

6 Ways Pastors Are Hindering Revival

Pastors must allow God to awaken them to the call to regional revival.

I regularly hear from people who are done with church, are frustrated with church leadership and are ready to abandon the weekly gathering, if they haven't done so already.

I agree that there are significant issues. However, I relentlessly support God's ordained leaders and encourage as many as I can to stay connected in life-giving churches. Now is not the time to abandon ship, even if we agree that reformation is necessary. This reform must come from within. The new wineskin is coming, and we need everybody in position and ready to serve the revival that results.

Since it's critical for everybody to remain locked in to their assignments in this "all hands on deck" season, we need today's leadership to shift toward the apostolic and become more regionally minded than locally minded.

Six Ways Pastors Are Hindering Revival

1. They don't pray.

So the twelve called the multitude of disciples together and said, "It is not reasonable for us to leave the word of God and serve tables. Brothers, look among yourselves for seven men who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint over this duty. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word (Acts 6:2-4).

The daily schedule for pastors should be mostly devoted to fervent intercession and study of Scripture. Sadly, most

pastors don't even lead corporate prayer meetings, much less hide away in their prayer closet.

There is no way they can discern the spirit of revival if they aren't given to a life of intensity in prayer. It's extremely easy for me to discern whether the spirit of prayer and the spirit of revival is in a church. I travel all over the nation, and I explode with life when I walk into some sanctuaries that have been bathed in prayer. You can feel the tangible presence of God. You are impacted by the weighty atmosphere that could only be the result of a praying pastor.

Praying pastors can't help but to weave Holy Spirit-fueled intercession throughout the Sunday service. Tongues of fire rest on top of the congregation, groans erupt from the saints and people are laid out all over the room. Not only does a praying pastor refuse to shut down such an atmosphere, but he initiates it. God's presence becomes a key driver of their ministry, and the goal changes from church growth or visitor attraction and assimilation in their local church to a raging fire in their region. If the pillar of fire emerges in a local church across town, the revival-minded, intercession-driven pastor will cancel everything at his home base to lead the people into the presence of God in the region.

2. They don't embrace the prophetic.

"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies" (1 Thess. 5:19-20).

"Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:1).

Too often pastors are leading their local churches logically, using church growth methods instead of facilitating a prophetic culture. It's one thing to point your ship in the direction you want it to go. It's something altogether

different to put up your sails, allowing the wind to take you where it wants to go.

We must hear God's voice continually in our churches, and the pastor is the one to encourage the growth of prophetic ministry. God will connect pastors with prophets (and other offices) so God's specific mandates can be heard and heeded. Additionally, every person in the congregation must be equipped and released to prophesy. If a vibrant prayer culture has been developed in the church, you won't be able to keep people from releasing oracles from heaven. God will be continually communicating to everybody.

3. They don't release people to follow the fire.

The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night (Ex. 13:21).

It grieves my heart, and I'm certain the heart of the Lord, when pastors refuse to release people under their care to follow the fire. The call of the church is to equip disciples and then to release them. We as leaders should have open hands, not tight fists. If a move of God launches in another church in the city, the pastor absolutely must encourage people to run to the outpouring. Better yet, he should be leading the way!

God will move geographically, and the fire most likely won't ignite in your church, even if you are contending for it, if the outpouring is elsewhere. If you hold any value for revival, you will drive every day to that pillar of fire with a convoy of your congregation following behind.

4. Their focus is on building their own ministry instead of the regional church.

if My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land (2 Chron. 7:14).

It's time to stop expending energy mostly on building local ministries to the detriment of the regional church. It's good and right to develop what God has given us to steward, and it's right to have vision, even locally. However, the end goal must not be local church growth. It has got to be a regional outpouring. God will heal the land, the region, not the local gathering.

It's time we start hearing pastors crying out for a move of God in their city versus in their local church. If the prophetic ministry is sharp and active, you will hear words that focus on God's plans for the city much more than you will his plans for the local church.

5. Their focus is on attracting seekers instead of training and releasing disciples.

He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, and for the building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12).

Numerical church growth in our American church culture has overtaken more important goals. It's true that everything healthy grows, but sometimes the growth is deep instead of wide. The strategy of local churches must shift from growing in number to training remnants in prayer, ministry, revival and leadership. Then, the goal is actually to shrink in number instead of growing in number as these disciples are released as apostolic men and women of God.

Of course, that doesn't mean that the local church can't still

grow. It can, but it's not a metric to be measured. It's simply the overflow of an effective ministry that is regionally focused, prayer-driven and discipleship-minded.

6. They overestimate their role and leadership ability.

Let nothing be done out of strife or conceit, but in humility let each esteem the other better than himself. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others (Phil. 2:3-4).

Moreover, you shall choose out of all the people capable men who fear God, men of truth, hating dishonest gain, and place these men over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens (Ex. 18:21).

This one might sting.

Most pastors don't have the God-given ability to lead a regional revival. They have been called to nurture a small group.

God will raise up a leader or leaders who have the gifting to apostolically give leadership to a massive movement, and it's important that everybody else in the city assumes their positions in support of the revival.

During an outpouring in Detroit several years ago, I was honored to be asked to lead the prayer emphasis. I wasn't called to host the revival in my church, so I led the charge as many in my church drove 45 minutes every night to the outpouring. The fact that I wasn't asked to lead, or that my church wasn't the focus, or that any of the offerings weren't coming to me, didn't bother me in the least. How could it? I was in an outpouring!

In the city church, when a regional outpouring hits, God will utilize the willing pastors in the city in various roles.

Humility will be required. Jealously will have to be killed. If that doesn't happen, the revival is sure to die out as fast as it ignited.