

Address: 160 Paya Lebar Road, Orion@Paya Lebar #04-06, Singapore 409022
Sun Worship Service: 10am, Sun School: 11.45am, Wed Prayer Meeting: 8pm
Website: www.sovereignhopebpc.org
Rev Dr Jack Sin: 91160948 (hp) / jacksin710@gmail.com
Elder Loke Tat Luen: tloke822@gmail.com

THE MARKS OF A BIBLICAL EVANGELICAL AWAKENING

There is a great interest in the theme of revival recently after news reports of the Asbury University revival in Kentucky on 8 Feb 2023 and it is spreading and ongoing as reported. **We are cautiously hopeful that it could be a genuine work but we need to be discerning and prayerful and we must neither be presumptuous nor prejudiced against it but be patient to examine it biblically and let it pass the test of time.** For this cause we ask the question, How would you define the word “revival”? The *Webster Dictionary* defines the word “revive” as:

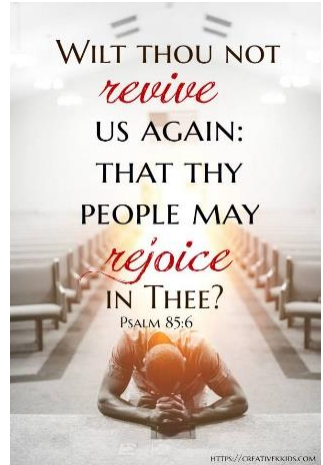
1. an action, recall or recovery to life from death or apparent death,
2. return or recall to activity from a state of languor,
3. recall, return or recovery from a state of neglect, oblivion, obscurity or depression,
4. renewed or have active attention to religion, an awakening of men to their spiritual concerns.

The closest biblical word to revival has “a primary root meaning to live (figuratively or literally), make alive, nourish up, preserve alive, quicken, recover, repair, restore, or be whole” (Strong’s, 2421). It is used as such 14 times in the Old Testament.

One key Old Testament example summarising this is Psalm 85:6, “*Wilt thou [God, the Giver of revival] not revive us [the need] again [the history of revival]: that thy people [the prime subjects of revival] may rejoice [the effect of revival] in thee [the end and purpose of revival]?*”

Dr Wilbur Smith notes seven “outstanding revivals” in the Old Testament in addition to the one under Jonah. They include:

1. The one in Jacob’s household (Gen 35:1–15),
2. The one under Asa (2 Chr 15:1–15),
3. Jehoash (2 Kgs 11–12; 2 Chr 23–24),
4. Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:4–7; 2 Chr 29:31),



5. Josiah (2 Kgs 22–23; 2 Chr 34–35),
6. The two revivals after the Exile under Zerubbabel (Ezra 5–6) in which Haggai and Zechariah played a prominent part, and finally in
7. Nehemiah’s time, in which Ezra was the outstanding figure (Neh 9:9; 12:44–47).

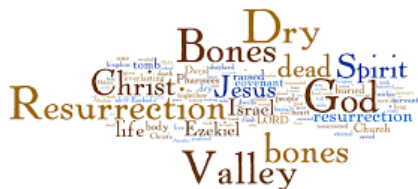
Why do we need to identify distinguishing marks of revival today? The reasons are given in the book *The Quest for Godliness* by Packer and a relevant quote is given below:

We predispose ourselves to be too hasty in identifying with revival outbreaks of religious excitement exhibit certain outward features that marked some revival of the past—prostrations, visions, spontaneous singing, or whatever the features are that have impressed us. We have to remember that the devil can produce the outward forms of religious excitement, as well as the Spirit of God, and that in fact Satan has often wrought havoc in the church through movements of self-deceived fanaticism which announced themselves, doubtless in all good faith, as movements of the Holy Spirit in revival. We need a criterion for telling the two apart; otherwise Satan will be free to fool us as he pleases by gratifying our hunger for revival with his own particular brand of “enthusiastic” delusions. [J I Packer, *A Quest for Godliness* (Illinois: Crossway Books, 1992), 316].

The biblical accounts and church history are replete with many examples of spiritual revivals. As believers, we need to distinguish between a genuine and a spurious revival. The Apostle John in 1 John 4:1 reminds us to test the spirits to see if they are of God. When there is a true work of grace, there will also be the counterfeit masterminded by the Devil. Religious experiences which are subjective, can be abused or misunderstood. We need to return to the objective, infallible and inerrant Word of God as our ultimate guide to determine the distinguishing marks of a true spiritual revival. Historical accounts of genuine revivals are useful to some extent to augment and support Biblical principles for the assessment of a revival. For our purpose, we will consider a picturesque passage of Scripture from Ezekiel 37 commonly known as the Valley of Dry Bones.

The Valley of Dry Bones (Ezek 37:1–28)

Ezekiel’s ministry is antedated to 597 BC when he was taken captive by the Babylonians. His call to the prophetic ministry came in the 5th year of king Jehoiachin’s captivity. This would have been in the year 593–592 BC. He served until the 27th year of his captivity (Ezek 29:17). His home was in Tel-abib (3:15), a place for exiles near Babylon. He was a contemporary



of Jeremiah, who ministered mainly to the Jews in Jerusalem, and Daniel, who was taken to Babylon. Ezekiel speaks on a variety of themes. He emphasised the holiness of God, the coming judgment and a future restoration of the covenant

people of God. He speaks of revival and repentance for the individual and the whole Jewish community. The book of Ezekiel is a book full of prophetic insights, yet so relevant and applicable to us today.

In Ezek 37, what is commonly known as the Valley of Dry Bones, is a picture of the true reformation and revival of the nation of Israel. Figuratively, in their spiritual and moral poverty, they were compared to a valley full of the dead dry bones that have no life in them. Ezekiel is often called the prophet of vision. He sees a vision where God resuscitated these bones and gave them life again. This section here has some rich and relevant lessons for us on the accurate appreciation of spiritual revivals today. **It is our subject of deep study and contemplation to identify the distinguishing characteristics of an authentic revival versus a spurious one. There are at least five marks of a true spiritual revival that we can glean from Ezekiel 37.**

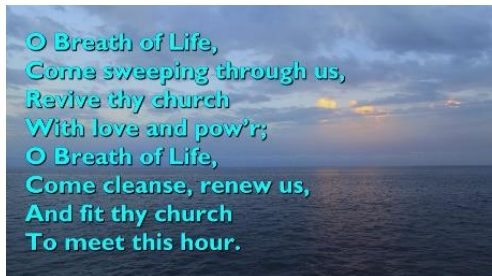
Firstly, a revival can come

about only from the Hand of our Sovereign God. There are some today who think that they can organise a revival. Revival is something that God brings about. It is quite impossible for man to create a climate for revival. Though men may prepare and pray for it, revival is the work of the sovereign God, not primarily

for the benefit of His people, but for His own honour and glory. **Every genuine revival is clearly stamped with the hallmark of divine sovereignty. The moment for that first outpouring of the Spirit was not determined by the believers in the upper room but by God who had foreshadowed it centuries before. In revival, things happen often suddenly and unexpectedly.**

This suddenness is a typical feature of revival. Meetings are filled with poignant biblical sermons are preached to convict hearts of sin because God is at work. People are moved by an unseen hand of God. Isaiah described such a time when God did *"terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence"* (Isa 64:3). No matter how long people have been praying for it or expecting it, when it comes it is always a surprise. In revival, God takes over, it is His sovereign work. Revivals are never publicised in advance; they cannot be because God alone determines the timing. A revival that is proclaimed and arranged ahead of time may not possibly be a true revival.

Some think that all they need is an eloquent and renowned charismatic speaker who can perform 'signs and wonders', speaking in tongues and lots of emotional hyped up singing and a sensational appeal to people, hoping that the people will be revived. These Revivals are more anthropocentric than theocentric. This was not the case in Ezekiel's time. God was the supreme, only initiator of the revival of Israel, not men. We must not think that revival can be organised and planned by the ingenuity of men, no matter how well-intentioned they may be. We may have revival meetings (which may not be wrong) but that does not mean that we will



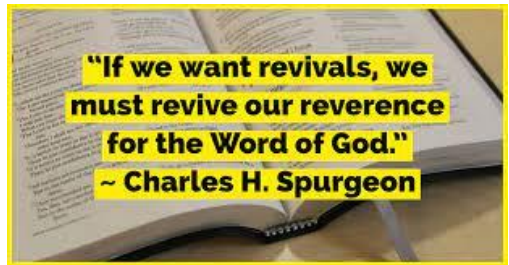
have a revival. **The spiritual revival can only be wrought by the Holy Spirit within the hearts of men. Some so-called revivals are just emotionally charged up meetings with great showmanship and choreographed side shows like mass ecstatic singing and 'ostentatious testimonies' and boisterous public participation.** A public display of exceptionally large groups of people gathered does not necessarily constitute an authentic Holy Ghost revival.

Revival may start with a few people in a church, village or college. There are some revivals in church history that affected a smaller number of people in a locality. It is still a genuine revival, nonetheless. Large numbers do not prove anything. 60,000 gathered at the National Stadium at any one time, even for religious meetings, does not constitute a true spiritual revival. Do not confuse physical numbers with spiritual revivals. An infamous 19th century American preacher in Charles Finney who believe in perfectionism in the redeemed on earth and a second blessing of the Spirit, tried to engineer a revival in his time, and he rejected the doctrine of original sin. Many were attracted to him in the second awakening as it is commonly called. **He used clever seductive marketing techniques, produced psychological excitement in the anxious bench and the protracted meetings to get many people in and many who are unsuspecting and gullible friends were taken in by him and some claimed it be a revival as a result . .**

Although a revival can affect many at a single time, the authenticity of it is never decided by numbers and we must be careful not to be swayed by an outward appearance of things. While the Spirit of God can work in reviving the hearts of many at any one time, be careful that we do not evaluate revival only on the basis of large numbers of attendees especially if it has just temporal mass ostentatious emotional appeal.

Secondly, a true revival is

never divorced from the convicting influence of the pure Word of God and the gospel. In Ezekiel 37:4, God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones. The revival during the post-exilic era under Nehemiah and Ezra was brought up by the powerful preaching of the Word of God by Ezra, *"So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading"* (Neh 8:8). The result of the preaching was that the people understood the words and they applied to their hearts, and they repented and wept (Neh 8:9). **The Word was comprehensible to them, and it had an impact in their lives profoundly and it changed their lives substantially.**



There are some so called revival meetings, where we hardly hear the Word of God being preached. For example, in 1994 when Rodney Howard-Browne spoke at the National Stadium in Singapore in a laughing revival so called, it was attended by about 40,000 people, he managed about 20-25 minutes of superficial preaching, and the rest were large outburst of laughter, much repetitive singing and 'slaying'

of people in the Spirit, and some called it a revival. **There was no expositional, doctrinal preaching that convicts the hearers of their depraved and desperate sinful condition and their grave need for a Saviour. There were much psychological and emotional working up of the people by repetitive singing and mass appeal, asking people to come down to be prayed for as “he served the new wine” which he claimed. But after the empty delirium died down, there was no reliable evidence of lasting spiritual change in those who attended.** There can be no real spiritual revival without the life-changing of lives through the clear declaration of the Word of God as, Hebrews 4:12 speaks of the power of the Word,

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

As you realise the word “prophecy” (to forthtell) was used seven times in Ezekiel 37, from verse 4 to verse 12. No preaching of the Word, no revival of lives, this is the divine formula of God. The reason for this essential acceptance of Scripture during revival is that, in a revival, **God uses His Word to change and correct His people, and there is always a renewed love and acceptance of Scripture. God will not trust revival into the hands of those who have a low view of this spiritual sword of truth, piercing the hearts of fallen men.** During the 18th century Awakening in New England, Jonathan Edwards remarked on the new attitude to Scripture among the people:

[They] often speak of religious things as seeming new to them; that . . . the Bible is a new book: they find new chapters, new psalms, new histories, because they see them in a new light . . .

There can be no revival without the clear powerful preaching and understanding of the content of the Scriptures. Martin Lloyd-Jones experienced revival in his church in Aberavon during the 1930s. In 1931, 135 were added to the church by conversion. Lloyd-Jones was marked out during his time in Wales, and throughout his later ministry, as a preacher who took his authority exclusively from the Bible. During his ministry in London from 1938 until his retirement thirty years later, he could hold between 1,500 and 2,000 at his evening congregation, and his preaching had, as its greatest appeal, a firm, uncompromising confidence in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture and the necessity of obedience to it. In the late 19th century, Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached to 6,000–8,000 people every Sunday night at the Metropolitan Tabernacle during the nineteenth century and his church experienced continuous revival for many years, with sixty new members each month being added to the membership.

Spurgeon claimed no other authority than the Word of God when he saw the Bible as the inspired standard of God. Long before Lloyd-Jones or Spurgeon, John Wycliffe and Huss in the 14th century, **Luther, Calvin, Knox and Zwingli in the 16th century, the Puritans in the 17th century, Edwards, Whitefield in the 18th century, and a host of others, who were all used of the Lord in times of revival, were fully committed to the preaching based on the inspired authority and sufficiency of the Bible. And they were equally committed to obedience to it. We conclude that the sound preaching of the Word of God is indispensable to a true Holy Ghost revival.**

Jhirdly, revival comes with the convicting and converting work of the Holy Ghost. There is an extraordinary work of the blessed Comforter in stirring and convicting the hearts of depraved men into confession, repentance and reformation within. In Ezekiel 37:14, it reads,

And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.

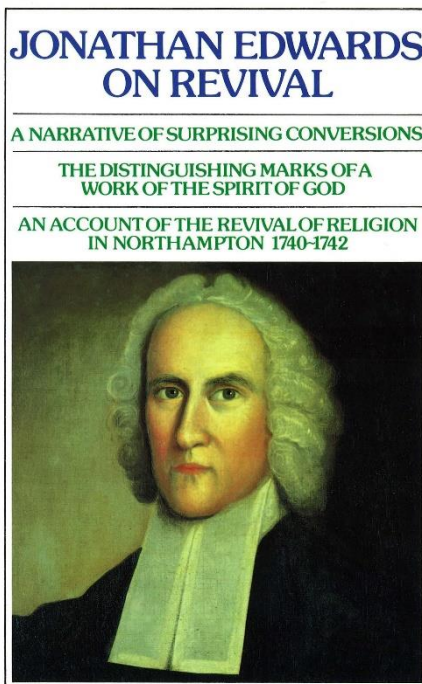
Only the third person of the Holy Trinity can bring about true revival by the sovereign will of the triune God and the result is that we will seek the knowledge and fear of Lord and will glorify Him.

The noted theologian on Revival, Jonathan Edward says here,

The influence of the Spirit of God is yet more abundantly manifest if persons have their hearts drawn off from the world and weaned from the objects of their worldly lusts, and taken off from worldly pursuits, by the sense they have of the excellence of divine things, and the affection they have to those spiritual enjoyments of another world, that are promised in the Gospel. (113)

After great convictions and humbling, and agonizing with God, they had Christ discovered to them anew as an all-sufficient Saviour, and in the glories of His grace, and in a far more clear manner than before; **and with greater humility, self-emptiness, and brokenness of heart, and a purer, a higher joy, and greater desires after holiness of life; but with greater self-diffidence and distrust of their treacherous hearts.** (152)

(*Jonathan Edwards on Revival* (Banner of Truth: Edinburgh, 1984. 113 and 152)

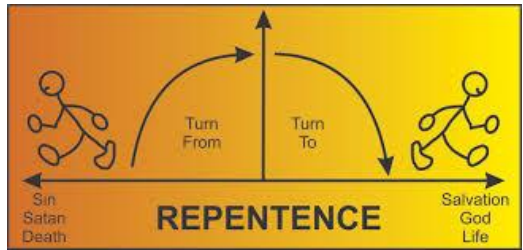


What then is the work of the Holy Ghost? He is the One that will reveal all truth and teach us all things and testify of Christ and apply those life-changing biblical truths to the saints, that totally re-energise, renew and reform us from within. **It has nothing to do with ecstatic speaking in tongues, demon casting,**

predictive prophecies and physical convulsions and inordinate behaviours, but a reverence for God and His Word and a humble heart that is broken and contrite (Isa 66:2). We must not think only of physical manifestations (although there may be weeping) of the Spirit but the inward and quiet workings of the Holy Ghost in the transformation of the hearts of men with genuine affections of the soul for Christ that last (Titus 3:5).

Fourthly, an authentic revival is always accompanied by the marks of true evangelical repentance. Look at Ezekiel 37:23,

Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.



The requirement of God is that they will stop defiling themselves with idols, and ceased from their transgressions, and God will forgive them and restore them back to life. Revelation 2:5 has it this way,

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and **repent**, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will **remove** thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

It has 3Rs: to remember God and repent of our evil deeds or else be removed from being a witness for God. John the Baptist's message is given in Matthew 3:8, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Paul's preaching is a clearer summon for repentance as evidenced in Acts 20:21,

Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

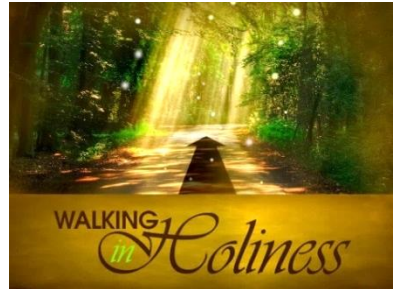
During the time of Jonah, when Jonah finally preached to the Ninevites, the people were revived (Jonah 3:5–10), and one of the effects was that they put on sackcloth. **They fasted and, by their outward action, demonstrated an inward condition of true evangelical repentance. Repentance must be supported by fruits and works.** When the tax collector, Zacchaeus, was converted and revived, he returned fourfold the money he had extorted from the common people. Jesus confirmed that his faith was genuine on the basis of works of repentance (Luke 19:8–10). This is the singular most important feature of a true spiritual revival. Without repentance, there can be no revival as Paul puts it also in Acts 20:21,

The revival on the Day of Pentecost came about because of Peter's preaching and challenges in Acts 2:38, Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall

receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. It was a dramatic change of lives and many were convicted and converted in their hearts and the church grew and was truly blessed. You cannot over emphasise the necessity of evangelical repentance. It is the jewel, the chief distinguishing mark and evidence at every true revival. **Today we have cheap grace, easy believism and revivalism without repentance and confession of sin (cf. 1 John 1:9).** There can be much emotional responses, psychological and sensational experiences but there is no real lasting change of heart from sin towards God. People returned to their sins after a while and there was no permanent effect or change in their lives. What kind of a revival is that which is devoid of a lasting penitent spirit and godly sorrow and a profound hatred and forsaking of sin?

Finally, a revival is always followed by a quest for holiness and consecration of one's life to God. Look at Ezekiel 37:26–28,

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.



A genuine Holy Ghost Revival invariably means a life that is resolved on godliness, faith and piety, and a love for the Word of God, for fervent prayer, for sound and reverential worship, for deeper Christian fellowship and a great detestation of sin. This is an inevitable result of a transformed life, a resuscitated person. The revived person loves to breathe, to walk, to talk and to live again in Christ (Rom 6:12–13). He is now dead to sins and alive unto God. He longs for spiritual growth in the study of the Word, for corporate intercession and for holy worship and Christian service as in Romans 12:1–2.

He or she is a revived person whose heart and mind affected by the word of God. He or she would address his or her sinful habits and his life is changed. During the revival under Ezra, the Jewish people make a covenant with God to put away their strange wives (Ezra 10:1–17). They desired a complete break with their sin that was destroying them. Some had married heathen wives, and these had affected them spiritually. **A true spiritual revival will invariably result in a separation from sin and a consecration unto God. A quest for holiness and righteousness, faith and Christian piety by the affected is the result of a distinguishing mark of a genuine revival.** Consider what J I Packer says here,

Revival is a work of reinvigorating and propagating Christian piety. It is essentially a restoring of religion. Edwards conceived Christian religion to be: an experimental acquaintance with, and a hearty, practical response to, the

divine realities set forth in the gospel. It is this that languishes during the time of sleep and barrenness before revival comes, and it is this that the outpouring of the Spirit renews. Hence the “distinguishing marks of a work of the Spirit of God,” ie, of a revival, all have to do with a deepening of experimental piety [J I Packer, *Godliness*, 319].

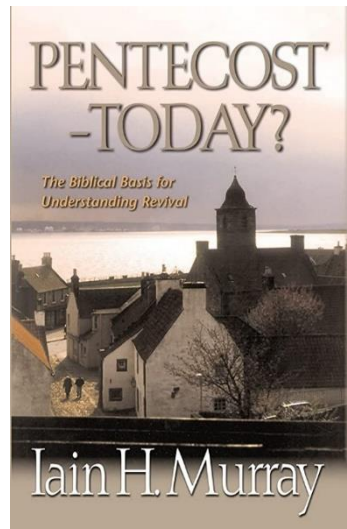
Conclusion

We yearn for revival in our times, but we have to carefully document and study the revival of biblical times and we need godly wisdom and more time in order to assess, discern and biblically appraise its authenticity in our times if any. We pray that it will be a real lasting spiritual awakening in Asbury. God is the sovereign source of all genuine revivals, and He will do it according to His will and in His own good time. Church history has instances of revivals, as in the 16th century Reformation, the 17th and 18th century Great Awakening of England and New England under George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards respectively, the 19th century Ulster Revival in Ireland, the 20th century revival in the Far East under John Sung in 1935–39 and the revival in China under Ting Li Mei, the Moody of China, and there are others as well.

God willing, we may experience revival in our times, but we have to be vigilant and prudent against spurious, or counterfeit revivals which can appear to be real outwardly in the onslaught. If repentance truly follows revival, let the lasting fruits of repentance speak for itself as said by John the Baptist in Mat3:8. **We believe in revivals and that God is the author of it. He has His own purpose and His own timetable. We can pray for revivals, but we cannot initiate it. We can be expectant and long for it but we cannot artificially produce it nor shall we attempt to do it. The arm of the flesh will fail; but if it is of the Spirit, it will prevail. Let God do what is right in His own time and we will know finally with prayer and patience.** As for now let us continue to humbly pray and seek the Lord and confess and repent of our sins, peradventure, *“times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord”* (Acts 3:19).

Jack Sin

(For deeper studies on this subject of Revival, read Iain Murray, *Pentecost Today- The Biblical Basis for Understanding Revival*, and *Revival and Revivalism*, and Jonathan Edwards, on *Revival, Religious Affections* - A timely message was delivered on the Marks of A Biblical Awakening at the GAES service on 19 Feb 2023 and is available upon request.)



Lord's Day Programme for January - March 2023

The Deliberate Christ-Centred Church in Action

(Book of Ephesians)



JANUARY

- 1 Divine Calling of a Believer (1:1-12)
- 8* Character of the Church (1:13-23)
- 15 Changed from Darkness to Light (2:1-10)
- 22 Progress of the Church (2:11-22)
- 29 Fullness of the Church (3:1-12)

FEBRUARY

- 5 **5th Anniversary Thanksgiving**
The Witness of the Church in Dangerous Times (Acts 5:29-42)
- 12* Functions of the Church (3:13-21)
- 19 Conduct of the Church (4:1-16)
- 26 Steps for Effective Witness in our Lives (4:17-32)

MARCH

- 5 Divinely Transformed Living (5:1-21)
- 12* Guidelines for Healthy Marital Relations (5:22-33)
- 19 Rules for Family Relationships (6:1-9)
- 26 Divine Protection for Spiritual Combat (6:10-24)

SOVEREIGNHOPE
WISDOM BEGETTER OF FAITH

PASTOR JACK SIN +65 91160948 | SOVEREIGNHOPEBPC@GMAIL.COM
WWW.SOVEREIGNHOPEBPC.ORG | 140 PATA LEDAR ROAD, ORION@PATA LEDAR #04-06 SINGAPORE 409022

SOVEREIGN HOPE BPC CAMP

Exercise unto Godliness in
an Ungodly World

Speaker:
Rev Philip Heng

CAMP FEE

Twin Sharing \$290
For Single \$390

PULAI SPRING



Come for a time for
reflection, fellowship and learning
with insightful messages, workshop
and devotions and family bonding time.

7-10 June 2023



Location
Pulai Springs Resort,
Malaysia



REGISTER TODAY WITH BRO PAUL TAN 80604412
CLOSING DATE FOR REGISTRATION 16 APRIL 2023

Memory Verse

Eph 3:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Lord's Day Sunday Worship Service! We are so glad you are here to worship with us. If you are here for the first time, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave. Those who share the church vision to acquire a place of worship in due time, may designate your offerings to the SHBPC Church Building Fund.
2. Pastor brings us God's Word this morning on "***Steps for Effective Witness in our Lives (Eph 4:17-32)***", continuing the quarterly series on "***The Deliberate Christ-Centred Church in Action (Book of Ephesians)***".
3. Pastor will preach next Sunday on "***Divinely Transformed Living (Eph 5:1-21)***"
4. Come and learn at our weekly Sunday School classes after the worship service:
 - Westminster Confession of Faith – Pastor
 - Studies in 1 Chronicles – Dn Kwong Leen
 - Practical Reflections from Ephesians – Dn Yue Kay & Paul Kong
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on every Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren. We have systematic studies on Basic Theology, and the book of Joshua. Join us for a time of profitable learning.
6. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The prayer list is available in church.
7. Monthly Neighbourhood Bible Class will next meet on this **Fri 3 Mar 2023, 7.30pm in church** on the study of 2 Samuel. Come and join us!
8. The **Annual Church Camp** will be held at **Pulai Springs Resort (Johor Bahru, Malaysia), June 7-10, 2023**. Rev Philip Heng is our camp speaker "***Exercise unto Godliness in an Ungodly World***". Do set aside this time and join us for a time of learning, spiritual refreshment and blessed fellowship. Contact Paul Tan (hp: 8060 4412) for more information.
9. We need willing hands and hearts to assist in the weekly cleaning of the premises. Do let Dn Yue Kay if you are available to serve in this area.
10. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
 - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
 - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
 - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**