

7 Ways the Local Church Can Be a Catalyst for Revival

We need a reformation in the church of the Western culture—and fast. I'm not talking about a tweak or adjustment, but rather a costly, troubling, invasive, offensive and radical change to what we know as the church. A firestorm from heaven is coming, and only those who are ignited in that fire will embrace the coming shift. Religious traditionalists and those who are resistant to the deeper call will sadly reject this transition. This is why we must prepare the people under our care now! The Holy Spirit wants His church to be ready!

This great end-times verse has universal application: *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready"* (Rev. 19:7).

Sunday go to meeting church was great for previous generations, but it's gotten us as far as can go. A revolution must come. That revolution will come from within the local church, however, not in spite of it.

I can't imagine not attending a local church with a faithful, passionate pastor leading the way. I am an unapologetic, determined supporter of the church in its current form, and I am excited about seeing reform emerge from my view in the pew on the inside. Sadly, too many are disconnecting from their local church, presuming an advance into culture without its restraints is somehow more spiritual. They are hurting, not helping, the cause of revival.

So to clearly communicate my position so there is no misunderstanding whatsoever:

I fully embrace and support the local church, and I endeavor to honor pastors and leaders unreservedly. From that place,

with a healthy and pure heart, I also embrace reform.

As we prepare for the coming revolution, we all must be connected in a local church that's led by anointed, Spirit-driven leaders. That's non-negotiable. The coming reformation requires we are zealously submitted and devoted as the shift draws near.

That being said, I need to write a raw, unrehearsed message about the growing threat that the current local church wineskin can be to revival. Instead of being a strategic support to citywide revival, it's at risk of hindering the cause. As we proceed toward a reformed model and a new wineskin that can hold the new move of the Holy Spirit, the resulting shock will be a catalyst for an immeasurable move of God that has yet to be imagined.

What I'm going to share will certainly require a full blown reformation in the church if we are going to see revival come. Church as we know it must come to an end. God isn't planning on enhancing the church systems that are already in place—he's planning on eradicating many of them for the sake of something so otherworldly that few will even recognize it as the church—and many will resist with religious fervor.

With that, I offer seven ways the local church can be a catalyst for revival:

1. Minimize business. There are a lot of tired pastors and people in churches today because of overstuffed, inflexible schedules. It's common to fill church schedules with all sorts of programs and ministries, special events and other activities. It's true that a lot of wonderful ministry occurs at the local church level, and it's easy to expend a lot of time and energy on those activities.

The problem comes when a call for the church of the city (which is how the church is defined biblically) needs the participation of Christians in the region to support a greater

cause.

I propose, with few exceptions, local church schedules should be flexible enough to cancel in a moment's notice so the people can be released to attend to regional church focuses.

2. Understanding regional priority. I was part of a large, citywide event that was to be held at the Palace of Auburn Hills in the Detroit area. Unfortunately, the event had to be canceled because pastors wouldn't release the people under their care from their Wednesday night church responsibilities to attend.

Not only should the pastor have released his people, he should have led the charge!

How unfortunate that a lesser, local church weekly service kept people away from the more important regional event.

When regional prayer events, revival meetings or other key, strategic meetings are called, it's critical that the local focus yields.

3. Rejecting a focus on survival and local church growth. Instead of focusing on the success of the regional church and the advance toward revival at that level, local churches are often focused mostly on growing or surviving themselves.

If we were honest, we'd admit primary reasons we as pastors and leaders might not want people under our care involved in other ministries and churches is because they might leave and take their money with them. I believe this insecurity is a serious violation of the trust God has given us as leaders. We must have open hands and encourage people to move in and out of our local churches easily so they can fulfill their vision, and the city vision, instead of our own.

4. Releasing resources. Regional events and ministries often need the people who are part of the various local churches in

the city to serve. People, finances, time and energy are often guarded by local churches, which leaves regional assignments under-resourced. They often fail.

Several years ago, I knew it was critical to cancel my own church plans for a month so people could be free to serve at a regional revival event about 40 minutes away. It would have been inappropriate for me to keep them focused on our own local church ministries when the fire was lit elsewhere. The regional event needed intercessors to support that move of God, so I eagerly released those precious resources, amazing prayer warriors, along with any finances they wanted to give there, to undergird that regional event.

5. Refuse to give in to jealousy, overprotectiveness and resistance. As I stated above, the revival in your region most probably will ignite in a church other than your own. We must avoid the temptation to be jealous if that happens. We also can't be so nervous about other people, visiting evangelists or other leaders that we resist or avoid what is happening through their ministry.

6. Support greater growth. If people are limited to connecting at a local church level, their growth can't help but to be stunted. Today, few are ready for revival because local churches are, by design, only focusing on a limited set of tools they are equipping their people with.

I can't imagine, as a leader, only sitting under one pastor and being limited in my growth to their awesome yet limited strengths. While we are called to radically support and serve a local pastor and body, we can't stop there. I believe it's important to connect in various churches and ministries in a region on a regular basis.

7. Understand levels of authority. Senior pastors of a local church are not the senior authority in the region. It will take quite a reformation for us to step into city-church

government, but we can start now by acknowledging that leaders on a regional level must have the support and participation of the more localized leaders.

Apostles are the gatekeepers of a city, and it's critical to know who they are if we are to advance toward revival.

I agree that such a reformation that I touched on in this article will be extreme. It won't happen overnight, or even in a handful of years. What can happen immediately, however, is that we embrace the shift and come into agreement to serve the city church and to advance toward revival at that level.

A local church move of God will be wonderful, but it won't last. We must see a foundation built regionally that will support a massive move of God. Maybe your region will be the first of 19,000 that will see the church of that city set ablaze in revival! {eoa}

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Note: This is an excerpt from John Burton's original article. For the entire story, please visit .