

4 Myths of Revival

I devoured accounts of revival that perpetuated a romantic view of this phenomena which caused me to stumble. Maria Woodworth Etter's stories of setting up a tent and hosting a service where people were healed and delivered created a hunger in me to see God heal and deliver my friends. I wanted to see people miraculously healed and delivered and thousands of people flooding into services. While I've seen healing and deliverance in my church that hosted a revival for 20 years, I've also seen death, divorce, and people fall away.

When I first started attending my church located in a small country town, I was struck by how ordinary the people were in the church. They were hard working moms, dads, grandmas, grandpas, students, teenagers and children who loved God. There were lines of people from all over the world standing in front of their church, but the members were very humble and unassuming people. They attended church six days a week and served behind the scenes in services that were five to six hours long. Many of them left church at 1 a.m. and got up early the next day to go work.

Living and serving among them through the highs and lows of life revealed some myths that I believed about revival. Most Christians believe these myths which can keep them from receiving the work of God. Here are some common myths about revival

1) Revival is for sinners. The definition of revival is 'to revive or bring back to life.' Those who were once alive come close to dying and they need to be revived back to life. Jesus was the original revivalist who focused his ministry on his people – Israel.

"But He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'" (Matt. 15:24).

Revival isn't for the sinner who has no interest in God although I've seen dramatic conversions. Revival is first for the Christian. When revival began at Smithton Community Church, they expected drug addicts and the down and out to flood into their church. Instead, buses and van loads of Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Catholics and many other churches came to the services.

As Christians traveled from other countries and testified of having an encounter with God, the leaders realized that God sent a revival for His people. Jesus brought a move of the Spirit to His people. The Romans and Greeks or Gentiles were not the focus of Jesus' ministry although they would join His work later.

2. Revival is the solution to all of life's problems. This is the romantic idea that I had of revival. Revival would save my marriage, make me rich, heal me from sickness or pull in my wayward child. While my marriage was literally rescued by revival and stretched my faith to start a business, I've seen people get sick and die, divorce, kids back slide or fall away.

When my daughter was born with special needs after I was on staff at my church, I thought that revival didn't work. After all, she should have been born healthy since I poured my life out for the cause. That summer after she was born, my husband, Jerome, lost his job. I questioned revival and realized that I made it an idol.

I considered leaving my church until God asked me if I was there to sit on the front row and get phone calls from the pastor. I responded to God by saying I wasn't there to get special favors but because He had called me. God spoke to me that He had not changed His mind.

I was still called to this church even though circumstances didn't line up with what I believed. Even though I questioned

the legitimacy of revival, I still admired the pastor and his wife because I had worked closely with them. I knew how much they loved God, loved people and operated in integrity. The pastor encouraged people to run to God and give Him more of your time and life when you were in trouble. I trusted the pastor as a person and followed his advice.

We followed the pastor's teaching on trusting God and our situation dramatically turned around. God blessed my husband with a job and my daughter had no major health issues. I've learned through the 17 years of disappointments, breakthroughs, healings, sickness, death, miracles, divorce, broken families and the highs and lows of life that although God moves among people, we still live in a fallen world. We live on a planet with disease, death, horrific crime, poverty and injustice, yet the only way God moves is through people.

The Holy Spirit needs a vessel to flow through. That vessel is a frail, flawed human being. The problem isn't the message of revival. The problem is that people who love God are prone to be fickle and are easily discouraged by hard circumstances.

3. Revival is a random, sovereign move of God. The accounts that I read of revival in Wales or the Moravians led me to believe that we can hope that God moves but it is ultimately up to Him. We can't do anything to create a climate conducive to revival. We can only hope and pray.

I learned that the outpouring that struck my church in March 1996 was preceded by several years of prayer for revival. They didn't take prayer requests during these prayer meetings, but focused on revival. I believe that those heart-wrenching prayers focused on God alone made them attractive to His Spirit. If Jesus had to pray all night, how much more do we need a prayerful lifestyle?

Revival is God moving within frail, human vessels. In most examples of supernatural activity in the Bible, God needed a

willing vessel. He needed Mary to carry the Messiah. He needed Ananias to initiate Saul into his apostolic ministry as Paul. He needed Peter to carry the revival to a Roman centurion, Cornelius. Ultimately revival begins with a relationship between you and God and other people. People are the carriers of revival. We can create an atmosphere that God likes or shut Him out.

4. The evidence of revival is thousands of people saved at an evangelistic crusade. This is going to shock you and please know that I'm not anti-evangelism. I just think that we may have an American church idea of evangelism that differs from the early church style of evangelism.

Jesus did not conduct one evangelistic crusade to reach out to the Romans. He focused exclusively on bringing revival to His people that made God attractive to Romans such as Cornelius. Jesus brought revival to devout Jews.

While we read about thousands of people who were added to the church daily in the book of Acts, remember this:

"And continuing daily with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:46-47).

The people experiencing revival met in the temple or synagogue. They were not in a Roman coliseum or bathhouse, they met in 'church.' Revival began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on 120 believers praying together.

The people in that prayer meeting that unleashed the power of Pentecost on the planet were devout Jews and Gentiles that loved Jesus. They were willing to die for what they believed in. Their devotional life would probably make American Christianity look worldly and carnal. They wanted the Holy

Spirit and He came.

The prayer meeting was not an evangelistic crusade. This was a gathering of people who loved God, laid their lives down for each other and gave everything they had to the cause. The number of believers grew as they met together, attended to the apostles teaching and fellowshiped. They were a community that made their faith attractive to unbelievers with their life of serving and loving one another.

Revival is God moving among a community of believers. As I was free from these myths, I've drawn closer to the revivalist, Jesus. My heart longs for Him and aches for the people of God to know Him and enjoy the benefits of belonging to Him. We need Him and we need each other for God to break forth in a fresh move today.

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