

3 Ways to Keep Revival Alive

The **Holy Spirit** is calling the people of God out of seasons of refreshing and cycles of outpouring and instead showing us what a lifestyle of revival looks like and how it can be sustained from one generation to the next. **Revival** was never meant to die; it was always intended to redefine what Christianity looked and functioned like.

Many are pressing into God's heart at this key moment in history. There is a sense that what we have come to define as "church as usual" is downright insufficient for the task at hand—*discipling nations*.

Our seminars, workshops and conferences are purposed to equip us with tools and resources to "do church more effectively." Are they working? Yes. But whose vision of church are we accommodating and propagating—man's or God's?

If our priority is to continue pleasing man, it will be impossible for us to build a structure that will carry and sustain what we commonly call revival. However, if our aim, desire and foremost **passion** is to please God and accommodate His vision of church, we bend hearing ears toward heaven, ask the right questions and start to receive the necessary downloads on how to sustain revival as a lifestyle. This is where we are moving. This is what we are pressing in for.

What Are We Reviving?

Surely, if we are able to define the concept of revival, then we will be able to approach it with increased clarity and understanding. I have read some incredible definitions of *revival*, including one offered by Duncan Campbell: "Revival is a community saturated with God."

Richard Owen Roberts describes it this way: "Revival is an extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit producing extraordinary

results. ... [It's] the re-entry of Christ's manifest presence."

And Stephen Olford says this: "Revival is not some emotion or worked-up excitement; it is rather an invasion from heaven which brings a man to a conscious awareness of **God**."

The concept that struck me the most when it came to the possibility of sustaining revival was brilliantly presented by Edwin Orr. He defined *revival* as a "movement of the Holy Spirit bringing about a revival of **New Testament Christianity** in the **church** of Christ and its related community."

Revival is a return to the original New Testament blueprint of Christianity. It is nothing new; rather, it is a divine summons to embrace the church's original design, as clearly defined by **Jesus** Himself: "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16:18-19, NASB)

If we believe that revival is anything other than going back to the original expression of New Testament Christianity, then yes, it will be impossible to continue and sustain it. God's blessing is on God's blueprint; God's blueprint is made very clear in Jesus' description of the church in Matthew 16:18-19.

As the church, we are called to steward and, yes, broker kingdom realities on earth. If Scripture reveals something as bound or forbidden in heaven, then such should be bound on earth. Likewise, if the Word shows us that something is loosed, or normal, in heaven, our goal should be to see that reality is normal on earth. In our own ability, these tasks would be utterly impossible. Introduce the reality and power of **Pentecost**, however, and that changes everything.

Can Revival Outlast a Season, Person and Experience?

What began as an **outpouring** in one generation should continue as a lifestyle in the next. If this does not happen, then we did not appropriately respond to the summons of revival when God served us with a sovereign notice.

In writing a few previous articles on the subject of revival, I started to discuss the possibility of sustaining a move of God. I was amazed at how many people were convinced that revival could not be sustained. Therein lies the issue.

I am discontent at the thought of experiencing another “move of the Spirit,” wave, renewal, refreshing, outpouring or revival, only to have it putter out. Even if it did, somehow, continue for several years, what is the point of contending for something that we know is ultimately going to fizzle out and die in the end?

Don’t get me wrong. I truly celebrate the genuine moves of God’s Spirit that have followed hungry believers since the Day of Pentecost. Each historical outpouring produced a momentum that, in turn, impacted the following outpouring. There is much honor to extend toward the great moves of God, as well as the ordinary men and women who said yes to the extraordinary assignment of stewarding revival.

There is always **fruit**, no question. However, I want us to lift our eyes and have a vision for something far greater and far more lasting than just another season of visitation. When God visits, I want us to be ready to respond and reorient everything to accommodate Him.

As G. Campbell Morgan said, “Revival cannot be organized, but we can set our sails to catch the wind from heaven when God chooses to blow upon His people once again.”

What are three practical ways that we can “set our sails” to “catch the wind from heaven”?

3 Ways to Experience a Revival Lifestyle

1. We recognize that it is possible for revival to continue beyond a time, season or even a generation. For those of you who still have difficulty embracing this concept, ask yourself, “What definition of revival am I embracing?” If we are looking for something new to come down from heaven, then yes, it will be difficult to sustain such an experience. This is what had led so many to try to repeat what they experienced during a previous move of God. As a result, they attempt to manufacture this experience, only to end up operating in the flesh. How do we keep revival going without manufacturing anything?

2. We stop and respond to God’s sovereign summons. When revival comes, it is easy to get caught up in the exciting whirlwind it produces. Rightly so. We celebrate the harvest of souls being ushered into the kingdom. We are overjoyed by the refreshing we experience in God’s presence. The healings, miracles, signs and wonders remind us of how near heaven truly is. All of these things are glorious, but they can be downright destructive if we do not receive and respond to the memo. Revival preaches a very clear message: This is what normal Christianity looks like. Adjust accordingly! Are we listening? The longer we deny that revival reveals what normal should look like, the longer we will be satisfied with a wind or a refreshing when, in fact, God wants to revolutionize Christian life as we know it. It is time for us to raise the bar and start agreeing with God’s vision.

3. Revival reorients in order to produce reformation. We are reoriented with Jesus’ original picture of “normal church” so that we can reform our operations appropriately. Sounds simple. The problem is that there are actually people who want revival without reformation. Why? Because the occasional, sporadic visitation does not threaten the safe, predictable, comfortable rhythm of Christian life. Ideally, we want a move of God that we can fit nicely into our 21st-century church paradigms. We want a touch without having to engage

transformation. Truly, this is like putting a square peg in a round hole. This will always be impossible, as the structure will need to change in order to carry revival. We pray for the new wine but are unwilling to trade our old wineskins.

God wants to radically reform the way we do church and live out Christianity in the 21st century. Are we willing to reorient our lives and our churches with God's original blueprint and pursue a revival lifestyle instead of a revival experience?

Start with this simple prayer: *Holy Spirit, come. I want to experience Your presence and power like never before. I don't want just a touch or a visitation or a season of revival; I want to live like Jesus said I could live. Open my eyes. Show me areas in my church, life and family that need to be transformed so that I can experience everything Jesus said was available and possible.*

Let's be like the men and women in times past who cried out for an outpouring not to get a zing or a zip but to become completely wrecked for anything less than normal, supernatural New Testament Christianity.

Larry Sparks is host of Life Supernatural, a weekly radio program that features best-selling authors, emerging filmmakers and key ministry leaders. In addition to serving as the director of curriculum resources for Destiny Image Publishers, Larry is president and founder of Equip Culture Ministries – an organization that equips believers to experience a life of sustained victory through the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Visit him at [www.larryvsparks.com](#) or on Twitter at @LarryVSparks.