

Why Your Church Should Pray for Revival

By [David McLemore](#)

We need a category for revival in all of our churches. Without it, we may miss out on the great blessing that God offers. Without it, we may spend our lives toiling for the wrong things, and we may shortchange the future generations.

Revival, in the historical sense, is an in-breaking of the kingdom of God that reorders the world (or a part of the world) for a specific period of time. [W.B. Sprague](#) defines revival in his [Lectures on Revivals](#) as 'to cure the disorders of the mind.' In revival many are humbled. Many are saved. The world pivots, and history is never the same.

I am not referring to summer night tent revivals, but to a culture of prayer for revival over the course of years built into the fabric of the local church. As [Martyn Lloyd-Jones](#) says in his book, *Revival*, 'If I may put it bluntly and clearly, what is needed is not a stunt, but the action of God that will stun people.'

You want that. Your heart longs for it. So does mine. So how can we firm up the shores of the category for revival in our churches? Here are some practical steps, and one massive reason to sum it all up.

WHY SHOULD A CHURCH PRAY FOR REVIVAL?

1. The church that prays for revival prays for God's power (Acts 1:8). There is a certain amount of power mankind has been given. We can be persuasive. We can be innovative. We can be attractive, to a degree (as long as you don't look too closely). We can plan and organize and pull off amazing feats. But all of those things are nothing compared to the power held within God. When a church prays for revival that church is praying for a power not their own. They are praying for the power of the Holy Spirit to be poured out in greater measure than they can imagine. It is a prayer of faith, a prayer of need, and a prayer of humility.

2. The church that prays for revival prays for a great awakening (Acts 3:19-20). There is a reason the revivals in early America are referred to as the Great Awakenings. If there is anything needed today it is an awakening from our slumber. We are so sleepy toward God, even the best among us. Our God-sensibilities, by and large, are so dreary that many Christians no longer even pick up their Bible. Entertainment has dulled us, yes, but the problem is deeper than that. We haven't merely been entertained by other things, we have failed to be awed by God. The church that prays for revival, then, is praying for an awakening to God. They are praying for times of refreshing from the Lord.

3. The church that prays for revival prays for salvation of many far from God (Acts 2:47). Revival always demands attention. I'm not sure it can be said something is revival if people far from God have no idea it has been going on. Those who currently

mock and scoff at the Lord, in times of revival, come to him – miraculously. All of the work pastors and elders and ministry leaders can do in 50 years the Lord can do in one minute. God is in the business of bringing people to himself, and therefore, manifesting his glory. That is done best when people are saved, when Jesus is lifted up and all people are drawn to him. That happens in massive quantities, with great wonder in times of revival.

WHAT DOES PRAYING FOR REVIVAL TEACH THE CHURCH?

1. When a church prays for revival the church learns to be expectant (Eph. 3:20). Praying for something that only God can do is hard because it pushes us down into new areas of humility. We are more comfortable praying for God's help in our current plans, but to pray for God to do something that only he can do reorients our prayers away from ourselves and onto God. It is risky, but it is bold – and Christians should be bold. We serve a God who is able to work wonders.
2. When a church prays for revival the church learns to plead with God in prayer (Luke 11:5-13). Here's what I mean: when was the last time you used Scripture to ask the Lord to do again what he has done in the past? How much do you take God's word and use it back to him in prayer? That's what you're doing when praying for revival. You look at the book of Acts, for example, and see the multitudes coming to Christ and you're saying to God, 'Lord, I don't see this in my city today. Why? Will you do this again? Will you pour your Holy Spirit out on us? Your name must be magnified here. You must become glorified in our city, in our time. Please, Lord. Do this for the sake of Christ.' That is not irreverent. That is pleasing to God. Jesus told us so in Luke 8 with the parable of the friend in need at midnight. But most of all, it is pleasing to God because God wants to glorify himself. Do you want him to be glorified? Asking him for more of himself magnifies his glory.
3. When a church prays for revival the church learns to wait on the Lord. Similar to number 1 above, praying for something that only God can do puts us on God's timetable. He doesn't live in our space/time box. He lives outside of it. But he does care about it, and he does work in and through it. Our patience is so thin compared to God's. What if you spent your entire life praying for revival only to miss out on it? What if through your patiently expectant prayers your children or grandchildren experienced the revival that you spent your life praying for? Are we ok with our prayers today being the means of blessing for our children tomorrow? We must wait on the Lord. After all, what we are asking for is his work in his way through his means for his glory. We wouldn't want it manufactured. We have enough of that in this world. We want it only as he would give it to us. So we wait – pleading expectantly.

WHY IS A CATEGORY FOR REVIVAL IMPORTANT IN THE LIFE OF A CHURCH?

Revival is an important category for a church to have. The history books are filled with revivals. They are significant. They have spurred the church onward, and given her new life time and again. Reading about, talking about, and remembering revival stories are important in the life of the church for at least these reasons:

1. Revival is an important category for a church to have because revivals remind us that we aren't God (Isa. 6:5). We should remember this, but we seem to quickly forget

that we aren't God. Our next great idea is enough to push God to the sidelines. We puff ourselves up. One stroke of the ego explodes our heads and we believe that our way of ministry is God's gift to the world. Well, it may be. But more likely you fall in line with the rest of the church throughout history that is ruled and reigned by God. He is God, and you are not. Your ideas may be gifts from him, but the real gift is God himself. Remember that.

2. Revival is an important category for a church to have because it reminds us that there is always great hope for the church (Matt. 16:18). We are in God's hands, not the world's. When the landscape looks the bleakest, the sun is about to rise. The world does not seem to be getting better. Sin is still powerful. Satan is still the prince of the power of the air. Creation is still groaning. But there is a great hope because God is still God. There is a great hope because the Lord Jesus Christ is alive and through his Spirit he is calling men and women to himself. History has proven that God is still able to move in great power for extended periods of time to bring massive amounts of people into his kingdom. As long as Christ is on the throne we have hope – and he's not moving. Neither should your hope.

3. Revival is an important category for a church to have because we need to constantly repent (1 John 1:7). Nothing will drive us to repentance quicker and with more consistency than to talk through, think through, and pray through the hindrances to revival in our church. What are we thinking about God? What are we asking him for? What areas of our lives need cleansing? Praying for revival brings greater clarity to our own desperate situation and great need. The biggest problem in any church is the low thoughts of God that are prevalent throughout the congregation. Look at the revivals of history and see the great humility that it brought, see the great conviction of sin, see the great awakening. We should heed Peter's words in Acts 3, 'Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.' Acts 3:1-9-20.

BUT THE MAIN REASON REVIVAL IS AN IMPORTANT CATEGORY FOR THE CHURCH TO HAVE IS . . .

While those are all good categories of thought in regards to revival, there is something more pressing, something more urgent. We must begin praying for revival in our churches because the evil we see (and the much greater evil we don't see) will not be redeemed without the Lord bending down toward us. ISIS will not fall. Human trafficking will not stop. Abortion will not end. None of the evil that keeps us up at night will even pause for a moment without the gracious God above looking upon this wicked earth with mercy and grace. When we pray for revival we are praying for God to end the madness. We think of it as abnormal, but revival is the only true normal in the universe. Everything else is a distortion.

If you want the world to be shaken, so that you wake up from your slumber, so that the interstates shuffle less girls across state lines, pray for the Lord to rend the heavens and come down. Pray with passion. Pray with urgency. Pray with expectancy. Pray with humility. Pray without ceasing. Pray. Just pray. God is able to break through.

The only final solution to all the evil in the world, and all the evil in your heart, is the glory of God shining forth.

Come, Lord Jesus!