

Have Revival in Your Heart

Revival is a glorious state we all want to experience. But true revival doesn't begin in the church; it begins in our hearts.

My husband and I are privileged to lead a church that has experienced revival many times down through the years. We have seen thousands changed by the power of God. But I have discovered from personal experience that revival does not begin in the church; it starts in the depths of our hearts.

Revival means to be restored to life or health, to be quickened from sickness, discouragement, faintness or death. Only those who have at one time been alive in Christ can be revived in the true sense of the word from a state of spiritual faintness.

Hidden Things of the Heart

I have experienced revival many times as God has revealed to me the hidden things of my heart. Though I am a Spirit-filled believer and a pastor's wife, I had things submerged in my heart that I was unable to deal with and get free from. These hidden things completely blocked my ability to respond to God.

Psalm 19:12 says, "Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults" (NIV). The original language reads, "His errors, who can understand? From secret _____ forgive me."

The psalmist leaves a blank for us to fill in. So our prayer is to be, "Forgive the secret _____ that I've covered up and concealed. Forgive, Lord, the _____ that I've sheltered."

For many years, I avoided praying this prayer. I attempted to deal with my heart through my own efforts. When I failed, I would justify my actions in order to absolve myself from the need to change.

Then one day I read Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" I finally realized that my heart was beyond cure humanly speaking. I couldn't understand it, let alone fix it.

I was bound by anger and bitterness that had come into my life for no obvious reason when I was a very small child. My parents were good people who raised me in a loving home. But as I grew up, I nurtured these wrong attitudes until they became rooted in me.

I didn't have to say a word. I could walk into a room, and somehow the bitter root would suck all the life out of my relationships—with my husband, my daughter and most of all the Lord.

Hebrews 12:15 tells us, "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." I didn't know it was possible to miss the grace of God, but the Bible makes it clear you can, especially if you allow a bitter root to grow up.

Bitterness begins with a seed—often just a thought—that germinates in our hearts. Given time, the seed takes root and then springs up. Other people see it blossom, and soon you can no longer hide the evidence of it.

By the time revival had begun in our church, I could no longer hide my bitter root. It had germinated and poked its head up. When it finally reached full bloom, I felt powerless to change myself.

One day Ephesians 4:31 came alive to me: "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." I suddenly realized Paul wasn't talking to prostitutes or people at a bar. He was talking to believers. He was talking to me! I was a believer, and yet there were things I still needed to get rid of.

Twofold Deliverance

How was I able to get rid of the bitterness? My spiritual rescue involved a two-step process. I personally experienced both the height and the depth of revival in a miraculous way that changed me forever, ripping out the bitter root from the core of my being.

First, God opened my heart to the depth of the Word and made it alive to me by the Holy Spirit. I had a deep realization of the truth about my deceitful heart and could no longer justify myself. "It's me, oh Lord! I am a bitter mess, and I have defiled my whole life!"

The awesome fear of the Lord washed over me. I didn't want to grieve His Spirit or lose His presence. I decided I did not want to miss my destiny in the Lord by cherishing a bitter root any longer. I stopped defending my non-biblical, non-Christlike position.

Freed from self-justification, I acknowledged my sinfulness and sought intense, life-changing prayer. I gathered the most powerful women in our church around me. As they prayed, the fire of God came down and struck me to the floor.

God had already revealed me to me. But now I was personally experiencing God Himself. Like a skilled surgeon, Jesus eradicated the bitter root from my soul.

I was set free in January of 1997. Shortly afterward, I received a letter from our daughter, who was in college at the time. She wrote: "Dear Mom, for so many years, I just wanted you to love me and to really mother me. But I knew you couldn't. Now I see you're so changed. All I want to do now is walk hand in hand with you the rest of my life and serve Jesus with you."

Then she prophesied in her letter, "When I have a little girl I want her to be just like you." She and her husband now work with us in our ministry and recently had a beautiful baby

girl—another miraculous blessing of revival.

Set Free to Respond

I know that I am not alone in the need for heart revival. So many of God's people have unresolved issues hidden in their hearts! Anger, depression, fear, religiosity—all of these prevent us from responding to God. Thankfully, His Word and the power of His Spirit are greater than our ignorance and self-justification.

The first step to freedom from any secret sin is to allow the Holy Spirit to probe and uncover it by the light of God's Word. That's where true revival starts. I needed the Holy Spirit to reveal me to me. When I accepted the truth of who I really was, the release of my soul began.

As I've shared my testimony and the principles of revival around the world, I have seen hundreds of women respond and receive deliverance from their hidden "fill in the blanks." Recently, in England, a pastor stood in awe watching several hundred women and girls rush to the altar after the truth of God's Word revealed them to themselves.

While they repented, the power of God swept through. Soon these women experienced another dimension of revival as God revealed Himself to them in a mighty way. Some collapsed under the weight of His glory, moaning, tears streaming down faces. Others, with hands in the air, experienced a release and an uplift they had never dreamed possible. They allowed God to do surgery in the depth of their souls and take the ax to the bitter, greedy, impure, angry roots of their lives.

In a recent meeting a little old lady in her 70s, bent over from years of bitterness, wept as the power of God swept over her frail body. Collapsing onto the floor, she lay still as the Lord did surgery on her soul.

Later she came to me with tears in her eyes, saying: "I have

lived with that bitter root for most of my life. It ruined my relationship with my daughter and husband. That thing is gone. I feel totally different. And I believe God is going to restore my family relationships.”

There is lasting fruit in true revival. Four years ago, a young woman came to us on her birthday, ready to commit suicide. Every year on her birthday her father would sexually abuse her.

She had decided to kill herself rather than live with that secret shame and torment any longer. She came hungry and desperate, deciding to give God another “chance.”

The power of God struck her, and she responded. Today, she is a team member of a church, working with youth and children and touching others with the fire of revival.

Another woman who had been married 30 years had always allowed a bitter root to contaminate her husband’s attitude toward the churches they had helped to pioneer. After about three years at each church, she would allow a spirit of offense to rise up. This would force them to leave the church with some flimsy excuse and go on to help some other new work, where the same cycle of offense and bitterness would occur.

After hearing my testimony, she repented, responded to the Lord and was released from the spirit of offense. She and her husband are now concentrating on their marriage and feeling like newlyweds. Her grown children are rejoicing that they have a new mom.

To get free from an unresponsive, hard-hearted, religious attitude, you must become so desperate that you’re willing to do whatever it takes to change. A woman who was determined to find freedom from religiosity came to one of our Women in Revival conferences. During a powerful time of praise and worship, she shocked her friends.

When the glory of God became heavy in the room, she jumped up on one of the chairs and stretched upward with all her might, bellowing out praises to the Lord. Later she explained: "The lightnings of God suddenly struck me. I received instantaneous healing of chronic pain. But the most glorious healing I received was that of my hard, religious heart. I'm free!"

True Revival

That is what real revival is all about—experiencing the height of His glory along with the depth of His digging. As our hidden "whatevers" are dealt with, we are loosed from our self-justifying, self-centered ways. Our self-effort ceases as the power of God removes the bitter roots and their poison. God's power comes into our lives, and healing pours out into every relationship.

True revival is supernaturally initiated when God steps down from heaven into the midst of His people to bring vigorous life to the half-dead. When we respond to this visitation with hunger and repentance, our hearts are turned back to our first love. We are cleaned up, equipped and empowered to do the works of the kingdom of God. We, the revived, are then prepared to become effective evangelists and gather in a great harvest.

I like to think of revival as having two dimensions: height and depth. The height of revival is God's revealing Himself to us. His presence is manifest, and the weight of His glory settles on us. As God reveals Himself, His power is released, and people are miraculously changed and healed both physically and emotionally.

The depth of revival is God's revealing us to us so that we see ourselves in the light of His Word. Deep conviction pierces our souls, and our hearts begin to break as we see how far we are from God's plan for our lives. The sword of the Spirit digs deep, quickening the Word and making it operative in us.

That's when release and deliverance come. Only when both the height of His glory and the depth of His digging come into our lives are we able to be set free from the hidden things of the heart.

True revival comes in response to our hunger for God. We can't work it up through religious habit—crying, moaning and burying our heads at the church altar as we have for the last 10 years—or by responding out of guilt or a fear that God is mad at or disappointed with us. We must allow Psalm 42:1 to become the cry of our hearts: “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.”

God will not ignore our earnest cry. He will touch us, one by one, by manifesting Himself to us and showing us our hidden sins so that revival can begin.

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