACK

We are excited about the potential these studies have to help each of us process the weekend message at a deeper level, and to see God change our lives in significant ways. In order to make these guides as helpful as possible, we would love to hear which elements are most helpful, which are least helpful, as well as any other comments, questions or suggestions. Feel free to send your feedback directly to Jon Holmberg at jonrholmberg@gmail.com.