

Preparation for a Visitation

(Getting Ready for Revival)



Times of Refreshing Ministries

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ONE OF THE GREATEST NEEDS IN THE CHURCH IS REVIVAL, WHICH IS A VISITATION FROM HEAVEN!

Revival is much more than a meeting; it is a move of God in a manifested manner; it is when God comes manifesting His Presence, refreshing His people and redeeming the lost. That is what Isaiah was praying for when, according to Isaiah 64:1 he prayed, *“Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down.”* In Habakkuk 3:2, the prophet prayed, *“O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.”* Then, with the first two words of v. 3 the answer to his prayer for revival is given when it simply says, *“God came.”*

There is, however, an important, often overlooked truth relative to revival in this sense: ***God’s mightiest movements and works and visitations are usually preceded by periods of preparation.*** In fact, the principle of preparation is seen throughout the Bible. For instance, in Exodus we find that Moses spent forty years on the backside of the desert being prepared by God to deliver His people from Egyptian bondage.

In Joshua 3:5, on the eve of the day the children of Israel would enter the Promised Land, Joshua told the people, *“Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”* Joshua was saying that God was about to do some mighty things on their behalf, so they needed to get ready, to prepare for it. According to the Gospels, the Lord Jesus spent thirty years at home and forty days in the wilderness preparing for a ministry that lasted just three-and-a-half years. Then in Acts 1 and 2, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, was preceded by a ten-day period of preparation on the part of the disciples involving prayer, seeking God, and confession.

As you can see, ***preparation is very important and vital.*** Preparation is also very difficult; it involves submitting ourselves to disciplines such as prayer and it is an act of faith. After all, ***if we really believe God is going to do something, we will get ready for it.*** In other words, when we pray for rain we ought to carry an umbrella. Typically, ***God will only give us what we’re prepared to receive.***

Preparation for revival is man’s responsibility, while God is responsible for the revival itself. Someone said, “Revival isn’t something we work up, it’s something God sends

down.” ***In the final analysis, revival is the sovereign work of a sovereign God.*** We cannot force His hand or make Him move or make Him do anything. The Psalmist prayed, “*Wilt Thou not revive us again that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?*” (Ps. 85:6) The idea of *Thou* is *Thou and Thou alone*. In other words, the Psalmist recognized that God, and God alone, was the source of revival. We can and should prepare to meet the conditions and requirements revealed in the Word of God, but ***whether or not God moves is ultimately up to His Sovereign prerogative.***

In Acts 8:22, Peter told Simon the sorcerer, “*Repent...of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.*” Peter wasn’t guaranteeing Simon that God would forgive him, even if he did repent. Maybe God would, but maybe He would not; that’s up to God. All we can do, and must do, is what God tells us to do and then throw ourselves on His mercy.

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF PREPARATION FOR REVIVAL; THEY ARE SPIRITUAL AND SPECIAL.

God’s Word reveals several elements of spiritual preparation for revival. These are some things that tend to attract God or compel Him to visit us. The fallacy of the “church growth movement” is the emphasis on strategies to attract people or to get people to visit our churches. We ought to be trying to attract God or get *Him* to visit our churches. Acts 11:21 reads, “*And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.*”

The correct question we need to be asking is not, “Where are the great numbers believing and turning to the Lord,” but, “Where is the hand or the Presence of the Lord?” Because where the hand or Presence of God is evident, those believing and turning to the Lord usually follows.

I. ELEMENTS OF SPIRITUAL PREPARATION:

- **Realization** - The 1st step in preparing for revival is just the simple realization that we need one, both individually and corporately. The indictment of the Lord Jesus against the church of the Laodiceans in Rev. 3, was that they were “lukewarm” as evidenced by their declaration, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing...” God will do nothing for those who need nothing. We need to realize our desperate need of a fresh visitation from Heaven. Usually, those who don’t think or

even say they don't need revival are the very ones who desperately need it.

- **Humility** - This step involves admitting and acknowledging our desperation and need of a fresh move of God. We hear a lot about revival praying but very little, if any about revival humility. In the most popular verse on revival, II Chronicles 7:14, humility is mentioned before prayer. God said, *"If my people, which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray..."* Humility is simply admitting that without Jesus we can do nothing and are nothing.
- **Confession** - In Psalms 66:18, the Psalmist said, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."* If we're not experiencing revival, there is only one reason, not two or three reasons, but one: unconfessed sin. Sin is that which hinders revival more than anything else.

According to I John 1:9, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Confess means to say the same thing as, or to agree with God. It is saying, "God, You're right and I'm wrong." To implement this step, encourage the people to get alone with God sometime before the meeting and have a *Confession Session*. This includes having a notepad paper and a pen. Then, ask the Lord to reveal to them every unconfessed sin of thought, word, or deed. They can pray Psalm 139:23, 24: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

When God begins to reveal their sins, they must write them down. Next, they must confess every sin they have written down. When they have finished confessing their sins, they must thank God for forgiving and cleansing them according to I John 1:9. They should then tear up their *sin list* and throw it away, thus symbolizing the glorious truth that He has "thrown their sins into the sea of His forgetfulness."

- **Repentance** - As important as confession of sin is, it isn't enough. Sins confessed must now become sins repented. Proverbs 28:13 says, *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."* Only the ones who confess and forsake their sin will find the mercy of God's forgiveness. God also said in II Chronicles 7:14, *"If my people... will turn from their wicked ways..."* If we want revival, not only must we say, "God, you were right and I was wrong," but also, "I'll never do that again." We must repent of, forsake, and turn from everything that grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit, which is incompatible with the

holy Presence of God.

We should ask God to reveal and remove every obstacle, every barrier, and every hindrance to revival; thereby realizing that sometimes the things that hinder us are not always obviously evil, sinful things. In Hebrews 12:1, the writer said, *“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us...”* Notice he makes a distinction between *weight* and sin. Sometimes it is not only sinful things that hinder revival, but even good things that are the enemy of the best things.

- **Prayer** - Only when we have realized our need of revival, humbled ourselves before the Lord, confessed and repented of our sins, are we ready to sincerely pray for revival. There is no question concerning the connection between revival and prayer. As someone said, “When God gets ready to move, He gets His people a-prayin.” Someone else said, “When prayer goes up, blessings come down.” **The Bible is full of prayer promises relevant to revival.** In fact, there are verses that are actually prayers for revival, such as Ps. 85:6, Is. 64:1, 2, and Hab. 3:1-2.

Another verse relevant to revival is Acts 28:31, where the Bible says that Paul, who was imprisoned *“in his own hired house,”* was *“preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”* That last phrase is actually an adverb in the original language that literally means *freely, without restraint, or without hindrance.* In 1857 a great revival called the “Prayer Revival” consumed New York City and spread throughout the world. The human leader of that movement was a man named Jeremiah Lamphier. One of his favorite phrases was based on Acts 28:31, “Let’s pray that God would move unhinderably.” And God did! We need to pray that God would move unhinderably in our midst.

- **Seeking** -Revival is the result, ironically, not of seeking revival but of seeking the Reviver, God Himself. In II Chronicles 7:14, God says, *“My people must seek my face.”* ***One reason we’re not experiencing more of a move of God in our day is because we’re seeking more the hand of God (what He can do for us) than we are the face of God (who He is).***

Hebrews 11:6 promises that God is *“a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.”* Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.” Someone might wonder, “How long should I seek God?” The Bible answers that in Hosea 10:12, *“for*

it is time to seek the Lord, till He come....” This list of elements involved in spiritual preparation for revival is not exhaustive, but it is sufficient and, if applied, could result in a mighty move of God.

CHALLENGE YOUR PEOPLE TO APPLY THESE ELEMENTS BY PUTTING THEM IN THE FORM OF A COMMITMENT AS FOLLOWS:

Understanding that the greatest need in my life, my church, my community, my country, and my world is revival or a fresh visitation from Heaven or a mighty manifestation of God’s Presence and Power, I solemnly join with other believers in my church in making the following commitments:

- † **I WILL REALIZE** THAT OUR GREATEST NEED IS REVIVAL, BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND CORPORATELY, HAVING ALREADY BEEN AWAKENED TO THIS REALITY.

- † **I WILL HUMBLE** MYSELF DAILY BEFORE THE LORD ACKNOWLEDGING OUR DESPERATE NEED FOR A FRESH VISITATION FROM HIM.

- † **I WILL CONFESS** MY SINS UP TO DATE AND THEN, KEEP SHORT SIN ACCOUNTS WITH GOD.

- † **I WILL REPENT** OF AND FORSAKE EVERY SIN GOD REVEALS TO ME AND THAT I CONFESS.

- † **I WILL PRAY** DAILY FOR A FRESH FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, FOR REVIVAL, AND FOR GOD TO MOVE “UNHINDERABLY” IN OUR MIDST.

- † **I WILL SEEK** THE LORD HIMSELF, “TILL HE COME,” IN A MIGHTY MANIFESTATION OF HIS PRESENCE AND POWER.

There are several aspects of what we are referring to as special preparations for revival. These refer to some practical things we can do in order to be in a position in which God can move.

II. ELEMENTS OF SPECIAL PREPARATION:

1. SPECIAL PRAYER - We've already referred to the importance of prayer as part of the spiritual preparation for revival. Now, we want to suggest some special practical ways to implement prayer leading up to the revival meeting:

A. Individual - Encourage your people to begin praying, personally, every day for revival in their life and in the life of their church at least four weeks prior to the beginning of the meeting. You may even want to suggest simple, sample prayers for them to pray. For instance, you could suggest a prayer based on Isaiah 64:1 "*O God, I ask that you would rend the heavens and come down*"; or Habakkuk 3:2 "*Lord, I pray that your would revive your work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make Yourself known. In wrath remember mercy.*"

B. Corporate - As important as it is for individuals in the church to personally pray for revival, it is equally important for the church to pray corporately for revival. Remember, Jesus said in Matthew 18:19, "*That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*" You may want to organize a *PRAYER TEAM*, by appointing those whom you perceive to already have a heart for God and prayer to serve on this team. Their responsibility will be to work with you organizing several modes of corporate prayer for revival. Suggestions for corporate involvement in prayer for revival include:

- **Cottage Prayer Meetings** - These should be held weekly in the homes of four members, beginning a month prior to the meeting. You could also set aside the Wednesday night prior to meeting as an *IN-CHURCH COTTAGE PRAYER MEETING*.
- **Prayer Partners** - Pair people together who will begin praying regularly for revival at least four weeks prior to the meeting. **Always** assign men with men and women with women. Encourage married couples to pray together for revival, but also to be involved with a prayer partner. Partners should set a time to pray,

at least once a week until the meeting. The people meet briefly in the auditorium for instructions and requests, then divide into small groups and meet throughout the auditorium or classrooms of the church.

- **Services and Classes** - At least four weeks prior to the meeting, specific prayer should be offered for revival in every service, class, and group gatherings such as deacons, women, men, youth, etc.
- **Prayer Chain** - Plan a 24-hour or 12-hour prayer meeting on the Saturday just before the revival meeting. For instance, this would go either from 8:00 a.m. Saturday to 8:00 a.m. Sunday, or from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Saturday. Have a sign-up form and ask people to register for a time period of 30 minutes. You could suggest that married couples, families, or classes take the time periods.
- **Prayer before Revival Services** - Plan and announce prayer meetings 30 minutes prior to each service. These prayer sessions can be held in the auditorium or in a designated room.

In all these types of prayer, ask God to move mightily in the services, anoint the evangelist with the Holy Spirit as he proclaims God's Word, anoint those who lead the worship through music, revive God's people, and save the lost.

2. SPECIAL PROMOTION - In Mark 2:1, the Bible says that *"it was noised abroad that he (Jesus) was in the house,"* and v. 2 says that *"immediately many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them...."* Then, vv.3 - 12, shares the account of Jesus healing a paralyzed man. It was a mighty move of God. We understand that ***real revival is its own advertisement and promotion.*** But, there are some things we can do and must do if we're going to see God work. One of the major ingredients that revival requires is people. Needless to say, but nonetheless true, is **God doesn't revive and save pews, but revives and saves people.** If our goal is to see God move, then we must get people to the meeting. Some may object by saying that God is Sovereign and doesn't need means. That's true; but, God in His Sovereignty chooses to use means.

SOME SUGGESTED PROMOTIONS:

A. Friend Day - Encourage your people to invite and bring a lost or out of church friend or relative to Bible Study and the morning service on the first day of the meeting. At least four weeks prior to the meeting, the pastor should invite and

secure someone to come as your special guest and friend on that day. Share with the church that you have a friend coming that day as a visible example and encouragement for them to do the same.

B. Dinner on the Grounds - After the first service, have lunch together at the church. This may encourage some who are reluctant to come.

C. Church-Wide Fellowship - Plan a church-wide fellowship for one night of the meeting after the revival.

D. Sunday School Service - Have high attendance promotion in the Bible Study hour and in the first service of the meeting. The teachers should contact and invite those already enrolled as well as class prospects. The classes could be recognized in the service. You could also provide muffins and donuts for breakfast.

E. Hot Dog Hoedown - Have a hot dog supper for children in grades 1 - 6 before one of the evening services. The evangelist will meet with them and share a simple Gospel message. The time should be a least one hour before the evening service.

F. Pizza Pig Out - Have pizza from a restaurant for youth 7th grade through College. Again, this should be before one of the evening services. Wednesday has typically worked the best because most of the youth were planning to be there already for their regular Wednesday activities at the church. The evangelist will meet with them one hour before the service, and share a challenging message. The youth could go **C.R.A.S.H.**ing one hour before the meal. C.R.A.S.H. stands for **Christians Running Around Snatching Humans**, and involves the youth meeting at the church and then going to pick up friends to bring them to the service that evening.

G. Noon Service or "Mid-Day Manna" - Have a meal and Bible Study at the church from noon to 1:00 p.m. Monday - Wednesday of the meeting.

3. SPECIAL PUBLICITY - As we think about publicizing the meeting, we should keep in mind that that which draws the people, according to Mark 2:1-2, is the, "*Presence of Jesus,*" and that real revival is it's own advertisement. However, there is nothing wrong in getting the word out regarding a series of meetings in which we are praying for and believing in God for revival.

A. Bulletin Inserts - Put inserts publicizing dates, times, events and name of the

evangelist for the meeting in the bulletin and newsletter at least four weeks before the meeting starts.

B. Canvassing - Make copies of the bulletin insert and set aside a day or evening to put the flyers on doors of the houses and apartments in the community or neighborhoods surrounding the church. You could also mail them to prospects. You could put them under the windshield wipers of vehicles in parking lots of grocery stores, shopping centers, recreation centers, etc. You could also put them in the window of local stores with management approval. Canvassing should be done at least one week prior to the meeting.

IMPORTANT: Check with your local municipal authorities regarding ordinances pertaining to flyer distribution. Also, respect the property of those to whom you distribute: stay on the sidewalks and off the grass, honor *no soliciting* notices, and be careful of personal property.

C. Church Sign - If you have a street sign, publicize the meeting on it at least one to two weeks before the meeting.

D. Newspaper, Radio and T.V. - You can receive biographical information about the evangelist upon request for this purpose.

4. SPECIAL PROVISIONS -

A. Finances - We go to any church, any size and just request that a love offering be taken each service. Also, we ask that you take care of our expenses out of the church budget. Expenses include airline tickets or the I.R.S. prescribed amount for mileage.

B. Meals - We request that at least two meals per day be provided. We don't typically eat breakfast.

C. Lodging - We prefer to stay in a hotel if possible. If it is not, a room at someone's house is fine.

If you have any questions about any of the material in this preparation guide, please don't hesitate to contact us.

LET US PLAN, LET US PREPARE, LET US PROMOTE

***AS IF EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON US;
BUT, LET US PRAY AS IF EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON GOD!***