

What Is the Biblical Definition of ‘Revival?’

As impressive moves of faith unfold across America—from the beaches of northeastern Florida to the shorelines of Southern California—many are wondering if the country could be on the cusp of revival.

Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, and the former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, is the author of the forthcoming book, “Revival: When God Comes to Church,” in which he unpacks a biblical understanding of the word “revival” and what Christians ought to do to create an atmosphere for spiritual restoration.

The most succinct definition of “revival” Gaines has come across, he said during a recent appearance on CBN’s “Faith vs. Culture,” comes straight from the Old Testament: “When the glory of God fills the house of God.”

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“The word ‘vive’ has to do with life; ‘re’ means to repeat or to have fresh life,” the pastor said. “So it means ‘to have new life’. That’s what it is. And revival is not for people who don’t know Christ. I like to say it this way: You can’t revive something that’s never been ‘vived.’ So if they’ve never been given life in Jesus Christ, they can’t be revived. That’s for Christians. So revival is specifically for the people of God.”

Gaines turned then toward a passage of Scripture he believes is often “totally misrepresented.”

In Revelation 3:20, the Apostle John wrote, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and

opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me," (NIV).

The verse, the pastor explained, isn't addressing individual salvation, as it's often used. Rather, the passage is referring to Jesus attempting to regain access to—or to revive—His collective church.

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"He's not knocking on the door of somebody's heart," Gaines said. "He's knocking on the door of the church of Laodicea, and He's trying to get back into His church! That's an amazing picture: that Jesus — a lot of the time — we lock Him out of His own church. We've got our programs, we've got our stuff, we've got our denominations, we've got all this stuff that we rely on, and we're not relying on the Lord."

He added, "The greatest thing we can give anybody is the manifest presence of God. When they come [into the church], is God there? Is God really there in manifest presence, or is He outside knocking, trying to get into His own church? I just believe we ought to let Him have His church."

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