

Ephesians 5:14

“Awake, O Sleeper!”

I am alive today because someone woke up! (2x).

I have been asked to share a few moments about my family history and its connection to revival and renewal.

This afternoon I'm going to share a story from my ancestry.

There are countless new sites where you submit a little saliva and they can tell you a lot about your ancestry.

In my case, I already know quite a lot about my family history because my family history was closely connected to the first and second great Awakening.

That's why I can say to you, that I'm alive tonight, because someone woke up.

My 6th great grandfather was William Tennent.

He was born in Scotland in 1673, went to the university of Edinburgh and migrated to the new world in 1718.

In 1727 he founded a theological college known as the Log College which provided pastors for the First Great Awakening (1730-40).

The Log College eventually became renamed the College of New Jersey and finally they proposed re-naming it Belcher College after the governor of New Jersey, Jonathan Belcher.

But even Governor Belcher thought that would be a horrible name for a new university... belcher.

So, they decided to name it after the first town in New Jersey where every merchant in the town put up \$20 to support the new location.

Only one town rose to the occasion, a tiny little town called Princeton, New Jersey.

So, the school was renamed Princeton, and the rest is history.

William Tennent's children all became part of what was known at that time as the New Lights, as opposed to the Old Lights.

These were Great Awakening preachers and they were denouncing religious formalism, promoting revival, conversion experiences, direct experience with God, and pietism.

One of William's son, Gilbert, became very prominent in the great awakening.

His sermon and pamphlet, *The Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry* was so revolutionary that it caused a huge split in the church over the ways ministers should be trained.

But, it is William Tennent's second son, William Tennent, Jr. born in 1705 (who is my 5th great grandfather) that I want to tell you about this afternoon.

William Tennent, Jr. had just graduated from the Log College and was preparing to take his ordination exams.

In other words, he was right where many of you are tonight.

In those days, it was a deeply classical training and he was conversing in Latin with his theological tutor when suddenly, with a big heave and cry, he collapsed to the ground and died.

In the 18th century there were four main ways to determine if someone was dead, and you are probably familiar with all four of these.

Pulse Death pallor Death dew Rigamortis

William Tennent, Jr. experienced all of this and so he was pronounced dead and the funeral was set for the next day.

The day before the funeral another doctor came and examined the body and thought he felt a slight warmth underneath his arm pits, so he called in another doctor.

The other doctor examined him and couldn't feel any warmth at all.

This was a time before such things as EKGs, so he used the methods he had: no pulse, death pallor, stiff as a board... again, declared dead for the second time.

The next day was the day of the funeral.

People gathered for the funeral and just before they were going to close the casket and bring him out for burial, another doctor said he wanted to examine him again.

William and Gilbert both didn't want to allow for it, because everyone had already gathered for the funeral and had now been officially declared dead by two different doctors.

But, there was a fifth test which was done – that was to shine a very bright light into someone's eyes and see if their pupil restricted.

They did this and the pupil remained dilated, but he did see at the last minute a little shimmer of the eye, and for just a second William Tennent seemed to shudder, then fell lifeless again.

They called off the funeral, wrapped the body in warm towels and eventually he came to.

He could not speak. He had to learn everything all over again over the next two years, though his Latin came back before his English.

If William Tennent, Jr. had not woken up, I would not be here today, because he went on to get married, and have a family and serve a church for the next 43 years until his real death.

I am here tonight five generations later because William Tennent, Jr. woke up.

“awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you”

There is no doubt that the larger context of this verse is about the power of the gospel in bringing us up from darkness to light, the renunciation of our old life and the power of a life endowed with the power and grace of Christ.

I have an unusual story...my story is that if William Tennent, Jr. had not woken up, then I would not be here today..

But, in another way, this is the story of every one of you.

Because Jesus Christ has raised you from the dead... you have awakened from the dead.. and because you live, others will live...others will hear the gospel.... because you woke up, they will wake up.. this is sacred chain of redemption:

How why shall call on him, of whom they have not believed?

How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard,

How they hear without a preacher preaching to them,

How can anyone preach unless they are sent?

This conference is about lighting the fire of revival and sowing for another great awakening!!

I'm so glad that William Tennent, Jr. woke up just minutes before they closed the casket!

I'm so glad that you woke up with the call of Jesus:

Wake up O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!!

You have been awakened by the gospel.... and thousands will live and hear the gospel because you have been awakened by the call of Christ and the word of God.

We live in a day when the church of Jesus Christ has been marked by domesticated Christianity, casual prayers, and a culturally compromised church.

Yet, the Risen Lord walks among his churches just as he did among the seven churches of Revelation.

When that happens, the church reaches an inflection point where change, transformation, renewal and hope are possible.

The Risen Christ breaks through our brokenness and brings us new life and hope.

Our frenzied desperation is met with his divine grace.

This happened in February, just five months ago, on the campus of Asbury University and Asbury Seminary.

There have been millions of videos and clips and postings on social media about the Asbury awakening,

but what is not as well known is what we call “pre-revival” – the things that God quietly does to prepare us for his divine presence.

(Tell about Hong) - prayerfulness.. expectation... growing desperation.

Wednesday, February 8th normal chapel service.

Zach Meerkreebs preached from Romans 12:9-21 and called students to be revived by the love of God.

When the service was over 19 students came to the altar and lingered there, over 1,000 left the chapel just like any normal day of required chapel.

However, God was really among those students and gradually more and more students began to return and by the end of the day Hughes auditorium was packed out and the altar was filled with students.

That continued for sixteen days from Feb. 8th to Feb. 23rd.

ILLUS: Student running out of empty tomb!!!

(1) GEN Z Identity

The awakening had an inner core and an outer core.

The inner core of the awakening was focused on the campus of AU and was a deep stirring of Gen. Z. (1997-2012) 11-26 years old.

This generation has been characterized as the most lonely and desperate generation in our lifetime.

They are disillusioned by the cultural landscape with no sure anchors.

The political apparatus of their nation is broken, so it is hard for them to believe that there are political solutions to our country's deep malaise.

They often come from broken homes or have seen deep fissures in family life and extended family life in our nation.

It has certainly touched many of their friends, if not their own lives.

They have seen the church in massive stagnation and decline.

They are coming up in the shadow of the larger Millennial group which is the leading edge of the so-called “nones” who have no religious affiliation.

Social Media has been proven to be very destabilizing for this generation and especially platforms like Instagram and tik tok have proved to be emotionally damaging for Gen. Z.

We grew up in a world where at least our school was a safe place, but now they are punctuated by school shootings and bullying that has marked their generation with a sense of despair.

Their generation looks around and sees no certainties anywhere... even your gender is not something you can know, which has been one of the few things you could always and, frankly, just assume.

In short, they are not growing up in the soil of hope, and the loss of hope is a very challenging place to be.

Many have turned to opioids, or changing their gender, or experimenting with their sexuality which has left them empty.

We might assume that Christian young people would somehow manage all of this, but it is clear that even Christian families face many of these challenges with their youth.

So, you must see February 8th and the ensuing days as a divine spark in the soil of desperation and hopelessness.

I am amazed at how God sovereignly met this generation with the power of his presence and the hope of the gospel.

It was surprising how many students from Asbury University in the early days of the revival, even though they were there at a Christian college, received Christ as their savior.

This mushroomed over the next few weeks.

Only time will tell, but I think that the core of the revival or awakening was that God sovereignly did something for that generation.

He demonstrated his power and grace and he birthed into them a great hope.

People have sometimes asked why these awakenings often start in schools, not in churches.

Well, the reason is that schools is where greater numbers of a particular generation are gathered and so it is a fitting place to reach Gen Z in large numbers.

## (2) RADICAL HUMILITY

The phrase “radical humility” – not a very loud revival with fiery sermons and emotional outbursts.

It was a remarkably quiet experience to be there.

Yes, the social media showed the remarkable worship.

No overhead projection. No named speakers ever were put on the platform. No real sermons...

We had a godly leader, David Thomas, who gave daily exhortations sometimes multiple times per day, but it was mostly scripture reading, prayers of repentance, and worship.

It went day and night.

Eventually, as outsiders began to pour in they began to reserve, first ten rows, and then twenty rows of Gen Z and by the second week the whole of Hughes auditorium was reserved exclusively for those 25 and younger.

They did a good job of protecting that space for the core work of God.

After all, He had showed up among that generation and in their space.

Radical Humility was not so much about the humility of those who came to the altars and were quietly weeping before God..

but the radical humility of God himself and he stooped down to bring hope to this generation who has lost so much hope.

ILLUS: “I’ll go first” - “Will God forgive me for not forgiving him?”

## (3) SPIRITUAL OPPORTUNITY

The outer core of the awakening was with rank and file people all over the nation and the world.

It started out a few hundred and they were being accommodated in the balconies and in the aisles of Hughes auditorium.

But, it soon became clear that it wasn’t just going to hundreds but thousands pouring into this tiny town of Wilmore, Kentucky.

I met my team fairly early on and we established as our guiding principle the phrase, “radical hospitality.”

Our role was to serve the University in whatever way we could.

I told Kevin Brown that whatever the cost, either in resources or personnel or physical spaces, we wanted to serve.

So, by the first weekend that began to happen and increased more and more as the next few weeks unfolded.

The University never opened any facility but Hughes auditorium.

They rightly believed that the seating capacity of Hughes could accommodate 1,500 Gen. Z people at a time.

Students were coming to various meetings morning and night so it was thousands of young people every day pouring into Hughes auditorium.

But, there were tens of thousands who were older than 26 who were coming to Wilmore for prayer.

I made it very clear to our formation teams that no one was to come to our campus to “watch” something in Hughes.

Rather, every space was to be a space for worship and prayer.

This meant training and deploying dozens of prayer teams who would be at many altars across our campus.

We began by opening Estes Chapel.

When Estes was filled, we filled successive spaces including other chapels on our campus, our gymnasium and our cafeteria.

We had altars in every space.

No one knows how many people came to Wilmore during those 16 days.

The newly formed Wikipedia page says about 70,000 came, but no one knows.

If anything it felt like even more.

But, what was revealed was a general spiritual hunger which was tapped into across the world.

People who had been carrying spiritual burdens, unanswered prayers, addictions, an inner desire to receive Christ as their Lord and Savior, realized that if they could get to Wilmore,

I stood at the door when we opened for services and I was met with people filled with joy and anticipation about meeting God.

I knelt at the altar in all of the venues over the course of those days and prayed with people and heard their confessions.

One of things which struck me was that it was clearly non-denominational.

We had many Roman Catholics who came and received Christ at the altar.

We had Pentecostals.

We had mainline and independent Christians, all side by side at the altar night after night day after day in a kind of holy humility.

The spaces were closed for certain hours of the day so we could re-group, clean bathrooms, change out worship bands, vacuum floors and prepare for the next wave.

There were a group of committed prayer warriors who were designated to stay and just be on their faces praying all through the day and night, especially in Hughes during those days, so that there was never a time when the space was empty.

We had two spaces, one at the University and one at the seminary which was dedicated just for intercessors.

They did not receive any outside guests, they just gathered to intercede for those who were coming.

People prayed in those spaces day and night.

This outer core of the revival which was really what Asbury Seminary hosted was the second aspect of the revival.

It was also important because it shows that desperation and hopelessness is not confined to one generation, but to people all across our society.

On Feb. 20th (Monday) you will recall the revival began Feb 8th... the streets are packed.

There were so many cars in Wilmore that the city put a huge DOT sign out on the main road coming in saying: REVIVAL AT CAPACITY!

They were putting out on their channels... please don't enter the city.

But, waited in lines right past that.. it was just another picture to take.

So, we met to discuss the next steps.

By the second week, the core team was meeting in my office because it was easier to get to and my office is directly across from Hughes auditorium and we could easily see all the long lines of people.

An organization called Awaken the Dawn offered to give us a 3,000 seater tent to continue receiving guests into one space.

We had been told that we could not allow this many cars into Wilmore, so we had to consider a nearby location with access from outside the city.

A large farm in Wilmore which once hosted the Ichthus music festival was discussed and we had two conversations with the owner about what it would take to rent the farm for as long as we needed it.

We had a large church in the area agree to stage all the cars in their parking lot and then have church buses lined up which would run endless shuttles in and out of the city to help with the parking.

This was hours of conversation.

But, we decided to spent Monday and Tuesday praying about this, and, to our own surprise, when we met back to discuss this again, we all agreed that the Lord was clearly leading us to end the public meetings on Thursday of that week with the Collegiate Day of Prayer (previous weekend, Andrew Peterson).

Over 4,100 schools linked together in a massive simulcast.

#### (4) DE-PLATFORMING SIMPLICITY

The awakening happened in a very simple service.

There was no band, no digital projections, nothing but an acoustical guitar and a few singers.

It remained that way throughout the awakening.

There were not any "platform" Christians, i.e. famous Christians to speak at the awakening.

It was simple and it remained simple to the end.

The closing service of the awakening was held on Thursday, February 23rd.

We had been sensing a strong leading from the Lord to pivot from a "come and see" to a "go and tell".

It wasn't a good spiritual strategy to tell spiritually hungry people all over the nation and world that if they are spiritually hungry, come to Wilmore, KY.

We needed to pivot.

February 23rd was chosen as the closing day of pubic services, because it was the 200th anniversary of the National Collegiate Day of Prayer.

Asbury University had been chosen almost 2 years earlier to be the site.

Over 1,400 schools and colleges and universities across N. America were linked up with gatherings all over the continent...

It was also carried by Christian network television across the world.

We had already secured some of the biggest names in the Christian world of north America: Rick Warren, Francis Chan and so forth...

We realized that to maintain the authenticity and simplicity of the awakening, we needed to maintain the de-platforming simplicity of the whole event.

Thus, we contacted each of these Christian leaders and asked if they would be willing to step aside and yield their speaking spots to Gen Z – and they did.

Thus, this became one of the hallmarks of the awakening. God working in simple ways with no one famous...

#### (5) GLOBAL POSSIBILITY

This brings us to the final core mark/sign of the awakening: the global spread.. moving from “Come and see” to “go and tell”... people going out as ambassadors to tell the story and see God working in churches across the country... as well as other schools.

This is the call... you are to be the vanguard of the global awakening.

I just returned from Arise Asia in Bangkok where over 1,200 Asian Gen Z gathered for awakening and mission into the world.

Tell story of Kalitha Cume