



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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ISSUE 1

Vision For Revival

When this ministry began, I sensed that one of its purposes was to encourage prayer for genuine revival. God established this ministry to encourage and equip believers to seek Him for true revival. In the past ten years, we have labored to be faithful to this calling. Through a variety of materials and conferences, we have sought to help believers seek God for revival.

For some time now, I have had a burden. This burden has resulted from a variety of sources. This burden began when I served in churches before I went into an itinerant ministry. As an evangelist, I have taught in conferences on preparation for revival. I have preached in meetings for the purpose of seeking God for revival. Through these things, I have developed this burden – that something is missing. What is missing is a vision for revival.

You may wonder what I mean by a "vision" for revival. By this, I mean that we must develop a conviction and hunger for revival. I just don't sense these things in our churches. We can have meetings called "revivals." However, we don't have the conviction that revival can happen or the hunger for this work of God. There is much talk about revival. Yet, where is the hunger and conviction for revival?

I have encountered two mindsets concerning revival. One mindset is that revival

is not a possibility. People might not say this openly, yet they do not believe that genuine revival will occur. I grew up in and minister in the Southern Baptist tradition where one has "revival meetings." Even in this tradition, people may go through the motions of these revival services; they may participate in revival meetings. Yet, in their heart, they do not believe in an extraordinary work of God that will change them, their church, or their nation. They do not believe it has any practical bearing on their lives.

At the same time, many churches do not even have set times for seeking God for revival. There is no mention of revival from the pulpit or in the small groups. There are no calls to plead with God for revival. Some tell me that "revival" is a dinosaur no longer relevant or needed in our day. Large numbers, big budgets, and comfortable facilities have replaced the need for revival. We have substituted our numbers, budgets, and buildings for God's sovereign work of revival. This is the outgrowth of unbelief concerning revival. It flows from the fact that we do not have a conviction or hunger for revival.

The other mindset is complacency with what I call the "mercy drops." This comes from

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the hymn "Showers Of Blessing" In this hymn, the writer declares, "Mercy drops 'round us are falling, but for the showers of blessing we plead." We see the mercy drops – God does work and bless our lives and churches. We acknowledge that God is doing a good work in us and around us. There is no doubt concerning this.

However, we must desire the "showers" of blessing. As much as God is doing now, He can do much more. In revival, God can do more in one day, one week, or one month than can be accomplished in years of faithful ministry. Too many believers and churches are content with the mercy drops. We need a longing for those showers of blessing – genuine revival that transforms everything.

I certainly don't claim infallibility nor do I pretend to have all the answers for this situation. In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, I want to offer what it takes to have a vision for revival. It is my hope and prayer that this issue will encourage believers to think more deeply about revival, hunger more intensely for it, and to seek God more fervently for it.

I don't speak as an expert; I'm simply a brokenhearted, hungering believer who longs to see genuine revival flow into our churches and lives. The words of Nancy Leigh DeMoss sum up my heart, "Revival is not just another emphasis that we must add to our already overcrowded agendas. It's not an option. It's not just a nice idea. A meeting with God in genuine revival is our only hope; our church's only hope, our nation's only hope."

What Is Revival?

A vision for revival begins with understanding what revival is. Believers must be instructed in what revival is. If they do not know what revival is, how can they pray for it? How will they know what to look for when it comes?

A number of definitions have been offered for revival. I offer this definition: revival is a period of sudden, unusual stirring of God's Spirit among His people in which He heightens and intensifies our walk with Him. It is a sovereign work of God done according to His

own prerogative. Notice a couple of points about this definition of revival:

- ✓ *Revival is the work of the Spirit.* The Spirit is the Agent in unleashing revival. He is the Author of revival according to God's sovereign purpose (**Acts 1-2**).
- ✓ *Revival is a work among God's people (**Acts 2, 12:26, 13:1-3; Revelation 2-3**).* The conversion of sinners often takes place in revival. Yet, it is primarily a work among His people, renewing their spiritual lives.
- ✓ *Revival is the sovereign work of God (**Psalms 80**).* It takes place in His time and way. We do not manipulate or coerce the Spirit's work of revival.
- ✓ *Revival heightens and intensifies our walk with God (**Revelation 2-3**).* In revival, the Holy Spirit renews our relationship with God. He breathes new life into our practice of the spiritual disciplines. He leads us to new levels of growth and commitment. Revival transforms us; we are never the same after this work of the Spirit.
- ✓ *Revival takes place in a definite period (**Ecclesiastes 3:1**).* Revival has a starting point, a climax, and an ending point. It is a distinct time of the extraordinary work of the Spirit in His people and church.

Why is it important to develop an understanding of revival? First, we must forsake all false notions of revival. False notions of revival will hinder us from experiencing the true work of God. We will accept and have contentment with something less than God's amazing work. Second, it humbles us. When you understand that revival is God's work according to His own sovereign purpose, it drives you to your knees. If God alone grants revival, we therefore must seek Him for it. If God alone pours out revival, we have to humble ourselves before Him and seek Him.

Is Revival A Possibility?

The second aspect of developing a vision for revival is genuine conviction

concerning revival. A vision for revival means trusting God for revival. It is the conviction that God can and will send revival in His time and day.

Revival must be a conviction in the heart of the believer. Until this issue is settled, you will not be able to pray powerfully or enthusiastically for revival. You will not also join with other believers in activities designed to seek God for revival. We can mouth the words that we believe in revival. We can admit that God revives. Yet, we must believe this for our own lives and for our churches.

Is revival possible? What biblical reasons do we have for believing that God does revive His people? The following are some biblical reasons for knowing that revival is possible:

- *The glory of God (Habakkuk 2:14)*. God desires to make His greatness known. He loves to reveal His greatness to people through His works and His Word. In revival, God does an extraordinary work in which He receives the glory; the church and the world is shown His greatness. Because of God's desire to make His glory known, we can believe and seek God for revival.
- *God's sovereignty (Luke 1:37)*. God's sovereignty anchors our hope and faith for revival. It is within God's ability to grant revival to His people. The fact that God conceived the eternal Son of God in the womb of the virgin Mary shows that He truly can do the impossible. Revival is not impossible; it can become a reality because of God's awesome sovereignty.
- *God's mercy (Lamentations 3:22-23)*. The hope for revival is firmly grounded in God's mercy. He is full of mercy; His compassion for His people never fails. We have sinned against God. We have failed to seek Him and obey Him. Yet, there is still hope. God's abundant and abiding mercy shows us that there is still hope for revival even in the darkest hours of the church.
- *The fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)*. God has called the church to fulfill the Great Commission – to proclaim the gospel, to baptize, and to make disciples. A backslidden, powerless

church will not have the ability to do this. Revival is the powerful renewal of the church that it might shatter the powers of darkness and draw numbers of people into the kingdom through the gospel. In revival, God powerfully stirs His church and it accomplishes more in a shorter period than in years of faithful ministry.

- *The reality of backsliding (Proverbs 14:14)*. Backsliding can take place in the lives of genuine believers. Backsliding occurs when a person is filled with self and simply goes through the motions of service to and worship of God. The world and the flesh take precedence over God and His Word. Backsliding is often imperceptible; it overtakes a believer in gradual steps. **Proverbs 14:4** speaks of the backslider "in heart." The believer may be faithful in church and to the things of God, yet his or her heart is far from God. Believers need to experience revival to stir them out of their backslidden condition back into a fervent and intense pursuit of God and His Word.
- *Christ's call for repentance in His church (Revelation 2 and 3)*. In **Revelation 2** and **3**, we see the church, just years after Christ's resurrection and ascension, in need of revival. They had left their passionate love for Christ and fellowship with Him. Christ calls on His church to repent and experience genuine revival (**Revelation 2:2-4, 14-16; 3:1, 3, 15-16, 19**). Christ always calls His church to repent when they turn from Him and His Word. Christ's call to repentance shows us that revival is a need and a genuine possibility.
- *God's gracious invitation (Matthew 7:7)*. In **Matthew 7:7**, Jesus grants to His people a gracious invitation, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Christ teaches us that our Father wants us to seek Him with our desires. He longs for us to pour out our longings before Him. This certainly includes a desire for revival. We have the gracious invitation to seek Him for His reviving grace. God delights in this prayer and He will answer in His time. Christ tells us to ask, seek, and knock; this ought to strengthen and encourage our

willingness to trust and seek God for revival.

- *Examples of God's reviving work in the past (Habakkuk 3:1-2).* God has revived His people in the past. In both the Old and New Testaments, God's people departed from Him and then responded to His call to return:

Jacob's household – Genesis 35:1-15

Asa – 2 Chronicles 15:1-15

Joash – 2 Kings 11-12; 2 Chronicles 23-24

Hezekiah – 2 Kings 18:4-7; 2 Chronicles 29-31

Josiah – 2 Kings 22-23

Zerubbabel – Ezra 5-6

Nehemiah – Nehemiah 9-12

New Testament church – Revelation 2 – 3
God has sent revival to His people in both the Old and New Testaments and throughout the history of the church. God's work of revival in the past gives us hope for today, "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (**Malachi 3:6**).

- *The power of the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6; Acts 2).* Whether in the Old or the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is the Author of revival. By His power, He stirs and renews God's people. He has the power to revive the church of Christ. He has the ability to return His people to a place of passion and hungering for God and His Word. He can empower to church to advance in huge strides. The Holy Spirit's power ought to inflame our faith and hope for revival in the present day and hour of the church.

Preparing For Revival

While we cannot produce revival, we can prepare for it. The church cannot birth revival; this is the work of our God. It is God's sovereign work. Yet, God uses means to prepare the way for revival.

God's work of revival often begins with a few people who begin to seek Him and prepare for revival. The showers of blessing often begin with a drizzle in the lives of a few who begin to pray and prepare for revival.

The following is a 30-day prayer guide to help you begin preparing for revival. This guide is designed to help you prepare for your heart for God's reviving work. Each day you are given a verse or verses of Scripture. Read the verse or verses and meditate on them. Record any insights that the Spirit gives you. Then work through the guidelines for that day.

Day 1

Read and meditate on **Psalm 80**, particularly **verses 3, 7, 19**. Revival is God's work. He alone can revive us. Humble yourself before Him and confess this truth to God. Pray that a spirit of brokenness will fill your church and you. Ask that your church and you will become desperate for God's reviving grace.

Day 2

Read and meditate on **Psalm 86:4-7**. The psalmist calls on God to revive His people. Revival and prayer go hand in hand. Prayer is crucial to receiving the revival we need. Plead that God will unleash a spirit of prayer in your church for genuine revival.

Day 3

Read and meditate on **Revelation 3:14-22**. Do you believe that you need revival? Does your church need revival? Pray that God will shatter your church's and your own complacency and self-righteousness. Plead that your church and you will see the need for revival and that you will seek God for His reviving grace.

Day 4

Read and meditate on **Hebrews 11:6**. When you seek God for revival, you must approach God with faith. You must believe Him for revival in your church and in your life. Plead with Him to create within you the faith to receive revival. Call on Him to stir your church's faith to seek Him and receive revival from Him.

Day 5

Read and meditate on **Matthew 13:58**. Unbelief hinders us from receiving God's mighty works in our lives. Today confess any unbelief that you have about God's work of

revival in you and in your church. Pray today, "Lord, I believe You for revival; help my unbelief." Ask God to remove any hindrances to revival in your church.

Day 6

Read and meditate on **Galatians 6:9** and **1 Corinthians 15:58**. Revival comes in God's timing. You may have to seek God over the long haul for genuine revival in you and your church. Commit yourself today to seek God until He sends an extraordinary work of power and grace in your life and in the life of your church. Pray for the patience to wait and the strength not to give up.

Day 7

Read and meditate on **Matthew 22:34-40**. Confess and repent of not loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Pray that the Spirit will fill you with fresh love for God and a desire to demonstrate that love in your area. Plead that God will also do these same things in your church.

Day 8

Read and meditate on **Psalms 42:1-2** and **1 John 2:15-17**. Confess today that you have had greater desire for the pleasures and possessions of the world than God and His Word. Plead with the Holy Spirit to create within you a craving for God and His Word. Ask that you will desire God and His Word more than anything else in this world.

Day 9

Read and meditate on **John 14:15, 23-24**. Confess and repent of believing that you love God without striving to obey His Word. Pray that He will work into your heart a fresh commitment to hear and obey the Word of God. Ask Him to unleash a spirit of hearing and obeying the Word in your church.

Day 10

Read and meditate on **Psalms 63:8**. Confess and repent of putting anything in your life ahead of your relationship to God. Pray today that you will be passionately committed to following Christ. Plead that God will give your church the same desire.

Day 11

Read and meditate on **Zechariah 4:6**. Confess your need of the Holy Spirit. Admit to God that too many times you have attempted to live the Christian life in your own wisdom and power. Call on the Holy Spirit to fill you with His power. Plead that He will unleash His transforming power into your church and that genuine revival will result.

Day 12

Read and meditate on **Proverbs 8:13**. Are you as deeply convicted over evil in you and around you, as you were when you first came to Jesus Christ as your Savior? Confess any complacency in your life toward that which is evil. Ask that you will grow in the fear of the Lord and in your hatred of sin. Call on God to destroy any complacency that you have toward the evil in you and around you.

Day 13

Read and meditate on **Psalms 139:23-24**. Plead with the Holy Spirit to search your life. Ask Him to reveal to you anything in your life that offends God. Pray that you will not allow pride to keep you from seeing what the Spirit reveals to you. Plead that God will create a spirit of repentance in your church and in you.

Day 14

Read and meditate on **1 John 1:8-10**. The failure to see and acknowledge your sin means that you are deceived. Ask God that your church and you will not be deceived about your sins. Confess to God those things that the Spirit has dealt with you about from the previous day. Claim the cleansing power of His blood over your sins. Plead that your church will acknowledge its sin, repent, and seek Christ's cleansing.

Day 15

Read and meditate on **John 4:24**. God desires truthful, heartfelt worship. Have you ever gone through the motions of worship without worshipping God from the heart? Confess this to God and pray for a genuine spirit of worship in your church and in your life.

Day 16

Read and meditate on **Romans 9:1-3**. Do you have a passionate burden for the lost? Do you weep over the lost and plead with God for their salvation? Confess your dry eyes and your hard heart to God. Ask Him to grant your church and you a fresh passion for those who need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Day 17

Read and meditate on **Mark 1:3**. God sent John the Baptist to clear the way for His Son. Jesus Christ was coming in grace and power and all obstacles had to be removed. Revival is a visitation of God in grace and power. Pray today that the Holy Spirit will prepare your church and you for a divine visitation. Ask that all the obstacles to revival will be removed from your midst.

Day 18

Read and meditate on **1 Peter 5:8-9**. Satan hates revival and will do anything that He can to hinder it. He will use whatever means possible to hinder revival in your church and in you. Plead that God will bind him and his work against the move of the Spirit in your church.

Day 19

Read and meditate on **Psalms 127**. Thank God for the families that make up your church. Pray today that God's reviving grace will fill each family in your church.

Day 20

Read and meditate on **Ephesians 5:22-33**. Pray today that revival will take place in the marriages that make up your church. Call on God to stir husbands to love their wives with a Christlike, sacrificial love and that the wives will be submissive to their husbands. Ask God to deliver any marriages that are in trouble.

Day 21

Read **Ephesians 6:1-3**. Plead that honor and obedience will return to the homes that make up your church. Pray that God will grant the grace and power for children to walk in honor toward their parents – whether as a child in the home or as an adult with aging parents.

Day 22

Read and meditate on **Deuteronomy 6:6-9**. Pray today for a revival of prayer and Bible reading in the families that make up your church. Plead that these families will talk about the things of God with each other.

Day 23

Read and meditate on **Ephesians 4:30-32**. Are you harboring envy, bitterness, or jealousy in your heart? Ask God to reveal any envy, bitterness, or jealousy you have allowed room for in your heart. As He does this, confess this to God and plead that He will enable you to change. Pray that your church will not give any place to envy, bitterness, or jealousy.

Day 24

Read and meditate on **Matthew 6:14-15**. Are you harboring any unforgiveness toward others? Do you have any unforgiveness toward any in your church? Ask God to open your eyes to any unforgiveness that you have given room to in your life. As the Spirit reveals this to you, confess it to God and pray for those toward whom you have had unforgiveness.

Day 25

Read and meditate on **Psalms 133**. Are there broken relationships in your church? Ask God to intervene in these and to bring about reconciliation and healing. Plead with God to renew and strengthen the unity in your church.

Day 26

Read and meditate on **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**. A stronghold is a mindset that Satan builds up in peoples' minds to hinder God's work and Word. What strongholds has the devil erected in your church? What mindsets have hindered your church from revival and God's greater usefulness and blessing? Plead today that God will begin to destroy these strongholds. Ask Him to break down anything that binds your church and keeps your church from greater usefulness and genuine revival.

Day 27

Read and meditate on **1 Corinthians 2:1-4**. Plead God's empowering of your pastor to

proclaim the Word of God. Pray that his preaching will be a manifestation of the power of God. Ask that it will be used of God in preparing for and unleashing revival in your church.

Day 28

Read and meditate on **James 1:19-22**. Pray today for a spirit of expectation in your church. Plead that people will come to worship services ready and eager to hear and respond to the Word of God.

Day 29

Read and meditate on **1 Peter 3:7**. Peter calls on believers to be of the same mind. Believers must be joined together for the same purpose. Plead today that your church will forsake the variety of agendas that exist among the members. Pray that your church will be of the same mind – that the church will have one mind and heart to seek God for revival and His extraordinary work in its midst.

Day 30

Read and meditate on **Acts 2:41**. After the coming of the Holy Spirit, the church experienced fresh empowering. The church then proclaimed the gospel and thousands were converted. Revival often leads to awakening – the conversion of those who need Jesus Christ. Plead that God will unleash genuine revival in your midst and that many people in and out of the church will come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Ask that God's reviving grace will change your church and then your city or community.

What Do You Do Until Revival Comes?

Revival is the sovereign work of God. It comes according to His purpose and His time. What do you do after you finish the 30 days of preparation for revival? In other words, what do you do until revival comes?

In **Zechariah 4:10**, God asks Zechariah, "For who hath despised the day of small things?" He said this to address the discouragement that had set in among the

people of God. The work of rebuilding the temple had begun under Zerubbabel. The foundation was put down but the work was proceeding slowly. The walls were not completed; progress seemed impossible.

Worst of all, at least in the eyes of the people, the new temple was nowhere near as grand and remarkable as the temple that had been destroyed. The people were comparing the present temple to the past one. They had started despising the day of small things. Because of this, they became discouraged. For a while, they neglected the rebuilding of the temple.

Believing and praying for revival requires faith and patience. Looking back to the great revivals of the past and seeing the lack of it in our day can frustrate us and lead us to despair. It is easy to become discouraged – to despise the day of small things. Yet, we cannot allow discouragement and frustration to hinder us from seeking God for genuine revival. We must continue to cry out to Him and believe Him even in the day of small things.

What do believers need to do until revival comes?

- (1) *Make praying for revival an integral part of your prayer life.* Praying for revival is not something to be done only at certain times in the year; it has to become an essential part of our prayer life. It has to become our regular cry – our daily plea. Ask God to give you the strength and endurance for this.
- (2) *Pray with other believers.* Join other believers to pray for revival. Commit to pray together for genuine revival in your church and in your lives. Agree in prayer concerning the need for revival and plead with God for His reviving grace. God has often birthed revival when believers join and pray together for revival in their churches, their small groups, or their homes.
- (3) *Learn about God's works of revival in the past.* Read about and study the great moves of God in church history. This will have a two-fold effect. First, it will help you understand what revival is. That will enable you to pray with greater power and wait

with greater expectation. Second, it will encourage you and help you to exercise patience in waiting for God's reviving grace.

- (4) *Faithfully practice the spiritual disciplines.* Seeking God for revival requires a balance. We must have one eye fixed on heaven – praying for and waiting for God's reviving grace. Our other eye must be fixed on our daily walk with God. We must continue to be faithful in the Word, prayer, giving, serving, church attendance, and witnessing. Develop the balance of seeking God for revival while continuing to be faithful in your daily walk with God.
- (5) *Use whatever influence you have to stir up others concerning revival.* Speak to others

about revival. Talk to them about what **revival** is. Encourage them to seek God for **revival** in your church or your area.

- (6) *Preach and teach on revival.* Pastors and **teachers** need to commit to instruct the **people** in genuine revival. Faithfully teach **on what** revival is and how to seek God for it. Don't yield to discouragement or frustration; continue to instruct the people in what genuine revival is.
- (7) *Above all else, confess your own sin, repent, and fall in love with Jesus all over again.* God begins to grant revival when individual believers do these things.



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