

6 Reasons Why Revival is Not the Focus of the New Testament

The Asbury revival has garnered the attention of many. As a result, some pastors and young leaders are looking at this phenomenon as the norm and primary goal of their ministry.

However, we must look at revival as a means to an end, not the end itself.

Historically, charismatics have been “all in” on revival. To them, this term is an all-encompassing word that means a mighty move of God in the church that spills over into the community and wins the lost.

However, we should distinguish between a revival, which has to do with bringing life back to a dead church, and an awakening, which has to do with a massive movement of winning the lost in the surrounding communities of churches.

Of course, we should all believe in revivals leading to significant awakenings of sinners. However, there are many churches and pastors who have no strategy except to wait for a revival.

When I read the New Testament, this differs from the apostles' focus. The word “revival” is not used once in the New Testament, even though the need for it in the context of bringing life back to a dead church is implied in several places.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus told the church of Ephesus to come back to their first love. He tells the church of Sardis to wake up and strengthen the things that remain that are about to die. He rebuked the Laodicea church for being

lukewarm and admonished them to let Him back in the church (Rev. 2:1-7; 3:1-2; 3:14-20).

The following are six reasons why we should not put all our focus on revival.

1. Praying for revival implies your church is dead. The focus in the New Testament is not on revival, but on building healthy churches that nurture sheep that reproduce other sheep. Congregations like this continue to grow and expand organically without a revival. Consequently, a pastor whose primary focus is praying for revival in their church is implying that their congregation is dead or dying (which may be the case in many churches).

However, if their church is healthy, praying for a revival in their congregation would be like calling 911 for an EMT person to come and conduct CPR to bring someone back to life whose heart and health are fully functional. Healthy churches should focus on continuing to nurture the flock to present every member complete in Christ (Col. 1:28).

2. God cannot bring more people into your church beyond your capacity to shepherd them. In Deuteronomy 7:22, God told Moses that He could not give the children of Israel all of the promised lands at once lest the wild animals become unmanageable. Hence, the principle is God will never give you more than you can manage. If God answered most prayers for revival and awakening, it would possibly wreak havoc in many churches that cannot shepherd the needs of these newly saved people.

3. A primary focus of the New Testament is on making disciples, not on revival. Both Jesus and the apostle Paul put their primary focus on disciple making (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 14:21-28). Many pastors focus on revival but fail to create an infrastructure conducive to making disciples. So what would happen if many people came into their church, but there was no

process to mature these new converts?

The unfortunate result would be a lot of spiritual babies being born again who would not be properly disciplined, resulting in many of them falling away.

4. A primary focus in the New Testament is building strong families. According to the guidelines of the apostle Paul, a person is not qualified to be a spiritual leader unless they can manage their household (1 Tim. 3:5). The reason for this is that the church is a family of families, which is why Paul referred to her as the household of faith (1 Tim. 3:15). Thus, the true gauge of influential congregations is not merely the size of the church, but how strong the marriages and families are in the congregation.

5. A primary focus of the Scriptures is to live productive lives that benefit others. Some pastors and believers get discouraged because they've never experienced what they deem to be a great revival. This causes them to think that they failed or believe that the favor of God is not upon them. Thus, they only see God in the miraculous, not the mundane. However, the church's goal should be to nurture economically productive Christians that love their fellow Christians and become a blessing to the unchurched community (Gal. 6:10; 1 Thess. 4:9-12; Titus 2:14; Titus 3:9). This is one legitimate measure of success.

6. Great outpourings of the Spirit are expressed differently based on the context. Our church has seen incredible outpourings of the Spirit throughout the years (including a great move of the Spirit that started several weeks before Asbury). However, we have people with children, waiting for them in our Sunday school, who have extensive work and family obligations. We must dismiss our services at a certain point, even amid a great outpouring. We could not go on for weeks the way the students in a seminary like Asbury could (who likely are single, with no other significant family obligations in

life, which enables them to linger in the presence of God for days at a time).

✖ This doesn't mean that the outpouring in our church is any less intense than in Asbury. It just means that the Spirit expects people to bring what they receive in the church to their homes and impart it to their children, friends, neighbors and co-workers. For this reason, it is probably God who often initiates spiritual outpourings leading to awakenings amongst single people in colleges. As a result, they can impact other college campuses so that revival and awakening can spread like wildfire to the nation and beyond!

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