

Have We Become Armchair Revivalists?

I've never met a believer who didn't have an innate vision for revival. Sure, the concept of what revival actually looks like varies from person to person. But we all long to see a mass outpouring of the Holy Spirit that transforms cities and nations.

There's a problem, though: Too many Christians in America would rather sit on the sidelines and argue over what does and doesn't qualify as a revival than actually expend the energy to pray and prepare their hearts for one. If there is any hope for our country's future, this must change. Before you think I'm advocating for people to check all discernment at the door (along with their brains), let me explain.

I experienced firsthand the Toronto Blessing and the Brownsville Revival in the 1990s. I attended countless churches, conferences and events during that season where the Holy Spirit would show up in such power that any man-made agendas or sermon outlines became pointless. It was truly unique.

I also remember the stark difference between those who dove headfirst into what God was doing at the time and those who opted to sit on the sidelines. And no, I'm not talking about the Hank Hanegraaffs of the bunch who label any move of the Holy Spirit that involves flesh (i.e., people) as counterfeit; I'm referring to believers who questioned and critiqued every aspect of these moves to the point that they became frozen in their faith.

I know this because, for a while, I was one of them. I was an armchair revivalist, commenting on God's move from a distance without having first truly experienced it myself. I eventually

found that, while we're told to discern and "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1), we must first rely on the Holy Spirit for truth rather than basing it upon what our eyes can see.

Almost 20 years later, however, this Monday morning quarterback—er, revivalist—club continues to grow in an online world that amplifies any heresy hunter's claims. Their biggest gripe is how the word *revival* is misunderstood and misapplied.

It's true: Believers—and particularly the Spirit-filled community—have certainly abused the term *revival*, even reducing it to a marketing tactic to draw crowds. But after refusing to be a bystander and instead becoming an active participant in a handful of God's powerful moves, I've discovered a greater truth: It ultimately doesn't matter whether we call something a revival, renewal or outpouring ... because if we aren't crying out in the spirit of 2 Chronicles 7:14, desperate for God's healing in both our lives and throughout our land, it's unlikely we'll see "revival" anyway. Repentance and righteousness are far more important to God than what term we use to describe His move.

I recently sat down with John Kilpatrick and Nathan Morris, two leaders involved in what's been called the Bay of the Holy Spirit Revival. On July 23, 2010, God showed up at an otherwise ordinary conference and began healing and touching multitudes; two years later, the revival services continue. Kilpatrick is best known as Brownsville's former pastor, yet what many may not know is how he had to shepherd a congregation during both the sudden swell and the tumultuous aftermath of the revival. If anyone has a right to be skeptical or cynical of something being prematurely called a revival, it's Kilpatrick.

Yet as I spoke with him and Morris, a young British evangelist, I recognized the same heart seen today in fellow "revivalists" such as Bill Johnson, Randy Clark, Rodney Howard-Browne, and John and Carol Arnott. These men and women

are fire-starters, willing to take the personal attacks if it means stirring people's hearts toward a hunger for God's presence—which in turn, lays the foundation for a move of God.

In this month's issue of *Charisma*, we've highlighted the perfectly paired themes of healing and revival. Each contributor not only has a personal connection to revival, but also desires to see revival fires consume the U.S. as they are throughout the non-Western world. May their words help to rekindle whatever embers are glowing in your own life for the sake of true revival.

BTW: For more of my interview with John Kilpatrick and Nathan Morris, check out this month's *Charisma Digital*.

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