

Warning: Culture of Positivity May Be Roadblock to Revival

There is increasing pressure from segments of the church in our nation to reject any negative analysis or any call to reformation that reveals that which is out of order yet still valued by the people.

I feel this pressure in our ministry often. The demand is for balance, or, in reality, an overdose on happy with a rare, occasional sprinkle of temporary sobriety. Focus on the good in the hopes that it will resolve the bad. Unfortunately, it just doesn't work that way.

I take the troubling, urgent, upsetting, all-consuming messages of my heart to the Lord daily—often many times a day. The fear of the Lord is on me, and I don't want to communicate anything that's not driven by love and obedience. I can't imagine preaching something out of my soul that God would resist. I tremble at the thought.

I also feel God's fear from the other direction—I can't imagine staying silent or giving into demands for balance or positivity at the cost of souls. I know there will already be people in hell forever because of my failure to speak the truth, and I cannot bear to let that tragedy continue.

Prophecy of the end times by 90-year-old woman in 1968: A lukewarmness without parallel will take hold of the Christians, a falling away from true, living Christianity. Christians will not be open for penetrating preaching. They will not, like in earlier times, want to hear of sin and grace, law and gospel, repentance and restoration. There will come a substitute instead: happiness Christianity. Churches and prayer houses will be emptier and emptier. Instead of the

preaching we have been used to for generations—like, to take your cross up and follow Jesus—entertainment, art and culture will invade the churches where there should have been gatherings for repentance and revival.

The true analysis of the church in our nation is exactly what this women prophesied. The sackcloth and ashes are nowhere to be found. The playful, careless attitudes have resulted in a measure of happiness but no revival.

The very need for revival reveals the true condition of the church.

It presupposes that the church is sunk down in a backslidden state, and a revival consists in the return of a church from her backslidings, and in the conversion of sinners. A revival always includes conviction of sin on the part of the church.
~Charles Finney

Positivity has invaded the church and its strategies. Even evangelism today in many places is devoid of dealing with sin and repentance. The message is, “God loves you” without also communicating the dark, depravity of the human heart. Who wouldn’t want to follow a happy God who likes us? The problem is that’s not the entirety of the gospel, and that message is resulting in disillusioned people following Jesus in an unsaved condition.

Church services are full of celebration but absent of grieving. This must change.

There is so little principle in the church, so little firmness and stability of purpose, that unless the religious feelings are awakened and kept excited, worldly feeling and excitement will prevail, and men will not obey God. They have so little knowledge, and their principles are so weak, that unless they are excited, they will go back from the path of duty, and do

nothing to promote the glory of God. ~Charles Finney

I've said it many times before: *We need to cancel most everything we do and gather together day after day and pray.*

Many wonder why I keep beating a dead horse. It's simple. Because the horse is still dead.

Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.
~Rev. 3:2

It's time to shut down our conferences, cancel our church services, eliminate everything that will distract us—and pray. Continually. Together. For months or years until revival breaks out.

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me." ~Acts 1:4

Revival in America?

OK, of course there's hope for revival in America. So, what's the problem? The church is mostly sitting back on a casual, costless idea that revival can come without investing into the clear, non-negotiable process. Thus, our pursuit of revival has become little more than a mystical wish upon a star.

I want to make this as simple as I can. Until the church gathers together continually, prays fervently and repents in tears, revival is little more than a pipe dream.

Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD. Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty

it comes. ~Joel 1:14-15

How can we presume revival is near when people are not interested in doing now what they will be doing when revival breaks out? It's insanity.

Some people are terribly alarmed at all direct efforts to promote a revival, and they cry out, "You are trying to get up a revival in your own strength. Take care, you are interfering with the sovereignty of God. Better keep along in the usual course, and let God give a revival when He thinks it is best. God is a sovereign, and it is very wrong for you to attempt to get up a revival, just because you think a revival is needed." This is just such preaching as the devil wants. And men cannot do the devil's work more effectually than by preaching up the sovereignty of God, as a reason why we should not put forth efforts to produce a revival.
~Charles Finney

Revival isn't a mystical, ethereal experience that appears out of nowhere. There is cause and effect.

There has long been an idea prevalent that promoting religion has something very peculiar in it, not to be judged of by the ordinary rules of cause and effect; in short, that there is no connection of the means with the result, and no tendency in the means to produce the effect. No doctrine is more dangerous than this to the prosperity of the church, and nothing is more absurd.

Suppose a man were to go and preach this doctrine among farmers, about their sowing grain. Let him tell them that God is a sovereign, and will give them a crop only when it pleases him, and that for them to plow and plant and labor as if they expected to raise a crop is very wrong, and taking the work out of the hands of God, that it interferes with his sovereignty, and is going on in their own strength: and that

there is no connection between the means and the result on which they can depend. And now, suppose the farmers should believe such doctrine. Why, they would starve the world to death.

Just such results will follow from the church's being persuaded that promoting religion is somehow so mysteriously a subject of Divine sovereignty, that there is no natural connection between the means and the end. ~Charles Finney

When we do certain things, revival comes. When we don't, it doesn't.

Revival is not a miracle, or dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means—as much so as any other effect produced by the application of means. The revivals in the apostles' days were connected with miracles, but they were not miracles. ~Charles Finney

Evan Roberts modeled the cause and effect reality of revival brilliantly. It is simple:

“Congregate the people who are willing to make a total surrender. Pray and wait. Believe God's promises. Hold daily meetings.” ~Evan Roberts

Why is revival not breaking out in any of the 19,000 cities in America? It's not hard to understand.

- **Congregate the people**—Prayer meetings and solemn assemblies are becoming emptier and emptier.
- **Who are willing to make a total surrender**—Cares of life, busyness and other personal endeavors have displaced the call to die daily.
- **Pray**—It's rare today to find a Christian who pays the price of fervent intercession.

- **Wait**—In our ADD society, endurance has been offered at the altar of instant gratification, even if that gratification isn't God.
- **Believe God's promises**—Do we really believe the Bible? Do we stand immovably on the truths of Scripture? Not so much.
- **Hold daily meetings**—This one is laughable. We just don't have the time, energy or desire.

As a nation, we are zero for six in response to Evan Roberts' prescription for revival.

Keep in mind, Evan was responding to a message from Frank Bartleman who was curious as to how to initiate revival in his region. Frank listened to Evan, and the Azusa Street Revival changed the world.

We aren't waiting on God. He's waiting on us. Revival is up to us.

Many people have supposed God's sovereignty to be some thing very different from what it is. They have supposed it to be such an arbitrary disposal of events, and particularly of the gift of His Spirit, as precluded a rational employment of means for promoting a revival of religion. But there is no evidence from the Bible that God exercises any such sovereignty as that. There are no facts to prove it. But every thing goes to show that God has connected means with the end through all the departments of his government.
~Charles Finney

In this nation I have found it nearly impossible to pull off the strategy that Evan Roberts prescribed, though in Haiti it was easy!

Every night I was there, people walked up to two hours through very difficult terrain to come to church and pray with passion! Nobody drove, everybody walked, and everybody

engaged. Nobody milled around, left to go to the bathroom or was disinterested. Two thousand people a night were in position, in prayer and ready for instructions! Then, they walked home two hours in the dark and usually in torrential downpours to their homes.

I felt the spirit of revival in Haiti—the first time I’ve felt it in years.

That statement may cause trouble for those who embrace positivity. The thought is that any acknowledgement of a negative reality puts hope at risk. That is absolutely absurd.

Would anybody run a business this way? Would board meetings include only positive, happy thoughts in the hopes that they in themselves would turn the business around? Of course not.

Any successful business is an honest business. They analyze trends. They aren’t afraid to admit where they are failing. They don’t put their heads in the sand. They don’t presume a plastic smile is the answer.

Just as in business, revival will come as we honestly admit there is darkness in the land and trouble in the church.

A Warning Dream

I recently had a dream that was a personal warning to me, and it will help you understand better why the messages of repentance, reformation and revival can’t stop being the primary alarms of my ministry every day.

These alarms have cost my family and me quite a bit. While there is much fruit and glorious reports that continue to result from the message in my heart, the resistance is non-stop. While many have appreciated the prophetic call this ministry has, many others have pulled back from us, stayed at arms length, unfriended us or publicly renounced our ministry.

I don't say that to complain. Not at all. I say that to communicate how easy it would be to just stop ministering.

The temptation is there, ever so slightly, to pull back, chill out and become more balanced. More normal. More palatable.

I'm smart enough to know that I'd have a church of at least a couple hundred people, a healthy full-time salary, and a great reputation if I did so. I go to sleep with that thought every night.

Instead, the resistance is intense, and it's rare to find those who will carry the burden with me. God once told me, *"When you pray for the remnant, don't be surprised when the remnant shows up."*

The masses will be drawn to happy celebration as during the Triumphal Entry, but it's a very small remnant that will respond to the message of the cross.

The Dream

In my dream I traveled to a church [where] I spent a lot of time in my early years in Dayton, Ohio. I absolutely love this church and have been back there to preach on multiple occasions since I moved away.

I was the guest speaker for the weekend, and I was excited to release a powerful word of the Lord.

When I arrived, there were hundreds of people flooding the property. It was a festive, exciting atmosphere with a lot of young people.

I immediately realized though that while people were happy to see me, nobody mentioned anything about me speaking. It was clear that I wouldn't be ministering at all.

The people were entirely focused on socializing and fun. There was a massive slide in the church, much like an enclosed

waterslide that you'd ride at the water park. This one didn't have water, but you rode down on a cart. People stood in line for a long time to ride, and then they came back up to ride again.

The pressure was to have fun, be happy and enjoy life. So, I did. I waited in line and rode through the slide. It was amazing! It was massive and full of thrills!

I then went to the foyer of the church and suddenly realized I was barefoot. I lost my boots. It was extremely strange.

I opened the door and looked outside. It was the middle of summer, but the snow was falling. There was at least 8 inches of snow on the ground, and it was still falling very heavily.

I walked out into the snow-covered parking lot and then realized my kids were gone. I started to panic when I heard Eva's laugh. She was in her car seat, on the ground behind a parked car. She was covered with snow.

I then woke up.

The Interpretation

It's very simple. The church wants to play, and the pressure will be intense to join them. The message of the hour is not wanted. Happy church is the plan and the sheer numbers who are supporting it will attempt to drown out any contrary voice.

When I gave in, I lost my apostolic authority, represented by my boots.

I also lost my children. Eva was in her car seat, which was designed to be in the car. Vehicles represent ministry. The loss of my apostolic ministry resulted in my children, my inheritance, also being removed from their ministry. The next generation will be affected by the response of this generation.

The snow represented the coming revival, the refreshing. Very few even experienced it, and I was not prepared to minister it.

The Strategy

I will admit, I question whether revival will come to America. I know it can, but will it?

I've been in Detroit for five years, and every year many have presumed that revival was imminent. I wanted it to be, but I knew it was not.

Again, it's because of a very simple analysis—the prayer meetings are sparse.

I've been to many prayer and revival meetings over the years, and most of them have been pretty good. However, most of them have been quite empty.

Until the church reprioritizes schedules and what's important, and prays night and day from a place of repentance and desperation, revival will most likely be held back.

But, if a remnant group will do this, revival can certainly come. Only God knows how many must respond to the call.

I say we don't risk it. Let every Spirit-filled Christian in the cities of the Earth move into a life of consecration and pray together non-stop until God moves in our nation.

I will leave you with a call to action that Charles Finney left those who heard his lecture on revival:

I have a proposal to make to you who are here present. I have not commenced this course of Lectures on Revivals to get up a curious theory of my own on the subject. I would not spend my time and strength merely to give you instructions, to gratify your curiosity, and furnish you something to talk about. I have no idea of preaching about revivals. It is not my design

to preach so as to have you able to say at the close, "We understand all about revivals now," while you do nothing. But I wish to ask you a question. What do you hear lectures on revivals for? Do you mean that whenever you are convinced what your duty is in promoting a revival, you will go to work and practise it?

Will you follow the instructions I shall give you from the Word of God, and put them in practise in your own lives? Will you bring them to bear upon your families, your acquaintance, neighbors, and through the city? Or will you spend the winter in learning about revivals, and do nothing for them? I want you, as fast as you learn any thing on the subject of revivals, to put it in practice, and go to work and see if you cannot promote a revival among sinners here. If you will not do this, I wish you to let me know at the beginning, so that I need not waste my strength. You ought to decide now whether you will do this or not. You know that we call sinners to decide on the spot whether they will obey the Gospel. And we have no more authority to let you take time to deliberate whether you will obey God, than we have to let sinners do so. We call on you to unite now in a solemn pledge to God, that you will do your duty as fast as you learn what it is, and to pray that He will pour out his Spirit upon this church and upon all the city this winter.

John Burton has been developing and leading ministries for over 20 years and is a sought out teacher, prophetic messenger and revivalist. He has authored nine books, has appeared on Christian television and radio and directed one of the primary internships at the International House of Prayer (IHOP) in Kansas City. Additionally, he planted two churches, has initiated two city prayer movements and is currently directing a prayer and revival focused ministry school in Detroit called theLab University. John also has a web and graphic design business and is continually developing new and exciting ventures. He and his beautiful wife Amy have five children and

currently live in the Detroit region. He can be reached via his website at .