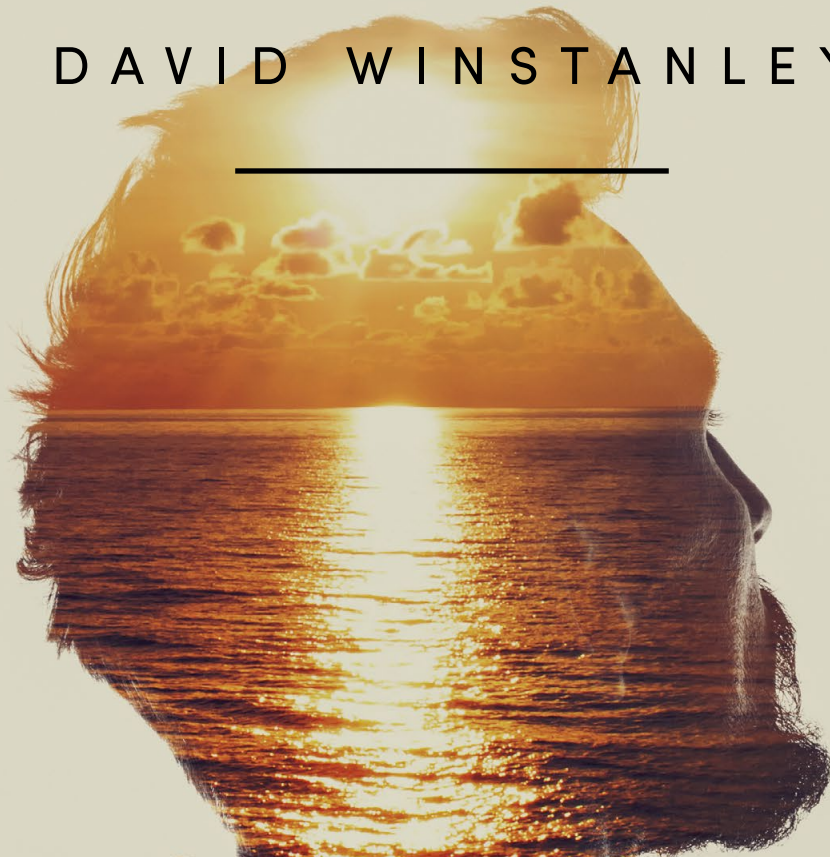


# Getting Personal With Renewal

DAVID WINSTANLEY

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*Methodist Minister and  
CEO of Aldersgate Renewal  
Ministries-UK, David  
Winstanley looks at how the  
renewal we long for needs  
to start with each one of us  
individually.*

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## IT BEGINS WITH ME

There is a problem in politics: we seem to have lost faith in our politicians. We have seen too many scandals, heard too many lies, had too many promises broken. There have been many who have prayed in our churches seeking a renewal of the hearts of politicians and that is a good prayer, but I believe that there is a prayer that needs to go before it and that is 'Lord, renew my heart'. If we want our leader's hearts to be changed then it has to begin with my heart. It seems to me that the same is true for Renewal when talking about the church. It begins with me.

I have been a part of the Methodist Church all my life (I've just turned 60!) and have only ever seen it in decline. Every year the Statistics for Mission are published and show yet another depressing set of numbers that says we are nearing the end of our days as a church. But we are not a people of statistics, we are a people of God, we stand on his Word. In Isaiah 9:7 we are told 'Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end' (NIV). This is a word of God for the church to live by and to live into. It is a word of God that gives hope to our prayers for revival and renewal. So my question to you is, where have you seen God at work in your life recently, and who have you told about what you experienced? Rather than lamenting our numerical decline, what if we started talking up our everyday experiences of God? What might happen? Well one thing is certain, other people will get excited. They will be encouraged and they will start to notice God in their own daily lives. Last week a man at one of my churches told us about where he had seen God this week and it was about a group of people pushing his car when he got stuck. He got a round of applause as he ended with the words, 'you see, prayer does work!'

Sometimes we might be guilty of only looking for God in the dramatic, the miracle, when he is present in all our circumstances. When we start to notice that we are living into that promise of God in Isaiah, we find that the renewal we long for has already begun.

## EQUIPPING FOR RENEWAL

At Aldersgate Renewal Ministries-UK our mission is to Equip the local church to minister to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit. We do this through team-led renewal weekends in local churches where we teach about the different ministries of the Holy Spirit, share some of our own testimony and offer prayer ministry. We've been privileged to minister with churches across the UK and abroad, and are constantly excited to see how God's promise to pour out his Spirit is just as true today as it ever has been.

A question that frequently arises on one of these weekends, when there has been a discernible move of the Holy Spirit and when people have shared testimony of how God has impacted their lives over the course of the weekend is: 'what are we going to do with this?' Meaning what are we, as a church, going to do with what we have received? My answer is always, 'what are you going to do with what God has given to you?' There is a personal responsibility that each of us must take up to bring the riches that God has given to us back to him in worship, prayer and service.

Being equipped for renewal comes in many forms and many different ways. Some of it will be in gathered places, maybe a weekend event such as the Aldersgate ones I have mentioned, or perhaps a MET conference, those places where we gather and fully expect to see God moving in all sorts of wonderful ways.

But what about on a Sunday morning at your own church? For many of us our week-by-week experience of church can be very dry and there might be a yearning in our heart for it to be more like that special gathering we attended. But even in that dry place God's promise is for renewal: 'I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs' (Isaiah 41:18, NIV). Even in the driest desert there are springs of water, often deep underground just waiting to burst forth. Is God calling you to be one of those springs of water?

If you find yourself in a dry place, take heart from God's promise in those words from Isaiah and keep pursuing personal renewal so that you might be a part of that spring of living water in the church today. As with so many things in the Kingdom of God, the personal benefit is often matched and more by the benefit to others. As the Holy Spirit pours more of his life-giving water into you as you pursue him, so those same streams will overflow from you and that is a great gift to bring to your church and your community.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE RENEWER

I remember finding a piece of metal in the garden many years ago; it was buried in the soil and I found it whilst digging. I picked it up and cleaned all the dirt from it and discovered it was an old 2d coin. I could have really cleaned it up and polished it, but it didn't seem worth it. I could also have thrown it back into the soil and let it get all covered in dirt again. I didn't. I had brought it back to the state it was most likely in before it was buried. You might say I had renewed it. We are mistaken if we think about our own renewal by God's good grace is the same as washing the dirt off us so that we're as we were before. That's just the start of it because God thinks that we are worth polishing up!

Recognising that God, through the work of his Holy Spirit dwelling within me has already begun a work of renewal is almost too amazing for words, but at the same time it is only the beginning. In Romans 12, Paul urges the church to 'not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind' (NRSV). Don't throw yourself back into the dirt



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to be covered and buried, but instead allow that work of renewal to continue. Paul gives us some helpful advice when he says don't 'be conformed to this world'. Your community, this country, the whole world needs a church that is not conformed to the lies, greed and power of this world, but is conformed to God's ways, to ways that make the things of God's Kingdom a reality in the lives of people who we meet day-by-day.

So it has to begin with me; it has to begin with you. I think it was Bill Hybels who said 'the local church is the hope of the world', by which he wasn't trying to push Christ to the side, but rather emphasize the fact that if you and I (the local church) take seriously the idea of personal renewal then the saving grace of Christ Jesus can come to bear on each and every community and everyone who lives within them.



## DAVID WINSTANLEY

*Rev David Winstanley has been in full-time circuit ministry for over 20 years and has led Aldersgate Renewal Ministries-UK since setting it up in 2011. He loves leading worship and seeing Christians of all ages ministering in their local setting through the power of the Holy Spirit. If you would like to talk to him about an Aldersgate team coming to your church email [dwinstanley@aldersgaterenewal.org.uk](mailto:dwinstanley@aldersgaterenewal.org.uk)*