

Why Revival Is Not Enough

I am so pleased that during this crisis there have been significant moves of God, as we are hearing of salvations taking place via online church services. Concurrent with this significant development regarding salvations are major corporate prayer gatherings online, involving individual churches and networks of churches. The church should always pivot toward prayer and evangelizing, but the Lord requires much more from the church: The church must reflect the model of the New Testament.

I admit that I have been tempted many times during the past four decades to give myself over only to prayer and intercession in order to see revival and awakening. However, as a pastor since the 1980s and as a leader of apostolic networks since the late 1990s, I have discovered that we need more than revival if we are going to have a long-term, sustainable effect on both the church and culture. According to my studies, most churches that experienced “revival” lasting several years never saw long-term benefits and often experienced burnout within their staff. The truth is that revival in the church and the awakening of sinners are only supposed to be the beginning of a long-term process of building the local church.

If your church needs a “revival,” it is implied that your church is dead, similar to the church in Sardis (Rev. 3:1). One needs to get to the root of why the church is experiencing a lack of passion and motivation. A lack of prayer may be one of those reasons, but it may also be due to a lack of other vital factors.

We should look at the Scriptures as our primary reference and not just heavily edited “revival accounts” that don’t always give the full picture. When we examine the Acts narrative, we find that prayer was at the center of every significant move

of God. However, the key to the effectiveness of the early church was not just prayer. If that were the case, Jesus would have merely told His apostles to spend all their time praying. In addition, the Acts narrative would have only illustrated one extended, protracted prayer gathering in order for the harvest to come in. When we look at the early church we see that there was much more to it as depicted in the Gospels and the Acts account.

The necessary keys that catalyzed an incredible movement in the early church involved several essential components. In Acts 2:42-46 and Acts 4:32-35, we see that the believers gave themselves over to 10 primary practices:

1. The believers were committed to being taught apostolic sound doctrine (Heb. 5:12-6:3).
2. The believers had regular meals (breaking bread) together that culminated with holy Communion.
3. The believers met several times each day for corporate prayer (Acts 3:1).
4. The church did life (fellowship) together as Jesus did with His disciples.
5. The believers met in large gatherings at the temple. (They had large gatherings when possible.)
6. They met in small groups, going from house to house. They did not only depend upon the temple, but also gathered in small groups and house churches.
7. People were being saved daily. Evangelism was the norm, not the exception.
8. Believers worshipped God together. They did not have a worship team, but most likely prayed and sang the book of Psalms, which was the hymnbook of Jesus and all Jews.
9. The believers were of one heart and mind. They had oneness, not merely unity.
10. The believers shared resources. There was not a government welfare system in place. The church became the support system everyone needed.

As a result of these practices, the church became a “disciple-making movement” (Matt. 28:19, Acts 6:7, Acts 14:20-28).

Personally, I wish all that was needed for a significant move of God was prayer, especially since I love giving myself over to prayer and fasting. Many noble leaders have done this, but often neglect the other necessary aspects mentioned above in the Acts narrative. A limited approach leads to limited results.

That being said, there may be specific seasons in life when the Spirit may prompt you to spend all of your time in prayer. As one observes history, such seasons of prayer were exemplified in the life of people like William Seymour and Frank Bartleman. Bartleman preceded the Azusa Street Revival, while Seymour was used mightily in that revival in the early 20th century. Dr. Edward Miller, who precipitated the great revival in Argentina in the mid-20th century, and John Hyde, the great evangelist and apostle of prayer in India in the early 20th century, also spent significant time in prayer. There are also great saints such as Rees Howells and contemporary leaders like Lou Engle, whose primary ministry has been prayer. There have been seasons in my life when the Spirit prompted me to pray three to eight hours or more per day (see my book, *Travail to Prevail*). In addition, the warnings in the New Testament (Eph. 6:18, 1 Thess. 5:17, 1 Tim. 2:1-4) indicate that the corporate body of Christ should continually have corporate prayer so that the fire “on the altar is never extinguished” (Lev. 6:12).

The Moravians under Count Zinzendorf started a prayer meeting called “The Lord’s Watch” that lasted over 100 years. This gave birth to the modern Protestant missionary movement in the early 18th century. The Moravians did life together, had small group discipleship and had other practices that were key to their effective and lasting movement.

Finally, as I conclude this part of the article, I want to

make it clear that I'm not advocating for less prayer, but for more prayer, which should occur within the context of other practices. These other practices are essential to creating a gospel-centered movement that will multiply disciples and shift culture.

Next week's article will focus on understanding the full role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church.