

What You Never Knew About Steve Hill and the Brownsville Revival

The revival began on Father's Day when an evangelist named Steve Hill was unexpectedly invited to speak. It was somewhat unusual for a senior pastor, such as John Kilpatrick, to give up his pulpit on such a holiday. However, he had just lost his mother and was still mourning her passing. He welcomed the opportunity for a break, even if it was just one weekend. Steve was a familiar face to Brownsville since he had spoken there several times in the past. However, something was noticeably different about the evangelist this Sunday.

Steve was a fiery preacher with intense blue eyes that burned with a passion for the lost and the Lord. He spoke that morning from Psalm 77:11 which says, "I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate also on all Your work and ponder on Your mighty deeds" (Ps. 77:11-12). Steve said, "This may be Father's Day, but friends, the Lord is going somewhere today .. .we are going to look back and say, I remember Father's Day of 1993. I remember 1994, but let me talk to you about 1995. I'll never forget that Sunday. I will never forget what happened to me on that day. We will remember the deeds of the Lord." Little did he know, just how prophetic those words would prove to be.

The preacher then shared a powerful encounter he'd recently had with the Lord. He said that ever since that experience, everything in his ministry had changed. Steve spoke for about 45 minutes before asking for all who wanted a fresh encounter with the Lord to come forward. There were eighteen hundred people in attendance that morning. More than half responded to the call for prayer, the other half took the opportunity to

dismiss themselves—they left too soon.

Steve descended the steps from the pulpit and began quickly working his way through the crowd laying hands on one person after the next. His loud voice bellowed across the sanctuary. "Touch him, Jesus!" he cried as he laid his hand on one man. "Fresh touch," he said to another. "More, Lord!" he prayed for yet another. Steve's voice was forceful, but his touch was gentle. He barely laid his fingers on the foreheads of the people as he prayed for them. Many were powerfully touched by the presence of God. Most were so overcome that they could no longer hold themselves up. They fell to the ground as if a great weight was laid upon them from above.

John Kilpatrick had never seen such manifestations in his church before. He left the platform to join Steve. As he stepped into the altar, Kilpatrick immediately noticed something unusual. There seemed to be a strong gust of air swirling around the floor. The air moved about his legs like the water of a swift flowing river. He then heard a sound coming from somewhere in the room. It rumbled and roared like wind being blown across a microphone. He looked up toward the speakers clustered above his head, but the sound wasn't coming from there. It was coming from behind the stage.

It sounded like a violent wind rushing into the sanctuary from above the platform. In his mind's eye he could see it flowing onto the stage, cascading down the steps into the altar. Kilpatrick felt it flow right between his legs forcing both his knees to buckle. He was overwhelmed.

Standing next to Kilpatrick was an usher who noticed his pastor struggling to hold himself up. He came over and assisted the pastor back to the platform, where Pastor Kilpatrick picked up a microphone to address the congregation. What came out of his mouth, he didn't intend to say. It leaped out from the depths of his spirit. In a loud voice, he proclaimed, "I tell you, in all my life, I have never felt the

power of God like I feel it right now ... I am telling you this, there is power in this place ... the glory of God ... don't fear. Just receive it!" John Kilpatrick was convinced that this was the beginning of the revival the church had been praying for. He wanted his people to get in.

The moment Pastor Kilpatrick spoke those words, the heavens above the church opened, and the Spirit of God filled the room. Whole groups of people began to be swept right off their feet. From his vantage point on the stage, he saw people falling everywhere. John Kilpatrick had never seen nor personally experienced anything like it. Even he found it difficult to hold himself up as the weight of God's glory began to increase around him. He started to descend the steps once again, but instead collapsed hard to the floor. His head bounced on the marble floor of the stage. He would lay there for nearly four hours under the glory of God.

After 18 months of praying for it, revival had come to Brownsville Assembly of God. The service on Father's Day lasted through the afternoon and ran into the evening service. All day long, the sanctuary was filled with the sounds of hundreds of worshipers laughing and singing along with cries of intercessors groaning and weeping.

Steve Hill was invited back every night that week and then each week thereafter. This continued for five amazing years. Every night more people would come, and every night more sinners would fill the altar, repenting before the Lord. Hundreds were being saved. As word of the revival spread, more and more people began to arrive from all across the nation and then the world. In all, 3.5 million people would come through the doors of the church, and over 150,000 souls would receive Jesus as their Savior.

For years, the crowds would start to arrive at the church as early as six o'clock in the morning. They would form a line in front of the church waiting for the doors to open at six

o'clock that evening. It was not uncommon to find thousands waiting in the line by noon. Each person standing in that line came with a burning hunger for more of the Lord. Saints and sinners alike would find their way into the line, certain that Jesus had something for them waiting within the church.

This is one of my most treasured stories I write about in *Trail Of Fire*. Yes, that is because my wife and I were both so tremendously impacted by this historic move of God. However there is another, deeper reason. You see, I still remember my spiritual condition before revival. It was a dry, routine and religious rut. There was no life. I had a form of godliness, yet God was absent. Then I entered that sanctuary in Pensacola, Florida. That place where God was truly visiting. That day I had a sudden awakening to the present reality of a very living Jesus who deeply desired to be in relationship with me. I was overwhelmed with just how much more there was to God that I had missed out on.

I want you to know: There is so much more.

There is more to this faith than what most have settled for. There is more than 60 minutes of church attendance a week. There is more than a four-song concert performed on a stage that we mislabel as worship. There is more than 35-minute self-help talks masquerading as sermons. There is even more than those small group gatherings that simply rehash the preachers weekend talking points. There is more!

Just as I discovered 21 years ago, there is still a very real Jesus who has been patiently waiting for you to break out of your religious routines and find a vibrant relationship with Him that transcends anything and everything you've currently known.

My friend, "church" is a very cheap substitute for a genuine relationship with Jesus. That's what scores of people discovered during the Brownsville revival. That's why they

sojourned hundreds, even thousands of miles to attend the services. Saints and sinners alike they came because they were hungry and thirsty for something more than what they had currently settled for. Interestingly enough, “more” became the common prayer during that season. Just like that first service when Steve invited anyone who wanted more to come forward, each night after the service, the prayer team would lay hands on seekers and simply pray, “More, Lord!”

What was true then, remains true today. Jesus is calling out to all those who hunger and thirst for more. He says, “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (Matt 11:28-30, MSG).

If you find yourself worn out from those dry, dull routines of religion, I have good news for you: There is more. More to a relationship with Jesus than what you have currently settled for. There is even more to life than where you have grown comfortable. He promised life in all its fullness. You need not let the enemy steal from you any longer. You need only come to Him in humility, and pray, “More, Lord!”