

The Asbury Outpouring 2023

Lessons to the Church

Readiness

- A bold, persevering commitment to **prayer** for spiritual awakening had been continuing for many years among many on the Asbury campus, surrounding regions, and around the world.
- At the core were **relationships built on trust** which could also expand on trust. We observed how awakening moves at the pace of friendship.
- Asbury has a treasured **history** of revival. **Presidential leadership** is highly trusted. These together made giving permission, allowing interruption, and embracing inconvenience for the outpouring much more possible.
- **Banding together** in trusted, safe, empathic, honest relationship had become a dimension of campus culture in the years prior to the outpouring. That contributed to the atmosphere of all meetings, both in private and public settings.
- There was not a sense that outpouring was occurring at this particular place and time because of something we had “gotten right.” There was instead simply **a shared willingness to “say yes”** to the small thing God appeared to be doing in His mercy to help us. And then for sixteen days and nights, what God had begun He continued to grow.

Posture

- **Spiritual hunger** was what moved a few students to linger after chapel February 8. Hunger rose to starvation as numbers increased. It was as though we had stepped inside the New Testament among the throngs pressing in to gain the help of the Lord.
- There was an unrushed willingness to **linger** throughout the outpouring. This was a mark of all meetings from the very start. Some of the sweetest and most fruitful times were after 11:00 p.m. and into the night, when everything official was done and many lingered in worship.
- **Priority was given to GenZ** at every level. Emerging adults were seen as the makers of the original move, the primary concern, the key leaders, and the prophetic voices of the outpouring. Not the “future of the church”—they were church *now*. Students held the front seats. Older generations carried a calling to be intercessors for their healing and shade over their boldness. Many moments of intergenerational prayer exhibited this commitment.
- Unity across class, ethnicity, nations, worship expression, and denomination was pursued from a posture of **radical humility**, seeking to outdo one another in blessing and serving.
- **Hope** and vision were stirred around what it is when God answers prayer, what church could actually be like, how Jesus is coming to rescue this generation, and more. “The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy” (Psalm 126:3)—this was the air we were breathing.

Experiences

- The aim became to build and **hold community under an outpouring** for as long as God wanted. We often said publicly that when He was done, we would stop.
- In early stages, we held firm about the nature of the community we were developing together. We acknowledged that had it not been for a few Asbury students, none of us

would have been there. They were the forerunners, and Hughes was their house. No guest would go into someone's house and rearrange the furniture. So, we were committed to the **worship life of the students**. All worship practices were respected, but we asked guests to check personal preferences at the door upon entry.

- Early on, we began to discern great blessing on **the worship, the altar, and the young**.
- **Worship** was of a different order: desperate, from the depths, passionate, alluring, united, a true habitation of the Lord. Often all that could be heard was the voices. Songs would start from a corner of the auditorium, wafting over the balcony, as Jesus conducted the room.
- The community sustained under the outpouring became **a vision of "normal" church**.
- It was an outpouring of **the presence of God**. "We love His presence" was the confession of our hearts. With nameless leadership and purified worship, Jesus owned the room. Hughes became a throne room. It seemed there was almost no distinction between earth and heaven in the room. Jesus had full access to do all He wished.
- Teams of have gone out from the Asbury community to **bear witness** to what we experienced throughout the sixteen days and nights of outpouring.

Practices

- Partly on instinct, out of core values, and as a result of never having time for more thorough planning, meetings were very **simple and unpolished**. The atmosphere felt unstaged and raw. Often gatherings felt slightly clunky and messy, which gave oversold and church-hurt GenZ a sense of authenticity: that what was happening was not programmed to move them toward a particular emotion or outcome.
- The environment was very "analog"—an older building, no lyrics projected, acoustic instruments. The atmosphere was very **accessible and basic**.
- Everything was **highly participatory**. There was much movement and involvement in the room, across all simulcast venues, on the lawn, and in the line. People were empowered to worship and pray everywhere. Opportunities for response were ongoing throughout the day.
- Gospel presentations followed by a call to complete surrender, Spirit-filled life, discipleship, and mission were standard most days and nights. Gatherings included extended times of individuals reading cherished portions of Scripture and sharing testimonies (always about Jesus, brief, current, and "don't preach!"). **Essential churchlife** became the filter through which the presence of God was pouring.
- Hundreds of altar ministers were trained twice per day in a simple model that brought confidence and integrity to ministry. **Altar ministry** never stopped throughout most days and nights. After waiting sometimes for many hours, people came in the doors often to go first to the altar before taking a seat.
- A **balance of freedom with minimal structure** was pursued: enough order to not quench openness but to protect the meetings from "going off the rails." The experience felt clean, calm, and approachable. A variety of gifts and manifestations were expressed and experienced during the outpouring, but no expression was spotlighted or became programmatic. Only Jesus held center stage.
- While some guests livestreamed from within Hughes, Asbury University did not, and we asked each day that guests would not. "Awakening is not the same as 'going viral,'" we said. "Awakening doesn't move by looking at it on our phones, but by seeking God for it on our faces." **The university did not livestream** (until day 12 as a crowd reduction measure) both to protect the privacy of students and to shun any impression of seeking fame or following from what God was doing.

Inner Life

- “**Holiness** Unto the Lord”—the words over the pipe organ—became the true north of the outpouring.
- The first few days were devoted to much **repentance**. Many times, the whole room was invited to their knees for silent confession and prayer of repentance.
- There was a renunciation of self-promotion. “There is **no celebrity** in the room. The only celebrity here is Jesus. And He is so much more than a celebrity to us.” The outpouring began to feel like a toppling of much of the American church industry, an embodiment of John the Baptist’s vocation that “we must decrease that He might increase.”
- **Honesty** was welcomed and normalized in the assembly and embodied by leaders.
- The outpouring flowed from expression of the **fruit of the Holy Spirit** and was generating the same fruit as men and women, especially the young, were invited to do deep work in their lives with Jesus.
- The spirit of adoption was poured into our hearts, a profound encounter with the **love of the Father**. But it was not a soft love. God was unearthing and confronting and calling out brokenness in love. It was the kindness of the Lord leading to repentance. The atmosphere was one of grace, of holy love welcoming us, in which repentance was a gift.
- A key innovation of the outpouring was the “**consecration room**” where worship leaders were invited into a compassionate but uncompromising call to repentance and deep humility before entering into leadership in the assembly. The hidden realities of our lives and the closets of our closeness with Jesus were valued more highly than appearance, talent, or persona.

Leadership

- The simple but challenging commitment to **unbreakable community among leaders** was embraced from the start: being unoffendable, holding short accounts, processing emotion in real time, repairing as we were going, raising a hand to speak, etc.
 - The essential approach of leadership was **observe and respond**: offering prayerful attention to what we collectively sensed God was doing and attempting to stay in step with that.
 - **Male/female shared leadership** was the pattern from the beginning to the end, both publicly and privately.
 - The outpouring began in a chapel service led by a gospel choir with young leaders of multiple races. **Racial unity** was a commitment in every hour of the outpouring and a deep endeavor behind the scenes in the leadership core.
 - From the start, there was a commitment to being **nameless and title-less**. It was intentional that no key voice or directing individual emerged. A half-dozen persons cycled to and from the front, plus eventually a few others. No one was introduced or introduced themselves.
 - The permission and blessing of the university president, and his role in holding together various constituencies, were important from the start. **Institutional life became the greenhouse of supernatural movement**. Asbury University held back nothing in mobilizing support throughout those two weeks.
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